

Commemorating the Tragic Martyrdom of Hadrat Fatimah al-Zahra (A.S)

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Each year the Imamiyyah Shiites commemorate two historic-religious events: the tragedy of Ashura, martyrdom of Imam Hussain (A.S.) and the tragic martyrdom of Hadrat Fatimah al-Zahra (A.S.). Indeed, it is our duty to put forth effort in keeping the memory of these events alive.

Perhaps those not familiar with Shiite beliefs may question the purpose of commemorating the tragic past events, thinking remembering these sad events will only cause further disunity within Muslim communities.

In reply to this uncertainty, we must say that if the events we commemorate are merely for historic purposes, then mourning over them are not only unnecessary, but also utterly useless. However, what if remembering these events closely relate to religious beliefs? What if these events actually had an impact in shaping people's beliefs: beliefs that directly influenced their lives in both this world and the hereafter? And upon this we conclude that in fact it is obligatory on every truth-seeking and religious person to investigate the histories of the two schools of thought in Islam. Each school of thought introduced itself as religious references for the nation through either the concept of caliphate or Imamate. In this regards, the Holy Quran says: " ...Is He then Who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who himself does not go aright unless he is guided? What then is the matter with you; how do you judge? (1)"

Studying the sayings and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) shows that observing the rights of the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) holds an especially high status, and as a result showing affection and love towards the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) is one of the most obvious ways of observing their rights. Insistent commandments of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) to observe the rights of the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) on one hand, and the frequent Ahadith which indicate the value in loving the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) on the other hand have caused Muslims to pay special attention towards love and affection for the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.). In his last sayings, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) continued emphasizing this tradition regarding the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.)(2). In another statement, he has identified the best person towards the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) as the best of the nation (3); and in the famous Hadith of Thaqalayn, he has referred to the Holy Quran and the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) as two valuable, equal, and inseparable things, and has insistently ordered the observation of both (4).

In a Hadith frequently narrated by Shia and Sunni sources, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) has said: "Fatimah is the master of all the women of the worlds" (5). And regarding her proximity towards Allah (SWT), he has said: "O Fatimah! Verily Allah becomes wrathful for your anger, and is pleased at your pleasure" (6). His love for Hadrat Fatimah (A.S.) was so much that he would repeatedly say: "Fatimah is a piece of my flesh" (7).

Other sources have also introduced a fuller version of the previous Hadith, adding that: "She is the flesh of me which is in my chest, the light of my eyes, and the fruit of my heart" (8). Moreover, he had specifically ordered people to respect Hadrat Fatimah (A.S.) and he presented this order through his behavior (9), sayings, and titles (10) he attributed to Lady Fatimah (A.S.).

Scholars and historians unanimously agree that love towards Hadrat Fatimah (A.S.) is of the most obvious and practical ways in expressing love for the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.). In the commentary of verse 23 in chapter 42 of the Holy Quran (11), both Sunni and Shia interpreters have induced that the term family (Aal) in this verse refers to Hadrat Fatimah (A.S.) as one of its members (12).

Considering the above statements, to some the thought of Hadrat Fatimah (A.S.) being oppressed by the governors after the death of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) may seem as a total misconception. Yet, the facts can be easily found in authentic history books, authored by Shia and Sunni historians, which narrate the incidents after the death of the Prophet (S.A.W.). These recordings clearly indicate how Hadrat Fatimah (A.S.) would express her constant state of suffering from the oppressions induced upon her by the governors after the death of the Prophet (S.A.W.): "I suffered so many tragedies that if they had hit bright days, they would have turned into dark nights". In another incident when Umm-Salama asked for her health, Lady Fatimah (A.S.) clearly complained about the absence of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and the oppressions placed upon his rightful successor; and she named hypocrisy in religion and avenging the victories of Imam Ali (A.S.) as causes for these incidents (13). A brief look at her fiery and doleful sermon in the mosque, in the presence of the Muhajirin and Ansar, clarifies how she condemns the deviations made by the ruler of the government.

And finally, upon seeing the indifference of people toward the oppressions of the government and toward the deviations made in Islam, as a sign of objection she asked Imam Ali (A.S.) to perform her burial ceremony in secret, and for her grave to be hidden from the public (14).

Indeed this was an awakening call for people to ask: "Why despite all the commandments and recommendations made about her, did the life of the only daughter of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) end in such a manner?" (15)

Footnotes:

1- The Holy Quran (10, 35)

2- Majma' al-Zawa'id, vol. 9, p. 163- Sawa'iq al-Muhraqa, pp. 90 & 136

3- Fa'id al-Ghadi, vol. 3, p. 497

4- Sahih Muslim, vol. 7, p. 123, Published in Cairo in 1334 AH

5- Fada'il al-Khamsa min Sihah Sittah, vol. 3- Ihqaq al-Haqq, vol. 10- Bihar al Anwar, vol. 43

6- Dhakha'ir al-Uqba, p. 39- Mustadrak Hakim, vol. 3, p. 153- Usd al-Ghabah, vol. 5, p. 522- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 43. p. 19

7- Sahih Muslim, vol. 7, p. 140- Sahih Tirmadhi, vol. 2, p. 319- Mustadrak Haakim, vol. 3, p. 153

8- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 43. pp. 24 & 80

9- There are numerous reports about the unique relationship between Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and Hadrat Fatimah (A.S.): a relationship far deeper than a simple father-daughter relation. Examples of such reports can be found in page 364 of Manaqib. Ibn Maghazili narrates that after the revelation of verse 24 of chapter 24, Allah (SWT) ordered people to call the Prophet (S.A.W.) respectfully by his specified title of "messenger of Allah". Hadrat Fatimah (A.S.) would also call him with this title, when her father upon bending down to kiss her hand, requested that she continue calling him "Father" like before, for this was a word that he loved more, and for which Allah (SWT) was pleased with as well.

10- The Prophet (S.A.W.) himself chose the title "Umm Abiha" (the mother of his father) for Hadrat Fatimah (A.S.) and this has been narrated by both Shia and Sunni. See Kashf al-Ghummah, vol. 2, p. 88 and Al-Isabah, vol. 4, p. 365 (Published in Egypt)

11- "Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it but love for my near relatives..."

12- For example, Zamakhshari says: "There is no doubt that the relation between Fatimah (A.S.) Ali (A.S.) Hassan (A.S.) Hussain (A.S.) and Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) was the firmest and closest of relations, and this certainty is like the certainty about a frequent narration. Thus, it is appropriate to believe in them as the family of the Prophet (A.S.)". (Tafsir of Al-Kashaf, under verse 23 of chapter 42)

13- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 43, pp. 156 & 157

14- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 43, pp. 192 & 193 & 214

15- This excerpt was written by consulting the following sources:

- "The Whistle of Guidance", lecture series of Ayatullah Dhia Abadi, pamphlet number 28

- "The life of Hadrat Fatimah al Zahra (A.S.) and her daughters", Sayyid Hashim Rasouli

Mahallati

.- "Sadness for ever; Why Shiites Mourn in Fatemyiah", by Sayyid Mujtaba Mousawi Rad