

house of SORROWS

A Translation of Baytul Ahzan



The life of Sayyidah Fatemah al-Zahra and her grief

Written by
al-Hāj Shaykh ‘Abbās al-Qummi

Translated by
Aejaz Ali Turab Husain (al-Husainee)

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Translated by Aejaz Ali Turab Husain (al-Husainee)

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السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا فَاطِمَةَ الْبَتُولِ

Peace be upon you, O Fāṭemah al-Batūl!

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا زَيْنَ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ

Peace be upon you, O embellishment of the women of the worlds!

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا بِنْتَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَيْهِ

Peace be upon you, O daughter of the Prophet of Allāh, the Lord of the worlds, salutations be upon you and upon him!

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أُمَّ الْحَسَنِ وَالْحُسَيْنِ

Peace be upon you, O mother of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn!

لَعَنَ اللَّهُ أُمَّةً غَضَبْتِكِ حَقِّكَ وَمَنْعَتِكِ مَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ لَكَ حَلَالًا

May Allāh curse those who usurped your rights, and who prevented you from that which Allāh made lawful for you!

أَنَا بَرِيٌّ إِلَيْكَ مِنْهُمْ وَمِنْ شِيعَتِهِمْ

I disassociate myself from them and their adherents!



Excerpts from Ziyāratul Jāmi'atul Kabirah

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Transliteration Table

The method of transliteration of Islāmic terminology from the Arabic language has been carried out according to the standard transliteration table mentioned below.

ء	ﺀ	ط	ṭ
ا	a	ظ	ẓ
ب	b	ع	‘
ت	t	غ	gh
ث	th	ف	f
ج	j	ق	q
ح	ḥ	ك	k
خ	kh	ل	l
د	d	م	m
ذ	dh	ن	n
ر	r	و	w
ز	z	ي	y
س	s	ه	h
ش	sh		
ص	ṣ		
ض	ḍ		

Long Vowels

ا	ā
و	ū
ي	ī

Short Vowels

َ	a
ُ	u
ِ	i

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful



Publisher's Preface

When we were first given the opportunity to undertake the publishing of the seminal work authored by Shaykh ‘Abbās al-Qummī, on a very tragic and lesser-known aspect of Islāmic history, entitled Baytul Ahzān - ‘House of Sorrows’, our immediate response was a resounding “yes”!

Already having published a book on the last and greatest Prophet for all of mankind, Muḥammad b. ‘Abdullah ﷺ authored by ‘Allamah Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭaba’ī, and translated into English by Shaykh Tahir-Ridha Jaffer entitled “Sunan an-Nabi”; and following up that project with a comprehensive book on the last Imam and saviour of humanity, Imam al-Ḥujjat b. al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī al-Mahdī عليه السلام entitled, “The Last Luminary and Ways to Delve into the Light” authored by Sayyid Riḍā Ḥusaynī Mutlaq and translated by Saleem Bhimji [both books are available for review and purchase at www.al-mubin.org or www.iph.ca] - it was only fitting for our third major publication to be a magnum opus on the greatest woman to ever walk this Earth - a woman whom the Prophet of Islām ﷺ described as being “The chief mistress of women of the entire universe - from the first to the last”, lady Faṭemah al-Zahrā عليها السلام.

The author of this work, the late Shaykh ‘Abbās al-Qummī took tremendous pains to write this book and quoted extensively from the

most authentic narrations of Islamic history and ṣaḥīḥ (reliable) traditions from both the Shi‘a and non-Shi‘a sources to ensure fair and balanced treatment of the topic at hand. Thus, as you begin to read this work, one needs to first clear one’s thoughts of all personal biases and ‘blind love’ for influential and leading figures in Islamic history, and be prepared to open the mind and heart to permit the painfully tragic events, which began just hours after the Prophet of Islam ﷺ left this world and continue until this day in various ways and forms, to permeate one’s heart and soul. If this is not done, then the blood-stained pages of grief which recount the history of the family of the Prophet and his noble and loyal companions will remain as mere historical anecdotes, rather than serving their ultimate purpose of an inner change in one’s life and character.



Within the circle of Islamic ideology, it is a known fact that the Prophet of Allah ﷺ was always extremely careful in what he said and how he said it, and that his words were never due to personal sentiment or emotions nor due to family or cultural ties, and thus it should come to no surprise for Muslims to read how the Prophet elevated the status of his only daughter and subsequently through her, women in general - and this is important to remember when we reflect on the time in which the Qur’an was being revealed in which women were mere commodities that were bought and sold, with infanticide of baby girls practiced on a regular basis by numerous ‘Arab tribes and many other cultural perversions. Indeed it is only through studying the life of noble women such as the Prophet’s first and most beloved wife, Khadijah b. Khuwaylid ؓ; the cherished daughter of the Prophet, Faṭemah al-Zahrā ؓ; and other notable women from amongst the family of the Prophet and his illustrious companions and the lofty rank that Islam has endowed upon them, that we see the power and forward-thinking nature of the teachings of Islam.

Since the translator has already done a comprehensive review of the status of women in various societies and dispensations throughout the

world in his foreword, in our preface, we will focus our words on Faṭemah al-Zahra عليها السلام and the legacy which she left for humanity.

Every year, millions of Muslims cry for Faṭemah al-Zahra عليها السلام. There are a multitude of gatherings – both commemorations and mourning ceremonies in her memory. There are observances of praise, joy, and honour for her in which her noble characteristics are remembered, while Muslims also hold rituals of lamentation where they recount - in vivid detail - the painful events of Islamic history which led to her intense grief and eventual martyrdom. The faithful even go to the extent of invoking Almighty Allah ﷻ to deprive those who hurt her from His Mercy and Blessings!

Despite everything which is recalled on the pulpits throughout the world and the articles and booklets which have been published so far about this great woman, the true history of her short life and the salient features of her personality are still unknown; however still, with the little that the Muslims know about her, they still accept Faṭemah - her majesty and greatness - whole-heartedly.

The sphere of influence of Faṭemah al-Zahra عليها السلام is extensive and she not only appeals and is a person of reverence for the Muslim community and whom only Muslim authors write about; rather her character, personality and visage actually transcend religion and the Muslim sphere.

In her recent work, *Chosen among Women: Mary and Fatima in Medieval Christianity and Shi'ite Islam*, Mary Thurkillll writes the following about the beloved daughter of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ:

According to early medieval Christian and Shi'ite tradition, God chose Mary and Fatima as vessels for his sublime progeny. Mary, an obedient maiden gave birth to the God-Man Jesus; Fatima, sharing in the divine *nur*, held the Imamate within her womb ... Theologians clearly relied on Mary and Fatima to articulate and expand their respective orthodoxies and notions of rightness. By defining first their pure and immaculate nature, authors transformed Mary's and Fatima's bodies into sacred containers ... Fatima also served as a sacred vessel, holding the Imam's *nur* within her while

simultaneously sharing it. Fatima al-Zahra existed as the only female member of the holy family and, like her father, husband and sons, remained immaculate and infallible. Both Shi'ite and Christian authors also likened their holy women to an ancient container, Noah's ark; the women's wombs carried humanity's true salvation. Mary and Fatima served equally important functions in political and sectarian discourse. With such a rhetorical agenda in mind, hagiographers accented Mary's and Fatima's maternal roles. These holy women, as mothers, effectively defined the limits of community and sectarian division. By symbolically adopting believers to their maternal care, Mary and Fatima damned unbelievers to hell. Hagiographers advertised their holy mothers by describing their homey miracles and domestic skill. Both women experienced superhuman parturitions, multiplied food, and interceded for their spiritual offspring ... Fatima, the mystical nexus of the holy family, rewards her adoptive kin who weep for her slain son, Husayn, and escorts women into paradise on judgement day. Because these women (Mary and Fatima) are both powerful in their own right yet intimately connected to domestic (private) space, they can be employed by authors for a variety of purposes. Mary and Fatima can signify both female independence and agency and submission and chastity ... Whether in the seventh century or the twenty-first, Mary's and Fatima's charisma affords scholars and religious alike an important symbol of community and religiosity that may be manipulated in various ways. The holy women's attendance within the home subtly stresses the male households' presence and dominance. In the end, however, Mary and Fatima – chosen by God as holy vessels and chosen by men as didactic models – manage to provide moral exemplars for women, promote standards of sanctity and faith, and chastise religious and political heresy. Within such legacies the domestic indeed complements public (masculine) authority and gains a place for feminine sanctity not easily ignored.¹



The Prophet of Islām ﷺ, who speaks nothing but what has been revealed to him and is ordered to say by the Most High, has mentioned the following glowing tributes in regards to his beloved daughter عليها السلام:

1. On the Day of Judgement, a caller will call out, 'lower your gaze until Faṭemah has passed.'²
2. I am not pleased unless Faṭemah is pleased.³
3. The most beloved of my family to me is Faṭemah.⁴
4. The head of the women of Paradise is Faṭemah.⁵
5. Many men have reached completion, but no women have reached completion except for four: Maryam, Āsiyah, Khadijah, and Faṭemah.⁶
6. The verse of purification (al-Qur'an 33:33) was revealed concerning five people: myself, 'Alī, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and Faṭemah.⁷
7. Faṭemah is part of me. Whatever upsets her upsets me, and whatever harms her harms me.⁸
8. Faṭemah is part of me, and whoever pleases her, pleases me.⁹
9. Oh Faṭemah, verily God is angry when you are angry.¹⁰

These, and hundreds of other Prophetic statements and numerous verses of the Noble Qur'an give us a glimpse into this great woman and oblige us to study her life and the legacy she has left behind.

