

An Introduction to the Mother of Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidin (a.s): Shahzanan

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We are before a noble mistress. The mistress was among the honorable pure women of the Muslims. She was the great mistress, Shāhzanān. She was the daughter of the (Iranian) kings and was mother of Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidin, peace be on him. This great mistress occupied an important position in the world of the Muslim woman. Indeed, she was among the great mistresses of her time. She was among the prominent Muslim women and was distinguished by noble qualities. Among them are:

- A. She had a very clear lineage. She was the daughter of Choesroe, the just king and pride of the kings of the East. Concerning him, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said with pride: "I was born at the time of the just King, Choesroe."
 - B. She was the wife of the father of the free and lord of martyrs, Imām Husayn, peace be on him.
 - C. She was the mother of Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidin and Sayyid al-Sājidin, peace be on him.
 - D. She was the grandmother of the pure Imams from among the children of Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidin, peace be on him.
 - E. She was the holy relationship between the Arabs and the Persians.
- .Indeed these qualities added honor to her honor and glory to her glory

Her Psychological Traits

As for her psychological traits, they were chastity, purity, perfection, standard morals, and cleverness. As she had good inclinations and honorable traits, the Commander of the faithful (Imām ‘Ali), peace be on him, hastened to marry her to his son Imām Husayn, peace be on him. He ordered him to treat her kindly and to do good for her. We will briefly present some of .her affairs according to what the references have mentioned

Reports of her Marriage

The reports have differed over the time when she married Imām Husayn, peace be on him. The :following are some of them

A. At the Time of 'Umar

Al-Kulayni reported on the authority of Imām Abu Ja'far al-Baqir, peace be on him. He said: "When Yazdigird's daughter came, 'Umar made the virgins of Medina honor her. When 'Umar looked at her, she covered her face and said: "Uf birūjj bādā Hurmuz." These words meaning the day of Hurmuz has become black because his daughters have become prisoners. "Is she abusing me?" asked 'Umar. "That is not for you," said the Commander of the faithful, "Let her choose a person from the Muslims."

She walked till she put her hand on the head of al-Husayn, peace be on him.[1]
Some historians have mentioned a report similar to this account. They said: "Yazdigird had two daughters. They were taken prisoners during the time of 'Umar. Thus, the Commander of the faithful (Imām 'Ali), peace be on him, took them. Of these he had given Imām al-Husayn and she bore him Zayn al-'Ābidin. He had given the other to Mohammed b. Abi Bakr and she bore him al-Qāsim.[2]

Ibn Kullakān has mentioned a similar report to this. However, he has added that they were three (daughters).

[So he (the Commander of the faithful) had given the third to 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar.[3]

B. At the Time of 'Uthmān

Al-Sadūq has reported: "When 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar conquered Khurasān (Iran) during the days of 'Uthmān, he took the two daughters of Yazdigird prisoners. He sent them to 'Uthmān. Of [them the latter had given to al-Hasan. He had given the other to al-Husayn.[4]

C. At the Time of the Caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful

A group of the historians and the narrators has reported: "When the Commander of the faithful (Imām 'Ali), peace be on him, had assumed the caliphate, he appointed Hurayth b. Jābir over part of the eastern provinces. The latter had sent him two daughters of Yazdigird b. Sharyyār. Of these he had given his son al-Husayn, peace be on him, Shāhzanān and she bore him Zayn al-'Ābidin, peace be on him. He had given the other to Mohammed b. Abi Baker and she bore him al-Qāsim, the famous jurist."

These are the reports which have been mentioned of her marriage to Imām (Husayn), the Lord of martyrs, peace be on him. Worth mentioning, the last two reports have not mentioned the capture of Mrs. Shāhzanān with her two sisters, rather they have mentioned that they were

.sent to the Caliph. But the first report is clear in mentioning their capture

Checking the Reports

We must check these different reports. We think that the first report is incorrect for the following reasons:

1. Yazdigird was alive throughout the caliphate of 'Umar. He died after his death. He was killed in Maru in the year 30 A.H. That was in the sixth year of the caliphate of 'Uthmān. We firmly believe that Shāhzanān and her two sisters disappeared after the murder of their father till the caliphate of the Commander of the faithful (Imām 'Ali). The Commander of the faithful appointed Hurayth b. Jābir over that area. The latter found them and sent them to the Imām, peace be on him.

2. What Abu Hanifa reported indicates that the first report is incorrect. When the daughter of Yazdigird was brought to the Commander of the faithful, he, peace be on him, said to her:

"Choose whomever you want of the Muslims."

She answered with awareness and high purpose:

"I want a head over whom there is no head."

This indicates the strong awareness of this Princess.

The Imām answered her kindly, saying:

"Indeed 'Ali is an old man."

This means that the Imām was in no need of women, for he was an old man. Besides he was busy treating the general affairs that surrounded him.

