
THE PROPHET'S MARRIAGES

by

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The Translator of the Holy Quran

WITH A PHILOSOPHICAL SURVEY

by

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THE PROPHET'S WIVES

"O Prophet! Say to your wives: If you desire this world's life and its ornature, 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."

—The Holy Quran 33 : 28, 29

PLURALITY of wives is met with in the lives of great religious personages. Abraham, who enjoys the reverence of more than half the human race, had more wives than one. Similar was the case with Jacob, Moses, and David. Solomon is reported to have carried the number to hundreds. These were the ancestors of Jesus. As to Jesus himself, he had not even one, as the Gospels show, so his example in the matter is out of the question. Should celibacy be made the ideal of life and become the rule, the world would come to an end before long. Thus it is obvious that the institution of polygamy has no intrinsic evil, and the mere fact that the Prophet had a number of wives is by no means objectionable; it was the custom of the patriarchs of old.

Up to the good old age of fifty-three, when one out-grows the passions of youth, the Prophet led his life in the company of but one wife, thereby setting an example that monogamy must be the rule of life under normal conditions. And as a matter of fact, this is exactly the purport of the Qur-anic teachings. But as a universal religion, Islam must needs provide for all sorts of abnormalities. Polygamy is one such provision, permissible only when certain abnormal conditions call for it. When such conditions do arise, Polygamy becomes a necessity, and if it is not allowed then the result is immoral sexual intercourse. The society becomes corrupt. Unmarried mothers and natural children become a part of it. Polygamy is, under such circumstances, the only effective preventive. Call it a necessary evil, or what you will, it is the only safeguard against moral turpitude. The Prophet was to be a perfect exemplar for man-kind. Hence it was necessary that, notwithstanding his spending the whole of his youth — nay, even the major portion of his old age with a single wife, he should have taken more wives than one, when war had increased the female element. We observe that his disposition was

averse to warfare. Full forty years before the Call, he had been living in a land where sword was as freely wielded as a stick, which was a vast den of wild animals flying at one another's throats, where fighting and feuds were the order of the day, where there was no chance of survival for one who could not use the sword; yet not once did he deal a blow at an enemy. Even after the Call, when fighting has to be resorted to as a measure of self-defence, and the Prophet did in person take part in several battles, his sword never fell upon an enemy, excepting once at the battle of Uhud, when he had to use it against one of the enemies who rushed down upon him, charging him most furiously. Again, he was so peace-loving by nature that he preferred the truce of Hudaibiyya to bloodshed, though it treated the Muslims as a defeated party. Notwithstanding the fact that warfare was so alien to his nature, he was driven by sheer force of circumstances to take the field. For war is another necessary evil, and there comes a time when it cannot be avoided. The Holy Prophet could not be called a perfect exemplar had he omitted to set an example on the field of battle as well for the guidance of mankind. Circum-

stances arose which dragged him into the field to demonstrate how an ordinary soldier and a general should conduct himself.

In the same manner we observe that in a hot country like Arabia he leads a spotlessly chaste life as a celibate till the age of twenty-five. His purity of character is of household fame. Then, he lives with one wife and she too a widow, fifteen years his senior—till he is fifty. All these facts force upon us the conclusion that his continence was an impenetrable proof against lust and passion. Still at that old age, when sanity cannot possibly impeach him of sensuality, unless blinded by prejudice, he had to take more wives, so that this unavoidable aspect of human life might not be left undemonstrated in the life of the Perfect Exemplar.

