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Critically Analysing the aspects of Jahilliya, Revelation of The Quran and Satanic Verses from the Biographical account of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ by Karen Armstrong

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Abstract: The concept of Orientalism has often been connected with severe notions like Freudianism, Utopianism, Imperialism, Racism, and Anti-Islamic narratives. The perspective of Islamophobia was prevalent so much that numerous examples of Prophet Muhammad's (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) biographies which are polemical in character were ascertained in the modern time. The approach against Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) developed by the west did not in a sense represented an effective theoretical foundation. However, one cannot ignore the fact that certain Orientalists have also vouchsafed contributions of substantial character regarding a biographical account of Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) in particular Islamic Studies as a subject in general. Such kind of approach and attitude is clearly visible and explicitly manifested in the efforts of various Orientalists of Modish era. While analyzing their approach one can easily discern the adoption of the 'dialogue method' in their writings as they sought to accord the substantial consummations. In the modern west the trend is to accentuate on Prophet Muhammad's (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) historical account by abstaining from accounts of apocryphal nature and also at the same time keep the traditional outlook of negative intact. Therefore, in this exposition, the evaluation of the paramount notions like Jahilliya Arabia, Revelation of the Quran and Satanic Verses provided by the distinguished Orientalist writer of contemporary times namely Karen Armstrong in her biographical accounts of Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) is provided.

Keywords: Prophet Muhammad, Orientalism, Biography, Islamic Studies, Religion

Introduction: Karen Armstrong is the prominent writer of various works on religion and a noteworthy biographer of Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) in the contemporary times. She turned into a liberal after being exposed to a life as Roman Catholic nun. While serving in the religious community for seven long years she had various disastrous and cataclysmic experiences because of catholic absolutism, she recaptured the essence of another universe of realization as an after-effect of being so much pulverized and damaged.

Karen is eminent for her scholastic works in the discipline of comparative religions¹. Moreover, she has written personal life accounts of various prominent religious personalities which also include two important biographies of Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) namely ‘*Muhammad: A biography of the Prophet*’ and ‘*Muhammad: A prophet of our times*’.

Conceived in Worcestershire, England,² she was sent to Holy child Jesus convent, subsequently, she frequented St. Anne’s college, Oxford.³ With the termination of her graduation, she hankered for thesis writing on the poet Tennyson, however, her exposition was discarded.⁴ Willingly she commenced her professional career as an English instructor at James Allen girl’s school, Dulwich, and advanced her way there as the chief authority in the division of English. She wrote her appealing autobiography ‘*Through the narrow gate*’ which showed up in 1981 and accorded her solace and succour after prolonged struggle with dismay and desolation. In the meantime, she got the noble opportunity of working as television broadcaster and made a documentary on St. Paul for ‘Channel Four’. Along the way, she developed an interest in the comparative analysis and study of different religions which is explicitly reflected in her works.⁵ She is apt and dexterous in her field of writing and has the behemothic amount of books to her credit.

Karen Armstrong endeavours to assay the biased version of the analyses of Islam by the west for which she adopts various appropriate techniques and adroit means to prove the validity of her claims. Her exposition puts forth pieces of evidence from the historical account of facts and events; moreover, she at times bolsters her claim by using the comparative analyses of religions.⁶

During Louis’s tenure it was very enigmatic for the Christian west to live in absolute unison and harmony with other creeds which was very much contrary to the Muslim segment of the respective era. In fact she firmly believes that the instigation of the pungent history of the Muslim- Western affiliation was actually cause by the intrusion against Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) in Muslim hegemonized Spain.⁷ Karen accentuating the nub of the issue underscores that the deficit of cultural essentiality can cause copious antagonistic vibes illustrations of which are even explicit in the neoteric world in the form of belligerent contumacious religiosity.⁸ While bolstering her argument she wants us to reminisce about the cordovian martyrs⁹ whenever perplexed by the fury and animosity of the Muslims especially in those parts of the globe where western ethnicity endeavours to dominate the traditional culture and value.

