

(.The Role of Lady Zainab (s.a

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The ruin and confusion brought about by the atrocious army was so great that zainab, the daughter of Ali (a.s.), had great difficulty in gathering the orphaned children, whom she had to appease and to appease and console till late midnight. Ali ibnul Husain (a.s.) says, ""My aunt zainab always performed her prayers standing. But on that night, intense grief and the extraordinary effort of gathering, guarding and consoling the children and women had made her so tired that she performed her night prayers sitting, for she could stand only with great effort. Late after midnight, she sat facing the Qiblah and raised her trembling hands with a voice that spoke of her grief and fatigue, and yet determination. Allaho akbar! One can only guess the feelings of this great daughter of Ali (a.s.) when she spoke to God during those prayers. Was she complaining of the destruction and death the oppressive regime had brought upon the household of the Messenger of God? Was she pleading with her God to accept all those sacrifices made by Husain (a.s.) and his companions for the sake of Islam? Was she asking God to bestow a greater determination and strength to this daughter of Ali (a.s.) and sister of Husain (a.s.) to enable her to fulfil this mission which had been brought upto this point by the martyrs and the most difficult part of which remained for her to complete? Was she beseeching the Almighty to give patience and forbearance to the hearts of the women and children whose sole guardian she had become? Was she praying that God may take His revenge from the oppressors and tyrants who had not heeded the exalted station of the House of the Prophet and had shed the blood of their heir of the Prophet? When we observe the dishonourable deeds of the evil regime of Yazid against the Household of the Peophet, there is no need to be surprised, for the foundations of disrespect and injustice towards them had been laid a long time before. The regime of Yazid and Ibn Ziyad was only the successor of its predecessors. We need not be surprised at the hideous acts of the agents of Yazid for the sake of his political power and position. Don't we know about the conspiracies which had started even before the death of the Messenger (s.a.w.a.s.)? Don't we know about the insulting fashion in which the Prophet (sa.w.a.s.) himself, on his death bed, was treated by his so-called "companions? Had not the dictates of political conspiracy demanded that Ali"s (a.s.) house be broken into? That his wife and children be threatened with death? And that Ali (a.s.) be pulled out of his house with a rope around his neck? Who was it who cried from outside his door, By God, I will set fire to his house.""? If, after Ashura, almost 50 years after the Prophet"s (s.a.w.a.s) death, the

women and children of his house hold were taken prisoner and paraded through the streets and bazaars of Kufa and Damascus, was not Fatima(a.s.), the Prophet's beloved daughter, mistreated and beaten only days after her father's death? Shall we be surprised when, in the year 61 A.H., the so - called Muslims of Kufa, fighting under the command of Omar ibn Sa'd did not abstain from burning down the tents which housed the women and children of the Prophet's House hold, when the companions of the Prophet, soon after his death, threatened to burn down the house of Ali and Fatima (a.s.)? Why must we be surprised at the looting and pillaging of the tents after the martyrdom of Husain (a.s.), when we know that the Prophet's daughter was deprived of her rights of inheritance and her property confiscated by the companions of the Prophet himself? There is no reason to be surprised at the daughter of Ali (a.s.) the grandson of Ali (a.s.) and the women and children of his household being taken as prisoners from Karbala to Kufa and from Kufa to Damascus into the presence of the caliph of Muslims! Was not Ali (a.s.) himself taken into the presence of an earlier caliph with a rope clasp ing his neck...when the swords came out of their scabbards threatening his life and that of his household: either allegiance or...? The same condition and the same demand and a ?!similar threat

After Karbala

The morning of 11th of Muharram dawned and zainab took up the mission where Husain ibn Ali (a.s.) had left it. Husain (a.s.) had played his part and from this juncture zainab assumed her important role in the struggle for Islam, so that the mission that had reached this point, with so much sacrifice of noble lives, could be brought to its fruitful conclusion. It was possible that even now, the smallest amount of oversight and neglect might make the whole venture fruitless and render the martyrs' sacrifices futile. With supreme courage and determination, she resolved not to be overcome by grief and be crushed by the weight of the tragedies that had befallen her family, and with the iron will she had inherited from her father and grandfather was determined to make the best use of every opportunity to propagate the mission of Imam Husain (a.s.) It had remained for zainab (a.s.) to utilise every opportunity to counteract the deceptive propaganda of the regime, by which it sought the bloodshed of Husain (a.s.) and his companions, and make the truth shine forth for people. It was her mission to dispel the doubts and misunderstandings sown into the public mind by the propaganda of the regime and to make known for the people the objectives and ideals which lay behind Husain's martyrdom. Her role was to make people understand that the oppressive and exploitive regime had falsely introduced Husain (a.s.) and his companions to the people as opponents of Islam and enemies of its progress. She had to make it known to the people who were ignorant of the truth that it

