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Chapter 5: The Philosophy Of The Marriages Of The Holy Prophet Of Islam

Some Examples Of The Accusations Brought Against Him By Christians

At the beginning of the 18th century, Christian writers began a new crusade against Islam. Through writing and circulating books overflowing with insults and false accusations, they intended to distract the people of the world from the divine religion of Islam and to turn them against the great leader of Islam, Prophet Muhammad (peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants). 1

These myths, false writings, and prejudiced works of the Christian bigots originated in the Middle Ages, especially in the 15th century, when one John Andre Maure wrote a book against the Prophet's religion that was used by the later anti-Islamic writers. And since other writers did not know the Arabic language, they contented themselves with copying out of his books on Islam. 2

Thus, the writers whose so-called sacred books openly accuse prophets of adultery have written about our great leader, 'He followed passions and sensual desires and though he ordered his followers not to take more than four permanent wives, he himself had more wives'. 4

With this insult, they have tried to introduce our Holy Prophet as a sensual man to the unaware Christian readers, thus to stain his supreme character and to hinder the spread and propagation of Islam.

But this fantasy turned out to be vain. Before long, the honest Christian writers began to defend the Holy Prophet of Islam and to apologize for the accusations brought against the Qur'an and the Prophet of Islam.

It is clear to those of us who believe in the perfect innocence of prophets, that such insults are quite

unbelievable and far from the truth, but it is necessary to make the facts clear to those who do not agree with us in this matter.

The Judgment Of History

It has been written by impartial truth-seeking historians, both Muslims and Christians, that the numerous marriages of the Holy Prophet of Islam, were by no means due to sensuality and sexual passions, for if this were so, he would never have married Khadija who was 40 years old and who had lost most of her beauty and vivacity in the houses of her two former husbands, when he himself was only 25, the age of the sexual passions of youth and when young men are preoccupied with choosing young wives.

The Prophet lived most sincerely and faithfully for 25 years with Khadija⁵, and, though many beautiful Arab maidens and women were eagerly longing to marry him, not once did he take another wife during his married life with Khadija. No doubt if our Holy Prophet were interested in following sexual passions, he could not have refrained from mating with young women during this long period.

Groundless Views Of Bigoted Critics

What if such unjust people were asked, 'Why did the Prophet spend his youth with an aged widow and not marry other women? Why did he take several women as wives in the last ten years of his life, which was the period of old age and when he was having to handle many problems regarding both the internal and external policies of Islam, it was not convenient for him to undertake the responsibilities of marital life?'

And what if they were asked, 'Was it not extremely troublesome and difficult to take care of helpless women each having several orphans? Is it consistent with the pleasure-seeking nature of a man to bear the companionship of women with varied moods and manners?'

Surely they have no choice but to admit that the Prophet was never sensual and pleasure-seeking and that they have accused him out of hostility and bigotry.

John Davenport says, 'How is it possible for a sensual man to content himself with just one wife for 25 years in such a place where polygyny was common and prevalent. ⁶

The Number Of Wives Of The Holy Prophet

After Khadija passed away, when the Holy Prophet was 53 years old, he took other wives including 'Aisha, Hafsa, Zaynab bint Khuzayma, Umm Salma, Sauda bint Zama, Zaynab bint Jahash, Juwayriya, Safia, Maymuna, Umm Habiba and Marya.⁷

The conditions and circumstances that necessitated the several marriages of the Prophet should be

studied. The main reasons for his marriages are the following:

1. To Take Care Of The Orphans And The Destitute

The Prophet took some of his wives in order to maintain the prestige and reputation they had when they previously had been living in comfort and honour but whose faith and honour were endangered due to the loss of their guardians – husbands, fathers, sons and their tribes – forcing them to abandon Islam and select polytheism and atheism. Sauda was like this. Her husband passed away in Ethiopia, where they had migrated, leaving her alone and without support. The Prophet, who had lost Khadija and had no other wife, married Sauda. 8

Zaynab the daughter of Khuzayma was a widow who had, after her husband's death, fallen into poverty. She had always been a generous and benevolent woman, known as 'the mother of the poor'. To guard her honour and reputation, the Prophet took Zaynab as his wife. She passed away in the lifetime of God's Messengers. 9Umm Salma, too, was faithful and aged and had helpless orphans. She was another wife of our Prophet. 10

