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مراحل نقش تربیتی زن در اسلام از منظر قرآن و حدیث با تأکید بر دیدگاه امام شهید خامنه‌ای ﷺ

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چکیده

هدف: این پژوهش با هدف بررسی نقش تربیتی و تمدن‌ساز زنان در اسلام در مراحل مختلف رشد، و با تلفیق منابع وحیانی با اندیشه‌های معاصر آیت‌الله سید علی خامنه‌ای به منظور ارائه الگویی جامع در تربیت دینی خانواده انجام شده است.

روش پژوهش: این مطالعه با بهره‌گیری از روش توصیفی-تحلیلی، به بررسی و تحلیل متون اصیل اسلامی (قرآن کریم و احادیث معصومین علیهم‌السلام) در کنار دیدگاه‌های نظری امام سید علی خامنه‌ای می‌پردازد.

یافته‌ها: نقش تربیتی مادر طی چهار مرحله پیاپی تحقق می‌یابد: ۱ (پیش از بارداری، با محوریت خودسازی اخلاقی، ایمان و تقوای مادر؛ ۲ (دوران بارداری، با تأکید بر سلامت اخلاقی مادر، باورهای خالص دینی و روزی حلال؛ ۳ (دوران شیردهی، به عنوان بستر روانی-اجتماعی و معنوی برای انتقال فضایل اخلاقی از طریق تغذیه و عاطفه مادری؛ و ۴ (پس از شیردهی، با تمرکز بر جامعه‌پذیری دینی، الگودهی عملی و ایجاد محیط معنوی در خانواده.

نتیجه‌گیری: مادری در اندیشه اسلامی از یک نقش صرفاً زیستی فراتر رفته و والاترین بستر برای انسان‌سازی و ارتقای جامعه به شمار می‌رود. این پژوهش مدلی پیوسته و مرحله‌محور از تأثیر تربیتی مادر ارائه می‌دهد که میان متون اصیل دینی و مباحث معاصر تربیت خانوادگی پیوند برقرار می‌سازد.

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An Investigation into the Stages of Women's Educational Role in Islam from the Perspective of the Qur'an and Ḥadīth, with Emphasis on the Thought of the Martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei (May God Have Mercy upon Him)

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to examine the educational and civilization-building role of women in Islam across distinct developmental stages, synthesizing scriptural sources with the contemporary thought of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei to provide an integrated framework for religious family education.

Methodology: The research utilizes a descriptive-analytical methodology to analyze primary Islamic texts—the Holy Qur'an and Ḥadīth traditions of the Infallibles (pbut)—alongside the theoretical perspectives of Imam Sayyid Ali Khamenei.

Findings: The maternal educational influence unfolds through four sequential stages: (1) *Pre-Pregnancy*, focusing on the mother's moral self-purification, faith ($īmān$), and God-consciousness ($taqwā$); (2) *Pregnancy*, emphasizing maternal moral integrity, spiritual conviction, and lawful nutrition ($ḥalāl$ food); (3) *Breastfeeding*, serving as a psychosocial and spiritual medium for transmitting ethical virtues through physical nourishment and affection; and (4) *Post-Breastfeeding*, centering on religious socialization, practical role-modeling, and a spiritually conducive home environment.

Conclusion: Motherhood in Islamic thought transcends biological functions to serve as the primary locus for human formation and societal elevation. The study provides a continuous, stage-based model of maternal influence that bridges foundational Islamic texts with contemporary discourse on family upbringing

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Introduction

The family, as the first and most fundamental educational institution in Islam, plays a decisive role in shaping human personality and advancing the excellence of Islamic society. Within this institution, the mother serves as the emotional, moral, and pedagogical axis of the household, occupying an exceptional position in the process of human cultivation. The Holy Qur'an and the narrations of the Infallibles (peace be upon them) have extensively elucidated the multifaceted dimensions of women's influence in nurturing future generations, underscoring the sublime status of motherhood (Hosseini, 2021; Mansouri & Nasiri, 2021).

