

Allamah Shibli's methods of authenticating Islamic historical facts

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Abstract: The *Sirah* (biography of the Prophet Muhammad) literature in general merely contains narration of historical events related directly or indirectly to the last Prophet (SAW). Allama Shibli Nu'mani's work entitled *Sirat al-Nabi* is an exception to this general trend. This article attempts to highlight Allamah Shibli's methodology of *Sirah* writing in general, and analyze selected historical events as treated by him in his *Sirat al-Nabi* in particular in a bid to reconfirm the aptness of his investigation of *Sirah*-related events. The article has selected seven historical incidents and showed that Shibli Nu'mani has analysed the controversial stories in the light of three elements: the Qur'an, authentic Hadith and the chain of narrators (*sanad*). Through this process, he identified what was fabricated and baselessly reported.

Keywords: Allamah Shibli, *Sirat al-Nabi*, Methodology, Authentication, Historical events.

Introduction

Allamah Shibli Nu'mani (1857-1914) is a world renowned scholar of Islamic history and a respected national figure of academia in the Indo-Pak sub-continent. His works like *Sirat al-Nabi*, *Al-Faruq*, and *Al-Ma'mun* bear witness to his scholarship. Allamah Shibli is a historian *par excellence* who does not simply narrate the well-known and widely accepted historical truths but also subjects almost the entire compendia of Islamic history to critical analysis in the light of the Qur'an, highly authentic traditions as recorded in the most reliable sources, and logic. The subject of this article is his *magnum opus*, *Sirat al-Nabi* (Life of the Prophet (SAW)). There is probably no work in the *Sirah* literature that could match Allamah Shibli's contribution. What makes his work on *Sirah* extraordinarily distinct from others is his unique methodology of critical analysis of historical events related directly or indirectly to the last Prophet's (SAW) life and mission with a view to establishing the truth.

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Principles of historicity in *Sirat al-Nabi*

Allamah Shibli penned down a very comprehensive preface to his *Sirat al-Nabi*. In it, he focused on principles of authentication of prophetic traditions and historical events, criticizing *Sirah* writers in general for their blind recording of events from Islamic history. He made it clear that the objective of writing *Sirat al-Nabi* was to produce a work on the life and mission of the last Prophet (SAW) which could contain only authentic and historically true events, dismissing all the unreliable information as has been recorded in the relevant sources (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 4-8). In the end, Allamah Shibli outlined the three basic principles he followed in selecting and recording the historical events (Nu'mani, 1996: 65).

First, authentication by the Qur'an and preferring the *Sirah* related events as mentioned in the Qur'an to other narrations. The Qur'an was revealed in response to a particular socio-historical background, referring in brief or in detail to the then happenings in and around Arabian Peninsula. Hence, he considered the Qur'an as the most reliable source for authentication. He observed that the *Sirah* writers did not pay much attention to the narrations in the Qur'an which could have easily resolved many issues raised by these writers.

Second, authentication by the most reliable Hadith (Traditions). His reliance on the authentic traditions as recorded particularly in al-Bukhari and Muslim's *Sahih*, serves as the second method to authenticate a controversial historical fact. He was critical in scrutinizing the authenticity of traditions in the first place. He criticised the *Sirah* writers in general that they recorded less reliable information in their works, ignoring the Hadith compilations. He basically relied on six main books of Hadith (al-Bukhari's *Sahih*, Muslim's *Sahih*, al-Tirmidhi's *Al-Jami'*, Abu Da'ud's *Sunan*, al-Nasa'i's *Sunan*, and Ibn Majah's *Sunan*) for his *Sirat al-Nabi*. He emphasized that almost all the significant historical events on *Sirah* could be found available in these Hadith compilations. He managed to gather details of most of the *Sirah* related events from these authentic sources of information.

Third, authentication of reports through scrutinizing the reporters. In this regard, he relied on three classic works: Ibn Sa'd's *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, Ibn Hisham's *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, and al-Tabari's *Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Rusul*. For this task, he made a list of all the reporters (several hundred) in these three sources and checked their position and credibility from the biographical dictionaries (*kutub 'ilm asma' al-rijal*) in order to determine the status of the reports concerned.

