

Preface by the Persian translator

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Ailment and remedy

1-Ailment

Intense fanaticism, blind following, undue respect shown to so-called pious individuals of the nation and lack of courage in investigating the life history, morals and mentality accompanied by a careful survey and discussion of all aspects of the period in which they lived, have been major factors for the Muslims' indigence, and the reason for the dispersion and retardation of the Islamic society.

Fourteen centuries of Islamic history have gone by, but not all the Muslims have heard of this history which is related to them, nor of the critical and important events which have been the main factor in the course of such a history for Islam. Various political factors, too, have had a significant role in this connection.

Today all are cognizant of the fact that in every society and nation, employment of self-interest and influence, and promotion of personal motives through religion facilitate the attainment of a decisive result for this reason, alteration of facts, fabrication and propagation of false stories and non-factual matters and creation of false subjects are the factors which have been employed in every period and country in order to promote personal motives and political aims. In this way, the basis of differences and dispersion among the Muslims has been greatly, reinforced and those who have held position and power have spared no effort in employing all methods to intensify these differences in order to attain their political designs.

With the passage of years and centuries, and concentration of misinterpreted and altered subjects and stories in minds, their penetration into the beliefs and thoughts and their transfer from one generation to another have eventually led to such conditions which have been faced by nations for many centuries. Hence there has come about a history which has perplexed all sound minds, wondering how to have access to true facts in this regard.

2-Remedy

This deviation from truth is not only in the history of Islam. Every nation and religion too has a similar history. But it is certain that truth does not perish, and however strong the means of deviation may be, it cannot generally be eliminated. But what is meanwhile important is the endeavor to discover and bring the truth out of thousands of false statements and announcing it decisively with acceptable arguments. What has been achieved by the lofty scholar Sayyid Murtada 'Askári in his famous book "Aḥadith of 'Umm al-Mu'minin 'A'ishah" has shown a new way for seekers of truth. The author has written the present book which describes the facts and events of early Islam, by means of perusing many books of history and tradition about the validity of which all world Muslims are unanimous, and he has set forth clear and decisive arguments and evidence about which no doubt or ambiguity remains and he has left it all for the public to judge.

On the suggestion of the author, I translated the said book entitled "The Role of 'A'ishah in the History of Islam" when I was on an official mission to Baghdad. But its printing was postponed for some years; this delay, however, proved to be fortunate, since the present book secured some advantages over the original text in several ways, and after a recent meeting with the author in Tehran, the following points were agreed to:

1-It contains the accounts and introduction written by scholar Hamid Hafnī Dawūd in praise of the book, together with its translation.

2-The reason for the plurality of the Prophet's wives, described by the author, has been added to the present book.

3-A more detailed account has been given of the personalities who were dealt with briefly earlier in the notes.

4-A more detailed account has been given of the great men of learning who played a significant role in the course of Islamic history, and this account has been transferred from the notes to the main text.

5-The Quranic chapter 'at-Tahrim" and the cause of its descent have been wholly included after the brief story of Mariyah.

In following up the admirable way adopted by the author, the translation into Persian has been carried out impartially and free from any prejudice and personal feelings, and without any alteration or expression of likes and dislikes.

May this minor contribution succeed in revealing the true facts and causes of the course taken by the present history of Islam, and be acceptable to Unique God, and approved by men of learning and research.

Now that the first volume of this book is offered for the general public for judgment, it is hoped that men of enlightenment, knowledge and discernment will offer their views, criticisms and suggestions impartially and without taking side with any particular sect, and thus guide and help the writer to remove any deficiencies, which may exist now, in his effort to produce a faultless edition in future. In this way, they may render a worthy service to the world of Islam.

In conclusion, I must express thanks to my learned friend Mr. Muhammad Husayn Mujahid for encouraging me to translate this book and for undertaking the labor of its collation.

***'Ata Muhammad Sardar-Niya
Tehran, October 1967***

**A part of the introduction by
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Facts

Ibn Mas'ud's method of guidance

"The truest of words is the Book of God, and the way of salvation is the one shown by our lord Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). The worst of deeds is innovation which causes deviation that ends with the fire of hell."

Thus spoke 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud (May God be pleased with him) to his companion peers and to his pupils and followers, describing the signs of the ways of religion.

When he spoke of knowledge, he meant the highest goal, which has been sought by religious scholars and seekers of truth in discovering the truth alone and avoiding deviation and wrong words. He said: Attainment of truth is not possible except through two fundamental principles of the noble religion of Islam, namely the Book of God and the utterances of His prophet, the former being the highest and noblest truth ever uttered in the past and present, which cannot be excelled in future, and whose validity will never be diminished.

Why should it not be so? The reason is that it has descended from God Almighty, and mankind has confessed his own weakness and inability before the eloquence of its phrases and its brilliant truth. It is the most decisive evidence for the prophet hood of Muhammad. Next are the utterances of an untaught and unlettered Prophet, an exalted personality through whom the heavenly Book has been communicated to the people all over the world; a person who has not offered anything on his own behalf, nor has he added anything on his own behalf, nor has he added anything of his own, nor given

any instructions except for the inspirations received from the source of divine revelation.

His words rose from the heart, and they were nothing but heavenly inspirations sent to him by Great God. In the Qur'an God has praised him and spoken well of his character, and said:

"And most surely you conform yourself to sublime morality."⁽¹⁾

Therefore what has come from these two valid sources must be a clear and absolute truth into which doubt or ambiguity cannot find its way, whereas anything that has not been derived from those two sources is exposed to evaluation and criticism, and is subject to changes and modifications, and also to the estimation of its beauty and ugliness.

An alert and clear-sighted reader may have understood our purpose in quoting the words of that exalted companion of the Prophet who began his remarks with such wise phrases. In his description of the ways of religion and the sacred laws of Islam, he draws the attention of the listener directly to the Book of God and His prophet's tradition, and advises him to follow those two principles, namely a book about whose words, phrases, and apparent form and arrangement all are unanimous and have no differences, and a tradition and lifestyle which have been handed down by the Prophet to chaste and virtuous individuals namely men who had no intention of attributing any falsehood or misconduct to the Prophet of Islam.

Let us know the truth and its supporters

Another point that we deduce from that sincere and wise utterance is that these two sources are immune from any questioning and safe from any criticism and alteration, whereas everything else is subject to evaluation, and about which a verdict is issued with the aid of intellect and knowledge, and is subject to analysis and criticism, in order to distinguish the difference between jewels and shells, and right and wrong. On this course, we have no fear in facing other sources and their authors even if they may possess a high rank in the Islamic society and dignity among the people and

may be among the Prophet's companions. The reason is that our purpose is to seek truth and right, and also because the Prophet's companions have not all possessed the same level of justice, knowledge and accuracy in preserving the exact words and phrases of the Prophet of God, and like many other human beings they may have been subject to forgetfulness, error and blunder. Some of them have followed the path of truth in elaborating on the Prophet's tradition, while others may have erred in it. Some of them possessed a strong memory, while some others had been forgetful; a number may have been steadfast in faith, while others were fickle and perplexed; some were sincere devotees, while others were hypocrites!

The Qur'an itself confirms this point where it says:

"And from among those who are round about you of the dwellers of the desert there are hypocrites, and from among the people of Medina also; they are stubborn in hypocrisy; you do not know them; We know them; We will chastise them twice, then shall they be turned back to a grievous chastisement."⁽²⁾

With this state of affairs in early days of Islam, we cannot consider all the companions to be on an equal footing and regard all the standard-bearers of Islam as being wholly chaste; for, since the appearance of man on the earth and formation of society, he has always shown his various aspects including the highest degrees of integrity and justice as well as the lowest level of hypocrisy and hindrance. Historical evidence and statistics, gained from the study of various peoples and societies since the creation of Adam, confirm this view. But the principle of change in religious communities and the manner of invitation towards the path of truth reached the height of perfection in the person of Muhammad and his friends, for, no other Prophet has brought such an exalted and steadfast law, and no friends of any other Prophet have equaled the friends of our Prophet in devotion to religion and immensity of number.

But the honor of companionship with the Prophet which have given a particular rank and dignity to his friends, have not checked some of them from causing derangement in his injunctions through self-interest and showing lack of devotion

to his laws and commands. Consequently, there is no reason why we should exempt the leaders and pioneers of Islam from the general law of investigation and criticism solely owing to their companionship with the Prophet; for, they have not been of equal weight from the viewpoint of justice. For instance, despite intense insistence and desire of the Prophet for the guidance of all human beings towards the path to perfection, there were some individuals in whose heart Islam did not easily find its way, and also there were some who had hidden infidelity and hypocrisy behind the mask of Islam.

The Qur'an clearly describes the lofty ideas of the Prophet and his deep and sincere interest in guiding people on to the path of truth, and it has, on several occasions, spoken of his attitude and sacred ideals. It says at one place:

"Therefore do remind, for, you are only a reminder. You are not a watcher over them"⁽³⁾

And elsewhere it says:

"Surely you cannot guide whom you love but Allah guides whom He pleases"⁽⁴⁾

And at another place it says:

"Therefore do remind, surely reminding does profit."⁽⁵⁾

There are also many such verses in the Qur'an which confirm the insistence of this great reformer of mankind, and his deep desire to guide all people, and especially his sympathy and kindness upon the order of God, towards those persons who are still wayward and have not had the privilege of finding the true path, having been separated from the followers of the divine path.

Support of Islam

All the above points show that the glory and greatness of Islam are based on its laws and teachings, not on its followers, and this greatness is not the product of the support and confirmation by its followers so as to expose it to annihilation

I myself believe that if the entire world rises to fight and joins hands to destroy it, there cannot be inflicted the slightest damage upon its glory and greatness. Similarly, if the whole world join hands to glorify and support it, nothing can be

added to that glory and greatness; for, the secret of Islam lies in its lofty principles, and the secret of those principles lies in themselves not in the visage of its followers. This is a point

which is understood only by true scholars and learned people. Therefore, if the pioneers of Islam and the Prophet's companions are subjected to discussion and criticism and their life, words and deeds are analyzed in detail in order to introduce the wicked and dishonest persons to the world of Islam, no damage will be done to Islam and its spiritual truth. On the contrary, an Islam, which Lays the foundation of justice through its injunctions, and declares the equality of all human beings in the eyes of the law, will allow such a survey and criticism, and particularly insist upon such an investigation and criticism for the sake of discovering truth and leading people towards their right destination.

