

## **Could prophet Mohammad marry the underage Ayesha?**

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### **The Allegation:**

The allegation is that Ayesha was six years old when she was legally engaged in a marriage contract with Mohammad who was beyond the age of fifty three when the marital obligation became a contractual obligation. Further, it is alleged that the marital bond and matrimonial contract had not been performed until three years pass the date of the contract when the bride became nine years of age.

We need to have a scrutinized and analytical observation and study of the entire matter from all existing corners and logical angles to ascertain its factual and authentic conformity through an acceptable method of documentary and historical evaluations.

During the following analysis, we will examine, evaluate, and adjudicate the authenticity and accuracy of this issue through historical, logical, practical, evidentiary, and legal instruments and considerations.

### **On Authenticity of Allegations:**

The core and nucleus of this analytical research is based on the argument and claim that evidentiary instruments, provided to establish the age of the bride, appear to be lacking even the minimum required standards of genuineness and authentic originality.

The following article is an attempt to dig out reality from the same history.

As a way for defending the mis-narrations and misreports about the age of Ayesha, it has been claimed that marriage with the minors was a cultural and habitual practice within the Arabs at the time that Mohammad married Ayesha. It has been further claimed that as an ongoing and practical tradition, it was quite normal and conventional for a nine year old girl to be married and her marriage be legally and lawfully consummated. It is also argued that such traditional marriage was fully honored and respected by Arabs, otherwise people would have had objected to such tradition and habit. This argument wastefully strangles to prosecute and blame the modern time by claiming to assert that, it is the modern time that the society is utilizing new and different

scale and standards for marital ethics and moral principles. This claim and argument is a biased presumption of unsupported practices that have never been established by any authenticated account or historical evidence.

Reasonably, it is the burden and responsibilities of the claimants and all those who believe in this falsely assumed facts, accusing the holy prophet to have conducted an act short than perfect, claiming to be an acceptable norm of the time, to provide sufficient evidentiary, and universally acceptable, instrument to reasonably substantiate their point of view. In other word, one may stand to defend the position of the legality of underage marriage based on the cultural practices and other instrumental factors. Based on this approach it could be the responsibility of all those who believe that marrying a girl as young as nine years old was an accepted norm of the Arab culture, to provide at least a few examples to substantiate their point of view.

It may be claimed that so far no one have yet been able to find a single dependable and authentic instance in the books of Arab history where a girl as young as nine years old was given away in marriage. Those who reject the authenticity of any opposing historical evidence believe that even if there are any history supporting the underage marriage as an Arab tradition would be totally baseless and unauthentic. Unless such examples are given, and authenticated accordingly, we do not have any reasonable grounds to believe that such a tradition actually ever existed and practiced as an acceptable norm of marriage.

On this end, the opponents of the underage marriage, having had ever been a customary and acceptable practice of the Arabs in the past, insist that there has not been a single authenticated and dependable instance in any books concerning Arab history where a girl as young as nine years old was given away in marriage as a conventional and honorable means of an acceptable and legal marriage. Unless such examples are given and claiming facts are provided, the given claims, regardless of the frequency and age of its publications and public support, lacks even the minimum established evidentiary support and reasonable grounds to substantiate the claims that marriage with six years old girls would have been really an accepted norm.

The proponents of underage marriage being an acceptable Arab tradition adhere to a few narratives to substantiate their claims.

Abu Tughlub Ibni Hamdan married the daughter of Izz al-Dawla Bakhtyar when she was three and paid a dowry of 100,000 dinars. This took place in Safar 360 Hijrah. (Ibni al-Athir, al-Kamil)

Al-Shafi`i in al-Umm reported that he saw countless examples of nine year old pubescent girls in Yemen who were married at that age. Al-Bayhaqi also

narrates it from him in the Sunan al-Kubra as it is the case in; al-Dhahabi in the Siyar.

Al-Bayhaqi narrated with his chains in his Sunan al-Kubra no less than three examples of Muslim wives that gave birth at age nine or ten.

Hisham Ibni Urwah himself (whom the objector claims to know enough to forward the most barefaced judgments on his reliability) married Fatima bint al-Mundhir when she was nine years old (al-Muntazam and Tarikh Baghdad).

It has been reported that the second caliph of Islam, Umar Ibni Khattab, married Umm Kulthum the daughter of Ali and Fatima at a similar age. This narrative has been narrated by Abd al-Razzaq Ibni Abd al-Barr and a few other narrators.

And Ayesha herself was first almost affianced to Jubayr Ibni Mut-im before her father dropped that option when he received word from the Messenger of Allah, and Allah blessed and greeted him and the messenger was well-pleased with him.

All of the aforementioned reports and narrations, supporting the legality and customary tradition of marriage with an underage female, the authenticity and originality of all these reports are highly suspicious and none are accorded with even the minimum standards necessary for certifying them as authentic and reliable. The genuineness and legitimacy of all of the above mentioned reports remain doubtfully questionable.

**Although these narratives are highly suspicious and distrustful, nonetheless, they must be published and reported here and become an open claim for further evaluations and assessments for their compliance and conformity with all acceptable and traditional means of authentication and endorsement.**

### **The Prime narrator of the early childhood marriage :**

With respect to the issue of the age of Ayesha at her marriage with the prophet, most of the narratives are reported only by Hisham Ibni Urwah reporting on 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.

I have checked narratives of more than eleven authorities among the Tabi`in, and found out that they all have reported it directly from Ayesha, not counting the other major Companions that reported the same, nor other major Successors that reported it from other than Ayesha.

It is quite strange that no one from Medinah, where Hisham Ibni 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 Ibni Anas.

The opponent to the aforementioned views believes that there were a few narratives that originated from Urwah while he was residing in Medinah, despite the majority view that failed to recognize the reliability of any narratives that disputes the absence of qualified narratives from Urwah during his long residence in Medina. Notwithstanding the uncertainty and devaluated significance of the all Medinan narratives by Urwah, the followings are a reference to the sources to the above mentioned disputes and disagreements.

Al-Zuhri also reports it from Urwah, from Ayesha; so does Abd Allah Ibni Dhakwan, both major Madanis. So is the Tabi`i Yahya al-Lakhmi who reports it from her in the Musnad and in Ibni Sa`d's Tabaqat. So is Abu Ishaq Sa`d Ibni Ibrahim who reports it from Imam al-Qasim Ibni Muhammad, one of the Seven Imams of Medina from Ayesha.

With respect to the unity of sources referred to for more than one narrative, often we fail to note that, although in any given narrative there might have been more than one narrator, the fact is that they are all considering the first person, Sahaba ( any of Mohammad's contemporary apostles ), in the chain of narrators of these reports.

On the other hand, when in this paper, it is stated that these reports are only (or mostly) reported by one narrator only; it means that even though the first person in the chain of these reports changes there is common narrator in all these reports. Just to clarify, take the example of the four reports of Sahih Bukhari.

It is often stated and argued that of the four hadith in Saheeh Bukhari, two were narrated from Ayesha (7:64 and 7:65), one from Abu Hishaam (5:236) and one via Urwah (7:88)." It must be noted that this statement, is only referring to the first person in the chain of narrators in his statement. The statement is not wrong or misquoted. But on the other hand, if the chain of narrators of the four reportings of Sahih Bukhari is carefully attended to, it will be established that in the first two cases, the statement of Ayesha has been quoted by none other than Urwah, or Abu Hishaam Urwah, which means the father of Hishaam, and which means the same person and the same single narrator ! Again, it must be noted that Abu Hisham and Urwah, and Ibni Urwah, are all the same person.

Having researched and analytically evaluated the authentic assessments and signified values of the above mentioned narratives, as having been reported, they appear as to not only lack necessary qualifications for being considered a historical

narrations, 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 unlikely to have had happened. Observing and evaluating the issue at hand from an objective stand point, raises many distrustful issues and causes several doubtful dynamics.

### **More on Narrators and Hadith :**

As mentioned, it must be noted that, with respect to the age of Ayesha when she married, most of the existing supportive narratives are reported only by Hisham Ibni Urwah reporting on the authority of his father, Urwah. And when measuring the extent of the validity of a given narrative, as a norm of scrutiny and standard of evaluation, the narrative should logically have been reported by more than one particular reporter or narrator.

**As a traditional and acceptable practice, narrations reported by less than three narrators are not reliable, especially when they are found to have material conflict with the origin source where narrative had been initiated.**

Hisham Ibni Urwah was a resident of the city of Medina for the first seventy one years of his life. He emigrated in Iraq at age seventy two and maintained his residence for the rest of his life. Hisham is the first narrator who narrated the age of the marriage of Ayesha with Mohammad. Many famous and credible scholars, narrators, and historian of Islam, including Malik Ibni Anas, were the students of Hisham Ibni Urwah.

**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.**

In addition to the above four Madinese Tabi`in narrators, Sufyan Ibni Uyayna from Khurasan, and Abd Allah Ibni Muhammad Ibni Yahya from Tabarayya in Palestine, both report it. Nor was this hadith reported only by Urwah but also by Abd al-Malik Ibni Umayr, al-Aswad, Ibni Abi Mulayka, Abu Salama Ibni Abd al-Rahman Ibni Awf, Yahya Ibni Abd al-Rahman Ibni Hatib, Abu Ubayda, also known as, Amir Ibni Abd Allah Ibni Masoud and others of the Tabi`i Imams directly from Ayesha. This makes the report mass-transmitted (mutawatir) from Ayesha by over eleven authorities among the Tabi`in, not counting the other major Companions that reported the same, such as Ibni Masoud nor other major Successors that reported it from other than Ayesha, such as Qatada.

**None of the narratives of the Hisham Ibni Urwah was established, initiated, or reported from Medina. There is no evidence of any of his students to have ever recorded or reported to have heard Hisham Ibni Urwah narrated or reported about the events, and indeed all alleged reports came later on**

from Iraq, when he was too old, and probably with weak or distorted memory.

One would expect a narrator to utter and register the narratives while they are more fresh and in closer proximity with the time that narrated event have had occurred. Once again, the significant argument to be scrutinized is that, all those who heard the aforementioned narrative from Hisham Ibni Urwah were Iraqis, and this is a simple statement of fact. This can be checked in the biographical sketches of these narrators in any of the books written on the narrators.

Tahzib Al Tahzib, one of the most well known books on the life and reliability of the narrators of the traditions of the Prophet reports that according to Yaqub Ibni Shaibah: "narratives reported by Hisham are reliable except those that are reported through the people of Iraq". It further states that Malik Ibni Anas objected on those narratives of Hisham which were reported through people of Iraq. (Vol 11, pg 48 - 51) Also, Mizan Al I'tidal, another book on the narrators of the traditions of the Prophet reports that when he was old, Hisham's memory suffered quite badly. (Vole 4, pg 301 - 302)

The opponents to the above asserted views state that the loss of recollection of Urwah did not cause a distorted reminiscence and could not amount to a faulty imprecision, whereby, rendering his narratives as unreliable. The followings are the documentary evidences which are reported for the viewer observation and their own independent and convincing evaluations.

Al-Dhahabi in Mizan Al I'tidal (4:301 No.9233) states: "Hisham Ibni Urwah, one of the eminent personalities, a Proof is in himself, and an Imam, however, in his old age his memory diminished"

Opponents to the absence of reliability of the narratives reported by Urwah due to his imprecision argue that; despite the diminished memory of Urwah in Iraq, he certainly never became confused.

