



The Reasons of the Prohibition of the Marriage of the Prophet's Wives after his Demise

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Abstract

Describing the status of the Prophet's (PBUH) wives as Nisā al-nabī (نساء النبي), the Holy Qur'ān considered their remarriage after the Holy Prophet (PBUH) as tormenting, and severely forbids it. The present study aims to examine the reasons of the Prohibition of the marriage of the Prophet's (PBUH) wives after his demise, and explain the philosophy behind this decree of God based on Qur'ānic, narratives, and historical, social and intellectual reasons. In this study, the data were collected through a library research method and were analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method. The detailed study of the data indicated that those willing to marry the Prophet's (PBUH) wives did not respect dignity and status of the Prophet's (PBUH). In addition, after marrying the Prophet's (PBUH) wives, they could politically, socially, morally, and theologically abuse their status out of selfishness and adventure. Therefore, in addition to preserving the Prohibition of the prophecy, Qur'ān limited the possibility of personal identification of some people through affinity with the Prophet (PBUH) and prevented the possible slips. Moreover, his wives' denial of getting divorced after the elevation of the Qur'ānic verse 33: 53, indicates their self-sacrifice, appreciating the honor of continuing their marriage to the Prophet (PBUH) as well as maintaining the spiritual achievements of their matrimonial lives.

Keywords: *The Prophet Muḥammad; Nisā Al-Nabī; The Prohibition of the Marriage, The Qur'ānic Verse 33: 53*

Introduction

One of the decrees of God regarding the household of the prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) is the issue of his wives' remarriage after his demise, which was forbidden by the revelation of the Qur'ānic

verse 33: 53 which says: " وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَنْ تُنكِحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا " (*You may not torment the Apostle of Allāh, nor may you ever marry his wives after him*), the content of which relates to the Prohibition of the marriage of the prophet's (PBUH) wives after his demise. This verse prohibited the prophet's (PBUH) wives from getting remarried.

The present article aims to examine the reasons of the Prohibition of the marriage of the Prophet's (PBUH) wives after his demise, and explain why God has issued such a decree, while it would lead to their not having any source of income, mate and spouse, as well as losing the chance of having children, and so forth.

The purpose of this study is to explain the reasons of the Prohibition of the marriage of the Prophet's (PBUH) wives after his demise by examining the commentaries of the Holy Qur'ān, the narratives of the infallibles and the report of the historians about the prophet Muḥammad's (PBUH) practical conduct (*sīrah*).

Reviewing the related literature, researcher found no extensive, and independent study conducted on this subject. There are only a few references to it in some commentaries (e.g. Al-Qurtabī, 1418/1998, Vol. 8, p. 310; Makārim, 1388/1968, vol. 17, p 406, Suyutī, 1414/1994, p. 176; Ṭabātabā'ei, 1393/1973, vol. 16, p. 337; Ṭabarsī, 1415/1995, vol. 6, P. 455) and some historical writings (e.g., Subhānī, 1424/2003, vol. 7, p. 403; Olyanasab, 1438/2017, p. 261). Therefore, this innovative study extensively focuses on the Prohibition of the marriage of the Prophet's (PBUH) wives after his demise.

The Philosophy of the Prohibition of the Marriage of the Prophet's (PBUH) Wives after His Demise

1. Narrative Reasons

A. *Qur'ānic prohibition of marrying the prophet's (PBUH) wives*

The Quran says:

" وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَنْ تُنكِحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا (33:53)

You may not torment the Apostle of Allah, nor may you ever marry his wives after him. Indeed, that would be a grave [matter] with Allah.

A basic condition in any marriage is the consent of the two parties. In other words, both man and woman must be willing to marry. The same was true about the prophet's (PBUH) wives. So they married him willingly. With the revelation of the given verse, they could get divorce before the prophet's (PBUH) demise in order to not to be subject to this decree.

The Holy prophet (PBUH) didn't get married before the age of 25 when he married *Khadija*. Their marriage lasted 30 years until *Khadija* passed away. Then, The Holy prophet (PBUH) married a number of Arab women most of whom were widows (Ibn Sa'd, 1418/1998, vo. 8, p. 52). Since marrying widows was not common the Arabs at the time, rather it was conserved kind of taboo, it can be said that one the reasons of such marriage was to promote the good tradition of marrying the widows (Al-Zamakhshari, 1416/1996, vol. 1, p. 274).

