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Wives of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his Marriage to Aisha (RA)

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Basics of Islam | The Way of Life

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Introduction

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ، نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ،
وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا.
مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ، وَمَنْ يَضِلَّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ.

*Inna AlHamdalilah nahmaduhu wa nastaeenuhu wa nastaghfiruh, wa naoothu billahi
min shuroori an fusinaa wa min sayeeaati aamaalina mayahdihillhu fala mudillalah wa
mayudlil fala haadiya lah*

*Ashadu An Laa Ilaaha illAllah wahdahu la shareeka lah wa ash hadu anna
Muhammadan abduhu wa rasooluh*

“Praise be to Allah, we seek His help and His forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evil of our own souls and from our bad deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides will never be led astray, and whomsoever Allah leaves astray, no one can guide. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, the One, having no partner. And I bear witness that Muhammad (PBUH) is His slave and Messenger.”

Aim of this paper

It is a common fact nowadays that instigators try to distort the image of Islam and unfortunately criticise the Holy Prophet (PBUH) of Islam by smearing his marriage to Aisha and justify their claim by standing up for women rights.

The aim of this paper is to clarify such misconceptions and clear our beloved Prophet of these ridiculed ideologies. This paper will provide understanding to the readers through logical arguments (God willing) as to why this was a natural phenomenon fourteen centuries ago furthermore how such practices still exist today.

A quick overview of Marriage in Islam

Marriage is a religious duty and is a moral safeguard as well as a social necessity.

¹It's been narrated by Anas bin Malik that when a group of men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet enquiring about how the Prophet (PBUH) worshipped (Allah), and when they were informed about that, they considered their worship insufficient. Later after being informed of this, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, *"Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By Allah, I am more submissive to Allah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep and I also marry women. So he who does not follow my tradition in religion, is not from me"*.¹

Marriage serves as a means to emotional and sexual gratification. It is also a form of Ibadah (worship) since it is obeying Allah and his messenger.

²The conditions of Marriage:

'Abdullah (b.Mas'ud) may Allah be pleased with him reported that Allah's messenger (PBUH) said to us: *"O young men, those among you who can support a wife should marry, for it restrains eyes (from casting evil glances) and preserves one from immorality; but he who cannot afford it should observe fast for it is a means of controlling the sexual desire"*.²

³Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet (PBUH) said, *"A women is married for four things, i.e., her wealth, her family status, her beauty, and her religion. So you should marry the religious women (otherwise) you will be the losers."*

'Narrated Usama bin Zaid: The Prophet (PBUH) said, *"After me I have not left any trial more severe to men than women."*⁴

Thoughtful consideration of the Qur'anic instructions and the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) clearly show that marriage is compulsory for men and women who have the means to pay (bridal gift – unless the women makes an exemption) and to support wife and children. Both sides must be free of obstacles and have legal capacity. The women's guardian must be present to wed her and is a criteria for the Nikah (marriage). The prohibition of marriage include blood and milk kinship and there must be no other conditions demanded by either parties which may prevent the Nikah. The bride and groom also must have reached the age of maturity and fully consented.

¹ Sahih al-Bukhari: Book 67, Hadith 1

² Sahih Muslim: Book 16, Hadith 3

³ Sahih al-Bukhari: Book 67, Hadith 28

⁴ Sahih al- Bukhari: Book 67, Hadith 34

⁵Allah says in the Holy Quran –

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا
إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

'Among his signs is this, which he created for you mates from among yourselves that you may dwell in tranquillity with them and he has put love and mercy between your hearts: verily in that are signs for those who reflect'.

Wives of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

⁶Let us briefly discuss the wives of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

- **Khadija bint Khuwaylid (RA)**

She was the first wife of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and bore him 2 sons and 2 daughters. She was first convert to Islam and it is reported in the Seerah that he offered her 20 camels as dowry. Khadija offered moral and financial support to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through her life and died before Hijrah (migration) took place.

- **Sawdah bint Zum'ah (RA)**

She was the second wife of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and was a divorcee. Since she needed protection from her family who were against her conversion, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) offered her that protection. She passed away in 22 AH.

- **Aisha bint Abu Bakar (RA)**

She was the third wife of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and he married her before that migration to Madinah.

- **Hafsa bint Umar (RA)**

She was the daughter of Umar bin Al-Khattab (RA) and was once widowed. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) married her to strengthen ties with Umar and his tribe. She died in 45 AH.

