The Most Awesome Women of the Qur'an





INTRODUCTION

woman in Islam is something unique, something that has no similarities in any other system. As far as 'equality' goes, contrary to popular misconception, Islam has long recognised the equality of men and women as human beings. It is to it's credit that it does not commit hypocrisy and claim them to be identical.

If we look at any civilisation in the history of humankind, we will not find a woman playing a role in it's establishment where it can be attributed to her efforts. The Greek philosophers and others were all men, the Church writers were men and even today women scholarship is limited. The French Revolution and the Russians were men and the founding of the US were men. It is only in the establishment of Islam that we find women playing a central role in the actualisation of it's teachings.

Man and woman represent two forms of divine energy; they are the male and female elements of a single nafs (soul).

O people! have taqwa for your Rabb Who created you from a single nafs and created it's partner from it... ?? 4:1

Every aspect of the universe is distinguished by these two dimensions. Men and women are given different tools by Allah to attain a common goal: their physiological, emotional and psychological differences are a result of their divergent spiritual mandates. By nature men are physically stronger; he is more aggressive and outdoor orientated. In dramatic contrast a woman embodies the ideal of inner dignity. Society sometimes mistakes this subtlety as a weakness but in truth it is more formidable than aggressive physical force. True human dignity does not holler, it resonates from within.

The actualisation of the noblest and most intellectual ideas is done by women. Even Jalaluddin Rumi in his Mathnawi writes: "In the view of intellect, heaven is the man and earth the woman, whatever the one throws down, the other nurtures."

Women are better at harnessing and nurturing spiritual and emotional energy.

The mandate of a Muslim woman is clearly defined. Her primary role is to build the basis of the structure of a society. It is she who is to provide the invisible foundation of a nucleus from which all human beings build their lives. Many

intellectual and spiritual seeds have been sown in the Muslim world, it is time a Muslim woman came home to her spiritual mandate and nurtured them, actualise them so that they can grow and flourish in future generations.

For this role it is essential that she is educated. For it is, the one single factor within our control that directly influences who we are as a people. We will only 'succeed' if women are educated. By education it is not merely learning the skills to make a living, or pursuing a vocation but also learning to understand life itself. The 'why' of education must precede the 'how'.

The role models in this book are those who shaped and inspired their communities without compromising their roles as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers and grandmothers making an impact whose ripples continued to motivate. They all succeeded because of their unshakable conviction in their spiritual mandates accorded by Allah.

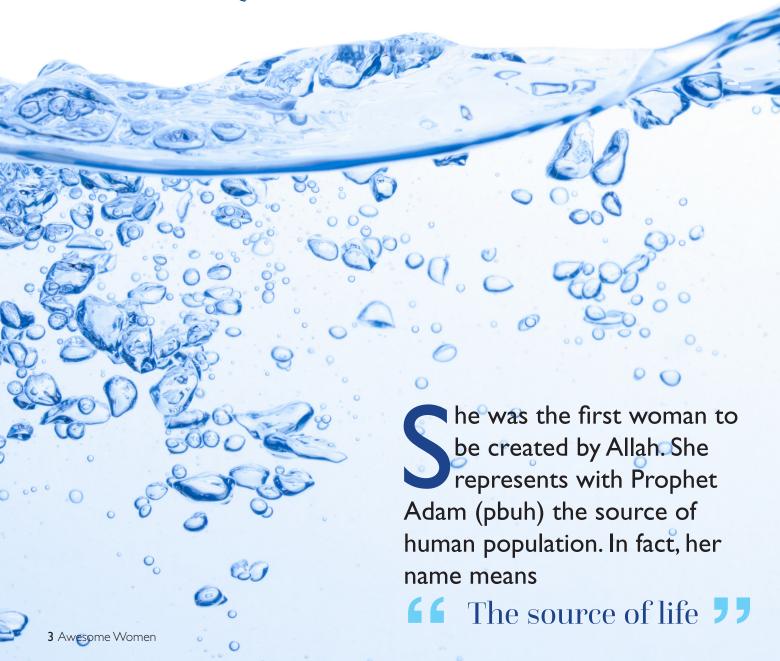
These were women who despite being restricted by their ancient cultures which we cannot even try to comprehend in our times, broke the mould and became timeless role models, inspirers and embodiments of what a human being can do.

