

A Review of the Criticisms against Prophet Muhammad's Marriage with Zaynab Bint Jahsh

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Abstract

Since the 7th century, we have had criticisms of Prophet Mohammed for his preaching of monotheism by his non-Muslim Arab contemporaries and his discussions on Jewish Faith by Jewish Arabs. During the middle ages, various western and Byzantine Christian thinkers described the Middle East as a hotbed of sexuality and Prophet Muhammad's marriage came to be a focal point of criticism in biographical writings. Western critics such as William Montgomery Watt, Dermenghem, Washington Irving, Lammens, William Muir and Karen Armstrong considered Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) to be lustful in his marriage to his wives. His marriage with Zaynab bint Jahsh, more than others, attracted bitterer criticism. Unfortunately, the early Arabic sources relied upon by critics lack scientific. It is against this assertion that this paper re-examined existing literature on the issue and identified the relevance of the marriage to the contemporary time using a combination of historical and exegetical research methods. Historical method is necessary in this work because the author researched into works on biography to study the view of biographers on the personalities discussed. Exegetical works on the Qur'an are also consulted to navigate the views of exegetes on the verses that relate to the subject matter. The aim of this work is to probe the authenticity of sources relied upon by critics and to relate

the lessons in the marriage to the contemporary time. Findings show that the criticism of Prophet Muhammad's marriage to Zainab lacks objectivity and so requires a review for the sake of moral justice.

Keywords:

Prophet Muhammad; Zayd ibn Hāritha; Zaynab bint Jahsh; Orientalism William Muir; Marriage

Introduction

The life of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was full of remarkable events and activities. More eventful was the fifth year of the Prophet's migration from Makkah to Madīnah which saw many historic happenings among which are the conquest of the battle of Trench, the Siege of Banu Qurayzah and the promulgation of new laws to regulate the activities of Muslims. Most of these events were the crux of the chapter of the Confederates, which was revealed to discuss them.¹

A wide range of injunctions contained in the chapter with regards to child adoption, the use of a veil and the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab have attracted the attention of many critics. More hotly debated, is the subject of the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab and the circumstances of it; on which many articles, research papers, books, and theses have been written. Just like the fate of a coin which has two sides, the issue of Muhammad's (S.A.W) marriage with Zaynab has enjoyed a wide range of diverse views and opinions. While some people see it as a response to a divine call which could not but be answered, others see it as a basal human response to lust. Some critics adopted, with a biased mind, the latter view without a scrutiny of sources and hence, submitted that Muhammad (S.A.W.) married Zaynab to satisfy his lust: an accusation that may not survive the test of reasoning. A study of the relationship of the Prophet with Zaynab before the event is pertinent. Equally worthy of cognizance is the position of the Prophet as a statesman and a spiritual leader who enjoins divine guidance in his activities.

¹Muhammad Jarir, At-Tabari. *Tārīkhutṭabari-Tārīkhur Rusuliwal Mulūk* (Beirut: Dārut Turath, 1387A.H.), Vol. 2, pp. 562-282.

Zaynab's Marriage to Zayd

Like in every race and culture, nobility is a status to be revered. It is a general norm that a noble woman is married to a noble man from another family. Few are the exceptions to this norm in the history of man, especially in the Arabian Peninsula where the discriminatory norm was highly pronounced. Zaynab bint Jahsh, born about thirty years before the Hijrah, was a daughter of Jahsh ibn Riyab. Her mother was Ummaimah bint AbdulMutallib, a member of the noble Hashim clan of the Quraysh and a sister of Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W) father. Zaynab lost her first husband before 622 A.D. and she accompanied her brother, Abdullah ibn Jahsh, on his Hijrah to Madinah after the death of her husband. Zaynab was therefore, known to the Prophet when she was a young girl and the relationship and closeness remained intact even after she lost her husband, giving the opportunity for the Prophet to woo her for himself during these periods if she had wished to have her for passion.

An examination of the nuptial solemnization that took place between Zayd and Zaynab reveal an unusual situation. Muhammad (S.A.W.) asked for the hand of his own cousin, Zaynab, for his adopted son, Zayd, in marriage². Her (Zaynab's) brother, Abdullah ibn Jahsh, refused to let his sister—the Hashimi and Quraysh noble girl that she was, and the first cousin of the Prophet (S.A.W.) also—become the wife of a slave whom Khadijah had bought and whom Muhammad (S.A.W.) had set free and adopted as a son.³ Such a union was regarded by Abdullah bin Jahsh and by the Arabs in general as a thing of great shame for a woman that is of high calibre and nobility to marry an emancipated slave. It was in objection to the position of Abdullah, and the need for total submission to the will of Allah as might be expressed by His Messenger, according to some commentators of the Qur'an⁴ that Allah revealed:

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ
يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ
ضَلَالًا مُبِينًا

² M. H.Haykal, *The life of Muhammad* Translated by Isma'il Razi A. Al Faruqi. (America: North American Trust Publication, 1976), p. 295.

³Ibid., p. 295.

⁴ These commentators include Ibn Kathir in *Tafsirul Qur'anil Azim* and Sayyid Qutb in *FiZilalil Qur'an*.

