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There are a cluster of hadith and later reports that describe the Prophet Muhammad as “white” and sometimes “white with a reddish tinge,” plus a separate cluster about dyeing hair and beards red with henna.

These texts *have* been used – by some Muslims and by various polemical and white-supremacist/anti-Black authors – to argue that Muhammad was a “white man with ginger hair.” But when you read the full range of reports and the classical commentary, that racialised picture is much more complicated and, in many ways, anachronistic.

Below I’ll walk through:

1. Core hadith on “whiteness” of the Prophet’s complexion
2. Texts on his hair and the red/henna/“ginger” issue
3. How polemicists and racists have used these texts to claim “white, ginger Muhammad”
4. How Muslim and academic writers push back and re-interpret them

1. Hadith describing the Prophet as “white” or “white with a reddish tinge”

1.1. Texts explicitly calling him “white”

Several canonical Sunni collections contain reports in which the Prophet is described as “white” (abyad) or a “white man”:

- Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtues, chapter literally titled “The Prophet was white with an elegant face”. A Companion, Abu Tufayl, is asked if he saw the Prophet and replies: *he had a white, handsome face.* [Sunnah](#)
- Sahih al-Bukhari, “Knowledge,” hadith 63. When a Bedouin comes to the mosque asking “Who among you is Muhammad?”, the Companions answer: *“This white man reclining on his arm.”* [Sunnah](#)
- Sahih al-Bukhari, “Istisqa’ (Prayer for rain),” hadith 1008. Ibn ‘Umar recites poetry of Abu Talib describing Muhammad as *“a white [man] by whose face rain is sought, a protector of orphans, a guardian of widows.”* [Sunnah](#)



- Shama'il al-Muhammadiyah of al-Tirmidhi, the classic work on the Prophet's physical description, has a famous report summarised as: *"The Messenger of God had a white complexion with a slight redness and a medium-sized body."* [Sapelo Square | Sapelo Square](#)

These are the *central* texts that people cite when they claim "Muhammad was white."

1.2. Texts that put him *between* extremes of colour

Other reports, though, are more nuanced and explicitly say he was not extremely white nor very dark:

- Sahih Muslim 2347a (Anas ibn Malik) describes the Prophet as neither conspicuously tall nor short, with a colour that was "neither glaringly white (al-abyad al-amhaq) nor brown (adam)", and hair neither very curly nor straight. [Sunnah](#)
- The same report is also preserved via al-Tirmidhi and quoted in the Sapelo Square article on "Prophet Muhammad and the Skin Color Ethic," which highlights that some narrations describe him as "brown in complexion (asmar al-lawn)", and others as "white with a reddish tinge." [Sapelo Square | Sapelo Square](#)
- Some later summaries of Shama'il-type material describe him as "wheat-coloured" – a middle tone between light and dark common among Arabs – rather than European-style pale. [Muslim and Quran+1](#)

So the *same* hadith corpus contains both "white with a reddish tinge" and "brown in complexion" reports. Classical commentators usually treat these as describing different aspects (brightness vs pigment) or different observers, not as contradictions.

1.3. Hadith about the "whiteness" of particular body parts

There are also scattered reports noting the "whiteness" of specific limbs when his body was visible:

- Sahih al-Bukhari 4:56:767 – Abu Juhaifa recalls seeing the Prophet at al-Abtah and says: *"It is as if I am still seeing the whiteness of his leg."* [Hadith Collection](#)
- Other narrations (collected in polemical compilations) talk about the whiteness of his shins, forearms, armpits, stomach, cheeks, etc., usually in passing – for example when his garment is lifted, or when he raises his arms in du'a. Islamophobic sites like Wikilslam list a string of these narrations precisely to emphasise "Muhammad's white complexion." [Wikilslam+1](#)

These limb-focused hadith are heavily used in online polemics to paint a picture of the Prophet as *"epically white"* and to ridicule claims that he could have been brown or darker.

