

The Virgin Mary as a Role Model Through Quranic Stories

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 26 Dec 2024

Revised: 14 Feb 2025

Accepted: 22 Feb 2025

ABSTRACT

The Muslim community honors Maryam (their name for the Virgin Mary) as the second person they use to symbolize purity after Prophet Muhammad's wife Khadijah. Through Quranic accounts the text presents Mary's best qualities to show everyone she stands as an ethic example of faith and womanhood for all. The research studies Mary in the Quran by exploring both her bloodline and religious vocation as it pertains to her purity. The Quran describes Maryam's merits so we can see why Islam venerates her morality and her role in spiritual matters.

The research team analyzed all mentions of Mary in the Quran through direct textual analysis to reveal her biblical profile. The researchers studied Mary's religious standing and family roots plus how she handled herself to confirm her place as a faith leader.

The Quran clearly shows Mary as spiritually important because she descends from the House of Imran through her family history. Her strong character points like being morally pure and patient in prayers stand clear through her description. Through tough life periods her strong faith in God makes her stand out as a strong example of spiritual and moral power. These personality traits demonstrate reliable truth about faith and show believers around the world during every generation.

According to the Quran the Virgin Mary showcases how anyone can live morally strong and resist wrong religious mindsets. Throughout her narrative God shows her and believers that their devotion leads to salvation. Through Mary's story readers discover spiritual guidance needed to live well in every era.

Keywords: Quran, Blessed Virgin Mary, faith, purity, spiritual authority

1. INTRODUCTION

The story of the Virgin Mary has held a disproportionately prominent place in Islamic teachings over the centuries. Regarded as the best of all women, she serves as an ideal role model in divine teachings. Her virtuous character transcends religious boundaries, inspiring admiration and reverence among people of various faiths. Her story emphasizes universal values such as humility, unwavering faith, perseverance, and devotion to goodness, truth, and beauty. As a figure of moral and spiritual excellence, her life continues to serve as a source of guidance for diverse audiences. Her exemplary qualities make her a bridge between different faiths, highlighting shared values of morality and virtue. Educators often invoke her story to underscore the importance of virtuous living, patience, and steadfast devotion to a higher purpose.

This essay explores the portrayal of Mary—Mariam—in Islam through the Quranic stories. Rather than compiling a biographical account of this first-century figure, it focuses on analyzing Quranic verses that reference her, emphasizing her noble lineage, spiritual legacy, and the moral lessons derived from her story. By examining her role as a symbol of faith and virtue, the essay reveals her enduring influence in Islamic tradition, offering a timeless message of hope, resilience, and moral integrity. (Tatari & Von Stosch, 2022; Mirza, 2021)

The paper delves into unique aspects of Mary, such as her profound piety, her humanity, her moments of doubt when faced with extraordinary events, and her unwavering faith in God's wisdom to comprehend their purpose. These experiences, rather than diminishing her faith, served to reinforce it. Through the layered meanings of Quranic verses, the study examines the challenges that tested her morality, the events that elevated her spiritual status, and the traits that cemented her as an exemplary role model. Both the explicit and implicit meanings of

these verses highlight the profound significance of moral character, spiritual resilience, and unwavering devotion to God. By analyzing these elements, the paper underscores how Mary's story continues to inspire individuals across cultures and religions, offering timeless lessons in perseverance, faith, and moral fortitude. Her narrative remains a beacon of hope and an enduring example of how personal virtue and unwavering trust in divine wisdom can triumph over adversity. (Leu, 2022; Tatari & Von Stosch, 2022)

2. THE LINEAGE OF THE VIRGIN MARY

The descent of the Virgin Mary is well appreciated in Islam. She is closely linked with the family of Amram, or Imran in Arabic, of the Islamic tradition, who is one of the ideologically significant personages in Islamic scripture. The association of the Virgin with Imran is also found in Islamic polemic literature, where Mary is adopted as an exemplar suitable for Muslims, among other religious places and figures common to Jews and Christians, like the Temple of Solomon. Mary's lineage from the house of Imran is repeatedly noted in Islamic embroidery, such as the al-Mu'ayyadi minaret in Cairo, built by the third Fatimid caliph, al-Mu'ayyad. A panel that once adorned the outside of the minaret shows Imran, Hannah, and Mary praying in the location of David's Tomb, now the Wailing Wall, in Jerusalem. In a rigged inscription, God addresses Mary as "the daughter of the prophets." (Abboud, 2024)

