THE MARRIAGE OF ʿĀISHAH (RA) IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF MAQĀṢID AL-SHARĪʿAH: A HISTORICAL AND NORMATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE OBJECTIVES OF ISLAMIC LAW

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the marriage of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) to Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, emphasizing the historical, normative, and educational dimensions of the event. Modern debates that highlight the issue of ʿĀishah's age often stem from a literalist reading detached from the *maqāṣid*-based context of Islamic law. Through a qualitative literature study of classical sources such as *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*, *al-Muwāfaqāt* by al-Shāṭibī, and *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah al-Islāmiyyah* by Ibn ʿĀshūr, this article finds that the marriage carries broad legal dimensions: the protection of lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), education of the ummah (*taʿlīm al-ummah*), and the formation of Islamic family ethics. Methodologically, this study employs a *maqāṣidī-historical* approach, using qualitative analysis of both texts and the 7th-century Arabian social context. The findings suggest that the marriage of ʿĀishah was not merely a historical fact but a *sharīʿah* instrument for safeguarding moral order and the epistemology of Islamic law. A *maqāṣid*-based understanding helps to avoid ahistorical interpretations while reinforcing the relevance of Islamic family ethics in the modern era.

I. Introduction

The debate over the marriage of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to ʿĀ'ishah RA remains one of the most sensitive issues in modern Islamic studies. This issue frequently emerges in academic discourse, media narratives, and human rights movements, particularly when ʿĀ'ishah RA's age at marriage is interpreted literally without taking into account Islamic historical methodology and the maqāṣid al-sharīʿah (objectives of Islamic law) (Brown, 2006). In the modern context, certain secular circles evaluate this practice according to 20th-century Western moral standards, which consider biological age as an indicator of ethical maturity (Crone, 1987). Such an approach produces methodological distortions by judging a 7th-century event through the lens of anachronistic modern ethics.

Consequently, prophetic narratives rich with spiritual, educational, and legal values are often reduced to defensive apologetic discourse (Esposito, 1998). Within the epistemology of Islamic law, every action of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is not incidental but possesses a *ta'līl* (rationale) and *ḥikmah tashrīʿiyyah* (legislative wisdom) that reflect the moral objectives of the shariʿah (Al-Shatibi, 1997). Al-Shāṭibī, in *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʿah*, asserts that the shariʿah is revealed to safeguard human welfare according to five fundamental principles (*al-ḍarūriyyāt al-khams*): the preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-ʿaql*), lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). These principles serve as the foundation for normative analysis of all practices of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, including his marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA.

The maqāṣid approach provides a rational and methodological framework for understanding the Prophet's marriage not as a private act but as part of the broader Islamic legal and civilizational order (Kamali, 2003). According to Ibn ʿĀshūr, maqāṣid functions as a dynamic mechanism to maintain balance between the revelatory text and human welfare across time (Ibn Ashur, 1946). Through the lens of maqāṣid, Islamic law is not static but functionally oriented toward *taḥqīq al-maṣlaḥah* (the realization of welfare).

In the context of ʿĀ'ishah RA's marriage, this approach reveals multiple dimensions of welfare:

1. **Ḥifẓ al-nasl (protection of lineage)** — preserving the moral continuity and social legitimacy of the prophetic household;
2. **Ḥifẓ al-dīn (preservation of religion)** — through ʿĀ'ishah RA's role as a hadith transmitter, educator, and legal authority preserving the teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ;
3. **Ḥifẓ al-'aql (intellectual development)** — reflected in ʿĀ'ishah RA's contributions to exegesis (*tafsīr*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and the correction of the Companions (Al-Qaradawi, 2004).

The marriage also had a distinctive socio-historical context. In 7th-century Hijaz society, biological age was not the sole indicator of maturity; social measures such as mental readiness and moral responsibility were considered more significant (Jasser, 2008). Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA strengthened the socio-political alliance with Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, his closest companion (Ibn Ashur, 1946). Thus, this marriage encompassed intertwined legal, social, and political dimensions.

Methodologically, understanding this event through the lens of maqāṣid al-sharīʿah enables Muslims to avoid two extremes: historical literalism that freezes the text and moral relativism that negates the authority of revelation (Ibn Ashur, 1946). The maqāṣid approach teaches that Islamic law is oriented toward universal human values rather than mere positive legal texts.