was the Household of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.s.), the home of Revelation, that was the true upholder and the source of the values and teachings of Islam, for the protection of which they did not refrain even from sacrificing their lives and every thing else they had. The martyrs gave away their lives and departed from the scene of oppression, but it remained for the women and children, in the leadership and guardianship of this great daughter of Ali (a.s.), to pursue the most difficult and the most tormenting part of the mission. Had it not been for zainab, we would not have known the objectives of the qiyam of Husain ibn Ali (a.s.). His aim would have been lost and this event of great tragedy would have been buried under the mountain-load of distortions and misinterpretations-a thing which many have nevertheless tried to do but have failed miserably. Thus it was a great responsibility that lay on zainab's shoulders-the great woman who, in addition, was also the kind and compassionate guardian and leader of this group of unhappy prisoners in their journey from Karbala to Kufa, from Kufa to Damascus, from Damascus to Karbala and from there to Madina, the home of the Prophet's family. This job required great strength and forbearance and qualities which cannot be found in an ordinary woman. But zainab too was no ordinary lady, she was the daughter of Ali (a.s.) and had been reared by a mother like Fatima (s.a.)-the same Ali and Fatima (a.s.) who had spent all their lives in struggle and had fought their way in the midst of political crises and conspiracies. zainab (a.s.) was a true daughter of her mother, who, through her active and passive struggle, had forced the regime of her time to take a defensive stand and had shown to posterity the ways of struggle in difficult times as well as their immense value, a fact to which history bears testimony! Thus it was zainab (a.s.), the daughter of Ali and Fabima (a.s.), the wife of such a valuable man of renown as Abdullah ibn Ja"far, and the mother of such brave youthful martyrs as "Aun and Muhammad and the beloved sister of such a man as Imam Husain (a.s.) who pursued the mission with immense care and wisdom and who at last brought it to its sublimly fruitful conclusion. As we have indicated before, our intention here is not by any means story-telling. The only objective is to illuminate the aims and objectives of the qiyam of Imam Husain (a.s.) Till now, we have accompanied Husain (a.s.), on his journey which as we have said, had no other than a sacred and heavenly objective and purpose. We have seen how Husain (a.s.) constantly struggled for the sake of upholding the sanctity of the laws of Islam and the survival of its sublime values. We have observed how he stood up to safeguard the rights of Muslims and ideals of social justice and human liberty. From this point, we shall accompany zainab (a.s.) in her journey from Karbala to Madina and see how zainab pursued the same ideals as

(.her brother, Imam Husain (a.s

Omar ibn Sa'd left Karbala on the 11th of Muharram after having performed the funeral ceremonies and burial of the hell-ward bound dead of his army. The headless bodies of Husain (a.s.) and his companions lay unattended and neglected in the desert for three days, When Ibn Ziyad's men left Karbala and nobody had stayed, some people of the tribe of Bani Asad came and buried the bodies of Husain (a.s.) and his companions. When Ali ibn Husain (a.s.), who was twenty-two at the time, and Zainab were being taken to Kufa as prisoners on the 11th of Muharram, the bodies of the martyrs lay scattered all over the camp, drenched in their holy blood, uncared for and unattended. But Zainab knew that God would not forget those who had died in His way, and a day would come when Ibn Ziyad, Shimr and Omar ibn Sa'd, and those who had assisted and fought for them, would be recorded by history with ignominy and disgrace surrounding their very names, their dead among the most ignominious of the dead while the tombs of the holy martyrs would become lasting symbols of human glory and greatness, where every year, even after passage of centuries, millions of Muslims from every corner of the earth would come to pay their homage to the great works and sacrifices of the martyrs of Karbala. The bodies of the martyrs lay for three days unwashed and uncovered, their heads severed from their bodies, naked and broken under the hooves of horses, yet history was to lay bare before the eyes of posterity the most ugly, atrocious and vengeful attitude of the regime of Yazid towards the Household of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.a.s); and to this, the bodies of the martyrs bear testimony. God covered them with magnificent and glorious apparel of martyrdom and sainthood and laid bare the ugly nature of the atrocious enemies of Islam and its Prophet (s.a.w.a.s.) While the graves of Yazid, Ibn Ziyad, Shimr, Omar ibn Sa'd and the other agents of the regime are unknown and forgotten, history preserves their ignominious names and acts to serve as a lesson to all oppressors and tyrants to come. Yet the tombs of the martyrs of Karbala stand as luminous signs of man's struggle for justice, liberty and human dignity and, even after the passage of centuries, are like radiant and potent minarets of guidance and struggle in a world of oppression, injustice and denial of God. Whatever movements for freedom and struggles for liberty took place in the Muslim world, their leaders and followers have always looked up to the martyrs of Karbala for guidance, strength and inspiration. More than thirteen hundred years later, when Islamic revolution in Iran was victorious against oppression and colonialism, its victory was yet another gift from the martyrs of Karbala to mankind, Islam and Muslims have become everlastingly indebted to them..and to Zainab. That is why when Ali ibn Husain (a.s.), as the caravan of the prisoners started for Kufa, intensely grieved at the sight of the bodies of his father, brothers relations and friends of his father lying unattended in the sands, Zainab consoled her nephew and said: Dear nephew, do

