



## The Revolutionary Islamic Identity and the Revolutionary Woman from the Perspective of Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir Al-Sadr

Hadi Beigi Malek Abad<sup>1\*</sup> | Zeinab Mehanna<sup>2</sup>

1. Corresponding Author, Department of Social Sciences, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Islamic Azad University Science and Research Branch, Tehran, Iran. Email: [h.beygi12@gmail.com](mailto:h.beygi12@gmail.com)

2. Department of Contemporary Islamic Thought, Complex of Islamic Sciences and Studies, Al-Mustafa International University, Tehran, Iran. Email: [zeina.mto@gmail.com](mailto:zeina.mto@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

This article explores Sayyed Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr's depiction of the revolutionary Islamic identity, focusing on the revolutionary role of women. The analysis draws from four of his published books, including *Contemporary Man and the Social Problem*, and *Fadak fi al-Tarikh (Fadak in History)*, to illustrate these concepts. The paper adopts the «content of analysis method» for data collection, involving related documents and the dilala method of text analysis. The article is divided into three sections. Firstly, it delves into Sayyed al-Sadr's portrayal of the Islamic identity and how it evolves into a revolutionary force in pursuit of freedom. Secondly, it examines the inspiring example of Fatima Al Zahraa (as) who, by disputing with Ibn Abu Quhafa (aka Abu Bakr) to claim her property (Fadak), demonstrates the potential for women to be active agents and even revolutionaries. Lastly, the article evaluates Sayyed al-Sadr's relationship with his sister Amina al-Sadr (aka Bint al-Huda), recognizing her as one of the early and prominent revolutionary women of Shia heritage.

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## Introduction

Ayatollah Sayyed Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr (also known as al-Shahid al-Khamis) is widely recognized as the ideological founder of the Islamic Dawa Party (Aziz, 1983, Vol. 25: 212), which stands as one of the pivotal «pillars» of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. A prominent contemporary Islamic philosopher and one of the most influential Twelver Shia clerics of the twentieth century, Sayyed Sadr was born in Kadhimiya (1353/1935-1400/1980) into a family with deep roots in religious studies, hailing from Jabal Amel in Lebanon. His father, Haidar al-Sadr, held a distinguished position as a high-ranking Shia cleric. Descending from the lineage of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) through the seventh Shia Imam Musa al-Kadhim (as), Sayyed Sadr's intellectual prowess became evident from a young age as he gained fame within the Hawza (religious community of learning) in Najaf, Iraq.

Even in his youth, he demonstrated remarkable aptitude, delivering lectures on Islamic history and engaging in the highest lessons (bahth kharij) of Najaf. Sayyed Sadr pursued advanced studies under notable scholars such as Sayyed Al Khu'i in Usul (Islamic legal theory) and Sayyed Al-Hakim in Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence). At the remarkable age of 22, Sayyed Al Khu'i granted him a license of Ijtihad, and by the time he reached 25, he had already commenced teaching. His academic achievements were astounding, authoring a minimum of 27 essential books on diverse subjects encompassing jurisprudence, fundamentals of law, philosophy, logic, theology, economics, Qur'anic commentaries, history, and Islamic culture. Additionally, he published no less than 25 major articles, all accomplished before he reached the age of 45.

This is a man who dedicated himself to confronting the emerging societal issues influenced by Western culture that was impacting the thoughts and ideologies of the youth. He accomplished this through his influential books and by revamping the educational systems within the Hawza.<sup>1</sup> Recognizing the outdated and overly complex Usul textbooks in the Hawza, he swiftly penned 'Duroos fi Ilm Al Usul,' a comprehensive Usuli textbook comprising three tiers: introductory, intermediate, and advanced. In the realm of Qur'anic Studies, he wrote 'Uloom Al Quran' to serve as a textbook at Sayyed Mortadha Al Askari's Usool Al-Deen College in Baghdad. He also gained acclaim for his article on 'al Tafsir al Mawduhu' (topical tafsir), which introduced an innovative form of interpretation.

In the sphere of Messianic Studies, he provided an introduction to Sayed Mohammad Sadr's four-volume book on Imam Mahdi and his role, addressing challenging misconceptions surrounding the belief in Al Mahdi. Furthermore, Sadr authored the renowned 'Al Fatawa Al Wadhiya,' a fiqhi manual of fatwas written in a clear and accessible manner, enabling his followers to understand without the need for additional explanation.