⁵ Holy Quran 30:21

⁶ <https://kalamullah.com/books/prophetmuhammadwithhiswivesbook.pdf>

- **Umm Habeebah bint Abu Sufyan (RA)**

She was the daughter of Abu Sufyan and was a widow, she suffered many hardships due to her father being an enemy of Islam and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) married her to save her from this suffering.

- **Juwariyah bint Harith (RA)**

She was a war captive and was distributed to another person but she did not want to go with him and raised her concerns with the Prophet (PBUH). So he (PBUH) proposed her to marry him so he could pay ransom to the other person. She was a woman of religious mind and spent most of her time in prayers.

- **Zaynab bint Jahsh (RA)**

She was the first cousin of the Prophet (PBUH) and was given to his adopted son Zaid ibn Haritha and later divorced. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was commanded by Allah to marry her, as mentioned in Surah Al-Ahzab which took place in 5 AH.

- **Maymoonah bint Harith (RA)**

She was once divorced and later widowed. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) called her a 'symbol of goodness' as she was fond of freeing slaves and narrator of traditions to Muslim women.

- **Safiyyah (RA)**

She belonged to a Jewish tribe of Banu Nazir, she was a captive and a divorced woman. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) married her and influenced many of her tribe. She died in 50 AH.

- **Zainab bin Khuzimah**

She was the daughter of Khuwalid ibn Abdullah and was a divorcee and also poor. She used to help the poor and was known as Umm Al-Masakin. She died 3 months after the marriage and is buried in Jannat-ul-Baqi.

- **Maria bint Qibtia (RA)**

She came from a wealthy family and was a present from the Chief of Egypt. She gave birth to Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) son Ibrahim by which she rose in esteem and position among other wives. She was the second lady after Khadijah to bore him a son.

There are two more wives of the Prophet (PBUH) who were slaves but this is heavily debated as the reports are regarded as weak.

7 Brief history of the life of Aisha (RA)

Hazrat Aisha bint Abu Bakr (RA) was born 614CE (please bear in mind this is only a historical account without objective evidence) in Mecca to Umm Ruman and Abu Bakr, two of Muhammad's (PBUH) beloved and trusted companions. Aisha (RA) was the third and youngest wife of Muhammad (PBUH).

Aisha was known as the mother of believers and played a very important part in the collection of hadith throughout her life (May Allah be pleased with her).

Aisha's (RA) Marriage to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

⁸Prior to marriage, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) saw a dream about her in which an Angel had presented something to him (PBUH) wrapped in silk. Prophet Muhammad curiously asked the Angel what it was therefore was informed it was his wife. When he (PBUH) unwrapped the silk cover he (PBUH) saw that it was Aisha (RA).

'Narrated by Aisha: 'Allahs Messenger (PBUH) said to (Me), "You have been shown to me twice in (my) dreams. A man was carrying you in silken cloth and said to me, this is your wife. I uncovered it; behold, it was you. I said to myself if this dream is from Allah, He will cause it to come true"⁹.

The majority of traditional hadith sources states that Aisha was married to Muhammad (PBUH) at a young age, although it is hard to put an exact date. In my humble opinion, this could be between the age of 9 and 20 (age of Maturity); and accordingly to Ibn Hisham, Prophet (PBUH) was at the age of 50 plus years. A point to note is that numbering system and record was all down to memory and dependent at that time; there are no sayings in the Qu'ran or by the Prophet in mutawattir ahadith concerning a definitive age. There is nothing objective to pinpoint an age like we do at our time to the precise minute, and all humans are mortal as infallibility is an etiquette of Allah alone.

¹⁰In some of the hadith books such as: Bukhari, Marriage, 38,39; Muslim, Marriage, 70; Abu Dawud, Marriage, 32; Nasai, Marriage, 29; Ibn Majah, Marriage, 13), and that "Aisha was born eight years before the migration"

Allah says in the Qur'an 'Give the women [upon marriage] their gifts [mahr] graciously. If they themselves waive some of it for you, then take and consume it with pleasure and good cheer.' (An-Nisa/Women 4:4)

⁷ https://www.islamawareness.net/marriage_001.html

⁸ www.quranreading.com/blog/a-short-biography-of-hazrat-aish-ra-the-mother-of-the-believers

⁹ Sahih al-Bukhari : Book 67, Hadith 16

¹⁰ www.islamandquran.org/fatwas/did-hz-aisha-marry-our-prophet-at-the-age-of-nine.html

From the above verse we can highlight the importance of maturity whilst being married and it is a requirement in the Arab culture. The marriage of our Prophet with Aisha did not cause any rumours or objections in that century; so Aisha must have been at the age of acceptable maturity. Even in our age, a girl who has attained maturity can marry with anyone she wants.