Why should we go that far? The great reformer of humanity, Muhammad, has in his wise guidance, directly and indirectly encouraged us to follow truth alone and accept and support truth only because of its being right irrespective of individuals, even if it were in the interest of a poor and helpless person, and also to rise up against falsehood and corruption, even if it is to the detriment of a noble and distinguished individual, and to make no discrimination between the noble and ignoble for the enforcement of divine punishments.

Muhammad and enforcement of justice

It is narrated in the traditions of Sahih that Usamah ibn Zayd whose father and himself were respected by the Prophet, one day interceded with him to exempt a noble woman of Quraysh who had committed theft, from being given due punishment, but that great reformer and divine Prophet refused to accept this intercession and uttered his well-known and everlasting remark about this matter, saying: "O people! Your predecessors wasted away everything of theirs! They let alone a noble person, who had committed theft, whereas they punished a weak and unknown thief'. I swear to God that if Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad, committed theft, I would cut off her hand!"

It was with such final words that the Prophet, the founder of the principles of justice and equality, refused not to enforce the punishment prescribed, by heavenly laws upon that noble woman, of aL-Makhzumi tribe, despite her high rank and dignity among her own people. ⁽⁶⁾

In this way, the Prophet abolished class differences hundreds of years before theorists of communism tried to remove them. At a time when he declared the law of justice and equality, he made all people equal under that law, and gave personal help to abstemious, shelterless and distressed people against the powerful and infamous tyrants. This law has been clearly expressed in the Qur'an, and holy and prophetic traditions. The Qur'an says:

"O you men! Surely We have, created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other, surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful of his duty." ⁽⁷⁾

The holy tradition says: "Whoever puts into practice my order, will have heaven for his abode even, if he is an Abyssinian slave, and he who disobeys will have the fire of hell for his seat, even if he is a dignitary of the Quraysh." Most of the noble traditions of the Prophet are manifest examples of the height of humanity and justice.

The close and distant friends of Muhammad

Where the Prophet speaks of future and unveils occurrences, he describes his companions after his demise as follows: some of them will proceed worthily in the way of God, while some others will deviate; a number rise up against justice, while others will resort to mutiny and injustice.

He addressed 'Ammar and said: "O 'Ammar! You will be killed by a group of rebellious and tyrannical individuals!" And he said to 'Ali: "O 'Ali! Do you know the most miserable of past and future people?" 'All answered: "God and His prophet are more aware." The Prophet said: "The most miserable of past people was he who cut off the leg of the Thamud tribe's camel; and the most miserable of the future persons is he who kills you." ⁽⁸⁾

All these points show that without any doubt the Prophet's

companions differ from each other in terms of their rank and position like other people. Some of them have attained the highest degree of perfection, virtue and humanity, whereas some others have remained in the abyss of meanness and corruption, and not all of them have succeeded to gain honour as companions of the Prophet or to find the way leading to truth and perfection, and thus to win equality with others.

This being the case, would this law that believes the companions and other people are equal in the religion of Islam and makes dignity and superiority dependent upon the degree of chastity and performance of sacred injunctions of Islam, not be the most adequate reason for that group of people who have not yet abandoned the way of caution, to permit a discussion and a critical survey of the Prophet's companions? A companion who has not followed the path of truth and has not submitted to the sacred law of Islam, cannot claim a distinction only by being a companion of the Prophet, in the same way that the people of our own time who have been separated greatly from the era of the Prophet, but have fully understood his holy principles and have been deeply influenced by Islam, cannot be reproached for not having lived in the Prophet's time and not having had the good fortune of being his companions.

In fact, there are many individuals who are near in appearance, but far in reality, whereas there may be many who are far in appearance, and yet close in reality. In my opinion, we and the Prophet's companions are equal in our call for truth and the need for propagating the exalted laws of Islam.

Indeed, the greatest distinction gained by the Prophet's companions in benefiting from his association has been their opportunity to have personal contact with and received direct command from the master of the faith. It should be remembered that this distinction has no more than two aspects: Firstly, the great blessing of his companionship and receiving his direct command without intermediary, and secondly it is the most convincing sign and decisive argument for the companion himself.

If the companionship with the Prophet could, in itself,

provide the means for his intercession on the day of resurrection, and protect the companion from criticism, and keep him immune from hardships and upheaval of time, and prevent the issuance of a verdict by the Muslims for or against him, the Prophet would never have uttered these historical and everlasting words to his dearest child: "O Fatimah, daughter of the Prophet of God! Ask me whatever you wish, for before the threshold of divine justice, the fact of your being the daughter of the Prophet will be of no avail to you."⁽⁹⁾

This historical statement was uttered by the Prophet to his daughter on the day when the following verse descended to him: "Inform your close relations." Indeed, the lofty principles laid down by the Prophet about justice and equality consider all people equally in carrying out the punishments based on Islamic injunctions.

The author as viewed by Dr. Hamid Hafni Dawud

Some time ago, research scholar Mr. Murtada 'Askari presented his book 'Ahadith of Umm al-Mu'minin 'A'ishah" to men of learning and scholars, especially to two groups of readers who fervently sought truth, heartily desired to discern the philosophy of Islamic history, and comprehend the reasons and history of the canon law and its principles. He engaged himself in this research at a time when he came across undeniable documents concerning the life of Umm al Mu'minin 'A'ishah, and he made use of them to present the truth, and express his views freely. However telling the truth and seeking it are regarded as an unforgivable offence by the short sighted and by those who think it improper to criticize and issue a verdict of any kind against each of the Prophet's companions, since they themselves have enforced a limit for this survey and investigations about those companions.

Mr. 'Askari has, in his book, fully adopted the method of critics and researchers by employing scientific sequence and scrutiny, and explained in his introduction the difficulties and obstacles which existed in the way of investigation for all seekers of truth. One of these obstacles may be a scholar's attachment to his own feelings and partiality, causing him to prefer one group or personality to another, due to his

prejudice, while this may be contrary to truth. Or owing to self-interest and adverse motive, he may resort to every trick in order to conceal truth. This is the way of some writers who try to establish some concordance between two opposite views. This concordance may seem agreeable, but it is obvious that two contrary views and aspects cannot be brought together to create harmony.

Mr. 'Askari has succeeded in removing in his own discussion such defects, which exist in the way of every scholar's investigation. He pursues a definite goal from which he has not deviated, and he has not made personalities and authorities the axis of his task, since his aim has been to discover truth.

Moreover, he has been able to lay aside his own feelings and inclinations, and allow perfect freedom to intellect alone in issuing verdicts, avoiding all blind and misleading prejudices, and showing no preference to one group over another, even if that group belongs to his own sect. It would be no exaggeration to say that Mr. 'Askari has laid down a firm and steadfast rule in the method of his investigation. What mostly attracts scholars apart from the apparent form of this book and wins their praise and admiration is the fact that he has been able to observe the general law in his scientific discussion, and analyze the traditions of Umm alMu'minin with perfect care and caution, and thus reveal the truth with all its manifestations.

'Ali's assassination and 'A'ishah's praise of God

Historical evidence compels us to express doubt about some of the traditions of Umm al-Mu'minin such as the traditions which speak of the caliphate of the two elders (Abu Bakr and 'Umar) without a mention of 'Ali and also the traditions related to the qualities of the two elder caliphs and 'Uthman and 'A'ishah's ways, since in these traditions, feeling and interest have played an important role, for, her relationship with Abu Bakr was one between a daughter and father. Similarly, her words about 'Umar are very different from her expressions about 'Ali who was considered a rival of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Also, her rise against 'Uthman and her incitement of people to

shed his blood, and then her uprising, for the sake of avenging his death, are other arguments, which make us, doubt the truth of her words.

In the same way, her actions against 'Ali her aids to his enemies and her alliance with Talhah and az-Zubayr who had broken their vow with 'Ali and her starting the fire of the battle of al-Jamal, are all clear examples of her rancor and long-standing hostility towards such a chaste Imam as 'Ali using those acts as a means to create division and dispersion among the Muslims. She felt such a pain in her heart about 'Ali that it gave her no tranquility. Even when she heard the news of the Imam's assassination, she prostrated herself to thank God, and recited a couplet expressing her feeling.

Each of her traditions is related to one of such important historical events, which should be treated with caution, and discovery of truth gives her a higher position than her personality and one's own inclinations.

Moreover, a companion of the Prophet may, like other people, err in his verdict and judgment, since so long as a human being, whoever he may be, acts upon his own opinion and taste, he may be right or wrong. But an investigator has no right to lay aside wisdom and intelligence, humble himself before great personalities, and conceal the truth. He is not permitted in his evaluation, to place right and wrong views on the same level. His duty is to state the truth in its full sense.

In addition, when we agree that every authority may err and blunder and hence will be called to account at the threshold of divine justice, Umm al-Mu'minin will not be exempted from this rule, and no injustice is done to her. From the viewpoint of scientific and research method, injustice occurs when we give a prejudiced judgment about 'Ali and 'A'ishah and consider them to be equal from the viewpoint of justice, or when we regard 'Ali, who proceeded in the right path, as an authority to be at par with those who had gone astray, such as 'A'ishah, Mu'awiyah and other companions who rose in opposition to and dispute with 'Ali.

'Ali regarded God as his governor

'Ali, not in his capacity as the "Gate of the City of Knowledge"

and the Guardian appointed by Muhammad, not only because he uttered the truth strongly and explicitly and defended it staunchly and thus gave religion strength and consistency, and not because of all the above qualities, but on account of the fact that he has been the possessor of all the attributes of perfection in its full sense, has attained his status.

What has placed 'Ali above everyone else is the fact that in all his words and deeds, he regarded God as his supervisor and a watchful governor, and was strict upon himself in the interest of the Muslims, preferring public and Muslim society's interests to his own and worldly gains. During his Caliphate, the noblest stage of humanity and perfection of a human being is distinguished in such a rank and position. He, in this period in particular, was a perfect model in his food, dress, justice of his verdicts, and avoidance of the deceptive manifestation of the world.

