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The Third Infallible, Hadhrat Fatimah al-Zahra

For Muslim women, Fatimah al-Zahra (as) is undoubtedly the most popular religious, moral, pious, and literary figure among the Muslims and other people of the world. The personality of Fatimah al-Zahra (as) is superior to all women of the world; she is a perfect paradigm for all the women who are enamored with chastity and piety.

It was on her chaste and immaculate lap that the two dignified and eminent Imams, i.e., Imam al-Hasan (as), the manifestation of tolerance and grace, and Imam al-Husayn (as), the master of the martyrs, were raised and brought up; so was also Zaynab Kubra (as), a corporeal epic, an embodiment of bravery, who was matchless in eloquence and a truth-seeker who proclaimed the message of 'Ashura to the world and removed the mask of hypocrisy, polytheism, meanness, and worldliness from the face of Yazid and members of his sect.

Nobody denies that a mother has much more participation in rearing children, especially her daughters. And it was Fatimah al-Zahra (as) who imparted the Islamic spirit of education to her sons and daughters in pure atmosphere of chastity and piety of family.

Her Parents

Born to Khadija, Fatimah was the only child survived from her marriage to the Holy Prophet (S). What can be said about a father who was the seal of the prophets, beloved of Allah and a savior for mankind? A father, whose moral perfections and dispositions may not be described even by the most eloquent orators.

As for her mother, Khadija daughter of Khuwaylid was one of the most virtuous women before the advent of Islam; and in the Islamic era she was the first lady to acknowledge her faith in her husband, the Holy Prophet (S), and to embrace Islam, and generously bestow her wealth on the development of this religion.

The history of Islam will never forget the degree to which Khadija was faithful and loyal to the Prophet

(S) in giving out her wealth and soul lavishly to Islam.

‘A’isha, the Prophet (S)’s wife, is quoted as saying: “No other women were as much respected as Khadija was. The Apostle of Allah (S) used to recall her with fondness and so much respect as if there existed no one like her.”

‘A’isha further said: “One day I told the Prophet (S) that she [Khadija] had been only a widow. Hearing this, he got so upset that his face turned red. Then he said: I swear by Allah there existed no other woman better than Khadija to me. The day when all people were infidels and idolaters she acknowledged her faith in me. The days when everybody accused me of sorcery and telling lies, she confirmed me.

When everybody had turned their back on me, Khadija put all her wealth at my disposal and spent it generously in my way. God bestowed a daughter on me through her, who was a manifestation of purity, chastity, and piety.” Then, ‘A’isha said: “I told the Prophet (S) that I did not mean to talk evil about her, and I repented my words.”

It is said that Khadija gave birth to seven children from the Prophet (S):

Qasim, whose name brought forth the nickname Abu al-Qasim for the Prophet (S), and died before the *Bi’tha* (Prophetic Mission) of the Prophet (S) at the age of two. ‘Abd Allah, or Tayyib, who was born at the outset of *Bi’tha* and died after that. Zaynab, who was married to Abu al-‘As.

Ruqayya, who got married first to ‘Ataba and then to ‘Uthman b. Affan, and died in the second year after *Hijra*. Umm Kulthum, who also married ‘Uthman – after Ruqayya’s death – and died four years after *Hijra*. The seventh one was Fatimah al-Zahra (as) who got married to Hadhrat ‘Ali (as). The fruits of this blessed and noble marriage were the holy progeny consisting of our honorable and Infallible Imams.

The birthday of Fatmat al-Zahra (as) is known to be on Jamadi al-Thani 20, 5 years after *Bi’tha* in Mecca. Thus, at the time of *Hijra* she was about nine years old.

Her names and nicknames, which all represent her heavenly characteristics and moral virtues, include: Siddiqa Tahira, Zakiyya, Zahra, Sayyidat al-Nisa al-‘Alamin, Khayr al-Nisa, Batul, and so forth.

The most amazing name she is famous for is Umm Abiha, i.e. “mother of her father” which indicates her intense love for her great father, and that from early childhood and in spite of her young age she was – like Khadija – a spiritual haven and mental support.

The nickname Umm Abiha was given by the Prophet (S) to his beloved daughter. In Arabic, Umm has a second meaning besides mother i.e. source and origin. As in Umm al-Khaba’ith (the source of all evils) which is used for wine, and Umm al-Qura, which is attributed to Mecca, so Umm Abiha also means the origin and source of *Nubuwwa* (Prophethood) and *Wilaya* (Guardianship). And, in truth, Zahra was like a shady tree, giving forth sweet fruits of Imamate and *Wilayat*.

