

Chapter 3: The Role Model

The Truthful

It was narrated that 'Aisha said: 'I have not seen any one more truthful than her – Fatimah – but only her father.'¹ The value of this *hadith* is that it has been narrated by 'Aisha, who seems to have spoken after a study of the Islamic society. It is worth noting that 'Aisha did not say in her description of Fatimah (as) that she was 'the truthful', but the most truthful. This expression, when given to a person, means that they are very sensitive to truthfulness, and that they would make absolutely sure that any word they utter contains no false suggestions, and certainly no lies. 'Aisha saw Fatimah as (as) the most truthful, and one who represented truth in speech and attitude, like her father the Messenger of Allah (sawa) who manifested truth so that his folk knew him – even before the start of his Message – as 'the truthful, the trustworthy'.

Fatimah (as) acquired this attribute from her father (sawa) and excelled in it until she became the most truthful after him. Fatimah (as) has been, and still is, a role model of truthfulness, and wants us to turn life into truth, so that every one of us might be the most truthful with himself and the most truthful among his people, not like the many who live their lives in continuous lying – lying in religion through all kinds of deviations, and in politics with all its traitors and arrogant powers, and in social reality where lying may promote selfish interests.

The Worshipper

If we look at what history books have told us about Fatimah (as), we find that her worship was unrivalled. Here are some examples:

1– It is told that al-Hasan al-Basri said: 'There was no one in this nation who worshipped more than Fatimah: she used to pray until her feet became swollen.'²

2– Even more emphatic was her son, Imam al-Hasan (as), who said: **'I saw my mother Fatimah (as) standing up in her *mihrab* [prayer niche] every Friday night. She bowed and prostrated herself**

until dawn, and I heard her praying for the believers, naming them...!'³

Fatimah was burdened with her household problems, pregnancies and children, and with her Islamic responsibilities in the social arena – but in spite of all that, and the weakness of her body, she would worship Allah until her feet became swollen, and found the time to stay awake and pray all night, praising Allah.

The Miraculous Favors

No doubt that there were normal circumstances which formed the backdrop to the spiritual and mental development of Lady Fatimah (as), such as the Prophet's upbringing of her – the same applies to other great women such as Zakariyah's upbringing of the Virgin Mary (as). However, in addition to this, there was the Divine favour which covered her in purity and holiness, and empowered her to perform some miracles even while she was in her mother's womb⁴ and honoured her with the visit of the angel.⁵

And while we cannot infer that there were metaphysical elements in Fatimah's personality which place her beyond being a human being, or that her life was transformed completely by metaphysical events which defy the natural laws that Allah has placed in the universe, this does not mean at all that such events are to be denied altogether. Fatimah (as) was indeed the person so endowed by the favours and graces of Allah that we can say that there was an element of the metaphysical in her personality.

It was narrated that the Messenger of Allah (sawa) used to enter her room and find food, just as when Zakariyyah used to enter Mary's room and find food, and then ask: 'O Mary! From where have you got this?' She would reply: **'It is from God; Verily God provideth whomsoever He liketh without measure.'** (Qur'an 2:37)

Likewise, Fatimah (as) used to answer her father (sawa): she had the miraculous favour of Allah, Who prepared her to be the Doyenne of the Women of the World, and to occupy such position, she had to have all the virtues and elements of goodness, truth, worship and purity.

In addition, she was blessed by other miraculous favours that revealed her great position in relation to Allah and her nearness to him.

But was Fatimah (as) a paranormal woman?

In spite of all the aforementioned proofs of Fatimah's infallibility, holiness, miraculous favours and virtues, all these do not remove her from the human race. She was a woman who had feelings, emotions and desires, as other women have. Her greatness was that she developed her feelings within the framework of Allah's satisfaction and did not let her desires go beyond what Allah permitted, and so her heart, mind and body did not deviate from the right path by even the tiniest measure.

It was the same with the Messenger of Allah (sawa): he was a human being with the peculiarities of all

men **'And say thou: I am only a man like you, it is revealed unto me...'** (Qur'an 18:110) If he and also the prophets (as), Imams and Fatimah (as) had not been human beings, they would not have had any distinction over the rest of the people, and there would have been no meaning in following them: **'And had We made him an Angel, We would have certainly made him a man, and We would have made confused to them what they (now) make confused.'** (Qur'an 6:9) The greatness and value of these (individuals) is that they are human beings and not angels; but through their will and holiness they are, for Allah, higher than the angels.