In the contemporary era, the martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei (may God have mercy upon him), adopting a systemic and civilizational approach, regarded motherhood as extending far beyond an individual or familial responsibility, characterizing it as the very foundation for cultivating faithful human beings and realizing an authentic Islamic society (Khamenei, 1991, 2013b, 2018; Shaaban Pourpicha, 2023).

Of particular importance is the adoption of a process-oriented perspective on the mother's educational role. A mother's influence on her child is by no means confined to the postnatal period; rather, it begins before conception, continues throughout pregnancy and breastfeeding, and reaches maturity during the post-weaning stages. Each of these stages has distinct foundations, requirements, and educational functions, the understanding of which can provide a basis for cultural, educational, and family-oriented policymaking within Islamic society (Pourhosseini, 2017; Gholami, 2019).

Despite numerous studies on the status of women, motherhood, and Islamic upbringing, a review of the literature indicates that most existing works have either focused on a single developmental stage or examined Qur'anic verses, ḥadīths, or the views of individual scholars in isolation (Hāshimī, 2007; Soroush Mahallati, 2012). To date, relatively little systematic attention has been devoted to developing a comprehensive, stage-based model of the maternal educational trajectory from the pre-pregnancy period through the post-breastfeeding stage by integrating the Holy Qur'an, the Ḥadīth traditions of the Infallibles (peace be upon them), and the thought of Ayatollah Khamenei. Thus, the primary research gap addressed by this study is the absence of a coherent theoretical framework for analyzing the continuity of the mother's educational role across the initial stages of human development.

Accordingly, the central research question is: What stages and educational functions constitute the maternal role in Islam, and how does the thought of Ayatollah Khamenei explain these stages within the framework of Islamic upbringing? Employing a descriptive-analytical methodology and drawing upon Qur'anic verses, the ḥadīths of the Infallibles (peace be upon them), and the statements of Ayatollah Khamenei, this study investigates four chronological stages: (1) pre-conception, (2) pregnancy, (3) breastfeeding or lactation, and (4) post-weaning or early childhood.

The novelty of this research lies in presenting a conceptual, stage-based framework that reconstructs motherhood as a continuous and purposeful process of forming the religious, moral, and social identity of the human being. In addition to identifying and analyzing the educational components of each stage, the study establishes the logical connection between prenatal and postnatal upbringing, thereby demonstrating the theoretical capacity of Islamic teachings to contribute to the literature on Islamic education and family studies.

1. Conceptual Framework: The Concept of Education (*Tarbiyah*)

Lexical Analysis

The word *tarbiyah* derives from the Arabic roots *r-b-w* and *r-b-y*, which lexically denote growth, increase, flourishing, elevation, and attainment of perfection (al-Farāhīdī, 1988, vol. 8, p. 284; Ibn Manẓūr, 1993, vol. 14, p. 305). The classical lexicographer al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī defines it as a process of gradual guidance and cultivation through which a human being progresses toward ultimate perfection (al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 2009, p. 340).

Terminological Definition

In pedagogical and philosophical terminology, *tarbiyah* refers to a purposeful process of preparing the conditions necessary for the development and flourishing of human capacities and gradually guiding the individual toward perfection. Accordingly, education entails the harmonious cultivation of a person's existential faculties and the actualization of their latent spiritual and intellectual capacities (Amīnī, 1993, p. 12; Muṭahharī, 1988, p. 14).

2. The Multidimensional Role of Women in the Family

As the core and heart of the family, women play an indispensable and multidimensional role in consolidating and elevating the familial institution (Sāvajī, 1992; Javādī Āmulī, 2021). This role encompasses a delicate combination of affection, education, management, and empathetic partnership, which together constitute a foundation for social health and vitality.

Within this framework, a woman not only nurtures future generations in her capacity as a mother but also, in her role as a wife, provides a primary source of emotional security, psychological stability, and collaborative decision-making. Furthermore, her management of the domestic sphere and her cultivation of an atmosphere characterized by spiritual tranquility and transcendent growth make important contributions to the psychosocial stability of the household (A Group of Authors, 2012; Pourhosseini, 2017; Hajizadeh Anari et al., 2024).

