

***The Preservation of the Holy Qur'an as
a Source of Seerah:
A Critical Analysis of Robert Spencer's
Views on the Holy Qur'an***

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Abstarct

The holy Qur'an is the most authentic source of Seerah (the prophetic biography). It has been thoroughly preserved in different historical eras. Notwithstanding, the Orientalists have relentlessly endeavored to engender doubts in the minds of the believers regarding the historical preservation of the Holy Qur'an.

Robert Spencer is also included in the long of such critics of the Holy Qur'an. He is an American author. He is quite famous for his criticism of Islam and the prophet of Islam. He has published twelve books so far. He is a member of Melkite Greek Catholic Church. He maintains the Holy Qur'an is a much belated invention and as such offers no significant information about Muhammad's (SAW) life.

The following research paper is an attempt to prove three important points: the holy Qur'an was thoroughly preserved in different periods of Islamic history, it sheds abundant light on the major events in the life of the prophet (SAW) and several biographers have drawn on the holy Qur'an as source of seerah.

Key Words: *Qur'an, Scribe, Mashaf, prophetic biography, preservation, Huffaz, Manuscript.*

Some Orientalists have relentlessly tried to create doubts in the minds of the believers about the primary sources of their religion. In this connection, they have not spared the holy Qur'an. Noldeke, for instance, does not believe in Muhammad's (SAW) revelation as genuine Divine inspiration, he rather attributes it to the 'uncontrollable excitement' of a visionary¹.

William St. Clair Tisdall considers the holy Qur'an as derived from Jewish sources.² Richard Bell observes that the holy Qur'an, in its style, is influenced by Judaism, Christianity

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and Zoroastrianism.³ To sow suspicions in the minds of the believers about the holy Qur'an, Arthur Jeffery remarks that the holy Qur'an did not exist in an arranged and edited book form, when the prophet (SAW) died⁴.

Robert Spencer persistently questions the historicity of Muhammad (SAW). To substantiate his claim he questions the authenticity of Islamic Sources. As he asserts:

*"A thorough review of the historical records provides startling indications that much, if not all, of what we know about Muhammad is legend, not historical fact."*⁵

With a view to making the holy Qur'an appear unreliable source of Muhammad's (SAW) biography, he asserts:

"A careful investigation similarly suggests that the Qur'an is not a collection of what Muhammad presented as revelations from the one true God..."⁶ To buttress his argument, he quotes John Wansbrough, "who doubted the historical value of the early Islamic texts". Wansbrough claims that "the Qur'an was developed primarily to establish Islam's origins in Arabia and that the Hadith were fabricated in order to give the Arabian Empire a distinctive religion so as to foster its stability and unity."⁷

Spencer avers that the holy Qur'an provides but little information about Muhammad (SAW). He maintains:

"One may assume that the first and foremost source for information about Muhammad's life is the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam. Yet that book actually reveals little about the life of Islam's central figure. In it, Allah frequently addresses his prophet and tells him what to say to the believers and unbelievers. Commentators and readers generally assume that Muhammad is the one addressed in these cases, but that—like so much else in this field—is not certain."⁸

Furthermore, Spencer refuses to acquiesce in Muslims' traditional account of the holy Qur'an's compilation. He maintains;

"What's more, Muslims believe that the Qur'an's text as it stands today is the same as it was when the caliph Uthman compiled and published the standard canonical text. Nothing has been changed, nothing has been added, and nothing has been lost."⁹

Disagreeing with this assertion, Spencer writes:

“This claim is a commonplace of Muslim apologetic literature. Yet today's Qur'ans are based on a text that can be traced back to medieval Islamic tradition but no further.”¹⁰

He goes further adding that author of Qur'an is not Muhammad (SAW) alone; there were other contributors as well. In his words:

“But an examination of the records—including early Islamic tradition itself—indicates that the canonical text of the Qur'an cannot be attributed to Muhammad alone.”¹¹

The following discussion revolves around three major points: the holy Qur'an was thoroughly preserved in different historical periods, the holy Qur'an affords sufficient information about the life of Muhammad (SAW) and numerous biographers have drawn upon the holy Qur'an a rich reservoir of information about the life of the Muhammad (SAW).