It is indeed difficult to speak about the personality of Faṭemah عليها السلام; she is the role model that Islām wants all women to follow. She is a symbol of the various dimensions of womanhood. She is the perfect model of a daughter when dealing with her father; the perfect model of a wife when dealing with her husband; the perfect model of a mother when raising her children; and the perfect model of a passionate, strong, fighting woman when confronting her time and the oppressions in her society. Faṭemah عليها السلام herself is a guide - an outstanding example of someone to

follow, an ideal type of woman - one whose life bore witness for any woman who wishes to 'become herself' and to regain her own identity.

Her life was wrought with many difficulties: losing her mother when she was only five years old; being brought up by her father (the Messenger of Allah ﷺ) who had the added responsibility of being the final Messenger of God; the physical aggression and mental torture which the polytheists wreaked on her family, friends and the believers; and ultimately, having to leave her birth-city of Mecca and migrate to a new home and community hundreds of kilometers to the north in the city of Madinah. Panultimately, she had to witness the death (or according to most reports, the poisoning and murder) of her father with the masses vying for political authority - leaving his lifeless body to take part in elections; and finally the rejection of her husband and his Prophetically and Divinely granted authority over the community by the majority of the Muslims; and tragically in the end, the physical attacks against her which resulted in her miscarriage and ultimately murder at the tender age of eighteen.

Faṭemah (عليها السلام) lived like this and died like this - however after her death, she began a new life in history.

The repression and cruelty that Fatemah al-Zahra (عليها السلام) went through was not something that was 'accidental' or 'unintentional' - rather, every act of transgression against her and the Ahlul Bayt (عليهم السلام) were pre-meditated acts of aggression.

Ziyarat 'Āshura', which is accepted as being a Sacred Tradition (Ḥadīth al-Qudsī - revealed words of Allah ﷻ to His Prophet ﷺ which do not form a part of the Qur'an) states the following:

فَلَعَنَ اللَّهُ أُمَّةً آسَسَتْ أَسَاسَ الظُّلْمِ وَالْجَوْرِ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ ...

"May the removal of Allah's blessings and mercy (la'n) be upon the individuals who laid the foundations for oppression and tyranny (to be inflicted) upon you Ahlul Bayt."

This line, if carefully studied speaks volumes as to 'who' is responsible for not only the crimes inflicted on the Muslim community immediately after the death of the Prophet which are recounted in this book - but also all acts of oppression, tyranny, corruption, violence and terrorism which continue to be perpetrated today under the guise of Islām.

Scholars who have written upon Ziyārat 'Āshurā' relate that the 'individuals' referred to in this ziyārat are two fold: the general community of Muslims at large who overlooked the rank and status of the Ahlul Bayt and deprived them of their rights, choosing and permitting others to take the reigns of caliphate; and on a secondary level, it refers to those individuals who were present at the event of as-Saqīfah (which is detailed in this work) and were part and parcel of the usurpation of the caliphate from the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalīb عليه السلام. This group, which was made up of the Anṣar and Muhājirīn had no justification - neither from the legal code of Islām, nor from the 'temporal' law - to arbitrarily decide upon the fate of the entire Muslim community and appoint an individual to become the first caliph of Islām.

The reason it is said that the individuals who were at as-Saqīfah and were altering the course of history are worthy of the perpetual damnation of Allah ﷻ is that it is through their acts of tyranny and oppression specifically targeted against the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet ﷺ, they showed complete disregard for the commandments of Allah ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ and through such reckless actions, every act of injustice that takes place on the Earth today lies squarely on their shoulders.

Had they permitted the orders of Allah ﷻ to be carried out and the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalīb عليه السلام to manifest, the oppression against the Ahlul Bayt عليه السلام would not have occurred - including the events detailed in this work in regards to Faṭemah al-Zahra عليها السلام, the tragic events of Kərbala, and even the atrocities inflicted upon the other Imāms عليه السلام. Indeed, the acts of terrorism and killing of innocent men, women and children throughout the world today under the guise of Islām would also not be happening had the political ramblings at Saqīfah not taken place. (For an indepth analysis of what

transpired in regards to these events, refer to ‘*When Power and Piety Collide*’ by Sayyid Mustafa al-Qazwini and ‘*The Sacred Effusion*’ by Muhammad Khalfan – both can be purchased from www.al-haqq.com)

Therefore, we state with complete certainty that the people responsible for the first act of oppression and tyranny against the Ahlul Bayt عليه السلام deserve to have the eternal damnation of Allah ﷻ, just as Allah ﷻ Himself states in the Qur’an with clarity:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ...﴾

“Indeed those who hurt and upset Allah and His Messenger will have the mercy and compassion of Allah removed from them, both in [this] world and in the next life...” (al-Qur’an 33:57)

What greater grief can one inflict upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ than to accost his daughter, make her suffer emotional and physical pain; cause her to have a miscarriage; force her to see her husband’s rights snatched away and plundered; see her husband physically abused and ultimately, lose her own life?

Therefore in the light of such tragedies, all of those who have suffered; all of those whose rights have been plundered; all of those who have been deceived and tricked - have taken the name of Faṭemah عليها السلام or her beloved son, Ḥusayn عليه السلام as their banner.

The memory of Faṭemah عليها السلام grows through the love of the men and women who throughout the history of Islam, have fought for freedom and justice. Throughout the centuries, innocent people have been punished under the merciless and bloody lash of various governments. Their cries and anger grew and overflowed from their wounded hearts and this is why in the history of all spiritually awakened and knowledgeable Islamic communities, Faṭemah has been the source of inspiration for those who want to reclaim their rights, for those who seek justice, and for those who resist oppression, cruelty and discrimination.

She was not just a wife to Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام; rather, Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام looked upon her as a friend - a friend who was familiar with his pains and his aspirations. She was his endless refuge, the one who listened to his secrets; the one who was the only companion in his loneliness. This is why ‘Alī عليه السلام behaved towards her and her children slightly differently than the wives he took after his beloved's death and the other children that he fathered. After Faṭemah عليها السلام died, ‘Alī عليه السلام married other women and he had children from them; but from the very beginning, he separated the children who were from Faṭemah عليها السلام, from his other children - the latter were called ‘Bani ‘Alī’, (lit. the children of ‘Alī) while the former were referred to as ‘Bani Faṭemah’ (lit. the children of Faṭemah).



In closing, we relate the words of the late Ali Shariati in his work, Faṭemah is Faṭemah:

I do not know what to say about her or how to say it? I wanted to imitate the French writer who was speaking one day in a conference about the Virgin Mary. He said, “For 1,700 years all of the speakers have spoken of Mary. For 1,700 years, all philosophers and thinkers of various nations of the East and West have spoken of the value of Mary. For 1,700 years, the poets of the world have spent all of their creative efforts and power in their praise of Mary. For 1,700 years, all of the painters and artists have created wonderful works of art showing the face and form of Mary. But the totality of all that has been said and the efforts of all the artists and thinkers throughout these many centuries have not been able to better describe the greatness of Mary than the simple words, ‘Mary was the mother of Jesus Christ.’

And I wanted to begin in this manner with Faṭemah. I got stuck. I wished to say, ‘Faṭemah was the daughter of the great Khadijah,’ but I sensed this would not fully describe Faṭemah. I wished to say, ‘Faṭemah was the daughter of Muḥammad,’ but I sensed this would not fully describe Faṭemah. I wished to say, ‘Faṭemah was the wife of

‘Ali,’ but I sensed this would not fully describe Faṭemah. I wished to say, ‘Faṭemah was the mother of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn,’ but I sensed this would not fully describe Faṭemah. I wished to say, ‘Faṭemah is the mother of Zaynab,’ but I still sensed this would not fully describe Faṭemah. No, these are all true, and none of them is Faṭemah - Faṭemah is Faṭemah.”

