

Hikmah behind the marriages of Rasulallah(S)

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Abstract: *Rasulallah(S) could have easily gotten multiple gorgeous women as his wives or concubines had he so desired. However, except Ayesha, all his wives were divorced, widowed or slaves. All of these marriages were divinely ordained and had Hikmah (divine wisdom) and valid reasons behind it. Some of them were helping a pious Muslim woman whose husband had been slain in the cause of Islam, freeing those captives of war belonging to an honourable lineage, and to achieve political allies for the cause of Islam. Some marriages were entered into in the hope of establishing cordial relationships with some influential tribes in order to reduce their enmity towards Islam. Rasulallah(S) removed racial, cultural, tribal and national distinctions and prejudices through his marriages. The prime reason for his marriages was to unite the Muslim community with love and affection. During the era of Jahiliyyah, a divorced woman was considered inferior in status and the rich man would usually prefer to have them as concubines rather than marry them. By marrying a divorced lady, Rasulallah(S) set a precedent that it is legal as well as noble to marry a divorcee and elevate her status in society. Some of Rasulallah's(S) marriages were in order to wipe out certain prevailing evil customs and practices. An adopted son was considered as one's own back in the day which Islam disallowed and Rasulallah (S) married his cousin Zaynab who was earlier the wife of his adopted son Zaid. Thus, he removed the custom that Nikah was illegal with the former wife of an adopted son. Likewise, prisoners of wars were kept as slave girls but never married. To eradicate this evil practice Rasulallah(S) set an example and married two captive women.*

The Accusations of the biased Orientals:

At the beginning of the 15th century, the Orientals started a literary crusade against Islam. This crusade was primarily designed and directed towards making concocted allegations on Islam. They desired that Islam should be smeared so profusely that it negatively influences the minds of the people against Islam. Historical facts can't be denied regarding multiple marriages and concubines of the Anbiya prior to Rasulallah (S). Earlier Scriptures including the Qur'an provide us limited details regarding marriages of selected personalities like Ibrahim (as), Yaqub (as), Dawood (as), and Sulaiyman (as). The Scriptures explained polygamy as a "good deed" bestowed upon them from their Lord. Sulaiyman (as) had 700 wives and 300 concubines [1]!

In sealing treaties in ancient days, it was traditional for a junior monarch to present his daughter for marriage to the senior monarch. Every time a new treaty was sealed, Sulaiyman (as) ended up with a new wife. These wives were considered “tokens of friendship” and “sealed” the relationship between the two monarchs. Scripture informs that Dawood (as) also had wives and concubines. Dawood (as) blessings, including his wives, were given to him as a result of divine favour [2].

The source of all such accusations was the books written by biased writers which had been written during the previous centuries. J. A. Mure [3] written in the 15th century and subsequent writers indulged in accusations against Islam while making his book the basis of their allegations. Owing to their ignorance of the Arabic language, the writers could not get any benefit from the primary sources on Islam. Therefore whenever they wrote about Islam, they entirely depended on this book and designed fabricated charges against Islam.

In the present distorted Biblical Literature, a reference has been made to the Anbiya committing adultery. Likewise, the spiteful minds have attempted to paint Rasulullah(S) in a manner as if he was consumed by lust. Orientals have argued that Muhammad permitted Muslims to marry only four women, but he himself married 12. The purpose of such writings has only one motive which is to defame the Rasul of Islam and to minimize his personality to prevent Islam from spreading. Like their other efforts, this exercise, too, proved useless. A few honest Orientals recognized the facts regarding Islam and Rasulullah (S) and apologized for the forged accusations against him. For us who believe in the divine status of Ismah of Rasulullah (S) granted to him by Wahi near the place of “Ghadir al-Khum” [4] through Ayah “Balligh” such accusations are absolutely ineffectual. However, it is essential to expose the truth for those who do not share our belief.

If the critics are questioned as to why Rasulullah (S) spent his entire youth with a 40 year old widow and didn't marry a young woman instead, and why during the last 10 years of his life when old age had set in, and his entire attention was devoted to solving the internal and external problems of Ummah he went on to marry several women, what would they say? Is it lust or desire or licentiousness to spend life with women of drastically different temperaments?

The critics have no reply to these questions except this admission that all these marriages were not for the satisfaction of sexual desires and that all the accusations of this sort have been made on the basis of born enmity and prejudice.

