

*Why did the Prophet*  
*(may Allah bless him and grant him peace)*  
*marry 'Aisha*  
*(may Allah be pleased with her)*  
*whilst she was at a young age?'*

## Introduction

The marriage of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) to 'Aisha bint Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with them) when she was at quite a young age has been the focus of quite a bit of criticism in the West. Unfortunately, in this Neo-Colonialist Age some of those who profess to be Muslims have themselves become critics. Many Muslims, faced with the overwhelming allegedly "universal" Western liberal values that have permeated almost everyone around them, sheepishly avoid discussion of such "embarrassing" Islamic issues. Insha'Allah, this book will be a contribution to making both Muslims and non-Muslims aware of not only the objective facts regarding the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) marriage to 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) but how to understand it in light of Islam and life in the "modern" world.

Regrettably, for those of us trying to spread the truth of Islam in the West, we often have to agree with the Orientalist W. Montgomery Watt when he wrote: *"Of all the world's great men none has been so much maligned (slandered) as Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace)"* but here,

for a change, we are dealing with something that is an authentic part of Islamic history, not a fictional or fabricated event that Westerners have been deceived into believing is authentic, such as the "Satanic Verses" incident. That a man in his fifties would marry such a young girl -- especially a man who is supposed to be a living example of piety -- is not only difficult for many "modern" Westerners to come to terms with, but it has even gone so far as to stir up disgusting "sexual misconduct" charges. In the face of such criticism, Muslims have not always reacted well. In the past century, when so many Muslims were so "Westoxicated" and ready to monkey Europeans in almost anything, the usual reaction was to deny the sources that reported the alleged "embarrassing problem". To Muslim "modernists", who argued that only a legal ruling found in the Qur'an was Islamically valid, brushing aside this aspect of the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) life was rather easy. They simply denied that it had occurred and attacked the sources which reported it. Fortunately for Muslims, the apologies of these "Uncle Toms of Islam" have faded into the border to a large extent. However, there are still many Muslims out there who try to get around what they see as a problem by ignoring authentic Islamic sources whilst claiming to be followers of the Ahl as-Sunnah (Orthodox Sunni Muslims). Many other Muslims possibly wonder whether the story is authentic and how to understand it if it is.

Through the centuries, Orientalists' have advanced numerous accusations and far-fetched theories to discredit Islam and its last Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). Praise be to Allah alone, all such accusations have been successfully refuted by the Muslim Ummah. Currently, one of the 'reinvented' accusations against the noble character of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) is about his marriage to young 'Aisha Siddiqa (may Allah be pleased with her).

### **The Islamic Evidence of 'Aisha's (may Allah be pleased with her) Age**

Due to the apparent ignorance of many Muslims, possibly due to reading "modernist" apologetic literature let's take a look at what the authentic sources of Islam say about the age at which 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) married the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) is in order. This way, before we move on to an analysis of the facts, we will first establish what the authentic Islamic facts are. At this point, it should be mentioned that it is absolutely pointless from an Islamic standpoint to say that the age of 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) is "not found in the Qur'an", since the textual sources of Islam are made up of both the Qur'an and the Sunnah - and the Qur'an tells us this. Now in regards to what the authentic Islamic sources actually say, it may come as a disappointment to some "modern" and "cultured" Muslims that there are four ahadith in Sahih al-Bukhari and three ahadith in Sahih Muslim which clearly state that 'Aisha was

“nine years old” at the time that her marriage was consummated with the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). These ahadith, with only slight variation, read as follows:

“Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was betrothed (zawaj) to her when she was six years old and he consummated his marriage when she was nine years old, and then she remained with him for nine years”.<sup>ii</sup>

Of the four ahadith in Sahih al-Bukhari, two were narrated from ‘Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) (7:64 and 7:65), one from Abu Hishaam (5:236) and one via ‘Ursa (7:88). All three of the ahadith in Sahih Muslim have ‘Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) as a narrator. Additionally, all of the ahadith in both books agree that the marriage betrothal contract took place when ‘Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) was “six years old”, but was not consummated until she was “nine years old”. Additionally, a hadith with basically the same text (matn) is reported in Sunan Abu Dawood. Needless to say, this evidence is -- Islamically speaking -- overwhelmingly strong and authentic, Muslims who deny it knowingly come out of the folds Islam.

