



"THE MARRIAGES OF THE HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH)"

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[Note: Many anti-Islamic sites spread misconceptions relating to our Beloved Holy Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) marriages. We present here an article that will clear our Beloved Holy Prophet (pbuh) off these blasphemous charges. May Allah guide the opponents of Islam aright, Aameen!]

The several marriages that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) contracted have been much misunderstood and subjected to derogatory remarks beyond all limits of justice and decency. Notwithstanding the fact, that the institution of polygamy existed before the advent of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and a majority of Biblical prophets were polygamous, our critics single him out "heaping abuses, calumny and derogatory epithets, upon him." ¹ The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) contracted a number of marriages after the age of fifty-three. The accusation of being licentious is nothing but a product of their own fertile imagination. Dr. Besant refutes this assertion: "But do you mean to tell me that the man who in the full flush of youthful vigour, a young man of four and twenty (24), married a woman much his senior, and remained faithful to her for six and twenty years (26), at fifty years of age when the passions are dying married for lust and sexual passion? Not thus are men's lives to be judged. And you look at the women whom he married, you will find that by every one of them an alliance was made for his people, or something was gained for his followers, or the woman was in sore need of protection." ²

The famous author of the book called "Mohammad and Mohammedanism", Bosworth Smith explains: "It should be remembered, however, that most of Mohammad's marriages may be explained at least, as much by his pity for the forlorn condition of the persons concerned as by other motives. They were almost all of them with widow who were not remarkable either for their beauty or their wealth, but quite the reverse." ³ The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) contracted marriages either for the protection of the females whose husbands had died for the cause of Islam or for cementing the bonds of love with those who could by their position and influence be of service to Islam or for the benefit of humanity at large. "In every single case it was a personal sacrifice on the part of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to have contracted the marriage, or circumstances obliged him to do so whilst there was as yet no law limiting the number of wives." ⁴ The ladies who married the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did so of their own volition. None of them was forced into marriage. The youthful days of the Prophet prior to the beginning of revelation, "were free from every blemish; neither his worst enemies during his life nor the mud-

slinging critics of the later times have ever been able to find the slightest fault with this critical period of his life. His veracity, chastity, innocence and pureness of heart were proverbial for he never indulged in anything unbecoming of a true should youth like him." ⁵ From twenty-five years up to the age of fifty he remained with a wife older than him. During this period of his age he remained devoted to his wife and even after her death he remembered her with love and compassion." ⁶

It is narrated on the authority of Jabir ibn Abdullah that Abu Jahl and some of the chiefs of the Quraish approached the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said: "If you are anxious for leadership, we are prepared to declare you our leader, if you need riches we would collect for you an enormous amount of wealth that will suffice not only for you but even for your descendants; if you are impelled by sexual urge, you may chose ten beautiful damsels out of the whole tribe of Quraish. The Holy Prophet kept silent and did not utter a word. When their talks concluded, the Holy Prophet recited the following verse of the Qur'an : "Beneficent God! A revelation from the Beneficent, the Merciful : A Book of which the verses are made plain, an Arabic Qur'an for a people who know – good news and a warning. But most of them turn away, so they hearken not" (41 : 1.4).

The Holy Prophet concluded his reply on the verse : "Then if they turn away, then say: I warn you of a scourge like the scourge of 'Ad and Thamud, (41 : 13)." ⁷ This solitary event is enough to refute the charge of licentiousness. The worldly pleasures had no significance for him. "His was a life of perfect sublimity and single-minded devotion to Allah, absolutely free from the taints of base desires." ⁸

A Western biographer of the Holy Prophet pin-points the common weakness of the occidentals who try to bring in a verdict on the marriages of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him): "Muhammad's married life must not be looked at from an occidental point of view or from that set by Christian conventions. These men and women were not occidentals and they were not Christians. They were living at a period and in a country where the only known ethical standards were theirs. Even so, there is no reason why the codes of America and Europe should be considered superior to those of the Arabs. The people of the West have many things to give to the people of the East. They have much to glean, too, and until they can prove that their way of living is on a higher moral standard than any body else's, they should reserve judgements on other creeds and castes and countries." ⁹

The Holy Prophet lived a simple and modest life. Being the Head of State, the Chief Justice, the Commander-in-Chief, the instructor etc., he was the most busiest man of his time, still he spent considerable part of his nights in prayers and meditation.¹⁰ His furniture was simple (i.e. mats, jugs, blankets etc.). His life was so simple that his wives did not have worldly comforts. Could this be a life of a lustful and passionate man? At the advent of Islam in Arabia the practice of polygamy was common and deeply rooted in the social life." ¹¹ He contracted various marriages in accordance with the custom of the country.