They all reflected Divinity...

HAWWA (EVE)

Reflections:

- I. Did her heart hurt when she thought of being deceived by Shaytan?
- 2. Did she complain to Allah like Yaqub did when Habil was murdered by his brother. What thoughts went through her mind about her son Qabil?



Prophet Adam (pbuh) was the richest man created, however he still felt incomplete. Allah then creates Hawwa at which point Adam (pbuh) feels complete. They are both warned against Shaytan but having never experienced deceit in their lives find that when they are approached by him to be promised the 'completeness' they felt to last forever, they succumb and eat of the tree they were advised not to approach. Realising their error immediately, they ask for forgiveness.

Allah forgives them but they are sent down to earth for which they were created. They arrive at the Mountain of Mercy in Arafat, travel to Muzdalifa (literally meaning a place where you

spend a night) and go down to the valley of Bakka (Makka) where Jibrail indicates the position of Ka'ba and Prophet Adam (pbuh) builds it.

Adam (pbuh) wishes for a permanent structure and a prototype made of Ruby is sent. The boundary of the haram is indicated by the light reflected of the cube. A stone from Janna on which they did sajda is sent down.

This then becomes black (today called the Hajarul Aswad). Adam (pbuh) is told to do tawaf. On completion, he looks for Hawwa climbing the nearest mountain (Saffa). He sees her on Marwa and walks toward her, he is stopped by Jibrail who asks him to cut his nails and hair - to be presentable (the first tagseer).



2:35, 36

7:19-23

18:50-51

20:121

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Their first born sons Habil & Qabil are mentioned in the Qur'an in 5:27

Traditionally, the final resting place of Hawwa (pbuh) is said to be in Jeddah (meaning grandmother and named after her) in Saudi Arabia.

SARAH & HAJRA (Hagar)



Indeed there is for you a good example in Ibrahim and those with him. 55 60:4

Reflections:

- I. The life of Hajra reflects absolute trust in Divinity so much so that all of humankind who go for Hajj are obligated to follow her footsteps in Sa'ee.
- 2. Sarah's life demonstrates that God's plan is better than ours and He always answers duas (in the best way at the best time).

Sarah had not been able to conceive a child whilst she was young. At the age of seventy, she was far too old to become a mother. She had a slave - Hajra who was of child bearing age and she gave Hajra to Ibraheem (not unusual in those days) as a wife to have a child.

Hajra gave birth to a son, Ismail.

Allah ordered Prophet Ibrahim to take Hajra and Ismail to the Hijaz (Arabia). They arrived at the valley of Bakka which was a barren dry land with no water or trees. He was ordered to leave his wife and young son there. Hajra asked her husband: "Is this the order of Allah?" and he replied in the affirmative to which she said: "As Allah has ordered you to do this, He will not forget us!"



Prophet Ibraheem raised his hands in dua saying:

O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring dwell in an uncultivated valley, by Your Sacred House (Ka'ba) in order, O our Lord, that they may establish prayer, therefore make the hearts of people incline towards them, and provide them with fruits, so that they may be grateful. 14:37



Hajra and her son soon ran out of water. She went out to search for water running between the two mountains of Safa and Marwa. Suddenly, she saw a spring of water gush out under the heel of her son Ismail. The spring is still there today and is known as Zamzam (meaning lots of water). The people of Jurham who lived on the outskirts

of Makka came to live nearer as a result of Zamzam making it a thriving town. Ibrahim and Ismail were ordered by Allah to build the Ka'ba next to the grave of Hajra (buried in Hijre Ismail). All those who visit Makka have to circumbulate around the grave of a black, slave woman in order for their Hajj to be accepted!