The opponents continue to argue that; although that the man changed a little bit and his memory was not the same as it had been in his younger days, so that he forgot come of what he had memorized or lapsed, should not have any bearing on the issue of reliability. They contend that no one is immune to forgetfulness. It is also claimed that; when he came to Iraq in the last part of his life he narrated a great amount of knowledge, in the course of which are a few narrations in which he did not excel, and such occurs also to Malik, and Shu`ba, and Waki, and the major trustworthy masters. Finally, we are advised to spare oneself confusion and floundering, and not to mix the firmly-established Imams with the weak and muddled narrators. It is further claimed that Hisham Ibni Urwah is a Shaykh al-Islam and similar to other narrators, such

as, Ibni al-Qattan, and Abd al-Rahman Ibni Khirash, he was admired by Malik. They also argue that; no one should pay any attention to what Abu al-Hasan Ibni al-Qattan said about him and Suhayl Ibni Abi Salih, that; both becoming confused or changing.

There is a statement documented from Yaqub stating: "Trustworthy, thoroughly reliable, above reproach except after he went to Iraq, at which time he narrated overly from his father and was criticized for it." Notice that Ya'qub does not exactly endorse that criticism, nor he rejects or opposes to that. As for Malik, he reports over one hundred hadiths from Urwah (as is evident in the two Sahihs and Sunan!) to the point that al-Dhahabi questions the authenticity of his alleged criticism of Urwah.

Indeed, none among the hadith Masters endorsed these reservations since they were based solely on the fact that Urwah in his last period (he was 71 at the time of his last trip to Iraq), for the sake of brevity and briefness, would say "My father, from Ayesha" (abi an Ayesha) and no longer pronounced, "narrated to me" (haddathani).

Al-Mizzi in Tahdhib al-Kamal (30:238) explained that it became a foregone conclusion for the Iraqis that Urwah did not narrate anything from his father except what he had heard directly from him. Ibni Hajar also dismisses the objections against Hisham Ibni Urwah as negligible in Tahdhib al-Tahdhib (11:45), saying: "It was clear enough to the Iraqis that he did not narrate from his father other than what he had heard directly from him." These fact may be a convincing evidence that Urwah had lost his memory and recollection with respect to what his father had narrated and reported to him, as he could only remember what he had recollected and could have recollection thereto.

One may argue the fact that if the entire narratives ever pronounced by Urwah in Iraq, is devaluated as unreliable, or one supports that "narratives reported by Hisham Ibni Urwah are reliable except those that are reported through the people of Iraq", as that it would eliminate all narrations of Ayyub al-Sakhtyani from him since Ayyub was a Basran Iraqi, and those of Abu Umar al-Nakha`i who was from Kufa, and those of Hammad Ibni Abi Sulayman from Kufa (the Shaykh of Abu Hanifa), and those of Hammad Ibni Salama and Hammad Ibni Zayd both from Basra, and those of Sufyan al-Thawri from Basra, and those of Shu`ba in Basra, all of whom narrated from Urwah.

To respond to the above mentioned prevailing views about the narrators named above, one may conclude that in fact all those narrators do carry several internal and external conflicts as to their reported narratives. Such conflicting statements extend contradictions within and without the narratives, which stand to establish the fact that the narratives reported by Urwah did not carry the mandatory identity and attribute of consistency and uniformity.

According to the generally accepted narration, Ayesha was born about eight years before Hijrah. But according to another narrative in Bukhari (kitabu'l-Tafseer) Ayesha is reported to have said that at the time that the Surah Al-Qamar, the 54th chapter of the Qur'an, was revealed, "I was a young girl". The 54th surah of the Qur'an was revealed nine years before Hijrah. According to this tradition, Ayesha had not only been born before the revelation of the referred Surah, but was actually a young girl (Jariyah), not an infant (Sibyah) at that time. Obviously, if this narrative is held to be true, it is in clear contradiction with the narratives reported by Hisham Ibni Urwah.

There is absolutely no sufficient reasoning existing to support rejection of the age of Ayesha, as it could be determined in relation with the date that the aforementioned chapter of the Book was revealed. Further, it is quite extraordinary to see any doubts or uncertainty about the age of Ayesha, particularly, after the comments of the experts on the narratives of Hisham Ibni Urwah, and especially after the circumstantial and evidentiary accounts are logically supportive of the accuracy of the narrations as reported.

The opposing views do not agree with the conclusion of the aforementioned statement. There are many narratives, historical statements, Qur'anic commentators and other stands, holding the view that the splitting of the moon ( a miracle said to happen upon non-believers request to Mohammad ) took place about five years before the Hijra of the holy Prophet from Mecca to Medina. They, therefore, take it as a confirmed fact, claiming Ayesha was born between seven and eight years before the Hijra and the words that she was a jariya or little girl five years before the Hijra match the fact that her age at the time of chapter Al-Qamar was revealed was around two or three years after the Hijra.

According to a number of narratives, Ayesha accompanied the Muslims in the battle of Badr and Uhud. Furthermore, it is also reported in books of Hadith 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. The fact that Ayesha participated in the battle of Badr and Uhud clearly indicates that she 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.

According to this narrative, Ayesha had not only been born before the revelation of the referred chapter of the Quran, but she was actually a young girl (jariyah), not an infant (sibyah) at that time. Obviously, if this narrative is held to be true, it is in clear contradiction with the narratives reported by Hisham Ibni Urwah. If the narratives of Ibni Hisham are to be held and considered as reliable, there will be some logical supports to accept the above mentioned narrative as true and factual. Accordingly, it appears that there are no further reasons or obstacles that after the comments of the



experts, with respect to him, why we should rely on his reports as an acceptable fact. Hisham Ibni Urwah, on his narratives reports that Ayesha participated in both battles, whereby, establishes her age to be, at least, beyond fifteen years old, even before the battle of Badr !

The opposing views for the participation of Ayesha to the aforementioned battles state that the prohibition applied to combatants and to those who have only participated in those battles. It is claimed that it applied neither to non-combatant boys nor to non-combatant girls and women. It further states that Ayesha did not participate in Badr at all but bade farewell to the combatants as they were leaving Medina, as narrated by Muslim ( a well-known narrator ) in his Sahih. On the day of the battle of Uhud (year 3), Anas, at the time only twelve or thirteen years old, reports seeing an eleven-year old `A'isha and his mother Umm Sulaym having tied up their dresses and carrying water skins back and forth to the combatants, as narrated by Al Bukhari and Muslim

It must be noted that contrary to what has been stated and held amongst the aforementioned statements, a two year old is not an infant. A two year old is able to run around, which is what jariya means. It must be noted here that there are some unreliable narratives, reporting the age of marriage for a female to be as young as six or seven years old, and the age for cohabitation as early as nine years old. Although, the authentic values of these narratives have already been challenged and conclusively discredited, nonetheless, they exist in some books of narratives and must not be ignored. They should be mentioned and logically discredited and objected to, accordingly.

It is also claimed by some other narratives, in dispute to the claim of the participation of Ayesha in the battles, as well as the age of Asma, that; according to several other opposing narrators and historians, the elder sister of Ayesha was ten years older than Ayesha.

To determine and verify the age of Ayesha with respect to the age of sister Asma, there could be a reference made to narratives as reported by Taqri'bu'l-tehzi'b as well as Al-bidayah wa'l-nihayah. In both narratives it states that Asma died in 73 Hijrah when she was 100 years old. Therefore, if Asma was 100 years old in 73 of 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, Ayesha should have been 17 or 18 years old at that time. Thus, Ayesha, if she got married in the first or second year of Hijra, was between 18 to 20 years old at the time of her marriage.

It is generally held that according to almost all the historians Asma, the elder sister of Ayesha was ten years older than Ayesha. Ibni Al Zinad in his narrative, as narrated and referenced by Ibni Khatir, a well-known historian and scholar, narrates that Asma was ten years older than Ayesha, whereby confirms and supports the general view with that respect. Notwithstanding, Al-Dhahabi in

Siyar A`lam al-Nubala' said there was a greater difference than 10 years between the two, up to 19 years. There are several conflicting views with respect to the extents of reliability and authenticity of this narration. In any event, this narrative remain to be part of the books of Hadith wich have negative implications for establishing the factual age of Ayesha with respect to the age of Asma. However, the more reliable and authentic views of the majority of the narratives stand for the fact that the Asma was, in fact, only ten years older than Ayesha.

It must be noted that the age of Ayesha has not been referred to in any of the narrations of Hisham Ibni Urwah or Abu Nu`aym al-Asbahani, while determining and verifying the age of Asma. Ibni Hajar reports in al-Isaba from Hisham Ibni Urwah, from his father, that Asma did live 100 years, and from Abu Nu`aym al-Asbahani that "Asma bint Abi Bakr was born 27 years before the Hijra, and she lived until the beginning of the year 74." None of these narrations, as mentioned above, have made any reference to the age of Ayesha, although, Ibni Hisham does have narrations refereeing to that issue elsewhere, as previously having been mentioned. However, the above two statements are not of any supportive or disapproving values or concern with the age of Ayesha, other than the fact of confirming the more verified dates of the vital status of Asma.

**Obviously, if it is established that Ayesha was in fact ten years older than Asma, then all the doubts, controversies, and confusions about her age at the time of her marriage with the prophet would be conclusively resolved and permanently settled.**

It has been claimed and addressed that Al Tabari in his treatise on Islamic history, while mentioning Abu Bakr, reports that Abu Bakr had four children and all four were born during the Jahiliyyah, the pre Islamic period. Obviously, if Ayesha was born in the period of jahiliyyah, she could not have been less than 14 years in the first year of Hijrah, the time she most likely got married. This view have been challenged by some opponants claiming that Al Tabari nowhere reports that "Abu Bakr's four children were all born in Jahiliyya" but only that Abu Bakr married both their mothers in Jahiliyya, Qutayla bint Sa`d and Umm Ruman, who bore him four children in all, two each, Ayesha being the daughter of Umm Ruman.

**According to Ibni Hisham, the historian, Ayesha accepted Islam quite some time before Umar Ibni Khattab. This shows that Ayesha accepted Islam during the first year of Islam. If the narrative reporting the age of Ayesha at marriage to have had been age of seven, held to be true and authentic, Ayesha should not have been born during the first year of Islam !**

The opponents deny such statement by Ibni Hisham, although such narrative has been mentioned with references in this article and elsewhere. The wordings of the statement of narration made by Ibni Hisham may have

dissimilar implication. The wording of the above mentioned narrations suggests to have been stated: "As to Ayesha among those that accepted Islam because of Abu Bakr." This statement may be challenged as to have not established the claim the exact date that Ayesha accepted Islam, being the first year of Hijra. Nor does it mean that she necessarily embraced Islam before Umar Ibni Khattab, some six years after hijra, although she was born the previous year (year 7 before the Hijra) and although it is understood she will automatically follow her father's choice even before the age of reason. The exact wordings of the statement of narrations may be interpreted either way, depending the way that the wordings are grammatically structured.

Proponents supportive of the proper age of Ayesha at her marriage with the prophet adhere and refer to related narratives reported from Tabari stating that at the time Abu Bakr planned on migrating to Habshah, some eight years before Hijrah, he went to Mut-am, with whose son Ayesha was engaged, and asked him to take Ayesha in his house as his son in-law. Mut-am refused, because Abu Bakr had embraced Islam, and subsequently his son divorced Ayesha. Now, if Ayesha was only seven years old at the time of her marriage with the holy prophet, she could not have been born at the time Abu Bakr decided on migrating to Habshah .

