

## **Ibne Ishaque's "Al-Maghazi" Its Methodology and Critical Analysis**

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**Abstract:** Muhammad Ben Ishaque was born at the holy city of Madina in 699A (80 Hijra) and died in 768A (151 Hijra). He holds a leading position in the art of "Seerat-Writing". He was an eminent and proficient writer of 'Hadith'. He heard and narrated 'Ahadith' directly from 'Taabeen' (disciples of the companions of the Holy Prophet (SAW)). He had the honor to meet and see Anas Bin Malik (RA), one of the companion of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

**Key Words:**

1. **Seerat, Seera or sear.** The life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
  2. **Maghazi.** Jihad.
  3. **Ghazwat.** Jihad
  4. **Hadith.** Anything (saying and practices) referred to the Holy Prophet.
  5. **Companion.** A person who saw the Holy Prophet (SWA) while being a Muslim.
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### **I. Introduction:**

#### **Muhammad bin Ishaque**

His name was Muhammad bin Ishaque bin Yasar bin Khiyar Al-Madni (H151). He was a Persian origin and a freed slave of Qais bin Mahzama bin Abdul Mutlib. He got education from the famous scholars of Madina, like Abban bin Usman, Muhammad bin Shahab Al-Zuhri, Asim bin Umer Al-Qatada and Hisham bin Urwa.

His grand father Yasar Bin Khiyar, as a prisoner of a war at Ain-ul-Tamar was taken to Madina. His narratives are related to Tabeen and himself had met with Hazrat Unas bin Malik. <sup>(1,2)</sup>

Asim bin Qatada says:

"The knowledge will not vanish until Ibne Ishaque is alive"<sup>(3)</sup>

Replying someone who asked his master Muhammad bin Shahab Zuhri about him (Ibne Ishaque) Maghazi said:

"He is the most learned man of Maghazi among you people"<sup>(4)</sup>

Imam Al-Shaafi said: "Anyone who wants to be highly skilled in Maghazi is considered to be the one of Ibne Ishaque's family"<sup>(5)</sup>

Muhammad bin Ishaque was among the first, unlike the other compilers, who tried to collect Ahadiths (traditions of Prophet Muhammad PUH), historical events and other baseless stories, paying no care to the principles of indentures for compiling his book on Seerat.

He expresses narrations as: "Someone who is not accused told me". <sup>(6)</sup>

Or "Some scholars among the jews or Christians told me". <sup>(7)</sup>

Or "I said..." <sup>(8)</sup>

Or "It is said, It is told..." <sup>(9)</sup>

"Some of the scholars said..." <sup>(10)</sup>

Adopting such uncommon way of writing by him, was very much criticized, and to the extent he was named as Dajal (the greatest deceiver) by Imam Malik. <sup>(11)</sup>

The citizens of Madina had firm grip over the traditions and thus used to give due importance to the certificates. Ibne Ishaque during his stay at Madina had completed classification of extracts of Seerat, and then in 123 Hijra he was shifted to Iraq, there his merit was highly recognized in an Academy of Historical Information.

Later on the Sirat by Ibne Ishaque, to settle and refine it, one ibne Hisham not only omitted the improper, untestified and the disgraceful portions from it, but he also added in, completing the incomplete, explaining the abridged and illustrating the hidden events of the description.

Approving this by the compilers of the later stage, and believing in those information, they used the same as a foundation and origin in compilation of their book on history and Seerat.

One Ibne A'adee (365H) writes about Muhammad bin Ishaque and his book Almaghazi:

"It is the grace and perfection of Ibne Ishaque, who persuaded the nobles and chiefs to read books on commencement of mankind and the Holy Prophet (PBUH) inspiration and Maghazi instead of the useless and needless one. There after many of the people who wrote books on Maghazi, but none achieved his standard and style of writing".<sup>(12)</sup>

Al-Zahabi (H748) writes: "It is an established fact among the scholars that though there may be something unusual in the stock of Ibne Ishaque, yet his compilation Maghazi is predominant and regarding Haram-o-Halal which are neither faint nor clear and needs evidence in support for clarification"<sup>(13)</sup>