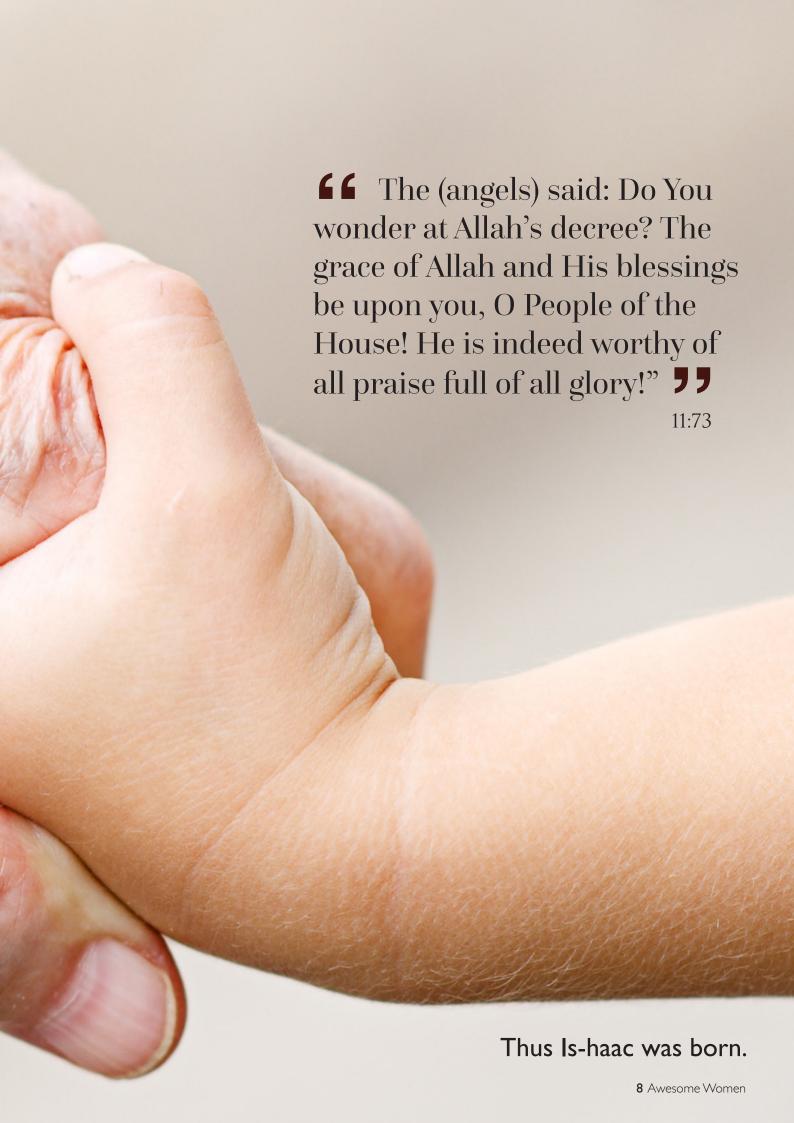
SARAH

On the other side in Palestine, an amazing event occurs. Allah sends angels to give Ibraheem at the age of ninety, the good news of another son to be born of Sarah - the great love of his life.

The Our'an describes her reaction:

And his wife, standing by, laughed when We gave her good tidings (of the birth) of Is-haac, and, after Is-haac, of Yaqub. 7 11:71

She said: "Alas for me! Shall I bear a child when I am an old woman and my husband now is an old man? That would indeed be a strange thing!" " 11:72



UMMMUSA (YUKABID) & AASIYA

Reflections

Raised between two exemplary mothers who were world apart - they loved him infinitely, protected him tenderly, defended him to the ultimate end, whilst educating him and preparing him for what Prophet Musa (pbuh) was to become - a liberation of a whole nation.

Firawn (Pharaoh) had ordered the murder of all Hebrew boys when Umm Musa gave birth to Prophet Musa (pbuh). Her hearts pleas were answered by Divinity.

We inspired your mother, saying, 'Put your child into the chest, then place him in the river. Let the river wash him onto its bank, and he will be taken in by an enemy of Mine and his.....?? 20:38, 39

Inspired by Divinity, she strategically planned his safety.

And We inspired to the mother of Moses, "Suckle him; but when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear and do not grieve. Indeed, We will return him to you and will make him [one] of the messengers. J 28:7



The Qur'an subtly recounts her emotional state and we read how Divinity consoles her troubled heart. He promises her the certain return of her child to her: "We shall return him to you". He then tells her that he will be one of His messengers.