It is declared in the Quran that: "The Lord did elect her, and purified her ... When the angels said, 'O Mary! Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee—chosen thee above the women of all nations.'" Western writers, living under the influence of the "occidental Judeo-Christian understanding of Mary as the mother of God," sometimes strain the connection between Mary and her forebears, but the Quran regards these links as necessary, as is clear from its stress on the ancestors in several passages. In 3:35–37, it is revealed that Hannah prays for a child at Mihrab, and, after his birth, she dedicates the child to the Almighty. In 3:38–41, it is clear that John's parents prayed to the Lord for a child, a major part of which is given to prayers and supplication by both parents. In 19:6 and 21:89, God mentions Aaron and his line as recipients of His mercy, guarding them from error and banks of the straight path. But the most in-depth coverage is given to four generations of the same family from 3:35 to 3:41. (Tatari & Von Stosch, 2022)

2.1. Pious Family of Imran

This surah gives details of the pious family of Imran, from which the Virgin Mary hails. Members of this family included Mary's mother, who made a vow to devote the child born to her to the service of the temple. Legend has it that she had revolved in prayer and fasting, hoping for the birth of a son who could offer services to the temple. She took a vow accordingly, but to her dismay, she bore a girl. How could she take a thing without shame and know that there would be born unto her an unwedded mother? She has brought forth, and she should live with the female. That is what she prayed for, and she is giving it the name Mary. Imran's family here is not a material thing; it is rather a family of whom the wife is faithful and chaste, each member of which receives and gives only righteousness. Behold! Amran, who in terms of his wife is intuitive, swears her to her prayerful acts and her offspring to the type of entities it will ultimately rejoin. His wife, born into a certain setting of ethics, assisted the religious situation she was born into and made a vow that her offspring from her pregnancy would not come close to any harm that some people can burden it with. (Pang, 2023)

From her reliance on Allah, Amran and his wife were in a divine environment, and their way of perfecting that ethicality nevertheless made it a very special decision for the child. Such were the other opinions that affected it. Mary's imaginary reflection of adulthood is not expected by other believers. Mary's inherent doctrine is declared when individuals are born to a couple collectively, and in Mary's case, it can also be stated about the means of ethicality in and of themselves by divine sources. Mary, as an unthought-of situation, cannot grow because of her understanding of Amran's personality to ignore certain choices and magnify others. It is of the utmost importance to protect his conviction and reconcile them against Mary's faith. Thus, Allah develops in her a love of His secrets. (Bednarek & Smith, 2024)

3. VIRTUES OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Virtues of Mary

Chastity, patience, honesty, and steadfast worship are several virtues of the Virgin Mary. We can break this down into several small parts that represent these virtues. First and foremost, the virtue of the Virgin Mary is chastity. It means that she always cleanses herself in her theology and belief. Chastity also means to avoid anything or any attitude that the Divinity does not love or find pleasurable. The second virtue is patience. It seems logical to portray the Virgin Mary as a figure of patience; she always faces many painful experiences in her life. The third virtue of the Virgin Mary is honesty. This argument is based on the depiction of the honesty of Mary in the face of people. This shows the honesty of Mary in defending herself and her belief about the newborn. Her father is a good person, and her mother is chaste. The last indication of her honesty elevates Mary to the highest purity and virtue above all other righteous women. The fourth virtue of the Virgin Mary is that she is constant in her worship. This states that Mary worshipped Allah and cleansed herself. Trusting in a safe purification while standing in adoration, in the presence of others. The believers are constantly engaged in the remembrance of Allah. It also shows that Mary was always remembering Allah, the Lord of the universe, and sanctifying Him for becoming the Virgin, or pure. She washes herself from spiritual dirt. The last virtue of the Virgin Mary is that she always connects her heart to remember her Lord. (Tatari & Von Stosch, 2022)

3.1. Chastity

Chastity. It is because of chastity that biblical women have held such an important place within the various religious traditions throughout history. Purity in both a physical sense and a spiritual sense is emphasized. Quite naturally, chastity is the essence of the Virgin Mary's centuries-old glorification, both as a religious personage and as an ideal woman or mother.

