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**Title** **An Analytical Study of Dr. Mohar Ali's Intellectual Legacy in refuting the Orientalists' Narratives on the Prophetic Sirah**

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## An Analytical Study of Dr. Mohar Ali's Intellectual Legacy in refuting the Orientalists' Narratives on the Prophetic Sirah

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### **Abstract:**

*This research paper aims to analyze the efforts and scope of the contemporary Islamic scholar, Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali in confronting and refuting the Orientalists' views regarding the Sirah of the Holy Prophet PBUH. Dr. Mohar Ali in his book "Sirat al Nabi and the Orientalist", counters various allegations put forth by the Orientalists especially David Samuel Margoliouth, William Muir and William Montgomery Watt. He briefly examines and refutes the false claims of Orientalists including that the family of the noble Prophet PBUH was of no importance, allegation of Prophet PBUH having epilepsy, the financial motive behind the marriage of the Prophet PBUH to Hazrat Khadijah R.A., the commandments of the Holy Qur'an being taken from Christianity and Judaism and many other related components. Using a painstaking methodology founded on Islamic historiography, Dr. Mohar Ali reinforces the integrity of the Holy Prophet PBUH, the legitimacy of the Holy Qur'an, and nature of his mission. A scholarly, evidence-driven response to the realm of Orientalist scholars, it provides Islamic historiography with a fierce defense against ideological bias. This research exemplifies Dr. Mohar Ali's important involvement to re-imagining of the early Muslim history and serves like a well-balanced answer to the Orientalist arguments which have shaped Western perception of Islam and its early texts.*

**Keywords:** *Orientalism, Prophetic Biography (Sirah), Islamic Historiography, Muhammad Mohar Ali, Critique of Orientalist Discourse*

## Introduction

### • Dr. Muhammad Mohar ali

Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali was a Muslim scholar from Bangladesh. He was born on 1st, July 1929 in Khulna, Bengal. He graduated in History from Dhaka University during 1952-1953 acquiring respectively Bachelor and Master degrees from the institution in the same year; and subsequently in 1963, from SOAS at University of London, and a degree of bar-at-law from Lincoln's Inn, London in 1964.

Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali was a University Lecturer of Bengal in 1954-1976. Arriving in Saudi Arabia in 1976, he taught history of Islam at Muhammad bin Saud University, Riyadh for 5 years. After that he served the Islamic University of Madinah for 7 years. In 1988, he became a research scholar in King Fahd Complex. In the year 2000, he was given the King Faisal International Prize for Islamic Studies, for the importance of this dissemination and Islam's cultural role outer the Arabic-speaking regions. His writing, *A History of the Muslims of Bengal* is notable work of him.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali passed away on April 11, 2007 in London.

Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali was an expert of Islamic history particularly in Bangal. His book, *History of the Muslims of Bengal*, is measured a significant orientation in the antiquity of Islamic dissemination in the expanse and its social as well as political possessions. His other pen-works include: *A Brief Survey of Muslim Rule in India*, *An Outline of Ancient Indo-Pakistani History*, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities 1833-1857*, *The Fall of Sirajuddaulah*, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, *The Qur'an and the Orientalists: An Examination of their Main Theories and Assumptions*, *A Word for Word Meaning of the Qur'an*, and *Nawwab Abdullatif's memoire*.<sup>2</sup>

### • The Book: "Sirat Al-Nabi and the Orientalists"

The book "*Sirat Al-Nabi and the Orientalists: With Special Reference to the Writings of W. Muir, D.S. Margoliouth, and W. Montgomery Watt*" is a seminal pen-work of Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali in critiques on Orientalists' thoughts. This 2 volumes book was printed in 1997 by King Fahd Complex in Madinah. The volume IA discusses the topics from Background of Sirah till the beginning of the Prophet's PBUH mission. Whereas the volume IB deals with the Sirah incidents starting from initial phases of Holy Prophet's PBUH mission until his arrival to Medinah.

In this book, a scholarly critique of Orientalist writings on the life of Prophet Muhammad PBUH has been executed. The author has systematically analyzed and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://kingfaisalprize.org/professor-mohammad-muhar-ali/>

<sup>2</sup> For more information about life history of Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali, please visit: <https://www.bmri.org.uk/biogs/Muhammad-Mohar-Ali.pdf> ; <https://shoncharon.com/details/593> ; <https://kingfaisalprize.org/professor-mohammad-muhar-ali/>

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respond to the misrepresentations, doubts, and critical assumptions made by well-known Western Orientalists (Sir William Muir<sup>3</sup>, David Samuel Margoliouth<sup>4</sup>, William. Montgomery Watt<sup>5</sup>). In this regard, Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali adopted a critical analytical methodology for evaluation of the historical and textual approaches used by the Orientalists in elaboration of Sirah incidents. The author has also provided a robust defense of the authenticity and objectivity of Muslim sources of history and Sirah, countering the claims of Orientalists that these are biased or fabricated. However, despite the polemical nature of the subject, Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali maintained a calm, reasonable, and academic tone throughout the book.