2. Reports about his hair and the "ginger / red" issue

The "ginger" side of the claim pulls together three elements:

1. General descriptions of the Prophet's hair
2. Hadith about hair dye and henna/katam
3. Claims that he personally dyed his hair/beard red or that his hair looked red

2.1. General descriptions: mostly black hair with few white hairs

Multiple hadith – especially in Muslim and later summarising works – say that:

- The Prophet's hair was jet black, wavy, between his earlobes and shoulders, sometimes parted, sometimes left hanging. pbuh.org+1
- At his death he had “not twenty white hairs” in head and beard. [Sunnah+1](#)

These core descriptions don't suggest natural red or ginger hair; they suggest dark (black) hair with very limited greying.

2.2. General Sunnah of dyeing hair, especially with henna and katam

Several widely-cited hadith establish dyeing grey hair as a recommended practice, with emphasis on henna and katam (a dark/reddish plant dye):

- Sahih al-Bukhari 5899 – The Prophet says: “*The Jews and Christians do not dye their hair, so differ from them.*” [Sunnah](#)
- A broader fiqh summary (Fiqh-us-Sunnah) cites hadith from Abu Dharr and others where the Prophet says: “The best thing to use for changing grey hair is henna and katam”, which together give a reddish or reddish-brown tone. alim.org+1

These are the texts Muslims use to justify orange/ginger-looking henna beards today, especially among older men in South Asia, the Horn of Africa, and elsewhere. Journalistic and photographic pieces about “red beards” in Bangladesh, Somalia, Afghanistan etc. explicitly tie the fashion back to the Prophet's reported use of henna. [GMB AKASH+1](#)

2.3. Reports that his hair *appeared* red or was stained / dyed

There are a few specific reports that are read as “evidence” that the Prophet's hair was, at least at times, reddish:

1. Bukhari on red-tinted hair from scent – A Companion, Rabi'a ibn Abi 'Abd al-Rahman, says he saw some hairs of the Prophet and they were red; when he asked, he was told the colour came from perfume/oils applied to them, not from natural pigment. [Qur'anic misconceptions addressed](#)
2. Report of Umm Salamah showing hair “dyed” with henna and katam – Some hadith-search tools and later writers cite a narration where she produces a hair of the Prophet that appears to have been dyed with henna and katam. islamicity.org+1
3. Sunan Abi Dawud (4206) – Abu Rimthah says he visited the Prophet and saw that his locks, down to his earlobes, were stained with henna, and he was wearing two green garments. [UrduPoint+1](#)

Taken together, these become the main textual basis for the claim that the Prophet had – or at least wore – reddish, henna-coloured hair, functionally similar to what English speakers call “ginger.”

2.4. Reports that he *did not* dye his hair

At the same time, there is a strong counter-cluster of reports saying he did not dye his hair at all:

- Sahih Muslim 2341e – Anas ibn Malik is asked whether the Prophet dyed his hair; he replies that the Prophet did not dye, and that he had only a small amount of whiteness in his hair. [Sunnah](#)
- Sunan al-Nasa'i, Book of Adornment – A very similar report: Anas says the Messenger “*did not dye his hair; his grey hair were only a little beneath his lower lip, at his temples, and a little on his head.*” [Sunnah](#)

- Another Muslim narration via Anas says the Prophet had not reached an age that *required* dyeing, and that it was Abu Bakr and ‘Umar who dyed their hair with henna, not the Prophet. [Sunnah+1](#)

Classical scholars reconcile this by saying:

- The Prophet generally did not dye, because his grey hairs were so few that there was no need;
- A small number of reports that mention henna-stained locks or red hairs may refer to exceptional occasions, or to hair that had been coloured by scent, oils or storage in containers, not active, repeated dyeing. [Hard Questions+1](#)

In other words: the soundest core picture in classical Sunni tradition is black hair with a handful of white hairs, usually not dyed, with a few ambiguous reports that allow some scholars (and later popular writers) to imagine him with reddish-tinted hair or beard in later years.

3. How these texts are used to claim “Muhammad was a white man with ginger hair”

3.1. Internal Muslim uses (non-racial, often idealising fairness)

Inside Muslim tradition, the “white / reddish” descriptions are mostly used to:

- Emphasise his beauty and radiance, e.g. “white with a rosy tinge,” “face like the moon.” [Islam Future → The Future For Islam](#)
- Provide colour detail in devotional descriptions (Shama’il, mawlid literature, modern lectures on the Prophet’s physical traits).