Background information regarding Western perspective of Islam and the stature of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ : Deliberating on the inherited prejudice against Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) she believes that the real denunciation against Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) by Cordovian martyrs had been sub structured on predictive personal account. Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) was depicted as a person who practices deception under the supposed identity as a swindler and a

lascivious man who proselytized by availing his sword.¹⁰ During Middle Ages, some critics even accused Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) of according more authority to ignominious sections such as women and slaves.¹¹

Islam was considered heterodoxy, a neglected subsection of Christianity. Remnants of the antediluvian delusion have even made it to the modern era. The west has become naturally accustomed to such hallucinations albeit facts implicitly deject such myths about Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*). Furthermore, when the crusaders conquered the Jerusalem, they massacred Muslims in cold blood dubbed them as ‘filth’ and took it as their legal duty to cleanse the holy city from Muslims.¹²

The *Satanic Verses* of Salman Rushdie is in complete concurrence with the western extravagant and unrestrained fancies of Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) so much so that Muhammad’s (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) status in the west is no more than a fictional character with hardly any historical bases at all.¹³ She assorts Islam with Judaism and then divorces them both from Christianity keeping in view the inklings of heresy, underscoring that the notion of divine in Christianity is close to idolatry.

According to Karen the proper organic roots for the establishment of the fictional character of Muhammad, (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) was laid in the period of crusades which in due course of time got graphically manifested in the form of phobia. During crusades the Christians besides disseminating fantasies about Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) and Saracens also transfused myths about Jews and anti-Semitism soon became a deadly European epidemic which caused several crisis and illness in the western psyche on the other hand, there was no such hoax in the Muslim world.

In this caliginosity of ignorance and atmosphere of unfamiliarity the level of ignorance had sunk so much that Muslims were seen as the followers of heretical religion with Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) as their cardinal God thus leaving no difference between Muslims and pagans. It was very arduous for them to believe that the Muslim god ‘Allah’ is the same God worshipped by Jews and Christians.

Although the author also analyzes some of the rare protagonists and their constructive works as the inceptive phase in the west to unearth the truth and to subdue deeply rooted myths to pave its way.

With time decent observation of Islam was becoming conspicuous but it was not robust enough to break the shackles of hostility completely as no matter how genuinely they tried to be candid but the clandestine acrimony, antipathy, dyspathy, repellency, and rancour still lingered with them.¹⁴ Moreover the colonial spirit later inevitably affected their crude apperception of Islam.¹⁵

The dichotomy of Christianity into Catholic and Protestant led each to correlate and equate their adversary with Muslims however with dinky cognizance of the reality and rarely caring about verifiable documented truths.¹⁶ The principle cause for the Muslim sphere getting alienated was its continuing experience of disdain and antipathy for their religion including Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) which appears to be acutely ingrained in western civilization and that in turn, also affected their policies and protocols in the post-colonial era regarding the Muslim nation.

Deliberating on the advancement of contemporary radical sections in Islam which she believes is not simply after effects of the ingrained and chronicle abomination of the west but primarily because of the cultural disarray which is vividly perceived in the modern times because of the hegemony of western culture.¹⁷

Rather than observing Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) as antagonist to essential of religion and asperser of noble civilization. In fact, the desideratum is to see Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) as a man of much higher esteem and worth who was successful enough to restore society on the lines of amity, equity, empathy, magnanimity, philanthropy, benevolence and egalitarianism.

Actually, Karen brings into the frame events from Prophet Muhammad's (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) life in the second chapter 'Muhammad the Man of Allah' in which she portrays Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) in the backdrop of the inceptive phase of revelation.

Regarding the reaction of Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) to the archangel Gabriel she generally vouchsafes exaggerated account in both of her works regarding Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*). In this book the reason she gives for the inability of Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) to reply briskly to the initial call of Archangel was because he was not a *Kahin* (كاهن).

كاهن is derived from the active particle of كهن (kahana, a verb meaning 'to predict the future') from the root word ك ه ن.

