

## **The Revolutionary Sermon of Sayyidah Zaynab (S) in the Court of Yazid (L): A Historical & Political Analysis**

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**Abstract:** Muslims forget the chain of sacrifices of the only daughter of Mohammad (S), Sayyidah Fatimah (as) through her father (S), husband, sons, daughters and her grandchildren? Zaynab (as) demonstrated the same courage boldly at Karbala, Kufa and Syria which her beloved mother demonstrated in the court and during the attack by the Zalimeen. She was crushed between the wall and door which terminated her pregnancy and was the eventual cause of her and her unborn son Muhsin's (as) Shahadat. Sayyidah Zaynab's (as) sermon was historic for the following reasons:

i). Sayyidah Zaynab (as) discussed the cardinal principles to establish the Daw'ah of Maruf and exposed the ugly face of Umayyads to the world by snatching the veil of so-called Islam and disclosed their crimes. Besides, she introduced her grandfather, father, mother and brothers among the hostiles in a manner which destroyed the planning of Umayyads forever. Sayyidah Zaynab (as) performed the responsibility of Bara'at from Munkar.

ii). She reminded of the superior status of Ahl al-Bayt (as) as declared in the Qur'an.

iii). It was a defining moment in the history of Islam.

iv). Sayyidah Zaynab (as) perfectly exposed the hollow "victory" of Yazid (L), and established the supremacy of the true Islam of Mohammad (S) over the distorted Umayyad version of Islam. Islam is alive today thanks to the sacrifices of the family of Rasulallah(S) – Al Khamsat'il Ath'ar (as) and Al-Imam Abu Talib (as). The daughter of Fatimah al-Zahra (as) ended her sermon by offering Shukr (gratitude) to Allah. Let us take a lesson from this sermon and cast aside any fear that prevents acting against Zulm (oppression).

In the aftermath of Karbala, Sayyid'at Fatimiy'at – the women of Ahl al-Bayt (as) – along with Al-Imam Ali Zain ul-Abideen(as) were taken captive and paraded in a degradingly disgusting manner from Karbala to Kufa. The womenfolk and children of the family of Rasulallah(S) with the only surviving adult-male of the family, Al-Imam Ali ibn al Husain Zain ul-Abideen (as), were bound and chained, along with small children. The caravan of the oppressed underwent the most testing situations and was afflicted with the greatest of tortures. They were then finally brought to Damascus, Syria, and presented before the Umayyad Emperor (L) Yazid Ibn Muawiyah; there too abuse awaited them. Shimar bin Zil-Jawshan (L) presented the sacred

head of Abi Abdillah Al Imam al-Husain (as) to Yazid (L) as a trophy. The natives of Damascus stood there to observe the Umayyad accomplishment over the Ahl al-Bayt (as). The Yazidi soldiers tied all the captives with a single rope, beginning with the neck of Al-Imam Ali Zain ul-Abideen (as), to Sayyidah Zaynab (as), up to the last child, Abi Jafar Al-Imam Mohammad al-Baqir (as). The joy and excitement of Yazid (L) on this sorrowful state of Ahl al-Bayt (as) was unmistakable.

Among 300 courtiers and ambassadors, the Roman Ambassador was also present in the court. He observed the prisoners and the severed head and therefore questioned Yazid (L):

“King of Arabia, who are these prisoners and whose severed head is this?”

Yazid responded:

“Why do you ask? And what do you have to do with these prisoners and the head?”

The ambassador replied:

“Even in this deplorable state nobility is visible from their faces which renders them different. And whose severed head is this?”

“This is the head of a traitor of the Islamic State,” replied Yazid.

Upon hearing these words, the beloved daughter of Ali (as) got furious and longingly looked towards the face of Al Imam Ali Ibn al-Husain (as) as if she was seeking permission to reply. The Imam (as) gave her indication through the movement of his eyes. It was here, in the stronghold of the accursed Yazid (L), that the light of truth prevailed over the dark veil of ignorance of the Shait’an which had engulfed the majority of the Ummah. Under the eternally cruel eyes of the tyrant Yazid (L), Sayyidah Zaynab (as), the daughter of the ever victorious Lion of Allah, Ali ibn Abi Talib (as), then delivered an unparalleled address. This awoke the people of Damascus from their deep sleep of negligence and shook the foundation of the Umayyad dynasty, eventually sending it crumbling to the ground.

