

The Famous Muslim Women: The First Woman Martyr in Islam, Sumayya bint Khayyat

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Compiled By: Syed Ali Shahbaz

The first woman martyr in Islam, Sumayya bint Khayyat

Women have played an important role in the history of Islam from its beginnings. One such lady who is well known by Muslims but does not always receive that much attention is SumayyahbintKhayyat. She was a black-skinned person from Africa, who was treated as a slave by the light-skinned Arab infidels of Mecca. In 615 CE, on hearing of the declaration of the universal message of Islam by Prophet Mohammad (SAWA), Sumayya, along with her husband, Yasser IbnAmmar and son, Ammar, believed in his mission, and became Muslim. This angered the Arab infidels and they started active persecution of the small Muslim community.

The first to be targeted were those who did not have tribal protection. Sumayyah, Yasser, and Ammar were among this group. All three were tied up and beaten. Sumayyah was then stabbed by the archenemy of Islam Abu Jahl, when she refused to recant her faith, making her the first martyr of Islam. Prophet Mohammad (SAWA) was very troubled by the persecution of the Muslims, especially Ammar'sfamily. He comforted them by giving them tidings of Paradise for their steadfastness in faith.

Although Sumayyah did not live long to enough to see the Muslim community grow, she is remembered for her strength, courage, and faith in a period when the Muslims were heavily persecuted. She is important because her active commitment to her faith dispels the image of Muslim women nowadays that they are oppressed and do not have choice in regards to how they practice their faith. Sumayyah chose to be a Muslim and stood against the Meccans, even risking her life, and had strength that would inspire Muslim men and women later on as they struggled to establish a Muslim community.

It is for this reason that she is considered to be a role model for all Muslims. Her husband Yasser was also martyred after being severely tortured by the pagan Arabs. Their son, Ammarresisted torture, and in order to escape certain death, it is reported that he contradicted his faith verbally, but at heart was a staunch Muslim. This concealment of faith, which made the pagans release him from torture, is an example of taqiyyaor dissimulation in face of

adversity. The holy Qur'an also cites taqiyya in the case of the monotheist believer in the court of the tyrannical Pharaoh in Egypt, who concealed his faith and saved the life of Prophet Moses (PBUH). Thus Ammar only verbally agreed to whatever the pagans told him to express, because he was being tortured so horribly.

After the persecution of Muslims was over, the Prophet's uncle Hamza along with other companions went to the location where the torture and persecution took place; they found every persecuted Muslim dead except Ammar, who had survived the torture. Ammar's parents, Yasser and Sumayya, were both among the group of persecuted Muslims who achieved martyrdom. As a matter of fact, his mother Sumayyah, is considered the first Muslim martyr. Ammar, who was about the same age as Prophet Mohammad (SAWA) was known for his steadfast faith. The Prophet said in explicit words that wherever truth goes, Ammar follows it, and one day he will be killed by a group of renegades from Islam.

After the passing away of the Prophet, Ammar stayed loyal to the Prophet's divinely-decreed successor, Imam Ali (AS). He was greatly respected amongst the Muslims, and used to fearlessly criticize whenever he saw deviation, as is his criticism of the 3rd caliph, Osman ibn Affan, who ordered the severe beating of Ammar in violation of the Prophet's command. The pagans who had become Muslims in name such as Mu'awiyya ibn Abu Sufyan, used to intensely hate Ammar.

He finally achieved martyrdom at the age of 90 during one of the battles of the War of Siffin in Raqqa, Syria, by the forces of Mu'awiyya, as foretold by the Prophet. Alas, the present day heretics, the Salafis, who with the help of the Zionists and the Crusaders have occupied Aleppo and Raqqa, recently blew up the holy mausoleum of Ammar ibn Yasser, the Martyr, and the son of the first two Martyrs, Sumayya and Yasser.

Omm Kolthoum, the second daughter of Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb (A.S.) and Hazrat Fatema Zahra (S.A.)

In the year 9 AH, a radiant granddaughter was born to Prophet Mohammad (SAWA) in Medina. Her parents, the Prophet's Immaculate Daughter, Hazrat Fatema Zahra (peace upon her) and her Infallible Husband, Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb (AS), beamed with joy. It was their 4th child and second daughter. In fact, the second daughter in succession, following the birth three years ago of the Impeccable Zainab (peace upon her), she was also given the same name which means "Ornament of the Father", with the suffix "as-Sughra", in order to indicate Zainab the Younger. As was the custom among the Arabs she acquired the kunya or agnomen "Omm Kolthoum", and till this day is famous by this name. She grew up in the blessed atmosphere of

the Ahl al-Bayt along with her sister and her two brothers, Imam Hasan and Imam Husain (peace upon them), the Leaders of the Youths of Paradise. No wonder, she acquired the peerless traits of her household, whose pristine purity has been confirmed by God Almighty Himself in the holy Qur'an in ayah 33 of Surah al-Ahzaab, which reads: "Allah desires to remove uncleanness from you Ahl al-Bayt, and preserve you pristinely pure."

