

Part 3

When there was such a hospital, with such a staff in a remote village near Sabzevar in the 7th and 8th Islamic centuries, there must certainly have been more important and well-equipped hospitals in larger cities like Rey, Tus, Balkh, Bukhara and Baghdad. But we see that our ethnically-oriented intellectuals announce that a European or American woman serving in the first world war established nursing in the world. They negate and oppose the nurses who worked in the early stage of Islam, because it is a religious tradition.

Therefore, you see how problems are confused, how rights are abolished, how great talents are sacrificed in the name of religious traditions and how many great religious values and Islamic virtues are forgotten in the name of intellectualism and opposition to traditional, religious beliefs!

Thus the responsibility of those who understand both the present society and Islam and who live in the present century is very heavy. They must bear the burden of many centuries of emotions, ideas and faith. It is not an easy task to travel such a long distance and discover the truth which exists beyond it.

As mentioned, one of the most important factors that enables Islamic communities to stand against and resist the insidious invitation of pseudo-scientific Freudianism and its dreadful use of sexuality is the presence of an exemplary religious models in a humane culture. In the same way that Western worldwide colonialization stupefies the minds of its own youth through narcotics, promotes Freudianism and sexual liberty for Eastern countries, and exports sexual liberty into the Eastern countries in exchange for their raw materials. In place of the oil, diamonds, gold, rubber, etc. which the West takes from the East, it gives sexual liberty to them.

When a young man or woman is introduced to sexual liberty, he or she will become occupied by it and will not think about other things, such as problems of freedoms. And when such young people have matured, they will be so involved with installment payments, sexual obsessions, etc. that they will never come to look and think about other problems!

The most important weapon of Islamic youth against this insidious invitation of the West is the possession of symbols leading the mind to genuine spiritual experiences. The spiritual symbols made

available to the present generation which is unwilling to be captured either by hollow, conservative, anti-human, anti-Islamic ethnic traditions or by the stupefying culture of indecent Western modernism are the best weapons against the West's attack.

The woman of the Third World must be one who makes a choice. She is the woman who neither accepts the inherited mould nor the imported novelty. She recognizes both of them. She knows and is aware of both of them. The one which is imposed upon her in the name of tradition which she inherits, is not related to Islam at all but is related to ethnic customs of the period of paternalism and even slavery. And the one which is imported from the West is not science, not humanity, not freedom and not liberty. It is not based on sanctity and respect for women at all. Rather it is based on the low tricks of the bourgeoisie stupefying consumerism and mindless self-indulgence.

She wants to select, but what model? She wants neither the model of the traditional, strict woman, nor the model of the modern degraded woman. She wants the face of a Muslim woman. Fortunately, both material and history are available to build this third figure. And even more authentic than history, logical than scientific arguments are the objective exemplary personalities who are symbols in our Islamic history.

All of them were gathered in a family. All lived in a small room a family, each of whose members is a symbol, a model. Being Hasan-like means having patience and peace. Being Husayn-like means participating in spiritual and religious struggle in the way of God (Jihad) and martyrdom. Being Zaynab-like means bearing the heavy social mission of justice and truth. Being Fatima-like means being a real woman. Being Ali-like means being virtuous.

I do not intend to once again repeat the life of Fatima as a model. All I knew in this respect I have already said and written. But I would like to mention once again that it is not sufficient only to understand and repeat the historical biographies. We must realize how to describe, how to understand, how to learn lessons from Fatima's life.

When the Prophet of Islam said that Fatima was one of the four greatest women of the world, when he consoled all the pains, miseries and disturbances of her life and implied she would be selected as the woman among women of the world, he was not intending to superficially greet her or to give her false consolation. He was quite serious in this respect. He recommended she be patient and bear the heavy burden and responsibility of being Fatima.

Fatima's sisters did not have such a responsibility and were living with their husbands as ordinary Muslim women. But Fatima was exceptional. Thus the Prophet by calling her 'the woman among the women of the world' was intending neither to make an idol for his followers to worship nor to praise her as a victim in order to mourn for her. He intended to introduce her as a model and a symbol, to learn lessons from the manner of her life and to act in accordance with it. This is the meaning of being the 'woman among women of the world'.

How can we learn from Fatima's life? You all know the various dimensions of her life and, thus, there is no necessity to repeat it here. The only point that I would like to make is that we should try to learn from this great personality.

For example, when we consider Fadak in Fatima's life, we must see what lesson we can learn from it. Fatima's insistence upon getting back Fadak was not for the sake of possessing a small farm. Her struggle must not be reduced to that level. Her struggles and efforts were to take what she thought was her right, even though the companions of the Prophet tried to show that their opposition was according to Islamic standards. Therefore, the real value of Fadak is as a symbol and an example.