**On the basis of this report it seems only reasonable to assume that Ayesha had not only been born 8 years before Hijrah, but was also a young lady, quite prepared for marriage.**

Opponents rejecting the above inferences, disallow the conclusion and assert that there is no mention of emigration in the narratives reported by Tabari of any such decision have ever been made by Abu Bakr with reference to the marriage of Ayesha, involving Mut-am. It has been argued that Abubakr has never ask Mut-am to take Ayesha because there had been only some preliminary talk, not a formal arrangement. Umm Ruman, Abu Bakr's wife, reportedly said: "By Allah, no promise had been given on our part at all" The dispute is somehow resolved by accepting that, according to Al tabari; when the news of the Prophet's interest in Ayesha came, he went to see Mut-am. Then Mut-am's wife manifested her fear that her son would become Muslim if he married into Abu Bakr's family. Abu Bakr then left them and gave his assent to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace.

It could be well argued that notwithstanding the detail and conditions of the circumstances surrounding the issue of the marriage of Ayesha, she must have had reached the traditionally proper and legal age for having been engaged in a marital contract and matrimonial intimacy, had the marriage contract would have had been established. The central point is to establish the fact, that at the date referred to in the above statement, which was some eight years before the Hijra, Ayesha was of a legally and traditionally established age of marriage.

**This fact is critical and indispensable to establish and prove the fact that at the time of the marriage of Ayesha with the prophet, she was at least seventeen to nineteen, or even twenty years old.**

The only opposing view to this conclusion arises from the claim of authenticity of the narratives reported by Ibni Hisham Urwah, whereby, stating the age of Ayesha to have had been only nine years old when she her marriage was consummated.

The lack of reliability and absence of consistency and uniformity in the entire narratives, ever narrated by Ibni Hisham, have already been asserted and argued in this article. As elsewhere above it has been asserted, the narratives of Ibni Hisham are grossly inconsistent both for internal divergence, as well as external discrepancies, constantly departing from one premises and arriving at some other bases with no logical nexus or rationally required articulated coherent. We detected a narration from Tabari stating that based on the narratives reported by Ibni Hisham,: "On the day he consummated the marriage with her, she was nine years old."

According to a narrative reported by Ahmad Ibni Hanbal, after the death of Khadijah, when Khaulah came to the holy Prophet, advising him to marry again, the Prophet asked her regarding the choices she had in her mind. Khaulah said: "You can marry a virgin, or, a Bikr or a women who has already been married, or, a Thayyib". When the Prophet asked about who the virgin was, Khaulah proposed the name of Ayesha as the bride.

It is the responsibility of all those who believe that marrying a girl as young as nine years old was an accepted norm of the Arab culture, to provide at least a few examples to substantiate their point of view. I have not yet been able to find a single reliable instance in the books of Arab history where a girl as young as nine years old was given away in marriage. Unless such examples are given, we do not have any reasonable grounds to believe that it really was an accepted

**All those who know the Arabic language, are aware that the word "Bikr" in the Arabic language is not used for an immature nine year old girl which was considered to be at minor age, thereby, would prohibit her from having had been engaged in a legal marriage which would constitute a legal and enforceable contract. Minor age is a critical factor which governs the issue of capacity and consent. Obviously, the qualification and capacity for consent could have had not been existed for a proper and legal marriage. Therefore, had the marital contract had formed and established under the circumstances claimed as aforementioned, such marriage would have had not been legal and as such would the render the relation totally illegal and**

unethical.. The correct word for a young playful girl, as stated earlier is Jariyah. The word Bikr, on the other hand, is used for an unmarried lady, and obviously a nine year old is not a Bikr or a lady. Although, a female child or infant or infant are naturally Bikr or virgin, nonetheless, the word bikr is customarily used to address a female who could have been traditionally consummated, but she had remained as Bikr, or, consumable and not-yet-consummated. This may well establish the fact that the age of Ayesha at the time of her marriage with the prophet could have been an underage in violation of those respected traditional and cultural ethics and principles.

Proponents supportive of the proper age of Ayesha at her marriage with the prophet adhere and refer to some related narratives as major points that go against accepting the commonly known narrative regarding Ayesha's age at the time of her marriage. In the opinion of the proponents, neither was it an Arab tradition to give away girls in marriage at an age as young as nine or ten years, nor did the Prophet marry Ayesha 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. Although, these assertions may be established through several historical and evidentiary documents and reasoning, nonetheless, there are some other historical claims and narratives that tend to devaluate the foundations supporting this view.

These are some of the major points that go against accepting the commonly known narrative regarding Ayesha's age at the time of her marriage.

The opponents to the views indicated above, adhere to some conflicting narratives that totally disagree and contradict the above given views. To support such apposition, in part, they use and refer to the Islamic Review which reports the narratives reported from the well-known historian Ibni Jareer al-Tabari stating at page 50 of volume 4 of his 'Book of History: "Abu Bakr married two ladies in the days of Jahiliyya (pre Islamic ignorance era), Fateelah daughter of Abd al-Aza was the first, from whom Abdullah and Asma were born. Umm-i-Rooman was the second, from whom Abd al-Rahman and Aishah were born. All the four children of Abu Bakr were born in the days of Jahiliyyah from the above-named two ladies.

It is a well-known fact of history, which Abu Bakr's son Abd al-Rahman fought against the Muslims in the battle of Badr. His age at that time was 21-22 years, and although he was older than 'Aishah, there is no evidence to show that the difference between their ages was more than three or four years. This fact lends support to the view that Ayesha was born four or five years before the Call. It may be argued that Abu Bakr's children, Abd Allah, Abd al-Rahman, Muhammad and Asma, were all born before Ayesha, and therefore, her birth could have followed that of the last of them by any number of years.

The author of the well-known collection of Hadith, Mishkat al-Masabeeh, Sheikh Wali Ad--Deen, writes in his well-known book Ahmal fi Asma al-Rijjal':

"At the time of the consummation of her marriage the age of Sayedah Aishah was not less than 18-19 years."

It must be noted that Sheiekh Wali-d-Deen is the nickname of Al-Khatib al-Tibrizi, whose book is called: Al Ikmal Fi Asma Al Rejal, which received an Urdu translation in the fifties and titled: Al Ikmal Fi Asma Al Rejal Muallaf E Sahib E Meshkat, sheikh Valiy-al-Din Abi Abd-Allah Muhammad Ibni Abd-Allah al-Khatib, Tarjuma-e Urdu. [Karachi, Nur-Muhammad: Karkhana-e Tijarat-i-Kutub, 1953]. There are several internal conflicts and inconsistencies in the narratives reported in the book named above. In the original Arabic version the age of Ayesha is indicated as not to be bellow 18 or 19, while in the Urdu translation of the same book it clearly states the age of Ayesha to be seven at her marriage and 9 when her marriage was first consummated and cohabited with the prophet !

According to Ibni Hajar, Fatimah ( prophet's daughter ) was five years older than Ayesha. Fatimah is reported to have been born when the Prophet was 35 years old. Thus, even if this information is taken to be correct, Ayesha 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.

To maintain the required authentic characteristics and ethical neutrality of this research article, we may have to attend to the two other versions of narratives reported by the same narrator.

Ibni Hajar mentions two versions of the same subject narrative. He reports from al-Waqidi's narration that Fatima was born when the Prophet was 35 years old. He also reports from a narrative from Ibni Abd al-Barr hat she was born when prophet 41, approximately one year more or less before Prophethood, and about five years before Ayesha was born. The latter version matches the established dates. Accepting this statement, Ayesha would have been nineteen to twenty years younger than her sister Asma who was born 27 years before Hijra and died at 74 of Hijra. With that account she could be five to eight years to eight years younger than Fatima. However, the two narratives reported by Ibni Hajar, contains obvious conflicts as to the dates and credibility of the narrator and illed adjudicative intellects utilized for relatively authenticating the received narrations. The date of the birth of Fatima, being nine years prior to Hijra, creates a serious and major conflict within the entire bodies of the many respected and relatively reliable narratives.

## Concise history of Muhammad's marriages :

Muhammad married his first wife, Khadijah, several years before his announcement as a prophet of Islam. Khadijah was a reasonably successful and financially stable business woman of Mecca and was, at least, 15 years older than the holy prophet. Muhammad was 25 and Khadijah was 40 at the time of their marriage. This loving and caring monogamous relationship continued for more than 25 years until her death.

Muhammad, now over 53 years of age, married a relatively aged woman by the name of Saudah. It is thus important to note here that Muhammad's twenty five prime youth years were spent in purely monogamous relationship with a lady 15 years his senior. This speaks volumes about the original and essential piety of the holy prophet throughout his fruitful life and loyalty in spousal matters as well as about the fact that his later marriages could not have been motivated by any human wild, or even natural, sexual desires.

In 620-621 A.D, he and his devout companions migrated from Mecca to Medina. Then a couple of years later, he married Ayesha, a daughter of his closest companion, Abu Bakr, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Hijrah (Islamic calendar--623-24 A.D). This information coming from diverse historical and Hadith sources is widely agreed upon and therefore can be, a priori, considered authentic.

## Quran and such allegations:

The age of Ayesha has been grossly misreported in the prophetic narrations. Considering the totality of all governing evidentiary circumstances, and based upon all other coincidental and conforming accounts and events, it appears that a few narratives reporting this event, to be highly unreliable and unlikely to have had occurred due to the fact that the alleged event could have had not have any logical or practical conformity with the constitutional mandates of the holy Quran.

There is a Final Word for a Muslim and that is the Book of God, the Holy Qur'an—the book that defines the marriageable age for a man or woman when he or she attains soundness of judgment (Al-Qur'an 4:6). If Muhammad 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.

Now based on this information, and a host of other related bits and pieces, summarized below, it can be shown that Ayesha could have been at least 16-19 of age at the time of her marriage with Muhammad :

## Itemized analysis of these historical and Hadith (Narratives) accounts:

1. Several books of Hadith (Al-Bukhari and Al-Muslim, Abu Dawood, among others) and Islamic history (Tabari, among others) report that Ayesha was married to the Prophet at 6 but her marriage was not consummated until she was 9 year old. Although, this information is widely quoted and found in many Hadith and history books, it must be noted that most of this information has come from a single person, Hisham bin Urwah, who is the last narrator of this Hadith Isnaad (chain of narration) on the authority of his father. Thus, this Hadith is primarily a single Hadith. Some other narratives mention the same Hadith but their narration has been found weak and unacceptable. In general, a Hadith has more credibility if it is narrated by more people independently from diverse chains of narrators. In this case, there is basically only one source.

2. Despite the abundance of information available during the 71 years that Hisham bin Urwah lived and taught in Medina, it is rather odd that that no one else, not even his famous pupil Malik Ibni Anas reported Ayesha's age from Hisham in Medina. Furthermore, all the narrators of this Hadith were Iraqis. Hisham is reported to have moved to Iraq in his later years. An extensive list of biographical sketches of all narrators including these Iraqis is available in some books.

3. Yaqub Ibni Shaibah is reported to have said, "narratives reported by Hisham are reliable except those that are reported through the people of Iraq". Malik Ibni Anas (d. 795), a student of Hisham in fact discredited all narratives of Hisham that were reported through people of Iraq.

(Tehzibu'l-tehzib, by Ibni Hajar al-Asqalani, Arabic, Dar Ihya al-turath al-Islami, one of the most well known books on the life and reliability of the narrators of the traditions of the Prophet, vol 11, pg 48 - 51)

4. It is reported that Hisham bin Urwah's memory suffered in his later years to the extent that some of the traditions reported from Hisham bin Urwah could not be trusted for authenticity.

