# The Role of Women in the Construction of the New Islamic Civilization from the Perspective of Martyr Ayatollah Sayyid Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti

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| Article Info | ABSTRACT |
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| | **Objective:** In the process of achieving a new Islamic civilization, one of the fundamental issues is clarifying the position and role of women in this civilizational movement. This article examines the role of women in shaping Islamic civilization from the perspective of Martyr Ayatollah Beheshti. The main research question is: 'How is the role and status of women in realizing the construction of the new Islamic civilization explained from Beheshti's viewpoint?'<br><br>**Method:** To answer this question, the present study employed a descriptive-analytical approach, drawing on library and documentary sources. The findings indicate that Beheshti, with a transformative perspective, considers women as key agents in building the Islamic civilization and emphasizes their intrinsic human dignity.<br><br>**Findings:** According to him, the active participation of women in scientific, ethical, and social fields, alongside the preservation of Islamic identity, is essential to advancing Islamic civilization. He believes that redefining the status of women within the framework of authentic Islamic teachings is necessary and opposes any imitation of rigid traditions or Western feminist discourses.<br><br>**Conclution:** Beheshti considers the family as the central nucleus of civilization-building and emphasizes the importance of capable women in this context. Furthermore, he views the provision of educational and socio-political participation opportunities for women as essential for their effective presence in the path of realizing the new Islamic civilization. This article, by presenting a balanced Islamic model from Beheshti's perspective, proposes gender justice through the integration of Quranic principles with contemporary needs and, by critiquing both tradition and Western feminism, offers practical strategies for women's empowerment. |

## Introduction

The construction of a new Islamic civilization, as a strategic horizon for contemporary Islamic societies, requires a comprehensive and purposeful revival of the intellectual, cultural, social, and ethical capacities of the Islamic Ummah. The participation of all social groups, particularly women, in this process is considered an undeniable necessity; women who act not as followers or complements but as independent and influential actors in producing culture, educating future generations, strengthening the family institution, and contributing to social and civilizational construction.

However, in many traditional or conservative approaches, the role of women in the Islamic civilization-building process has either been overlooked or marginalized. Conversely, some contemporary discourses, inclined toward non-native models incompatible with Islamic principles, have gone to extremes in redefining women's roles. This situation has created theoretical and practical gaps in understanding the actual position of women in contemporary Islamic society, underscoring the need for reconsideration in this domain.

Despite the clear emphasis of religious texts on human dignity, social justice, and women's responsibility, a comprehensive, native theoretical framework for their active participation in the process of Islamic civilization-building, particularly at the strategic level, has not yet been fully articulated. In this context, revisiting the ideas of thinkers who have interpreted Islamic sources with a jurisprudential and transformative approach can be enlightening.

One of the prominent figures in this field is Martyr Ayatollah Dr. Sayyid Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti. By combining jurisprudential knowledge, social awareness, and a justice-oriented approach, he provided an alternative model for the role and status of women in Islamic society, a model that neither relies on the elimination or reduction of women's roles nor on imitation of Western models, but emphasizes women's dignity, autonomy, and social responsibility within a religious framework.

The present study aims to clarify Beheshti's views on the role of women in constructing a new Islamic civilization, addressing the central question: 'How does Martyr Ayatollah Beheshti define the role and status of women in realizing this new Islamic civilization?' The research seeks to articulate Beheshti's perspectives and to provide a theoretical framework grounded in his writings, opinions, and intellectual foundations.

This study employs an analytical-interpretive approach and uses qualitative content analysis to draw on authentic Islamic sources and Beheshti's works to create a theoretical framework

for women's active, balanced, and purposeful participation in civilizational arenas, grounded in the interaction between Islamic tradition and contemporary exigencies. Ultimately, the research aims to present a rational, strategic, and Islamic consistent image of women's agency in constructing the new Islamic civilization and to propose strategies to strengthen this role across scientific, cultural, social, and ethical domains.

## 1. Research Background

Several articles have addressed this topic as part of the research background. These studies examine the role of women in constructing the new Islamic civilization from various perspectives:

- Yaseri et al. (2018 AD/1397 SH) provided a conceptual model analyzing women's role in the flourishing of Islamic civilization. They argue that women, through their educational role in the family and active participation in society, significantly influence the transmission of Islamic values and the spread of Islamic awakening. The model includes cultural, political, and economic dimensions.

- Zohourimanesh et al. (2024 AD/1403 SH) analyzed Beheshti's view on the political status of women. They showed that Beheshti, using Ijtihad, redefined concepts such as gender equality and women's social participation in Islamic discourse, emphasizing women's role in political and social activities.

- Farahi et al. (2024 AD/1403 SH) explored Beheshti's civilizational thought. They emphasized that Beheshti played an effective role in the awakening of the people and the Islamic Revolution, contributing significantly to the formation of the Islamic system by addressing various dimensions of Islamic civilization-building.

- Firahi (2012 AD/1391 SH) examined Beheshti's ideas in the theory of Ummah and Imamate, concluding that Beheshti played a fundamental role in the formation of Islamic civilization but did not have the opportunity to codify his jurisprudential and political thoughts systematically. These articles generally emphasize women's status and Beheshti's thought in the context of civilization-building.

- Shiroudi (2005 AD/1384 SH) studied women's socio-political role in contemporary Iranian society, examining their activities across three historical periods (the Constitutional Revolution and its pre- and post-periods). The article highlights the

active and decisive role of Iranian women in political and social transformations, rejecting passive or negative perspectives based on historical evidence.

