

Good News

And give good news to those who do good (to others)

-Holy Quran 22:37

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- *The Martyrdom of Imam Hussain and*
- *The Age of Aisha at the time of her marriage to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s)*

A Brief Look into the Historical and Spiritual Significance Of the Martyrdom of Imam Hussain

- Ebrahim Mohamed

‘And speak not of those who are slain in Allah’s way as dead. Nay, (they are) alive, but you perceive not.’ – Holy Quran 2:154

Brief Historical Background

The Abbasids

The Holy Prophet **Muhammad** (s¹) came from **the Quraish** tribe. At the head of this tribe was **Abd Manaf**. He had three sons of which two are prominent in an historical sense. The one is **Ummaya** and the other **Hashim**, the father of **Abdul Mutallib**, the father of **Abdullah**, the father of the **Holy Prophet Muhammad(s)**. Thus historians often refer to the Holy Prophet (s) as being from the **Hashimites**, a much respected tribe of the Quraish. **Hashim** is also the father of one **Abbas** whence stems the **Abbasid** dynasty.

The Ummayyads

Ummaya is a brother of **Hashim**. **Abu Sufyan**, who led the Makkans

¹ *Sallaluhu Alayhi Wassalaam Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him*

in opposition to the Holy Prophet (s) before eventually accepting Islam, and his son **Muawiyya 1**, are descendants of **Ummaya**. The **Ummaya dynasty** comes from this line of Quraish.

The Period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (*Khulafa Rashideen*)

After the Holy Prophet Muhammad's demise, **Abu Bakr** was elected by majority vote as the Caliph, despite slight opposition of no real significance. Abu Bakr was the preferred choice because the Prophet (s) always appointed him to lead the prayers in his absence. He was also the closest to the Prophet in devotion to the cause of Islam. He is also well-known for his piety and great selfless sacrifices that were unmatched among his peers. Still, the election process was to get the acceptance of the majority of the leading candidates for the position. It was not just an arbitrary decision; it followed a process of consultation. The same process followed the appointment of the other three

Caliphs, namely Umar, Uthman and Ali. These four are historically known as the '**Rightly Guided Caliphs**'.

With the expanse of Muslim governed territories as far as Syria and Egypt, inevitable political challenges and trials followed. Because these territories were too large to govern from one central point in Madina, governors were appointed and placed in charge of it. One such governor was **Muawiyya 1**, the son of Abu Sufyan who was placed in charge of Syria by the Caliph Umar.

The First *Fitna*

Fitna is an Arabic word that has wide connotations in different contexts. It is often associated with the distresses, trials, and afflictions that occur as a result of some mischief, often the spread of false propaganda with the specific aim to stir up rebellion and thus create instability and anarchy. It encompasses insubordination, unjust

rebellions and insurrections against legitimate rulers or authorities.

The first of these *Fitna* in the history of Islam started during the third Caliphate namely that of Hazrat Uthman and continued through the Caliphate of Hazrat Ali and the Umayyad Caliphates that followed. By the time Uthman came into power, the Kingdom included Iraq, Syria and Egypt. Both Sunni and Shia historians attribute the start of the *Fitna* to one Abdullah bin Saba, a Yemeni Jew who had converted to Islam. It is said that he was a zealot who espoused exaggerated claims that Ali was divine and that he was his prophet. Hartwig Hirschfeld writing in the Jewish Encyclopaedia says of him, 'He went to Egypt where he founded an anti- Othmanian sect to promote the interests of Ali.' He was eventually banished by Ali.

Despite the fact that everyone across the kingdom, including Hazrat Ali, were at peace with the Caliphate of Uthman, the mischief mongers spread false propaganda

about the Caliphate. They steadily managed to influence the Egyptians who had personal unrelated grievances and soon others in Syria, Basra and Kufa in Iraq came under their influence. Even people in Makka and Madina slowly started to believe that Uthman was too old and incompetent to rule. Uthman refused to suppress the rebels with force; instead he pressed for diplomacy and dialogue and invited their delegates to the centre in Madina for consultations. He had a meeting with them in the Prophet's mosque where he confronted them together with senior Companions of the Prophet (s) and other people of the city. There he refuted their unreliable gossips, and answered their questions **and pardoned them.** They returned but concealed their malevolence to carry out their deadly plot to overthrow the Caliphate at a later stage.

