

# **Have any of the Sunni scholars ever claimed that Ayishah used to breastfeed adult men?**

Sunni groups

In the Name of God the Most Beneficent the Most Merciful

**The elaboration of the question:**

**Ayishah ordered her sisters to suckle grown-up men:**

**Ayishah herself used to breastfeed adult men:**

**Can any unmarried woman ever breastfeed?**

**Abu Mohammad Dulabi who has been a prominent Sunni scholar used to breastfeed children:**

**Should getting fed by milk be directly done from one's teats?**

Inquirer: Yusof

The issue of suckling grown-up men by a woman has been the matter of controversy ever since the advent of Islam. The issue has been met with cons pros. The Holy Prophet's (Peace Be upon Him) wife, Ayishah, was one of those who threw heavy weight behind the controversial issue. However other Ummuhat al-Momenin (Mothers of the Believers) were at odds with the matter.

**Ayishah ordered her sisters to suckle grown-up men:**

According to Sunni scholars, Ayishah used to ask her sisters or nieces to nurse any adult man whom she liked to be allowed to her house freely, so

that Ayishah could get Mahram (permitted to take off her Hijab and coverings in front of him).

Mohammad Nasir al-Din al-Bani has written in Abi Davud's Sahih Sunan,

فبذلك كانت عائشة رضي الله عنها تأمر بنات أخواتها وبنات إخوتها أن يرضعن مَنْ أَحَبَّتْ عائشة أن يراها ويدخل عليها- وإن كان كبيراً- خمس رضعات، ثم يدخل عليها.

Based on this narrative, Ayishah used to order her sisters and nieces to suckle the grown-up men, whom she loved to freely see her, five times.

He went on to say

قلت: إسناده صحيح على شرط البخاري، وصححه الحافظ، ومن قبله ابن الجارود

“I believe that the narrative is reliable based on conditions put forward by Bukhari. Hafiz Ibn Hajar as well as Ibn Jarud before him has already edited the narrative.”

Abi Davud's Sahih Sunan, vol. 6, p. 302

A number of other Sunni scholars have insisted that the matter not remain in place as a binding decree. According to them, Ayishah's sisters had breastfed several adult men so that they could freely go to her house as Mahram in fact.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jowziyyah, one of Ibn Taymiyyah's best students, has cited in his book, Zad al-Ma'ad, as follows,

قالوا: وقد صح عنها أنها كانت تدخل عليها الكبير إذا أرضعته في حال كبره أخت من أخواتها  
الرضاع المحرم

According to scholars and researches, it has been quoted from Ayishah that grown-up men used to commute to her house after one of her sisters suckled them.

Al-Zar'I, al-Damishqi al-Hanbali, Shams al-Din Abu 'Abdullah Mohammad Ibn Abi BIKR Ayub, known as Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jowziyyah, (died in 751 AH), Zad al-Ma'ad fi Huda Khayr al-'Ibad, vol. 5, p. 584; researched by Shu'ayb al-Arnawut, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Arnawut; published by Muassissat al-Risalat, Maktabat al-Minar al-Islamiyya, Beirut, Kuwait, the fourteenth edition, 1407 AH-1986 AD.

Even Imam Malik has cited in his book, Mowta, that Salim Ibn Abdullah Ibn 'Umar was breastfed by Umm Kolthum, Ayishah's sister. But he was not allowed to go into Ayishah's home because he was not suckled as many as ten times.

وَحَدَّثَنِي عَنْ مَالِكٍ عَنْ نَافِعٍ أَنَّ سَالِمَ بْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ عَائِشَةَ أُمَّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَرْسَلَتْ بِهِ وَهُوَ يَرْضَعُ إِلَى أختِهَا أُمَّ كُلثُومِ بِنْتِ أَبِي بَكْرٍ الصِّدِّيقِ فَقَالَتْ أَرْضِعِيهِ عَشْرَ رَضَعَاتٍ حَتَّى يَدْخُلَ عَلَيَّ قَالَ سَالِمٌ فَأَرْضَعْتَنِي أُمَّ كُلثُومٍ ثَلَاثَ رَضَعَاتٍ ثُمَّ مَرَضَتْ فَلَمْ تُرْضِعْنِي غَيْرَ ثَلَاثِ رَضَعَاتٍ فَلَمْ أَكُنْ أَدْخُلُ عَلَى عَائِشَةَ مِنْ أَجْلِ أَنَّ أُمَّ كُلثُومٍ لَمْ تُتِمَّ لِي عَشْرَ رَضَعَاتٍ

Nafi' has quoted Salim Ibn Abdullah Ibn 'Umar as saying that Umm al-Momenin, Ayishah, sent him to Umm Kolthum, Abubakr's daughter, to suckle him. Ayishah had told her to breastfed Salim ten times in order to be permitted into her house. Salim said, "Umm Kolthum breastfed me only three times. She could not suckle me more because she fell ill."

