

Great Women of the World

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Hazrat Fatima Zahra (upon whom be peace)

The anniversary of Hazrat Fatima's birthday and Women's Day

Tomorrow is Women's Day. It is the day when (the birth of) a woman is commemorated of whom the world is proud. It is the day commemorating a woman whose daughter stood against tyrannical governments, who recited that sermon and uttered those words, of which you are all aware. (1)

16 May 1979 (26 Urdibihisht 1358 AHS)

If a day is to be designated 'Women's Day', what day is more deserving, is prouder, than the day commemorating the joyous birth of Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace, a woman who is the pride of the family of divine revelation, and who, like a sun, shines brightly in the crown of beloved Islam. (2)

5 May 1980 (15 Urdibihisht 1359 AHS)

It is a great day, on which a woman came into the world who compared with all men. A woman came into the world who was an exemplar for mankind. A woman came into the world in whom all traits of a (true) human being were manifest. So today is a great day. It is the day of you women. (3)

17 May 1980 (7 Urdibihisht 1359 AHS)

I convey my best wishes and felicitations to the noble nation of Iran, in particular the respected women, on the immensely happy occasion of the birthday of Fatima Zahra, the most felicitous day to commemorate Women's Day.

This joyous birthday occurred in a place and time when women were not considered to be human beings and their very existence was seen as a source of shame for families among the different tribes of the pre-Islamic times. In such a corrupt and barbaric environment, the great Prophet of Islam took woman's hand and delivered her from the slough of pagan customs. The history of Islam testifies to the limitless respect the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him and his descendants, showed this noble infant, so as to demonstrate that woman has a special greatness in society, and if she is not superior to man, she is certainly no less than him. So this day is the day of woman's revivification, and the day to establish her honour

and the great role she plays in society. (4)

24 April 1981 (4 Urdibihisht 1360 AHS)

Felicitations to the mighty nation of Iran, in particular its great women, on this blessed day of the woman, this illustrious day commemorating a lustrous being who lays the foundations on which mankind's virtues and the exalted values of God's representative in this world are built. And even more blessed and precious is the most felicitous selection of the 20th day of Jumada II (as Women's Day), the proud day of the birth of a woman who is one of history's miracles and who is a source of pride for the world of creation. (5)

14 April 1982 (25 Farvardin 1361 AHS)

I congratulate all you ladies and women in all Islamic countries on this joyous holiday marking the glorious birth of Hazrat Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace. I ask God, the Blessed and Exalted, to guide all the respected women along the path that He has laid down, so that they can achieve lofty Islamic goals. It is a source of great pride for the women that they have designated Hazrat Fatima's birthday as Women's Day; it is a source of pride and responsibility.

(6)

2 March 1986 (11 Isfand 1364 AHS)

In fact, according to the traditions that have been handed down to us, the Most Noble Messenger (peace be upon him and his descendants) and the Imams (upon whom be peace) existed before the creation of the world in the form of lights^{[14][8]} situated beneath the divine throne; they were superior to other men even in the sperm from which they grew and in their physical composition. Their exalted station is limited only by the divine will, as indicated by the saying of Gabriel recorded in the traditions on the mi'raj:^{[15][9]} "Were I to draw closer by as much as the breadth of a finger, surely I would burn."^{[16][10]} The Prophet himself said: "We have states with God that are beyond the reach of the cherubim and the prophets."^{[17][11]} It is part of our belief that the Imams (upon whom be peace) too enjoy similar states, before the question of government even arises. For example, according to the traditions, Hazrat Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace, also possessed these states, even though she was not a ruler, a judge or a governor. These states are quite distinct from the function of government. So when we say that Hazrat Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace, was neither a judge nor a ruler, this does not mean that she was like you and me, or that she has no spiritual superiority over us.

Islamic Government, pp. 64-65.

What proves our suggested possibility concerning the truth of the 'Night of Power' (or Decree) Lailat al-qadr^{[18][12]} is the lengthy noble hadith,^{[19][13]} which appears in the exegesis of al-Burhan (Tafsir al-Burhan) and is quoted from the book al-Kafi, ^{[20][14]} in which it is said that when a Christian asked Imam Musa ibn Ja'far^{[21][15]} about the hidden meaning of the Qur'anic verse: "Ha Mim. By the book that makes things clear. We sent it down during a

blessed night, for We ever wish to warn against evil. In that night is made distinct every affair of wisdom," (Qur'an 44:1-4),[22][16] he replied, "As to the meaning of Ha Mim, it is Muhammad, peace be upon him and his descendants. The 'book that makes things clear' is Amir al-Muminin 'Ali, upon whom be peace, and the 'night' is Fatima, upon whom be peace."[23][17]

Adab al-Salat, p. 329

Amongst the supererogatory prayers to be performed after the prescribed prayer (salat) are the tasbihat[24][18] of Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace, which the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his descendants, taught her and which are the most preferred of such prayers.[25][19] It is in the hadith that had there been anything better, the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his descendants, would have presented Fatima, upon whom be peace, with it.