Uthman's Martyrdom

In Shawwal, 35 A.H. the rebels returned to Madina and

surrounded the home of Uthman and held him and his family and some Companions hostage for forty days. Even when some Companions were prepared to fight the insurgents, Uthman prevented them **as ‘he did not want to drop the blood of a Muslim for his own sake.’**

Stealthily the conspirators broke into his house from the back and attacked him as he was reading the Holy Quran. His wife Naila attempted to protect him, but they beat her with the sword, cutting off her fingers. When the rebels killed Hazrat Uthman, his blood spilled onto the Quran. He was martyred on the 18th of Dhul-Hijjah 35A.H. (17 June, 656 A.D.)

The Rebels

Now in control of the central government in Madina, **the invading rebels** pushed for Ali to become the Caliph. He refused on the grounds that he did not want to be put in power by those guilty of open rebellion and assassination. However, the remaining companions

of the Holy Prophet (s) who were living in Madina and other residents of Madina supported the nomination of Hazrat Ali and persuaded him to take up the position of Caliph. Hazrat Ali felt he owed it to the companions of the Holy Prophet (s) and the people of Madina and for that reason agreed to accept the mantle of Caliph.

Hazrat Ali

Hazrat Ali, however, had a great task on his hands and that was to bring the guilty ones to book. The noble Caliph was very concerned about the unity of the Muslims that was now being threatened by the consequences of the *Fitna*. He had to strategize carefully and make sure that he did not resort to any rash action that could cause a further insurrection.

However, **Muawiyya 1**, governor of Syria, who, like Hazrat Uthman, was from the Ummaya clan of the Quraish, was disturbed by Hazrat Ali’s delay in taking action against the rebels that were guilty of

Uthman's murder. He had a powerful army at his disposal because of his position of authority as governor of Syria. He threatened to make use of this force and take the law into his own hands and march onto rebel territory to apprehend the offenders. Hazrat Ali saw the threats of Muawiyya as a revolt against the rule of law that could lead to further uprisings and chaos and decided to send his forces to intervene in the hope that it will persuade Muawiyya to stop with his plans. The situation in the kingdom called for unity and support of the Caliphate and his action would be an open revolt that would only embolden the rebels. This is how Hazrat Ali assessed the situation.

In order to keep the sacred cities of Makka and Madina free from the trepidations caused by the civil unrest and for other strategic reasons, Hazrat Ali moved the administrative headquarters from Madina to Kufa in Iraq.

Muawiyya 1 refused to relent to Hazrat Ali's authority. As a result

several skirmishes between the two ensued that eventually culminated in the first major civil war between Muslims at the **battle of Siffin**. The war ended in a stalemate when Muawiyya, on the brink of defeat, finally requested arbitration rather than fighting to settle the dispute about the Caliphate.

Hazrat Ali, peaceful and tender hearted as he was, his heart brimming over with the desire for unity, agreed to arbitration. However, remnants of the rebel group that later became known as the Khawarij, the Deserters, that had joined Hazrat Ali's camp after he was appointed Caliph, were strongly opposed to the Caliph's decision to accede to Muawiyya's request for arbitration. They argued that he should be fought until he is defeated and submit to the authority of the legitimately appointed Caliph and the rule of law. However, whenever Hazrat Ali saw even the slightest chance to avoid bloodshed, he immediately restrained his hands. He abhorred the idea of division and

disintegration among Muslims. ‘They are our Muslim brothers’, he said. The arbitration however failed to bring a solution and Muawiyya 1 continued his opposition. A truce was finally reached when Hazrat Ali agreed to grant Muawiyya 1 independent autonomy over Egypt and Syria with him remaining in charge of the rest of the kingdom.