This study aims to analyze the meaning and wisdom behind Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA from the perspective of maqāṣid al-sharīʿah while linking it to the socio-

historical context of Arab society and the relevance of modern Islamic family ethics. The research is expected to provide a more proportionate and scholarly understanding of the relationship between prophetic history and the objectives of Islamic law, while affirming the relevance of maqāṣid as an ethical framework in addressing contemporary moral and social challenges for Muslims (Ibn Qayyim, 1992).

2. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach based on library research, focusing on textual analysis and conceptual interpretation. This method is chosen because the research object is not an empirical phenomenon but rather Islamic legal discourse derived from normative texts and religious history. Such an approach enables the researcher to explore the legal rationale (*ta'līl al-aḥkām*) and the values of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* underlying the marriage of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to ʿĀ'ishah RA (Denzin, 2011).

The qualitative method in this study uses descriptive-interpretative analysis with an emphasis on two main dimensions:

1. **Historical Analysis:** examining the socio-cultural context of 7th-century Arab society, including marriage customs, social structures, and pre-Islamic value systems;
2. **Normative-Maqāṣidī Analysis:** interpreting the objectives of shariʿah based on the theory of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* developed by al-Shāṭibī, Ibn ʿĀshūr, and contemporary elaboration by Jasser Auda (2008) (Al-Shāṭibī, 2008).

By combining these two analytical dimensions, the study seeks to explain how the Prophet's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA can be understood as part of an Islamic legal system aimed at promoting welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), rather than merely a debated historical fact.

Data Sources and Analytical Materials

The primary sources for this research include:

1. **Primary Sources:**
   a. The Qur'an and authentic hadiths related to the household of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (especially in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*);
   b. Classical Islamic works such as *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah* (Ibn Hishām), *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharī'ah* (al-Shāṭibī), *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah* (Ibn ʿĀshūr), and *Zād al-Ma'ād fī Hady Khayr al-'Ibād* (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah).
2. **Secondary Sources:**
   Contemporary literature on *maqāṣid* and Islamic law, including Jasser Auda (*Maqasid al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law*, 2008), Mohammad Hashim Kamali (*Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 2003), and gender-historical studies such as Kecia Ali (*Marriage and Slavery in Early Islam*, 2010) and Leila Ahmed (*Women and Gender in Islam*, 1992) (Kamali, 2008).

Data analysis was conducted through content analysis of these texts by:

1. Identifying *maqāṣid* themes;
2. Categorizing legal and moral values inherent in the Prophet's marriage; and
3. Interpreting the relevance of these values to modern principles of welfare in Islamic law.

Theoretical Framework: Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah

The study is theoretically grounded in the theory of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* developed by al-Shāṭibī in *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharī'ah*. Al-Shāṭibī emphasizes that every shariʿah ruling is purpose-oriented, aiming at human welfare (*taḥqīq al-maṣlaḥah*) and the prevention of harm (*dar'*

al-mafsadah). The five fundamental maqāṣid (*al-ḍarūriyyāt al-khams*)—religion (*dīn*), life (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*), lineage (*nasl*), and property (*māl*)—serve as an evaluative framework for assessing legal policies.

Ibn ʿĀshūr further refined this theory, highlighting that *maqāṣid* function not only as normative instruments but also as dynamic principles guiding the renewal of Islamic law. He differentiates between *maqāṣid 'āmmah* (general objectives) and *maqāṣid khāṣṣah* (specific objectives), directing *ijtihād* to align with the moral spirit of revelation. Within this context, the Prophet's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA reflects specific maqāṣid, including:

1. **Ta'līm al-ummah (education of the community):** through ʿĀ'ishah RA's role as educator and hadith transmitter;
2. **Ta'zīz al-akhlaq (strengthening family morality):** by exemplifying affection and ethical conduct within the Prophet's household;
3. **Taḥqīq al-maṣlaḥah al-'āmmah (realization of public welfare):** through teaching jurisprudence, knowledge, and ethics to the Muslim community.

Contemporary maqāṣid scholarship, particularly by Jasser Auda, extends this concept through systems thinking, positioning *maqāṣid* as a dynamic framework linking text, context, and universal moral values. Auda's approach is crucial for understanding prophetic historical events in the context of globalized ethical perspectives.