John Davenport argued logically: [5]

“Can a person be called licentious or lustful who does not marry any women till the age of 25 while living in an environment where several marriages were highly prevalent?”

Let us ponder over the argument presented by the famous western historian, Thomas Carlyle admitted: [6]

“In effect, contrary to what his enemies accuse him, Mohammad was never lustful and sexual and that it was a slander, only out of prejudice against him, and this indeed is great injustice”.

John Davenport says: [7]

“And it may then be asked, is it likely that a very sensual man, of a country where polygamy was a common practice, should be contented to twenty five years with one wife, she being fifteen years older than himself.”

Bosworth Smith explains: [8]

“It should be remembered, however, that most of Mohammad’s marriages may be explained at least, as much by his pity for the forlorn condition of the persons concerned as by other motives”.

These are some of the wives of Rasulallah (S):

1. 595 AD, Khudaijah bint Khuwalid, a widow:

Rasulullah (S) remained unmarried until the age of twenty-five. From age twenty-five to fifty he remain married to one woman, the forty year old Khudaijah. She was 15 years older than him at this point and had three children from two previous marriages. These included her two daughters who are wrongly attributed as Rasulallah’s (S). He (S) spent about 25 years of his life with Khudaijah, a time during which he was highly sought after by many noble unmarried women of Arabia, but the Rasul of Islam (S) never showed any interest. This confirms that Rasulallah(S) was not a “lustful”. His marriage to Khudaijah shows only limited types of marriage that are allowed in Islam. Between the age of fifty and fifty-two, he remained unmarried and spent that time in commemoration of his beloved wife and kind guardian uncle, Al-Imam Abu Talib (as), the father of Amir al-Mumineen Ali (as). Between age fifty-three and sixty, he married all his other wives for various valid and noble reasons.

Rasulullah(S) after the demise of Khudaijah married the following women:

- i. Saudah
- ii. Ayesha
- iii. Hafsa
- iv. Umme Habibah
- v. Umme Salama
- vi. Zaynab bint Jahash
- vii. Zaynab bint Khuzaimah
- viii. Maiymunah
- ix. Javeriah
- x. Safiyah.
- xi. Mariyah

At the age of sixty, through an Ayah, he was commanded not to marry anymore: [9]

“It is not lawful for you (to marry other) women after this, nor to change them for other wives.”

The above mentioned Ayah illustrates that Rasulallah(S), like all his other actions, established even conjugal relations in accordance with the will of His Lord. Let us cast a glance over the Hikmah (divine wisdom) and circumstances on the basis of which Rasulallah (S) married a number of other women.

2. 620 AD, Saudah bint Zamah Amir, a widow:

After immigrating to Abyssinia, Saudah's husband passed away and she was all alone. At the age of fifty, in the 10th year of Nubuwwah, Rasulallah(S) married Saudah bint Zama. Rasulallah (S) chose to marry a middle-aged, widowed, jolly, and kind woman like Saudah who could take care of his children. His marriage to Saudah, an African woman, also established that Islam allowed the man to marry a woman of a different race and condemned the spirit of racism. His marriages with widows like Hafsa bint Umar, Zaynab bint Khuzaimah, Umme Salama and Hind bint Abi Umayyah, demonstrate that Islam teaches men to show kindness and care for widows. Like Saudah there were women who had spent their lives in prosperity, and dignity, but after the death of their husbands had faced several social problems.

3. 620 AD=2(AH), Ayesha bint Abi Bakr, a virgin:

She was not only young but also very intelligent. One of the reasons or Hikmah (divine wisdom) in selecting Ayesha as the youngest wife was her scholastic background. The age difference between her and Rasulallah (S) was about 33 years which is significantly less than the age difference between Joseph the Carpenter and Mary when they got married or engaged to each other. Mary's age was between 12 and 14 while Joseph's was about 90. "The Catholic Encyclopedia" says: [10]

"...a respectable man to espouse Mary, then twelve to fourteen years of age, Joseph, who was at the time ninety years old"

This then means that the age difference between Joseph and Mary was about 77 years which is well over double to that between Rasulallah(S) and Ayesha. If the same standard were to apply, why is there no outcry over this matter too? In short, her Nikah was performed while she was not an adult, but the marriage was consummated only while she attained puberty. Some Sirah biographers agree that Rasulallah(S) consummated his marriage with Ayesha in the year 2 Hijrah hence it can be conclusively said that she was around 19 at that time. Another reason for the marriage was to forge a pleasant relationship between the Muslims in Makkah and the non-Muslim tribe of Abu Bakr.

