

HADRAT HAFSA BINT UMAR (RA)

Even before the announcement of apostleship by the Holy Prophet Hadrat Mohammad (SAW), he was greatly respected by the Quraish tribe and in the whole Arabian Peninsula. The Quraishites were the trustees of the house of Allah i.e. Ka'aba. Many years before the declaration of prophethood by Hadrat Mohammad (SAW), once the whole of the Quraish tribe was busy in reconstruction and renovation of Ka'aba. In the process, every body whether old or young, was participating. Umar bin Khattab was also one of them. Suddenly a messenger came running to him and broke the news that his wife had given birth to a daughter. This daughter was Hafsa. Hafsa who later became the mother of the faithful after her marriage with the Holy Prophet (SAW).

On the declaration of prophethood by Hadrat Mohammad (SAW), the whole of Quraish and Arab society turned against him. Old colleagues, friends, and relatives turned into enemies and people who used to call him *The Honest*, and *The Truthful* now looked for any opportunity to kill him. Umar was also one of those 'daring' persons who had planned to kill the Holy Prophet (SAW). But, as the dawn of a day after a long dark night is inevitable; so was the case with Umar. Soon, Umar embraced Islam and the sword, which was so far thirsty for the blood of the Holy Prophet (SAW), turned into the Holy Prophet's shield. After embracing Islam, Umar, once so hostile to the Holy Prophet (SAW) became a very zealous Muslim, ready to sacrifice anything for the cause of Islam and at the call of the Holy Prophet (SAW). Since Hadrat Umar commanded great respect in Arabian society, a lot of people embraced Islam in those days following her father's footsteps.

Hadrat Hafsa's first marriage took place with Khunais bin Hadhafa. Khunais and Hadrat Hafsa were dedicated followers of Islam. They had decided to stay by the side of the Holy Prophet (SAW) in the face of all hostilities and opposition. Islam had strengthened their bond of love. On the eve of migration, both never faltered. They welcomed this sacrifice and left their homeland for the love of Islam. Migration was not a trivial matter. It was the turning point of history and played a great role in the lives of Muslims. When the life at Makkah was no longer bearable for Muslims, the Holy Prophet (SAW) ordered migration to Madina, and every Muslim, leaving behind their kith and kin, properties, homeland, social affinities, relatives and their past, started for Madina. Hadrat

Hafsa and Hadrat Khunais, were among the migrants. It was the beginning of a new life for both wife and husband. Hadrat Hafsa and Khunais were now soldiers of Islam.

The non-believers and Makkans did not discontinue their hostility even after the migration and chased the Muslims to Madina. Muslims at Madina were not allowed by Makkans to live at peace, until the first battle was fought at Badar (*Badar was the valley where the first battle was fought between Makkans and Madinite Muslims*). After sacrificing money, property, homeland and relatives, now the moment of sacrifice of their lives had come. Hadrat Khunais was no coward and volunteered for the battle as a soldier. He fought in the battle relentlessly. Makkans were astonished to see the bravery of Hadrat Khunais. Khunais received serious injuries in the battle and returned to Madina, victorious and wounded. The wounds proved fatal and he died leaving Hadrat Hafsa as a widow.

A cruel social custom of not marrying the widows existed in those days and Hafsa was bound to become a victim of this custom. Islam stood for the emancipation of women and their equal status with men as enshrined in the Islamic law. Islam insists on the re-marriage of widows. It does not contain or curtail a woman's rights on becoming a widow. Being once widow does not mean that a woman should be neglected or stay with her parents for the rest of her life. Rather it envisages and recommends re-marriage of widows. Neglected and miserable people make a society sick and Islam stands for a healthy society. An Islamic society is not like five separate fingers but like a fist. The grief of one person should be felt by all. If we care to glance over the precedent set by the Holy Prophet (SAW) and its strict compliance in the first forty to fifty years (*The period of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and the four rightly guided caliphs i.e. Hadrat Abu Bakr, Hadrat Umar, Hadrat Othman and Hadrat Ali*); we would come to know that re-marriage of a widow was the rule. It created atmosphere which gave protection to widows and orphans. The Holy Prophet's life is a shining example of this tradition. Except Hadrat Ayesha, all his wives were ex-widows, which shows that the widow deserves a better future. Re-marriage of widows has another reason behind it. Apart from rehabilitation and security against immorality, it helps to produce more Muslim children.

