

A Textual Analysis of the Hadīths of Āishah’s Age at the Time of Her Marriage to the Prophet Muhammad (saw)

“Hz. Āişe’nin Hz. Peygamber (s.a.v.) ile Evlendiğindeki Yaşına Dair Hadislerin Metin Tenkidi”

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Özet: Bu makale, Hz. Āişe’nin Hz. Peygamber ile söz kesildiğinde altı, zifafa girdiğine ise dokuz yaşında olduğuna dair hadislerin tenkidi bir tahlilini konu edinmektedir. Bu konuya dair hadisler İslâm’da, genellikle çocuk yaştaki çocukların evlendirilmesinin câiz olduğu inancına yol açmıştır. Bu meseleye yönelik, İslâm dünyasında karışık bir tepki meydana getirmiştir. Bazı kimseler Hz. Āişe’nin, Hz. Peygamberin eşi olarak evine girdiğinde dokuz yaşında olduğunda ısrar ederken, diğer bir kesim de on dokuz yaşında olduğunu savunmuştur. Sözkonusu yaklaşım, Kur’ân-ı Kerim ve hadisler yanında tamamıyla el yazmaları, kitaplar, akademik dergiler, internet, dergiler gibi tamamen yazılı kaynaklardan hareketle ortaya konulmuştur. Bu çalışma, Hz. Āişe’nin yaşının hadislerin rivâyeti esnasında ciddi derecede yanlış rivâyet edildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Kaldı ki, bu olayı tarihî verilere dayalı olarak anlatan rivâyetler güvenilirliğin üst düzeyinde değildir. Bu makale, konuyu nesnel bir noktadan ele almayı önermekte ve şayet Hz. Peygamber (s.a.v.) insanlık için bir model ve hayatı boyunca Kur’ân’a göre hayat sürdürüyse ve Allah Kur’ân’da onun sağlam karakterine şahitlik etmişse, onun altı veya dokuz yaşında, olgunlaşmamış, oyun çağında bir kız çocuğu ile evlenemeyeceği sonucuna ulaşmaktadır.

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Hadisler, Yanlış anlama, Metin Tenkidi, çocuk evliliği, Olgunlaşmamış, Āişe, Hz. Peygamber (s.a.v.)

Introduction

A great misconception prevails as to the age at which Āishah was taken in marriage by the Prophet. The *ahādīth* account that Āishah said she was 6 when betrothed to the Prophet and she married him at the age of nine.

For instance, there are four *ahādīth* in *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*¹ and three *ahādīth*

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¹ al-Bukhārī, Abū ‘Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismail (n.d) *Al-Jami al-Sahih (Sahih al-*

in *Sahih Muslim*² clearly stated that the Holy Prophet (SAW) married 'Āishah when she was simply six years of age and consummated the marriage when she was nine. These *ahādīth*, with only slight variation, read as follows:

'Āishah, narrated that the Prophet(SAW) was betrothed (zawaj) to her when she was six years old and he consummated (*nikāh*) his marriage when she was nine years old, and then she remained with him for nine years.³

Of the four *ahādīth* in *Sahih al-Bukhārī*, two were narrated from 'Āishah⁴ one from Abū Hishām⁵ and one via 'Urwa.⁶ All three of the *ahādīth* in *Sahih Muslim* have 'Āishah as a narrator. Additionally, all of the *ahādīth* in both books agree that the marriage betrothal contract took place when 'Āishah was "six years old", but was not consummated until she was "nine years old". Additionally, 4 *hadīth* with the same text (*matn*) is reported in *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*.⁷

This paper therefore, intends to examine the two positions mentioned above, with a view to discovering whether the *ahādīth* are actually compatible with Islamic teachings or not so as to enable us arrive at reasonable and convincing conclusions.