It was the 1<sup>st</sup> of Safar when the voice of Zaynab (as) thundered and pierced every corner of the court, breaking the hostile atmosphere. A dreadful silence prevailed. Sayyidah Zaynab (as) stepped forward and responded to the Firoon of that time Yazid (L). She added a new chapter to the history of the so-called Khilaf’ah of the Umayyad. She boldly challenged Yazid (L), thereby establishing Tawhid: [1]

#### **Sermon of the Sayyidah:**

“All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. His blessings upon His Rasul (S) and his entire progeny. Allah’s words are true Who says:

“Then the end of those who committed evil was that they disbelieved in the signs of Allah, and insulted them.” [2]

#### **Annotation:**

To deny the signs of Allah is ‘irtid’ad, and to joyously recite verses on the assassination of the children of Rasulullah (S) is the practice of Umayyads. This same act was demonstrated on the assassination of Hamzah (as) in the Ghazw’ah of Uhud. The enemies of Islam had cheerfully declared in Uhud that they had taken revenge from Rasulullah (S).

### **Sermon of the Sayyidah:**

*(O Yazid) Do you think that you have blocked all opportunities on earth and this universe for us by driving us as prisoners, and that we have been degraded before Allah and that you have gained respect and have acquired an important position near Him? You presume that your task is planned, while your power and command please you? Have you forgotten the words of Allah?*

*“Do not regard those who disbelieved that we grant them good for themselves. We only give them respite so that they may increase their sins, and for them, there is a humiliating and disgraceful torment.” [3]*

### **Annotation:**

*In the first part of her sermon, the daughter of Fatimah addressed Yazid (L) by name as if he was somebody ordinary, while everybody else referred to him as Amir al-Mumineen. She clarified to Yazid (L) not to think of himself as noble after snatching command from the hands of Aale Mohammad (as). Sayyidah Zaynab (as) warned him through the above Ayah that he has lost the chance of Taubah, therefore Jahannam is his final destination. The burning fire of hell awaits him. Yazid’s (L) character is an open fact: he was a drunkard, played with monkeys, loved filthy songs, was an adulterer and a chess player (declared Har’am) by Ali Ibn Abi Talib (as). In short, he considered Har’am to be Halal.*

### **Sermon of the Sayyidah:**

*Is it the custom of justice, O accursed son of the “released one” that you respectfully keep your ladies and concubines behind the veil, while you capture and parade the helpless daughters of Rasulallah(S) as prisoners? You snatched their veils and exposed their faces, and displayed them from one land to another, as they had none of their men with them or any protectors?*

### **Annotation:**

*In the second part of her sermon, the daughter of Ali (as) focused upon the conquest of Makkah. Sayyidah Zaynab (as) reminded Yazid (L) of the day of that day in 8 (A.H) when Rasulallah (S) extended his generosity on the arch enemies of Islam – the ancestors of Yazid (L) – and set them free. His father Muawiyah, grandfather Abu Sufiyan and grandmother Hind were included in “Tuluqa” (freed ones). On that day Rasulallah (S) very magnanimously set all of them free irrespective of what they had committed in the past and declared:*

*“Go! All of you are free”.*

*Sayyidah Zaynab (as) reprimanded Yazid (L) for humiliating Sayyid’at as prisoners of war. She reminded that it was Rasulallah (S) who freed Yazid’s family on the day of the conquest of Makkah while they were under the swords of Ahl al-Bayt (as). Instead of thanking Rasulallah (S) who saved you and your family from slavery, this is how you have rewarded the Ahl al-Bayt (as). As Ali Ibn Abi Talib (as) with a single stroke of his sword Zulfiq’ar sent enemies to hell, his lion-hearted daughter Zaynab (as) also destroyed the foundation of Syrian Empire with a single word “Yabnat-Tuluqa – son of the released ones”. Sayyidah Zaynab (as) communicated the message of modest dress to the upcoming generations of Muslim women. She condemned the brutal actions of snatching the Hij’ab of the women of Ahl al-Bayt (as). Those who weep on the tragic*

events of when veils were snatched from the heads and Zulm committed upon Syed'at from Karbala to Syria, should learn this lesson of Zaynab (as) and always follow the dress code of Islam which she taught in the hostile atmosphere of the Syrian Court.

**Sermon of the Sayyidah:**

What can be expected from the descendents of those whose mouths chewed the livers of the purified ones, and whose flesh grows out of the blood of the Shuhad'a?