Firstly, in most of the authentic works on *Sīrah*, there is no mention of this kind of the response given by Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*). Secondly, there was no need to specifically bring the word *Kahin* to depict the one who does not possess the ability to read while as its quite known fact from the reliable sources that many in Arabia knew reading but were not *Kahin*.¹⁸

His perception that he had turned out to be a body possessed by jinn was the real cause of him being dismayed, vividly seems the author's own opinion leading to

overemphasis and thus undue amplification of the situation along with an awry depiction of facts.¹⁹

She stresses some of the classical indispensable scholars in the field of *Sīrah* writing such as Muhammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yasār ibn Khiyār, Abū ‘Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Sa’d ibn Manī‘al-Baṣrī al-Hāshimī kātib al-Wāqidī, Abū Ja‘far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Abu ‘Abdullah Muhammad Ibn ‘Omar Ibn Waqid al-Aslami, she considers then paramount references in the field of Prophet Muhammad’s (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) *Sīrah*. Although she ardently claims to have availed them intermittently still she mostly uses secondary sources and chiefly relies on translation.²⁰

Accentuating the importance of the Quran as a source of *Sīrah* she says that Quran lucidly accords us the coetaneous exposition of the events related to Muhammad’s (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) life which is nonpareil in the chronicle of religions as it bolsters our vision of analyzing idiosyncratic problems he had to confront and how his discernment advanced to different levels of applicability and comprehensiveness.²¹ However, the west at a general level considers Quran quite enigmatic and intricate even for those who were reasonably affectionate to Islam. Compared to Christianity, Muslims like Jews have due consideration for the language of the Quran and as such Arabic is contemplated as a sacrosanct language.

Obviously, there comes impediments in translating languages, particularly when it comes to Arabic it appears original text in Arabic is hardly recognizable in any other language. It would not be absurd to say that there is something unique about the Arabic language which seems incommunicative in another argot, indubitable especially when deliberating on Quran which is drafted in an awfully complex, profound and connotative language. According to Karen “the first official compilation was made in about 650, some twenty years after Prophet Muhammad’s (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) death” which according to historically documented facts is not true.

Regarding the availability of information about Muhammad ﷺ (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) in contrast to Jesus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام she affirms that very minimal is known about Jesus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام further, the content of the gospels is to a high degree dissimilar to the classical account of Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) whereas the former was more concerned with the facts of the history and mostly centered around early churches instead of focusing on authentic events. Tangible words of Christ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام are rarely preserved and documented.

While seeming soberly thoughtful Karen believes that if we analyze Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) as we observe other prominent historical personalities, we would indubitably consider him as one of the outstanding figures the world has ever witnessed.

Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) even surpassed Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام in preaching the strict form of Monotheism and was highly successful in his mission in only twenty three year which is really a massive feat to his credit additionally to declare the testimony to only one God worth worship was not a bare apocryphal, superficial affirmation; it required a significant metamorphosis of one’s consciousness.

About knowledge of Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) regarding Jews and Christians, she points that it was very limited thus clandestinely implying that it would not have been possible for Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) to create a new religion by interfusing the teachings of Christianity and Judaism in sync.²²

Analyzing the *Jahilliya* Period: Life in the desert was usually precarious so only tribes could vouchsafe the healthy survival of the community. Thus, to kindle such communal outlook an ideology called *Muruwah* was evolved. *Muruwah* was related to the endurance of pain, patience in suffering, courage in war, dedication to take full revenge in case of wrong done, guarding weaker and confronting the stronger. Each tribe used to brag of the unique type of *Muruwah*, presumed to be bequeathed via blood.

The gap created because of the dearth of religion was fulfilled by this notion of *Muruwah*, which in a sense provided meaning to their feckless existence. Generosity was a cardinal virtue prevalent because of interdependence and dynamic scenarios, it in a way also promoted dispassion for material belongings

Vendetta was the only means by which a modicum of security in the society could have been preserved as there was no common Rule of Law. Even though overall unity in the society was compromised because of the Blood feud as the tribes seemed engaged in vicious cycle of hate, animosity and violence. Another means by which the balance of power was maintained was raid or *Ghazu* which was quite prevalent and a consistent occupation. There were many protagonist aspects in *Muruwah* which got incorporated as essential values in Islam.

