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Introduction: Why Fatimah (as)?

Her stances were stances for the right, and her sorrow was the sorrow for the issue (Islam), and her joy was the joy of the message; the depth of Islam was manifested in the depth of her personality and she amassed within herself all the Islamic human virtues, since being the Doyenne of the Women of the World implied that she should be at the highest level, spiritually and morally.

This is why we are intensely interested in Fatimah al-Zahra' (as) because when we remember her we remember the message and her role, and remember Islam and the dynamic issues in which Fatimah (as) was a central figure; hence we feel that she is with us in all of our concerns and that she is alive among us. There are people in history who finish when they die, because their existence is encapsulated in the span of their lives; there are others who remain alive as long as life exists, and who continue as long as their message continues and as long as there are people who are open to their message.

Fatimah (as) is placed at the pinnacle of these people, since you cannot mention the Messenger of Allah (sawa) without mentioning her. She was his product and the spirit inside his body; and you cannot mention Ali (as) without mentioning her as she was his companion in life and suffering; and you cannot mention al-Hasan, al-Husain and Zaynab (as) without mentioning her as she was the secret of purity in their childhood and of their personalities throughout their lives.

This is the secret of Fatimah (as) that obliges us to keep her in our minds and our hearts as a message and thought, not just the cause of tears. We cannot but open up to her with our tears, but more important than that is to open ourselves to her message because she lived all her tears and all her life for the Message and never for one moment lived it for her own self. This is the secret of all the members of Ahlul Bayt (as): they lived for the whole of Islam and gave their lives for Islam and the Message.

Not an inflation of the past

Talking about Fatimah (as) involves no unwarranted inflation of history. Besides, with her virtues, she represents the living present and a bright future. We have seen her in her motherhood as the greatest of mothers, and we have seen the cruelty imposed by that role on her weak body, but she withstood all this

with an open mind and with patience. Then we saw her fulfilling her different missionary responsibilities when she stirred up the conscience of the nation, and presented the greatest lesson in how to deal with the circumstances following the death of the Prophet (sawa). She held that stance which has proved itself over time and stayed valid to the present, and will ever be.

Studying the experience of Fatimah (as) is not a reversion to the past, and hence a diminution of ourselves within those limitations, but rather a question of trying to draw lessons from a pioneering experience by an infallible personality – an experience which has never been confined to the past but one which shall ever be current and renewed.

A role model for both sexes

When we present Fatimah (as) as a role model, we are not talking about women only, We present her as a role model for both men and women because she is a constituent element of Islam and the Muslim people as a whole, not just of women – even if there was a big role as woman in her life. Muslim women can take a lot from Fatimah (as) when they know how to spend their time valuably and how to open themselves up, with all their powers, to knowledge, spirituality and dynamic attitude, according to their abilities.

Love versus allegiance

Love for the great personalities and individuals with a mission are not only emotions but a stance. This is the difference between being a loving person and being a proponent follower: allegiance is a stance while love is emotion. It is natural that the situation must live the emotion and move by it, but it should move beyond it to open up to the whole of the message through opening up to the bearers of the message, who represent its legitimacy.

Yes! The value of what Ahlul Bayt (as) say and do is that it represents the whole legitimacy. When a person takes words of knowledge or rulings, or follows a line of conduct which can be right or wrong, he will be puzzled as to the legitimacy of what he has seen or heard; but if he depends on infallible examples who have been purified from abominable acts, then there can be no place for falsehood, and no place for injustice. He will have taken the truth from a pure fountain, in which nothing can muddy its purity.

Imam al-Sadiq (as) said: **'My *hadith* is the *hadith* of my father, and my father's is that of my grandfather, and my grandfather's is that of al-Husain, and al-Husain's is that of al-Hasan, and al-Hasan's is that of the Commander of the Faithful, and the Commander of the Faithful's is that of the Messenger of Allah, and the Messenger of Allah's is the word of Allah the Great and Almighty.'**

His eminence and Fatimah's virtues

When I started my life, Lady al-Zahra (as) was in my mind, heart and life. Before I was twenty, in al-Najaf, Iraq, I wrote a poem on the anniversary of the death of Fatimah (as). I talked about her in lectures, interviews, dialogues and poems – the talk of spiritual passion and intellectual love and heartfelt sanctification.... I spoke of every one of her virtues, merits and spiritual meanings, and then extended that to analyzing her words, amongst which was her famous sermon, because I always believed that we had to know Fatimah (as) to the full – her spirit, heart, thought and attitude, so that she would become for us 'the pioneer who would not fail his folks' and the role model whom we should imitate and follow in our Islamic lives, men and women together.

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