Some examples enlightening the approach and methodology of Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali in his book "*Sirat al Nabi and the Orientalists*" in special reference of

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<sup>3</sup> **William Muir** was a Scottish Orientalist. He was born on April 27, 1819, in Glasgow. He received his education at Kilmarnock Academy in Haileybury College and the University of Edinburgh. He joined the Civil Services of Bengal in 1837. He has been the Secretary of North-Western Governors, Member of the Agra Revenue Board, and chief of the Intelligence Department during the Mutiny. In 1865, he served as the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India. He appointed the Lieutenant Governor of the North-Western Provinces in 1868 and selected as a member of the Financial Council in 1874, He got retirement in 1876 as a member of the Council of India in London. From 1885 to 1903, he held the position of Principal at the University of Edinburgh. He passed away in 1905. William Muir's well-known books include: *Life of Mahomet and History of Islam to the Era of the Hegira*, *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, *The Caliphate*, *The Koran: Its Composition and Teaching*, *The Mohammedan Controversy*. For more details, please consult: Encyclopedia Britannica, ("Muir, Sir William") 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, Vol. 18, P. 958

<sup>4</sup> **David Samuel Margoliouth** was an English scholar and Orientalist with a notable work in Islamic Studies. He was born in October, 1858 in London. He served the University of Oxford as professor of Arabic in 1889–1937. He was also a minister of the Church of England. He traveled through middle-east for a long time. His works on the history of Islam, include *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam (1905)*, *The Early Development of Mohammedanism (1914)*, and *The Relations between Arabs and Israelites Prior to the Rise of Islam (1924)*. He died in London on 22nd March, 1940. For more details, please consult: Encyclopedia Britannica, ("David Samuel Margoliouth") online through this link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/David-Samuel-Margoliouth>

<sup>5</sup> **Montgomery Watt** was born in 1909. In 1919, he was admitted to George Watson's College. In 1929, he got a Bachelor's degree in Classics and another Bachelor's degree in Ancient History and Philosophy from Balliol College, Oxford University. He was awarded the Ph.D. degree in 1943. In 1947-1979, he served in University of Edinburgh as an Arabic Language lecturer. His notable works include: *The Truth in the Religions; a Sociological and Psychological Approach*, *The faith and practice of al-Ghazali*, *Muhammad at Mecca*, *Muhammad at Medina*, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, *Muhammad's Mecca*, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, *Islamic Political Thought*, *Islamic Surveys: The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe*, *The Majesty That Was Islam*, *What Is Islam?*, *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions*, *Early Islam*, *Islamic Creeds*, *History of Islamic Spain*, *Islamic Political Thought*, *Islam and the Integration of Society*, *Islam: A Short History*, *A Christian Faith for Today*. For more details, please see: Hillenbrand, Carole, *The Life and Work of W. Montgomery Watt*, Edinburgh University Press, 2019, Pages: 4-9

refutation of Orientalists' thoughts and false allegations on the personality and life history of the Holy Prophet Muhammad PBUH are showcased below. These examples elaborate various types of allegations and blames of Orientalists about the personality and life of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH including His name, family and tribe, Mental health and disorder (affected by epilepsy), The Qur'an being his own dictation, His marital life and some events of his blessed life.

### **Examples from the book: “Sirat al Nabi and the Orientalists”**

#### **I. The Family and Tribe of the Holy Prophet PBUH**

One of the objections of Orientalists about the persona of Prophet Muhammad PBUH is that he was from an unknown and ordinary family instead of being from a great or well-known family. Numerous well-known Orientalists, such as: D. S. Margoliouth, Carl Brokelmann, Bernard Lewis, Montgomery Watt, are involved in the same accusing.

In the six<sup>th</sup> Chapter of his book, Dr. Mohar Ali pointed out this issue that: “The first thing to notice about the orientalist's views about the Prophet's early life is their attempt to show that he belonged to an unimportant and humble family of Makka. The suggestion is put forward more pointedly by Margoliouth. His arguments are as follows.”<sup>6</sup>

Then he mentioned the under-mentioned narrative of D.S. Margoliouth in this regard:

- a) “The Kuraish in the Koran wonder why a Prophet should be sent to them who was not of noble birth.”
- b) “When at the height of his power the Prophet was compared by the Quraysh people "to a palm springing out of a dung-hill.”
- c) “On the day of his triumphal entry into Makka the Prophet declared that an end had now come to the pagan aristocracy by blood, the implication being that he himself was not of aristocratic blood.”
- d) "He himself rejected the title, 'Master and son of our Master' offered him by some devotee."
- e) “His grandfather, 'Abd al-Muttalib, was engaged in money- lending, which profession was of little esteem in the eyes of the Arabs. And if he dug the Zamzam well and rendered its water potable by mixing it with camel's milk, honey, or raisins, it could not be assumed that he put himself to this trouble without remuneration. Hence, it would seem that the offices of 'waterer and entertainer' which later writers represent as posts of honour at Meccah resolve

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<sup>6</sup> Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, (Madinah: King Fahd Complex for the printing of the Holy Qur'an, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 1997 C.E.), Vol. 1A, p. 131.

themselves into a trade, and one that was not honourable since the Prophet afterwards forbade the sale of water.”