2.1. The Station of Motherhood: Ontological and Civilizational Significance

In Islamic thought, motherhood is not merely a biological experience; it constitutes a sacred divine station (*maqām-i ilāhī*) and a civilization-building role in the process of human cultivation and the formation of the religious and social identity of future generations (Beheshti, 2005; Soroush Mahallati, 2012).

The Holy Qur'an and authentic traditions present the mother as a principal axis in raising a righteous generation and preserving religious identity and psychological well-being within the family. In several Prophetic traditions, maternal devotion is equated with striving in the path of God (*jihād fī sabīl Allāh*) (al-Kulaynī, 2013; al-Majlisī, 1983). Within this paradigm, a substantial share of developmental influence within the family rests with the mother, whose role in the child's natural and spiritual development during early childhood is foundational and decisive (A Group of Authors, 2012, p. 584).

From the Qur'anic perspective, the mother's mission transcends the physical transmission of biological life; she is also a transmitter of spiritual, human, and religious identity. Within the philosophical anthropology of Ayatollah Khamenei, human beings are endowed with free will, intellect, and an innate primordial nature (*fiṭrah*). Women, like men, possess intrinsic divine dignity (*karāmah dhātiyyah*). At the same time, their social roles derive directly from their natural, primordial, and juridical capacities. Motherhood is one such primordial and authentic role: *"The role of motherhood is the role of woman in the creation of distinguished human beings"* (Khamenei, April 21, 2010).

Emphasizing that mothers are vital to the continuation of the human species, Ayatollah Khamenei stated: "The role of woman is the role of the right to life. The lives of human beings rest in the palms of mothers; mothers hold the right to life over their children. The love that Almighty God has placed in a mother's heart toward her child is unmatched; there exists no love of this quality and intensity. She is the holder of the right to life, and subsequently the continuation of lineage; mothers are the source of the survival of the human race, for it is through motherhood that humanity continues" (Khamenei, December 25, 1991 / 4 Dey 1370).

From this perspective, the mother is the source of human emergence, early development, and primary education, providing the infant's first experiential encounter with affection, peace, and noble values. Consequently, broader social transformation and civilizational development are fundamentally rooted in the educational influence of mothers.

Ayatollah Khamenei emphasizes the complementary roles of wife and mother as essential and non-negotiable: "A woman in the family manifests at times in the role of wife and at times in the role of mother; each possesses distinct characteristics. The most important and primary duties of a woman are precisely these. The matter of motherhood, the matter of spousal partnership, and the sanctity of the household and family are vital, primary issues. Even if you [women] become the greatest medical specialist or top scholar in any academic field, if you are not a homemaker and maternal pillar, this constitutes a deficiency for you. You must be the queen and manager of the home; this is the true axis" (Khamenei, 1991).

He further states: "A woman in her maternal role is, in truth, the master architect of the future edifice of Islamic civilization. If women are righteous, society will become righteous. The educational role of the mother is not merely individual; it carries profound social, moral, and even political ramifications in Islamic civilization, for it is mothers who nurture leaders, martyrs, and religious scholars. Motherhood is not only a natural and divine obligation; due to the paramount importance of raising future generations, it is immensely noble from both spiritual and social viewpoints. In contrast to derogatory and reductive Western perspectives, motherhood is a magnificent honor" (Khamenei, May 11, 2013 / 21 Ordibehesht 1392, p. 43).

Thus, motherhood emerges as an existential station whose value corresponds to the importance of educating the very masterpiece of creation: the human being. The destiny and ultimate felicity of every individual are closely connected to maternal upbringing, which plays a decisive role in character formation (Khamenei, 2013a; Shaaban Pourpicha, 2023).