While others exerted great efforts to secure Caliphate, in the case of 'Au it was caliphate itself, which hastened towards him. Others preferred their interests and -those of their relatives to public interests, but 'Ali placed public interests before those of his own and his kinsmen.

At the time 'Ali was in Kufah, his brother 'Aqil ibn Abi Talib joined him. 'Ali welcomed and asked him why he had come to Kufah. 'Aqil said: "My salary is not adequate for, our livelihood, and the high cost of living in Medina has put me heavily in debt. I have come to ask for your help to save me from this situation."

'Mi said: "I swear to God that I have nothing but my own salary. So you must wait until the due time of payment so that you may receive it instead of me."

'Aqil said: "Do you think that I have come so far from Hejaz in the hope of receiving your salary? Of what worth is your share of salary to me? How can it solve my problem?"

The chaste Imam answered: "Do you know of any worldly goods belonging to me? Or do you expect God to burn time in the fire of hell for offering Muslims' funds to a relative?"

Thus 'Aqil who could not tolerate the justice of a chaste Imam as 'Mi, turned to and joined Mu'awiyah who made no distinction between legitimate and illegitimate acts, and

regarded public funds as his personal property.

This event acquaints us with `Ali's personality and the extent of his chastity and degree of preferring public interests to those of himself and his kinsmen.

It can be claimed without any doubt that none of the Prophet's companions but `Ali had attained such a height of humanity and perfection; or, he himself has, in all sincerity, uttered his famous and immortal phrase saying: "O world, deceive others but not me!"

`Ali and the Caliphate

I do not think there is any companion of the Prophet whose verdict and authority may not be subject to comments except `Ali about whose authority there does not exist the slightest room for criticism. I make this statement with full courage since it is confirmed by all the political events that have occurred in Islam.

`Umar interfered in the matter of caliphate with the result that Abu Bakr succeeded to get that position. In his decree he argued that he had checked riot and sedition, and after Abu Bakr he shouldered that heavy responsibility, and on many occasions, confessed his own mistake in giving his verdict in favor of Abu Bakr's caliphate. At that time when some of the companions spoke to him about the allegiance to his son `Abd Allah he answered: "It is enough for `Umar's household to have one person responsible and to be called to account at the threshold of divine justice about Muhammad's ummah." But `Ali explained, contrary to the two elders and concerning the matter of caliphate, that he was engaged in a more important task, namely preparing the body of the Prophet for burial.⁽¹⁰⁾

This was the greatest criticism leveled always against Abu Bakr and `Umar, showing, `Ali to be entitled against those two.

In the election of the caliph after `Umar, `Abd ar-Rahman ibn `Awf gave his verdict upon `Ali and `Uthman who were two of the six candidates for the Caliphate nominated by `Umar, and notified to those two the duty of the caliph in relation to his own verdict. Although he knew that `Ali would not submit to his authority, he began first by proposing to `Ali the

acceptance of the terms of caliphate.

'Ali accepted that duty to the extent of his power and ability, and assurance of his conscience before God and His prophet. But 'Uthman in order not to let the chance of caliphate escape him, accepted unconditionally all those I conditions, irrespective of his power and ability.

In accepting the terms of the son of 'Awf, 'Ali was more eager to win the consent of God and His prophet, and Muslims' interests than to gain the position of caliph and command, whereas 'Uthman cherished that position rather than anything else. God knows whether, at the outset, 'Uthman possessed perfect discernment of the task faced by him, or whether he realized it, later on, since this is an internal matter about which we cannot issue a verdict and we can only judge by appearance.

Historical verdicts of 'A'ishah

At first 'A'ishah agreed to 'Uthman's caliphate and confirmed it. Then she turned against him and gave an opposite verdict. For that reason, her authority is not reliable. But 'Ali, despite establishing the reasons for his rivalry with 'Uthman on the issue of caliphate, did not, unlike 'A'ishah, rise in conflict with Uthman.

After 'Uthman was killed, 'Ali refused to accept allegiance of Talhah and az-Zubayr except in the mosque and in the presence of all people, and when they forced him to accept caliphate, he rose in the mosque and said: "I was weary of becoming your caliph, but you favored only my command. Remember that I shall take no step except with your approval and advice. I hold the keys to your public funds, but I shall never take one drachma of it without your approval." Then he asked: "Do you agree to this?" The people shouted their agreement, and 'Ali said: "O God! Be their witness," and then he accepted the caliphate.

'Ali had made the right decision and thus he left no excuse for people, since it was they who forced him to accept that position and not because he himself desired it. Therefore, anyone who shirked his duty and opposed 'Ali, would be a traitor and guilty, and he who remained loyal would be a true

believer.

'A'ishah resorted to a verdict once again, namely when she rose to oppose the murderers of 'Uthman and avenge his murder, and formally collaborated with Talhah and az-Zubayr who had broken their pact with 'Ali and trampled upon their allegiance with him. This motivated action showed that it was not free from spite and grudge so that the people accused her of having risen, not to avenge 'Uthman's blood, but intending to cause division and dispersion among the Muslims and scattering people from around 'Ali. Had there been anyone else in 'Ali's place, she would not have resorted to such an action.

Umm Salamah's historical letter to 'A'ishah

'A'ishah's action in fighting 'Ali was the second split that occurred in the foundation of Islam after 'Umar's move with regard to caliphate. This statement is not a personal opinion expressed for a particular motive. They are undeniable acts about which just leaders of nations and well-known impartial historians are unanimous.

The action of 'A'ishah has been despised by supporters of justice and truth since the time of the Prophet's companions. A witness to this claim is Umm Salamah, another consort of the Prophet. She wrote a Letter of counsel to 'A'ishah, asking her to abstain from this action, and warned her against the Creation of division and dispersion among the Muslims. The letter goes Like this:

"From Umm Salamah, wife of the Prophet of God, to 'A'ishah, Umm al-Mu'minin.

I praise Unique God and confess His uniqueness. But now, you have, with your action, torn the veil of respect between the Prophet of God (p.b.u.h.) and his nation, and desecrated it. The Qur'an has gathered 'up your skirt; so do not obstinately drag it along. Your rank and position are secure; so do not lose them in a futile manner. Fear Unique God Who is the guardian of this ummah!

If the Prophet of God had considered it worthy of women to fight, he would certainly have issued a command in this connection. Do you not know that he has forbidden you from

challenging others. For, if any deviation takes place in the pillar of religion, it will never be corrected by the force of women, and not repaired by them. The holy war of women is to observe self-control, chastity and contentment.

If the exalted Prophet sees you driving your camel in the desert from one watering place to another, what will you say to him? You are bound to hasten towards him sooner or later. I dare say that if they tell me: 'O Umm Salamah, enter heaven', I would feel ashamed in meeting the Prophet while I have shown disrespect to him.

Therefore, veil yourself and remain peacefully in your house. You will be doing the greatest service to this nation if you do nothing for them. I know also that if I were to inform you of a remark I have from the holy Prophet, you will writhe like one bitten by a snake! That is all."

This letter is another evidence that 'A'ishah had erred in her judgment, and confirms this point that the reason for her uprising had not really been others' interest in society and solidarity of the Muslims. Moreover, none of the consorts of the Prophet assisted her in this uprising.

The author's goal in this book

Mr. 'Askari, may God reward him for his truthfulness, has never intended, in his precise scientific discussion, to rouse people against 'A'ishah despite her errors in issuing a verdict in her uprising. During his discussion, he has tried to correct the ideas on historical events in the minds of most people who have not been able to understand the Prophet's companions, and have failed to distinguish right and wrong from their utterances, and have consequently been deprived of understanding proper history and its basis and also Islamic canon laws. By his efforts in this regard he has also sought that people understand the Prophet's traditions without being affected by feelings and minor interests and prejudice towards the narrators of tradition, but with the use of their knowledge.

The reason is that if the people understand the whole or a part of the Prophet's traditions they will easily become aware of the secret behind differences between Islamic sects and jurisprudentially creeds, and will realize to what extent these

differences are artificial and a product of those rulers who, because of particular motives, preferred one party over another, and fabricated any tradition that they desired in order to reinforce the foundation of their rule and strengthen their own group. Or they may have compelled some companions of the Prophet to alter or misinterpret some of those traditions. It was preferable for them to depict a companion as liar and deduce something from his statement that would serve their own interest and thus strengthen their rule.

Before ending my scientific discussion which has been undertaken to please God, I wish to advise Mr. 'Askari to make use of his scientific subject of this discussion for a higher purpose, namely bringing various Islamic sects closer and lay a firmer foundation as desired by learned and enlightened people, in order to bring about unity and solidarity among the Muslims. It is quite possible that he, while deeply involved with research, may follow this suggestion in practice since there does not exist an inherent basic difference between a moderate Shi'ah and an intelligent Sunni, and there is no doubt that each of these two sects, so long as they pursue a single goal and are sincere in their purpose, will make utmost efforts to remove defects and refine one another.

***Dr. Hamid Hafni Dawud
Cairo, College of Languages
23 March 1962***

The motive for writing this book

*"And if Allah pleases He would certainly make you a single nation."
The Qur'an, chapter an-Nahl, Verse 93*

Many researchers in noble traditions of the Prophet of Islam have, since long ago, realized that there exist wide differences between some of these traditions themselves, and also between them and the verses of the divine Book. The result was that some of the past scholars decided to account for and interpret these differences in order to remove objections to the Prophet and his traditions, and they wrote books entitled: "Ta'wil mukhtalif al-hadith"⁽¹¹⁾, "Bayan mushkil al-hadith"⁽¹²⁾ "Bayn mushkilat al-athar"⁽¹³⁾ etc., which roused the hostility of such critics as atheists and Christian- missionaries, and a group of orientalist so that by reliance on the contradictions and differences of these traditions, they could reproach the Prophet of Islam and deride and criticize his religion. But both groups were ignorant of the fact that the great collection of traditions, especially those which contradict each other, have not been written in the same style to make them confident that all of them have come from and have been stated exactly by the Prophet so that these could be subjected to a single general survey. They are a collection of several different traditions, which have reached us from various narrators. A researcher must first classify them in connection with the type of narrators. For example, the traditions related to 'A'ishah Umm al-Mu'minin Anas⁽¹⁴⁾ Abu Hurayrah⁽¹⁵⁾ 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar⁽¹⁶⁾ must each be collected separately and compared in conjunction with the traditions of other narrators who have quoted from the

Prophet (with due attention to the life story, views and ideas of each of them) in order to discover truth.