Asma the elder sister of Aisha, was ten years older than Aisha. It is reported in Ibn Kathir's Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah, as well as in Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani's Taqreeb al-Tehzeeb: Asma died in 73 A.H. at the age of one hundred years. She was ten years older than her sister Aisha."

According to this, Asma must be around 27-28 during the migration (al-hijrat), which makes Aisha 17-18 at the migration (in 622CE).

It is a known fact that she started to live with Muhammad (PBUH) at least two years after the migration. Which suggests, Aisha must be 19-20 when she started to live with Muhammad (PBUH). This is the strongest evidence.

Another version to understand this matter is from the following hadith.

Narrated Ibn `Umar: That the Prophet (PBUH) inspected him on the day of Uhud while he was fourteen years old, and the Prophet (PBUH) did not allow him to take part in the battle. He was inspected again by the Prophet (PBUH) on the day of Al- Khandaq (i.e. battle of the Trench) while he was fifteen years old, and the Prophet (PBUH) allowed him to take Part in the battle.[1] When we take into account that Aisha took part in the preparations before Badr and the war of Uhud as the Seerah suggests, and we consider the duties that a woman would have to fulfil in war, it is evident that Aisha must be at least 16 years old during the Battle of Uhud, which is one year after she started to live with Muhammad (PBUH).

Finally, the following narration; It was also reported by Imam Ahmad that Aisha used to be engaged to Jubair Bin Mutyim who was the son of Al-Mutyim Bin Udai who was a disbeliever, before she got married to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Abu Bakr, father of Aisha, would not have agreed to this engagement after the start of the revelation since this family were disbelievers. This proves that Aisha was born before the start of the revelation, and that she was a girl at a marriageable age even before her marriage to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Aisha (May Allah be pleased with her) was the means of spreading knowledge of the Qur'an and the practices of Muhammad (PBUH). She was blessed with an extraordinary memory and never forgot something once she heard it. She became the scholar, stateswomen and the major resource to all Muslims even today because she possessed all of the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Why was Aisha (RA) instrumental in spreading the knowledge of Islam

An intellectually gifted person was required who would have daily contact with Prophet (PBUH) at the closest and most personal level, to absorb the teachings that he was giving on all aspects of life by his word and actions. Such a person would need to possess the below qualities:

1. An excellent, precise memory to retain a vast amount of detail and accurately.
2. To have the capability to grasp the significance and the principles of the teachings.
3. Power of reasoning, criticism and deduction to resolve problems on the basis of the teachings.
4. Skills and ability to convey knowledge to a wide range of audience.
5. Have the prospect of living for a considerable period of time after the death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in order to send his message to distant generations.

¹¹It is an absolute positive and undeniable historical fact that Aisha (RA) was blessed with all these qualities and carried out this mission. She acted as a teacher and interpreter of Islam, providing guidance to even the greatest of the male companions of Muhammad (PBUH) until she passed away.

Aisha (RA) used to say; *'One of Allah's bounties upon me is that the Messenger of Allah died in my house, while I am still alive. He died between my chest and neck while he was leaning against me. Allah has mixed his saliva with mine at his death.'*¹²

Aisha (RA) lived on and passed away in Madinah at the age of approx. 66, the year 58 AH after dedicating her entire life towards spreading the knowledge of Islam and is buried in Jannatul Baqi.

¹³Misconceptions surrounding Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Marriage to Aisha (RA)

We will now shed light on the following misconception to gain understanding and provide reasoning to those who criticise our beloved Prophet (PBUH).

¹¹ www.guranreading.com/blog/a-short-biography-of-hazrat-aish-ra-the-mother-of-the-belivers

¹² www.Sunnahonline.com/library/history-of-islam/279-death-of-the-messenger-of-allah-the

¹³

https://archive.org/stream/WhyDidProphetMuhammadMarryAishaTheYoungGirl.pdf/WhyDidProphetMuhammadMarryAishaTheYoungGirl_djvu.txt

Is their motive to criticize the Marriage of young girls or is it to distort the picture of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)? Let's now look at the issues surrounding this situation and provide counter argument against it.