Some notes as you read this work

In researching and writing this work, the late Shaykh ‘Abbas al-Qummī has employed numerous references from both the Shi‘a and Ahlus Sunnah scholars. The readers may sometimes come across numerous explanations in regards to a particular event – and at times, some of these diverse opinions may seem to contradict one another or may not be what the “official” Shi‘a position is. It is at this point that one should keep in mind that the author is merely presenting the various opinions about what transpired after the death of the Prophet ﷺ as have been recorded in various sources; and for this reason, he has relied on quoting and analyzing multiple reports before he arrives at his own conclusion, or as will be seen, he leaves it up to the reader to read the various report, and make up their own mind as to where the truth lies.

It is customary to offer a prayer for God’s peace and blessings whenever we mention the name of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, his family, or any of God’s prophets, angels, or saints. While in the past, we have used the diphthongs, “ﷺ”, “ﷺ”, “ﷺ” and others to remind the reader to invoke these prayers, due to the nature of this work, we have omitted these markings. This decision should not be construed as a sign of disrespect to these great personalities. The only reason for leaving them out is to remove hindrance in the fluency of the text. In following with Islamic tradition, the reader is still encouraged to make his invocations while reading these names just as was done during the layout and editing of this work.

In closing, we first thank the Creator, Allah ﷻ for bestowing upon us the Divine providence (*tawfiq*) to be able to complete the publication of this work, as without His constant guidance and blessings, we would not

be where we are today; and His support would not be there were it not for the intercession of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and his noble family members عليه السلام - whom we pray that the Most High continues to bless and raise their ranks in Paradise and that they accept this noble publication as our humble attempt to keep alive their memory and teachings.

We must recognize the author of this work, the late Shaykh ‘Abbās al-Qummi for his untiring efforts to acquaint the Muslims with the life of Faṭemah al-Zahra عليها السلام and for all of his other valuable contributions to the community - books such as *Mafatih al-Jinan*, *Manazil al-Ākhirah*, *Muntahal al-A'mal* and many others.

We must also thank the translator, Aejaz Ali Turab Husain (al-Husainee) for his hard work in rendering this book into English and for his thorough and thought-provoking introduction. In order to truly appreciate the services of Islam and the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ and the life and death of Faṭemah al-Zahra عليها السلام on the world scene, we need to understand how other cultures, societies and religions view woman and then compare that to the model of lady Faṭemah and the Islamic ideal - and he has done this in a very lucid and comprehensive style in the Translator's Foreword.

We would like to acknowledge the support, encouragement and assistance of Sr. Arifa Hudda, specifically her review and careful editing of this entire book.

Last but not least, we would like to appreciate and sincerely thank the various private donors who generously contributed towards the publication of this work - without your continued support of our projects, this and many other works would remain unknown to the English speaking world.

Our sincere appreciation also extends to the non-Profit organizations and foundations that have assisted in the publication of this work (presented in alphabetical order). Please do consider volunteering your time or donating to these organizations so that they can in turn, further promote and assist in the dissemination of the faith of Islam:

1. Islamic Humanitarian Service

- More information on the I.H.S. can be found at their website of www.al-haqq.com

2. Mohsin and Fauzia Jaffer Foundation, Inc.

May Allah accept this humble effort from us in our attempts to educate the Muslim community on the greatest woman to ever inhabit the Earth, Faṭemah al-Zahra عليها السلام.

Saleem Bhimji - Director of the Islamic Publishing House

9th Rabī‘ al-Awwal, 1431 AH

‘Eid al-Zahra

February 24th, 2010 CE

Notes

1. Chosen Among Women: Mary and Fatima in Medieval Christianity and Shi’ite Islam; written by Mary F. Thurlkill; Printed by University of Notre Dame Press 2007; pp. 119-123

2. Kanzul ‘Ummal, v. 13, p. 91 & 93, Muntakhab Kanzul ‘Ummal quoted in the margin of al-Musnad, v. 5, p. 96; al-Sawa’iq al-Muhariqa, p. 190; ‘Usdul Ghaba, v. 5, p. 523; Tadhkirat al-Khawwas, p. 279; Dhaka’ir al-‘Uqba, p. 48; Manaḡib al-Imam ‘Ali of Ibn al-Maghazali, p. 356; Nurul Absar, p. 51-52, Yanabi‘ al-Mawadda, v. 2, ch. 56, p. 136

3 Manaḡib al-Imam ‘Ali of Ibn al-Maghazali, p. 342.

4 Al-Jami‘ al-Ṣaghīr, v. 1, #203, p. 37; al-Sawa’iq al-Muhariqa, p. 191; Yanabi‘ al-Mawadda, v. 2, ch. 59, p. 479; Kanzul ‘Ummal, v. 13, p. 93.

5 Kanzul ‘Ummal, v. 13, p. 94; Ṣaḡīḡ al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Fadha’il, Chapter on the Virtues of Faṭimah; al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya, v. 2, p. 61.

6 Nurul Absar, p. 51.

7 Is‘af al-Raghibīn, p. 116; Ṣaḡīḡ al-Muslim, Kitab Fadha’il al-Ṣaḡaba.

8 Ṣaḡīḡ al-Muslim, v. 5, p. 54; Khaṣa’is al-Imam ‘Ali of al-Nisa’i, p. 121-122; Maṣabiḡ al-Sunnah, v. 4, p. 185; al-Isabah, v. 4, p. 378; Seir ‘Alam Al-Nubala’, v. 2, p. 119; Kanzul ‘Ummal, v. 13, p. 97; similar wording is related in al-Tirmidī, v. 3, Chapter on the Virtues of Faṭimah, p. 241; Ḥaliyatul Awliya’, v.2, p. 40; Muntakhab Kanzul ‘Ummal, in the margins of al-Musnad, v. 5, p. 96; Ma‘rifat ma yajib li ‘ala Āl-Bayt al-Nabawī min al-ḡaqq ‘ala man a‘dahum, p. 58; Dhakha’irul ‘Uqba, p. 38; Tadhkirat al-Khawwas, p. 279; Yanabi‘ al-Mawadda, v.2, ch. 59, p.

478.

9 Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhariqa, p. 180 & 132; Mustadrak al-Ḥakim; Ma'rifat ma yajib li 'ala Āl Bayt al-Nabawi min al-ḥaqq 'ala man a'dahum, p. 73; Yanabi' al-Mawadda, v. 2, ch. 59, p. 468.

10 Al-Sawaaiq al-Muhariqa, p. 175; Mustadrak al-Ḥakim, Chapter on the Virtues of Faṭīma; Manaqib al-Imam 'Alī of Ibn al-Maghazalī, p. 351.



Biography of the Author

Shaykh ‘Abbās b. Muḥammad Riḍā al-Qummī was born in 1877 CE in Qum, Iran. His father, Shaykh Muḥammad Riḍā was a merchant and renowned as a pious, religious man. His mother Zaynab was a virtuous lady who had made a pledge with herself to always be in a state of spiritual purity at the time of feeding her newborn. She practiced what she said and for two years she fed ‘Abbās while always being in a state of purity and it was because of this that later on in his life Shaykh ‘Abbās al-Qummī was quoted as saying, “The main reason for my success was due to my mother’s blessings because that respected lady, within all possible limits, always fed me in a state of cleanliness and purity.”

Shaykh ‘Abbās progressed rapidly in acquiring religious education such that after a short period of time, he became well-known in Qum and was addressed as ‘Shaykh ‘Abbās’ and was described as a young religious person who had a vast amount of knowledge on Islām.

Apart from his sermons and lectures, he also kept busy compiling books. When he turned 21 years of age, his first major accomplishment was reached when he published his first book in the city of Qum. This was a great source of happiness for the Shaykh and his neighbours for which, he thanked Allāh for this success and continued to work much harder and wrote many other books.¹

In Qum, he gained maximum benefit from the renown scholar, Āyatullāh Mirzā Muḥammad Arbāb al-Qummī (d. 1942) and made

extensive use of his library. He also benefitted from the presence of Hāj Aqā Aḥmad Ṭabāṭabā'ī.

From his youth, Shaykh 'Abbās had elegant handwriting and was fond of calligraphy and took time to learn the different styles of calligraphy such as the 'Naskh' and 'Nastaliq' from the art teacher, Aqa Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn. He acquired skills in the art of calligraphy to such an extent that his first book, *Fawa'id al-Rajabiyyah*, printed in 1897 was written in his own handwriting! In the same year, at the end of the month of Safar, he transcribed 220 pages of (the commentary of) Sūrah Yāsīn written by the well-known scholar, Mulla Ṣadrā in the Naskh calligraphy style and at the end of the work, had the humility and humbleness to mention himself as a 'student of the lowest grade and the lowest creature on the earth.'²

After completing the preliminary studies at the Theological Seminary, Shaykh 'Abbās realized that the knowledge which he had gained in the Hawzah of Qum would not satisfy him, and thus in 1898, he migrated to Najaf al-Ashraf (in 'Irāq) to quench his thirst for more knowledge.