Adab al-Salat, p. 377

The divine personality of Hazrat Fatima Zahra (upon whom be peace)

All dimensions that one can imagine exist for a woman and a human being were personified in Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace. She was not an ordinary woman; she was a spiritual woman, a heavenly woman, a human being in the true sense of the word. She was the incarnation of human goodness; she personified the true nature of woman and the true nature of the human being. She was not an ordinary woman, she was a heavenly being who appeared in this world in the form of a human being, she was a divine, celestial being who appeared in the form of a woman. She personified all the very best human and female traits that one can imagine. Tomorrow[26][20] then is Women's Day, tomorrow is the day on which such a woman was born.

She was a woman who embodied all the virtues of the prophets, a woman who, had she been a man, would have been a prophet, a woman who, had she been a man, would have been the Messenger of God. Spiritual qualities, heavenly qualities, divine qualities, celestial qualities, human and angelic qualities all came together in this being. She was a human being in the full sense of the word, a woman in the full sense of the word. Tomorrow then is Women's Day.

Tomorrow is the day when woman's dignity and woman's character came into being. Various dimensions exist for the woman just as they do for a man, for human beings in general. This external, physical side is the lowest stage of a human being's development, be it man or woman, but it is from this inferior stage that the human being moves towards perfection. Man is a moving being, moving from the physical towards the metaphysical stage, towards annihilation in God. In Fatima Zahra's case these stages have been attained. She

began from the physical stage and moved on. She proceeded through the stages of a spiritual movement assisted by divine power, by the invisible hand, by the teachings of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his descendants) until she reached the stage that all others could not reach. Tomorrow then is the day on which all aspects of woman were materialised, and woman in all her dimensions was incarnated. Tomorrow is Women's Day. (7)

16 May 1979 (26 Urdibihisht 1358 AHS)

It is a great day; a woman came into the world who compared with all men. A woman came into the world who exemplified humanity. A woman came into the world in whom all traits of a (true) human being were manifest. So today is a great day. It is the day of you women. (8)

17 May 1980 (27 Urdibihisht 1359 AHS)

Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace, a woman who is the pride of the family of divine revelation and who like a sun shines brightly in the crown of beloved Islam; a woman whose virtues were on a par with the endless virtues of the Most Noble Messenger and the household of infallibility and purity; a woman for whom everyone, with whatever viewpoint he may hold, has praises, yet none has been able to offer her adequate praise. The hadiths[27][21] that have come down to us from the family of divine revelation are such that the listener can easily understand, for one cannot contain a sea in a bottle. And whatever others have said in her praise was according to their own level of understanding not commensurate with her standing.

So let us leave this vale of wonder . . . (9)

5 May 1980 (15 Urdibihisht 1359 AHS)

And I hope you will accept and perform those duties you are obliged to carry out, which are to strive both in the area of education, which is an important matter, and in the defence of Islam. These are among the important tasks the performance of which is incumbent on every man and woman, on the young and old alike. (10)

2 March 1986 (11 Isfand 1364 AHS)

I do not consider myself adequate to the task of speaking about Hazrat Fatima, upon whom be peace, so I will suffice with reciting a sound tradition[28][22] which can be found in Usul al-Kafi.[29][23] This tradition quotes Hazrat Sadiq,[30][24] upon whom be peace, as saying: "After the death of her father, Fatima, upon whom be peace, lived for seventy-five days. She was in this world and she was overcome with grief. Gabriel, the Trusted Spirit, came to her regularly to console her and tell her of future events."

So according to this tradition, in these seventy-five days she had contact with Gabriel, he came and went many times. I do not think that such a thing has happened for anyone else other than the great prophets of the highest rank, that in seventy-five days Gabriel, the Trusted Spirit,

came and went and spoke of events that would take place in the future, spoke of things that would happen to her offspring in the future.

Hazrat Amir[31][25] wrote down what Gabriel said, he was the writer of these revelations just as he had been the writer of the revelations the Noble Messenger had received - of course with the death of the Noble Messenger those revelations which brought divine laws ended. He was the writer of the revelations that were made to Hazrat Fatima during these seventy-five days. Gabriel's appearing to someone should not be taken as a trivial affair. One should not imagine that Gabriel would appear to just anyone. The necessary relationship has to exist between the spirit of that person to whom Gabriel would appear and Gabriel's station as the paramount spirit. Whether we believe that it is the greatness of the spirit of the saint or prophet that brings Gabriel down to this lower station, or that it is God who sends him to make such revelations, whether we side with the speculatists in their views or those who interpret the literal meaning in theirs, it still remains that unless the necessary relationship exists between the spirit of that person to whom Gabriel would appear and Gabriel, the paramount spirit, then it would be impossible for such a thing to happen.