Whenever God and His Messenger have decided a matter, it is not for a believing man or a believing woman to claim freedom of choice in that matter. Whoever disobeys God and His Messenger strays far into error (Q33:36)

In the spirit of total equality of man before Allah which Islam preaches, the Prophet wanted to achieve, through this marriage, the removal of class distinctions. He wanted to give this new Islamic value a practical endorsement and hence, arranged for the marriage between Zayd, a freed slave, and Zaynab, a woman from the noble tribe of the Quraysh⁵.

There is no doubt as to the firm faith of the duo of Zayd and Zaynab, but their faith could not avail them to avert the imminent dissolution that would later greet their marriage. The blue blood of nobility flows through Zaynab's veins and by human nature, she became egoistic, seeing herself as superior to Zayd, while Zayd on the other hand, would not tolerate the spiteful and rude dispositions of his noble wife. She continued to deride Zayd, to boast of her lineage in his presence and to look down on him because of his former status: a slave. ⁶Unable to continue bearing this uncomplimentary experience from his wife, Zayd reported her to Muhammad (S.A.W.) who said to him "Hold fast to your wife and fear God" ⁷ But there was no hope left for the marriage; Zaynab's nagging attitude made Zayd so miserable that he divorced her and she was eventually married to the Prophet(S.A.W). Q 33:37-40 of the Chapter of Confederates give a brief account of the event. Allah says:

وَإِذْ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِي أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ
وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ
أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ فَلَمَّا قَضَى زَيْدٌ مِنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاكَهَا لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا وَكَانَ
أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا (37) مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ
لَهُ سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَقْدُورًا
(38) الَّذِينَ يُبْلَغُونَ رَسُولَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا

⁵Sayyid Qutb, *FiZilalil Qur'an* (Beirut: DārusShurūq, 1412 A.H), Vol.14, p.73.

⁶Haykal. *The Life of Muhammad*. Translated...p. 296.

⁷ Muhammad Jarir, At Tabari. *Jāmi'u l-BayānfiTa'wilil Qur'an* (Beirut: Mu'assasatur Risālah, 2000), Vol. 22, p. 273.

اللَّهُ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا (39) مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ
رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (40)

Behold! Thou didst say to one who had received the Grace of Allah and Thy favour: "keep Thou (in wedlock) Thy wife, and fear Allah." but Thou didst hide in Thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: Thou Didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that Thou shouldst fear Allah. Then when Zaid had dissolved (his marriage) with her, with the necessary (formality), we joined her In marriage to thee: In order that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the believers In (the matter of) marriage with the wives of their adopted sons, when the latter have dissolved with the necessary (formality) (Their marriage) with them, and Allah's command must be fulfilled.

There can be no difficulty to the Prophet in what Allah has indicated to Him As a duty. It was the practice (approved) of Allah amongst those of old that have passed away, and the command of Allah is a Decree determined.(it is the practice of those) who preach the messages of Allah, and fear him, and fear none but Allah. and Enough is Allah to call (men) to account. Muhammad (S.A.W.) is not the father of your men, but (He is) the Messenger of Allah, and the seal of the Prophets: and Allah has full knowledge of all things. (Q33:37-40)

Orientalists' Account of the Prophet's Marriage with Zaynab

It is astonishing that Muir⁸, like Hughes⁹, Tisdall¹⁰, and many other orientalist accused the Prophet of exhibiting voluptuous and

⁸W Muir, Mahomet and Islam; A sketch of the Prophet's Life from Original Sources and A Brief Outline of His Religion. 1986, pp. 120-130.

⁹Hughes T. P. "Dictionary of Islam: Being A Cyclopeda of the Doctrines, Rites, Ceremonies, and Customs Together With The Technical and Theological Terms of the Muhammadan Religion".(London: Munshiram, 1885), p. 698.

rapacious sexual instincts. Like many of his colleagues, Muir viewed this issue and the revelations that surround it as calculated measures for Muhammad (S.A.W.) to increase the number of his Harem or to prove that Islam allows having concubines after marrying four wives. He wrote:

Mohammad was now near threescore years of age; but a weakness for the sex seemed but to grow with age; and the attractions of his increasing harem instead of satisfying appear rather to have stimulated desire after new and varied charms. Happening one day to visit his adopted son Zeid, he found him absent. As he knocked, Zeinab his wife, now over thirty years of age, but fair to look upon, invited him to enter; and, starting up in her loose and scanty dress, made haste to array herself for his reception. But the beauties of her figure through the half-opened door had already unveiled themselves too freely before the admiring gaze of Mohammad. He was smitten by the sight: 'Gracious Lord!' he exclaimed 'Good Heavens! How Thou dost turn the hearts of men!' The rapturous words, repeated in a low voice as he turned to go, were overheard by Zeinab, who perceived the flame she had kindled, and, proud of her conquest, was nothing loth to tell her husband of it. Zeid went straightway to Mohammad and declared his readiness to divorce Zeinab for him. This Mohammad declined: 'Keep thy wife to thyself,' he said, 'and fear God.' But Zeid saw probably that the admonition proceeded from unwilling lips, and that the Prophet had still a longing eye for Zeinab. Perhaps he did not care to keep her, when he found that she desired to leave him, and

