

The Role of Women in the Uprising of Imam al-Mahdi (atfs)

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In studying the hadiths on the role of women before and after the advent of Hadrat al-Mahdi ('atfs), we find that a few important points need to be made. Although some hadiths say that most of the followers of Dajjal (Anti-Christ) would consist of the Jews and women,[13][183] there would be also faithful and chaste women, who had experienced hardships in preserving their faith, and would have been profoundly affected by the state of affairs prior to the advent (zuhur).

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Some women would possess firmness of stance and jihad-like spirits, and wherever they go, they would expose the inhuman essence of the Dajjal as part of their propaganda war against him.

Some hadiths say that during the uprising of al-Mahdi ('atfs) four-hundred women will accompany him and most of them will be engaged in activities concerned with health and medical treatment. Of course, there is disagreement in the hadiths concerning the number of women who will be accompanying al-Mahdi ('atfs) during his uprising.

Some hadiths mention thirteen women who will be with Hadrat al-Mahdi ('atfs) during his advent, who perhaps would be among his earlier forces. Other hadiths have mentioned seven thousand eight hundred as the number of women who will assist him ('atfs), and they are the women who will accompany him ('atfs) after the uprising and help him ('atfs) in many activities.

In the book, Fitan, Ibn Hammad said: "The number of the faithful at the coming of Dajjal will be twelve thousand men and seven thousand seven or eight hundred women." [14][184]

The Messenger of Allah (S) said: "Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus the son of Mary) will descend from heaven in the midst of eight hundred men and four hundred women who would be the best inhabitants on the surface of the earth and the most righteous of the people of the past." [15][185]

Imam al-Baqir ('a) said: "By God, three thousand or so will come and there will be also fifty

women from among them.”[16][186]

Mufaddal ibn ‘Umar said: Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “Thirteen women will accompany Hadrat Qa’im.” I asked: “What will they be doing and what role will they play?” He (‘a) replied: “They will treat the wounded and attend to the sick just like what the (female) companions of the Messenger of Allah (S) were doing.” I asked: “Will you mention the names of the thirteen women?” He (‘a) said: “They are Qanwa the daughter of Rashid, Umm Ayman, Hababah Walabiyyah, Sumayyah the mother of ‘Ammar ibn Yasir, Zubaydah, Umm Khalid Ahmasiyyah, Umm Sa‘id Hanafiyyah, Siyanah Mashatah, and Umm Khalid Jahaniyyah.”[17][187]

In the book, Muntakhab al-Basa’ir, two women with the name of Watirah and Ahbashiyyah have been mentioned and they have been considered as among the companions and supporters of Hadrat al-Mahdi (‘atfs).[18][188] Some hadiths have only mentioned the existence of women among those who will accompany him (‘a) and have not mentioned their number.

The Historical Background of the Women Involved in the Advent

In the hadiths Mufaddal ibn ‘Umar has clearly mentioned the number of women who will accompany Hadrat al-Qa’im (‘a) at thirteen but among this number only nine have been introduced by name and description. Imam as-Sadiq’s (‘a) emphasis on the names was meant for us to study their biographies and salient features, and after research we obtained some points that give a convincing indication to a possible reason behind Imam as-Sadiq’s (‘a) emphasis on mentioning their names.

Each of these individuals has her own special features, but all of them have shown their own merits in the struggle against the enemies of God. Some, such as Siyanah, the mother of martyrs, have also attained martyrdom in a heartrending manner. Others such as Sumayyah had endured the most difficult tortures in the path of defending their Islamic convictions, and remained steadfast till the last breaths in defending their faith.

Another group such as Umm Khalid had deprived themselves of the favor of having healthy physical bodies and became disabled for the sake of preserving Islam. Another group such as Zubaydah had never exchanged Islam for the glitters of the world and material fortune.

On the contrary, they utilized those facilities in the way of faith and helped patronize the Hajj, which is one of the important manifestations of Islam and pillars of the religion. Yet another group had the honor of being wet nurses of the leaders of the Islamic ummah and rearing outstanding children while they themselves possessed lofty spiritual stations proverbial to all and sundry. Some of them had been from the family of martyrs and they themselves had carried their half-dead bodies and talked with them.

Yes, they have blazing hearts, who by demonstrating those acts of bravery, have proved that they could take part in shouldering the heavy burden of the global Islamic government.

Now, we will embark on introducing a number of them:

1. Siyanah

It is stated in the book, Khasa'is Fatimiyyah: "In the government of al-Mahdi ('atfs) thirteen women will be revived and return to the world to treat the wounded. One of them is Siyanah who had been the wife of Hizqayl (Ezekiel) and hairdresser of the daughter of Pharaoh. Her husband, Hizqayl (Ezekiel), was the cousin and treasurer of Pharaoh. It has been said that Hizqayl is a believer from the family of Pharaoh and believed in Musa (Moses), the prophet of his time.[19][189]

The Prophet (S) said: "During the night of ascension (mi'raj) on the way between Makkah al-Mu'azzamah (Holy Mecca) and Masjid al-Aqsa (in Jerusalem) I suddenly smelled something pleasant, which I had never smelled before. I asked Jibra'il (Archangel Gabriel): "What is this pleasant smell?" He answered: "O Messenger of Allah (S)! It is that of the wife of Hizqayl; she believed in Hadrat Musa ibn 'Imran (Prophet Moses, the son of Amran) and used to hide her faith.

