



Ethics of Motherhood: A Comparative Approach Between Islamic and Feminist Thought

■ Aqdas Yazdi¹

Abstract

The physical and psychological developmental differences between men's and women's nature are with good reason. Women's integrity lies in moving towards what their nature and disposition dictate. Islam considers motherhood, and its particular ethical criteria, to be one of the greatest manifestations of female integrity, and nurturing the new generation to a woman's most significant task. Parallel to the Human Rights Movement in the West and the Industrial Revolution, another movement – “Feminism” – began to achieve women's rights and establish equality between men and women. This movement, through its discrepancies, has become an all-inclusive ideology with orientations. Based on their fundamental ideas and philosophies such as individualism and sexual freedom, feminist extremists consider motherhood to be the most important factor in the suppression of women. According to them, patriarchy has dominated history, science, and society while women's status and unique characteristics have been ignored. Through criticizing traditional ethics, they have strived to find new approaches so that at the same time as flattering and attesting to the superiority of feminine characteristics, they could spread them through general ethical solutions for society. One of their targets in the field of ethics is the ethics of motherhood; they attempt to establish the benevolent and nurturing nature of motherhood as a social blueprint for all human interactions. Islam deems faith, purity, patience, sacrifice, etc. to be virtues essential to motherhood and considers mothers' bosoms to be the primary and most important factor in conveying values to the new generations.

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1. University of Qom, Iran. E-mail: wrc@qom.ac.ir

Introduction

God Almighty, in all His Wisdom in the creation of all beings, has granted them the necessary developmental and innate abilities to guide them along their path to perfection. As such, "motherhood" is the greatest manifestation of divinity in women, which, if nurtured within its truthful principles, becomes the pinnacle of a woman's perfection and integrity. Unfortunately, in the last centuries, following the spread of modern materialistic views, distance from spirituality, emphasis on personal freedoms, and relevancy of ethical criteria, the enemies of mankind have now targeted the sacred institution of motherhood.

This article, besides revealing the ominous project of feminism in its radical form, from denying the differences between men and women to rejecting the tradition of marriage, demeaning the male gender, destroying the institution of families, and metamorphosing the identity of women, to attempt to create humans through new reproduction technologies, and the dimensions of raising children in governmental organizations, and replacing families with government, we also compare the views of Islam and Feminism about these issues.

Developmental Differences between Men and Women

Reflection on the Quran and religious scriptures reveals that men and women, in their human identities and that which is a necessity to humanity, are equals. All-Knowing God, to preserve the continuation of mankind, divided humans into male and female, and the differences in several characteristics are the requisite of such division (Mehrizi, 1382 SH, 68) and this difference produces different effects in social life. (Misbāh Yazdī, 1382 SH, 5/15)

The Psychological and Spiritual Differences between Men and Women

The system of creation has placed each being in an orbit specific to itself and its welfare, to reside within that same natural orbit. (Mutahhari, 1380 SH, 44) In nature, everything has its own special place and a relevant purpose. (Tabātabāī, 1384 SH, 108) The munificent Quran also said: "*Though He has created you in [various] stages?*" (Quran 71:14)

God made women's nature soft and granted them sensitivity

and delicacy of feelings, assigning them appropriate duties. "*Your women are a tillage for you.*" (Quran 2: 223)

Feminism and Biological Differences

Early feminists respected the differences between women and men. According to them, because of their natural differences, women have certain duties and the government is required to support the "task of motherhood". (Dumas, 1992, 41) However, feminist extremists, to equalize the roles of males and females, have attacked the matter of gender, considering gender-related behavior to be the result of social acceptance and not biology. (Gardner, 1386 SH, 187) Among the purposes of creating families are satisfying the sexual needs of men and women, psychological serenity for both spouses, passion and compassion between their bilateral interactions, and finally the most important goal: procreation and the need to continue one's seed, which enters families into a new phase. (Misbāh Yazdī, 1382 SH, 5/65-68)

Islam has several recommendations when choosing a wife and the mother of one's children and suggests qualities and virtues such as faith, wisdom, decorum, purity, dignity of birth and lineage, fertility, ability to satisfy the sexual needs of the spouse, and beauty of visage. (al-Āmili, n.d, 7/13-28)

Feminism and Marriage

Feminist extremists blatantly reject marriage and believe that starting a family is a conspiracy to oppress women further and a tool in the hands of male traditional ethics. They instead promote homosexuality and sexual independence for women. (Islāmī et al., 1386 SH, 342)

Feminist extremists, by acknowledging the fact that, women are more active and dominant in sexual matters are attempting to establish a new order to subdue men. They will use any political, educational, commercial, legal, and other means to reach their goals and insist upon them. (Pasno, 1384 SH, 87) Approaches to homosexual ethics with the emphasis on "choice" instead of "duty" suggest that instead of the traditional question of "whether this act is good" one must ask "whether this act will aid me in my progress towards self-awareness and freedom". This approach is the most radical in feminist ethics to eradicate completely the

dominance of men and push them aside from life's scene, purely to serve personal desire, enjoyment, and self-satisfaction. (Islāmī et al., 1386 SH, 343) Groups of homosexuals have frankly announced that a true feminist must be homosexual since there is no need for men. (Pasno, 1384 SH, 85)

On the other hand, an inclination for adultery has increasingly reduced the tendency to marry because when someone could satisfy her sexual needs outside wedlock, she has no intention or motivation to marry. The burden of carrying a child and nurturing children will not encumber women which is a deviation from nature. (Tabātabāī, 1384 SH, 507) The successes of this feminist movement include single mothers, a dangerous increase in sexually transmitted diseases, sexual stimulants, abortions, and runaway fathers whose roles in families are being ignored. They have no decisive rights, waste their lives away in the streets, or have aggressive relations with women. (Ibid, 86-105) Ultimately, these results are vindictively anti-child. The fact that children hold a position secondary to men is bad enough but what makes it worse is when children also hold a position secondary to women; an idea that follows the feminists of the third century and ancient Rome – which had a motto: "Live for yourself." (Carocopino, 1941, 89-115)