The next day, Musa's mother felt a void in her heart, if We had not strengthened it to make her one of those who believe, she would have revealed everything about him. 77 28:10



The Qur'an describes Umm Musa's sorrow saying her heart had been emptied from the separation from her son. Such was her suffering that she was on the verge of disclosing the secret. Divinity gives her strength - the Arabic word used is 'rabatna' meaning to tie or bind her feelings in order to prevent them from bursting open.

Meanwhile, the wooden chest transporting little Musa reached the shore at the gardens of Pharaoh's palace. Aasiya, the wife of Pharaoh sees the baby as a blessing from Heaven. She pleads with Pharaoh to spare him and allow her to adopt him as her child:

A Pharaoh's household picked him up... and Pharaoh's wife said, 'Here is a joy behold for me and for you! Do not kill him: he may be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son. 3 28:8-9



The sister of Musa, Maryam followed the wooden chest and it stops at the palace of Pharaoh; the abode of the very tyrant she was trying to keep him away from. Maryam learns that

the newborn was refusing all wet-nurses and was on the verge of perishing. The palace was in turmoil searching for a wet-nurse as Aasiya was distraught.

The Qur'an says: • • We had ordained that he would refuse to feed from wet nurses 33 28:12

Maryam, suggested a wet nurse who the child would not refuse. Thus, the baby was returned to Umm Musa who got her child back as promised.

We restored him to his mother in this way, so that she might be comforted, not grieve, and know that God's promise is true, though most of them do not know > >

28:13



Musa was raised simultaneously by another awesome woman, Aasiya who had become his adoptive mother.

She was enamoured by Musa who filled the lack of affection in her life living with the tyrannical Pharaoh.

66 God has also given examples of believers: Pharaoh's wife, who said, 'Lord, build me a house near You in the Garden. Save me from Pharaoh and his actions; save me from the evildoers. ""

Like Umm Musa, Aasiya refuses to be enslaved by him and proclaimed her refusal openly declaring her faith in Divinity. She lived in a permanent state of confrontation with Pharaoh suffering isolation and oppression. However, her resolve of spiritual freedom must have etched upon the mind of Musa the love of justice and freedom.

HANNAH (Anne) & MARYAM (Mary)

Reflections:

- I. Divinity beautifully shows that when it comes to the worship of Allah it doesn't matter about your gender, colour or age; we're all equal in front of Him, as long as we make the effort.
- 2. Maryam endured malicious gossip, witnessed her son being rejected by the people he came to help, and listened to hateful accusations towards him from the leaders of the community. Her strength from her trust in God gave her limitless potential making her one of the best of human beings to have walked on the earth.

We make plans the way we think is best, and at times they don't work out the way we planned, because Allah has a better plan for us.

Many years ago, a woman made a promise to Allah, she noticed the men in the community could go

two ways, either be at the service of their Creator or to themselves, and she wanted the best for her son. She made an oath that the son, in her womb would dedicate his whole life to the service of Allah.

When a woman of Imran said: My Lord! surely I dedicate to You what is in my womb, to be devoted (to Your service); accept therefore from me, surely You art the Hearing, the Knowing.

Hannah believed that only a son could be dedicated to Allah

So when she gave birth, she said: My Lord! Surely I have brought it forth a female-- and Allah knew best what she brought forth-- and the male is not like the female, and I have named it Maryam, and I commend her and her offspring into Your protection from the accursed Shaitan. 33:36

So it seemed, she could no longer continue with this vision? She didn't give up, as is shown by her words, she turned to Allah and asked Him to protect her, in turn asking Him to keep her daughter firm and the best of believers.

So her Lord accepted her with a good acceptance and made her grow up a good growing, and gave her into the charge of Zakariyya; whenever Zakariyya entered the sanctuary to (see) her, he found with her food. He said: O Maryam! where from did this come to you? She said: It is from Allah. Surely Allah gives to whom He pleases without measure.

Maryam was put in the care of her uncle, Zakariyya. Her parents used all the resource around them to ensure their child was in the care of the best teacher and carer, so she would be taught by the best.

MARYAM

Maryam has a special and esteemed placed in the Qur'an, where a sura (chapter) is named after her and Allah says.....