A Spirit Overflowing

After her missionary concern, came her concern for the people around her, or rather her concern for the people was part of her missionary concerns. Here lies the value of Fatimah (as), for her high and distinguished position does not lie in her family descent – however honourable – or in her tribe, or in any other connection that people boast about, but in the Islamic values which have been manifested in her, and for which she was called. It is for these values that man lives for others before living for himself – to bear the burdens and concerns of others and loves for them what he loves for himself, and hates for them what he hates for himself. This was what Fatimah (as) manifested in her being; in fact she excelled to the highest level, and she did not only give the others some of what had Allah given her, but she also favoured them, even though she herself was in urgent need.

Imam al-Hasan (as) said: **'I saw my mother Fatimah (as) standing up in her *mihrab* [prayer niche] every Friday night. She bowed and prostrated herself until dawn, and I heard her praying for the believers, naming them, and she prayed much for them and never for herself. So I said to her: O mother! Why don't you pray for yourself as you pray for others? She said: O my son! The neighbour [first], then the house!'**⁶

And for whom was she praying at night, when she was waiting to sit before Allah to confide in Him, and to submit and surrender to Him? Was she praying for herself, and requesting something for herself, like many of us would do when we pray during the day or night?

No! For her the matter lay in another direction: she would use the precious opportunity of the night – its serenity and spirituality through which the horizons open for worshippers and uplift the soul – to pray not for herself but for the believers.

The knowledgeable

(1) Knowledge

She used to sit with Ali (as) before the Prophet (sawa), as the revelation was revealed, listening with eagerness and concentration to the Messenger's teachings which explained to them the meanings of the revelation and taught them Allah's rulings and law.

One piece of evidence that the Prophet (sawa) used to take care of Fatimah's learning was the *hadith* narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (as): **'When Fatimah came complaining to the Messenger of Allah (sawa) about something, he gave her a [dried] palm tree branch - which was used for writing - and said: Learn what is in it... In it was: Whoever believes in Allah and the Day of Judgement must not hurt his neighbour, and whoever believes in Allah and the Day of Judgement shall be generous to his guest, and whoever believes in Allah and the Day of Judgement shall say [something] good or be silent.'**⁷

The Prophet (sawa) wanted for her to relieve her pains by becoming busy with Islamic values and propagating them to people. This suggests to us that we should be aware of our missionary role more than our pains, so that we might beat our pain through our mission, for whoever lives the concerns of the grand issues forgets his pains and renders them insignificant.

(2) The Importance of Knowledge

Some scholars of the *hadith* narrated that a man came to Fatimah (as) and said: 'O Fatimah daughter of the Messenger of Allah! Have you got something to give me?' She said to her servant: **'Get me that writing piece [made of palm tree branches].'** And when she could not find it, Fatimah (as) said: **'Get it! It is for me equal to Hasan and Husain! This is the inheritance of the Messenger of Allah (sawa).'**⁸

We can see clearly from this narration how much Fatimah (as) respects knowledge, for we know how much she loved her sons al-Hasan and al-Husain (as). It must also be clear that importance does not lie in the letters of the written word, but in its spirit, which turns it into the thoughts that enrich man, and the dynamic movement that corrects his ways and guides his experience.

This narration might also suggest that the Truthful (as) used to receive men and answer their questions and religious queries, or give them some religious advice.

The Teacher

Al-Zahra (as) did not restrict herself to writing down the knowledge, and collecting it in a book or other written texts; she also worked to propagate it in the Muslim society. Also, she did not wait for people to come to her with queries and to provide the answers to them, but took the initiative to spread knowledge in society. The writers of her history narrated that she used to teach lessons to the women of the Migrants (*muhajroon*) and Supporters (*ansar*), who used to gather for her teaching lessons, rather as pupils assemble for the lessons given in the religious schools we know today. Her sermon in the Mosque, in which she explained the secrets of jurisprudence and Divine laws, as well as other points, is a living document and the best testimony of Fatimah's cultural message and her educational, intellectual responsibility.

The Writer

Her concern for knowledge and the *hadith* of the Messenger of Allah (sawa) and Islamic teachings and rulings reached such an extent that she would write down everything she heard from the Prophet (sawa) directly, or indirectly – i.e. what was also narrated to her by Ali (as) or her son al-Hasan (as) – as can be understood from the narrations above.

It could be said that Fatimah (as) was the first writer in Islam, among both men and women, and the first to write the *hadith* of the Messenger of Allah (sawa) in his presence. And from this we can see that what the caliph 'Umar bin al-Khattab did, when he prohibited the writing of the *hadith* of the Prophet (sawa) so that – as he claimed – the *sunnah* did not get mixed up with the Qur'an, was wrong, and his arguments were unconvincing, for we see Fatimah (as) writing the *hadith* of the Prophet (sawa) during his life, without him (sawa) prohibiting it.