There are innumerable religions in the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism etc. Each of these religions claims authenticity for its scriptures. As a matter of fact the authenticity of a creed hinges on its origin and source being authentically preserved. The higher is the level of preservation, the greater the authenticity is.

The holy Qur'an is the most reliable source of the prophetic biography; however, Robert Spencer casts doubts on its authenticity and suggests that it was invented much later. The following passages revolve around two important facts: Firstly, the holy Quran was preserved with utmost care; secondly, the holy Qur'an has been successfully employed as a source of prophetic biographies. There are two rational criteria for the preservation of scriptures: memorization and written document. The holy Qur'an is a unique exception among all religious scriptures in terms of being preserved by both modes of historical preservation. Michael Swettler writes-

“In ancient times, when writing was scarcely used, memory and oral transmission was exercised and strengthened to a degree now almost unknown¹²”

The prophet (SAW) was born in this society. He began to receive revelation at the age of forty and it took about twenty three years to reach the last verse of the holy Qur'an. The very

definition of the holy given by religious scholars reflects the impeccable preservation of the holy Quran. The definitions reads:

“The Quran is the Book revealed to the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (SAW) as written in the masahif and transmitted to us from him through an authentic continuous narration (tawatur) without doubt.”¹³

According to this definition, the prophet (SAW) memorized the holy Qur'an and transmitted it to his companions. The holy prophet (SAW) used to be very anxious about each verse of the revelation and therefore he used to be in a great hurry to memorize it. As the holy Quran portrays his anxiety in the following verses:

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ ۚ لَا تُحْرِكُ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ

“Move not thy tongue concerning the (Qur'an) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it and promulgate it.”¹⁴

On the one hand, the verses show his unease, and on the other hand, the Divine responsibility to preserve the holy Qur'an. To fulfill the Divine pledge of preservation of the holy Qur'an, Angel Gabriel used to recite the whole Qur'an for the prophet (SAW) each year.

Imam Bukhari narrates:

“The prophet (SAW) was the most generous person and he used to become even more generous in the month of Ramadan because Gabriel used to meet him every night of the month of Ramadan till it was over. Allah's messenger (SAW) used to recite the Qur'an for him. When Gabriel met him, he used to become more generous than the fast wind in doing good.”¹⁵

Gabriel used to repeat the recitation of the Qur'an with the prophet (SAW) once a year, but he repeated it twice with him in the year he (prophet (SAW)) passed away.¹⁶

The prophet (SAW) used to stay up late at night and recite the holy Qur'an from memory. Other religious scriptures such as Torah and Bible etc. got vanished but the holy Qur'an was perfectly preserved and there remained no menace of its being lost.¹⁷

The prophet (SAW) consistently encouraged his companion to learn the holy Qur'an and teach it. Addressing his companions, the prophet (SAW) said:

*"The most superior among you (Muslims) are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it"*¹⁸

The companions of the prophet (SAW) also used to recite the holy Qur'an from memory. Abu Bakar, the first male Muslim, used to recite the holy Qur'an publically in front of Ka'aba.¹⁹

The prophet (SAW) also asked his companions to recite the holy Qur'an for him: Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud narrates:

"Allah's apostle said to me, "recite of the Qur'an to me". I asked should I recite it to you although it had been revealed to you. He said: "I like to hear it from others." So I recited Sura al-Nisa till I reached

"فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَى هَؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا"

*"how will it be when we bring witness from each nation and We bring you (O Muhammad) as a witness against these people" then he said: "stop!" behold his eyes were then shedding tears.*²⁰

