

## Session 1

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

### Motherhood in Islam

## I - From the Holy Qur'ân

### 1. Children are a gift from Allah

*Allah's is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth; He creates what He pleases. He grants to whom He pleases daughters and grants to whom He pleases sons. Or He makes them of both sorts, male and female; and He makes whom He pleases barren; surely He is the knowing, the Powerful. (42:49-50)*

### 2. Right of the Mother

*And We have enjoined man in respect of his parents - his mother bears him with weakness upon hardships and weaning takes two years - saying: "Be grateful to Me and to both your parents, to Me is the eternal coming. (31:14)*

*And We have enjoined on man doing of good to his parents; with troubles did his mother bear him and with troubles did she bring him forth; and the bearing and the weaning of him was thirty months. (46:15)*

## II - From Hadîth

1. It is the right of your mother that you should appreciate that she carried you [in her womb] the way nobody carries anybody, she fed you the fruits of her heart which nobody feeds anybody. She protected you [during pregnancy] with her ears, eyes, hands, legs, hair, limbs, [in short] with her whole being, gladly, cheerfully, and carefully; suffering patiently all the worries, pains, difficulties, and sorrows. Till the hand of God removed you from her and brought you into this world. Then she was most happy, feeding you forgetting her own hunger, clothing you even if she herself had no clothes, giving you milk and water not caring for her own thirst, keeping you in the shade, even if she had to suffer from the heat of the sun, giving you every comfort with her own hardships; lulling you to sleep while keeping herself awake.

Imam Zaynul `Abidin (a) in *Risalatul Huqooq* – The Chapter of Rights.

2. Fortunate is the person whose mother is chaste and virtuous.

Imam Ja`far as-Sâdiq (a)

3. Heaven lies under the feet of the mother.

Holy Prophet (s)

### **III – Imam Khomeini’s advice to mothers**

You respected women are busy training healthy children. You are responsible for training virtuous children and then offering them to society. We are all responsible for developing chaste Muslim children, but they are better raised in your laps. Your laps are the best schools of training. You have a responsibility to your country for you can train children who will then cultivate a country. You can train children who will protect and support the aspirations and desires of the Prophets.

May 26, 1979 – extracted from Mahjubah Vol. 1 nos.11&12

The job of training children is the highest of all the professions. A good child, if you transfer it to society, is better for you than possessing all of the universe. The first stage in the training of a child is in its mother’s lap. There is no love higher than the love between a mother and a child.

June 11, 1979 - extracted from Mahjubah Vol. 1 nos.11&12

It is the role of the Prophets to make human beings out of individuals who do not differ from animals, and to purify them. This was the profession of the Prophets. The role of the mothers should be this too, to purify the children who are raised in their laps. . . That which a child hears from its mother during early training is imprinted upon the heart of the child and remains with the child forever. Mothers must turn their attention to the fact that they bring up their children well. . . This is a very important issue that mothers are capable of fulfilling, they are actually structured by nature to meet. No one else is so built. A child does not learn as much from its father as it does from its mother. . . . A mother may raise a child well and that child may become a leader of the Ummah and save it. Or a mother may raise a child badly and that child is later responsible for the destruction of the Ummah.

Mahjubah Vol. 2, nos. 8 & 9

### **III - Motherhood and *Fitrat***

Almighty Allah has created human beings according to a particular *fitrat*. This means He has placed inside them internal urges and desires that are natural and not learned from outside sources. When man fulfills these instincts, he is able to achieve happiness and satisfaction. The religion of Islam guides its followers in expressing and fulfilling these natural instincts appropriately. Those who ignore and suppress their natural instincts, or do not fulfill them in a balanced manner, often lead dissatisfied and unhappy lives.

Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: *Then set your face upright for religion in the right state, the nature made by Allah in which He has made men, there is no altering of Allah's creation . . . (30:30)*

One of these natural instincts is the love of children. Human beings have a natural urge to have children of their own. The intense affection and protectiveness they feel towards children allows them to sacrifice for their children, and meet their needs without considering it a great burden. Without this natural desire, not many people would be willing to raise children and undergo all the hard work and difficulties associated with raising children. Children are a source of pleasure for the parents. According to the Holy Qur'an, believers pray for that pleasure, and say: *O our Lord! Grant us in our spouses and our children the joy of our eyes . . . (25:74)*

The fitrat of a woman gives her a maternal instinct which is in full bloom when her child is born. But it can also be seen when she handles babies and children other than her own. This instinct brings with it gentleness and love for the helpless child. It is expressed in a tender voice, in the desire to touch and hold close, to smile and talk to a baby even when it does not understand. The baby also instinctively responds to such gestures of affection.