**Annotations:**

Here Sayyidah Zaynab (as) reminded the famous episode which occurred immediately after the Ghazw'ah Uhud, when Hind, the grandmother of Yazid (L), attempted to chew the liver of Sayyidna Hamzah (as), but in vain. Hind recited the following couplets in joy:

"Shagaytu Min Hamzata Nafsi Beahdin  
Hatta Baqartu Yatnahu Anil Kabadi"  
I have cooled my heart in Uhud from Hamzah;  
I have pierced his stomach and took out his liver  
"Shafaiytu Nafsi Wa Qazaytu Nazri  
Shafaiyta Wahshiyun Ghalilu Sadri"  
My entire life I will be grateful to Wahshi  
Until my bones dissolve in the grave.

Not only Muslim historians but Orientals like Gibbon have labeled her as "The Liver Eater". She mutilated the body of Hamzah (as) and later on her descendants desecrated the graves of Hamzah (as) and Ahl al-Bayt (as) in the graveyard of Jannat ul-Baqee (Madinah). Rasulullah (S) used to turn his face away in aversion whenever he saw Hind. [4] Moreover, Sayyidah Zaynab (as) referred to Yazid's grandfather Abu Sufiyan who spent his entire life in anti Daw'ah activities. She did not forget Yazid's father who executed Ash'ab, who were exemplary Muslims, and ignored the rulings of the Shariah.

**Sermon of the Sayyidah:**

I know why you treat us this way, but you do not know what a sin you commit when you claim:

"Perhaps my ancestors, who were killed in Badar,  
Had they been present here today,  
They would make Tahleel and say in delight,  
May your hands, O Yazid, never be paralyzed!"

**Annotations:**

Sayyidah Zaynab(as) counters Yazid's couplets in which he wished his forefathers who were slaughtered by the hands of Ali (as) and Hamzah (as) during Ghazw'ah Badar had been alive. She assured Yazid courageously that he will face the same fate as his ancestors.

**Sermon of the Sayyidah:**

*How dare you strike the lips of Imam Husain with your stick! These are the same lips which Rasulallah(S) used to kiss. You have done what you wanted to do and destroyed the roots of piety and virtue! You have shed the blood of the son and family of Rasulallah (S) and have hidden the brilliant stars on earth from amongst the descendants of Abd ul-Muttalib (as) under the clouds of cruelty and brutality. However, you shall appear before Allah soon. You shall meet your ancestors and also move to their place. At that time you will wish that perhaps you had been blind and deaf, and regret when you said that it was a day of rejoicing for your ancestors”.*

**Annotations:**

*It was unbearable for Zaynab (as), tears rolled down her eyes, and her heart burned, when she saw Yazid (L) insulting the sacred head of Husain (as) by hitting on the lips of Abi Abdillah al-Husain (as) with his stick.*

**Sermon of the Sayyidah:**

*O Allah! Give our rights back to us and take revenge from all those who oppressed us, and send Your wrath upon those who have shed our blood and killed our protectors. Wallah! You have burnt only your skin and cut only your own flesh. You will soon appear in the presence of Rasulallah (S.) and will see with your own eyes that his children are in the Jannah. It will be the day when Allah will deliver the descendants of the Rasulallah (S) from the state of being scattered and will bring all of them together in the Jannah. This is the promise which Allah has made in the Qur’an. He says:*

*“Do not think of those who are slain for the cause of Allah as dead. They are alive with their Lord and receive Rizaq from Him.” [5]*

**The Sermon of Sayyidah:**

*“O Yazid! Allah is sufficient as a judge and Muhammad will be your enemy as the petitioner supported by Jibra’el (as). All those who instigated you to do what you did and all your organs will give evidence against you and your father, who appointed you as the ruler, and set forth this worldly kingdom for you to rule upon the neck of Muslims. You will then realize the evil place that awaits the tyrants. On that day it will become known what penalty the dictators earn, whose position is worse and whose army is more feeble and degraded.*

**Annotations:**

*Sayyidah Zaynab (as) taught the future generations that they must resist tyrants, no matter how strong or powerful they appear to be. The granddaughter of Rasulallah (S) demonstrated how to perform “Jih’ad al-Akbar” before a tyrant like Yazid (L), even as a prisoner. The heresy of Yazid (L) is not hidden; he never believed in Allah, His Rasul (S) and in the Qur’an. His creeds and deeds are clear evidence. Due to the heretic approach of the ruler, people were also inclined towards heresy. In such an atmosphere, Sayyidah Zaynab (as) reminded them of the forgotten lessons of Islam.*

