

## Ayesha's Age Dispute

Have we ever thought that why will the Prophet of Islam marry a 9, 6 in some places, year girl. What was the requirement for it? Sunni historians have recorded that the prophet did not allow Abu Bakr or Umer to marry with his daughter, Fatima (AS), due to the vast age difference. She was too young for them. The prophet refused to marry her young daughter with older men, and he himself would marry a 9 year old minor, with an age difference of more than 35 years?

Many anti-Islamic sites accuse our Beloved Holy Prophet, Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, of , God Forbid, marrying a minor. We present here an article that will clear our Beloved Holy Prophet (pbuh) off this blasphemous charge.

Most narrations carry misstatements about the age of 'Aishah at the time of her marriage to the Holy Prophet, (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). They place this marriage in the tenth year of the Call and state that Hazrat 'Aishah was only 6 years old at that time. On proper sifting of the material facts, these statements turn out to be incorrect and it becomes evident that she, in fact, was about 19 or 20 years of age when she arrived in the house of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as his wife in 2 A.H.

It will be in the fitness of things to quote from the writings of two well-known Muslim scholars of the present century who are the main exponents of the view that Hazrat 'Aishah was 6 years old at her Nikah and 9 years old at the time of the consummation of her marriage. Both Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi and Maulana Syed Abul Ala Maududi are well-known Muslim authors of Seerat (biography).

### Nadvi's View

[Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi writes on page 21 of his book 'Seerat-i-Aishah':](#) "Books of history and biography are generally silent about the birth date of Hazrat 'Aishah. The historian Ibn Sa'd, whom many later biographers have followed, has written that Hazrat 'Aishah was born in the fourth year of the Call, and was married at the age of 6 years in the tenth year of the Call. Apparently this cannot be correct, because if her birth in the fourth year of the Call be admitted as correct then her age at the time of her marriage in the tenth year of the Call works out to 7 and not 6 years. The fact remains that some matters about the age of Hazrat 'Aishah are admitted to be correct by most historians and biographers, and these are: She was married three years before Hijrah at the age of six years; the marriage was consummated in the month of Shawal in the year 1 A.H. when she was 9 years old, and she became a widow in Rabi-al-Awwal 11 A.H., at the age of 18 years. According to this account, the correct date of her birth works out to the end of the fifth year of the Call or 614 A.D. of the Christian calendar. For a proper comprehension of the events of history, one should bear in mind that out of a total period of 23 years of the Call, the first 13 years were passed in Mecca and the last 10 years in Madina. Thus, the fourth year of the Call had already been out before her birth and the fifth year was running."

**Comment [SDOL.org 1]:** History, mostly sunni historians have stated the age of Hazrat Ayesha about nine/ten when she had married the Prophet of Islam, who was over forty five then. With such a huge age difference, the nonmuslims have attacked our Prophet by calling him Rangeela Rasool and thinking him to be a womanizer.

Today, the same people find it odd and against woman's right, to let any girl below the age of 16 to get married. Furthermore, it is considered tyranny to marry a girl to some one who is more than 10 years older than her.

To make it short, all people who claim that 55 year Prophet (SAW) married 9 year old Ayesha will never allow their own daughters below the age of ten to be married and that too with a person who is five times her age. Why so? Are they too ashamed to do today what prophet of Islam did 1400 Years ago? Or Has Islam changed over the millennium?

The fact is that Ayesha was not 9 years old when she married Rasool (SAW).

This piece of work is not a major shia sunni related issue. It is just another discovery regarding the distortion in History. Infact, almost all shias do believe that Ayesha was married to the prophet at a minor age. Historical documents regarding this are weak. Following is a document, gathered and compiled by [www.sdol.org](http://www.sdol.org) five years ago, from unreferenced sources.

