Fatimah Zahra (a) the Link between Prophethood and Imamat

<"xml encoding="UTF-8?>

Fatimah (A.S.) was the only woman connecting Prophethood and Imamate and was the link between the two. She was the daughter of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.), the wife of the first Imam (A.S.) and the mother of the rest of the Imams (A.S.) who descended from her and her husband Ali (A.S.). Allah singled her out with this virtue and peculiarity because she was the most perfect and highest example in purity, sanctity, worship, asceticism and morals.

Al-Kawthar

According to some Qur'an commentaries (tafsir), when the Quraysh (tribe) said that the Prophet (S.A.W.) had no offspring, the chapter of al-Kawthar was revealed: 'Verily We have given thee the Kawthar (Abundance). So pray thou unto thy Lord! And offer sacrifice. Verily, thy enemy shall be the one cut off (in his progeny).' (Qur'an 108:1-3)

'We have given you al-Kawthar' means we have given you the abundant good, which shall last throughout your life and after it; therefore, turn your face unto your Lord in prayer, as mention of your name shall never end and your offspring shall never perish; it is those standing against you who are more deserving of this description.

This revelation was given against the backdrop of the pronouncements by some of the Quraysh's most scurrilous men - such as al-'As bin Wa'il, Abu Jahl, 'Uqbah bin Abi Mu'ayt and Ka'b bin al-Ashraf - that the Prophet (S.A.W.) was cut off from male children, after the death of his son al-Qasim. Hence, it is clear that the abundant good - al-Kawthar - was pointing to the abundant offspring which the Prophet (S.A.W.) would have through his daughter Fatimah (A.S.), and that this was a reply to those people and their effort to weaken the Prophet's spirits. Supporting our interpretation, al-Tabataba'i, in al-Mizan commentary, said: 'Without that, the words 'Verily, thy enemy shall be the one cut off' would be useless.'

Her Childhood

In Fatimah's childhood, there was no place for playing, leisure and purposelessness. Nor were her energies those of a child living a childhood of innocence and simplicity. Rather, hers was the energy of a child who stored within herself a feeling for the role which she should play in the Messenger's life and the suffering and pain which he was facing. It was a childhood with the characteristics of a motherhood, living its spirit and fulfilling its role.

There she was, and having opened her eyes to life, she saw her father (S.A.W.) coming every now and then, weighed down by the pressures, burdens and harm inflicted by the atheists; so

she would embrace her father and relieve his pain and take care of him with all kindness. One day, she saw her father (S.A.W.) in the Holy Mosque of Makkah after the atheists had dumped dirt and rubbish over his back while he was praying to his Lord. She promptly went forward and removed the rubbish with her small hands, expressing her sadness and condolences to him (S.A.W.) with her tears.

This is what made her open up to her responsibilities in her early childhood to stand by her father, to take care of him and empathize with him; and he was the one who had lost his mother, and his sympathetic wife. She stood by him when he was challenged with the Message: some called him names, others accused him of being insane, others threw dirt and stones on him; his uncle Abu Lahab crying out: 'No doubt, Muhammad (S.A.W.) has bewitched you!'

But when he returned home, he would be greeted by Fatimah (A.S.), with her sympathy and care, which was not that of a child weeping without awareness..... She was sensing that his pain was also hers and so amassed during her childhood the pain of the Message and pain of the Messenger... And whosoever amasses in their early childhood the awareness of the pain of the Messenger and the Message cannot find time for leisure or playing or purposelessness; playing and purposelessness occur in our lives because of an emptiness, which we are trying to fill.

This was how Fatimah (A.S.) grew up, not like other children, but as a person with mission in her feelings, emotions, opinions and her whole dynamic attitude.

Her Relationship with the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.)

Ibn 'Abdul Barr, in al-Istee'ab, narrated - and we would like very much to use it, as it was a Sunni source which represents a neutral source, so that the Shi'ah could not be accused of talking out of emotion - that 'Ayshah said: 'I had not seen any one who was more resembling the Messenger of Allah in his speech, conduct and manners as Fatimah; when she used to enter (his house) he would stand up for her, take her hand and kiss it and make her sit in his sitting place; and when he used to enter (her house) she would stand up for him, take his hand and kiss it and make him sit in her sitting place'.