Validity and Reliability of Analysis

To ensure interpretive validity, the study employs source triangulation by comparing various classical narratives and scholarly opinions across generations. Textual interpretation considers:

1. *Asbāb al-wurūd* (circumstances of hadith narration) and historical context;
2. Comparisons between classical jurists (*fuqahā*) and modern exegetes (*mufassir*);
3. Conformity with universal maqāṣid principles, such as justice, compassion, and wisdom.

This approach ensures that the analysis is not subjective but integrates textual authority (*naṣṣ*) with the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid*).

Relevance of Theoretical Framework to Research Object

The *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* framework bridges two critical dimensions of this study:

1. **Historicization of the event:** explaining the socio-cultural context of the Prophet's marriage in 7th-century Arab society**;**
2. **Normativity of Islamic law:** identifying universal values underlying the formation of Islamic law and family ethics.

Thus, the theory of *maqāṣid* serves not only as an analytical tool but also as a hermeneutic framework for understanding that the Prophet's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA manifests the objectives of Islamic law: education, protection, and human welfare (*maṣlaḥah insāniyyah*).

3. Results and Discussion

Ḥifẓ al-Nasl (Protection of Lineage and Family Honor)

Within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, the concept of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* is one of the five primary objectives of shariʿah (*al-ḍarūriyyāt al-khams*), aimed at preserving the social and moral continuity of humanity (Al-Shatibi, 1997). Al-Shāṭibī, in *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharī'ah*, explains that Islamic law places great emphasis on the clarity of lineage, family honor, and the legitimacy of marriage as a mechanism to safeguard public welfare (*maṣlaḥah 'āmmah*). Therefore, marriage is not merely a social contract but a moral institution that structures interpersonal relationships within a framework of dignity and responsibility.

In the context of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA, the principle of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* serves a dual function: socially and historically, it strengthens familial alliances between two prominent figures in Islam, namely the Prophet and Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq; normatively, it exemplifies marital ethics grounded in moral virtue rather than personal desire (Ibn Qayyim, 1994). Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (1994), in *Zād al-Maʻād fī Hady Khayr al-ʻIbād*, emphasizes that every marriage of the Prophet contains educational, social, and da'wah dimensions intended to reinforce shariʿah values in society rather than merely fulfilling personal needs.

Historically, the marriage of ʿĀ'ishah RA occurred following a prolonged period of social conflict between Muslims and the Quraysh, where marriage functioned as a means of reconciliation and social stabilization. In pre-Islamic Arab society, kinship ties (*ʻaṣabiyyah*) played a strategic role in maintaining peace and solidarity. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ utilized marriage as an institution to strengthen moral and political networks among the Muslim community. Thus, *ḥifẓ al-nasl* in this context does not only signify the preservation of biological lineage but also the safeguarding of social networks and human values that underpin Islamic civilization.

From an Islamic legal perspective, *ḥifẓ al-nasl* also entails preserving the sanctity of the marital relationship, preventing confusion in lineage, and protecting the dignity of women. ʿĀ'ishah RA became a symbol of familial integrity—a form of *ḥifẓ al-ʻirdh* (protection of honor) closely related to the maqāṣid of lineage (Al-Ghazālī, 2003). Al-Ghazālī, in *Iḥyā' ʻUlūm al-Dīn*, describes marriage as a "fortress for religion and honor," safeguarding humanity from moral corruption.

Moreover, ʿĀ'ishah RA's contributions as a hadith transmitter and educator expanded the meaning of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* into an epistemological realm. She functioned not only as the Prophet's wife but also as a *muhaddithah* and teacher to the next generation of companions. Her role in cultivating communal morality and instructing Islamic family law represents the preservation of knowledge and intellectual lineage characteristic of the Islamic tradition. Consequently, *ḥifẓ al-nasl* encompasses three layers of meaning here: biological (family continuity), social (societal stability), and intellectual (preservation of knowledge and etiquette).

In contemporary maqāṣid thought, Jasser Auda broadens the concept of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* to include the protection of family institutions and human dignity (*karāmah insāniyyah*). He asserts that the objectives of shariʿah are not limited to regulating reproduction but also ensuring the continuity of moral, spiritual, and educational values that nurture a faithful generation (Auda, 2008). Within this framework, the Prophet's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA should be understood not as a personal act but as part of a prophetic strategy to build a just and civil Islamic social order.