Most of the western people are astonished about this fact that the Prophet (PBUH) married Aisha (RA) at the age of 9 while he was 53 years of age. They have ignored the fact that this was nothing unusual fourteen centuries ago and was a natural matter. It is logical to determine that their intention is to condemn and misrepresent the image of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and harm the reputation of Islam.

They have also overlooked the fact that this phenomenon still exists today in countries such as Africa and Asia. Furthermore, such marriages took place long before and after the call of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was born in a society in which early marriages were something ordinary. If we dig further we find that during the period of 'Jahaliya' (the time before Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent), the Quraysh went to such extent that they were burying their daughters alive. Wasn't this banished during the era of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)? Even the enemies of the Prophet (PBUH), who tried to kill him, did not use such marriage as a pretext to distort Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) image and instigate against him.

There were similar marriages happening all around Arabia during the era of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) therefore why are there no emphasis upon the enemies of Islam?

Let us now focus on the Jewish community whereby a stipulation in their religion which allows marrying a girl of 3 years and 1 day old (extreme! I know - but emphasising this fact).

If you look into Commandment of Sanhedrin verses 11, 54 and 55, it is not unusual for an older man to marry a younger girl.

Marriage Age in Europe

¹⁴The marriage in early ages was prevailing in Europe itself, especially the early marriage of Emperors and Kings in the 12th Century for the purpose of creating alliances for continuation of peace.

According to (William of Tyre), As for the Empress of Byzantium 'Theodora', the wife of Manwel, she was 13 years old when she married the Prince of Jerusalem.

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https://archive.org/stream/WhyDidProphetMuhammadMarryAishaTheYoungGirl.pdf/WhyDidProphetMuhammadMarryAishaTheYoungGirl_djvu.txt

The wife of Alexios Kamanos (Aainas), was 12 years old when she married and became the empress before the age of 15. When Andronikos overthrew Alexios by force, he then married his wife (Aainas) although there were about 50 years gap between them. This is not an isolated incident as history shows repeatedly that this was a frequent occurrence. Did Henry the VIII marry Anne Boleyn as an older man to a younger women and dismantling the sacred law of Christianity?

¹⁵Margret Beaufort was married to John de la Pole at the age of 7 in 1450.

Anne de Mowbray, 8th Countess of Norfolk was married to Richard of Shrewsbury in 1477.

Moreover, there are countless registered marriages throughout history which involved both younger girls being married and a younger girl marrying an older guy, however the instigators shun these statistics.

Age of Consent

¹⁶AVERT, an international charity organisation interested in studying the HIV/AIDS disease, mentioned a detailed table in their website about age of consent worldwide i.e. the legal age to practice sexual intimacy.

AVERT stated that; the Japanese and the Argentinian people can legally practice intimacy at the age of 13 together with many more countries. A statistic taken between 1880-2017 show that the age of consent has risen from 10 years in 1880 at many states in USA to 13 years of age in 2017, at countries such as Spain, Portugal and Brazil.

Conclusion

Early marriages still exist in the 21st century, and is even practiced by European people; therefore, why is the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) blamed for such marriage which took place fourteen centuries ago? This clearly demonstrates the non-credibility of such instigators and their hidden agenda to distort the image of Islam and its Prophet (May Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon Him).

We find that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a champion in women's rights and treated his wives with love and respect. If we look deeply into the life of Aisha (RA) she dedicated her whole life in teaching the religion of Islam. If she was held against her will and was not treated right; then there would be no dedication after the passing of Muhammad (PBUH) and she would have perhaps remarried.

Finally, in order to make the picture clearer to the instigators, if you were to compare a European or American girl to an African or Asian girl who suffers from poverty, generally the girl in poverty would be more mature at an earlier age due to harshness

¹⁵ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_child_brides

¹⁶ <http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/primary-sources/24>

which reality possesses i.e. cooking, cleaning, looking after younger children, travelling long and far for food and water. However, a modern European or American girl would be living comfortably with ease and would generally deal with big responsibilities at later stage in life.

Now, an Arab girl fourteen centuries ago would be accustomed to similar struggles to the modern day African or Asian girl striving in poverty and would commonly get proposals for marriage at a tender age. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent as a mercy to mankind and after Prophethood he did not make any major decisions without the revelation/inspiration from Allah the Exalted. Every action he followed was for a strong purpose including his marriage to Aisha which manifested itself with her dedication to teaching after the death of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).