Family

Family is a "natural-conventional" society that lies somewhere between an instinctive society (such as that of the bees and termites) and a social-conventional (such as the civil society of humans). (Mutahhari, 1380 SH, 11) Family is life's first educational institution and the primary center of important pedagogy. (Dashti, 1372 SH, 44) Family is a strongly influential institution that conveys values from one generation to another. Family is the only social structure that deals with its members with love, patience, and care. This force of correlation leads individuals to excellence. (Novak, 1982, 165)

According to Islam, family, and its health have many effects on the advancement of society. It is the source of welfare in managing the State and humanity. (Khamenei, 1386 SH, 84) The developing character of a child requires knowledge that someone is there who cares for him more than others, someone who would

not only rational but also irrational things for him. (Pollock, 1983, 39) The traditional family is indeed a safe house in this cruel world. In return for this support of our children, apart from the natural satisfaction it brings, it enables us to face mortality with notions of being immortal. (Gardner, 1386 SH, 93)

Unconditional love and acceptance of a child's uniqueness by the parents sets the basis for the progeny to discover his wishes and ideals and recognize the path to achieve them more quickly. (Munajjim, 1384 SH, 177) In the religion of Islam, parents must share the responsibility equally of raising the children and adorning them with moral ethics and social decorum. (Kalantari, 1385 SH, 131) Changing the family system and its related clichés has always been one of the demands of feminists because, in their opinion, the family is the utmost original institution in which women are placed under the dominance of the patriarchal system. (Mushirzadeh, 1382 SH, 283-288)

On the other hand, emphasis on women's sexual liberty and easy birth control has annihilated the importance and value of the female's body and destroyed the relationship between husband and wife. In the light of feminist education, men expect an equal contribution towards living expenses by women. If a woman simply wishes to be a mother, the public opinion would be that she is neglecting her responsibilities. (Pasno, 1384 SH, 114)

Motherhood

Many of the roles of mothers in the past, such as nursing, counseling, guidance, etc. now require years of specific training and education but in two aspects a mother's role is irreplaceable: one is pregnancy and childbirth and the other is the unconditional love of a mother for her child. On that basis, it can be said, "Mother is the giver of life." (Munajjim, 1384 SH, 172-174) Motherhood is a state of human existence with respect to biological necessities. In this view, motherhood is the natural destiny of women and an instinctive function. (Chodrow, 1978, 50) "Motherhood" usually means caring for the children, satisfying their material, spiritual, and emotional needs, and feeling responsible for them. (Adams, 1990, 31) In modern approaches to gender, motherhood is the manifestation of relations that are subject to change through historical, social,

economic, and even racial aspects. (Sadiqī-Fasā'ī, 1384 SH, 19) Even the cultural changes of the second half of the twentieth century to the meaning and structure of paternity have affected the understanding and analysis of the issue of motherhood. (Keary, 2000, 12)

The legend of motherly love has several specific aspects which distinguish it from other forms of love; although, socio-cultural norms and values have certain effects on it. (Munajjim, 1384 SH, 165-171) Some believe that even the feelings and affection a woman has for her spouse are rooted within her maternal love and are a secondary state of a woman's maternity arising from her instinct of adaptability to situations. (Mutahhari, 1380 SH, 174) In childhood, nothing can replace "mother", and later in life, nothing can be "mother". Any mother and child will understand this perfectly. (Gardner, 1386 SH, 217)

Esteemed scholar and sociologist, John Bowlby (1969) believes that a child's dependence on the mother is a sheetrock of the child's personality. Where it is missing, the child will be incapable of having meaningful relationships with others. He stresses that: "A child needs the presence of a mother as much as food and the absence of a mother would subconsciously evoke the feeling of anger and loss in him." (Bowlby, 1969, xiii)

Honor and Dignity of the Position of Motherhood

There are two categories of verses in the Quran on gratitude for parents; one on the joint rights of mother and father and the other specifically on gratitude for mothers which, in itself, honours the position of mothers. (Javādi Āmoli, 1375 SH, 177)

"Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone except Him, and [He has enjoined] kindness to parents." (Quran 17: 23)

"We have enjoined man concerning his parents: His mother carried him through weakness upon weakness, and his weaning takes two years. Give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is the return." (Quran 31: 14)

Then, as a description of a mother's services, the Quran cites her thirty months' endeavor which includes the duration of pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding which is difficult for the mother (from the exegesis of Surah 46: 15). A man named Jahmah

came into Prophet Muhammad's (Peace Be upon Him) presence and said, *"I wish to go with, to be of service to you in the war and have come to you for guidance."* The Prophet asked, "Do you have a mother?" He said, "Yes." The prophet said, "Well, then go be of service to her, for Jannat (paradise) is beneath her feet." (Muḥammadī Reyshahrī, 1371 SH, 10/713) It is due to a mother's important position and her great sacrifice that when someone asked the Prophet of Islam, *"O Prophet of God, to whom must I do kindness?"* He replied, *"To your mother."* When that man asked again, *"And after that to whom must I be kind?"* he replied again, *"To your mother."* When the man asked the third time, *"And after that to whom must I do kindness?"* the Prophet replied, *"To your father."* (Kulaynī, n.d, 233)

God, in His Excellence, has combined mothers' hearts and souls of mothers with His light of divine mercy to such an extent that none but mothers may understand. His Eternal Benevolence granted mothers tolerance as unyielding as the Earth to persevere in the face of hardship and difficulty from the moment of conception, pregnancy, and birth, to nursing and nurturing the child to the end; such hardships and troubles which fathers could not withstand for even a single night. (Khomeini, 1374 SH, 124) The Lord, in His Excellence, honored women with the task of motherhood and granted them the merits of this important task so that all Prophets, Imams, and divine ambassadors soared to the divine presence from the bosom of a woman. (Dashti, 1372 SH, 44) This proves that a woman's most important function is motherhood and that all other activities must be done while maintaining the maternal aspect. (Khamenei, 1486 SH, 81)