In addition to his scholarly pursuits, he engaged in intellectual dialogues to tackle the philosophical challenges presented by capitalism and communism during the 50s, 60s, and 70s of the previous century. However, these endeavors led him to face continuous persecution by the Baath party, resulting in severe house arrest and multiple arrests in Baghdad. Tragically, on April 9th, 1980, the world was shaken by the news of Sadr and his sister Amina's execution after enduring severe torture. Some accounts even suggest that Saddam himself fired the shots that ended Sadr's life. (Aziz, 1983, Vol. 25: 212)

## Methodology and Sources

Islamic studies encompass various disciplines, such as Kalam (Islamic theology), Fikh (Islamic jurisprudence), Uṣūl al-Fiqh (methodology/principles of Jurisprudence), Hadith (tradition), 'Ulūm al-ḥadīth (hadith criticism), Naskh or al-Nāsikh wa'l-Mansūkh (abrogations), Usul al-Din (theology), Asma' al-Rijal (biographies of Hadith scholars), Sirah (Biography of the Prophet), and Maghazi (Battles of the Prophet) (Beg, 2010: 2.3). In recent times, contemporary Islamic-based research development has gained significant interest among scholars worldwide, aiming to explore various aspects of life and religious texts from an Islamic perspective.

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1. His campaign to modernize Hawza education entailed unprecedented measures such as the standardization of curriculum, the introduction of unified matriculation, and student admission only after completion of secular studies in the state educational system. On Sadr's reform programme, see 'Abd al-Jabar al-Rafa'i, *Manhaj al-Shahid al-Sadr fi Tajdid al-Fikr al-Islami* [Martyr al-Sadr's Method in the Renewal of Islamic Thought] (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 2001: 48–59).

In the article titled «Towards the Development of Islamic-based Research Methodology» (doi, n.d.), Wan Khairuldine outlines two types of Islamic-based research methods: the basic level and the operational level. This paper adopts the operational level, utilizing the three forms of the Killah (meaning direction) method to assess its suitability as a textual analysis method. The primary sources for this research are two books: «Contemporary Man and the Social Problem» (1979), translated into English by Yasin T. Al-Jbouri, and «Fadak in History» (1955), edited by Dr. Abdul Jabbar Sharara.<sup>11</sup> Additional resources include selected materials from Iraqi press and two other major books by Sadr: *Falsafatuna* (Our Philosophy), *Al-Islam Yaqud al Hayah* (Islam Directs Life).

Secondary sources for this research include various works such as Mallat's book and two articles, Jabar's monograph and edited book, Kantz's research and article, al-Urayyid's article, Pursley's article, Khetia's MA thesis, Abbas's article, and Jamshidi & Nasirzadeh's article.

Sadr's publication titled «Social Problem» puts forth the idea that the Islamic system has the potential to establish order and happiness among humanity by providing specific guidelines for constructing a Muslim individual in terms of personal interests, egoism, selflessness, and political freedom in the social context. In his volume «Fadak in History», he contests the conventional depiction of Fatima (as), transforming her from a vulnerable victim of injustice into a revolutionary heroine who fearlessly combated «Ibn Abu Quhafa» to regain her rightful entitlements. This transformation conveys a potent message that protest and resistance are essential, irrespective of the likelihood of triumph. Though Sadr did not explicitly tackle women's concerns, he did render his sister Bint al-Huda, a pronounced role in his pedagogical and political activity.<sup>2</sup> In the concluding segment of the article, readers encounter proof of her influence and the substance of her writings, along with her ascent in the political sphere, which left an impact on both women and men within the Muslim world (wikishia, nd).

### **Muslim Identity, Freedom, and Revolution**

In this section, I will first explore Sayyed Baqir Sadr's perspective on what constitutes an «Identity» and, more specifically, the concept of «Muslim Identity». Subsequently, I will delve into the notions of «Freedom» and, in particular, «Political Freedom». The reason for addressing these concepts is that Fatima (as), through her «Muslim Identity», was able to assert her rights to «political freedom» in terms of thought and expression.