Argument for Protagonists of the *Ahadith*

It is opposite to examine the argument of the protagonists of the *ahādīth* with a view to comparing these with the views of its antagonists, to enable us arrive at balanced points. Arguments in supports it include:

1. Everyone is a child of the time they live in and therefore must be evaluated according to the cultural context of the relevant time. There are certain values that form a society's customs and when a society is evaluated, these values have to be taken into consideration. Otherwise, where one to attempt to evaluate historical events within today's conditions, one is fated to make mistakes. It is known that during the period when Prophet existed, young girls were married at an early age⁸ and that age difference was not important

Bukhārī), Cairo, Book 7, Number 64, Book 7, Number 65, Book 5, Number 236 and Book 7, Number 88.

² Muslim bin al-Hujjaj bin Muslim al-Qushairi: *Sahih Muslim*, Cairo, 1393 A.H, Book 8, Number 3309, Book 8, Number 3310, Book 8, Number 3311.

³ al-Bukhārī, Abū 'Abdullah,... Op. cit, Volume 7, Book 62, Number 64.

⁴ Ibid, Book 7, Number 64 and Book 7, Number 65.

⁵ Ibid, Book 5, Number, 236.

⁶ Ibid, Book, 7, Number, 88.

⁷ Abu Da'ud, Sulaiman bin al -Ash'ath al- Sijistani, *Sunan Abi Da'ud*, Cairo, 1372 A.H, Book 41, Number 4915: Book 41, Number 4916, Book 41, Number 4917.

⁸ Abdul Muttalib, the grandfather of the Prophet, married Hala bint Uhayb, who was young then. Since he married off his son Abdullah to Amina at an early age at around the same time of his own marriage with Hala, the Prophet was almost of the same age with his uncle Hamza.

in marriage.⁹ Especially in regards to young girls, it should not be forgotten that there was social pressure for this, that they matured earlier due to climatic and geographical conditions and that they were seen as goods that needed to grow in their husband's house. Moreover, this is not a matter just related to girls; boys were also married at ages 8, 9 and 10.¹⁰

2. 'Aishah was the daughter of Abū Bakr, one of the Prophet's closest friends and devoted followers. He was one of the earliest converts to Islam and hoped to solidify the deep love that existed between him and the Prophet by uniting their families in marriage. It should be noted that the Prophet's marriage to 'Aishah was an exceedingly happy for both parties.¹¹ It should be mentioned that the same *Muslim hadīth* that tells that 'Aishah was nine years old at the time of the marriage also tells that the marriage was divinely ordained. For instance, the Prophet saw a dream about marrying her. It is proven in al-Bukhārī that the Prophet said to her:

You were shown to me twice in a dream. I saw that you were wrapped in a piece of silk, and it was said, this is your wife. I uncovered her and saw that it was you. I said, if this is from Allah then it will come to pass.¹²

3. As the *ahādīth* about 'Aishah's age show, her betrothal took place at least three years before the consummation of the marriage.¹³ The reason for this was that they were waiting for her to come of age (i.e. puberty).¹⁴ The large majority of Islamic jurists say that the earliest time a marriage can be consummated is on the onset sexual maturity (*bulūgh*), 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.¹⁵

4. In Islam, it is unlawful to force someone to marry someone that he do not want to marry. The evidence shows that 'Aishah's marriage to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) 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. None of the Muslim sources report that anyone from the society at that time criticized this marriage due to 'Aishah's young age. On the contrary, the marriage of 'Aishah to the Prophet

⁹ In order to have family relationship with the Prophet and thus further his close relation with God's Messenger, Umar ibn Khattab married Ali's daughter Umm Qulthum, and this marriage was not found strange at that time at all.

¹⁰ Amr ibn As, for instance, was 12 years older than his son Abdullah. This means that he was around 10 when he got married.

¹¹ al-Bukhārī, Abū 'Abdullah,... Op. cit, Volume 7, Book 62, Number 15.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Taking this information into account, some people calculate Aisha's age at marriage as least 14 or 22, up to 28..