Since Shaykh 'Abbās was very eager to know about the true narrators of the Islāmic sciences, he mentions that from the time he entered Najaf, he was fascinated by the scholarly personality of Āyatullāh Mirzā Ḥusayn Nūrī Ṭabarsī (d. 1902) and began to attend his lectures. Within a short period, he gained vast amounts of knowledge from his teacher and due to his own zeal, became one of his most endeared students. Other scholars in the Hawza, such as Muḥaddith al-Nūrī trusted him to such an extent that he gave him the task of transcribing his book *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*.

During this time, he gained official recognition of his studies from his teachers in the fields of the rational and traditional sciences, jurisprudence, exegesis, scholasticism and other religious disciplines.

He remained with his teacher in Najaf for four years and only returned to his hometown of Qum after the death of Muḥaddith al-Nūrī. In regards to the death of his teacher, he is quoted as saying, "His death was so difficult for me to bear, that I can still taste its bitterness."³ Returning

back to Qum, he remained engrossed in teaching and training students, writing and public speaking.

He then proceeded for Ḥaj and shortly thereafter in 1904, he moved to Mashhad, Irān due to various personal and economic challenges. He continued his religious training and teaching and remained in the sacred city of Mashhad for a considerable period of time.

It was during this period that Āyatullāh al-Uẓmā Shaykh ‘Abdul Karīm Hāerī Yazdī (d. 1936) migrated from the city of Arāk, Irān to Qum and was responsible for the revival of the Theological Seminary of Qum. Students from all over the world flocked to Qum to gain benefit from the teachers and classes being offered; and in order to strengthen and mobilize the Hawzah in Qum, Āyatullāh Yazdī invited numerous scholars to settle there, and at this time requested Shaykh ‘Abbās al-Qummī to come as well. Shaykh ‘Abbās readily agreed and hastened back home to Qum and settled there.

He was passionately attached to books, and in this regard his son said, “From my early childhood, whenever I travelled with my father, I always saw him engrossed in studying from the early hours of the morning until late at night.”⁴

Once, he travelled to Syria with a group of businessmen and those with him narrate that while they would go sight-seeing, he would stay behind and remain busy in studying and writing, and whenever they invited him to accompany them, he would politely refuse. At night, while they would be fast asleep, he would be busy in his studies.

His love of books was so intense, that inspite being in financial difficulty, he would save his money to buy books and he was quoted as saying, “During my days while I was studying in Qum, I had become very indigent. I would gather each and every qiran (penny) to make some tumān (a dollar). I would then walk from Qum to Tehran [which is approximately a 90 minute trip by car], buy the books I needed (from there) and then return back home.”⁵

In terms of his humility and humbleness, it is related that a man once requested Muḥaddith al-Qummī to recite a majlis⁶ and promised that he

would give him fifty ‘Irāqī dinārs, while at that time, the monthly expenses of Shaykh ‘Abbās were only three dinār. Hearing this, Muḥaddith al-Qummī replied, “I mount the pulpit for Imām Ḥusayn and not for anything else, therefore I cannot accept your offer.”

He led a very simple and sober life such that even an ordinary student lived a far better life than him. He had a cloak made of canvas that he ensured was kept neat, perfumed and clean. He spent many winter and summer months over the course of numerous years wearing it but never thought of changing it, and even the floor of his house was covered with a coarse carpet.

He was familiar with the Qur’ān from early childhood, and when arriving at the verse, “And I did not create the jinn and the humans but that they may worship (Me)”⁷, his entire body would tremble and he would be heard whispering, “How unaware and how far away we are from the Divine goal!”

He firmly believed that the performance of obligatory deeds alone was not sufficient to reach the peak of perfection, but rather performance of the supererogatory (Nawāfil) and recommended (Sunnah) prayers, coupled with the remembrance of Allāh ﷻ, supplications and invocations will lead one to the ultimate position, and he himself was never ignorant of performing these acts. His son, Mīrzā ‘Alī Muḥaddith Zādeh narrates, “As far as I can recall, my father never missed his night prayers (Ṣalātul Layl) - even during journeys.”

With his lofty scholarly rank and level of piety and learning, he always showed humility and modesty, and was weary of pride and fame and desired to live a life of anonymity. He was respectful to all, but mostly he paid particular respect to the scholars who hailed from the Prophetic lineage (Sadāt) and people who were in some way the propagators of the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt ﷺ. When he entered a religious gathering, he would sit wherever he found a place and would not give priority to himself over others.

He has left behind a great treasure of books authored by him on various Islamic subjects. According to his son Mīrzā ‘Alī Muḥaddith Zādeh, he

wrote 63 books on prayers, ethics, history and biographies; however Muddaris Tabrizī has listed 30 books by the Shaykh in his work, *Rayḥānatul Adab*. Āyatullāh Sayyed Muḥsin al-Amīn lists 65 books authored by him⁸ while at the same time, ‘Alī Dawānī introduces about 85 large and small books penned by this great scholar.⁹

Some of these books include:

1. Mafātiḥul Jinān wa Bāqiyātus Ṣāliḥāt - considered one of the best books on supplications and ziyārāt;
2. Ṣafīnatul Biḥār wa Madīnatul Ḥikam wal Athār – a subject-wise compilation of the traditions found in Biḥārul Anwār of ‘Allāmah Majlisī which took 20 years to compile;
3. Muntahal A‘māl fī Tārīkh al-Nabī wal Āl - a comprehensive book investigating the lives of the fourteen infallibles;
4. Al-Fuṣṭulul ‘Aliyyah fil Manāqibal Murtaḍāwiyyah - the excellences and ethics of Imām ‘Alī;
5. Kohlul Baṣar fī Sirate Sayyedul Bashār - a biography on the life of the Noble Prophet;
6. Nafasul Maḥmūm - a book focusing on the tragedy of Karbala and the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn;¹⁰
7. Nafasul Masdūr - a continuation of Nafasul Maḥmūm and published as an annexure to it;
8. Manāzilul Ākhirah - discussing the various stages of the hereafter;¹¹
9. Baitul Ahzān fī Maṣāib Sayyedatun Niswān – the glorious life of Sayyidah Fāṭimah and the episode of Saqīfah and Fadak.¹²

Āyatullāh Āqā Buzūrg Tehrānī writes about this great personality, “I found him to be a perfect human being and a great scholar. He was an embodiment of all the laudable qualities, and possessed a praiseworthy character. He was humble and possessed utmost piety and abstinence (to the transient world). I was acquainted with him for a considerable time and my spirit gained utmost benefit from his divine spirit.”¹³

Shaykh ‘Abbās al-Qummi died at the age of around 65 years on the 23rd of Dhul Ḥijjah 1359 AH (1940 AD) after a productive and full life in which

he has left behind an enormous wealth of knowledge for humanity to benefit from.

Āyatullāh al-‘Uzmā Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan Isfahānī (d. 1978) recited the prayers upon his body and he was laid to rest beside his teacher, Muḥaddith al-Nūrī in the courtyard of the shrine of the Commander of the Faithful, Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام in Najaf al-Ashraf, Irāq.

“Allāh will exalt (you in) ranks (unto Him), those who believe among you, and those who have been granted knowledge, and Allāh is All-Aware of whatsoever you do.”¹⁴

Notes

1. ‘Alī Ma‘šūmī, *Chehreha wa Qisseha*
2. ‘Alī Dawānī, *Mafākhire Islām*
3. Shaykh ‘Abbās al-Qummī, *Fawā’id al-Raḍāwīyyah*
4. At the end of the translation of *Nafasul Maḥmūm*, a book authored by Shaykh ‘Abbās al-Qummī
5. Shaykh ‘Abbās al-Qummī, *Marde Taqwa wa Fazilat*
6. A religious gathering in which an orator relates the excellences of the Ahlul Bayt followed by their sufferings; also accompanied by enjoining the performance of good deeds and preventing from the evil ones, ornamenting them with evidences from the Qur’an and Prophetic traditions (aḥādīth).
7. Noble Qur’an, Sūratul Ḍarīyāt (51):56
8. Āyatullāh Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amin, *A’yān al-Shi’a*
9. ‘Alī Dawānī, *Mafākhire Islām*
10. The translator (of this current book) had the great privilege to translate this precious and informative book into the English language which has been published by Madinatul Ilm Islamic Center of Mumbai (India); and Anṣāriyan Publications of Qum (Irān).
11. The translator (of this current work) also had the honour of translating this book into the English language and it has been published by Madinatul Ilm Islamic Center of Mumbai (India); and Imām ‘Alī Foundation, Qum (Irān).
12. The present book.
13. Āqā Buzūrg al-Tehrānī, *Tabaqāt A’lām al-Shi’a*
14. Noble Qur’an, Sūratul Mujādilah (58):11



Translator's Foreword

Praise be to Allāh with all the hymns by which He is praised, by the Angels who are the nearest to Him; by His creatures who are most honourable in His Sight; and by those adorers who are best approved by Him. A praise that excels all praise in the same way that the Lord excels all of His creations. May His blessings be upon His Messenger Muḥammad, the Prophet of Mercy, and upon his pure progeny who are the lanterns in the darkness, the brilliant minarets of guidance and the high lofty standards of the religion. May His special blessings be upon His last deputy and His remaining emissary, the expected Mahdī - may Allāh hasten his advent and include us among his adherents.

