



Ibn Sīnā's View on the Model of an Ideal Family and its Assessment through Islamic and Feminist Perspectives

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Abstract

The relationship between family and household management has always been one of the most significant issues for philosophers within the area of practical wisdom. By referring to the opinions of philosophers related to this area, many gaps that exist in the theories of household management and family policy-making will be filled. One of the philosophers who has extensively dealt with the issues of family and household management is the famous and influential Muslim philosopher, Ibn Sīnā. In the present article, the author has tried to review Ibn Sīnā's opinions on the ideal family and then assess it through Islamic and feminist doctrines. The method used in this study was literature analysis. In this research, Ibn Sīnā's example of an ideal family is explained in the following five areas: 1. marriage and divorce, 2. hierarchy of authority in the family, 3. reciprocal responsibilities between the spouses, 4. gender-based division of labor and 5. the household aspect. Thereafter, each of the above areas was comparatively assessed according to Islamic doctrines. The findings of this study suggest that Ibn Sīnā's opinion bears many similarities to the Islamic model of an ideal family, while, in contrast, it seriously opposed feminist approaches to family.

Keywords: Ibn Sīnā, household management, ideal family model, Islam, feminism.

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Introduction

Practical wisdom defines human practice, i.e., the dos and don'ts. Its ultimate goal is to direct man towards that which will guarantee his felicity. It discusses three areas, namely, ethics, household management and politics. These three areas are based on the three dimensions of human life, i.e., individual, domestic and social.

Family, being the cornerstone of society, has long attracted the attention of theosophists and philosophers. Subjects and issues, such as the importance and necessity of forming a family, the nature of the relationship between men and women in the family, raising children, the economic dynamics of the family, the authority structure of the family, etc. have always been core issues discussed within practical wisdom. It is for this reason, that the management of the household (*tadbīr al-manzil*) has, since Ancient Greece until now, been one of the foremost concerns within the philosophical heritage of mankind.

One of the fundamental questions in this regard concerns the management model of family relations, i.e., which of these models will enable it to attain felicity and goodness? It is a question that philosophers have pondered and written extensively about. In this regard, the heritage of Islamic philosophy is full of treatises and works dedicated to this topic.

In the modern era, there has been tremendous emphasis on the individual and social spheres of human life. This is clear from the claims made in the fields of psychology and sociology. However, what has been marginalized and moved to the periphery of man's existence is his family life. Done so because of the reductionist approach to modernity (Kirmāni and Sulgī, 1392 SH, 123). Today, one of the most important theoretical challenges seen at both international and national levels pertains to family policymaking. Hence, one way to address these theoretical gaps regarding family relationships is to review the vast heritage of Islamic philosophy, with a focus on family and home planning.

Ibn Sīnā, commonly known in the West as Avicenna, is one of the most eminent Muslim philosophers. He has written many detailed and extensive works on home economics and household management. The importance of dealing with his philosophical views regarding household management in the present article is

because of the extensiveness by which he has treated this topic within his writings, thus allowing for a model to be derived. Additionally, one of the pertinent characteristics of Ibn Sīnā's efforts was his attempt to link practical wisdom with Islamic law and jurisprudence.¹

The current research aims to review the opinions of Ibn Sīnā regarding practical wisdom and household management to present a structured model of the family as per his opinions. Thereafter, this model will be compared and contrasted with teachings abstracted from Islamic sources and also feminist literature.

Theoretical Framework

In this section, a literature review is first conducted. Thereafter, the theoretical framework and method of the discussion are highlighted.

Literature Review

Very few researches, inside and outside of Iran, have been done on Ibn Sīnā's philosophical heritage that focuses on the practical wisdom of home economics. The few articles that have been published in this regard have taken a completely descriptive and non-analytical approach to his opinions and did not intend to derive the ideal family model from his perspective. Mentioned below are some of the more important articles related to the subject of this research:

In an article titled "Household Management according to Ibn Sīnā", Muḥaqiq Dāmād (1375 SH) descriptively explains and investigates some of Ibn Sīnā's opinions on household management strategies. After explaining Ibn Sīnā's point of view on the motivations for forming a family, he touches on his instructions which, in his view, are necessary to comply with regarding marriage. Finally, he indicates the principles of family management from Ibn Sīnā's perspective. The aforementioned article is a simple description of Ibn Sīnā's *Risāla fī al-Siyāsa* and is without any further explanation or analysis.