Omm Kolthoum was only 2 years old when her grandfather, Prophet Mohammad (SAWA), passed away. The little girl witnessed the calamities that befell her household when her father's right of political leadership of the Islamic state was usurped, along with her mother's patrimony of the orchard of Fadak. In such a tender age, she had to endure the horrible sight of the falling of the burning door on her mother, Hazrat Fatema Zahra (peace upon her), when agents of the new regime stormed the house in order to force Imam Ali (AS) to give pledge of allegiance to the new rulers. As a result her noble mother suffered broken ribs, miscarriage, and finally martyrdom, making Omm Kolthoum and her siblings, orphans. In those crucial years, the bereaved Imam Ali (AS) took care of the household and with utmost care groomed the grandchildren of the Prophet as well as his other sons and daughters that were born of different mothers. On reaching marriageable age, Omm Kolthoum was wedded to her first cousin, Aun, the son of her martyred uncle, Ja'far at-Tayyar. She was 31 years old when another great tragedy befell with the martyrdom of her dear father, Imam Ali (AS), in Kufa in the blessed month of Ramadhan. An important point to note is that on the night before he was struck the fatal blow on the head by the poisoned sword of the renegade, Ibn Muljam, her father was her guest for breaking the day's fast, and stayed for several hours that night giving valuable advises that would be the source of strength and comfort to her for the greatest ever tragedy to occur twenty years later in Karbala. Omm Kolthoum is therefore the source of some of the detailed accounts of the last days of the life of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (AS).

Ten years later, Omm Kolthoum witnessed the martyrdom, through a fatal dose of poison, of her elder brother, Imam Hasan (AS). On being widowed at the death of her husband, Aun ibn Ja'far, she stayed with her younger brother Imam Husain (AS), and when he was forced to leave Medina, she accompanied him, all the way to Iraq, where history's most heartrending tragedy struck the Ahl al-Bayt in Karbala. Along with her older sister, Zainab al-Kubra, she was witness to the bloodcurdling events of the Day of Ashura that saw the steady martyrdom in uneven combat of her nephews, brothers, kinsmen, loyal supporters, and finally of her revered brother, Imam Husain (AS).

The two sisters now assumed responsibility of the survivors of the tragedy, the women and

children of the Prophet's Household, especially their sick and bedridden 23-year old nephew, Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS), all of whom were dragged as prisoners to the court of the tyrants in Kufa and Damascus. Along with Hazrat Zainab (SA), she delivered eloquent sermons to unmask the hypocrisy of the Omayyads, who thought that by massacring Imam Husain (AS) and his kinsmen, they had succeeded in erasing from public memory the dignity and reverence of the Prophet's Household. So electrifying was the impact of these sermons on the audience that the tyrant Yazid and his regime shuddered and soon released the Prophet's Household from imprisonment. Omm Kolthoum passed away only a short time after the tragedy of Karbala. She departed from the world some four months after the tragedy of Ashura in her hometown Medina in the year 61 AH.

Here we present glimpses of her eloquently moving sermons that jolted human conscience. On arrival as captive in Kufa when she noticed the people in joyous mood on seeing the heads of the martyrs of Karbala, she said: "What will you answer if the Prophet were to ask you? What have you done to my progeny and household after my death? Is this the recompense to which I directed you that after me you deal with my kin with such evil. Indeed I fear that a curse will come upon you like the chastisement befalling the previous nations.

On return to Medina, when the sight of the city of the Prophet appeared before her, Omm Kolthoum lamented: "O my grandfather's city, do not accept us. We mourn our brother. On camels we were carried. On rough ones we were carried. We are the daughter of Taha and Yasin. O Medina! A caravan of sorrow to you I bring. An abundant gift of tears to you I bring. O Medina! I left with the Joseph of the family of Ali, but now I return with only his bloodied shirt."

Hazrat Fatima, the mother of Imam Mohammad Baqer (A.S.)