She points that before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) the society was getting saturated with the sterile antediluvian religion and in the terminating phase of *Jahilliya* the society of Arabs was severely suffering from spiritual crisis and malaise. Furthermore, the perpetual cycle of vendettas and blood feud had completely torn the society leaving no scope for united Arab which was of no match to the other existing civilized societies.

Some of the western scholars who propounded that religion propagated by Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) is the religion meant for the desert dwellers but the new religion of the time was in the inception received by Mecans, completely engulfed in the ambiance of higher commerce and capitalism. Most of the great virtuosos in the religion had focused on the disparity amid wealthy and poor, issues of social justice and accordingly provided their unique and best solutions.²³

By the beginning of the 7th century, Arabs were getting cognizant of the fact that they lacked their own scripture and no Prophet had God destined for them moreover, many Arabs used to hold people of the scripture in high esteem, but wished to stay away from the religion conjoined with great powers or altered by its relations. Some Arabs retracted their steps to the pure pristine religion which belonged to Ibrahim عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام and were known as *Hanifiyyah* sect²⁴

According to the west, *Hanifiyyah* is a legend, depicting the spiritual urge that was a specific feature in the terminating phase of *Jahilliya* rather than a factual segment of history. However, Karen specifies that it must have some factual backdrop and even deliberates about some *hanifs* in a detailed manner²⁵

Examining Revelation and Quran in a Broader context: While Jesus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام was known for the healing capacity and his miraculous character was a prominent factor of his adulthood on the other hand Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) did not display such miracle but proclaimed that the divine word in the form of the Quran was an eternal miracle accorded by god to him.

Karen at one place says that there was minimal contact between Arabs residing in Hejaz and the Christian community, further the former knew nothing about the Christian faith, which seems a bit distant as areas that obviously were geographically bound together would naturally cause healthy interactions with other cultures and religions moreover she at another place herself mentions that even before Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) Arabs used to hold people of the scripture referring to Jews and Christians in high esteem.²⁶ And were annoyed with God for not bequeathing them any specific scripture additionally, during the life of Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) Arabs became more cognizant about the people of Scripture in one way or the other.²⁷

She also overstates when claiming that the Quranic comprehension of Christian faith is very narrow.²⁸ Undeniably it contains approximately more than fifty stories akin to the script of the bible. Out of the 114 chapters and 6236 verses of the Quran, the autonym of Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) can only be found at 4 places while the name of Jesus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام is mentioned at 25 places.²⁹ No woman is mentioned by her name in the Quran except the mother of Jesus Maryam or Mary عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام. Entire two *Suras* (Chapters) titled Family of Imran³⁰ and Maryam³¹ are devoted to the story of Maryam and events regarding her life, further Quran even refers to Jesus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام by the following incredible epithets such as: Word of God (*Kalamullah*), Spirit of God (*Ruh-Allah*) Jesus Christ (*Al Maseehu Esa*) and goes on to highlight the copious number of miracles of Jesus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام.

This book provides a more detailed account of Muhammad's (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) life in comparison to her second biography. In his childhood, Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) lost his father followed by his

mother. When his father Abdullah passed away, he left some camels and a slave girl called Bahira. The autonym of the girl is wrongly put as Bahira by Karen, her name actually was Barakah (Arabic بركة)

Bahira was in reality the autonym of the Christian Monk whom Prophet met as a child while accompanying his uncle Abu Talib on a vocational trip to Syria.³² While some western critics have raised doubt on his vocation ascertaining that neither he possessed primary knowledge of travel destinations nor the Quran which underscores the astounding cavalcade and habitude of Syriac Christianity.³³

However, Karen considers it quite capricious to doubt the traditional outlook of the early life of Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) as a business person as it is very perplexing to understand the basis for such useless assertions.³⁴

She also compares the reaction of Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) to the agonizing hug of an angel with other such incidents of august Hebrew prophets like³⁵ Isaiah,³⁶ Jeremiah³⁷ and ³⁸Jacob.³⁹ She relates their experience with transcendence which is interpreted as God by Monotheists. Although Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) unlike, already mentioned Prophets lacked required consolation in the form of established faith to bolster his interpretation of the event.