not sorrow nor grieve! Be confident that this scene too shall pass. Do you not know that those who give away their lives for the sake of God take up residence in the depths of human hearts? The memory of those who die for freedom and liberty takes firm root in the heart of humanity and there it lives on for ever. Dear nephew, without doubt, soon a time will come when one will pass through this place and will not see any desert or sand. A beautiful city will grow around the tombs of these martyrs and this battlefield will assume the form of a glorious shrine. Leaving the bodies of her dear ones-her brothers, nephews and sons behind - zainab started on the way to Kufa as a prisoner. The gates of Kufa drew near and a large crowd of spectators had gathered outside it. The regime was indeed celebrating its newly achieved victory! And the people of Kufa...who in history have become synonymous with treachery and deceit...were again back in the streets. They were the people who had sold their souls for money and promises of rewards...who yearned for liberty and freedom from oppression while the desire for wealth and worldly position and possessions had enslaved them. They had invited the son of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.s.) to this city and had then taken up arms against him! Now, as they saw the women and children of Husain (a.s.) being brought as prisoners into the streets of their city, they wept. When the caravan of prisoners neared the Dar ul-Imarah, zainab seized this opportunity to address the treacherous crowd of the deceitful Kufans. She cried: Praise belongs to God and may His blessings be upon my father, Muhammad, and his Household-the chaste and the sacred! O people of Kufa! You deceivers! You traitors and saboteurs! You sinners...now you weep? May God never abate the flow of your tears and may your hearts ever smoulder with grief and sorrow. You are like the woman who painstakingly and with great labour twines a strong rope, and then herself unwinds it, there by wasting her effort and energy. Your false pledges have no bearing on truth and sincerity, Know that you have naught to offer but fictitious harangues, false pride, knavery, deception, lust, malice, lies and faltery. know that you are as vile and devoid of character as low and despicable slave girls. Your hearts are full of antagonism and spite, you are as odious and loathsome as the vegetables that sprout and flourish around cesspools and the rotten plaster on old graves. Beware, for you have sponsored a very wrongful act for which God is totally displeased with you. You have foraged but poorly for the Hereafter. Without doubt, His wrath shall soon descend upon you. Now you weep for my brother and raise wailing cries for him. Yes, by the Almighty, weep! Because you are only fit to weep Yes, by the Almighty, weep! Because you are only fit to weep. Yes, weep in plenty and laugh less, because you are wholly steeped in the ignominy of the murder of the Imam of your time. The stain of his blood is upon your hands and you cannot wipe it off. Nor can you be exonerated from the crime of slaying the vicegerent of the Last Prophet of God (s.a.w.a.s.) the