The Martyrdom of Hazrat Ali

The rebels within Hazrat Ali’s camp who had supported him thus far were severely opposed to the truce, broke away from the Caliphate and started a rebellion of their own against Hazrat Ali. They went to the extreme of dubbing Hazrat Ali, Muawiyya and those who were actively engaged in attempts to bring the murderers of Hazrat Uthman to justice such as Aisha, the wife of the Prophet (s) and those Companions who supported her, as apostates. Thus the vile *takfiri* practice (dubbing fellow Muslims as heretical and apostates), was born.

In order to suppress their rebellion, a battle in which the rebels were heavily defeated, ensued. This led to the despicable act of revenge. Some rebels entered the mosque early one morning and one of them wounded Hazrat Ali in the head with a poisonous sword while he was praying. Hazrat Ali died a martyr, two days later. (May Almighty Allah be pleased with him)

Hassan and Muawiyya 1

With Hazrat Ali out of the way, **Muawiyya 1**, already in charge of Egypt and Syria, vied for the position left vacant by Hazrat Ali that would give him control over the entire kingdom. **Hassan, Ali’s son and grandson of the Holy Prophet (s)** was a favourite of the people for the position. However, much like his father Hazrat Ali, Hassan’s primary concern was the unity of the Muslims. He thus decided to stand down as a candidate for the Caliphate in favour of Muawiyya 1 subject to certain pre-conditions. He

sent Muawiyya 1 a letter containing the gist of a treaty that stated:

- ‘Muawiyya 1 must act in accordance with the Book of Allah (the Holy Quran), the Sunna (practical example) of His Prophet and the conduct of the righteous Caliphs;
- Muawiyya 1 should NOT be entitled to appoint his successor but that there should be an electoral council (*Shura*) in place to decide;
- That the people should be safe wherever they were with respect to their person, their property and their offspring;
- That Muawiyya 1 would not seek any wrong against Hassan secretly or openly, **and would not intimidate any of his companions.**’

The letter was testified to by Abd Allah ibn al-Harith and Amr ibn Salima and transmitted by them to Muawiyya 1 for recognition of its contents and acceptance thereof.

With Muawiyya 1 as the Caliph, **the Umayyad dynasty**

started. Since he was the governor of Syria at the time, he moved the capital from Kufa in Iraq to **Baghdad, the capital of Syria.**

Yazid 1, son of Muawiyya 1

Muawiyya 1, however, did not remain true to the treaty he entered into with Hassan, and not only nominated but used his influence as Caliph to campaign strongly for his son Yazid to be his successor when he died. He rapidly influenced the leadership from other regions to accept his nomination of his son Yazid 1, despite the fact that his action was in direct contravention of the very first condition of the treaty he made with Hassan. The appointment of Yazid, finally, introduced the un-Islamic practice of **hereditary rule.**

Many historians are of the view that Yazid 1 was not a religious person and was not fit to step in the footsteps of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. He might have had some academic skills according to

some, but was not regarded as morally fit to rule.

Imam Hussain, the son of Hazrat Ali and the grandson of the Holy Prophet

Muhammad (s)

Imam Hussain, younger brother of Hassan, on the other hand had inherited his father's virtues and chivalrous disposition. Hussain was the ideal candidate for the position of the Caliphate. It was felt that if an open and fair consultative electoral process was followed, Hussain would have been elected as the Caliph by the majority.

Hussain was quite rightly upset by Muawiyya's breach of the treaty he made with his brother Hassan. He saw Muawiyya's action as setting a very dangerous precedent in the electoral process - a serious step down from the high moral criteria that the lofty position of Caliphate demanded.

When the Muslims of Kufa sought to have consultations with

Hussain, he felt it his duty to respond to their appeal and go and meet with them. All Hussain's friends tried to persuade him not to trust the people of Kufa who had a history of lacking in steadfastness.

The Massacre at Karbala

Imam Hussain nevertheless traversed the desert of Arabia with a contingent of approximately 172 made up of several of his kinsmen, his two grownup sons, a few devoted followers, and a weak and fearful contingent of women and children. It was clear he came in peace to listen to the concerns of the people of Kufa and perhaps thereafter have some dialogue with Yazid.