- f) “The name Abd al-Muttalib, ‘slave of al-Mutalib’, though given a fanciful explanation by the historians, is probably to be interpreted as meaning that its owner was at one time actually a slave, though afterwards manumitted and enrolled into the Hashim clan...When the Prophet's enemies wished to insult him, they called him ‘the son of Abu Kabshah’ which conveyed some sting; but what the nature of the insult was we cannot define with certainty.”<sup>7</sup>

Here, Muhammad Mohar Ali, while commenting on Margoliouth's views, claimed that these opinions are far-fetched and have been presented by concealing or distorting the facts.<sup>8</sup> Then he refuted Margoliouth's above-mentioned statements using both rational and textual arguments, and clarified that:

“Margoliouth's use of this report to show the supposed humble family status of the Prophet is faulty in two main respects. He simply grasps at the obviously spiteful remark of the Prophet's avowed enemies, disregarding the many other indisputable facts that prove to the contrary. Secondly, and more seriously, he withholds from his readers the important fact that the Prophet, when he came to know about the malicious remark about him, immediately protested and mentioned before the audience the names of his father and grandfather in such a way as leaves no room for doubt that they were so well-known figures that they needed no further introduction. In fact many of the ansār before whom the Prophet thus spoke were 'Abd al-Muttalib's own maternal relatives. The Prophet did not stop there. He specifically pointed out that he belonged to the best family of the best of clans in the best of tribes. By suppressing this very material fact of the Prophet's immediate protestation against his enemies' malicious remark and his unequivocal and public declaration of his most respectable family background Margoliouth has miserably maneuvered to turn one of the decisive evidences in favour of the Prophet as one against him! That the report in question is one of the strongest evidences in favour of the Prophet's family status is shown by the fact that in his well-known index for the traditions Wensinck rightly lists this report under the heading, which is the Prophet's saying: ‘I am the best of you in respect of family, and the best of you as a person’.”<sup>9</sup>

Thereafter, Muhammad Mohar Ali presented Montgomery Watt's views regarding the family of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, stating that Watt has adopted Margoliouth's aforementioned views without much original contribution, asserting that the Holy Prophet PBUH was not from a noble family. He further states:

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<sup>7</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, pp. 131-132.

<sup>8</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 132.

<sup>9</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, pp. 133-134.

“Watt also cites the Qur'anic passage 43:31 to show the Prophet's ordinary position in the society, though elsewhere he (Watt) suggests that during the first few years of his mission the Prophet had grown sufficiently important to induce the Quraysh leaders to make him offers of compromise.”<sup>10</sup>

## II. The Name of the Holy Prophet PBUH

Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali in the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter presented the view of the Orientalist Aloys Sprenger regarding the blessed name of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, stating that in the beginning, his name was "Qutham," which was later changed to Muhammad. According to the researcher, Sprenger's manner of expression suggests that there was a significant gap of time between these name changes. Subsequently, Dr. Mohar Ali presented the view of William Muir regarding the blessed name of the Prophet PBUH as mentioned below:

“Almost simultaneously with Sprenger, Muir advanced his remarks about the Prophet's name. He did not of course refer to the name 'Qutham', but otherwise attempted to create confusion about the name, particularly the name 'Ahmad'. He suggested that this latter form was adopted by the Muslims and became favourite with them for their confrontation with the Christians and Jews because it fell in line with the ‘supposed’ prophecy about their Prophet in the Bible.”<sup>11</sup>

Then Dr. Mohar Ali critically examined and refuted William Muir's views and opinions on this matter in the light of various Sirah sources, presenting counterarguments with evidence. He says:

“The subject of Biblical prophecy about the Prophet needs a separate treatment. Here only the main weaknesses of Muir's remarks may be noticed. It is well known that the Muslim historians, while discussing the novelty of the name 'Muḥammad', themselves take care to note that a few other persons had been named 'Muḥammad' because their parents had by chance come to know from some well-informed Christian monk that there was a prophecy in the Bible about the advent of a Prophet who was expected to appear very shortly and who would bear the name 'Muhammad'. Hence each of the parents named their son 'Muhammad' with the fond hope that he might turn out to be the expected Prophet.' It is also noted that the persons so named were all contemporaries with the Prophet and most of them were born close to the time of his call to Prophethood. Muir is aware of this fact and the reason thus given by the historians for the parents' thus naming their children; but he dismisses this reason as ‘the usual Mahometan credulity and desire’ to ‘exhibit anticipation of the Prophet.’”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 138.

<sup>11</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 143.

<sup>12</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 144.

The scholar then did a detailed discussion on the fact that the names Muhammad and Ahmad were given to many individuals both before and after the Prophet Muhammad PBUH.