The relationship existed between Gabriel, the paramount spirit, and the prophets of the highest rank such as the Messenger of God, Moses, Jesus and Abraham. It did not exist with just anyone, and after these prophets it did not exist with anyone else. Indeed, I have not even heard of Gabriel descending to the Imams as he did to the prophets. As far as I know it was only to Hazrat Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace, that Gabriel appeared repeatedly during the period of these seventy-five days, revealing future events which would take place for her offspring and which Hazrat Amir recorded. Perhaps he spoke to her about the time of her exalted offspring Hazrat Sahib,[32][26] upon whom be peace, in which case he may have mentioned events in Iran too; who knows, it is possible.

Be that as it may, I consider the fact that Gabriel appeared to her when he had appeared to no one other than the prophets, upon whom be peace - and even then not all the prophets, only those of the highest rank - and some of the saints who are of the same rank as them, to demonstrate her nobility and moral excellence better than any other virtue with which she is attributed, even though those virtues too are important. The fact that she had communication with Gabriel in those seventy-five days, and that he has appeared to no one since then, demonstrates an excellence, which is, but one of the characteristics of Hazrat Fatima, upon whom be peace. (11)

2 March 1986 (11 Isfand 1364 AHS)

My pen and words are unable to describe adequately the great and extensive resistance of

millions of Muslims enamoured of service, self-sacrifice and martyrdom in this country of the Lord of the Age (may our souls be sacrificed for him). Nor can I do justice to the epic events which have taken place, the acts of bravery, the good deeds and the service performed by the spiritual children of Kauthar, Hazrat Fatima, upon whom be peace, all of which spring from the knowledge gained from Islam and the family of the Prophet and from the blessings gained by following the path of the Imam of 'Ashura[33][27]. (12)

5 February 1987 (16 Isfand 1365 AHS)

We are honoured that the vivifying prayers, which are called the 'ascending recitation' come from our Infallible Imams. We are proud that the Sha'ban invocations[34][28] of the Imams, the Prayer of Husayn ibn 'Ali (upon whom be peace) on the Day of 'Arafa,[35][29] the prayers of the Sahifa-yi Sajjadiya [36][30] known as the 'Psalms of the Family of the Holy Prophet', and the Sahifa-yi Fatimiya, which is a book of God's revelations to Hazrat Fatima, are from us. (13)

5 June 1990 (15 Khurdad 1368 AHS)

Hazrat Fatima Zahra's home and its blessings

Hazrat Amir (Imam `Ali), upon whom be peace, was the leader of all Muslims with a domain perhaps ten times larger than today's Iran. It extended from the Hijaz to Egypt and even farther into Africa, reaching parts of Europe. Yet when this divine leader sat with a group of people, just as we are sitting here now, even this[37][31] was not beneath him. He possessed one pelisse, which, tradition holds, he and Hazrat Fatima would sleep upon at night and during the day he would scatter grass upon for his camel to eat. This was also the kind of lifestyle the Prophet had. This is Islam. (14)

4 July 1979 (13 Tir 1358 AHS)

The ideology was being erased and destroyed by the deviationists remaining from the Age of Ignorance[38][32] and by the calculated plans for the revival of nationalism and Arabism with the slogan 'no message received, no revelation revealed',[39][33] the just Islamic government was being turned into a monarchical regime and Islam and the revelation dragged into obscurity, when suddenly a great figure, who had been nourished by the juice of divine revelation, nurtured in the household of the lord of the messengers, Muhammad Mustafa, and the lord of the Imams, `Ali Murtaza (Imam `Ali), and raised in the care of Siddiqah Tahera (Hazrat Fatima), rose up and through his unequalled sacrifice and movement for God created a great incident Wafat, which brought the palaces of the oppressors tumbling down and saved the ideology of Islam. (15)

16 June 1980 (26 Khurdad 1359 AHS)

This small house of Fatima's, upon whom be peace, and these people reared there, who

numbered four or five, in reality manifested all the power of God the Exalted. They rendered services at which all of us, all of mankind, marvel. (16)

9 March 1982 (18 Isfand 1360 AHS)

A woman in a small room of a humble home nurtured human beings whose light shone from the vast expanse of the earth to the highest heavens, from this world to the next. May the blessings and peace of God the Exalted be upon this small room, which was the place where the light of divine majesty was made manifest and was the nursery of the elite children of mankind. (17)

