

Fatima, The Perfect Role Model

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Amongst the fourteen infallibles, it was necessary for one of them to be a woman as if all of them were men, then all of the advice, recommendations and teachings which we see directed towards the women of the community – things such as how to take care of ones' spouse, how to maintain the home, how to take care of the children, the style and function of the hijab, how to modestly maneuver within society, patience and submission to God in the face of challenges and the hundreds of other teachings would have been mere words which were spoken and simple theological discussion to be studied.

It is possible that women of all ages would have said to themselves: "If there was at least one infallible woman from amongst all of these people that God sent for guidance, a woman who knew what we as women go through, how we feel and how our emotions are formulated, then all of these pieces of advice we have been given and responsibilities which have been put on our shoulders would not have been there – as these men just don't understand us!"

Therefore, the presence of Fatima Zahrah, peace be upon her, as one of the fourteen infallibles, and her being a role-model for women cemented the guidance and teachings which Islam brought and showed us that they are possible to implement in our daily lives.

It is not only Fatima Zahrah, peace be upon her, who showed this reality to the women, but also people like her beloved daughter, Zaynab, peace be upon her, who also becomes the ideal role model and is a grand historical figure for women to follow.

Rather, even those who were not from their family – women like Fiddah (the freed-slave of Fatima Zahrah, peace be upon her) and the daughter of Fiddah, were able to reach such a stage that they become role models and are known as the "walking Qur'an"!

When we say that Fatima Zahrah, peace be upon her, is a role model – we do not mean that this is only limited to a few areas of her life – however as this discussion is endless and we can never stop discussing the greatness of his personality, below, we present just some of the examples of how

Sayyida Fatima Zahrah, peace be upon her, is the greatest role model.

1) In the Qur'an, we read the commandment on *being good to one's parents*. Fatima Zahrah, peace be upon her, was so loyal and devoted to her father, the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, that he said the following about her: "[You are] the mother of your father." (أُمِّي). One meaning of this is that the love which she had for her father was much greater than just the average love which a daughter would have for a father.

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

"Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone except Him, and [He has enjoined] kindness to parents. Should they reach old age at your side —one of them or both— do not say to them, 'Fie!' And do not chide them, but speak to them noble words." [1](#)

2) In the Qur'an, we read the commandment on being generous and munificent. On the night of her wedding, when Fatima Zahrah, peace be upon her, was making her way to her husband's home, was wearing a new wedding dress. Historical accounts narrate that a poor woman approached her (or came to the door of the house she was in and asked for clothing to cover herself with). Rather than giving her the old dress which she had, she actually gave away her brand new wedding dress and wore her old clothes on her wedding night!

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

"You will never attain piety until you spend out of what you hold dear, and whatever you may spend of anything, God indeed knows it." [2](#)

3) In the Qur'an, we read passages in regards to migration in the way of Allah, and as we know, Fatima Zahrah, peace be upon her, made the migration from Mecca to Medina along with the early group of Muslims.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آوَوْا وَتَصَرَّوْا أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا ۚ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ

"Those who have believed, migrated, and struggled in the way of God, and those who gave them shelter and help, it is they who are truly the faithful. For them is forgiveness and a noble provision." [3](#)

4) In the Qur'an we read numerous verses about patience, sincerity, complete submission to God,

consciousness of God and modesty and indeed, Fatima Zahrah, peace be upon her, has reached to the pinnacles of perfection in all of these areas.

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

“Indeed the muslim men and the muslim women, the faithful men and the faithful women, the obedient men and the obedient women, the truthful men and the truthful women, the patient men and the patient women, the humble men and the humble women, the charitable men and the charitable women, the men who fast and the women who fast, the men who guard their private parts and the women who guard, the men who remember God greatly and the women who remember [God greatly] —God holds in store for them forgiveness and a great reward.”⁴

5) In the Qur'an, we are advised to gain knowledge and to acquire the tools necessary to be granted wisdom (hikmah) and indeed in this regards Fatima Zahrah, peace be upon her, shone bright as she has a book known as the muÒlaf of Fatima which the infallible Imams would sometimes refer to when they wanted to acquire information on events which would take place in the future.

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

“Read in the Name of your Lord who created; created man from a clinging mass. Read, and your Lord is the most generous, who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know.”⁵

6) In the Qur'an we are spoken to in regards to working, striving and struggling and when we glance at the life of Fatima Zahrah, we see that on many occasions her hands were calloused and bleeding from the amount of work which she used to perform.

وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يُرَى

“And that nothing belongs to a person except what he strives for, and that he will soon be shown his endeavour.”⁶

7) In the Qur'an, there are verses in regards to showing justice in all aspects of life and when we study how Fatima Zahrah dealt with her house maid, Fiddah, and how she divided the daily tasks of the house, we see how she enacted justice in her life.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَى وَيَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۖ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

“Indeed God enjoins justice and kindness and generosity towards relatives, and He forbids indecency, wrong, and aggression. He advises you, so that you may take admonition.”⁷

8) In the Qur'an, we see verses in regards to the authority and governance of God and those whom He has put into positions of power and leadership and that it is only they who have a right to govern society, and Fatima Zahrah, peace be upon her, whether it be in her famous Fadak sermon which she delivered in the Masjid of the Prophet, or in the other ways in which she fought for her own rights and that of her husband, we see that in all of these instances, she stood up to the government of the time and openly and flatly rejected their right to rule and supported her husband, the Commander of the Faithful Ali ibne Abi Talib, which ultimately resulted in her own martyrdom for the cause.

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

“Your guardian is only God, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while bowing down.”⁸

9) In the Qur'an, we are addressed in regards to having faith in the next world and that we should yearn for the next life, and indeed Fatima Zahrah, peace be upon her, heard from her father that she would be the first person from his nation to leave this world and join him in the next life.

وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

“While the Hereafter is better and more lasting.”⁹

By studying and understanding these few examples from the life of this illustrious woman, we can fully appreciate that Fatima Zahrah, peace be upon her, is the practical and real-world example of the verses of the Noble Qur'an.

Despite the fact that amongst almost all civilizations of yesteryear and today and within the poems, stories and examples which are often recounted, women have almost always bore the brunt end of the stick and have constantly been humiliated and denigrated and have always been considered as a “thing” which must be associated to someone else (in order to gain some identity) and that women have always been lookd upon as being the “weaker gender”, the Qur'an has shown us that not only for all women, but rather for all men as well, that one of the best examples is that of a woman – the wife of the Pharaoh!

Asiya, the wife of the Pharaoh, lived in the grandest of palaces – however she did not let the glitter and allure of the palace of her husband, the Pharaoh, delude her.

She saw the enormous amounts of wealth of the Pharaoh, however she detached herself from it.

She had all types of means and necessities at her disposal to make her life easier and in addition to this, she had gardens, streams, temporal power, authority, governance and everything else – the same things which made her husband intoxicated such that he went to the extent of claiming that he was the sovereign owner and supreme god such as his statement which is recorded in the Qur'an in which he said:

And Pharaoh proclaimed amongst his people. He said, 'O my people! Does not the kingdom of Egypt belong to me and these rivers that run at my feet? Do you not perceive?'¹⁰

Despite the fact that all of this was at her reach, the wife of the Pharaoh still addressed God and said:

***'My Lord! Build me a home near You in paradise, and deliver me from Pharaoh and his conduct, and deliver me from the wrongdoing lot.'*¹¹**

In this verse of the Qur'an, that which is even more important to her than paradise is the house in paradise near her Lord, and that is why she uses the word “كَنْءٌ” – ‘near You [God]’.

From this we see that a woman is such that she can reach to the level in which she is able to throw aside all of the material pleasures which are in front of her eyes and affix her heart to that which is with God and God alone and become the perfect role-model for men and women of all eternity.

¹. Suratul Isra (17), Verse 23.

². Surat Ale Imran (3), verse 92

³. Suratul Anfal (8), verse 74

⁴. Suratul Ahzab (33), verse 35

⁵. Suratul Alaq (96), verses 1 – 5

⁶. Suratul Najm (53), verse 39 – 40

⁷. Suratul Nahl (16), verse 90

⁸. Suratul Maidah (5), verse 55

⁹. Suratul A'la (87), verse 17

¹⁰. Al-Qur'an, 43:51:

وَنَادَىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ فِي قَوْمِهِ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَلَيْسَ لِي مُلْكُ مِصْرَ وَهَذِهِ الْأَنْهَارُ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِي ۚ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ

¹¹. Al-Qur'an, 66: 11:

رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِن فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ...

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