Meaning of Her Chastity. Mary's story exemplifies a frequently cited teaching that women and men who are committed to God, who uphold and cherish their religious faith, and who live their lives uprightly according to sound moral values, will always fully enjoy divine favor in this world and the world to come. As a consequence of her religious dedication and commitment to God, the mother of Jesus is exalted as a symbol of piety to all who genuinely accept and affirm the revelation from on high. (Ibe, 2023)

Mary's Chastity. The emphasis on Mary's integrity of body and mind shows that she was not destitute and abandoned to poverty and social misery. That is, Mary did not have to strip herself of all that betokens dignity of birth and selfhood when she had everything. The text leaves no doubt that Mary's chastity was of both body and soul. The purity and sinlessness of Mary reflect upon both physical and spiritual reality. Mary's physical purity is an explicit status that forms a part of her biological makeup, and just as bodily purity, spiritual purity was one of Mary's inborn qualities, too.

3.2. Patience

Dealing with misfortunes, being patient and composed is another aspect of Mary's many successes. From an early age, the Virgin Mary went through trying times, yet she was unperturbed. This experience reshaped her into a person who is quiet but not broken. It transformed her into a woman who is confident and powerful. This characteristic of the Virgin Mary is clearly discernible from the narrative. Being able to accept a situation with patience is very important. The question, then, is what is the position of this virtue in the life of the Virgin Mary? Her patience was not an indication of defeat, submission, or intimidation; rather, it demonstrated great strength, confidence, and understanding. Mary's silence and reservation were signs of the power of her soul. She did not voice her resignation to others, since she was convinced of her divine duty. The strength and power of her spirit kept her from communicating with others because it was pointless. (De et al.2021)

Patience is closely linked to the character of Mary. This has been addressed by various narratives. The first chapter shows Mary remaining silent in the face of society's skepticism. Rather than argue about a topic that would have been beyond many, she answered calmly but with confidence in the second chapter. As Mary's resolve grew after the annunciation, she became silent and conducted herself with quiet dignity in front of society. A sincere person is not interested in arguing with others if their objections are futile. Mary expected her society to understand that her

being with child was a miracle brought about by God, one in which nature had been transgressed. However, the actions of Mary's society had violated human values, all the while presuming the sacredness of the existence of Jesus. Mary's response to her society was quiet, yet it was the result of infinite intellectual power, purity, and sophistication. Her defense demonstrated that she was convinced of the divine wisdom behind her condition. Mary's wisdom stemmed from her absolute certainty about the divine. She knew that nature and the divine are two irrefutable truths to the extent that nature becomes a predestined destiny from a divine viewpoint. Mary's silence was the silence of a surrendered soul, patience was her supernatural nature, and natural women are not normally like this. Approving situations that call for silence and tolerance necessitates an accumulation of moral and intellectual capital far removed from mere feminine witchcraft. If all of reality's myriad machinations are subsumed by a divine plan, then the world is seen differently. This reflects a great strength. (Høybye et al.2021)

The practice of patience results in tolerance and compromise, while the exercise of patience serves as an essential factor in social behavior development and personal spiritual elevation in religion. Religious ascension is a form of personal development that requires copious years of patience and perseverance before a person reaches full enlightenment. Patience is frequently addressed as a facet of spirituality, virtue, faith, and actions. In both commands and discourse, patience is required of those who practice warning in every community. In times of gratitude as well as trial, fortitude and serenity are necessary. Is this virtue an integral part of the universal role model of the Virgin Mary, and not just an Arabic virtuous mother character? Recognizing the necessity of patience in a prophet's life best explains the relationship between this virtue and the essence of faith. (Alfain et al.2023)

3.3. Honesty

Stevens quotes Aristotle when he mentions that honesty or integrity is a correspondent of truth. This is a fitting approach, as a discussion on Mary's life would otherwise not be able to be completed without the mention of honesty in her words and actions. The Virgin Mary is absolutely honest, both in her words and actions. She speaks the truth, especially regarding her chastity, her pledge, and her state of being herself. God is witness to the truth of the speech of the Virgin Mary. (Kim et al.2021)(Rachman et al.2023)

Goodness is honesty because it is related to one's integrity. The emphasis is on the words of an individual as evidence for integrity, which entices others to trust him. It also implies speaking about the value of conviction and verification. Consequently, it would appear that only truthful individuals are sincere in their worship and relationship with God. Honesty establishes the bond of trust between people. The more honest a person is, the more he or she is trusted and respected by others. It is a virtue because the perfect performance of any task that requires it is impossible without it. Mary's character stands out as she never denies who her Son is, especially before her society, where she was the most vulnerable to being stoned. Her integrity is expressed in confrontations such as when she was accused of committing adultery, but she does not waver in her statement that she has vowed herself to God the Exalted. When she faced her community after giving birth to Jesus, she displayed her honesty by not actually speaking but pointing to the child. Her innate caution regarding random speech logically follows this level of her truthfulness. Mary is an example of absolute and complete honesty. (Phillips, 2023)