The henna/katam reports are used to support:

- The idea that dyeing grey hair – especially with henna – is a Sunnah (commendable practice). [Islam-QA+1](#)
- Cultural practices of orange/red beards as a visible link to the Prophet.

In many of these settings, “white” is not unpacked in modern racial terms; it is often heard as “bright, pure, luminous, fair” – a *value-laden* description, but not necessarily a statement that he was “a white man” in a European/modern sense.

3.2. Islamophobic and white-supremacist uses

Outside Muslim circles, especially in Christian missionary and far-right / white-supremacist discourse, the same texts are used very differently.

Common strategy:

1. Compile every hadith that mentions “white” or “whiteness” – face, leg, shins, forearms, armpits, stomach, etc. – from Bukhari, Muslim and others, probably using online search tools. [WikIslam+1](#)
2. Highlight Bukhari 63 (“this white man reclining on his arm”) and Abu Talib’s poem (“a white man by whose face rain is sought”) again and again. [Sunnah+1](#)
3. Combine these with negative or stereotyped hadith about Blackness (e.g., “raisin-headed” people in eschatological reports, or Black slaves in legal discussions) to argue that:
 - Muhammad was literally “an Arab white man”;

- Islam is inherently pro-white/anti-Black;
- And therefore claims about Islam's anti-racist message are hypocritical.

You can see this approach in places like Wikislam's "Muhammad's White Complexion" entry and polemical essays linking his "epic whiteness" to his ownership of Black slaves. [Wikislam+1](#)

Some polemicists add jokes like calling him "the world's biggest cracker" – explicitly framing him as a white man in US racial terms while mocking Black Muslims' identification with him. [Is the Quran the Word of God?](#)

3.3. "Red / ginger" beard in polemics and popular culture

The "ginger" element comes in more from popular culture and fringe writing than from mainstream fiqh or hadith commentary:

- Blog posts and pseudo-historical sites ask "Was the Prophet Muhammad red-haired?" and speculate that he may have had naturally red hair when young, then dyed his beard red with henna later, based on the henna/katam narrations and the report of red-tinted hairs. [redhairmyths.blogspot.com+1](#)
- A conspiratorial blog ("Atlantean Gardens") claims he began dyeing his beard red to look younger and that he was "naturally red-haired," again leaning heavily on henna-related hadith and later red-bearded Muslim figures, while playing into European "red-beard" myths (Barbarossa, etc.). [atlanteangardens.blogspot.com](#)
- Western journalists, Reddit threads and Instagram posts about ginger-bearded Afghanis, Somalis or Bangladeshis routinely explain their style as "copying the Prophet, who dyed his beard red," treating the henna beards as a live remembrance of a "red-bearded Muhammad." [GMB AKASH+2AP Photos+2](#)

These narratives then feed back into Islamophobic and racist spaces, where people say things like "Muhammad had pale skin and a ginger beard; Islam isn't a Black religion" – often in direct arguments with Black Muslims or ex-Muslims.

4. Muslim scholarly and critical responses

Because these "white/ginger" claims are now weaponised in racial arguments, Muslim scholars and Black Muslim thinkers in particular have responded in several ways.

4.1. Re-reading "white" (abyad) in Arab linguistic context

One key line of argument (seen, for instance, in the Sapelo Square article) is linguistic:

- Arabic usage historically often employed "white" (abyad) for an unblemished / luminous appearance or noble character, not necessarily light skin.
- When early Arabs wanted to speak of light-skinned complexions, they sometimes used "red" (ahmar); "white" could also function symbolically for purity, while "black" could function symbolically for sin – without mapping onto specific populations. [Sapelo Square | Sapelo Square](#)

On this reading, some "white" descriptions of the Prophet may be:

- Moral or symbolic, not pigment-descriptive; or
- Describing the quality (clarity, brightness) of his skin rather than its precise colour.

4.2. Emphasising the "middle complexion" hadith

Black Muslim and other anti-racist writers highlight the “neither albino-white nor deep black” hadith and the reports that he was “brown in complexion” or “wheat-coloured,” arguing that:

- The dominant picture is of a medium-brown Arab with luminous, clear skin, not of an extremely pale, European-type white man;
- The diversity of descriptors reflects different observers and emphases rather than a racial category that maps neatly to “white” or “Black” in modern terms. [Sapelo Square | Sapelo Square+1](#)

4.3. De-centring race in the prophetic ideal

Many Muslim writers also argue that:

- Debates over his “race” often import modern racial hierarchies into a 7th-century Arabian setting where the categories did not function in the same way;
- Treating his being “white” or “brown” as theologically important repeats the very colour-hierarchies that Islam, at the level of *principle*, seeks to undercut (“no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab or white over black except in God-consciousness”).

