1493 - Ruling on marrying young women

the question

I need to know, when did the Holy Prophet get married to Hazrat Aisha, there have been claims on newsgroups that the Holy Prophet was a pedophile. I want enough information to be able to answer such allegations.
I need to know everything about this particular marriage, quoting sources.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The answer to your question may be found in the hadith of Saheeh al-Bukhari and the commentary of al-Haafiz al-‘Asqallaani, which are quoted below:

‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) married me when I was six years old. Then we came to Madeenah and stayed in Bani al-Haarith ibn Khazraj. I fell ill and my hair started to fall out (due to the illness; then it grew back thick again). My mother Umm Roomaan came to me whilst I was on a swing and my friends were with me. She shouted for me and I came to her, not knowing what she wanted. She took me by the hand and led me to the door of the house. I was out of breath and we waited until I had calmed down, then she took some water and wiped my face and head, then took me inside. There were some women of the Ansaar in the house, and they said: " ‘Alaa al-khayri wa’l-baraka wa ‘ala khayri taa’ir (blessings, best wishes, etc)." My mother handed me over to them and they tidied me up, then suddenly the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was there. It was mid-morning, and they handed me over to him. At that time I was nine years old." (Reported by al-Bukhari, 3605).

‘Urwah said: "Khadeejah died three years before the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be

upon him) migrated to Madeenah. He stayed alone for two years or thereabouts, then he married ‘Aa’ishah when she was six years old, and consummated the marriage when she was nine years old." (Reported by al-Bukhari, 3607)

The phrase "he married ‘Aa’ishah" means that the marriage contract was drawn up; the marriage was consummated later on, when she was nine.

Muslim reports from al-Zuhri, from ‘Urwah, that ‘Aa’ishah said that she was taken to him when she was nine years old, and she took her toys with her. He died when she was eighteen years old. Muslim also reports a similar account from ‘Aa’ishah via al-Aswad. He reports from ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Urwah from his father that ‘Aa’ishah said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) married me in Shawwaal and consummated the marriage with me in Shawwaal."

‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) married her when she was six years old and consummated the marriage when she was nine years old, and she stayed with him for nine years." (Reported by al-Bukhari, 4738)

Al-Bukhari calls this chapter of his Saheeh "Baab inkaah al-rajul wuldahu (or waladahu) al-sighaar (Chapter on a man marrying off his young children)." The fact that Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):
". . . and for those who have no courses [periods] [(i.e., they are still immature) their ‘iddah is three months likewise, except in case of death] . . ." [al-Talaaq 65:4]
is an indication that it is permissible to marry girls below the age of adolescence. This is a good understanding, but the aayah makes no specific mention of either the father or the young girl. It could be said that the basic principle concerning marrying children is that it is forbidden unless there is specific evidence (daleel) to indicate otherwise. The hadeeth of ‘Aa’ishah states that her father Abu Bakr married her off before the age of puberty, but there is no other evidence apart from that, so the rule applies to all other cases.

Al- Muhallab said: "[The scholars] agreed that it is permissible for a father to marry off his young virgin daughter, even though it is not usually the case to have intercourse with such a young

woman."

(The above was summarized from Fath al-Baari Sharh ‘ala Saheeh al-Bukhari)

In summary, then, it is permitted to contract marriage with a young girl and to hand her over to her husband to stay with him before she reaches adolescence. As for consummating the marriage, this does not happen until she is physically able for it. Thus the matter becomes quite clear. Do you see anything wrong with a man living with his young wife in one house, bringing her up and teaching her, but delaying consummation until she is ready for it? We ask Allah to show us truth and falsehood and to make each clear.

And Allah knows best.