

Chapter 4: Questions and Answers

Q1 – The infallibility of the Imams (as) is perhaps because they are the Imams and leaders for the people. What is the benefit of Fatimah's infallibility: she is not a prophet or an imam?

A – Fatimah (as) is the mother of the infallibles (as). She gave them all her effort and virtues, and amongst these is the infallibility which Allah had given her. However, the question of infallibility is a human issue which arises from Divine grace. Like the role of the Imamah as the leadership, which needs infallibility as a must, Allah may give infallibility to another person, especially the woman who is prepared to be an Imam, not in the strict sense of the term, but as the example. We believe that women have reached the level of infallibility as has been established with Virgin Mary (as) and Fatimah (as); but we may find some women who have not had a verse revealed regarding their infallibility, but who have not been distant from infallibility, such as Lady Zaynab (as) – women can come near to infallibility when they live their responsibility towards Allah and the people.

In addition, Allah, through his grace to Fatimah (as), wanted to tell people – men and women – that women can be elevated with Allah's bestowing and grace to the most exalted positions, and to infallibility.

Moreover, Allah wants to make the woman a role model for all people, men and women, so that men can be told that, just as they can have an infallible man as a role model, you can also have an infallible woman as a role model, because there is no difference between men and women as far as reaching the level of infallibility is concerned.

Q2 – What, apart from Infallibility, is the difference between Fatima al-Zahra (as) and all other women?

A – The difference is that Fatimah possessed a degree of spiritual depth in her personality that made her a manifestation of the message. Most women with a mission have a commitment to the message which comes from outside of themselves. By contrast, for Fatimah (as) it came from inside her mind and heart and soul, because she lived the whole of her life with the message and under the wing of the Messenger

of Allah (sawa), and then opened herself up to the full vigor of the message in the House of Ali (as), and moved dynamically in the emotion of the message with al-Hasan and al-Husain (as). Therefore, she lived the message. This is the difference between depth and shallowness. You cannot find anything in her personal life that speaks of leisure or purposelessness. This is what makes her a role model – the ultimate role model.

Q3 – How did she achieve that degree of belief?

A – How and where did Fatimah (as) live? She lived her childhood with the revelation revealed to her father (sawa) day and night, and so she was sensing the atmosphere of revelation day and night. She was living with the Messenger of Allah (sawa) and learning something from him every day, and living his manners, spirituality and prayers day and night. She used to accompany her father in his battles, and followed him in the dynamic movement of his Message, and to take from him kindness and give him kindness, take from him manners and ways of conduct that became manifest in her. Hence, in the house of the Prophet (sawa) Fatimah lived the whole of his Message in spirit and in detail. We know that she was not taught by another teacher, and so the whole of her knowledge came from the Messenger of Allah, and she spent the whole of her upbringing at his side. In addition, Allah has bestowed upon her his grace and mercy, to complete the picture; so it was by her own effort that she learnt from the Prophet (sawa) with the grace of Allah.

Hence, we saw that when she moved to the house of Ali (as) that she lived with him his spirit, intellect, patience and holy struggle.

Q4 – In dialogue with one Sunni brother, he said: You say that Fatimah is the Doyenne of the Women of the World while it is in fact – according to the Qur'an – Mariam (the Virgin Mary)?

A – It is narrated, by both the Sunnis and Shi'ites that Fatimah (as) is the Doyenne of the Women of the World.^{[1](#)}

Q5 – It was narrated that you said that Fatimah (as) had no right to Fadak. Is this true?

A – Fadak is a Fatimid fact and an Islamic fact.

Q6 – Regarding Fadak again: some say that if Fatimah (as) had had a right in Fadak, Imam Ali (as) would have returned it to its legal owners, i.e. Ahlul Bayt (as), when he became caliph, because he was capable of doing that.

A – The issue of Fadak was not, for Ali and Ahlul Bayt (as), a financial one. How come and Ali was the person who said: **'What do I do with Fadak and [anything] other than Fadak when the self will, tomorrow, end up in a grave?'** Rather, for them, Fadak was a symbol of the usurped caliphate. When Ali (as) became the caliph, he did not see any benefit in getting it back himself, and did not want to be accused of using the (power of) caliphate for personal interests. Also, perhaps he found that getting it

back would have created problems from those who cried out 'O the sunnah of 'Umar' when Ali (as) changed some of the things which 'Umar introduced in the prayer of *Taraweeh*.²

Q7 – Fadak again: it is well known that Ahlul Bayt (as) did not care about worldly things, so why did Lady Fatimah (as) demand that the first caliph hand Fadak back to her?