This evidence having been established, there doesn't leave much room open for debate about ‘Aisha's age amongst believing Muslims. Until someone proves that in the Arabic language “nine years old” means something other than “nine years old”, then we should all be firm in our belief that she was “nine years old”. In spite of these facts, there are still some Muslim authors that have somehow (?) managed to push ‘Aisha's age out to as far as “fourteen or fifteen years old” at the time of her marriage to the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). It should come as no surprise, however, that none of them ever offer any proof, evidence or references for their opinions. This can be said with the utmost confidence, since certainly none of them can produce sources more authentic than the hadith collections of Imams al-Bukhari and Muslim! Based on the research, I feel that there is a common source for those who claim that ‘Aisha's age was “fourteen or fifteen years old” at the time of the marriage. This source is “The Biographies of Prominent Muslims” which is published in book form, on CD-ROM and is posted in several places on the Internet. Just another example of why going to the sources is important.

Let's probe some of the Orientalist' charges in detail in the light of modern research, historic evidence and the Islamic sources of the Qur'an and the Sunnah to separate truth from falsehood, and display to the world that Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) is indeed an exemplary for all of mankind.

Two main theories are often advanced by Orientalists to attack the pure character of Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) on his marriage to ‘Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) at her young age;

- A. He was a Paedophile.
- B. He was involved in child abuse.

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

### **A. He was a Paedophile?**

In the Encyclopaedia Britannica the definition of a Paedophile is as follows:

*“Paedophile: also spelled PAEDOPHILIA, psychosexual disorder in which an adult's arousal and sexual gratification occur primarily through sexual contact with prepubescent children. The typical paedophile 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.”<sup>iii</sup>*

In the Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary it states: "*pe.do.phil.ia n [NL] (1906): sexual perversion in which children are the preferred sexual object -- pe.do.phil.i.ac or pe.do.phil.ic adj.*"<sup>iv</sup>

The diagnostic criteria for paedophilia according to the American Psychiatric Association:

1. 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.
2. The person has acted on these urges, or is markedly distressed by them.
3. The person is at least 16 years old and at least 5 years older than the child or children.<sup>v</sup>

*"In addition to their paedophilia, a significant number of paedophiles are concomitantly or have previously been involved in exhibitionism, voyeurism, or rape".*<sup>1vi</sup>

### **Does the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) fit the above criteria of a paedophile?**

With the above criteria of a paedophile in mind, let's analyze the lifestyle of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and his marriages.

Name of bride	Age at marriage	Age of the Prophet
Khadija	40	25
Sawda	50	50
Aisha	9	53
Hafsa	22	55
Zaynab bint Khuzayma	30	55
Umme Salma	26	56
Zaynab bint Jahash	35	58
Juwariya	20	57
Umme Habiba	36	57
Safiya	17	58
Maymuna	36	59

### **His marriages:**

Statistics from the above table: Percentage of his wives who were 17 years and older = 91% and the percentage of his wives who were widows = 64%.

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

Moreover, according to the criteria in the references cited above in Synopsis of Psychiatry, a vast majority of paedophiles possess a history of exhibitionism, voyeurism, or rape. Again, there is no single reference from either religious or secular sources that the noble Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) ever indulged in such heartless behaviour (Allah forbid). This truth is observed and accepted by both Muslims and unbiased non-Muslims scholars.

<sup>1</sup> Voyeurism is the recurrent preoccupation with fantasized or acts that involve seeking out or observing people who are naked, or are engaged in grooming or in sexual activity.

Annie Bessest writes: *“It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), 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.”*<sup>vii</sup>

**B. He was involved in child abuse:** Others claim that the noble Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) indulged in child-abuse when he married ‘Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) at her young age. Let’s scrutinise 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 or rape; 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 behaviour are common following instances of child abuse or neglect.”*<sup>viii</sup>

Comments: None of the criteria of child-abuse applies to the noble life of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). There is no single incident of any infliction of pain and suffering by the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) on ‘Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) 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 (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) with ‘Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) or any of his wives.