¹⁴ Nabia Abbott, *Aishah-The Beloved of Mohammed*, al-Saqi Books, London, 1985, p, 7.

¹⁵ Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet*, Harper San Francisco, 1992, page 157.

was encouraged by 'Āishah's father, Abū Bakr, and was welcomed by the community at large.¹⁶

5. In the comments of 'Abdul-Hamīd Siddiqī on the *ahādīth* in *Sahih Muslim* which mention 'Āishah's young marriage to the Prophet, shows three other reasons for this marriage: 'Āishah's marriage to the Prophet at an early age allowed her to be an eyewitness to the personal details of his life and carry them on to the succeeding generations. By being both spiritually and physically near to the Prophet, the marriage prepared 'Āishah 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 help support the Prophet's work and further the cause of Islam. She was not only a model for wives and mothers, but she was also a commentator on the Qur'an, an authority on *hadīth* and knowledgeable in Islamic law. She narrated at least 2,210 *ahādīth* that give Muslims valuable insights into the final Prophet's daily life and behaviour, thus preserving the *Sunnah* of Muhammad (SAW).¹⁷

6. At that time, this marriage refuted the notion that a man could not marry the daughter of a man who he had declared to be his "brother" (even in the religious sense). Since the Prophet and Abū Bakr had declared each other to be "brothers", this notion was done away with. This is demonstrated in the following *hadīth*:

Narrated 'Ursa: The Prophet (SAW) asked Abū Bakr for 'Āishah's hand in marriage. Abū Bakr said, "But I am your brother." The Prophet (SAW) said, "You are my brother in God's religion and His Book, but she ('Āishah) is lawful for me to marry."¹⁸

7. 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 carried a bad omen.¹⁹ The authentic *ahādīth* indicate that the Prophet and 'Āishah were married in this lunar month.

8. The verse of the Qur'an emphasized that children should be married when they come of age.²⁰ So, opposing a divine suggestion cannot be considered. Using the mentality of Umar, if intervention had been a matter of consideration here, the Prophet would surely have been warned in a coming revelation and a step would have been taken to resolve the issue. At any rate, the Prophet's wedding to 'Āishah took place in accordance with direction from

¹⁶ W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad: *Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford University Press, 1961, page 229.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ al-Bukhārī, Abū 'Abdullah, ... Op. cit, Volume 7, Book 62, Number 18.

¹⁹ Nabia Abbott, *Āishah-The Beloved of Mohammed*, al-Saqi Books, London, 1985, page 7.

²⁰ Ishola Balogun, "Nothing like child marriage in Islam" *Vanguard Nigeria Daily News Paper*, Wednesday February 12th, 2014, p. 4.

divine will.²¹

9. The Prophet's marriage to 'Āishah, followed the norms of all Semitic peoples, including those of Biblical times.²² For instance, in the book of Genesis it is recorded that:

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had born him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; so she said to Abram, 'The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.' Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. ... So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.' (Genesis, chapter 16, verses 1-4, and 15-16, New International Version. Bolding is mine).²³

Firstly, it is evident that as Abraham was 86 years old, Hagar must have been some fifty years younger than him, and probably even younger, to bear a child. Secondly, the Bible speaks of Sarai giving her maidservant Hagar to Abraham. So Hagar's consent was not obtained but rather she was commanded by Sarai to go and become Abraham's wife.

Also, the first book of Kings begins as follows:

When King David was old and well advanced in years, he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him. So his servants said to him, 'Let us look for a young virgin to attend the king and take care of him. She can lie beside him so that our lord the king may keep warm.' Then they searched throughout Israel for a beautiful girl and found Abishag, a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. The girl was very beautiful; she took care of the king and waited on him, but the king had no intimate relations with her.²⁴

So there seems nothing wrong, according to the Bible, in procuring a young virgin, again apparently without her consent, whose duties include lying with the elderly king in bed. The intention was certainly for sexual enjoyment, otherwise there was no necessity of looking for a young, beautiful virgin. A much older woman, perhaps a widow, could have performed all these duties, including lying with the king to keep him warm.