After the death of Hadrat Hafsa's husband, Hadrat Umar became worried about Hadrat Hafsa's re-marriage. The background of her marriage with the Holy Prophet (SAW) is quite interesting. Hadrat Umar wanted to marry her with Hadrat Abu Bakr. He discussed the matter with Hadrat Abu Bakr and solicited his views. Hadrat Abu Bakr kept mum and gave no reply. Hadrat Umar felt unhappy over this re-action of Hadrat Abu Bakr. In the mean time, Ruqqiya the wife of Hadrat Othman and the daughter of the Holy Prophet (SAW), died. Hadrat Umar proposed this match to Hadrat Othman when he was deeply grief stricken. Othman said 'I am not inclined to marriage so early'.

Disappointed Hadrat Umar came to his leader, the Holy Prophet Hadrat Mohammad (SAW) and narrated the whole story. Hadrat Umar and the Holy Prophet (SAW) had a deep loving association. This association had now reached a point where it could be further strengthened. The daughter of Hadrat Abu Bakr was already married to the Holy Prophet (SAW). This blessing was now to be conferred on Hadrat Umar's daughter too. On hearing the story of Hadrat Umar, the Holy Prophet (SAW) said:

"Why not marry Hafsa to a person who is better than Othman, and Othman may get a wife who is better than Hafsa".

The Holy Prophet (SAW) married another of his daughter, Hadrat Kulsoom to Hadrat Othman and himself asked for the hand of Hadrat Hafsa from Hadrat Umar. Thus Hadrat Othman became *Dhun-Noorain* (A person having two lights. This surname was given to Hadrat Othman indicating his marriages with the two daughters of the Holy Prophet (SAW) one after the other), and Hadrat Hafsa became the mother of the faithful. Hadrat Hafsa was married to the Holy Prophet (SAW) in the third year of Hijra. After this marriage Hadrat Abu Bakr met Hadrat Umar and said:

"Do not be angry with me. The Holy Prophet (SAW) had already showed his inclination of marrying Hafsa and I could not disclose it before hand, so I kept quiet. Had I not known the Prophet's inclination I would have certainly accepted your proposal".

This explanation cleared the misunderstanding of Hadrat Umar. The most interesting thing in the details of this incident is that it was destined for Hadrat Hafsa to be the mother of the faithful, so it happened accordingly despite best efforts of Hadrat Umar for marrying her to others. Hadrat Hafsa enjoyed a very successful and happy life thereafter.

All the wives of the Holy Prophet have one or two famous incidents to their credit which were later reported in the Hadith. Likewise, some holy verses of Quran are also attributed to have been revealed to the Holy Prophet (SAW) because of his wives. Some verses stand for admonishing the wives of the Holy Prophet (SAW) for a certain act and some verses relate to giving explanation of certain act of a wife.

The Incident of Tehreem:

The Holy Prophet Hadrat Mohammad (SAW) usually visited his wives after Asar (*Asar prayer is offered in the later afternoon*) prayers. Once, he visited Hadrat Zainab who presented some honey to the Holy Prophet. While eating honey and in conversation he spent a little more time with Hadrat Zainab than usual. This prolonged stay with Hadrat Zainab, created some envious feeling in Hadrat

Ayesha. She inquired from some body about the reason of the Holy Prophet's delay and came to know that some woman and sent honey to Hadrat Zainab and that honey caused the delay. Hadrat Ayesha took Hadrat Hafsa into confidence and planned to tell the Prophet, that his breath is giving the smell of Maghafeer (*A kind of flower having pungent odour, commonly sucked by Urfat, Arabian honey bees*) flowers. The honey bee called 'Urfat' mostly sucks the flowers of Maghafeer and the honey gives its smell.

When the Holy Prophet (SAW) visited Hadrat Hafsa's place after Hadrat Zainab, Hadrat Hasfa pointed out to the Holy Prophet (SAW), as pre-planned that his breath is giving the smell of Maghafeer. Later same was repeated by Hadrat Ayesha. The Holy Prophet (SAW) felt regretted on taking the honey at Hadrat Zainab's place. After a few days when he visited Hadrat Zainab again, she asked as usual if he would like to have honey. The Holy Prophet said, "No! I have decided never to eat honey for the rest of my life". Immediately after this pledge, the following holy verses were revealed to the Holy Prophet (SAW), which are now a part of *Surah Tehreem* (*A chapter of the Holy Quran is called Surah. Quran comprises of 114 Surahs*) in the Holy Quran:

"O Prophet, why do you forbid a thing for your self, just to please your wives, which has been allowed to you by Allah".