light of his House and the apostle of the divine saints. You have martyred a man, who was your succour, your support in adversity, the tower of your strength, your guide in precept and practice. Realize that you are guilty of an extremely obnoxious crime and a heinous misdeed in this world. What ridiculously futile assets have you amassed as an offering for the Day of Reckoning! May the Wrath of God descend upon you and may you perish and be ruined! Your efforts have miscarried and you have miserably failed. Your aspirations have fallen through, and you are not only the universally despised and hated of this world but have also reaped the eternal enmity of God! Woe to you, O people of Kufa! Do you know where you have hurt Muhammad (s.a.w.a.s) most? what vows you have broken and whose blood you have shed? Truly, you have committed such a colossally loathsome and hateful act that the heavens may fall upon earth, the earth may tear up and mountains scatter like ashes! Remember! Yes, remember that your retribution shall be extremely harsh and severe and there will be no one to come to your rescue. Do not gloat even during so short time at your disposal before the Final Reckoning. The lapse of a period of time between commitment of a crime and the meting out of punishment is but a reprieve. For God knows best when to strike! Understand; surely God is watching you and is waiting for you! Zainab's words fell like angry thunderbolts over the minds of the people of Kufa who were shaken out of their base complacency by the daughter of Ali (a.s.) The older people heard Zainab with surprise; to them, it was as if after twenty years they were again hearing Ali (a.s.) himself; for Zainab had a voice, a manner of speech and an eloquence that closely resembled that of her father. Today she stood as a prisoner in the market - place of Kufa, where her father had once ruled as the Khalifah of Muslims, and where Zainab herself had lived as the Khalifah's daughter. This speech of Zainab, delivered with undaunted courage and fiery eloquence of her father, had a very deep effect on the minds of the people. It sowed the seeds of an uprising that was to manifest itself five years later (remembered in history as the Movement of the Tawwabun" or the penitents). After Zainab, her sister Umm-e-Khulthoom addressed the people of Kufa and under the guise of attacking the people of Kufa for their treacheries delivered deadly blows to the regime of Yazid. Ali ibnul Husain (a.s.) too, with all the weakness of a man who had only half-recovered from a serious illness addressed the people: Are you not ashamed of yourselves? With what face shall you meet the Prophet of God (s.a.w.a.s.) on the Day of Judgement? You invited his son and this is how you have received your guest! You called him and then put him under siege and martyred him together with his companions; and having imprisoned his women and children you have them paraded around the streets of your city! This is how you welcome your guests... It was at this stage that the people again started speaking against the regime and some approached Ali

ibnul Husain (a.s.) declaring their support and offering to fight with him against the government. To Ali ibnul Husain (a.s.) this was yet another affront; angrily he replied: Strange! Your treacheries and disloyalties with my father are before my eyes! As it is, we are undergoing the manner of your hospitality! But still you do not abstain from fabricating your devilish designs! If what you say is really true, do not do anything against us and abstain from saying anything that would bring us greater harm. We do not want either your support or your favours! Soon the officials came to realize that the speeches of the prisoners before the people, even if it were not dangerous, might heighten anti - government feelings among the people, Ibn Ziyad ordered the heads of the Martyrs to be taken out to be carried at the head of the caravan of the prisoners being paraded around the streets of Kufa. When the spectators saw the heads of the martyrs appear, all their attention was absorbed by these heads, which they pointed out to one to one another, and their attention shifted away from the prisoners and they no longer paid any heed to what they had to say. In this fashion, the prisoners were finally brought to the .residency of the governor of Kufa

Court of Ibn Ziyad

The court of Ibn Ziyad was being prepared for a special occasion. The government officials and the army commanders who had shortly returned from Karbala were all present. Other classes of the people had also been permitted to attend the celebrations. Ibn Ziyad had set the head of Husain Ibn Ali (a.s.) in front of him. He ordered the prisoners of Karbala to be brought into the court and the women and children of the household of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.s) were brought in. Zainab entered without paying any attention to Ibn Ziyad and as she stood in a corner, women and children surrounded her. Who is this lady? asked Ibn Ziyad, who considers herself to be so important? She is the daughter of Ali Zainab, he was told. He turned towards Zainab and said, Thank God who brought you low and exposed your lies. Zainab replied, The evildoers abuse themselves, and the corrupt tell falsehoods; and we are not such. Ibn Ziyad ostensibly acted, however, as if these words were not aimed at him. He said, Daughter of Ali, have you seen how God has acted with your brother and his family? Zainab replied: I have not known aught but benevolence and goodness from God. And as for our people, for whom God has ordained blessings of martyrdom, they defended themselves with valour. They were martyred and have reached their Divinely - ordained Abode. But, O son of Ziyad, God will bring them and all of you face to face, when you will offer excuses which will be of no avail. Son of Ziyad! May your mother weep over you. Remember, one day you have to answer for this before God. Be prepared for that day and realize in whose favour the Almighty's verdict shall be. I swear, you have no doubt slain our men, violated our sanctity, and have not only hacked our