As he approached the confines of Iraq, he saw no signs of the Kufan delegation that had promised to meet him. He was alarmed by the solitary and hostile face of the country, and suspecting treachery, he camped with his small band at a place called **Karbala** near the western bank of the Euphrates River.

Imam Hussain's apprehensions of betrayal proved only too well-founded. He was soon overtaken by a disproportionately large army of about 4000 under the command of one Ibn Sa'd appointed by Yazid's governor of Kufa. For days they surrounded Imam Hussain's tents and cut them off from the waters of the Euphrates. Imam Hussain, in the hope that the people of Kufa would come to his aid, decided to stand his ground so that justice might prevail; even if it meant having to fight back. An overzealous chief of Yazid's army, ignoring the sacrilege of fighting the grandson of the Holy Prophet (s) attacked Imam Hussain and his small band. In close combat the valour of Hussain and his small band were invincible; but the enemy's archers picked them off from a safe distance. One by one the defenders fell, until at last there remained but the grandson of the Holy Prophet (s) and his family which he had lodged in a tent. Wounded and dying he dragged himself to the riverside for a

last drink; but the enemy arrows drove him back. Re-entering his tent, he took his infant child in his arms; the child was struck with an arrow. Then his sons and nephews were killed and died in his arms. Able no more to stand up to his pitiless foes, alone and weary, Hussain seated himself at the entrance of his tent. One of the women handed him water to assuage his burning thirst. As he raised it to his lips, he was pierced in the mouth with an arrow and breathed his last after offering a prayer for the living and the dead. (May Almighty Allah be please with him)

Yazid's rule lasted for only three years. Before he died, in mysterious circumstances, he appointed his son Muawiyya II as his successor.

Hazrat Imam Hussain, a noble son of Islam, known for his piety

It is not enough to revere the selfless character of Imam Hussain.

We have to probe the deeper meaning of his struggle. A struggle which the illustrious grandson of the Holy Prophet (s) of Islam had to make that now serves as an immortal example of selfless devotion to Almighty Allah and an ideal he believed to be just and true.

What was it, we may ask, that sustained Imam Hussain through this crucial ordeal? Why was he so ready to sacrifice at the altar of Divine Love that was so dear and near to him? Why did he remain unmoved in the midst of excruciating pain and insufferable cruel bereavement?

In spite of every possible humiliation and shame that he and his family faced, why did he not budge an inch from his firm position?

Like his holy grandfather his faith in the unity of Islam and the existence of a Power mightier and higher than the mightiest of natural phenomena, was unshakable.

He was a most worthy successor to the spiritual legacy of the Holy Prophet (s). When

conviction, however, had once taken possession of his mind, it was unshakable. No earthly power or friendly persuasion could move him away from an iron resolve

To him spiritual life was a reality. He did not pay a mere lip-service to all that was sacred and Divine. He was the truest of believers in Allah and His Messenger and the life Eternal. He had fully realised that Allah Almighty alone was real, and that earthly life with all its glitter and glamour was hollow and unreal. He knew beyond the shadow of doubt that the outer seemingly solid world was constantly changing and was therefore transitory. Earthly joys were deceptive. To work in conscious co-operation with the Divine plan was the manifest duty of every Muslim, especially the Muslim leader, whose one concern in life must be to do the bidding of the Almighty.

Once he told his elder brother Imam Hassan that he clearly foresaw what was going to happen to him

and that he was preparing to lay down his life in order to vindicate the cause of true Islam undaunted by fear or frown. He recognized no power higher than Almighty Allah.

From the outer physical point of view he seemed to suffer the pangs of hunger and thirst, pain and anguish. The cries and lamentations of his dearest and nearest kith and kin bruised his heart. But on a higher level, he remained inwardly calm and resigned as he was in full possession of spiritual life and knew with certainty that the physical was, after all, perishable.