(Mizanu'l-ai`tidal, by Al-Zahbi, Arabic, a book on the life sketches of the narrators of the Hadith, Al-Maktabatu'l-athriyyah, Sheikhpura, Pakistan, Vol 4, pg 301)

5. Even though Ayesha is reported to have been born about eight years before Hijrah (around 614 A.D.), one can find another narrative in Bukhari (kitabul-tafseer) whereby Ayesha is reported to have said that she was a 'young girl' at the time of revelation of the 54<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Qur'an which came 9 years before Hijrah (around 612 A.D). Thus, according to this



tradition, Ayesha was a young girl (Jariyah—as she calls herself and not an infant in which case she would be Sibyah). Additionally, this narrative stands in direct contrast to the one reported on Ayesha's age by Hisham bin Urwah. This puts Ayesha's age significantly higher than 9 as reported by Hisham bin Urwah—possibly 15 or even higher. Obviously, if this narrative is held to be true, it is in clear contradiction with the narratives reported by Hisham Ibni Urwah. There is no compelling reason as to why this tradition should be considered less accurate vis-à-vis Hisham's narrative).

(Sahih Bukhari, kitabu'l-tafsir, Arabic, Bab Qaulihi Bal al-sa`atu Maw`iduhum wa'l-sa`atu adha' wa amarr).

6. According to many narratives, Ayesha participated in the battles of Badr and Uhud. No one older than 15 was allowed to accompany the Prophet's army in the battle of Uhud. This applied across the board to all participants, men and women alike. The battle of Uhud took place around the 2<sup>nd</sup> Hijrah, a time line close to her marriage with the Prophet. Obviously, she was at least older than 15 at that time.

A narrative regarding Ayesha's participation in the battle of `Uhud is given in Bukhari.

(Kitabu'l-jihad wa'l-siyar, Arabic, Bab Ghazwi'l-nisa' wa qitalihinna ma`a'lrijal; that all boys under 15 were sent back is given in Bukhari, Kitabu'l-maghazi, Bab ghazwati'l-khandaq wa hiya'l-ahza'b, Arabic).

8. Most historians have consensus on the age of one of the oldest female companions of the Prophet, namely, Asma, the elder sister of Ayesha that was ten years older than Ayesha. It is also reported in Taqribu'l-tehzi'b as well as Al-bidayah wa'l-nihayah that Asma died in 73 Hijrah when she was 100 years old. Clearly, if Asma was 27 or 28 years old at the time of Hijrah, Ayesha was 17 at the time of Hijrah and 19 at the time of consummation of her marriage with Muhammad.

For Asma being 10 years older than Ayesha, see A`la'ma'l-nubala', Al-Zahabi, Vol 2, Pg 289, Arabic, Mu'assasatu'l-risalah, Beirut, 1992. Ibni Kathir confirms this fact, [Asma] was elder to her sister [Ayesha] by ten years" (Al-Bidayah wa'l-nihayah, Ibni Kathir, Vol 8, Pg 371, Arabic, Dar al-fikr al-`arabi, Al-jizah, 1933).

For Asma being 100 years old, see Al-Bidayah wa'l-nihayah, Ibni Kathir, Vol 8, Pg 372, Arabic, Dar al-fikr al-`arabi, Al-jizah, 1933). Ibni Hajar al-Asqalani also has the same information: "She [Asma (ra)] lived a hundred years and died in 73 or 74 AH." "Taqribu'l-tehzi'b, Ibni Hajar Al-Asqalani, Pg 654, Arabic, Bab fi'l-nisa', al-harfu'l-alif"

9. Tabari informs in his treatise on Islamic history that Abu Bakr had four children and all four were born during the pre Islamic period. The pre-Islamic period ended in 610 A.D, a fact that makes Ayesha to be at least 14 years of age at the time of her marriage around 613-624 A.D.

(Tarikhu'l-umam wa'l-mamlu'k, Al-Tabari, Vol 4, Pg 50, Arabic, Dara'l-fikr, Beirut, 1979)

10. Ibni Hisham, the historian, reports that Ayesha accepted Islam quite some time before `Umar Ibni al-Khattab which only means that Ayesha accepted Islam close to the time of first revelation (around 610 A.D). This means she must have been at least a young girl at that time. Assuming she was barely 6 or 7 at that time this information puts the age of Ayesha at 20 or more at the time of her marriage with Muhammad (623-624 A.D.),

(Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah, Ibni Hisham, vol 1, Pg 227 - 234 and 295, Arabic, Maktabah al-Riyadh al-hadithah, Al-Riyadh).

11. Tabari reports that before migrating to Habashah, Abu Bakr planned to hand over his daughter, Ayesha to Mut'am's son to whom she was engaged But fearing persecution by the Quraish, Mut'am refused and his son divorced Ayesha. The migration to Habashah happened 8 years before Hijra. Obviously, at the time she was ready to take on responsibilities as a wife (possibly 9 or 10 years of age). If she married Muhammad in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Hijrah (623-624 A.D), she could not be less than 19 years of age

(a secondary reference for this argument is: Tehqiq e umar e Siddiqah e Ka'inat, Habib ur Rahman Kandhalwi, Urdu, Pg 38, Anjuman Uswa e hasanah, Karachi, Pakistan).

\* 12. A famous Sunni imam, Ahmad Ibni Hanbal, reports in His Musnad, that after the death of Khadijah, Khaulah came to the Prophet and advised him to marry again. She had two propositions for the Prophet: Either Muhammad could marry a virgin (bikr), or he could go for woman who had already been married (thayyib)". Khaulah named Ayesha for a virgin (bikr). It is common knowledge that the term bikr in the Arabic language refers to a well formed lady and not to a 9 year old, playful, immature lass. If she were nine, the word used by Khaulah would have been jariyah and not bikr.

(Musnad, Ahmad Ibni Hanbal, Vol 6, Pg 210, Arabic, Dar Ihya al-turath al-arabi, Beirut).

13. Ibni Hajar al-Asqalani has reported that Fatimah, Muhammad's daughter, was five years older than Ayesha and that Fatimah was born when the Prophet was 35 years old. Thus, Ayesha, according to Ibni Hajar,

was born when Muhammad was 40 and consummated her marriage when he was 54 or 55. That makes Aysa at least 15-16 years of age.

\* (Al-isabah fi tamyizi'l-sahabah, Ibni Hajar al-Asqalani, Vol 4, Pg 377, Arabic, Maktabatu'l-Riyadh al-haditha, al-Riyadh1978)

14. It must be pointed out that Ayesha's age at the time of her marriage has never been an issue. If it were, his enemies must have picked up on this issue as they did to him on some other issues. Also, the reader must note that none of these Hadith reports concerning Ayesha's controversial age of marriage with the Prophet goes back to the Prophet himself. In other words, it is not the Prophet himself who said Ayesha was 6 or 9. These reports came from a single individual and the Iraqis reported from him when he grew old and his memory started failing.

In conclusion, this article is an attempt to prove that the books written 200-300 years after the death of Muhammad, while providing a good deal of historical information about him, are not free from faulty, less than perfect and self-contradictory materials. These should not be taken as the final word for a Muslim. There is a Final Word for a Muslim and that is the Book of God, the Holy Qur'an—the book that defines the marriageable age for a man or woman when he or she attains soundness of judgment (Al-Qur'an 4:6). If Muhammad 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.

**Reaching out Quran and Sunnah (defined as, Prophet's Quranic practices & utterances) for this issue:**

There are some stands and statements that hold and unjustifiably imply that from the narratives mentioned above, with respect to the age of Ayesha, the stated and claimed facts are indicative of an acceptable tradition providing authority and practices of marriage with minor females, and as such, it could be a recognized Sunnah of the Islamic behaviors and practices. These categorical and classic claims have been repeatedly denounced and rejected by so many respected and reputable scholars and researchers. It is totally baseless and without any logical support to mention or claim that from an Islamic standpoint the age of Ayesha could not be found in Quran, or further, to allege that the legal age of marriage is not specified and determined in Quran. All textual sources of Islam are made up of both the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and the Qur'an clearly indicates such fact in rather quite an extended details.

The law of marriage in Islam is governed by Quran and Sunnah, and the prophetic practices with respect to any issue constitute the required and concrete Sunnah for that issue or subject. Further, the prophetic Sunnah

must be in support and full compliance with the ruling of the Book (Quran), as a matter of law and coherent logic. The Sunnah cannot contradict with the constitutional and legal instrument of the governing authority for the same subject.

The age of marriage is clearly indicated and established in Quran, and as such the marriage with minor are considered an evil crime.

The principal reservations in accepting the above mentioned narratives, are on the basis of which, that if it is established that the age of Ayesha at the time of her marriage with the Prophet held to 9 years old, then the fundamental authenticity of Islam will become under critical and elementary question and reevaluation. Accepting the alleged fact of the marriage with an underage minor would place the perpetrator in clear violations of the most fundamental ruling structure of the ultimate authority, the holy Quran. Not only the alleged facts seems to be unreliable and violating the basic principles of the Book, there are other authenticated and logical accounts, accords, and data that entirely reject, even a remote possibility, of the likelihood of such allegation.

The Quran has not given names and other details of Prophet's wives but it has confirmed that all marriages of the Prophet were lawful (33:50). The age of Ayesha, wife of the prophet, is disputed on the basis of a calligraphic error in history books.

**Narrated history, however sacred, is not above scrutiny, particularly where dignity and honor of the prophet is at stake.**

Some scholars are erroneously interpreted and presented Sunnah as being commonly known as that of the utterances and practices of the prophet, and all other actions which gained his approval. Although, this statement, commonly accepted by Muslims, does not accurately describe Sunnah. But for the purpose of this discussion, let us take this to be an accurate explanation of Sunnah of the Prophet. But even then, the narratives describing the age of Ayesha at the time of her marriage do not fall under the scope of Sunnah.

Obviously, the narrative of Ayesha's age at the time of her marriage is not a part of the sayings of the Prophet, it cannot be termed as the Prophet's practices and neither can it be included in the actions which gained his approval. The narrative of Ayesha's age is just a narrative of a historical

event. Just because it has been reported by Bukhari and Muslim, does not change its status from being a narrative of a historical event to a Sunnah. Because of this fact, this narrative should be seen in the light of all other narratives of historical events which have been reported by Bukhari, Muslim and other historians of Islam. This is exactly the main subject and the core of this issue that, a report and narration of a narrator who, gives reports about a claimed fact that was heard from a third party two hundred sixty years, passed the claimed and unsubstantiated event, is now considered a prophetic Sunnah (legal and mandatory tradition) for all others to obey and follow.

If this is true, that Prophet Muhammad married Ayesha when she was 6 year old, then it must be consistent with the Qur'an stating that Muhammad himself followed the Qur'an before he asked others to follow it. The Qur'an does not assign a definite number to the age at which a man or a woman becomes 'adult' or ready to marry. However, there is a clear definition of the marriageable age as per 4:6: [An-Nisa' 4:6] Make trial of orphans until they reach the age of marriage; if then ye find sound judgment in them, release their property to them;

This verse is talking about two concepts here:

First of all, the trustee of a property should first test the ability of the grown up orphan to see if he or she is capable of managing his or her own affairs well.

Second, the Qur'an provides guidelines for the trustee as to the time at which the property of the orphans is to be handed over--it is the time when the orphan has attained adulthood or marriageable age and that he or she has attained a good degree of mental maturity.

Thus, the Qur'an gives a clear definition of adulthood or marriageable age as the one when one has attained a good measure of mental maturity. This should raise the question: Does a 6- or 9-year old have that level of quality of sound judgment? The answer is a resounding NO. If Muhammad married a 6 year old girl (and consummated her marriage at age 9), one wonders if he actually followed the Quranic guidelines regarding this issue. Please recall that the Qur'an states that Muhammad is a model for all mankind and that he himself followed the Qur'an in its entirety while ordering the same for his devout followers.