The Arabs enjoyed a distinguished position among the people for their wonderful memory. After having wandered in the wilderness of ignorance, they obtained the holy Qura'n and looked upon it as the most precious asset of their life.²¹ Therefore, in no time a large number of companions eagerly memorized the holy Qur'an. They include: Abu Bakar, Umar, Usman, Ali, Talha, Sa'ad, Abdullah Ibn Mas'ood, Huzaiifa bin Yaman, Salim Maula Abi Huzaiifa, Abu Hurairah, Ibn Umar, Abdullah ibn Umar, Abdullah Ibn Abbas, Amar Ibn Aas, Mua'wiya, Abdullah ibn Zubair, Abdullah ibn Sa'ib, Aysha, Hafsa, Ummi Salama, Ummi Waraqa, Ubai Ibn Ka'ab, Mu'az Ibn Jabal, Abu Halima Ibn Mu'az, Zaid Ibn Sabith, Abu Darda, Majma Ibn Jaria, Maslam bin Mkhallad, Ans Ibn Malik, Aqba ibn Amir, Tamim Darmi, Abu Musa Ash'ari, Abu Zaid (RA).²² These are the names of those companions who had memorized the whole text of the holy Qur'an otherwise there were hundreds of such companions who had consigned parts of the holy Qur'an to the memory. In addition, the prophet (SAW) , on various occasions, deputed seventy teachers of Qur'an to certain tribes and assigned them the task of teaching the

Qur'an. We know that seventy Hufaz (memorizers of Qur'an) were martyred during the battle of Be'ri Ma'una. Approximately the same number of Hufaz companions lost their lives in the battle of Yamama.²³ In a tradition, it is reported that seventy companions were martyred.²⁴

In short, in the beginning of Islam memory was used as the major mode of preservation of the holy Qur'an. In view of the resources available then, it was the most reliable means of preserving the sacred book. As there were a limited number of the literate people and printing machines were unavailable, memory was the most ideal tool for preserving the holy Qur'an. Allah had bestowed wonderful gift of memory on them and very ordinary rustic people are known to have memorized thousands of poetic verses and long genealogies of their horses.²⁵

To appreciate the rapid propagation of the holy Qur'an through this mode, it seems pertinent to narrate a story of young companion as narrated in Sahih Bukhari. Amar Ibn slama was a young companion of the Prophet (SAW) and his house was located at the bank of a spring where people used to take rest and fetch water. He was just seven years of age but by hearing the people recite the verses of the holy Qur'an, he memorized a considerable part of the holy Qur'an.²⁶

After the departure of the prophet (SAW), his companions followed in his footsteps and encouraged memorization of the holy Qur'an. "Over the centuries of the Islamic era, there have arisen throughout the various regions of the Islamic world literally thousands of schools devoted especially to the teaching of the Qur'an to the children for the purpose of memorization. These are called, in Arabic, *Katatib* (singular : *Kuttab*). It is said that the caliph Umar(634-44) first ordered the construction of these schools in the age of the great expansion.²⁷ It goes without saying that the holy Qura'n is memorized by millions of people. No book, be it religious or secular, has ever been memorized by such a great number of people.

In Kenneth Cragg's view, "The phenomenon of Quranic recital means that the text has traversed the centuries in an

unbroken living sequence of devotion. It cannot, therefore, be handled as a an antiquarian thing, nor as a historical document out of a distant past. The fact of hifz (Quranic memorization) has made the Qura'n a present possession through all the lapse of Muslim time and given it currency in every generation never allowing its relegation to a bare authority for reference alone”²⁸

Although the memorization was the major mode for the preservation of the holy Qur'an, the prophet (SAW) was also very heedful about the preservation of the holy Qur'an in the written form. Zaid Ibn sabit narrates that he used to write down the revelation for the prophet (SAW). After the writing was over, the prophet (SAW) would ask me to read and he would correct wherever I had committed a mistake.²⁹