Lifetime of Fatimah al-Zahra (as)

Fatimah al-Zahra (as) inherited eminent features from her great mother, e.g. generosity, benevolence, and instructiveness; and Divine and Heavenly characteristics from her noble father. She was a compassionate, kind, and devoted wife for her husband 'Ali (as). In her heart, there was nothing inscribed except monotheism, worshipping God Almighty, and love of the Prophet (S); and she stood aloof from the impurity of paganism and idolatry.

She lived nine years of her early life in her parents' peaceful and serene house and another nine years with her honorable husband 'Ali al-Murtadha (as), engaging in dissemination of the Islamic doctrines and social services, as well as doing the exhausting housework.

She used to spend her time educating her children, doing household chores, and in worship and remembrance of God. Fatimah (as) was a lady who grew and fostered within the Islamic educational school of thought, with faith and piety being permeated into all aspects of her life.

Fatimah (as) was raised at her mother's side and in the warm-hearted bosom of her father. She learned Divine knowledge and sciences from the fountainhead of Prophethood; and in her husband's house, she put into action what she had learned for years.

Like an aged mother and an experienced housewife who has left behind all her life span, Fatimah (as) would give her full attention to her household and well-being of her husband and education of her children. She would also take into consideration whatever took place outside their house, and would defend her own and her husband's rights.

How Fatimah (as) and 'Ali (as) Got Married

From the beginning it was known to all that no man was there to match Fatimah (as) as a spouse except 'Ali (as). Nevertheless, many of the Prophet (S.A.W)'s companions and those who thought to be close to him, cherished marriage with her, and fostered this aspiration in their minds.

It is reported that, following all these aspirations, a number of the companions asked 'Ali (as): "Why do you not make an effort to marry with the only daughter of the Prophet (S.A.W)?"

'Ali (as) said: "I have no [financial] means to step forward for this purpose." And they commented: "The Prophet (S) will not ask for anything from you." Eventually, 'Ali (as) found a chance to bring up the request.

One day he went to the house of the Holy Prophet (S) for his proposal, but was held back due to bashfulness. This was repeated for a couple of times, it is said. At the third visit, the Holy Prophet (S) asked 'Ali (as): "Do you require something?" Yes, replied 'Ali (as). The Prophet said: "Perhaps you came to seek Zahra's hand in marriage?" 'Ali (as) said he did. Since this marriage was ordained by God

and the Prophet (S) was informed through revelation about its importance, he was to let his daughter know about this proposal and asked her opinion in this relation.

The Prophet (S) said to his daughter Fatimah (as): “You know ‘Ali very well; he is the closest person to me. He has precedence over others in service and virtue. I besought God to choose the best husband for you.”

“God ordered me to give you in marriage to ‘Ali (as). Tell me what you think.” Fatimah kept silent. The Prophet (S) interpreted her silence as consent and became happy, starting to say *takbir* [*Allahu Akbar*]. The Prophet (S), then, gave the glad tidings to ‘Ali (as), and determined a bridal gift as an equivalent of 2000 grams of silver. Then in a gathering where some of the companions were present, the Prophet (S) recited the marriage sermon and the auspicious contract of marriage was concluded.

It can be said that ‘Ali (a.s.) did not own anything but a sword, a coat of armor, and a camel for carrying water. The Prophet (S) told ‘Ali: “Keep the sword for *jihad* and the camel for carrying water and trips, but sell your armor to provide means for the marriage.” The Prophet (S) told Salman to sell the armor, and he sold it for five hundred *dirhams*. Then a sheep was slaughtered and the marriage banquet was held. It took place in the month of Dhu’l Hijja, 2 years after Hijra. All the objects brought into Fatimah (as)’s house as dowry did not exceed 14 items as follows:

A scarf; two pieces of cloth; a bath towel; a piece of wool *chadur* (top to toe cover); four pillows; a straw mat; a wooden bowl; a clay jar; a water goatskin; a water pitcher; a wooden bed; a laundry basin; a ewer; a couple of hand mills; and some fragrance and perfume.

These included all the dowry and household of Fatimah (as), chief of the ladies of the world, and the wife of ‘Ali (as). At the night of consummation, Sulami, ‘Umayy’s daughter undertook taking care of Fatimah (as) in place of her mother, Khadija, who had passed away.

The Holy Apostle of Allah (S) together with a number of his companions from among both *Muhajirun* and *Ansar* took part in the wedding ceremony. The chanting of *takbir* and *tahlil* (saying *la ilaha illa Allah* = there is no God but Allah) had filled the lanes and streets of Medina with Divinity, and waves of felicity had been delighting people’s hearts.