This incident is known as the incident of *Tehreem*. A few days later, Hadrat Hafsa again committed a mistake and Allah mentioned that incident too in the Holy Quran. The background of that incident was that once the Holy Prophet (SAW) told something to Hadrat Hafsa in confidence. But she could not hold it and disclosed it to Hadrat Ayesha. The Holy Prophet (SAW) was not aware of it, however he was informed of it through revelation by Allah. Following were the verses of Surah Tehreem revealed to the Holy Prophet (SAW).

"And when Prophet said some thing in confidence to one of his wives, it was disclosed (by her). And Allah broke this news to the Holy Prophet (SAW). The Prophet said a part of it and left a part. Then, they (the wives of the Holy Prophet) asked, him who told him about that and the Holy Prophet (SAW) said, "I have been informed by Allah, Who is All Knowing and All-Aware."

Now such a situation was created, which might have led to domestic problems and the Holy Prophet's displeasure; so Hadrat Ayesha and Hadrat Hafsa consulted each other and wanted to correct the course of events. On this the following verses were revealed to the Holy Prophet by Allah:

"If both of you return repentantly to Allah, for your hearts are on the fault, it is better for you. And if you adopt a wrong course and unite against the Holy Prophet (SAW), then be known that with him is Allah, Gabriel, righteous among the believers, furthermore angels are also his supporters and defenders".

This holy verse conveys the implicit meaning that the wives of the Holy Prophet (SAW) were ordinary human beings and could commit mistakes. Only a Prophet is immune to committing mistakes. And if a mistake was committed by a wife of the Holy Prophet (SAW), Allah warned them to desist. The rationale behind it was to make the wives of the Holy Prophet (SAW) a perfect example for the Muslim Ummah (*The word Ummah stands for the Muslim community from the dawn of Islam to eternity*) for all the times to come. Hence the wives of the Holy Prophet (SAW) were warned to be careful even if they committed minor mistakes.

Hadrat Hafsa had deep religious knowledge and was always eager for further learning. Her religious knowledge can be assessed by one incident when the Prophet said:

"I hope the people who participated in Badar (*Battle fought between Makkans and Madinite Muslims*) and Hudaibiya (*A place where peace treaty between Makkans and Muslims and Madina was signed*) will not be condemned to Hell in Hereafter".

Immediately, Hadrat Hafsa made a query:

"O, Prophet of Allah, how is it possible; Because Allah says that every one of us will have the experience of Hell, at least once, in the next life".

And then she recited the following verse from Quran:

"And then We will salvage the pious people and leave the cruel fallen on their knees".

This verse substantiated Hadrat Hafsa's view point. Such was her understanding and insight in religion that compelled her contemporaries to visit her for learning religion and its teachings. Hadrat Abdullah bin Umar, Hamza bin Abdullah, Haris bin Obaiy, Abdur Rehman bin Haris, Safia bint-e-Abi Ubaida, and Umm-e-Maisher Ansaria are among her pupils in religious knowledge.

Hadrat Hafsa has reported sixty traditions (Ahadith), that she heard either direct from the Holy Prophet (SAW) or from her father Hadrat Umar. Apart from these qualities she was a pious lady. She strictly followed the teachings of Islam in letter and spirit. Sometimes, she prayed the whole night. She was an early riser in the morning for *Fajar* (morning) prayers. During her old age and while suffering from failing health, she used to fast regularly.

Hadrat Ayesha and Hadrat Hafsa had great love for each other and shared many experiences together. Jealousy sometimes arose between the two wives, but there was no lasting bitterness between them. Hadrat Hafsa was quite stubborn and had a bit hot temper. Hadrat Ayesha said;

"Hafsa was just like her father. Constancy was Umar's overwhelming characteristic, and same was true about Hafsa".

On certain occasions Hadrat Hafsa spoke harshly to the Holy Prophet (SAW). One such instance has been reported by Hadrat Umar as follows:

“In pre-Islamic days, women were used to be looked down upon. One day I was busy in some task and my wife intervened. I became angry and rebuked her that she had no business to interfere in such matters. My wife said: “You do not like my interruption and your daughter Hafsa loses her temper even with the Holy Prophet (SAW)”. Hearing this, I went to Hafsa and inquired about the matter. She confessed that it had happened so many times. I warned her to be careful in future; otherwise she might invite the wrath of Allah”.

Her short temper never touched the boundaries of insolence, rudeness or arrogance. She lived a virtuous life. She died, 35 years after the Holy Prophet and was buried at *Jannat-ul-Baqi'*. May Allah rest her soul in peace.