The prophet (SAW) was unlettered; therefore, he had appointed several companions to write down the revelation for him. It means that the writing of the sacred book was not the responsibility of Zaid Ibn Sabit alone. The number of the official scribes was forty.³⁰ But the prominent ones include the following companions: Abu Bakar, Umar, Usman, Ali, Ubai IbnKa'ab, Abdullah Ibn Ibi Sarh, Zubair Ibn al-Awam, Khalid bin Sa'id bin Al-Aas, Hanzala ibn Rab'i, Ma'qib ibn Ibi Fatimah, Abdullah Ibn Arqam al-Zuhri, Shurahbil bin Hasana, Abdullah ibn Rawaha,³¹ Amir bin Fahmira, Amr Ibn Aas, Sabith bin Qais bin Shamma, Mugheera bin Shu'aba, Khalid bin Walid, Mu'awiya bin Sufyan, and Zaid bin Sabith (RA).³² The whole Qur'an existed in its complete form the during the life of the prophet (SAW). There several ahadith which show that whenever a new revelation came to the prophet (SAW) he would immediately call one of the above scribes to write it down.

It is narrated:

“ Some people visited Zaid Ibn Sabith and asked him to tell them some stories about the messenger of Allah, he said : “ I was his neighbor, when the inspiration descended on him he sent for me and I went to him and wrote down for him.”³³

Al-Bara narrates: “ there was revealed:

لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً
وَكُلًّا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَى وَفَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

“Not equal are those believers who sit (home) and those who strive and fight in the cause of Allah...” the prophet (SAW) said: “call Zaid for me and let him bring the board, ink pot and scapula bone.” Then the prophet (SAW) asked him: “write ‘not equal are those believers’....”³⁴ Zaid is also reported to have said: “We used to compile the holy Qur’an from small scraps in the presence of the prophet (SAW).”³⁵

“In Madinah, the prophet (SAW) had forty eight scribes who used to write for him.”³⁶ Abdullah ibn Umar reports:

“the Messenger of Allah said: don’t take the Qur’an on a journey with you, for I am afraid lest it should fall into the hands of the enemy.”³⁷

During his last pilgrimage, the messenger of Allah said:

“ I have left with you something which if you hold fast to it you will never fall into error—a plain indication, the Book of God (Qur’an) and the practice of his prophet(SAW).”³⁸

The prophet (SAW) had made his scribes write the whole Qur’an during his lifetime but it did not exist in a book form. It was written on different things. Some of his companions had also written various parts of the holy Qur’an which they used to consult in order to refresh their memory. Umar’s brother in law and his sister had embraced Islam before Umar. Hearing that Sa’eed Bin Zaid and Fatimah had embraced Islam, Umar entered their home in great fury. They were reciting a sahifa (a booklet) which contained the verse of surah Taha. And Khabab bin Arat was teaching them.³⁹ Besides, there are many reports which show that the companions had their personal copies of the holy Qur’an, some complete and some incomplete. For instance, in Sahih Bukhari Ibn Umar reports: the prophet (SAW) forbade carrying the holy Qur’an to the territory of the enemy.⁴⁰ In Mu’ajam al-Tibrani it is reported that the prophet (SAW) said: he who recites the verse of the holy Qur’an in the Mushaf he will get the reward of two thousand virtues whereas he who recites from memory he will

get the reward of one thousand virtues.⁴¹ From these two traditions we can conclude that the holy Qur'an existed in the written form during the life of the prophet (SAW).

The task of binding the holy Qur'an in the form of book was carried out by Abu Bakar. A large number of huffaz (the memorizers of the Qur'an) died in the battle of Yamama (633 CE). The event turned the attention of the companions towards collecting the scattered parts of the holy Qur'an. They feared that unless an official mushaf of the holy Qur'an were prepared, a significant portion of the Divine revelation might be lost.