It also seems anomalous to Karen when western critics claim that word ‘*Ummi*’ should not be translated as illiterate trying to disarray the assertion of Quran which calls Muhammad ﷺ (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) as the unlettered Prophet (*Ummi*) underscoring the extraordinary feature of his divine inspiration. According to Karen it’s almost of similar symbolic importance among Muslim as the concept of The Virgin birth is to Christians.⁴⁰

In other words, one can conclude that from the inception, God has not abandoned humanity without proper guidance,⁴¹ even though people rarely pay heed to commandments of God and contumaciously deject the paramount message from the divine. The Quran encourages both genders to strive for social justice. Due care is to be taken of the members of the society especially of the vulnerable it’s in fact these teachings that form the basis of the Quran on the other hand Karen says that even if the contemporary Muslim seems antagonistic to the west, accentuating that they are in a real sense hostile to injustice although it may be perpetrated by their own rulers.

Addressing the western critics who claim that Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) was not a socialist because he didn’t opposed capitalism as it accorded high favor to his clan Quraysh and he didn’t fully endeavor to annihilate poverty from the root, Karen highlights the point that it would never be fair to judge the socialistic stand of Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) according to the contemporary standards of socialism which are developed in the west, however in the profound sense, he caused an inexpugnable mark on the religious philosophy.⁴²

Compared to Jesus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) was not in favor of complete destitution instead opted for generosity which could be depicted from the fact that *Zakat* or Almsgiving is among the essential five pillars in Islam.⁴³ Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) even when he reached the Zenith of his power and authority still carried on to live his life simply and frugally.⁴⁴

The Quran was not about erratic commandments from heaven full of enigmas and paradoxes but based on positively constructed human logic.⁴⁵ Quran wants mankind to observe the signs of God’s benevolence and endowments which are vividly manifested in nature. Failure in the society to repay the goodness of nature by paying least consideration to the subordinate, vulnerable poor, weak, elderly, indulging in corruption, double dealing, extortion, deception, cheating, scams or promoting evil, atrocious, lewd, activities would definitely cause them to alter the real disposition of nature. Over time Muhammad’s (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) religion got the appellation of Islam and followers of it were referred to as Muslims referring to those who submits their will to God. However, according to Karen before that, the believers used to call their religion ‘*Tazaqqa*’ by which they used to imbibe the noble characteristics of generosity and compassion in their life.

Howbeit the statement regarding the nomenclature of religion seems quite adventurous even though the development of noble qualities were part and parcel of Islam right from the inception.

While comparing the notion of God in the major Abrahamic faiths Karen ascertains that Allah of Quran is clearly more impersonal in comparison to the Yahweh of Jewish scriptures or to that matter with the Father of Christian scriptures. In antecedent religions of Hebrew Yahweh out of personal content arbitrarily used to confer rewards or inflict punishments. However, Allah of Quran is not inspired by such personal animus, in cognizance with Quran the verses are vocal about God only in the form of allegory or signs (*Āyah*) which partly conceal his divine nature and partly reveal implying that God, in reality, eludes human comprehension.⁴⁶

Muslims used to rise in the night to make night vigils as was the practice of Syrian Christian monks who recited psalms for some hours at night. According to Karen, it seems that Muslims had derived this practice from Syrian Christian monks, regarding which she lacked stout pieces of evidence as such.⁴⁷

Karen latter on further says that the cardinal inkling regarding Judgment of Last day is a thought that Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) had extracted from the Judeo-Christian values,⁴⁸ which is very much contradictory to her other statements.⁴⁹

Critically assaying the controversial Satanic Verses: The author has devoted a complete chapter to the controversial issue of satanic verses. People in *Jahilliya* belonged to different types of sects and in society, there was always the possibility of a novel cult, however the radical promotion of a single exclusive belief with the complete

denial of other cults was quite alien. The author gives an analogous scenario by showing that when Christians began to reject the Jewish law of antediluvian character the same Christians who used to be abiding members and visitors of the synagogue, were rigorously put to task for manifesting disrespect, disloyalty, and impiety.