I realized this matter when I was investigating the historical events of early Islam through traditions. I was particularly attracted by the traditions quoted from 'Aishah Umm al-Mu'minin and I was convinced that the history of Islam from the beginning of the Prophet's ordainment until the allegiance with Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah will not be understood properly unless Umm al-Mu'minin's traditions which are one of the most important source of the history of early Islam, are studied and evaluated impartially, and solely for the sake of finding the truth.

I believe also that understanding some verses of the heavenly Book as well as Islamic jurisprudence for whose explanation reference is made to the Ahadith of Umm al-Mu'ninin depends on a previous study of these traditions.

As I intended to discuss and organize the history of the critical Islamic period, I was obliged to give priority to the evaluation of these traditions before dealing with other topics. A discussion of such matters especially concerning the leaders of early Islam involves certain difficulties, which are not very easy for a Muslim scholar to remove.

Let us investigate impartially

The first difficulty for an oriental Muslim writer is to deal with views with which he has been accustomed and brought up, and which have influenced his life and mentality and taken deep roots in all aspects of his existence, as well as the beliefs possessed by his society.

He regards the personalities of early Islam to be superior to other human beings, and considers their time and the people of their time more holy, and his belief about them and their time is different from that about others and their time.

If such a writer is unable to remove this difficulty in his discussion and research, his subject will become just the defense of his beliefs instead of seeking truth.

As I realized this fact, I decided especially in this connection, not to give attention to my feelings concerning the respect I felt for 'A'ishah Umm al-Mu'minin as a consort of the Prophet,

observe no discrimination between revered Islamic personalities and others who happened to enter the discussion, and attribute to them various feelings and motives that all people have, so that after analyzing the events which have occurred during the life of Umm al-Mu'minin I would be able to discuss and survey her words and traditions for the discovery of truth alone.

Although I do not claim complete success in this determination, I have used my utmost endeavor for this purpose, and I leave it to others to judge. But I take God as my witness in saying that only the hope of assisting the scholars to investigate the true story of early Islam and the Quranic injunctions has been my motive in the study and survey of this subject.

Islam or faith and belief

Secondly, if he succeeds in removing the above difficulty in his investigation, there figures another problem, namely the effect of the publication of such topics on coordination and unity among the Muslims. Now this question arises that since with the efforts of the strivers and reformers of Islam, the hopes and expectations of various groups of Muslims have, to some extent, been fulfilled and they are brought close to each other and the means of their brotherhood and solidarity have been provided, will it be proper to describe in detail the past events and publish matters which not only produce violent refutation and criticism but also rouse dormant feelings and produce aversion and hatred?

But opposed to this question, the following matter must be brought up which cannot be easily disregarded. If on the excuse of the futility of benevolent reformers' effort, such a discussion and investigation would not be acceptable, in that case, no one will engage in scientific research, and this would be an unpardonable injustice to knowledge, consequently, the facts of Islam would, as in former centuries, remain hidden behind the veil of mental rigidity and futile fanaticism, and as a result the discord and differences among various Islamic sects would manifest themselves more intensely. This is certainly not something to be approved by reformers and those who are interested in Islamic solidarity.

Consequently, while we sincerely desire the success of our Muslim brethren in laying aside all differences and uprooting dispersion, in response to the call of the benevolent reformers of Islam, we feel a particular respect for learning and knowledge and regard them as belonging to a different category; for, those who have endeavored constantly to lay the foundations of Muslim unity and solidarity, proclaim that solidarity under the sacred banner of Islam, while Islam, in itself, has no international political motivation. But it is a faith and belief in a set of realities born only out of a perfectly scientific criticism, discussion and research, and in concealing those facts under such excuses and pretexts, no single and firm faith, or belief would be produced, and the proper and direct course of Islam would not be distinguished from the pitfall of perdition and aberration.

I beg God Almighty to grant us success in following the right path, for, it is He who guides all to the right path.

Deep Islamic solidarity

The third difficulty that arises is the outcry that is the main stimulant of that faith and rises from the heart. It is a faith in the fact that only Islam should govern the Muslim society and serve as the foundation of our social solidarity. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to make constant efforts for reviving Islamic life and give it a solid foundation.

O strivers in the way of truth, may God grant you success! Do you not invite all the Muslims to return to Islam, and submit to its principles and enforce its laws? What is the way of understanding Islamic principles and injunctions? Is it other than a survey and research, from the beginning of its history, and discovery of the true traditions of the great Prophet as well as a study of the life and ideas of their narrators, so that by this means, we may comprehend the cause of descent of the Quranic verses and thereby understand the Islamic injunctions which we should obey and call on others to act upon?

As we are bound to act upon the injunctions of Islam, we must first obtain a knowledge about them, since action is not possible without knowledge.

It can be stated with complete confidence that the effort for

Islamic solidarity, and steadfastness in bringing back Islam to the Muslim society, are not incompatible with the discussion and investigation of the history of Islam and a careful survey of the traditions of its Prophet. On the contrary, it serves as its basis and both subjects serve as complements to one another, for, bringing Islam back to the Muslim society would not be possible without creating harmony among the Muslims, and understanding the meaning of the Quranic verses and the Prophet's utterances as well as history of Islam.

Similarly, so long as there exists no faith in the necessity of bringing Islam back to the Muslim society, no friendship and proper brotherhood will be established among the Muslims, since if this were not so, what would be the basis of harmony among the Muslims? What would give them unity and the common direction? Moreover, creation of brotherhood is not possible except through making the Muslims understand each other's views, and take to proper criticism in order to discover and follow the truth. In that case, these words of God in the Qur'an would be applicable to them:

"Give good news to those who listen to the word, then follow the best of it; those are they whom Allah has guided and those it is who are the men of understanding."⁽¹⁷⁾

This is our call and we beg God to enable us and all our Muslim brethren to follow these noble words. The difficulties mentioned above have been peculiar to the Muslims.

Worship of ancestors

In the history of Islam, like the history of other nations and religions of the world, in addition to what we have already mentioned, there have always been three other great obstacles which have acted as barriers to many seekers of truth and historians, checking them from following truth and knowledge.

The first and the foremost difficulty have been the habit of excessive respect for and even worship of ancestors. Since history was written, man has always been accustomed to show unnecessary and undue reverence to those who have gone by. This led to idolatry, and thus Nasr, Yaghuth Wadd, Ya'uq and Suwa',⁽¹⁸⁾ who were good and virtuous men were respected greatly by their contemporaries, but after their death, this

respect took the form of worship.

Surprisingly, we see our good people of the past who, in various periods of their lives, go so far in their rejection and criticism that they issue verdicts of death for each other and consider legitimate shedding the blood of their rivals and followers. But after the passage of long years, the present generation has gone to this in its reverence and respect for them that they do not even allow any survey and investigation of their words and deeds to themselves and to others, thus preventing discovery of truth altogether.

Blind prejudice

The second barrier is improper, indecent and, at the same time, comic prejudice, which serves as a barrier keeping man, confined within the wall of darkness and ignorance. This is an altar of sacrifice where we have witnessed many victims throughout human history in every country and every period.

Religious fanaticism twice turned the city of Rayy into ruins at the beginning of the seventh century AH.⁽¹⁹⁾ The Hanafites and Shafi'ites rose first against the Shi'ites and cruelly massacred them. Then the Shafi'ites attacked the Hanafi sect and shed their blood, with the result that houses were demolished and the city was destroyed. This is an example of the altar of sacrifice due to fanaticism. We can easily find thousands of victims in history as a result of ugly, ill-omened, touching and funny prejudice.

Demagogues

The third obstacle is the most hateful of them, namely the influence exerted by those in power in various periods of history. It was they who by using bayonets and their position did whatever they desired, and forcefully and by means of demagoguery and affectation blocked the way of discussion and investigation, and since the year 655 formally barred the nation's jurisprudence from practicing jurisprudence.⁽²⁰⁾

I do not know whether now that after eight centuries preliminary steps have been taken to prove the way of practicing jurisprudence, and some progress has been made in this respect, the time has not come to permit the Muslims to

resort to discussion and investigation, too, or whether they would do nothing but imitate their predecessors.

No! the situation would not continue to remain so, since owing to the constant efforts of reformers, the light of knowledge has made truth evident to an undeniable extent, and the time will arrive very soon when people will laugh at our suffering for not being allowed any discussion and investigation, in the same way that we are now laughing at the indecent obstinacy and fanaticism of the people of Rayy in that period.

Beside these obstacles, on hearing the praise of someone we have got into the habit of closing our ears to a criticism of him, or when we resort to fault-finding and criticism, we cannot afford to hear a praise of him.

But I will introduce 'A'ishah Umm al-Mu'minin on the basis of what I have found in traditions and history, whether this introduction takes the form of criticism or praise. If someone is not content with this description and cannot bear the difficulties already mentioned (which are mutually felt by both the writer and reader), then he can hand over the book to another person who is able to remove those obstacles out of this way.

Indeed, anyone who wishes to recognize Umm al-Mu'minin through history and traditions and analyze her personality so far as it is possible through the study of traditions, the following pages which describe various periods of this lady of early Islam are at his disposal. It is worthier to follow truth. May the right spirit be blessed!

***Sayyid Murtada 'Askari
Baghdad, College of Theology***

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Part One 'A'ishah in the Prophet's household</p> |
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Chapter al-Ahzab of the Qur'an

Verses 28 to 33:

"O Prophet! Say your wives: If you desire this world's life and its nature, then come, I will give you a provision and allow you to depart a goodly departing;

And if you desire Allah and His Apostle and the latter abode, then surely Allah has prepared for the doers of good among you a mighty reward.

O wives of the Prophet! Whoever of you commits an open indecency, the punishment shall be increased to her doubly; and this is easy to Allah.

And whoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Apostle and does good, We will give to her reward doubly, and We have prepared for her an honorable sustenance.

O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other of the women; if you will be on your guard, then be not soft in your speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease yearn; and speak a good word.

And stay in your houses and do not display your finery like the displaying of the ignorance of yore."

A glance at `A'ishah's life

`A'ishah had a nervous, sharp and unruly Temper.

The author

`A'ishah was the daughter of the first caliph `Abd Allah Abu Bakr, son of Abu Quhafah `Uthman, and granddaughter of `Amir ibn Ka'b of the house of Taym (Quraysh).

She was born in the fourth year after the Prophet's ordainment in Mecca and grew up in the same city.

After the death of his first loyal wife, Khadjjah, and two years before his emigration to Medina, the Prophet wedded `A'ishah, and a year and a half after the emigration, in the lunar month of Shawwal and after the battle of Badr, on the insistence of her father Abu Bakr, took her to his own house. When the Prophet died, she was only eighteen years old. Thus Umm al-Mu'minin spent only eight years and five months of her life in the Prophet's house.

After the departure of the Prophet, `A'ishah was a staunch supporter of the government of the time in the caliphate of her father Abu Bakr, and after him, in the rule of his sincere friend, `Umar, and evens in the first half of `Uthman's caliphate.

In the second half of `Uthman's caliphate, for certain reasons which will be explained later `A'ishah got offended with `Uthman, and this vexation gradually changed into rancor and hostility owing to certain incidents which occurred between her and `Uthman. As a result of the sharp acts of `Umm al-Mu'minin and violent reactions of `Uthman this hostility went so far that despite all her support of the caliphs and caliphate, she joined the ranks of `Uthman's opponents, and even acted as their leader, opposing `Uthman to such an extent that she fanned up the flame of public uprising and revolution until `Uthman was assassinated.

With the death of `Uthman, and people's allegiance to Imam `ali ibn Abi Talib as caliph, `A'ishah saw that her plan was ruined ⁽²¹⁾ and so she raised the banner of opposition to the Imam, and roused his rivals and opponents to wage the battle of al-Jamal ⁽²²⁾ in Basra against him and herself commanded the

opponents' forces in this fight.

'A'ishah was defeated in the battle of al-Jamal and her forces were badly crushed, but Imam 'Ali brought her back respectfully to Medina, where she continued to stay until the assassination of Imam 'Ali.

When Mu'awiyah, son of Abu Sufyan seized power, he resorted to fabricating and publishing false traditions through his supporters and hirelings, describing the merits and virtues of his own house in particular, and those of 'A'ishah's group and supporters and Imam 'Ali's opponents in general. In the propagation of these praises and eulogies, 'A'ishah herself played an important role which will be described later.

'A'ishah died on the night of Tuesday 10th of Shawwal, 57 or 59 AH, in Medina and Abu Hurayrah, successor to Marwan ibn al-Hakam, who was Governor of Medina, performed her funeral prayers,⁽²³⁾ and according to her, will she was buried in the al-Baaq' alongside the graves of other wives of the Prophet⁽²⁴⁾. 'A'ishah had a nervous, sharp and unruly temper. A forceful nature, quickness of understanding the position and taking decision, sharp intelligence, envy and intense jealousy, too, were elements of her personality. She was extremely jealous of her husband, and this jealousy was so intense that she could not allow anyone else to find a place in his heart, or let the smallest particle of his affection be given to another person whoever he or she may have been.

'A'ishah deeply loved her kith and kin, and was so prejudiced in their favour that she lost her head whenever their interests were endangered, and thus she forgot her position and, by no means, abstained from supporting their interests.

All these were her moral qualities, which held away during her whole life, especially the short years of her married life with the Prophet. Lastly 'A'ishah is one of those everlasting women whose name will be remembered in history until the end of the world.

**The secret behind the plurality of
the Prophet's wives
Why did the Prophet have several wives?**

A discussion of nation's customs

Every nation's customs are produced by its environment from the viewpoint of geography, economics, education, ideas and beliefs, taking shape in a succession of eras and centuries, and finding firm and strong roots in the texture of that nation. That is why it is a very difficult matter for a scholar to discuss and survey the customs of a people who possess a history in accordance with their position; for, one cannot look upon the way of life and moral and spiritual characteristics, customs and habits of a nation from the viewpoint of the present day society, or at our customs and social and economic environment as well as our means of communication, education and association of various nations, and draw a conclusion and pass a judgment. Today we live in relatively large cities, stay in rather comfortable houses, and benefit from all the facilities provided by modern architecture for an easy life as well as parks, well-equipped stores, fast transport, different means of communications such as telephone, microwave etc. So that when some famous figure, for instance, sneezes at the other end of the world, every one at this end hears and sees it in less than a second. Customs and habits conform with such an environment.

With this very brief and concise introduction, how can we, in view of the vision and understanding of our society, pass judgment to reach a conclusion about the habits, customs and traditions that existed fourteen centuries ago?

What do we know of the tribal life in forts, under tents and in deserts within the framework of tribal customs and traditions? Even if we know something, will this knowledge be enough to enable us to feel at home amidst that tribe and within the bounds of its customs and traditions? Can we, like them, view matters from the same angle of that time and place, and the same habits and customs of several centuries ago of tribal upbringing and pass a judgement?

We never claim our ability to lead you, on this tour and exploration, in every possible way, or place at your disposal all the social customs and circumstances of various tribes of Arabia in a perfectly clear and tangible manner related to fourteen centuries ago, to the extent that you may feel to be one of them. What we can do is to try to describe the circumstances of that environment to the extent of acquainting you with the historical facts of that land.

Certain facts of history

All historians in the world, both friendly and hostile, are unanimous in the following points:

1-The people of Arabia before advent of Islam, owing to the unfavorable nature of the environment, lived mostly in tents and consequently the means of their livelihood were obtained, not through agriculture or in some cases, not through animal husbandry, but through plunder of each other or massacre of other tribes, so that they could provide themselves with sustenance for a few days and rescue themselves from hunger.

2-With the exception of Yemen and ash-Sham, and several small and insignificant oases in the parched deserts of Arabia, and a few villages and small towns (if they could be called so) the biggest and the most populous of which were Mecca and Yathrib, no sign of development and civilization could be seen in that scorched land.

3-Wealth and property were monopolized by the idolatrous feudals of Mecca and chiefs of the Quraysh tribe, and perhaps the Jews of Yathrib and other neighboring oases. Other inhabitants of that dry land had nothing but hot sighs which rose from their bare breasts on account of such an intense poverty and distress, and no smoke emitted from their hearths. Also no water boiled in their pots, and it was only their tears of despair, which flowed down their lackluster eyes.

4-Lack of harmony of environment and tent-dwelling the scourge of scorching seasonal winds of the dry and burning desert, bloodshed, massacre and plunder for making sustenance even for a few days; poverty and indigence, hard life, savagery and thousands of other miseries had deprived most of those poor and unhappy people of tender and fine human feelings to

such an extent that they buried alive their unfortunate daughters with their own hands in order to get rid of any additional burden at their paltry and miserable meal, and check themselves from offering that unhappy, broken and poor community of Hejaz another creature who would be more unfortunate than themselves.

The Qur'an says in chapter al-An'am, verse 151:

"Say: (O Prophet!) Come, I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you. Remember that you do not associate anything with Him, and show kindness to your parents, and do not slay your children for fear of poverty."

And in Chapter al-Isra' (Banu Isra'il), verse 31, it says:

"And do not kill your children for fear of poverty; we give them sustenance and yourselves too; surely to kill them is a great wrong."

And in Chapter at-Takwir, verses 8 and 9 it says:

"And when the one buried alive is asked ('on Resurrection Day), for what sin was she killed?"

They were afraid for the following reasons:

1-In fights, retreats, massacres and plunders, girls not only were a hindrance, but owing to poverty and indigence they were also likely to be driven to disgraceful deeds and debauchery, thus ruining the honour of the family.

2-Owing to their physical peculiarities, in defeats and retreats, women and girls were often taken prisoner by the enemy and sold as slaves.

3-In the family and tribe, girls had the role of consumers and were an economic burden on the family, and could thus usurp the place of active and efficient men and boys of the family and tribe.

Chapter an-Nahl of the Qur'an, verses 58 and 59 say:

"And when a daughter is announced to one of them his fare becomes black and he is full of wrath.

He hides himself from the people because of the evil of that which is announced to him. Shall he keep it with disgrace or bury it alive in the dust?"

It is clear as to what the life of such girls who remained alive would be. Moreover, in the society of Arabia of those days, a woman had no position at all. She was regarded by men as a

means of quenching their lust, and sometimes she was inherited by the eldest son who as her sole owner could offer her to anyone he wished or arranged her marriage to him. He could force his slave-girls to sell their bodies and offer the money thus gained to their owner, or to throw themselves into the arms of any men of their master's choice. She could be deprived of all inheritance, and be rated as a captive, a slave, an outcast, a hated being, a wicked element lacking all worth and asset, a troublesome creature and a burden to society. She had no right to her own belongings, and was even deprived of living in the way she desired.

God Almighty says in Chapter an-Nur of the Qur'an, verse 33:

"And do not compel your slave-girls to prostitution, when they desire to keep chaste, in order to seek frail good of this world's life, and whoever compels them, then surely after their compulsion Allah is Forgiving, Merciful"

This was how the pre-Islamic Arabs treated their women, and when we speak of Arab women, we are referring to the land of Hejaz. But in those days in no nation or religion were women considered to be free-born human beings. Let us lay aside futile prejudice, and turn the pages of history books of various nations and religions to see that our claim is supported fully, and then realize that it is only Islam that completely respects the rights of women as free-born human beings.⁽²⁵⁾

In view of the regrettable state of the Arabs' life in those days, the position a woman held in such a society, and the problems caused by her in every family and tribe, let us now turn to the study of the attitude of Islam towards women as a result of the noble Prophet's wise treatment of this divine creature who has been created by God as man's partner and companion and given the task of bringing stability and tranquility into human life.