A – Fadak was a right for Fatimah (as), a gift from the Messenger of Allah or an inheritance from him. It is natural for her to demand this right, without indicating a concern in money and worldly things. Demanding one's right, through natural needs and familial responsibilities, is a legitimate pursuit which is commended by Allah. That is the point.

Secondly, demanding Fadak was a bridge to the caliphate, a legitimate right of which Fadak was one of its indications. It was told that one 'Abbasid caliph said to Imam al-Kadhim (as): 'I am ready to return Fadak back to you, so set its boundaries', thinking that it was a mere area in al-Hijaz. However, the Imam said: '**If I set Fadak's boundaries you shall never give it to me.**' The caliph asked: 'What are its boundaries?' He replied to him that the boundaries of Fadak were the boundaries of all the Islamic countries!

Hence, Fadak was the starting point and not the goal. Ibn Abi al-Hadeed – as quoted in his commentary on *Nahj al-Balaghah* – asked his teacher: 'Why didn't Abu Bakr give Fadak to Fatimah (as); if it was for the Muslims, wouldn't they have given it to Fatimah?' His teacher replied: 'If she was given Fadak, she would have demanded the caliphate for Ali, and therefore he decided to stop the matter at the start lest her demand would stretch to more than that.'

Q8 – How can we reconcile the stances of Fatimah (as), when she died quite upset and angry with Abu Bakr and 'Umar, and that of Ali (as) who gave them *bay'ah* (oath of acceptance of rule)? There are some people who are confused by this and would say that Fatimah (as) had been driven by emotions and that she got angry out of self-interest, while the stance of Ali (as) was rational?

A – The stance of Fatimah (as) was the stance of Ali (as)! Ali's stance was negative and rejecting, just as Fatimah's was. Also, who said that Fatimah's stance was driven by emotion? Had her emotion moved for the caliphate for Ali, more than Ali's emotion for himself? No, Fatimah was angry for the right, not for herself, and defended the right just as Ali (as) did, with all resolve and force.

Hence, when we read in *Nahj al-Balaghah* his speech: '**I swear by Allah that Ibn Abi Quhafah has put it [the caliphate] on [without suitability] like a shirt while [at the same time] he knows that my place regarding it is like the [center] pole in the mill – the torrent comes down from me, and the bird cannot reach my [high] position.**'³ This speech represented Ali's protest over and rejection of what had happened.

Yes, after that, Ali (as) saw that Islam's interests lied in patience'... **So, I was patient, (but) with a**

speck in the eye and sorrow in the throat.'⁴

Also, he said a wonderful word, explaining his patience and tolerating the situation, in spite of his rejection of its false claims to legitimacy. This was in his letter to the people of Egypt, and I would like every Shi'ite Muslim to read it, to know the approach of Ali (as) in the Islamic reality when the disturbance (*fitnah*), differences and problems would arise. He said: **'I was surprised to see the people pour unto that person to give him *bay'ah*; so I held my hand, until I saw the people heading backwards and turning from Islam, calling for the annihilation of the religion of Muhammad (sawa), so I feared that if I did not support Islam and its people I would see its breakage and demolition, a disaster for me which would be greater than losing my rule over you, which was after all only few days long, and that it would vanish as when a mirage vanishes or the clouds disperse; so I stood up in those events until falsehood disappeared and perished and the religion felt secured and comfortable...'**⁵ And he used to say: **'I shall make peace [with them] as long as the interests of Muslims are safe and that there is no injustice in it but to me personally.'**⁶

Q9 – Fatimah's rib: what is your true position regarding this matter?

A – Anyone who claims that I have said that Fatimah's rib was not broken is a liar!

Some people have been talking this nonsense for more than five years.⁷ Here, I have this to say to you, to clarify the matter: to start with, I reiterate that I did not say that Fatimah's rib was not broken, and everyone who claims that I did is a liar. I merely regarded it as unlikely; I raised a question mark on the basis of historical analysis. I said: 'I do not react positively with this because the Muslims' love for Fatimah (as) had been greater than their love for Ali, and greater than their love for al-Hasan and al-Husain, and greater than that their love for the Messenger of Allah (sawa). I said that it was unlikely that anyone would commit such an act, but conceded that bad intentions were plotted – not to establish the innocence of anyone, but in fear of agitating Islamic public opinion.