Others, especially Black Muslims, insist that *how* his colour is portrayed matters deeply because Muslims have historically participated in colourism and anti-Black racism, and whitewashed images of the Prophet can reinforce those hierarchies. [Sapelo Square | Sapelo Square](#)

5. Putting it all together

If we pull all of this together, here’s the clearest, text-grounded picture:

1. There *are* authentic hadith that describe the Prophet as “white” and even label him “this white man,” and there are devotional texts praising him as “white with a reddish tinge.”
2. There are also authentic hadith describing him as “brown in complexion” and explicitly saying he was neither extremely white nor very dark.
3. Multiple hadith note the whiteness of specific body parts (leg, shins, forearms, etc.), and these have been heavily exploited in missionary and white-supremacist propaganda to construct an image of “Muhammad the very white Arab.” [Wikislam+1](#)
4. On hair:
 - The core reports say he had black hair with very few grey hairs and normally did not dye it. [Sunnah+2Sunnah+2](#)
 - Some narrations and later understandings associate him with red/henna-dyed hair, either via:
 - hairs that looked red due to perfume, or
 - reports of henna-stained locks and the general encouragement to dye grey hair with henna and katam. [Qur’anic misconceptions addressed+2Hamariweb.com+2](#)
5. On usage:
 - Mainstream Muslim usage tends to idealise his fairness and link henna dyeing to his Sunnah, but does not usually racialise him as “white” in a modern European sense.

- **Anti-Black / Islamophobic discourse aggressively selects every “white” and “whiteness of his...” narration (plus henna-related reports) to argue he was a white man with a ginger beard, and then uses that claim against Black Muslims and against Islam more generally. [Is the Quran the Word of God?+1](#)**
- **Black Muslims and critical scholars respond by highlighting the full range of reports and the historical Arabic semantics of colour terms, and by critiquing the way whiteness has been centered in traditional and modern Muslim imaginaries. [Sapelo Square](#) | [Sapelo Square](#)**

Signed

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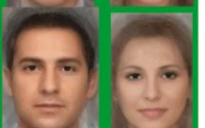


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	IC1		W1 UK White W2 White European W9 Other White		Who are you? <hr/>  BIRTH PLACE <hr/>  LINEAGE <hr/>  APPEARANCE <hr/>  STATE OF MIND <hr/>  DNA
	IC2		W9 Other White Dark European		
	IC3		B1 Caribbean B2 African B9 Other Black		
	IC4		A1 Indian A2 Pakistani A3 Bangladeshi A9 Other Asian		
	IC5		O1 Chinese O9 Any Other Oriental		
	IC6		M1 White & Black Caribbean M2 White & Black African M3 White & Asian M9 Any Other Mixed		
	IC7		NS Not Stated		

UK Government Race and Ethnicity Codes.