The status of women in the world has been one of the hottest issues of debate for many years. Several organizations whose goal is 'women's liberation' have been formed around the globe and who strive - day and night - to liberate the 'oppressed women' from the clutches of fanaticism and oppression. Freedom, equality, equity and fair justice for women are the slogans of such organizations that endeavor to give women their lost status in society and to portray her independent identity so that she may walk alongside men and execute all of those tasks which men perform and even those that which some men dare not to perform!

Religion is condemned for limiting women's involvement in all affairs of the society and barring them from reaching their goals. Islam, in particular, has been continuously criticized for its 'bias against women' confining them within the four walls of their house, hidden under the

'ugly black veil' and considering them as a 'door-mat' - thus hindering their progress.

Western organizations are at the forefront in the criticism of Islam for this 'injustice' and have succeeded in gathering around them a multitude of 'liberated Arab and Muslim women', who have most passionately responded to their calls for 'freedom'.

Before discussing the status of women in Islām, let us have a look at the status which women enjoyed in the past (and the present as well) in the other major religions of the world and 'progressive nations'.

Christianity, which is considered to be the most liberal religion in the world has been far more rigid in its stance against women. Jawaharlal Nehru, in his monumental work, *Discovery of India*, writes:

Bad as the legal position of women was in ancient India, judged by the modern standards, it was far better than in ancient Greece and Rome, in early Christianity, in the Canon Laws of Medieval Europe, and indeed right up to comparatively modern times at the beginning of the 19th Century.¹

In the early ages of Christianity when the religion of the people, of a high and low societal status, ignorant and educated, consisted only of the adoration of the mother of Jesus, the Church of Christ had placed the sex under a ban. Priest after Priest had written about the enormities of women, their evil tendencies, inconceivable malignity and considered them to be a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted evil!

St. Tertullian (circa 155 CE - 225 CE) represented the general feeling in a book in which he addressed women saying:

Do you not know that each of you is an Eve? The judgement of God on this sex of yours lives even in this age and the guilt (associated with it) must, out of necessity, also live on (and continue to exist). You are the Devil's gateway; You are the unsealer of the forbidden tree; You are the first deserter of the Divine law; You are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You

destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desertion, even the Son of God had to die.²

St. Augustine (354 CE - 430 CE) wrote the following to a friend:

What is the difference whether it is in a wife or a mother, it is still Eve the temptress that we must beware of in any woman ... I fail to see what use woman can be to man, if one excludes the function of bearing children³

Martin Luther (1483 CE - 1546 CE), the German theologian and Church reformer says:

If they [women] become tired or even die, that does not matter. Let them die in childbirth, that's why they are there.⁴

The Orthodox Church excluded women from the exercise of all religious functions except the lowliest. They were completely excluded from society, were prohibited from appearing in public and were forbidden from going to feasts or banquets. They were directed to remain in seclusion, observe silence, obey their husbands, and apply themselves to weaving, spinning and cooking. If they ever went out, they were to be clothed from head to foot.

In the 19th century, after long discussions, religious leaders of France decided, "A woman is a human being, but she is made to serve man."

In England it was not until about 1850 that women were counted in the National Population Census. It was in 1882 that a British law, unprecedented in the country's history, for the first time in its history, granted women the right to decide how their own earnings should be spent instead of handing them over directly to their husbands! Until then, even the clothes on their back had been their husband's property.

In his days, Henry VIII had even forbidden women to study the Bible when the first English translations appeared.

The Reformation Statement on the role of women declares:

In the beginning God made man, male and female. He made Adam first, and then made Eve from Adam's rib. This order of creation

subordinates wives to their husbands in marriage, and women to men in the church. As an act of submission to their Creator, women are commanded to submit to their husbands and to male leadership in the church. Women are not allowed to teach or have authority over men in any formal capacity in the church.⁵

Female infanticide among earlier Hinduism was common. A woman was barred from studying the Vedas - the most sacred of the Aryans texts; or participating in the oblations to the Manes; or in the sacrifices to the deities. The wife's religion was, and still is to serve her husband, her Lord and her eternal happiness depends on the strict performance of this duty.

Child marriages of daughters as young as 5 and 6 years old was common due to the custom of the dowry and to avoid scandals.⁶ Law books prescribed that the best partner for a man was one-third his age and thus a man who was 18 years old should marry a girl six years old! It has been stated that:

A man, aged thirty years, shall marry a maiden of twelve who pleases him, or a man of twenty-four a girl of eight years of age; if (the performance of) his duties would otherwise be impeded, he must marry sooner.⁷

This system still prevails in many parts of India.

An Aryan (Hindu) husband could at any time accuse his wife of infidelity and if the wife protested her innocence, the council of village elders would order a trial by fire. The accused woman would be required to pass through a blazing flame. Not just death, but any signs of burns would be taken as a sign of guilt and the wife would then have to undergo the penalty for infidelity.⁸ Adultery carried the death sentence in Aryan law - either way she would have to pay with her life for her husband's or elders' mere suspicions.

The ideal role model for this custom was Sita, the wife of Rama. She was required by her spouse, the most adored of Hindu Gods, to pass through the fire ordeal after her return from Lanka where she had been abducted by the king Ravana.

The death penalty was prescribed for Aryan women guilty of infidelity and the Manu Smriti, the most authoritative Indo-Aryan law-book states:

When a woman, proud of her relations [or abilities] deceives her husband (with another man), then the king should [ensure that] she be torn apart by dogs in a place much frequented by the people!⁹

Not only that, but adultery was defined as the simple touching of clothes and even conversing with men:

He who addresses the wife of another man at a pilgrimage site outside the village, in a forest, or at the confluence of rivers, suffer (the punishment for) adulterous acts.¹⁰

A wife, a son, and a slave - these three were declared to have no property; the wealth that they earned was (acquired) for the man to whom they belonged.

The Aryans, upon their invasion of India circa 1,500 BC, introduced the horrific custom of sati, meaning that the faithful wife would sacrifice herself on the funeral pyre of her dead husband! The woman performing this 'noble act' found a niche in the hearts of all the votaries of Hinduism as one of the best and noblest of her sex and often became herself the object of worship. It is sanctioned by the Hindu's most sacred texts, and was practiced from the fall of the Semito-Dravidian Indus Valley civilization to the modern age.

The most sacred of Aryan scriptures are the Vedas, and the Rig Veda, the oldest Veda, mentions the custom of sati. The following famous 'Sati Hymn' of the Rig Veda was (and still is) recited during the actual immolation of the widow:

Let these women, whose husbands are worthy and are living, enter the house with ghee¹¹ (applied) as collyrium (to their eyes). Let these wives first step into the pyre, tearless without any affliction and well adorned.¹²

If women do not perform sati, then they will be reborn into the lowly body of a woman again and again until they perform sati.¹³

It is the highest duty of the woman to immolate herself after her husband.¹⁴

Thus, it is evident that the Aryans introduced the custom of sati because it was encouraged in their scriptures and many goddesses even performed the act. Several of Krishna's (one of the most venerated Hindu gods) wives performed sati upon his death, including Rukmini, Rohini, Bhadra and Madura.¹⁵ Madri, the second wife of King Pandu considered an 'incarnation' of goddess Dhriti, and performed sati.¹⁶

Sati still continues to this day and in 1990, more than 50 widows were burnt alive in sati.¹⁷

Another aspect of women's suppression in Hinduism is the 'Devadasi system' that prevails even until today. Since the Hindu divinities loved music and dancing, a large number of dancing girls are attached to the temples, who are by no means vestal, and whose services are at the disposal of the ministrants of the cult. Devadasi (lit. servant of God) originally describes a Hindu religious practice in which girls are 'married' to a deity or temple. In addition to taking care of the temple, they learn and practice classical arts and dances. Some scholars are of the opinion that the custom of dedicating girls to temples became common in the 6th century CE as most of the Puranas containing reference to it have been written during this period. Several Puranas recommended that arrangements should be made to enlist the services of singing girls for worship at temples.

