

Role of Women in the Husayni Revolution

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It is a historically foregone conclusion that Imam Hussein (a.s.) was fully aware of the fact that his opposition to the Umayyad policy and the strong stance he took against it would only lead to his martyrdom in the way of Allah, whether he remained in the city of Medina, Mecca or any other city. But he wanted his martyrdom to have an impact on the life of the ummah as wide and great as the personal reward, comfort and eternal pleasure of Allah which he won. That is why he planned to foil all attempts of assassination against him, hatched by the Umayyad rulers.

That kind of death has no reverberations, or at least its consequences are quite limited. No turmoil would follow it as big as desired, nor would there be a furor that would be potential in the life of the ummah.

Thus, the key elements that would promote a historical shock in the body of the ummah, that would leave its marks on the present and future of the ummah, had to be ripened. Imam Hussein (a.s.) began preparing himself and his followers for a real battle between his camp, the camp of the faith, and the camp of falsehood led by the Umayyad house. He called on the men to join the revolutionary forces. He spared neither tribes, nor the Arab neighborhoods which he passed by on his way to Iraq, without calling them to aid him and join his forces. Historically and horizontally, the outcry would be sharper. This fact made him to bring his womenfolk and children, though he was totally convinced that he would not survive the battle. Imam Hussein (a.s.) had a conviction, to the point of certainty, that his women and those of his supporters would be taken captives and would be humiliated at the hands of the regime's stooges. But he also knew that this outrageous abuse would not be publically approved of. It would serve as a good and effective element in disclosing the nature of the Umayyad policy and leave it, undisguised, before the masses. Shedding off the layers of humiliation and passivity, the Muslim conscience would be thrown into the center of the big challenge.

The women, on the other hand, played no less effective roles. In captivity they talked to the people, laid the facts bare before them, and unveiled the schemes and plots of the Umayyad policy, both in Kufa and Syria. Through the speeches, discussions and tirades on the part of the women, Imam Hussein (a.s.) drove home his message. The reader will not remain in doubt as to why Imam Hussein (a.s.) brought with him his women to Karbala'.

Based on these considerations, we ascertain, without the slightest doubt, that the participation of the women in the Hussein revolution was planned and pondered over beforehand.

Hence, Imam Hussein's (a.s.) reply to his brother, Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyah, who asked him why he was taking the women with him prior to his departure from Mecca, "Certainly, Allah desires to see them captive."

We deem it of great use to quote texts from the addresses delivered by Zainab, the Great Lady, and the other virtuous women from the house of Imam Hussein (a.s.).

Zainab, the noble woman from the tribe of Bani-Hashim, the daughter of Fatima al-Zahra' and Imam Ali (a.s.), the sister of Imam Hussein (a.s.), stood among the Kufans, assuming her responsibility as the spokeswomen for her brother's revolution, addressed them in these words:

"Praise be to Allah and divine blessings be sent on my grandfather, Muhammad, and his good and exemplary descendents. O People of Kufa! Do you shed tears? May your tears never dry up, and your loud lamentations never cease. You are like the woman that unravels to bits the thread which she has formerly spun. Your faith is nothing but deceit and betrayal. Are there any among you but the immodest, disgraced, proud, spiteful, idolator, enemy, and reviler? There are among you those who are as guileful plants growing in filth, or the silver on a grave.

"Certainly evil is that which your souls have sent before for you. Allah is displeased with you and in punishment shall you abide. Are you crying and wailing? Indeed, by Allah. Do cry endlessly and laugh but little, for your deed was so horrendously disgraceful that you will never be able to atone for it. How can you wash away the crime of murdering the scion of the Seal of the Prophets, the essence of the message, the lord of the youth in paradise, the refuge of your nobles, the refuge to whom you resorted during affliction, the bright divine proof of yours, and your master who spoke for you.

"What an awful sin you did commit! Away with you, there will be no forgiveness for you. Certainly, your efforts failed, your hands suffered loss, and your bargain was brought to naught. You have made yourselves deserving of the wrath of Allah. Abasement and humiliation have been brought down upon you.

'Woe to you! Do you know how you tore the liver of the Prophet of Allah? Whom of his womenfolk you exposed? What blood of his you shed? What honor of his you defamed?

"Your deed is most certainly so dangerously ugly and foul, that it filled the earth and sky with its putridness. Are you surprised that it rained blood? Certainly, the punishment of the Hereafter is infinitely more abasing, and you shall not be helped. Do not make light of the delay of punishment in that it is not hastened by the fear of missing the taking of revenge. Most surely Allah is watching..."

Zainab, the Great Lady, alerted the people of Kufa of their crime and punishment and of their

responsibilities. The situation was critically dangerous, she told them, after their murdering of Imam Hussein (a.s.). A massive wave of anger went through the masses against the Umayyad policy and its decision-makers.