Malik Ibn Anas Abu Abdullah al-Asbahi (died in 179 AH), Mowta al-Imam Malik, vol. 2, p. 603, H. 126; researched by Mohammad Fuad 'Abd al-Baqi; published by Dar al-Turath al-'Arabi, Egypt.

The majority of Sunni scholars believe that Ayishah herself never breastfed the men. But instead, she asked her sisters and nieces to do so as the only way that could let them go to her.

But has any of the Sunni scholars ever claimed that Ayishah suckled the grown-up men herself?

### **Ayishah breastfed adult men herself:**

Unfortunately, some of the Sunni scholars have claimed that it was Ayishah herself who breastfed the grown-up men not her sisters or nieces.

For example, Allame Dr. Sheikh Mousa Shahin Lashin (died in 1430 AH), who was a lecturer at the Faculties of Religious Principles and Hadith of al-Azhar University in Egypt as well as the vice president of the same university, has pointed out in his book, Fath al-Mun'am, a commentary to Sahih Muslim, that Ayishah herself breastfed a boy in order to get Mahram to him.

وكانت عائشة - رضي الله عنها - ترى أن إرضاع الكبير يحرمه، وأرضعت غلاما فعلا، وكان يدخل عليها، وأنكر بقية أمهات المؤمنين ذلك.

Ayishah was of this belief that Rida' al-Kabir (breastfeeding an adult male) could make a woman Mahram to him. She definitely suckled a boy, who was just at puberty. Then that boy used to go into her house. Meanwhile, other Mothers of the Believers were at odds with the notion of Rida'.

Fath al-Mun'am, Commentary to Sahih Muslim, vol. 5, p. 622.

Mohammad al-Tahir Ibn 'Ashur (died in 1284), one of the senior Sunni interpreters, has also affirmed that it was Ayishah herself who used to feed grown-up men with her own breast milk.

...وكانت عائشة أم المؤمنين إذا أرادت أن يدخل عليها أحد الحجاب أرضعته ، تأولت ذلك من إذن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم لسهلة زوج أبي حذيفة ، وهو رأي لم يوافقها عليه أمهات المؤمنين ، وأبين أن يدخل أحد عليهن بذلك ، وقال به الليث بن سعد ، بإعمال رضاع الكبير . وقد رجع عنه أبو موسى الأشعري بعد أن أفتى به

Whenever Ayishah wanted a man to come and see her, she breastfed him first. Her justification was the Holy Prophet's (Peace Be Upon Him)

permission to Sahla to do so. The Prophet's (PBUH) other wives, however, were at loggerheads with Ayishah in this regard. They dismissed that idea as a way that allowed men to come and see them. Layth Ibn Sa'd also supported the notion of Rida' al-Kabir. But Abu Mousa Ash'ari withdrew immediately after he issued a decree in favor of it.

Mohammad al-Tahir Ibn 'Ashur (died in 1284), al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir, vol. 4, p. 297; published by Dar Sahnun Lil Nashr wa al-Towzi', Tunisia, 1997 AD.

But don't these claims defame the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) wife?

If the answer is yes why shouldn't they be deleted from Sunni books then?

In case a Shia figure had made such a claim in his book, wouldn't Sunni scholars have branded him an infidel under the pretext of insulting the Prophet's (PBUH) wife?

### **Can an unmarried woman breastfeed?**

The question that might come to someone's mind is that how could Ayishah ever breastfeed other men at a time when she did not have a husband. How could she ever suckle while she never had a child?

In answer to this question, we should refer to Sunni scholars who have asserted that a woman does not necessarily need to give birth to a baby in order to have milk to feed. They claim that as soon as a girl gets her period, she can breastfeed. According to them, even a virgin girl is able to breastfeed and can make the males Mahram to herself.

Ansari Shafi'i has written in his Asna al-Matalib,

وَهِيَ ثَلَاثَةُ الْأَوَّلِ الْمَرْضِعُ فَيُشْتَرَطُ كَوْنُهَا امْرَأَةً حَيَّةً بَلَغَتْ سِنَّ الْحَيْضِ ، وَإِنْ لَمْ تَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُحْكَمْ  
بِبُلُوغِهَا سِوَاءَ أَكَانَتْ مُزَوَّجَةً أَمْ بَكْرًا أَمْ غَيْرَهُمَا . ...