Hence, *ḥifẓ al-nasl* in this event symbolizes the integration of law, morality, and society; it balances individual welfare with communal welfare. In *fiqh*, it underpins the strengthening of family ethics, while within the maqāṣid framework, it constitutes a universal principle concerning moral responsibility for the continuity of generations and the preservation of human dignity.

Ḥifẓ al-Dīn (Preservation of Religion)

In the *maqāṣid al-sharīʻah* construct, *ḥifẓ al-dīn* occupies the most fundamental position as the primary objective of shariʿah. Islamic law aims to safeguard the existence of religion, both in terms of ritual practice and knowledge. Al-Shāṭibī, in *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʻah*, emphasizes that preserving religion does not merely mean maintaining outward rituals but also ensuring the continuity of religious knowledge and moral exemplars within social life. In this context, the Prophet's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA carries a strong dimension of *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, as through her, the Prophet's knowledge was authentically transmitted to subsequent generations.

ʿĀ'ishah RA played a central role as a bearer of scholarly authority and a guardian of the isnād (chain of transmission) in Islamic knowledge. She narrated over 2,200 hadiths (Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣābah fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥābah*, 1328 H) and ranked among the seven companions with the highest number of hadith transmissions (*al-mukthirūn min al-riwāyah*). Many of her narrations covered family law, ritual practices, and social ethics—domains only accessible through domestic proximity to the Prophet. This demonstrates that her marriage was not merely a private matter but part of the prophetic scheme to preserve *ta'līm al-ummah* (education of the community) as an expression of *ḥifẓ al-dīn*.

Historically, ʿĀ'ishah RA's role extended beyond that of a personal spouse. She was recognized as a jurist (*faqīhah*), hadith scholar (*muhaddithah*), and exegete (*mufassirah*) who issued legal opinions to companions and the *tābi'īn*. Ibn Sa'd, in *Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, notes that no fewer than 200 male companions and *tābi'īn* approached her to learn hadith and family law. Prominent scholars such as ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr, al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad, and Abū Salamah ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān considered her their principal teacher in matters of ritual and household law.

This scholarly role reinforces the epistemological dimension of *ḥifẓ al-dīn*. Ibn ʿĀshūr (1946) *argues* that preserving religion also entails preserving *ʿilm al-dīn*—the scholarly tradition, interpretation, and teaching of Islamic values to ensure their relevance and vitality in society (Ibn ʿĀshūr, 1946). Thus, ʿĀ'ishah RA's active engagement in legal discourse realizes *maqasid ta'līm al-ummah* (education of the community) and *tabyīn al-sharī'ah* (clarification of shariʿah).

Furthermore, ʿĀ'ishah RA acted as a guardian of hadith authenticity. In some narrations, she rejected or *corrected* reports contradicting the maqāṣid and prophetic ethics. For instance, when hearing a narration that the Prophet saw God directly, she firmly rejected it based on Qur'an, Surah al-An'ām:103, and the principle of Allah's transcendence (*tanzīh*) over physical attributes (al-Zarkashī, *al-Ijābah li-Irād mā Istadrakathu 'Āishah 'alā al-Ṣaḥābah*, 1980) (Al-Zarkashī, 1980). Her critical and methodological stance demonstrates that she not only preserved religious texts but also safeguarded their epistemological integrity.

From a maqāṣid *perspective*, such a role represents the highest form of *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, encompassing the continuity of rationality and moral values within religion. Al-Shāṭibī asserts that religion cannot be upheld without knowledge and ethics, which serve to preserve the welfare of religion (*maṣlaḥah al-dīn*) and enlighten the community (al-Shāṭibī, 1997, Vol. II, pp. 28–31). Therefore, ʿĀ'ishah RA's contribution as a female scholar is integral to the maqāṣid of shariʿah, which requires the preservation of knowledge and justice values.

In contemporary terms, Jasser Auda extends *ḥifẓ al-dīn* beyond ritual maintenance to include the development of spiritual and moral awareness that liberates the individual. He asserts that *maqāṣid* protect *religion* from two extremes: textual formalism that neglects *maqāṣid*, and modern relativism that separates religion from public morality. In this regard, ʿĀ'ishah RA exemplifies the balance between textual authority and ethical rationality, tradition and renewal.