1. Ibn Sīnā considers the propositions of practical philosophy to be generally accepted (*mashhūr*). They include the "rational goodness and wickedness of justice and injustice". According to him, these propositions are outside of the realm of reasoning. He reviews and analyzes the discussion about knowledge of the rights and duties of the citizens of a country, the government and household management within the framework of *Sharī'a*.

In an article titled "*The Art of Household Management according to Ibn Sīnā*", Nūrānī Nejād (1383 SH) highlights Ibn Sīnā's instructions and recommendations on the management of the household. This article attempted to contrast his opinions with those of Plato. In an article titled "*An Analysis of Man's Family Life in Practical Philosophy with Emphasis on Ibn Sīnā's Views*", Kirmāni and Sulgī have analyzed the position of the family, while being one of the important dimensions of human life, with a focus on the views of Ibn Sīnā. Şādiq and BakSHhī have co-authored an article titled "*The Status of Woman in the Social and Family System according to Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Khwaja Naṣīr*" in which they compare the opinions of these three Muslim philosophers regarding the family and the role of woman within it. In an article titled "*Ibn Sīnā's Demographic Thought with an Emphasis on Fertility*," Intizārī and Asadpūr (1396 SH) examined Ibn Sīnā's views on fertility, childbirth, child health, etc.

From the above, it could be said that the distinguishing feature of this research with regards to the aforementioned works concerning Ibn Sīnā's views on the family is that they only presented a descriptive report of his views on household management, whereas the objective of the present article is twofold: 1. to extract the ideal family model from Ibn Sīnā's opinions and 2. to thereafter compare it with Islamic teachings.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The present research focuses on the domain of peripatetic practical wisdom, paying special attention to the philosophical opinions of Ibn Sīnā, i.e., considering them as the source and theoretical framework for this discussion. From a methodological perspective, the research attempts to analyze and examine the available literature related to the subject matter to answer the research questions (Bailey, 1994, 214). The process of conducting this research was as follows: a) collecting sources and references related to the subject; b) reviewing the sources and extracting related key concepts; c) classification and analysis of the obtained data to answer the research question.

In addition, the family model presented in this article entails the three dimensions of the family from the perspective of Talcott Parsons' functional sociology approach, namely, family structure,

family functions, and role relationships (Rosenbaum, 1376 SH, 74). Therefore, the present research seeks to investigate the three aspects in the following five areas: 1. marriage and divorce; 2. reciprocal responsibilities; 3. hierarchy of authority; 4. division of household labor and 5. household aspect.

Family Model according to Ibn Sīnā

In this section, we will first examine the family model from Ibn Sīnā's point of view in the above-mentioned five areas. Thereafter, we will discuss its compatibility with Islamic teachings.

Marriage and Divorce

Marriage and Family Formation

According to Ibn Sīnā, marriage is considered the loftiest pillar of society (Ibn Sīnā, 1395 SH, 351). Additionally, it is one of the first things that must be taken into consideration when enacting and legislating laws for society (Ibid). Obstacles to the realization of this important goal, such as *zinā* (fornication and adultery) and homosexuality must be announced as forbidden and dealt with severely within communities since they make people needless of this most important of principles (Ibid, 352). He maintains that marriage should occur openly and publicly to avoid any doubt about the offspring, as well as to prevent any fault from happening in the process of transferring inheritance and fulfilling the obligations of maintenance (Ibid). He is against marrying at a young age (i.e., before puberty) and explains the consequences and negative effects of intimacy with an immature girl from a medical perspective (Ibid, 1389 SH, 297). Among the various forms of marriage, such as polygyny, polyandry, incest marriage, etc., which have existed throughout history, only polygyny is legitimately recognized by him, while the rest are considered shameful and abhorrent (Ibid, 1395 SH, 353). Furthermore, his view on polygyny being legitimate is conditional on it being based on justice.