- Thamani et al. (2020 AD/1399 SH) analyzed women's role in the new Islamic civilization, drawing on the Supreme Leader's thoughts, and concluded that women play a central role in seven domains: "Science, justice, spirituality, economy, independence, national dignity, and lifestyle."

- Moradi (2020 AD/1399 SH) examined women's mission in the new Islamic civilization, arguing that women, with equal human identity and Quranic dignity, have dual material and spiritual responsibilities: "In the family, safeguarding property, honor, and educating children with contemporary knowledge; in society, supporting the resistance economy, scientific presence, and political participation." This role requires awareness of both religious and modern sciences.

Considering the research background, the present article, focusing on Beheshti's integrated thought, explores women's status in jurisprudential-political dimensions. Unlike previous studies that primarily addressed women's general roles or revolutionary discourses, this article relies on Beheshti's views to present a coherent intellectual system in which women, combining educational and social roles, are central to achieving the Islamic civilization. It also emphasizes Beheshti's dynamic Ijtihad in shaping women's agency within an Islamic framework.

This study uses a descriptive-analytical method based on library and documentary sources. Data were collected through the examination of Beheshti's works, including books, articles, and speeches, as well as other relevant sources (e.g., the Qur'an, Hadith, and contemporary research), and through a comparative review of other Islamic thinkers' works. Qualitative content analysis with an interpretive-critical approach was employed to extract and explain Beheshti's perspectives on women's role in the new Islamic civilization; a comparative method was also used to critique and contrast traditional, Western feminist, and progressive Islamic readings. The credibility of the findings was ensured through the use of reliable sources and systematic analysis. This methodology enables a comprehensive, documented study of the topic.

By presenting Beheshti's balanced Islamic model, which simultaneously strengthens women's familial and social roles, this study addresses the tradition-modernity challenge. By critiquing

both restrictive traditional views and instrumental Western feminism, the article proposes an innovative solution: "Islamic gender justice."

## 2. Theoretical Framework and Research Foundations

The theoretical framework of this study, aimed at clarifying women's role in constructing the new Islamic civilization, is based on integrating the thought of Martyr Ayatollah Dr. Sayyid Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti with contemporary social science theories. This framework adopts a jurisprudential and reformist approach to provide a balanced, rational, and operational model that, while recognizing women's intrinsic dignity and social responsibility, positions them as central and active agents in building the Islamic civilization.

The theoretical framework consists of three primary levels:

- Ontological and Epistemological Foundations; based on religious and Qur'anic principles;
- Key Concepts and Intermediate Theory; based on Beheshti's thought;
- Analytical-Operational Model; utilizing contemporary social science theories.

### 2.1. Ontological Foundations: Dignity, Equality, and Human Responsibility

This study rests on three fundamental religious principles emphasized by Beheshti. These principles form the ontological basis for defining the status of women and men within an Islamic worldview:

- The Principle of Human Intrinsic Dignity

Referring to the verse "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam" (al-Isrā': 70), Beheshti considers dignity an inherent and non-gendered characteristic. This dignity is not the result of social or gender roles, but the very essence of human existence, and any inferior view of women is rejected. This principle serves as the intellectual basis for critiquing restrictive traditional views.

- The Principle of Equality in Human Essence

The verse "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female…" (al-Ḥujurāt: 13) emphasizes the inherent equality of men and women and defines human value

based on piety rather than gender. This equality provides a foundation for rejecting gender-based discrimination and recognizing women's potential across all social domains.

- The Principle of Social Responsibility and Comprehensive Participation

Multiple verses and Hadiths, such as "The believing men and believing women are allies of one another" (al-Tawbah: 71), along with women's active participation in early Islam, indicate that men and women share responsibility toward society. This principle challenges traditional views that confine women's social roles to the family and regard women's participation in enjoining good and forbidding evil, as well as in social structures, as a religious duty.

Summary of this section: "These three religious principles provide the epistemological framework for the study, creating a context in which women are not merely "Recipients of Rulings" but also "Responsible Actors" and "Direct addressees of divine commands" in the construction of society."

## 2.2.    Intermediate Theory: Beheshti's "Islamic Gender Justice."

Beheshti presents, with a dynamic, Ijtihad-based approach, a coherent and practical theory of women's status that goes beyond basic religious principles. This study formulates his thought as the "Islamic Gender Justice" theory, an intermediate theory bridging general religious foundations and operational analysis, with three core pillars:

- **Equality in Intrinsic Dignity and Value**

Beheshti believes that gender differences should not lead to inequality in human value. Men and women are created from the same essence, and their dignity is equal.

- **Difference in Functions, Not Discrimination**

He acknowledges biological and functional differences between men and women. Still, he emphasizes that these differences are meant for role allocation according to divine wisdom, not as grounds for discrimination or social exclusion. This view aligns with the "Equality in difference" concept articulated by Allameh Tabataba'i and Martyr Motahhari.

- **Shared Responsibility in All Arenas**

This theory goes beyond the traditional role of women in the family, stressing the shared responsibility of men and women in all social, political, economic, and cultural fields. According to Beheshti, women can and must be active, influential agents in society.

This intermediate theory serves as a bridge between religious principles and operational analysis. It allows us to critique non-authentic traditions that impose limitations on women in the name of religion while distancing ourselves from Western feminism, which often equates equality with the denial of differences.

### 2.3.     Analytical-Operational Model: Integration with Contemporary Theories

To operationalize Beheshti's theory and analyze women's practical position, this study draws on two contemporary social science theories. These theories help illustrate how women can move from theoretical recognition to practical agency in civilization-building.