From the perspective of Islamic law, *ḥifẓ al-dīn* as represented by ʿĀ'ishah RA demonstrates that women possess *full* legitimacy in the development of Islamic law and knowledge. This aligns with the spirit of *al-'adl wa al-musāwah* (justice and equality), the essence of maqāṣid according to Ibn ʿĀshūr and Auda. Thus, the Prophet's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA served not only to preserve the continuity of religious teachings but also to uphold the maqāṣid of knowledge and justice as pillars of Islamic law.

Ḥifẓ al-'Aql (Protection of Intellect and Rationality)

Within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, the concept of *ḥifẓ al-'aql* (protection of intellect) occupies a strategic position as a means to preserve human rational capacity, enabling comprehension of divine revelation, evaluation of *maṣlaḥah* (public interest), and prevention of intellectual deviation (Al-Shatibi, 1997). Al-Shāṭibī, in *al-Muwāfaqāt*, emphasizes that reason is a principal instrument in understanding shariʿah (*mafāhīm al-shar'*) and in promoting welfare. Therefore, all forms of education and intellectual development fall within the scope of this maqāṣid. ʿĀ'ishah RA stands as one of the most representative figures of *ḥifẓ al-'aql* in Islamic history. She is renowned for her analytical intelligence, strong memory, and sensitivity to the meanings of revelation. Al-Zarkashī, in *al-Ijābah li-Irād mā Istadrakathu 'Āishah 'alā al-Ṣaḥābah*, documents more than thirty instances in which ʿĀ'ishah corrected other companions in matters of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, and *fiqh*. For example, she rejected interpretations potentially contradicting the moral principles of the Qur'an, such as when some companions understood the verse *"wa man ya'mal sū'an yujza bih"* (Qur'an 4:123) literally as an absolute punishment; ʿĀ'ishah clarified that the verse conveys a moral-spiritual meaning rather than a purely legalistic one (Al-Zarkashī, 1980). This critical stance demonstrates her excellence in legal reasoning and rational methodology in *tafsīr*.

From a maqāṣid perspective, ʿĀ'ishah RA's intellectual role represents a concrete manifestation of *ḥifẓ al-'aql* oriented toward the development of Islamic legal epistemology. She not only transmitted *ḥadīth* but also interpreted and critiqued them based on context and the overarching principles of shariʿah. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī considers ʿĀ'ishah RA among the companions most adept in legal reasoning (*fiqh al-dīn*), due to her ability to integrate textual sources with the rationality inherent in maqāṣid (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, 1980).

Additionally, ʿĀ'ishah RA played a pivotal role in shaping a participatory and egalitarian intellectual tradition within Islam. Ibn Sa'd, in *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, notes that many male companions, including prominent figures such as Abū Hurayrah, Ibn ʿAbbās, and Anas ibn Mālik, frequently consulted ʿĀ'ishah on legal matters, indicating public recognition of her rational and intellectual authority (Ibn Sa'd, 2003). Hence, *ḥifẓ al-'aql* not only entails safeguarding reason from physical or moral corruption but also dignifying the role of intellect in the pursuit of truth and *ijtihād*.

Historically, the marriage of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ with ʿĀ'ishah RA functioned as an intellectual educational platform under direct prophetic guidance. The Prophet facilitated and honed her reasoning skills through dialogue, answering her questions, and even allowing open argumentation. In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, the Prophet is reported to have said: *"Take part of your religious knowledge from Ḥumayrā' (ʿĀ'ishah)"* (no. 3769) (Al-Bukhārī, 1997). This *ḥadīth* legitimizes the prophetic endorsement of female intellectual capacity and affirms *ḥifẓ al-'aql* as a collective responsibility of the Muslim community, devoid of gender bias.

Conceptually, Ibn ʿĀshūr interprets *ḥifẓ al-'aql* not merely as protection from destructive influences but also as ensuring the development of rationality in legal reasoning and methodology. In the context of ʿĀ'ishah RA, this is evident in her engagement in *ta'līl al-aḥkām* (rationalization of legal rulings) and *istinbāṭ al-ma'ānī* (derivation of meanings)—central activities in the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. She expanded the horizon of religious knowledge from textual to substantial understanding, thereby serving as a model of *ḥifẓ al-'aql* in practical *ijtihad (Ibn Ashur, 1946)*.