He believes that there are two motivations for marriage and family formation. These are mentioned below:

A) Economic motivations: This motivation, which is heavily highlighted in his treatise titled, *al-Siyāsa*, considers the basic and primary motivation of marriage and family formation to be purely economic. He states that emotional and social motivations are

secondary results of marriage, naturally stemming from economic motivation. In this treatise, he explains the difference between humans and animals in their providing of sustenance, arguing that, contrary to animals, humans are foresighted, hence store their necessities, and to do so, require a place of residence. Also, as humans need to save these necessities for a time of need, they will need somebody to keep it safe. Further, the man cannot stay at home himself, as he needs to provide, so he has no choice but to get someone to be his deputy in the home while he is away. In addition, this deputy needs to be a source of comfort and tranquility for him. Therefore, man is forced to select a partner from the opposite sex, who will protect his wealth and be a source of comfort and tranquility for him (Ibid, 1985, 15).

B) **Social motivations:** In his book, *al-Shifā'*, Ibn Sīnā expresses a non-economic and purely social motivation for marriage and family formation. He writes:

"The first thing that should be legislated in the matter concerning the city is marriage, which leads to procreation, and it should be promoted and encouraged, as it is by virtue of marriage that all species survive, and this (survival of the species) is a proof of the existence of God Almighty" (Ibid, 1395, 351).

Here, he maintains that marriage is motivated by the survival of the species, which he believes to be proof of the existence of God. Also, in his *al-Siyāsa* treatise, he indicates that humans need to have children to continue their survival and to have somebody who will assist them during their old age and weakness. Also, the legacy of the parents, after their death, is continued through their children (Ibid, 1985, 17).

It must be noted that Ibn Sīnā does not mention any other motivation, besides the two mentioned above, within his works for marriage and family formation. This is contrary to what is claimed in some articles regarding his opinion on the emotional and psychological motivations for marriage. The author of the current article believes that the comfort and tranquility he mentions are a natural result of a marriage that takes place upon economic or social motivations, as love and affection are created after marriage and through a shared life. Therefore, tranquility cannot be considered a primary motivation for family formation and marriage. From his perspective, love and affection cannot be

attained without affinity, and affinity requires habit to be realized. Habit is actualized by being together and interacting for a lengthy period (Ibid, 1395 SH, 352). Therefore, love is the result of a shared life, companionship and intimacy of the husband and wife.

Divorce and Separation

According to Ibn Sīnā, just as marriage is the foundation of society, divorce and separation are considered the cause of its collapse. For this reason, it is incumbent for marriage to be stable, thus avoiding divorce (Ibid). Nevertheless, the occurrence of divorce should be predicted in any marriage, since its total avoidance may cause some problems in the relationship between the spouses. Among these unfortunate consequences of blocking divorce, he makes mention of the increase of evil, hatred and undesirability between the spouses, resulting in the desire for extramarital relationships. These consequences cause greater harm to both the society and family than divorce (Ibid, 353). Accordingly, there should always be a way to end unstable and broken marriages. Nevertheless, strict measures should be put into place to enhance and ensure marital stability and prevent divorce (Ibid).

As he views the responsibility of marriage and family formation as being on the man, the matter of divorce and separation should also be at his disposal. More so, Ibn Sīnā does not consider a woman to be a suitable authority for making decisions about divorce, which is due to their minds being weak, immature and distracted by sentiment and anger (Ibid, 352). He has also taken a cautious approach regarding men, as he believes that just because men have the right to divorce, it does not give them the right to mistreat women. In the event of such occurring, the power of divorce will be removed from the man and delegated to the ruling authorities. Furthermore, divorce being a man's right does not mean that it is easy to initiate, or can be done haphazardly. In fact, it should be accompanied by legal compensation and the necessary strictness.

Ibn Sīnā considers a disruption in the family's sexual function to be one of the main causes of a couple's dissatisfaction and divorce. Regulating people's sexual behavior and meeting their needs in this regard is one of the most important functions of the family. Hence, the presence of sexual dysfunction and

dissatisfaction among men and women in their conjugal life has the potential to significantly contribute to the emergence of crises and tensions in their relationships, ultimately leading to the dissolution of the family. Noting the importance of sexual gratification within marriage and the high possibility of sexual dissatisfaction leading to divorce and separation, he writes:

It often happens that a man has a small and short penis. As a result of this, he is unable to please and satisfy his wife during sexual intercourse, resulting in her not being able to orgasm. Perhaps, a short and small penis may lead to aversion on the part of the wife, causing her to look for another man. Conversely, if the wife's vagina is not tight, the man will be left displeased, and, because of the man's aversion, the woman will also be discouraged and will refrain from having intercourse with her husband. It is at this point that both of them will seek different partners (Ibid, 1366 SH, 260).