There are three principles for Rida' the first of which is that the one who is going to suckle must be an alive woman who has got her period. There is no

need for her to have already given birth to a baby. No difference if she has not yet even reached the age of puberty. Neither is there any difference in the matter whether she is married or a virgin.

Al-Ansari al-Shafi’I, Abu Yahya Zakarya (died in 926 AH), Asna al-Matalib fi Sharh Rowdh al-Talib, vol. 3, p. 415; researched by Mohammad Mohammad Tamir; published by Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut, the first edition, 1422 AH-2000 AD.

Bajirami has made a similar comment in Minhaj al-Tullab.

أركانُهُ) ثلاثة (رَضِيعٌ ، وَلَبَنٌ ، وَمَرْضِعٌ ، وَشُرْطٌ فِيهِ كَوْنُهُ أَدْمِيَّةً حَيَّةً) حَيَاةً مُسْتَقَرَّةً (بَلَغَتْ) وَلَوْ  
بِكُرًّا (سِنَّ حَيْضٍ) أَي : تِسْعَ سِنِينَ قَمَرِيَّةً تَقْرِيْبِيَّةً. ...

“There are three principles for Rida’; the one who is breastfed, the production of milk and the person who suckles. The one who is going to breastfeed needs to be an alive human. She should have reached the age of puberty. She should have got her period even if she is a virgin. It means that she should be at least nine years of age.”

Al-Bajirami al-Shafi’I, Sulayman Ibn Mohammad Ibn ‘Umar (died in 1221 AH), Hashiyat al-Bajirami ‘Ala Minhaj al-Tullab, vol. 4, p. 131; published by al-Maktabat al-Islamiyya, Diyar Bikt, Turkey.

And here is what Baghawi has affirmed in Sharh al-Sunna,

وَإِذَا نَزَلَ لِلْبِكْرِ لَبَنٌ ، فَأَرْضَعَتْ بِهِ صَبِيًّا ، تَثَبَّتِ الْحَرَمَةُ إِذَا كَانَتْ فِي سِنٍ يَحْتَمِلُ فِيهَا الْبُلُوغَ ، وَهِيَ  
تِسْعَ سِنِينَ. ..

“As soon as milk was gushed out of a virgin girl’s teats and she breastfed someone, he would get Mahram beyond any doubt. But the condition is that she should have reached the age of puberty which is, in fact, nine years.”

Al-Baghawi, al-Hussein Ibn Mas’ud (died in 516 AH), Sharh al-Sunna, vol. 9, p. 79; researched by Shu’ayb al-Arnaut-Mohammad Zahir al-Shawish;

published by al-Maktab al-Islami, Damascus, Beirut, the second edition, 1403 AH-1983 AD.

Many Sunni scholars are of the same opinion over this issue, but we could only point to a handful of them above in a nutshell.

Now our question is that how come a little virgin girl could breastfeed but Ayisha could not?

**Abu Mohammad Dulabi, a well-known Sunni scholar, used to feed children with his breast milk:**

The prominent Sunni scholar, Abu Mohammad Yafi'i, has written a biography about Abu Mohammad Dulabi, admiring him as a man with extraordinary qualities. According to him, the foremost of his qualities was his ability to breastfeed children.

وفي السنة (إحدى وعشرين وسبع مائة) المذكورة توفي صاحب اليمن شيخ القراءات ومعدن البركات مقرئ حرم الله تعالى ومحقق قراءة كتاب الله عز وجل الشيخ الكبير السيد الشهير أبو محمد عبد الله المعروف بالدلاوي رضي الله تعالى عنه ونفع به كان من ذوي الكرامات العديداً والمناقب الحميدات

يقال إنه ممن سمع رد السلام من سيد الأنام عليه وعلى آله أفضل الصلاة والسلام ورأيته يطوف في ضحى كل يوم أسبوعاً بعد فراغ الطلبة من القراءة عليه وكان قد انحنى انحناء كثيراً فإذا جاء إلى الحجر الأسود زال ذلك الانحناء وقبله وكان يعد ذلك من كراماته.

