

Growing Up in Medina

Zaynab [a.s.] shared with her brothers and sister the extraordinary position of having such examples to look up to, emulate and learn from, as her grandfather, the Prophet of Allah [s.a.w.], her mother Fatima [a.s.], daughter of the Prophet, and her father Imam Ali [a.s.], cousin-brother of the Prophet.

In the pure environment that enveloped her, she absorbed the teachings of Islam that her grandfather imparted and after him her father. Here too she learnt to master all household skills with great proficiency. She had barely attained the tender age of seven when her beloved mother passed away. Her mother's death had closely followed her cherished grandfather's passing away. Some time later Imam Ali [a.s.] married Umm ul-Banin, whose devotion and pledge encouraged Zaynab [a.s.] in her learning.

Whilst still a young girl she was fully able to care for and be responsible for the running of her father's household. As much as she cared for the comforts and ease of her brothers and sisters, in her own wants she was frugal and unstintingly generous to the poor, homeless and parentless.

After her marriage her husband is reported as having said, "Zaynab is the best housewife."

From very early on she developed an unbreakable bond of attachment to her brother Imam Husayn [a.s.]. At times, when as a baby in her mother's arms she could not be pacified and made to stop crying, she would quieten down upon being held by her brother, and there she would sit quietly gazing at his face. Before she would pray she used to first cast a glance at the face of her beloved brother.

One day Fatima [a.s.] mentioned the intensity of her daughter's love for Imam Husayn [a.s.] to the Prophet [s.a.w.]. He breathed a deep sigh and said with moistened eyes, "My dear child.

This child of mine, Zaynab, would be confronted with a thousand and one calamities and face serious hardships in Karbala."