The Quranic guidelines as described clearly in 4:6 tell us that Muhammad could not have married a young girl of age 6 or 9.

There are other verses where the marriage bond has been described as "solemn covenant/solid contract---Meethaqan ghaleezan" (4:21). It is mighty revealing to me that in 4:21 for husband-wife relationship the same composition "meethaqan ghaleezan" has been used for the covenant that Allah took from all the prophets including Mohammad, the prophet of Islam (33:7). Not only that, the same expression was also used when Allah took covenant from the Jews not to violate the Sabbath (4:154). Thus, according to the Qur'an 'tying the knot' is going for a "Meethaqan Ghaleezan" (a solemn covenant of mutual trust and faithfulness for each other). This a definition of marriage, which later, when developed and nourished, gives rise to love, tranquility and mutual feelings of caring (30:21), as well as to our offspring as comfort of our eyes (25:74). These verses should suffice and conclusively bury the issue of the age of Ayesha's marriage with the Prophet of Allah. Ayesha could not have been 6 years of age based on many facts and factors. She could not have been an adult woman capable of making her own sound decisions. Ayesha could not have entered into a 'solemn covenant' at the age of 6 with a 54-year old man. This defies all reasons for a productive and meaningful union. The Prophet, according to the Qur'an, is a model for all humanity. The Qur'an describes him of having 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.

Nonetheless, since the charge of pedophilia by Rev. Vines, rested solely on some Hadith reports and not on any of the Qur'anic verses, the attention is now turned to those Hadith accounts and many other observations related to Ayesha's age, and their in-depth analysis.

**Those who insist on such detrimental narratives, despite contradicted with Quran:**

In the presence of all these historical narratives that contradict the narrative of Ayesha's age at the time of her marriage, anyone who wants to prove that Ayesha was nine years at the time of consummation of her marriage has the responsibility of telling others why is he rejecting all the other historical narratives and accepting only the one that states Ayesha's age to be nine at the time of her marriage.

Over the last few decades, the issue of the age and marriage of Ayesha become a political issue and an instrumental vehicle to dishonor and discredit the religion of Islam on an international scale and multi-interests level. Although, a great majority of faithful people and believers are deeply disturbed and distressed by these orchestrated campaign, the internal disunity,

and to some extents, betrayal behavior of some influential Islamic authorities in addition to the silent ignorance of other Muslims have caused and afforded some authenticity and credit to the baseless and unfounded inflammatory allegations that continue to discredit, weaken, and deteriorate the fabric and institutional bonds of Islamic cultural and ethical identities and value.

Notwithstanding the fact that the allegations of the underage marriage of Ayesha could be effectively rebutted, one must perform a full and investigative analysis from all legal, traditional, cultural, and social dimensions to validly prove and establish the rational and practical impossibility of the ongoing and unsubstantiated claims of the issue of underage marriage of Ayesha. Marital contracts and marital relations in Islam are fully governed and adjudicated through the Book (Quran) and the Sunnah (Prophetic Tradition). The Sunnah must be coherently consistent and supportive of the legal and ethical structure of the Book. The Sunnah must be in full compliance and conformity with the content and objectives of the Book, and must provide for a permanent and perpetual mechanism for all others to achieve the same level and extents of conformity and compliance with the structural attributes and guiding objective of the Book. It may be of some value and benefit to summarily and briefly review and examine the sources, authorities, meanings, and applications of the two major and principals of Islamic legal and ethical structures, the Book, and the Sunnah.

According to the faith of Islam the vast majority of the Muslims professes, there are two sources of the Divine Guidance—the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Quran is the actual Word of Allah (God) revealed by the archangel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad over a period of 23 years during the period 610-632 A.D in the Arabian Peninsula. The Qur'an that was revealed as Guidance and Light (17:9) for all mankind was written and properly documented by some forty scribes during the lifetime of the Prophet. There is historical as well as the Quranic internal evidence to that effect (80:11-16 and 25:5) as well as God's personal guarantee against any possible corruption in the Scripture (15:9). Additionally, the Qur'an was not only written and documented but it was committed to memory in its entirety during the lifetime of the Prophet. This noble tradition of memorization of the Qur'an continues to this day. One can find hundreds of thousands of individuals around the world who know the entire Qur'an by heart. It is noteworthy that although there are several sects in Islam, the Qur'an remains perfectly preserved to the letter in its original Arabic language and recited, understood and referred to for explanations by all sects the same way. Thus, while the interpretations may vary, the original Arabic text has remained the same without sectarian bias.

The Qur'an enjoined Muhammad, as well as all other believers, to strictly follow the Quran (6:106; 10:109; 33:2) and it stands witness to the fact that Muhammad and his followers did exactly that all their lives (7:203; 46:9; 6:50). In fact, Muhammad himself was warned in rather stern terms not to go against

the Quranic teachings (17:39, 10:94-95, 69:40-48). Furthermore, the Qur'an declares Muhammad to be a man of highest moral standards (68:4; 33:21) and the best exemplar for humanity. The Qur'an enjoins the believers in scores of verses to follow Muhammad's teachings and accept him as a final authority in all their affairs.

One may argue that the facts given above do not contain the actual quotation to accurately address the referenced documents in an accurately stated manor. With respect to such potentially existing objections it is quite logic and customary to make direct reference to the most original and authenticated sources for ascertaining the validity of the documents submitted to substantiate the claim and proving the arguments and legally withstand all argumentative challenges and devaluating objections.

To comply with the required norms and standards of the most accurate authentication and precise scrutiny, all the references and quotations are supported with the available names of the narrators within the change of reference, so that it may provide for the easier and more immediate reference to the original sources.

To provide the reader with the most possible and available historical views and documents, for the both sides, all different views and documents will be introduced and reported on an equal basis. For instance, if we show a narrative from a narrator to support the age of Ayesha to be beyond fifteen years old at the time of her marriage with the holy prophet, we shall equally make reference to the chain of other reputable narrators who report her age, for the same occasion, to be six years old at the marriage, and nine at the time of consummation. There are highly respected Hadithes from the most reputable historians and narrators that have reported the age of Ayesha quite different with those who reject her to be a minor age bride. Amongst the aforementioned chain of narrators, we will find Bukhari, Tabari, Abu Dawud, to have named a few.

The Second generally accepted source of Islamic faith is the Sunnah. The Sunnah is the summation of Islamic teachings related to faith and code of conduct as personally practiced and perpetuated by Muhammad for all believers to implement and follow in their personal lives as well as in proper Islamic governance. The Sunnah protocols related to articles of Islamic faith and rituals are continuous from the day of the Prophet but a great many others are largely derived from a huge body of compilations of oral narrations referred to as Hadith. The Hadith, commonly known as traditions of the Prophet, consists of many books of compilations of reported accounts of Muhammad's sayings, actions, and tacit approvals. There are six books of Hadith (Sihah Sita) that are considered authentic by the main stream Sunni Muslims.



There is also a different set of four Hadith books for the Shia Muslim community. All these books were written 200-300 years after the death of Muhammad. The documentation of these books proceeded based on collection of hundreds of thousands of stories from the then living people who transmitted accounts or stories about Muhammad or his companions as they heard from earlier generations. Thus, the process of oral transmission (word of mouth) made the basis of all these collections. The aforementioned process commonly known as Isnaad or chain of narration comprised a chain of 4-6 or more narrators in time going back to the companions of Muhammad and to Muhammad himself over a period of 250-300 or more years. These accounts seek to portray the Muslim culture and history during the lifetime of the Prophet of Islam. Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that the only true surviving book, call it Islamic history or Divine Guidance, that was memorized by thousands of Companions of the Prophet and written in a completely and carefully documented form is none other than the Qur'an itself. The first non-Qur'anic history book, 'Seerat Rasoolallah' (Seerah/Tradition), by Ibni Ishaq (d. 767 A.D) was written more than 90 years after the death of Muhammad. That book of history was also based on oral transmissions. Ibni Ishaq was severely criticized by some notable scholars of Islam such as Malik Ibni Anas, the originator of the Maliki School of thought in Islamic jurisprudence mainly practiced in Africa.

The majority of Muslims considers two of the six Hadith books, those authored by Al-Bukhari (d. 870 A.D) and Al-Muslim (d. 875 A.D) most authentic after the Qur'an despite the fact that they were written 200-300 years after the advent of Islam. Both of the books were collected more than one century after the first book of Hadith having been first published by Ibni Ishaq. These scholars of Islam exercised great caution in selecting what they called correct traditions and proceeded with purest of intentions but one must not lose sight of the fact that they still collected narrations from living people who were not primary or even secondary and tertiary sources of the accounts of the life and sayings of Muhammad and his companions. Some Islamic historians (and/or exegetes of the Qur'an) whose books about early Islamic history are considered of high importance and who derive their history of early Islam from the saheeh of Ibni Ishaq include Tabari (d. 923 ), Ibni Katheer, Ibni Hisham (d. 827 A.D) and Ibni Hajar Al Asqalani, to name a few.

The introduction given above of the two sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunnah/Hadith, (prophetic Traditions) is necessary for the reader to understand the issue at hand, the age of Ayesha, the third wife of Prophet Muhammad at the time of her marriage.

Although it is reasonably presumed that a comprehensive and multidimensional review of all of the supporting and denying reasons and documents, the issue of alleged underage marriage of Ayesha could rationally be put to rest and be permanently and conclusively retired and related files closed, nonetheless, still many questions must be answered and many cloudy confusions must be patiently

cleared for the factual reality about this case to be fully exonerated. Many of the asserted claims and allegations are humiliations and subjective, and they are merely made for power strength and political gain. Regardless of the intents, motives, or objectives, the issue must have the reason to universally stand tall and clear in a bright and transparent stand.

There are many groups and interests that assert the allegations of an old man becoming aroused by a child, and they view this unfounded assertion as a conclusive and proven fact and convincing reality. Some of the narratives reported by the most credible narrators are being freely used as conclusive and concrete evidence to prove the allegations. Although there have been long and comprehensive discussions about this issue, it is still useful to give a summary collection of all of the narratives and reports that are used to deny the propriety and ethical values of the marriage of Ayesha. This will be the entire opposing instruments in one single file, a file to every point, thereof, have been fully responded based on the legal, traditional, documentary, and traditional documentations and reasoning.

It appears that all the above quotations, assertions, allegations, defenses, rebuttals, rejections, modifications, admissions, and denials, collectively give ample refutation to the common misconception that the age of Ayesha at her marriage with the holy prophet, and at her marital contract could have been six years old and at the time of consummation of marriage being only 9 years. If Muslim scholars of the present era deem fit to make an objective research instead of beating the old track, they will find ample evidentiary and testimonial material and many more rational and logical proofs and indications in the pages of history and the body of the voluminous narratives and reports, to arrive at a correct age for Ayesha. And Allah the Almighty is the source of ultimate truth.

The arguments of assertive claims, both from opponents as well as proponents, continue to construct and leave logical inference and rational implications, as a necessitating means of further studying and learning about this ever significant and important issue of the entire history and principle of the Islamic authentic and logical reasoning, for maintaining and holding up its existence and originality as an ethical and moral school of thoughts, humanities, services, and logical comprehension and rational conception. If we are not able to establish and prove the real age of Ayesha, the entire system of Islamic conceptual principles and theological moral philosophy will be subject to natural and irreversible collapse and eventual and permanent destruction and disappearance.