An abused child can have serious future consequences...delayed physical growth, impaired language. Learning and behaviour...etc (above definition). As one examines the chaste life of ‘Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her), her personality, physical, mental and spiritual developments are all contrary to that of an abused child. In fact through the Prophet’s (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) marriage and his guidance to ‘Aisha, history testifies that she should be labelled not as an abused child but as a ‘blessed child’.

After analyzing and refuting the accusations against the noble character of Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), the only possible alternative left with us is, why did the Prophet’s (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) marry ‘Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) whilst she was so young?

### **The Prophet’s (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) Marriages in Perspective**

To put all of this in perspective without undue apologies -- the first thing that one should be aware of is that ‘Aisha was the third wife of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), not the first. Prior to this, the Prophet’s (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) first and only wife for twenty-five years was Khadijah bint al-Khuwaylid, who was about fifteen years older than him. He married Khadijah when she was forty and he was twenty-five -- which might be called the years of a male’s “sexual prime” -- and stayed married only to her until her death. Just after Khadijah’s death, when he was around fifty years old, the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) married his second wife Sawdah bint Zamah.

It was after this second marriage that the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) became betrothed to ‘Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her). She was the daughter of Abu Bakr, one of the Prophet’s (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) closest friends and devoted followers. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) was one of the earliest converts to Islam and

hoped to solidify the deep love that existed between himself and the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) by uniting their families in marriage. The betrothal of Abu Bakr's daughter 'Aisha to Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) took place in the eleventh year of Muhammad's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) Prophethood, which was about a year after he had married Sawdah bint Zamah and before he made his Hijra (migration) to al-Madinah (Yathrib). As mentioned above, the marriage with 'Aisha bint Abu Bakr was consummated in Shawwal, which came seven months after the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) Hijra from Makkah to al-Madinah. At the time of his marriage to 'Aisha, the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was over fifty years old.

It should be noted that the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) marriage to 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) was an exceedingly happy one for both parties, as the hadith literature attests. 'Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, was his favourite wife and the only virgin that he ever married. After emigrating to al-Madinah, Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, married numerous other wives, eventually totalling eleven in his lifetime. Even though we do not have time to go into the details of each one of them here,<sup>2</sup> each of these marriages was done either for political reasons, to strengthen the ties of kinship or to help a woman in need. Quite a few of the wives were widows, older women or had been abandoned and thus were in need of a home. Additionally, it should be mentioned that the same collection of Muslim hadith literature that tells us that 'Aisha was only nine years old at the time of the marriage it also tells us that the marriage was Divinely ordained:

Narrated 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said (to me), *"You have been shown to me twice in (my) dreams. A man was carrying you in a silken cloth and said to me, 'This is your wife.' I uncovered it; and it was you. I said to myself, 'If this dream is from Allah, He will cause it to come true."*<sup>ix</sup>

Thus like everything that the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) did, there was wisdom behind it and lessons to be learned from it. The wisdom behind such incidents provides us guidance on the basis of human morality, exposes the double standards of misguided hypocrites from other religions that criticize Islam and much more. But more on that subject below . . .

### **Mother of the believers 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her)**

In the eleventh year of the Prophethood (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) i.e. the year Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her) died, the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) considered getting married. He was fifty, so he proposed to 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) the daughter of 'Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) his friend and the first one who believed in his Prophethood from the men. When she was six he contracted a marriage with her but did not consummate it for a period of three years until she was nine, which was after the Hijra. However, at the time in which he contracted the marriage with 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) he married Sawda (may Allah be pleased with her). In the first year of the Hijra, after the brotherhood between the *Ansar*<sup>3</sup> and *Muhajirin*<sup>4</sup> had been instituted, the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) consummated his marriage with 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) and he housed her next to the house of Sawda (may Allah be pleased with her) close to the Mosque. He allowed his first companion and friend 'Abu Bakr as-siddiq (may Allah be pleased with him) to come to see him in his house at his daughter's home.

### **Age of marriage**

'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) was the only virgin the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) married. She stayed in the company of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) for 9 years. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was 53 and 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) was 9 years old.<sup>x</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to my book "Why the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) married 11 wives? For details"

<sup>3</sup> Those who helped the Muslims settle in Madinah.