## Maududi's View

In the article, "[The Nikah Date of Sayedah 'Aishah,' published in the 'Tarjuman al-Quran' of September 1976](#), [Maulana Abul Ala Maududi](#) wrote: "It is apparent from the detailed reports of Imam Ahmad Tibrani, Ibn Jareer and Baihaqi that the Nikah of Sayedah 'Aishah was solemnized before the Nikah of Sayedah Saudah. It is also evident that her Nikah with the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was solemnized in the month of Shawal of the tenth year of the Call, three years before Hijrah, when she was 6 years old. Here a question arises, that if Sayedah 'Aishah was 6 years of age in the Shawal of the tenth year of the Call, then she should have been 9 years of age at the time of Hijrah and should have been of 11 years in 2 A.H. at the time of consummation. But all narrators agree that her Nikah was solemnized when she was 6 years old and the marriage was consummated when she was 9 years old. Some Ulema have tried to meet this discrepancy by saying that the marriage was consummated seven months after Hijrah. Hafiz Ibn Hajar has preferred this view. On the other hand, Imam Nauvi in his 'Tahzeeb al-Asma'a al-Lughat', Hafiz Ibn Katheer in his 'Al-Badaya' and Allama Qustalani in his 'Mawahib al-Deeniah' report consummation in 2 A.H. Hafiz Badr-ud-Din Aini has written in his Umdat al-Qari that the marriage of 'Aishah Siddiqah was consummated in Shawal 2 A.H. after the return of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) from the battle of Badr. Both Imam Nauvi and Allama Aini consider the above-quoted reports of consummation of marriage seven months after Hijrah as irresponsible and untrustworthy. Thus we are faced with a question that if the marriage was consummated at the age of 9 years in Shawal 2 A.H., then what should be the date of Nikah which should tally with her age of 6 years? An answer to this question is found in Bukhari wherein it is reported from Urwah ibn Zubair, "Sayedah Khadijah died three years before Hijrah; the Holy Prophet solemnized Nikah with Sayedah 'Aishah two years after that. Then it was consummated at the age of 9 years." This works out to be correct that Nikah was solemnized one year before Hijrah when she was 6 years old and consummation took place in 2 A.H. when she was 9 years."

**Comment [SDOL.org 2]:** The quotations amply bear out that both Syed Nadvi and Syed Maududi agree to the correctness of reports stating the age of Sayedah 'Aishah at 6 years at Nikah and 9 years at the consummation. Their only worry seems to be the calculation of the correct year of the Call and the Hijrah for fixing these ages in those calendar years. Both of them start with a preconception that the age of 6 years for Nikah and 9 years for consummation are correct and true, and set out in search of the correct year of the Call and Hijrah in which these preconceived ages will fit in. This hardly can be called a scientific method of finding her correct age. This rather may be called an effort to find a correct date for a given age.

## The Other View

As far as my information goes the first voice against the common misconception about the age of Sayedah 'Aishah at her marriage was raised by [Maulana Muhammad Ali, M.A., LL.B., in 1924 in his 'Muhammad the Prophet'](#), wherein he wrote: "The popular misconception as to Aishah's age may be removed here. That she had not attained maturity is clear enough, but that she was not so young as six years of age is also true. In the first place, it is clear that she had reached an age when betrothal could take place in the ordinary course and must therefore have been approaching the age of majority. Again, the Isabah, speaking of the Prophet's daughter Fatima, says that she was about five years older than 'Aishah. It is a fact (According to the Sunnis/The Shia Version Differs) that Fatima was born when the Ka'bah was being rebuilt, i.e., five years before

the Call or a little before it, and so 'Aishah was certainly not below ten years at the time of her marriage with the Holy Prophet (pbuh) in the tenth year of the Call. This conclusion is borne out by the testimony of 'Aishah herself who is reported to have related that when the chapter entitled 'The Moon' (the 54th chapter) was revealed she was a girl playing about and that she remembered certain verses then revealed. Now the fifty-fourth chapter could not have been revealed later than the fifth year of the Call, and therefore the report which states her to have been six years old in the tenth year of the Call when her marriage ceremony was gone through cannot be correct, because this would show her to have been born about the time of the revelation of the 54th chapter. All these considerations show her to have been not less than ten years old at the time of her marriage. And as the period between her marriage and its consummation was not less than five years, because the consummation took place in the second year of the Fight, it follows that she could not have been less than fifteen at that time. The popular account that she was six years at marriage and nine years at the time of consummation is decidedly not correct, because it supposes the period between the marriage and its consummation to be only three years, while this is historically wrong."

