Hadrat Fatima (A.S.) The Sacred Spring of Kawthar

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We have given you Kawthar… Surely your enemy is the one who shall be without posterity.”“ (Holy Quran 109:1,3) God the Almighty revealed the above verses when ‘Amr ibn ‘Aas and Hakam ibn ‘Aas – two of the meanest polytheists of Mecca – mocked Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) following the death of his infant son Taher. They called him abtar which means one who has ceased to have children, since earlier also, two of the Prophet’s sons named Qassim and Tayyeb had died in infancy. For the ignorant minds, it seemed the end of the line for Muhammad (S.A.W.) and his noble wife Khadija (A.S.).

The Almighty Creator, however, had His own plans. He had entrusted Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) with the universal message of Islam, and contrary to the wishes of retarded minds, He had a novel way of ensuring the eternity of His Messenger’s lineage. Not through a son, but through a daughter, in a manner conceptions and remove for good the sigma that was attached to the birth of a girl. Thus, the auspicious day was the 20th of the month of Jamadi al-Akher in Mecca, five years after the proclamation of the divine mission, when the Prophet and Khadija (A.S.) were blessed with that spring of perpetual abundance (Kawthar).

The radiant (az-Zahra) daughter was named Fatima (A.S.), a name that was destined to glow ever brighter throughout Islamic history. In an age when ignorant minds prided on male offspring and regarded the birth of a daughter as a shame, the Prophet rejoiced at her birth. Those were the days when women were denied rights and inheritance, not just by the Arabs but in all contemporary societies. So strong was male chauvinism that means only male offspring was counted as descendants were and the children of a daughter were not regarded as one’s progeny.

But Islam put an end to all those sordid practices and gave women their natural place in society. To serve as a practical paradigm for women of all ages, the Almighty singled out Fatima (A.S.), and decreed that the sons of His beloved Prophet would all die in infancy. Therefore, like her father, Fatima (A.S.) had a mission to perform. She was virtue personified. If Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) was the best exemplar for the human race, as the Quran calls him, she was to be the ideal of womanhood. It was Fatima (A.S.) with her role as a caring daughter, a faithful wife, a loving mother, and a concerned teacher for the growing community of Muslim women, that was to serve as the most perfect example for believing women.

It is said that the Prophet used to stand up when Fatima (A.S.) would enter his presence. It

was not the mere doting of a father for his only surviving child, as some may misconstrue. In fact, the Messenger was giving a practical display of the commands of the Creator, to show to the world Fatima's (A.S.) lofty status.

Fatima (A.S.) for her part, had earned this respect through her selfless struggle and sacrifices for Islam. At every stage of her life, she had given a lesson in the rights and duties of women in society. She was hardly nine when her mother the noble Khadija (A.S.) died. Fatima (A.S.) took upon herself the burden of caring for her father in those days of persecution in Mecca. Her care and concern of her father earned the little Fatima (A.S.) the epithet of Umm Abiha (mother of her father).

After migration to Medina she continued her glorious role. Her marriage was made in heaven. She refused to give her hand to any of the wealthy suitors of Arabia, and in a very simple ceremony married her father's beloved cousin Ali ibn Abi Taalib (A.S.), who did not possess any worldly wealth. The daughter of the "Seal of Prophet-hood" had a modest dowry which included only the bare necessities of life.

The couple made a perfect pair, and used to share all household work between them. Out of the blessed union were born sons Hassan (A.S.) and Hussayn (A.S.), and daughter Zaynab (A.S.) and Umm Kulthum (A.S.) - each one a stalwart in his or her own way, to whom Muslims will forever remain indebted.

Fatima (A.S.), alone among women, accompanied her father, her husband and her two sons to the parley with the Christians of Najran (3:60). And it was Fatima (A.S.) who was the central character of the famous Tradition of the Cloak (Hadith al-Kisa') on the occasion of the revelation of the Verse of Purity:

"Allah desires to remove uncleanness from you Ahl-ul-Bayt and keep you pure as pure can be," (Holy Quran 33:33) As mentioned by authoritative sources, the Almighty introduced to the celestial angels the five persons assembled under the cloak on Planet Earth as "Hum Fatima wa Abuha wa Ba'luha wa Banuha" (They are Fatima (A.S.), her father, her husband and her two sons). The event throws light on the honor and dignity attached to the person of women in Islam, especially that of the virtuous Fatima (A.S.). Even the "Mercy of the Creation" - Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) - was being introduced as Fatima's (A.S.) father. The same was true of Imam Ali (A.S.) and Imam Hussayn (A.S.), who despite their own luminous personalities were being introduced as Fatima's (A.S.) husband and sons.

Another instance of Fatima's (A.S.) revered status is the revelation of the verse: "make not the addressing of the Messenger among you like the summons of one of you to another..." (Holy Quran 24:63), which obliged the companions of the Prophet to address him as O' Messenger

of Allah, instead of calling him by his name or agnomen (kunya).

When Fatima (A.S.) addressed her father with the words “O’ Messenger of Allah”, the Prophet was rather disturbed, and told his beloved daughter: “O, Fatima this verse was not revealed for you, neither for your family nor for your descendants. You are of me and I am of you. This was revealed in relation to the oppressors and the ill mannered of the Quraysh. [When you address me] Say ‘dear father’, for this world is more life-giving for the heart and more pleasing for Allah”.

It is interesting to note that the Prophet’s habit of calling his grandchildren Hassan and Hussayn as “my sons” has been immortalized in the Holy Quran by Allah the Almighty Himself (3:60, Verse of Mubahila).

In fact, it was through Imam Hassan (A.S.) and Imam Hussayn (A.S.) that the Prophet’s progeny has multiplied and spread around the world. The Seyyeds and the Sherifs as they are known today are held in high esteem by Muslims as a mark of respect for Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and his daughter Fatima (A.S.).

Over the past fourteen centuries, dynasties have appeared throughout the Islamic world, claiming to be descendent of Fatima (A.S.). The famous University of al-Azhar in Cario which was founded one thousand years ago by the Fatimaids – who also claimed to be descendent of Fatima (A.S.) – is named after one of her epithets, az-Zahra.

In our own days, the father of the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini (RA), who incidentally was born on the auspicious birth anniversary of Fatima (A.S.), was a direct descendant of that blessed lady, and so is Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the present leader.

The birth anniversary of this great lady has rightly been named as Women’s Day in the Islamic Republic of Iran, for her nurturing role of innate human values.

As for the enmities that mocked the Prophet at the death of his infant son, true to the wordings of the Holy Quran, no one knows when and where in the shifting sands of Arabia did their progeny disappear. Glory to Fatima (A.S.), the Blessed Spring of Kawthar.