Aisha - Youngest Wife of the Prophet Muhammad

Short Biography of Aisha Bint Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq

Aisha was the youngest and favorite wife of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Aisha (r.a) was a great Muslim lady. She was very talented and had a wonderful memory. A Muslim scholar, she is credited with narrating more than two thousand hadith. She had a great love of learning and became noted for her intelligence, learning and sharp sense of judgement.Aishah (r.a) memorized quite a number of Surahs of the Qur'an. Her father was a man of learning and she inherited his love of knowledge.

Following the death of his first wife of 25 years, Khadija bint Khawilad, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)* entered into twelve other marriages. Aisha Bint Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq was the third and youngest wife, and the only child bride.

Aisha - Child Bride

Aisha was born in Mecca in 614 CE to Umm Ruman and Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq, the closest friend of the Prophet Muhammad (sal) and the first khalifa of Islam. Most accounts report that Aisha was six years old at the time of her marriage and nine when the marriage was consummated. She only went to live with him when she was 12 (some say 15). Although the bridal age of Aisha sometimes draws criticism, child marriages in 7th century Arabia were culturally and morally acceptable, just as they were in Biblical times.

The Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) was known to have an impeccable character, and his marriage to a child bride was an exception to his other marriages. Aisha was the only child and one of only two virgins to marry the Prophet (peace be upon him). His other wives were all widowed or divorced

Why did Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) married young Ayesha Siddiqua (r.a)?

Through the centuries, orientalists have advance numerous accusations and far-fetched theories to discredit Islam and its last Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him). Praise be to Allah alone, all such accusations have been successfully refuted by the Muslims Ummah. Currently, one of the 'reinvented' accusations against the noble character of the Prophet is about his marriage to young Aisha Siddiqa (r.a.).

Two main theories are often advance by orientalists to attack the pure character of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) on his marriage to Aisha (r.a.) at her young age.

A. He was a Pedophile.

B. He was involved in child abuse.

Let's analyze each theory to dig out the truth, through the Guidance of Allah (SWT).

A. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) married Aisha (r.a.) because he was a pedophile?

Definition of a Pedophile:

"Pedophile: also spelled PAEDOPHILIA, psychosexual disorder in which an adult's arousal and sexual gratification occur primarily through sexual contact with prepubescent children. The typical pedophile is unable to find satisfaction in an adult sexual relationship and may have low self-esteem, seeing sexual activity with a child as less threatening than that with an adult." Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998.

The diagnostic criteria for pedophilia according to American Psychiatric Association:

- Over a period of at least 6 months, recurrent intense sexual urges and sexual arousing fantasies involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children.
- The person has acted on these urges , or is markedly distressed by them.
- The person is at least 16 years old and at least 5 years older than the child.

Does the prophet fit the above criteria of a paedophile?

With the above criteria of a pedophile in mind, lets analyze the lifestyle of the prophet and his marriages.

His marriages:

Name of Bride	Bride's age at marriage	Comments

1.Hazrat Khadija Bint Khuwaylid	40	Twice widowed before
2. Hazrat Sawada Bint Zam'a	50	Widow
3. Hazrat A'isha Bint Abu Bakr	9	Started living with the prophet at the age of 9
4.Hazrat Hafsa Bint 'Umar	22	Widow
5.Hazrat Zaynab Bint Khuzayma	30	?
6.Hazrat Ummay Salama Hind Bint Abi Umayya	26	Widow
7.Hazrat Zaynab Bint Jahsh	38	Widow
8.Hazrat Juwayria Bint Al-Haritha	20	Widow
9. Hazrat Umm Habiba Ramla Bint Bint Abi Sufyan	36	Widow
10.Hazrat Safya Bint Huyayya	17	Widow
11.Hazrat Maymuna Bint Al-Haritha	36	Widow
12.Hazrat Maria al-Qibtiyya	17	Virgin, Egyptian

Statistics from the above table:

Percentage of his wives who were 17 years and older = 91 %

Percentage of his wives who were widows = 75%

Comments: The statistics show that the prophet's marriage to Aisha at her young age was an exception and not a norm of his other marriages. Furthermore "a pedophile's main mode of sexual satisfaction is with prepubescent girls", which is contradictory to the 91% of prophet's marriage to women 17 years and over. An unbiased examination of Prophet's life and his marriages to his wives blatantly rejects the notion of his lifestyle fitting that of a pedophile. All his brides were aged widows (except Aisha and Marya).

"It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher."

B. Others claim that the noble Prophet (peace be upon him) indulged in child-abuse when he married Aisha at her young age

Let scrutinize this allegation...