What throws further light on the fact that all sorts of sordid cravings and passions, so characteristic of human nature, had been thoroughly extinguished in the case of the Prophet, is the exceeding simplicity of his mode of life. Notwithstanding his living in this world, he had little attachment to the charms it can present. From the cradle to the grave he passes through a diversity of circum-

stances, a diversity which can hardly be met with in the life of a single man. Orphanhood is the extreme of helplessness, while kingship, that of power. From an orphan, he climbs to the summit of royal glory, but that creates not the slightest change in his way of living. He lives on exactly the same kind of humble fare, wears the same simple dress, and in all particulars has the same mode of life as he had in the state of orphanhood. It is hard to give up a kingly throne and lead the life of a hermit : but it is far harder that one should wield the royal sceptre, yet at the same time lead a hermit's life ; that one should possess power and pelf, yet spend it solely to promote the welfare of others ; that one should ever have the most alluring attractions before one's eyes, yet never for one moment be captivated by them. . When the Prophet had attained to absolute power over Madina and its suburbs, the furniture of his house was composed of an ordinary bed with a matting of palmleaves and an earthen jug for water. Some nights he would go without food. For days, no fire would be lit in his house to prepare food, the whole family living on mere dates. There was no lack of means to live a life of ease and comfort. The public

treasury was at his disposal. The well-to-do among his followers, who did not shrink from sacrificing their lives for his sake, would have been only too glad to provide him with every comfort of life, should he choose to avail himself of it. But worldly things carried little weight in his estimation. No mundance craving could ever prevail over him, neither in times of indigence nor of plenty. Just as he spurned at worldly things, such as power, pelf, and beauty, which the Quraish offered him when he was yet in a state of uttermost helplessness, so did he remain indifferent to them even now that God granted him all these things out of His own grace.

But a still more conclusive argument on the point is furnished by an incident alluded to in the Quranic verse quoted above. Shortly after their immigration into Madina, the condition of the Muslims improved. Business brought them prosperity. Besides, the booty that fell into their hands, together with the ransom money for the prisoners taken at the battle of Badr, made them comparatively ease-loving. So there was some change in the mode of their lives. But the household of the Prophet was absolutely unaffected by this

change of fortune. Quite a human desire, however, crept into the hearts of the Prophet's wives, that like other Muslim families they too should avail themselves of their share of comforts. Accordingly, they approached the Prophet in a body to prevail upon him to allow them their legitimate share of worldly felicity. Thereupon came the Divine injunction directing the Prophet to tell his wives that they could not remain his wives, if they would cherish such sordid cravings. So they must choose between the two alternatives. They must either have worldly finery, or keep in the Prophet's household. Should they decide to have the former, they would have plenty of what they want, but would forthwith forfeit the honour of being the Prophet's wives. Can this be the reply of a sensual man? The foremost concern of such a fellow is to seek to satisfy the slightest whim of the objects of his affection. No doubt the Prophet cherished great love and regard for his wives. "The best of you," he is reported to have said, "is the one who treats his wife best." This illustrates his attitude towards womanhood. Notwithstanding this, however, when his wives come to him with what is quite a legitimate

demand, they are coldly told that the Prophet's household and worldly comforts cannot go hand in hand. They must make a choice between the two. Does anyone who is a slave of his passions, disregard the wishes of his wives in such a manner? This shows beyond the shadow of a doubt how free the Prophet's heart was of all base and sensual thoughts. He is prepared to lose all his wives rather than yield to what he regards as unworthy of his wives—an inclination towards worldly things. Does it not conclusively show that the object of his marriages was anything but self-indulgence?

It may be questioned what that object could possibly be. The Holy Qur-an answers it thus: "O Prophet! say to your wives: If you desire this world's life and its ornaments, then come, I will give you a provision, and allow you to depart a goodly departing. And if you (the Prophet's wives) desire Allah and his Apostle and the latter abode, then surely Allah has prepared for the doers of good among you a mighty reward. And keep in mind what is recited in your houses of the communications of Allah and of the wisdom." ¹

¹ Ch. 33; vv. 28-29, 34.