She used to work as a hairdresser in the harem of Pharaoh. One day, she was busy dressing the hair of Pharaoh's daughter when the comb suddenly fell from her hand and she inadvertently said, "Bismillah" (in the name of Allah). Pharaoh's daughter asked her: "Do you worship my father?"

She answered: "No, but I do worship the One Who has created your father and will take him away. Pharaoh's daughter hurriedly went to her father and said: "The woman who dresses hair in our palace has faith in Musa (Moses). The Pharaoh summoned and asked her: "Do you not recognize my divinity?" Siyanah answered: "I will never turn away from the Real Lord and I will never worship you." The Pharaoh ordered a cupreous furnace be set ablaze and as the furnace became red-hot, he ordered all her children thrown into the fire in her presence.

At the moment when they wanted to take her sucking baby in her arms and throw him into the fire, Siyanah was moved and became inclined to disavow her religion when suddenly, by the decree of God, the child spoke and said to its mother: "O mother! Be patient for you are on the right path." The soldiers of Pharaoh threw Siyanah and her sucking child into the fire and burned them alive. Their ashes were poured into this very ground and until the Day of Resurrection this ground will have this pleasant scent..."[20][190]

She is among the women who will be revived and returned to the world and render service under the command of Hadrat al-Mahdi ('atfs).

2. Umm Ayman

Her name is Burkah. She was a bondwoman of the Prophet (S) who took her as an inheritance from his honorable father, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdil-Mutallib, and she took the responsibility of attending to the Messenger of Allah (S).[21][191]

The Prophet (S) used to address her as mother and say: "She is among the surviving members of my family." She had a son from her first husband, 'Ubayd Khazarji, whose name was Ayman. Ayman was among the migrants (muhajirin) (from Mecca to Medina) and the

strugglers (mujahidin), and he attained martyrdom in the Battle of Hunayn.

Umm Ayman is the person who, when intense thirst overpowered her on the way to Medina from Mecca (during the migration) and was about to die, a bucket of water was sent down to her from heaven. When she drank from it, she never became thirsty again.[22][192]

She cried profusely during the death of the Prophet (S). When they asked her for the reason behind her profuse crying, she said in reply: “By God! I knew that he (S) will pass away, but I’m weeping because of the termination of revelation.”[23][193]

In relation to the issue of Fadak, Fatimah az-Zahra (‘a) introduced her as a witness and testifier, and she finally passed away during the Caliphate of ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan.

3. Zubaydah

She is the wife of Harun ar-Rashid[24][194] and had been one of the Shi‘ah. When Harun was informed of her faith, he swore to divorce her. She was famous for doing good deeds. At the time when a goatskin of water cost one gold dinar in Mecca, she gratuitously gave water to the pilgrims and perhaps to the people of Mecca as well.

By constructing tunnels across the mountains, she brought water to Masjid al-Haram from a place 10 miles away. Zubaydah had a hundred bondswomen all of whom were memorizers (huffaz) of the Qur’an. Each of them was obliged to read one-tenth of the Qur’an so much so that from her place of residence the loud voice of Qur’an recital, like the buzz of bees, could be heard.[25][195]

4. Sumayyah the Mother of ‘Ammar ibn Yasir

She was the seventh person to embrace Islam and on account of this, she was subjected to the most horrible tortures. When the Prophet (S) saw ‘Ammar and his parents on the hot ground being tortured in the scorching heat of Mecca, he said to them: “O family of Yasir! Be patient; you have to know that your meeting place is heaven.”

Finally, Sumayyah attained martyrdom from the spear of the bloodthirsty chief, Abu Jahl, and she became the first woman martyr in Islam.[26][196]

5. Umm Khalid

When the governor of Iraq, Yusuf ibn ‘Umar, martyred Zayd ibn ‘Ali in the city of Kufah, he also cut off the hand of Umm Khalid for the “crime” of being a Shi‘ah and supporting Zayd’s uprising.

Abu Basir said: “We were in the company of Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) when Umm Khalid came with her amputated hand. He (‘a) said: ‘O Abu Basir! Do you want to listen to the speech of Umm Khalid?’

He answered: ‘Yes, I would be pleased to listen to her.’ Umm Khalid went up to the Imam (‘a) and started delivering a speech. I knew her for having perfect eloquence and fluency. He also spoke to her about the issue of wilayah and the disavowal of enemies...”[27][197]

6. Hababah Walibiyyah

Shaykh at-Tusi regarded her as among the companions of Imam al-Hasan ('a) while Ibn Dawud considered her as among the companions of Imam al-Hasan, Imam al-Husayn, Imam as-Sajjad, and Imam al-Baqir ('a). Others have regarded her as among the companions of the first eight Imams, i.e. up to Imam ar-Rida ('a).