Authentication of *Sirah* related events

Sirah books generally recorded three categories of events: (1) highly authentic, (2) controversial, and (3) concocted. Allamah Shibli was aware of his delicate task. He, therefore, reconfirmed the authentic events, analysed controversial stories in the light of the Qur'an, authentic Hadith and the chain of narrators (*sanad*), and identified what was fabricated and baselessly reported. Some examples are given below to highlight the methodology of Allamah Shibli in his *Sirah* work.

1. False allegation about polytheistic practice

Orientalists in general and David S. Margoliouth in his *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam* (2010) in particular labeled allegation against the Prophet (SAW) that he and his wife Khadijah used to venerate an idol namely 'Uzza (Nu'mani, 1996: 128-129). Allamah Shibli quotes a report recorded by al-Bukhari in his *al-Tarikh al-Saghir* that the Prophet (SAW) named his first son as 'Abd al-'Uzza (slave of al-'Uzza) (Al-Bukari, 1997: I, 2). Probably, the basis of Orientalists' claim is this report by al-Bukhari. Allamah Shibli rejects this report as baseless (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 128-129) as the first reporter in the chain, Isma'il ibn Abi Uways, is in the eyes of most of the Hadith scholars unreliable (*ghayr thiqah*), liar (*kadhdhab*), and fabricator of traditions (*wadda' al-hadith*) (Ibn Hajar, 1996: I, 255-257). Shibli also advances information about the Prophet's (SAW) total negation of polytheism and prevention of others from indulging in polytheistic practices. In its support, he refers to a report recorded by al-Hakim in his *al-Mustadrak* on the authority of Zayd ibn Harithah (Al-Nisaburi, 1995: III, 238-239). Thus, it was proved that the allegation was untrue.

2. Impact of qiss ibn Sa'idah on the Qur'an

Orientalists have claimed in their books that Qiss ibn Sa'idah once delivered the most famous rhetorical sermon on the occasion of 'Ukkaz fair where the Prophet (SAW) participated among others as audience and was so much impressed by the style of oration of Qiss that he later on imitated it in the Qur'an (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 130). The basis for such a claim is the reports recorded in various Muslim sources such as al-Baghawi (d.286 A.H.), al-Azdi (d.165 A.H.), al-Bayhaqi (d.458 A.H.), and al-Jahiz (d.255 A.H.) (Nu'mani, 1996: 131). Allamah Shibli proved this report as fabricated on the ground that most of its reporters are unreliable and liars (Nu'mani, 1996: 131). The common reporter in all the narrations of this event is Muhammad ibn Hajjaj. Shibli investigated his position in the biographical dictionaries and found that he was declared by Ibn Ma'in as liar and vicious

(*kadhdhab wa Khabith*), and by Ibn ‘Adi as *wadda*‘ (fabricator). Another reporter in one of the so many chains is Sa‘id ibn Hubayrah. Shibli traced his biography in the relevant sources and highlighted that Ibn Hibban described him as the one who narrated fabricated traditions on the authority of reliable sources. Other two reporters of the said report are Qasim ibn Abdullah and Ahmad ibn Sa‘id. Allamah Shibli identified them both on the basis of information in the sources as notorious for fabrication in hadith (Nu‘mani, 1996: 131). So, the non-authenticity of the report was proven in this regard.

3. Initial experiences of the Prophet (SAW)

According to al-Bukhari, during the interval between the first two revelations, the Prophet (SAW) felt seriously depressed and hence he used to climb the summit of the mountain in a bid to throw himself down. At that time Archangel Gabriel would appear and console him confirming that he was indeed the Messenger of Allah (SWT); and with this assurance the Prophet (SAW) relieved of his stress (Nu‘mani, 1996: I, 137). From this report, it appears that the Prophet (SAW) was initially in doubt about the authenticity of his appointment as the Messenger of Allah (SWT) or he was abandoned by Allah (SWT). Ibn Hajar al-‘Asaqalani has quoted an anonymous observation that how could a Messenger be in doubt about his position as Messenger and be assured about that only after a Christian’s (Waraqah ibn Nawfal) confirmation? He answered that the Apostleship (*nubuwwah*) is a heavy responsibility which cannot be born all of a sudden (Nu‘mani, 1996: I, 137). However, this cannot be a satisfactory answer to the report.