As mentioned several times within the body of this article, when the narrations as reported to support and establish the underage of Ayesha when married with Mohammad, all and every reputable or otherwise narrators based their narratives on the reports and narrations received from the sources that did not have any authentic values.

During the previous analysis presented, we have examined, evaluated, and rendered traditional and authentic legal adjudication to establish the existing and obvious conflicts and absence of authenticity and accuracy of the origins of the narratives used and based by other reputable narrators such as Bukhari. The narratives reported by Bukhari, particularly those reported from Iraqis narrators, are insufficient and contain internal conflicts and contradictions which render them distorted, defected, and of no historical, logical, evidentiary, and legal values. As it has been mentioned before, and supported by several conclusive and concrete evidences, the core and nucleus of this analytical research is based on the argument and claim that evidentiary instruments, provided to establish the age of the bride, appear to be lacking even the minimum required standards of genuineness and authentic originality.

As mentioned and proven before, the underage of Ayesha, at her marriage was not a cultural and habitual practice within the Arabs. It is an established fact that the marriage of Ayesha was fully honored and accepted by Arab culture and traditions. It is a strong evidence that the marriage of Ayesha was a traditional, honored, and acceptable marriage, further establishing that she could not be a person of underage and yet her marriage having been honored and accepted by a culture rejecting minor age marriage.

This claim and argument is an unbiased presumption of unsupported practices that have never been established by any authenticated account or historical evidence. Reasonably, it is the burden and responsibilities of the claimants and all those who believe in this falsely assumed facts, accusing the holy prophet to have conducted an act short than perfect, claiming to be an acceptable norm of the time, to provide sufficient evidentiary, and universally acceptable, instrument to reasonably substantiate their point of view.

On this end, there has not been a single dependable instance in any books concerning Arab history where a girl as young as nine years old was given away in marriage as a conventional and honorable means of an acceptable and legal marriage. Unless such examples are given and claiming facts are provided, the given claims, regardless of the frequency and age of its publications and public support, lacks even the minimum established evidentiary support and reasonable grounds to substantiate the claims that marriage with six years old girls would have been really an accepted norm.

Based on all above mentioned documentary evidences, as well as all other supportive elements, the age of Ayesha at the time of her marriage to Mohammad had to be beyond, at least, 17 years, and yet there are several reports and narratives, even in Bukhari, that establishes the fact that the entire narratives reported in that requires a newly established methodology of reevaluation and recertification.

The following narratives found in Bukhari which are in clear and obvious support for the claim and position that the entire content of all narratives must be subject to a very narrow scrutiny, reevaluation, authentications, and recertification. Ignoring this vitally important task, will render the entire body of the Islamic narratives questionable and less reliable for many other historical, legal, cultural, and evidentiary values.

The followings narratives in Sahih Bukhari, and some other enlisted narrators, are found to be in full and undependable conflicts with those logically authenticated and established facts and events

Sahih Muslim Book 008, Number 3310:

Ayesha reported: Allah's Apostle married me when I was six years old, and I was admitted to his house when I was nine years old.

Sahih Bukhari Volume 7, Book 62, Number 64.

Narrated Ayesha: that the Prophet married 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 (i.e., till his death).

Sahih Bukhari Volume 7, Book 62, Number 65.

Narrated Ayesha: That the Prophet married her when she was six years old and he consummated his marriage when she was nine years old. Hisham said: I have been informed that Ayesha remained with the Prophet for nine years.

Sahih Bukhari Volume 7, Book 62, Number 88:

Narrated Urwah: The Prophet wrote the (marriage contract) with Aisha while she was six years old and consummated his marriage with her while she was nine years old and she remained with him for nine years (till his death).

Sahih Bukhari 7 Book 62.Number 18:

Narrated Urwah: The Prophet asked Abu Bakr for 'Aisha's hand in marriage. Abu Bakr said "But I am your brother." The Prophet said, "You are my brother in Allah's religion and His Book, but she (Aisha) is lawful for me to marry."

The above narrative is used as a documentary reference to establish the claim that the first Caliph Abu Bakr did not approached Muhammad asking him to marry his daughter. This issue, of course, has been fully discussed and elaborated upon in the previous sections.

Arabs were a primitive lot with little rules to abide. Yet they had some code of ethics that they honored scrupulously. For example, although they fought all the year round, they abstained from hostilities during certain holy months of the year. They also considered Mecca to be a holy city and did not make war against it. An adopted son's wife was deemed to be a daughter in law and they would not marry her. Also it was customary that close friends made a pact of brotherhood and considered each other as true brothers.

It is also a known fact that Arabs would not tolerate any action or behavior that oppose or undermined their traditional culture and values. Had the prophet ever had have disregarded these rules anytime they would stood between him and his conduct by all means. The fact of any marriages of the prophet, together, with that of public support and blessing, is another rational and intuitive reasoning and evidence of utmost ethical and proper by the measures of society and their cultural and spiritual values.

It is claimed that the close relation of Abu Bakr and the prophet would position them as brothers, thereby; marrying with Ayesha would constitute a forbidden relation. Abu Bakr and Muhammad were brothers in faith, and as such, that would not present any ethical or legal obstacles for the willful marriage of Ayesha with the prophet. So according to their customs Ayesha was fully and ethically free to make her independent and determinant decision to marry to the candidate of her choice, in full compliance with the governing cultural norms and legal rules.

Sahih Bukhari Volume.7, Book 62, Number 37:

Narrated Ibni Abbas: It was said to the Prophet, "Won't you marry the daughter of Hamza?" He said, "She is my foster niece."

The above reference, although, is generally and traditionally used to discredit the prophet, to the contrary, it is an indicative of the prophet's full and proper compliance with every details of the rules and ethical considerations of society.

Sahih Bukhari Volume 9, Book 62, Number 140:

Narrated Aisha: Allah's Apostle said to me, "You were shown to me twice (in my dream) before I married you. I saw an angel carrying you in a silken piece of cloth, and I said to him; uncover (her) and behold, it was you. I said (to myself), If this is from Allah, then it must happen.

Sahih Bukhari Volume 5, Book 62, Number 236:

Narrated Hisham's father: Khadija died three years before the Prophet departed to Medina. He stayed there for two years or so and then he married

Aisha when she was a girl of six years of age, and he consumed that marriage when she was nine years old.

Sahih Bukhari Volume 5, Book 62, Number 234:

Narrated Aisha: The Prophet engaged me when I was a girl of six (years). We went to Medina and stayed at the home of Bani-al-Harith bin Khazraj. Then I got ill and my hair fell down. Later on my hair grew (again) and my mother, Um Ruman, came to me while I was playing in a swing with some of my girl friends. She called me, and I went to her, not knowing what she wanted to do to me. She caught me by the hand and made me stand at the door of the house. I was breathless then, and when my breathing became All right, she took some water and rubbed my face and head with it. Then she took me into the house. There in the house I saw some Ansari women who said, "Best wishes and Allah's Blessing and a good luck." Then she entrusted me to them and they prepared me (for the marriage). Unexpectedly Allah's Apostle came to me in the forenoon and my mother handed me over to him, and at that time I was a girl of nine years of age.

The above narratives are identified as a Hadith that was first published by Ibni Hisham during his residency in Iraq. As mentioned before, the narrative entirely fails to be a qualified Hadith under all the standard measuring devices for accrediting a Hadith, sufficient to hold the same as authentic and reliable. Readers are directed to refer to the sections defining the means and standards for qualifying any narrative.

Based on these narratives, whether Muhammad had actually such dream or he just said it to please Ayesha is not the point. What matters here is that it indicates that Ayesha was a baby being "carried" by an angel when the Prophet dreamed of her.

Obviously, this narrative is reported by Urwah from Ayesha. Once again, the source of publication of this narrative is the same unreliable source, originally responsible for causing and creating most of the existing and conflicting controversial narratives in general, and with respect to the marriage of Ayesha, in particular. If it is established that this narrative is authentic and originally established as reliable, then the entire system of Islamic traditions of ethics and moralities will be collapsed and corrupted.

If we hold these narrative as valid and reliable, then we would have placed the holy prophet in an image of a person who lacks morality and conducts actions and transactions that are morally wrong and traditionally unethical, and from the legal stand point, totally illegal and in full violation of all stated standards and formulated and mandated principles and ordinances.

According to Quran, the prophet did not commit any wrong or even insufficient conduct. In Quran, he is referred to as a man without even one single act of immoral, erroneous, wrong, unethical, or even, less than perfect. Obviously, if such an unethical conduct, as claimed by the above narrative, has been ever committed by the prophet, not only he would become disqualified as a proper prophet, as claimed by Quran, the entire system, including the authenticity and holiness of the Book would be to a total collapse and destruction.

Therefore, we are left with two critical choices, accepting the truth of the above narrative and establish the destruction and end of Islam, or to reject the narrative and adhere and commit to an ongoing inspection, evaluation, and comparative practices between the essential factors of Quran and all narratives that claim to be in support and for the deliberation and collaboration of the Book. This is a very critical and utmost important task, binding upon all scholars and even ordinary and average Muslims throughout the world to follow up on a continuous basis for the extended comparative analysis and evaluations of all narratives for the purpose of authenticating them with the fundamental standards and constitutional principles of Quran.

Sunan Abu-Dawud Book 41, Number 4915 & Number 4916 & Number 4917 :

Narrated Ayesha, Ummul Mu'minin: The Apostle of Allah married me when I was seven or six. When we came to Medina, some women came. According to Bishr's version, Umm Ruman came to me when I was swinging. They took me, made me prepared and decorated me. I was then brought to the Apostle of Allah and he took up cohabitation with me when I was nine. She halted me at the door, and I burst into laughter.

This Hadith is used to establish the underage marriage of Ayesha. Although we read that Ayesha was swinging, and although the nature of alleged act could be utilized to establish the underage condition of the marriage, it must be born in mind that the entire Hadith is rejected as false and unfounded since it contradicts and violates the minimum standards and required qualification for being accounted and accorded as even a relatively weak Hadith.

It is sad and frustrating to go on evaluating the value of a subject, providing for the means and measures for the standards of accreditations and still receiving challenges to the details, while the essential and entire value and authenticity of the issue and claim at hand is failed to gain any legal or traditional standing. Of course playing of girl is a circumstantial evidence for her childhood, and not being aware of the circumstances could be another evidence of being under age. Nonetheless, when the entire story proven to be false, there is no point to assume and uphold any part thereof, for sectional evaluation or resulting conclusions.

Sahih Bukhari Volume 7, Book 62, Number 90:

Narrated Aisha: When the Prophet married me, my mother came to me and made me enter the house (of the Prophet) and nothing surprised me but the coming of Allah's Apostle to me in the forenoon.

According to the aforementioned narrative there has been no waiting period or passing a mandatory periodic interlude between the legal marriage of Ayesha with Mohammad and the consummation of such marriage, or any other intimacy or cohabitation, as a result of their marriage. If this narrative is held reliable, then Ayesha must have had married with the prophet when she was six years old. Further, it proposes that a six years old child was trusted with an old man to be her husband and cohabitant. This narrative clearly contradicts other narratives that reported a three years time detachment before the consummation or otherwise intimate relation between the bride and the groom. Further more, the narrative reports from Ayesha that nothing surprised her from the fact that she was delivered and trusted to Mohammad, and that of Mohammad coming to her in the forenoon. Under any other circumstances, for a six years old child it must have been a surprised that an old adult come to her in the forenoon for any purpose.