Actually, both the Romans and the Meccan society had this conviction that their success in this world is directly proportional to their regard for their ancestral tradition which was carried to them from their forefathers.⁵⁰

Referring to the annals of Ibn Sa'd and Ṭabarī, according to which on a certain instance the Satan meddled with the reception of Revelation from God to Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*), in the context of the Revelation of Sura 53. Declaring the possibility of revering Al-Lāt, Al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, as *Banat* of Allah and negotiators between mankind and God that are exalted *gharāniq*⁵¹. In a way affirming the pagan belief of the people of Mecca and thus bringing to an end the lingering altercations,⁵² suddenly Islam now didn't appear as a blasphemous threat which could be a definite source of calamity and adversity on Mecca and its inhabitants.

According to the report in due course of time Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) received revelation from God making him aware that his ostensible acknowledgement of the authority of *Banat Allah* (Al-Lāt, Al-‘Uzzā, Manāt) was actually an inspiration from Satan,⁵³ as a result the related verses were obliterated from the Quran and altered by the real version from divine certifying that Al-Lāt, Al-‘Uzzā, Manāt are mere fabrications of Arabs and are not worthy of being worshipped.

Majority of the Muslims rejected this account on doubtful authenticity. They claim that the major sources of Islamic knowledge are silent about it referring to Quran which rather affirms the contrary of it, Quran makes the notion explicit that mortals do not have enough power to alter the words from the divinity furthermore if ever Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) considered such a possibility it could prove fatal⁵⁴; authentic collection of *Aḥadīth* about Prophet Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) compiled by Imam Bukhārī رَجْمَةُ اللَّهِ and Imam Muslim رَجْمَةُ اللَّهِ; it's not even included by Ibn Ishaq in one of the reliable and earliest biography of Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*). Critical interpretation of a tradition is not the criteria near Muslim Scholars for the rejection of tradition but inadequate authentication is taken into cognizance.

While as the western critics of Islam used the tradition of Satanic verses to refute the Prophetic claim of Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) by raising questions such as the inability of Muhammad ﷺ (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) to differentiate between divine revelation and inspiration from Satan, the ability of Muhammad ﷺ (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā ‘Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) to make changes in the revelation from the God to gain more followers or to

fulfill personal desires. Nevertheless, scholars such as Montgomery Watt and M. Rodinson have endeavored to exhibit that even if the traditions regarding satanic verses are upheld it does not inevitably divulge such adverse interpretation.

Since the crises caused by the novel *'The Satanic Verses'* of Salman Rushdie, the tradition has received new significance, the novel gives misrepresentation of the life of Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallāhu 'alaihi wa 'alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*), recalling age-old fantasies about Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallāhu 'alaihi wa 'alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*).

The book also belittles and maligns the probability of the Quran. It appears that the events from which the novel got its title imply the allegation that the Quran is not able to differentiate between good and wrong. Further, it leads to accusations and utterly human or even corrupt inspiration are god's will. It's considerable to note here that the Rushdie's account of Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallāhu 'alaihi wa 'alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) and his companions was not portrayed as facts but as the vision of a character that had undergone mental derangement.⁵⁵

Conversely, Ṭabarī gives two visions of the events in his work on history besides his well known commentary of the Holy Quran. However, both the reports about the event are in some ways different from one another. Ṭabarī does not agree with all the reports he had recorded, but he aspires for the reader to analyze them and determine the reality accordingly. According to the reputed scholars of *ḥadīth*, this tradition brought by Ṭabarī is weak in its authenticity⁵⁶. So his adulation about the daughters of God was not basically to have material gratification⁵⁷ as suggested by one of the versions. Ṭabarī highlights that Muhammad ﷺ (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallāhu 'alaihi wa 'alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) actually wished for a formative resolution to conciliate Quraysh to his message of monotheism.