Argument for Antagonists of the *Ahadīth*

Having examined the argument of those who supported the *ahādīt*, we shall now examine the argument of those who opined that 'Āishah's age at the time of marriage was not less than 17 or 18 and at the time of consummation of marriage about 19 or 20:

1. Most of the *ahādīt* are reported only by *Hisham ibn 'urwah* reporting on

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² King James Version: *The Holy Bible*, Great Britain, Egret And Spottiswood Publications, Mathew 10: 16, 1 Kings, Chapter 1, Verses 1-4, Chapter 16, Verses 1-4, and 15-16.

²³ King James Version: *The Holy...* Op. cit, Genesis, Chapter 16, Verses 1-4, and 15-16.

²⁴ King James Version: *The Holy...*, 1 Kings, Chapter 1, Verses 1-4.

the authority of his father. An event as well known as the one being reported should logically have been reported by more people than just one, two or three.²⁵

2. It is quite strange that no one from *Medinah*, where *Hisham ibn `urwah* lived the first seventy one years of his life has narrated the event, even though in *Medinah* his pupils included people as well known as *Malik ibn Anas*. All the narratives of this event have been reported by narrators from Iraq, where *Hisham* is reported to have had shifted after living in *Medinah* for seventy one years.²⁶

3. *Tehzibu'l-tehziib*, one of the most well known books on the life and reliable of the traditions of the Prophet reports that according to *Yaqub ibn Shaibah*: "narratives reported by *Hisham* are reliable except those that are reported through the people of Iraq". It further states that *Malik ibn Anas* objected on those narratives of *Hisham* which were reported through people of Iraq.²⁷

4. *Mizanu'l-ai`tidal*, another book on the traditions of the Prophet reports that when he was old, *Hisham's* memory suffered quite badly.²⁸

5. According to the generally accepted tradition, 'Āishah was born about eight years before *Hijrah*. But according to another narrative in *Bukhārī* 'Āishah is reported to have said that at the time *Surah al-Qamar*, the 54th chapter of the Qur'an, was revealed, "I was a young girl". The 54th chapter of the Qur'an was revealed nine years before *Hijrah*. According to this tradition, 'Āishah had not only been born before the revelation of the *surah*, but was actually a young girl (*jariyah*), not an infant (*sibyah*) at that time.²⁹ Obviously, if this narrative is held to be true, it is in clear contradiction with the reported by *Hisham ibn `urwah*.

6. According to a number of narratives, 'Āishah accompanied the Muslims in the battle of *Badr* and *Uhud*. Furthermore, it is also reported in books of *hādīth* and history that no one under the age of 15 years was allowed to take part in the battle of *Uhud*. All the boys below 15 years of age were sent back.³⁰ 'Āishah's participation in the battle of *Badr* and *Uhud* clearly indicate that she

²⁵ Dr. Peregrino Brimah, "Early Child Marriage: What the Qur'an did not say!" <http://newsrescue.com/my-thoughts-on-child-marriage/#axzz2ZmXGEXUL>

²⁶ For more information about the position of Islam on Child marriage, go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>

²⁷ Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Tehzibu'l-tehziib*, Dar Ihya al-turath al-Islami, volume 11, pp, 48 – 51, This book is one of the most well known books on the life and reliability of the narrators of the traditions of the Prophet.

²⁸ al-Zahbi, *Mizanu'l-ai`tidal*, al-Maktabatu'l-athriyyah, Sheikhpura, Pakistan, Volume 4, p. 301- 302, is a book on the life sketches of the narrators of the *Hadīth*.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

was not nine or ten years old at that time. After all, women used to accompany men to the battle fields to help them, not to be a burden on them.