**A) Bourdieu's Theory of Social Fields and Capitals**

Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), a French sociologist, proposed the theory of social fields and multiple forms of capital, offering a structural analysis of social inequalities. According to Bourdieu, social actors compete within various fields (political, economic, cultural, etc.), and the combination of capital determines their positions (Bourdieu, 1986).

Integration with Beheshti's Thought: This theory is used to analyze women's roles in Islamic civilization. It suggests that for women to play a central role in building Islamic civilization, they must actively participate in four key fields:

- Economic Field: By acquiring economic capital through employment and entrepreneurship;
- Cultural Field: By acquiring cultural capital through education and the transmission of authentic Islamic values;
- Social Field: By acquiring social capital through networking and involvement in civil and political institutions;
- Symbolic Field: By acquiring symbolic capital through redefining the Muslim woman's identity as an active, not passive, agent.

**B) Kabeer's Empowerment Theory**

Naila Kabeer argues that real empowerment occurs when women achieve both "Power within" (self-confidence) and "Power to" (social opportunities) (Kabeer, 1999). This theory defines empowerment in three key dimensions: resources (access to opportunities), agency (decision-making power), and achievements (tangible outcomes).

Integration with Beheshti's Thought: This theory serves as the operational model for Beheshti's ideas, showing how women can be empowered for civilization-building:

- Access to Resources: Beheshti's emphasis on education and participation means providing access to economic and cultural capital.
- Strengthening Agency: Emphasizing shared responsibility and women's right to choose enhances their agency in individual and social decision-making.
- Achieving Outcomes: The ultimate goal is achieving tangible results in the economic, cultural, and political development of Islamic society.

## 3. Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative content analysis. The research corpus includes all written works, speeches, and interviews of Martyr Ayatollah Dr. Sayyid Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti, focusing on key concepts such as human dignity, gender justice, social responsibility, and civilization-building.

Additionally, secondary data analysis is used to examine prior empirical research on women's social and political participation in Islamic societies, testing the practical applicability of Beheshti's "Islamic Gender Justice" theory while enriching the study's theoretical framework.

## 4. Innovation of the Theoretical Framework

The main innovation of this study lies in the systematic three-level integration of Beheshti's thought, transforming it into a coherent and practical theory of gender and civilization-building for the first time. This innovation has three key aspects:

- Formulating scattered ideas into a coherent theory: For the first time, Beheshti's ideas are synthesized into a middle-range theory called "Islamic Gender Justice."
- Integration of religion and social sciences: By bridging Qur'anic and Ijtihad-based foundations (Beheshti) with contemporary social science theories (Bourdieu and Kabeer), the framework provides analytical depth regarding women's role in Islamic civilization.
- Operationalizing a civilizational theory: Beyond theoretical discussion, this research transforms Beheshti's thought into a practical tool for policy analysis and planning, usable by policymakers and international institutions.

## 5.   Summary of the Theoretical Framework and Beheshti's Perspective

Beheshti's approach is a moderate and Ijtihad-based perspective that neither falls into restrictive traditions nor adopts instrumental Western feminism. This study, for the first time, consolidates his scattered ideas into a coherent and practical theory of gender and civilization-building.

Our theoretical framework positions Beheshti's perspective as a foundational theory, which, combined with contemporary theories (Bourdieu and Kabeer), forms an analytical-operational model for examining women's role in building the new Islamic civilization.

## 6.   Definition of Key Concepts

### 6.1.     New Islamic Civilization

A new Islamic civilization is a justice-oriented, advanced society based on Islamic principles, emphasizing spiritual and ethical growth alongside material development. This civilization seeks to revive Islamic identity, strengthen Muslim unity, and provide an effective model for contemporary life. As a religious reformer, Beheshti emphasized reconstructing Islamic thought and grounding civilization-building in the Qur'an and Islamic principles.

According to him, Islamic civilization should be based on rationalism, justice, a religious worldview, ethics, a macro-perspective, religious democracy, the rule of law, and the principle of Velayat-e Faqih (Faroohi, 2024 AD/1403 SH: 112). Although the term "New Islamic civilization" appears infrequently in his works, his vision of a dynamic Islamic society aligns with this concept.

### 6.2.     Women

In Islam, women are recognized as complete human beings with intrinsic dignity. They are equal to men in creation, human values, and spiritual rewards. Islam grants women specific rights and responsibilities that define their roles in family and society.

### 6.3.    Women's Roles and Rights from the Qur'an

1. Equality in Humanity: The Qur'an explicitly states that men and women are created from a single soul and have no difference in human essence (al-Nisāʾ: 1). This equality extends to spiritual values and rewards (al-Aḥzāb: 35).

2. Different Roles: While equal in essence, men and women have distinct roles and responsibilities in family and society. Women, as wives and mothers, play a central role in child-rearing and maintaining the family (al-Baqarah: 223).

3. Specific Rights: The Qur'an provides women with rights such as dowry, maintenance, inheritance, and property ownership (al-Nisāʾ: 32), emphasizing good treatment and preserving dignity (al-Nisāʾ: 19).

### 6.4.    Women's Agency

Women's agency in the new Islamic civilization is active, multidimensional, and grounded in Islamic values across various life domains. Beyond their central family role, women participate in scientific, social, economic, and political arenas while preserving Islamic identity. This conscious presence safeguards dignity and advances Islamic society. Martyr Ayatollah Dr. Beheshti emphasizes that women's participation in family, education, and politics not only aligns with Islam but also strengthens the Islamic system (Beheshti, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 82).