But the Princess insisted on her idea, saying:

"I talked completely to you."

Some Persian leaders asked the Imām to marry her to them.

The Imām answered, saying: "That is up to her. If she wishes to refuse (marriage), (she can refuse it). If she wishes to accept (marriage), (she can accept it)."

The Imām had no right to impose marriage on her, rather that was up to her psychological wishes. No one had the right to force her to what he wanted. The Mistress refrained from answering him.[5] We firmly believe that it was Mrs. Shāhzanān. Her marriage took place during the time of the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him.

3. The third report is the most famous of the foregoing two reports. Most jurists think that fame makes the report superior to (the other reports). Al-Muqrim, a researcher, believed in this report

Some historians have mentioned irregular ideas concerning the lineage of Mrs. Shāhzanān.

They are as follow:

A. She was from the country of al-Sind.[6]

B. She was among those who were taken prisoners in Kabul.[7]

These two ideas oppose what the narrators and the historians have unanimously agreed on, for they said that she was the daughter of Yazdigird, the king of the Persians. That was famous even during the time of the Imām. All the people knew that. In this connection, Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali, who was contemporary with the

Imām, recited:

Indeed there is a son between Kasra and Hāshim.

He is more noble than him to whom charms were entrusted. He is the light. The place of his secret is the Light of Allah.

He is the source of the fountain of the Imāmate.[8]

He is knowledgeable.

Imām Zayn al-'Ābidin, peace be on him, denoted that when he said: "I am the son of the two good (communities)." With this he, peace be on him, referred to the well-known tradition:

"Allah, the Most High, has two good (communities) among His creatures. His good (community) from the Arabs is Quraysh, and from non-Arabs is Persia.[9]" Some historians said: "Indeed 'Ali b. al-Husayn (Zayn al-'Ābidin) gathered prophethood and authority on the ".side of his grandfathers

Her Holy Name

The mother of the Imām, peace be on him, was known as Shāhzanān. This was not her name. Rather it was her nick-name. It means the queen or the mistress of the women.[10] However, the historians have differed over her name. The following are some of her names:

1. Salāma.[11]

2. Salāfa.[12]

3. Ghazāla.[13]

4. Salama.[14]

5. Sādira.[15]

6. Shaharbānawayh.[16]

These are some of the ideas which we have mentioned concerning her name. It does not

.concern us which name is correct, for it does not avail readers

The Holy Relationship

Mrs. Shāhzanān was the holy relationship between the Arabs and the Persians. This is because she was the mother of Zayn al-‘Ābidin, who was the son of the two good (communities) and father of the pure progeny who filled the world with all the factors of awareness, dignity, and advancement. Sayyid ‘Abid al-‘Aziz Sayyid al-Ahal said: “Zayn al-‘Ābidin is a strong relationship between us, we, the Arabs, and the Persians. Then he is a strong relationship among all people. It is as if he is among the strong causes which the Subtle, the Powerful (Allah) drove to erase division, to strengthen unity, and to bring people close to each other.[17]” This was the strongest relationship between the Arabs and the .Persians because it has spread love, affection, and unity among them

Pre-Islamic Beliefs

Islam destroyed the pagan beliefs that divided the Muslims and paralyzed their unity. Among those beliefs was that an Arab did not marry a non-Arab (woman). This is because he wanted to preserve Arab blood and lineage. Surely this phenomenon divided the Muslims and destroyed their unity. Islam indeed cast away this hollow selfishness and these vain titles. It supported the honor and beauty of soul. Hence the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, said: “Surely, the most honorable of you with Allah is the most pious of you.” Islam has denoted in a positive way the just equality among the Muslims. It has destroyed class differences and all racism. Allah’s Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, married his relative Zaynab, the daughter of Jahash, who belonged to the chiefs of the Hashimites, to his retainer, Zayd b. Hāritha. He, may Allah bless him and his family, wanted the Islamic community to learn a lesson from that and to follow this clear straight path. The Imams of the members of the House (ahl al -Bayt), peace be on them, followed this Prophetic method. They waged war against racism and resisted pre-Islamic beliefs by marrying female slaves after they had released them. They sometimes married them with money before they had freed them. This had great influence on the Arabs, and they abandoned their pre-Islamic beliefs. The historians said: “Imām al-Husayn, peace be on him, married Mrs. Shāhzanān and she bore him the great figure of guidance, Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidin, peace be on him. The Arabs saw his perfection and his high self. Hence Quraysh hurried to marry slave-wives.[18]” Al-Mubarrad has narrated the following on the authority of a man from Quraysh. The man’s mother was a slave-wife. The man said: “One day I sat with Sa’id b. al-Musayyab, and he asked me: ‘Who are

your maternal uncles?' My mother is a slave-wife, I answered."

Sa'id disdained the man. However, the man was clever. He waited for a while. In the mean time Sālim b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar came. The latter was a Quraysh great figure, but his mother was a slave-wife. Sa'id talked with Sālim. Then the latter went away. So the man asked Sa'id:

"Uncle, who is this man?"