Sayyed Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr initiates his discourse in the essay/book «Contemporary Man and the Social Problem» with a fundamental inquiry: «Which system brings order to human beings and fosters a happy social life?» (al-Sadr, 1979: 1). According to Baqir al-Sadr, humanity has been preoccupied with answering this question, resulting in a plethora of responses. Over time, various systems have been suggested and implemented from the early stages of communal living, sometimes leading to improvements in life, while at other times causing harm. Consequently, the pursuit of the best system has led to the rejection of one in favor of another, often through violent means. The modern era has witnessed the prevalence of three dominant systems, according to Baqir al-Sadr: The Capitalistic System, the Socialistic System, and the Communistic System (Ibid). In contention with all three, presented as the answer to the fundamental question of order and happiness, Baqir al-Sadr introduces his concept of the Islamic System as the system that provides an answer to the latter (Ibid: 26-32). For Baqir al-Sadr, both the proponents of capitalism and communism introduced their ideologies as solutions to the discussed social problem, «Which system brings order to human beings, and provides for them a happy social life? ». He saw that the attempt of the individual in the West in implementing capitalism is conditioned to consider their own material life as not only their greatest asset but also the purpose of their life. Life is reduced to just a material dimension without any greater meaning. Therefore, the individual's sense of pleasure is intrinsically tied to material factors, hence

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1. The translations utilized throughout are from the Muhammadi Trust's 1987 translation, however as the page numbers were not available during the process of writing this paper, the Arabic original is being cited in some cases and in other cases, page numbers will be cited from the downloaded copy from al-islam.org ( <https://www.al-islam.org/contemporary-man-and-social-problem-sayyid-muhammad-baqir-al-sadr> )

2. On Sadr's sister (Bint al-Huda) and her ideas on women's rights, see Sara Parsley, 'Daughters of the Right Path: Family Law, Homosocial Publics, and the Ethics of Intimacy in the Works of Shi'i Revivalist Bint al-Huda', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 8(2) (2012), pp. 51–77.

the instinct of self-love or egoism that all humankind possesses is fine-tuned onto the ways of capitalism. (Ibid: 27-29)

As per Baqir al-Sadr's perspective, genuine self-love derives its satisfaction from «moral and emotional values», prompting individuals to sacrifice their resources to ensure others receive their fair share. He emphasizes the necessity of transforming the human perception of pleasure and benefit to bring about changes in human behavior. By aligning desired behaviors with the instinct of self-love, positive shifts can be achieved.

The matter of personal interest and selfishness becomes evident within communism, despite the abolition of private property, as both capitalism and communism are structured to address material needs (Ibid: 30-32). As Baqir al-Sadr elucidated, the affliction of society is not private property, but it is instead the misused instinct of self-love (egoism) within humankind.

Al-Sadr delineates two prospective methods to tackle this issue (Ibid: 29). The first option, pursued by the communists, revolves around substituting the inherent nature of humans with a novel one, wherein personal desires are abandoned, and all endeavors are channeled into the betterment of society. This radical metamorphosis would require eradicating self-centered affection from individuals' hearts, to be supplanted by communal love. However, this alternative presents noteworthy pragmatic hurdles. The question arises: who would shoulder the responsibility of executing this extensive societal overhaul, and what duration would such a process span? While theoretically possible, its implementation seems highly implausible.

The second option, the focus of this article, is the Islamic approach. Al-Sadr contends that the Islamic system seeks to adjust the materialistic notion of life held by humans. He believes that genuine happiness cannot be attained solely through materialistic pursuits as propagated by capitalistic democracy. Instead, the Islamic system offers a non-materialistic path to fulfillment. Islam introduces a new set of guiding principles for life, with pleasure ultimately derived from the satisfaction of God. Although personal interest still exists, it is no longer the sole driving force behind an individual's decisions. Instead, one strives to align personal interests with the interests of God.

Al-Sadr's reading of history acknowledges that self-love played a crucial role in the survival and advancement of early humans. It was instrumental in enabling them to overcome threats and preserve their lives, leading to the formation of communal existence rooted in shared human necessities. Attempting to entirely eradicate self-love contradicts both the factual reality and the fundamental core of humanity's origins. (Ibid: 32)

According to Sadr, the moral standard of seeking the satisfaction of God (Ibid), serves a dual purpose. It not only fulfills the personal interests of individuals but also aligns with the social objectives of society. This reconciliation can be achieved through the advancement of religion, particularly Islam, which manifests in two forms: the «Ontological Foundation» and the «Epistemological Foundation». In the Ontological Foundation, life is comprehended in a manner that encompasses the concept of a just afterlife, considering the present life as a preparation for the life to come. The Epistemological Foundation, on the other hand, focuses on reconciliation through didactic means. Religion is introduced as a moral education that nurtures and develops individuals spiritually.