Economic combat of Quraysh with the Prophet

In the days when the Prophet was newly ordained, the Quraysh rose up to check the propagation and spread of this new religion, and tried to find the means of vanquishing him through the exigencies of those times. They proposed to his

sons-in-law to divorce his daughters and send them back to their father's house in order to deter the Prophet from engaging in spiritual and religious mission of prophethood, and thus compelling him to attend to material duties of providing livelihood for his family.

This story has been mentioned in "Sirah of Ibn Hisham": The Quraysh said to each other: "You have freed Muhammad from the worry of supporting his family, send back his daughters to him to keep him occupied with the task of getting subsistence for them." Then to carry out their plan, they got in touch with the Prophet's sons-in-law, namely Abu al-'As the nephew of Khadijah, and 'Utbah, son of Abu Lahab who was the Prophet's nephew ⁽²⁶⁾, and proposed to them that, in return for divorcing Muhammad's daughter, they would let them marry any of the girls of the Quraysh (who were the nobles of Mecca) that they desired. Abu al-'As, who felt a deep affection for his wife (daughter of the Prophet), refused the proposal, but 'Utbah answered that he would agree on the condition that they let him marry the daughter of Sa'id ibn al-'As or his granddaughter, that is, daughter of Aban ibn Sa'id ibn al-'As. The Quraysh fulfilled his wish and let him marry the daughter of Sa'id ibn al-'As and thus he divorced Ruqayyah, daughter of the Prophet.

In view of this historical happening, it can easily be seen to what extent a woman was burden for a man of family, so that the Quraysh adopted this method as the most decisive way of fighting the Prophet.

Economic support for the Prophet and winning over the enemy

On the one hand, at a time when the hostility of the Quraysh with the Prophet and his friends reached its height, some of his friends, both men and women, on his advice, departed for Abyssinia and then emigrated to Medina, thus abandoning all their property and belonging for the consent of God. They only succeeded in saving their lives from the Quraysh, and eventually the Prophet himself joined them in Medina and chose that city as the center of his activities.

Some of these homeless people were so indigent that they did not even have any clothes, and the Prophet let them settle on a

roofed platform in the mosque of Medina for days and nights, and that is why they were given the name of Ashab as-suffah (companions of the platform).

Among these wanderers there were guardian-less widows and lonely girls whom the honour of Islam could not allow to stay on that platform with the men, or permit them to stay in the houses of Ansar (those who helped the Prophet) without any logical and legitimate reason.

On the other hand, with the occurrence of battles and death of Muslim fighters in the field, the number of unprotected women and girls regularly increased. But on the recommendation of the Prophet, these females did not remain without a guardian; and by being made the legal consort of the Prophet, they shared the life of his other companions, and could enter their houses and prevents shattering of life.

Marriage as a means of preventing conflict and bloodshed

There had been long-standing customs in various Arab tribes, some of which still prevail. For instance, if a combat occurred between two tribes or blood was shed, the best way to prevent further bloodshed and loss of life and plunder, was to arrange inter-marriage between the two hostile groups, so that with the creation of this kinship, massacre and plunder would be stopped, and also loyal allies acquiesce to fight other enemies.

Now let us return to the main subject and continue the topic on exploring the reason for the plurality of the Prophet's wives.

1-Khadjjah, daughter of Khuwaylad al-Asadjyah al-Qurayshjyah

Khadjjah was the first lady to become the consort of the Prophet, and also the first woman to embrace this faith. She had married twice before him and had some children by them. Her marriage with the Prophet took place fifteen years before his ordainment when she was forty years of age, while the Prophet was twenty-five.

Khadijah died in the tenth year after ordainment when she was sixty-five. She was the only wife of the Prophet for twenty five years, and during this period, she spared no effort in

offering her wealth and devotion to him to promote the divine mission of her husband.

The Prophet's children, with the exception of Ibrahim, came from Khadjjah, and so long as she lived, he did not marry another, and to the end of his life, he remembered Khadjjah as the first lady of Islam. With the abundant alms she offered, he kept alive and respected her memory. The year Khadjjah died, the Prophet had gone through fiftieth year of his very active life.

2-Sudah, daughter of Zam'ah

At first, Sudah had married her cousin, as-Sakran, and accompanied the second group of Muslim emigrants to Abyssinia. as-Sakran died after his return from Abyssinia in Mecca and left Sudah without a guardian. After the death of Khadijah, the Prophet married Sudah who was then of an advanced age and had no one to take care of her. She died at the time of caliphate of Mu'awiyah in Medina in the year 54 AH.

3-'A'ishah, daughter of Abu Bakr

The Prophet proposed marriage with 'A'ishah in the same year as with Sudah, but he took the former to his house in Medina after the battle of Badr upon the insistence of her father, Abu Bakr.

4-Hafsah daughter of 'Umar

Hafsah, daughter of the second caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, was born five years before the ordainment of the Prophet of Islam. At first she wedded Khunays, son of Hudhafah, and immigrated with him to Medina. In the battle of Badr, he died after being wounded, leaving Hafsah a widow. Her father, 'Umar, was looking for a husband for her among the Prophet's friends, and at first made a proposal to 'Uthman who was rich and of the Umayyads, and though his wife Ruqayyah who was the Prophet's daughter, had died 'Uthman did not agree to this proposal of marriage and gave a negative answer. 'Umar asked Abu Bakr to marry Hafsah, but Abu Bakr, too, refused. So 'Umar who was offended with the refusal of two distinguished friends of the Prophet, complained to the Prophet against them,

and the Prophet settled the matter by himself marrying Hafsa. Hafsa died in the lunar month of Sha'ban in the year 45 AH in the caliphate of Mu'awiyah. Marwan governor of Medina, performed her burial prayer, and she was buried in al-Baqi'.⁽²⁷⁾

5-Zaynab, daughter of Khuzaymah

Zaynab had married twice before being wedded to the Prophet. Her second husband was killed in the battle of Uhud. The Prophet proposed to marry her, and she left the decision to himself. The Prophet married her in the lunar month of Ramadan in the third year after Hijrah. Zaynab died eight months after this marriage in the lunar month of Rabi' alAwwal (Rabi' I) in the fourth year after Hijrah.⁽²⁸⁾

6-Unim Salamah, daughter of Abu Umayyah

Her name was Hind, and she was the daughter of Abu Umayyah al-Makhzumi, and her mother was 'Atikah, daughter of 'Amir al-Makhzumi. At first she was the wife of Abu Salamah 'Abd Allah, son of 'Abd ai-Asad al-Makhzumi both of whom embraced Islam in Mecca. When the misconduct of the Quraysh towards the Muslims in Mecca became intolerable, the Prophet ordered them to emigrate to Abyssinia, where Umm Salamah gave birth to her children. Then the family returned to Mecca, and when the Prophet emigrated to Medina, Abu Salamah mounted his wife and a child on a camel, took the halter and proceeded towards Medina.

Umm Salamah narrates the story as follows: "When my relatives realized our intention to depart, they said to Abu Salamah: 'You yourself fled from us to become a Muslim. But we swear to God that we will not let you carry 'a woman of our family from one city to another,' and they pulled the halter out of his hand. When the relatives of Abu Salamah saw this, they protested angrily to them, and said: 'If you separate Umm al Salamah from her husband, we will not let you take her child with you since he is our child.' In this dispute the child's arm was dislocated, but finally Abu Salamah took away the child with him and my relatives kept me with them, and Abu Salamah departed for Medina."

She then adds: "They separated me from my husband. Every

day I went to the valley of al-Abtah in Mecca, and sat there weeping till evening. This went on for seven days until one of my cousins, while passing by, saw me. He went to our relatives asking them why they did not leave the poor woman alone and why they separated her from her husband. This protest had a positive effect, and they told me I could join my husband if I wished. When the relatives of my husband saw this, they brought back my child to me. I took him in my arms, mounted a camel and proceeded towards Medina, without any companion until I reached the land of at-Tan'im. 'Uthman, son of Talhah 'Abd ad-Dan al-Qurayshi, saw me and shouted: 'O daughter of Umayyah, where are you going to?' I said: 'I am going to my husband in Medina.' He asked: 'Is anyone accompanying you?' I said: 'No, by God, except God and this son of mine.' He said: 'By God, It cannot let you go alone.' Then he took the camel's halter and walked ahead. I swear to God I have never seen a man more chivalrous than him on this journey. Whenever we reached a halting place, he caused the camel to kneel down, and himself stayed some distance away to rest under a tree, and when it was time to move, he came and tied the saddle on the camel's back and stood aside telling me to mount. After I did so, he took the halter and pulled the camel behind him. This continued till we came close to Medina. He showed me the village of Quba' and said: 'This is where your husband is staying.' Then he went away and I joined my husband there."

When Umm Salamah reached Medina, it was said that she was the first lady to emigrate to Medina. The family stayed there until the battle of Uhud took place. Abu Salamah joined the Prophet to participate in that battle when he was wounded and eventually succumbed to the same wound in Medina and Umm Salamah was left without a guardian. The Prophet married Umm Salamah who was now old and sterile, and thus he took her and her children under his protection and support.

Umm Salamah died during the caliphate of Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah and after the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn.⁽²⁹⁾

7-Juwayriyah, daughter of al-Harith

The story of the marriage of the Prophet with Juwayriyah is a long one, but briefly speaking al-Harith was the chief of the

tribe of Banu al-Mustalaq that lived about thirty kilometers away from Medina. It was in the fifth or sixth year after Hijrah that al-Harith, with the aid of other tribes, collected a large force intending to carry out a surprise ride upon Medina and annihilate the Muslims.

The Prophet, who was aware of this plan, sent one of his companions to keep a watch on the tribe of al-Harith in order to find out the position and number of the enemy and report it. His envoy carried out the mission successfully and brought the Prophet useful information about the enemy's military position.

Meanwhile, a spy too came from the army of al-Harith among the Muslims to collect information, but he was captured before he could render any service. The Muslims invited him to embrace Islam but he refused, and thus they were forced to kill him. After this incident, the Prophet made the first move and attacked the tribe of Banu al-Mustalaq.

When the men from other tribes in the army of al-Harith saw themselves confronted with an unexpected attack, they fled and left al-Harith's army alone to engage in battle. The crier of Islam proposed the acceptance of this faith to al-Harith's troops but they did not only refuse the invitation but also killed the crier with arrows.