Thus, it has been clearly set forth here that the Prophet's household was not the place for ministering to carnal cravings. The object was far more sublime—the preservation of what they heard and learnt through their frequent association with the Prophet for the benefit of mankind in general, and their own sex in particular. Hence they were required to spurn at all the charms of this life, and attend heart and soul to the fulfilment of the real object. What a lofty object! There are a hundred-and-one morals of a man that do not find manifestation but in relation to the fair sex. Again, there are certain points of Islamic law which appertain to the female sex exclusively, and cannot find promulgation but through members of the same sex. In order that the world might not be deprived of those sayings and doings that could only find expression in the household, and in order that these things might be handed down to posterity, it was assigned to the Prophet's wives to watch all they heard or saw, and communicate the same to others. Thus the Prophet's marriages were intended as a means towards the realization of a religious object of great importance. There is many a point in Islamic code which the

Prophet could not explain to women direct. He could do it through his wives. Traditions record many instances of women asking information on particular matters pertaining to their sex, and the Prophet referring them to some one of his wives who would give them the necessary information. Again, quite a lot of the Prophet's moral conceptions which could be brought into play only within the family circle have come down to us through his wives. To say that a single woman could do that is to overestimate the capacity of human memory. Persons of varied temperaments, and hence of different interests, were needed to duly comprehend and preserve the numerous things that came to their notice. Surely all that would have been far too much for a single human brain to hold. This is also one of the reasons why almost all the great Prophets took more wives than one. This was all the more important in the case of the Last Prophet, in order that his words and deeds should be preserved and handed down in their details; for these were to serve as guidance to mankind for all ages to come. Thus it was a part of Divine wisdom to have so arranged to ensure the preservation of the Prophet's teachings, in

precept as well as in practice.

Though the object of the Prophet's plurality of marriages was what has been stated above, the causes were manifold. The circle of Muslim brotherhood was, at the time, very narrow. The perpetual state of war created disparity between the male and female elements of the society. Husbands having fallen on the field of battle, their widows had to be provided for. But bread and butter is not the only provision needed in such cases, as is supposed by certain short-sighted statesmen. Their sex-requirements must be looked after, otherwise moral corruption would inevitably result, and ultimately lead to the ruin of a whole nation. But a reformer, with whom morals are all in all, could not content himself with making provisions merely for their eating and drinking. The Prophet was jealous of their chastity, far more than of their physical needs. It became, therefore, necessary to sanction polygamy under the the circumstances. This is the reason that the Prophet had to take a number of wives in the Madinite period of his life. We must note that all his wives were either widows or divorced women. Where self-indulgence is the motive the choice seldom falls on widows. Passion

must needs have virginity for its gratification. And there was no dearth of virgins. It would have been an enviable privilege for any Muslim to be the father-in-law of the Prophet. But the object was a far nobler one—the protection of the widows of his friends. Thus as many as five of his wives were such as had lost their husbands on the battlefield or otherwise. How difficult it was in those times to arrange a match for a Muslim woman is amply illustrated by the case of Hafsa, the widowed daughter of a man of 'Umar's influence and position, is known to the students of the history of that period. So in polygamy alone lay the moral safety of the Muslim society situated as it then was.

Again, certain political reasons also led to some of the Prophet's marriages. That with Juwairiya, for instance, resulted in a great blessing. It did not only put an end to the bitter hostility of the Banu Mustaliq, but bound them in a strong tie of friendship to the Muslims. Moreover, as an immediate consequence of this, hundreds of prisoners of that tribe were instantaneously set at large. Was it anything but a religious end? Likewise the Jews were the deadliest enemies of Islam in Arabia. The Prophet attempted to conciliate

them as well by taking a wife from among their nobility. In this case, however, the Jewish malice proved too strong for the conciliatory measures adopted by the Prophet. They persisted in their hostility, and never ceased concocting mischief against Islam. On his own part, however, the Prophet did his utmost to conciliate them. Maimuna was also a widow and came of an alien tribe, though the circumstances that led to her marriage with the Prophet were somewhat different. Her sister was already married to 'Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, and so when she offered her hand to the Prophet, the latter could not refuse it.