Author shows different interpretations of the word 'Satan' in different Abrahamic faiths. Satan has become a symbol of nefariousness in Christianity; unlike the satanic character depicted in the Quran and Jewish scriptures, asserts that the antagonistic figure here is a bit amendable. She gets carried away and claims that the forgiveness of Satan on the day of Recompense is indicated in the Quran which is nowhere actually mentioned in the Quran in place of it God in Surah Araf verse 18 says, "Get out of here, condemned, rejected. Indeed, those of them who follow you, I will fill Hell with you all together". Further, she refers to some of the Sufis who believed in the absolute love of Satan towards God as he refused to prostrate to any creation other than God himself. These so-called Sufi's have actually arrayed from the real belief of the Quran which manifests that the true love of God can only be attained by following the dictates of God which Satan rejected based on his superiority over Adam as he was created from fire and Adam from clay. Obviously, according to him, the fire had higher qualities in comparison to despicable clay.⁵⁸

Even if in the last case scenario we consider the event of Satanic Verses it still never implied that Quran was ever blemished by evil as is preserved by the account of Ṭabarī, the alleged Satanic verse was replaced by the divine revelation refuting the basic existence of these *Banat Allah* and depicting them as baseless fabrication⁵⁹ which existed

only in name howbeit it would rather imply the questionable authenticity of Prophet and the crack in the divine scheme of preservation of ambrosial revelation.

Adam had yielded to the advancements of Satan and the latter even tried to tempt other messengers but God always protected them from the casts of Satan. The use of the word Satanic is at times synonymous with human temper, however, it does not accord Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) the authority to fiddle with Quran in any way as it's explicit in the Quran that no mortal can alter the words from God and if Muhammad (*Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa ‘alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābihi wa Ṣallam*) ever tries to make some adjustments the aftermaths could be lethal⁶⁰

Like in Jewish scriptures Quran also while dealing with the issue of association of partners with Allah highlights the pagan deities' ineffectiveness and inefficiency underscoring the fact that they are not capable of doing anything for those who call upon and worship them.⁶¹ Quran besides being laden with Knowledge and information also holds significant status analogous to the symbolic figure of Torah, Sacrament of Christ, in other words, signs of divine which is cultivated by people in different traditions. Quran is not only for acquiring information or to get directives rather, it's a discipline dealing with spiritual upliftment.⁶²

Conclusion: This exposition assayed the *Sirah* related work in English by eminent academicians in the contemporary west to describe and assess the cardinal bailiwicks like Pre Prophetic era, Divine Revelation, and the dubious yet controversial episode of Satanic Verses. Basically, the desideratum is to unravel numerous chapters from the Prophet's life in a fresh perspective which will demonstrate effectively and energetically the immediate relevance of his message and conduct for today's readership, Muslim and Non-Muslims alike.

So amidst the colossal works on *Sirah*, there is a need to study the neoteric trend in this noble domain which largely canvasses many in vogue issues and intricacies like the narrative of illustrating the meaning and relevance of *Sirah* in today's pluralistic world; to consociate aptly the directives of *Sirah* to render elucidation to the predicaments and dilemmas encountered today; to vouchsafe a flowing account of *Sirah* with pertinent Quranic passages and *Ahadith*; to endeavor for insightful and focusing coverage of all the events of Prophet's illustrious life and career so that it can be excerpted and referred for various domains; to transfigure war-centric narrating or super heroic account of *Sirah* into one focused more on the Prophet's humanness and other akin traits and achievements of his which may be emulated even today; to annotate his innermost tender feelings, as well as his equanimity, being the head of an enormous state; to underscore his spiritual quest as a mortal human being as well as his being the mentor par excellence for humankind of all time and place. Thus modern trends in *Sirah* writing delineate Prophet's life in our epoch, spelling out how his intimations speak to us today and how congruous and consequential his teachings are in this modish world.

Once work in this direction is initiated, fresh ideas and approaches to the understanding of the *Sirah*, and new issues for debate on the subject of the *Sirah*, will continue to emanate for many years to come. Such an intellectual revolution, pulling the *Ummah*

together on the common ground of the *Sirah*, is an essential pre-requisite for the future success of the global Muslim *Ummah*. This research also offers advanced challenges in the form of methodologies that shall have to be applied for the analyses of neoteric approaches and trends in *Sirah* writing. This explicitly is a vibrant area for original, even speculative research.

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