<sup>4</sup> Those who migrated with the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) to Madinah.

### **A learnt Scholar**

She was 18 years old when the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) passed away from this world and so she lived with the Messenger of Allah for 9 years until she passed away at the age of 65. She has narrated 2,210 traditions from the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) from which 174 are in the Sahih of Imam Bukhari and Muslim.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) is reported to have said, "Take half of your religion from this Humayra (red-faced lady)."

Imam Zuhri Tabi'i said, "Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) was the most learned among the Muslims – senior and learned Companions of the Prophet consulted her."

'Urwah ibn Zubayr said that, "Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) was the most scholarly person in the sciences of the Quran, poetry, fiqh, medicine, history of the Arabs, their genealogy, and was most competent in distinguishing between the lawful and unlawful. She ranked, with 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, among the five most learned Muslim Companions of the Prophet."

In his book, Al-Isabah, Ibn Hajar (may Allah's mercy be upon him) quotes Abu Burdah (may Allah be pleased with him), who quoted his father as saying, "*Any time we found something difficult to understand we asked 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) about it, we would find that she was knowledgeable about the matter.*"

Similarly, Ata ibn Abi Rabah (may Allah be pleased with him) once said, "*Of all people, 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) was the one with the most extensive legal knowledge and she could offer the most informed opinions on other people's characters.*"

'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) used to consult 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) in all matters pertaining to women, as well as questions relating to the Messenger of Allah's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) domestic affairs. 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) used to consult other women as well; for example, he consulted his daughter Hafsa (may Allah be pleased with her) concerning the maximum period of time a man should be absent from his wife in the fulfilment of military duties. In response, Hafsa (may Allah be pleased with her) voiced the view that a husband should not be away from his wife for more than four months. 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with her) in turn, adopted his daughter's opinion and set four months as the maximum length for the missions on which men could be sent away.<sup>xi</sup>

'Aisha (as) was so young, yet she was so willing to learn and as a result she had become one of seven legal jurists out of ten thousand companions of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) at the age of only eighteen years old.

So we find that 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) was the only virgin to be married to the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). We also find that she carried the mission of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) after his demise from this world.

### **Demise**

Shaykh Ahmad Raza Khan writes in Irfan-e-Shariat: She passed away on Tuesday the 17<sup>th</sup> of Ramadhan, in 58 AH. Her funeral was lead by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be please with him). She was to be buried at night, as per her wish, in the cemetery of Madinah, Jannatul-Baqi.<sup>xii</sup>

## **Lesson for generations to come**

According to Judaism, Christianity and Islam, right and wrong are ordained by Almighty Allah. As such, morality does not change over time based on our whims, desires or cultural sensitivities. As will be demonstrated, the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) Muhammad's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) marriage to 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) viewed both in the light of Absolute Morality and the cultural norms of his time, was not an immoral act, but was an act containing valuable lessons for generations to come. Additionally, this marriage followed the norms for all Semitic peoples, including those of Biblical times. Based on this, and other information that will be provided below, it is grossly hypocritical for Christians to criticize the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) marriage to 'Aisha, whilst she was at such a young age. In case Christian readers are under the false impression that their values today are timeless and somehow reflect those of Biblical times, please consider the following points which are directly related to the question of, at what age a person is properly ready to be married:

## **Age of Marriage in Biblical Times**

Keeping in mind the ideas of "political correctness" and "absolute morality", in Biblical times the age at which a girl could marry was puberty. However, during the Middle Ages it was usually twelve years old. Now in most "Christian" countries it is between fourteen and sixteen years old. We live in a time where some places allow partners of the same sex to legally marry, but consider an eighteen year old boy who sleeps with a sixteen year old girl a "statutory rapist". So even though Christians might disagree with much of what is becoming all too prevalent in Western society today -- whether it be drug abuse, gay marriages or abortion -- they too have been swallowed up (possibly unknowingly) by the ugly monster of "moral relativism".