The PROPHET'S MARRIAGES

SOME DEEPER ASPECTS

By Maulvi Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad

Much misgiving exists even in the minds of well-meaning people regarding the plurality of marriages that the Prophet contracted during the latter part of his life. In minds, Western and Westernised, that have no experience of polygamy, this creates an unwholesome sensation. And this in spite of the fact that Muslim divines have given very sound arguments to prove that it is unreasonable to ascribe this action of the Propnet to any urge of sensuality. It has been pointed out, for example, that in a country where sexual immorality was at its highest and where maturity was attained at a rather early age, the Prophet lived a spotlessly celibate life till the age of twenty-five; that at that age when he could easily marry the most beautiful virgin of Arabia, he preferred a widow of forty; that with this motherly lady he lived a devoted life for full twenty-five years, and that he thought of polygamy only when he was fifty, when the heat of youth had altogether gone. It has also been pointed

out that his life in polygamy was as ascetic as before it, thus ruling out all possibilities of self-indulgence. A man who spends most of his nights in prayers and vigils and most of his days in semi-starvation cannot be regarded as enjoying his polygamous life from the sensual point of view. But even strong arguments such as these leave some minds still unsatisfied. And it is no use avoiding the issue just for the sake of modesty. Modesty in the old sense in matters of sex does not exist in modern minds. And religious preachers have to face the situation as it is or else they will fail to carry conviction to minds otherwise well-disposed with regard to certain vital questions of religion. They should lose no time in bringing in for an open discussion questions that are agitating many minds even if convention frowns at such a discussion. True religious leaders do not stand in need of any misty hallow of sanctity ; they, on the other hand, invite with a challenge all scientific criticism of their own personalities. Prophet Muhammad, as a true religious leader, is not afraid of any scientific criticism, however severe and exacting it may be. I, therefore, propose to raise one by one all those misgivings that lurk in many minds

with regard to the Prophet's marriages and resolve them by an open discussion. To begin with, there is really nothing to thrill in a plurality of marriages. The thrill, if it at all comes, is a very short-lived one. By an analysis of the relevant psychology we can easily understand that the real thrill of the company of a second-woman lies in the idea of its sinfulness. The commandment "Do not covet your neighbour's wife" has its foundation in this vicious tendency in man. A married wife, however beautiful, charming and attractive, lacks the attraction of a commonplace woman with whom one is not legally married. The thrill of sin is eternal in all unredeemed souls, and in this age almost all of us are unredeemed. Once we understand this important aspect of human psychology, more than half of our misgivings regarding the Prophet's polygamous marriages and regarding all polygamous marriages for that matter, will vanish. One may, however, object here by saying that if an open door is left for divorce and one is allowed to divorce a woman as soon as she becomes stale, even the short-lived thrill of having new women as wives may be perpetuated. There is force in this argument. But it is exactly here that the Qur'an and the

Prophet's example acquit themselves admirably. Easy divorce is absolutely banned. The procedure of divorce is an extremely tedious one in the Qur'an. And the Prophet has summarised the whole attitude of Islam towards the question by saying ; "Of all permissible things divorce is most disliked by God." As for his own self the Qur'an gave a still harder ruling. The following verse was revealed in the seventh year of the Hijra, i.e., full three years before his death ;

"It is not allowed to you to take women afterwards, nor that you should change them for other wives though their beauty be pleasing to you" (30 : 52.)

