

Seerah is the answer: Preamble

We live in a world today that is characterized by disparity. Disparity of income, education, opportunity, power, access to necessities of life, and freedom in almost every sphere of life. Simultaneously, it is a world where we like to talk about the importance of equality, non-discrimination, equal opportunity, freedom of all kinds and not just access but the possibility to excel in all spheres. Therefore, it can be said that we live in a world of contradiction. That is why we are plagued with ailments which are characteristic of a life that is full of contradiction, like depression, stress, anxiety, loneliness and schizophrenia. <https://nyti.ms/2DGJu3t?smid=nytcare-ios-share> The highest selling drug in the US is Prozac, an anti-depressant. Other countries are not far behind. Suicide is rampant and strangely it is not the poor and homeless who commit suicide, it is those at the top of the pyramid or dung heap, as you will.

Add to this global warming, a direct result of irresponsible industrialization and industrial farming, massive deforestation for mining, carbon emission in many ways, burning of fossil fuels, industrialized fishing, dumping of effluents, garbage, plastics, chemicals and the pollution from millions of new vehicles on our roads every year. Wars all over the world, which are necessary to keep the military industrial complex in business, while strident calls for peace pay lip service to our hypocritical global culture. Deaths, as long as they are not of rich, white people are not even worthy of mention. Uncounted hundreds of thousands killed and rendered homeless refugees in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan are all simply numbers. Nothing more. There is much more to say but I will let this suffice for now.

The most difficult thing to do in life is to face harsh reality. The temptation to give it a rose tinge is overwhelming. Most do. They despair and perish. Those who don't, are able to work out a plan to either change that reality or to at least save themselves from the ultimate calamity. That is our challenge.

Muslims have become masters of self-deception. We do it in two ways. We cherry-pick moments of glory from our history and imagine that somehow, they reflect positively on ourselves today. Having done that, we go away with a good feeling that serves to lower the alarm of our reality and enables us to go back to sleep. How many times have you heard people saying, 'One day another Salahuddin will arise'? Little do we want to think that the real Salahuddin didn't sit and wait for some Messiah to arise

or descend. He did what needed to be done. But that means action, investment, change of lifestyle, making significant choices and hard decisions. None of which we are willing to do. Yet we have the audacity to imagine that one day, suddenly, we will become the most beloved, powerful, wealthy and influential people in the world.

If that is not collective insanity, what is?

It looks like maybe in our lifetime, my generation is doomed to be relegated to the detritus of history, statistics devoid of all meaning. However, if we continue to work to create pathways to success, perhaps someday this effort will have an effect. I believe that attempting course-correction while worrying ourselves down to rock-bottom at least pre-qualifies us for being saved from the ultimate calamity, because Rasoolullah ﷺ is reported to have said, *"He who does not concern himself with (or worry over) the problems of the Muslim Ummah is not from me."*

I have decided that this is all that I can do and all that I will be questioned about. Because when I meet my Rabb, I will not be asked, "What happened?" I will be asked, "What did you do?"

I try to ensure that I can answer that question. I ask Allah ﷻ for His Mercy.

Question is, 'What is the answer?'

Allah ﷻ sent His Last and Final Messenger Muhammad ﷺ as a mercy to all creation and to teach us how to create a life full of blessing for ourselves and all those around us. Everyone everywhere is searching for answers for the question, "How can we halt this race towards annihilation and create a society that is just, merciful, compassionate and prosperous for everyone who lives in it?"

Allah ﷻ sent Muhammad ﷺ and told us that his life is the answer, the template to be followed for anyone who wants a life that is full of goodness for all concerned. The Seerah is the backbone of the Ummah. It is the Field-book, the Live Demo, of the Qur'an. It is the 'How' for those who know the 'Why'. But strangely we Muslims have ignored the Seerah. The strangest thing in my opinion is not only that the Seerah is not studied but it is not even a subject in our Madaaris. That an Islamic institution of learning can call itself that, while not teaching about the life of Muhammad ﷺ, thanks

to whom we have Islam itself, is something that I find impossible to understand. That too when Allah ﷻ clearly presented the life of His Messenger ﷺ as the best example for us to follow. Allah ﷻ said:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ
وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

Ahzab 33: 21. *Indeed in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad ﷺ) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes in (the Meeting with) Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah a great deal.*

And He said that the reward for following Rasoolullah ﷺ is that Allah ﷻ will love you.

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

A'al Imraan 3: 31. *Say (O Muhammad ﷺ to mankind): "If you (really) love Allah then follow me (emulate me), Allah will love you and forgive your sins. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."*

What better incentives do we need to not only teach the Seerah in our Madaaris and Darul Uloom but in every Muslim home and school across the world? How will we answer Allah ﷻ when we meet Him, if we continue to ignore the life of Rasoolullah ﷺ? But when those who run institutions for the study of Islam, don't consider it essential to study the life of Muhammad ﷺ, what hope is there for others to do so? The reality is that it is in the Seerah, in its study followed by its application that lies its power. If you are selling perfume, you don't give a lecture about its aroma. You open the bottle and let people smell the aroma. Then you don't need to speak, to sell the perfume. The perfume will sell itself. That is the situation with the Seerah of Rasoolullah ﷺ. It is for us to bring the Seerah into our lives, so that the world can see what it was like to live with Muhammad ﷺ.

That is what this series of lectures is about. I have tried to conceptualize and extract eight lessons that we can learn from the life of Rasoolullah ﷺ and apply in our lives today to remake our society on a template of justice, harmony and compassion for all those who live in it. It strikes me how little we know Rasoolullah ﷺ. For example, if he were to walk into our masjid, would we recognize him? Recognize as you would recognize me, for example, i.e. seeing someone you know very well. Or would we look at him and say, "That is an impressive looking man. Wonder who he is?" Bigger question is, what would he say if we were to go up to him and introduce ourselves and say, "Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ, I am a Muslim and I am your Ummati."

The lectures are not for you to simply listen to and enjoy, though I hope you will do that. At the end of each lecture is a page where you are encouraged to list what exactly you intend to do, to inculcate the lesson from the Seerah of Rasoolullah ﷺ about which you just finished reading, into your life. Please write down the changes you intend to make and make them. List the attitudes, habits and behaviors that you will need to give up, change, bring in or consciously reinforce and continue, which will enable you to bring your life in line with the example that Rasoolullah ﷺ set for us. The example of Rasoolullah ﷺ has been well preserved for us by the historians, Muhadditheen and scholars of the Seerah. It is for us to bring it to life, out of the pages of books, by aligning our lives to his blessed life. That way our life will become an act of worship and be filled with the Rahma and Baraka of Allah ﷻ's Mercy.

What we need is 'Thoughtful Practice'. We need to start doing things that we didn't do until now because we need them to align our lives with the life of Rasoolullah ﷺ. We need to stop those things we do today, which take us away from the blessed example of Rasoolullah ﷺ. We need to consciously continue to do those things which are aligned with the life of Rasoolullah ﷺ. The Action Plan page at the end of each section will help you to do this. Please makes notes there and if you need to, use more pages to elaborate your action plan. And then, most importantly, put it into practice. In the end, it is only actions which count and for which we will be rewarded. I ask Allah ﷻ to help us all to live our lives by the Seerah and to fill our lives with its Baraka. I ask Allah ﷻ for His help and acceptance of this initiative and enable us to relive the life that He called, 'A good example for those who look forward to the meeting with Allah ﷻ.'