¹⁰ W.S.C Tisdall, *The Original Sources of the Qur'an; Its Origin in Pagan Legends and Mythology*. (London: London Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1905),p.84.

was ambitious of the new and distinguished alliance. And so he formally divorced her. Mohammad still hesitated. There might be little scandal according to Arab morals in seeking the hand of a married woman whose husband had no wish to keep her; but the husband in the present case was Mohammad's adopted son, and even in Arabia such a union was unlawful...¹¹

In the submission made above by Muir, four fundamental issues are raised: The first issue is that of Zaynab inviting the Prophet to enter the house in the absence of her husband. Even when some biographers added that the Prophet refused to enter on invitation as will later be seen, Muir remains silent on the disposition of the Prophet. The person of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) as a spiritual leader would not have honoured the invitation of a woman in the absence of her husband. The second issue is that of preparing for the Prophet's reception. As the Prophet's cousin, the person of Zaynab could not be said to have been ignorant of Islamic ethics on reception of a visitor. More blasphemous is the third issue which is the statement that the beauty of Zaynab was unveiled through a half-opened door for the Prophet to see as if the Prophet was unaware of her beauty earlier. hastily, Muir simply submitted that the Prophet was hypocritical in his admonition for Zaynab and that is the fourth issue. Muir acknowledged in his work that the biographic work of At-Tabari was his source. It is on this basis that we shall study the sources relied upon by critics of the relationship.

Arabic Sources on Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W.) Marriage to Zaynab

Among the Muslim biographers from whose account some orientalist got their information are Ibn Sa'd in his *Kitābut Tabaqātil Kubra*, At-Ṭabarī in his *Jāmi'u l Bayān* which is held by scholars as one of the most reliable early works on the Qur'an and Ibn Hisham

¹¹W. Muir, *The Life of Mohammad from Original Sources*. (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1923), pp. 290-291.

in his *As Siratiwal Maghāzī*.¹²The first biographical work to discuss the event in some details is *Kitābut Tabaqātil Kubrah* (The Book of Classes) written by the traditionalist, Ibn Sa'd. In his own submission, he related that one day, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) went looking for Zayd and when he came to Zayd's house, he met Zayd's wife, Zaynab, who was dressed in clothes that were admired by Muhammad. Ibn Sa'd alluded that Zaynab greeted Muhammad (S.A.W) and invited him into the house while Zayd was away but Muhammad(S.A.W) refused to enter the house and left. As he left, according to Ibn Sa'd, Muhammad (S.A.W) murmured something inaudible except the phrase "Glory be to God the Almighty! Glory be to God who causes hearts to turn". When Zayd returned home, Zaynab told him what happened. Zayd then went to Muhammad (S.A.W) and told Muhammad(S.A.W) that:

O messenger of Allah, I heard that you came to my house, and you did not enter, perhaps Zaynab has excited your admiration, and so I will separate myself from her. The messenger of Allah said: keep your wife... but Zayd went on and divorced her anyway.¹³

After a period had passed, Muhammad (S.A.W.) got the revelation that God had married Zaynab to him.¹⁴ At-Ṭabarī, a Muslim historian who lived in the 10th century and wrote a lengthy chronicle of the history of the Muslim community up till his time in his book titled, *Tārīkhul Rusuli Wal Mulūk* (the history of the Prophets and the Kings) equally submitted that the Prophet saw Zaynab, admired her and wished he could marry her. He wrote:

I was told that Muhammad ibn 'Umar said: 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr Al-Aslami told me that Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Habban said: the Prophet (S.A.W.) came to Zayd ibn Harithah's house asking for him—at a time, Zayd was called Muhammad's son. Probably the Prophet

¹² Muhammad Muhammad Abu Shuhbah, *Al-Isra'iliyyatwal Mawdu'atfi Kitābit Tafsīr* (Beirut: Maktabatus Sunnah, nd), p. 115.

¹³Muhammad bn Sa'd, *At Tabaqatul Kubrah* (Beirut: DāruṢādir 1968), Vol. 8, p.101.

¹⁴Ibid.,

(S.A.W.) could not see him over a period and he asked: where is Zayd? Then he went seeking him at his house. But he didn't find him. Accordingly, Zaynab came out to receive him and the Prophet (S.A.W.) (S.A.W.) turned his face from her, and she said: He isn't here O Prophet of Allah, but I beg of you to come in. But the Prophet (S.A.W.) refused to. She came out in her nightgown for she hurried when she was told that the Prophet (S.A.W.) was at the door. She fell into the Prophet's heart, then he left murmuring incomprehensible words, except for: Grace be to Him Who directs the heart. When Zayd came home, Zaynab told him that the Prophet (S.A.W.) had been at their house. Zayd asked her: Did you not tell him to come in?! Zaynab said: I have but he refused. Zayd asked: did he not say anything? Zaynab said: he left murmuring something I couldn't understand, but I heard him say "Grace be to Him Who directs the heart? Afterwards, Zayd went to the Prophet (S.A.W.) and said: O Prophet of Allah, I have been told that you have been to my house, and that you have refused to come in. If it had been that you like Zaynab, I shall leave her for your sake. But the Prophet (saw) said: Hold on to your wife. But Zayd couldn't live on with Zaynab from that day. He would come to the Prophet (S.A.W.) and ask him again, but the Prophet (S.A.W.) would say: Hold on to your wife. And Zayd asked him again, and the Prophet (S.A.W.) would still say: Hold on to your wife. But Zayd divorced Zaynab and her period was over.¹⁵