None of the sources report that anyone from the society at that time criticized this marriage due to 'Aisha's young age. On the contrary, the marriage of 'Aisha to the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was encouraged by 'Aisha's father and mother and was welcomed by the community at large. It is reported that women who wanted to help the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), such as Khawlah bint al-Hakeem, encouraged him to marry the young 'Aisha. Due to the Semitic culture in which they lived, they certainly saw nothing wrong with such a marriage.

## **Puberty, Maturity and Marriage**

The above points have been presented quite clearly, however, some additional details upon a few of the them is worthwhile. An interesting article on the age at which people married in Biblical times is [Ancient Israelite Marriage Customs](#), by Jim West, ThD -- a Baptist minister. This article states that:

*"The wife was to be taken from within the larger family circle (usually at the outset of puberty or around the age of 13) in order to maintain the purity of the family line".*

This is just one reference to the fact that the onset of puberty was considered the age at which young people could marry. Hence, the fact that people in Biblical times married at an early age, is widely endorsed. While discussing the meaning of the word 'almah, which is the Hebrew word for "young woman" or "adolescent female", Gerald Segal says:

*"It should be noted, however, that in biblical times females married at an early age" <sup>xiii</sup>*

In spite of its somewhat arrogant Western talk of "primitive cultures", [An Overview of the World's Religions](#) makes it clear that puberty is an age old symbol of adulthood:

*"Almost all primitive cultures pay attention to puberty and marriage rituals, although there is a general tendency to pay more attention to the puberty rites of males than of females. Because puberty and marriage symbolize the fact that children are acquiring adult roles, most primitive*



*cultures consider the rituals surrounding these events very important. Puberty rituals are often accompanied with ceremonial circumcision or some other operation on the male genitals. Female circumcision is less common, although it occurs in several cultures. Female puberty rites are more often related to the commencement of the menstrual cycle in young girls.”*

### **Some female authors agree:**

*“Puberty is defined as the age or period at which a person is first capable of sexual reproduction, in other eras of history, a rite or celebration of this landmark event was a part of the culture.”<sup>xiv</sup>*

“Getting your period” marks a rite of passage for young girls entering womanhood (From the Women's Resource Centre).

Another contemporary reference relating marriage age to puberty is an article on Central Africa, which says: “. . . *women marry soon after puberty*”.<sup>xv</sup> The previous quotations, and plenty of others which were not used, should prove to any intelligent person what anthropologists and historians already know: in centuries past, people were considered ready for marriage when they reached puberty.

It should be mentioned that from an Islamic point of view, many problems in society today can be traced back to the abandonment of early marriage. Due to the way that Almighty Allah has created man and woman, i.e. with strong sexual desires, people should marry young. In the past, this was even more true since life expectancy was very low (i.e. you were considered “old” if you made it to 40!). Not only does marriage provide a legal outlet for people with strong sexual desires, but it usually produces more children. One of the main purposes of marriage is to produce children – “be fruitful and multiply” as the Bible says (Genesis 8:17). This was especially important in the past, when people did not live for as long as they do now and the infant mortality rate was much higher.

### **The Age of Puberty**

Even though we have established that puberty has been the historical, cultural and religious norm for indicating readiness for marriage, some may wonder at which age puberty normally takes place. This is somewhat meaningless in regards to our specific discussion of Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and ‘Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) since the hadith literature makes it clear that she had reached puberty. However, in regards to puberty and at what age most girls have their first menstrual cycle, ‘Abdul-Hamid Siddiqi says:

*“Islam has laid down no age limit for puberty for it varies with countries and races due to the climate, hereditary, physical and social conditions. Those who live in cold regions attain puberty at a much later age as compared with those living in hot regions where both male and female attain it at a quite an early age. “The average temperature of the country or province,” say the well-known authors of the book Woman, “is considered the chief factor here, not only with regards to menstruation, but also with regards to the whole of sexual development at puberty.”<sup>xvi</sup>*

Raciborski, Jaubert, Routh and many others have collected and collated statistics on the subject. Marie Espino has summarised some of the data as follows: “(a) *The limit of age for the first appearance of menstruation is between nine and twenty-four in the temperate-zone;* (b) *The average age varies widely and it may be accepted as established that the nearer the Equator, the earlier the average age for menstruation.*”<sup>xvii</sup>