Pregnancy

From the moment the fetus forms inside the mother's womb, the period of motherhood begins. (Amini, 1368 SH, 33) In the holy Quran, a woman's pregnancy is referred to as follows: *"It is He who created you from a single soul, and made from it its mate, that he might find comfort with her. So, when he had covered her, she bore a light burden and passed [some time] with it. When she had grown heavy, they both invoked Allah, their Lord: 'If You give us a healthy [child], we will be surely grateful.'"* (Quran 7: 189)

In remuneration of a pregnant mother, it suffices that the

prophet of Islam said: "A woman from the beginning of pregnancy to the end of the nursing period is as a soldier of God and if she should lose her life in that time, she will be rewarded as a martyr." (Muttaqī al-Hindī, 16/411; Nūrī Hamadani, 1383 SH, 451)

The diet of a mother during pregnancy is of paramount importance. Imam Rida (a.s) said about this matter, "*Quince increases wisdom and intellect.*" (Ṭabrisī, n.d. 1/180) There is much emphasis in Islam on a pregnant woman's avoiding both Ḥarām and doubt-inducing food. Further, it is ethically recommended for a pregnant woman to avoid wishing malice upon anyone, being envious and looking at al-Marrat (passersby), and, to pray and saying psalms, reading the Quran, keeping calm, refraining from grief, maintaining her wuḍū' (ablution from minor impurity), and refrain from fighting and arguing. (Dashti, 1372 SH, 58)

Nursing

The mother can nurse the child after birth from the milk in her bosom and nurture the child due to her special maternal psychological characteristics. (Misbāh Yazdī, 1382 SH, 5/69, 72) Imam 'Alī (a.s) said, "*For a baby, nothing holds more benefits than the mother's breast milk.*" (al-Āmili, n.d, 7/175) The mother has the right to choose the duration of the nursing period. The Quran leaves the decision of the nursing period to the parents: "*Mothers shall suckle their children for two full years—that for such as desire to complete the suckling...*" (Quran 2: 233)

Feminism and Motherhood

There is a long history of belittling the revered position of motherhood through the ignorance of mankind; it has taken a new shape in every era according to its conditions and situations. On one side of the spectrum, traditionalist extremists have limited the role of women to childbearing and housekeeping. The anchor to support this idea is the biological differences between men and women. Motherhood is a completely instinctive function, deep-rooted in nature while the men's biology makes them competent for the instrumental roles of satisfying financial needs and interacting with the outside world. In modern approaches to

gender, motherhood is a social construct affected by the limited reality of women. Anthropologists have explained how a change in a social situation causes a change in women's status. (Sadiqī-Fasā'ī, 1384 SH, 23) Rich distinguishes motherhood as an experience enclosed in a woman's body, uninfluenced by culture, from the institution of maternity which yields all control to a patriarchic culture. Of these two descriptions, one is forced upon the other. From this point, some feminist extremists have linked the suppression of women to motherhood and consider the biological ability to procreate to be the greatest obstacle for women. (Ibid, 19) The "Goals of the National Organization for Women" released a notification defining homemakers as "completely retired from society", deeming raising the new generation to be unimportant. (Pasno, 1384 SH, 115-116)

Firestone suggests that "motherhood" should be eliminated from human culture. In her opinion, new nursing technologies and child-care institutions have ended the need for natural mothers. (Gardner, 1386 SH, 188) In order to belittle the position of homemakers, socialist governments such as Canada and Sweden have tried to punish single-income families through revenue and taxation laws. (Ibid, 224, 120)

Family Feminism

Unlike feminist extremists who believe motherhood to be the source of suppression of women, this group's focal point is women's ability to bear children. This group, with reference to the fact that the mother-child relationship has a biological aspect, and, that women, in comparison to men, have a closer and more natural bond with children, concludes that the restoration of family and the roles of mothers must exceed all other activities. (Sadiqī-Fasā'ī, 1384 SH, 26, 39)

Extreme Feminism and Procreation

This group, based on the principle of "individualism", aiming for personal liberty and independence of women, and, supporting the principle of "equality" for men and women, undermines the natural gender differences, disparages the institution of the family, and regards motherhood to be marginal. In their opinion, any legislature in favor of mothers conforms to the traditional

gender stereotypes and causes the suppression of women. (Ibid, 24, 26) Firestone who believes the biological ability to procreate to be the main reason for women's oppression and gender-based role division, writes, "The first objective of a feminine social system is to save women from their reproductive biology by any means possible". Simone De Beauvoir in her book "The Second Sex" (Vol. 2, 2001) says that perhaps one day the participation of men in the process of procreation will become unnecessary ... and to reach this objective is women's desire. This group strongly supports the rights to contraception and abortion and considers new reproduction techniques such as IVF to be the preferred way to become pregnant. However, nowadays, many of the victims of these projects are middle-aged clients of fertility clinics who spend millions of dollars to achieve their unattainable dreams of having children. (Ibid, 29-30)

Abortion

Feminists believe abortion rights to be vital to women's sexual freedom. Women and politicians have considered this issue from a purely political and not moral perspective, ignoring the ethical issue of the lives of unborn children. Supporters of abortion rights believe that a fetus is a mass of accumulated cells without feelings and not a complete human. The unborn child within the mother's womb is only an irregular matter resulting from the mother's sexual activities. The Supreme Court also approved the right to abortion based on the argument that the fetus in the womb does not yet have the qualities of humanity, and therefore, human rights do not apply to them. Today, in abortion clinics, they cruelly take unborn children's lives and shred their lifeless bodies in disposal machines. Many doctors earn a living through this business, and, by selling the dismembered parts of fetal bodies to cosmetic companies, make a great deal of money. (Ibid, 54, 74)