4. 625 AD = 4 (AH), Hafsa bint Umar bin al-Khattab, a widow:

During the Muslim war with Makkah, many men died leaving behind widows and orphans. 21 year old Hafsa, daughter of Umar bin al-Khattab, lost her husband at Badr when her husband Khunais ibn Hudhaifah was killed in action. Rasulallah(S) married her.

5. 626 AD, 5 (AH), Zaynab bint Khuziama bin Haris, a widow:

50 year old Zaynab bint Khuzaimah husband's death left her without any supporter and she was faced with hunger and deprivation. She was extraordinarily generous and was known as Umm ul-Masakeen (the mother of the poor). Rasulallah (S) married her for the sake of her honour and generosity. She passed away during the lifetime of Rasulallah (S).

6. 626 AD, 4 (AH), Umme Salama bint Abi Ummayah, a widow:

Twenty-nine year old Umme Salama had many children but Rasulullah(S) demonstrated his supreme character in not only marrying the widow but accepting and treating the orphans as his own children. Rasulullah (S) married her due to the fact that she was an ardent believer of Islam. Rasulullah (S) married several women by way of practical opposition to the traditional ways and manners of the days of Jahiliyyah and also for a practical clarification of the Law of Islam. Umme Salama loved Fatimah more than her own children. The love she possessed for the children of Ali and Fatimah, al-Hasan, al-Husain, Zaynab and Kulsum was second to none. She commemorated the tragedy of Karbala and departed from this world the same year.

7. 626 AD, Zaynab bint Jahash, a divorcee:

Zaynab bint Jahash was a cousin of Rasulullah (S), who was first married to his adopted son, Zaid bin Harisah. This marriage was against discrimination of the days of Jahiliyyah because Zaynab was the granddaughter of Al-Imam Abd al-Muttalib (as) and she enjoyed a particular eminence in the Arabian society, while Zaid was a slave, whom Rasulullah (S) had freed. Zaynab always reminded her previous husband Zaid of her family's eminence and brilliance on account of which her relations with her husband soured. Rasulullah (S) tried hard to reconcile them, but it bore no difference and ultimately Zaid divorced her. The marriage of Rasulullah(S) to his 38 year old cousin, Zaynab bint Jahsh, who was divorced by his (Rasulullah's) adopted son, Zaid, makes it clear that in Islam, it is lawful for a man to marry his first cousin. It is reported that Zaynab offered herself to Rasulullah(S) without Mahr. It is also lawful for a man to marry a woman divorced by his adopted son since the adopted son is not related to him by blood.

When the divorce took place, Rasulullah (S) married her on the basis of a Divine injunction so that a practice prevalent in the days of Jahiliyyah be done away with. Prior to the dawn of Islam an adopted son was deemed as a real son and if a woman was married to an adopted son, the father of the adopted son could not marry her even after divorce. In this case, Christian and Jewish writers have demonstrated such ignorance which is almost unintelligible. They alleged, Nauzubillah:

"Due to her beauty Rasulullah (S) fell in love with Zaynab".

If Rasulullah (S) had such ideas in his mind and was really in love with her beauty, then why did he not marry her when she was a virgin and he, too, was young? Being his cousin, how is it possible that Rasulullah(S) was not aware of Zaynab's beauty. During the period of Jahiliyyah, in Arabian society, divorced women were treated inferior in status and were not allowed to remarry. Rasulullah (S) removed this evil practice by marrying a divorced lady and elevated the status of women, which is still neglected in many societies.

8. 627 AD=5(AH), Juvairiyah bint Haris, a slave:

Rasulullah (S) married several women merely for the sake of getting certain captives released. Marriage with 20 year old Juvairiyah was solely for this purpose. Juvairiyah belonged to a large tribe, Bani Mustaliq. The members of this tribe were defeated in a battle against the Muslims and became captives. Rasulullah (S) married Juvairiyah bint al-Haritha, who was the wife of the chief of his tribe. When the Muslims saw that the war captives or prisoners of war had become

relatives of Rasulallah(S), they released many of the captives and the famous Sirah writer Ibn Hisham [11].