### **Sermon of the Sayyidah:**

*O enemy of Allah! Although calamities have forced me to speak to you, I consider you to be degraded and not fit even to be reprimanded and reproached. But what am I to do? I find your verbal attacks and rebuke too much to bear; our eyes are shedding tears, our hearts are burning. What is even stranger is that the noble party of Allah was slaughtered by the army of the “released” – the force of Shait’an.*

*Our blood is dripping from their hands and our flesh is falling down from their mouths.*

### **Annotations:**

*Sayyidah Zaynab (as) introduced her pious family as Hizbullah (Party of Allah), and called the family of Yazid (L) Hizb ul-Shait’an (Party of the devil). The sermon of Zainab (as) was the culmination of Abi Abdillah Al Imam al-Husain’s Divine Revolution, and one of the most remarkable and excellent revolutionary speeches in Islam. Through her selected words, Sayyidah Zaynab (as) destroyed the despotism of Yazid (L). The voice of Sayyidah Zaynab (as) resounded in the Syrian court so much that its echo is still heard today even after centuries have lapsed, and would continue to resound till the Day of Qiyamah.*

### **Sermon of the Sayyidah:**

*The sacred bodies of the Shuhad’a were placed at the disposal of wolves, hyenas and other wild animals, and dirtied by the brutes. If you feel that you have gained something today by this beastly act, you will certainly lose on the Day of Qiyamah. On that day nothing but your deeds will count. That day you will send Lanah on Ibn Marjanah (Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad) and in turn, he will throw Lanah upon you.*

*“And your Lord never treats His servants unjustly”. [6]*

*Wallah! I do not fear anyone except Him and do not complain to anyone else, and rely upon Him alone.*

*You may utilize your treachery, traps, and disloyalty (with Islam), but I swear Wallah that the shame and disgrace which you have earned by the treatment meted out to us cannot be eradicated. You shall never be able to wipeout our memories and inspiration from the midst, nor will you ever be able to wipe off the disgrace of this episode. Your opinion is erroneous, and your days numbered, and your wealth wasted on the day when the caller will announce:*

*“Beware! (Now) Verily the Lanah of Allah is on the oppressors and unjust” [7]*

### **Annotation:**

*People who are blind by faith, and whose hearts are sealed by Allah, can deny the victory of the blood of Husain over the sword (of Yazid). The Dua of Zaynab (as) was answered and after two years and a few months only, Yazid (L) left this world for Jahannam. Today millions of Sunni and Shia Muslims proudly claim their lineage from Moola Abi Abdillah Al Imam al-Husain (as) but none from Yazid (L). The name of Yazid (L) has now become a curse, while purposeful Zikar al-Husain has become a source of ultimate liberation. The enmity with Husain (as) is such a sin that waters of the seven oceans cannot wipe out its blackness. Sayyidah Zaynab (as) announced that Yazid (L) and his supporters shall remain in Jahannam and that there was no way for their salvation. Through her precise wordings, she refreshed the minds of the audience of the unique*

manner of her father Ali ibn Abi Talib's (as) oration, and the memory of the matchless sermon of her mother Fatimah, which she delivered at the court of the then ruler.

**Sermon of the Sayyidah:**

*I thank Allah Who sealed the life of our early ones with forgiveness, and Who destined Shahadah for our conclusion with blessings and accommodated them in the Jannah. I offer Dua that may Allah elevate their status and complete His reward upon them, and increase it further, and to turn with fairness their succession upon us, for He is Merciful and a Friend. [8] "Allah is (quite) sufficient for us and the most excellent Protector is (He)". [9]*

**Annotation:**

*Hearing the resounding words of Sayyidah Zaynab (as) everyone was left spellbound. This bold sermon not only frightened those present but also had a chilling effect on Yazid (L). The celebration of joy turned into a gathering of shock. The declaration of Aqidah and Daw'ah of Tawhid for uncompromising justice terrified Yazid, who was fearful that he would be unable to hold the reins of power if such speeches continued to be delivered.*

**Concluding Discussion:**

*No artist can paint, nor can the pen of an eloquent writer describe the reality of Yazid as Sayyidah Zaynab (as) exposed. The brave daughter of Ali (as) unveiled the ugly face of enemies of the institution of Tawhid and informed the Ummah that this 'Military Operation' was short term. Let the enemies of Allah enjoy the bliss of this world so that their sins will multiply and, therefore, have a painful perpetual punishment.*