Day-Care Centres

Day-care centers are yet another weapon of radical feminists in their battle with "the family". To give priority to women's social obligations and free them from the responsibilities of motherhood, they devised free day-care plans to eliminate the need for conventional family. Women would compete with men;

patriarchy would cease and everyone would be of an equal standing. (Gardner, 1386 SH, 109) Of course, a good kindergarten for a few hours a day, not only does not harm the children but is also preferable for some mothers. (Ibid, 217) However, the long hours of daycare alter the relationship between mother and child, and its pervasive effects may dangerously alter the construct of society. (Ibid, 224)

These major changes in child-rearing, in modern-day America, have caused a diminished sense of community and augmented the spirit of individualism. (Khamenei, 1386 SH, 106)

Feminist Ethics

Until the end of the eighteenth century, belief in the great chain of existence was based on a strong faith in God, as the source of all things holy and good, from Whom all things begin and to Whom all things return. This chain of existence included the lowest forms of life such as the amoeba to the greatest form such as the Holy Omni-Presence. In this chain, laden with ethical and moral hierarchies, humans are right in the middle and can fall to the level of beasts by committing acts of ignorance or rise to a higher level, perhaps even to the holy and revered position of receiving Divine messages, through performing wise acts. (Ibid, 50) Before the Copernican, Darwinian, and Freudian dictums struck their blows to the "self-love of humanity", the public opinion of Man's position in the world was that God created the earth, the heavens, and humans and mankind's main obligation is to be great trustees to the creations of The Lord and live a sacred life according to Judeo- Christian teachings. However, the aforementioned dictums propelled Western civilization towards a state in which nothing is absolute.

Therefore, no truth or ethical principle, except self-interest, is worthy of consideration. (Ibid, 50) One of the most definitive signs of the decline of our social, cultural, and – by extension – family ethics; today, is our blatant disregard for moral hierarchies. That constitutes a loss of the belief that in all human matters, there is good, better, and best, and that all ethically healthy human communities must adapt themselves and their legislation to this natural belief. (Ibid, 56) Out of all failed interpretations of human and natural realities, relative ethics has reigned out of control and

has given us the worst disregard for moral hierarchies; that is, no surprise because in the era of seeking equality, we have announced that all things, including ethical values, are equal. (Ibid, 55)

Now, in our era, the psychoanalytic human has emerged. This particular brand of human beings is characterized as one that "severely rejects the notion of hierarchy in which all manners of predecessors believed." (Reich, 1976, 5) This act became the major pivotal point in the principal changes from the system of hierarchy to equality. This change could only occur based on the notion that there is no ethical hierarchy, no right or wrong, no good or bad. As soon as these relative ethics emerged as a systematic unit, moral principles were replaced by psychoanalysis. In fact, we live in an anti-cultural society in which we seek freedom from all boundaries and obligations. The religious human sought salvation, but the psychoanalytic human is born to enjoy. Beliefs have surrendered their place to passions and now all nations raise havoc to achieve those rights that satisfy these passions. (Ibid, 25)

Nowadays in the West, the individual freedom or moral of "be happy", which is devoid of value, has replaced the meaningful values of obligations towards spouse, family, children, and society. Sexual freedom lost women and men's financial support in the household. That support enabled women to bear children, provide for them, and should they choose to support them, and raise them on their own. (Gardner, 1386 SH, 210)

The essence of the ethical system, that the early feminists strived to preserve, was significantly different from that of modern feminists. At that time ethical principles were based on the family values of men and women. Nowadays, however, ethics are based on independence and autonomy. This matter appears charming at first but is essentially quite dangerous. Unfortunately, extreme feminism has become propulsion towards this autonomous individualism, and, as a result, served anti-family policies in the government's interest. (Ibid, 172) Thomas Judge, theoretician of disambiguation, fanatically announced that the individual and freedom surpass culture, society, tradition, norms, greater values, obligation, and many other facets of ultra-individualistic realities. The disambiguation philosophy of free will, which is in fact a

weapon to protect the individual against the government, has now become a philosophical weapon for radicals to use against the institutions of family and society. Judge strongly believes that all interpretations of reality are of equal validity.

The therapy approach also considers all social pathologies to be the result of sociological arbitration and beyond the help of the individual. In this perspective, the family is a failed institution and children are its victims. They replace families with governmental facilities and parents with social workers. Criminologists, also, based on these principles, believe crime to be the outcome of a disturbed family or a plagued society and the criminal merely to be a victim of such circumstances, not someone to be cured or punished. (Ibid, 59) Therefore we see that based on these ideas, the ethical values of the West have changed drastically. They consider carnal virtues such as chastity, generosity, modesty, kindness, sincerity, and so on to be myths, remnants of the archaic and barbaric eras. They believe chastity to be a pointless denial of carnal desires and natural pleasures, compassion to be the result of a weakness of the heart, and modesty and prudence to be an obstacle to achieving human rights whereas it is only in the light of these virtues that human beings can attain salvation and true happiness. (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1384 SH, 110)

Nowadays, as a reflection of feminist movements' emphasis on sexual freedom, single mothers have become a cultural anomaly. A great percentage of homicides, suicides, school expulsions, and runaway minors are due to the lack of a parental figure in the person's life, specifically a father figure. In households in which women seek equal treatment, there is often conflict; if women in our society had a correct understanding of the differences in the men's and women's roles, they would understand the vital necessity of a family. God has created women with specific traits that make them just as valuable as their male counterparts. In the eyes of God, we are not second-rate or inferior citizens. God's purpose, when speaking of the union of man and woman, was not meant for misuse. He means the men's protection to be nurturing to women, not oppressing or demeaning to their gender. (Pasno, 1384 SH, 110)

Maternal Ethics

This so-called maternal approach to ethics is closely related to

women's opinions on ethics. Theoreticians of this approach place emphasis on females' psychological characteristics and ethical virtues. According to them, a truly gender-equal system of ethics, would not be a replica of conditional-obligatory models that are generally based on male experiences. Most of our human interactions are between people who are not equal in power or knowledge. Ethics systems must be based on a model suitable to the routine, daily lives of the general public and not on understandings that are bound to conditional actions. The dynamics of ethical existence are best explained through the models of maternal instincts. (Stanford Encyclopedia) Where a parent attempts a relationship with a child, a doctor with a patient, or a confident youth with a distressed and depressed friend, it is not a relationship of two equal economic poles in a business negotiation, but rather the relationship of two individuals with specific weaknesses and strengths.