7. According to almost all the historians Asma, the elder sister of Āishah was ten years older than Āishah. It is reported in *Taqri'bu'l-tehzi'b* as well as *al-bidayah wa'l-nihayah* that Asma died in 73 *hijrah* when she was 100 years old. Now, obviously if Asma was 100 years old in 73 *hijrah* she should have been 27 or 28 years old at the time of *hijrah*. If Asma was 27 or 28 years old at the time of *hijrah*, Āishah should have been 17 or 18 years old at that time.³¹ Thus, Āishah, if she got married in 1AH (after *hijrah*) or 2 AH, was between 18 to 20 years old at the time of her marriage.

Chronology

Now let me state some of the pertinent dates in the history of Islam:

| Jahilliyyah | Before Revelation |
|---|---------------------------|
| First Revelation | 610 CE |
| Abu Bakr accepts Islam | 610 CE |
| Public preaching | 613 CE |
| Emigration to Abyssenia | 615 CE |
| Umar bin al Khattab accept Islam | 616 CE |
| Generally accepted betrothal of Āishah | 620 CE |
| Hijrah | 622 CE |
| Generally accepted year of Āishah living with Prophet | 623 or 624 CE (1 or 2 AH) |

8. *Tabari* in his treatise on Islamic history, while mentioning Abū Bakar reports that Abū Bakar had four children and all four were born during the *Jahiliyyah* the pre Islamic period. Obviously, if Āishah was born in the period of *jahiliyyah*, she could not have been less than 14 years in 1 A.H the time she most likely got married.³²

9. Some time after the death of the Prophet's first wife, Khadija, Khawla suggested to the Prophet that he should get married again, to a *bikrun*, referring to Āishah. In Arabic *bikrun* is used for an unmarried girl who has crossed the age of puberty and is of marriageable age. The word cannot be used for a six-year-old girl. Neither has this ever been promoted as a *Sunnah* of the Prophet. The Prophet married off his daughters Fatima at 18 and Ruquiyya at 23. Besides, Abū Bakar, Āishah's father, married off his eldest daughter Asma at the age of 26.³³

10. According to Ibn Hajar also, Fatimah was five years older than Āishah.

³¹ Siyar A'la'ma'l-nubala', al-Zahabi, Arabic, *Mu'assatu'l-risalah*, Beirut, 1992, Volume 2, P, 289.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, Dar Ihya al-turath al-'arabi, Beirut, Volume 6, P. 210.

Fatimah is reported to have been born when the Prophet was 35 years old. Thus, even if this information is taken to be correct, 'Aishah could by no means be less than 14 years old at the time of *hijrah*, and 15 or 16 years old at the time of her marriage.³⁴

11. With regard to days in Mecca, 'Aishah said, "I was a girl playing games when the verse, 'Indeed, the last hour is their appointed time (for their complete recompense), and the last hour will be more grievous and more bitter'³⁵ was revealed to Allah's Messenger."³⁶ This information opens other doors regarding her age. The verse is the 46th verse of the 54th chapter of the Qur'an, which explains the miracle of the split moon (the splitting of the moon is one of the miracles performed by the Prophet Muhammad). Revealed as a whole, this chapter came while the Prophet was in Ibn Arqam's home in the fourth (614)³⁷ or eighth (618) or ninth (619)³⁸ year of his mission, according to differing reports. Looking especially at necessity, some scholars focused on the date being 614; when this date is taken, 'Aishah either had not been born or had just been born. While when this date is taken it appears that she must have been born at least eight or nine years earlier, the situation does not change much when 618 or 619 are taken. In that situation she would have only been 4 or 5 years old, neither an age at which she would be in a position to understand this event and relate it years later. According to the second possibility, she was probably born when Muhammad's prophethood had just begun³⁹.