He underscores the importance of this issue to such an extent that he censures the embarrassment of doctors in dealing with this issue and providing information about it to couples. He writes about the damages that this misplaced embarrassment can cause in the following manner,

Doctors feel embarrassed to explain penile enlargement or vaginal tightness and women's enjoyment of sexual intercourse. By hiding and failing to elaborate on these issues, they unknowingly cause damage to the couple and their attempts at procreation (Ibid, 261).

Hierarchy of Authority in the Family

According to Ibn Sīnā, the structure of family power and authority is like a pyramid. The man is positioned at the top as the head and caretaker of the family. The woman is then his deputy in the house, while the positions of the children and servants are placed accordingly. Hence, the most prevalent structure of power and authority within families is patriarchy. Across cultures, men are the primary (and often sole) decision-makers regarding domestic, economic, and social matters that concern the family; while the wife, children, servants, etc. are considered to be his dependents (Ibid, 1985, 15).

More so, he considers this structure of power to be a source of

moderation in family relationships, considering any change and shifting of the hierarchy of power in this pyramid to be undesirable. He views man's obedience to a woman to be the source of his destruction, shame and degradation (Ibid, 15). Therefore, in order to maintain this model and the position of the man in the family, he gives certain recommendations on how a man should behave with his wife. They are as follows:

A) Extreme reverence: In order to prevent a change in the hierarchy of family authority and the disturbances that occur as a consequence of the change, Ibn Sīnā advises men to cultivate a sense of awe and reverence in their spouses. He believes that if a man's conduct with his wife does not lead to her revering and respecting him, it will result in her degradation of him, the not fulfilling of his requests and in her trying to make him subservient to her. In this case, the management of the household will fall into her hands, thus disrupting the moderation of family affairs. Consequently, the man will suffer disgrace, shame and humiliation, which will provide the grounds for the woman's rebellion and obstinacy (Ibid, 16).

B) Respect for women: Another principle highlighted by Ibn Sīnā concerning a proper relationship between a man and his wife is the necessity of a man to respect and honor her; for when she is respected and honored by her husband, she will try to maintain this mode of conduct and fear losing it. Therefore, in such circumstances, she cannot help but reciprocate and treat her husband with respect and kindness, which otherwise would have been unattainable for him, even if he were to spend vast amounts of wealth.

C) Occupying women with important household matters: Another important principle that Ibn Sīnā advises men to practice in their behavioral policy towards women is to get them occupied with important family matters, such as raising children, taking care of servants, etc. He believes that if a woman is not kept busy, her only concern will be to adorn herself, in order to attract the attention of others (Ibid, 17). According to him, women should be occupied with important tasks solely within the family environment. He is strongly opposed to a woman working outside the home (Ibid, 1395 SH, 353).

The Couple's Reciprocal Responsibilities

The husband and wife are the most important elements of a family and, as the institution of the family is based on their interactions, it is their mutual relationship that determines the family dynamics. Ibn Sīnā clearly emphasizes the mutual relationship between couples. He also explains the behavioral requirements and standards that both of them should adhere to.

A Husband's Responsibilities towards His Wife

The behavioral requirements and responsibilities of a husband towards his wife are:

a) Material Support and Security: Ibn Sīnā explains this responsibility by first mentioning the following preliminaries: 1) the attraction of women to men is an undeniable reality; 2) the possibility of women being deceived and used by men for their desires is significant; 3) women follow their emotions more than their intellect (*'aql*) in social relationships and 4) the sexual exploitation of women can lead to corruption and disgrace. He therefore concludes that the sexual security of women in social relationships must be preserved and that the possibility of them being used as tools and exploited by society at large must be negated through marriage. His proposed solution is that women must remain at home, where they will be protected, and not work outside of it. In addition, the law must stipulate that the responsibility for a woman's sustenance is the responsibility of the man (Ibid).

b) Allowing her to Adorn Herself: According to Ibn Sīnā, a woman, in line with her natural tendency towards beauty and adornment, should be presented with the environment and conditions to do so by her husband. By creating such an environment, the husband is showing his respect for her and her qualities.