So the Prophet had to retain all those women—all of them widows and divorced wives of others excepting one—whom he married. Although the verse prohibited divorce at a certain point of time, it goes to the credit of the Prophet and the religion he preached that he never divorced any wife even before this. Thus once a woman was married to the Prophet, she continued to be his wife for all times to come. Neither was he allowed to marry a new wife after this. This fact should finally disperse all clouds of doubt that

may gather in people's minds in this connection. As there was no prospect of any change, there was no thrill to be had, the thrill of a fresh wife. Further, as I have said, a woman, as soon as she acquires a permanent legal position as a wife and becomes a fixture so to speak, loses that aspect of her attraction which tickles the imagination of us of this age. Shakespeare is very right when he says that sensuality demands an unlimited supply of fresh food for itself. If one is found, therefore, to put a stop to his desire anywhere, the suspicion of sensuality shall have to be ruled out from an estimate of his character. In the case of the Prophet the stop was placed on his sex life in a twofold way. He was commanded not to marry any further full three years before his death. Even if he had lived up to the age of, say, ninety and even if all his wives had died within a year or two after the revelation of this prohibition order, he was not to marry any more. Considering the case from the human point of view, it was an extremely hard ban that could be placed on a man's sex life. The scientific-minded critic, even if he is hostile to the religion itself, will find ample reason here for rejecting the theory that it was sensuality that prompted the

Prophet to take to a plurality of wives.

A very important fact that is generally missed in understanding the question of sensuality in relation to polygamy is that it is greediness that constitutes sensuality. Just as a man of millions may live a simple life, while a man with very limited means may yet be fond of luxury, similarly a man with one wife can quite possibly be less continent than a man with a plurality of wives. Further, all sobre married men will agree that the keenness of sex urge recedes into the back-ground as other and more serious aspects of conjugal life come into prominence. It is not so much the flesh that holds the two together as co-operation in other duties and obligations, although flesh has some part and a minor part to play all throughout. Very rightly has that veteran missionary of Islam, the late Khwaja Kamalud Din, remarked that the bed is not the best part of conjugal life. This is as true of polygamous life as of monogamous life.

It is the abnormal modern outlook on life that sees in the wife nothing but an incarnation of sex in its gross physical form. In this outlook, greediness of the flesh reigns supreme, a greediness which will not stop short of abso-

lute communism in women, and of gratification at will. As I have said, sensuality can brook no restrictions on itself. So much so that if a man can put a stop to his presumed sensuality at any point, *i. e.*, if he can at any stage of his career cry a halt to his sex gratification, that person cannot reasonably be called a sensual man. We have to find out other grounds for his sex life, monogamous or polygamous. Sensuality and self-control can never go together. The characteristic of sensuality is that it increases as it goes on satisfying itself.

The conception of woman as impersonation of sex is the very basis of real sensuality and constitutes a denial of the soul in her. Islam is violently opposed to such a conception as can be seen from its teachings and laws.

Confronted with the fact that the Prophet lived a spotlessly celibate life till the age of 25 and further lived a life of ideal monogamy for another 25 years in a country where sensuality and debauchery were regarded as the strong man's proud privileges, the sceptical critic would advance the plausible theory that some people may grow sensual towards the end of their life. Such a theory, however, is based on a wrong observation of human nature. The

people who go wrong in this way are those that are really sensual from the very beginning of their lives ; only they do not get an opportunity for an open self-indulgence. Their sensuality waits for opportunity and resources for an open manifestation.

In the case of the Prophet, the opportunity was not lacking even in the beginning of his life. Polygamy, the only latitude that he ever allowed himself, was not at all regarded a sin or a dishonourable act in Arabia, it was rather sanctioned by the sacred traditions of the race. Least of all, he could have married a virgin girl when he first thought of conjugal life. There was no question of repressed desire in this case that could manifest itself in an advanced age. As a matter of fact, his own tribe, in its attempts to dissuade him from his challenging preachings, itself offered him, for a second wife, any one he should care to choose from among the beautiful virgins of the race. His reply was a flat refusal: that shattered once and for all the half-hearted suspicion of the Arabs themselves that the Prophet's agitation could have anything to do with some kind of sex complex. But although the Prophet's contemporary enemies, after a thorough test, were satisfied that his career

had no tinge of sensuality anywhere, their counterparts of the 19th and the 20th centuries of the Christian era would still like to stick to that exploded theory, notwithstanding their lack of first-hand knowledge about his character. The irony of the situation, indeed, could go no further.