In spite of his personality and erudition, there are other narrations contrary to that of At-Tabari. One of such narrations is contained in the work of Ibn Hishām who, like Muhammad ibn Ishaq,¹⁶ narrated that:

¹⁵ Muhammad Jarir, At-Tabari. *Tarikh At Tabari*...pp. 263-264.

¹⁶ Muhammad Ishaq, *As-Siyariwa-l Maghāzī* (Beirut: DārulFikr, 1978), p. 262.

Zayd bin Harithah was ill, so the Prophet (S.A.W.) went to visit him. Zaynab Zayd's wife – was at his head nursing him. Just as she left to do something, the Prophet (S.A.W.) looked at her, lowered his head and said: Glory be to him who directs hearts and eyes. Then Zayd said: shall I divorce her for you O Allah's Messenger? But the Prophet (S.A.W.) said: NO. Then the verse "Behold! Thou did say to one who had received the grades of Allah and thy favour: Retain thou (in wedlock) thy wife, and fear Allah" was revealed¹⁷

The narration above established that Zayd was at home when the Prophet came in for the visit and that Zaynab was with her husband at the time of the visit. Empirically, Zayd needed not to be informed by anybody if actually the Prophet murmured anything out. Not even by his wife because the wife was with him and no report that the sickness of Zayd could not make him hear.

As for the exegetic sources, classical exegetes such as Al-Baghawi, while discussing circumstances of the revelation of Qur'an 33:37-40, reported that the Prophet (S.A.W.) visited Zayd's house in his absence and saw Zaynab from a distance in her veil. He appreciated her beauty and her light complexion and murmured 'Gracious Lord! Thou turn the hearts'. He then went back and when Zayd came back home, Zaynab reported the incidence to him and from then, Zayd developed a hatred for her.¹⁸ Proponents of this view include Abu Su'ud,¹⁹ At-Tha'labi,²⁰ Az-Zamakhshari²¹ and An-Nasafi.²² In the like of these exegetes are some scholars who are even of the view that the Prophet wished

¹⁷ Muhammad Ishaq, *As-Siyariwa-l Maghāzi...* p.262.

¹⁸ Hassan Mas'ud Al Baghawi, *Ma'ālimut Tanzīlfi Tafsīril Qur'an* (Beirut: Dārut Taybah, 1997), Vol.6, p.354.

¹⁹ Abu su'ud Muhammad Muhammad Mustapha, *Irshādul Aqlis Salīmila Mazāyal Kitābil Karīm* (Beirut: Dāruhiyā'it Turāthil Arabi, nd), Vol.7, p. 105.

²⁰ Ahmad Muhammad, *At-tha'labi. Al Kashfu Wal Bayan anTafsiril Qur'an* (Beirut: Dārulhaya'itturāthil Arabi, 2002), Vol.8, p. 47.

²¹ Mahmud Amru Az Zamakhshari, *Al-Kash-Shāfu an Haqa'iqi Gawamidit Tanzil* (Beirut: Darul Kitabil Arabi 1407A.H), Vol. 3, p. 540.

²² Abdullahi Ahmad An Nasafi, *Madarikut Tanzilwahaqa'iqut Ta'wil* (Beirut: Dārul Kalimit Tayyib, 1998), Vol. 3, p.32.

that Zayd divorced Zaynab so that he could marry her.²³ At-Ṭabari in his exegetical work wrote:

Yūnus told me that Ibn Wahb said: Ibn Zayd said: The Prophet (S.A.W.) wedded Zayd ibn Harithah to his cousin Zaynab bint Jahsh. The Prophet (S.A.W.) went out in search of him (Zayd) one day. The door of his house was but a piece of fabric, therefore the wind blew it open and revealed Zaynab with her sleeves up in her room. And she fell into the Prophet's (S.A.W.) heart, and since then she hated the other (Zayd). Then Zayd came to the Prophet (S.A.W.) and said: O Prophet of Allah, I want to leave my wife. He (the prophet) said: Why? Do you have any suspicion about her? He answered: No! By Allah I have no suspicion about her and I have seen but goodness from her. Then the Prophet (saw) said: Hold on to your wife, and fear Allah in her. That is what Allah said: "Behold! Thou did say to one who had received the graces of Allah and thy favour: 'Retain thou (in wedlock) thy wife, and fear Allah.' But thou didst hide in thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest" i.e., hide in thy heart that if you leave her, I will marry her.²⁴

It is worthy of note that most of the early exegetes rely on the information they got either from the biographical works of some early biographers such as At-Ṭabari or from the exegetical works of some early exegetes such as Muqātil, the oldest surviving complete Tafsir.²⁵ Muqātil narrated the story without details of his source of information as if he was an eye witness. He went to the extent of making an allegation that the Prophet went to Zaynab to

²³Ni'matullahi Mahmud, *Al Fawatihullillahiyah Wal Mafatihul Ghaibiyah* (Egypt: DāruRikābī, 1999), Vol. 2, p. 157.