14 April 1982 (25 Farvardin 1361 AHS)

We had a humble dwelling in the early days of Islam and that belonged to Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace. It was even smaller than these rooms here,[40][34] but what blessings it bestowed. The blessings that came from this small hut were such that they filled the world with enlightenment. And man would have to traverse a great distance before he could reach the station of those who bestowed these blessings, for the dwellers of this humble home occupy such a high station in the spiritual realm that even the hands of the angels cannot reach them, and their teachings are such that whatever good one sees in the Muslim lands, especially in our land, comes from their blessings. (18)

21 March 1983 (1 Farvardin 1362 AHS)

In the exegesis of Al-Burhan (Tafsir al-Burhan), there is a narrative from Hazrat Baqir.[41][35] Being a noble hadith referring to several pieces of information and disclosing important secrets, we will, owing to its blessedness, relate it in full: The author of Tafsir al-Burhan, may God have mercy on him, quoting a narrative from `Abdullah ibn `Ajlan as-Sakuni who quoted from the men of Shaykh Abu Ja`far at-Tusi who quoted Abu Ja`far himself who said: I heard Abu Ja`far (Imam Baqir), upon whom be peace, say: The house of `Ali and Fatima was the room of the Messenger of God, upon whom be peace, and the roof of their house was the Throne of the Lord of the worlds. At the back of their house there was an opening to the Throne, the curtain before the stairs of revelation having been raised. And the angels would bring down revelation to them in the morning, in the evening and at any hour or any moment. The comings and goings of groups of angels were endless. Verily did God, the Blessed and Exalted, draw back the curtain on the heavens for Abraham till he saw the Throne and He increased his seeing power. And verily did God increase the seeing power of Muhammad, `Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn, upon whom be peace. They would look at the Throne and they found no roof over their home except the Throne. Their home was roofed with the Throne of the Beneficent, and "therein ascend the angels and the Spirit by God's permission on every

affair, in peace," (Qur'an 97:4-5). I asked: "For every affair?" He replied: "For every affair." I asked: "Is this what was revealed?" He replied: "Yes."

Adab al-Salat, p. 448

The way of life of Hazrat Fatima (upon whom be peace)

We must take this family as our role model, our women should try to emulate their women, and our men their men. All of us should learn from all of them. They dedicated their lives to the support of the oppressed and to the revival of the divine traditions. We should follow their example and dedicate our lives to them. He who knows the history of Islam, knows that each member of this family was a perfect human being, even more than that, a divine being, a spiritual person who rose up for the people and for the oppressed against those who sought to destroy them. (19)

11 April 1979 (22 Farvardin 1358 AHS)

The exemplar is Hazrat Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace. The exemplar is the Prophet of Islam. We can say that our country is Islamic, that we have an Islamic Republic when all these ideals that are contained in Islam are realised. (20)

29 May 1979 (8 Khurdad 1358 AHS)

The speech of Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace, decrying the government, the uprising of the Commander of the Faithful (Imam `Ali), his forbearance over twenty odd years while helping the government of the time, and later his sacrifice in the way of Islam and the sacrifice made by his two dear sons: Imam Mujtaba,[42][36] who discredited the tyrannical Umayyad government through the great service he rendered; and Imam Mujtaba's dear brother, the Lord of the Martyrs (Imam Husayn), with the great service he rendered, are things about which you are all aware.

We know that despite the fact they were few in number and their weapons were insufficient, the divine spirit and the spirit of belief made them such that they were able to prevail over all the tyrants of their age, revive Islam and set an example for us all, dear brothers, which is that we should stand fast against all the powers that today have risen up in war against us, even though our numbers be few, our weapons insufficient and our readiness incomplete.

And we shall also follow our Imams, upon whom be peace, in the example they set by demonstrating that one must stand against the arrogant ones armed sometimes with words and at others with weapons, and put them in their place. (21)

9 March 1982 (18 Isfand 1360 AHS)

Strive to purify your character and to make your friends do likewise. Strive so that you react to the outrages committed against you. In your attempts to uphold all the qualities that make up

the great character of woman, be as that unique woman, Hazrat Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace, was. All of us should take our exemplar from Islam by looking at her and her children, and being as she was. Strive to acquire learning and godliness, for learning is not the preserve of any one person, learning is for all, godliness is for all, and striving to acquire learning and achieve godliness is the duty of us all. (22)