In the end Hazrat Imam Hussain's whole heart and soul rushed upwards to the ever-Merciful One. In one last powerful surge of love for the Almighty he succumbed in joyful surrender. His firm stance for justice and honour against the corrupt and immoral forces of tyrannical, hereditary rule is admired worldwide even today by Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Nelson Mandela wrote: 'I spent more than 20 years in prison,

then one night I decided to surrender by signing all the terms and conditions of government. But suddenly I thought about Imam Hussain and the Karbala movement and Imam Hussain gave me the strength to stand for the right of freedom and liberation and I did.'

Thomas Carlyle: 'The best lesson which we get from the tragedy of Karbala is that Hussain and his companions were the rigid believers of God. They illustrated that **numerical superiority does not count when it comes to truth and falsehood. The victory of Hussain despite his minority marvels me!**'

Mahatma Gandhi: 'The progress of Islam does not depend on the use of sword by its believers, but the result of **the supreme sacrifice of Hussain, the great saint.**'



The Holy Prophet Muhammad's (s) Marriage to Aisha²

Ebrahim Mohamed

The age of Aisha at the time of her marriage to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) has been a contentious issue with both critics of Islam and Muslim theologians.

Admittedly, 6th century Arabia was not entirely an era of high literacy in the history of the Arabs (HQ 62:2), compared to the Greeks and Romans. They did not keep accurate records of dates of birth for example. Later historians also did not pay too much attention to such details which they regarded as non-essential. Such information were thus not preserved with the same scrutiny and due diligence as were matters on which beliefs and doctrines were based. Thus we find that as much as it is alleged that the Prophet (s) was engaged to Aisha when she was six years old and took

her into marriage at the age of nine, it is equally argued that she was nine years old when she was engaged and fifteen years old when married. Besides these, historical facts exist that support the fact that she was already nineteen years old when she entered the household of the Holy Prophet (s) as his wife. The latter is more consistent with the general theme we come across in the Holy Quran and character of the Holy Prophet (s) and thus closest to the truth.

Maturity of Intellect an important criterion for determining eligibility for marriage according to the Holy Quran

Muhammad Ali, leading contemporary research scholar of Islam, writes in his famous book *The Religion of Islam* in the chapter headed *Marriage* under sub-section '*Age of Marriage*', 'There is no mention anywhere in the Holy Quran or Tradition (Hadith) of minors being married or divorced.'

² May Allah be pleased with her

On the contrary, the Holy Quran makes it quite clear that marriage takes place at the stage of *maturity of intellect*, which is clearly pointed out as being the stage that follows *childhood*. Note, three distinct stages in the natural life cycle of a human being are clearly pointed out in the Holy Quran; the first being that of a **minor (child)**, the next, that of reaching **maturity**, and then **old age**:

‘He brings you forth *as a child*, **then** that you may attain your *maturity*, **then** that you may *be old*.’ – 40:67

Bearing these natural life cycles in mind, we now find that the following verse points to the stage of *maturity* in the life cycle as the *age of marriage*:

‘And test the orphan until they reach **the age of marriage**. Then if you find in them **maturity of intellect**, make over to them their property.’ - (4:6)

(All emphases mine)

Thus, the age of marriage, which in Islam amounts to a binding contract between two consenting parties with specific conjugal rights and obligations, referred to as a *mithaq* in the Holy Quran (4:21), is the age of *maturity of intellect*. It is that stage when minors cease to be considered such and are able to assume legal control over their persons, actions, and decisions.

Support is sometimes sought for marriage to minors from the following verse of the Holy Quran dealing with divorce procedure:

‘And those of your women who despair of menstruation, if you have a doubt, the prescribed time shall be three months (i.e. the cooling off period after a divorce announcement), *and of those too who have not had their courses*.’ – (65:4)

To identify women who have *not had their courses* with minors is absolutely wrong for there are many cases of adult women who, for some reason or other, have not experienced menstruation. One

example is that of women that suffer from *amenorrhea* a medical condition when menstruation is absent during the *reproductive* years between puberty and menopause. It is with such exceptional cases that this verse deals; and, since the verse deals with the legal procedure of divorce, it was essential for such a provision to be made.

