

Introduction

Lady Zaynab, daughter of Imam Ali (a) and granddaughter of Prophet Muhammad (S), was the first lady in the world of Islam to create a whole history of erecting edifices of right and justice, demolishing the gloomy castles of wrong and oppression, and recording, through her honorable circumstances, new standards of honor and dignity for Islam and Muslims throughout history. Thus, she has been a ring head in the series of the ideals and human glories that her fathers, brothers, descendants of her brothers, and their partisans introduced to humanity.

She contributed actively to construction of the edifices of renaissance of Muslim ideals and to the propagation of the religious and political cognizance. She achieved this at a time when the ruling authorities and their sycophant followers used propagandist media to overcast the pure mentality of people and even forge the intuitive facts of Islam.

Positively, Lady Zaynab aborted all these forgeries and brought into view the reality of the Umayyad rulers; the actual enemies of Islam. She, also, proved to the public that the Umayyad rulers were polluted by crimes and violations against human rights and that their authority was illegal since they usurped rights of others and appointed themselves as absolute rulers over Muslims without obtaining their satisfaction or consulting them.

Through her marvelous revolutionary speeches and situations, Lady Zaynab particularized minutely the reality that was hidden from the public, and focused light on the misdemeanor of the Umayyad rulers and their political plots.

Lady Zaynab, the Prophet's granddaughter, was characterized by a personality that combined all the high moral standards and the honorable tendencies and, accordingly, she has been the best exemplary of honor, chastity, and dignity in addition to every virtue of human perfection. She had inherited the highest principles of charity including deep-rooted faith and trust in Almighty Allah in the most perfect manner from her parents and grandfather.

Historians have recorded remarkable portraits of situations where her incomparable faith and perseverance on principles were displayed. The leading roles of these situations were proudly awarded

to Lady Zaynab. At the night that followed that horrible day of Ashura¹ in Karbala, Lady Zaynab offered Thanksgiving Prayer to Almighty Allah for the tragedy which inflicted not only the Ahl al-Bayt (a), but also all human beings in general and Muslims in particular.

Another picture of Lady Zaynab's tremendous faith is that on the day of 'Ashura' she stopped near the body of her martyred brother, Imam al-Husayn (a), whose head had been cruelly severed off by the swords of the criminal band of the Umayyad army, and uttered her immortal words:

اللَّهُمَّ تَقَبَّلْ هَذَا الْقُرْبَانَ، وَأْتِبْهُ عَلَى عَمَلِهِ.

“O Allah, accept this offering and reward him for his deed.”

Has humanity ever seen such a demonstration of faith?

The most destructive adversity that inflicted Islam at that time took the Ahl al-Bayt (a) away from the political theatre of Islam while everybody, especially those who contributed directly to setting aside of the Ahl al-Bayt from their rightful positions, remained aware with certainty about the divine decision of choosing them (i.e. the Ahl al-Bayt) as the leaders of the Islamic nation. Historians have recorded unanimously that after the demise of Prophet Muhammad (S), some individuals led a rebellion against his general decision about succession in the leadership of the Islamic nation, claiming that it is unacceptable for the Hashemites² to have both prophethood and succession in leadership³.

This adversity resulted in handing the leadership and destiny of the Islamic nation over to unsuitable individuals who were the main reason beyond the downfall of Muslims.

The Islamic nation, as a whole, was thus deprived of the pure source of the knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (a), which was the natural extension of the divine knowledge of the prophets (a). Imam Ali (a), in consequence lived in complete confinement, away from the political and practical life of the Islamic nation during the entire regime of the three caliphs. And, when he was elected freely for the first time, as the leader of the Islamic nation, the capitalists, the greedy, the deviants, and the ignorant revolted against his just government and engaged him in opposition for many things.

By such engagement, the Islamic world was afflicted with a big loss when Imam Ali (a) did not have enough time to extend ideal justice and equality all over the Islamic state. As a matter of fact, the Immaculate Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) faced the same fate as their grandfather Imam Ali (a) when the Umayyad and Abbasid rulers prevented them from extending their ideals and knowledge among the people, causing humanity to lose on benefitting from such sources of wisdom.

It was because of the policies of the caliphs of Quraysh⁴, that the mortal enemies of Islam could come to power, rule over Muslims, and change the Islamic State into a kingdom dominated by personal interests and hereditary dynasty.

Thus, doing wrong and oppression became the distinctive features of the ruling authorities at that time. To be killed was the fate of men having freedom of thought, people were deprived of their rights, which became a possession in the hands of a few gangs who were loyal to the ruling authorities, and corruption found rich pasture in the Islamic provinces.

Wrong, oppression, and corruption attained the climax in the reign of Yazid the dissolute. Historians have unanimously agreed on the fact that “Yazid was such an unjust, immoral, and sinful man that he did not believe in Allah and His Apostle for a single moment.” In abstract, Yazid’s policies exploded in every matter that violated Islam.

