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In 4 A.H. (A.D. 626) Fatima bint Asad, the widow of Abu Talib and the mother of Ali, died in Medina. She had reared Muhammad, the future Prophet, as her own son, and he called her his mother. She was the second lady in Arabia to accept Islam, the first being Khadija, the wife of the Prophet.

Muhammad was deprived of his mother early in life but he soon found a second mother in Fatima bint Asad. He, therefore, did not miss the love and affection that a mother alone can give. When his foster-mother died, he attended the funeral, and said: "May God bless your noble soul. You were to me like my own mother. You fed me while you yourself went hungry. Your aim in doing so was to please God with your deeds." He gave his own cloak for her shroud, and she was given burial in it. He often said, "I was an orphan and she made me her son. She was the kindest person to me after Abu Talib."

When the grave was made ready, Muhammad, the Messenger of God, entered it; he lay down in it, and said: "O God! Life and death are in Thy hands. Thou alone will never die. Bless my mother, Fatima bint Asad, and give her a mansion in Heaven. Thou art the Most Merciful."

When Fatima bint Asad was buried, Muhammad Mustafa repeated *Allah-o-Akbar* (God is Great) forty times, and prayed: "O God! Put her in the Light, and fill her heart with Light."

Muhammad Mustafa was the Executor of the last will and testament of Fatima bint Asad.

Fatima bint Asad was a most remarkable lady since two of the children she brought up, Muhammad and Ali, turned out to be the two most remarkable men in the history of Islam. Her home was the real cradle of Islam. Both Muhammad, the future Prophet of Islam, and Ali, the future paladin of Islam, were born in her house, and they grew up in it. Both of them were the "products" of her education.

Fatima bint Asad was also the mother of Jaafer, the hero of the battle of Mootah, and the Winged Martyr of Islam. The name of her husband, Abu Talib, figures in history as the greatest benefactor of Islam, but

her role in the service of Islam was no less important than his. She shares the distinction with him of rearing and educating Muhammad, the future Messenger of God. If her husband protected Muhammad from his enemies outside, she provided him love, comfort and security at home. It was in her home that Muhammad found emotional security and the emotional closeness of a family.

If Khadija was the first Muslim lady and the greatest benefactress of Islam, Fatima bint Asad was the second Muslim lady, and the second greatest benefactress of Islam. May God be pleased with His slaves, Khadija and Fatima bint Asad, and may He bless them.

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