Definition of Child Abuse:

Child Abuse, also called CRUELTY TO CHILDREN, the wilful and unjustifiable infliction of pain and suffering on children. The term can denote the use of inordinate physical violence; unjustifiable verbal abuse; the failure to furnish proper shelter, nourishment, medical treatment, or emotional support; incest; other cases of sexual molestation ; and the making of child pornography. Frequently described by the medical profession as the "battered-child syndrome," abusive treatment of children is almost universally proscribed by criminal statutes. Child abuse can have serious future consequences for the victims involved. Delays in physical growth, impaired language and cognitive abilities, and problems in personality development, learning, and behaviors are common following instances of child abuse or neglect. Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998

Comments: None of the criteria of child-abuse applies to the noble life of the Prophet (pbuh). There is no single incident of any infliction of pain and suffering by the prophet on Aisha or any other human being for that matter. Neither any instance of verbal or sexual abuse can be concluded from the relationship of the prophet with Aisha (r.a.) or any of his wives.

An abused child can have serious future consequences...delayed physical growth, impaired language. learning and behavior...etc (above definition). As one examines the chaste life of Aisha (r.a.), her personality, physical, mental and spiritual development are all contrary to that of an abused child. In fact through the Prophet's marriage and his guidance to Aisha, history testifies that she should be labeled not as an abused child but as a 'blessed child'.

After analyzing and refuting the accusations against the noble character of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the only viable alternative left with us is:

C. The Prophet married Aisha for the benefit of Islam and Humanity

Lets analyze...

1. The Prophet married Aisha primarily for three reasons:

a. To reinforce the friendly relations already existing with Abu Bakr (r.a)(his closest companion).

b. To educate and train Aisha for the purposes of Islam.

c. To utilize her capabilities for the sake of Islam.

2. Her Marriage with the prophet was a *Wahy* (Divine Revelation). She, herself relates from the Prophet. **"He said, 'I saw you in dreams three times. The angel brought you to me and you were clad in white silk. He (the angel) said that it was your consort and he (angel) showed me by opening your face. You are just like that**..." Sahih Muslim, Vol.2, p. 285.

3. Aisha (r.a.) was born after her parents had embraced Islam. Therefore, she was free from the defilement of polytheism right from her birth.

4. In her youth, already known for her striking beauty and her formidable memory, she came under the loving care and attention of the Prophet himself. As his wife and close companion she acquired from him knowledge and insight such as no woman has ever acquired.

Aisha lived on almost fifty years after the passing away of the Prophet. She had been his wife for a decade. Much of this time was spent in learning and acquiring knowledge of the two most important sources of God's guidance, the Qur'an and the Sunnah of His Prophet. Aisha (r.a.) was one of the three wives (the other two being Hafsa (r.a.) and Umm Salama (r.a.) who memorised the Revelation. Like Hafsa (r.a.), she had her own script of the Qur'an written after the Prophet had died.

So far as the Hadith or sayings of the Prophet is concerned, Aisha (r.a.) is one of four persons (the others being Abu Hurayra, Abdullah ibn Umar, and Anas ibn Malik) who transmitted more than two thousand sayings. From her, 2210 Hadith have come, out of which 174 Hadith are commonly agreed upon by both Bukhari and Muslim.

Many of her transmissions pertain to some of the most intimate aspects of personal behaviour which only someone in Aishah's position could have learnt. What is most important is that her knowledge of Hadith was passed on in written form by at least three persons including her nephew Urwah who became one of the greatest scholars among the generation after the Companions.

It is the claim of the Scholars of Islam that without her, half of the *Ilm-I-Hadith* [knowledge, understanding of the Hadith (and Islam)] would have perished.

5. Many of the learned companions of the Prophet and their followers benefited from Aishah's knowledge**.**
Arwa Bin Zubair says,

"I did not find anyone more proficient [than Aisha (r.a.)] in the knowledge of the Holy Qur'an, the Commandments of Halal (lawful) and Haram (prohibited), Ilmul-Ansab and Arabic poetry. That is why, even senior companions of the Prophet used to consult Aisha (r.a.) in resolving intricate issued".

Ibn Qayyim and Ibn Sa'ad, Jala-ul-Afham, vol. 2, p. 26.

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari says:

"Never had we (the companions) had any difficulty for the solution of which we approached Aisha and did not get some useful information from her".

Sirat-I-Aisha, on the authority of Trimidhi, p. 163.

6. As a teacher she had a clear and persuasive manner of speech and her power of oratory has been described in superlative terms by al-Ahnaf who said: "I have heard speeches of Abu Bakr and Umar, Uthman and Ali and the Khulafa up to this day, but I have not heard speech more persuasive and more beautiful from the mouth of any person than from the mouth of Aisha."

The Prophet said,

"The superiority of 'Aisha to other ladies is like the superiority of *Tharid* (i.e. meat and bread dish) to other meals. Many men reached the level of perfection, but no woman reached such a level except Mary, the daughter of Imran and Asia, the wife of Pharaoh."

Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith, Narrated by Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari Hadith 4.643.