And when the angels said: O Marium! surely Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of of the world. 3:42

One of the titles given to her in the Qur'an is as the 'sister of Harun (Aaron). Her relationship to Harun is significant because it refers to her noble lineage as a daughter of 'Imran. 19:28

Her nobility is also emphasised where Prophet Isa (pbuh) is referred to as the son of Maryam breaking the tradition where identity was only through male ancestry.

Such is Isa, son of Maryam; (this is) the saying of truth about which they dispute

19:34

It also places emphasis that he was created in Maryam's womb by Divine decree rather than biology.

She said: When shall I have a boy and no mortal has yet touched me, nor have I been unchaste?

He said: Even so; your Lord says: It is easy to Me: and that We may make him a sign to men and a mercy from Us, and it is a matter which has been decreed. **55** 19:20,21

The Qur'an describes her childbirth and the relief Divinity provided to her anguish.

And the throes (of childbirth) compelled her to betake herself to the trunk of a palm tree. She said: Oh, would that I had died before this, and had been a thing quite forgotten!

Then (the child) called out to her from beneath her: Grieve not, surely your Lord has made a stream to flow beneath you;

And shake towards you the trunk of the palm tree, it will drop on you fresh ripe dates:

So eat and drink and refresh the eye. Then if you see any mortal, say: Surely I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent Allah, so I shall not speak to any man today. • 19:23-26

Her honour comes from her total trust in God when she brings the baby to her people. She risked not only a damaged reputation but according to the law a woman who failed to remain a virgin before marriage could be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 22:20-21)

And she came to her people with him, carrying him (with her). They said: O Maryam! surely you have done a strange thing.

O sister of Haroun! your father was not a bad man, nor, was your mother an unchaste woman.

But she pointed to him. They said: How should we speak to one who was a child in the cradle?

He said: Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet;

And He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and poor-rate so long as I live;

And dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me insolent, unblessed;

And peace on me on the day I was born, and on the day I die, and on the day I am raised to life.

Such is Isa, son of Maryam; (this is) the saying of truth about which they dispute. 19:27-34

KHADIJA

Reflections:

- I. What was it about the Prophet (pbuh) that inspired such love that she laid her life's work at his feet?
- 2. What energised her to take him food every day to the cave where he meditated?
- 3. What was it about him that she forsook the 'respect' the Makkans (her people, her community) had for her?
- 4. There can be only one answer.... She saw her Rabb (Lord) in him...

There is Khadija the daughter of Khuwayled who was the joint custodian of the Ka'ba with Abdul Muttalib;
 Khadija the successful business women;
 Khadija the guardian of orphans,
 Khadija the princess of Makka;
 Khadija the wife and support of Rasulullah;
Khadija the mother of Fatima (pbuh) and then there is Khadija whom Rasulullah (pbuh) said was one of the women of Janna (paradise).

She was born in Makka around 567 CE (the date of her birth is not known by any historian) to Khuwayled and Fatima.

Khuwaylid was a successful business man and the joint custodian of the Ka'ba with Abdul Muttalib.

SHE WAS A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS WOMAN

Her parents died early within 10 years of each other leaving her and her siblings Awwam, Usayd and Hala orphans. She continued the family business of running trade caravans in the Summer to Syria, and to Yemen in Winter

becoming a successful business woman in her own right. Khadija knew what she was doing business-wise, never compromising her modesty or integrity to succeed in the male-dominated trades, hiring only those that could meet these standards.

SHE ASKED THE PROPHET TO MARRY HER AND THEIR MARRIAGE WAS AN EPIC LOVE STORY

She turned down many marriage proposals and was looking for the best. When she saw the awesome character of Muhammad (pbuh) she hired him and then decided he was the man when she saw his management of her caravans. Through a friend, she asked him to marry her. (He said yes.)

Taking multiple wives was a common practice, yet Khadija and Muhammad's marriage was

monogamous until her death 25 years later. She was his comfort and support in every way during the most difficult time of his life. He loved no one more than Khadija during his lifetime. They had 3 children: Qasim, Abdullah (Both who died in infancy) and Fatima (pbuh). She also looked after her sister Hala's orphaned daughters as her own: Zaynab, Umm Kulthum and Ruqayya.