2.1.1. The Mother's Educational Role in the Pre-Pregnancy Stage

The maternal educational continuum begins long before conception. The pre-pregnancy stage comprises four indispensable spiritual and moral foundations.

Self-purification constitutes the initial and essential step in human education. Before undertaking any transformative social or familial responsibility, an individual must reform their personality and epistemological framework. Human beings inevitably develop within environments exposed to unhealthy ethical, cultural, and behavioral influences; without systematic self-purification, the realization of transcendent divine standards remains severely constrained. For a woman preparing to assume the profound responsibility of motherhood, this requirement is even more significant. She is responsible not only for her own spiritual development but also, through her conduct, demeanor, and character, for establishing the ethical foundations of the coming generation. Consequently, a mother's cognitive and spiritual well-being is closely connected to the well-being of society, whereas her moral corruption can contribute to family dysfunction and, ultimately, social deviation (Qāʾimī, 1993, p. 43). A woman contemplating motherhood should therefore engage in sustained moral self-refinement in preparation for this pivotal responsibility.

Religious faith is not merely influential in marital and personal life; it can also exert a decisive influence on the religious orientation of offspring. Polytheism, theological skepticism, or a lack of faith on the part of the mother may negatively affect the child's developmental path and expose the child to moral and spiritual difficulties. For this reason, the Holy Qur'an prohibits marriage with polytheists and cautions believers against being deceived by superficial beauty or material wealth, stating: *"Do not marry polytheistic women until they believe; a believing bondwoman is better than a polytheist woman, even though she may please you. And do not give [believing women] in marriage to polytheistic men until they believe; for a believing bondsman is better than a polytheist man, even though he may please you..."* (Qur'an 2:221).

A mother who seeks to raise faithful children should herself possess firm conviction in *Tawḥīd* (Divine Unity), *Nubuwwah* (Prophethood), *ʿAdl* (Divine Justice), *Imāmah* (Divinely Appointed Leadership), and *Maʿād* (Resurrection). Such women can serve as pure vessels for the cultivation of faith and the formation of righteous and distinguished individuals (Qāʾimī, 1993, p. 154).

God-consciousness (*taqwā*) is derived etymologically from the Arabic root *w-q-y* and signifies self-restraint, vigilant preservation, and protection of the soul from anything harmful or destructive (Qāʾimī, 1993, p. 44). Self-knowledge culminates in conscious movement toward moral perfection and God-consciousness, whereby the individual seeks the pleasure of Allah and recognizes the spiritual lifelessness of a heart devoid of divine love. An Islamic society can be founded upon virtue and piety only when the upbringing of future generations is grounded in these principles. In this regard, the mother plays a primary role as the child's first teacher and most influential agent of character formation; her embrace constitutes the child's first school. Without pious mothers, the cultivation of a righteous generation becomes exceedingly difficult (Qāʾimī, 1993, p. 44). Within this model, the mother is expected to maintain a high degree of vigilance and piety because of her direct influence on the developing psyche of the child. The source text further maintains that maternal inner peace, moral restraint, and reverence for God exert an enduring influence on the psychological and spiritual well-being of the child.

Spirit of servitude (*taʿabbud*) constitutes another important foundation of maternal education. The mother's mental and spiritual state can exert a profound influence on the development of the offspring. Islamic jurisprudence and traditions strongly recommend that parents perform ritual ablution (*wuḍūʾ*) and maintain remembrance of God before marital intimacy, as remembrance of Allah contributes to tranquility of the heart and establishes a positive spiritual environment. A spirit of devoted servitude, remembrance of God, and practical observance of divine commandments can therefore contribute to the formation of a child's religious identity. Effective upbringing depends not only on verbal instruction but also, and more fundamentally, on parental behavioral modeling (al-Kulaynī, 2013; Pourhosseini, 2017).

Regarding the devout worship of Lady Maryam (peace be upon her), the Holy Qur'an states: "And [remember] when the angels said: O Mary! Indeed, Allah has chosen you, purified you, and chosen you above the women of the worlds. O Mary! Be devoutly obedient to your Lord, prostrate yourself, and bow with those who bow" (Qur'an 3:42–43).

