

# The Slander against Ayesha (RA) (Mother of the Believers) and her Vindication by Allah



This article summarizes the slander that the hypocrites during Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) levied against mother of the believers, Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her). This was an important event in Islamic history that also led the revelation of important verses in Surah Nour in which Allah vindicated her.

Ayesha (RA)) once accompanied the Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) on a campaign and was travelling with a caravan. She accidentally got separated from the caravan during the journey and was stranded in the desert. Safwan bin Mu`attal, who was travelling separately happened to get to the same place where she was and seeing her stranded, brought his camel and made it kneel so that she could ride upon it. Then he set out leading the camel until they caught up with the army. This gave rise not just to suspicion, but allegations against them; with Abdullah bin Ubayy , the leader of the hypocrites, being the foremost in spreading them. He fabricated the lie and whispered it to others, until some of the Muslims started to believe it, and began to talk about their suspicions. As for Ayesha (RA), as she was ill during those days, she did not know about the slander that

the people were indulging in. What upset her when she was ill was that she observed the Prophet's behavior to have changed toward her. On inquiry, when she finally came to know about the slander from another lady, she sought the Prophet's permission and went to her parents' home. She said: *"Rumours about this slander went on spreading in the city for about a month, which caused a great distress and anguish to the Holy Prophet. I cried due to helplessness and my parents were sick with mental agony."*

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The Prophet (ﷺ) remained in great **anxiety** with regard to Aisha (RA) for one whole month. At last one day he (ﷺ) visited her and her parents. He sat near her (which she says he had not done since the slander had started). Feeling that something decisive was going to happen that day, **Abu Bakr** and Umm Ruman (Ayesha (RA)'s parents) also sat near them. The Holy Prophet gently said: *"Ayesha, I have heard this about you. If you are innocent, I expect that **Allah** will declare your innocence. But if you have committed the sin, you should offer repentance, and **ask for Allah's forgiveness; when a servant (of Allah) confesses his guilt and repents, Allah forgives him.**"*

Hearing these words, tears dried in her eyes, as Ayesha (RA) reported. She looked up to her father expecting that he would say something in her defense, but he said, *'Daughter, I do not know what I should say.'* Then she turned to her mother, but she also did not know what to say. At last Ayesha (RA) replied, *"You have all heard something about me and believed it. Now if I say that I am innocent – and Allah is my witness that I am innocent – you will not believe me; and if I confess something which I never did – and Allah knows that I never did it – you will believe me. I cannot but repeat the words which the father of Prophet Yousuf (Joseph)*

*had spoken: 'fa-sabrun jamil': I will bear this patiently with good grace."*

Saying this she lay down thinking that Allah was aware of her innocence, and He would certainly reveal the truth. At that moment, suddenly the state of receiving the Divine Revelation appeared on the Holy Prophet , when pearl-like drops of perspiration used to gather on his face even in severe winter. The revelation vindicated her stand and proved her innocence. When it was over, the Prophet (F+ﷺ) was overjoyed. The first words he spoke were: *"Congratulations, Ayesha (RA), Allah has sent down proof of your innocence"*, and then he recited the following ten verses of Sura An-Noor that had her vindication:

Verily those who brought forth the slander (against 'Aishah) are a group among you. Consider it not a bad thing for you. Nay, it is good for you. Unto every man among them will be paid that which he had earned of the sin, and as for him among them who had the greater share therein, his will be a great torment. (11). Why then, did not the believers, men and women, when you heard it (the slander), think good of their own people and say: "This (charge) is an obvious lie?" (12) Why did they not produce four witnesses? Since they (the slanderers) have not produced witnesses! Then with Allah they are the liars. (13) Had it not been for the Grace of Allah and His Mercy unto you in this world and in the Hereafter, a great torment would have touched you for that whereof you had spoken. (14) When you were propagating it with your tongues, and uttering

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنكُمْ لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُم بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لِّكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَا أَكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾  
 لَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٢﴾  
 لَوْلَا جَاءَهُ وَعَلَيْهِ بَازِعَةٌ شَهَادَةٌ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشَّهَادَةِ فَأُولَئِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٣﴾  
 وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَا أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾  
 إِذْ تَلَقَوْهُ بِاللَّيْنِ تَكْرِؤًا يُفَوِّهُمَ مَا لَيْسَ لَكُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾  
 وَلَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ قُلْتُمْ مَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَتَكَلَّمَ بِهَذَا سُبْحَانَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٦﴾  
 يَعِظُكُمُ اللَّهُ أَنْ تَعُودُوا لِمِثْلِهِ أَبَدًا إِن كُنتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧﴾  
 أَوْسَيْنِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾  
 إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾  
 وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ زَوْقٌ رَّجِيمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾  
 ﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوبَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ خُطُوبَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَإِنَّهُ يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَا مِنكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُزَكِّي مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢١﴾

with your mouths that  
whereof you had no  
knowledge, you counted  
it a little thing, while  
with Allah it was very  
great. (15)