The limitation of the number of wives was fixed at the end of the eighth year of Hijrah and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) had married all his wives before that period. He was commanded by Allah to keep those whom he had already married but was forbidden to marry any more.¹² The Quranic verse, "It is not allowed to take wives after this, (33 : 52) implies that the Holy Prophet, like all his other acts contracted those marriages perfectly in accordance with the will of the Lord. There was a divine purpose behind them and when it was achieved a restriction was placed upon him." ¹³

The above facts clearly belie the wrong notions that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) contracted these marriages in response to physical needs or biological pressures. Those who doubt moral integrity or spiritual excellence of our Prophet, (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) should answer questions such as: "Why did he start his first marriage at the age of 25 years after having had no association with any female? Why did he choose a twice-widowed older lady who was 15 years senior to him? Why did he remain with her until her death when he was over fifty? Why did he accept all those helpless widows and divorcees who possessed no particular appealing qualities? Why did he lead such an austere and hard life, when he could have had an easy and comfortable course? Why did he con-tract most of his marriages in the busiest five years of his life, when his mission and career were at stake? How could he manage to be what he was, if the harem life or passions overtook him? ¹⁴

REASONS FOR THE MARRIAGES:

The factors that prompted the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to contract several marriages are being briefly discussed below:

1. An Ideal Model:

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) being the last and the Final Prophet ¹⁵ and "Mercy for the nations" ¹⁶ was required to present to humanity an ideal and perfect model for all stages of human experience and moral test and for that very reason the Holy Quran calls him an "excellent exemplar." ¹⁷ Mankind learnt from him the best ways. As a husband he was kind, "He lived with one wife and with more than one, with the old and the young, with the widow and the divorcee, with the pleasant and the temperamental, with the renowned and the humble; but in all cases he was the pattern of kindness and consolation." ¹⁸ To be an ideal model he had to undergo the trials and complexities of human behaviour, which were hard and by no means pleasurable. He gave to the world an ideal example of (i) a celibate life up to the age of twenty-five, (ii) a monogamous life with an old widow and (iii) finally a polygamous life after the age of fifty. In each and every aspect, his life was perfect. He indeed is a model for humanity - an excellent exemplar. Such an example could not have been possible without contracting all these marriages.

2. Education of the Ummah:

With the migration of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and the Muslims to Medina, the Islamic society was established. The Muslims were required to conform their social and personal behaviour to the teachings of Islam. The Holy Prophet himself meticulously observed the Quranic commands and regulations and solved difficult problems concerning Muslims' social and political life. The Holy Prophet encouraged Muslims to convey the knowledge they had gained to other Muslims. He paid special attention towards female education. For this purpose the Holy Prophet required fully trained ladies. The ideal way to solve this problem was to personally train some ladies. Who could be more trained and witness to the private life of the Holy Prophet than his wives. "It was not an ordinary work but an important task of vast magnitude which was admirably accomplished by these pious ladies." ¹⁹

3. Preservation of the Holy Prophet's Private Life:

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was undoubtedly, the greatest teacher of mankind. He lived an exemplary life, which was a living commentary on the Holy Quran. "Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed." ²⁰ By marrying with women of varied temperaments he was able to get his private life and actions preserved in a better way in order to set a complete and perfect example to the mankind. It was possible for men to forget many things of his personal life on account of their constant conflict with the outside world but women (house-wives) cannot forget them. It was necessary, therefore, to marry with a number of women of different places and clans having varied tastes, habits and temperaments. Besides, a number of laws and rules of the Shariah concerning women could be promulgated only through wives." ²¹ This, perhaps, is one of the most important reasons for the Holy Prophet's marriages. The wives of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) were required to serve as models of virtue to the Muslims and to teach them all that was "recited in the house, of the messages of Allah and the wisdom." ²² Thus they were required to remember and convey to the Muslims whatever the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) taught them at home.