[Sulaiman Nadvi took Maulana Muhammad Ali to task \(for his above-quoted view\) in note 2 on page 26 of the third edition of his 'Seerat-i-Aishah'](#) in the following words: "Some irresponsible persons who think that the marriage with a girl of tender age was not befitting for the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) have tried to prove that the age of Hazrat 'Aishah Siddiqah at her marriage was 16 years instead of 6 years. All such efforts are useless and all such claims are illogical. Not a single word is the Hadith and history can be found in their support."

### **Nadvi Contradicts Himself**

In spite of this severe criticism of Muhammad Ali's view, Nadvi not only contradicts himself about the age of Hazrat 'Aishah, but provides supporting evidence to Muhammad Ali's views when, writing about the last days of the life of Hazrat 'Aishah, he writes at [page 111 of the same 'Seerat-i-Aishah'](#): "Hazrat 'Aishah was a widow and she passed 40 years of her life as a widow." Further, at [page 153](#) he writes: "The last days of Khilafat (Caliphate) of Amir Muawiyya were the last days of the life of Hazrat 'Aishah and her age at that time was 67 years." Now if we deduct 40 years of her widowed life from 67 years then we find she was 27 years of age at the time of the passing away of the Holy Prophet in 11 A.H. and not 18 years as reported by Nadvi in the earlier pages of the same book. Since the total period of the Call is 23 years, therefore, according to this account she was born about four years before the Call and not in the fourth year of the Call as Nadvi tried to make us believe in his earlier pages quoted herein above. Consequently, her age at the time of the Nikah in the tenth year of the Call works out to 14-15 years and not 6 years, as Nadvi himself so assertively reported. According to this account, Hazrat 'Aishah's age at the time of consummation of her marriage in 2 A.H. works out to 19-20 years and not 9 years as stated in earlier pages of Seerat-i-Aishah. A further enquiry is most naturally necessitated to find out which of the reports of Nadvi should be given credence.

## Other Sources

There are other important events recorded in history which provide definite evidence about the age of Hazrat 'Aishah.

1. The well-known historian [Ibn Jareer al-Tabari writes at page 50 of volume 4 of his 'Book of History'](#): "Abu Bakr married two ladies in the days of ignorance (pre-Call era). Fateelah daughter of Abd al-Aza was the first, from whom Abdullah and Asma were born. Umm-i-Roman was the second, from whom Abd al-Rahman and 'Aishah were born. All the four children of Abu Bakr were born in the days of ignorance (Jahiliyyah, i.e., pre-Islamic days) from the above-named two ladies.
2. It is a well-known fact of history, that Abu Bakr's son Abd al-Rahman fought against the Muslims in the battle of Badr. His age at that time was 21-22 years, and although he was older than 'Aishah, there is no evidence to show that the difference between their ages was more than three or four years. This fact lends support to the view that Hazrat 'Aishah was born four or five years before the Call.
3. The well-known historian and scholar '[Allama 'Imad-ud-Deen Ibn Katheer writes in his 'Al-Badayah'](#) about Sayedah Asma' daughter of Hazrat Abu Bakr': Asma' died in 73 A.H. at the age of 100 years. She was ten years older than her sister 'Aishah. Now according to this report 'Asma' would have been 27-28 years old at the time of Hijrah and since she was ten years older than Sayedah 'Aishah, therefore the age of Sayedah 'Aishah would have been 17 or 18 years at the time of Hijrah. Accordingly, her birth falls about four or five years before the Call, and her age at the time of the consummation of marriage in 2 A.H. will work out to 19-20 years.
4. The author of the well-known collection of Hadith '[Mishkat al-Masabeeh](#)', [Sheikh Waheed-ud-Deen, writes in his well-known book 'Ahmal fi Asma' al-Rijjal'](#): "At the time of the consummation of her marriage Sayedah 'Aishah's age was not less than 18-19 years."