SHE WAS THE FIRST MUSLIMA

Yahya ibn `Afeef is quoted saying that he once came, before the advent of Islam, to Makka. He says: "When the sun started rising, I saw a man who came out of a place not far from us, faced the Ka'ba and started performing his prayers. He hardly started before being joined by a young boy who stood on his right side, then by a woman who stood behind them. When he bowed down, the young boy and the woman bowed, and when he stood up straight, they too did likewise. When he prostrated, they too, prostrated."

He expressed his amazement at that, saying to Abbas: "This is quite strange, O Abbas!" "Is it, really?" said Abbas. "Do you know who he is?", Abbas asked his guest who answered in the negative. "He is Muhammad ibn Abdullah, my nephew. Do you know who the young boy is?" asked he again. "No, indeed," answered the guest. "He is Ali son of Abu Talib. Do you know who the woman is?" The answer came again in the negative, to which Abbas said, "She is Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, my nephew's wife."





SHE SPENT HER WORLDLY RICHES ON THE POOR

She dedicated her life and wealth to humanity. Khadija gave her earnings to the poor and to the orphans, to the widows and the sick. She helped poor girls get married and provided their dowry. She endured suffering and persecution from the very people who called her the Ameeratul Quraysh (The Princess of the Quraysh) and Al Tahira (The Pure One).

Spending 3 years in the valley of Abu Talib in exile with the other Muslims made her frail and ill and she died aged 52 years in Makka. So grieved

was the Prophet (pbuh) that he called the year Aamul Huzn (The year of grief). He had lost his guardian Abu Talib and his soul mate Khadija in one year.

She is one of the most awesome women in history. She continues to inspire women being a timeless embodiment of the words 'sacrifice' 'dedication' and 'generosity'.

She took great care of the Prophet of Islam and for showing the world, through her behaviour, what a pious, modest and courageous woman can accomplish.

Her support of the Prophet (pbuh) is embodied in the Qur'an And find you in need and make you free from need? "" 93:8 20 Awesome Women

FATIMA (pbuh)

Reflections:

"A daughter becomes the owner of the values of her father. The final link in this chain of Divine justice, the rightful chain of truth is Fatima, the last daughter of a family who had anticipated a son: Muhammad had known what the hands of fate had in store for him. And, Fatima, also, had known who she was. Yes! This school of thought created such a revolution. A woman, in this religion, is freed like this. Isn't this the religion of Abraham and they, his heirs?"

Ali Shariati from his book 'Fatima is Fatima'



There is Fatima the daughter that her father called Ummu Abiha (the mother of her father),
Fatima the ideal wife
Fatima the mother of the Aimma,
Fatima the teacher,
Fatima the community worker,
Fatima the upholder of truth and justice,

Fatima the link between Nabuwwa (Prophet hood) and Imama (Leadership), and then there is Fatima whom the Qur'an refers to as 'Kawthar' (abundance of goodness).

She was born in Makka on the 20th of Jamad ul Aakhir, 5 years after Be'that (615 CE) and when she died at the age of 18 years on the 14th of

Jamad ul Awwal II AH (632 CE), this awesome personality had left a legacy of freedom and justice.

THE PROPHET'S COMFORT

She was the daughter who defended her father against the elders of her tribe. The child who held her fathers' hand, accompanied him to the bazaar, listened to the abuse hurled at her father,

and then walked back home with him comforting him. He said: "Whoever hurts Fatima, hurts me, whoever hurts me hurts Allah..."

ALI'S SOUL MATE

When describing their marriage he said: "We lived like two pigeons in a cocoon."

Ali (pbuh) at her death said: "I placed you in your grave but you will always exist in my heart — My sorrow is eternal and my nights sleepless without any peace — If I leave you it is not that I do not want to stay near you and if I stay here have I not been unfair to the fate that Allah promises for those with patience."



UPHOLDER OF TRUTH & JUSTICE

The woman who tells the newly elected Khalifa that he has displeased Allah and His Prophet by not listening to the Prophet's advice and only keeping his own interests at heart? One who whenever she found injustice spoke out not worrying about the outcome knowing that her words were the truth?

She is the ideal for all women in all their roles: daughter, wife, mother, community member, teacher. She is an embodiment of moral features.

Fatima (pbuh) proves that a Muslim woman can hold on to her dignity while taking part in social activities and preserve her nobility as a Muslim.