The dedication ceremony of the devadasi is far more interesting. It initiates a young girl into the devadasi profession and is performed in the temple by the priest. In the Brahminical tradition, marriage is viewed as the only religious initiation (diksha) permissible to women. Thus the dedication is a symbolic 'marriage' of the pubescent girl to the temples' deity.

In these ceremonies, the devadasi- initiate consummates her marriage with an emblem of the god borrowed from the temple as a stand-in 'bridegroom'. In practice this often means that the priest will have sexual

union with her in addition to the other nuptial rites that are performed at a typical Hindu wedding. From then onward, the devadasi is considered a 'nitya sumangali,' meaning that the woman is eternally free from the adversity of widowhood. She would then perform her ritual and artistic duties in the temple.

The puberty ceremonies are an occasion not only for temple honour, but also for community feasting and celebration in which the local elites also participate. The music and dance and public display of the girl also helps to attract patrons.

Patronship in a majority of cases is achieved at the time of the dedication ceremony itself. The patron who secures this right of spending the first night with the girl can pay a fixed sum of money to maintain a permanent liaison with the devadasi, and pay to maintain a relationship for a fixed amount of time, or terminate the liaison after the deflowering ceremony. A permanent liaison with a patron does not bar the girl from entertaining other clients, unless he specifies otherwise. In case the girl entertains, then the other men have to leave the girl's house when her patron comes.

In modern India the tradition has become associated with commercial sexual exploitation, as described in a recent report by the National Human Rights Commission of the Government of India.¹⁸

According to this report, "after initiation as devadasis, women migrate either to nearby towns or other far-off cities to practise prostitution." A study from 1990 recorded that 45.9% of devadasis were prostitutes.¹⁹

Buddhism and Jainism were both protest movements against the Vedic system. However, they did not lead to any major changes in the status of women. This was due to the emphasis placed by these religions on asceticism. Thus, although these reformers opposed certain cruelties against women, yet they were considered as hurdles on the path to salvation. The Buddha was very strict in his insistence on asceticism. He left his home and his wife to attain nirvana (spiritual enlightenment) and considered women as a hindrance to reach that goal. Buddha is said to have induced his disciples not to look at a woman or even talk to her.²⁰

Never was the condition of women so bad, never was she held under greater subjugation, a slave to the caprice of man, than under the Mago-Zoroastrians. In relation to the sexes, the Persians recognized no law but that of a man's own will. He could marry his nearest kindred and divorce his wives at his pleasure. The system of female seclusion was not confined to the Persians alone as among the Ionic Greeks, women were confined within the Gynaikonitis, often kept under lock and key and never allowed to participate in public life. In Persia, the custom of employing eunuchs [a castrated man, in particular, one castrated early enough to have major hormonal consequences] to guard the women prevailed from the remotest antiquity.²¹

Now, let us turn to Arabia, the birth place of Islām.

The position of women in the pre-Islamic days was no better than our contemporary society. Arabia was a male dominated society in which women had no status of any kind other than as sex objects. The number of women a man could marry was not fixed; and when a man died, his son 'inherited' all of his wives, except his own mother.

A savage custom of the Arabs was to bury their female infants alive. Even if an Arab did not wish to bury his daughter alive, he still had to uphold this 'honourable tradition', being unable to resist social pressures. The Qur'ān speaks out against this atrocity in clear words:

And when is announced unto (any) one of them a daughter, darkened becomes his face and he is filled with wrath. He hides himself from the people due to the bad the tidings given to him, (he ponders whether) he shall keep her with disgrace or bury her (alive) in the dust, behold (how) evil it is what they decide.²²

At another place it is quoted:

And kill not your children for fear of want, We sustain them and yourselves (too), Verily killing them is a great sin.²³

Also Allāh says:

And when the female-baby buried (alive) shall be asked, for what sin (of hers) was she put to death?²⁴

Imām al-Bukhārī, on the institution of marriage in Arabia before Islām, quotes from al-Zuhri, who says that ‘Urwah b. Zubayr informed him that ‘Āysha told him that marriage in the pre-Islāmic period was of four types:

(1) One was the marriage of people as it is today, where a man betroths his ward or his daughter to another man, and the latter assigns a dower to her and then marries her;

(2) Another type was when a man said to his wife when she was purified from her menses, “Go to X and have intercourse with him”, her husband then stays away from her and does not touch her at all until it is clear that she is pregnant from that man with whom she sought intercourse. When it is clear that she is pregnant, her husband has intercourse with her if he wants. He acts thus simply from the desire for a noble child. This type of marriage was known as ‘Nikah al-Istibda’, the marriage of seeking intercourse;

(3) Another type was when a group of less than ten men used to visit a woman and all of them had to have intercourse with her. If she became pregnant and bore a child, when some nights had passed after the birth she sent for the men and all had to come to her. When they had come together in her presence, she would say to them, “All of you (men) know the result of what has taken place - I have borne a child and he is the child of ... ” – naming whoever she wanted to choose from the group of ten men. Her child would then be attributed to that man and he was not allowed to refuse this;

(4) The last type is when many men frequent a woman and she does not keep herself from anyone who comes to her - these women were the prostitutes. They used to set banners up at the door of their house and were called “ladies of the flags.” Whoever wanted them, went in to their house. If one of these women conceived and bore a child, all of the men who had been with her gathered together and summoned the physiognomists. Then they attributed her child to the man whom they thought was the father, and the child remained

attributed to him and was called his son and no one was permitted to object to this course. When the Prophet Muḥammad came preaching the truth, he abolished all of these types of marriages of the Pre-Islamic era except that which people practice today.

Unfortunately, the West has not given Islām a fair chance. Every opportunity is utilized to denigrate and blaspheme the true Islāmic point of view. Due to blindly and gullibly swallowing the filth that is fed to them day and night by the Western media, even Muslims have become adversely affected by such falsehood and have begun to doubt the true Islāmic standpoint.

How remarkably Āyatullāh Sayyid Rūḥullāh al-Khomeini stated it when he described a woman in Islām by saying:

From the Islamic viewpoint, women have sensitive roles in the formation of an Islamic community. Islam promotes a woman to the extent that she is able to recover her human status in the community and cast off her status as an object, and commensurate with such growth, she can assume responsibilities in developing the Islamic government.²⁵

In several places, the Noble Qur'ān discusses the equal position that a woman enjoys alongside man:

Verily the Muslim men and Muslim women, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obedient men and the obedient women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the alms-giving men and the alms-giving women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their private parts and the women who guard (their private parts), and the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember Allah (much), for them has been prepared forgiveness and a great recompense.²⁶

At another juncture, Allāh says:

Whosoever does good, whether male or female, and is be a believer, then We shall certainly make that person live a good and pure life, and certainly We will give them their return with the best of what they were doing.²⁷

In yet another verse we read:

And whosoever does deeds of righteousness, whether male or female, and is a believer, then these shall enter Paradise and they shall not be wronged (even) to the husk of a date-stone.²⁸

Each of the five pillars of Islām is as important for women as it is for men, and there is no differentiation in their reward:

And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves, mates, that you may dwell (inclined) unto them, and He placed love and compassion between the two of you. Indeed in this are signs for a people who reflect.²⁹

This is a very apt definition of the relationship between man and woman as they are not bound together only by a physical relationship, but rather are brought together by love and mercy and such a definition and description comprises mutual care, consideration, respect and affection.

The Qur'an states:

They (your wives) are an apparel for you (the husbands) and you (the husbands) are an apparel for them.³⁰

As an apparel gives protection, warmth, comfort and decency, so too a husband and wife offer each other intimacy, comfort and protection from adultery and other vices.

Allāh also states:

I will not suffer the work of any of you that works to be lost, be he male or female, the one of you being from the other.³¹

Every man or woman should pursue his or her education as far as it is possible. One of the main aims of acquiring knowledge in Islām is to become Allāh-conscious, and in the history of Islām, we find that there

were women who were narrators of ḥadīth, mystics, scholars, authors, poets and teachers in their own right! They utilized their knowledge within the precepts of Islām.

Indeed, Islām was founded with the rights of women inbuilt within the tenets of the Shari'ah and therefore a Muslim woman is totally liberated and independent and within the limits of the Shari'ah, she can stand side by side men! Today in many Muslim countries, we find women in various professional fields gaining excellence and reaching their goals with modesty and virtue.