In his magnum opus, *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*, ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī explains that these verses convey two profound truths: first, that God honored Mary because of her exceptional proximity and elevated spiritual station; and second, that sincere servitude was required of her as a fitting response to that divine distinction (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1995, vol. 3, p. 188). Through

her sincere devotion and spiritual purity, Lady Maryam attained an exalted station before God, and He subsequently granted her the distinguished prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1992, vol. 2, p. 409). Hence, pre-conception worship, fasting, prayer, and persistent remembrance of God provide the spiritual foundation upon which the cultivation of a pious child may begin.

2.1.2. The Mother's Educational Role During Pregnancy

The Holy Qur'an repeatedly highlights the immense hardships, sacrifices, and pivotal role of the mother during pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding, presenting these experiences as among the foundations of the elevated status and special reverence accorded to mothers in Islam: *"And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him with weakness upon weakness, and his weaning takes two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; unto Me is the final destination."* (Qur'an 31:14).

From the Qur'anic perspective, the mother's role extends beyond the physical transmission of biological life; she also contributes to the transmission of spiritual and religious identity. In the narrative of Prophet Mūsā (peace be upon him), the Qur'an highlights the mother's faith, complete reliance upon God (*tawakkul*), and inner serenity: *"And We inspired the mother of Moses: Suckle him; but when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve. Indeed, We will return him to you and will make him one of the messengers."* (Qur'an 28:7).

In this verse, the mother of Mūsā receives divine inspiration and, with unwavering faith, entrusts her infant to divine providence (Makārim Shīrāzī, 1992, vol. 1, p. 170). This Qur'anic account demonstrates the elevated spiritual station that a woman may attain, enabling her to receive divine inspiration.

A mother's educational responsibilities begin with the onset of pregnancy. The gestational period entails profound responsibilities for the mother. A faithful mother recognizes that her child, whether male or female, represents a continuation of herself and that her own moral and spiritual condition may influence the child's development. Her chastity, modesty, purity, and ethical conduct are therefore presented in Islamic thought as important factors in the child's moral and religious formation (Mūsawī Rād Lārījānī, 2000, p. 41).

Ayatollah Khamenei states: "The educational and identity-forming role of the mother begins with the emergence of human life during pregnancy, and its effects continue throughout a person's life. A person's personality, emotions, beliefs, and conduct—even during youth and adulthood—remain under the enduring influence of maternal affection, compassion, and distinctive educational methods. Therefore, the higher the level of religious

knowledge, cultural awareness, and scientific understanding possessed by women, the deeper and more enduring their cultural and educational influence on the identity of the next generation will be. The mother's role in the process of education and cultural formation occupies such an exceptional position that it can scarcely be compared with that of any other cultural or moral institution." (Khamenei, 1999, p. 66).

Ayatollah Khamenei repeatedly emphasizes that maternal influence begins during pregnancy and may continue throughout an individual's life. From this perspective, the mother's knowledge, spiritual insight, and moral character can have a profound and lasting influence on the development of children and, consequently, on society as a whole.

Maternal faith, grounded in conscious theological understanding, is likewise presented as a decisive factor. A mother who possesses firm belief in *Tawḥīd* (Divine Unity), Prophethood, Divine Justice, the Imāms, and the Resurrection differs fundamentally from one who lacks such convictions. Since the mother constitutes one of the child's earliest developmental models, her religious beliefs may contribute significantly to the formation of the child's foundational religious outlook. According to this perspective, such influence begins during pregnancy through the mother's words, thoughts, and spiritual disposition (Qāʾimī, 1993, p. 154).

This reality is illustrated in Sūrat Āl ʿImrān in the account of the mother of Maryam: "[Remember] when the wife of ʿImrān said: My Lord! I have dedicated what is in my womb purely to You, consecrated for Your service, so accept this from me. Indeed, You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." (Qur'an 3:35).