The narrations also mention what was called '*mus-haf Fatimah*', i.e. the book of Fatimah (as), which has aroused a great deal of controversy. Therefore, we have to clarify the nature of this book and what it has contained.

First of all, we have to emphasize that this book – according to the belief of all Shi'ah without exception – is not another Qur'an, or different from the Qur'an which Muslims have and which has had been neither added to nor abbreviated.

Some Muslim scholars have tried to accuse the Shi'ah of having a Qur'an different to the Qur'an known to all Muslims. This accusation derives from the word *mus-haf*, which some suggested to mean Qur'an, and also on what Imam al-Sadiq (as) said: **'It is three times bigger than your *mus-haf*.'**⁹ We say to those, as we have said to many Sunni Muslim scholars¹⁰ that if you go to all Shi'ite places in the world and enter their homes, bookshops, mosques and *Husainiyyahs*, you will not find any other book besides the Qur'an that is in your hands – it is not different in one word, not even in one letter.

As to the nature of this book, the narration said: **'.... Gabriel used to come to her to offer her good condolences in her father and to make her satisfied and to inform her about her father and his place and to tell her about what was going to happen to her offspring; and Ali used to write that; this was *mus-haf Fatimah*.'**¹¹

And in the narration from Imam al-Sadiq (as), he read: **'*Mus-haf Fatimah* (as), I do not claim that there is Qur'an in it; in it is what people need us for and we do not need any one.'**¹²

Another narration tells us that Imam al-Sadiq (as) said: **'And to bring out *mus-haf Fatimah*, for it has Fatimah's will.'**¹³

According to some narrations, this book was written by Ali (as)¹⁴ and another narration suggests that it was dictated by the Prophet (sawa) himself, with Ali (as) writing it.¹⁵

Hence, it is more probable that it was a book about the allowable and prohibited things (*halal and haram*), although it is possible that it included rulings and stories told by the angel, and also her will. In light of this, the book can be attributed to Fatimah (as), just as it can be attributed to Ali (as) and, hence, she can be regarded as the first author in Islam, just as Ali was the first author in Islam.

The Most Faithful Wife

History tells us that Fatimah (as) lived with her husband as best as a wife can, in love, faithfulness, obedience and care. This was why in her last days, when she was giving Ali her will, she said: **'you have not experienced me as a liar or unfaithful and I have not disobeyed you since I have known you'**; he replied: **'You are more pious, God-fearing and knowing for me to rebuke you in anything of that sort.'**¹⁶

She used to take care of her husband, who was burdened with holy war and his responsibilities, and she did not complain about that, in spite of the cruel obligation it put on the wives of the warriors, and especially someone like the Commander of the Faithful (as), who was the lion of the wars and the lion of Allah and his Messenger (sawa). She was burdened with the upbringing of the children and her household concerns, but all that did not prevent her from performing, faithfully, her role as a wife.

She lived with her husband as any Muslim wife, did not set herself apart as the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (sawa); rather she performed her marital responsibilities as best as a Muslim woman could do in spite of the weakness that plagued her from the start of her life, as narrated by the historians.

In another narration, Ali (as) said: **'I did not make her angry throughout my life with her and she did not make me angry and did not disobey my orders throughout her life with me.'**¹⁷ Satisfaction was granted to them because they lived as people with a mission, and the Message was the greatest of their concerns.

Because Fatimah (as) was faithful to her husband, and harmonized with him in soul and spirituality, it would be inconceivable that she would insult Ali (as) in any way. Therefore I reject strongly the suggestion that Fatimah (as) said: **'O Ibn Abi Talib! You have wrapped yourself like an embryo and sat like an accused! You have not satisfied by speech, and have not helped with any useful thing, and I have no choice'**,¹⁸ because these words were insults and Fatimah (as) was above insulting Ali (as) or telling him 'what is your use? You have not benefited me, you are like an embryo!'

Supportive Couple

Ali and Fatimah (as) used to divide the responsibilities inside the house, and in our narrations Fatimah (as) asked the Prophet (sawa), in a loving way, to divide the chores between her and Ali (as). The agreement was that she would grind, knead and bake and Ali (as) would sweep the floor, and bring water and wood (for the fire).¹⁹

In this there is a lesson for both men and women: men should learn not to feel too grand to serve at home. Ali (as) swept the floor and brought the water and wood, while the men among us feel their masculinity is brought into question if they sweep the floor or bring water. Ali was the master of men, but saw nothing objectionable in sweeping the floor of the house, because the house was his house and the wife his wife. He was a human being, and she was a human being, and a man, however great, is never too big to serve his children, wife, father, mother, brothers and sisters or anyone for whom he is responsible.