4. Elimination of Racial and Tribal Distinctions:

By contracting some of the marriages the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) removed the distinctions between different clans and tribes. He eliminated racial and national distinctions and prejudices and upheld piety as criterion of integrity and superiority. He married some of the humblest and poorest women, a coptic girl from Egypt and a Jewess. Thus he removed the distinction of race and creed and gave a practical demonstration of the fact that after accepting Islam all are equal in the sight of Allah and the Shariah revealed by Him.

5. Status of a Divorced Woman:

Divorced women were looked upon as inferior in status and were not allowed to remarry in pre-Islamic era. By marrying a divorced lady the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) taught that such a marriage is not only lawful but desirable to grant a divorced woman an honourable status in the society.

6. Marriage with the Divorced Wife of an Adopted Son:

Some of the Prophet's marriages were for legislative reasons, in order to abolish certain prevailing evil customs and practices. Before Islam an adopted son was considered as a real son and was entitled to all rights and privileges similar to a real son. Islam abrogated this practice. The Holy Prophet demonstrated his disapproval by marrying Hazrat Zainab, who was previously married to Hazrat Zaid, a freed slave, and who was considered his adopted son. Thus he established correct status of an adopted child.

7. Protection of Widows and their Children:

The Holy Prophet also married widowed women. This helped in solving the problem of providing care and protection to widows and their children in peace as well as in war when due to death of large number of male members, women were left with no one to support them.

8. Status of Freed Prisoners of War:

Before the advent of our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) the prisoners of war were taken as slaves. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) set an example by freeing them on ransom and on several occasions without charging any thing. They were encouraged and assisted to settle down through legal marriages, or earning money by working or even educating people. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) not only paid ransom for some and freed them but also married two of the captive women.

9. Political Reasons:

Some of the marriages were political in character. He was concerned for the future of Islam. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was ever anxious to bind his followers belonging to different clans and tribes in mutual love and affection. That was, doubtlessly, the object in marrying Juwairiyah (may Allah be pleased with her), daughter of Haris, the Chief of Bani al-Mustaliq. The whole clan of that tribe and their allies were thus won over to Islam. It was through marriage with Safiyah (may Allah be pleased with her) that the enmity of a section of Jewish Community was neutralised. Similarly by marrying Mariya the Copt, (may Allah be pleased with her) the Holy Prophet developed blood relations with a ruler of great magnitude.

An Ideal Husband:

The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, treated his wives with even kindness and affection. He gave to the mankind best possible example in respect of dealing with wives of different age groups having different temperaments and social status. It is reported from Hazrat Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) the wife of the Holy Prophet that her husband had remarked many a time that "the best of you is he who is good to his wife". And according to a report from Abdullah ibn Umar, the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, declared : "The whole world is a thing to be made use of and the best thing in the world is a virtuous wife."

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- 3 Quoted from Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar, op. Cit.. p. 395.
- 4 Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar, op. Cit. P. 371.
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- 6 Qazi Muhammad Sulaiman Salman Mansoorpuri, Rahmatul-lil-Aalameen (Mercy for the nations), Vol.11, (Islamic Book Foundation, 240.N Samanabad, Lahore), p.114.
- 7 Mahmud Alusi in his commentary of the Holy Quran, Ruh al-Muhammad Ma'ani, (vol.24, p.99, (Murerie Press, Cairo). Quoted from Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, op. Cit. Pp.241-242.
- 8 Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, op. Cit. P.241.
- 9 R.V.C. Bodley, The Messenger – The Life of Mohammed, (London, 1946), quoted from Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi, Muhammad Rasulallah, op. Cit., p.407.
- 10 Al-Quran : Al-Muzammil, 73 : 20 : "Lo ! thy Lord Knoweth how thou keepest vigil sometimes nearly two-thirds of the night or (sometimes) half or a third thereof, as do a party of those with thee..."
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- 12 Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar, Muhammad – the Holy Prophet, op. Cit., p.371.
- 13 Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, op. Cit., p.240.
- 14 Hammudah Abdalati, op. Cit., p.177.
- 15 Al Quran, 33 : 40.
- 16 Ibid., 21 : 107.
- 17 Ibid., 33 : 21.
- 18 Hammudah Abdalati, op. Cit., p.177.
- 19 Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, op. Cit., p.241.
- 20 Al-Quran, 53 : 3.4.
- 21 Dr. Majid Ali, MUHAMMAD – The Final Messenger, (Idarah-I-Delli, Delhi, 1980), p.386.
- 22 Al-Quran, 33 : 34.
- 23 Wives of the Prophet by Fida Hussain, (Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1979), p.180.