

Fast 20: Night prayers and simple life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad

- In the last Study, the prayers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad were mentioned when he spent between one-third ($\frac{1}{3}$) and two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) of the night in prayer. One of his Companions reported:

The Prophet ﷺ would remain standing in prayer until his feet or calves would become swollen. When he was told about it, he said: “Why should I not be a thankful servant (of Allāh)?” (Bukhari, hadith 1130)

His wife Aishah put it in these words: “...until his feet would become cracked”.

- After the death of the Holy Prophet, ideas derogatory to women began to spread among Muslims. Some of them said that if a man was praying and “a dog, an ass or a woman” passed in front of him, his prayer became null and void. When Aishah heard this, she was infuriated and said: “Do you equate us women with dogs and asses?” And she added as follows about the Holy Prophet’s prayers at home at night:

“I certainly saw the Prophet ﷺ saying prayers and I would be lying on the bed between him and the *Qiblah*. If I needed anything, as I disliked to pass in front of him, I would slip away quietly.” (Bukhari, hadith 508 and 511)

She also described his prayers at night in this way:

“The Prophet ﷺ used to say his prayers while I would be sleeping, lying across (the width of) his bed. When he wanted to say his *Witr* prayer, he would awake me, so I would say my *Witr* prayer.” (Bukhari, hadith 512)

“I used to sleep in front of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and my legs used to be in front of him. When he would go into prostration, he would press me and I would withdraw my legs, and when he would stand up, I would stretch them. There used to be no lamps in houses in those days.” (Bukhari, hadith 513)

- A well-known Companion, and scholar of the Quran, Ibn Abbas, was a small boy during the life of the Holy Prophet. He has described spending a night at the house of his aunt Maimunah with the Holy Prophet. She was a widow who had married the Holy Prophet when she was 51 years of age. He says that the Holy Prophet “slept until half of the night had passed, or a little before it or a little after it” and then woke up. After performing ablution, the Holy Prophet prayed two *rakats* at a time, several times, finishing them with the *Witr* prayer. “Then he lay down until the caller to prayer came to him (for *Fajr*) and he stood up and said two *rakats* of light prayer. Then he went out and said the *Fajr* prayer” (Bukhari, hadith 183).

- These daily habits and style of living of the Holy Prophet are a thorough rebuttal to the allegation that he married several women because he was licentious and a seeker after carnal lust (God forbid). Maulana Muhammad Ali writes:

“It is nothing but a distortion of facts to call such a person a voluptuary, simply because he took certain widows under the shelter of his roof and made them share the honour of partnership with him in matrimonial life. The man who passed half and even two-thirds of the night in prayer and who strenuously worked during the day-time for the all-round welfare of a whole nation, could not possibly have time for the indulgence of his passions. It is also a noteworthy fact that the only thing which kept him awake was a recitation of the Quran, or the glorification of the Divine Being, and it is impossible to fathom the depth of his love for God and his love for the word of God, when it is borne in mind that only the greatest attraction could keep a man awake during the night and enable him to conquer sleep.” (*The Religion of Islam*, ch. Prayer, under ‘The *Tahajjud* prayer’)

- As to what the Holy Prophet did during the day, if he was at home, a Companion relates the following:

I asked Aishah, “What did the Prophet ﷺ do in his house?” She said: “He used to serve the people of his house.” She meant doing work for the people of his house. She added: “And when the prayer time came, he would go out for the prayer.” (Bukhari, hadith 676)

The words translated as “people of his house” can also be translated as “his wife”.

- As regards his eating, his Companions who saw him day and night said:

“The family of Muhammad did not eat sufficiently for any three successive days till he died.” (Bukhari, hadith 5374)

In other words, there were never three days in a row when the Holy Prophet and his family had enough to eat on each of those days. His wife Aishah recalled:

“Till the Prophet ﷺ died, we used to satisfy our hunger with the two black things: dates and water.” (Bukhari, hadith 5383)

- Again, the question may be asked: Since this was undoubtedly how the Holy Prophet Muhammad spent his nights and days, and lived and ate, does it not show that it is **impossible** for him to have been a licentious, sexual pleasure-seeking person (God forbid)? Had he wanted to, he could have easily acquired every comfort and luxury as the head of a community and state.