2. To Establish Proper Laws And Customs

Another reason was to establish proper laws and customs and to nullify wrong customs and beliefs of the period of ignorance and idol-worship. At the Holy Prophet's order, Zaynab, the daughter of Jahash and the Prophet's cousin, married Zayd ibn Harith. This was an example of annulling class differences which Islam forbids. Zaynab was a granddaughter of the Quraysh chieftain Abdul Muttalib and Zayd's family were slaves. The Holy Prophet had bought his freedom. For these reasons, Zaynab considered herself superior to her husband, Zayd, thus making her marital life bitter and unbearable. No matter how much the Holy Prophet advised them, she did not change her manners, so finally Zayd, feeling no love for her any longer, divorced her. 11

At God's command, the great Prophet of Islam married Zaynab after her husband, Zayd, had divorced her in order to wipe out the custom of not marrying the former wives of adopted sons (for they regarded their adopted sons as their real sons), which custom was unduly prevalent among the people in the dark periods of paganism. 12

False Accusations

Some Christian writers have, in their dishonest judgments and accusatory remarks, gone so far as to claim that the Holy Prophet of Islam had fallen in love with Zaynab's beauty. This claim is so far from the truth that it is clearly rejected by all authentic histories and logical indications because if the Prophet of Islam were a slave to his passions and entangled in such sensual thoughts, or if Zaynab were so attractive as to fascinate him, he would have fallen in love with her when she was still a maiden, when he himself was young and more vivacious, especially considering the fact that Zaynab was a close relative of his and usually relatives know about each other's beauty or lack of it.

3. To Set Free The Slaves Like Juwayriya

Juwayriya was from the famous tribe called the Bani Mustalaq who were defeated and taken captive in their fight with the Islamic forces. The Prophet married Juwayriya the daughter of Harith, who was their chief. When the Muslims observed that the captives had thus become relatives of the Prophet, they freed many of them. According to Ibn Hisham, this blessed marriage resulted in freedom for one hundred families from that tribe. 13

4. To Form Friendly Relations

Some marriages occurred to form friendly relations with great Arab tribes, to hinder their obstruction, and to maintain internal policy. For these reasons, the Holy Prophet of Islam married `Aisha, Hafsa, Safia, Maymuna, and Umm Habiba.

Umm Habiba was the daughter of Abu Sufyan, whose family members were bigoted enemies of the family of the Holy Prophet of Islam and especially of our Prophet himself. Umm Habiba's husband gave up Islam in Ethiopia, became a Christian, and died there.

She was then extremely troubled and worried for she was herself a Muslim while her father, Abu Sufyan, was rated among the greatest enemies of Islam. Thus she could not take refuge with him and was alone and helpless. Therefore, to help and support this poor woman and to make friends with the Bani Umayyad, the Prophet married her. 14

Safia was the daughter of Hayy ibn Akhtab, the head of the Bani Nazir tribe. To guard her prestige, the Prophet took her as his wife after the Jewish captives were scattered among the Muslims, thus establishing family relationships with one of the greatest Bani Israel tribes. 15

Maymuna, whom God's Messenger married in the year 7 AH, was from the tribe of Bani Makhzum. 16With the exception of `Aisha, most of the wives of the Holy Prophet were either widows or divorcees at the time they were married to the Prophet and most of them had lost their beauty and youth, proving that the marriages of the Holy Prophet had been out of sacred motives and for benevolent reasons, so that no one can bring such accusations as sensuality and seeking of false pleasure against him.

1. Islam from the viewpoint of Voltaire, second edition, p.5.

2. Ibid., p.6.

3. The Book of Samuel, 2, section II.

4. The Life of Muhammad, compiled by Dr. Heykal, p.315.

5. Muruj ul-Dhahab, Vol. 2, p.287.

6. Udhri Taqdir Bih Pishgahi Muhammad wa Quran, p.35.

7. Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 22, pp.200-204.

8. The Life of Muhammad, compiled by Dr. Heykal, p.319.

9. Ibid., p.320; Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 22, p.203.

10. The Life of Muhammad, compiled –6y Dr. Heykal, p.321.
11. Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 22, pp.214–218.
12. See The Holy Qur'an, Sura Ahzab, Ayah 37.
13. Sirihi ibn Hisham, Vol. 3, p.295,
14. Isabih wa Isti'ab, p.305; Musu'ati Alenabi, p.369; Sirihi ibn Hisham, Vol. 1, p.223; and A'lam Alwari, p.141.
15. Ibid.; Musu'ati, p.345, A'lam, p. 142.
16. Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 22, p.203; Sirihi ibn Hisham, p.372; Musu'ati Alenabi, p.404.

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