### EVIDENCE #1: Reliability of Source

Most of the narratives printed in the books of hadith are reported only by Hisham ibn `Urwah, who was reporting on the authority of his father. First of all, more people than just one, two or three should logically have reported. It is strange that no one from Medina, where Hisham ibn `Urwah lived the first 71 years of his life narrated the event, despite the fact that his Medinitte pupils included the well-respected Malik ibn Anas. The origins of the report of the narratives of this event are people from Iraq, where Hisham is reported to have shifted after living in Medina for most of his life.

*Tehzibu'l-Tehzib*, one of the most well known books on the life and reliability of the narrators of the traditions of the Prophet, reports that according to Yaqub ibn Shaibah: "He [Hisham] is highly reliable, his narratives are acceptable, except what he narrated after moving over to Iraq" ([Tehzi'bu'l-tehzi'b, Ibn Hajar Al-'asqala'ni, Dar Ihya al-turath al-Islami, 15th century. Vol 11, p. 50](#)).

It further states that Malik ibn Anas objected on those narratives of Hisham which were reported through people in Iraq: "I have been told that Malik objected on those narratives of Hisham which were reported through people of Iraq" ([Tehzi'b u'l-tehzi'b, Ibn Hajar Al-`asqala'ni, Dar Ihya al-turath al-Islami, Vol.11, p. 50](#)).

*Mizanu'l-ai`tidal*, another book on the life sketches of the narrators of the traditions of the Prophet reports: "When he was old, Hisham's memory suffered quite badly" ([Mizanu'l-ai`tidal, Al-Zahbi, Al-Maktabatu'l-athriyyah, Sheikhpura, Pakistan, Vol. 4, p. 301](#)).

Based on these references, Hisham's memory was failing and his narratives while in Iraq were unreliable. So, his narrative of Ayesha's marriage and age are unreliable.

## CHRONOLOGY

it is vital also to keep in mind some of the pertinent dates in the history of Islam:

- pre-610 CE: Jahiliya (pre-Islamic age) before revelation
- 610 CE: First revelation
- 610 CE: AbuBakr accepts Islam
- 613 CE: Prophet Muhammad begins preaching publicly.
- 615 CE: Emigration to Abyssinia
- 616 CE: Umar bin al Khattab accepts Islam
- 620 CE: Generally accepted betrothal of Ayesha to the Prophet
- 622 CE: Hijrah (emigration to Yathrib, later renamed Medina)
- 623/624 CE: Generally accepted year of Ayesha living with the Prophet

## EVIDENCE #2: The Betrothal

According to Tabari (also according to Hisham ibn 'Urwah, Ibn Hunbal and Ibn Sad), Ayesha was betrothed at seven years of age and began to cohabit with the Prophet at the age of nine years.

However, in another work, Al-Tabari says: "All four of his [Abu Bakr's] children were born of his two wives during the pre-Islamic period" ([Tarikhu'l-umam wa'l-mamlu'k, Al-Tabari \(died 922\), Vol. 4, p. 50, Arabic, Dara'l-fikr, Beirut, 1979](#)).

If Ayesha was betrothed in 620 CE (at the age of seven) and started to live with the Prophet in 624 CE (at the age of nine), that would indicate that she was born in 613 CE and was nine when she began living with the Prophet. Therefore, based on one account of Al-Tabari, the numbers show that Ayesha must have born in 613 CE, three years after the beginning of revelation (610 CE). Tabari also states that Ayesha was born in the pre-Islamic era (in Jahiliya). If she was born before 610 CE, she would have been at least 14 years old when she began living with the Prophet. Essentially, Tabari contradicts himself. Al-Tabari is unreliable in the matter of determining Ayesha's age.

## EVIDENCE #3: Ayesha's Age in relation to Asma's Age

According to Abda'l-Rahman ibn abi zanna'd: "Asma was 10 years older than Ayesha" ([Siyar A`la'ma'l-nubala', Al-Zahabi, Vol. 2, p. 289, Arabic, Mu'assasatu'l-risalah, Beirut, 1992](#)).

According to Ibn Kathir: “She [Asma] was elder to her sister [Ayesha] by 10 years” ([Al-Bidayah wa'l-nihayah, Ibn Kathir, Vol. 8, p. 371, Dar al-fikr al-`arabi, Al-jizah, 1933](#)).