²⁴ Muhammad Jarir At Tabari. *Jami'u l-Bayan* ...Vol. 20, p. 274.

²⁵https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muqatil_ibn_Sulayman. accessed on 20th september, 2016

advise her against being shrewd to her husband and in the process, he got fascinated by the beauty of Zaynab and plotted for her being divorced by Zayd.²⁶ An indictment that presented the Prophet who was the facilitator of Zaynab's marriage to Zayd as the master minder of the marriage dissolution.

Zaynab's Marriage in the Hadith

Orthodox Muslim scholars do not reckon with stories about Muhammad(S.A.W.) unless they are narrated in an "authentic" collection of ḥadīth, such as Bukhārī or Muslim, or with an "authentic" chain of narrators in other sources, be it ḥadīth or from another genre such as biographic or exegetic literature.²⁷It is worth mentioning that controversial details of the story that can be found in the biographical and the exegetic literature with respect to the marriage of Zaynab bint Jahsh to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) are absent in the ḥadīth literatures. In the book of Saḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī, the most popular collection of ḥadīth compiled at the end of the 9th century, it is stated that Qur'an 33:37-40 was revealed in respect of Zayd ibn Hārithah and Zaynab bint Jahsh²⁸and no other information was provided. Commenting on this hadith, Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalānī, the most prominent interpreter of SaḥīḥAl-Bukhārī, commented that this story was reported in a clear manner by Ibn Abi Hātim who said that the verse was revealed in respect of Zaynab bint Jahsh who was given out in marriage by the Prophet to Zayd ibn Hārithah, his adopted child and Allah made it known to the Prophet that Zaynab shall later be one of his wives. Knowing surely that his society will ignorantly condemn him for marrying the divorcee of his adopted child, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) concealed Allah's wish from Zayd and told him to hold on to his wife each time the latter brought the complaint of his nagging wife to him.²⁹

In the book of Saḥīḥ Al-Muslim, the second most popular book of ḥadīth, nothing is documented of the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab except that when Zaynab's waiting period [*'idda*] was

²⁶Maqātil Sulayman, *Tafsīru Muqātil bn sulayman*(Beirut: Dārulhyā'itTurāth, 1423A.H), Vol.3, p. 493.

²⁷Sundland...p. 18.

²⁸ Al Bukhari. Isma'il Muhammad, *Al-Jāmi'ul Musnadus Saḥīḥul Mukhtasar* (Cairo: DāruTawqun Najat,1422 A.H), Vol. 6, p.117, Hadith 4787.

²⁹ Ahmad Ali bn Hajar Al-Asqalani, *Fat-hul Bārī SharhuSaḥīḥul Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dārul Maā'rifah, 1379 A.H), Vol. 8, p.524.

over, Muhammad (S.A.W.) told Zayd to propose his marriage to her which he did and for which Zaynab delayed her acceptance until revelation confirmed the legitimacy of the proposal.³⁰ Likewise, the fancy story of the Prophet visiting Zayd and appreciating the beauty of his wife is equally not contained in all the interpretations given to the verse in question by At-Tirmidhi.³¹ Confirming the fact that the controversy owed its origin to the time of the Prophet, At Tirmithi reported this tradition:

Aliy ibn Hujr said that Dawud bn Az Zabarqani informed us about Dawud ibn Abi Hind who reported As Shabiyy who said that A'Isha said: were the messenger of Allah to have concealed anything of the revelation, he would have concealed this verse (Behold! Thou didst say to one who had received the Grace of Allah and Thy favour) by emancipation from you: ("Retain thou thy wife, and fear Allah." but Thou Didst hide in thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: Thou Didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that Thou shouldst fear Allah) up to (and Allah's command must be fulfilled). when the Prophet of Allah, may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him, married her, they said: he married his son's beloved one. Allah then revealed: Muhammad is not the father of your children but rather, a messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets. The Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him, adopted him (Zayd) from childhood and he remained with him until he grew up and he was called Zayd the son of Muhammad. Allah then revealed the verse: Call them by (the names of) their fathers: that is juster in the sight of Allah. But if ye know not their father's (names, call them) your brothers, or your *maulas*³²

³⁰ Muslim Al Hajjaj, *Musnadus Sahihul Mukhtasar* (Beirūt: Dāruihyā'it Turāthil Arabi. nd), Vol. 2, p. 1048. Hadith.1428.

³¹ At Tirmithi, Muhammad Isa, *Al-Jami'ul Kabir; Sunanu Tirmidhi* (Beirūt: DārulArabil Islami, 1998), Vol.5, p. 207 Hadith 3207-3210.

³² At Tirmithi ...p. 205 Hadith 3607.