Additionally, an article entitled ‘*Puberty in Girls*’ by an Australian government Public Health organization, says: “*The first sign of puberty is usually a surge of growth: you become taller; your breasts develop; hair begins to grow in the pubic area and under the arms. This may start from 10 years to 14 years - even earlier for some and later for others.*”

An article ‘*Physical Changes in Girls During Puberty*’ has this to say:

*“During puberty, a girl's body changes, inside and out, into the body of a woman. The changes don't come all at once, and they don't happen at the same time for everybody. Most girls start showing physical changes around age 11, but everyone has her own internal schedule for development. It's normal for changes to start as early as 8 or 9 years of age, or not until 13 or 14. Even if nothing looks or feels different yet, the changes may have already begun inside your body.”*

### **Not Much Ado Back Then**

Above, it was established, that fact that getting married at puberty was an accepted practice amongst not only today's “primitive cultures”, but specifically amongst the Semitic (i.e. Hebrew, Arab, Syriac, etc.) peoples of the Middle East. In order to provide additional proof that Muhammad's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) marriage to 'Aisha did not raise any eyebrows at that time, I here submit quotations from two Western female scholars who have studied Islam in detail:

“It is not clear just when the marriage actually took place. According to some versions, it was in the month of Shawwal of the Year 1, that is, some seven or eight months after the arrival at Medina; but, according to others, it was not until after the Battle of Badr, that is, in Shawwal of the second year of the Hijrah. In no version is there any comment made on the disparity of the ages between Mohammed (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and 'Aisha, or on the tender age of the bride who, at the most, could not have been over ten years old and who was still much enamoured (charmed) with her play”<sup>xviii</sup>

Another author, Karen Armstrong, has this to add: “Tabari says that she was so young that she stayed in her parents' home and the marriage was consummated there later when she had reached puberty”.<sup>xix</sup> This further establishes that the marriage took place at puberty and that, as such, no eyebrows were raised. “Tabari”, it should be mentioned, refers to Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Jareer al-Tabari (225-310 AH / 839-923 CE), who was a great Muslim scholar who is well known in the West for his Qur'anic commentary and history of the world.

### **Happy marriage?**

Many will readily agree with the information above, but still may harbour reservations about whether a marriage to an older man could be happy for such a young girl. Putting aside the modern Western notions of “happiness” for a moment, the marriage of 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) and the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was a mutually happy and loving one as in expressed in numerous hadith and seerah books. Happy marriages often occur between people with a fairly large difference in ages is known among psychologists:

Theodor states: *“When the differences (in ages) is great, e.g. exceeds fifteen to twenty years, the results may be happier. The marriage of an elderly (senescent) not, of course, an old (senile) man to a quite young girl, is often very successful and harmonious.”*<sup>xx</sup>

### **To establish a law**

Historically, the age at which a girl was considered ready to be married has been puberty. This was the case in Biblical times, as we will discuss below, and is still used to determine the age of marriage in what the culturally arrogant West calls “primitive societies” throughout the world. As the ahadith about 'A'isha's (may Allah be pleased with her) age shows, her marriage took place at least three years before the consummation of the marriage. The reason for this was that they were waiting for her to come of age (i.e. to have her first menstrual period). Puberty is a biological sign which shows that a woman is capable of bearing children. Can anyone logically deny this? Part of the wisdom behind the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) Muhammad's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) marriage to 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) just after she reached puberty is to firmly establish this as a point of Islamic Law, even though it was already cultural norm in all Semitic societies (including the one Jesus, upon whom be peace, grew up in). The large majority of Islamic jurists say that the earliest time which a marriage can be consummated is at the

onset of sexual maturity (bulugh), meaning puberty. Since this was the norm of all Semitic cultures and it still is the norm of many cultures today -- it is certainly not something that Islam invented.