Another matter worth mentioning here is that while describing that day, 'Aishah stated, "I was a girl playing games." The word she used to describe herself, *jariya*, is used to describe the passage into puberty. Some scholars say that it is used for girls who are older than.⁴⁰ If we look at the issue taking 614 as the year that (Q. 54) was revealed, 'Aishah would have been born at least eight years before the prophetic mission, or in 606. If we accept 618, then the year of birth would have been 610; this event alone makes it impossible for her to have been 9 when she married. When this information is combined with her name being on the list of the first Muslims, one get the result that 'Aishah's

³⁴ Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *al-isabah fi tamyizi'l-sahabah*, Maktabatul-Riyadh al-haditha, al-Riyadh, 1978, Volume 4, P. 377.

³⁵ Suratui al-Qamar, Qur'an Chapter 54 verse,46.

³⁶ al-Bukhārī, Abū 'Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismail, *Fadail al-Qur'an*, 6; Tafsir al-Sura, Volume, 54 Number. 6, Ayni, Badruddin Abū Muhammad Mahmud ibn Ahmad, *Umdat al-Qari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhārī*, Dar allhya al-Turas al-Arabi, Volume 20, Number, 21; Asqalani and al-Asqalani Ibn Hajar: *Fath al Bari bi Sharh al- Bukhārī*, Cairo, 1378 A.H, Volume, 1, P. 291.

³⁷ Suyuti, *Itqan*, Beirut, 1987, Volume,1, p. 29.

³⁸ The month difference stems from the lunar calendar.

³⁹ Taking this information into account, some people calculate Aisha's age at marriage as least 14 or 22, up to 28.

⁴⁰ Ishola Balogun, "Nothing like child marriage in Islam"... Op, cit, p. 4.

date of birth was probably 606. Consequently, she would have been at least 17 when she married.

12. Another factor that supports the above view is that, at the time when the Prophet's marriage was a topic of discussion, 'Āishah was engaged to Mut'im ibn Adiyy's son Jubayr. The suggestion for the Prophet to marry 'Āishah move by Hawla bint Hakim, the wife of Uthman ibn Maz'un, someone who was not from the family. Both situations show that she had come to the age of marriage and was known as a young marriageable girl.⁴¹ As is known, this betrothal was broken by the Ibn Adiyy family due to the possible religious conversion of their son to Islam, and it was only after this that 'Āishah's engagement to Muhammad, (SAW) took place.⁴² Consequently, the marriage agreement was either made before the prophetic mission or when the call to Islam was being made openly (three years after the Prophet began receiving revelation). If it was made before the mission, together with the idea that 'Āishah was 9 years old when she married being shaken from its foundation, it implies that 'Āishah was born even earlier than has been thought. For this reason, some say that she was a 13- or 14-year-old girl then.⁴³

It should not be overlooked that this decision was made during the period when the call to Islam had begun to be made openly. In regard to time, this means 613-614. If it is assumed that 'Āishah was born four years after the mission, it has to be accepted that she had not yet been born, so it is not possible to talk about a marriage agreement under these circumstances. In this case, it has to be accepted that she was at least 7 or 8 when her engagement was broken, so the year was probably 605.⁴⁴

13. While listing names of Muslims during the first days of Islam, 'Āishah's names, together with her older sister Asma, are listed immediately after the names of the Sabiqun al-Awwalun (the first ones). Being the 18th person to accept Islam, 'Āishah's name precedes the names of Umayr ibn Abi Waqqas and Abdullah ibn.... and many others.⁴⁵ This means that, she was living then and was mature enough to make such a choice and exercise her will. In addition, the information in reports that "she was a small girl then" shows that her name was mentioned in a conscious way.⁴⁶ This date refers to the early days of Islam and it is known that 'Āishah's sister Asma, who was born in 595, was

⁴¹ Nabia Abbott, *Āishah-The Beloved of Mohammed*,... Op. Cit, p. 7.

⁴² al-Bukhārī, Abū 'Abdullah,... Op, cit, Nikah, 11, Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, Op. cit, Volume, 6, p. 210.