### **III. The Allegation of Mental Disease**

Under the topic "*The Insinuation of Epilepsy and other remarks*", Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali also discussed the objection raised by various Orientalists most notably William Muir and Margoliouth that "*the suffer of the Holy Prophet PBUH from epilepsy*". In this regard, he pointed out that the Orientalists derived this assumption from the incident of the Prophet's PBUH chest being opened (Shaqq al-Sadr). He writes that the hints began with the Greeks and then were picked up by later authors. Others, as Syed Ahmed Khan has emphasized, even mistook the term fa-alhīqīhi (فالحقيه) in the report as bi-alhaqqīyyah (بالحقية) and then absurdly rendered it as "the Hypochondriacal disease". Evidently, when William Muir stated his opus, he bought into the fallacy of his forebears. And so the mention of this event he calls "Most Likely a Seizure".<sup>13</sup> Afterwards, he commented on the thought of D. S. Margoliouth saying that:

"Thus Margoliouth, while recognizing that some of the signs of epilepsy including degeneration of the brain power were wanting in the case of the Prophet, nonetheless echoes Muir not only in reiterating the allegation but also in relating the alleged fits of epilepsy with the process of the coming of revelation. Margoliouth even adds that the Prophet had developed the skill of 'artificially' inducing the symptoms in order to 'produce' revelations! He writes: '... the notion current among Christian writers that he was subject to epilepsy finds curious confirmation in the notices recorded of his experiences during the process of revelation the importance of which is not lessened by the possibility that the symptoms were often artificially induced'."<sup>14</sup>

The researcher then argued, through various rational and textual evidences, that such a claim holds no truth. In this regard, he states at one point:

"The theory of epilepsy or of any such ailment cannot be sustained, neither on historical nor on rational and medical grounds. It is evident from all the available accounts that the Prophet possessed and retained till his death an uncommon physical and mental health and resourcefulness. Nor did he ever exhibit any sign of debility and degeneration of body and mind which, by the common verdict of past and present medical science, are the unavoidable effects of epilepsy or hysteria. Not that this fact is quite unknown to the protagonists of the insinuation. Muir himself notes: 'It is probable that, in other respects, the constitution of Mahomet was

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<sup>13</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 156.

<sup>14</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 158.

rendered more robust'. Yet Muir and his followers would persist in advancing the insinuation."<sup>15</sup>

#### **iv. Prophet's PBUH journey to Syria**

Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali, while discussing the youth incidents of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, mentions the journey undertaken by the Prophet PBUH to Syria with the trade goods of Hazrat Khadijah R.A. In this context, he also sheds light on the views and ideas of the Orientalists. He states that, according to William Muir, the Prophet PBUH may have visited several other locations during the journey, such as the city of Gaza and the Mediterranean Sea. According to Muir, references in the Qur'an to sea vessels and towering waves like those of the ocean could possibly be inspired by observations made during this journey.<sup>16</sup>

Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali further stated about D. S. Margoliouth that he further amplifies Muir's ideas. He claims that the Prophet Muhammad PBUH had visited all those countries and regions that bordered the Arabian Headland such as Persia, Syria, Hira, Bahrain, Abyssinia, Yemen, and Egypt among others. He further says:

“Thus in three consecutive sentences at one place Watt would have us believe that (a) the Prophet probably carried on trade with Syria either by travelling there personally again or through his agent; (b) that he was possibly excluded from such profitable operations and from the inner circle of Makka's traders, and (c) that it was unlikely that he was so excluded because he was very much in close relationship with that ‘inner circle’ and the mercantile élite of the city. Needless to say that Watt could have saved himself the trouble of making such contradictory conjectures had he not been caught in the web of his misconceived theory of an acute trade war between Banú Hashim and the others on which he builds many other conjectures. The truth is that neither Banû Hashim in general nor the Prophet in particular were ever excluded from the so-called ‘most profitable’ operations, nor did the so-called Makkan inner circle ever attempt before the hijrah to divert the Prophet from his mission by ‘engulfing’ him in commerce.”<sup>17</sup>

#### **v. Prophet's PBUH Marriage with Khadija R.A.**

Some Orientalists have raised the objection that the Prophet Muhammad PBUH deliberately planned his marriage to a wealthy woman “Khadijah R.A.” in order to strengthen and stabilize his financial condition. Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali, in his book, presents this objection with reference to D. S. Margoliouth. He states:

“As regards the Prophet's motive, the main insinuation has been made by Margoliouth. He alleges that the Prophet delayed marrying till the twenty- fifth year of his age because he was a calculating and his material position through marriage.

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<sup>15</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 158.

<sup>16</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 187.

<sup>17</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 190.

In this connection Margoliouth castigates not only the Prophet but also the Arabs in general for their alleged passion saying: 'Mohammed, though not without his share of that passion of which the Talmud rightly says nine parts have been given to the Arabs, and only one to the rest of the world, waited to marry till he could better himself there by ambitious individual and waited for an opportunity for improving'.”<sup>18</sup>

Later, the researcher, referring to William Muir, states that Muir, citing other Orientalists such as Sprenger and Weil, draws on an account narrated by al-Waqidi. According to this account, “When Khadijah R.A. felt distress that Khuwaylid, her father, will not agree for this marriage, she arranged an excessive banquet for him, and during the celebration, when he was intoxicated and in a joyful state, she had him officiate her marriage with the Holy Prophet Muhammad PBUH in the presence of the Prophet's uncle, Hamzah R.A. When Khuwaylid regained sobriety, he became extremely angry and wanted to annul the marriage, but was later persuaded to accept it”.<sup>19</sup> Then, the author briefly commented on the reports of al-Waqidi that:

“It must be noted that Al-Waqidi, while giving an account of the marriage on the basis of other reports, refers to this one as well by way of pointing out that it was a mistaken and unreliable account. Al-Tabari also does the same, namely, he mentions it and then adds his own comment saying that it is untrue and unreliable. Both these authorities also point out that Khadijah's (R.A) father Khuwaylid died before the Fijâr war and that her uncle Amr ibn Asad acted as guardian for her marriage. And although Ibn Ishaq at first says that Khuwaylid gave her in marriage, he (Ibn Ishaq) rectifies his mistake at a later stage in his work and mentions that 'Amr gave her in marriage.’”<sup>20</sup>

#### **VI. Qur'an is the creation of Holy Prophet PBUH**

In the Chapter “Wahy and the Orientalists”, Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali has discussed the narratives of Orientalists related to the Holy Qur'an and its revelation status. In this regard, while commenting on the Orientalists' accusation of being Holy Qur'an a creation of Holy Prophet Muhammad PBUH. He further stated with reference to the 15<sup>th</sup> verse of Surah Yunus that not only did the Prophet Muhammad PBUH have no authority to alter the Qur'an, but he was also bound to follow the commands revealed in it. In that case, how could it possibly be his own speech?

“It is also noteworthy that the unbelievers repeatedly asked the messenger of Allah to give them a different Qur'an or to change it. In reply he told them very clearly that

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<sup>18</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 191.

<sup>19</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 192.

<sup>20</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, pp. 193-194.

it was not within his power to change even a word of what was wahy-ied to him and that ..... He himself was subject to its dictates and injunctions.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Jewish & Christian scholars and scriptures as the sources of revelation**

The 9<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the book deals with the Judaeo-Christian influence on the Holy Prophet and the Holy Qur'an. In this chapter, the author has discussed the allegations of Orientalists that the prophet PBUH has created the Holy Qur'an using the teachings and information which he get from the Jews and the Christian monks in Makkah, Madinah and Syria etc. He thoroughly evaluated the Orientalist narrative in this regard and criticized it with different rational and textual evidences mainly from the Holy Qur'an itself. According to the author, Wiiliam Muir was the first modern scholar who advanced and popularized this false theory. So, he firstly criticized his theory in and elaborative way. Afterwards, he pointed at the other orientalists including D. S. Margoliouth and Montgomery Watt have also adopted these views of Muir but in their own ways. He further summarized the similar arguments of all three orientalists (D.S. Margoliouth, William Muir, W. Montgomery Watt) that they present nearly identical perspectives using nearly identical arguments.” More often these arguments rotate around the five assumptions including:

1. The contingent or ecological effectiveness of Christianity and Judaism.
2. Holy Prophet's suspected direct availment of particular Christians.
3. The claimed Qur'anic proof of his informer or informers.
4. Plausibly slow improvement in accuracy of the Qur'anic retelling of the biblical accounts.
5. Contemporary errors allegedly repeated in the Qur'an.

Here he conducted a detailed critical review of orientalists' accusations supporting with some thoughtful questions and commented that:

“Is it reasonable to assume that a person of Muhammad's (PBUH) intelligence and common sense, as on all hands he is admitted to be, would proceed to propound a new religion and challenge the correctness of both the prevailing systems of Judaism and Christianity on the basis of a mere hearsay and superficial knowledge of them?.....The inherent weakness and inconsistency in the orientalists' approach lies in the fact they suggest on the one hand that the Prophet was ambitious and therefore careful enough to avoid the political implications of embracing either Judaism or Christianity and, on the other, that he was careless enough to proceed to found a new religion by picking up information from bazaar gossips and Jewish story-tellers at wine shops!”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, pp. 509-510.

<sup>22</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 261.

He further stated:

“In fact even a cursory glance at the Qur'ân unmistakably brings out two undeniable facts. In the first place, the Qur'ân does not claim any originality in the sense of presenting a new religion. It claims merely to revive and fulfil the same message which it maintains and here is its originality God has given to all the Prophets throughout the ages and to every people. Secondly, it very uncompromisingly rejects and denounces the polytheistic beliefs and practices of the contemporary Arabs as also of the Jews and Christians. This two-fold and predominant notes of the Qur'ân are just the reverse of what the orientalists suggest.”<sup>23</sup>

While commenting on the narrative of Prophet's PBUH getting education from the Christian monks, Dr. Mohar Ali clarified that:

“The trade journeys to predominantly Christian regions were a regular feature of Arab commercial life, however, there is no evidence in reliable historical sources that the Prophet PBUH utilized these opportunities to engage with Christian doctrine get information from Christian monks. The mostly reported yet historically questionable accounts of interactions with monks such as Bahîra and Nestorius focus solely on the observations of these individuals and provide no indication of active inquiry or interest from the Prophet PBUH himself. Moreover, during the purported meeting with Bahîra, the Prophet PBUH was only a twelve-year-old boy, an age at which meaningful theological discourse would have been highly improbable. Given the demanding nature of these trade expeditions, such interactions would have been impractical, and had any significant religious or intellectual exchange occurred, it would likely have been noted by the prominent Meccan figures who accompanied him many of whom later became his most vocal opponents.”<sup>24</sup>

After the detailed refuting notes regarding the above mentioned alleged claim of orientalists, Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali in Chapter no. 12 of his book, further presented the differences in the contents of Qur'an and the Bible regarding the faith and scientific theories including the scientific errors concerning the sky and earth's shape and mistakes regarding Judaism and Christianity about Trinity, Uzayr and Crucifixion.<sup>25</sup>

## **VII. The reconstruction of Ka'ba**

During the reconstruction of the Ka'ba, a serious conflict arose among the tribes of Quraysh concerning who will be honored to place the Hajr-e-Aswad in its rightful position. This moment had the potential to trigger a violent tribal clash, as each clan

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<sup>23</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 262.