Then, it was the turn of Fatima, daughter of Imam Hussein (a.s.), to talk to the Kufans. She said:

"...O people of Kufa! O you who are cunning, treacherous, and arrogantly proud. We are the household who are being put to the test (of guiding you to the right path), and put you to the test (of following us). He made our trial good. He imparted His knowledge and sagacity to us. We are certainly the store of His knowledge, the utensil of His sagacity and wisdom, and the divine proof on earth for His servants. Allah honored us with His honor and preferred us over lots of the people He created, by means of His Prophet (s.a.w.). But you charged us with falsehood, and disbelief. You viewed it permissible to fight us, and considered our property as loot, as if we were of Turkish extraction or from the city of Kabul, as you had killed our grandfather not so long ago. Your swords are still dripping with our blood, Ahlul-Bait, due to a deep-rooted rancor. Your eyes delighted, and your hearts rejoiced at our death. You were certainly audacious towards Allah. You plotted, but Allah is the best of plotters. So, do not let yourselves induce you to exalt in the blood of us which you shed, and the money of us which you plundered, for the horrible misfortune and great calamities that have befallen us are ordained before Allah brings them into being. That is easy for Allah; so that you may not grieve for the good things you miss, or be overjoyed at what you gain, Allah does not love the haughty and vainglorious...

"Woe to you! Wait for the imprecation and chastisement. It is as if I were witnessing the vengeance descending on you repeatedly from Heaven. Allah will exterminate you by what your hands had won and make some of you taste severe punishment at the hands of others. Then you will eternally abide in the painful chastisement on the Day of Judgement. That is because you have wronged us terribly. May Allah curse the oppressors."

In Damascus, the role of the women took a clearer shape. Many discussions, hectic arguments and speeches were made. The women were on the offensive. They assailed the tyrants with sharp words. Yazid bin Mu'awiyah was particularly attacked. Let us take, for example, in the presence of Yazid. It is a brightly unique example of pioneering jihad with words:

"Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. Blessings be sent on the Messenger of Allah and all his household. Truthful, indeed, are the words of Allah:

"The evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the signs of Allah and used to mock them."

Holy Qur'an (30:10)

"Do you think, Yazid, that since you have literally imprisoned us, having us being driven forward as if we were bondsmen, we are humiliated in the sight of Allah and you are honored in His eyes and that is because of your great status you enjoy in Allah's eyes? And so you put on airs, and looked happily and joyfully proud. That is because you have the world at your feet, your affairs arranged and sorted out, and you have our right to rulership unjustly taken on your behalf. Wait! Wait! Have you lost sight to what Allah had said:

"And let not those who disbelieve think that Our granting them respites is better for their souls; We grant them respite only that they may add to their sins; and they shall have a disgraceful punishment."

Holy Qur'an (3:178)

"Is it fair, son of the people, whom the Prophet (s.a.w.) had set free, to protect your women and bondsmen, and to drive the daughters of the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.) as captives, after you have unveiled them and exposed their faces? Is it fair that the enemies should drive their mounts from one country to another, while being stared at by the people of the houses which line the roads, and those who live wandering from one place to another, their faces scrutinized by the near and the far-off, the base and the noble, with no one of their protectors to defend them, and no man of theirs to guard them? But how could those who threw up the livers of pure men, and who grew up feeding on the blood of the martyrs, guard themselves against evil....?"

"It is enough for you to have Allah as a Judge, the Prophet of Allah a foe and Gabriel a helper of the Prophet. The one who appointed you, (a caliph) [she refers to his father Mu'awiyah] and helped you to seize control over the Muslims, will surely know what a bad substitute the wrongdoers had. Who is worse, and more deviant, you or your father? I am surely belittling you. I do not see that scolding you is something awfully discouraging. I certainly know whom I am addressing. It is you who has left Muslim's eyes tearful, and their chests heated, whenever they remember Imam Hussein."

"Plan your plots, and do you best, for, by Allah, who had honored us with the revelation, the Book, the prophethood, and preference over other people, you will never attain our status, nor will you reach our end, nor will you erase our end, nor will you erase our remembrance. The disgrace you brought upon yourself will never be washed off. Are not your views but hollow and worthless? Are not your days but numbered? Will not your party be but scattered men on the day when the caller will call out, 'May Allah curse the aggressive oppressor...'"

These are only a few fragments of the tempestuous statements made by Zainab and her sisters in the way of jihad. We have made a mention of it to ascertain that the women played a

highly effective media role in explaining the objectives of the uprising, disclosing the plight of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and their right to manage the affairs of the people. The women succeeded in uncovering the deviated policy adopted by the Ummayyad house to steer the life of the people .as they wished, mislead the ummah, and deceive the weak-willed people among the ummah