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	IC1		W1 UK White W2 White European W9 Other White		IC3		B1 Caribbean B2 African B9 Other Black		IC6		M1 White & Black Caribbean M2 White & Black African M3 White & Asian M9 Any Other Mixed
1 White Race	WBRI		White British	3 Black Race	BAFR		Black - African	6 Mixed Race	MABL		Asian and Black
1 White Race	WCOR		White British - Cornish	3 Black Race	BANN		Black - Angolan	6 Mixed Race	MACH		Asian and Chinese
1 White Race	WENG		White British - English	3 Black Race	BAOF		Other Black African	6 Mixed Race	MAOE		Asian and Any Other Ethnic Group
1 White Race	WSCO		White British - Scottish	3 Black Race	BCON		Black - Congolese	6 Mixed Race	MBCH		Black and Chinese
1 White Race	WWEL		White British - Welsh	3 Black Race	BCRB		Black Caribbean	6 Mixed Race	MBOE		Black and Any Other Ethnic Group
1 White Race	WOWB		White British Other	3 Black Race	BEUR		Black European	6 Mixed Race	MCOE		Chinese and Any Other Ethnic Group
1 White Race	WIRI		White - Irish	3 Black Race	BGHA		Black - Ghanaian	6 Mixed Race	MOTH		Any Other Mixed Background
1 White Race	WIRT		White - Traveller of Irish Heritage	3 Black Race	BNAM		Black North American	6 Mixed Race	MOTM		Other Mixed Background
1 White Race	WEEU		White Eastern European	3 Black Race	BNGN		Black - Nigerian	6 Mixed Race	MWAI		White and Indian
1 White Race	WEUR		White European	3 Black Race	BOTB		Other Black	6 Mixed Race	MWAO		White and Any Other Asian Background
1 White Race	WOTW		White Other	3 Black Race	BOTH		Any Other Black Background	6 Mixed Race	MWAP		White and Pakistani
1 White Race	WWEU		White Western European	3 Black Race	BSLN		Black - Sierra Leonean	6 Mixed Race	MWAS		White and Asian
				3 Black Race	BSOM		Black - Somali	6 Mixed Race	MWBA		White and Black African
				3 Black Race	BSUD		Black - Sudanese	6 Mixed Race	MWBC		White and Black Caribbean
	IC2		W9 Other White Dark European		IC4		A1 Indian A2 Pakistani A3 Bangladeshi A9 Other Asian		IC6		M1 White & Black Caribbean M2 White & Black African M3 White & Asian M9 Any Other Mixed
2 White Race	WALB		Albanian	4 Asian Race	AAFR		African Asian	6 Mixed Race	MWCH		White and Chinese
2 White Race	WOTH		Any Other White Background	4 Asian Race	ABAN		Bangladeshi	6 Mixed Race	MWOE		White and Any Other Ethnic Group
2 White Race	WBOS		Bosnian- Herzegovinian	4 Asian Race	AIND		Indian	6 Other Race	OAFG		Afghan
2 White Race	WCRO		Croatian	4 Asian Race	AKAO		Kashmiri Other	6 Other Race	OARA		Arab Other
2 White Race	WGRK		Greek	4 Asian Race	AKPA		Kashmiri Pakistani	6 Other Race	OEGY		Egyptian
2 White Race	WGRC		Greek Cypriot	4 Asian Race	AMPK		Mirpuri Pakistani	6 Other Race	OFIL		Filipino
2 White Race	WGRE		Greek/ Greek Cypriot	4 Asian Race	ANEP		Nepali	6 Other Race	OIRN		Iranian
2 White Race	WROM		Gypsy / Roma	4 Asian Race	AOPK		Other Pakistani	6 Other Race	OIRQ		Iraqi
2 White Race	WITA		Italian	4 Asian Race	AOTA		Other Asian	6 Other Race	OJPN		Japanese
2 White Race	WKOS		Kosovan	4 Asian Race	AOTH		Any Other Asian Background	6 Other Race	OKOR		Korean
2 White Race	WPOR		Portuguese	4 Asian Race	APKN		Pakistani	6 Other Race	OKRD		Kurdish
2 White Race	WSER		Serbian	4 Asian Race	ASLT		Sri Lankan Tamil	6 Other Race	OLAM		Latin/ South/ Central American
2 White Race	WTUK		Turkish	4 Asian Race	ASNL		Sri Lankan Sinhalese	6 Other Race	OLEB		Lebanese
2 White Race	WTUC		Turkish Cypriot	4 Asian Race	ASRO		Sri Lankan Other	6 Other Race	OLIB		Libyan
2 White Race	WTUR		Turkish/ Turkish Cypriot					6 Other Race	OMAL		Malay
					IC5		O1 Chinese O9 Any Other Oriental		IC7		NS Not Stated
				5 Chinese Race	CHKC		Hong Kong Chinese	7 Not Known Yet	NOBT		Information Not Yet Obtained
				5 Chinese Race	CHNE		Chinese	7 Rebel Race	REFU		Refused
				5 Chinese Race	CMAL		Malaysian Chinese				
				5 Chinese Race	COCH		Other Chinese				
				5 Chinese Race	CSNG		Singaporean Chinese				
				5 Chinese Race	CTWN		Taiwanese				