In the midst of these circumstances, nobody had the ability to utter a single word of right except Imam al-Husayn (a) who led his great revolution so that it paved the way for standing against every unjust individual and declaring the word of truth openly courageously.

Through its horrible chapters, the revolution of Imam al-Husayn (a) shook the worldwide conscience and carried an intellectual donation and bright lessons to all peoples who suffer the ordeals of colonialism and slavery.

Lady Zaynab contributed actively and positively in all the chapters and heroism associated with Imam al-Husayn’s revolution. In the first stage of the revolution, Lady Zaynab stood so bravely with her brother even though she knew the fate that he faced. Her strong will, fortitude, and determination on supporting her brother in his revolution were distinctive features of this revolution that changed the course of history and supplied the seekers of freedom with factors of renaissance and development.

Lady Zaynab believed in the revolution of her brother. She participated in his struggle against wrong and oppression in a vigorous manner, and achieved the goals of this great revolution. Through her innovative speeches in the porticoes of the Umayyad ruling capital, she stood for the genuine principles of Imam al-Husayn’s revolution. She could crystallize the public opinion and that found an actual cognizance in that, later on, it resulted in successive popular uprisings against the Umayyad regime.

She gave an unmatched example of willpower, deep-rooted faith, and steadfastness through her conduct in the horrific circumstances she had to encounter. In fact, the example of Lady Zaynab can be found neither in the Islamic history nor in the history of humankind.

This great lady saw the atrocious adversities that afflicted her family members and could treat these situations with perseverance and steadfastness as she submitted totally to the Almighty Allah.

She saw young men among her sons, nephews and cousins who had luminous personalities that were as pleasing as the moon, being killed with their organs severed and trampled so cruelly on the ground of Karbala. She saw even the newborns and the babies of her household slaughtered savagely in the hands of those inhumane criminals.

She saw the ladies of the Prophet's house harshly exhausted by thirst while they wailed for their sons and brethren, but she kept trying to console and order them to be patient and steadfast.

She saw her brother, Chief of the Martyrs, surrounded by those wicked people whose swords, spears, and lances struck his body until they had so hideously beheaded him.

She saw those infidel invaders attack the tents for women and set them on fire while the Prophet's harem had to run into the desert out of fear.

Lady Zaynab saw all these adversities and faced them with faith, perseverance, and submission to Almighty Allah.

The disaster of Karbala with all of its horrifying, hideous events that followed, including the capture, humiliation, and punishment imposed on men and women of the Ahl al-Bayt to set example, induces us to take a brief view of the political documents that inform us of the events that followed the Prophet's demise directly. This is so because these are the rudimentary source that informs us of what underlay the misfortunes of the Ahl al-Bayt in particular and Muslims in general.

Most certainly, the most significant factors that resulted in the absolute domination of the Umayyad dynasty over the Islamic State were the plot of the Saqifah⁵ and the spurious forgery of the Shura⁶. It was because of these two baseless systems that had been introduced as an innovation, that the Umayyad infidels, even though they had been humiliated by Islam and deemed to be slaves, were able to fight against Islam with all their weapons once they had been released. They could thus come to power and prevail over Muslims and their destiny.

The ruling authorities that usurped the legal right of Imam Ali (a) showed a favor to the Umayyad rulers. This removed the mask of humility and meekness that Islam had placed on their faces. They granted the Umayyads abundant wealth and invested in them by appointing them to leading offices in the Islamic State. Muawiyah ibn Abu Sufyan was the biggest beneficiary of such procedures. He was given the governorship of Syria and was granted special support and advocacy. When Umar ibn al-Khattab was informed that the governor of Syria, namely Muawiyah, exceeded all limits in violating the Muslims' treasury as he built palaces, committed every sin forbidden by Islam, dressed silky clothes, and ate in golden and silver plates, Umar found him excuses by saying, "This is the Khosrow – King of the Arabs."

Everybody knew that Islam had been devoid of any royalty or aristocracy. In the sight of Islam, all Muslims are of the same class. Nothing distinguishes them except piety and charity. It is ironic then that an individual such as Muawiyah who had opposed Islam openly and was forced to accept it so as to save himself from being killed was being described as the King of the Arabs!

In the Holy Quran, Muawiyah and his family have been described as the doomed tree⁷. In many texts that are authentically related to the Prophet (S), the Umayyad dynasty had been cursed. After all, they are only slaves of Muslims until the Prophet released them and they were named 'the Released Ones.'

So summarily, the events of Karbala and the ordeals faced by the Ahl al-Bayt (a) are reviewed; it can be proven that they were primarily the results of the plot of Saqifah and the spurious forgery of Shura. Further to this, these two unfounded systems have been the reason behind all the ordeals that Muslims have faced throughout history.