Despite having waited for years for a child, she did not regard her offspring merely as a means of fulfilling worldly desires or companionship. Rather, she dedicated the child in her womb to the service of God and thereby demonstrated profound faith in divine providence and the importance of a righteous upbringing.

In Islamic ethics, piety is regarded as the culmination of righteous conduct and a quality beloved by God (Qāʾimī, 1993, pp. 141–142). Within the perspective adopted in this study, the mother's psychological state and ethical conduct are considered relevant to fetal development, making pregnancy an important stage in the formation of character (al-Majlisī, 1983, vol. 5, p. 153). The Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny) is reported to have stated: *"The wretched is one who was wretched in his mother's womb, and the felicitous is one whose felicity was established in his mother's womb."* (al-Majlisī, 1983, vol. 5, pp. 9, 153).

According to the interpretation adopted by the source, this narration indicates that tendencies toward felicity (*saʿādah*) or wretchedness (*shaqāwah*) are associated with the prenatal stage, thereby underscoring the significance attributed to the mother's role during pregnancy (Mūsawī Rād Lārījānī, 2000, p. 43).

The Qur'an likewise states concerning Jesus (peace be upon him): *"And peace is upon me the day I was born..."* (Qur'an 19:33). In the interpretation cited in the source, *salām* (peace) is understood to encompass comprehensive physical and spiritual well-being associated with the purity of Maryam during pregnancy (Falsafī, 1962, p. 100).

Food, water, and nourishment play essential roles in human physical development and well-being. In Islamic thought, however, food also carries ethical and spiritual significance. The Qur'an states: *"Then let man look at his food"* (Qur'an 80:24). Exegetes have understood this verse as inviting reflection upon divine provision while also emphasizing attention to the nature and quality of one's nourishment (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1995, vol. 15, p. 209). Accordingly, Islamic teachings emphasize the consumption of lawful (*ḥalāl*) and wholesome (*ṭayyib*) food during pregnancy and caution against unlawful or doubtful sources of sustenance because of their perceived ethical and spiritual consequences for the individual and family.

2.1.3. The Mother's Educational Role During the Breastfeeding (Riḍāʿah) Stage

Following the challenges of pregnancy and childbirth, the mother enters a new stage of educational and moral responsibility. Her role encompasses physical nourishment, emotional care, spiritual orientation, moral cultivation, and the reinforcement of religious values. Breastfeeding is presented in Islamic thought as an important opportunity for maternal interaction and the transmission of values, as the mother's conduct, expressions, and manner of interaction provide an early model for the child's developing religious and moral orientation.

Breastfeeding is described as an important foundation of early childhood development, since the quality of foundational experiences can affect subsequent development (Mūsawī Rād Lārījānī, 2000, p. 87). During the first two years of life, the infant may develop a particularly close physical and emotional relationship with the mother through breastfeeding. The act of breastfeeding is therefore understood not merely as a means of physical nourishment but also as an opportunity for emotional bonding and psychological security. The source further emphasizes the importance of maternal presence and affectionate interaction during this period (Qāʾimī, 1991, p. 71).

The Islamic tradition attaches significant spiritual merit to breastfeeding. The Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny) is reported to have stated: *"Whenever a mother suckles her child, for every suck she receives a reward equivalent to that of emancipating a descendant of Ishmael (peace be upon him). When she completes nursing the child, a noble angel touches her side and says: 'Resume your deeds, for indeed you have been forgiven.'"* (al-Majlisī, 1983, vol. 101, p. 106).

This tradition illustrates the spiritual significance attributed to breastfeeding in Islamic teachings and presents it as a practice associated not only with physical nourishment but also with spiritual merit (Muṣṭafawī, p. 144).

In Islamic thought, the family constitutes a fundamental basis of social and civilizational development, while the mother occupies a central position within the family. The upbringing of a righteous generation is consequently presented as an important prerequisite for the realization of an Islamic civilization (Nūrī Hamadānī, 2017, p. 446).