These natural inclinations prevent a mother from oppressing and harming her child. The helplessness and dependence of the child brings out strong maternal feelings. This is the wisdom of the Creator, who created this dependence on the mother in order to strengthen the bond between mother and child. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a) says in Hadithe Mufazzal: *If the infant had been born with mature intellect, with an understanding of his functions, there would have been few occasions for the sweetness felt in the nature of the offspring, and the demands under which the parents find a full time pre-occupation with the affairs of the young ones would not have risen. Love and affection, felt for children, following the inconveniences undergone for their sake, would not subsist between parents and children.*

## **IV - Responsibilities of Motherhood**

When the Almighty grants a woman a child, it is a trust that He has placed with her. Along with it come responsibilities and duties that cannot be shirked. Those who fulfill the responsibilities of this trust well, succeed in obeying and pleasing the Almighty. There is great reward for them, both in this world and in the Hereafter.

The responsibility of motherhood does not lie in just fulfilling the physical needs of the child, or supplying the child with material goods. If a child is not raised properly and given the right training, material possessions will be of no use. When a mother teaches her child how to live a life of dignity and purity, this child is prepared for a lifetime of balanced happiness and honor in this world. This is an internal wealth which every mother can pass on to her child.

A mother should put in effort to raise her child in the best manner possible. She knows her child best, and can handle the child in the most appropriate manner. Children differ greatly, and there can be no set training rules for all children. The individualized and personalized training which a mother can provide cannot be matched by other caregivers. According to Aghae Falsafi, a mother can do the following for her children which no-one else can:

1. Recognize and become familiar with the inclinations and nature of her child. She can then handle him accordingly, and cater for his personal needs.
2. Pay attention to the particular talents that her child may have. Every child has unique abilities and potentials that are often overlooked in a larger setting such a day care or school. The mother must try to recognize these unique abilities and help her child develop them.
3. If her child has negative characteristics, a mother should take note of that and try to improve them. Whenever possible she should try to help her child understand what is good and virtuous, and point out the harms of the negative behavior.

According to hadith two most important responsibilities of a parent are teaching the child faith and Akhlaq. The following hadith emphasize these two aspects of training:

1. The right of your child is that you should know that he is from you and will be ascribed to you, through both his good and his evil, in the immediate affairs of this world. You are responsible for what has been entrusted to you, such as educating him in good conduct, pointing him in the direction of his Lord, and helping him to obey Him. So act toward him with the action of one who knows that he will be rewarded for doing good toward him and punished for evildoing.

Imam Zaynul `Abidin (a) in *Risalatul Huqooq* – The Chapter of Rights.

2. A parent does not grant a child a better gift than good manners.

Imam Ali (a)

3. There is no better inheritance than good manners.

Imam Ali (a)

## **V - Reward of fulfilling Motherly duties**

There is great reward for the mother who fulfills her duties in raising her children in the right manner. Islam recognizes the greatness of mothers, and has allotted rewards for them both in this world and in the hereafter.

### Respect in this world.

A mother commands great respect from her family. She is to be obeyed, and venerated. The Qur'anic verses which talk about the rights of parents specifically mention the mother. The Holy Prophet (s) has enjoined goodness to the mother even before the father.

A man once came for advice to him, as to who he should be good to. The Prophet (s) advised him to do good to his mother. Three times the man asked, and three times the Prophet (s) told him to do good to his mother. At the fourth time, the Prophet (s) told him to do good to his father. This well-known story clearly illustrates the position of the mother in Islam.

A mother has been freed for the noble task of raising children. It is not necessary for her to earn livelihood for the family. She has also been excused from many religious obligations such as Jihâd, Jamâ`at salât etc. for her to be able to spend time with her children.

#### Respect in the Hereafter.

The famous hadith of the Holy Prophet (s) says: *Jannat lies under the feet of the mothers.* A woman came to the Holy Prophet (s) and asked why going for Jihad was not obligatory on women. She was afraid that women were barred from achieving the great reward for those who fought and died in the way of the Almighty. The Prophet (s) explained to her that a woman was a fighter in Allah's way from the time she became pregnant until the time she delivered, and from the time she began breast-feeding until the time she stopped. If she died during that period, her position would be that of a martyr.

To raise a virtuous child is one of the greatest good deeds of a woman. It continues to bring reward even after death. Her efforts are transferred to the next generation as her children raise children of their own. Thus the effects of her training and upbringing last long after her death.