*"Naibat'iz Zahra", "Sharikat'il Husain" Zaynab (as) had shown her courage first in the Court of Kufa, and later in the Court of Damascus. She had convinced and communicated that those killed by the order of Yazid were, in reality, the Moon and Stars of the galaxy of Nubuawah. It was due to the tremendous efforts of Zaynab (as) through the institution of Az'a, Nawh, and Aweel on Husain (as) that the message of Islam attained eternity. In the terminology of wisdom, this effort, bold oration, and demonstration of bravery by Sayyidah Zaynab (as) ascertained the Daw'ah of "Maruf". She unveiled the ugly face of the supreme symbol of "Munkar".*

*Her efforts destroyed the propaganda of those who depicted Abi Abdillah Al Imam al-Husain ibn Ali (as) as a rebel of the Muslim State. They showed that not only can a citizen, even the ruler could be charged as a rebel of Islam. "Zaynab" means Zeen'ah (prestige) of the father. Rasulullah(S) had chosen this name for this brave daughter who communicated the message of Shahadah and became the pride of the Nabavi family. In the episode of Karbala, the name of Zaynab shall always live on. Her shrine is in Al Muizziyat'il Qahirah, Egypt. [10]*

**Note:**

*Sayyidah Zaynab (as) resided in Egypt where she breathed her last and was buried. The Sayyidah buried in Damascus is her younger sister, "Zainab al-Wusta" – Umme Kulsum" (as). Rulers of Egypt, such as Kafur al-Akhshidi, Ahmad Ibn Tawlaun and Bani Fatimah (as) visited her shrine. The Muqsurah of Sayyidah Zaynab bint Ali (as) was built with silver presented by 52<sup>nd</sup> Al*

*Da'i al-Fatimi Dr. Sayyidna Mohammad Burhanuddin. On the birthday night of Sayyidah Zaynab (as), tens of thousands of Egyptians (from Fellahin, Al Saeed, Nuba and deserts beyond) along with those from different countries gather in Al Qahirah. Sunnis, Shi'as and Sufis gather at her Atab'at (grave) fulfilling the rites of Ziyarah, earning the pleasure of the Nabi (S) at his granddaughter's doors and securing the pleasure of Allah.*

*As devotees of Ahl al-Bayt (as), we should keep the message of Husain (as) and Zaynab (as) alive. It is imperative that we teach about religion to the young who will eventually take our place. The responsibilities of the devotees should not be confined to Majlis and Buka, but speaking and resisting against injustice, tyranny, and getting ready to sacrifice themselves and their loved ones for Islam.*

*Laanah of Allah upon all those who committed Zulm upon Al Khamsat'il Ath'ar (as)*

*Laanah of Allah upon all Zalimeen who tortured and assassinated Ahl al-Bayt (as)*

*Laanah of Allah upon Yazid and upon all those with a soft corner for him*

*Laanah of Allah upon all Zalimeen from this time to the time of the Qiyamah*

*Salaam upon you O Grand Daughter of Rasulullah(S)*

*O daughter of Fatimah and Ali, may my parents be sacrificed upon you*

*Fulfill our wishes of your Ziyarah by the order of Allah*

*Remove from us Afaat and Bala and help us in trials, Aameen.*



**Bibliography and Notes:**

[1] Arabi is an eloquent and lucid language. It is usually impossible to translate certain sentences and words or phrases into any other language hence the comprehensive sense of the original Sermon of Sayyidah Zaynab (as) cannot be transmitted from Arabi to English.

[2] Surah al-Rum 30: Ayah 10

[3] Surah A'li Imr'an 3: Ayah 178

[4] "Sirah Ibn Hisham", vol. 2, p.75. "Hind the Liver Eater" Orientals recognize the grandmother of Yazid with this title. "Sharh Nahj al-Balagha", Ibn Abil Hadid al-Mutazali and author of "Tarikh Aasam Kufi" recorded that she was amongst Zarqa, Nabigha, and Humamah.

[5] Surah A'li Imr'an, Ayah 169

[6] Surah al Haj-41: Ayah 46

[7] Surah al-Hud-11: Ayah 18

[8] Sermon of Sayyidah Zaynab (as) is documented on p. 21 of "Balaghat un-Nisa", Najafi edition, Vol. 2, of Al Khawarizmi's book: "Maqtal al-Husain", and on Badr Shahin's book: "Lady Zaynab", Qum, Iran.

[9] Surah A'li- Imr'an- , Ayah 173

[10] In his book: "Al Tarikh", Ibn Asakir records:

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