12 March 1985 (21 Isfand 1363 AHS)

Likewise, if you women here, indeed all our women all over the country, have accepted today as Women's Day, that is, have accepted the day which marks the birthday of Hazrat Fatima Zahra, with all the perfection it represents and the position it enjoys, as Women's Day, then you have a great task to perform, one which includes struggle, just as she struggled, to the best of her ability, during the short span of her life, addressing the governments of the time and passing judgement on them. To truly accept her birthday as Women's Day, you must imitate her. To truly accept it you must follow her example in her renunciation of the things of this world, in her devotion and piety and in all the virtues she possessed. If you do not do this, then you have not entered into the true spirit of Women's Day. Whoever does not accept these things has not entered into the true spirit of Women's Day and has not recognised its true nature. (23)

2 March 1986 (11 Isfand 1364 AHS)

It is greatly regrettable that yesterday (Saturday 28 January 1989 / 8 Bahman 1368 AHS) the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting organisation broadcast a derogatory remark about the role model for women, a remark which one is ashamed to repeat. The person who allowed such a remark to be broadcast will be punished and removed from office, and the others involved in this matter will also be punished. If it is proven that the intention was to insult and disparage, then most certainly the person guilty will be sentenced to death. If an incident of this kind is repeated, then the top officials at the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting will receive a severe reprimand and will be punished. Of course all stages of the investigation will be in the hands of the Judiciary. (24)

29 January 1989 (9 Bahman 1367 AHS)

The Philosophy of Imamate as held by Hazrat Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace
In order to assure the unity of the Islamic umma,[43][37] in order to liberate the Islamic homeland from occupation and penetration by the imperialists and their puppet governments, it is imperative that we establish a government. In order to attain the unity and freedom of the Muslim peoples, we must overthrow the oppressive governments installed by the imperialists and bring into existence an Islamic government of justice that will be in the service of the people. The formation of such a government will serve to preserve the order and unity of the

Muslims. Just as Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace, said in her address: "The Imamate exists for the sake of preserving order among the Muslims and replacing their disunity with unity."

Islamic Government, p. 49.

The complete texts of messages and some speeches given on the occasion of Women's Day

Imam Khomeini's Message on Women's Day

I seek refuge in God from the accursed Satan

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Tomorrow marks the birthday of Siddiqah Tahera Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace; it is Women's Day. All dimensions that one can imagine exist for a woman and a human being were personified in Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace. She was not an ordinary woman; she was a spiritual woman, a heavenly woman, a human being in the true sense of the word.

She was the incarnation of human goodness; she personified the true nature of woman and the true nature of the human being. She was not an ordinary woman, she was a heavenly being who appeared in this world in the form of a human being, she was a divine, celestial being who appeared in the form of a woman. She personified all the very best human and female traits that one can imagine. Tomorrow^[44]^[38] then is Women's Day, tomorrow is the day on which such a woman was born.

She was a woman who embodied all the virtues of the prophets, a woman who, had she been a man, would have been a prophet, a woman who, had she been a man, would have been the Messenger of God. Spiritual qualities, heavenly qualities, divine qualities, celestial qualities, human and angelic qualities all came together in this being. She was a human being in the full sense of the word, a woman in the full sense of the word. Tomorrow then is Women's Day.

Tomorrow is the day when woman's dignity and woman's character came into being. Various dimensions exist for the woman just as they do for a man, for human beings in general. This external, physical side is the lowest stage of a human being's development, be it man or woman, but it is from this inferior stage that the human being moves towards perfection. Man is a moving being, moving from the physical towards the metaphysical stage, towards annihilation in God. In Fatima Zahra's case these stages have been attained. She began from the physical stage and moved on. She proceeded through the stages of a spiritual movement assisted by divine power, by the invisible hand, by the teachings of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him and his descendants) until she reached the stage that all others could not reach.

Tomorrow then is the day on which all aspects of woman were materialised, and woman in all

her dimensions was incarnated. Tomorrow is Women's Day. Unfortunately, women have suffered from victimisation in the past, notably in two periods. The first was during the Age of Ignorance, the period before the advent of Islam. During this time, women were oppressed; they were treated like animals, even worse than animals. Then Islam came and bestowed its blessings on mankind, it dragged women out of that state of oppression; it pulled her from that slough of ignorance. The second period when women have been oppressed occurred in our Iran, during the reigns of the former Shah (Riza Khan) and his son (Muhammad Riza). In the name of wanting to liberate women, they oppressed the women; they committed outrages against them. They dragged them down from that position of honour and esteem that they occupied, from that spiritual position that they enjoyed, making them instead mere objects. In the name of freedom, freedom for women and freedom for men, they deprived men and women of their freedom. They corrupted our women and our youth. The Shah (Muhammad Riza) believed women should be 'ravishing and beguiling' as he put it. Of course it was because he had allowed the animal aspect of his nature, the base animal aspect with its concern for the physical, for the material, to overcome him that he viewed women as such. Accordingly, he pulled women down from their position as human beings to the level of an animal, and on the plea of wanting to give women status, he dragged her down from the status she enjoyed to a lower one. He turned women into dolls, whereas women are human beings, great human beings. Women are the educators of society. It is from the laps of women that true human beings originate. The first stage in the development of sound men and women begins in the lap of a woman. Women are the educators of human beings. A country's success or its misfortune depends on women. If they impart sound teachings, they create (sound) human beings and a flourishing country. Good fortune originates from the laps of women, they should be the source of every success and happiness, yet unfortunately this father and son, in particular this son, turned women into playthings. The number of crimes they perpetrated against the women they did not perpetrate against the men. Women are the source of all blessings. We all saw what role the women played in this movement. History has witnessed great women in the world and what it means to be a woman, but history is remote. We ourselves have witnessed the kind of woman Islam has nurtured. In this recent period, the women who rose up were the veiled women from the south of the city, from Qum and other places where Islam enjoys a strong foothold. Those who had the type of upbringing that the Aryamehr[45][39] decreed did not participate in this uprising at all. They were given a training that was depraving and corrupt and were