Zaid Ibn Sabith Al-Ansari says: "Abu Bakar sent for me after the casualties among the warriors (of the battle) of Yamama (in which a large number of the memorizers of the holy Qur'an were martyred). Umar was present on the occasion. Abu Bakar said, "Umar has come to me and said that people have suffered heavy casualties on the day of Yamama. And I am afraid that there will be some casualties of Qurra (expert memorizers of the holy Qur'an) at other places, whereby a large part of the Qur'an may be lost unless you collect it (in one manuscript or book). So Abu Bakar said to me: "you are a wise young man and we do not suspect you (of telling lies or of forgetfulness) and you used to write the revelation for the Messenger of Allah. Therefore, look for the Qur'an and collect it in one manuscript. So I started locating the Qur'anic material and collecting it from parchments, scapula, leafstalks of date palms and from the memories of men (who knew it by heart).⁴²

Under the instruction of Abu Bakar, a committee was constituted to undertake the task of collecting the verses from various scattered sources to be reduced to one mushaf (book). Zaid Ibn Sabith was appointed as the head of the committee as he was not only the official scribe of the prophet (SAW) but also an expert memorizer of the holy Qur'an. The member of the committee laid down stringent criteria for accepting written material. The following criteria were set:

1. The material must have been written down in the presence of the prophet (SAW). Anything written down with the help of memory after the apostle of Allah was not be incorporated in manuscript.⁴³

2. The material was to be corroborated by two trustworthy witnesses, testifying to the fact that they themselves had heard the concerned verses from the apostle of Allah.⁴⁴

The manuscript thus prepared remained with Abu Bakar, then with Umar and from Umar it came into the possession of his daughter, namely Hafsa, the wife of the prophet (SAW).⁴⁵

In the reign of caliph Usman , Islam spread out of its birthplace and entered great empires of Rome and Iran. In the newly conquered regions, people used to learn the holy Qur'an from the companions of the prophet (SAW). Although the holy Qur'an is revealed in the Quraishi dialect of the Arabic language, yet to facilitate the speakers of other dialects of the same language, the prophet (SAW) permitted the various dialectical recitations. Dispute arose when some people began to emphasize their dialect as the standard one for the recitation of the holy Qur'an. During the battles Armenia and Azerbaijan, Huzaifa bin Aliman saw people debating the accuracy of their dialect and rejecting others' dialectical recitation. He straightaway returned from the battle field and warned the pious caliph of the alarming situation. He advised the caliph to resolve the issue before the people fell into conflicts regarding the scripture like the Jews and the Christians. Huzaifa informed the caliph that Syrian were following the dialectical recitation of Ubai Ibn Ka'ab which the Iraqis had never heard and the Iraqis followed the dialectical recitation of Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud which the Syrian had never heard.⁴⁶

The situation went from bad to worse which alarmed Usman who called an emergency meeting of the learned companions and discussed the matter. Usman informed them that some people considered their dialect as superior to the other dialects which might lead to blaming one another as heretic. He finally delivered a sermon in which he intimated the people to unanimously nip the evil in the bud before it engendered serious differences among Muslims.⁴⁷ With the purpose of establishing unity among Muslims, Usman sent for the Msahif (Books) which were in Hafsa's possession. The masahif were brought and a committee of learned companions was constituted for the

purpose of copying the text from those masahif. The committee consisted of Zaid bin Sabith, Abdullah Ibn Zubair, Sa'id Ibn al-Aas, and Abdu-ur-Rahman bin Hashim. The fundamental job was done by the committee but, according a tradition reported by Ibn Abi Da'wud, the number of those who helped in this task had reached twelve. They included Ubai Ibn Ka'ab, Kasir Ibn Aflah, Malik bin Abi Amir, Anas ibn Malik, and Abdullah ibn Abbas.⁴⁸ The committee prepared an official copy in the Quraishi dialect, the original dialect in which the holy Qur'an was revealed and then was memorized by the companions.