Allamah Shibli seems to have disagreed with al-Bukhari’s report and Ibn Hajar’s comment. He attracts attention of the readers to several reporting: (1) according to al-Tirmidhi, during his journey to Syria the tree under which the would be Prophet (SAW) took rest for a while stooped with all of its branches over him in reverence, and with this Buhayra the Christian monk recognized him as the Messenger; (2) according to Muslim, the Prophet (SAW) said: “I still recognize the rock which used to salute me even before my Apostleship”; and (3) according to other sources of authentic traditions, before his Apostleship the angels cut open his chest and cleaned his heart of all filth. Referring to these authentic reports, Shibli observes that Muhammad already had prior indications of becoming a prophet, so throwing himself down from the mountain top out of depression due to apparent discontinuity of revelation is irrational. Instead he counter-posed questions such as (1) did any other Prophet of Allah (SWT) have doubt about the authenticity of his position in the initial stages?; and (2) did

Moses have any doubt upon hearing the voice from behind the mountain? Another line of argument Shibli takes is concerning the chain (*sanad*) of reporters. He declares that the chain is disconnected (*maqtu'*) as it ends with al-Zuhri. So, he takes a stand and argued that disconnected chain is not sufficient for authenticity of such a significant event (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 137-138).

Praise of idols

Almost all the Orientalists including William Muir and Montgomery Watt have recorded an anecdote captioned "Satanic Verses" in their respective works, claiming that during the revelation of *Surat al-Najm* (53) Satan managed to interfere into the process of revelation and interposed two of his own verses in the *Surah* (*tilka al-gharaniq al-'ula wa inna shafa'atunhunna la turtuja—these idols are highly praised ones and their intercession is accepted*) (Watt, 1980: 61). Orientalists have borrowed this story from Muslim sources such as al-Tabari, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Marduwayh, Ibn Ishaque, Musa ibn 'Uqbah, and Abu Ma'shar. Allamah Shibli declares this story baseless and concocted. He was surprised that even Ibn Hajar has supported the authenticity of this story. The arguments Allamah Shibli has come up with for the rebuttal of this story as fabricated are three (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 163-164).

First, many great hadith scholars like al-Bayhaqi, Qazi 'Ayaz, al-'Ayni, al-Mundhiri, and al-Nawawi have identified this story as fabricated (*mawdu'*). Second, the Qur'an has described the tactics of Quraysh against the Qur'an in 41: 26 ("The disbelievers say: Do not listen to this Qur'an and insert therein something senseless so that you might prevail"). Quraysh as a part of their tradition would glorify three of their idols (*lat*, *manat*, and *'uzza*) during *tawaf* of *ka'bah* in these words: "*wa al-lat wa al-'uzza wa manat al-thalithah al-ukhra fa innahunna al-gharaniq al-'ula wa inna shafa'atunhunna la turtuja*". It seems that when the Prophet (SAW) read the verse 19-20 from *Surat al-najm* (53), someone from disbelievers read the above-mentioned satanic verses synchronizing with the reading of the Prophet (SAW). The people at a distance might have mistaken both original verses and the satanic ones to be part of the Prophetic reading. Later on the story assumed a different reading that these satanic verses were put into the mouth of the Prophet (SAW) by Satan. Third, it is reported that when the Quraysh heard the Prophet (SAW) read verse 53:19-20 feared that he would condemn their idols and read the alleged satanic verses along with the original reading of the Qur'an by the Prophet (SAW).

