# The Role of Mentorship in Transmitting Religious Culture and Building Islamic Civilization

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**ABSTRACT**

Mentorship, as a fundamental element of the Islamic educational system, is deeply rooted in the traditions of the prophets, the Ahl al-Bayt (AS), and the righteous scholars. This pedagogical tradition is not limited to the transfer of knowledge; rather, it plays a pivotal role in shaping the religious, cultural, and civilizational identity of students. In today's rapidly changing socio-cultural and media landscape, revisiting this tradition has become imperative. The present study aims to elucidate the significance and functions of mentorship in transmitting religious culture and in the process of Islamic civilization-building. Utilizing a descriptive-analytical method and drawing upon religious, historical, and biographical sources, this paper examines the multifaceted aspects of this tradition. Findings indicate that mentorship is a multidimensional and continuous process based on a spiritual and intellectual relationship between teacher and student, which institutionalizes values, nurtures committed elites, and contributes to the production of religious and civilizational knowledge. It concludes that reviving this tradition may address contemporary identity and epistemological crises in Muslim societies and play a strategic role in realizing the New Islamic Civilization.

**Keywords:** Mentorship, Religious Culture, Islamic Education, Civilization-building, Transmission of Knowledge, Scholarly Tradition, Islamic Educational System

## INTRODUCTION:

### Problem Statement:
In the face of rapidly accelerating cultural and media transformations, one of the fundamental challenges facing Islamic societies is the effective transmission of religious identity to future generations. The tradition of *shagird-parvari*, as one of the oldest and most authentic educational mechanisms in Islamic civilization, is not merely limited to information transfer. Rather, it is a profound process for character building, enhancing religious insight, and cultivating the elites who shape civilization. However, this tradition necessitates serious rethinking and regeneration in its encounter with modern educational systems and social changes.

### Significance of the Topic:
Throughout Islamic history, *shagird-parvari* has played a pivotal role in the continuity of the teachings of prophets and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). From this tradition emerged disciples who themselves founded scientific centers and became influential forces in Islamic civilization. A strategic re-examination of the civilizational potential of this tradition can contribute to the revival of Islamic identity.

### Objective of the Article:
The objective of this research is to conduct a historical and conceptual analysis of the position of the *shagird-parvari* tradition in the process of transmitting religious culture and building Islamic civilization.

### Research Questions:
1. What is the position of *shagird-parvari* in the Islamic education system?
2. How has this tradition played a role in transmitting religious culture and the continuity of Islamic civilization?
3. What elements and components in the educational methods of Islamic mentors have facilitated the formation of a civilizational movement?

### Assumptions:
- *Shagird-parvari* is a comprehensive, multi-faceted educational ground beyond formal schooling.
- The diminishing of this tradition will cause a deficiency in the transmission of Islamic identity.
- Its revival can be an effective solution to today's epistemological and cultural crises.

### Research Methodology:
This article, using a descriptive-analytical approach and drawing upon religious, historical, and biographical sources, aims to elucidate the various dimensions of the *shagird-parvari* tradition and examine its functions in Islamic civilization-building.

### Part One: Theoretical Foundations of Shagird-Parvari in the Religious System

1.       Conceptual explanation and terminology of *shagird-parvari*.
2.       Examination of the Quranic and narrative foundations of *shagird-parvari*.
3.       The position of *shagird-parvari* in the Islamic education system.
4.       The connection between education, upbringing, and civilization-building in the Islamic discourse.

## Theoretical Foundations of Shagird-Parvari in the Islamic Discourse

### 1. Lexical and Terminological Definition of Shagird-Parvari

In Persian lexicography, the word "shagird" refers to someone who seeks to acquire knowledge or a profession from their teacher. The word "parvari" originates from "parvardan," meaning to nurture, train, and care for someone to reach perfection. Therefore, "shagird-parvari" in its literal sense means "the training and nurturing of a learner by a teacher or mentor."

In the Islamic educational context, "shagird-parvari" is an interactive, continuous, and nurturing process in which a mentor (scholar, teacher, or master) draws inspiration from religious teachings to foster the comprehensive scientific, spiritual, ethical, intellectual, and social growth of their student. This process extends beyond formal instruction, encompassing character refinement, emotional connection, serving as a role model, and participating in the student's life. *Shagird-parvari* is not merely about training custodians of content but about cultivating "bearers of the mission."

### 2. The Position of Shagird-Parvari in the Islamic Discourse on Education

In the Islamic discourse, education is viewed as a holistic and goal-oriented process. The aim of upbringing is for humans to attain the station of *Khalifatullah* (vicegerent of God) and achieve balanced growth in their intellectual, spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions. Within this framework, *shagird-parvari* is an authentic and practical method for achieving such an upbringing, as it emphasizes the "educational relationship," unlike formal schooling.

Numerous verses in the Quran, such as: "And it is not for the believers to go forth [to battle] all at once. For there should travel from every troop of them a party [remaining] to gain proficiency in religion and to warn their people when they return to them…" (Surah At-Tawbah, 9:122), point to the necessity of specialized and presential religious education, the realization of which is impossible without the master-student relationship.