As previously mentioned, individuals harbor diverse personal interests and inclinations. While some inclinations may stem from the pursuit of pleasure and material gains, there are also dormant spiritual inclinations that can be aroused through appropriate instruction. This educational responsibility lies with the infallible figures, whether they be Prophets or Imams, who steer individuals towards spiritual maturation and higher consciousness. Through this education, self-love undergoes transformation, wherein its ultimate satisfaction lies in the pursuit of moral values.

The Islamic state places significant emphasis on educating people about spiritual and ethical dimensions of life, maintaining a balanced approach in defining central principles for legislation and governance. This equilibrium nurtures what is commonly referred to as the Muslim identity, encompassing a harmonious coexistence between individual well-being and societal values.

Having clarified the essence of a «Muslim Identity», it is now crucial to examine the comprehensive framework that Islam, as a system, provides for the fulfillment of an individual's life within a thriving social structure (Ibid: 36). As a fusion of spiritual and ethical doctrines, a «Muslim» is empowered to pursue higher objectives and serve their society. To attain these elevated goals in the «Islamic State», one must not only be cognizant of social life but also possess an all-encompassing

political awareness that encompasses life, the cosmos, sociology, politics, economics, and ethics (Ibid). Central to being politically aware is the practice of «freedom», particularly «political freedom» (Ibid: 37). Sadr unequivocally expresses this concept, stating, «Freedom, according to Islam, maintains the revolutionary aspect of freedom: man's emancipation from the slavery of idols' control, all idols from whose yoke humanity has suffered throughout history. However, this liberation is firmly based on absolute submission to Allah alone» (Ibid: 38). For Sadr, political freedom is violated when individuals are deprived of their own will and control over their destinies (Ibid: 48). He also underscores the idea that political equality lies in sharing responsibilities rather than ruling. (Ibid: 49).

In summary, Islam, as a system, offers a holistic framework for individuals to flourish within a meticulously organized society. Being politically aware, practicing freedom, and embracing political equality are fundamental elements in achieving the higher objectives set forth by Islam for a Muslim's life.

The aforementioned theories substantiate the notion that a Muslim identity should encompass elements of freedom, with particular emphasis on political freedom. However, if an individual finds themselves exploited and unjustly subjugated by others, they have the right to seek a «revolution» to secure their political freedom. To grasp this concept fully, readers must carefully examine Sadr's valuable works, including «Falsafatuna», «Eqtisaduna», and «Al Islam Yaqud al Hayah». Sadr identifies three pillars that establish the necessity of a «revolution» within a favorable evolution, and he refers to them as the «revolution triangle»:

1. Wisdom and knowledge, which draw from the school of traditions
2. Feelings, emotions, and profound spiritual aspirations, as every movement must originate from the depths of the human soul.
3. Actions and mobilization of intellectual and academic resources, manifesting movement and progress. (Jamshīdī, 2017, Vol. 10: 138-150 and 144)

In his books, Shaheed Sadr characterizes revolution as a «reformist» movement, promising renewal, fertility, and ideological abundance (Sadr, 1979: 145). He outlines six traits that define this conscious movement: it opposes the status quo, displays volatility, advocates for deep transformation and fundamental changes, generates new life and is rooted in the school of traditions (Ibid: 146). With this foundation laid, I intend to establish a connection between these traits and the second part of the article, which delves into the sermon of Fatima al Zahra (a.s.) and its application of political freedom and revolution as detailed in Sadr's book «Fadak in History».

### **Fatima al-Zahra (as) as a Revolutionary Model**

Numerous authors have written and published books discussing the incident of Fadak, with a particular focus on the sermon delivered by Fatima al-Zahra (as). The dispute between the daughter of the Prophet (PBUH) and Ibn Abu Quhafa over the ownership of Fadak extends beyond a mere personal matter and inheritance dispute. Many researchers and analysts view it as a potent political statement, an inspiration for future revolutions, and a blueprint for a system to be followed. Additionally, the incident sheds light on the status of women during times of crisis. In this section of the article, I will explore the geographical significance of Fadak, the actual dispute between Fatima al-Zahra (a.s.) and Ibn Abu Quhafa, and the revolutionary elements present in the sermon from a woman's perspective.