Further, if the aforementioned narrative is held reliable, consequentially it will be obvious and an undeniable evidence that Ayesha, who was receiving Mohammad in the forenoon, was as young as a child playing with her dolls. Under any normal and natural circumstances a playful child would be quite surprised and disturbed to find an adult who happened to be her husband and, therefore, have no obstacle for furthering the private cohabitation into a confident and, potentially, convenient intimacy and foreplays. Reporting lack of surprise on the part of Ayesha is a circumstantial evidence that Ayesha was married to prophet in full violation of Islamic rules, Arab culture, and all bonds and limitations established by the principles of moralities and ethics.

Sahih Bukhari Volume 8, Book 73, Number 151

Narrated Aisha: I used to play with the dolls in the presence of the Prophet, and my girl friends also used to play with me. When Allah's Apostle used to enter (my dwelling place) they used to hide themselves, but the Prophet would call them to join and play with me.

According to Fateh Al Bari, page 143, Vol.13, the playing with the dolls and similar images were forbidden and illegal for the adults who were beyond the age of puberty, but it was allowed for Aisha at that time, since she was a little girl, not yet reached the age of puberty and therefore, she would not be subject to prohibiting rules applicable to adults. Further, the above mentioned narrative is a demonstrative and testimonial evidence that if the Sahih Bukhari



Volume 7, Book 62, Number 90, is accepted as a valid and reliable narrative, then the age of Ayesha at the time of her marriage with Mohammad would have had been the age of a little girl playing with dolls and not yet reached the age of puberty.

Now, we are confronted with a major contradictory problem between giving in for the age of Ayesha as a little girl, not even having reached the age of puberty and denying the morality and properness of the prophet, or rejecting the narrative and admitting that there are no truth or authentic values in the above-mentioned narrative. There is not any other choice for any researcher who is bound by the principles of justice and rationality.

Sahih Muslim Volume 08, Book 65, Number 3311:

Ayesha reported that Allah's Apostle married her when she was seven years old, and she was taken to his house as a bride when she was nine, and her dolls were with her, and when he (the Holy Prophet) died she was eighteen years old.

Sahih Bukhari Volume 8, Book 73, Number 33:

Narrated Ayesha: I never felt so jealous of any woman as I did of Khadija, though she had died three years before the Prophet married me, and that was because I heard him mentioning her too often, and because his Lord had ordered him to give her the glad tidings that she would have a palace in Paradise, made of Qasab and because he used to slaughter a sheep and distribute its meat among her friends.

The holy Prophet departed when he was 63. So he must have married Ayesha when he was 51 and went to her when he was 54. Khadija died in December of 619 AD. That is two years before Hijra, at that time the Prophet was 51 years old. So in the same year that Khadija died the prophet married Ayesha and took her to his home 3 years later, one year after Hijra. But until she grew up he married Umm Salama. In another part Ayesha claims that as long as she remembers her parents were always Muslims.

As it can be clearly demonstrated, each and every parts of the above mentioned narratives internally and externally contradict all other narratives with respect to the age of the marriage of Ayesha and Mohammad. Once again, we are left with a critical choice, as to whether discount the reliability of the conflicting narratives which are insulting and humiliations of the ethical values and moralities of the prophet, or hold the narratives without any objects and accuse and condemn the prophet as less than pure and perfect, disregarding all other evidences, including authentic reports and statements of the holy Quran with respect to the innocence, purity, and perfection stand and behavior of the prophet.

Sahih Bukhari Volume 5, Book 58, Number 245 :

Narrated Ayesha: I never remembered my parents believing in any religion other than the true religion (Islam).

The above mentioned narrative is another example of the existing of major and invalidating conflicts between the several different narratives reported by the same narrator, claiming them as being Sahih, which means having been securitized and evaluated to have been in conformity with all the governing rules of authentication, and as such they have passed the test and became reliable for further use and application.

According to the above mentioned narrative, Ayesha if could not be older than 16 or 18 as other reliable and authentic evidence justify, otherwise, she would have remembered the religion of her parents prior to becoming Muslims. We made several historical references and accordingly established the true and correct age of Ayesha at any points between her birth, marriage, and death. Rationally, the truth is supported by several authentic evidence and a series of other instruments, but after truth being so obvious and clear, any reasonable person would recognize the narrowly stated two alternatives are the only two choices for resolving this ever disturbing and confusing issue; we either accept the Islam and its principles and values, as authentic and ethical, or we insist of the underage of Ayesha and condemn the principles of the faith of 1.5 Billion individuals to support our stand about the underage of Ayesha, at any costs.

No sane person, or even not an average and ordinary individual, would be aroused by a 9 year old child. How could we attribute this horrible and culpable act to a holy prophet, to a perfect and role model for ethical values, the most unethical and shameful conduct by upholding several unreliable baseless stories to maintain our superiority over those who simple mined to believe our unjustified and unfair position that are being held for the mere purpose of political powers and financial gains. The question has been so far remained unanswered.

Once again, it must be noted that according to almost all the historian, Asma, the elder sister of Ayesha was ten years older than Ayesha. It is reported that Asma died in year 73 of Hijrah when she was 100 years old. Now, obviously if Asma was 100 years old in year 73 of Hijrah, she should have been 27 or 28 years old at the time of the event of Hijrah. If Asma was 27 or 28 years old at the time of Hijrah, Ayesha should have been 17 or 18 years old at that time. Thus, Ayesha, who was married to the prophet in the first or second year of Hijrah, was between 18 to 20 years old at the time of her marriage.

Briefly reviewing the history, we will notice that Abu Bakr had four children and all four were born during the Jahiliyyah, the pre Islamic period. Obviously,

if Ayesha was born in the period of jahiliyyah, she could not have been less than 14 years in the first year of Hijrah, when she likely married with the prophet. Ayesha accepted Islam quite some time before Umar Ibni Khattab. This shows that Ayesha accepted Islam during the first year of Islam. While, if the narrative of the age of the marriage of Ayesha is held to be seven years, she should not have been born during the first year of Islam. It is also reported that eight year before the Hijrah Abu Bakr planned to emigrate to Habasha, thereby, asking his son-in-law, Mut-am to take his bride (Ayesha) home so that Abu Bakr could go on with his plan. Mut-am refused and subsequently Ayesha was divorced.

If Ayesha was only six years old at the time of her marriage, she could not have been born and reached the age of marriage some eight years before the Hijrah. These are some of the major points that go against accepting the commonly known narratives regarding the underage of Ayesha at the time of her marriage with the prophet. It is a historical fact and a known tradition that it was not an Arab tradition to give away girls in marriage at an age as young as nine or ten years. Further more, considering the totality of all governing circumstances, it cannot be accepted did that the Prophet would marry Ayesha 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 erroneously narrated.

Most of the narratives having been narrated by Bukhari and other Narrators are based and built up on the narratives as existed and reported by Hisham Ibni Urwah on the authority of his father. All the reports published by Hisham, with respect to the age of Ayesha at her marriage with the prophet, are defected by all respective governing rules and traditional mandates. The extents of the deficiencies and violations are multidimensional, consequentially causing the entire narratives that ever published in Iraq to be invalid and unreliable. There are several reputable reports and historical and narrative evidences that support the legal objections and invalidating causes for the narratives reported by the Hisham.

It is quite strange that no one from Medina, where Hisham Ibni Urwah lived the first seventy one years of his life has narrated the event of marriage of Ayesha, even though in Medina his students included people as well known as Malik Ibni 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 Medina for seventy one years. Again, the argument that all those who heard this narrative from Hisham Ibni Urwah were Iraqis is a simple statement of fact. This can be checked in the biographical sketches of these narrators in any of the books written on the narrators. Further, there are sufficient reports from Yaqub Shaiban stating the absence of reliability of narratives reported by Ibni Urwah during his residing in Iraq, with respect to the events occurred in Medina. There are other several reports all indicative sever loss and distortion of memory of Ibni Hisham during his residing in Iraq.

Although the majority of the narrators of the age and event of the marriage of Ayesha are highly respected and reliable, nonetheless, the origin and primary sources of the entire narratives ever narrated by these reputable narrators, are all elicited and brought forth from one single source of narration which is not accredited by any means, tradition, or authorities whose traditions govern the examination and authentic evaluation and certification of a narrative. This critical points always has the tendencies to escape the mind of the reader or researching individual. It must be born in mind, and be self remained frequently, that the reputation and reliability of the traditionally reputable narrators cannot change and compensate for the absence of the original distortion of a narrative having had been used and narrated by them.

It is essentially important to constantly and consistently recall the critical fact that on the reliability and resources utilized by Hisham Ibni Urwah, each one of his quoted statement, whether it is from Tabari, Bukhari, Muslim or Abu Dawud, is either narrated by Hisham Ibni `Urwah or is reported to the respective author by or through an Iraqi. Not even a single narrative is free from either of the two problems.

The presentation of several quotations from Tabari, Bukhari and Muslim are mainly to demonstrate and establish the fact that even their own information contradict with the narrative regarding the age of Ayesha. Thus, when the narrative of Ayesha's age is not reliable and when there is information in the same books that contradicts the narrative of Ayesha's age, the final conclusion is mandated to be made on more narratives that contain more consistency, conformity, and uniformity within the norms and standards of authentication. There are absolutely no reason to believe that the information on Ayesha's age is accepted (when there are adequate grounds to reject it) and other (contradictory) information is rejected (when there is no ground to accept it).

I have read almost the entire voluminous body of all related articles, documents, narratives, and any other indicative and guiding instruments that could be beneficial and instrumental in arriving at any rationally established fair and practical support adjudicative judgment and evaluations of hundreds of conflicting and incompatible resources and I have responded to them to the extents humanly possible. I have not seen yet even a new unread issue that is justifies any other research or further analysis and reevaluations, as all the presented claims and documents rely on the very sources for which already I had presented my reservations upon. In case that in future there should be any new evidence or issue that have not been indicated and adjudicated in this article, I shall be glad to open the window for a whole new analytical approach to reevaluate the entire issue at hand. But without any specific subject I sincerely have to conclude this matter as stated and resolved in

As a generally accepted definition of Sunnah, one may define Islamic tradition (Sunnah) to include the sayings, and behavioral compliances and practices of the Prophet, known commonly as Hadithes which consist of words and deeds of the prophet and that of what have gained his approval.

Although, the above statement, though commonly accepted by Muslims, does not accurately describe Sunnah. But for the purpose of this discussion, let us take this to be an accurate explanation of Sunnah of the Prophet. But even then, the narratives describing the age of Ayesha at the time of her marriage do not fall under the scope of Sunnah.

Obviously, the narrative referring and reporting the age of Ayesha at the time of her marriage is not a part of "the sayings of the Prophet", it cannot be termed as the Prophet's "practices" and neither can it be included in the "actions which gained his approval". The narrative of respective to the age of Ayesha is just a narrative of a historical event. Just because it has been reported by Bukhari and Muslim, does not change its status from being a narrative of a historical event to a Sunnah. Because of this fact, this narrative should be seen in the light of all other narratives of historical events which have been reported by Bukhari, Muslim and other historians of Islam. This is exactly what has been left to uphold within the Muslim scholarly society throughout the long and critical history of Islam.

In the presence of all these historical narratives that contradict the narrative of the age of Ayesha at the time of her marriage with the holy prophet, any one who wants to prove that Ayesha was nine years at the time of consummation of her marriage has the responsibility of telling others why is he rejecting all the other historical narratives and accepting only the one that states the age of Ayesha as to be nine at the time of her marriage.

At the turn of the century, there are increasing critical voices being raised to assert the misconception of the legality of marriage with children in Islam. The supporting forces of this evil idea borrowed their instrument through a traditional misreading of the Quran.