Furthermore, the renowned hadith from Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him): "May Allah have mercy on a servant who revives our cause," and its continuation: "…who learns our sciences and teaches them to people" (Al-Kafi, Vol. 1, p. 32), indicate that keeping the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt alive is contingent upon continuous *shagird-parvari.*

Therefore, in the Islamic tradition, *shagird-parvari* is not merely an educational tool but a civilization-building method for the production, preservation, and transmission of religious culture and Islamic identity.

## Part Two: The Conduct of the Prophet, the Ahl al-Bayt, and Islamic Scholars in Shagird-Parvari

The tradition of *shagird-parvari* in Islam began not only from the dawn of the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him and his progeny) prophethood but has also been continued consistently and coherently by the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) and the great scholars of Islam.

### 1. Shagird-Parvari in the Conduct of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

The Prophet (pbuh), as the best role model in teaching and upbringing, considered *shagird-parvari* a vital part of his mission. A prominent example is the dispatch of Mus'ab ibn Umayr to Medina to propagate Islam and train the earliest Muslims. This symbolic act signifies the importance of training a scientific and social representative in the process of spreading the religion.

The Prophet (pbuh) directly nurtured his companions, emphasizing ethics, knowledge, and righteous actions. This close and continuous relationship ensured the correct transmission of religious teachings and the formation of a faithful character.

### 2. Shagird-Parvari in the Conduct of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS)

The Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet (AS), particularly Imam Ali (AS) and Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (AS), placed special importance on scientific and educational *shagird-parvari*. Imam Ali (AS) nurtured disciples such as Kumayl ibn Ziyad, Malik al-Ashtar, and Maytham al-Tammar, each of whom were not only scholars and commanders but also carriers of the ideas of Wilayah (Guardianship) and Islamic civilization-building.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (AS) had over four thousand students across various scientific fields. The breadth of his students and the diversity of sciences taught—from jurisprudence, theology, and philosophy to natural sciences—demonstrates the depth and scope of his *shagird-parvari*, which laid the foundations for the scientific centers of Shi'ism.

### 3. Shagird-Parvari in the Conduct of Islamic Scholars

Following the Ahl al-Bayt, great Islamic scholars such as Sheikh al-Mufid, Khajeh Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, Allamah al-Hilli, the First and Second Shahid (Martyrs), and Imam Khomeini (RA) continued this tradition. *Shagird-parvari* by these eminent figures in religious, scientific, social, and political spheres led not only to the transmission of knowledge but also to social renewal and transformation.

Imam Khomeini (RA) viewed *shagird-parvari* as a civilizational duty, believing that the training of faithful, committed, and aware students is the bedrock for realizing Islamic governance and a new Islamic civilization.

## Part Three: Shagird-Parvari and Its Role in Islamic Civilization-Building

Islamic civilization, beyond military conquests or economic development, is the product of committed, knowledgeable, and intellectual human capital nurtured within the framework of *shagird-parvari* (Nasr, 1383). Institutions like Dar al-Hikmah in Baghdad, the Nizamiyehs in Nishapur and Baghdad, and the seminaries of Najaf and Qom are examples of the fruits of this enduring and continuous tradition (Bagheri, 1392).

*Shagird-parvari* has led to the establishment of "intergenerational connections" and the transmission of "spiritual and intellectual heritage" (Motahhari, 1375). In this process, academic ethics, ijtihad (independent legal reasoning), practical training, and active participation in social affairs have become integral components of the learning process (Khamenei, 1390).

The cultivation of scientific and religious elites who can play an effective role in guiding society and producing knowledge and civilization is a result of this very tradition of *shagird-parvari*. This tradition enabled religious and rational sciences to be interconnected, leading to the flourishing of Islamic civilization in the fields of philosophy, jurisprudence, art, and natural sciences (Kulayni, 1407).

Furthermore, *shagird-parvari* represents a transfer of religious and ethical culture and an Islamic lifestyle that has influenced the social and civilizational structure of Islamic societies, paving the way for the formation of Islamic civilization with its unique characteristics (Khamenei, 1393).

## Part Four: Contemporary Challenges in Shagird-Parvari

In the present era, the Islamic tradition of *shagird-parvari* faces numerous challenges that can diminish its impact and efficacy. Some of the most significant of these challenges include:

- **Divergence of New Educational Institutions from the Master-Disciple Tradition:** With the expansion of formal and modern educational systems, the direct and continuous master-disciple relationship, which is the foundation of traditional *shagird-parvari*, has weakened. This has resulted in a superficial and shallow pursuit of ethical, spiritual, and epistemological training (Bagheri, 1392).

- **Weakness of Spiritual and Ethical Training in Formal Educational Systems:** Formal education often focuses on content delivery, with less attention given to ethical, moral, and spiritual aspects. This leads to a decrease in the commitment and responsibility of students (Motahhari, 1375).