The Muhammad (s) Prophet and Messenger of God

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) was born in Makka in what is known in Islamic history as *The year of the Elephant*³ approximately equating to **570 A.D.** He passed away in Madina in **632 A.D.** He married **Khadija** who was 15 years his senior when he was 25 years old and lived a **monogamous** life with her for 25 years. This, critics agree, was indeed remarkable for a young man in a country where people prided themselves on loose sexual relations and unrestricted polygamy.

³ Refers to a well documented event when Abraha, king of Yemen, marched on Makka with elephants to destroy the Holy House of God, the Ka'bah.

Even a hostile critic like Sir William Muir admits: *'all authorities agree in ascribing to the youth of Muhammad a modesty of deportment and purity of manners rare among the people of Mecca.'*⁴

The Call

The year of the 'Call' is the year the Holy Prophet (s) received his calling from God to start his mission of prophethood. He was **forty years old** at the time, which means he received the **Call** in and around **610 A.D.**

It is well known that Muhammad (s) religiously obeyed the commandments of God that were revealed to him:

'I follow only that which is revealed to me' – (6:50)

The Hijra

The year of the 'Hijra' is the year the Holy Prophet (s) emigrated to and arrived in Madina. It took place approximately thirteen years after the Call more or less coinciding

⁴ Muir, William *Life of Mohammed*

with the **year 622 A.D.** according to most authorities. It is the date on which the commencement of the Muslim *Hijri* calendar is based. Muslim dates are thus stipulated as A.H. (*Anno Hijira*) which means ‘the year of the Hijra.’

Approximate date of Aisha’s birth and marriage

Ibn Jarir Tabari, famous historian of Islam, writes:

‘In the time before Islam⁵, Abu Bakr⁶ married two women. The first was Fatila daughter of Abdul Uzza, from whom Abdullah and Asma were born. Then he married Umm Ruman, from whom Abdur Rahman and **Aisha** were born. These four were **born before Islam.**’⁷

Thus, according to Tabari, Aisha was born **before 610 A.D. the year of the Call.** About ten years later in **620 A.D.**, Khadija, passed away. A few months later Muhammad (s) married an elderly widow, Sauda.

⁵ Meaning before the Call

⁶ Close companion of the prophet and father of Aisha

⁷ *Tarikh Tabari*, vol. 4, p. 50

She and her husband were among the first who had fled to Abyssinia to escape persecution by the Makkans. When they returned her husband died in Makka. When the Holy Prophet (s) eventually took her into marriage, it brought her much needed solace and security.

The Marriage proposal

Muhammad Ali, referring to Ibn Sa’d’s *Kitāb at-Tabaqāt al-Kabī*,⁸ writes, ‘when Abu Bakr, father of Aisha, was approached on behalf of the Holy Prophet (s), he replied that the girl had already been betrothed to Jubair, and that he would have to settle the matter first with him. This shows that Aisha must have been approaching majority at the time.’⁹

If we now take into account that Aisha was born before the Call and that Khadija passed away ten years later after the Call and that the Holy Prophet (s) married the widow Sauda in the meantime, and that

⁸ *Compendium of biographies of famous Islamic personalities.*

⁹ Ali, MM, *Living Thoughts of the Prophet Muhammad*

Aisha was already betrothed to Jubair at the time, it is most likely that she was already fourteen or fifteen years old at the time of the proposal made on behalf of the Prophet (s) mentioned by ‘Ibn Sa’d. She would also have been *intellectually mature* to understand the implications of such a proposal. The following historical facts give further credence to this inference.

Ibn Kathir, historian and classical commentator of the Holy Quran, writes in his *Al-bidayya wal-nihaya:- A History of Islam:*

‘Asma (an older sister of Aisha) died in 73 A.H. at the age of one hundred years. **She was ten years older than her sister Aisha.**’

Imam Wali –ud-Din Muhammad ibn Abdullah Al Khatib, the compiler of the famous collection of Hadith, *Mishkat al Masabih*, writing under *Asma* says something similar:

‘She (Asma) was the sister of Aisha *Siddiqah*, the wife of the Holy Prophet and was ten years

older than her ... In 73 A.H. Asma died at the age of one hundred years.’¹⁰

With this information, we deduce that Asma was twenty seven years old in the year 1 A.H. (100 – 73) **and Aisha seventeen** at the time.