When we study this text, we can conclude two things: first, the unity and complete merging between Fatimah's personality and her father's, as the person most closely resembling him. This is reflected even in his walking, as seen in many narrations, such as 'Fatimah came and her walk did not fail the walking of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.)'; second, the depth of the spiritual relationship between the Prophet (S.A.W.) and Fatimah (A.S.), a relationship which the Prophet (S.A.W.) had with Fatimah (A.S.) alone.

Another narration by al-Hakim in al-Mustadrak states: 'The Messenger of Allah used, when he came back from a battle or journey, to come to the mosque and pray two rak'as to thank Allah..... then would enter to (the house of) Fatimah, then he would come to his wives'.

This meant that Fatimah (A.S.) held the prime place in the relationships between the Prophet (S.A.W.) and other people, including his wives.

In the same book, al-Mustadrak, al-Hakim also narrated: 'The Prophet (S.A.W.), when he used to travel, the last person he would see was Fatimah.'

Thus her image would stay in his mind, and the kindness and emotion, with which she used to embrace him, would stay with him in his travel and his memory, to comfort him.

Al-Hakim added: 'And when he returned from a journey, the first person he would see would be Fatimah.'

Historians have said that the Prophet (S.A.W.) did not accept that Fatimah (A.S.) became separated from him even after her marriage and, therefore, did not accept that she lived in a house far away from him, so she lived in the house next to his so that he could enter into her house directly from his.

In al-Isti'ab we read: ''Ayshah was asked: who was the most beloved person to the Messenger of Allah? She replied: Fatimah. I asked: and amongst men? She said: her husband...'

This is an important witness by 'Ayshah for Fatimah and Ali (A.S.).

There are many stories from her life which tell how she used to study her father's thoughts to know what he liked and disliked, what opened up his heart and what closed it. An example of this was when he (S.A.W.) came back from a journey and entered her house, looked around a little, then left. Quickly she knew that something bothered the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.). She thought about it and realized that on the door of her house was a curtain and that she had two bracelets in her hands; she took the curtain down and took off the bracelets and sent them with her sons and said: 'Say greetings to my father and say to him: we have not introduced anything after you except this, it is for you to do with them what you like.'

When the Prophet (S.A.W.) heard this, his expression relaxed. He was moved by this generous, wonderful, spiritual gesture by his daughter, and this thoughtful response, and gave these things to the poor, saying: 'She did this! May her father be sacrificed for her! May her father be sacrificed for her! May her father be sacrificed for her! What have the family of Muhammad (S.A.W.) to do with life: they have been created for the hereafter!'

This is what every girl with a mission should learn, when her father is a man of missionary affiliations and responsibilities; as too should every woman with someone who has a missionary dimension in his life: she should learn not to get too engrossed with her own affairs,

but to open herself up to the responsibilities of her father, husband, brother or son so as to join with him in the dynamic movement of responsibility, and not to add to the burdens to his responsibility. For we see many great men, past and present, become burdened by the people who are around them: while when they think in a missionary manner, those around them think only of themselves.

We also learn from Fatimah (A.S.), in her advanced missionary awareness and position, that she was someone who rebelled against her personal needs, however simple, for the sake of her missionary ambitions; she was someone who prioritized in favour of principles over the self. This is what we need to learn, for many of us - men and women alike - fall down when it comes to a choice between the needs of the principle and the needs of the self; we too often choose the self, and may even make a principle of service to the self.

Fatimah al-Zahra (A.S.) was unique in all her behaviour and deeds, even in her sorrow for her beloved, especially during her separation from the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.).

Historians tell us that, when she went to him as he was dying, she embraced him and he whispered something in her ear which made her weep. Then, when he whispered something that made her laugh, she was asked:

'How quickly (your) laughing after weeping?!' She said: 'I shall not reveal the Messenger of Allah's secret in his life.' So, when she was asked about this after his death, she said: 'He whispered in my ear first that he was going to meet his Lord and that his soul was announced to him (his death), so I wept; then he whispered in my ear again that I was going to be the first of his family to go after him, so I laughed!'

Where else would you find a young woman, whatever her love for her father, become happy when he tells her that she is going to be the first to die after him?

?What relationship deeper could be than this, and what unity of spirit could be stronger