Today Fadak does not exist. Some may say that such historical subjects must not be considered and discussed so much. But, quite the contrary, I believe these are living subjects which must be repeated and discussed not as historical events which are taught in schools, but rather as subjects from which one can gain valuable lessons.

What lessons? A lesson to be learned about the highest manifestation of motherhood in Islamic history, about Fatima, about the edifying symbol of a woman in the house, in marriage, in relationships, in motherhood, in training and nourishing children like Hasan, Husayn and Zaynab, and in companionship with her husband Ali. She was a woman who throughout the whole of her life, from her childhood to her marriage, from her marriage to the end of her life, felt herself to be a responsible and committed person and a part of the destiny of the community. She defended what was right, supported justice in thought, idea and deed and confronted the oppression which existed in her society. She was ever present in all social problems and confrontations. She did not remain silent until her death even though she knew that she would not succeed in her fight. This is the meaning of social commitment and responsibility. It is the lesson that can be learned from Fatima's life.

When she was a small girl of around ten years, she went everywhere in Makkah with her father, Prophet of Islam. No one expected a small girl to go hand in hand with her father in such a socio-political and ideological situation. But Fatima felt herself responsible for the destination of the Islamic Revolution although according to her age, she was not responsible. So she was present at any confrontation. She was present wherever the Prophet of Islam was alone against the enemy. She stood beside him. Numerous cases have been recorded. For example, once when the Prophet's enemies poured dust onto his head from a balcony, it was Fatima who cleaned the dust from the face of the Prophet with her small hands. It was she who gave consolation to him.

The Prophet and his family were exiled in the desolate valley for three years. Heroes such as Sad ibn Waqqas (the famous officer and commander) even after the passing of many years, when recalling those days, would tremble with terror. Throughout that time, when the whole responsibility for the blockade, imprisonment, humiliation, loneliness, hunger, and difficulties rested upon the shoulders of the Prophet, Fatima was present. She caressed her old mother, her hero father and even gave consolation to her older sisters! She was the only source of love, kindness, and enthusiasm in this horrible valley

and through those hard and difficult years.

When the Prophet migrated to Madinah, she bore the difficulties of the period of migration. Even in marrying Ali, she showed social commitment because everyone knew that Ali was not a man of the house but rather a man of battle. Thus he was not a desirable husband from the point of view which seeks only home, pleasures and comfort. Everyone knew that Ali possessed nothing except a sword and love. They knew he would not possess anything else up to the end of his life. Fatima knew that Ali would never return home with full hands. She knew that the hand of destiny had made Ali like an anvil which must bear all strokes of hardships. Thus, by selecting a warrior like Ali as a husband, Fatima shouldered a great responsibility.

Hence, Fatima consciously made her selection. She gloriously bore the heavy burden of this mission up to her death. She made a home which is unique in history, beyond human scale and standards. For everyone, whether Muslim or not, admits that her home was a paradigm of the human situation. A home in which Ali was the father, Fatima was the mother, Hasan and Husayn the sons and Zaynab and Umm Kulthum the daughters. All of them were elevated symbols. All of them were gathered in one family not dispersed throughout history in order to be collected and introduced separately. They were one generation inside one house. It is really painful for Muslims who had such models, such a religion, and such a culture to have such a destiny. A great personality like Fatima was among the members of this family. She was such a distinct woman that Ayisha, the Prophet's wife, praised her saying, "I never saw anyone higher than Fatima, except her father, the Prophet."

Thus it is sufficient for any intellectual woman to read a book about Fatima (or about other distinguished Islamic women, like Khadija or Zaynab) to know these figures and compare them with figures who are introduced in the name of modernism. Any women comparing Fatima with women who are introduced through modern magazines will recognize significant differences and reach the proper and inevitable conclusion.

Therefore, the most important duty of the aware, responsible writers and preachers is to introduce these figures accurately to the present generation thus holding up the most conscious, humane models to defend and resist the West's attack.

A real figure of a Muslim woman can be seen in the Battle of Siffin, the battle that took place between Ali and Muawiyah. In this battle, the women (who were in Ali's army) by singing epic poems, and by encouragement and enthusiastic lectures and speeches, inspired Ali's army against Muawiyah. After the Battle of Siffin and the death of Ali, Muawiyah ordered these women to be pursued in order to take revenge against the families. One of these women was captured and sent to Muawiyah's court in Damascus. Muawiyah told her that she had a very sinful past. She, in order to avoid Muawiyah's revenge, said, "God bless you. Overlook the past." But Muawiyah said, "Do you know that you shed the blood of our army when we fought by Ali's army in the Battle of Siffin?" She courageously answered, "God bless you that you gave me this blessed news [that I participated in that war against you and your

army]."

This is the face of a Muslim woman. If we study the books which have been written about Muslim women, we will notice that wherever Islam ruled throughout history, Muslim women have shown the greatest talents in science, literature and social issues. But wherever Islamic societies have declined, women also declined. Our intellectuals have never found the opportunity to study the life and personality of Zaynab properly and to take note of her real figure and role.