ومنها أنه كان عنده طفل غابت أمه عنه فبكى فدر ثديه باللبن فأرضع ذلك الطفل حتى سكت وله كرامات أخرى كثيرة شهيرة

"Abu Mohammad known as Dulabi passed away in 721 AH. He was Sahib al-Yamin, the source of blessings, the Qur'an reciter in God's sanctuary (Ka'bah), a grand professor and a notable Sayyid. He enjoyed numerous unique qualities. It has been quoted that Dulabi was one of the individuals who received response from the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) when they saluted him. I used to see him performing Tawaf (moving around the

Ka'bah) seven times at sunrise every day after finishing his Qur'an classes. Although he was bent, he could kiss and pay homage to Hajar al-Aswad (the black stone) because as soon as he reached to the site he became straight up. As yet another extraordinary quality, he could suckle a crying and hungry baby whose mother was away. Abu Mohammd Dulabi's breasts got filled with milk all of a sudden. The baby was pacified once Dulabi fed him with his breast milk."

Al-Yafi'I, Abu Mohammad Abdullah Ibn As'ad Ibn 'Ali Ibn Sulayman (died in 768 AH), *Mirat al-Jinan wa 'Ibrat al-Yaqzan*, vol. 4, p. 260; published by Dar al-Kitab al-Islami, Cairo, 1413 AH-1993 AD.

How come Mr. Dulabi could breastfeed a child as a man, but Ayishah could not have such a miracle!

### **Should getting fed with milk be directly done from one's teats?**

In order to remove shame and disgrace from the face of this decree, some supporters of Saqifah (a place where the Muslims from Medina or Ansar gathered to discuss the future and leadership of the Muslims following the Prophet's (PBUH) demise) made a new claim. They declared that feeding should have not necessarily been done directly from breasts. As far as they were concerned, milk could be drawn from breasts and poured in a container. They believed that feeding someone with that drawn milk could similarly make him Mahram to the one whom the milk belonged. On the contrary, there is another group of Sunni scholars who believed that Rida' is impossible to be realized unless a child or an adult suck milk directly from one's breasts. They have said that indirect suckling can never make someone Mahram to a woman. The following is what Ibn Hazm Andolosi has said about the notion of Rida'.

مسألة وأما صفة الرضاع المحرم فإنما هو ما امتصه الراضع من ثدي المرضعة بفيه فقط.



woman's teat.' Abi Sulayman and all followers of our sect are also of the same mind."

Ibn Hazm al-Andolosi, al-Zahiri, Abu Mohammad 'Ali Ibn Ahmad Ibn Saeed (died in 456 AH), al-Mahalli, vol. 10, p. 7; researched by Li Janat Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi; published by Dar al-Afaq al-Jadidah, Beirut.

In response to a question that how an adult could ever drink milk from a woman's breast, Ibn Hazm has said as follows,

وقال بعض من لا يخاف الله تعالى فيما يطلق به لسانه كيف يحل للكبير أن يرضع ثدى امرأة أجنبية قال أبو محمد هذا اعتراض مجرد على رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم الذي أمر بذلك والقائل بهذا لا يستحي من أن يطلق أن للمملوكة أن تصلي عريانة يرى الناس ثديها وخاصرتها وأن للحررة أن تتعمد أن تكشف من ش فتي فرجها مقدار الدرهم البغلي تصلى كذلك ويراها الصادر والوارد بين الجماعة في المسجد وأن تكشف أقل من ربع بطنها كذلك. ونعوذ بالله من عدم الحياء وقلة الدين.

"Some people do not fear from God and say nonsense by asking, 'How come is it Halal (lawful) for an adult male to drink milk from the breast of a strange woman?'

Abu Mohammad (Ibn Hazm) said, 'The question is nothing but bringing the Holy Prophet's (Peace be Upon Him) decree into question. Shame on the person who has said that it is permissible for a slave maid to uncover her breasts and buttocks while doing her prayer in public! Shame on him for saying that it is permissible for a non-slave woman to consciously unveil her sexual organ and do prayer at a site where people can easily see her! And shame on the one who has said that a non-slave woman is allowed to expose one fourth of her belly while performing prayer! I seek refuge in God for all this imprudence and disgrace.'

Ibn Hazm al-Andolosi, al-Zahiri, Abu Mohammad ‘Ali Ibn Ahmad Ibn Saeed (died in 456 AH), al-Mahalli, vol. 10, p. 23; researched by Li Janat Ihya al-Turath al-‘Arabi; published by Dar al-Afaq al-Jadidah, Beirut.

The person whom Ibn Hazm blamed was Nu’man Ibn Thabit Abu Hamifah, known as a grand Sunni Imam. In his book, al-Mahalli, vol. 3, p. 224, Ibn Hazm has explained his decree in detail.

The senior Sunni scholar, Zayn al-‘Abidin Iraqi, has also addressed the topic in discussion. He has quoted Ibn Hazm as saying that drinking milk needs to be directly carried out from a woman’s teat as the only condition to make a male Mahram to her.