In Ruddick's opinion, maternal instinct, like any other human instinct, has its own specific method of thinking with its own vocabulary, reasoning, goals, and purposes. The goals of maternal thinking are as follows: caring for, raising, and accepting the child, and protecting the child's life which are "instinctive maternal actions". Infants are delicate and fragile and without proper care, nurture, and clothing, they would not survive. For mothers to be able to care for their young, even in the hardest of circumstances, they must possess some ethical virtues such as humility and good nature.

The second aspect of motherly instinct is rearing and nurturing the child, which does not have a pre-existing model and is coupled with compassion and love. The third and final aspect of maternal instinct is education. Mothers often try to raise their children to be compassionate, model citizens; in Ruddick's opinion, enforcing discipline, protection, education, and good manners in upbringing, is an ultra-virtuous example of "loving care", which is both reasonable and emotional. This love is what causes mothers not to loathe and reproach maternal instincts. (Ibid)

Feminist theoreticians of maternal ethics strive to generalize and make maternal instinct applicable to both men and women. Based on that, anyone can think as a mother does, whether in family or social matters. According to the supporters of this

theory, the reality of war is merely death and the loss of the products of motherly instincts, namely people on whose growth, nurturing, and protection, many years of troubles, hardship, and care have been spent. In contrast, the popular male understanding of war is to achieve victory and power. (Ibid)

E. F. Kitei based his approach to equality in ethics on the concept of "dependence" rather than motherhood. Protecting, worrying, and connecting with the dependent are the main points in this approach. According to Kitei, the origin of a mother's ethical obligations towards her infant is the relationship of the dependent one in dire need of her who has the position to satisfy those needs. The main distinguishing point of this relationship of dependency, which has a great social foundation and structure, is that it is usually not by choice, but rather assumed to be bound by family ties, the dynamics of friendship, or terms of servitude.

Kitei proposes that the model of the relationship of dependence could and must guide the general policies of human equality. In his opinion, all human beings are equal because they are the products of one or several mothers and at some point, were dependent on her or them. He claims that since every person is a mother's child, one must care for and protect the source of this dependence, rather than attempt to weaken the ties that hold society together. He insists that the primary purpose of general policies must be to strengthen the sources of dependence and on the other hand, reduce dependence itself. (Ibid)

According to Held, maternal ethics are based on cooperation, compassion, agreement, sharing, and satisfying the needs of others. She believes the relationship between the motherly figure and the child to be the model of all favorable human interactions. She claims that there is a significant gap between women's and men's ethical experiences. She criticizes traditional Western ethics in which not only are women's ethics of women ignored but men's ethics are also considered to be non-gendered. Unlike some philosophers of maternal ethics, Held believes that both women and men can assume motherhood. The fact that men cannot bear children does not mean that they cannot raise children either. Both men and women can and must acquire the views of maternal ethics. Making the ethics of motherhood exclusive to women causes men to become unemotional, dispassionate, and

quarrelsome individuals who show these characteristics when placed in positions of power. Held, despite believing that both men and women can assume motherhood, also reminds us that there are qualitative differences between the motherhood of women and men. Women's ability to reproduce is perhaps a sign that they are more responsible for the creation of new individuals than men. However, since men have a part in the conception and creation of a new life, they must also share in its protection and the responsibilities of its growth. (Ibid)

White Beck, in an analysis of motherhood, places more emphasis than Ruddick or Held on the mothers' biology. In his opinion, women's "maternal instinct" causes them to see everything as if revolving around their babies whereas men are different. A father, despite his efforts, will not be able to experience motherhood or the fragility and feebleness of infants. The best he can do is to provide support through these experiences and offer his compassion. The different biological experiences of men and women affect their particular emotions towards the child. The physical experiences specific to women deepen their emotions and the strength of their affection and care for the child. (Ibid)

Criticizing Feminist Maternal Ethics

There are two groups of critics of the maternal approach to ethics: feminists and non-feminists. Non-feminist critics oppose the idea of using a special application of a relationship as an ethical model for every interaction. Non-feminist critics are dubious about whether any human relationship can be a model for all human interactions because every human relationship including parent to child, husband to wife, friend to friend, and employer to employee has its own specific criteria. The relationship between those of unequal status cannot be as a model for a relationship between those of equal status and vice versa. (Ibid)

Feminist critics interfere with the adequacy of the mother and child relationship. According to them, mothers, in a patriarchal society, are surrounded by misconceptions, expectations, and requirements. Is it necessary that other than for a few exceptions, all women must follow the example of those who have sacrificed everything for the sake of their children? Alternatively, must all people follow the example of good friendship as a relationship?

(Rutledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1382 SH)

Others criticize that proponents of maternal ethics consider biological mothers to be too ideal and needlessly brush non-biological mothers and fathers aside. Another point is that there are many behavioral differences between mothers. Some of them perform their maternal duties under the most oppressive circumstances; others are negligent or violent towards their children whereas some men or non-biological mothers have better maternal behavior than biological mothers. This group of critics believes that even better role models can be found. Friendly relationships, especially those based upon mutual goals and wishes, can have all that a mother-child relationship offers and more. (Ibid, 18)

Ethics of Care and Its Criticism

Care has a short-recorded history – since the latter half of the twentieth century. Care includes emotional ethics and outlook about another person. Even though this care may apply to animals, institutions, or even ideas and thoughts, it applies primarily to people. (Ibid, 185) Caring for another person requires affection and concern for his or her happiness in a way that one feels at peace and happy when he or she is happy, unhappy, and distressed; this state cannot exist unless one person is emotionally involved in caring for another. The care-giver must want the well-being of the charge – hence this protection is done willingly and enthusiastically. Therefore, caring is not due to obligatory servitude or the need to aid another; even though there may also be these elements to care, but more logically and purely based on one's charitable nature since care also requires understanding, or at least understanding the needs, well-being, and welfare requirements of another person. At the same time, in caring for another, one tends to consider the charge of troubles and problems as one's own neglecting one's own personal problems and troubles. Therefore, care as opposed to mere concern, enthusiastic care-giving and constantly thinking of the welfare of another, are of ethical importance.