From a contemporary maqāṣid perspective, Jasser Auda situates *ḥifẓ al-'aql* within the framework of intellectual reform, emphasizing the maintenance of critical, open, and dynamic reasoning. He argues that *safeguarding* the intellect involves liberation from dogmatism, intellectual discrimination, and stagnant thinking (Auda, 2008). Accordingly, ʿĀ'ishah RA's

exemplary status as a highly knowledgeable and rational woman aligns with contemporary maqāṣid *objectives*: fostering an Islamic civilization grounded in knowledge, justice, and freedom of thought.

In summary, the Prophet's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA holds not only spiritual significance but also *functions* as a model for intellectual education and the formation of rationality in Islamic law. Through scholarly interaction, dialogue, and instruction, the Prophet instilled *ḥifẓ al-ʿaql* as an active maqāṣid, nurturing a generation characterized by knowledge, critical thinking, and civility.

Ḥifẓ al-Nafs (Protection of Life and Human Dignity)

Within the structure of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (protection of life) constitutes a foundational principle that affirms Islam's regard for human life and dignity. The primary aim of shariʿah in this dimension is to safeguard the rights to life, security, and honor of every individual without discrimination (Al-Shāṭibī, 1997). Al-Shāṭibī, in *al-Muwāfaqāt*, emphasizes that the shariʿah was revealed to bring about *al-maṣāliḥ* (benefits) and prevent *al-mafāsid* (harm), particularly in matters concerning human life and safety.

In the context of the prophetic household, the principle of *ḥifẓ al-nafs* is realized through the ethical conduct of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ toward his family and those around him. A *ḥadīth* reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim states: *"The Prophet never struck anyone, whether wife or servant, except during jihad in the way of Allah."* This narration indicates that protection of life encompasses not only the physical but also the moral and emotional dimensions. The compassion (*raḥmah*) exhibited by the Prophet is a direct implementation of the maqāṣid concerning protection of human dignity (*ḥifẓ al-nafs wa al-karāmah al-insāniyyah*) (Muslim, 1997).

ʿĀ'ishah RA, as both a witness and participant in the prophetic household, recorded numerous concrete examples of this maqāṣid in practice. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī narrates that the Prophet assisted with household chores, mended his own clothing, and never displayed violence within family interactions. This behavior demonstrates that Islamic law emphasizes *raḥmah* and justice (*ʿadl*), rather than dominance or patriarchy (Al-Bukhārī, 1997). Furthermore, in Sunan Abī Dāwūd, the Prophet stated: *"The best among you is the one who treats his family best, and I am the best among you to my family."* This highlights the normative ethical framework of the household as rooted in compassion and justice (Abū Dāwūd, 2007).

From a maqāṣid perspective, *ḥifẓ al-nafs* not only safeguards individual life but also maintains social harmony as part of public interest (*maṣlaḥah ʿāmmah*). Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, in *Iʿlām al*-Muwaqqiʿīn, emphasizes that any Islamic law contrary to compassion and justice is inherently contrary to the objectives of shariʿah itself (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2000). Consequently, the Prophet's conduct toward ʿĀ'ishah RA exemplifies the implementation of justice and humanity at the core of shariʿah.

Historically, this principle carries significant social implications. Pre-Islamic Arab society was characterized by patriarchal norms and domestic violence that were socially accepted. The presence of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ introduced a transformative moral and legal framework, elevating women from social objects to legal and moral subjects. His marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA exemplifies this ethical reform within the family, emphasizing respect for women's rights and dignity (Mernissi,1991).

Moreover, *ḥifẓ al-nafs* extends to the protection of psychological and emotional well-being. Numerous reports illustrate the Prophet's empathy and gentle communication toward ʿĀ'ishah RA, even during disagreements. For instance, during the event of *ifk* (slander against ʿĀ'ishah), the

Prophet did not immediately accuse her but awaited divine revelation, demonstrating procedural justice and moral protection from social stigma (Al-Bukhari, 2008).