According to Ibn Kathir: “She [Asma] saw the killing of her son during that year [73 AH], as we have already mentioned, and five days later she herself died. According to other narratives, she died not after five days but 10 or 20, or a few days over 20, or 100 days later. The most well known narrative is that of 100 days later. At the time of her death, she was 100 years old.” ([Al-Bidayah wa'l-nihayah, Ibn Kathir, Vol. 8, p. 372, Dar al-fikr al-`arabi, Al-jizah, 1933](#))

According to Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani: “She [Asma] lived a hundred years and died in 73 or 74 AH.” ([Taqrību'l-tehziib, Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, p. 654, Arabic, Bab fi'l-nisa', al-harfu'l-alif, Lucknow](#)).

According to almost all the historians, Asma, the elder sister of Ayesha was 10 years older than Ayesha. If Asma was 100 years old in 73 AH, she should have been 27 or 28 years old at the time of the hijrah.

If Asma was 27 or 28 years old at the time of hijrah, Ayesha should have been 17 or 18 years old. Thus, Ayesha, being 17 or 18 years of at the time of Hijra, she started to cohabit with the Prophet between at either 19 to 20 years of age.

#### **EVIDENCE #4: The Battles of Badr and Uhud**

A narrative regarding Ayesha's participation in Badr is given in the hadith of Muslim, ([Kitabu'l-jihad wa'l-siyar, Bab karahiyati'l-isti`anah fi'l-ghazwi bikafir](#)). Ayesha, while narrating the journey to Badr and one of the important events that took place in that journey, says: “when we reached Shajarah”. Obviously, Ayesha was with the group travelling towards Badr. A narrative regarding Ayesha's participation in the Battle of Uhud is given in Bukhari ([Kitabu'l-jihad wa'l-siyar, Bab Ghazwi'l-nisa' wa qitalihinna ma`a'lrijal](#)): “Anas reports that on the day of Uhud, people could not stand their ground around the Prophet. [On that day,] I saw Ayesha and Umm-i-Sulaim, they had pulled their dress up from their feet [to avoid any hindrance in their movement].” Again, this indicates that Ayesha was present in the Battles of Uhud and Badr.

It is narrated in Bukhari ([Kitabu'l-maghazi, Bab Ghazwati'l-khandaq wa hiya'l-ahza'b](#)): “Ibn `Umar states that the Prophet did not permit me to participate in Uhud, as at that time, I was 14 years old. But on the day of Khandaq, when I was 15 years old, the Prophet permitted my participation.”

Based on the above narratives, (a) the children below 15 years were sent back and were not allowed to participate in the Battle of Uhud, and (b) Ayesha participated in the Battles of Badr and Uhud.

Ayesha's participation in the Battles of Badr and Uhud clearly indicates that she was not nine years old but at least 15 years old. After all, women used to accompany men to the battlefields to help them, not to be a burden on them. This account is another contradiction regarding Ayesha's age.

### **EVIDENCE #5: Surat al-Qamar (The Moon)**

According to the generally accepted tradition, Ayesha was born about eight years before hijrah. But according to another narrative in Bukhari, Ayesha is reported to have said: "I was a young (*jariyah* in Arabic)" girl when Surah Al-Qamar was revealed ([Sahih Bukhari, kitabu'l-tafsir, Bab Qaulihi Bal al-sa`atu Maw`iduhum wa'l-sa`atu adha' wa amarr](#)).

Chapter 54 of the Quran was revealed eight years before hijrah ([The Bounteous Koran, M.M. Khatib, 1985](#)), indicating that it was revealed in 614 CE. If Ayesha started living with the Prophet at the age of nine in 623 CE or 624 CE, she was a newborn infant (*sibyah* in Arabic) at the time that Surah Al-Qamar (The Moon) was revealed. According to the above tradition, Ayesha was actually a young girl, not an infant in the year of revelation of Al-Qamar. *Jariyah* means young playful girl ([Lane's Arabic English Lexicon](#)). So, Ayesha, being a *jariyah* not a *sibyah* (infant), must be somewhere between 6-13 years old at the time of revelation of Al-Qamar, and therefore must have been 14-21 years at the time she married the Prophet.