Geographically, Fadak is situated in Hejaz, approximately 160 km from Medina (Hamawi, 1907, Vol. 4: 238). Despite its location in the arid lands of al-Harra, it boasts lush date palms, gardens, and arable land. Historical records suggest that Jews inhabited the region during the early Islamic period (Baladi, 1978, Vol. 2: 205-206, Vol. 7: 23). The Shamruk castle, located near Fadak, held strategic importance as the main military base for the Jewish community. However, it is reported that during the time of Omar Ibn al-Khatab, the second caliph, he ordered the Jews to vacate the region (Marjami, 1998, Vol. 1: 438). Today Fadak is located in the city of al-Ha'it (Ja'fariyan, 1991: 396) which consisted of 21 villages by 1975 and according to the reports in 2010, about 14,000 people live there. During the emergence of Islam, the fertile soil and abundant water sources in Fadak contributed to its prosperity, with thriving date palms and other gardens. Consequently, Fadak became a highly productive and profitable land, comparable in value to the date palms of Kufa, renowned for its extensive cultivation of date palms (Ibn Abi Hadid, 1964, Vol. 16: 236). When Umar al-Khattab

decided to expel the Jewish inhabitants, he compensated them with 50 thousand Dirhams (the old currency of Hejaz) for the remaining half of Fadak that they owned. (Basri, n.d.: 98)

According to various sources, Fadak yielded an annual income ranging from 24 to 70 thousand Dinars during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Researchers estimate that this income was sufficient to cover the expenses of Banu Hashim, eliminating their need for financial support from the government or caliphate (Qutb al-Rawandi, n.d., Vol. 1: 113). The incident of Fadak has sparked extensive debates among researchers from different Islamic traditions, including both the Sunni and Shia traditions. In this article, the main focus will be on exploring Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr's perspective as depicted in his book «Fadak in History», which marks his inaugural work on this subject.

The book depicts the dispute that proceeded between the Prophet's daughter, Fatima (a.s.), and the leaders (and here in particular with Ibn Abu Quhafa) of the fledgling Islamic community the leaders (and here in particular with Ibn Abu Quhafa) of the fledgling Islamic community following the Prophet's death (Kanz, 2014: 2). In his book, Sadr endeavors to highlight the injustice inflicted upon Shi'ism and to advocate for women's rights to inheritance. (Ibid: 10)

Therefore, the dispute over Fadak was not merely about the ownership of a few acres of land; it was a profound political confrontation and a quest to reclaim the rights of her husband, Imam Ali bin Abi Taleb (a.s.), who had been unjustly deprived of his rightful position and authority in the Islamic state by the caliph and his supporters (Imamreza. net, nd). Ibn Abu Quhafa was well aware that this conflict transcended the borders of a mere «garden»; it represented a clash over the political rule of Imam Ali (a.s.) and his leadership of the Ummah. In other words, the significance of Fadak extended beyond the physical boundaries of its 223,834.52 km<sup>2</sup> lush gardens, wells, and date palm trees; it symbolized the boundaries of the «caliphate» and the «Islamic rule». This sentiment is evident in Fatima al-Zahra's (a.s.) sermon when she declares, «Yes, Fadak was in our possession. Fadak in its wider sense, that is whatever was under the shade of the sky. Then some envied it, and others took it over» (Ibid).

In his book, Sadr presents his arguments in five chapters. The first chapter, titled «Upon the Scene of Uprising», delves into Lady Fatima's (a.s.) movements and actions after the demise of the Prophet (PBUH). Sadr views it as a monumental uprising, firmly etched in history, and he expounds on the various aspects and scenes of this momentous event.

In the second chapter titled «The True and Hidden Meanings of Fadak», Sadr delves into the geographical attributes of Fadak, its political chronicles, and the various transfers of ownership between caliphs and the descendants of Ahlu al-Bayt. The third chapter elucidates the political struggles between the caliphs and Imam Ali (a.s.) and their roles in paving the way for the rise of the Umayyad Caliphate. This is followed by the fourth part, which includes excerpts from Fatima al-Zahra's (a.s.) speech, with Sadr providing an analysis of certain portions of her discourse. The book culminates with a final assessment of the story, where Lady Fatima invokes references from the Qur'an to advocate the concept of Wilayat. (wikishia. net, nd)

It is noteworthy that the themes of state authority and inheritance law, as raised by a female protagonist (Fatima al-Zahra), in «Fadak in History», are far from coincidental. Sadr's intention was to instigate activism and present a new image of Fatima, infused with meaning from Iraqi contexts and political discourse. In his book, Sadr transforms the perception of Fatima from a vulnerable victim mourning the loss of her father, the Prophet, into a courageous revolutionary heroine, serving as a role model for her diverse co-religionists. (Feder, 2014: 79-96, 83)

Sadr's reinterpretation of primary sources, accepted by him and other Shia clerics, along with secondary literature, challenges the traditional portrayal of Fatima as physically feeble and consumed by grief. Instead, Sadr's dramatic introduction presents Fatima (a.s.) as a figure radiating light, embodying resilience and strength.