Socially and personally, it is most troublesome when honesty, one of the virtues, vanishes. What is of prime importance is the virtues, not the prophets or those surrounding them. Thus, the Virgin Mary's honesty is the main issue and is one of the centerpieces of faith and virtue. Mary's honesty must be taken as an example and instruction. The woman declared her chastity and truth; she acted upon the necessity of honesty and displayed it openly when required in historically inevitable circumstances. (Tran, 2020)

3.4. Steadfast Worship

Perhaps Mary's most defining quality was her unwavering dedication to her connection with the divine. She is consistently shown deeply engaged in prayer, yet never spoken to by God as a prophet. This creates a powerful emphasis; Mary's role in the sacred is not constructed through divine dictates or commands. Her examples show her as someone whose primary skill is not acting under divine decree, but steadfastly upholding her prayers to God for guidance and support. The connection of Mary's worship, often equated with the word prayer, shows that the consistency with which she performs these prayers gave her solace and God's help, not as a sort of transactional process, but as an expression of profound faith and connection to the divine. (Deshotel, 2023)(Hibshman, 2024)

The relative prominence of Mary's pure worship in these narratives is essential for achieving many of the goals of the stories. While many narratives focus on a limited aspect of a particular figure, the lack of integrally important prophetic knowledge keeps Mary's examples and parables tied to virtues transcending prophethood and divine communication. Portraying Mary's worship as a significant part of her character accomplishes the secondary goal of making her an attractive model for those seeking to realize a deep spiritual relationship with God. In the first place, steadfast and constant worship and prayer are emblematic of a form of piety; demonstrating and encouraging the maintenance of a consistent spiritual practice and of one's faith in God. Mary invites this kind of piety largely for exemplifying one virtue: confident and consistent worship. It's a piety that, perhaps, foreshadows the limitations of just any worship, regardless of its intent or an individual's internal states. Mary's piety overturns her apparent personal shortcomings and societal circumstances and reveals God's strength, concern, and changes. (Tran, 2020)

4. MORAL AND EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCE

One of the reasons why the role of the Virgin Mary in the Quran goes beyond ordinary biography is that her influence transcends a single dimension. Her life story provides not only exemplary models for the virtuous Christian but also a series of lessons for the faithful, through which Christians can learn from this virtuous believer. Most of these role models reveal their moral and ethical influence, highlighting the emotional states and virtues of the Virgin Mary. For example, her spiritual portrayal in the narratives related to the stages of pregnancy is presented as an example of chastity and ingenuity. It is her biological innocence that fends off accusations of immorality. Moreover, her own life is intertwined with the lives of several prophets, including her testimony during the infancy of Jesus. With the birth of Jesus, this narrative moves into the realm of the miraculous; it is the purity of the Virgin who presents him with a logical explanation. (Tatari & Von Stosch, 2022)

The life of the Virgin Mary is not exemplified merely through the apparent or hidden realities of good and evil or the virtues and faults of believers. Mary's life, besides serving this purpose, is also given to the faithful as a lesson, an education, and a reminder. The Virgin Mary is a believer who reflects the virtues of faith, duty, devotion, and integrity in her personality. She is portrayed with her moral characteristics as a pure and trustworthy woman who acts with devotion, motherly love, and steadfastness without being intimidated or defeated, despite the helpless and seemingly unhappy environment, and who undertakes a role rather than being content with divine decree and the conditions of destiny. The stories about her teach that believers should embrace these positive values. In other words, the life of the Virgin Mary is presented as a good template for virtue and morality in Western Christianity, and the family and the virtues of life are relationally highlighted. The virtues and values shaping women are also foregrounded. In the educational context, it is mentioned that the life of the Virgin Mary serves believers, acting as a validation and revitalization of her faith. In the life stories about Mary, there is always the idea of the individual's personal acceptance of faith, emotional and spiritual impressions, and personal belief. The Virgin Mary, who grew up under the wings of the Prophet Zechariah, became exceptional for her sincerity and modesty, fulfilling her service to the Most High righteously. Thus, she earned the love, acceptance, and appreciation of the Supreme. Mary, praised as free of any veiling, worthy of worship and prostration, aware of the truths of existence, was blessed with special achievements peculiar to the spirit. Thanks to her significant involvement in the scope of miracles, Mary left influential traces in the life of the community.