And why did you not,  
when you heard it, say:  
“It is not right for us to  
speak of this. Glory be to  
You (O Allah)! This is a  
great lie.” (16)

Allah forbids you from it  
and warns you not to  
repeat the like of it  
forever, if you are  
believers. (17)

And Allah makes the  
Ayat (proofs, evidence,  
verses, lessons, signs,  
revelations, etc.) plain to  
you, and Allah is All-  
Knowing, All-Wise. (18)

Verily, those who like  
that (the crime of) illegal  
sexual intercourse should  
be propagated among  
those who believe, they  
will have a painful  
torment in this world and  
in the Hereafter. And  
Allah knows and you  
know not. (19)

And had it not been for  
the Grace of Allah and  
His Mercy on you,  
(Allah would have  
hastened the punishment  
upon you). And that  
Allah is full of Kindness,

Most Merciful. (20)  
O you who believe!  
Follow not the footsteps  
of Shaitan (Satan). And  
whosoever follows the  
footsteps of Shaitan  
(Satan), then, verily he  
commands Al-Fahsha  
[i.e. to commit  
indecent (illegal sexual  
intercourse)], and Al-  
Munkar [disbelief and  
polytheism (i.e. to do  
evil and wicked deeds;  
and to speak or to do  
what is forbidden in  
Islam)]. And had it not  
been for the Grace of  
Allah and His Mercy on  
you, not one of you  
would ever have been  
pure from sins. But  
Allah purifies (guides  
to Islam) whom He  
wills, and Allah is All-  
Hearer, All-Knower.  
(21)  
(Quran, *Sura An-Noor:11-21*).

## Lessons that we can learn

This event provided many key lessons. Let's review some of them below.

### 1. The Prophet's ordeal and challenge until the verses were revealed

The Prophet (ﷺ) conduct and attitude proved beyond any doubt his moral purity, nobility, fairness, tolerance and forbearance. If he had wished, he could have punished the people responsible for the attack severely. But he bore everything with patience until the Divine injunction came down from Allah. Later, he enforced the punishment only on those three Muslims whose guilt was established, and spared the hypocrites who were responsible for spreading the mischief.

### 2. Perseverance of Ayesha (RA) and her reaction after the fact was known

The incident also highlights Ayesha (RA)'s magnanimity. She did not allow the slander against her to color her judgment of the people circulating it. Hassan bin Thabit had played a prominent role in the campaign of slander against her, yet she continued to treat him with due honor and esteem. When people reminded her that he was the man who had slandered her, she replied, *'...he it was who used to rebut the anti-Islamic poets on behalf of the Holy Prophet and Islam'*, and thus she acknowledged his service to Islam more than his role in her slander. Thus, she didn't allow the dictates of her ego to supersede her objective judgment.

### 3. Ayesha (RA)'s family's response

Abu Bakr and his family responded to the slander against their daughter with dignified silence in spite of being convinced of their daughter's moral character and the falsity of the accusation. Abu Bakr's own relative, Mistah bin Uthatha, whose whole family he had supported all along, continued heaping disgrace on Abu Bakr (RA) publicly, yet Abu Bakr (RA) neither severed his family relations with him nor stopped monetary help to him and his family.

After the revelation of verses 11-21 of Surah Nour absolving her from the accusation, Abu Bakr swore that he would no longer support Mistah bin Uthatha. This was because the man had shown no regard for the relationship nor for the favors that Abu Bakr had all along been showing him and his family. At this verse 22 of Surah Noor was revealed:

And let not those among you who are blessed with graces and wealth swear not to give (any sort of help) to their kinsmen, Al-

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُو الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

Masakin (the poor), and those who left their homes for Allah's Cause. Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

***(Quran, Sura An-Noor:11-22).***

On hearing this verse, Abu Bakr immediately said: *“By God! We do want that Allah should forgive us.”* And he again started helping Mistah in a more liberal manner than before. His example was followed by some other companions who had also sworn that they would discontinue helping those who had taken an active part in the slander. All of them revoked their oaths, wiping out the ill-will that had been created by the mischief.