‘was faced with two gates and no time to waver . . . She selected the tiring way that was hard . . . especially because of her physically weaker nature. For it was full of difficulties and stress and required courage, effective oratory force, and the ability to articulate the essence of the revolution (thawra) into words’. (Sadr, 1995: 7)

Indeed, according to Sadr, Fatima al-Zahra's outrage at Ibn Abu Quhafa's stance was not merely a reactionary emotion; rather, it served as her way to criticize the existing conditions and ignite her

revolution. Another significant theme in Shia tradition is the concept of light, often associated with the presence of the infallible. Fatima (a.s.) is renowned for being surrounded by radiant light on various occasions, symbolizing life, creation, and mysticism. One such occasion was her marriage to Imam Ali (a.s.) (Kulyani, 1886: chp.130, h5). The significance of this light is also explored in Sadr's book, but it takes on a new role based on the expressions he quotes. Her home, for example, is described as «an alcove of light» and a «symbol of Prophethood». Sadr emphasizes that the light from Prophethood becomes an instrument guiding Fatima's path toward revolution. He underscores that «Muhammad's light illuminated her path [to revolution]», (Sadr, 1995: 12, 90-91) thereby transforming the common link of light, Fatima, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Prophethood, and divine election into a central facilitator of her revolutionary activism. Sadr portrays Fatima's most celebrated attribute, her association with light, as an indispensable factor in her revolt against injustice.

Through her revolutionary activism, Sadr presents Fatima (a.s.) not just as a role model for women but as a role model for all, regardless of gender (Feder, 2014: 76-96). Her legacy of standing up against injustice becomes an inspiration for people from all walks of life. Fatima (a.s.) has been honored and acclaimed to be the embodiment of womanhood- the obedient, pious, wholesome, religious, faithful wife, and in Shia literature she has been revered to be the exemplar of chastity and religiosity.<sup>1</sup> Even with her sorrowful crying after the demise of her father, Sadr managed to elucidate that trait and utilize it as a factor in her revolutionary activity:

«Here she cried bitterly. But it was not the crying that appears on the lineaments and overtakes the countenance. It was the agony of the conscience, the suffering of the soul, and the tremor of the regrets in the depth of the heart . . . The pains ceased to envelop her. It did not last long. She burst forth like a flaming spark and was accompanied by her companions until she reached the battlefields». (Sadr 1995: 9-10)

In broad terms, the preceding discourse suggests that while certain perspectives may interpret Fatima's tears as emblematic of not only her anguish but also the collective suffering of her community, Sadr highlights that it catalyzed for her to take action. Moreover, Sadr exemplifies her bravery and depicts her as emotionally and mentally resilient, as evident in his book where he asserts that:

«She arose with no doubt about what she endeavored to do and with no fear in her perilous situation. She did not have any hesitation for her vision, for which she was very serious about and sure of her decision. She was not plagued by an obsession with worry or confusion. She was at the peak of her noble readiness . . . and defensive way.» It was 'her grief-stricken soul that sent her to the battlefields, caused her to undertake the revolution, and continue it». (Ibid: 7, 11)

According to Sadr, Fatima's (a.s.) rebellious confrontation with Ibn Abu Quhafa to claim her inheritance and assert Imam Ali's (a.s.) rightful leadership is the highest form of revolution against an unjust ruler. Sadr emphasizes that the dispute over Fadak represents a revolution against the state's policies, which Fatima perceived as deviating from the established rule she was accustomed to before the death of Prophet Muhammad. (Ibid: 40)

Sadr highlights that Allah tested her with these circumstances, and she bravely played the role of a defensive soldier, defying death for the sake of truth. Her revolutionary stance inspired an entire Ummah to sanctify this revolution and draw strength from her resistance and determination (Ibid: 7-9). Indeed, Fatima (a.s.) displayed immense courage and strength, even in the face of threats from those in power, both verbally and physically. Her unwavering commitment to justice and her defiance of injustice make her an exemplary figure of resistance and resilience. Verbally, Umar Ibn Khattab, the second khalifa threatened to set her house on fire and he did! According to a narration from Ibn Abi Shaybah's book *Al-Musannif*, where he recorded the latter incident with the chain of narrators on the authority of Zaid Ibn Aslam who narrates from his father Aslam. Aslam (Umar's slave):