The criticism of Muhammad's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) marriage to 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) is something relatively new, in that it grew up out of the values of "Post Enlightenment" Europe. This was a Europe that had abandoned (or at least modified) its religious morality for a new set of humanist values where people used their own opinions to determine what was right and wrong. It is interesting to note that Christians from a very early time criticised (again hypocritically) the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) practice of polygamy,<sup>5</sup> but not the marriage to 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her). Certainly, those from a Middle Eastern Semitic background would not have found anything to criticise, since nothing abnormal or immoral took place. It was European Christians who began to criticise Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) on this point, not ones who were in touch with their Semitic roots.

### **Responsibility**

It is upon reaching the age of puberty that a person, man or woman, becomes legally responsible under Islamic Law. At this point, they are allowed to make their own decisions and are held accountable for their actions. It should also be mentioned that in Islam, it is unlawful to force someone to marry someone that they do not want to marry. The evidence shows that 'A'isha's (may Allah be pleased with her) marriage to the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was one which both parties and their families agreed upon. Based on the culture at that time, no one saw anything wrong with it. On the contrary, they were all happy about it.

### **Adult status**

Society's ideas of love, family and marriage are much different in the so-called "modern" and "civilised" West of today than they were in Biblical or Qur'anic times. Unfortunately, many of us carry the baggage of "romantic love" and ideas about sex that have managed to poison our minds since the Europeans (and their ideas) came to dominate the globe. These ideas have not only leaked into the minds of Muslims, but actually been embedded into their very thoughts. As mentioned above, the sad part is that most people do not even realise that they are under such un-Islamic influences. Just to reference the way things have changed, a statement in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* makes it clear that values regarding the proper age of marriage have been changing over the years: ". . . in the United States and parts of Europe the association of adult status with sexual maturity as expressed in the term puberty rites has been unwelcome!"<sup>2</sup>

If you look at the *Oxford Biblical dictionary*, it states the age of Mary at the birth of Jesus, which was ten. So we find that the culture of that time was accepted and not rejected, so why are the West mixing two cultures together, I don't know? When a horse and a donkey mate, the off spring is not a horse nor is it a donkey but it is a mule. It's simple, leave Islam as it is and don't mix the Western culture and Islamic!

When a Welsh resistance leader was captured and brought before the emperor in Rome, he said: "Because you desire to conquer the world, it does not necessarily follow that the world desires to be conquered by you..."

According to many Christians Mary (may Allah be pleased with her) was 14 years old when she gave birth to Jesus.

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<sup>5</sup> Read my book on Frequently Asked Questions about women in Islam for more details?

## **The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) married 'Aisha for the benefit of Islam and Humanity**

Let's analyse...

1. The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) married 'Aisha primarily for three reasons:

- a. To reinforce the friendly relations already existing with Abu Bakr (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 (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was a Wahy (Divine Revelation). She, herself relates from the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). *"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..."*<sup>xxi</sup>

3. 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) 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 (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) 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 (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). 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 Allah's guidance, the Qur'an and the Sunnah of His Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) was one of the three wives (the other two being Hafsa (may Allah be pleased with her) and Umm Salama (may Allah be pleased with her) who memorized the Revelation. Like Hafsa (may Allah be pleased with her), she had her own script of the Qur'an written after the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) had died.

So far as the Hadith or sayings of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) is concerned, 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) 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 'Aisha'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-e-Hadith [knowledge, understanding of the Hadith (and Islam)] would have perished.

Many of the learned companions of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and their followers benefited from 'Aisha's knowledge. Abu Musa al-Ash`ari once said:

"If we companions of the Messenger of Allah had any difficulty on a matter, we asked 'Aisha about it."

"Yahya related to me from Malik from Yahya ibn Said from Said ibn al-Musayyab that Abu Musa al-

Ash'ari came to 'Aisha, the wife of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), and said to her, "The disagreement of the companions in a matter which I hate to bring before you has distressed me." She said, "What is that? You did not ask your mother about it, so ask me." He said, "A man penetrates his wife, but becomes listless and does not ejaculate." She said, "When the circumcised part passes the circumcised part ghusl is obligatory." Abu Musa added, "I shall never ask anyone about this after you."xxii

Arwa Bin Zubair says,

"I did not find anyone more proficient [than 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her)] in the knowledge of the Holy Qur'an, the Commandments of Halal (lawful) and Haram (prohibited), Ilmu-Ansab and Arabic poetry. That is why, even senior companions of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) used to consult 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) in resolving complex issues". xxiii

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".xxiv

### **A Teacher**

5. 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 (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) 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 Aasiya, the wife of Pharaoh."xxv

Musa Ibn Talha (may Allah be pleased with him) says,

"I did not see anyone more eloquent than 'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her)"xxvi

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

'Aisha'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 (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) received Wahy (Divine Revelations) several times. This helped her in interpreting the verses.