⁴³ al- Tabari, Muhammad bin Jarir: *Jamiu al-Bayan* well known as Tafsir- al-Tabari, Cairo, 1321 A.H, Volume, 3, pp. 161-163.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, Maktabah al-Riyadh al-hadithah, al-Riyadh, Volume, 1, Pp 271.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

15 when she became a Muslim.⁴⁷ This indicates the year 610, when the Prophet started to receive the revelation and this then shows that Aisha was at least 5, 6 or 7 that day and that she was at least 17 or 18 when she married the Prophet in Medina. From the foregoing, two arguments have been examined on the commonly known narrative regarding 'Āishah's age at the time of her marriage to the Prophet by way of determining its compatibility with Islamic teachings.

Observations

It is observed that, the age of 'Ayishah has been erroneously reported in the *ahādīth* and even, these *ahādīth* are highly unreliable and problematic.

For instance, it was reported in *Sahih Bukhārī* that, 'Āishah was 6 when betrothed and 9 when she was wed. However, *Sahih Bukhārī* included another recording that 'Āishah was a young girl and remembered when Qur'an Chapter, 45 was revealed 9 years before her wedding as well. However, it should come as no surprise that, both of them offer proof, evidence or references for their opinions in the *Ahādīth*. The in-depth studies of historical facts and authentic *Ahādīth* actually reveal that this information can not be true, and 'Āishah was at least 18-21 years old when she was married to the Prophet.

Also, Ibn Habbal⁴⁸ claims that 'Āishah at the age of nine was rather more interested to play with toy-horses than to take up the responsible task of a wife. Therefore, this paper, would not believe that Abū Bakar, would betroth his immature seven-year-old daughter to fifty-year-old Prophet. Similarly, it would not believe that Prophet would marry a seven-year-old girl.

Another important duty demanded from the guardian of a child is "to educate them." Let us ask the question, "How many of Muslims can educate their children satisfactorily before they reach the age of seven or nine years?" The answer is "none." It is a logically impossible task to educate a child satisfactorily before the child attains the age of seven. Then, how can one believe that 'Āishah was educated satisfactorily at the claimed age of seven at the time of her marriage? Abū Bakar was a judicious man, so, he definitely would have judged that 'Āishah was a child at heart and was not satisfactorily educated as demanded by the Qur'an. He would not have married her to any one. If a proposal of marrying the immature and yet to be educated seven-year-old 'Āishah came to Prophet he would have rejected it outright because neither Prophet nor Abū Bakar would violate any clause in the Qur'an. Therefore, marriage of 'Āishah at the age of seven years would violate the maturity clause or requirement of the Qur'an. Therefore, the story of the marriage of the seven-year-old immature 'Āishah is a myth.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, ... Op. cit Volume 6, p. 210.

Also, a woman must be consulted and get her permission to make the marriage valid. So, in the Muslim marriage, a credible permission from woman is a pre-requisite for the marriage to be valid. By any stretch of imagination, the permission by a seven-year-old immature girl cannot be a valid authorization for marriage. It is unconceivable that Abū Bakar, would take seriously the permission of a seven-year-old girl to marry a fifty-year-old man. Similarly, Prophet would not have accepted permission given by an immature girl who, according to *Shahih Muslim*, took her toys with her when she went live with Prophet. Therefore, the Prophet did not marry seven-year-old 'Aishah because it would have violated the requirement of valid permission clause of Islamic marriage decree. Therefore, it was neither an Arab tradition to give away girls in marriage at an age as young as seven or nine years, nor did the Prophet marry 'Aishah at such a young age. The people of Arabia did not object to this marriage, because it never happened in the manner it has been narrated.

The quotations from *Tabari*, *Bukhārī* and *Muslim* show they contradict each other regarding 'Aishah's age. Furthermore, many of these scholars contradict themselves in their own records. Thus, the narrative of 'Aishah's age at the time of the marriage is not reliable due to the clear contradictions seen in the works of classical scholars of Islam. Therefore, no absolutely reason to believe that the information on 'Aishah's age is accepted as true when there are adequate grounds to reject it as myth. Moreover, the guidance from the Qur'an is against the marriage of immature girls and boys and also against entrusting them with responsibilities.