<sup>24</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, pp. 265-266.

<sup>25</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, pp. 291-319.

considered itself worthy of this privilege. At this critical interval, Prophet Muhammad PBUH intervened with exceptional wisdom, foresight, and diplomacy. He proposed a solution that all parties accepted that placing the Black Stone on a cloth and having representatives of all major clans hold its corners, while he himself placed the stone in position. This act not only averted bloodshed but earned him the title of al-Amīn (the Trustworthy) even more firmly in the eyes of his people. Despite the moral strength and communal harmony that this event exemplifies, some Orientalist scholars have not refrained from distorting its significance. Arthur Jeffery, in particular, gave the episode a misleading interpretation. He suggested that by taking part in placing the Black Stone, the Prophet PBUH was effectively participating in the reconstruction of a pagan temple, a shrine, according to him, associated with pre-Islamic deities such as Lāt, Manāt, and 'Uzzā. This framing attempts to undermine the sanctity and monotheistic orientation of the Prophet's character even prior to his prophet hood.

Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali refuted this accusation with strong scholarly reasoning. He argued that such a portrayal completely disregards the historical, cultural, and religious context of the Kaaba. He further stated:

“As regards the third argument that Muḥammad (PBUH) by his arbitration and action in resetting the Black Stone participated in rebuilding the Ka'ba, ‘the House of that al-Lāt, al-'Uzza and Manāt’ against whom he ‘fulminated’ subsequently, Jeffery is mistaken in two ways. The Ka'ba was not the house of Al-Lāt, Al-'Uzzā and Manāt. They and their shrines were situated respectively at Tâ'if, Nakhala and Qudayd (near the Red Sea coast between Makka and Madina) though they were revered by the Quraysh.’ Nor was the Ka'ba at Makka sanctified and revered by the Makkans and Arabs in general as the house of their idols, though a good number of them were indeed placed in and around it. In fact a number of shrines of their idols at different places also were called ka'bas, such as the Ka'ba at Najran, the Ka'ba at Sindad (between Kûfa and Baṣra) and the Ka'ba al-Yamaniyyah at Dhu al-Khalasah.”<sup>26</sup>

At another point, in account of the special status of the Holy Ka'ba, the researcher says:

“In so far as the Ka'ba at Makka was concerned, however, the Arabs held it in especial esteem and ascribed to it the preeminent position not as the shrine of any particular idol or as the house of their idols in general, but as the House of Allah and because of its association with the memory of Prophets Ibrahîm and Ismâ'il. It was also only to this Ka'ba that the Arabs, despite their lapse into idolatry, performed 'umrah and hajj in pursuance of the Abrahamic tradition. Hence the Prophet's arbitration and action in re-setting the Black Stone to the Ka'ba was no participation

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<sup>26</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, pp. 210-211.

in the building of an idol house, nor is it at all an evidence of his following at that time 'peacefully the religion of his people'.<sup>27</sup>

### **VIII. The Spurious story of the "Satanic Verses" (Story of Gharaniq)**

Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali, has presented a comprehensive discussion on the "incident of Gharaniq. While commenting on the details of this event, he wrote that this story is complete manifest nonsense and falsehood to the extent it should have been unconditionally rejected as such so that chroniclers and traditionists could leave no record of it? However, as some of them are taped, this fact itself rather than the self-evidently discrediting characteristics of the story has frequently been advanced as a basis for establishing its authenticity.<sup>28</sup> He further refuted the allegation with Qur'anic references in three points:

- i. "Neither Satan nor anyone else could interfere in the process of coming of the revelation, nor did the Prophet ever entertain any intention of making a compromise with the unbelieving leaders, nor did he ever interpolate anything in the text of the revelation."
- ii. "The passages cited as having been revealed as a sequel to the incident and for reassuring the Prophet prove to the contrary, showing that he had not made even the slightest move towards making a compromise with the unbelieving leaders."
- iii. "The internal evidence of s̄urat al-Najm in connection with the revelation of which the story has been foisted, goes against its spirit and purport."<sup>29</sup>

The author further raises the point that this incident also appears to be fabricated because revelation was also sent down to the previous prophets, yet there is not a single instance in historical records where Satan managed to deceive a prophet during the process of revelation and caused him to utter something that Allah had not revealed and which did not reflect His will. Moreover, the method and arrangement of divine revelation by Allah Almighty is impossible to be such insecure as to allow Satan to interfere and confuse the message. He states:

"To put the sense of reading or reciting on the expression here would, as already indicated, be a gross affront to both history and theology; for it would then mean that there was no previous Prophet or Messenger of Allah who was not misled by Satan to utter in the name of Allah what He actually did not reveal. Neither does the history of previous Prophets bear such a highly generalized assertion, nor is it conceivable that Allah's revelations were sent down in such unprotected and vulnerable manners that Satan had in respect of every Prophet the chance of

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<sup>27</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1A, p. 211.