c) Observing *Hijāb* and Modest Dress: Ibn Sīnā considers the covering of a woman in front of strange men as an instant of preserving her respect and dignity. It is because of this that he strongly advises men to protect the *hijāb* of their wives.

d) Not Stimulating Her Sense of Jealousy: Ibn Sīnā considers the refraining of the husband from performing any act that will cause jealousy in his wife as another instance of his respect for her.

e) Honoring Agreements: Another duty that he considers for

the husband is that he must keep his promises and honor the agreements that he made with his wife. Not doing so will humiliate and debase him in the eyes of his wife.

f) Chivalry: According to Ibn Sīnā, observing chivalry, kindness and generosity towards one's wife is another requirement of the husband (Ibid, 1985, 18).

A Wife's Responsibility towards her Husband

Ibn Sīnā describes the proper behaviors of a wife towards her husband as follows:

a) Humility and Submissiveness: Ibn Sīnā considers a good and righteous wife to be obedient to her husband's orders and wishes. He says that submission to the man's authority in the family is one of the appropriate behaviors of a wife towards her husband. He believes that a good wife is humble and resourceful in serving her husband.

b) Being a Well-Wisher: Another worthy trait of a righteous wife according to Ibn Sīnā, is for her to be a well-wisher for her husband. As the deputy of her husband within the home and his trustee concerning taking care of his property and honor, she must wish well for him in their shared life.

c) Being Trustworthy: According to Ibn Sīnā, a good wife, during her husband's absence from the home, is trustworthy and reliable with respect to his property, reputation and children.

d) Contentment and Frugality: Ibn Sīnā believes that a good and worthy wife always helps her husband in the economic situation of the family. She does so by being frugal with her spending, content with what she has and adding to what her husband is short of.

e) Good Natured: Removing the grief and hardships from the husband through good and pleasant manners is another example of a wife's good behavior according to Ibn Sīnā. He believes that a good wife tries to remove her husband's sorrows by giving him comfort at home with grace, tolerance, closeness and intimacy.

f) Self-Protection against Strangers: Another desirable behavior of a wife, concerning her husband, is for her to protect herself against strangers in the absence of her husband (Ibid).

Division of Labor

In Ibn Sīnā's view, the division of labor in the family is based on gender

differences and is aimed at safeguarding the overall interests of the woman and the family. He supports the gender-based model of the traditional division of labor, in which the man is the breadwinner of the family and the woman is the housekeeper. He does not consider it expedient to change these roles. The basis of this division of labor according to Ibn Sīnā is that, firstly, because a woman is attractive, she attracts the lustful attention of men. Secondly, since a woman is more easily deceived than a man because she does not follow the dictates of her intellect, she must be protected by her husband. Therefore, it is not permissible for a woman to engage in trade and labor like a man.

From his point of view, it is more appropriate for a woman to stay at home, look after her family and take care of household affairs, and for a man to undertake the task of supporting her financially, ensuring her psychological well-being and physical health and safety (Ibid, 1395 SH, 353). Additionally, Ibn Sīnā emphasizes the role of women as mothers and considers mother's milk as being the best form of nutrition for a newborn (Ibid, 1366 SH, 351).

The Household Aspect

According to Ibn Sīnā, procreation is one of the most important motivations for marriage and also one of the functions of the family (Naqdī, 1386 SH, 24). Essentially, marriage is considered to be the pillar and foundation of human society. He also described fertility as being one of the characteristics of a good woman (Ibn Sīnā, 1366 SH, 77) and that this ability, i.e., the reproductive capacity of a woman, is one of the principles governing marriage and spouse selection (Sutūda, 1382 SH, 71).

Although there is no clarification about the aspect of the household in Ibn Sīnā's works, it can be implicitly understood that he believed in and encouraged large families, for he attached great importance to raising children and men to increase the members of his family. In one of his writings, he mentions that the increase in the number of family members requires the hiring of servants (Ibn Sīnā, 1985, 14). This sentence implies that he may have encouraged large families.