The Qur'an states: "Mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years; [that is] for those who wish to complete the nursing. And the father shall bear the provision and clothing of the mother in a fair manner. No soul is tasked with more than its capacity. No mother shall be harmed on account of her child..." (Qur'an 2:233).

In this regard, Imam Ali ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) is reported to have stated: "Know that the most binding and obligatory of all rights is the right of the mother. For she carried you in her womb when no one else would carry anyone; she guarded you with her hearing, her sight, and all her limbs with joyful devotion despite every hardship when no one could assist her. She nursed you when you were hungry and thirsty, clothed you when you were naked, and protected you with her entire being. Therefore, give thanks to her for this immense benevolence, an obligation you can never fulfill except with the assistance of Allah." (al-Majlisī, 1983, vol. 71, p. 76).

Ayatollah Khamenei emphasizes the broader social significance of motherhood: "If women comprehended the grandeur of the maternal mission, they would realize that educating a child means educating the future of an entire society." (Khamenei, 2013a, p. 43).

He describes the maternal mission as raising a generation that is *"self-reliant, faithful, and resilient."* In his addresses to students, he further emphasizes the formative influence of mothers by stating that young people whose souls are deeply rooted in faith have had their mothers as their first teachers. In discussing the Sacred Defense, he likewise attributes a significant role in the formation of its heroes to their mothers rather than to educational institutions alone (Khamenei, 2017a, 2018; Khamenei, 1999, p. 78).

Allāmah Muḥammad Taqī Jaʿfarī similarly emphasizes the civilizational significance of motherhood: "The mission of the mother in raising a faithful generation is the familial continuation of Prophethood. The mother is the axis of faith, hope, and rationality in society; the absence of a faithful mother creates a civilizational vacuum. By raising righteous offspring, mothers perpetuate the prophetic mission within the domestic sphere, keeping the divine primordial nature (fiṭrah) alive across society." (Jaʿfarī, 2010, p. 65).

Within this framework, maternal piety is regarded as an important element in the formation of the child's moral character. The source emphasizes such practices as guarding one's speech, sight, and hearing from sinful conduct and ensuring that one's sustenance is lawful and wholesome. It further attributes a formative role to the mother's ethical disposition during breastfeeding (Ṭāhirī, 1991, pp. 42–43).

The Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (peace be upon him), is reported to have stated: "Exercise careful selection for wet-nursing just as you exercise discernment in marriage, for breastfeeding influences temperament and disposition." (al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1993, vol. 21, p. 468).

Accordingly, the source emphasizes that the nursing mother's moral and spiritual disposition is relevant to the child's upbringing and development, and that breastfeeding should therefore be understood within the broader framework of Islamic moral and educational formation.

2.1.4. The Mother's Educational Role in the Post-Breastfeeding Stage

In the post-weaning stage, the mother's educational influence reaches its fullest expression across three primary domains.

1. Cultivating Religious Beliefs

Instilling belief in the fundamental principles (*uṣūl*) and practical branches (*furūʿ*) of religion is an important responsibility within the Muslim family. Because young children are still developing their capacity for abstract reasoning and may not yet be able to comprehend complex theological arguments, they acquire religious concepts primarily through behavioral modeling, affection, and direct maternal instruction. Belief in God, Prophethood, and the Resurrection provides a powerful psychological foundation for encouraging righteous conduct and deterring moral misconduct. The prophets consistently followed this approach, beginning their missions by emphasizing monotheism and belief in the Hereafter and subsequently guiding people toward moral virtues (Amīnī, 2012, p. 320). As the Qur'an states: *"[Adhere to] the natural disposition of Allah upon which*

He has created mankind" (Qur'an 30:30). Given the particularly strong emotional bond between young children and their mothers, children tend to receive maternal teachings and guidance with considerable receptivity.