#### **4. The response of the other wives of the Prophet (ﷺ)**

Despite the jealousy that existed in the hearts of some of the other wives of the prophet, none of them took the least part in the slander nor even expressed the slightest approval of it. Even Zainab, for whose sake her real sister, Hamnah bint Jahsh, was taking part in the slander, did not utter anything about her rival (Ayesha (RA)) except good words. According to Ayesha (RA) herself: *“Zainab among the wives of the Holy Prophet was my strongest rival, but when in connection with the incident of the slander, the Holy Prophet asked her opinion of me, she said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, I swear by God that I have perceived nothing in her except piety’.”*

Zainab (RA) depicted an admirable quality in adhering to the truth about Ayesha (RA), refuting the false charge by declaring that she'd seen nothing except good in Ayesha (RA). She did not allow any feelings of jealousy to cloud the truth. By declaring the truth and not staying silent, she prevented any doubts to surface about Ayesha (RA).

#### **5. The evils of slandering**

The incident became the cause of some very important additions to the social law and injunctions of Islam. Through these, the Muslims received Commandments from Allah which ensured that the **Muslim** society could be kept clean and protected against the creation and propagation of moral evils.



لَوْلَا جَاؤُوا عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَاءِ فَأُولَئِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ

**“Why did they not produce four witnesses? Since they (the slanderers) have not produced witnesses! Then with Allah they are the liars.” (Quran, Sura An-Noor:13).**

This verse draws our attention to the fact that none of the accusers had actually witnessed what they were accusing the innocent about. The only basis of the accusation was that Ayesha (RA) had been left behind and Safwan bin Mu`attal had brought her to the camp on his camel.

The general principle laid down was that all dealings in the Islamic society must be based on `good faith. The question of a bad opinion should arise only when there is definite and concrete basis for it. Every person should, as a matter of principle, be considered innocent unless there are sound reasons to hold him guilty or suspect. Every person should be considered as truthful unless there are strong grounds for holding him unreliable.

وَلَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ قُلْتُمْ مَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَتَكَلَّمَ بِهَذَا سُبْحَانَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ

**And why did you not, when you heard it, say: “It is not right for us to speak of this. Glory be to You (O Allah)! This is a great lie.” (24:16).**

Allah (ﷻ) admonishes people regarding their response to the slander. The lady being accused was no other than the wife of the Holy Prophet of Allah, whom every Muslim esteemed higher than his own mother, and whom Allah Himself had forbidden for every Muslim just like his own mother. The man being accused was not only a follower of the same caravan, a soldier of the same army, and an inhabitant of the same city, but also a Muslim, who believed in the lady’s husband to be the Messenger of Allah and his religious leader and guide. He had even followed him and fought in the most dangerous battle at Badr. As such, the slander was an even greater sin.

## 6. The Prophet (ﷺ) had no knowledge of the unseen

The Muslims came to understand that the Holy Prophet had no absolute knowledge of the unseen. He knew from the unseen and other knowledge only that which Allah had taught him. For a month he was upset and would make inquiries from the maid-servant, from his other wives, and sometimes from Ali and Usamah. Had he possessed any knowledge of the unseen, he wouldn't have felt so upset or made inquiries, nor counseled repentance. However, when the Divine Message revealed the truth, he happily received that knowledge and made it known to all. Thus Allah arranged to safeguard the Muslims, through direct experience and observation, against exaggerated notions which people tend to entertain regarding their religious leaders. Perhaps this was the reason why Allah withheld revelation for a month and Allah knows best.

## 7. Trust in Allah and obedience leads to receiving Blessings from Allah

The hypocrites had planned to inflict a defeat on the Muslims on the moral front. But Allah turned this mischief into a means of strength for the Muslims. The incident brought out the best in the conduct and attitude of the Holy Prophet, Abu Bakr and his family, and even other Muslims. Nobility and forbearance stood out as their forte. For example, when Abu Ayyub Ansari's wife mentioned before him the rumors of the slander, he said, *"Mother of Ayyub, if you had been there in place of Aayesha (RA), would you have done that?"* She replied, *"By God, I would never have done it."* Ayyub then said, *"Well, Aayesha (RA) is a much better woman than you. As for myself if I had been in place of Safwan, I could never have entertained such an evil thought and Safwan is a better Muslim than I."* Thus, the result of the mischief engineered by the hypocrites was contrary to what they had planned to achieve, and the Muslims emerged out of this test morally stronger than before.

Eventually we should never forget that truth always prevails and shows itself when Allah's Help is sought and His way is adopted. Anger and vindictiveness rarely leads to any good, which can only be achieved through patience and adherence to the straight path.

**References:** (1) Quran interpretation ([Tafsir](#)) by Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, (2) Tafsir Ibn Kathir