Analysis and Assessment

Ibn Sīnā's views on the family and its relationships are, on the one hand, compatible with Islamic teachings, while on the other hand, they are in clear conflict with feminist theories. Islam, regarding marriage and

family formation, highlights its importance and value as a sacred institution, stipulated by God. Thus, as marriage and family formation are a clear necessity and hold great relevance in this approach, it is incumbent upon Islamic society to provide the means for the youth to actualize this heavenly bond. (Şadūq, 1413 AH, vol. 3/251; Nūrī, 1401 AH, 14/154/Majlisī, 1404 AH, 103/221; Muḥammadī Ray Shahrī, 1386 SH, 4/280; Hurr al-Āmilī, 1416 AH, 20/45). However, from a feminist perspective, the family is an institution where the values of a patriarchal society are instilled in children and future generations of the society, and serves only to strengthen the reproduction of the patriarchal order (Beachy, 1979; Steinem, 1970; Levin, 1978; Firestone, 1974; Barrett, 1967). Therefore, it must be limited or eliminated. Kate Millet writes:

The family is an oppressive institution in which women are the property of men and mere slaves, and the family itself is a feudal organization that is designed for the socialization of young people for a larger social order. The family must be abolished, and the care of children is definitely better left to well-trained practitioners of both sexes, rather than to resentful and often disaffected individuals (parents) (Millet, 1970, 89).

Furthermore, Islam considers marriage as the exclusive means for the satisfaction of sexual needs and there are numerous Quranic verses and prophetic traditions that indicate the importance and sanctity of this union (e.g., Quran 24: 32; Quran 4: 20-21; Quran 30: 21). There are also verses which prohibit and censure sexual relations outside of marriage (See Quran 30:32; Quran 4:15; Quran 24: 2), as well as sodomy (Quran 7:80; Quran 29:29; Quran 27:54; Quran 4:16).

Contrary to this perspective, extreme feminist literature advocates for same-sex relationships over heterosexual marriages. Kathrine Holden, a feminist theorist, wrote the following in a letter to the editor of Sign Magazine:

I want to state how bisexuality relates to feminism. In my opinion, "bisexuality" and other extensions of gender identity should be accepted beyond the norm of heterosexuality. As a feminist, I consider bisexuality to be a better and stronger form of "gender equality" because a person who wants to communicate with both sexes (male and female) does not have any restrictions in choosing her sexual partner. In my opinion, the personality of each person is more important than her gender in choosing a sexual partner (Holden, 1998, 7).

Ibn Sīnā's approach to love is the exact opposite of the prevailing discourse in the modern world, which pursues the experience of love outside the framework of marriage and family formation. Today, the supporters of the sanctity of love emphasize the immorality of marriage and consider it tantamount to the cessation of love. In the best-case scenario, the relationship between love and marriage in the modern world is such that in pre-marriage courtship, love is considered a necessary prelude to marriage. In other words, in modern life, men and women first fall in love and then get married, and after a while, the affection and love between them declines and disappears. But in Ibn Sīnā's view, men and women marry for reasons other than love and, after spending some time together, develop love and affection in their relationship, thus making their bond stronger.

Perhaps the only difference between Ibn Sīnā's opinion and Islamic teachings about marriage is related to the issue of motivation for marriage. Contrary to Ibn Sīnā, who solely considers the economic and social motivations for marriage, neglecting the emotional and psychological motivations, Islam emphasizes the emotional and psychological motives for marriage, as it leads to tranquility and peace for the couple (Quran 30:21). In the view of Islam, men and women complement and perfect each other. This can only occur within the framework of marriage, i.e., when the mutual emotional needs of both are fulfilled.

Similarly, Ibn Sīnā's view on divorce is also completely consistent with Islamic teachings. Divorce is considered the most reviled allowable act in Islam (Hindī, 1413 AH, trad. 27871), i.e., it shakes the throne of God. Therefore, in order to maintain the interests of Islamic society, it is required to limit the occurrence of such an act. In this approach, the right to divorce is usually a prerogative of men, except in some legal exceptions. This ruling is based on several verses of the Glorious Quran (Quran 2: 227 & 23; Quran 33: 49; Quran 65:1), and numerous prophetic traditions (Hindī, 1413 AH, 9/640; Ḥurr al-Āmilī, 1416 AH, 21/289).