If we now take into account the fact that Aisha entered the Prophet’s household two years after the Hijra, according to general consensus, she **would have been nineteen at the time.**

This is further corroborated by details contained in a report in Bukhari with regard to Aisha’s role in the Battle of Uhud that runs thus:

‘On the day of the battle of Uhud when some people retreated and left the Prophet, I saw Aisha, daughter of Abu Bakr and Umm Sulaim, with their robes tucked up so that the

¹⁰ *Mishkat al-Masabih*, Edition with Urdu translation published in Lahore, 1986, vol. 3, p. 300/301.

bangles around their ankles were visible hurrying with their water skins (in another narration it is said ‘carrying the water skins on their backs’). Then they would pour water into the mouths of the people, and return to fill the water skins again and came back again to pour water in the mouths of the people.’¹¹

Now Aisha, it is said, joined the Prophet’s household one year before the battle of Uhud. So if we are to believe that she was nine years old when she married the Prophet (s), like some mistakenly do, she would have been only ten years old when this event occurred. It is thus highly unlikely for a frail ten year old girl to be engaged in such strenuous activities in the midst of a hardened, deadly battle situation; something the Holy Prophet (s) definitely would not have allowed; but indeed possible for a fit, twenty year old woman.

¹¹ Sahih Bukhari, *Kitab-ul-Jihad wal-Siyar*, Chapter: ‘Women in war and their fighting alongside men’

In conclusion, there is no doubt that Aisha was already **nineteen years old at the time of her marriage.**

Qualities of Aisha and her role in Islam

Aisha played a pivotal role as a *teacher, exponent* and *interpreter* of the religion of Islam. She was an exceptionally intelligent and astute woman, a young prodigy. This was a vital factor in her marriage to the Messenger of Allah, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) as is clearly proven by events during and after his death.

She entered the Holy Prophet’s household, after his emigration to Madina, just at the time when the teachings of Islam in all fields of life for the Muslim community were starting to be revealed to the Holy Prophet (s) and demonstrated by him by his example and practice. An intellectually gifted person was required who would have daily contact with him at the closest and most personal level, so

as to absorb the teachings that he was giving on all aspects of life. Aisha was indeed such a person. She possessed the necessary sterling qualities, such as:

- An excellent, precise memory to retain a vast amount of detail accurately.
- The ability to understand and to grasp the significance and the principles of the teachings.
- The powers of reasoning, criticism and deduction to resolve problems on the basis of those teachings.
- The skills to convey knowledge to a wide range of audiences.
- The prospect of passing on Muhammad's message to future generations after his death.

History bears out that Aisha fulfilled all these requirements in her lifetime as the wife of the Holy Prophet (s) and after his death. After the Holy Prophet's death, she acted as a teacher and interpreter of Islam,

providing guidance to even the greatest of the male Companions of the Holy Prophet (s). They made a special point of going to her to gain knowledge and seek her opinion. A vast number of the Prophet's sayings and actions are reported from her in books of Hadith. She not only quoted his sayings and reported her observations of events, but interpreted them to provide solutions to questions. Whenever necessary, she corrected the views of his greatest Companions. She was a first hand witness of what the Prophet (s) said and did. She made rulings and judgments on which Islamic law is based. It is thus recognised, from the earliest times in Islam, that some two-thirds of Islamic Law is based on reports and interpretations that have come from Aisha.

In view of these exceptional qualities of Aisha and the towering role she played in the transmission of the teachings of Islam, she was far from being a victim of some form of child and marital abuse as some 'good-for-nothings' out of

sheer mischief allege. Nay! Indeed she remains the true ‘Mother of the Believers.’ May Almighty God be pleased with her and bless her eternally. -END



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Editor : Ebrahim Mohamed

Contact Details: P.O. Box 13744

Goodwood, Cape Town, South Africa 7463

Email: emuhamed@mweb.co.za

Publications: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at

Islam Lahore (South Africa)

Reg. P.B.O. 930050262