Finally, all Muslims agree that the Qur'an is the book of guidance. So, Muslims need to seek for the guidance from the Qur'an to clear the confusion in the matter of the age of 'Aishah at her marriage. Does the Qur'an allow or disallow marriage of an immature child of seven years of age?

There are no verses that explicitly allow such marriage. However, there is a verse that guides Muslims in their duty to raise a child deprived with the death of one or both parents. The guidance of the Qur'an on the topic of raising orphans is also valid in the case of children (Qur'an 4: 5-6). In the matter of children who has lost a parent, a Muslim is ordered to (a) feed them, (b) clothe them, (c) educate them, and (d) test them for maturity "until the age of marriage" before entrusting them with management of finances. Here the Qur'anic verse demands meticulous proof of their intellectual and physical maturity by objective test results before the age of marriage in order to entrust their property to them. Also, The Prophet, according to the Qur'an, is a model for all humanity. The Qur'an tells that he was at the highest of moral pedestal. Even if child marriages were common in his community, he could not have gone for it because it went against the Qur'anic injunctions of 4: 6 and 4: 21. In the light of this verse, no responsible Muslims would hand over financial management to a seven or nine year old girl. If one cannot trust a seven year old to manage the financial matters, she cannot be intellectually or physically fit for marriage. Conclusively, no one knows the exact age at the time of her

marriage due to lack of reliable records. Based on the evidences presented above, the marriage of fifty-two-year-old Prophet with Āishah at nine year of age is only a proverbial myth. On the contrary, Āishah was an intellectually and physically mature *Bikr* (virgin adult unmarried woman with no sexual experience) when she married Prophet.

Conclusion

This paper has critically examined the *ahādīth* account that ‘Āishah was 6 (Six) years when she betrothed to the Prophet and she married him at the age of nine. This *ahādīth* has often led to the belief that child marriage is permissible in Islam. This issue itself has generated mixed reaction from the Muslims world over. While some insisted that ‘Āishah’s age at marriage was nine, others maintained that she was 19 years of age when she arrived in the house of the Prophet as a wife. The study revealed that, the age of ‘Āishah has been grossly mis-reported in the *ahādīth*. Not only that, the narratives reporting this event are not only highly unreliable but also that on the basis of other historical data, the event reported, is quite an unlikely happening. The paper recommended that, one should look at the issue from an objective stand point. The paper concluded that, if Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is a model for mankind, if he followed the Qur’an all his life, if Allah stands witness to his rock-solid character, there is no way that he could have taken a 6-9 year old, immature young, playful girl as a responsible wife.

A Textual Analysis of the Hadīths of Āishah’s Age at the Time of Her Marriage to the Prophet Muhammad (saw)

Abstract: This paper intends to critically examine the *ahādīth* that said ‘Āishah was 6 when betrothed to the Prophet and she married him at the age of nine. This *ahādīth* has often led to the belief that child marriage is permissible in Islam. This issue itself has generated mixed reaction from the Muslims all around the world. While some insisted that ‘Āishah’s age was nine during the marriage, others maintained that she was 19 years of age when she arrived in the house of the Prophet as a wife. The approach adopted in this study is gained purely from written sources which comprise manuscripts, books, journals, internet, magazines as well as the Holy Qur’an and *ahādīth*. The study reveals that, the age of ‘Āishah has been grossly mis-reported in the *ahādīth*. Not only that, the narratives reporting this event are not only highly unreliable but also that on the basis of other historical data, the event reported, is quite an unlikely happening. The paper recommended that, one should look at the issue from an objective stand point. The paper concluded that, if Prophet Muhammad (saw) is a model for mankind, if he followed the Qur’an all his life, if Allah stands witness to his rock-solid character, there is no way that he could have taken a 6-9 year old, immature young girl as a responsible wife.

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