The same lesson has to be learned by women: that work at home is not belittling – a mentality which has arisen amongst Muslim women lately. Fatimah (as) worked, grinded and baked. Although we have said many times that Allah has not made it obligatory for a woman, whether daughter or wife, to serve at home, it is obligatory under Islam in that Allah wants people who live in any position which calls for participation to participate naturally and according to their powers. Allah did not make it obligatory for women to work at home or breastfeed the children, because he wanted them to give from their heart, and with the energy, effort and awareness that springs from their own will.

In summary, in the question of serving, he who serves another within the ambit of his responsibility does not call his dignity into question; so the woman who regards her work at home as belittling to her personality, or the man who regards his participation in such work as belittling to him is misguided. There is no person who is a servant absolutely, and there is no person who is a master absolutely, for every one of us is a master in one circle and a servant in another.

Her Life and Suffering

History tells us that the life of Fatimah (as) might be described as ordinary, as far her daily life – doing the domestic chores, bringing up her children – is concerned. In spite of being the Doyenne of the Women of the World, the daughter of the most honourable Prophet and Messenger, wife of the Commander of the Faithful and the Master of Regents, and mother of al-Hasan and al-Husain, the masters of the Youth of Paradise, she lived a normal life, grinding, kneading, baking, cooking, taking care of her children and doing all the things that were her responsibility as the female head of the household. Also, we can say that she transcended the physical suffering that she experienced during her childhood, and which cruelly remained with her while she was in her husband's house. The suffering, troubles and difficulties that Fatimah (as) endured demonstrated the difference between her personality and the personalities of other women, for her simple way of life, her hardships, the inadequacy of her food and clothing, were things that other women seldom had to put up with, but she displayed a kind of patience towards suffering that corresponded to that shown by Ali (as).

History relates a number of stories about her life which are expressive and impressive in this respect, such as:

1– She had only one sheepskin which she used as a mattress, as she told her father: **'I swear by the**

One Who sent you with the truth as a prophet that Ali and I, for five years now, have not got but one sheepskin which we sleep on at night... and our pillow is filled with fibre/straw.'²⁰

In talking to her father, she appeared satisfied and content with what Allah had given to her.

2- The narration by Imam al-Sadiq (as) that when the Messenger of Allah (sawa) saw Fatimah (as) wearing a poor-quality cloak while kneading bread and breast-feeding her son, his eyes filled with tears and he said: **'O my daughter! Accept - with alacrity - life's bitterness, while waiting for the sweetness of the hereafter.'**²¹

3- Someone saw her hand-grinding barley and saying: **'But that which is with Allah is better and more enduring.'** (Qur'an 28:60)

A Servant or Praising God?

Ali said once to her, when he saw the signs of great hardship and suffering on her: **'What if you go to your father to ask for a servant to relieve you a little?'** She refused, as she was shy to ask the Messenger of Allah (sawa) for such request. Therefore, when they arrived, it was Ali (as) who said to the Prophet (sawa): **'She grinded with the mill until her hands became hard, and it affected her chest, and swept the house until her clothes became dusty.'** However, the Prophet (sawa) replied: **'Would you like me to teach you something? If you learn it, it would be better than the servant: if you go to sleep say *Allahu Akbar* 34 times and *Alhamdu Lillah* 33 times and *Subhan Allah* 33 times. It is better for you than the servant!'** They said: **'We are satisfied with Allah.'**²²

In another narration, Ali (as) added that Fatimah (as): **'...lit the fire until her clothes darkened...'**²³

The Prophet (sawa) said that and he was addressing their spirits to elevate them to the highest levels, and to bond them to Allah the Most High and to relieve them of suffering, especially Fatimah (as). The Prophet (sawa) did not perhaps have a servant to give them, or perhaps he did not want to make his house or his daughter's house better than the houses of some of the poor. Hence, he taught her what was better than a servant, and eternalized with that what was later known as *'tasbeeh al-Zahra'*. This perpetrated the praise after every prayer performed by the believers and before they would go to sleep, remembering through it the living hardships of their Lady al-Zahra (as), who transcended her difficulties and forgot her concerns when she sat to praise Allah (in that particular way). In this way, they learn how to live with Allah and feel the company of Allah and the sweetness of His praise when they are assailed by their concerns, difficulties and pains.

The Struggler

Fatimah (as) did not live in seclusion; rather her short life was filled with the wonderful holy struggle on all fronts, and that she lived for Allah and His way, and to implement truth.