السابعة استشكل أمره عليه الصلاة والسلام إياها بإرضاعه لما فيه من التقاء البشريتين وهو محرم قبل أن يستكمل الرضاع المعتبر وتصير محرما له قال القاضي عياض... ويحتمل أنه عفي عن مسه للحاجة كما خص بالرضاعة مع الكبر انتهى  
وجعل أبو العباس القرطبي علي ذلك دليلا على الاختصاص به لأن القاعدة تحريم الاطلاع على العورة ولا يختلف في أن ثدي الحرة عورة لا يجوز الاطلاع عليه قال ولا يقال يمكن أن يرضع ولا يطلع لأننا نقول نفس التقام حلمة الثدي بالفم اطلع فلا يجوز انتهى  
ولم يعرج علي ذكر ما تقدم عن القاضي من شربه بعد حلبه ولم يستصوب ابن حزم ذلك واقتضى كلامه جوازه مطلقا فإنه حكى عن بعضهم أنه قال: كيف يحل للكبير أن يرضع ثدي امرأة أجنبية؟ ثم نقضه بقول من قال إن للأمة الصلاة عريانة يرى الناس ثديها وخاصرتها وأن للحرة أن تتعمد أن ينكشف من شفتي فرجها قدر الدرهم البغلي تصلي كذلك وإن تكشف أقل من ربع بطنها كذلك انتهى... واعتبر ابن حزم في التحريم الامتصاص من الثدي وحكاه عن طائفة

“The seventh point about Rida’ al-Kabir (breastfeeding adult males):

A question that has been raised with regard to the notion of Rida’ al-Kabir is that in order for a strange man and a woman to get Mahram, a skin contact needs to be established first between them and that such a practice is Haram (unlawful) as a matter of fact.

According to Qadhi ‘Ayyadh, such a practice might be permissible in case of a need for milk. Breastfeeding of grown-up men is basically considered a special decree.

Abu ‘Abbas Qurtabi has described the narrative above as a justification for the fact that the rule of making an adult male Mahram through breastfeeding is a specific case. That is because looking at a woman’s sexual organ is a general rule. And there is no dispute over whether her breasts are also considered as a sexual organ with the prohibition of looking at them. And it seems impossible for one to drink milk from teats but avoid looking at them at the same time. Since breastfeeding is tantamount to a skin contact, it is not permissible. (Hence, this rule should be applied as a general rule). However, he did not notice the point that Qadhi had really wanted to convey. He had pointed out that milk could be drawn from breasts before feeding someone.

Meanwhile, despite catching the words of Qadhi, Ibn Hazm has rejected the practice of drawing milk. He has quoted a number of scholars as raising doubts that how could an adult ever drink milk from the breast of an unknown woman. Then, he has himself replied that those scholars were the ones who permitted a slave maid to uncover her breasts and buttocks and a non-slave woman to reveal her sexual organ while performing prayers in public.

As far as Ibn Hazm is concerned, one should necessarily be fed directly from a woman’s breast in order to become Mahram with her. He has also cited a number of other figures who had similar views on the issue.”

Al-‘Araqi, Abu al-Fadhl Zayn al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahim Ibn al-Hussein (died in 806 AH), *Tarh al-Tathrib fi Sharh al-Taqrīb*, vol. 7, p. 129; researched by ‘Abd al-Qadir; published by Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut, the first edition, 2000 AD.

Kashani Hanafi has, for his part, asserted that putting teats into one's mouth is the only condition to realize Rida'.

وَأَمَّا الْمَوْجُودُ مِنَ الْمُرْضِعَةِ التَّمَكِينُ مِنْ ارْتِضَاعِهَا بِإِقَامِهَا تَدْيِهَا فَكَانَتْ مُحَصَّلَةً لِلشَّرْطِ

The necessary condition is that a woman puts her breast inside one's mouth so that he can drink milk.

Al-Kasani al-Hanafi, 'Ala al-Din Abi Bakr Ibn Mas'ud Ibn Ahmad al-Shashi known as Malik al-'Ulama (died in 587 AH), Badai' al-Sanai' fi Tartib al-Sharai', vol. 4, p. 11; published by Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, Beirut, the second edition, 1982 AD.

Therefore, according to the Sunni scholars and senior figures whose views were discussed earlier, a grown-up man needs to directly drink milk from a woman's breasts. And Ibn Hazm has declared that any possible doubt raised about the matter is indeed an objection to the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him).

Good Luck

The Group Responsible for Answers to Doubts

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