«When the people paid allegiance to Abu Bakr after the Prophet's demise, Ali and Zubair used to visit Fatimah's house and consult with her on the matter. When Umar learned of this, he proceeded to Fatimah's house and said – O daughter of the Prophet, by Allah

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1. For examples of this portrayal, see Nahjul Balagha, Peak of Eloquence, p. 648; Shariati, *Fatima Is Fatima*; Klemm, 'Image Formation', pp. 200–202; Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, 'Who is Fatima? Gender, Culture, and Representation in Islam', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 1(2) (2005), pp. 1–24; and Denise Soufi, 'The Image of Fatima in Classical Muslim Thought' (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1997).

there is none more beloved to me than your father. And after your father, there is none more beloved to me than you. By Allah (despite this) if these people gather at your house nothing will stop me from burning your house down». (Gutenberg, org, n.d.)

The tension heightens and the threat transforms from a verbal one to a physical one where in the same incident, there is a mention of firewood and a smoldering rope being brought to the house of Fatimah (a.s.). E.g., Balaazari (exp. 225 AH) in his book *Al-Ansaab al-Ashraaf* narrates with his chain of narrators:

‘Abu Bakr sent word for Ali to pay allegiance but Ali refused. On this, Umar with the smoldering rope reached Fatimah’s (a.s.) house. Fatimah (a.s.) was standing behind the door. She protested – O son of Khattab, do you want to see my house burning? Umar replied – Yes, this is firmer and better than what your father brought (i.e., Islam).’ (Baladhuri, 1996, Vol. 1: 586)

It is evident to the reader that despite facing numerous trials and tribulations, Fatimah (a.s.) stood resolute and endured all the challenges, which sets her apart not only because of her association with the Prophet (PBUH) and Imam Ali (a.s.) but also because of her exceptional merit. According to Sadr, the Fatimid opposition succeeded because it vigorously presented the truth and bolstered its eternal impact in the ideological power struggle (Sadr, 1995: 91-92). Sadr emphasizes that the essence of Fatima's revolution was to convey the revolutionary intent and record its indignation and dominant contours in history. In this regard, the revolution was deemed successful even if it faced obstacles or setbacks (Ibid: 18). Fatima’s opposition was of paramount importance as she unequivocally proclaimed that the state orientation under Ibn Abu Quhafa and 'Umar's stewardship was corrupt and illegitimate. She stood firm in her belief that supporting such a rule was tantamount to treason or sin (Ibid: 91). Her unwavering stance and expression of the revolution's intent had a lasting impact on the course of history.

Indeed, as one can discern, Sadr’s approach to interpreting early Islamic history and events echoes the efforts of religious reformists and modern philosophers. He intended to confront contemporary issues by delving into the past and reevaluating prevailing forms of political and societal and political dialogue. An exemplary instance of this can be seen in the treatment of Fatima's sermon, where Sadr accentuates her pivotal role in demonstrating that women can be politically and revolutionarily engaged. Fatima emerges as a moral force, acting on behalf of the fate of Islam, challenging conventional paradigms, and advocating for a more inclusive and progressive society. Through his analysis of historical occurrences and notable figures, Sadr aimed to extract meaningful insights and relevance for the present-day context, contributing to the ongoing discourse on political and societal transformation.

### **Sadr and Bint al-Huda’s Activism**

The final part of this article will explore the impact of Sadr on his sister Amina Haidar Sadr (aka Bint al-Huda) and her revolutionary ideas and activism. Bint al-Huda is celebrated as one of the most influential female authors who has left a lasting imprint on the Islamic sphere, particularly in motivating young Shia women. Her extensive work, comprising novels and short stories, has spanned over four decades and has been translated into over five languages.

Under the guidance of her martyr brother, Mohammed Baqir Al-Sadr, Bint al-Huda wrote stories that beautifully encapsulated Islamic thoughts in a literal style, making them accessible and relatable for women from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Her works touch on various essential themes, including family, Islamic work, the challenges faced by working women, the significance of hijab, perspectives on make-up and beauty, the complexities of polygamy, and much more (wikishia, net, n.d.).