### 7.    The Status of Women in Society from Theoretical Perspectives: Traditional Views, Western Feminism, and Progressive Islamic Readings

The status of women in society has always been one of the most challenging subjects in social philosophy, theology, and gender studies. In this regard, three major perspectives have emerged, each explaining the role and position of women based on distinct theoretical foundations. These perspectives not only reflect historical and cultural transformations but have also exerted profound influence on social and legal policymaking.

### 7.1. The Traditional View: Restricting Women's Roles to the Family Sphere

This perspective rooted in limited interpretations of religious texts and historical customs, views women as weaker beings in need of male protection. Within this paradigm, women's roles are primarily confined to the private sphere, namely, child-rearing and domestic responsibilities. Inevitable misinterpretations of verses such as "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women" (al-Nisā': 34) have been used to justify the exclusion of women from public arenas (Motahhari, 1977 AD/1357 SH: 58).

This approach, by emphasizing rigid gender-based division of labor, overlooks women's social, political, and economic participation and, in some cases, even restricts their access to education and employment. Critics argue that this view stems from misreading of religious texts and the influence of pre-modern patriarchal cultures. Ahmad Zahruddin's (2024) study, "Gender Studies in the Qur'an: Interpretations of Women's Roles and Rights," demonstrates that although some traditional interpretations have limited women's roles, linguistic and contextual analyses of Qur'anic verses affirm women's active participation in social, economic, and political dimensions (Zahruddin, 2024: 3).

### 7.2. Western Feminist Perspective: Absolute Equality and Opposition to Traditional Structures

In contrast, Western feminism advocates absolute equality between women and men and critiques traditional family structures and gender roles. This approach, strengthened during the second wave of feminism (from the 1960s onward), portrays religion and religious institutions as tools for women's oppression (Millet, 1970: 42). Radical feminism, by denying any innate differences between men and women, calls for a complete redefinition of social relations based on equality.

However, this perspective faces challenges, including neglecting biological differences and weakening the family institution. Furthermore, some strands of liberal feminism, by emphasizing excessive individualism, fail to recognize the complementary roles of women and men in society.

## 7.3.  Progressive Islamic Reading: Integrating Human Dignity with Social Responsibility

Between these two perspectives, thinkers such as Martyr Ayatollah Beheshti and Martyr Morteza Motahhari propose a comprehensive middle path through a progressive and Ijtihad-based interpretation of Islam. Referring to verses such as "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam" (al-Isrāʾ: 70), Beheshti emphasizes the intrinsic equality of women and men in human essence and spiritual values (Beheshti, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 25).

Similarly, Motahhari, in "The System of Women's Rights in Islam," distinguishes between "Sameness" and "equality" in rights and explains Islam's balanced legal system. He argues: "Islam, while affirming equality in human dignity, acknowledges natural differences and complementary roles of women and men within the family and society." (Motahhari, 1977 AD/1357 SH: 72)

From these thinkers' perspective, Islam recognizes women's full social, political, and economic rights while acknowledging functional differences in specific domains. Beheshti cites exemplary figures such as Lady Khadijah, a successful entrepreneur and supporter of the Prophet's mission, and Lady Zaynab, a model of political and social resistance, to justify women's active participation in public life (Beheshti, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 2, 115). Motahhari similarly critiques demeaning interpretations of women's status, asserting: "Islam abolished pre-Islamic customs and granted women independent legal personality." (Motahhari, 1977 AD/1357 SH: 85)

This holistic perspective avoids both the excesses of traditionalism (which confines women to the private sphere) and the shortcomings of radical feminism (which denies natural differences). It defends women's fundamental rights in public domains while emphasizing the preservation of the family as society's central institution. Motahhari refers to this balance as "Gender justice," grounded not in "Mechanical equality" but in "Proportionality between rights and responsibilities." (Motahhari, 1977 AD/1357 SH: 93)

## 8. Theoretical Foundations of Women's Role in the Construction of the New Islamic Civilization from Beheshti's Perspective, with Emphasis on the Qur'an and Sunnah

Martyr Ayatollah Dr. Sayyid Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti, drawing upon authentic Islamic foundations and referencing the Qur'an and Sunnah, presents a comprehensive and reformist view of women's status and their role in building the new Islamic civilization. He emphasizes human dignity, equal rights, and shared responsibilities of women and men in constructing Islamic society. This section outlines the theoretical foundations of his perspective based on Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions as articulated by Beheshti.

### 8.1. The Principle of Human Dignity and Equality in Human Essence

Referring to the verse "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam" (al-Isrāʾ: 70), Beheshti emphasizes in "The Status of Women in Islam" that women and men are equal in human essence and rejects any inherent discrimination against women (Beheshti, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 25). He maintains that civilization-building is impossible without utilizing the human capacities of both genders.

### 8.2. Shared Responsibility in Social Reform

Based on the verse "The believing men and believing women…," (al-Tawbah: 71) Beheshti considers women and men equally responsible for social reform, enjoining good, and forbidding evil, viewing this verse as a foundation for shared responsibility in civilization-building (Beheshti, 2013 AD/1380 SH: 2, 110).

### 8.3. The Central Role of the Family and Generational Training

Citing the verse "They are clothing for you, and you are clothing for them" (al-Baqarah: 187) and the hadith "Paradise lies beneath the feet of mothers," (Majlisi, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 43, 81) Beheshti identifies the family as the nucleus of civilization-building and regards women, as mothers and wives, as educators of a righteous generation (Beheshti, 2017 AD/1397 SH: 45).