Sa'id became angry. He shouted at the man, saying:

"Glory be to Allah ! Do you ignore this man who is from your people ? This is Sālim b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Umarb. al-Khattāb."

"Who is his mother?" asked the man.

"A slave-wife," replied Sa'id.

Then al-Qāsim b. Mohammed b. Abi Baker came to Sa'id. The former's mother was a slave-wife. A talk took place between them. When al-Qāsim went away, the man asked Sa'id the same question. The man answered him in the same manner. Then Imām Zayn al-Ābidin came.

Sa'id welcomed him warmly. When the Imām went away, the man asked Sa'id: "Uncle, who is this man?"

"This is whom no Muslim can ignore. This is 'Ali b. al-Husayn b. 'Ali b. Abi Tālib," replied Sa'id angrily.

"Who is his mother ?" asked the man.

"A slave-wife," replied Sa'id.

"Why did you disdain me when I said that my mother was a slave-wife ? Is my mother not similar to theirs?" asked the man.

Sa'id confessed his mistake. He admired the man and took care of him.[19]

This bad phenomenon prevailed that time. It resulted from the backgrounds of the pre-Islamic time that was intellectually and socially backward. One has no shortcoming when his mother is from Rome, Persia, and the like. For this reason the poet said:

Do not curse the person whose mother is from the Romans Or is black from the non-Arabs.

Indeed the mothers of people are entrusted containers and the lineage has fathers. They only thing that increases the importance of the person is his good deeds, his services for his community, and his high self even though his mother is black from non-Arabs. If the person's deeds are bad, then he is mean even if he is a Sharif from Quraysh. The great Islam has underlined that. It does not hold importance to anything except good deeds, for they are .the only criterion in showing the high and low position in it

Imām 'Ali took care of Her

Imām 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, took care of Mrs. Shāhzanān, for he was aware of her belief and her perfect intellect. A group of traditions was narrated on his authority. The traditions have praised her outstanding qualities. Some of them are as follows:

A. He recommended his son, Imām Husayn, to treat her kindly, saying: "Treat Sharbānawayh kindly, for she is satisfactory. She will bear you the best of the people of the earth after you.[20]"

B. He told his family that she would be the pure mother of the pure Imams. He, peace be on him, said: "She is the mother of the trustees (of authority), the pure progeny.[21]"

The pure Imams, from whom Allah kept away the uncleanness and purified thoroughly, branched from this noble Mistress.

Imām 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, took care of Mrs. Shāhzanān, for he knew that she had good abilities such as virtues, perfection, and politeness. He, peace be on him, asked her: "What have you memorized from your father after the Event of the Elephant?"

She answered him with this golden word that denotes her father's vast intellect and his experience in the affairs of life:

He said: "When Allah overcomes an affair, the ambitions become humble after it. When the period is over, death is in the means."

The Imām was astonished at this wise word that indicates the reality of life. Hence he admired her, saying: "What good your father said ! All matters are subject to destiny, so much so that sometimes death results from effort.[22]"

Every thing in this existence is subject to Allah's will. Indeed Allah , the Most High has the power over everything. Man may depend on firm means. He thinks that such means protect him from dangers. However, they do not avail him. This is because they might endanger him. .Therefore, his death results from them

Al-Husayn took care of Her

Imām Husayn, peace be on him, took care of his wife, Mrs. Shāhzanān, very much. He preferred her to his wives. As a result this Mistress found respect and honor with the Imām. So she forgot the luxurious life which she led during the rule of her father. The Imām taught her the Islamic spiritual teachings to the extent that she renounced her royal life. Sayyid 'Abd al-Aziz Sayyid al-Ahal said: "Al-Husayn, peace be on him, taught her Islamic teachings to the "[extent that she forgot the palaces of al-Madā'in and the meadows of Kabul.[23

Some historians praised this noble Mistress. The following are their words (concerning her):

A. Al-Mubarrad

Concerning this great Mistress, al-Mubarrad said:

“Shāhzanān was among the excellent women.[24]”

Indeed Shāhzanān was among the mistresses of the women. She was chaste, and her intellect was perfect.

Moreover, her morals were high.

B. Ibn Shadqam

Ibn Shadqam said: “Shāhzanān had many outstanding merits.[25]”

C. Al-Kunji

Imām al-Hafiz, Mohammed b. Yousif al-Kunji, said: “Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, created the rightly-guided Imams, from among the progeny of al-Husayn, from the daughter of Choesroe with the exclusion of the rest of his wives.[26]” Indeed Allah bestowed His favors and His care on this noble Mistress. He endowed her with great favor. He made her a noble mother for Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidin and good pure grandmother for the pure Imams, who raised the Word of Allah high in the earth.

.With this we end our talk about the affairs of this great Mistress

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