Before his prophetic mission (*Bi'that*), human beings were enchained by the oppression and superstition. Most importantly, the freedom and dignity of women were suppressed such that no free will

and value were granted to them. However, after the Holy prophet's (PBUH) *Bi'that*, the real status of the women was realized and the way was paved for the enforcement of their rights.

B. The cause of the revelation of the Qur'ānic verse 33:53 and the narratives prohibiting marrying the Prophet's (PBUH) wives

According to a narrative, once some of the opponents of the Prophet (PBUH) said: "how could the Prophet (PBUH) marry our widows? Swear to God, we will marry his wives after his death." At this time, the above verse was revealed which completely prohibited marrying his (PBUH) wives after his demise and put an end to this conspiracy (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1407/1987, vol. 6, p. 221; al-Baghawī, 1415/1995, vol. 3, p. 541; Ṭabarsī, 1415/1995, vol. 8, p. 252).

Khāzin says: "مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَنْ تُنكِحُوا أَرْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا إِنَّ دَلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا" (33:53) was revealed about one of the prophet's (PBUH) companion who had said: "after the prophet's (PBUH) demise, I will marry Āishā". It is said that he was Ṭalhah ibn Ubaydullāh. And God said it is forbidden and considered as a grave sin. The verse "إِنَّ تُبَدُّوا شَيْئًا أَوْ تُخْفُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا" (33:54) (*Whether you disclose anything or hide it, Allah indeed knows all things*) is also about those who wanted to marry Āishā (Khāzin, 1415/1995, vol. 3, p. 434).¹ Sam'ānī states that "most of the commenters consider him to be Ṭalhah (Olyanasab, 1438/2017, p. 261). Quating Sadī, Muzaffar states: "when Abū Salama and Khanīs ibn ḥadhāqa passed away and the Prophet (PBUH) married their widows (i.e., Ummi Salama and Ḥafṣa, Ṭalhah and Uthmān said: "while Muhammad marries our wives, should not we marry his wives? Swear to God! After his death, we will forcefully take his wives." Ṭalhah wanted to marry Āishā and Uthmān was in love with Ummi Salama. God revealed the following verses: "وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا... " (4:149) (*Whether you disclose a good [deed that you do] or hide it, or excuse an evil [deed], Allah is indeed all-excusing, all-powerful.*), as well as "إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا" (33:57) (*Indeed those who torment Allah and His Apostle are cursed by Allah in the world and the Hereafter, and He has prepared a humiliating punishment for them*) (Muzaffar, 1392; Al-Suyutī, 1414/1994). Eight narratives have narrated this and three narratives have mentioned the name of Ṭalhah (Ibn Muḥkam, 1410/1990, vol. 3, p. 379; Ibn kathīr, 1419/1999, vol. 6, p. 455; Ibn Abī Ḥātam, 1417/1997, vol. 10, p. 3150; Fakhr Rāzī, 1415/1995, vol. 13, cl.25, p. 226; Al-Qurtabī, 1418/1998, vol. 7, cl. 24, p. 207; Tabarī, 1373/1954, vol. 12, cl. 22, p. 50; Wahidī, 1411/1991, p. 374; Samarqandī, 1416/1996, vol. 3, p. 71; Ibn al-Jawzī, 1407/1987, vol. 6, p. 221; Al-Baghawī, 1415/1995, vol. 3, p. 541; Ṭabarsī, 1415/1995, vol. 8, P. 253).

Ibn Abī'l-Ḥadīd (1404/1984) quoted Ibn Kathīr's commentary that "once Ismā'īl ibn Muhammad, son of Imām ṣādiq (AS), had an argument with Qāsim ibn Muhammad, descendant of Ṭalhah. Qāsim said: "our excellence is more than yours! What makes you superior to Banī Hāshim? Perhaps you mean what your grandfather said 'Muhammad forbade use marrying his wives but he himself married our wives. When Muhammad passes away, we will sit among his wives' anklets just as he sat among our wives' anklets". Thus, God revealed the verse 'You may not torment the Apostle of Allah, nor may you ever marry his wives after him.' (33:53). Ibn Abī'l-Ḥadīd (1404/1984, vol. 9, p. 323), Ibn Kathīr (1419/1999, vol. 3, p. 506), Qomī (1412/1992, vol. 2, p. 194), Majlisī (1403/1983, vol. 17, p. 15; vol. 22, p. 172), Huweizī (1415/1995, vol. 5, p. 375), and other reliable historical and narrative resources have mentioned this important subject. Ālūsī and Al-Suyutī also related some narratives in the commentary of the verse (Ālūsī, 1415/1995, vol. 22, p. 74; Al-Suyutī, 1414/1994, vol. 5, p. 179).