Nell Noddings, who proposes the most complete explanation of care, argues that care is much more than merely being concerned for another. Care requires a strong understanding, open-

mindedness, and sensitivity towards one another. When caring for another, one must consider the other as an individual. Caring is not a regular standard of ethics. The importance of care is in the conceptual view that it represents. (Ibid, 186)

Care, as understood in the late twentieth century, is not the same as compassion or charity. It is a much more complicated and deeper emotion. It requires a more collective involvement with another person and his or her situation whereas compassion and charity are achieved through humanity.

Carl Gilligan and others reason that women attempt to categorize ethics based on care more than men. In opposition to this view, many feminists argue that reference to any gender differences relevant to important ethical characteristics can once again be associated with the suppression and belittlement of women. (Ibid, 167) Non-feminist critics also argue that even if care is an ethical virtue, and not just a pleasant psychological characteristic that some random people possess, it is essentially a virtue less ethical than justice. This group suggests that replacing a special sense of care with the common ethical principle of "helping those in need" is better since principles are more trustworthy than senses. (Stanford Encyclopedia)

Theoreticians, such as Robinson, attempt to offer general standards of care to manage society and political fields. (Ibid)

Motherhood in Islam

According to Islam, mothers are the foundations of shaping family identity. The status of husbands and children, their happiness or sadness, are solely dependent upon her. Hence it is said that man's ultimate happiness lies in finding a respectable and praiseworthy wife. (Mirkhani, 1379 SH, 78) A child is a gift from God in the parents' safe-keeping. Mothers in particular are responsible for safeguarding this gift. (Qā'imī, n.d, 78) Raising a righteous child is so important that the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (S) said: A righteous child is one of the flowers of paradise. (Kulaynī, 1413 A.H, 6/7)

A mother is an ethical and behavioral role model for the child and the child initially learns the philosophy of life from the mother. (Qā'imī, n.d, 99, 147) Mothers have the great responsibility of raising their babies; a good upbringing can

ensure a nation's happiness and a poor upbringing can corrupt a society. (Khomeini, 1366 SH, 193) The woman's lap is that of immaculacy, prominence, purity, and virtue. Women can raise strong youths for the future of the nation. (Ibid, 119-120) Imām Sajjād (a.s) said about the rights of children: *"Your child's right over you is that you know he is of your being, his good or bad lies with you in this world and you know that you are responsible for his upbringing. Raise him such that you find yourself rewarded when he does well and find yourself punished and discomfited when he does evil."* (Imām Sajjād, 1370 SH, 140)

From an ethical perspective, mothers should know the basics of ethics and virtues, understand them, and apply them to their lives to still positive ethics in their children. Religiously, faith and belief are vital components of a mother's knowledge. Based on them, she can guide her child towards great goals. The mother is responsible for the physical and emotional well-being of the child and must teach the child the ways of respectable conduct towards others. (Qā'imī, n.d, 59, 272)

Lady Zahra (a.s): A Multidimensional Role Model for All Mothers

Contemplating different aspects of the holy Prophet's daughter, as a wonderful wife and most valuable mother, we realize that from a meager shanty, she raises such children whose luminosity surpasses time and place. (Mirkhani, 1379 SH, 129) Every Thursday night, Lady Zahra's children would find their mother at prayer, kneeling and prostrating before God, and praying for every Muslim. When they asked her why she did not pray for herself, she said, "First neighbors, then household." (Majlisī, 1403 A.H, 10/25) In terms of knowledge and combatting ignorance, her moving speech in the mosque of Medina is thoroughly infused with different aspects: history, sociology, philosophy of the extinction of great nations, religious principles (Uṣūl) and subsidiaries (Furū'), leadership, the role of praying and sincerity, and so on, that the world has not yet seen since. (Zanjāni, 1363 SH) From this, we understand that a mother must be an educated and knowledgeable person. A mother's ignorance can have devastating and irreversible effects on a child. Observing the life of the great Lady Zahra, we understand that a woman, concerning her position as mother and wife, must participate in resolving

scientific, political, economic, and social issues. (Ibid, 129)

What Mothers Pass on Hereditarily and through Upbringing according to the Qur'ān

We can only say about Can'ān son of Noah, who refused to take his father's sympathetic advice in the sight of the signs of Divine Wrath, that he did not have a good mother; the mother's traits passed to the son. In contrast, Ishmael son of Abraham, obeyed the will of his father without complaint because he had a wonderful mother like Hājar, who had, in the years of his father's absence, taught him sincere virtues, religion, and sacrifice. ('Abedīnī, n.d, 50-53)

Furthermore, Moses' mother was so kind and pure that her name and story are told in the holy Quran (Quran 28: 7) and after throwing him in the Nile for his protection, Divine Providence willed that he should reject all wet nurses and be breastfed and raised by his own mother, thus receiving her guidance and care. (Quran 28: 12). Later, even in the Pharaoh's palace, another faithful woman, the Pharaoh's wife, played a role in his upbringing. The Pharaoh's wife, in the palace of corruption, behaved so well and righteously that she became a role model for all believers. (Quran 66: 11)

The Paramount Importance of Mothers' Faith and Purity

To raise her children successfully, a mother must develop faith to resist temptation. A mother's faith aids her in the face of problems and her children benefit from peace and mental strength. Faithful mothers control their tempers and hold their tongues when dealing with their children, refrain from associations that might stain their character, and the effects of purity, humility, and grace show upon their faces. (Qā'imī, n.d, 159-162)