### 8.4.    The Necessity of Acquiring Knowledge

The verse "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" (al-Zumar: 9) and the hadith "Seeking knowledge is an obligation…" (al-Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 34, Hadith 1) highlight the necessity of women's education. Beheshti considers any obstacle to women's education contrary to Islam and regards knowledge as a prerequisite for civilizational participation (Beheshti, 2018 AD/1398 SH: 38).

### 8.5.    Participation in Social and Political Arenas

By emphasizing role models such as Lady Khadijah in supporting the Prophet (PBUH) and Lady Zaynab in post-Karbala enlightenment, Beheshti views women's social and political participation as legitimate and essential for the dynamism of Islamic civilization (Beheshti, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 2, 115).

### 8.6.    Gender Justice Instead of Absolute Equality

Distinguishing between justice and absolute equality, Beheshti stresses the realization of gender justice, meaning that rights and duties are organized in accordance with natural dispositions and differences between women and men. He argues that Islam aims to create fair opportunities for the flourishing of both genders' capacities (Beheshti, 2018 AD/1398 SH: 30).

### 8.7.    Women's Economic Participation

Based on the practice of Lady Khadijah, Beheshti considers women's economic participation in line with Islamic values beneficial and necessary. He believes economic development without women's participation to be incomplete (Beheshti, 2019 AD/1399 SH: 52). Thus, the new Islamic civilization requires the conscious and active involvement of women in economic domains to achieve societal prosperity.

Overall, Beheshti's perspective is grounded in active, informed women's participation across all dimensions of Islamic civilization-building, firmly rooted in religious sources and in human dignity.

## 9. Analysis of Beheshti's Perspective on Women's Role in the Construction of the New Islamic Civilization

Martyr Ayatollah Dr. Sayyid Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti presented progressive and justice-oriented views on women's role in Islamic civilization. He believed that women could play a central role not only within the family but also across economic, social, cultural, scientific, and political domains in shaping the new Islamic civilization.

### 9.1. Gender Justice and the Elimination of Unjust Discrimination

Referring to the verse "Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women… Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward," (al-Aḥzāb: 35) Beheshti emphasizes equality between women and men in human dignity and spiritual values. In "The Status of Women in Islam," he states that the criterion of humanity is the divine spirit, and since both women and men possess it, neither is subordinate to the other (Beheshti, 2018 AD/1398 SH: 25).

This view aligns with Motahhari's assertion that "Islam regards women and men as two branches of the same root and two blossoms of the same branch." (Motahhari, 1977 AD/1357 SH: 43) It forms the basis for eliminating all forms of discrimination grounded in alleged inherent deficiencies of women.

Sayyid Hossein Nasr similarly emphasizes women's intrinsic dignity within Islamic civilization but interprets it through the lens of traditional wisdom, arguing that gender justice entails complementarity rather than uniformity of roles (Nasr, 2013: 67; 2016: 58).

Beheshti defines gender justice as the regulation of rights and duties in accordance with natural characteristics and social roles. He writes: "Gender justice in Islam means organizing rights and duties in a way that ensures balance and justice." (Beheshti, 2018 AD/1398 SH: 30)

This perspective aligns with Allameh Tabataba'i's theory of "Equality within difference," (al-Mizan) which views natural differences as contributing to human societal perfection (Tabataba'i, 2000 AD/1390 SH: 4, 356). Like Imam Khomeini, who stated, "Woman is the educator of society." (Khomeini: 7, 132) Beheshti emphasized women's formative role.

By rejecting absolute equality, this view provides fair opportunities for women's talent development while eliminating unjust discrimination. Beheshti attributed discrimination against women to misinterpretations of religious texts and the influence of non-Islamic

cultures, asserting that Islam grants women unparalleled rights (Beheshti, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 2, 112).

He encouraged women to become aware of their rights and strive to reclaim them, stating: "Women must become aware of their rights and work to restore them. Islam grants women rights that place them in their true position." (Beheshti, 2019 AD/1399 SH: 48) This reflects his progressive outlook on women's active role in social reform and justice.

## 9.2.    The Role of Women in the Family

Martyr Ayatollah Beheshti placed special emphasis on the central role of women in the family as one of the foundations of Islamic civilization. He believed that by fulfilling their roles as mothers and wives, women play an irreplaceable part in raising future generations in accordance with Islamic values.

In the book "Woman in Islam" (a collection of lectures and articles), he states:

"The family is the foundation and cornerstone of Islamic society, and the woman, as the axis of the family, whether in the role of mother or wife, plays a key role in strengthening and elevating this institution. Islam has granted women rights proportionate to their responsibilities, which must be implemented with justice and respect for human dignity." (Beheshti, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 45)

Likewise, in his speeches, he emphasized the educational role of women and stated:

"The role of motherhood is one of the most sensitive and valuable roles. The upbringing of children, which constitutes a major part of a mother's responsibilities, has a profound impact on building a healthy and dynamic society." (Beheshti, 1981 AD/1360 SH: speech at the Conference on the Role of Women in Islamic Society, Tehran)

This perspective aligns with the view of Ayatollah Javadi Amoli in "Woman in the Mirror of Glory and Beauty," where the family is described as "The smallest civilizational unit," (Javadi Amoli, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 112) as well as with Imam Khomeini (may he rest in peace), who stated:

"From the lap of woman emerge great men… The happiness and misery of nations depend on women." (Khomeini: 7, 338)

This view is also consistent with that of Morteza Motahhari, who maintained that "Child upbringing is the most important role of women." (Motahhari, 1978 AD/1357 SH: 87)

Martyr Beheshti further emphasized the importance of safeguarding the sanctity of the family and observing chastity and hijab, believing that these values, applicable to both women and men, are essential for preserving the moral health of society:

"Preserving chastity and observing hijab are mutual duties for both women and men, contributing to the strengthening of the family and the moral health of society." (Beheshti, 1981 AD/1360 SH: speech to a gathering of women)

Sayyid Hossein Nasr supports this view, arguing that women in Islamic societies bear responsibility for preserving cultural and moral values (Nasr, 2013: 85). He emphasizes that women's spiritual role in Islamic civilization-building takes shape through their influence in raising faithful generations and underscores the importance of the bond between tradition and family in Islamic civilization (Nasr, 2016: 72).