There is a verse in the Chapter Nessa (women) in Quran which begins with: "If you fear that you are not capable of maintaining the principles of equality and justice, as between and amongst the orphan children, you may wish to engage into the marriage of your choice to the extents and limitations of four based upon your ability and justifications of equality, justice ...." Obviously, as will be established, there is no legal authority provided for underage marriage with children in Islam. And obviously and rationally, the marriage is offered as a legal and provisionary means for the support of orphan children by the means of any marriage that could establish any rational relations, reasonable coherent correlation, or legal and causal connection.

This verse, being the most abused and misread of the entire book collectively, has been misquoted, misinterpreted and misstated as: "if you fear that you can not deal fairly with the orphans, marry who seems good to you, two, three, or four; and orphans are below the age of puberty"

In any rational views or opinions, the marriage that has been referred to in the verse of Surah Nisaa is not with a minor orphan girl. The correct meaning of the verse, notwithstanding any judgmental views or irresponsible and irrelevant opinion, is based on the vast and multidimensional rationales and reasoning.

The word "Yatama" (translated as "orphans") in the Arabic language is used for such minor boys and girls whose father has passed away. This word has been used a number of times in the Quran and nowhere has it been used only for minor girls only.

The word "Nisaa" (translated as "women") in the Arabic language is used for adult women only. Thus the words: "Marry women that are right for you..." cannot be taken to imply marrying minor orphan girls.

The 6<sup>th</sup> verse of the Surah is another evidence of not only the fact that the word Nisaa (women), as used in verse 3, is not meant for minor orphan girls but also that the Quran has upheld the normal socio-cultural tradition of marrying boys and girls only after they have matured mentally as well as physically and are prepared to take up the responsibilities of marital life. The verse reads as:

"Make trial of and evaluate the orphans until they reach the age of capable of marriage; if then you find sound and matured judgment in them release their properties to them; but do not consume their properties wastefully, nor in haste against growing up. If the guardian is well off let him claim no remuneration but if he is poor, let him have or himself what is just and reasonable. When you release their properties to them take witnesses in their presence, but all sufficient is Allah in taking account" Al-Nisaa 4: 6

In view of the above arguments it is clear that the women regarding whom the Quran is allowing marriage are not the minor orphan girls referred to previously in the verse. This then brings us to the question that if these "women" are not the minor orphan girls, then who these "women" are. A close look at these verses and also verse 127 of the same Surah clearly shows that these "women" are actually the mothers of these orphans.

The Qur'an, in the opening part of Surah Nisaa has directed the Muslims to take care of the orphans (boys and girls) in the

society, as they would take care of their own children. In this context, the Quran says that if one fears that he shall not be able to deal justly with these orphans, he may marry their mothers, if he feels that this marriage shall help him in fulfilling his responsibility towards these orphans.

Then again in verse 127, the words "yatama al-nisaa" (translated as "orphans of these women") clearly shows that the "women" referred to in verse 6 are the mothers of the minor orphan boys and girls.

### Final Advice:

The statement and the historical information provided to devaluate the authenticity of the conflicting reports, have been primarily based on the research by Habib Ur Rahman Kandhalwi (Urdu) as presented in his booklet, "Tehqiq e umar e Siddiqah e Ka'inat", Anjuman Uswa e hasanah, Karachi, Pakistan.

Readers are encouraged to consult the useful materials in the aforementioned booklet for utilizing further reasoning and verification to assert and proof the contradictory nature of the reports with respect to age of Ayesha, and to further establish the standards for collecting the quotations as invalid and disqualified.

May god bless and help all those who are truly and consistently in search of the Truth

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### References :

The actual statements, their translations and their complete references are given below in the sequences of original Arabic version, English translation, and detailed references :

قال يعقوب بن شيبة: ثبت لم ينكر عليه شيء إلا بعد ما صار إلى العراق

"Yaqub Ibni Shaibah says: He [Hisham] is highly reliable, his narratives are acceptable, except what he narrated after moving over to Iraq."

Tehzi'bu'l-tehzi'b, Ibni Hajar Al-`asqala'ni, Arabic, Dar Ihya al-turath al-Islami, Vol 11, pg 50

## بلغني أن مالكا نقم عليه حديثه لأهل العراق

"I have been told that Malik [Ibni Anas] objected on those narratives of Hisham which were reported through people of Iraq."

Tehzi'bu'l-tehzi'b, Ibni Hajar Al-`asqala'ni, Arabic, Dar Ihya al-turath al-Islami, Vol 11, pg 50)

Mizanu'l-ai` tidal, another book on the [life sketches of the] narrators of the traditions of the Prophet reports that when he was old, Hisham's memory suffered quite badly. (vol 4, pg 301 - 302)

## في الكبر تناقص حفظه

"when he was old, Hisham's memory suffered quite badly" (Mizanu'l-ai` tidal, Al-Zahbi, Arabic, Al-Maktabatu'l-athriyyah, Sheikhpura, Pakistan, Vol 4, pg 301)

According to the generally accepted tradition, Ayesha was born about eight years before Hijrah. But according to another narrative in Bukhari (kitabu'l-tafseer) Ayesha 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 surah of the Qur'an was revealed nine years before Hijrah. According to this tradition, Ayesha had not only been born before the revelation of the referred surah, but was actually a young girl (jariyah), not an infant (sibyah) at that time. Obviously, if this narrative is held to be true, it is in clear contradiction with the narratives reported by Hisham Ibni `Urwah. I see absolutely no reason that after the comments of the experts on the narratives of Hisham Ibni `Urwah, why we should not accept this narrative to be more accurate.

The actual statements referred to in the above paragraph, their translations and their complete references are given below:

حدثنا إبراهيم بن موسى حدثنا هشام بن يوسف أن ابن جريج أخبرهم قال أخبرني يوسف بن ماهك قال إني عند عائشة أم المؤمنين قالت لقد أنزل علي محمد صلى عليه وسلم بحكمة وإني لجارية ألعب (بل الساعة موعدهم والساعة أدهى وأمر)

"Ayesha said: I was a young girl, when verse 46 of Surah Al-Qamar, [the 54th chapter of the Qur'an], was revealed. (Sahih Bukhari, kitabu'l-tafsir, Arabic, Bab Qaulihi Bal al-sa`atu Maw`iduhum wa'l-sa`atu adha' wa amarr)

A narrative regarding Ayesha's participation in Badr is given in Muslim, Kitabu'l-jihad wa'l-siyar, Arabic, Bab karahiyyati'l-isti`anah fi'l-ghazwi bikafir. Ayesha



while narrating the journey to Badr and one of the important events that took place in that journey, says:

إِذَا كُنَّا بِالشَّجَرَةِ

"When we reached Shajarah". It is quite obvious from these words that Ayesha was with the group travelling towards Badr.

A narrative regarding Ayesha's participation in the battle of `uhud is given in Bukhari, Kitabu'l-jihad wa'l-siyar, Arabic, Bab Ghazwi'l-nisa' wa qitalihinna ma`alrijal.

عن أنس رضي الله عنه قال لما كان يوم أحد انكزم الناس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال ولقد رأيت عائشة بنت أبي بكر وأم سليم وإهنا لمشمركان

"Anas reported that On the day of Uhud, people could not stand their ground around the Prophet. [On that day,] I saw Ayesha and Umm-i-Sulaim (ra), they had pulled their dress up from their feet [to avoid any hindrance in their movement]."

As far as the fact that children below 15 years were sent back and were not allowed to participate in the battle of `uhud, it is narrated in Bukhari, Kitabu'l-maghazi, Bab ghazwati'l-khandaq wa hiya'l-ahza'b, Arabic.

عن ابن عمر رضي الله عنهما أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم عرضه يوم أحد وهو ابن أربع عشرة سنة فلم يجزه وعرضه يوم الخندق وهو ابن خمس عشرة سنة فأجازه \*

"Ibni `umar states that the Prophet did not permit me to participate in Uhud, as at that time, I was fourteen years old. But on the day of Khandaq, when I was fifteen years old, the Prophet permitted my participation."

The relevant references required in this argument are provided below to establish the age difference between Ayesha and Asma:

According to Abda'l-Rahman Ibni abi zanna'd:

كانت أسماء أكبر من عائشة بعشر

Asma was ten years older than Ayesha. (Siyar A`la'ma'l-nubala', Al-Zahabi, Vol 2, Pg 289, Arabic, Mu'assasatu'l-risalah, Beirut, 1992)

According to Ibni Kathir:

وهي أكبر من أختها بعشر سنين

"She [Asma] was elder to her sister [Ayesha] by ten years". (Al-Bidayah wa'l-nihayah, Ibni Kathir, Vol 8, Pg 371, Arabic, Dar al-fikr al-`arabi, Al-jizah, 1933)

To establish the age of Asma at her departure in year 73 AH, we refer to an established and verified account by Ibni Khathir:

وأدركت قتل ولدها في هذه السنة كما ذكرنا، ثم ماتت بعده بخمسة أيام، وقيل بعشرة، وقيل بعشرين وقيل بضع و عشرين يوماً، وقيل عاشت بعده بمائة يوم وهو الأشهر. وبلغت من العمر مائة سنة

"She [Asma] saw the killing of her son during that year [73 AH], as we have already mentioned, five days later she herself died, according to other narratives her death was not five but ten or twenty or a few days over twenty or a hundred days later. The most well known narrative is that of hundred days later. At the time of her death, she was 100 years old." (Al-Bidayah wa'l-nihayah, Ibni Kathir, Vol 8, Pg 372, Arabic, Dar al-fikr al-`arabi, Al-jizah, 1933)

According to Ibni Hajar Al-Asqalani:

عاشت مائة سنة و مائت سنة ثلث أو أربع و سبعين

"She [Asma (ra)] lived a hundred years and died in 73 or 74 AH." (Taqribu'l-tehziib, Ibni Hajar Al-Asqalani, Pg 654, Arabic, Bab fi'l-nisa', al-harfu'l-alif, Lucknow)

Tabari in his treatise on Islamic history, while mentioning Abu Bakr reports that Abu Bakr had four children and all four were born during the Jahiliyyah -- the pre Islamic period. Obviously, if Ayesha was born in the period of jahiliyyah, she could not have been less than 14 years in 1 AH( one year After Hejrah-Prophet's migration to Medina ).

The original statement in Tabari, its translation and reference, follows:

فكل هؤلاء الأربعة من اولاده ولدوا من زوجته اللعين  
سميها في الجاهلية

"All four of his [Abu Bakr's] children were born of his two wives -- the names of whom we have already mentioned -- during the pre-Islamic period."(Tarikhu'l-umam wa'l-mamlu'k, Al-Tabari, Vol 4, Pg 50, Arabic, Dara'l-fikr, Beirut, 1979)

The complete reference for this reporting of Ahmad Ibni Hanbal is: Musnad Ahmad Ibni Hanbal, Vol 6, Pg 210, Arabic, Dar Ihya al-turath al-`arabi, Beirut.

According to Ibni Hajar, Fatimah was five years older than Ayesha. Fatimah is reported to have been born when the Prophet was 35 years old. Thus, even if this information is taken to be correct, Ayesha 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.

Ibni Hajar's original statement, its translation and reference follows:

ولدت فاطمة والكعبة تبنى والنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ابن خمس  
و ثلاثين سنة... و هي أسن من عائشة بنحو خمس سنين

Fatimah was born at the time the Ka`bah was rebuilt, when the Prophet was 35 years old... she (Fatimah) was five years older that Ayesha. (Al-Isabah fi Tamyiz Al Sahabah, Ibni Hajar Al Asqalani, Vol 4, Pg 377, Arabic, Maktabat Al Riyadh Al Haditha, Al Riyadh, 1978)

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