4. Abu Talib's embracing of Islam

According to al-Bukhar and Muslim, the Prophet (SAW) advised his uncle before his death to accept Islam but due to the nudge of Abu Jahl and others he died with the statement "I die on the faith of 'Abd al-Muttalib". But Ibn Ishaque has recorded another story in this respect. Before his death Abu Talib was murmuring something; "Abbas who heard the words of Abu Talib reported to the Prophet (SAW) that Abu Talib was uttering the same words as suggested by the Prophet (SAW)." Generally, the report of al-Bukhari is accepted as more authentic than that of Ibn Ishaque. But Allamah Shibli has considered al-Bukhari's report as less authentic on the ground that this is a *mursal* report, as per the comment of al-'Ayni, one of the commentators of al-Bukhari's *Sahih*, in which the last reporter is Musayyib who accepted Islam only after the conquest of Makkah. Allamah Shibli considered Ibn Ishaque's report also to be defective due to the gap between 'Abbas ibn 'Abd Allah (SWT) ibn Ma'bad and 'Abd Allah (SWT) ibn 'Abbas, from the angle of *sanad*, but applying logic he came to the conclusion of Ibn Ishaque's report is more authentic than that of al-Bukhari. For that matter he advanced logical argument. He raised a question whether all the sacrifices and sincere love of Abu Talib for his nephew for the sake of whom he made the entire Arabia his enemy and endured social boycott for three years will go waste. To further strengthen his argument, Allamah Shibli quotes an incident that once Abu Talib fell sick and asked the Prophet (SAW) to pray for his recovery from the illness to Allah (SWT) who appointed him as the Prophet; and when he recovered as a result of the Prophet's (SAW) prayer, he (Abu Talib) commented that Allah (SWT) honored his (the Prophet) wish (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 168-169).

5. Quraysh trade caravan as the target

Sirah writers in general claim that the Prophet (SAW) when he came out of Madinah with his army originally intending to waylay Quraysh trade caravan but when he heard about the arrival of Quraysh army he consulted his people and decided to face the Quraysh army instead. For example, al-Tabari narrates that when the Prophet (SAW) was informed about the arrival of Abu Sufyan's caravan from Syria, he advised his followers to waylay the trade caravan, encouraging them to plunder the booty. A report on the authority of Ka'b ibn Abi Malik is on record: "I did not stay behind during any battle except Tabuk and Badr; as for the absence from Badr, no absentee was condemned because the Prophet (SAW) initially targeted Quraysh trade caravan but suddenly he faced Quraysh army."

Allamah Shibli strongly disagrees with this reason of the Prophet's (SAW) coming out of Madinah before the battle of Badr (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 236-249).

In support of his position, he quotes from the Qur'an and a highly authentic report recorded in Muslim's *Sahih*. The Qur'anic verses (8: 5-7) read: "Even as your Lord caused you to go forth from your house with the truth, though a party of the believers was surely averse and disputed with you about the truth after it had become clear, as if they were being driven to sure death. And when Allah (SWT) promised you one of the two parties that it shall be yours, and you loved to overtake the unarmed one but Allah (SWT) willed to establish the truth with His words and to cut off unbelievers' root—to fully establish the truth and uproot the falsehood—even though the guilty disliked" (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 237-238).

It appears from these verses, that the situation referred to therein is about the time when the Prophet (SAW) had not yet left Madinah because the chance of catching any of the two Quraysh parties was certain only when Muslims were still in Madinah. These verses do not refer to the time when Muslims and Quraysh were already face to face in the plain of Badr because at that time the trade caravan had already escaped to Makkah. It really makes no sense to refer to both parties of Quraysh after one of them had already disappeared. Allah (SWT) disapproved some believers' wish to get the trade caravan. It was not the Prophet (SAW) who intended to attack the trade caravan, as it was not possible for him to think or act against the will of Allah (SWT) who had decided that the Prophet (SAW) and his followers would meet the Quraysh army in the battlefield. It is also mentioned in the above quoted verses that some believers were scared of death. If the trade caravan was the target, there was no fear of fighting and death. It is obviously a reference to the plan of the Prophet (SAW) to leave Madinah to fight Quraysh army at Badr.