It has also been said that Imam ar-Rida ('a) buried her in his own personal shirt. She was more than 240 years old at the time of death. She returned to her youth twice. The first time was through the miracle (mu'jizah) of Imam as-Sajjad ('a) and the second time was through the miracle of the eighth Imam ('a). It was she on whose stone the first eight Infallible Imams inscribed their seal one after the other.[28][198]

Hababah Walibiyyah said: "...I said to the Commander of the Faithful ('a): 'May God shower His mercy on you! What is the proof of your Imamate (imamah)?' He ('a) said in reply: 'Bring that small stone to me.' I brought it to him ('a). 'Ali ('a) sealed it with his ring such that the seal was inscribed on the small stone, and then he said to me: 'O Hababah! Anyone who claims the Imamate and has succeeded in inscribing his seal on this stone the way I did is an Imam, obedience to whom is obligatory. The Imam is he who knows whatever he wishes.'

I continued my usual occupation till the Commander of the Faithful ('a) departed from this world. Then, I went to see Imam al-Hasan ('a) who succeeded 'Ali ('a) when the people were asking him questions. When he ('a) saw me, he said: 'O Habbabah Walibiyyah!' I said: 'Yes, O my leader!' He ('a) said: 'Take out that thing with you.' I brought it out and gave the small stone to him ('a). He, like 'Ali ('a), inscribed a seal with his ring on the spot where the previous inscribed seal was.

After some time, I went to Imam al-Husayn ('a) who was then in the Mosque of the Messenger of Allah (S). He ('a) asked to me to come to him. He welcomed me and said: 'The proof for the thing you want exists. Do you want to see the sign of Imamate?' I replied: 'Yes, O my chief!' He ('a) said: 'Take out that thing with you.' I gave the small stone to him. He ('a) stroke his ring against it and his seal was inscribed therein.

After Imam al-Husayn ('a), I went to Imam as-Sajjad ('a) and I had become so old by then that I was trembling all over; I was one hundred and thirteen years old. He ('a) was then in the state of bowing (ruku') and prostration (sujud), and did not pay attention to me. I lost hope in obtaining the proof of his Imamate. He ('a) pointed to me with his forefinger and through this I became young again. I said: 'O my chief! To what extent has passed from the world and to what extent remains?'

He replied: 'As to what has passed, yes, but as to what has remained, no; that is, we have knowledge of the past but the future is part of the unseen (ghaybah) which is known to no one except God, and it is not expedient for us to say anything about it.' Then he ('a) said to me: 'Take out that thing you have.' I gave the stone to him ('a) and he put his seal on it.

As time passed by, I went to Imam al-Baqir ('a) and he also put a seal on that stone. After him I went to Imam as-Sadiq ('a) and he also inscribed a seal. After the passage of many years, I

went to Imam al-Kazim (‘a) and he also inscribed his seal on it. After him I went to visit Imam ar-Rida (‘a) and he also inscribed his seal on it.” Thereafter, Hababah remained alive for nine months.[29][199]

7. Qanwa’ the Daughter of Rashid Hijri

Although nothing has been mentioned in both Sunni and Shi‘ah books concerning the personality of this lady, the events related to the manner of the captivity and martyrdom of her esteemed father at the hands of Ibn Ziyad, which she narrated, clearly shows the degree of her firmness and steadfastness in faith, her attachment to Islam and Shi‘ism, and her love for the Commander of the Faithful (‘a).

Abu Hayyan Bajali said: “I asked Qanwa’, the daughter of Rashid Hijri: ‘What hadiths and narrations have you heard from your father?’ She said: ‘My father reported from the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) that he (‘a) said: ‘O Rashid! To what extent will be your patience when the adopted son of the Bani ‘Umayyah (Ibn Ziyad) summons you and amputates your two hands, two feet and tongue?’ He asked: ‘Will my destination be heaven...?’ He (‘a) replied: ‘O Rashid! You will be in my company both in this world and in the hereafter.’”

Qanwa’ said: “By God! After a little while Ibn Ziyad summoned my father and asked him to denounce ‘Ali (‘a), but my father never did it. Ibn Ziyad asked: ‘How has ‘Ali described the manner in which you will be killed?’ My father answered: ‘My friend ‘Ali has informed me that you will ask me to denounce him but I will refuse. Then you will amputate my two hands, two feet and tongue.’ Ibn Ziyad said: ‘By God! I will do something with respect to you that is contrary to ‘Ali’s prediction.’

Then he ordered that my father’s two hands and two feet be amputated but that his tongue be spared. I carried my father on my shoulder and along the way I asked him: ‘O father! Do you feel pain and agony?’ He said: ‘No. I am only annoyed at the amount of pressure that the crowd would exert on me.’ As I took my father and brought him to the palace of Ibn Ziyad, the people gathered around him. My father took advantage of the opportunity and said: ‘Bring pen, ink and paper so that I could narrate events to you. When Ibn Ziyad was informed of it, he ordered that his tongue be cut off and my father attained martyrdom that very night.”