In the context of contemporary Islamic law, the maqāṣid of *ḥifẓ al-nafs* provides a normative foundation for developing family law and safeguarding women. Jasser Auda emphasizes that this principle should inform modern policies such as prevention of domestic violence, equality in marital rights, and ensuring security for all family members (Auda, 2008). Thus, the prophetic ethics in dealing with ʿĀ'ishah RA serve as an ethically relevant model for reforming Islamic law based on humanistic values.

Overall, *ḥifẓ al-nafs* in the prophetic household encompasses more than the prohibition of killing or causing physical harm; it entails a commitment to well-being, compassion, and respect for human dignity. These values constitute the foundational ethics of Islamic law, asserting that protection of life includes physical, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions.

The Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah Approach in Reading the Historical Context and Ethics of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's Marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA

The maqāṣid al-sharī'ah approach in contemporary studies functions as a bridge between normative shariʿah texts and the dynamic realities of society. In the modern context, maqāṣid thought has evolved from merely a theory within uṣūl al-fiqh to an ethical and epistemological paradigm for the reform of Islamic law. This approach rejects narrow legalism that focuses solely on literal texts, asserting instead that Islamic law aims to realize universal human values such as justice, raḥmah (compassion), and maṣlaḥah (public interest) (Auda, 2008).

A contextual understanding of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA provides a concrete example of how maqāṣid can be applied to read historical events proportionally and justly. Literal readings that focus exclusively on age, without considering cultural, social, and legal maqāṣid contexts, risk producing anachronistic bias—assessing the past with modern moral standards that are irrelevant. Conversely, the maqāṣid approach demands analysis based on 'illah (legal reasoning) and ḥikmah (moral purpose) to ensure texts are understood in accordance with the spirit of the shariʿah (Kamali, 2003).

Jasser Auda emphasizes that maqāṣid functions as a "bridge between the revealed texts and the lived reality of the ummah." (Auda, 2008). According to him, Islamic law should be purpose-oriented and context-sensitive because revelation was sent as a mercy for all humanity (raḥmatan lil-'ālamīn). In this sense, maqāṣid is not merely a legal theory but also a social ethical paradigm guiding Muslims to understand shariʿah values holistically.

Contemporary maqāṣid approaches also open space for reinterpreting family, educational, and gender values in Islam. Within the family context, maqāṣid emphasizes the importance of justice ('adl), compassion (raḥmah), and moral responsibility (amānah) as foundations of an Islamic household. In education, maqāṣid serves as a principle for cultivating intellect and morality, exemplified by ʿĀ'ishah RA as a symbol of knowledge, wisdom, and female integrity in Islam (Barlas, 2002).

Furthermore, a maqāṣid understanding contributes to strengthening gender ethics within Islamic law. ʿĀ'ishah RA demonstrated that women are not merely recipients of knowledge but also developers of knowledge and sources of legal authority. From a maqāṣid perspective, this aligns with ḥifẓ al-nafs (protection of life) and ḥifẓ al-'aql (intellectual development), which ensure spiritual and intellectual equality between men and women. Consequently, the maqāṣid approach not only protects women's rights but also restores their epistemological role within the Islamic knowledge system (Mernissi, 1993).

Additionally, the contemporary maqāṣid approach emphasizes that Islamic law must be responsive to contemporary challenges, such as gender-based violence, child marriage, and moral education in the family. This aligns with Mohammad Hashim Kamali's view that maqāṣid functions as a "moral compass" in contemporary ijtihad, aiding scholars in interpreting texts while considering social justice and human rights. Within this framework, the marriage of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to ʿĀ'ishah RA can be understood not as legitimizing a particular social practice but as a source of enduring moral, educational, and humanitarian values.

In the context of globalization, maqāṣid also plays a crucial role in dialogue between Islam and modernity. Wael B. Hallaq explains that maqāṣid provides an epistemological foundation for Islam to remain authentic without rejecting progress (Hallaq, 2007). Through maqāṣid, Islamic law is not static but continually transforms to achieve taḥqīq al-maṣlaḥah (realization of public interest). Therefore, understanding Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA through the maqāṣid lens is not merely historical defense but an affirmation that Islam upholds humanity, justice, and compassion across time.

Thus, the contemporary maqāṣid framework teaches that understanding the history of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ requires not only textual analysis but also ethical and philosophical readings of legal purposes. This approach ensures that Islamic teachings remain relevant, inclusive, and oriented toward human welfare (al-maṣlaḥah al-insāniyyah), reflecting the spirit of maqāṣid as the soul of shariʿah.