Through her writings, Bint al-Huda sought to empower and inspire women, allowing them to explore and understand Islamic principles and values in a manner that resonates with their lives and experiences. Her impactful literary contributions have made her a significant figure in shaping the thoughts and perspectives of countless Muslim women across the globe. It has been thought and



known that Sayyed Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr is the «twin of her soul».<sup>1</sup> His role has been the greatest in building her distinctive personality, coining her thoughts, and encouraging her to delve into the world of writing, authorship, and work in all its educational, social, and movement dimensions<sup>1</sup>. Bint al-Huda testified to her brothers' care, especially that of her martyred brother, Mohammed-Baqir al-Sadr, who did not stop for one day looking after her, teaching and nurturing her up to the last day of her life. She says the following in his praise:

«Thanks to Allah Almighty and to the closeness of my brother from whom I get the guidance regarding how to work, the sound and suitable visions on the one hand, and the in-depth culture and sound understanding of Islam. I referred to him regarding anything which I found to be difficult, and I got from him the best that can be attained, especially in juristic and ideological matters, and this is a great blessing for which I must thank Allah». (Iraqi, 2003: 51)

Moreover, apart from providing her with emotional support, Sadr allowed Bint al-Huda to express her ideas through publishing in a journal. This took place when in 1958 when a collective of young Shite clerics in Najaf, Iraq, among them Ayatollahs Muhammad Baqir, launched the journal of the recently founded Jama'at al-Ulema (Society of Religious Scholars). The publication included a regular column dedicated to women's issues written by her, al-Sadr, and Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, who launched *al-Adwa' al-Islamiyya* (Islamic Lights) Amina bint Haidar al-Sadr, under the pseudonym Bint al-Huda (Daughter of the Right Path). Over the ensuing two decades, Bint al-Huda crafted numerous essays, religious treatises, novellas, and short stories, few of which have been translated into English (Ubayd al-Urayyid, 2013: 7). Her monthly «women's column» (Pursley, 2013: 51), tackled a broad array of contentious subjects, encompassing divorce, contemporary marriage, inheritance, western family laws, and motherhood. (Ibid: 53-57)

Regarding her involvement in political activities, she emerged as a prominent figure in women's Islamic movements in Iraq. Inspired by her brother's example, she chose to tread a similar path. Following Sadr's arrest, she delivered a significant speech within the sacred precinct of Imam Ali (a.s.) shrine. In this address, she conveyed to the people the news of the Marja' (the religious leader) being apprehended. This speech subsequently triggered demonstrations by the populace of Najaf, demanding the release of her brother Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr. This episode bears semblance to a historical occurrence, reminiscent of Fatima's sermon within the mosque where she confronted Abu Bakr. The elements of revolution and demanding political rights from an unjust state have spurred people in Baghdad, Kadhimiya, Fuhud, Samawa, Nu'maniyya, Lebanon, Bahrain, and Kuwait to support Sadr. When the government saw the magnitude of the protests in the region, it put the Sadr family under house arrest, then imprisoned Sadr and his sister on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April, 1980. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of April, 1980, both Amin and Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr were executed. (Ibid: 63-67)

## Conclusion

In conclusion, martyr Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr's writings have been instrumental in guiding readers on various crucial aspects of Muslim identity, revolution, and the rejection of unjust circumstances, particularly for women. His books, «Fadak in History» and «Contemporary Man and the Social Problem» along with his nurturing and support of his sister Bint al-Huda, demonstrate the potential for Muslim women to take revolutionary actions against injustice and illegitimate political authority. Fatima al-Zahra (a.s.) emerges as a remarkable early feminist archetype, advocating for political freedom, freedom of speech, ownership rights, and female inheritance. Through the examples of both Fatima al-Zahra (a.s.) and Bint al-Huda, Sadr has fostered a historical shift within Shi'ism, moving from passive eschatological expectations for salvation to active confrontation with worldly forces. Sadr's teachings and the inspiring lives of these revolutionary women have left a lasting impact, empowering Muslim women to challenge oppressive systems and claim their rights. Their legacy serves as a testament to the potential for positive change when guided by the principles of justice, equality, and the pursuit of a more just and inclusive society.

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1. Hassan al-Saeed, *Muslim Woman*, p. 255. (Bint al-Huda had jihadi positions with her brother, martyr Sayyed al-Sadr, with whom she was strongly connected, so much so that she said, «My life is from my brother's life, and it will end with his life's end, if Allah so will»). See: Ahmed al-`Amili, *a/m*, Vol. 1, p. 81].

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