<sup>28</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1B, p. 684.

<sup>29</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1B, pp. 684-685.

interfering with them. That interpretation would be in conflict with the very concept of revelation (wahy) as enunciated in the Qur'ān which unequivocally states that Allah Himself protects His revelation from being interfered with directly or indirectly when it is being sent down. It is neither necessary nor justifiable to tarnish the records of all the previous Prophets and to undermine the very nature of Allah's revelation simply to justify a manifestly untrue story and a supposed pitfall on the part of Prophet Muhammad PBUH.”<sup>30</sup>

#### **IX. The Preaching of Islam and Makkah opposition**

The Prophet Muhammad started preaching in Makkah and its surrounding after receiving the divine revelation. Most of the people of Makkah, however, were not ready to accept this new teaching and they did not want to leave their stable idolatrous ways and the related immoral activities. They therefore staged a multi-dimensional opposition, which included both psychological and physical oppression. The Orientalism scholars have been arguing about the causes of this resistance. Such as William Muir and D.S. Margoliouth, contended that religious and economic interests of the Quraysh, whose wealth and power could not be separated with the Ka'ba. Muir, implicitly, also hinted at a political aspect, that the fear of the Quraysh of the ambition of the Prophet and his political ambitions was the foundation of their enmity. Al-Watt built on these theories and claimed that the hostility was based on religious, economic, and political reasons. He argued that the original revelations of the Quran were not a complete monotheistic concept; combined with the scandalous satanic verses, this led to an early move to make peace with the Quraysh. Such compromise failed, as Watt explains, and led to the denunciation of idol worship by the Prophet and the heightened opposition that he encountered.

Dr. Mohar Ali countered this argument by asserting that the cause of Watt's these unpredictable and perplexing proclamations is plainly because to his conflicting criteria and ambivalent allegiances. Initially, he seems believing so called satanic verses being declared by the Holy Prophet PBUH as a concession he offered to the inhabitants of Ta'if, Nakhlah and Qudayd in order to convince them to accept their divine personages, but he later argues that the verses were pronounced after the leadership of the Quraysh had requested him to make a compromise that would acknowledge their divine beings. Watt then builds on the assumption that the earlier monotheism of the Prophet was unclear and thus could be accommodated by the recognition of a local deity, and then tries to justify the disappointment of the negotiated conciliation and its rejection by the Holy Prophet PBUH by arguing that his monotheism was, in reality, inconsistent with such a recognition. He also says that retraction of satanic verses was a renunciation of the cooperation with establishment of Makkah, and at the same time, the annulment was not a

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<sup>30</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1B, pp. 689-690.

renunciation of the adoration at the Holy Kaba. These roles are evidently indicative of his split loyalties, towards Makkan Quraysh and subsequently towards the sanctuaries of Ta'if, Nakhlah, and Qudayd.<sup>31</sup>

### **Methodology of Dr. Mohar Ali in Countering the Orientalist theories**

Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali's approach to countering Orientalist views on the lifespan of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and early Islamic history is marked by a rigorous, systematic, and academically grounded methodology. His scholarly work in "Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists" is a meticulous exercise in engaging with Western interpretations of Islamic history, especially those put forward by influential Orientalists such as D.S. Margoliouth, William Muir, and W. Montgomery Watt. Below, I will elaborate on his methodology in addressing the Orientalist views and his specific counterarguments.

- **Analytical and Critical Reading of Orientalist Sources:**

Dr. Mohar Ali approaches the works of the Orientalists with a critical eye. Rather than simply dismissing their views, he carefully dissects their arguments to understand the underlying assumptions and biases. His methodology involves a thorough examination of the sources used by Orientalists and the conclusions they draw. For example, in the case of William Muir's portrayal of the Holy Prophet PBUH and his family, Dr. Mohar Ali does not only reject Muir's conclusion that the Prophet PBUH has a humble background; he carefully analyzes the textual sources and historical context to demonstrate that Muir's conclusions are based on selective readings, omissions, and a lack of understanding of the Arab cultural and social context.

- **Use of Historical Context and Islamic Sources:**

One of the core strengths of Dr. Mohar Ali's methodology is his reliance on Islamic sources primarily hadiths, classical Islamic historiography, and the Qur'an to refute Orientalist claims. For example, in addressing the claim that the Prophet Muhammad PBUH came from an unimportant family, Dr. Mohar Ali uses the Prophet's own statement recorded in authentic sources to demonstrate that his lineage was highly esteemed. He quotes the Prophet's own words to the effect that he was from the highly noble family which was from the best clans as a direct rebuttal to Orientalist arguments that his family was insignificant.

- **Ethical and Balanced Tone:**

Dr. Mohar Ali's work is characterized by an ethical commitment to fairness and scholarly restraint. While he critiques the Orientalist views, he does so without

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<sup>31</sup> Mohar Ali, *Sirat al-Nabi and the Orientalists*, Vol. 1B, pp. 725-726.

resorting to emotional language or polemic. His tone is one of reasoned, evidence-based argumentation, always striving for objectivity. This distinguishes his work from many other critiques of Orientalism that may take a more confrontational stance. His emphasis on fairness is apparent in his careful presentation of both the Orientalists' arguments and the counter-arguments he provides. He addresses the weaknesses in Orientalist methodologies, but without undermining the academic value of their contributions.