The Holy Prophet (S) put the hand of her daughter in the hand of ‘Ali (as) and prayed for good blessing to them and bade farewell to them. Thus, the wedding ceremony of the best of men and women in the world was held in such a simple way.

[From Delight to Sorrow](#)

In the year 11/632, at the end of Safar/May, the heart-breaking demise of the Holy Prophet (S) occurred, and how painful it was for Fatimah (as) to part from her father, who, before all his travels, the last one he hugged and kissed goodbye was his beloved daughter, and when he returned, the first one he visited

was also his daughter. He would always inquire after her state and health and whispered secrets in her soul's ear. Since childhood, she had been constantly next to her father and taking care of him.

Sometimes she would rush along with Hashemite women to the battleground to inquire about her father's state. In the battle of Uhud, for example, where a rumor was spread that the Prophet (S) had been killed, she rushed to the slope of Uhud Mountain to wash blood off her father's face and take care of the wounds by pouring some ashes from a burnt mat on them for remedy.

She was such a woman that whenever she found free time from her housework and child-rearing, she would go over to his father to enjoy his company. But alas! The moment for separation of the father and daughter had come too soon. The Prophet (S) fell sick in his bed, with his face getting pale implying his last moments.

'A'isha is quoted as saying that at the last moments of his life, the Prophet (S) called for his beloved daughter and seated her next to himself and whispered something in her ear, at which she burst into crying. Then, he told her something else that suddenly made her delighted and smiling. Everybody was bewildered by these two conflicting reactions.

When asked what secret she was whispered to, she said: "The first time my father told me of his death; I got very sad and lost my patience and wept. He became sad too, and whispered again in my ear: 'My dear daughter! Know that you are the first in the family who will soon join me'. I got very delighted to hear this good tiding. My father said: 'Are you pleased to be the Chief of the Ladies of the World and the Chief of the Ladies of this *umma*?' And the Fatimah (as)'s answer was: "I am pleased with what God and you are pleased with."

To sum up, Fatimah (as), the chief of the ladies of the world and the ladies of this *umma*, and the freshly blossomed flower of the garden of Prophethood, soon started to wither and after a while joined her beloved father. Alas! How short was the blessed life of the most pious and paramount lady of Islam.

Indeed, her father's death and the events which followed made Fatimah (as) weary in body and soul. The days following her father's demise passed over her in bitter grief and unending weeping. She could not tolerate being separated from her father, and thus when she heard from her father about her death, she smiled. She would rather die than outlive him.

Finally, disturbances and sorrows became more and more debilitating for her to the extent that the daughter of the Prophet (S) fell seriously ill. In this dire situation, obviously nobody, except a couple of the oppressed and underprivileged like Balal and Salman, sympathized with this honorable lady.

However, the women, both of the *Muhajirun* and *Ansar*, especially the latter, who were informed of her illness, rushed to her bedside to visit and appease her sympathetically. At her sickbed, in reply to those who inquired about her health, the Prophet (S)'s daughter would speak eloquent words, which in those days seemed to be the laments and complaints of a bereaved and tyrannized lady, but were actually

warnings to Muslims against disunion and mischief coming up in future.

Indeed, she said what should have been said, and upon the painful affliction of bereavement of her beloved and affectionate father, she hastened to Paradise to join her noble father (S) by the pond of *kawthar*.

The passing away of the Prophet (S)'s daughter made 'Ali (as) very distressed and mournful. This separation and "deep affliction" is too vast to be explained here.

The Story of Fadak as a Historical Reality

Fadak was a cultivated piece of land 140 km off Medina. It was a personal property since it was not obtained in a war or taken over as spoils of war. Rather, when the story about Khaybar reached the village of Fadak, all the people there consented to make peace with the Prophet (S), providing him with half of Fadak and keeping the other half for themselves, for which they demanded to hold their own religious rites quite freely and the security of their territory to be maintained by the Islamic state.

It is said that when the verse, ﴿And give the kinsman his right...﴾ (Al-Qur'an, 17: 26), was revealed, the Prophet (S) presented Fadak as a gift to her beloved daughter, Fatimah (as).

It was barely ten days after the demise of the Holy Prophet (S) when Fatimah al-Zahra (as) was informed that the caliph's agents have expelled her workers from Fadak and taken over the land. Thereupon, along with a group of Hashemite women, Fatimah (as) went to the caliph to take back her usurped land, and some talk was exchanged between them accordingly.

The Prophet (S)'s daughter asked Abu Bakr why he had deprived her of her right and dismissed her workers from the land. The caliph said, "I have heard your father say that the Prophets bequeath nothing." "My father bestowed Fadak on me while he was still alive and it was since then that I have been the owner", said Fatimah (as).