When the Muslims saw this, they rushed at once upon the enemy and in a hard battle, which ensued, the tribe of al-Harith surrendered after defeat. Of the Muslim army only one soldier was killed, while al-Harith's army lost ten men. The Muslims captured much spoil and many men as prisoners. Juwayriyah whose husband had been killed in this battle, was one of the captives, and she was given to one of the Ansar (Prophet's helpers) as his share.

When they returned to Medina, she went to the Prophet begging him for freedom. The Prophet said the ransom, freed and then married her. When the Prophet's companions heard this news, as a sign of respect to this marriage, they set free all the captives in their possession.

al-Harith, on hearing this report came to Medina and embraced Islam, and on his return to his tribe, made them all embrace Islam.

8-Umm Habibah, daughter of Abu Sufyan

Umm Habibah's father Abu Sufyan was the archenemy of the Prophet of Islam and instigator and ringleader of the Quraysh battles against the Prophet. Unlike her father, Umm Habibah embraced Islam and emigrated to Abyssinia with her husband and he died there, leaving her without a caretaker. When the Prophet heard of this he sent someone to her in Abyssinia, asking her hand in marriage and eventually he married her in the seventh year after Hijrah.

The news of his daughter's marriage with the Prophet deeply enraged Abu Sufyan who was enemy of God and His prophet, and uttered such words which showed his defeat in the face of the greatness and exalted moral and spiritual position of the Prophet. He said: "One cannot punch this male in the nose."⁽³⁰⁾

One year after this marriage, the peace treaty of al-Hudaybiyah took place in the 8th year AH and the Quraysh, despite all of their obstinacy, were vanquished by the greatness and power of Islam, thus actually and formally recognizing this divine faith.

Do you suppose this marriage has been devoid of effect in securing such a great advantage?

9-Safiyah, daughter of Huyay

Safiyah was the daughter of Huyay ibn Akhtab from the progeny of Aaron, brother of Moses, and her mother was Barrah, daughter of Samuel, from the Banu Qurayzah tribe.

Her first husband was Salam, son of Mushkim, and after being divorced, she was wedded to Kinanah, son of ar-Rabi' from Banu an-Nadir tribe. But ar-Rabi' was killed by the Muslims in the battle of Khaybar, and the infidels in Khaybar were taken captive by the Muslims after the battle. The Prophet took her to himself as a war prisoner and when he noticed a blue mark on his face he asked how it had come about. She answered: "One night I dreamt that a moon rose from Medina and settled on my lap. I related my dream to my husband, Rabi', and he felt very uneasy and shouted at me: 'Do you hope to become a king's consort who has risen in Medina?' and he slapped me so hard on the face that it went blue, and this is the effect of that blow."

After hearing the story, the Prophet said to Safiyah: "If you embrace Islam, I will marry you, and if you remain a Jew, I will set you free to return to your people and tribe."

She said: "Prior to invitation to Islam, I had already embraced it. Moreover, I have no parents and have nothing to do with the Jews for you to give me the choice between faith and infidelity. God and His prophet are much more important to me than freedom and return to my kins."

The Prophet told her to observe the period of waiting related to her husband's death, and then wedded her and settled her in the al-'Aliyah locality of Medina in the house of one of the members of Banu Harithah tribe.

'A'ishah while veiled, secretly visited Safiyah. The Prophet asked her: "How did you find Safiyah?" She answered: "I found her a Jewess." He said: "Don't call her a Jewess since she has embraced Islam and is a good Muslim."

Safiyah loved the Prophet deeply and did not abstain from expressing affection. One example of this love emerged when the Prophet had fallen ill and his consorts had gathered around him, Safiyah said anxiously to the Prophet: "I swear to God that I long to have your pain transferred to my body." On hearing the words of Safiyah, other wives of the Prophet winked at each other and, raised their eyebrows, considering her words to be ostentatious. But this unfair conduct of the ladies was duly observed by the Prophet. So he addressed them, saying: "Go and cleanse yourself of wrong thoughts." They asked the reason, and he said: "Your gestures and hints. I swear to God that she is truthful sincere in her words."

Safiyah died in the year 52 AH in Medina during the caliphate of Mu'awiyah and was buried in al-Baqi' cemetery.⁽³¹⁾

10-Maymunah, daughter of al-Harith

Maymunah, daughter of al-Harith al-Hilaliyah, was at first the wife of Mas'ud ath-Thaqafi, and after being divorced she married Abu Rahm ibn 'Abd al-'Uzza and lived with him until his death. In the year 7 AH when the Prophet was on a pilgrimage to Mecca, she wedded him. The sermon was read by his son-in-law Abbas (husband of his sister) and the Prophet's uncle. She accompanied him to Medina.

Maymunah was the last lady to marry the Prophet. There is no agreement about the date of her death, but the most accepted view is that she died in the year 51 AH on her return from pilgrimage at a halting place called Sarf.

11-Zaynab, daughter of Jahsh

The stories of the Prophet's marriages were so far similar to each other, having a clear reason. But there was another reason for his marriage with Zaynab, which requires an introduction.

As we know, reformers in the world usually took the first step themselves in carrying out their plan of reform for society, and began with themselves and their family. They spared no effort and self-sacrifice necessary for attaining their sacred goal and then went on to invite their kith and kin, and afterwards other human beings to act upon the plan.

The Prophet of Islam, as a unique reformer of humanity, was no exception to this law, and he began with himself to reform society and do away with the hated customs of pagan times upon the order of God. For this reason in his last Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca he said: "Usury of any type is null and void, and the first usury I abolish is the usury of my uncle al-'Abbas.⁽³²⁾ Every blood that is shed in pagan times is lost, and the first blood I waste is the blood of Rabi'ah son grandson of 'Abd al-Muttalib."⁽³³⁾

In the biography of the Prophet, there is much evidence about this episode. His marriage with Zaynab, daughter of Jahsh is one of those cases where the Prophet sought it to break up the system of ignorance and ugly customs of pagan times.

The Prophet by this marriage pursued the following two fundamental objectives:

- 1-To remove class distinction.
- 2-To abolish the verdicts related to adopt sons.⁽³⁴⁾

Zayd ibn Harithah, the Prophet's adopted son, was in his childhood attacked by a group of Arabs and kidnapped, and then put up for sale in Mecca. The Prophet was present at the sale, and upon feeling an attachment for him bought him for his wife, Khadijah, and she offered the child to the Prophet.

Zayd's parents, who were afflicted at the disappearance of

their endeared child, knew nothing of his fate. One day some members of Zayd's tribe happened to see him in Mecca and they recognized each other, and Zayd sent a poem through them for his parents, saying: "Be not worried. I live in the family of the noblest of Arab tribes and I am well-looked after."

Zayd's father and uncle who were informed of his situation and residence took some money with them and left for Mecca, hoping to buy him back. When they met the Prophet and explained their purpose, he said: "If Zayd wishes to leave me, I have no objection." He summoned Zayd, and when he saw his father and uncle, he admitted his kinship. Then the Prophet explained to him their purpose and gave him the option to stay or to leave. Zayd answered: "I shall never prefer anyone to you." His father said: "My boy, do you prefer slavery to the freedom of living with your father?" He answered, pointing to the Prophet: "Yes, with such a person."

Then the Prophet took Zayd's hand and brought him to the rock of Isma'il (in the Ka'bah) and said in a loud voice: "Be witness that Zayd is my son; he inherits from me and I inherit from him."

When Zayd's father and uncle heard this, they were overjoyed and returned home. After Zayd's freedom, the people called him "Zayd ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah."

Zaynab, daughter of Jahsh, who was a niece of the Prophet, was his ward, and a marriage proposal for her came from some of the Quraysh tribe. She asked the Prophet what to do. He proposed her marriage with Zayd. Zaynab protested and said: "Would you give me, your niece, to a freed slave of yours?" Zaynab's brother and sister did not approve of this marriage either, on account of the existing class difference until a divine revelation descended about this matter, saying:

"And it behoves not a believing man and a believing woman that they should have any choice in their matter when Allah and His Apostle have decided a matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His Apostle, he surely strays off a manifest straying."⁽³⁵⁾

This verse silenced all three of them and they expressed their agreement, with Zaynab declaring her readiness to marry Zayd. The Prophet solemnized the ceremony with the same lofty goal of removing class differences and aristocratic pride.

Zaynab went to Zayd's house and lived along with the other wife of Zayd, called Umm Ayman, who had also been freed by the Prophet, and with her child Usamah. Such a life made Zaynab uneasy and she began to maltreat Zayd. This misbehavior continued until Zayd complained of her to the Prophet and asked his permission to divorce her. But the Prophet said:

'Keep your wife to yourself and be careful of your duty to Allah'⁽³⁶⁾

However, her misconduct made Zayd so weary that upon his insistence, the Prophet agreed to their separation and she was eventually divorced.

When her legal period of separation was over, the Prophet was ordered by God to break another custom of pagan times by marrying Zaynab, so as to show that the laws related to one's own son do not apply to an adopted son, and one can marry the divorced wife of one's adopted son.

It was hard for the Prophet to carry out this matter, and he was worried about the people's attitude and their idle talk, until the following verse descended showing his intense anxiety:

"Do you fear people, while it is worthier for you to fear God? Now that Zayd has freed that woman, We allow you to wed her so that believers would not be blamed for marrying the divorced wives of their adopted sons."⁽³⁷⁾

On the basis of this verse and its explicit comment the Prophet married Zaynab to break by divine order, the despised and illogical customs of pagan times.

What has been said shows that most of the Prophet's marriages were based on the advisability, policy and interest of the society, execution of divine laws, as well as breaking the wrong customs of pagan times, not for the sake of satisfying carnal desires or animal instincts.

The ladies who offered themselves to the Prophet without a dowry

There were other women who offered themselves to the Prophet without demanding a dowry. What is meant by the word "offer" according to the Qur'an is proposal of marriage. Books of biography and history mention several such women, one of

whom is Khulah, daughter of Hakim.