The glimpses from the life of virtuous lady in the history of Islam. She was Fatema, named after her Grandmother, Fatemat-az-Zahra (peace upon her), the Infallible Daughter of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA).

The memorable life of an impeccable great- granddaughter of the Prophet – the granddaughter of Hazrat Fatema and the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (peace upon them). She was the daughter of an Infallible Imam, the wife of another Infallible Imam, and the mother of yet another Infallible Imam, besides being the grandmother and ancestress of seven more Infallible Imams.

To be more precise, the Fatema, on whose life we dwell today, was the daughter of the Prophet's elder grandson, Imam Hasan Mojtaba (AS), the wife of her first cousin, the Survivor of the tragedy of Karbala Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS), and the mother of Imam Mohammad

Baqer (AS). Through her grandson, Imam Ja'far Sadeq (AS), her lineal descent of the Infallible continues till the Lord of the Age, the Promised Saviour of mankind, Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance to establish the global government of peace, prosperity, and justice). Her kunya was Omm Abdullah, since her second son was named Abdullah, and she was acclaimed by all as the "Siddiqa" of her times, that is, the Most Truthful Lady. It is said that none among the family of Imam Hasan looked like her. At the same time she was a picture of patience, prudence, and piety. She and Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS) were united in the blessed bond of marriage by her uncle, Imam Husain (AS), while both the bride and the groom were in their teens. The fruit of this auspicious union was the Prophet's 5th Infallible Heir, Imam Mohammad Baqer (AS).

It is said when the 5th Imam was born, the air of Medina was full of fragrance. Fatema bint al-Husain (SA) accompanied the caravan of the noble family of the Ahl al-Bayt, as it was forced to leave hometown Medina for Mecca, and thence to Iraq. She was present on the fateful day of Ashura, the 10th of Moharram in Karbala, where during the course of history's most bloodcurdling tragedy she endured with grief and patience the martyrdom of three of her brothers, including the youthful Qassem, and severe injuries to a fourth one, Hassan al-Mossanna. Her grieving heart also bore with patient the martyrdom of her cousins, Ali Akbar and the 6-month infant Ali Asghar, as well as uncles, including the valiant standard-bearer, Hazrat Abbas (AS), with the climax to the tragedy being the martyrdom of her dear uncle and father-in-law, Imam Husain (AS).

In the aftermath of the tragedy, the survivors, including Fatema bint al-Hasan (SA), had to go through more heartrending tragedies, as the noble captives were dragged in chains to the courts of the tyrants in Kufa and Damascus. Inspired by the indomitable courage of her aunts, Hazrat Zainab and Hazrat Omm Kolsoum (peace upon them), Fatema bint al-Hasan (SA) never let emotions overcome her, and all the while protected her son, the three-and-a-half year old Imam Mohammad Baqer (AS), since her husband, Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS), was being mercilessly treated by the captors. On release from captivity in Syria and return to her hometown Medina, she maintained her dignity in grooming the children and imparting the message of Karbala to the society.

It is related from the 5th Imam: Once, while my mother was sitting next to a wall, a sudden crack appeared along with an awful sound as if the wall would fall any moment. At this she said: By the Truth of my ancestor Prophet Mohammad the Chosen, God will not allow you to fall. The wall became suspended in midair, until my mother was safely out of its reach. This was indeed a miraculous incident by the Will of God Almighty, and it shows the purity of

character of Fatema bint al-Hasan (SA). When Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS), came to know about this miraculous incident, as a form of thanksgiving to God Almighty, he gave away as charity to the poor, some hundred dinar. Imam Sadeq (AS) has also paid glowing tributes to the peerless personality of his grandmother, on whose authority several hadith have been recorded.

Shahrbano, the princess of Persia and mother of Imam Zain al-Abedin (A.S.)

Shahrbano, the princess of Persia and mother of Imam Zain al-Abedin (A.S.) was a virtuous lady, who born as a princess was reduced to the state of a war captive. But then by the Grace of God rose to a much higher status than being the daughter of a mere king, to become the wife of an Infallible Imam, the mother of an Infallible Imam, the grandmother of an Infallible Imam and subsequently the ancestress of several more Imams, the last of whom being the Lord of the Age, Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance).

She was none other than Shahrbano, the princess of Persia, who wedded Imam Husain (AS), the younger grandson and 3rd Infallible Successor of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA), and gave birth to Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS).