6. At the time of the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) death, the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) head was on her lap. It was in her quarters that the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was buried.

The life of 'Aisha is a proof that a woman can be far more learned than men and that she can be the teacher of scholars and experts. Her life is also a proof that a woman can exert influence over men and women and provide them with inspiration and leadership. 'Aisha is a continuing inspiration and role model to today's youth who are diligently searching for an example amongst the pop stars, movie actresses and sports stars. May the memory of her live forever in the heart of the Muslim Ummah and may Allah grant her the highest abode in Paradise...Ameen.

### **Role Model!**

What ever the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) did was to teach the followers, hence, if someone was to marry at a young age, they could see and use the example of the Prophet

(may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and live their life happily following the Prophet of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).

### **Religion and Culture!**

Another answer to such questions is that the rule is this and it's simple, that you can not mix two religions together on any questions (i.e. Islam and Christianity etc.) nor can you mix a religion and a culture together (i.e. Islam and the West). The laws of each religion were sent by Allah (The Exalted) to a particular Prophet (may Allah bless them and grant them peace) and the followers of that time. If it was the case that we can mix culture and religion with each other, why then did Allah (The Exalted) send different scriptures and different Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace)s to guide mankind, would it not suffice to send one book and one Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace)?

### **Enemies Dispute!**

If there was anyone to dispute the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) marriage to 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) then it would be no other than the staunch enemies of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), however, do we find any non-Muslims, pagans and idol worshippers that apposed this marriage at that time? So are those of today to appose this blessed marriage which was a command of Allah (The Exalted) to the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), have a better understanding of the culture at that time?

### **Physically and spiritually near!**

'A'isha's (may Allah be pleased with her) marriage to the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) at an early age allowed her to witness the details of his life and pass them on the succeeding generations. By being both spiritually and physically near to the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) the marriage prepared 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) to be an example to all Muslims, especially women, for all times. She developed into a spiritual, teacher and scholar, since she was remarkably intelligent and wise. Her qualities helped support the Prophet's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) work and further the cause of Islam. 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) the 'Mother of the Believers', was not only a model for wives and mothers.

### **Superstition**

The marriage did away with the pagan Arab superstition that it was a bad omen to be married in the month of Shawwal. They thought that the month carried this omen since the word Shawwal was derived from Shaala, which itself was believed to carry a bad omen. The authentic ahadith indicate that the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and 'A'isha were married in this lunar month.

### **Mature**

'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her) was no ordinary woman. If you consider women who are between the ages of 20-27, most are immature even being passed the age of puberty. However, 'A'isha (may Allah be pleased with her), was such a lady that great companions would respect her and seek advice who was a model for women as well as men of mankind.

It was a marriage agreed by the community at large and not abduction, nor did he want to use her for sexual pleasure and then divorce her. Unlike Henry the VIII (8<sup>th</sup>) who used his wives as he wanted a baby boy to inherit his wealth. Where was the respect of girls and women then? When Henry the VIII did not get what he wanted he either divorced or executed them. Henry VIII married 6 times out of which he divorced two, executed two, one died and one was widowed (she was the lucky one!).<sup>xxvii</sup>

Whatever the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) did was for the betterment of the followers, being Muslims we should accept this fact if there is a question of doubt in our minds. At

the end of the day, he was the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and obeyed His commands.

Those who have not made the effort to understand Islam or don't want to understand will come out with all sorts of slander. We should attempt to make them understand, if they do not then we should pray that Allah (The Exalted) open their hearts.

May Allah (The Exalted) open our hearts and gives us all the understanding of Islam! Ameen.

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xxiv Sirat-l-'Aisha, on the authority of Trimidhi, p. 163.

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