(A) In the Battles

She used to accompany her father (sawa) in some of his battles and wars. Historians have said that: 'When the Messenger of Allah (sawa) was wounded in the Battle of Uhud, Ali was bringing water, using his shield, from al-Mihras – the water source there – to wash the wound, but the blood did not stop.'²⁴ Fatimah (as) now played the role of a nurse: 'Fatimah came – gave him a dose of kindness first – and embraced him, crying, then she burned [palm tree] mat and put its ash on the wound and the blood stopped.'²⁵

This suggests the depth of relationship between her and the Messenger of Allah (sawa) and her intense care for him, even though he, at that time, had more than one wife.

(B) Angry for the Truth

After the death of the Messenger of Allah (sawa), she started a holy struggle of another kind. Her biggest concern was to prove the right of Ali to the caliphate, as an Imam appointed by Allah. All her actions centered upon this high goal, and when she talked about Fadak, she did not do so because it represented a financial need, as other people might try to acquire money, for – to her and her husband – Fadak was not worth anything. As Ali (as) put it: **'What do I do with Fadak and [anything] other than Fadak when the self will, tomorrow, end up in a grave?'**²⁶

Fatimah (as) proceeded in protecting the politics of truth with her stances, words, sermons and all her activities. The women of the Supporters (*ansar*) came to visit her during her final illness and started to inquire about her health, her pain and weakness. And how did she answer? She said: **'I have become abandoning your life, hating your men!'**²⁷ Why? Because they did not support the truth – did not stand with Ali (as) who represented the truth. Her stance was not because Ali (as) was her husband or cousin, but because he was her Imam, her custodian and leader (*Walyy al-Amr*), and the Muslims' Imam and their custodian and leader, and because Ali was with the truth and the truth with him, and because Ali was the one who was taught by the Messenger of Allah and to whom he (sawa) opened one thousand gates to knowledge, with each gate opening to one thousand other gates²⁸; and because had Ali been handed over the rule, he would have ruled with truth and would have laid the foundation of justice.

(C) Her reply to the Migrants and Supporters

When they came to her and said: 'Had Abu al-Hasan come and mentioned this issue before the covenant [to Abu Bakr] was confirmed and the contract [of caliphate] was fastened, we would not have chosen anyone else!' She said: **'Go away from me! You have no excuse after the warning and no say after failing in your obligations!'**

Here was Fatimah (as), a firm woman flaming up with rage, entering into dialogue and dispute and

arguments with men and women, not to prove a personal right for herself, but for a big missionary goal which was the succession and caliphate after the Prophet (sawa).

(D) Her visits to the houses of the Ansar

She retained this same firmness in her stance to the extent that, according to some narrations, she used to go out with Ali (as) to the houses of Muslims, especially the *Ansar*, to talk to them about the right of Ali (as) and his suitability for the caliphate. They would reply: 'Had your husband and cousin come to us before Abu Bakr, we would have never chosen anyone else!' and Ali (as) would reply: **'Do you want me to leave the Messenger of Allah (sawa) in his house, unburied, and go out to quarrel with people about his rule?'** And Fatimah (as) would say: **'Abu al-Hasan could not do otherwise, and they did what Allah would judge them and reclaim from them!'**²⁹

She lived for the major issues and never for the minor ones, because whoever lives for Islam and all truth will have to be of the size of Islam and truth, and will have to stay firm – not to take sides or to flatter, back down, weaken, or be humiliated or saddened.

The Orator

Fatimah (as) stood like a revolutionary or opposition activist, giving voice to her side of arguments in sermons matching argument with argument, offering rebuke when strong rebuke could emphasize the meaning of truth, and being lenient when leniency and gentleness could be useful.

(A) Excerpts from her sermon in the Mosque

She stood in the Mosque, delivering her sermon. This had no equivalent in the Arabic history – an orator talking about the secrets of Islamic jurisprudence in all its major categories providing for every one of them its explanation and a clarification of the wisdom behind it. All this was to show the people the nature of the dynamic movement of this jurisprudence in their lives.

Thus, she entered into arguments around the issue of inheritance and its related verses, and her right in it.

We shall break her sermon into several parts, according to the topics with which each part deals.

(Because of the size of this book, the full text and full commentary of his eminence is not included here, only a few excerpts from the various parts, as divided up by his eminence. The translator.)

Part 1 – The Oneness of God

'Praise and gratitude to Allah for His bounties...'

'There is no God but Allah, the One, Who is impossible for the eyes to see, and the tongues to

describe.'