These perspectives demonstrate the significance of women's roles in nurturing future generations and strengthening the family as the cornerstone of Islamic society. They emphasize complementary roles for women and men, proportional rights and responsibilities, and women's social participation within the framework of Islamic values.

### 9.3. Women's Participation in Economic, Social, and Political Spheres

Martyr Beheshti, as one of the architects of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, strongly emphasized women's active participation in social and political arenas. He believed that women, as half of society, must play an effective role in major decision-making processes and in building Islamic society.

He stressed the equality of women and men in terms of human dignity and believed that women must enjoy the necessary rights to participate in shaping their political and social destinies. During the drafting of the Constitution, he supported women's participation in elections, holding political and social offices, and membership in political parties and organizations. In a speech delivered in 1979, he stated:

"A woman, like a man, has the right to participate in determining her political and social destiny and to use her abilities to advance society." (Beheshti, 1979 AD/1358 SH: speech to university students, Tehran)

In "Woman in Islam" (a collection of lectures and articles), he further notes:

"Women are not only half of society; through active participation in social, political, and cultural spheres, they can contribute to building a dynamic and healthy society." (Beheshti, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 52)

Martyr Beheshti also emphasized the importance of women's presence in decision-making positions, believing that such participation enriches decisions and enhances social justice. In another speech in 1980, he stated:

"Women's presence in decision-making positions, from parliament to social organizations, leads to diversity of perspectives and fairer decisions." (Beheshti, 1980 AD/1359 SH: speech at the Conference on the Role of Women in the Islamic Republic, Tehran)

This view aligns with that of Ayatollah Khamenei, who has stated:

"A Muslim woman must be present in scientific, political, and social arenas." (Khamenei, 1999 AD/1378 SH: speech to a gathering of women)

Similarly, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli writes in "Woman in the Mirror of Glory and Beauty":

"A Muslim woman must not only be a learner of knowledge, but also a producer of knowledge and a creator of culture. Islamic civilization will remain incomplete without women's scholarly participation." (Javadi Amoli, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 189)

Sayyid Hossein Nasr also considers women's participation necessary, though he believes their presence should be more concentrated in scientific, cultural, and religious domains rather than politics and management (Nasr, 2016: 95). He emphasizes that women's activity in Islamic society must remain within the framework of religious traditions and moral values (Nasr, 2013: 88).

International research likewise shows that women's political participation has a significant impact on countries' social and economic development. According to a study by Inglehart and Norris (2003), countries with higher levels of women's political participation enjoy better human development indicators (Inglehart and Norris, 2003: 134). Additionally, Moghadam's (2013) studies of Islamic countries demonstrate that progressive interpretations of Islam can enhance women's participation in the public sphere (p. 215).

Regarding women's economic participation, Duflo's (2012) research shows that increased female labor market participation not only contributes to economic growth but also leads to a fairer distribution of resources within families (Duflo, 2012: 1053). From a sociological perspective, Paxton and Hughes (2016) argue that women's presence in political institutions leads to more comprehensive policymaking and greater attention to social issues (p. 78).

In political science, Charrad's (2011) studies show that Islamic countries' approaches to women's rights vary widely and depend on religious interpretations and historical conditions (Charrad, 2011: 152). These findings align with the diverse perspectives of Islamic thinkers discussed above.

Thus, Beheshti, through a progressive and Islamic approach, regarded women's comprehensive participation in political, social, and cultural spheres as their undeniable right. He believed that women's active participation in major decision-making processes contributes to both social justice and societal progress.

### 9.4. Critique of Traditional and Western Perspectives

Beheshti critically examined both traditional and Western views on women, believing that each, in its own way, undermines women's human dignity. While respecting authentic Islamic traditions, he criticized traditional perspectives that deprive women of social and political rights, viewing such limitations as the result of misinterpretations of religious texts and contrary to the spirit of Islam.

In "Woman in Islam" (a collection of lectures and articles), he states:

"Islam opposes any unjust discrimination between women and men and has established rights proportionate to the human dignity and responsibilities of each." (Beheshti, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 47)

Criticizing inauthentic traditions, he stated in a 1980 speech:

"Much of what circulates under the name of tradition is the product of human minds and must be evaluated by rational and Islamic criteria, rather than being accepted merely because it is called tradition." (Beheshti, 1980 AD/1359 SH: speech at the Conference on the Role of Women in the Islamic Republic, Tehran)

As a social reformer, Beheshti simultaneously critiqued two intellectual currents. On one hand, like Motahhari, who argued that "some erroneous traditions are products of patriarchal societies," (Motahhari, 1978 AD/1357 SH: 23) he criticized distorted traditional interpretations:

"Much of what is propagated as tradition is in fact a human construct." (Beheshti, 1980 AD/1359 SH)

On the other hand, Beheshti criticized aspects of Western perspectives on women, arguing that Western culture, by instrumentalizing women and reducing them to mere sexual objects, undermines their human dignity. In a 1979 speech, he stated:

"We oppose any form of freedom that turns women into tools for pleasure or commerce, because this contradicts women's human dignity." (Beheshti, 1979 AD/1358 SH: speech to university students, Tehran)

Sayyid Hossein Nasr affirms this view, arguing that the West has turned women into economic consumers and advertising tools (Nasr, 2016: 122). He emphasizes that Islamic civilization should define women's roles based on Islamic wisdom rather than imitation of the West (Nasr, 2013: 110).