family tree but have pulled it out from its very roots. If you think that all these acts are the cause of glorification for you, then yes, you have acquired glory. For certain, I am surprised at the person who murders his Imam and says he has gained glory, whereas in truth he knows what retribution awaits him for this atrocious deed. Ibn Ziyad, apparently unmoved by what zainab had said, retorted, Anyhow, I am at peace after having killed Husain. O son of Ziyad! You say your heart is at peace by the slaughter of Husain (a.s.) Yet you know too well that the sight of Husain used to soothe and solace the Prophet. The Prophet always petted and fondled Husain (a.s.) and the two, he and his elder brother, Hasan, were often riders on his holy back. zainab continued: Indeed prepare your excuses for the Day of Reckoning. Son of Ziyad! Even if my brother was aspiring for the khalifah, then he was in the right because the khalifah was his inheritance from his grandfather, the Prophet; whilst you, son of Ziyad, prepare your defences for the day when God shall be the judge. O Ibn Ziyad, you are guilty of a most ghastly crime, and inspite of this deed of yours, you seek peace in the world! Pity, yes a thousand pities that you are drunk with this short-lived might and this brief prestige. Worldly power and wealth have enticed you and have made you proud. But be warned that temporal monarchy and power will fade into insignificance and perish You are not immortal and shall not live forever. Peace and rest you shall never find. Do you know and realize what you have done to those divine souls and their relatives? You are revelling and celebrating over your evil deeds and their massacre. Remember your act is so grievously vile and ghastly that its ignominy shall always accompany you till the Doomsday. You shall, indeed for sure, never be gratified with the acquisition of your heart"s desire. Ibn Ziyad was angered but was made to desist from taking any harsh action by those who were present, who told him, Leave her alone. She has suffered and her grief makes her say all this. zainab"s speech, however, had transformed the very mood of the assembly. The joysa and pride of victory had been obliterated in the hearts, which were now invaded by guilt, shame and indignity. Ibn Ziyad who was well aware that zainab"s speech had created an atmosphere which was not at all to his benefit, tried to change the topic with the comment: zainab too speaks eloquently like her father! To this zainab replied. What do woman have to do with oratory. Up to now the exchange had been entirely to the ruin of Ibn Ziyad. He turned to Imam Sajjad (a.s.) the son of Husain (a.s.), who stood among the prisoners and inquired, who is this man? He is Ali, son of Husain, came the reply from one who stood around. Ibn Ziyad said, We had received the report that Ali ibnul Husain was killed by God in Karbala! Yes, I had a brother named Ali, replied Imam Sajjad (a.s.), who was killed by your army in Karbala. No, it was God who killed him, came the angry retort from Ibn Ziyad. In reply, Imam Sajjad (a.s.) recited this verse of the Quran, God takes the souls at the time of their death, and that which

has not died, in its sleep; He withholds that against which He has decreed death, but looses the other till a stated term (43:39) The calm reply enraged Ibn Ziyad who cried, What impudence! How dare you argue with me! Then he ordered his men to behead him. zainab, when she saw this came in between Imam Sajjad (a.s.) and Ibn Ziyad's men and cried out to Ibn Ziyad, Ibn Ziyad, are you not ashamed? Do you intend to kill all of our men. It is impossible! You will have to kill me first before you can put your hands on my nephew. Ibn Ziyad was surprised at this scene of love and courage. He clearly saw that zainab (a.s.) intended what she had said. Then desisting from the idea he said, In deed, blood-relationship is a strong bond! Ali ibnul Husain (a.s.) told his aunt, Dear aunt, be calm and allow me to speak directly to him. Then Taking a few steps forward he said to Ibn Ziyad, You threaten me with death? Do you not know that martyrdom is our inheritance and our merit...? By this time, Ibn Ziyad had understood that this kind of exchange was not to his benefit. Perhaps it was at this moment that Husain's (a.s.) head attracted his attention and with a cane that he had in his hand pointed out to Husain's (a.s.) lips and teeth and at the same time commencing an absurd highhanded harangue. Zaid ibn Arqam, an aged companion of the Prophet was present. When he saw that Ibn Ziyad's impertinence had come to this extent, he cried out in protest, Ibn Ziyad! Take away your cane! God is witness that I have seen many times the Prophet of God kissing these lips. And with these words, he got up and weeping loudly left the assembly. Ibn Ziyad realized that with the honourable station Zaid ibn Arqam possessed in the society the matter could end ruinously for him. He cried after Zaid, Do not cry. You have become old and have lost your wits. Do you weep at a time of great victory as this? Had you not been old and decrepit as you are, I would have had you beheaded this moment! Zaid ibn Arqam, as he walked out of Ibn Ziyad's court cried out to the people: O Arabs! You will ever remain slaves of Ibn Ziyad after this moment! You kill the son of Fatima (a.s.) and make the son of Marjana (Ibn Ziyad's mother) the ruler over yourselves, so that he may kill the pure and pious among you and give mean brigands supremacy over your affairs. O people! It were you who brought wverlasting indignity and ignominy on yourselves and submitted to this absement. May God deprive you of honour and !welfare since you have submitted to such abasement and devilry