Purity is a virtue that comes from chastising the instinct of lust. (Tūsī, 1373 SH, 110) With the appearance of this virtue, wisdom, and reason overcome lust and desire, and the person can then be free from their bond. (Rāzī Muskuyah, 1411 A.H, 40) Virtues such as humility, grace, and so on are all controlled by chastity. (Ibid, 41) A mother's value is in her purity and servitude to the Divine Will. A mother who is compassionate and wise with her children will never be tainted. The existence of saints in the world

is due to the virtue of their mothers and this means that women's purity can have an eternal effect on the world. The Holy Quran praises the Virgin Mary's purity and chastity to the point that she was deemed worthy of being impregnated by the Holy Spirit. (Quran 66: 11)

Motherly Forgiveness

Essentially motherhood means accepting limitations and obligations, not as a chore, but with pleasure and joy. A mother's work is incompatible with selfishness, egotism, and self-interest. A mother is required to make many sacrifices to keep the new generation. (Qā'imī, n.d, 232-289) This means ethical sacrifice, which is a personal virtue through which one forfeits personal interests in favor of another's. (Rāzī Muskuyah, 1411 A.H, 43) The Holy Quran says that those who possess this particular virtue are among those who shall reach salvation. (Quran 59: 9)

Furthermore, empathizing and sympathizing with a child requires patience and tolerance which nurses and governesses do not have. Rearing a child and instilling certain ethical virtues in him requires patience and tolerance that only a mother possesses. (Qā'imī, n.d, 170-172) The mother must look past her desires and this is exactly the ethical patience that includes resistance against indecent desires. (Tūsī, 1373 SH, 114) And the reward for those who are patient is immeasurable. (Quran 39:10) Another virtue that a mother must possess is meekness. Meekness is a personal virtue through which the self reaches a state of serenity and peace such that rage and anger can no longer easily upset her. (Rāzī Muskuyah, 1411 A.H, 43)

Motherly Love and Kindness

The joy of motherhood and a mother's serenity and peace in the time she spends loving and caring for her child and performing her maternal obligations is a duty imposed upon mothers by nature and instinct. (Qā'imī, n.d, 269, 271) Some psychologists believe that all aspects of a woman's life which consist of love and kindness and preserving the emotional health of a woman, are closely related to these spiritual niceties. (Hashimi-Rekavandi, 1391 SH, 60, 77) This love that engulfs all of a woman's other wishes is the reason for her pleasure and joy. (Lambroso, 1382

SH, 93-96) Motherly love incredibly lightens the burden of motherhood. (Ibid, 117) Love is excessive kindness which only occurs between two individuals (Rāzī Muskuyah, 1411 A.H, 126) and motherly love is attraction towards a being to whom, the mother gives her whole self. (Lambroso, 1382 SH, 93-96)

Motherly love is essential to a child's survival. The mother is the source of kindness, compassion, and safety for the child. A child's self-confidence and peace of mind are dependent upon this feeling of safety. (Qā'imī, n.d, 106-109) Parents love their child because they consider him to be a version of themselves and their hope of survival... Mother and father strive to discipline and perfect their child to provide all welfare, benefit, and happiness for him. (Rāzī Muskuyah, 1411 A.H, 131-132)

In Islam kindness and love for children have such importance that when one of the Ansār (Helpers) came to the Prophet and asked to whom he must do kindness, the Prophet replied, "*To your parents.*" The man said, "They have passed away." The Prophet then replied, "*Then be kind to your children.*" (Majlisī, 1403 A.H, 104/98; Kulaynī, 1413 A.H, 6/52) Imām Sādiq (a.s) also said that God has mercy upon his servants because of a parent's extreme love for children. (Muḥammadī Reysharī, 699) Motherly love must be unconditional and fulfilling. (Qā'imī, n.d, 91) However, moderation must be maintained in affection; excessive love and kindness spoils the child whereas excessive strictness and discipline harms the healthy character of the child. (Mikhbur, 1385 SH, 240)

Some Ethical Suggestions Made by Islam for Dealing with Your Children

Refrain from Insults and Scorn: Persistently scorning and insulting the child demeans the child's character and provokes his or her stubbornness. Imām 'Alī (a.s) said, "Excessive scorn and punishment fuels the fires of obstinacy." (Ḥarrani, 1364 A.H, 84)

Keeping Promises: The great Prophet of Islam said, "When you make a promise to a child, you must keep it because children look to you as providers." (al-Āmilī, n.d. 15/201; Ṭabrisī, 219)

Speaking kindly to a Child: An Islamic ethical suggestion is to refrain from speaking harsh and impolite words because it may taint the heart. (Āmudī, n.d., 2/298) Being angry with

a child causes God's anger. (Kulaynī, 1413 A.H, 6/51)

Emphasis on Kissing Your Children: The Prophet advises parents to kiss their children and says that for every kiss a parent gives a child, a good deed is written for that mother or father. (Muḥammadī Reysharī, 199)

Motherly Discipline: Mothers must discipline their children kindly and gently, not harshly. Their teachings must be appropriate to the child's level of understanding. When discipline includes dos and don'ts, they must not demean or break the child's spirit. Never compare your child to another or brag about another's achievements in the face of your child's weaknesses. The child must not be shamed when disciplined and his/her dignity must be maintained. Unnecessary discipline weakens a child's self-confidence. When mistakes are repeated, the parents must stop discipline and start seeking reasons. Discipline must guide rather than force, and if ineffective, it must be done through other methods such as storytelling or punishment as necessary. (Qā'imī, n.d, 192-193)

Playing with the Child: Adults playing with children is educationally important. The Holy Prophet (S) said: *"He who has a child in his care, must behave like a child in bringing him up."* (al-Āmilī, n.d. 5/126)

The mother can stimulate the child's imagination and creativity when playing, teach him the importance of rules and respect for regulations, and help him learn new and unknown things, and peaceful co-existence.

