



FOUR GREAT WOMEN

Anâs Radhi-Allâhu ‘anhu reports that Nabî Sallallâhu ‘alayhi wasallam has said: “From among the women of the world who have reached perfection and who are worthy of following are (the following four): Maryam (Mary) the daughter of Imrân; Khadija daughter of Khuwailid; Fatima daughter of Muhammad peace be upon him and Asiyah wife of Fir’aun (Pharaoh)” (Tirmidhi).

The scholars of hadîth are of the view that this statement was made before Aisha Radhi-Allâhu ‘anha reached the position of excellence whereupon Muhammad peace be upon him said: “The virtue of Aisha Radhi-Allâhu ‘anha over all the women of the world is like the virtue of tharîd [a meat dish] over all other food.”

The hadîth however refers to four women who acquired perfection in faith and character by virtue of their devotion, patience, toil and morality. Their lives radiated with piety, trust, patience and gratitude. Their lives serve as beacons of guidance for all believers, especially in times of hardship, difficulty and struggle.

Maryam (Mary): The Daughter of Imrân

Maryam (Mary) Alayhas-Salâm spent her young days in total seclusion within the precincts of Baitul Muqaddas. She devoted her life to prayer and worship of the Almighty. Although unmarried she miraculously gave birth to Isa (Jesus) Alayhis- Salâm. She was accused of adultery and chastised for bringing disrepute to the family name. Who would have believed her innocence when she came to her people as a spinster with a child in hand, and how could she exonerate herself from the charge of adultery? Just how could an unmarried woman convince her people that this was no ordinary birth... nor was this an ordinary child? The Holy Qur’ân says: “So she came to her people carrying the child with her.” They said:” O Maryam (Mary) you have indeed done an amazing thing” ... she pointed to him- they exclaimed: “How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?” But He (the child) said: “I am the servant of Allâh who has given me the Book and made me a Prophet.” (19:27-30). The breast suckling child spoke and vindicated his mother from the accusation of infidelity. When she gave her life to Allâh, Allâh gave her a child that protected her integrity even whilst he was in the cradle.

Khadija Daughter of Khuwailid

She was extremely wise, intelligent, gentle, and influential called Tahira [chaste and pure] even in the era of ignorance. She was exceptionally wealthy and a prosperous business woman. She married Muhammad peace be upon him at the age of forty while he was twenty five. She provided the moral, financial, and emotional support for Muhammad peace be upon him when he was blessed with Nubuwwat (prophethood). When Muhammad peace be upon him first saw Jibra’îl Alayhis-Salâm in the cave of Hira, he was terrified and feared for his life. He ran down the mountain trembling and crying: “Cover me up! Cover me up!” It was Khadija Radhi-Allâhu ‘anha who consoled him; she was his pillar of support; she believed in him when everyone else doubted him. She served as his refuge, consoled him, supported him and cared for him when he was alone, confused and terrified. She stood by him when everyone else shunned him. Khadija Radhi-Allâhu ‘anha rallied to the call of Islam, she gave a home to

Muhammad peace be upon him, she was his first confidant, and tower of strength.

Fatima Daughter of Muhammad

Muhammad peace be upon him would often say: "Fatima is of my flesh, he who angers her, angers me" (Bukhari & Muslim)

Fatimah Radhi-Allâhu ‘anhu was the youngest child of Muhammad peace be upon him and the only child who survived him. Hers was a life of extreme poverty and struggle. She constantly saw her father being mistreated, insulted and humiliated by the disbelievers. One day, when she was barely ten years old, she accompanied her father to the Masjid al-Haram. He stood in the place known as al-Hijr facing the Kabah and began to pray. Fatimah stood at his side. A group of Quraysh gathered around him. They included Abu Jahl ibn Hisham, the Prophet's uncle, Uqbah ibn Abi Muayt, Umayyah ibn Khalaf, and Shaybah and Utbah. Abu Jahl, the ringleader, asked: "Which of you can bring the entrails of a slaughtered animal and throw it on Muhammad?" Uqbah ibn Abi Muayt, one of the vilest of the lot, volunteered and hurried off. He returned with the obnoxious filth and threw it on the shoulders of the Prophet while he was still prostrating. Imagine the feelings of Fatimah as she saw her father being humiliated in this manner. She went up to her father and removed the filth and then stood firmly and angrily before the group of Quraish thugs and lashed out against them. Such scenes of vicious opposition and harassment against her father and the early Muslims were witnessed by the young Fatimah almost everyday. She did not meekly stand aside but joined in the struggle in defence of her father and his noble mission.

Asiyah wife of Fir'aun (Pharaoh)

"And for those who have faith Allâh has set forth a parable in the (story) of Fir'aun's (Pharaoh) wife when she prayed: O my sustainer! Build for me a mansion in paradise by You and save me from Fir'aun and his doings and save me from all evil doing people."

When the magicians fell into sajdah and declared their faith in Allâh and accepted Mûsa (Moses) Alayhis-Salâm as the prophet of Allâh – the wife of Fir'aun (Pharaoh) also declared her faith. Fir'aun (Pharaoh) began punishing her by pegging her to the ground and exposing her to the midday sun. Whenever he turned away from her the angels would give her shade with their wings. He then gave her a choice: 'Either retract from your belief or be prepared to be crushed by a huge boulder.' She chose to be crushed. As she was placed onto the ground she raised her sight towards the sky –she saw her place in Jannah and prayed: "O my sustainer! Build for me a mansion in paradise by You and save me from Fir'aun (Pharaoh) and his doings and save me from all evil doing people. As she said this, her rûh (soul) left her body and the boulder then crushed her lifeless body.

These four women changed the course of human history, through their perseverance, faith and courage. Maryam (Mary) Alayhas-Salâm life was characterized by piety, chastity and faith, Khadija Radhi-Allâhu ‘anha neither succumbed to the trappings of wealth, nor to power and fame, Fatima Radhi-Allâhu ‘anha made sabr (patience) in the face of unending hardships and was crowned the 'leader of all women in Jannah (Paradise)', whilst the wife of Fir'aun (Pharaoh) chose faith over royalty. These were women distinguished by sabr (patience) who found the true friendship of Allâh through their unfailing steadfastness in the face of grinding sacrifices.

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