Those who argued that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was lustful, found their sources in some books of biography and *tafsir*, especially the account of At-Ṭabari even though At-Ṭabari reported another version of the story narrated by Ali Ibn Zayd with a contrary position.³³The first claim of At-Ṭabari and those who adopted his version of the story may not be considered authentic because it is established that At Tabari, in some of his narrations, relied on *Isra'iliyyāt*³⁴ stories³⁵ which may be corrupted. Sources of the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab may therefore, be refuted on the following grounds:

1. There are many contradictions in the report, while Ibn Sa'd and At-Tabari maintained that Zayd was not at home when the Prophet came in and that Zaynab invited him to enter even when Zayd was out, Ibn Is-haq said Zayd was lying on his sick bed when the Prophet came in and the mission of the Prophet was visit him over his sickness.
2. At-Ṭabari mentioned that the wind played with Zaynab's nightgown to expose her for the Prophet while she was in the room, Ibn Is-haq said they were initially together and when she turned away, the Prophet watched her and murmured the words of glorification and admiration.
3. The *Ahadith* relied on by early biographers are *mursal* (with two reporters missing) because Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn Habban who is in the chain of narration was born about forty-seven years after the migration of the Prophet, some thirty-seven years after the death of the Prophet. As such, he was neither a Companion nor a Successor and so, he couldn't have been an eyewitness to the event.
4. Abdur-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn Aslam who reported the reliance of At-Ṭabari in his book of *tafsir* as early mentioned in this work was equally neither a Companion of the Prophet nor a Successor and as such, he equally could not have been an eye witness to the event and the *Ahadith* that could not be traced to

³³ Muhammad Jarir At Tabari. ...p. 274.

³⁴*Isra'iliyyat* refers to stories with Christians and/or Jews source.

³⁵ Muhammadu As-Sayyid Hussain Az-Zahabi, *At-Tafsir Wal Mufasssirūna*. (Egypt: *Wuhbah*, 1398A.H), Vol. 1, p. 154.

the Prophet are considered weak to be relied upon.³⁶ This is the more reason why the Consensus of scholars is that a tradition that is *mursal* cannot be used as a proof.³⁷ Scholars, in faulting the narrations on the text, observed that At-Ṭabari took his story from Al-Wāqidi who is referred to as Muhammad ibn Umar Al-Wāqidi, a personality known for fabrication of hadith to give some sort of sanction for the licentiousness of the 'Abbasid caliphs.³⁸

5. If the Prophet actually murmured the words of glorification of Allah as emphasized by critics, there is nothing to show that the words signify his admiration for Zaynab, and no one can be sure of perfectly reading the mind of others. Even if the Prophet turned his face down as documented by some biographers, such an action could fairly be interpreted as not wanting to commit himself to lustful gazing.
6. Zaynab was the Prophet's cousin and has been known to the Prophet from childhood. She was known to the Prophet when she was a girl and the Prophet was not struck by her beauty then. She was always seen by the Prophet even after her marriage with Zayd because the veil was not then known. What then would make her suddenly appear gorgeous to the Prophet when she was already in another man's house and at an older age of between thirty-five and forty?
7. It was the Prophet that arranged for her marriage to Zayd and insisted on it against the wish of Zaynab and her brother, Abdullah.³⁹ If the Prophet had been fascinated by her beauty and intended to marry her, that time would have been the best time for him to sell his desire and justify his action by the reluctance of Zaynab and her guardian.

³⁶ Muhammad Ahmad, *Al-Mawqizatu fi ilmi Mustalihul Hadith* (Halb: Maktabatul Matbu'atil Islamiyyah, 1421A.H), p. 39.

³⁷ Nuruddin Muhammad, *Minhajun Naqdi Fi Ulūmil Hadith* (Suriyah/Damashq: Dārul Fikri, 1997), p. 371.

³⁸ Shibli Nu'mani, *Sirat-Un-Nabi (The Life Of The Prophet)* [Rendered into English by M. Tayyib Bakhsh Budayuni, (New Delhi: Idarah-I Adabiyat, 2009), Vol. 2, pp. 128 – 129.

³⁹ Al-Hijazi Muhammad Muhammad Mahmud, *At-Tafsirul Wadih* (Beirūt: Dārul Jaylil Jadid. 1413A.H), Vol. 3, p. 98.

A dispassionate assessment of critics' narrations as contained in the sources relied upon, reveals some incoherence in the account. It disturbs a critical mind how Zaynab, knowing she was disarranged, could invite Muhammad(S.A.W) into her abode. It sounds more logical that the Prophet entered unexpectedly—which his noble soul would never do, owing to his sheer decency and modesty. Moreover, it contradicts the spirit of Islamic sociological ethics that a man should peep through the other person's window. The instruction guiding visitation is boldly stated in Suratun Nur (Chapter of the Light).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى تَسْتَأْذِنُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا
عَلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَذَكَّرُونَ فَإِن لَّمْ تَجِدُوا فِيهَا أَحَدًا فَلَا
تَدْخُلُوهَا حَتَّىٰ يُؤَدِّنَ لَكُمْ وَإِن قِيلَ لَكُمْ ارْجِعُوا فَارْجِعُوا هُوَ أَزْكَىٰ لَكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ

O ye who believe! Enter not houses other than your own, until ye have asked permission and saluted those In them: that is best for you, In order that ye may heed (what is seemly). If ye find no one In the house, enter not until permission is given to you: if ye are asked to go back, go back: that makes for greater purity for yourselves: and Allah knows well all that ye do. (Q24:27-28)

Laying the claim that “Zaynab overheard Muhammad’s (S.A.W.) rapturous words through which she perceived ‘the flame she had kindled, and proud of her conquest was nothing to tell her husband of it” is unfair to Zaynab’s personality. In his historical work, Ibn Kathīr maintained that it was the wish of Allah for Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) to marry Zaynab, and even at the time Zayd was patronizing his house to report his wife, the Prophet (S.A.W.) had been inspired that Zaynab is coming back to him. But he refused to inform Zayd of Allah’s decision for the fear of misconception by people of a fickle mind.⁴⁰

Medieval exegetes of the Qur’an such as Qutb,⁴¹ As Shanqīti,⁴² and Mujīruddīn⁴³ are of the opinion that the

⁴⁰ Ibn Kathir, Ismail Umar, *Al Bidayah Wan Nihayah* (Beirut: Dārut Turāthil Arabi, 1988), Vol.4, p. 166.

⁴¹ Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilālil Qur’an* (Beirut: DārusShurūq, 1412 A.H), Vol. 5, p. 2869.

⁴² Muhammadul Amin Muhammad as Shanqiti, *Adwa’ l Bayān fi idā’l Qur’anil Kareem* (Beirut: DarulFikr, 1995), Vol. 5, p. 239.

Prophet(S.A.W.) did not have the desire to marry Zaynab rather, it was the wish of Allah to abolish adoption of a child in a way that the adopted child will claim the position of a biological child in all respect. To this group of exegetes, the Prophet (S.A.W.) had received an inspiration from Allah that Zayd will later divorce Zaynab and that the Prophet will subsequently marry Zaynab. Ibn Kathir reports thus:

... Ali ibn Zaid ibn Judaan reported that Ali, the son of Hussain asked me of the opinion of Alhassan regarding the word of Allah: But Thou Didst hide In Thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: Thou Didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that Thou shouldst fear Allah. I reported this to him but he said no, Allah had made it known to His Prophet that she is going to be one of his wives ever before he gave her out in marriage. When Zaid brought her report to him he said: Fear Allah and hold fast to your wife. He (Allah) said: I have informed you that I will marry her to you. You hide in you that which Allah will soon disclose... ⁴⁴

Some other exegetes such as Az Zuhayli,⁴⁵ Al-Hijāzī,⁴⁶ and authors of *At-Tafsīrul-Muyassar* are in support of the position of the aforementioned medieval exegetes. Authors of *At-Tafsīrul-Muyassar* comment thus:

O Muhammad, you conceived in you, that which Allah has inspired in you regarding Zayd's divorce of his wife and your marriage to her, and Allah will disclose what you conceived. And you feared that the hypocrites would say Muhammad

⁴³Mujiruddeen Muhammad, *Fat-hurRahmānifi Tafsīril Qur'an* (Al-Madinah: Daru Nawadir, nd) Vol. 5, p. 365.

⁴⁴Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīrul Qur'anil Azim* ...p. 425.

⁴⁵Wuhbah Mustapha Az Zuhaily, *At Tafsīrul Munir fi l Aqidah was Shari'ahwal Minhaj* (Damashq: Darul Fikr, 1418A.H.), Vol. 20, p. 24.

⁴⁶ Muhammad Mahmud Al Hijazi, *At Tafsīrul Wādih* (Beirūt: Darul Jailil Jadid, 1413A.H) Vol.3, p. 96.

married the divorcee of his adopted child while Allah is He that much deserves to be feared.⁴⁷

Al-Hijaz, like many other orthodox scholars, gave a better interpretation of the phrase of the Qur'an 'and you conceal in you what Allah will soon disclose' to mean that the Prophet was inspired of Zayd's divorce of Zaynab and his marriage of her but for the fear that the hypocrites would condemn him of marrying the divorcee of his adopted child, he concealed Allah's decision from Zayd and advised him to keep his wife and fear Allah. Allah thereby, rebuked him for concealing a lawful act which Allah had ordained.⁴⁸

The significance of Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W.) marriage with Zaynab

A culture that had been in practice in Arabia before Islam and at the early period of Islam is that of a child being adopted and given the entitlement of a biological child. This custom was commonly practised with the captives whose fathers were not known. Al-Qurtubi reported that in some instances, even when the father is known, a man may just like a child and will start calling that child of another man his son and subsequently, such a boy may inherit him, and he may inherit the boy too⁴⁹. The Shari'ah is not against adopting a child and taking care of such a child. The Prophet enjoins the care of an orphan and considers it a commendable act of *Ibādah*. However, the identity of the child's biological family should not be hidden.

The need for giving a clear-cut ruling on the right of the adopted child under his adoptive father is necessary because Islam provides a unique formula for estate distribution and marriage. When an adopted child acquires wealth under the adopting family, his wealth belongs to his own family and not of the adopting family at death. The adopted child is equally not entitled to share in the estate of his adoptive father. When the adopted child is

⁴⁷Dignitaries among Scholars of Tafsir, *At-Tafsīrul Muyassar*. (Saudi Arabia: King Fahd Publishing Company, 2009), p. 423.