She was the daughter of the Last Sassanid Emperor of Iran, Yazdegerd III. She was of the lineage of Khosrow Anushirvan the Just in whose reign Prophet Mohammad (SAWA) was born in Medina. A statement attributed to the Prophet says: I was born in the days of the just King, Kasra Anushirvan. Kasra is Arabic for Khosrow. In short, when the Persian Empire collapsed and the people of Iran accepted the truth of Islam, almost en masse, Shahrbano found herself a captive. As a prisoner of war she, along with her sister and other ladies, was taken to Medina, the city of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA).

Here, the group was presented before the self-styled caliph. In her native Persian she bemoaned her fate, at which the caliph who could not understand her language, thought she was cursing him, and became angry. The Commander of the Faithful, the Prophet's rightful Heir, Imam Ali (AS), happened to arrive at this moment, and on seeing her, he rebuked the caliph for his uncouth behaviour, telling him that noble ladies, even of a different religion and ethnicity, should not be treated in such a manner. The Imam, who as the chosen of God, was acquainted with all languages, calmed Shahrbano, and to her surprise spoke to her in flawless Persian. She felt relieved, and the Imam told the caliph to allow her to choose a consort from among the Muslims. Shahrbano, on surveying the gathering, felt enlightenment deep down in her heart on seeing the radiant visage of Imam Husain (AS).

Shahrbano was married to Imam Husain (AS), and thus the holy bond of matrimony between the noblest of the Arabs and the noblest of the Iranians was sealed. For her part, Shahrbano's

sister choose Mohammad bin Abu Bakr – who was brought up by Imam Ali (AS) – as her husband. She was indeed a picture of piety, prudence and patience. The fruit of the blessed union was the birth after several years, of Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS). As mentioned in the volume 46 of the book “Bihar al-Anwaar”, the famous poet Abu’l-Aswad al-Du’ali, who was among the companions of the Commander of the Faithful, recited the following verse:

“Indeed, there is a son (born) between Kasra and Hashem.
He is more noble than him to whom charms were entrusted.
He is the light, and the place of his secret is the Light of Allah.
He is the Source of the Fountain of Imamate.”

It is also mentioned in books of history and hadith that poets would refer to Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS) as “Ibn al-Khiyaratayn” which means the son of the two best communities. Imam Ali (AS) after testing the wisdom of his daughter-in-law, Shahrbano, had given her tidings of being the mother of the noblest of persons of his age. Imam Husain (AS) highly respected Shahrbano, who before the solemnizing of the nuptials formally embraced the truth of Islam, although she was a monotheist since birth and not a fire-worshipper.

The Imam taught her the Islamic spiritual teachings to the extent that she soon forgot the luxuries of her past life as a princess, and preferred the simplicity of life with the Prophet’s grandson in Medina to the palaces of Mada’en or Ctesiphon and the meadows of Kabul. Shahrbano, however, was not destined to live long. She was actually spared the sufferings of her husband and son in Karbala.

When Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS) was still a child this noble lady passed away in Medina and was laid to rest in the Prophet’s city. After her death, the Imam’s sister, Hazrat Zainab (SA) took the responsibility of bringing up Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS). Thus, by being the mother of the 4th Infallible Imam, Shahrbano became the ancestress of 8 more Infallible Imams, the last of whom, Imam Mahdi (AS) will reappear in the end times as Qa’em al-Mahdi to cleanse the world of all vestiges of corruption and oppression by establishing the global government of peace and justice. Amen

The captive children and womenfolk of the Holy Prophet’s Household

On 1st of the Islamic month of Safar in 61 AH, some 20 days after the heartrending tragedy of Karbala, the captive children and womenfolk of the Holy Prophet’s Household, along with the heads of Imam Husain (AS) and the other martyrs, mounted on spear-points, were dragged in fetters to the court of the Godless Yazid Ibn Mu’awiyah in Damascus. The Omayyads decorated the bazaars and streets to mock at the family of Prophet

Mohammad (SAWA) and celebrated the occasion as a day of festivity. Nonetheless, despite the severe sufferings, the noble captives, including the Hazrat Ruqayya (SA), the less-than-four-year daughter of Imam Husain (AS), bore themselves with dignity. Yazid rejoiced and said he had avenged the blood of his infidel ancestors, killed in the battles they had imposed on the Prophet at Badr and Ohad. The Imam's sister, Hazrat Zainab (SA) and the Imam's son and successor, Imam Zain al-Abedin (AS), delivered memorable sermons at Yazid's court and the Great Mosque, to expose Omayyad blasphemy against the Prophet's grandson and Ahl al-Bayt. The conscience of the Syrian people was thus aroused, alarming .Yazid and making him release the noble captives