Telling Children Stories: The Quran considers storytelling to be a teaching method (Quran 12: 111). Mothers can teach important ethical and theological lessons through stories. However, stories must be appropriate to the child's age, understanding, and psychological state, have an educational purpose, be free of lies and departures from reality, and answer any reasonable questions the child may have. (Mikhbur, 1385 SH, 233)

The Child's Education: Imām 'Alī (as) said, "A child's heart is as an empty land. Whatever you sow there will be accepted." (Imām 'Alī, 1373 SH, 297) The Lord Almighty says in the Holy Quran, "God brought you forth from your mothers' wombs while you knew naught." (Quran 16: 78). Human beings, in any stage of growth, require a teacher and guide. The child's very first

teacher is his or her mother. (Qā'imī, 1369 SH, 69)

Teaching religious essentials is also one of parent's most important duties. Imam Sadiq (a.s) said, "Teach your children Ḥadith as early as possible before enemies get in ahead of you and corrupt your children's hearts with their false words." (Kulaynī, 1413 A.H, 6/47)

Do Not Discriminate Between Your Children: The Holy Prophet suggests that you keep God in mind and treat your children equally. God praises equal treatment of one's children even concerning kissing them; He also emphasizes not discriminating when giving gifts to one's children. (Muḥammadī Reysharī, 706)

Consulting Your Child: During adolescence, when the child's mind is developing, it is commendable for parents to consult their children; it helps keep them free of tyranny and peremptory actions and strengthens their ability to make decisions. The Holy Prophet (S) strongly recommends parents to consult their children when they are between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one (the third septennial of their lives). (Muttaqī al-Ḥindī)

Keeping Children in Separate Beds: To follow proper child-rearing protocols and prevent sexual perversion from a tender age and the severity of satanic temptation, two boys, two girls, or a boy and a girl cannot, according to Islam, sleep in the same bed. There must be a barrier between them to separate them. (Muḥammadī Reysharī, 722) Mothers are not even allowed to sleep without reserve in the same bed as their daughters over the age of six. (al-Āmilī, n.d. 17)

Social Etiquette: The Holy Prophet recommends we teach our children proper etiquette. (Muḥammadī Reysharī, 721) We must teach our children to sit properly in public, not to complain and whine, to be silent unless spoken to, not to lie, and not to swear oaths whether true or false. Where elderly people are present, he must listen rather than speak and not say profane or improper things. He should not curse or utter vulgarity and blasphemy. He should be trained to speak eloquently and kindly, respect teachers and parents, and treat them with kindness and civility. He should have humility towards everyone, praise and admire those in conduct and interaction with him, and not participate in corrupt matters. (Rāzī Muskuyah, 1411 A.H, 72)

Finally, to end on a sweet note, we recite Imam Sajjād's prayer for raising children:

O Lord! Bestow thy grace upon me and have mercy on my children; do not deprive them of the gifts of righteousness and reason, and grant me righteous wisdom to raise them virtuously. O God! Adorn my children with the ornaments of insight and faith so that they might hear pleasant words, speak pleasantly, and be obedient to your will. (Imam Sajjād, n.d., 247-252)

Conclusion

God Almighty has created men and women with certain physiological and psychological differences to ensure the survival of the species. Biological and psychological research reveals differences between men and women, and the stroke of creation has given women a delicate nature to assume the revered task of motherhood. However, motherhood is incompatible with feminist ideologies because feminist theories, especially radical ones, demanding total equality between men and women in all respects, reject or deny there being any differences.

Extreme feminists attack the principle of gender and consider gender-based behavior to be the result of social acceptance and not physiology. If the nature of men and women were identical, the effects of it would have appeared throughout the centuries and the women's physiology would have changed to resemble that of men. It is for precisely this reason that Western societies have not yet been able to establish equality between men and women.

To achieve their goals, extreme feminists have even gone so far as to claim that reproduction is the main reason for the oppression of women and gender roles in society. Therefore, they propagated homosexuality of women and same-sex marriages whereas natural motherhood requires a dependence on the opposite sex.

They advertise contraception and abortion and believe that the new advancements in reproduction are the most efficient way to procreate.

However, if humanity reaches a state of scientific advancement where procreation can be done without satisfying sexual needs and without the loving and spiritual relationship between mother and father, it will not last very long because what preserves the laws of nature is human instinct. When nature is ignored, it

threatens humanity and causes the loss of social order.

Another problem feminism has with the concept of motherhood is based on the notion that to establish true social and political equality between men and women, there must be an emphasis on individuality whereas motherhood requires selfless attention to and care for the children which originates from emotional and psychological capacities for love and compassion, awareness of the needs of others, and self-sacrifice.

Based on acknowledging motherhood as a natural and instinctive matter for a woman, the women's primary goal is motherhood, and their sexual activity and satisfaction are to achieve this aim. However, through relying on the concepts of individuality and self-gratification, feminism seeks ever greater sexual freedom for women, and to make having children out of wedlock something that does not cause infamy. This, in turn, causes men not to assume parental responsibility for children and has caused women many problems in raising their children on their own, without any support from men.

So, we see that "the feminist movement" has only brought more problems for women. Their problems used to be the result of their humanity being neglected, but their new problems are the result of neglecting and ignoring their natural and instinctive desires, their particular potentials, and their particular function which is in turn, more oppressive to women. According to Islam, not only does motherhood not limit or retard a woman's social activities, but it is also her making and an important priority of womanhood. Furthermore, raising a child is a woman's most important and most sensitive obligation. In Islamic scriptures, mothers have a valuable position that men lack. Mothers can raise righteous and civil children to nurture society.

Ethical virtues deemed necessary for mothers in Islam include: faith, purity, sacrifice, patience, and so on, which develop women's spirituality and bring them closer to the Beloved. Sexual liberalism, self-gratification, and individualism are considered to be terrible ethical traits, linked to mankind's doom.

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