To prevent any alteration of the original revelation, again very stringent criteria were laid down by the committee. Firstly, the earlier original mushaf prepared by Abu Bakr was to be used as the principal source for the new one. Secondly, any doubt regarding a verse or verses was to be dispelled by summoning witnesses who themselves had heard the verse from the prophet (SAW).⁴⁹ Thirdly, Usman himself was to supervise the entire work of the appointed committee.⁵⁰

After the completion of the Mushaf, five copies of the same were prepared. But according to Abu Hathim Sajistani seven copies were made and dispatched to the major cities such as Makkah, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Basra, and Kufa etc. One was preserved in Madinah.⁵¹

As for the rest of the old copies were concerned, they were burnt at the behest of the caliph. This act of Usman, though apparently shocking, was unanimously endorsed and commended by the companions as it aimed at the unity and harmony of the Muslim community. Ali is reported to have said: "say nothing except good about Usman, for what he has done about the masahif was done in consultation with us".⁵² He commended Usman's act by saying,

*"if I were in command in place of Usman, I would have done the same."*⁵³

Another revered companion, namely Mus'ab ibn Sa'd Ibn Waqas, is reported to have said: "I saw the people assembled in a large number at Usman's burning of the prescribed copies of the Qur'an, and they were all pleased with his action; not a single person spoke against him."⁵⁴ Similarly, Zaid ibn Sabith said:

“I saw the companions of Muhammad (SAW) (going about) saying, ‘ By Allah, Usman had done well! Allah, Usman had done well!’”⁵⁵

The copies prepared by Usman are extant today; one of them is in Tashkant (a city in Uzbekistan) and a second in Istanbul (a city in Turkey). As mentioned above that copies made by Usman were sent to the major cities and one of them was sent to Madinah. The copy sent to Madinah was reportedly taken to Istanbul by the Turkish authorities and during World War I, the same copy came to Berlin. It is pertinent to quote the following clause of the Treaty of Versailles, the treaty which concluded World War I:

“Article 246: Within six months from the coming into force of the present Treaty, Germany will restore to His Majesty, King of Hedjaz, and the original Koran of Caliph Usman, which was removed from Medina by the Turkish authorities and is stated to have been presented to the ex-Emperor William II.”⁵⁶

As for as the second manuscript is concerned, it is most probably the master one of which the other copies were made during the reign of caliph Usman.⁵⁷ In 1485, it came to Samarkand and remained there till 1868. Then the Russians took it to St. Petersburg in 1869. A Russian orientalist carefully scrutinized it and gave a comprehensive description of its various features. According to him, many of its pages were damaged and some pages were missing. In 1905, a facsimile, approximately fifty copies, were produced by S. Pisareff. These copies were dispatched to eminent personalities such as the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid, the Amir of Bukhara, The Shah of Iran and other dignitaries of Afghanistan and Fas. One copy of it is now available in the Columbia University Library, USA.⁵⁸

The text and the arrangement of these two copies of the holy Qur'an are available to us and people Robert Spencer can compare them with any other copy of the holy Qur'an, from any place or period of time. It can be said with absolute certainty that they would be found identical.⁵⁹

In the light of the evidences furnished above, it can be proclaimed with perfect certainty and strong conviction that the prophet (SAW) memorized the whole Qur'an, made his scribes

write it down and many of his companions both memorized it and made private copies for recitation. The holy Qur'an preserved so scrupulously was thus bequeathed to one generation after another. This great book contains not an iota of corruption, interpolation or deletion. William Muir writes:

“there is otherwise every scrutiny, internal and external, that we possess the text which Muhammad himself gave forth and used.”⁶⁰

He maintains, “there is probably no other book in the world which has which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text.”⁶¹ It is, in fact, the fulfillment of the Divine responsibility of its protection. Allah says, “We have, without doubt, sent down the message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)”⁶²

However, in the contemporary world some Orientalists studied Islam and the life of the prophet of Islam with the deliberate intention to sow doubts and suspicions in the minds of Muslims. Robert Spencer has also tried to create doubts in the minds of the readers about the authenticity of those Islamic sources which have been used for writing seerah (the prophetic biography). This vile strategy on the part of some Western scholars has turned Muslims scholars more cautious and vigilant in their use of various sources. They have recommended drawing upon the absolutely authentic sources in order to eradicate the foundations of western objections and criticism which are generally based on material derived from unreliable sources.