There were many narrations: some said that they entered the house, while others said they did not. Hence, I said: 'I see that to be unlikely and I do not react positively to the word itself'. The world roared and heavens fell on earth, and words began to be fabricated and spread in some quarters!

This reaction has still not abated in more than one place, and leaflets are being distributed around the world. It is as if the dangers confronting the Muslims and all the injustice that we live in have become nothing, and all that matters is this historical issue!

In fact, this is a symptom of the backwardness which is being practiced by many in our Islamic arena. This problem still festers among those who do not care about the dangers which confront Islam, and that the problem is still alive means that we are not addressing the major issues on the proper level of awareness.

Q10 – Much wisdom, lessons and depth lie like concealed treasures in the narrations of Ahlul

Bayt (as). What is the way to open oneself up to this great grace?

A – We have spoken more than once that our problem with Ahlul Bayt (as) is that we have contained them in the prison of tragedy only! And when we opened out their horizons, we did that in the area of miracles and miraculous favours. As for their thinking, their approach to life, their authentic prophetic line in life, their comprehensive Qur'anic approach and all that they have said and moved dynamically in, which can provide answers to the questions, queries and problems from which our generation is suffering and future generations will be suffering, there is no work done that brings it out and explains it satisfactorily. We have cut them off from the dynamic movement of life and entered them in the movement of tears, and therefore we have made a wide opportunity quite narrow!

You have attended, in this season, more than one gathering to mark the anniversary of Fatimah's death. What have you heard about Fatimah al-Zahra (as)? I am here speaking in general terms, for amongst the orators there are those who bear the responsibility of enlightenment in the ways of Ahlul Bayt (as). However, most have concentrated on the tragedy and grievance. We emphasize the grievance, but this has been the grievance in the way of the Message, and not a weeping grievance. Ours is a grievance which encompasses vigour, strength, enlightenment, criticism and confrontation.

Q11 – Is it required from men to be the Messenger (sawa) or Ali (as), and women to be Fatimah (as), a hundred percent, so that we achieve the level of a healthy society? Or is the grace of those personalities and their characteristics more than what is needed for a healthy society, and so men only need a certain percentage from the Messenger and Ali, and women a certain percentage from Fatimah (as)?

A – In the world of the role models, you are not expected to reach the level of the role model, but to regard them as the highest example of the virtues and values, which have proved their realistic nature by the fact that the role models are human beings. This was why Allah said: **'Indeed (there) is for you in the Apostle of God (Muhammad) an excellent pattern (of conduct) for him who hopeth in God and the latter day and remembereth God much'** (Qur'an 33:21); and Ali (as) said: **'Your Imam is content from life with his two pieces of cloth, and from his food with his two pieces of bread; and you cannot bear that, but help me with God-fearing and hard work, and modesty and good thinking.'**⁸

And the poet says:

Imitate them, if you are not [exactly] like them

Surely imitating the virtuous is winning.

The greatest human examples among prophets, Imams and virtuous individuals are the summits to which we can aspire. Some may come near the summit, whilst others may stay on the foot of the mountain, but (whatever the case) we have to proceed to get the happiness through what they have

manifested, because this is the way of Islam. The Messenger of Allah (sawa) did not have anything apart from the Qur'an and Islam, and Ali (as) and Fatimah (as) did not have anything other than the Qur'an and Islam, but the difference between them and us was that they had manifested the Qur'an and Islam in their conscience using what Allah had bestowed on them in the knowledge which we could not reach because we lacked the means.

Q12 - Is loving Fatimah (as) without a practical attempt to apply the Qur'anic system as applied by Fatimah (as) sufficient to bring women to her on the Day of Judgement?

A - Fatimah (as) lived with the Messenger of Allah (sawa), Ali (as), al-Hasan and al-Husain (as), the conscience of the Imams (as) and all workers (in the way of Allah). The important thing is that the woman lives Islam in the obedience of Allah and the call for His religion and work, in a way that Fatimah (as) did, even if only to a certain percentage.

- [1.](#) Musnad Abu Dawood, p. 196, hadith 1373; al-Mustadrak, vol. 3, p. 156.
- [2.](#) The prayers performed in the nights of Ramadan, which used to be performed on an individual basis, but which 'Umar transferred to use in congregation. The translator.
- [3.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, the Shiqshiqiyah sermon.
- [4.](#) Ditto.
- [5.](#) Ditto, letter 62.
- [6.](#) Ditto, sermon 74.
- [7.](#) This was in October 1997. The translator.
- [8.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, letter 45.

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