### **EVIDENCE #6: Arabic Terminology**

According to a narrative reported by Ahmad ibn Hanbal, after the death of the Prophet's first wife Khadijah, when Khaulah came to the Prophet advising him to marry again, the Prophet asked her regarding the choices she had in mind. Khaulah said: "You can marry a virgin (*bikr*) or a woman who has already been married (*thayyib*)". When the Prophet asked the identity of the *bikr* (virgin), Khaulah mentioned Ayesha's name.

All those who know the Arabic language are aware that the word *bikr* in the Arabic language is not used for an immature nine-year-old girl. The correct word for a young playful girl, as stated earlier, is *jariyah*. *Bikr* on the other hand, is used for an unmarried lady without conjugal experience prior to marriage, as we understand the word "virgin" in English. Therefore, obviously a nine-year-old girl is not a "lady" (*bikr*) ([Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Vol. 6, p. .210, Arabic, Dar Ihya al-turath al-`arabi, Beirut](#)).

### **EVIDENCE #7. The Qur'anic Text**

All Muslims agree that the Quran is the book of guidance. So, we need to seek the guidance from the Quran to clear the smoke and confusion created by the eminent men of the classical period of Islam in the matter of Ayesha's age at her marriage. Does the Quran allow or disallow marriage of an immature child of seven years of age? There are no verses that explicitly allow such marriage. There is a verse, however, that guides Muslims in their duty to raise an orphaned child. The Quran's guidance on the topic of raising orphans is also valid in the case of our own children. The verse states: "And make not over your property (property of the orphan), which Allah had made a (means of) support for you, to the weak of understanding, and maintain them out of it, clothe them and give them good education. And test them until they reach the age of marriage. Then if you find them maturity of intellect, make over them their property..." ([Quran, 4:5-6](#)).

In the matter of children who have lost a parent, a Muslim is ordered to (a) feed them, (b) clothe them, (c) educate them, and (d) test them for maturity “until the age of marriage” before entrusting them with management of finances.

Here the Quranic verse demands meticulous proof of their intellectual and physical maturity by objective test results before the age of marriage in order to entrust their property to them.

In light of the above verses, no responsible Muslim would hand over financial management to a seven- or nine-year-old immature girl. If we cannot trust a seven-year-old to manage financial matters, she cannot be intellectually or physically fit for marriage.

### EVIDENCE #8: Consent in Marriage

A women must be consulted and must agree in order to make a marriage valid ([Mishakat al Masabiah, translation by James Robson, Vol. I, p. 665](#)). Islamically, credible permission from women is a prerequisite for a marriage to be valid.

By any stretch of the imagination, the permission given by an immature seven-year-old girl cannot be valid authorization for marriage. It is inconceivable that AbuBakr, an intelligent man, would take seriously the permission of a seven-year-old girl to marry a 50-year-old man. Similarly, the Prophet would not have accepted the permission given by a girl who, according to the hadith of Muslim, took her toys with her when she went live with Prophet.

All the above quotations give ample refutation to the common misconception that ‘Aishah’s age at the time of her Nikah was 6 years and at the time of consummation of marriage it was only 9 years. If Muslim scholars of the present era deem fit to make an objective research instead of beating the old track, they will find ample material in the pages of history to arrive at a correct age for ‘Aishah. This indeed would be a great service to the cause of Islam.

**Comment [SDOL.org 3]:** Ayesha’s age is not important for one’s faith. But defending the honor of Rasool (SAW) is.

Is it not character assassination of Rasool (SAW) to highlight how Ayesha was his favorite wife because of her beauty and Age? Verily Rasool (SAW) was above all of this.

People who wed juniors today in order to fulfill their lust should not portray Rasool (SAW) as their role model.

Rasool (SAW) married multiple women to create ties between different tribes, ties of brother hood and promoting Islam.

Having said that, if Prophet (SAW) did marry a 9 year old girl (**which he obviously did not**), it would not have been for purposes our corrupted minds think about.