Islām is criticized for two reasons which are considered to be 'injustice against women'; namely the ḥijāb (Islāmic covering for women) and polygamy. In reality, ḥijāb does not hamper the socio-psycho-economic growth of women - in fact a woman wearing the ḥijab commands more respect and is treated as an individual and not as an object of lust.

Rana Kabbānī, a modern day author, writes in her book:

The wearing of Islamic dress gives these women greater - rather than less - freedom and mobility, for in such austere garb and with the mentality that accompanies it, they are much less likely to be closely monitored by their families. Wearing the ḥijab can be a form of liberation, freeing women from being sexual objects, releasing them from the trap of Western dress and dictates of Western fashion. Just as feminists in the West have reflected on the connection between 'feminist clothes' and female oppression, so Muslim feminists reject the outward symbols of sexual allure. In favour of the ḥijab, it can be said that by distancing its wearer from the world, it enriches spiritual life, grants freedom from material preoccupations, and erases class differences by expressing solidarity with others in the same uniform. Since all women look the same in it, it is a most effective equalizer, and since it camouflages rich clothing, it is in keeping with the Islamic injunction against ostentation.³²

Frankly, what freedom and equal status has the Western civilization give to women? Prostitution, massage parlors, lesbianism, illegal mistresses, one-night stands, nudity and whamelessness! These are only some of the

'rights' that the 'Western world' has given to women. It has made women the cheapest commodity on the face of the Earth - from a car to a pack of candy, everything sells with the picture of a nude or semi-nude woman. The body of this cheap woman is the property of one and all. Every lusty and lecherous man is at full liberty to cast his filthy gaze upon her anatomy and commit everything evil and profane in his mind and heart. How cheap and despised is this woman on show!? How cheap is this woman the West has created!

On the contrary, the woman in Islām is a precious jewel not to be viewed by all. She is far too respectable than to be viewed and exhibited to any lecherous man. Her beauty and charms are reserved for the only person that truly appreciates and loves her - her husband. Thus, she is highly protected and covered at all times, unlike the cheap, shameless woman of the West, who has become the playmate of thousands, but loved by none for who she truly is.

In countries that have given women the so-called rights of freedom and equality and left them free to do as they wish, they are now shedding tears of remorse over the pathetic plight of their degeneration and disintegrating societies. Their women being economically and socially independent are no longer faithful and dedicated daughters, wives, sisters and mothers.

Marriage has become outdated and old-fashioned. Instead they prefer companionship, which becomes a relationship with no commitment binding upon the man or the woman. Children of such parents become delinquents and drug addicts - in summary, the whole society begins to decay and disintegrate so fast such that we see today, many countries have reached a point of no return.

Will Durant, the famous sociologist, says:

City life prevents men from observing the seasons, while sexual passions increase and conditions make indulgence easier. A civilization that makes marriage economically impossible before the age of thirty, drives a man to sexual deviation, weakens continence, and reduces purity from its original esteem as a virtue to distant lip-

service as an impractical dream. Art enhances human beauties, man cease to count their sins. Women, claiming equality with men, fall prey to passions. Love affairs unlimited and premarital cohabitation becomes the rule rather than the exception. The streets may be free of prostitutes – but not through fear of the police! It is because women have bankrupted prostitutes by taking over their business for free.³³

Before the advent of Islām, a man had no limit in regards to the number of their wives that he could keep. Islām imposed a limit and allowed plurality of marriage with the idea of abolishing adultery and although it allowed polygamy, it laid down strict rules so as to be safeguarded from misuse.

The Qur'ān states:

Then marry those who seem good to you, two or three or four, and if you fear that you shall not deal justly (with so many) then (marry) one only.³⁴

In another verse we are told:

And even if due to some circumstances divorce should take place among them, the woman should under no circumstances be wronged. And for the divorced women (too) (shall) be a provision in fairness, (this is) a duty on those who guard themselves (against evil).³⁵

Allāh also mentions in the Qur'ān:

O Prophet! (Say to the people) When you divorce (your) women, divorce them at their prescribed period, and reckon the *iddah* (prescribed waiting period), and fear (the wrath of) Allah your Lord, and turn them not out of their houses, nor shall they (themselves) go out, unless they commit any indecency. These are the limits of Allah, and whosoever transgresses the limits of Allah, then indeed he does injustice to his own self. And when they reached their *iddah* (the term prescribed), then either retain them with fairness or part with them with kindness.³⁶

History is full of examples that prove that polygamy existed, rather ruthlessly among the major religions of the world long before the advent of Islām.

The Sasanian king, Khusroe Pervez had 3,000 wives and 12,000 slave girls who were musical performers.³⁷ In China the Li Ki law gave every man the right to have upto 130 wives. In Israel one man could have several hundred wives. Charlemagne had 400 and Ardeshir Babekan had about the same number. Nor did the Gospel, following the Torah, abrogate or condemn this practice or utter a decree to ban it such that up until the second half of the 8th century AD and the time of Charlemagne, polygamy was customary in Europe and was not condemned by the Church!

Among all Eastern nations of antiquity, polygamy was a recognized institution. Its practice by royalty, which bore the insignia of divinity, sanctified its observance to the people.

Among the Hindus, polygamy, in both its aspects, prevailed from ancient times. Krishna, the most revered of Hindu deities, is believed to have had 16,108 wives! Dashratha, the King of Ayodhya and the father of Rama - another of the revered Hindu deities, married three wives.

Apparently, among the ancient Medes, Babylonians, Assyrians and Persians, there was no restriction as to the number of wives a man could take.

Polygamy existed among the Israelites, before the time of Prophet Moses, and it continued after him without any limit on the number of marriages that a Hebrew husband could contract. In later times, the Talmud restricted the number of wives a man could have through the ability of the husband to maintain them properly, and although the Rabbis counseled that a man should not take more than four wives, the Karaites differed from them and did not recognize the validity of any limitation.

To the Persians, religion offered a premium on the plurality of wives.³⁸

Among the Syro-Phoenician races, whom the Israelites displaced, conquered or destroyed, polygamy was degraded into bestiality.

Among the Thracians, Lyndians, and the Pelasgian races that settled in different parts of Europe and Western Asia, the customs of plurality of

marriages prevailed to an inordinate extent, and dwarfs all comparison with the practice prevailing elsewhere!³⁹

As for the Athenians, the most civilized and the most cultured of all the nations of antiquity, the wife was a mere chattel, marketable and transferable to others and a subject of testamentary disposition. She was regarded as being evil however indispensable for ensuring the orderliness of the household and for the procreation of children. An Athenian was allowed to have any number of wives, and the Demosthenes glorified in the possession by his people of three classes of women, two of which furnished the legal and semi-legal wives.⁴⁰

Among the Spartans, though the men were not allowed, unless under special circumstances, to have more than one wife, the women could have and almost did have more than one husband.⁴¹

History proves conclusively that until very recent times, polygamy was not considered so reprehensive as it is now. St. Augustine himself seems to have observed in it no intrinsic immorality or sinfulness, and declared that polygamy was not a crime if it was in the legal institution of a country.

Considering the exploitation of woman in the name of liberation, numerous non-Muslim scholars too voice their support in favour of the institution of polygamy.

Dr. Annie Besant says:

When we see thousands of miserable women who crowd the streets of Western towns during the night, we must surely feel that it does not lie in Western mouths to reproach Islam for its polygamy. It is better for a woman, happier for a woman, more respectable for a woman, to live in Islamic polygamy, united to one man only, with the legitimate child in her arms surrounded with respect, than to be seduced, cast out into the streets, perhaps with an illegitimate child outside the pale of law – unsheltered and uncared for, to become a victim of any passerby, night after night rendered incapable of motherhood, despised by all.

In nations in which multiple marriages is legal, it is made possible for practically all women to have a husband, children and a true family

life which meets their spiritual needs and satisfies their feminine instincts.

Unfortunately Church laws in Europe have not allowed multiple marriages and left many women to a life of spinsterhood. Some died unsatisfied; some were driven by their desires or by the need to earn their livelihood into immorality; some perished with qualms of conscience and broken hearts.

Nor can I understand, after giving much thought to the matter, why a man, whose wife falls ill of a chronic or incurable disease or proves barren or unable to bear a living child, should not take a second wife alongside the first. This is a question the Church should answer - unfortunately it cannot.