4.1. Model of Purity and Righteousness

Mary is portrayed as a model of purity and righteousness in the narratives: Indeed, I seek refuge in the All-Merciful from you! If you fear God... He said, I am but a Messenger of your Lord to give you a pure boy. The Virgin Mary is forged into the very essence of moral purity and divine righteousness. Such a depiction of the Virgin Mary aims to elevate her from all other women and religious figures. She employs the word "truly" to state that this boy will be pure. This, in turn, underscores that there were other pure individuals before the Virgin Mary and, therefore, behind her she is declaring, "I can assure you, my purity is a testimony that I am deserving of such an exceptional offering of goodness." Mary remained pure by not ever trusting nor succumbing to the supposed desires of the devil. (Stack, 2024)

Throughout the narratives, the term "pure" is not merely a title representing the Virgin Mary alone. Neither is the primary purpose of the adjective to create a connection and show superiority between this verse and the last verse

of Surah Maryam. Instead, the title in this context is referring to birth-giving practices that Mary espoused. Yes, God gave many women pure children prior to the birth of the Virgin Mary, such as to the Prophet Abraham and his spouse Sarah, but that was through Sarah's suggestion of Hagar, who was not only full of piety and morality but also had the genes of piety in her, making her an exceptional individual worthy of a pure child. Thus, she was also granted a pure child. Even the friend of God, Isaac, had a pure child as well. However, in the case of the Holy Jesus, no sexual contact was ever made; he was only conceived through the command of God. Being a pure woman of righteousness and not being involved in any form of deception meant that Mary never wanted nor sought a sinful life. The Virgin Mary did fit into the exalted narrative of being "truly chaste," and deserved the "true comfort" that would only come when the truth about her would be exposed. Mary's righteousness becomes the invitation for us to guide us to becoming righteous as well. The Virgin Mary's righteousness, thus, has been mostly about the purity of ethics and conduct, both at work and at home. Mary is far from being self-centered; this is the embodiment of a mother, who is also a spouse and a companion. As a result of her grand love and respect for her family, the Virgin Mary has shown exceptional righteousness. Purity is all about achieving a balanced and productive life. We keep certain areas of our life private. Purity has a communal aspect to it and can help us to live in harmony with our fellow citizens. Purity is about keeping all the corruption and filth of the world away from us. It is about resisting what is wrong and repulsive. Purity of character is not just present in garnered respect but also in a meaningful approach that can be of benefit to the entire community. If you want to see purity in motion, then look to see how the Virgin Mary lived her life, ponder what she tried to accomplish and how she interacted with the people. The lifestyles and problems of individuals may alter, but there are numerous underlying themes that we all share. (Leith, 2021)(Jovanovska, 2023)

5. GUARDIANSHIP OF PROPHET ZECHARIAH

The third story is about a central figure in the nurturing of the Virgin Mary. It depicts the charge given to her guardian. The relationship between the Virgin Mary and the Prophet Zakariyyah is so significant that it deserves to be seen in detail. Indeed, for Mary to be given to the protection of Zakariyyah, so that he could raise her, provided she would be a very intimate friend of Zakariyyah during her adolescence. That certainly means a great spiritual protection for the Virgin Mary, a very close relationship with her protector. Not everyone can be a mentor; it requires a special quality, faith, and dedication from the mentor. In the text, Mary is an embodiment of faith and virtue since her early life as a young girl. With the same depth of spirituality and faith, her protector, Zakariyyah, is described as a Prophet of God who took care of the Virgin Mary in privacy. In the report, the personality of Zakariyyah is depicted as a man with unshakable faith, exemplary trust, and determination, against all odds. His intent was fixed with a commitment to a single point: he wanted an offspring to carry on the affairs of his people and to lead them on the right path. And most importantly, his dedication was marked with self-abandonment and love for God. This was the educated atmosphere – caring, loving, and nurturing – in which the Virgin Mary was to grow into a kind of being that would later be revered and worshipped as a means to God. This report of the mentors/guardians also shows us the seamless love, care, and support between the holy ones of her lineage. (Akhlaq et al.2021)

5.1. Contribution to Mary's Greatness

Zechariah contributed to Mary's greatness. His guardianship was an enhancing supplement to Mary's wonderful situation, and it was a filling factor for her already existing powers and unique traits. The best way to enhance Mary's traits and to mirror her greatness was by the eminence of Zechariah. She was a rare figure in both the Quran and other religious traditions. His eminence lay not in the power he experienced, but in the strength he gave, empowered by his relationship with Mary. He bore witness to and beheld the unexplainable divine power and his own weakness. His feeling of the true divine verses outside the realm of reason and nature, and the manner in which he untangled and accepted it as it was, are also great. (Tatari & Von Stosch, 2022)