deprived of Islamic teachings, whereas those who were given an Islamic education shed blood, sacrificed lives, poured into the streets and brought the movement to victory. Our movement is indebted to them. The men poured into the streets after the women; the women encouraged the men; they formed the vanguard.

Women are creatures who can destroy a power that seems everlasting, a demonic power. During their reigns, Riza Khan and Muhammad Riza Khan vulgarised women, dragging them down from that status they once enjoyed, doing the same to the men and youth too. Numerous centres of corruption were created for our youth. In the name of freedom, in the name of progress, in the name of civilisation, they dragged our youth into corruption. In the name of freedom, they deprived us of all freedoms.

Those who lived through the Riza Khan period understand perfectly well what I am talking about, they witnessed for themselves what we were put through and what our respected women were put through, just as those who lived through Muhammad Riza's era saw what went on then. With deceptive words and bombastic terms, they set our country on a course for destruction. And worse than everything else, much worse, was the fact that they corrupted our youth.

Our human resources were put in a state of backwardness because of them. Women during the time of Riza Khan and Muhammad Riza Pahlavi were oppressed creatures and did not know it. It is doubtful that women were subjected to as much oppression during the Age of Ignorance as they were during the reigns of these two men, or as much degradation. In both periods (the Age of Ignorance and under the Pahlavis), women were oppressed. In the first, Islam came and rescued them from their bondage, and in this period too I hope that Islam will be able to take their hands and save them from the maelstrom of abjectness and oppression.

Oh honourable women, awaken! Be alert; do not let yourselves be deceived by those devils who wish to pull you into this maelstrom. They are alluring and deceitful; they are out to cheat you just as the cursed Shah was. Take refuge in Islam. Islam will bring you happiness. Tomorrow is Women's Day; it is the day when (the birth of) a woman is commemorated of whom the world is proud.

It is the day commemorating a woman whose daughter stood against tyrannical rulers, who recited that sermon and uttered those words, words of which you are all aware---a woman who stood up to a tyrant who would kill anyone who breathed a word against him. She was not afraid; she held her ground and condemned him, condemned Yazid and his leadership. She lambasted him saying he was not fit to be called a human being.

This is what women should be like, and, praise be to God, this is how the women of our day are. They stood against the tyrant with clenched fists carrying their infants in their arms and helped the movement.

May God keep us from the evil of devils.

May God keep our youth from the evil of these human devils.

May God keep our women and our girls from their evil. (25)

16 May 1979 (26 Urdibihisht 1358 AHS)

Imam Khomeini's address to a gathering of women on the occasion of Women's Day

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

The day is great, the gathering grand and the place blessed. It is the day commemorating the birth of Fatima Zahra, Women's Day. It is a victorious day for women, the day of the exemplar for women in the world. Women play a very important role in society. The realisation of mankind's hopes lies in her hands. She is the educator of great men and women. It is from the laps of women that man begins his ascent. It is in the laps of women that great men and great women are nurtured. It is a great day; a woman came into the world who compares with all men.

A woman came into the world who is an exemplar for mankind. A woman came into the world in whom all the traits of a (true) human being were manifest. So today is a great day. It is the day of you women.

In our era, women have shown that they stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their menfolk in the struggle; one could even go so far as to say that they lead the way. Iranian women have undertaken both great human and financial endeavours. This respected class of women from the south of Tehran, from Qum and other cities, these veiled ladies, these symbols of virtuousness, took the lead in the movement and in financial sacrifice, donating their jewels and gold to the oppressed. And the most important issue here is that one's intentions are pure. For the few loaves of bread that Hazrat Amir (Imam `Ali), upon whom be peace, and his family gave in charity, God revealed several (Qur'anic) verses. These verses were revealed not because of the loaves of bread, but because the intention was pure, it was an act done for God.