The falsity of the theory of the Prophet's sensuality thus proved beyond all doubt, it still remains for us to assign a befitting purpose to his plurality of marriages towards the fag-end of his life. For this we have to go into the deeper aspects of sex life than we have hitherto been familiar with. We have to realize that sex life, like any other self-expression, has its culture and refinement, which like every other refinement needs controlling and regulating of the emotion concerned. I make no apology for saying that sex is devoid of all refinement in our times. It has gone back to its crude manifestation of the Stone Age. The sex manifestation even of the best refined of our times will put to shame even some of the lower species of animal life. Our sex expression has indeed been robbed of all grace and culture that be-seems us as human beings, endowed that we are with reason and spiritual ambitions. And

herein will be revealed the importance of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's life. The Prophet appeared in a country where sex life had degenerated into utmost vulgarism, where nudism was practised on occasions of national fair, in broad day-light and without the least anxiety for privacy. When he left this world he left a whole nation behind, with whom sex life had attained the highest level of purity and refinement that the world had ever seen. I cannot go into the details of the question for fear of disturbing the conventional and senseless idea of modesty that the West has developed. I will content myself with an illustration from another aspect of our life, to suggest the possibility of refinement in a sphere that has been most unfortunately discarded by Christianity as a dirty affair altogether. Let us take the case of eating, an essentially animal need. And yet what a refinement has been introduced in its satisfaction ! Eating is done by the unrefined road-digger, with unwashed hands and face and perhaps with uncleaned mouth, his food placed on a piece of newspaper on the bare ground, where dust and flies are too likely to contaminate it, and he munching it with a sound that may be heard by every passer-by. How

vastly different is this eating with that of a member of the royal family taking his lunch in a room and with plates and other necessary things that are paragons of cleanliness, with a body spotlessly clean and in a manner highly delicate. Both are eating but the refinement creates such a wide gulf between the two acts that they can hardly be regarded as one and the same. Even so there is such a thing as refinement and culture in the satisfaction of the sex urge in man, given which this gross animal need can be elevated to a point where it may contribute to the deeper happiness of our spirit. But the West, so long as it persists in abhorring sex under the spell of Christianity, cannot conceive of the possibility of this refinement in it, with all its clinics and knowledge of Eugenics, and will thus not be able to appreciate the services rendered to this very delicate but essential side of our nature, by Prophet Muhammad. Among the many items of refinement that modern sex life lacks, modesty is one. Devoid of modesty, sex degenerates into an expression of savageness and the married couple, even of 50 years' standing, are as much in need of it as a young man and woman that are just thinking of entering into a wedlock. Sex-expression is

designed by nature to be soft like moonlight. If we force it to assume the character of the glaring rays of the tropical sun, it is bound to scorch our mind and soul. Control and moderation should mark every step of the expression of this most unruly emotion in man. Refinement and cleanliness should be its unfailing attendants. To what details this can go, can be realized by one who has studied the relevant aspects of the Prophet's instructions.

The Prophet knew that the national character of a people takes its shape from the manner of its sex-expression, and hence his anxiety to introduce refinement in this latter. Now in this refined sex life, the woman has to play an equal part with the man. The Prophet, however, had himself to be the instructor for the men as well as for the women followers, and he had his Prophet's dignity and responsibility. Close association of female disciples with a male master has always been fraught with dangers to a cause. The danger becomes all the more glaring if the cause be a religious one. In such a cause, there should be no room even for rumours as was unfortunately the case with a previous teacher of religion—Jesus of Nazareth. The Prophet