'He innovated the things not from something before, and created them not in imitation of past models... to bring attention to his obedience/worship and to show his powers...'

Part 2 – The Secrets of Prophethood, the Message and the Qur'an

'I bear witness that my father Muhammad is His slave and messenger, He has chosen him before sending him... He sent him in completion of his matter... So Allah has lit by my father Muhammad their [the nations] darkness, and uncovered from the hearts the difficult matters...'

'You are the worshippers of Allah, in front of His do's and don'ts, and the bearers of His religion and revelation, and guardians of yourselves, and His messengers to the nations...'

'And a leader of truth with you, and a covenant which he presented for you... the speaking book of Allah and the truthful Qur'an, and the shining light... a leader to [Allah's] satisfaction is following it and leading to saving is hearing it...'

Part 3 – The Rationale and Goals of Islamic Jurisprudence

'Allah made belief a purification of you from polytheism, and prayer to lead you away from arrogance, and [religious] tax to elevate the soul and increase the income, and fasting to make firm (your) faithfulness, and pilgrimage a glorifying building of the religion...'

Part 4 – Justice, Imamah and other Jurisprudence Secrets

'... and justice to harmonize the hearts (of people)... and obedience to us [Ahlul Bayt] a [perfect] system for the nation, and our Imamah a safety from differences... And good conduct with the parents a protection from the anger [of Allah]... and punishment to save blood [souls]...'

Part 5 – Defending the Right and Truth

'O people! Know that I am Fatimah and my father is Muhammad! I say again from the start, and I do not say what I say wrongfully, nor do I do what I do without reason. If you seek his family descent you shall find him father of me and not your other women, and the brother of my cousin, not your men; and you have been on the edge of Hell. Humiliated people, fearing the raids of the people around you, so Allah the Most High saved you by Muhammad, every time they lit a war fire Allah extinguished it, Or the polytheists opened their mouths [with their canines to bite], he [the Prophet] send his brother [Ali] unto their mouth ceilings [i.e. sent him to the points of danger and death]; he would not come back until he stepped with his foot on their ears and extinguished their flames with his sword, tired for Allah's sake near to the Messenger of Allah, a master amongst Allah's holy people... Whilst you were in soft living... And when Allah chose for his Prophet the place of His prophets and the shelter of His chosen [people], the enmity of

hypocrisy showed up amongst you, and the dress of religion got worn out...Then he [*Satan*] called upon you and found you quick [in responding to his call], and made you angry [to instigate your bad response] and found you angry [behaving out of emotional reactions]... and that whilst the time was [still] near, and the calamity wide, and the wound still open, and the Messenger had just been buried!

Part 6 – Setting out the proof for her right to Fadak

'And you claim now that we have no inheritance! Don't you know? O yes, it has uncovered for you like mid-morning sun that I am his daughter... O son of Abu Quhafah [i.e. Abu Bakr]! Is it that by the Book of Allah you inherit your father and I do not inherit mine? You have committed a grave thing! Is it with intention that you have abandoned the Book of Allah and left it behind your backs when it says: "And Solomon inherited David" (Qur'an 19:16), and says in what it tells of the story of John the son of Zakariyyah when he has said: "... So grant me from thyself an heir. Who shall inherit me and inherit from the family of Jacob?" (Qur'an 19: 5-6) Has Allah made a verse exclusive for you and taken my father out of it? ... Or you are more knowledgeable in the particulars and general rulings of the Qur'an than my father and my cousin? Here is [the inheritance] for you [Abu Bakr] complete, to meet you on your day of judgement; for the best judge is Allah, and the leader [in the argument] is Muhammad and the date is the Judgement [day]...'

Then she looked to the side of the Supporters (*Ansar*) and said:

- 'O people of support, and supporters of religion, and embracers of Islam! What is this denial to my right, and silence about my grievance? Didn't the Messenger of Allah used to say: "The person is to be taken care of in his children?"

'O sons of Qaylah! Am I being usurped from my father's inheritance and you are looking and hearing?!... And you have the numbers and [battle] preparations... And you have the weapons and the shields...'

'You are the good choice which has been chosen for us Ahlul Bayt... You fought the Arabs, and withstood the difficulties and hardships... How come you deviate after clarification... and committed polytheism after belief? ... Do you fear them? Allah is more worthy of fear if you are truly believers!'

'O, since I see that you have favoured safe life, and turned away the one who is more worthy of ruling... if you become infidels you and all people on Earth, surely Allah is Self-sufficient, Most Praised...'

'Thus, I said what I said, whilst knowing the deviation which had befallen you... but it was the rage of the soul and the letting out of anger... And to present in advance the argument and

advice...'