To further substantiate his stand, Allamah Shibli brings a report recorded by Muslim in his *Sahih*—"When the Prophet (SAW) received news about the passing of Abu Sufyan by Madinah, he consulted his people. When Abu Bakr and 'Umar said something, the Prophet (SAW) did not pay attention; and then Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah stood up and said: 'O Prophet of Allah (SWT)! Do you refer to us? By the One in whose Hands is my soul, if you commanded us to cross the sea we would surely do it; if you exhorted us to proceed to *Bark al-Ghamad* (a farthest place in Arabia), we would execute your plan.' The Prophet (SAW), then, invited the believers to prepare for war. The believers marched out of Madinah and encamped at Badr." Allamah Shibli maintains that the news about Abu Sufyan's

arrival was received by the Prophet (SAW) in Madinah itself who wanted Ansar to participate in the battle. He believes that the last part of the report shows that the Prophet (SAW) had already been instructed by Allah (SWT) through revelation to meet Quraysh army instead (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 241-242).

6. Background of the Prophet's (SAW) marriage with Juwayriyah

At a quite considerable distance from Madinah was a place named Muraysee' under the control of Banu al-Mustalaq tribe. Its leader Harith ibn Abi Zrar planned to invade Madinah. The Prophet (SAW) marched to that place and inflicted heavy defeat on the tribe. Around 600 tribesmen were made captive. The daughter of the tribal leader, Juwayriyah was also among the captives. The Prophet (SAW) freed her and married her. Historians and Hadith scholars have recorded two different stories concerning this marriage. According to Ibn Ishaque and others like Abu Da'ud, when Juwayriyah was given to Thabit ibn Qays as slave, she persuaded him to free him with the payment of ransom money and he agreed. She solicited help from the people and also from the Prophet (SAW). According to 'A'ishah, when Juwayriyah visited the Prophet (SAW), she ('A'ishah) suspected that her beauty would impress the Prophet (SAW) who paid the stipulated sum to buy her freedom and married her (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 288-289).

The other version of the story as recorded by Ibn Sa'd in his *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra* and Ibn Hajar in his *Al-Isabah* is that when Harith heard about the captivity of his daughter, Juwayriyah, he visited the Prophet (SAW) to request him to free her. The Prophet (SAW) then advised him to let Juwayriyah decide about what she wanted. When she was asked, she expressed her desire to remain with the Prophet (SAW) who thereupon married her (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 289-290).

Allamah Shibli rejects the first version of the story. But there is hardly any major difference in the two reports. These two reports describe two portions of the same story. If combined, the story would be: when Juwayriyah was given to someone as slave, she wanted freedom and for that matter she contacted the Prophet (SAW) to help her. The Prophet (SAW) sensed the significance of the freedom of Juwayriya and in the meantime her father visited the Prophet (SAW) to talk to him concerning her freedom. The Prophet (SAW) paid on her behalf the price for her freedom. But after the freedom, Juwayriyah preferred to be with the Prophet (SAW) as she was very much impressed with the magnanimity of the Prophet (SAW). And when the Prophet (SAW) married her, the believers freed all

the 600 prisoners of war on the ground that they became the relatives of the Prophet (SAW) (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 290).

7. Conspiracy against Jews of Banu Qurayzah

On the occasion of battle of Ahzab when the siege of Madinah by enemies of Islam prolonged, a new Muslim from Banu Ghatfan namely Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud who had relationship with both Jews and Quraysh frequented them one after another and talked to each of them in a way that both would become suspicious of each other, causing disunity among them (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 298). Allamah Shibli is reluctant to accept the authenticity of this report as recorded by Ibn Ishaque. He says that there was no need of any conspiracy and lies on the part of a companion to break the solidarity of Jews with Quraysh. Jews of Banu Quraizah had agreed to join Quraysh against the Prophet (SAW) on the condition that Quraysh would hand over some noble personalities to Jews as surety but when Quraysh went back upon this promise, Jews suspected insincerity from Quraysh and sent message to the Prophet (SAW) to renew the treaty. Nu'aym divulged this message to Quraysh and thus the agreement between Jews and Quraysh collapsed (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 298). What Allamah Shibli says is supported by what Ibn Kathir and others have recorded in their respective sources in detail.