being legally married to a few chosen disciples has raised the moral tone of his movement rather than lowering it. In the absence of his regular marriage with these disciples, the question we would have to face today would be not "Why did the Prophet marry so many wives?" but "Why did he keep so many concubines?" Besides, there are certain things which one cannot transmit to others without an intimate personal contact. Further, one or even two women were not enough for the purpose since it involved not only retaining all those numerous details of private life, but also spreading them over the world. All workers in the field know what a difficult task it is to spread wholesome habits of life among the generality of mankind. Considering the traditions of Muslim sex-life spread over the whole world, one can safely say that the Prophet's training was imparted to proper persons, as all these traditions have their source in the wives of Holy Prophet—all credit to them. One of the dangers of the modern Western education among the Muslims is that this glorious tradition is being discarded for a more vulgar approach to sex life, both in its moral as well as in its physical aspects, an unintention-

tional disrespect to the sacred memory of those great benefactors of world womanhood, rightly remembered by the Muslims by the exalted title of the "mothers of the faithful."

Now I proceed to discuss still another aspect of the question, and this will add clarity to what I am trying to convey. It is man that has brought religion to mankind. Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, Ramachandra and Shri Krishna, Zoroaster and Confucius, and Muhammad and all those numerous other founders of religion, both those whose names are found preserved either in history or in traditions and mythology, and those whose names are lost in the course of history, were all persons belonging to the male sex. Wherever a man claims to be spoken to by the Holy God and to be His agent and mouthpiece, men wise and critical, gather round him, anxious to test the truth of his claims and accept him as a guide if the claims prove genuine. Man knows where he needs the power from God, what darkness of his nature, He is to illumine, and what weakness of his character He is to remove by his direct light. Thus, if the claimant is found to possess a character which a direct contact with God alone can vouchsafe, the claims of

the man should be taken to be genuine. The claims may be attended by miracles and signs, but the sign of perfected character, the miracle of rising above all weaknesses of the flesh, is the greatest proof of the veracity of the claims of a person claiming direct contact with God, and indeed the surest of all tests. The first disciples of a true religious personality invariably apply this test to the claims of the master. And it is only when they are fully satisfied in this regard that they offer their all for the new cause which has nothing but opposition from the world at large. / Prophet Muhmmad's first disciples, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali, Talha, Zubair, and numerous others like them who pledged their everything for the new cause, all of them applied this test to his claims, and were satisfied that he showed unmistakable signs of God-contact. But when the woman heard his claims, and even found the wisest men of the realm testifying to the veracity of these claims, she still had her own doubts. No woman has ever been known to have the privilege of being a founder of religion. Man has always brought religion and woman has to accept him and show him due reverence and pay him allegiance from a respectful distant. Nor within histori-

cal period has the woman been able to test the truth of a man's claims of Divine Agentship from close quarters. Both Jesus and Buddha demanded the faith of woman in their claims from a distance that the difference of sex set up. And woman has her own peculiar test to apply to a man in order to be satisfied that his whole being has been really illuminated by the light of God, a transformation without which the claims of Divine Agentship cannot stand. She is privileged to reach the regions of man's character which are inaccessible to a man. And unless she is satisfied therein, she cannot let her soul to be guided and moulded by a man for her spiritual destiny. At least, the intellectual and spiritual womanhood cannot so surrender itself to the guidance of a man on behalf of God. She knows how a man whom man of unquestionable critical observation may pass as a redeemed man, may yet have certain weaknesses lurking in him which can be detected by woman alone. The last remnant of the greed in man, his concealed beastliness, can deceive manhood but not womanhood. So womanhood has rightly her peculiar doubts about the genuineness of a man even when the whole world of manhood is satisfied with regard to

his prophetic claims. And let there be no mistake about it that unless womanhood receives her full satisfaction, it cannot be spiritually redeemed. Whatever Nietzsche might have meant when he said that it was only when man was man enough that he could redeem the womanhood in the woman, his statement can be cent. per cent. correct in this particular sense. To resolve finally the doubts of womanhood with regard to the existence of God and His active interest in the affairs of humanity and its ultimate destiny, is the hardest of all tasks that man has ever attempted. May be that it is because of this difficulty that most of those that try to pass for Godly men keep themselves at a safe distance from the intimate approach of womanhood. But Prophet Muhammad was the manliest of men that have ever tried to reform mankind. He was as much anxious to redeem the woman as he was to redeem the man. He was confident of his own powers. He knew that he could demonstrate even to the shrewdest woman the absence of any greed in his soul. He thus purposely summoned not one woman, who very possibly might be of the believing and uncritical type, but a representative body of women, to come and examine him.

from a close range, where no simulation was possible, and see for themselves if God-realization was not the supreme fact in his life. He so invited them in order that womanhood through them might be redeemed through a perfected faith in the revelation of God.