The value of an action lies in its spiritual motives.

The actions of those sisters who took part in the movement were more valuable than those of the men; they came out (into the streets) in their veils of modesty and shouting in unison with the men brought about victory. Now, with the purest of intentions, what they had accumulated during their lives they donated to the needy. This is worth much, were the affluent to donate millions it would not match this in value.

So Women's Day is an important day, and today is Women's Day. Today is the day of you veiled ladies. This is a great gathering, a gathering of the different strata of those who (hitherto) could not come together, whom repression prevented from coming together. Today all have come together, men and women have come together in a brotherly and sisterly fashion at a holy place, at Fayziya,[46][40] at the place from which knowledge flows to all regions, the place at which divine laws are elucidated, the place from which knowledge and the knowledge of jihad is disseminated. The men and women of Qum are exemplary in their learning and their willingness to act, as are the men and women of Iran on the whole.

My friends, maintain this community and this unity. The devils seek to cause dissension among you. Preserve this ideological unity; preserve this uprising for God. As long as your uprising is for God, you will be victorious. Those who, using various pretexts, try to create divisions, are betraying the nation, betraying the country and betraying Islam. Be vigilant and neutralise their actions and their machinations.

Those who try to create disturbances and discord among the different segments of the population throughout the country are foreign agents, they are agents of America; they are American mercenaries. They receive money from the other side of the border, which they distribute to the workers to persuade them to down tools. They want them to stop working so the factories won't operate. The farmers are prevented from getting on with their work. Oh honourable workers! Dear farmers!

Continue with your work. Stop indulging in these ideological differences. Now is the time for everyone to be working for Islam and for his country. All of you are duty bound to do so. Those who try to prevent you from working want to open the way for their masters, they want to return us to that abjectness and suffering we once had to endure. May God protect you from their malice.

May He render Islam and the Muslims victorious.

May He give us the power of discernment.

May God grant you health and happiness.

Peace be upon you and also the mercy and blessings of God. (26)

17 May 1979 (27 Urdibihisht 1358 AHS)

Imam Khomeini's message for Women's Day

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

If a day is to be designated 'Women's Day', what day is more deserving, is prouder, than the day commemorating the joyous birth of Fatima Zahra, upon whom be peace, a woman who is the pride of the family of divine revelation and who like a sun shines brightly in the crown of

beloved Islam; a woman whose virtues were on a par with the endless virtues of the Most Noble Messenger and the household of infallibility and purity; a woman for whom everyone, with whatever viewpoint he may hold, has praises, yet none has been able to offer her adequate praise.

The hadiths that have come down to us from the family of divine revelation are such that the listener can easily understand, for one cannot contain a sea in a bottle. And whatever others have said in her praise was according to their own level of understanding, not commensurate with her standing. So let us leave this vale of wonder and turn to the virtues of women in general.

During this past half-century of blackness and bondage, this opprobrious Pahlavi era, the poisonous pens of the misguided and the words of benighted speakers sought to give women the status of a commodity, and those women who were vulnerable were drawn to centres that the pen is ashamed to mention. Anyone wishing to know something of these crimes can refer to the newspapers and magazines of the Riza Khan era, to the poems of the blackguards and scoundrels of that period, that corrupt period from the compulsory unveiling of women onwards. One can find out about the social gatherings of those days and the centres of corruption that existed.

Shame on those people. May the pens of such intellectuals be broken. Do not think that the crimes perpetrated on the plea of freedom for women and freedom for men had nothing to do with the plans of the world-plunderers and the international criminals. One of their plans was to lure the youth into the centres of vice and fornication, and in this they succeeded. Consequently, our country was deprived of young people who were active members of society. They robbed the youth of their ability to think, and brainwashed them into believing that they should be indifferent to the plundering and pillaging they carried out in this blighted country of xenomaniacs.[47][41]

Today, through the blessings of the Islamic movement, women are effective members of society, and have to a certain degree regained their proper standing. There are still a limited number of women in the upper echelons of society who have inherited the views of the black period of the former vile regime and consider women's proper standing to lie in prinking, in making herself up and participating in bacchanalian revelry.

They have made themselves into an article of trade, they are the followers and agents of the previous regime, the executors of the foreigners' plans and the helpers of the CIA and SAVAK. Apart from these, the women of Iran today are committed, lion-hearted individuals who shoulder-to-shoulder with our dear men are busy rebuilding their beloved country just as they

are busy rebuilding themselves through learning and education. You will not find a town or village without cultural or scientific centres composed of dedicated and honourable Muslim women. Through the blessings of Islam, the Islamic movement has brought about such a change in the spirit of the men and women of our society that they have travelled a road in one night that would have normally taken a hundred years to travel.