Musa Ibn Talha (r.a.) says,

"I did not see anyone more eloquent than Aisha (r.a.)"

Mustadrak of Hakim, vol.4, p.11.

7. Men and women came from far and wide to benefit from her knowledge.

Aishah's great interest in the study of the Qur'an is understandable. She was an eye-witness to a number of revelations and had therefore a clear idea of the circumstances in which they were revealed. It was on her bed alone (and no other consort's) that the Prophet received Wahy (Divine Revelations) several times. This helped her in interpreting the verses.

8. At the time of the Prophet's death, the Prophet's head was on her lap. It was in her quarters that the Prophet was buried.

A Strategic Marriage

Aishah's(r.a) marriage to the Prophet (peace be upon him) represents another cultural norm of her time – marriages which solidified family, tribal or political ties. Aishah's(r.a)

father, Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq, was an early follower of Islam, close personal friend of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and a prominent figure in Makkah. Marriage to Aisha allowed the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Abu Bakr to establish a public alliance, while the young bride received honored status as wife of the Prophet (peace be upon him).And Aishah (r.a) was fortunate to be trained under the care of the greatest teacher of mankind, Prophet Muhammed (sal). This training made her one of the most notable Muslim ladies in Islamic history.

The Prophet's Favorite Wife

Although the marriage was strategic, historical accounts report genuine affection between the two, and Aisha became known as the Prophet's (peace be upon him) favorite wife.Aishah (r.a) was totally devoted to the Prophet Muhammed (sal), her husband, and he loved her dearly.Aishah (r.a) loved and enjoyed serving her husband. She used to do the household work, including grinding flour and baking bread. She would make the beds and do the family's washing. She always kept ready for the Prophet's (sal) ablutions before prayer. She liked what the Prophet (Sal) liked and disliked what he disliked. If Aishah (r.a) loved anyone more than her husband Muhammad (sal) , it was Almighty Allah. This was the teaching of the Prophet (sal).

The Prophet (sal) did not love her only for her physical beauty but also for her intelligence, sound judgment and personality. The prophet (sal) fell ill in 11 AH and Aishah (r.a) nursed him with all the love and care of a devoted wife. It was in her lap that he rested his head when he died, and under the floor of her house that he was buried. The Prophet's Masjid (*Masjid Nabawi*) now stands on that site in Madina, Saudi Arabia.

Aishah's Preference:

Aishah (r.a) was also present at her father's death bed. Abu bakr asked her how many pieces of cloth were used to bury the Prophet (sal) and she told him three. He asked his daughter to wrap him also in three sheets of burial.

Aishah (r.a) saved the place beside her father's grave for her own burial but, after the injury which was to prove fatal, 'Umar the second Khalifah of Islam, sent his son Abdullah to Aishah(r.a) to ask permission for him to be buried beside Abu Bakr. She agreed to Umar's wishing saying, "Today I prefer Umar to myself." Which shows how great she was?

Scholar and Witness to Islamic History

Aishah was reported to have been very beautiful, but it is her piety, intelligence and remarkable memory that make her a notable figure in Islamic history. She absorbed vast religious knowledge from the Prophet (peace be upon him) – including memorizing the entire Qur'an – and was witness to much of the early history of Islam. She helped preserve the details of those events, as well as the details of the private and public life of Muhammad (peace be upon him), by narrating more than two thousand hadith.

Aishah was only 18 when the Prophet (peace be upon him) passed away, but she was already regarded a religious scholar. Over the next four decades, until her own death, Muslims consulted Aishah for her extensive understanding of Qur'an, Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), Islamic teachings and traditions (Sunnah). She helped educate Islamic scholars and took custody of children – some orphans – to raise then in Islam

The Battle of the Camel

The first violent division among Muslims occurred when the third caliph, Uthman, was killed and some suspected that Ali, his successor, conspired in the murder. The battle which ensued, and which Ali won, became known as the Battle of the Camel because Aisha gave directives from a howdah on the back of a camel.

Aishah- a role model for women

Aishah(r.a) always stood for the truth. She taught Islam to many people. She was an authority on many matters of Islamic Law, especially those concerning women.

Her life shows to what height a Muslim women can rise. Before Islam , women had a low status in society ; Islam gave them a very important position.

Islam wants to see a woman develop her talents and contribute to society as a mother and a wife and to remain loyal and chaste. Muslim women can rise to prominence with Islam . Allah the Creator has fixed their rights and duties according to their nature and biological make-up.

Aishah's life is an example for young Muslim girls, who should try to follow her devotion and love for her husband and her special aptitude for knowledge and learning.

Aisha Remembered

Aisha passed away in 58AH at the age of 67 on 17 Ramadhan. Her scholarly contributions to Islam, as well as her pious example, have earned her special status among the "Mothers of the Believers," a term of honor given to all the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

** Muslims invoke Allah's blessings on the Prophet Muhammad whenever his name is mentioned*