8. The Prophet (SAW) and Rayhanah

Several *Sirah* writers including Ibn Ishaque and al-Waqidi have reported that one of the female captives in the battle of Qurayzah was Rayhanah whom the Prophet selected for himself as concubine. Orientalists have narrated this story in a very disgusting manner indicating the Prophet's lust for sex. A Western historian writes that when the Prophet (SAW) enjoyed the killing of 700 Jews, he entered his house and enjoyed cohabitation with the Jewish mistress. Allamah Shibli forthrightly rejects this story as baseless and a lie. He quotes Ibn Sa'd and Ibn Hajar for substantiation of his stand. According to these two sources, the Prophet (SAW) freed Rayhanah and married her (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 298).

9. Allegation of the Prophet's (SAW) infatuation with Zaynab bt Jahsh

Orientalists have included in their respective works on the life of the Prophet (SAW) a story of how the Prophet (SAW) married Zaynab bt Jahsh. According to them, the Prophet (SAW) once went to Zayd ibn Harithah's house and found only his wife, Zaynab changing her dress. He returned from there, uttering an invocation "Hallowed is Allah (SWT) the Great, and Hallowed is Allah (SWT), the causer of the heart inflection". Thereafter, Zayd visited the Prophet (SAW)

and said to him if he liked Zaynab, he would divorce her. The main source of this story Orientalists have used is al-Tabari who has quoted this story from al-Waqidi who always looked for such baseless reports in a bid to authenticate carnal practices of Abbasid Caliphs.

Allamah Shibli rejected this report as baseless and quoted the views of Ibn Hajar and Ibn Kathir who considered this report fabricated and lie. According to him, the true story is different from this concoction. Zayd was the Prophet's (SAW) adopted son who in fulfillment of the Prophet's wish married Zaynab. But due to pre-Islamic Arab tradition it was a mismatch and the marriage could not last more than a year and resulted in divorce of Zaynab. After that Allah (SWT) commanded the Prophet (SAW) to marry her. The wisdom behind this marriage was to break longstanding Arab tradition linked to the practice of adoption. Arabs considered adopted son exactly as a real son and hence the adopted son would also get his share in the property of the father. Allah (SWT) willed to ban this practice of property distribution and ordered the Prophet (SAW) to marry the divorcee of the adopted son so as to lay down a new ruling for property distribution.

10. Chivalrous Act of 'Ali during Khaybar expedition

Ibn Ishaque and Hakim have recorded a story about the unbelievable chivalrous act of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. During the expedition of Khaybar, 'Ali fought a very powerful Jewish leader Marhab and killed him. When the Jews saw this humiliating scene, they attacked 'Ali and caused his shield to slip from his hand. 'Ali then uprooted the iron gate of the fort and used it as shield. It is said that someone named Abu Rafi' tried later along with seven others to lift the same gate but failed even to move it.

Allamah Shibli called it a baseless folklore. He quotes several views in his support. Al-Sakhawi declares all these stories related to 'Ali's legendary power as lies. Al-Dhahbi has termed this report as totally strange (*munkar*). Furthermore, as for the chain of this report, it is defective (*munqati'*) (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 340-341).

11. Background to the Prophet's marriage with Safiyyah bt Huyy ibn Akhtab

It has been reported in some sources on the authority of Anas ibn Malik that after the conquest of Khyabar when people talked about the beauty of Safiyyah bt. Huyy ibn Akhtab after she had been given to Dihya al-Kalbi, the Prophet (SAW) selected her for himself and took her from him in exchange of seven female slaves.

Allamah Shibli did not accept this version of the story. He preferred another version of the story as recorded by al-Bukhari in his *Sahih*. According to this version, after the battle, when all the captives were brought together, Dihyah al-Kalbi upon his request to the Prophet (SAW) was given freedom to make his selection of female slave from among the prisoners of war. When he selected Safiyyah, people suggested to the Prophet (SAW) to take her for himself on the ground that she was the daughter of the Jewish leader and the Prophet (SAW) freed her and married her (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 341-343).