2. Maternal Conduct as a Practical Model

A mother's lap constitutes a child's first school and one of the most important settings for early education. The lessons learned within this domestic environment may leave a lasting imprint on the child's character and conduct. A mother who has not addressed her own moral shortcomings cannot reasonably be expected to cultivate exemplary character in her children; an obstinate, foul-mouthed, or disrespectful mother may expose her child to similar patterns of behavior (Amīnī, 2012, p. 320). Within Islamic pedagogy, therefore, maternal character plays a significant role in shaping the child's way of life. The mother must embody virtue through her conduct, since abstract verbal instruction without practical exemplification is unlikely to achieve its intended educational effect.

Lady Fāṭimah al-Zahrāʾ (peace be upon her) provides a prominent example of practical ethical education. Imam al-Ḥasan al-Mujtabā (peace be upon him) is reported to have narrated: *"On a Thursday night into Friday morning, I saw my mother Fāṭimah standing in her prayer niche, engaged in continuous prayer and supplication until dawn, praying for each neighbor by name without praying for herself. I asked: 'O mother, why do you not pray for yourself as you pray for others?' She replied: 'O my son! The neighbor first, then the household'."* (al-Majlisī, 1983, vol. 43, p. 84).

Lady Fāṭimah's lived example contributed to the formation of exemplary personalities such as Imams al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, as well as Lady Zaynab and Lady Umm Kulthūm, who demonstrated steadfastness in confronting tyranny and oppression (Ḥakīm, 2014, p. 93).

3. Establishing a Religious and Sanctified Domestic Environment

Creating a home characterized by prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and supplication familiarizes children with religious practices from an early age (Ayatollahī, 2012, pp. 43–45). Within the Islamic educational framework, parental supervision—particularly maternal guidance—constitutes an important foundation of religious education, with worship occupying a central position.

Prayer (*ṣalāh*), as a principal form of worship, contributes to the formation of the child's moral and religious identity and should be introduced gradually and in accordance with the child's developmental stage, taking advantage of the child's natural inclination to imitate adults (al-Ṣadūq, n.d., vol. 1, p. 149). Similarly, children's introduction to fasting (*ṣawm*)

should be approached with warmth, positive experiences, and age-appropriate moderation rather than premature rigidity (Qāsimī, 2016, pp. 151–157). Through gradual habituation, empathy, and consistent parental modeling, acts of worship can become an enduring component of the child's religious identity.

Conclusion

This study examined the successive stages of women's educational role in Islam through three complementary sources of knowledge: the Holy Qur'an, the authentic traditions of the Prophet and the Infallibles (peace be upon them), and the contemporary civilizational thought of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei. The findings indicate that maternal upbringing constitutes a continuous, four-stage developmental process:

1. Pre-Pregnancy Stage: The mother's self-purification, firm faith (*īmān*), God-wariness (*taqwā*), and sincere servitude (*taʿabbud*) constitute the spiritual and moral foundation for the child's subsequent development.

2. Pregnancy Stage: Religious conviction, maternal ethical integrity, emotional serenity, and lawful and wholesome nutrition constitute important elements of the prenatal environment and, within the framework of the study, are regarded as influential factors in the child's physical, psychological, and spiritual development.

3. Breastfeeding Stage: Beyond providing physical nourishment, breastfeeding functions as an important psychosocial context for emotional bonding and, within the Islamic educational framework examined here, for the transmission of moral values, tranquility, and religious dispositions.

4. Post-Breastfeeding Stage: Maternal guidance develops into the cultivation of religious beliefs, moral virtues, and righteous conduct through practical role-modeling, gradual habituation to religious practices, and the establishment of a religiously oriented domestic environment.

In the thought of Ayatollah Khamenei, motherhood represents a highly elevated dimension of women's social and familial role and occupies a central position in the cultivation of human beings and the renewal of Islamic civilization. Maternal education constitutes a continuous and multidimensional process that begins before conception and extends throughout the child's development, thereby influencing the social and cultural future of the Muslim community. Consequently, the realization of a genuinely Qur'anic society requires due recognition of, support for, and appropriate institutionalization of this foundational role within the family and, where relevant, the broader social sphere.

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