### **The book "Al-Maghazi" of Ibne Ishaque:**

This book comprises the following three portions:-

1. **Al-Mubtada:** This portion of the book comprises the circumstances relating to the Pre-Islamic period. This first portion, **Al-Mubtada** contains from creation of the universe covering the history of ancient prophets including the pre Islam age, in furtherance of which history of Yemen, the tribals of age of ignorance and their worshipping statues, Ashab-ul-Ukhud (companions of trenches) Ashab-ul-Feel (companions of elephant), ancestors of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), and the religious tenets of the citizens of Macca have been described.
2. **Al-Mab'ath:** This portion consists of the events relating to the private life as well as the Prophetic Mission and activities of the Holy Prophet (SAW) in Makkah and subsequently his migration to Madina. In this second portion i.e. **Al-Mab'ath** the contents of that are, the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) life in Macca, his Hijra (migration), and other facts that happened in Macca, prior to The War of Badar where in most of that events Ibne Hisham had retained while he was refining the Seerat.
3. **Al-Maghazi:** This portion of the book is comprising the events of the Ghazawat fought by the Holy Prophet (SAW) against the infidels.

And this third portion **Al-Maghazi**, wherein events, from The War of Badar till the death of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) including his Ghazwat and Saraya, have been described. In this respect he also consulted the written rough sketches of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), wherein his letters written to the various kings and the pacts reached with the tribals of Madina are prominent.

Ibne Ishaque also annexed some lists of importance with his book, like the list showing the names of those they were first among the Muhajerin (migrators, refugees of Macca) and Ansar (helpers, citizens of Madina) to put faith in Islam, and the fighters' names including those who were killed or captured. He remained diligent about the certification of events and methodically arranged the Ghuzwat, but paid no heed to the certificates in the description of life in Macca.

The manner of his description which confirms the ingenious of Ibne Ishaque, also indicates his virtue and prudence in the field, enabling one to easily draw a full image of the occurrence, from putting the different and scattered parts of an event, happened at one place together.<sup>(14)</sup>

Only on listing the names of the persons present in certain event, Ibne Ishaque was never contented, on the contrary he also had described the name of the clan of the tribe they were belonged to, which indicates how much he was diligent in the genealogical matters.<sup>(15)</sup>

An orientalist of Mr. Joseph Horovitz had written, the sacred life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) of different periods, which Ibne Ishaque had presented in his compilation, is not only in resemblance, but by adding the circumstance of the period of ancient prophets, amplified the subject of Sirat, and made it a history of apostleship.<sup>(16)</sup>

Ibne Ishaque besides the Muslims narratives, also sought binfit from the narratives of non-Muslims and he like Wahab bin Munabbah (H 114 or H 110) who translated word for word the verses of Bible for adding in his book has also ranked him among the authors of the ancient time.<sup>(17)</sup>

## **II. Conclusion**

1. Ibne Ishaque is deemed to be the first biographer of the Holy Prophet (SAW) whose book "Seerat-e-Ibn-Ishaque" has been transmitted to us in a duly compiled and composed position. Ibn-e-Hashaam has copied a major portion of the contents of 'Seerat-e-Ibn-e-Ishaque' in his book, 'Seerat-e-Ibn-e-Hashaam'.
2. Ibn-e-Ishaque obtained traditions from the Non-Muslim narrators as well as from Muslims.
3. It was for the first time that he copied and wrote the texts of the 'Scriptures' along with their word for word translation in his book.
4. As against the writings of all other writers and scholars of Madina, Ibn-e-Ishaq just followed the style of Story-Tellers and amalgamated the sayings of the Holy Prophet (SAW) with the unreliable historical traditions, Public stories, Jewish traditions etc.
5. He had not been careful regarding the authentication of the sources of traditions and the 'chains of narrators'.

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- [3] Ibid, 295
- [4] Ibid,
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- [6] Tarikh Tebra, 92/1
- [7] Ibid, 70/1
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- [11] Tehzib-ul-Tehzib 29/5
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