As a matter of fact, the greatest and the most constructive service that can be offered to the Islamic nation is to hint at, propagate, and refer to the Ahl al-Bayt's innumerable, genuine virtues and elevated ideals. This is so because these matters leave a direct effect on the spread of virtue and moral standards and the development of excellence in behavior. The Ahl al-Bayt (a) have acted through their words, deeds, and behaviors so that they appear to be rays reflected from Almighty Allah's Light. They are, as proven by authentic reports narrated by the Prophet (S), those who 'do not speak out of vain desire'. They are the ships of salvation for the Islamic nation and a match to the Book of Allah.

The life accounts of the Ahl al-Bayt have been schools of God-fearing, genuine faith, and struggle against the wrong. They dedicated their lives to the Almighty and acted perfectly and sincerely for His sake. Thus, the biography of any of them is no more than a record of their personality which is a model for God-fearing and obedience to the Lord. They spent their days with fasting and spent their nights with prayers and recitals of the Holy Book of Allah.

Both men and women of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) acted with earnestness to spread knowledge, wisdom, and high moral standards among people. They also spent their lives by distributing charity among the needy, being kind to the miserable, striving actively against the wrong, and exerting all possible efforts for opposing injustice and the unjust individuals no matter how powerful they were, and the positions they held.

They engaged with the issues of the Islamic nation so bravely; therefore, they were vulnerable to being killed at the hands of the unjust rulers who held the reins of the Islamic nations wrongfully.

Lady Zaynab daughter of Imam Ali (a) is one of the individuals of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) to whom all the above-mentioned activities and descriptions is applicable. She is one who has contributed to spreading the word of Allah on this earth and struggled intently against the oppressors. She had to suffer the most horrible adversities and misfortunes for the sake of this. After the killing of her brother Imam al-Husayn (a), Lady Zaynab, as well as the other harem of the Prophet's household, were taken as captives and had to be presented before the wretched Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad who had been given the position of the governorship of two Islamic provinces. Lady Zaynab showed such remarkable courage when facing Ubaydullah, that he lost self control and he hurried towards her to beat her.

The caravan of the Prophet's household was then taken to Syria where they had to be presented before Yazid ibn Muawiyah. It was while facing this criminal descendant of the mortal enemies of Islam, that Lady Zaynab delivered her historical speech, which is considered as the most important feat that condemned and announced the Umayyad State and its partisans as illegal.

For the sake of Islam, this granddaughter of Prophet Muhammad (S) had to suffer horrifying adversities and misfortunes, and due to her heroic and honorable struggle against wrong and oppression, women of this world must take her as their role model. It is through a deep understanding of her as a pioneer of struggle against wrong that all women should recognize their roles in adopting the issues of justice on this earth.

- [1.](#) Day of Ashura is the tenth of Muharram, observed as a day of mourning (the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Al-Husayn (a).
- [2.](#) The Hashemites are sons and descendants of Hashim, the grandfather of Prophet Muhammad (S).
- [3.](#) See Ahmed Hussein Yaqub, *The Conception of the Sahaba's Ultimate Decency and the Political Leadership in Islam*; translated by Badr Shahin, Published by Ansariyan Publications – Qum, 1998.
- [4.](#) Quraysh is the tribe to which Prophet Muhammad (S) belonged.
- [5.](#) The Saqifah – Shed of Banu-Saidah – is the place where Abu-Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, and Abu-Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah held a secret meeting, attended by the Ansar – the inhabitants of Yathrib who had received and supported the Prophet and the emigrants from Mecca. This meeting was held immediately after the demise of Prophet Muhammad (S) to name the one to hold the position of the leadership of the Islamic nation although all the attendants knew for certain that the Prophet (S), on more than one occasion, had nominated Ali ibn Abu-Talib as his successor and declared that this decision had been issued by the Almighty Allah.
- [6.](#) Although he declared before everybody that the Prophet (S) did not nominate anybody for his succession in the leadership of the Islamic nation, Abu-Bakr, in his final hours, nominated Umar ibn al-Khattab as his successor and the next leader. The latter, however, created a mock council to elect the leader to succeed him. This system was called the Shura. For details, see the books of the Islamic history.
- [7.](#) See the exegetists' explanation of the Quranic Verse:

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لَكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ أَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ ۗ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّؤْيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنَاكَ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَالشَّجَرَةَ الْمَلْعُونَةَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ ۗ وَنُخَوِّفُهُمْ فَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلَّا طُغْيَانًا كَبِيرًا

“And when We said to you: Surely your Lord encompasses men; and We did not make the vision which We showed you and the cursed tree in the Quran as well but a trial for men; and We cause them to fear, but it only adds to their great inordinacy. (17:60)”

Source URL: <https://www.al-islam.org/lady-zaynab-badr-shahin/introduction#comment-0>