The women whom he so invited were not slow to understand the purpose of their relation with him. The shrewdest and most youthful of them, Ayisha, has a telling evidence to give on the subject. It is recorded in Bukhari that, asked about the Prophet's conduct during a certain kind of illness of his wives, Ayisha related that he used to be in close contact with them and significantly added, "Who is there among you who has so much control over his self as the Prophet had over his?" It is remarkable that the same observation is related of another wife of the Prophet—Maimuna.

This is no small matter. The woman has an intuitive knowledge of the weakness of man in a certain matter and the woman's instinct, it is agreed, is very strong indeed in certain things. All those women, therefore, that came to the Prophet as his wives, no doubt they came with a regard due to a religious personality, but they had all the same their traditional conception of

man which had a good margin for the peculiar weakness which the best of men betray in his intimate relation with the opposite sex. They had, no doubt, an extraordinary measure of devoutness and sincerity for religion, but this was nothing compared to what they experienced after their experiences with the Prophet.

A new moral universe, so to speak, opened before them as they came to know a person in whom God-realization had removed the last shred of greediness, which, in the judgment of universal womanhood, man was incapable of shedding. Thus, womanhood was religiously redeemed as never before. The religious experience that came to it through this channel was unprecedented in the religious history of mankind. The wives of the Prophet were, so to speak, a jury sitting in judgment on behalf of world-womanhood on the sex life of the Prophet and privileged to witness a new manifestation of human religious character. The impression which they so received went down to the very depths of their consciousness and brought redemption to womanhood in the most absolute sense of the term. From the ordinary womanhood of the then Arabia they rose to the highest levels of human conscious-

ness. They came to constitute a band of saintly figures after the death of the Prophet the like of which world had never seen before. The increasing material prosperity of Islam brought immense wealth at the feet of these "mothers of the faithful," but the end of each day would find them penniless, as a result of their unbounded charity. Owners of no mean wealth, they still considered barley-bread a luxury, that it was in the days of their Prophet husband and denied themselves all worldly comforts. They spent their days in charitable works and in the discussion of the Book of God and His Prophet and their nights in silent devotions to the Lord of life and existence.

Prophet Jesus is reported to have said that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. It may or may not be a true statement to make, but it will be absolutely true to say that the impossibility is greater in the case of a woman rising above the attractions of wealth and comfort. It was, therefore, nothing short of a miracle for the Prophet to have so entirely changed the nature of so many women at a time. Some of them were quite young when they became widows.

and lived up to the ripe old age of eighty, but they ended their lives in the same way as they had begun it, in eschewing everything that might be called worldliness and in applying themselves heart and soul to the remembrance of God and His revealed words. Such a redemption was possible only by the impact of the Prophet's self-effaced, flesh-subdued personality on their character. The Prophet thus created a tradition of womanhood which was unknown to the world before. This tradition, in spite of many disturbances in the course of history, continues to our own days, when it seems to be imperilled by the inroads of Westernism,

But just as the living personality of the Prophet and the living word of the Qur-an have survived all the mortal blows of the West and to-day, in their turn, hope to lend it a helping hand in the midst of its difficulties, the glorious traditions of redeemed womanhood established by the Prophet's wives will also survive its trial and stand up boldly in the world in the not very distant future to save dissipated womanhood, whose plight has its origin in the lewd conception of sex, persistently preached by the Christian West.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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