The caliph asked. "Do you have any witnesses for this?" Fatimah (as) said, "My witnesses are 'Ali (as) and Umm Ayman, [and as some believe, al-Hasan (as) and al-Husayn (as)] who have all borne witness. Then 'Ali (as), who was present as a witness, said to Abu Bakr, "Whom do you ask for witness when I lay claim to a property which is in the hand of a Muslim? Do you ask me, who am a claimant, for a witness or the other person who is in possession of the property?" The caliph said, "In this case I would call you to witness." 'Ali (as) said: "It is a long time since Fadak has been in our possession and disposal; now that the Muslims claim it to be a public property, they should bring in their witnesses."¹

In order to appropriate Fadak, the caliph appealed to a *hadith* which is in brief as follows: "Prophets do not bequeath anything, and whatever they leave behind after death is alms."

Contrasted to the Qur'an, this *hadith* proves to be incorrect. It is also rationally incorrect to believe that

the prophets bequeath nothing to their children, as it is pointed out in *Surat al-Maryam*, (verses 5 and 6) reflecting Zechariah's supplication: ﴿Indeed I fear my kinsmen, after me, and my wife is barren. So grant me from yourself an heir who may inherit from me and inherit from the House of Jacob, and make him, my Lord, pleasing [to You].﴾

Also in *Surat al-Naml*, verse 16, God says: ﴿Solomon inherited from David﴾. Instigated by the people surrounding him, the then caliph intended to deprive the Prophet (S)'s daughter and 'Ali (a.s.) of the revenue from Fadak, so that they become unable to give alms to the poor and the needy and as a result those who gathered around them intending to gain alms would disperse.

Furthermore, under Abu Bakr, some people shunned paying alms tax and thus the incomes to the public treasury began to subside. A fertile and cultivated piece of land with numerous palm groves, Fadak yielded about seventy thousand *dinars*. Consequently, Abu Bakr took over Fadak from the daughter of the Prophet (S) and many of other Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs followed him. For the first time, however, Fadak was returned to the offspring of Fatma (as) and Hashemites by 'Umar b. 'Abdul 'Aziz.

When the news about the usurpation of Fadak reached Fatimah (as), she called in her kindred and kinfolds. As they gathered in the Mosque of the Apostle of Allah (S), Fatimah (as) took a seat behind the curtain. Hearing her anguished cries and lamentation due to her father's absence and tyranny of the Muslims, both the Emigrants and the Helpers began to weep vehemently. Fatimah (as) paused a while for the silence to prevail and then delivered a fervent sermon.

She began by praising and glorifying Allah the Almighty, as follows: "Praise and glory belongs to the Lord whose generous Hand brought into the world of being the creatures abiding in the desert of non-existence. Praise is to God who taught us – His servants – the lesson of thankfulness and assigned gratefulness as our obligation.

He is the Lord who has existed before everything and will exist after everything." Then she went on to say: "Here I am, the daughter of the Prophet, professing the Oneness of Allah and acknowledging that Muhammad (S), my father, is His servant and messenger. O you, the group of Emigrants and Helpers! You pledged allegiance to your Prophet (S) to spread around his religion with your own hands and have the world of mankind turn round the pivot of his faith."

She then proceeded to talk about Islam and the Book of Allah, the Household of the Prophet (S), performing prayers, fasting, Hajj, and *jihad*, and said:

"O Muslims! You are advised not to leave us and not to leave your Prophet's children alone and to be faithful to his Household."

Introducing herself for the second time, she said: "...standing before this sacred tomb nobody can tell lies. I am not exaggerating... this is my father lying in his grave... My father, Muhammad (S), was sent to teach you morals, virtues, and the codes of humanity at the school of piety and ethics. You are the ones

who slipped back to your old faith and the time of paganism as soon as he passed away... then you took to incompatibility and practiced hypocrisy and detachment... I assume Satan has overshadowed your minds and diverted your heedless steps from the straight path.”

Then she uttered some words that hit down like a sledge hammer on the heads of the usurpers of her right, saying: “Who has said that Fatimah is to be deprived of her father's inheritance? Who is the one who has broken apart the lawful limits of inheritance and has interpreted the verses of the Qur'an to his own whims? O Emigrants and Helpers! I am astonished by what this old man says.