'It is in Allah's eyes what you do; and those who have committed injustice shall see where they will end up; and I am daughter of a warner to you of an imminent torture; so do, we will be doing, and wait, we shall be waiting.'

(B) Excerpts from her speech to the women of Ansar

Then she spoke with the women, who gathered in her house, about the basis for Ali's right through the words of the Messenger of Allah (sawa) and through Ali's capabilities.

Excerpts of what she said include:

- **'Where have they moved it [the caliphate] away from the firm origins of the Message and the foundation of Prophethood and the place of descent of the Holy Spirit and the knowledgeable in the issues of life and religion? This is surely the clear loss;'**
- **'What have they grudged from Abu Hasan? I swear by Allah that they have grudged his terribly effective sword and little concern about his death.'**
- **'I wonder what proof they have relied on? And what support they depended on? And to what handle they held on? And what offspring they committed [their bad deed] to and usurped?'**
- **'May the noses be damned of people who believe that they have done a good thing; surely they are *the* corrupt but without knowing! Woe unto them "Is then He who guideth unto truth more worthy to be followed or he who himself goeth not aright unless he is guided? What then hath befallen you? How [ill] ye judge?" (Qur'an 10:35)**

(C) Excerpts from the argument between Abu Bakr and Fatimah (as)

When Fatimah (as) finished her sermon, Abu Bakr said:

- **'...O you the best of women and daughter of the best of prophets, truthful in your speech... not turned away from your right..'**
- **'By Allah, I have not done other than the opinion of the Messenger of Allah and not done but with his permission... I heard the Messenger of Allah saying: "We the folk of prophets do not bequeath gold or silver, or houses or estates, but we bequeath the book and wisdom and knowledge and Prophethood, and what has been for us as income is for the ruler who succeeds us to do with it according to his ruling"...'**
- **'O you the Doyenne of your father's nation, and the good tree of your sons... your ruling is implemented on what I own, but as for Fadak it is not mine, so do you want me to disobey your father**

(sawa)?'

Then Fatimah (as) replied:

- **'May Allah be praised! My father the Messenger of Allah (sawa) would not abandon the Book of Allah, and not be disobedient to its rulings; rather he used to follow it and abide by its chapters (*surahs*). So, do you add to betrayal [of us] lying on him?'**

- **'This is the book of Allah – a just judge and decisive speaker – saying: "Who shall inherit me and inherit from the family of Jacob;" and "And Solomon inherited David"; so Allah the Great and Almighty clarified what He divided of installments, and legislated of rights and inheritance, and allowed of the shares of the males and females what had removed the argument of the false (people) and the thinking and doubts of the perished [people]. O no! "... Have beguiled you your [guilty] selves into something. But [my course is] comely patience; and God is He whose help is to be sought against what ye describe." (Qur'an 12:14)**

Abu Bakr then said:

- **'Allah and His Messenger have told the truth, and his daughter has told the truth! I do not deny what you have said; here are the Muslims between you and me... it has been on agreement with them what I have taken... and they are witnesses.'**

Fatimah (as) said finally:

- **'O you Muslim folks who are quick to the speech of falsehood, the silent [not objecting] to the losing, ugly deed; do not you [read and] ponder the Qur'an, or have your hearts been locked? Verily, I swear by Allah, that you shall see its bearing heavy, and consequences terrible, when the cover is removed... and come unto you from your Lord what you have not been preparing for, and the false people shall thence be losing.'**

Then, she turned to the Prophet's grave and said a poem, one line of which was:

We have felt your absence likewise the Earth its rain

And your folk have deviated; so be a witness and do not be absent.

Pioneer in the Political Role of Women

In this way she was talking – as the narrations suggested – to the Muslims about that right; she was the holy struggler. To use some contemporary terminology, she was the person who practiced political work in the strongest manner: she stood alone in front of a new ruling power – albeit that people might differ regarding its nature – while Ali (as), because of some other circumstances, did not confront the matter in such a direct way....

She was alone in the Mosque, she was alone with the women of *Muhajiroon* and *Ansar*, she was alone in the Medinah arena, and she was alone in all her practical attitudes, in which the emotions of her sorrow for the Messenger of Allah (sawa) would move dynamically one time, and with revolutionary zeal at another. With that, she legitimized Muslim woman's participation in politics as an orator, as a dynamic force of opposition, with all the effort and energy that that role would call for.

She was distinguished in her opposition, in that she wanted that opposition, rage and protest to remain after her death, requesting in her will to be buried at night, so that none of those who oppressed her or deviated from the right path could be present.