When Zaynab saw that the revolution had begun, she left her family, her husband and her children, and joined the revolution. It was not for the sake of her brother Husayn, who was the leader of this revolution, that she joined it. She did so because of her own responsibility and commitment to her society, religion and God. When she saw that a struggle and revolution had begun against an oppressive system, she joined the revolution and was beside her brother Husayn in all stages in those difficult days. Even after the martyrdom of Husayn and his companions, she carried the flag of the continuation of Karbala's revolution. She performed her mission thoroughly, perfectly and fairly, with strength and courage. She expressed with words the truth that Husayn expressed with blood. She shouted out against tyranny in any land. She distributed the seeds of revolution in every land that she entered, either free or as a captive. It is no accident that Muslims, wherever they are, show a great and deep sympathy towards the Prophet's family and love them.

It was Zaynab, the Prophet's granddaughter, who stood against and confronted the ruling oppressive power and who destroyed all resistance. She accomplished all this against a tyrannical caliphate which had conquered Iran and Byzantium. She spread the thoughts and ideas of Husayn's school of revolution and martyrdom everywhere and in every land. She took the drops of the blood of Karbala as a symbol of courage and justice to all places and all times.

Yes! All of these miracles belonged to a woman! Thus when a woman, a conscious and responsible committed woman sees such heroics from a woman who belonged to Fatima's family, she understands where she must look and how she must be. She realizes that a woman of any age and any century can emulate this model.

These are the values that will not change or grow old nor do they depend upon the customs of the socio-cultural or economic systems. These are stable and permanent values which will be destroyed only when there is no longer any humanity in existence. Thus, the present day woman must know Fatima was a woman who was a warrior during her childhood, a woman who showed patience and tolerance in the hard days of the economic blockade, a woman who endured three years of imprisonment in the desolate valley in Makkah, and a woman who cooperated and showed great sympathy to the Prophet of Islam after the death of her mother. She was the woman who acted 'as his mother' and, therefore, was entitled to be addressed by the Prophet as 'her father's mother'. She was the woman who in Madinah, was the wife of Ali, the man whom she herself had selected. When she married Ali, she entered a home which lacked everything except poverty and love. Then as Ali's wife, she

showed the highest example of companionship, fellowship, and the most ascending spirit. She was always beside Ali as a wife, a friend, a companion and a confidant who kept his secrets and bore his hardships.

And finally, she was the nourisher and trainer of Hasan, Husayn, Zaynab and Umm Kulsum. Her part in training Zaynab was even more important than Husayn because Husayn had grown up inside the Prophet's mosque and among the companions of the Prophet. He had grown up in Madinah at the center and peak of the confrontations and great social events. But Fatima had trained Zaynab inside her home and in her lap. The role of Zaynab in the revolution of Karbala and its continuation and progress resulted from Fatima's teachings and from the high spirit of Zaynab.

From every corner of Fatima's house, a symbol and a manifestation of humanity appears. The Prophet's family was considered to be the benchmark of Islamic understanding in all ages and at all times. Even after the victory of the Prophet in Madinah, Fatima still was the emblem of the bearer of poverty and harshness outside the home and was the highest caliber mother inside.

At the peak of victory and the glory of Islam, when her father was the leader of Islam, Fatima was still the example of a woman who lived as our sister. She bore hunger as a slave. She bore hardships and tolerated deprivation for the glory of her husband and the leadership of her father. And after the death of her father, when those difficult days were renewed, she once again started the struggle. Throughout the crisis this solitary mother did not cease her resistance. She actively continued her struggle.

Even at nights she visited the companions of the Prophet and influential political personalities. She spoke with the great friends of the Prophet and important personalities. She brought awareness to all. She criticized all of them. She analyzed and foresaw the calamity. This was her social role at that stage until she died. But even with her death, she created a political event. She asked to be buried at night. Her memories, actions, and struggles created a revival in Islamic history. She became the manifestation of the search for justice and truth in all the revolutionary uprisings of the 2nd through the 8th centuries in all countries from Egypt to Iran.

Even at the present time, she acts as a model for Muslim women: as a daughter of God's Prophet; as a mother who trained girls like Zaynab and Umm Kulsum and sons like Hasan and Husayn; as a wife, a high, ascending and exemplary wife to her husband; and as the companion of Ali's solitude, hardships and difficulties. She was beside him everywhere as a committed social woman, a woman who from the early stages of her life never left her father and fought beside him and struggled with him. She was the woman who fought against tyranny on the external front and who fought against deviation, usurpation and oppression on the internal front.

She died in solitude and silence. She asked Ali to bury her in secret, at night. Here was a woman who even used her death and burial ceremony as a means for struggle in the way of truth. This is how it is to be a Muslim woman in the present age.

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