Her involvement in social and political matters is evidence that in an Islamic society, a woman cannot remain indifferent and passive observers.

No words can describe the phenomenal legacy that she has left behind in her 18 years. Fatima (pbuh)and her sons will always be those who taught how to live the words of God revealed to Muhammad (pbuh).

And finally two gifts from Fatima Zahra. The Tasbee of Fatima Zahra and the Salawat which has the ability to move mountains.

22 Awesome Women

TASBEE OF FATIMAZAHRA (pbuh)

It all started before Allah created Adam (pbuh). The angels were trying to move the Arsh (throne) of Allah but it was too heavy and wouldn't budge. So they asked him for help. Allah told them to recite "Subhanallah." The angels did as they were told and found that it gave them power and strength and they were able to move the arsh. They liked this so much that they began constantly repeating "Subhanallah." - (Glory be to Allah)

Then Allah created Adam (pbuh). When Allah blew life into Adam. The first thing he did was sneeze and say "Alhamdulillah" (All praise be to Allah). The angels liked it so much that they added this to their glorification of Allah. Thus it became "Subhanallah walhamdulillah"

Hundreds of years passed and the prophet Nuh (pbuh) was now on earth. For nine hundred years he proclaimed the Oneness of Allah with the words "La illaha illalah." The angels loved this act so much that they added this. Thus, it became "Subhanallah walhamdulillah wa la illaha illalah." The angels kept repeating this day and night.

Many centuries passed and the prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) was asked by Allah to sacrifice his son Ismail (pbuh.) He was about to sacrifice his son and he needed something to give him the courage he needed to do this difficult deed. He recited "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is great). The angels loved this act so much that they added this, thus it became "Subhanallah walhamdulillah wa la illaha illalah Allahu Akbar."

More centuries passed. It was the night of Meraj, when Rasulullah (pbuh) ascended to the heavens with Jibrail. There Jibrail told Rasulullah (pbuh) the story and added the final part - "Wala hawla wa la quwwata illah billahil aliyyil azheem."

Thus it now became Subhanallahi walhamdulillahi wa la illaha illalahu wallahu Akbar wala hawla wa la quwwata illa billahil aliyyil Azheem ""

Up to this day, its recitation buzzes around the Arsh of Allah and it became the Tasbee of Sayyida Fatima Zahra (pbuh).

In the hadith of the A'immah (pbuh) there is a great deal of emphasis on reciting this effective Tasbee of Sayyida Fatima Zahra (pbuh). One of the secrets behind the merits of reciting this tasbee has been mentioned in a hadith in which we are told that a man came to Imam Ja'far As Sadiq (pbuh) and asked him: "What is the secret behind the Ka'ba having four rukn (corners)

and it being cubic square (in shape)?"
The imam (pbuh) replied, "It is because the Baytul Ma'mur has four rukn." The person then asked, "Why does the Baytul Ma'mur has four rukn?" The imam (pbuh) said, "because the 'Arsh has four rukn." The man further asked: "why the 'Arsh has four rukn?" The Imam (pbuh) replied: "... Due to the fact that every arsh is dependent upon (or made firm by) the rukn (as its supports). The first of these is Allahu akbar; the second is Subhanallah; the third is Alhamdulillah and the fourth is La ilaha illallah."

BEING CURED BY THE TASBEE

man went to Imam Ja'far Ibne
Muhammad As-Sadiq (pbuh) to complain
to him about his state. Even though the
Imam (pbuh) was speaking to him, he
could not hear what the Imam (pbuh) was saying.
The man then began to complain to the Imam
(pbuh) of very bad ears aches to which the Imam
(pbuh) asked him, "Do you not do the tasbee of
Fatima Zahra (pbuh)?"

The man questioned,"...What is the tasbee of Fatima Zahra (pbuh)?"

The Imam (pbuh) replied, "Recite 'Allahu Akbar' 34 times; 'Alhamdulillah' 33 times and 'Subhanallah' 33 times as this makes a complete 100 (remembrances)" The man stated that, "After a short period of time I recited this tasbihat continuously, and the pain in my ears went away."



and a female and We made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, (the) most noble of you near Allah (is the) most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah (is) All-Knower, All-Aware. 1913