Almost one hundred families of Bani Mustaliq were freed as a Mahr of the Nikah between Juvairiyah and Rasulallah (S). Rasulallah(S) was always anxious to bind his followers belonging to different clans and tribes in mutual love and affection. That was, without a doubt, the object in marrying Juvairiyah bint al-Haritha, the chief of Bani al-Mustaliq. The complete clan of that tribe and their allies were thus won over to Islam.

9. 628 AD=6(AH), Umme Habibah bint Abu Sufiyan, a widow:

Umme Habibah (Ramlah) was the daughter of Abu Sufiyan. She belonged to a family who were great enemies of Rasulallah (S). Her husband converted to Christianity in Abyssinia and left the fold of Islam. Umme Habibah was a staunch Muslim and didn't tolerate this, although her father Abu Sufiyan had been the bitterest enemy of Islam. Therefore, he did not provide protection to his daughter. Due to this Umme Habibah spent her days and nights in lamentation. Then Rasulallah (S) married the 36 year old Umme Habibah in order to support her and to bring the tribe of Bani Umaiyyah closer towards Islam. Rasulallah(S) asked the Emperor of Negus, who had previously entered the fold of Islam, for Umme Habibah's hand for marriage which the emperor approved.

This marriage shows how realistic and uncomplicated Islam is equally as a religion and as a mode of life.

10. 628 AD=7(AH), Safiyah bint Huaiy bin al-Akhtab, a slave:

Safiyah was the widowed daughter of Huaiy bin al-Akhtab, the Chief of the Jewish tribe of Bani Nadir. When the Jewish captives were distributed amongst the Muslims, the Rasul of Islam married the 17 year old Safiyah in order to provide her protection and safeguard her status. In this way, a matrimonial relationship was established with a large tribe of Bani Israel which paved the way for them to come closer to Islam. Rasulallah(S) married Safiyah bint Huaiy bin al-Akhtab, a Jew, and Mariyah, a Christian from Egypt. Both of them embraced Islam and were amongst the "Mothers of the Believers".

Marriages of Rasulallah(S) to his prisoners: Juvairiyah bint al-Haritha and Safiyah bint Huaiy bin al-Akhtab point towards the teachings of Islam regarding marriages based on social status. It also provides a lesson on how to respectfully treat the prisoners of war, especially if they are women. It also promoted the Daw'ah of Islam.

11. 629 AD=7(AH), Maymunah bint Haris, a widow:

Her name was Barrah but Rasulallah(S) called her Maymunah. She was a member of a large tribe, Bani Makhzum. Rasulallah (S) married this 27 year old lady and established a precedent that it was perfectly fine for women to directly approach men who they would like to marry, albeit in an honourable manner. The case of Maymunah is the best example in which she voluntarily proposed to Rasulallah(S) and became one of his honourable wives. She gifted herself to Rasulallah(S) and did not ask for any Mahr. [12]

12. Mariyah Qibtiyyah, a slave

It is permissible for a man to marry a woman belonging to a lower social class as in the case of Mariyah, who was presented to Rasulallah(S) by the ruler of Egypt. Rasulallah(S) elevated the status of a slave-girl by marrying her, instead of making her his concubine, as per the tradition of those days.

The judgment of history:

The marriages of Rasulallah (S) were not the basis of sexual desires because he married the 40 year old Khudaijah who had previously been married twice, at the age of 25 when sexual desire is at its height. The above marital briefs of Rasulallah (S) clearly indicate the noble aim and objectives for which he married a number of wives. It is not difficult to see that none of these marriages was for the personal satisfaction of sexual desires as unjustifiably accused by the Jews, Christians and Hindu writers. With the exception of Ayesha and Mariyah, all other wives of Rasulallah (S) were widows and several of them had passed the threshold of youth.

These Nabavi actions were to achieve political strength and defeat the powerful Quresh, in the tribal society of Arabia. He married his enemies' daughters Juvairiyah bint al-Haritha, the head of Bani al-Mustaliq of Khuzaah and Umme Habibah, the daughter of Abu Sufiyan. Al-Harith and Abu Sufiyan were bitter enemies of Islam. These marriages show how Islam promotes peace and reconciliation. There was a Hikmah behind all his marriages. The above facts clearly contradict the wrong notions that Rasulallah(S) married these women in response to his physical needs or biological pressures.

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