A particular complement to this divine story is his acknowledgment and understanding of Mary's state, although she remained silent, reflecting the close relationship between them from which he himself benefitted. Yet this relationship and guidance provided by Zechariah was also absolutely reciprocal: as much as Zechariah contributed to the reality of the distinguished soul that was Mary, the humble, age-stricken man of modest origins encountered the Almighty through her and was further enlightened and led. Mary provided a fertile ground where he could pass

this bar with success and honor. Zechariah was not only Mary's guardian, protector, and mentor, but Mary was also a daily vision of a soul who experienced and relived a light, which he himself relived implicitly every time he met Mary. In showing the roles of Zechariah and Mary as coexisting teachers and students, the verses, by mirroring the same content with another matter, secured their mutual consent to the spiritual heritage they were to share. (Mshelia, 2020)

6. CONCLUSION

Mary is a common figure in Christian and Islamic traditions alike, not only present in religious texts but also in the everyday lives of followers and devotees. She is invoked by millions of worshippers across the world in their personal prayers. Her virtue and her lineage have provided divine sanction to Jesus and to Muhammad, but perhaps more importantly, they provide moral sanction and have done so among the faithful for centuries. The virtues that Mary is said to have exhibited are precisely the virtues that the Virgin Mary is cited as a role model for. She was patient and she put her trust in God. She overcame an overtly oppressive social scene with considerable ingenuity, and when she was threatened by the mere prospect of sexual violence, she was given a shield of protection. For Christian and Muslim believers, the story of Mary carries many levels of meaning, of promise, and of deterrence. At the very least, she embodies those virtues and those actions that believers have been advised to cultivate in their own lives. In conclusion, by studying the familial origins and character traits of Muhammad's narrative representation of the Virgin Mary, we see that she is cited by the tradition as an exemplar because she exhibited patience and because she put her trust in God. From the earliest sources examined, we have seen that because of these virtues, Mary was revered. Her example was preserved and reproduced among the early community, and her status at that time and after has become that of a beacon of hope shining for those who wish to remember the place that trust in God can hold, the hope that patience can bring, and the promises of protection that the moral choices of individuals can accrue. Mary, represented by her family line, has become exemplary and priceless.

6.1. Mary as an Example of Unwavering Faith and High Virtues

In Quranic narratives, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is depicted as a quintessence of moral virtues and a prime example of unwavering faith. Revelations say that, as a small child, she refused to spend time with other children and sought refuge in a personal private space in the sanctuary. When Zachary asked her about where her food supplies came from, she said it was "from God." Furthermore, she was graced with the presence of angels and given glad tidings about the birth of Jesus. Quranic semiotic interpretation of the parallel mention of angels greeting Abraham and of this significant exchange with Mary is that the same spiritual virtues have recurred in different spiritual seekers at different times. Copious scriptures reinforce the shared virtues and experiences between serious spiritual seekers, ignoring ethnic and cultural characteristics.

The representations of Mary described in Quranic narratives and, according to Quranic semiotic interpretation, confirm her worth as a model or role model for believers, illuminating their meaning for their own and future generations. Narrations demonstrate that Mary's unwavering faith and moral conviction are a portrait of comfort for the seekers of the sublime. Regardless of how tyrannical circumstances may appear, followers are admonished to, like Mary, remain strong in their faith in order to achieve the Divine, even if this means experiencing divine estrangement. But the high moral standard of Mary is a challenge to everyone who has a desire to be a spiritual seeker. In these renderings of Mary, it is easy to overlook her spiritual fortitude and her devotion. If her portrayal in the Quran is any indication, she would likely have been quite indomitable. Despite criticism from her contemporaries, Mary is routinely portrayed as an exemplary figure. Her exemplary life offers a rallying point, a place to aspire to, for those who are seeking spiritual greatness and wish to adopt it in themselves; it concentrates an idea onto a single iconic figure. That idea is the embodiment of faith and morality. It is both universal and specific; it transcends the propriety of cultural and religious embeddedness but is only displayed to us here in the specifics of that embeddedness. The Quran provides a rich inheritance of Maryan stories for the spiritual seeker, a tradition dating from the very dawn of Islam. Reading and reflecting upon them allows the reader to bask in the light of Mary's faith and reflect on the virtues of the Virgin Mary, who is venerated in Islam as a living exemplar in deed and faith.

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