12. Death penalty for Kinanah ibn al-Rabi'

After the conquest of Khaybar, the Prophet (SAW) conditioned the security to the Jews with that they would not hide any treasures. But when a Jew named Kinanah ibn al-Rabi' concealed a treasure, he was subjected to torture with the command of the Prophet (SAW). The torturer was Zubayr who burned his chest and killed him as he refused to divulge the secret of the treasure. And then all the Jews were taken as slaves. This story has been recorded by al-Tabari and Ibn Hisham who took it from Ibn Ishaque who is known to have taken the stories concerning the Prophet's (SAW) battles from Jews. It seems this story was borrowed by Ibn Ishaque from Jews.

Allamah Shibli analysed the reports and sorted out the true story concerning the killing of Kinanah. He says that it was unthinkable that the Prophet (SAW) who was generally a kind-hearted person ordered the physical torture of Kinanah simply because he refused to tell the secret of the treasure. He then details the true event leading to the death of Kinanah. According to the details he has provided, Kinanah unlawfully killed a Muslim, Mahmud ibn Maslamah; for which he was also killed in revenge (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 344-347).

13. Indictment of ten people after the conquest of Makkah

Hafiz Mughalta'i has recorded 15 names, *Sirah* writers in general 10, Ibn Ishaque 8, Abu Da'ud and al-Darqutni 6 of those who were indicted and ordered to be killed after the conquest of Makkah. But al-Bukhari has recorded only one name, Abullah ibn Khatall. The crime of these people was that they tortured the Prophet (SAW). Allamah Shibli rebuts this story as baseless on the ground that the Prophet (SAW) never killed anyone simply because of physical torture; he rather gave general amnesty to the Makkans who were his staunch enemies.

Allamah Shibli believes that only two people, Ibn Khatall and Miqyas ibn Sababah were killed after the conquest of Makkah not because they tortured the

Prophet (SAW) or Muslims but because they were found to have killed Muslims (Nu'mani, 1996: I, 365-368).

14. Reason for revelation of *Surat al-tahrim* (66)

The Qura'n interpreters have advanced two reasons for the revelation of *Surat al-tahrim* (66), one related to honey and the other to Mariyah, one of the Prophet's wives. As for the second reason most of the commentators reject it as unreliable. Allamah Shibli also did not support this story. As regards the reason related to honey, its detail is available in the sources, including al-Bukhari's *Sahih*.

According to these sources, the Prophet (SAW) was very much fond of honey. Once he stayed with his wife, Zaynab bint Jahsh longer than usual due to the honey she received from some of her relatives. When 'A'ishah heard of it, she felt jealous of her and planned a trick with the help of other wives of the Prophet (SAW), including Hafsa. With the suggestion of 'A'ishah, all agreed to say to the Prophet (SAW) that they felt the foul smell of *maghafir* (probably acacia tree flower). As a result, the Prophet (SAW) vowed not to take honey any more. Allah (SWT), then, revealed *Surat al-tahrim*, correcting the approach of the Prophet (SAW) and his wives. The opening phrase of this revelation (66: 1) reads: "O Prophet! Why do you declare unlawful what Allah (SWT) made lawful for you? Do you want to please your wives?"

Allamah Shibli does agree that the *Surat al-tahrim* was revealed in connection with the Prophet's (SAW) longer stay with Zaynab due to the availability of honey, but doubts the authenticity of the detail of the story particularly the part which refers to the plan of 'A'ishah. He has quoted the comment of Badr al-Din al-'Ayni, one of the commentators of al-Bukhari's *Sahih*: "If you say: how it was possible for 'A'ishah and Hafsa to agree on speaking lie in which there was harm to the Prophet (SAW), I say that 'A'ishah was minor and also she did not intend to harm the Prophet (SAW); it was simply a trick of a wife against the co-wife".

Allamah Shibli criticised al-'Ayni's justification. He said that 'A'ishah was not a minor at that time; she was already 17 as this event occurred in 9th A.H; and also other wives of the Prophet (SAW) were mature, including Hafsa who was 35 at the time of her marriage with the Prophet (SAW). Shibli has offered his own explanation of the event saying that the Prophet's (SAW) wives' statement that they felt foul smell of *maghafir* from the Prophet's (SAW) mouth was not a lie; they might have really sensed this smell and expressed it, and since the Prophet (SAW) was also sensitive, he vowed not to take honey any more.