Abu Bakr supposes he can take over the inheritance of Abu Qahafa, whereas the inheritance of Muhammad (S) is unlawful for Fatimah. Nobody is allowed to quote a *hadith* from my father as against the Qur'an.” Then Fatimah al-Zahra (as) recited some verses from the *Surat al-Naml*, in which the Qur'an talks about Solomon's inheriting from David, and David bequeathing to Solomon. Then she read Zechariah's words from *Surat Al-i Imran*, and inheritance rules from *Surat al-Nisa*, to the Emigrants and Helpers and then she continued:

“O Emigrants and Helpers! What do you say on these manifest verses and how do you want to weaken a general law by a single *hadith*? How do you want to deprive Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad (S) and his dear one who was reared and trained by him, of her father's inheritance?” And then she faced Abu Bakr and said indignantly: “On the day of Resurrection, I will seize your collar to demand my right from you which is trampled on today.”

Then she turned toward the youth of Medina and after that turned toward the tribesmen and the Helpers and said: “O Zealous youth! O loyal comrades and helpers of Islam! What lassitude and negligence you are engaged in! O group of Helpers! Why are you as bleak and dormant as ice, while a bunch of hypocrites and inept have taken away my rightful lot and my father's memorial to me? O you who have power in your arms and gold in your palms! What has become of you that you would not move on? What has happened to those stern muscles and mountain-crasher fists which you used to fight with the infidels? How admirably you rose up and how contemptibly you sat back and kept quiet!”

Against such scathing logic given by the daughter of the Prophet (S), Abu Bakr had no choice but submission. The malevolent, however, did not let the right reach the rightful and the caliphate and *Wilayat* settle in their deserved position. The fervent words of Fatimah (as) were so impressive and influential that the powerful and authoritative people present there were feared lest a rebel and revolution would ensue.

Fatimah (as) swore not to talk to Abu Bakr and 'Umar any longer. Then, turned her face away from the crowd to the sacred grave of her honorable father and fell grievously on it, saying: “My father! They tyrannized me and will soon get the punishment for their actions on the Day of Resurrection. My father! I will cry for you as long as I live, and my eyes will not fail shedding tears...”

The women from the Bani Hashim wept a lot and took the daughter of the Prophet (S) away from her

father's grave and took her home, creeping along.

'Ali (as), Fatimah (as)'s husband, also asked her to be patient and tolerant in this gloomy time when the sun of the truth is covered with clouds of conspiracy. He himself, in order to prevent the newly planted tree of Islam from drying up, got along with patience.

Fatimah al-Zahra (as) gradually became emaciated due to the tragic events and sorrows, which if poured upon bright days, they would turn into dark nights, and passed away on 3rd of Jamadi al-Thani, 95 days (or, according to some sources, 75 days) after her father's demise.

Fatimah al-Zahra (as) advised her dear husband to bury her body at night-time. And it was done as she had wished. The most heart-rending of all was the fact that the resting place of the Holy Prophet (S)'s daughter is still unknown; some consider it to be in Baqi' cemetery, others say it is besides the resplendent Shrine of the Holy Apostle of Allah (S). With tears in his eyes, 'Ali laid the body of his beloved wife secretly in grave and without leaving a trace or sign filled it up with earth, whispering the following lines distressfully with tearful eyes:

“My soul is imprisoned in my bitterly painful sighs and laments. I wish the bird of my soul would fly out of this cage and take my laments along. Verily, there's no use in my life without your presence (my dear wife). My tears are flowing down because I fear lest my life after you would last long (and I would keep on burning in separation from you).”

Then, he took the hands of his dear children, the orphans of Zahra (as) – al-Hasan, al-Husayn, Zaynab, and Umm Kulthum – and returned to the sad house, from where Zahra (as) was absent for ever.

Some Sayings of Her Holiness Fatimah al-Zahra (as):

“God has ordained the faith a means for purifying from paganism; prayer (*salat*) a means for refraining from arrogance and rebelliousness; following the household of the Messenger a factor for the solidarity of the Islamic community; Imamate as preventive of disunity; and *jihad* (holy war) as a way of maintaining the glory of Islam.

Praise and glory belongs to the Lord whose generous Hand brought into the world of being the creatures abiding in the desert of non-existence.

Praise and glory belongs to the Lord who taught us to be grateful and decreed thankfulness as our duty. Allah is the Lord who had existed before everything and will exist after everything.

O Muslims! You have been advised not to abandon us and not to leave the children of your Prophet alone and to be faithful to his progeny.

My father, Muhammad (S), came to teach you virtuousness and morality in the school of piety and ethics and taught you the doctrine of humanity.”

(Part of her Scathing Sermon in the Mosque of Medina)

1. According to the Islamic law, the claimant has to bring in a witness and the denier has to utter an oath.

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