According to the culture of the time, even if no decree was revealed regarding permission or Prohibition of marrying the prophet's (PBUH) wives, it was not appropriate for them to utter such words,

¹ It should be mentioned that some commentators did not mention Ṭalhah in their works since they believed in the justice of the companions. Instead, they use expressions such as one of the Quraish dignitaries, one of the companions, one of the Muslims, or a man said. However, many of the sources have mentioned his name (Ṭabarsī, 1415/1995).

since it is an insult and torment to talk about marrying someone's wife after his death, particularly considering the Arabs' zeal of the time, such that they wished their wives die before them so that she could not marry after them (Al-Zamakhshari, 1416/1996, vol. 3, p. 556).

Juybir quote Ibn Abbās:

"During the time of the prophet (PBUH), a man (Ṭalhah) went to one of the wives of the Prophet (PBUH) (Āishā), who was his cousin, and talked to her. The prophet (PBUH) told him: never do it again. The man responded: O Messenger of God! She is my cousin and we did talk about anything forbidden. I did not do any wrong with her, nor did she. The holy prophet replied: I know, but there no one more zealous than God, and after him, I am the most zealous of all. After a while, the man said: the Prophet prohibited me from talking with my cousin. I swear I will marry her (Āishā) after his death. (Ālūsī, 1415/1995, vol. 22, p. 74; Al-Suyūfī, 1414/1994, vol. 5, p. 179).

Accordingly, God revealed the Qur'ānic verse 33:53, forbidding marrying with the Prophet (PBUH). Ṭalhah tormented the Prophet (PBUH) with his words, while the Holy Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا.

Indeed, those who torment Allah and His Apostle are cursed by Allah in the world and the Hereafter, and He has prepared a humiliating punishment for them. (33:57)

According to the above narratives, it can be concluded that the reason why they wanted to marry the Prophet's (PBUH) wives was to torment him. Besides, they were not aware of the status of the Prophet (PBUH). Thus, God prevented them by revealing this verse.

C. History

There are a number of cases in history which prohibit marrying the Prophet's (PBUH) wives. We will have presented only a few of them here.

Once Umar addressed Ṭalhah among the members of the six-member council: "your words at the time of the revelation of Hijāb verse made the prophet annoyed and this caused him to pass away: " *وَلَقَدْ مَاتَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ سَاخِطًا عَلَيْكَ بِالْكَلِمَةِ الَّتِي قُلْتَهَا يَوْمَ أَنْزَلْتُ آيَةَ الْحِجَابِ* (Ibn Abī'l-ḥadīd, 1404/1984, vol. 1, p. 144).

In sum, it should be said that the Holy Qur'ān has prohibited the believers from tormenting the prophet (PBUH). This torment has first been mentioned generally: " *مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ* ", and then, applied to a specific case of annoyance: " *وَلَا أَنْ تُنْكِحُوا زُرُوجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا إِنَّ دَلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا* " (33:53). Indeed, some of the prophet's (PBUH) companions who were also members of "the Ten with Tidings of Paradise" (*العشرة المبشرة*), made the Messenger of God tormented and intended to marry his wives after his demise, and had announced their intentions, while the Holy Qur'ān had already prohibited it.

2. The Reasons of the Wise

A. Respect

The prophet's (PBUH) wives would respect him by not getting remarried.

B. Provision of the material life

Just like anyone else, the prophet's (PBUH) wives would receive a fixed pension from *Bayt al-māl* (بيت المال) so none of them would face any financial problems (Ṭabarī, 1387/1954, vol. 3, p. 614; 1389, vol. 3, p. 613; Ibn Sa'd, 1418/1998, vol. 3, p. 225). Moreover, there is no historical report about their financial needs. Therefore, his wives were not willing to remarry, and all their needs were met.

C. Preventing the political and social abuses

If it was permissible to marry the prophet's (PBUH) wives after his demise, some could abusively establish a social status by marrying them. In addition, they could distort Islam by claiming that they were aware of the secrets of his household, teachings and ideology. Even the hypocrites could spread different news against the prophet. To prevent these and to strengthen the foundation of Islam, God called the prophet's (PBUH) wives as "*Mother of the believers*" (*Umm al-mu'minīn*) to show marrying them is like marrying one's own mother!

This danger becomes more palpable when we understand that some had prepared themselves to do so; some of them even had uttered their intention, and some, such as Ṭalhah and Uthmān, had it at their hearts (Al-Qurtabī, 1418/1998, Vol. 8, p. 310).