Addressing Criticism and Relevance

Some modern critiques, particularly from Orientalist and secular thinkers, often question ʿĀ'ishah RA's age at the time of her marriage to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. These critiques generally assume that her age does not meet modern ethical standards and is therefore viewed as a moral anomaly or violation of universal child rights. However, such perspectives are ahistorical, evaluating a 7th-century event by 20th- or 21st-century social parameters, which differ in anthropological, medical, and legal contexts (Robinson, 2003).

This article addresses these critiques through two maqāṣid-based epistemological approaches:

First, historical context. In pre-Islamic Arab society, biological and social age were not measured by chronological numbers but by signs of maturity (bulūgh), moral responsibility, and social readiness to establish a household. Most anthropologists and Islamic legal historians affirm that early puberty was common due to the climate and nutrition of the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore, marriage at a young age was not considered deviant but consistent with social structure and cultural norms of the time. Moreover, many historical narrations indicate that the age mentioned in ʿĀ'ishah RA's hadith is riwāyah āḥād (solitary narration) and remains debated among scholars. Some modern Muslim researchers suggest that the age of nine is not a fixed number but a chronological construction that does not account for differences between the Hijri and Qamari calendars. Hence, historiographically, ʿĀ'ishah RA's age cannot serve as a basis for judging Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's morality, let alone discrediting prophetic authority.

Second, maqāṣid orientation. From the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah perspective, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA should not be understood merely as a biological relationship but as a symbolic and educational act. Ibn 'Āshūr emphasizes that maqāṣid serves as ta'lil al-aḥkām—legal rationalization revealing the moral objectives behind shariʿah actions (Ibn Ashur, 1984). In this context, the marriage carried pedagogical, social, and dakwah dimensions: strengthening ties with Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, modeling a household based on raḥmah and knowledge, and preparing ʿĀ'ishah RA as a bearer of prophetic knowledge.

The maqāṣid orientation positions this marriage as an instrument of ta'lim al-ummah (education of the community). Under Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's guidance, ʿĀ'ishah RA became a leading faqīhah and muḥaddithah, yielding epistemological and moral impacts for Islamic civilization. Therefore, the central value of this event is not biological but ḥifẓ al-dīn (preservation of religion) and ḥifẓ al-'aql (intellectual development), two primary maqāṣid that underpin the sustainability of Islamic law.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA cannot be understood solely through a historical-empirical lens detached from shariʿah values but must be read within the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah framework, revealing moral, social, and epistemological dimensions of prophetic actions. Through maqāṣid analysis, this marriage highlights the comprehensive functions of Islamic law: preserving lineage (ḥifẓ al-nasl), safeguarding religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), cultivating rationality (ḥifẓ al-'aql), and protecting life (ḥifẓ al-nafs).

Historically, the marriage took place in 7th-century Arab society with standards of maturity and social structures distinct from modern norms. Normatively, however, it served as a vehicle for moral and educational guidance supporting shariʿah objectives. Under Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's mentorship, ʿĀ'ishah RA emerged as a faqīhah, muḥaddithah, and educator, playing a major role in ḥifẓ al-dīn and ta'lim al-ummah.

The maqāṣidī approach allows Muslims to understand this prophetic event not literally but through universal shariʿah values such as justice ('adl), compassion (raḥmah), and maṣlaḥah (public interest). From this perspective, modern polemics regarding ʿĀ'ishah RA's age can be contextualized proportionally as part of a prophetic mission focused on education and the development of a civilization based on knowledge and morality.

Methodologically, the maqāṣid approach plays a crucial role in constructing an Islamic legal hermeneutic centered on values rather than texts alone. It strengthens the function of shariʿah as a dynamic, contextual, and human-oriented ethical system. Thus, this study affirms that maqāṣid is not merely a conceptual tool in uṣūl fiqh but also an epistemological paradigm ensuring that Islamic law remains relevant, just, and merciful across eras.

Through this understanding, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's marriage to ʿĀ'ishah RA should be placed within hikmah tashrī'iyyah (legislative wisdom), representing the integration of history, revelation, and the objective of public welfare. It symbolizes that Islamic law, in all its dimensions, is rooted in compassion, education, and respect for human dignity—the very essence of maqāṣid itself.

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