The Truthful, the Witness

It was narrated by Imam Musa al-Kadhim (as): **'Fatimah is surely *'siddeeqah'* (truthful) and *'shaheedah'* (witness).'**³⁰

We understand from this *hadith* that our Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (as) has achieved the position of individuals who live the truth with the self, Allah and people around them. You know, now, that she was the most truthful after her father (sawa) – as narrated by 'Aisha – and that she reached the position of the witnesses who shall bear witness on the conduct of the nation, as is the case with the prophets (as) whom Allah the Most High has chosen for this position.

It is the combination of the word *'shaheedah'* with the word *'siddeeqah'* that suggests for us this interpretation of the word *'shaheedah'*, because it matches the verse: **'And whoever obeyeth God and the Apostle (*Muhammad*) these shall be with those God hath bestowed favours upon them; of the Prophets, and the Truthful, and the Righteous ones; and excellent are these as companions!'** (Qur'an 4:69); and: **'And on the day when We will raise up in every people from among themselves, a witness (*upon them*)'** (Qur'an 16:89), and others which talk about the position of the *'shadadah'* (witness) in the nation.

There is no doubt that the position of *'shadadah'*, meaning witness in the nation, is greater than *'shahadah'*, meaning getting killed in the way of Allah, because the word in its former meaning is the description of Allah the Most High: **'Is it not sufficient for thy Lord that He is a witness over all things.'** (Qur'an 41:53) It is also the description of Allah's prophets: **'How will it be [then] when We shall bring forth from every people a witness and when We shall bring thee a witness over these?'** (Qur'an 4:41)

And when Allah chooses someone for the witness stance, as he did with our Lady Fatimah (as), this choice would not come without reason. Rather it would come from the characteristics which made these individuals beloved to Allah and made them worthy of bearing the Message and of manifesting its values in life.

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1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 43, chapter 3, p. 53; al-Mustadrak, vol. 3, p. 160.
 2. Al-Bihar vol. 43, p 84; 'Awalim al-Zahra, p.224.
 3. Al-Bihar vol. 43, p 253; 'Awalim al-Zahra, p.225, from 'Ilal al-Sharayi'.
 4. 'Awalim al-Zahra, p. 201.
 5. 'Awalim al-Zahra, p. 583.
 6. Al-Bihar vol. 43, p 253; 'Awalim al-Zahra, p.225, from 'Ilal al-Sharayi'.
 7. Musnad Fatimah, al-Kafi, p.585.
 8. Majma' al-Zawa'id, Musnad Fatimah, p. 66, p. 586; Dela'il al-Zahra, p. 27.
 9. Al-Bihar, vol. 26, p. 39. It is obvious that the Imam (as) was talking about the size of this book, and that is why he added: 'I swear by Allah that it has not got not even one letter from your Qur'an', i.e. it is a piece of knowledge that is quite separate from the Holy Qur'an.
 10. His eminence had talked to the late Sheikh Muhammad al-Ghazali, who was fair in this issue, as he had been in other issues; see his book Difa' 'an al-'Aqeedah wal Sharee'ah Didda Meta'in al-Mustashriqeen, p. 219-220.
 11. Al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 241; al-Bihar, vol. 26, chapter 1, p. 41.
 12. Al-Bihar, vol. 26, chapter 1, p. 37.
 13. Al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 241.
 14. Al-Bihar, vol. 6, p. 41, 44.
 15. Al-Bihar, vol. 26, p. 41, narration 73.
 16. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 43, chapter 7, p. 191.
 17. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 43, p. 134.
 18. 'Awalim al-Zahra, p. 477.
 19. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 43, p. 81; Rawdat al-Kafi, vol. 8, p. 145.
 20. 'Awalim al-Zahra, p.264.
 21. 'Awalim al-Zahra, p.266.
 22. Wesa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. 6, p. 446; Sahih al-Bukhari, al-Karmani commentary, vol. 14, p. 244; Musnad Ahmad, vol. 1, p. 106.
 23. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 43, chapter 4, p. 82.
 24. Al-Nihayah, Ibn al-Atheer, vol. 5, p. 259.
 25. Al-Kamel fil Tareekh, vol. 1, p. 554; Sahih Muslim, vol. 3, p. 1416.
 26. Nahj al-Balaghah, letter no. 45.
 27. Dela'il al-Zahra, p. 87.
 28. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 26, p. 28-9. (This narration is one of the most famous narrations regarding the virtues of Ali (as), and has been extensively narrated by scholars in both schools of thought. The translator.)
 29. Al-Imamah wal Siyasah, p. 12.
 30. Al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 458

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