Like Imam Khomeini, who described Western culture as "The exploiter of women" (Khoeini: 5, 312), Beheshti criticized Western consumerism. In a 1981 speech, he stated:

"In Western culture, women are often presented as commodities for advertising and trade, a perspective that ignores their spiritual and social dimensions." (Beheshti, 1981 AD/1360 SH: speech to a gathering of women, Tehran)

Critiquing the one-dimensional Western view of women, Beheshti emphasized the balanced Islamic model. In a 1980 speech, he stated:

"Islam recognizes women as complete human beings with diverse dimensions, not merely as objects of pleasure, but as individuals with maternal, spousal, and social roles." (Beheshti, 1980 AD/1359 SH: speech at the Conference on the Role of Women in the Islamic Republic, Tehran)

Beheshti paid particular attention to the dualism dominating attitudes toward women, rigid traditionalism and extreme Western feminism. He believed that both approaches, in different ways, harm women's human dignity. He articulated his perspective through the concept of "Islamic gender justice," which integrates human dignity, functional differences, and women's social responsibility.

From Beheshti's perspective, traditional views, often shaped by limited and sometimes patriarchal interpretations of religious texts, restrict women to domestic roles and ignore their social and political rights. Such attitudes, especially in Islamic societies, are influenced more by tribal cultures than by authentic Islamic teachings. He emphasized that much of what is labeled "Tradition" is, in fact, a human construct subject to revision by reason and revelation.

Conversely, Western feminism, particularly in its second and third waves, has challenged traditional family structures and religious institutions through its insistence on absolute equality between women and men. For example, Kate Millett (1970) in Sexual Politics and Simone de Beauvoir (1949) in "The Second Sex" portray religion as a tool for women's subordination. Radical feminism, by ignoring innate differences between women and men, calls for uniform social roles, an approach that Beheshti regarded as a subtle form of injustice against women, as it detaches human roles from their natural and existential foundations.

Meanwhile, some Muslim feminists, such as Leila Ahmed, take a critical view of Western feminism. In "Women and Gender in Islam," she demonstrates how Western feminism often lacks an accurate understanding of Muslim women's religious and cultural contexts, and how colonial powers have used women's liberation discourse to consolidate dominance in Islamic societies (Ahmad, 1992).

Similarly, Saba Mahmood, in Politics of Piety, shows through her analysis of Muslim women's experiences in Egypt that women's agency can be meaningful outside secular frameworks and grounded in religious faith (Mahmood, 2005). This analysis aligns with Beheshti's perspective, in which women's social presence within a spiritual identity is not only possible but desirable and civilizational constructive.

Ultimately, by proposing a third model, the "Progressive Islamic reading," Martyr Beheshti argues that women's human dignity and civilizational role must be redefined on the basis of authentic Islamic teachings, while accounting for social and cultural transformations. This model neither remains trapped in traditional passivity nor leads to cultural confrontation with the West; instead, it offers an indigenous, balanced, and forward-looking framework.

These perspectives demonstrate Martyr Beheshti's belief in presenting a balanced Islamic model for women, one that preserves Islamic values while enabling women's active and effective participation in society.

## 10. Challenges Facing Women in Participating in the Realization of the New Islamic Civilization and the Solutions Proposed by Martyr Ayatollah Beheshti

Martyr Ayatollah Beheshti believed that women, as half of the social body, play a central role in the realization of the New Islamic Civilization. However, numerous challenges hinder

women's participation along this path. In his writings, books, and speeches, he addressed these obstacles and proposed solutions for overcoming them.


## 10.1. Challenges

### A) Misinterpretations of Religion and Inauthentic Traditions

Some traditional viewpoints, rooted in incorrect interpretations of Islam, confine women to limited roles (such as domestic duties) and regard their participation in social and political spheres as unnecessary or even contrary to Islamic law. These distorted religious interpretations and cultural customs deprive women of their social and political rights. According to Martyr Beheshti, such perspectives are incompatible with the true spirit of Islam.

### B) Structural and Social Constraints

Certain cultural and tribal customs, such as severe restrictions on women's education or employment, prevent women's active participation in society. The lack of adequate support mechanisms for balancing family and social roles, along with cultural resistance to women holding decision-making positions, constitutes a significant barrier. According to Beheshti, these traditions are often human constructs and must be evaluated according to rational and Islamic criteria.

### C) The Influence of Western Culture

The infiltration of Western culture, which, according to Beheshti, reduces women to instruments of pleasure and consumerism, threatens women's Islamic identity and disrupts their participation in achieving the goals of Islamic civilization. On the one hand, some currents interpret religious teachings narrowly and deem women's social participation incompatible with Islamic values; on the other hand, Western-influenced currents regard Islamic values as obstacles to women's progress. This false dichotomy can confuse women in choosing the correct path.