- **Logical and Rational Arguments:**

Dr. Mohar Ali's refutations are grounded in logical reasoning and rational thought. In the case of the epilepsy allegation, he not only critiques the Orientalists' selective reading of sources but also provides logical reasoning against the claims. He emphasizes that the physical and mental condition attributed to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH by Orientalists is inconsistent with the detailed descriptions of his health and actions recorded by contemporary sources. Furthermore, he relies on the absence of any credible evidence to support the claim, thus reinforcing his rational critique.

- **Contextualization of the Prophet's Actions:**

Dr. Mohar Ali is highly effective in contextualizing the actions of Prophet Muhammad PBUH within their historical, social, and political environment. He does not simply refute Orientalist claims; he also provides a more nuanced interpretation of the events and actions described. For instance, in addressing the Holy Prophet's PBUH arbitration in placement of Hajr-e-Aswad, Dr. Mohar Ali shows how this act was a demonstration of wisdom and foresight that averted potential violence among the Quraysh tribes. He counters the Orientalist suggestion that this act was part of the Prophet's participation in idol worship by explaining that the Ka'ba, although housing idols at the time, was fundamentally viewed by the Arabs as the house of God. Therefore, the Prophet's involvement in its restoration was not a compromise with idolatry, but a peaceful resolution to a critical conflict.

### **Conclusion**

Dr. Muhammad Mohar Ali has countered the rigorous intellectual challenges faced by Muslims against the critiques of Orientalists regarding the authenticity of the life-history of the Holy Prophet PBUH and Islam in general as an established historical narrative. The systematic approach of Dr. Mohar Ali blends the critique of the way impressions of Islamic traditions pertaining to characters and personality of Muhammad were formed through the works of some notable Orientalists, with the critique of these misrepresentations themselves by proving more veracity and integrity of. Driven by a desire to prove the Orientalists wrong, Dr. Mohar Ali not only examines this new literature, but he also pursues an in-depth analysis of the theories that Orientalists have propagated based on his family background, health, marriage, and the authenticity of the Qur'an, and he methodically debunks the claims

that the Prophet suffers from epilepsy, has a financial motive for marrying, or the Qur'an borrows from Jewish and Christian traditions. Using Islamic sources and history, although not naive, he goes beyond the ideological predilections of the orientalists to give a logical scheme which, in what can be called a sociological picture of the life of the Prophet, sketches out a supporting relationship between the head of state and the people in a low voice, showing that world history will benefit from a unique revelation of ethics and sound thought. Dr. Mohar Ali remains, therefore, a creative and important aspect of a burgeoning Islamic historiographical tradition that engages critically with the Orientalist tradition itself.

- ❖ Orientalists like D.S. Margoliouth, William Muir, and W. Montgomery Watt suggested that Holy Prophet PBUH hailed from a lowly irrelevant tribe, which they alleged was one of the main reasons for the Makkans' hostility against him. This is countered by Dr. Mohar Ali that the Holy Prophet PBUH did clearly state his noble lineage and did uphold his family on high status, opposing the views represented by the Orientalists.
- ❖ Opponents, especially Muir, Margoliouth, and their ilk, proposed that the Prophet was afflicted with epilepsy, directly conflating his religious experiences with a physical ailment. The truth to the contrary is more complex, Dr. Mohar Ali says, who adamantly rebuts this notion with historical and medical proof that the Prophet stayed mentally and physically strong, dismissing any association between epilepsy and the revelation process.
- ❖ The other theorist explained by the Orientalists is that the Qur'an is somehow infected by the Jewish and the Christian and the Prophet Muhammad PBUH taking from these abovementioned traditions. In contrast to this theory, Dr. Mohar Ali highlights the Qur'an within the field of comparative religions as a uniquely singular divine document that neither plagiarizes from nor is effected by the aforementioned scriptures, citing various references of the Qur'an itself that support this position.
- ❖ Some Orientalists especially Margoliouth has to say that the Prophet Muhammad PBUH married with Khadijah R.A for the sake of wealth. In response, Dr. Mohar Ali dismisses this assertion, arguing that the relationship between the prophetic couple was built upon respect and admiration for one another, not on financial incentive.
- ❖ Dr. Mohar Ali also disproves the Orientalist theory of the "Satanic Verses". He claims that Qur'an is protected from the outside and that the Satanic Verses is a myth and contradicts the nature of Wahy mentioned in Qur'an.
- ❖ Orientalists have wrongly interpreted the travel of the Prophet towards Syria and beyond that made him a teacher of faith. Dr Mohar Ali rebuts these theories saying that the trade journeys of the Prophet were not unusual for the time, in-

settings meant neither as theological journeys nor intended for bringing forth any notable religious or philosophical interpretation that would guide the basis of his prophethood.

- ❖ Dr. Mohar Ali has essential refutations of the Orientalist views through the understanding of the Islamic sources and contextual studying the biography and mission of the Holy Prophet PBUH. He shows that many of the criticisms originating from Orientalists are borne of ideological biases, neither historical nor textual evidence supporting their claims.