⁴⁸Muhammad Mahmud Al Hijazi. *At TafsīrulW ādih*...p. 96.

⁴⁹Shamsudin Al Qurtubi, *Al Jamī'u li Ahkāmīl Qur'an* (Cairo: Dārul Kutubil Misriyyah, 1964), Vol. 14, p. 119.

grown up, he or she is not legally prohibited from marrying from the adoptive family on the ground of adoption.

Zayd ibn Harithah of the Arab tribe of Kalb was taken captive when young during the Jahiliyyah period and was sold to Hakim ibn Hizam who presented him as a gift to his aunt, Khadijah. When Khadijah got married to the Prophet, she released Zayd to the Prophet and on the request of Zayd's father. Zayd was then freed by the Prophet and he chose to stay with the Prophet who had also adopted him as his son.

Allah says;

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِي جَوْفِهِ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَزْوَاجَكُمْ اللَّائِي
نُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْهُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَاءَكُمْ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُكُمْ
بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ ادْعُوهُمْ لِأَبَائِهِمْ هُوَ
أَفْضَلُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءَهُمْ فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيكُمْ
وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَكِنْ مَا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَكَانَ
اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

Allah has not made for any man two hearts
In His (one) body: nor has He made your
wives whom ye divorce by *Zihar* your
mothers: nor has He made your adopted
sons your sons. Such is (only) your (manner
of) speech by your mouths. But Allah tells
(you) the truth, and He shows the (right)
way. Call them by (the names of) their
fathers: that is more just in the sight of
Allah. But if ye know not their father's
(names, call them) your brothers in Faith, or
your *maulas*. but there is no blame on you if
ye make a mistake therein: (what counts is)
the intention of your hearts: and Allah is
Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.(Q33:45)

The purpose of messengers on earth is to bring to mankind, messages from Allah which are necessary to mould their life and such a task will definitely come with new legislations. It is the wish of Allah to abolish a practice that was already considered a norm in the society using His own Prophet as an example. This is exactly what happened in the issue of the marriage of the Prophet with Zaynab. Allah says in Q33: 38 -39

مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَهُ سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ
خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدْرًا مَقْدُورًا الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ
وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا

There can be no difficulty to the Prophet in what Allah has indicated to Him As a duty. it was the practice (approved) of Allah amongst those of old that have passed away. And the command of Allah is a Decree determined. (it is the practice of those) who preach the messages of Allah, and fear him, and fear none but Allah. and enough is Allah to call (humankind) to account.

And to make a final clarification on this matter which was hotly debated even during the time of the Prophet, Allah says in the subsequent verse:

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (He is) the Messenger of Allah, and the seal of the Prophets: and Allah has full knowledge of all things. (Q33:40)

On a final note, the fact that the Prophet was attacked from both within and outside the Muslim community is a clear sign that a leader needs to prepare himself for challenges which are capable of swaying him back to his step of moving the community forward. A slightest compromise is capable of jeopardising the mission of his leadership and so, rendering such a leader to be incompetent.

Conclusion

The assessment of various sources of Zaynab's marriage to Prophet Muhammad(S.A.W.) shows that the orientalist, and of course, some early exegetes of the Qur'an either adopted narrations they got from some biographers without proper scrutiny or chose to adopt the narrations with a biased mind even when there are other narrations that sound more logical and authentic. Verses Qur'an 33:37-39 confirm that it was God who ordained that the Prophet should marry Zaynab to abolish the Arabian tradition that prohibited marriage to a former wife of an adopted son. Why then should be Prophet be blamed for adhering to a Divine information from his creator. He was not the first prophet to find himself in such a position. This, then, comes to pass by God's consistent law which is not subject to people's baseless ideas.

This rule also applies to earlier messengers. When God commanded them to do something, they were not swayed in some other direction by other people; indeed the latter are of no importance. They feared no one other than God who charged them with the task of delivering His message and putting it into action. It is He only who holds them accountable and no one else. Neither was Zaynab Muhammad son's wife nor was Zayd Muhammad's son; Zayd was Hārithah's son. Hence, when the matter is looked at from the angle of reality, it carries no blame whatsoever. Muhammad (S.A.W.) was in the same relation to all Muslims, including Zayd ibn Hārithah; it was a relationship between a prophet and his community of believers. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) thus puts in the place God's law to be applied by all mankind till the end of time. Allah knows what suits humanity and sets its life on the best course. He has ordained that the Prophet (S.A.W.) act by His wisdom and knowledge. Furthermore, He has set in motion the laws and regulations that best serves humankind's interests and bring them happiness.

Consequent upon the findings of this work, the personality of At-Ṭabari is not in any way at a stake. He was a scholar of high repute but even then, his narration about the biography of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) cannot be considered in isolation especially on an issue that has to do with the personality of a statesman. It is on this basis that the author of this work submits that a holistic study of the Qur'anic verses on Zaynab's marriage to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and authentic traditions of the Prophet is necessary for a better understanding of the situation.