Again, regarding the hierarchy of authority within the family, Ibn Sīnā's view is very similar to the Islamic approach and hence, opposed to what contemporary feminists advocate. According to Islam, the leader- and guardianship of the family is with the husband, and he is responsible for their sustenance and

maintenance (Quran 4: 34; Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 12/42; Nūrī, 1401 AH, 14/248; Ṭabarsī, 1408 AH, 217). This division is based on the essence and creational qualities of men and women (Quran 2: 228). In other words, the creational differences between men and women require the man to be designated as the head and the one in charge of the family.

Also, in the context of family relationships, a woman is obliged to obey and submit herself to her husband (Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 14/153; Kulaynī, 1365 SH, 2/66; Nūrī, 1401 AH, 14/247). However, in the feminist view, the authority of men in the family is considered the root cause of gender oppression. Friedrich Engels, one of the leaders of Marxist feminism, writes: "The oppression of women is fundamentally from the patriarchal system. In a patriarchal family, nothing is normal, since men have total dominance to take possession of property and exercise power over women (Engels, 1975, 75). Betty Friedan, another leader of the feminist movement in the West, likened the traditional house to a forced labor camp, whose prisoners are housewives who have been brainwashed by the power of femininity and are no longer human (Friedan, 1963, 75).

From a religious point of view, the necessity of educating couples about sexual issues and increasing their knowledge about mutual sexual needs has been highlighted. There are countless narrations in religious texts about the quality and etiquette of marital relations. This shows the importance of sex education within the Shariʿa, for both men and women (Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 3/118; Kulaynī, 1365 SH, 5/50).

So, it can be concluded that most of Ibn Sīnā's opinions and recommendations concerning spousal relationships were derived from his Islamic approach. The relationship between couples in Islam is based on love (Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 14/115; Majlisī, 1404 AH, 104/132; Daylamī, 1412 AH, 175). Furthermore, the husband and wife have mutual rights and both are duty-bound to respect the rights of the other and not to put pressure on the other for securing their own material demands. It is also important to lower one's expectations and to be content. Islam also stresses the necessity of men to treat women with respect and dignity (Quran 4: 19; Quran 65: 5; Hindī, 1413 AH, 16/371; Pāydār, 1376 AH, 1520; Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 21/362 and 365; Nūrī, 1401 AH,

15/118; Kulaynī, 1365 SH, 6/4; Majlisī, 1404 AH, 68/389). Correspondingly, one of the duties of a Muslim woman towards her husband is for her to know that she is from and only for him. This is because a woman is a man's honor (*nāmūs*) and therefore, she must protect her husband's honor against strange, non-related, men (Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 20/40).

When it comes to the gender-based division of labor, we notice that Ibn Sīnā's view is again consistent with Islamic teachings and incompatible with the feminist view. Although Islam permits a woman to get employment outside of the home, as evidenced by Quranic verses (Quran 2: 234; Quran 4: 32; Quran 28: 23), prophetic narrations (Majlisī, 1404 AH, 100/9; Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 12/49; Nūrī, 1401 AH, 13/12) and historical anecdotes about the lives of the ladies of the Ahl al-Bayt and wives of the companions, who engaged in work activities and earned money. In addition, we find no proof that the Noble Prophet opposed it (Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 22/246; Majlisī, 1404 AH, 47/49). But when considering the Islamic value system regarding the gender-based division of roles in the family, it becomes apparent that the home and family are a woman's domain and territory. This division of labor in Islam, based on gender differences, can be seen in a famous narration, whereby the Noble Prophet, when requested by Imam ʿAlī and Lady Fāṭima to divide the family activities, allotted those which were outside the house to Imam ʿAlī and assigned the internal housework to Fāṭima (Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 20/172; Nūrī, 1401 AH, 13/48). Additionally, several other narrations concerning the importance of roles, such as being wifely (Majlisī, 1404 AH, 77/166; Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 20/32 and 40; Pāydār, 1376 AH, 2892; Nūrī, 1401 AH, 13/134; Ṭūsī 1364 AH, 7/400), motherly (Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 15/125; Nūrī, 1401 AH, 15/182; Kulaynī, 1365 SH, 5/336 and 2/130; Ṣadūq, 1413 AH, 2/49; Majlisī, 1404 AH, 74/85; Tabarsi, 1408 AH, 234; Iḥṣāʾī, 1405 AH, 1/442) and housekeeping (Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 14/15; Nūrī, 1401 AH, 14/245) can be seen in Islamic sources.

However, the gender-based division of labor by which a woman, as a wife and mother, is chiefly responsible for maintaining the house has been severely criticized and challenged in feminist thought.