You noble people witnessed for yourselves how the respected, committed women of Iran entered the arena ahead of the men to free the country from the trammels of imperial rule. We are all indebted to them for their uprising and their efforts. After defeating the superpowers and eradicating their corrupt roots, we can truly designate a day as Women's Day and tell the world about women and their progress in the Islamic Republic with pride and honour.

Today, women in the Islamic Republic are striving shoulder-to-shoulder with the men to rebuild their country and rebuild themselves. This is the true meaning of free men and free women, not that which was promulgated during the reign of the deposed Shah, for freedom then meant prison, repression and torture. I advise the women to forget the habits of the taghut[48][42] era and rebuild beloved Iran, which belongs to them and their children, such that with the help of all segments of the population it is freed from all aspects of (foreign) dependence.

I offer my best wishes to the committed women on this 20th day of Jumada II, which is a blessed day, and pray to God the Exalted for their health and happiness and for the greatness of Islam and the Muslims. (27)

Ruhullah al-Musawi al-Khomeini

5 May 1980 (15 Urdibihisht 1359)

Imam Khomeini's message on the occasion of Women's Day

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

I convey my best wishes and felicitations to the noble nation of Iran, in particular the respected women, on the immensely happy occasion of the birthday of Fatima Zahra, the most felicitous day to commemorate Women's Day.

This joyous birthday occurred in a place and time when women were not considered to be human beings and their very existence was seen as a source of shame for families among the different tribes of the pre-Islamic times. In such a corrupt and barbaric environment, the great

Prophet of Islam took woman's hand and delivered her from the slough of pagan customs. The history of Islam testifies to the limitless respect the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him and his descendants, showed this noble infant, so as to demonstrate that woman had a special greatness in society, and if she was not superior to man, she was certainly no less than him. So this day is the day of woman's revivification, and the day to

establish her honour and the great role she plays in society.

I am proud of these honourable women of Iran and the change they have wrought in themselves, a change that has brought to naught the devilish plans which the foreign strategists and their dishonourable stooges, from the profligate poets to the venal writers and propaganda organisations, have spent more than fifty years trying to bring to maturity. They have proved that the worthy Muslim women (of Iran) will not be misled and will not be hurt by the malicious machinations of the West and of those infatuated with the West. Even with all the propaganda which was trumpeted over those propaganda loudspeakers throughout the usurpatory reign of the Pahlavis, apart from a handful of affluent taghuti women, agents of SAVAK and people affiliated to them, millions of committed women from other segments of the population did not fall into the trap of those who had surrendered themselves to the West, and throughout the fifty years of benightment, standing proud before God and mankind, they bravely resisted the onslaught. Consequently, through this recent, divinely inspired change which has taken place, the hopes of the undiscerning, who regard the West as their qibla,[49][43] have been dashed forever.

May the Islamic movement of the great women of Iran be victorious and glorious. Glory be to this exalted segment of the population who with their valuable and brave contribution to the defence of the Islamic homeland and the venerable Qur'an brought victory to the revolution, and who today are actively involved in the war effort, either at the front or in other areas, and are prepared to make sacrifices.

May God's mercy be upon those mothers who sent their strong sons to the battlefield to defend Truth and who take pride in their subsequent invaluable martyrdom. Shame on those dolls who live a base animal life in loathsome palaces abroad and at home and who think of nothing save depravation. May they be severed the tongues and hands of those criminals who with their words and writings are striving to destroy the Islamic Republic and drag our dear country into the laps of the Left or Right!

Endless salutations to the committed women who are currently busy all over the country rearing children, teaching the illiterate and educating people in the rich culture of the Qur'an. May God's blessings be upon those women who have attained the high station of martyrdom in this revolution and in defence of their homeland, and upon those who are helping the sick and invalid in the clinics and hospitals. Greetings to those mothers who gave their children (for the cause) with pride and honour. Good wishes to you committed women in Islamic countries on Women's Day.

It is hoped that the community of women will cease being indifferent and will awaken from the

unnatural stupor the plunderers have forced them into, and that together, shoulder-to-shoulder, they will help those who have been deceived and guide them to the lofty station which is theirs. It is also hoped that women in the other Islamic countries will take lessons from the miraculous change that has occurred in the Iranian women as a result of the great Islamic revolution, and will strive to reform their society and bring freedom and independence to their countries.

May God's mercy and blessings be upon the honourable women of Islam and beloved Iran.

God's peace be upon His servants amongst the men and women believers. (28)

Ruhullah al-Musawi al-Khomeini

(24 April 1981 (4 Urdibihisht 1360 AHS