Western culture, through its instrumental view of women, presents them as commodities serving capitalism and consumerism. In contrast, Islam, by emphasizing women's dignity and constructive roles within the family and society, outlines a balanced path grounded in human nature. Islamic civilization will reach maturity only when women, while preserving their religious identity, participate actively and consciously in scientific, social, and cultural arenas.

## 10.2. Proposed Solutions

In his works and speeches, Beheshti adopted a comprehensive, forward-looking approach to women's issues, offering fundamental solutions to overcome challenges and strengthen women's participation in realizing the New Islamic Civilization. These solutions focus not only on structural reforms but also on intellectual and cultural transformation.

## A) Reforming Religious and Cultural Interpretations: Establishing a New Intellectual Foundation

One of Beheshti's most crucial solutions was correcting erroneous perceptions of women's status in Islam. This approach consisted of two main components:

- **Re-reading Religious Texts with an Authentic and Fair Approach**

Beheshti believed that many prevailing interpretations of religious texts had deviated from Islam's true path due to cultural and historical influences. Emphasizing women's human dignity, he sought to extract their rightful status and equal rights from the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition. In "Woman in Islam," he explicitly states:

"Islam opposes any form of unjust discrimination between women and men and has established rights proportionate to human dignity for both." (Beheshti, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 47)

This perspective advocates an Ijtihadi and contextual approach to counter superficial and misogynistic interpretations.

- **Critiquing Inauthentic and Irrational Traditions**

Beheshti argued that although cultural traditions are part of social identity, they should not be treated as absolute authorities. In a 1980 speech, he emphasized:

"Much of what is widespread in societies under the name of tradition is the product of the human mind and must be evaluated according to rational and Islamic criteria." (Beheshti, 1980 AD/1359 SH: speech at the Conference on the Role of Women in the Islamic Republic, Tehran)

This critique paves the way for reassessing behavioral and social patterns rooted in gender-based prejudices.

## B) Strengthening Women's Social and Political Participation: Creating the Conditions for Engagement

Beheshti considered women's active participation in society an Islamic and civilizational necessity and proposed two main strategies:

- **Guaranteeing Equal Social and Political Rights**

As one of the architects of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Beheshti supported women's rights to participate in elections, hold political office, and join civil organizations. In a 1979 speech, he stated:

"A woman, like a man, has the right to participate in determining her political and social destiny." (Beheshti, 1979 AD/1358 SH: speech to university students, Tehran)

This view presents women not merely as equal citizens but as active agents in decision-making processes.

- **Encouraging Women's Presence in Decision-making Positions**

He believed that women's presence at high levels of management and decision-making enriches perspectives and leads to fairer decisions. In a 1980 speech, he stated:

"Women's presence in decision-making positions leads to diversity of viewpoints and more just decisions." (Beheshti, 1980 AD/1359 SH: speech at the Conference on the Role of Women in the Islamic Republic, Tehran)

This approach emphasizes qualitative and impactful participation rather than mere formal inclusion.

**C) Presenting a Balanced Islamic Model for Women: Integrating Multiple Roles**

Beheshti articulated a model for women that combine preservation of Islamic identity and family roles with active social and cultural engagement. This model rests on two principles:

- **Balance Between Family and Social Roles**

He believed that motherhood and spousal roles are not obstacles to social participation but can provide a foundation for women's growth and fulfillment. In Woman in Islam, he describes women as "complete human beings with diverse existential dimensions," not confined to domestic roles alone (Beheshti, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 52). This view seeks to transcend the false dichotomy between homemaking and social presence.

- **Strengthening Islamic Identity and Protection from Instrumentalization**

In contrast to Western culture, which often commodifies women, Beheshti emphasized reinforcing women's Islamic identity through preserving chastity and human dignity. In a 1981 speech, he stated:

"We oppose any form of freedom that turns women into instruments for pleasure or commerce." (Beheshti, 1981 AD/1360 SH: speech to a gathering of women, Tehran)

This perspective presents Islamic identity as a shield against gender reductionism.

## Conclusion

This study, which examined the role of women in realizing the New Islamic Civilization from the perspective of Martyr Ayatollah Dr. Sayyid Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti, demonstrates that his thought embodies an interpretive, rational, and balanced approach to redefining the status of Muslim women in Islamic society. Drawing upon Qur'anic principles, Prophetic tradition, and social analysis, Beheshti presents an alternative model of Muslim womanhood that neither remains confined within restrictive traditions nor falls into the trap of radical Western feminist paradigms.

In this model, women are regarded as beings endowed with inherent dignity, social agency, and civilizational capacity, roles realized both within the family as nurturers of righteous generations and in scientific, cultural, economic, and political arenas as active participants. By articulating the theory of "Islamic gender justice," Martyr Beheshti emphasizes a balance between rights and responsibilities rather than mechanical equality, considering such justice a prerequisite for women's effective participation in building Islamic civilization.

From his perspective, the New Islamic Civilization will remain incomplete without women's conscious, committed, and purposeful presence. His simultaneous critique of patriarchal traditionalism and instrumentalizing Western feminism, along with proposed solutions such as reforming religious interpretations, expanding education, strengthening Islamic identity, and guaranteeing women's social and political rights, constitutes a significant theoretical contribution of this research.

Ultimately, Martyr Beheshti's vision offers an indigenous, rational, and civilization-building model of Muslim womanhood that can serve as a foundation for justice-oriented gender policymaking, cultural planning, and sustainable development in Islamic societies. By integrating reason, revelation, and the demands of the contemporary world, this model actualizes women's capacities in the reconstruction of Islamic civilization and redefines their status in accordance with the Qur'anic ideal of the complete human being.

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