As there is highly unreliable and exaggerated stuff in some prophetic biographies, they need to be sifted in light of definitive and authentic sources such as the holy Qur'an and sahih ahadith (sound traditions) This scholarly recommendation gave impetus to the intellectual trend of writing the prophetic biography in light of sahih ahadith (sound traditions) or exclusively in the light of the holy Qur'an. According to Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi, the prophetic biographers considered it supremely important to cast a critical look at the sources for composing prophetic biography so that the unreliable information might be excluded from the reliable information. The authenticity of the sources has always been an important

issue for the biographers but it has acquired more serious attention after expression of doubts regarding the sources of prophet biographies from the Western Orientalists' academic circles.⁶³ He adds that the most important source of the prophetic biography is the holy Quran which describes the life of the prophet (SAW) either explicitly or implicitly. His migration, ascension, his answers to the critics of Islam, his refuge in a cave, the battles of Badr, Uhud, Khandaq, Quraizah, Tabuk etc are the major events in his life and none has been left undescribed.⁶⁴

The authenticity of the holy Qur'an is established beyond a shadow of doubt. The holy Qur'an, besides other things, describes the various dimensions and aspects of the life of Muhammad (SAW), therefore, of all the sources of prophetic biography, the holy Qur'an is the most trustworthy one. All writers of prophetic biography have unanimously placed the holy Qur'an on the highest pedestal of authenticity as a source of seerah.⁶⁵

The holy Qur'an sheds abundant light on the life of Muhammad (SAW). It describes his orphanage, the purity of his life before prophet-hood, the beginning of revelation, the gap in revelation, the finality of his prophet-hood, the animosity and antagonistic attitude of the opponents, his preaching methodology, his battles with the transgressors, his relations with the Jews, Christians and polytheists, his treatment of the hypocrites, his dealing with his companions, his perseverance and steadfastness in the religious struggle, his patience and his gratitude.⁶⁶

The scope of the current study does not include an exhaustive treatment of the biographies written in the light of the holy Qur'an; it merely aims to refer to some biographies which have drawn on the holy Qur'an as a source. Robert Spencer is bent on proving that the prophet (SAW) was not a historical figure; he was rather a mythical or a fictional character. To prove the historicity of Muhammad (SAW), we proved the authenticity of the holy Qur'an. Now we proceed to give the list of some prophetic biographies written exclusively in the light of the most reliable source, namely the holy Qur'an.

The actual list of such biographies is too long, therefore, only a few names selected for brevity's sake. They are as follows:

1. Seera al-Rasool Minal al-Qur'an by Sayyid Muhammad Rizwanullah.
2. Rasoolullah fi al-Qur'an al-Karim by Hasan Kamil al-Maltawi
3. Seerah al-Rasool –Su'war Muqtabisa min al-Qur'an al-Karim wa Tahlilat wa Dirasat al-Qur'aniyya by Muhammad Izzat Daruza
4. Shakhsiyya al-Rasool wa Da'watuhu fil Qur'an by Muhmmad Ali al-Hashmi
5. Dalatul al-Qur'an al-Mubin ala anna Nabiyya Afzalul Aalamin by Abdullah bin Sadiq al-Ghimari
6. Hayat-e-Rasool Umi by Khalid Mas'ud.
7. Tizkar-e-Nabi by Gulzar Ahmad
8. Jamal-e-Mustafa by Abdul Aziz Urf
9. Hayat-e-Muhammadi Qur'an ki Roshni Mey by Syiad Abul Khair Kashfi
10. Maqam-e- Muhammad Qur'an Ki Roshni Mey by Syiad Abul Khair Kashfi
11. Akhlaq-e-Qur'an Qur'an Ki Roshni Mey by Syiad Abul Khair Kashfi
12. Seerat-e-Rasool Qur'an kay Ayena Mey by Abdul Ghafoor Rashid

Doctor S.M Zaman has done brief but comprehensive research work on the above mentioned books which can be studied in his book Naqoosh-e-Seerat. He has concluded that there are multitudes of verses in the holy Qur'an which shed ample light on the different aspects of the life of Muhammad (SAW). He maintains that the holy Qur'an is the most reliable source for writing prophetic biography.⁶⁷

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