Simone de Beauvoir, one of the most influential leaders of the feminist movement and the author of the book, *The Second Sex*, says: "No woman should be allowed to stay at home and raise her children. Society should be completely different. Women should

not have the right to choose, because if they have the right to choose, many of them will engage in the same work as before..." (De Beauvoir, 1975, 12). Kate Millett also writes in this regard: "As long as a woman's main priority is to take care of children, she cannot be a free human being. That every woman must be considered a mother is one of the favorite myths of conservatives" (Millett, 1970, 129). Firestone further writes: "The biological division, which assigns the task of reproduction to women, causes the suppression of women. Reproduction is the main factor responsible for men's domination over women. The only way to truly free women is to release them from the burden of reproduction through new scientific technologies, as the advancement of fertility technologies makes it possible to do away with the biological basis of women's inferiority. This progress rids the woman of the burden of getting pregnant and thus bearing children can become a shared responsibility of both men and women" (Firestone, 1970, 167).

Concerning population growth and the household aspect, there is a similarity between Ibn Sīnā's views and Islamic teachings. In Islam's view of the family, one of the most important functions of this institution is procreation and population growth of the Islamic society. The family dimension in this approach is broad and religious recommendations tend to encourage families to have many children (Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 20/14). From a religious perspective, a worthy child is a divine blessing and a flower from the flowers of Paradise (Kulaynī, 1365 SH, 6/3). In addition, a child is the adornment of life (Quran 18: 46), a friend and helper (Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, 1416 AH, 21/356), and the heir to and successor of their parents in the world (Ibid, 357). Their seeking forgiveness and good deeds are the cause of forgiveness and happiness in the Hereafter for their parents (Ṣadūq, 1413 AH, 3/309). Contrastingly, feminists strongly defend and promote abortion as a right for women. Firestone writes in her book, *The Dialectic of Sex*: "The first demand of a feminist social order would be the freeing of women from the tyranny of their reproductive biology by every means available" (Firestone, 1970, 167). Most radical feminists maintain that women have the right to terminate their pregnancy or have an abortion, and it is a personal decision that does not concern the state (Mushīrzadah, 1385 SH, 286). Betty Friedan defends abortion and calls it "the ultimate essential right of women" (Friedan, 1963, 14). Mary Daly says that all the efforts of feminists

should be devoted to creating a society where abortion should not be a problem (Daly, 1968, 41).

Conclusion

In the present study, an attempt was made to focus on the ideal family model from the perspective of Ibn Sīnā, and to then compare and evaluate the resulting model with Islamic teachings and feminist perspectives. This reassessment of Ibn Sīnā's opinions was undertaken in five areas, namely, marriage and divorce, a hierarchy of authority, reciprocal responsibilities of the couple, division of labor and the household aspect. In the discussion concerning marriage, the importance, motivations and forms of marriage were examined. From Ibn Sīnā's point of view, marriage, which is considered the foundation and central pillar of society, is initiated due to either economic or social motivations. Divorce is then considered the most destructive element for society, although it should not be completely banned, since its total avoidance may cause other problems. However, strict measures should be put in place to limit it as much as possible. He also considers divorce as a prerogative for the husband. Subsequently, his viewpoint was examined and compared with Islamic teachings, wherein remarkable agreements were noted between the two. Also, the disparity and conflict of this view with feminist thought were investigated.

With regards to the hierarchy of authority in the family, Ibn Sīnā believes that the man and husband are allocated the central role in the family; his wife, children, servants, etc., have to obey him as the head of the house. This view is also completely consistent with Islamic teachings and completely opposes the feminist view. Concerning a couple's reciprocal responsibilities, Ibn Sīnā's views are closely congruent with Islamic teachings, while they appear poles apart from the feminist views on the behavioral principles of men and women. Concerning the division of labor, as can be deduced from the teachings of Islam, Ibn Sīnā advocates for a gender-based division of roles and labor in the family, whereby the man, who is the head and provider for the family, must earn for the family outside the home, using trade or work. Whereas the woman, as the manager and deputy of the man at home, should take care of the children and the home. Similarly, concerning the household aspect, Ibn Sīnā's opinions are notably in line with the recommendations of Islam and at loggerheads with feminist ideas.

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