Allamah Shibli also suggested that the 3rd verse in the *Surat al-tahrim* (66: 3) (“And when the Prophet secretly communicated a piece of information to one of his wives—but when she informed others about it, and Allah (SWT) made him to know it...and when he informed her of it, she asked as to who informed him of it, he then said that he was informed by the One, All-Knowing, All Aware) was revealed when the Prophet (SAW) secretly informed Hafsa of something, advising her not to disclose it to anyone else, but she disclosed it to ‘A’ishah (Nu’mani, 1996: I, 384-385).

15. Prohibition of wine

The issue of prohibition of wine is a matter of controversy. Allamah Shibli offered details of how the wine was gradually prohibited. The Arabs were very fond of wine; the main subject of their poetry was wine. In Madinah also the people continued drinking wine but some including ‘Umar disliked it and wished to get clear guideline in this respect. In response to this, the verse 2: 219—“They ask you concerning wine and gambling. Say: in both of them there is great sin and also there are profits for men, but their sin is greater than their profit...” was revealed. But the people continued drinking wine. Once ‘Ali led a prayer in the state of intoxication and made error in recitation. ‘Umar then made another wishful appeal and the verse 4: 43—“Do not approach prayer in the state of intoxication...” was revealed. Once when some people under the impact of intoxication went out of control, the last revelation on the prohibition of wine (“O believers! Wine, gambling...represent only dirty trick of Satan, so shun it so that you might attain to blissful life” (5: 90) was revealed. Allamah Shibli regrets that historians and hadith scholars are not unanimous over when the wine was prohibited.

Ibn Hajar claims that wine was prohibited in the year 8 A.H. and substantiates it with a story that a friend of the Prophet (SAW) from Banu Thaqif or Bunu Daws presented the Prophet (SAW) a container of wine during the conquest of Makkah, but the Prophet (SAW) attracted his attention that the wine was prohibited. Allamah Shibli says that this view of Ibn Hajar is not correct, as the report simply proves that the friend of the Prophet (SAW) was not aware of the prohibition of wine as he was from a faraway place. Allamah Shibli insisted that the wine had already been declared unlawful only four years after the hijrah event (Nu’mani, 1996: II, 149-154).

However, one may not necessarily agree with the view of ‘Allamah Shibli. The last revelation on wine is available in *Surat al-ma’idah* (5) which is reported to have been revealed around the time of the Conquest of Makkah. There is a gap

of around 2-3 years between the revelation of the second verse on the wine and the last one. According to this calculation, the last verse on wine might have come down not in the 4th year after hijrah but only several years later. As for the suggestion of Allamah Shibli that wine which was an impure object must have been prohibited earlier, it may not withstand scrutiny. It should then have been banned either in Makki period itself or immediately after the hijrah. The Qur'an took into consideration the psychology of the people in general and the wine was gradually banned only when the people were mentally prepared for that.

Conclusion

There are many historical events surrounding the life of the Prophet (SAW). Many of these events are controversial and generated doubts about their authenticity. Most of the biographies on the Prophet (SAW) have recorded stories about his life uncritically. Scrutinizing the truth about the facts has later on created confusion and debate. This article has looked into the approach and method of Allama Shibli on this particular issue of explaining and scrutinizing certain events in the life of the Prophet (SAW). Allamah Shibli seems to be too sensitive to the authenticity of reporting of historical events during the time of the last Prophet (SAW) to accept it simply on its face value. He considered it his duty as a historian to come up with the true version of the events concerned. The Qur'an, the authentic reports as recorded in the authentic sources and logic are the criteria for Allamah Shibli to check the authenticity of historical events. A number of issues that this article has focused clearly demonstrated that Shibli has refuted the relevant misconceptions with clear arguments and evidence. His method of authentication deserves merit, and it might be equally useful in scrutinizing other events of Islamic history.

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