Due to their relation to the prophet and the order of Qur'ān, the prophet's (PBUH) wives were specially respected. Therefore, their tendency toward anything affected the tendency of the public. In order to prevent the possible political misuse on the part of their husbands, Qur'ān prohibited marrying them after the prophet's (PBUH) demise.

Moreover, if the hypocrites or the wicked married the prophet's (PBUH) wives and had children, they could abuse the verses on the duties of the Muslims towards the children of the prophet such as the following verse: " *و ما أسألكم عليه من أجر إن أجرى إلا على رب العالمين* " (*I do not ask you any reward for it; my reward lies only with the Lord of all the worlds*) (26:109)

Marrying the prophet's (PBUH) wives, one could access the secrets of the prophecy, which could be very attractive for the opportunists and the distorters (Ṭabāṭabā'ei, 1393/1973, vol. 16, p. 16; Makārim, 1388/1968, vol. 17, p. 405-6).

In addition, when Āishā decided to go to Baṣra, Ummi Salama wrote a letter to her to remind her of its danger, saying doing so was like fighting with the successor of the prophet (PBUH) and it is not in favor the Muslims. Āishā responded: "it was a good sermon and advice. But I do not do what you have thought. Two groups of the Muslims have turned to me. I will do anything I could for them. And if I can, I will devote my wealth to it. Peace be upon you" (Ibn Qutaybah, 1410/1990, vol. 1, p. 76; Ibn Abd Rabbih, nd., vol. 2, p. 277; Dīnwarī, 1410/1990, vol. 1, p. 45). In fact, Ummi Salama warned Āishā not to allow for the instinctual and behavioral abuses from the prophet's (PBUH) wives, but Āishā did not take it serious.

Therefore, if the prophet's (PBUH) wives remarried after his demise, it was possible for them to be intellectually and behaviorally abused. It should be mentioned that they already knew that they were not allowed to remarry after the prophet's (PBUH) demise; thus, they could get divorced (33:28), but they did not want to do so.

Therefore, if the Prophet's wives married after him, they could intellectually and behaviorally be abused. They decided to remain continuous their marriage with him and not to lose this honor and virtue at expense of getting the permission of remarrying after his demise.

3. Moral Reasons

Their self-sacrifice because of their marriage to the prophet (PBUH)

The Holy prophet (PBUH) devoted his life to God and Islam. His wives gained great honor living with him. Thus, such honor requires such a sacrifices, i.e., not remarrying after his demise. Accordingly, they were greatly respected and appreciated by the Muslims, and were satisfied with their status. They considered that deprivation, i.e., not being allowed to remarry, far less important than this honor. Therefore, they decided to devote by not marrying after his demise.

4. Social and Theological Reasons

A. Maintaining social respect for the prophet's (PBUH) wives

If his wives did not marry after his demise, their social respect would be maintained.

B. The honor of being the holy prophet's (PBUH) spouse

The honor of being the holy prophet's spouse made them not to remarry after him.

C. Granting a twofold reward to the prophet's (PBUH) wives by God

To show the value of **the prophet's (PBUH) wives**, the Holy Qur'an says: " وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ مِنْكُمْ خَيْرًا فَلْيَأْتِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ نَبِيًّا وَقَبُلْ مِنْ بَرِّهِ إِنَّكَ بِرَأْيِكَ تُنصَرُونَ " (But whoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Apostle and acts righteously, we shall give her a twofold reward, and We hold a noble provision in store for her) (33:31).

The holy prophet's (PBUH) wives preferred otherworldly and spiritual reward before God over fleeting worldly remarriage.

There are specific instructions for the holy prophet's (PBUH) wives in Qur'an: " يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْنُنَّ " (O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women) (33:32). Islam specifically insisted that the prophet's (PBUH) wives, both during his life and after his demise, to stay at their homes. In this regard, there were social and political concerns.

This promise was only granted to the prophet's (PBUH) wives. If any of them got divorced and remarried, she would no longer be granted such a reward.

Conclusion

This paper was an attempt to answer to the following question: why were the holy prophet's (PBUH) wives prohibited from remarriage after his demise? Qur'anic, narrative, historical, social and intellectual reasons showed that Almighty God forbade marrying the holy prophet's (PBUH) wives for ever to maintain the Prohibition of the prophet, prevent the sick-hearted people from any abuse, inhibit any religious distortion by the hypocrites, etc. thus, none his wives were allowed to remarry after him, nor any Muslim could marry them. Being aware of such limitation, all of his wives preferred to stay with him and did not remarry after his demise.

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