Good laws are those which ensure a happy life when obeyed, not those which deprive people of happiness or bind them hand and foot in the trammels of unnecessary bondage or which incite people to despise them and so to rush to the other extreme of corruption, prostitution or other kinds of vice.⁴²

It has also been stated by Dr. Gustave Le Bon that:

Nothing has been more criticized in Europe than Eastern customs of multiple marriages. No view held in Europe has shown the same amount of ignorance and error as this criticism. Surely the legal multiple marriage of the East is better than the hypocritical secretive multiple marriages of the West. The clandestine nature of the illicit relationship is degrading to both parties. The legalization of multiple marriages is far more seemly in every respect.⁴³

It is true that today, far too many women in the East lead an unsatisfactory way of life and face humiliation, neglect and deprivation. But this is not due to Islām's regulations - rather it is due to the neglect of religious precepts in political, social and economical institution by Muslims themselves. Nonetheless it is far better than the degradation and exploitation of women in the West under the pretext of liberation.

In the autobiography of Bertrand Russel, who was one of the most headstrong opponents of polygamy, we read that in his early life, apart from his mother, two women created a great impression upon him. One of them was Alys, his first wife, and the other one was his friend lady Ottoline Morell, one of the well-known women of that period and a friend of many of the early 20th century writers.

It seems that it was his love affairs that brought an end to his relationship with his wife. Russell himself wrote that one afternoon he resolved to ride to the country houses near the city on a bicycle, and that “all of a sudden I felt that I no longer loved Alys!”

The Bible also allows polygamy, to cite a few examples, “He (Solomon) had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines.”⁴⁴ At another place it is quoted, “If he take upon him another wife, her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall not diminish her.”⁴⁵



We now turn to the vision of Islām and its teachings on women. The best and the most perfect example of a woman’s excellence and significance in Islām can be found in the glorious and peerless personality of Sayyidah Fāṭemah, the only daughter of Prophet Muḥammad and Lady Khadijah. She was also his most beloved daughter and was the wife of Imām ‘Alī and the mother of eleven infallible leaders (Imāms).

She combined in herself all the noble qualities, merits and ideals that even the most virtuous of men have failed to achieve. Her unparalleled wisdom, excellent traits, unfaltering character, lofty morals and firm belief in Allāh reigns superior such that she stands unequalled in the annals of history.

What more excellence could Islām bestow upon a woman when we find a woman in an immaculate personality of Fāṭemah! And who else, except the Noble Prophet could praise his daughter suitably. Several times he declared, “Fāṭemah is a part of me; whoever delights her, delights me; and whoever enrages her, enrages me.”

Islām has produced numerous virtuous ladies who were peerless in their age, but none could attain the lofty position that Lady Fāṭemah did.

Prophet Adam's wife Hawwā; Prophet Ibrahim's wives Hajra and Sarāh; The Pharaoh's believing wife Āsiyah; Prophet Isa's mother Sayyidah Maryam; some of Prophet Muḥammad's wives, at the head of which was Sayyidah Khadijah, his mother Āminah b. Wahab, the mother of Imām 'Alī, Fāṭemah b. Asad, etc. were ladies of lofty characters, but it was Fāṭemah alone who was declared as the "Mistress of the women of the worlds", from the beginning until the end of time.

Her eminence is evident at several occasions when the Prophet himself would stand up to greet her whenever she came into his presence, and this was not due to a father's love for his daughter, but rather due to her own identity and her distinction. Indeed, tongues fall short of words to describe her eminence, and pens lack the ability to note down her merits.

Numerous books have been written by Shī'a and non-Shī'a scholars upon the life of this eminent personality, to name a few:

1. *Fāṭemah al-Zahrā Ummul Imāmah wa Sayyedatun Nisā* written by Āyatullāh Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāinī
2. *Fāṭemah al-Zahrā minal Mahd ilal Lahad* written by Āyatullāh Sayyid Muḥammad Kādhim al-Qazwīnī
3. *Fadak fil Tārikh* written by Āyatullāh Sayyed Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr
4. *Fāṭemah al-Zahrā: Umme Abihā* written by Āyatullāh Sayyid Fadhil al-Milānī
5. *Wafat al-Siddiqatuz Zahrā* written by Sayyed 'Abdul-Razzāq al-Muqarram
6. *Fāṭemah al-Zahrā: Qudwah wa Uswah* written by Āyatullāh Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī al-Modarresi
7. *Fāṭemah al-Zahrā al Mar'ah al Namuzajjiyyah fil Islam* written by Āyatullāh Shaykh Ibrāhīm Aminī
8. *Fāṭemah al-Zahrā* written by Āyatullāh Sayyid Dastaghaib Shirāzī

9. *Balagatul Fatemiyyah minal dawha al Muḥammadiyah* written by Sayyid Jāsim al-Shabbar
10. *I‘lamu Anni Fāṭemah* written by Shaykh ‘Abdul-Ḥamid al-Muhājir
11. *Al-Batūl al-Azra* written by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shamsuddīn
12. *Al-Batūl Fāṭemah al-Zahrā* written by Dr. ‘Abdul-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Halū
13. *Ummul Ḥasnain binte Akram Rasūl as-Sayyidah Fāṭemah al-Zahrā al-Batūl* written by Aḥmad ‘Abdul-Mun‘im ‘Abdus-Salām al-Halawānī
14. *Al-Sugūr al-Basemah fi Fadḥāil Fāṭemah* written by Jalāluddīn Suyūtī
15. *Al-Islam yuqif ila janibil mar’ah wa yukarrimoha fi shakhsiyyatiz Zahrā* written by ‘Abdul-Rasūl ‘Alī Khān

The book in your hands, *Baytul Ahzān Fī Masāib Sayyadatun Niswān*, (The House of Sorrows relating to the sorrows of the Mistress of the Women) is authored by the celebrated scholar Shaykh ‘Abbās al-Qummī.

This book focuses on the glorious life of Sayyidah Fāṭemah and also discusses in detail the heart-breaking episodes of Saqīfah and Fadak which took place after the death of the Noble Prophet. Wherever I have found it necessary, I have annexed notes to the translation to further understanding and clarification, and the readers are requested to refer to these notes.

This book is the third in the translation series of the works of Shaykh al-Qummī’s books - the first being *Manāzilul Ākhirah* which focuses on the life in the next world after this life; and the second one being *Nafasul Maḥmūm* concerning the tragic event of Kerbalā.

‘Arabic being an eloquent and lucid language, it is usually impossible to translate certain words or phrases into any other language, thus it becomes necessary at some places to quote the original ‘Arabic words.

Notwithstanding whatever knowledge and effort put in such work, it remains far from being perfect, for perfection is the essence of Allāh. I therefore request the readers to write in, should they feel it necessary, to

raise any point or make any remarks in so far as the translation is concerned and not the actual text of the book.

For the translation of the sermon of Sayyidah Fāṭemah, I have referred to the book of Āyatullāh al-Uẓmā Shaykh Ḥusayn 'Alī Muntazarī that explains her sermon in detail, rather than translating it myself, for it is impossible for an ordinary person like me, to comprehend the eloquence of the words of the Infallibles. His explanation on her sermon was given in his 'Ba'thul Khārij' lectures (highest level of lectures in the Islāmic seminary) delivered by the Āyatullāh to the students of the Islāmic seminary and have been compiled into a book.

As for the Qur'ānic verses, I have referred to the English translation and Commentary by Āyatullāh Shaykh Mahdī Pooya Yazdī and S.V. Mīr Aḥmad 'Alī, published by Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an Inc., Elmhurst, NY.

May Sayyidah Fāṭemah accept this humble service of mine seeking her pleasure and the pleasure of Allāh, and may Allāh exalt the position of the author of this informative book, Shaykh 'Abbās b. Muḥammad Riḍā al-Qummī, and offer him refuge under His Empyrean on the Day of Resurrection and count him among the slaves of the Ahlul Bayt.

May Allāh hasten the auspicious reappearance of Imām al-Mahdī, the one who will fill the earth with justice and equity as it is filled with injustice and oppression; and may Allāh include us among his slaves and adherents.

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3rd Sha'bān 1428 AH

Notes

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Author's Preface

Praise and gratitude belongs to the Almighty Allāh and salutations upon the Prophet of Mercy - Muḥammad, and upon his virtuous progeny, who are the guides of mankind.

This book is a summary on the glorious life of the best woman of the two worlds, the mother of the Infallible Imāms, Fāṭemah al-Zahrā, the 'Human Hourie'.

I have divided this book into four chapters and have further arranged the chapters into different sections:

Chapter 1: Circumstances relating to the birth of Sayyidah Zahrā, her names and the reasons for these names being attributed to her.

Chapter 2: Her virtues and character, and her marriage to Imām 'Alī.

Chapter 3: Incidents after the death of the Prophet, her chivalrous sermon, her resistance, and other related topics.

Chapter 4: Her anxiety and grief upon the separation of her honourable father, her will to Imām 'Alī, and topics relating to her last days.

'Abbās b. Muḥammad Riḍā (May Allāh forgive them both)