12-Khulah, daughter of Hakim a1-Hilaliyah

She was a woman who proposed marriage to the Prophet, but he postponed giving an answer. She served in his house until the Prophet wedded her to 'Uthman ibn Maz'un and she lived in the latter's house till his death.⁽³⁸⁾

13-Another lady

Sahl ibn Sa'd narrates: A woman came to the Prophet and offered herself in marriage. The Prophet remained silent. A Muslim man, who was present, said: "O Prophet! If you have no need of this woman, wed her to me." The Prophet said: "What have you to give her as dowry?" He answered: "Only the shirt I am wearing." The Prophet said: "If you give it to her, you will go naked. Try to find something else." He said: "I have nothing." The Prophet said: "Not an iron ring?" He said: "Not even that." The Prophet said: "Do you remember any verses of the Qur'an?" He said "yes" and recited several of them. The Prophet said: "Then I; offer you this woman in marriage, her dowry being those very verses of the Qur'an."

In the Prophet's biography there are mentioned the names of several other ladies who proposed marriage to the Prophet such as Umm Shank and Umm Layla. Some of them had spent a heart-rending life in the way of Islam before going to the Prophet, but it is explicitly stated that the Prophet married none of them.⁽³⁹⁾

A special verdict for a particular person

We have already spoken of the distress and homelessness of Muslim women of that time in the city of Medina, and saw how necessary it was in the sublime interests of Islam for the Prophet to get married with women of some unruly Arab tribes. As every Muslim is allowed to take four wives, we see that an exception was made in the case of the Prophet.

This exception is mentioned in verses 50-52 of Chapter al Ahzab as follows:

"O Prophet! Surely We have made lawful to you your wives whom you have given their dowries, and those whom your right

hand possesses out of those of whom Allah has given to you as prisoners of war, and the daughters of your paternal uncles and the daughters of your maternal uncles and the daughters of your maternal aunts who fled with you; and a behaving woman if she gave herself to the Prophet if the Prophet desired to marry her -specially for you, not for the rest of believers, We know what We have ordained for them concerning their wives, and those who in their right hand possess in order that no blame may attach to you; and Allah is Forgiving Merciful.

You may put off whom you please of them, and you may take to you whom you please, and whom you desire of those whom you had separated provisionally; no blame attaches to you; this is most proper; so that their eye may be cool and they may not grieve, and that they should be pleased, all of them, with what you have given them, and Allah knows what is in your hearts; and Allah is Knowing Forbearing.

It is not allowed to you to take women after wards, nor that you should change them for other wives, though their beauty be pleasing to you, except what your right hand possesses; and Allah is Watchful over all things."

These were God's commands given explicitly in the above verses, leaving it to the Prophet to take steps about what he thinks advisable. Thus, the number of his wives reached nine by the end of his life. This number was allowed only to the Prophet, while other men were allowed no more than four wives.

In the above verses, the limit of the Prophet's freedom is fixed at minus women's beauty, and this is a well-devised matter, and for this reason he is not allowed, unlike other men, to change by means of divorce any of his wives for new wives. The Prophet made use of this option for safeguarding the sublime interests of Islam and spiritual and political leadership in order to meet the human needs of the society's honorable women.

But when after the capture of Mecca the Muslims found a sound position, the Prophet did not marry again since he had no further need of the above verdict.

Conclusion of the survey

It is clear now concerning the Prophet's marriages that he lives with a lady who was fifteen years his senior, down to the age of fifty which is the height of a man's natural growth; a lady who died at the age of 65, and during that period he married no one else, and after Khadijah he married another woman advanced in years. Such was the Prophet's married life in Mecca until he emigrated to Medina and took charge of the grave responsibility of managing the Muslim society. At that time, the number of indigent and exiled believers who came to him every day reached eighty. They settled on the platform of the Prophet's mosque and some of them were inadequately dressed. At such a time, there were Muslim women who had lost their guardians in the battles of Muslims with infidels or in other happenings, and they could not return to their relatives since the latter were regarded as infidels and enemies of God and His prophet, and were thus looked upon as untouchables. All this happened in a community where women were anyhow regarded as a burden, and many fathers buried them alive for fear of falling short of subsistence for them. In the battles against the Prophet, too, they proposed to divorce his daughters in order to defeat him. The situation became so difficult in Medina for believing women that if a widow had a father, he insisted that one of his friends should marry her.

In such a case, was the Prophet's marriage with Hafsa not aimed at compensating her mental affliction and removal of her vexation with his two companions Abu Bakr and 'Uthman? At such a time, what could another old lady, Umm Salamah who had lost her husband in the battle of Uhud, do with so many children in a strange city? Could she possibly return to Mecca to the same family whose tyranny had forced her to flee to Abyssinia in Africa?

Or how could the other lady, Zaynab daughter of Khuzaymah, who had already married twice before getting married to the Prophet and whose second husband was killed in the battle of Uhud, continue her life?

Similarly, what remedy was there but for the Prophet's protection for Umm Habibah daughter of Abu Sufyan, who due to molestation by her family was compelled to run away with

her husband to Abyssinia where she lost him? Umm Habibah is the daughter of the same Abu Sufyan who spared no crime for the annihilation of Islam and humbling the Prophet. He was the man behind all rebellions against the Prophet, who tried to preserve the honour of the same Abu Sufyan to an unimaginable degree. Indeed, if the Quraysh led by Abu Sufyan often had tried to send the Prophet's daughters back to his house, the same Prophet wedded Abu Sufyan's daughter in Abyssinia and brought her with all respect and dignity to Medina. He made her the wife of the noblest Arab, the grandson of 'Abd al-Muttalib - an action which so overjoyed Abu Sufyan that he uttered his famous proverbial remark.

What reaction was produced in the other men of the Umayyad household by such noble acts? There is nothing at hand that could have quoted them but concerning the marriage with Juwayriyah, of the Banu al-Mustalaq tribe, we hear of an extensive reaction.

This tribe which was a branch of Khuza'ah tribes lived about thirty kilometers from Medina. Their chief al-Harith, gathered a large army of Arab tribes to fight the Prophet, but the Prophet made a surprise raid against him that led to the flight of other tribes who had come to help al-Harith. The Prophet proposed that they embrace Islam, but they refused. In the ensuing battle, al-Harith's tribe was defeated, and its combatants surrendered. Among the prisoners was the daughter of al-Harith chief of the tribe. The Prophet bought her from the man who had taken her prisoner, and after freeing and marrying her, put her on an equal footing with the other ladies of his house, whereas he could use her as a slave-concubine. To show respect to the Prophet's action, the Muslims freed all the prisoners of this tribe. When al-Harith heard of this matter, he came to Medina and embraced Islam, and then his whole tribe followed his example.

In the peace of al-Hudaybiyah this tribe and Khuza'ah tribe joined the Prophet against the Quraysh and their allies.

Now we can see the reason for the custom prevalent among the war-stricken Arab tribes. When they desired peace and reconciliation, the victorious tribe offered girls in marriage to the oppressed tribe, thus creating a political tie between them.

Obviously, the Prophet's marriages with females from the defeated tribes were no exception to this rule, such as his marriage with Safiyah of the Khaybar Jews, and marrying Rayhanah of the Banu an-Nadir Jews with a Jew of the Banu Qurayzah.

The purpose of the Prophet was clear in such marriages: to join together unruly Arab tribes. And this point becomes more evident when we see that none of his marriages took place with his Ansar tribes, since the widows of this group lived with their families and had no need of financial support. It was the Ansar themselves who at the beginning of the Muslims' emigration to Medina always helped such women with dwelling, food and clothes. The Prophet's wisdom is evident in all his marriages. Only in two cases there is a need for inquiry. The marriage with 'A'ishah is the first case, since he wedded her at the age of nine and this is contrary to prevalent custom especially of the urban people. In answer to this, we have already said that it is not right to compare the custom of that time and place with one of our own time and place.

The Prophet was not the only person who married a girl of that age. He gave his own daughter Fatimah az-Zahra' in marriage at the same age, and this is a prophet's action from the viewpoint of Islamic law. Moreover, in hot regions, Human beings reach the stage of natural puberty sooner and also get old sooner. This is often seen in India today and many a time a girl reaches puberty and becomes pregnant even before the age of nine and also gets old and infirm sooner, whereas in the mountains of Tibet the reverse is true, to the extent that it is said a man may reach the age of two hundred there, and the age of one hundred is considered young for him.

The second case is the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab, divorcee of Usamah, the adopted son of the Prophet, the reason for which has been explained by us earlier.

After these explanations about the reason for the plurality of the Prophet's wives, there arises the question as to why there has come about a misapprehension and cynicism about his marriages. The answer is that our study of biographies and traditions shows that such pessimism and misunderstanding is due to the annals narrated about this issue from 'A'ishah Umm

al-Mu'minin, in which the Prophet has been presented as a women-loving man, and this is the motive for writing this book.

In the next chapter, we will discuss some of these narrations.

'A'ishah in the Prophet's house

Woe upon her (A'ishah)! She is capable of every deed!

Uttered by the Prophet

Jealousy and Ardor

We have said that 'A'ishah was an ambitious and hot-tempered woman who was jealous of her husband's heart, and did not wish to see anyone win his affection. ⁽⁴⁰⁾ An example of her intense jealousy and ardor can be seen in her conjugal life especially when the Prophet married another woman.

She speaks of this jealousy and mental uneasiness unreservedly when Umm Salamah, Zaynab and other ladies found their way into the Prophet's house, and she most openly expressed her violent ardor concerning futile thoughts especially about the nights when the Prophet left the house for his nightly devotions.

In dark nights when there prevailed deep silence and tranquility the Prophet was usually engaged in communion with his God, and thus he spent certain of the nights in privacy and devotion. As the Prophet spent each night turn by turn, in the house of one of his consorts, those acts of devotion compelled him to spend some hours of each night outdoors in the mosque or al-Baqi' Cemetery. Consequently, in the nights when he was to be with 'A'ishah, as soon as he left the house for his usual devotion, her womanly jealousy was so roused as to follow him and see where he went and what he did.

She herself gives an account of these nightly pursuits on various occasions.

Nightly pursuits

She says: "One night I noticed that he was not in his bed. Uneasy thoughts so disturbed my mind as to fancy that he was