- **Negative Impact of Cyberspace on Face-to-Face Interaction and Educational Commitment:** The growth of cyberspace and social networks has led to the marginalization of face-to-face and continuous master-disciple interaction, reducing the depth of connection and commitment in the educational process (Khamenei, 1390).

- **Haste in Formal Education and Lack of Time for Gradual Training:** In the new educational system, due to the focus on a large volume of material and condensed schedules, there is insufficient time for the gradual and profound training process that traditional *shagird-parvari* emphasizes (Nasr, 1383).

- **Diminishing Role of the Teacher as a Comprehensive Mentor:** In the tradition of *shagird-parvari*, the teacher was not only a transmitter of knowledge but also an ethical, spiritual, and social mentor to the student. In modern educational systems, this multi-dimensional role has been marginalized (Khamenei, 1393).

These challenges underscore the necessity of reviewing and regenerating the tradition of *shagird-parvari* in new formats suited to the exigencies of the time, so that it can effectively fulfill its role in transmitting religious culture and building Islamic civilization.

## Part Five: Solutions for Reviving the Tradition of Shagird-Parvari in Modern Islamic Civilization-Building

In light of the challenges discussed in the previous section, reviving the tradition of *shagird-parvari* as a fundamental strategy for transmitting religious culture and building Islamic civilization is essential. The proposed solutions are as follows:

1. **Designing Education Programs Focused on Training in Seminaries and Universities:** Educational programs should emphasize not only content delivery but also the cultivation of students' ethical, spiritual, and epistemological dimensions. Creating courses and workshops that focus on ethical training and character development can strengthen this tradition (Bagheri, 1392).

2. **Redefining the Teacher's Role from a Mere Content Transmitter to a Comprehensive Mentor:** Teachers must effectively fulfill the role of ethical, spiritual, and social mentors, not just limiting themselves to academic transmission. This role should be officially recognized and trained for within educational systems (Motahhari, 1375).

3. **Strengthening Knowledge and Scientific Circles with Strong Teacher-Student Relationships:** Establishing continuous scientific and educational circles and sessions with the presence of teachers and students fosters deep and lasting relationships, which have been highly emphasized in the Islamic tradition (Kulayni, 1407 AH).

4. **Purposeful Utilization of New Media for Deepening Religious Training:** New media and cyberspace, when used correctly and purposefully, can be effective tools for maintaining and deepening teacher-student relationships, providing spiritual education, and spreading religious culture (Khamenei, 1390).

5. **Emulating Successful Historical Traditions in Training Civilization-Shaping Disciples:** Revisiting and adapting the models of *shagird-parvari* in the conduct of the Prophet (pbuh), the Ahl al-Bayt (AS), and great scholars like Imam al-Sadiq (AS) and Sheikh

al-Mufid can serve as a valuable guide for reviving this tradition in current circumstances (Nasr, 1383).

6. **Encouraging Gradual and Continuous Training:** Opportunities and spaces must be provided for gradual and continuous training to ensure the educational process achieves the necessary depth and impact (Khamenei, 1393).

7. **Developing Religious Educational Institutions with a Shagird-Parvari Approach:** Seminaries and Islamic educational centers should shift their structures towards a system based on *shagird-parvari*, prioritizing the teacher-student culture (Bagheri, 1392).

**Conclusion:**

1. ***Shagird-parvari* as a Cornerstone:** It's established as the fundamental pillar of Islamic education, going beyond mere knowledge transfer to encompass the holistic development of students' religious, cultural, and civilizational aspects.

2. **Historical Significance:** The tradition has been pivotal in passing down religious knowledge and shaping Islamic civilization, with historical educational institutions serving as direct products of this methodology.

3. **Generational Renewal:** *Shagird-parvari* has been instrumental in cultivating committed generations in knowledge, ethics, and culture, thereby fostering progress and strengthening Islamic societies.

4. **Contemporary Challenges and Revival Needs:** Modern issues like reduced face-to-face master-disciple interaction, weakened ethical training, and the influence of cyberspace have indeed damaged this tradition, necessitating a structured revival.

5. **Integration for Transmission:** Reviving *shagird-parvari* requires blending traditional teachings with modern educational and training tools to effectively transmit religious culture and civilization to future generations.

6. **Teacher's Role and Knowledge Circles:** Redefining the teacher as a comprehensive mentor and strengthening knowledge circles between masters and disciples are identified as keys to realizing a new Islamic civilization.

**Recommendations:**

1. **Interdisciplinary Research:** Expanding cross-disciplinary studies between educational sciences, religious sciences, sociology, and civilizational studies is crucial for a deeper analysis of *shagird-parvari*'s role in civilization-building.

2. **Comparative Historical Analysis:** Examining and comparing *shagird-parvari* methods across different Islamic historical periods (Prophethood, Imamate, various seminaries) can offer valuable insights for improving current practices.

3. **Leveraging Modern Technologies:** Purposeful use of digital media, online learning, and social networks, alongside face-to-face interactions, can

enhance the mentoring role and master-disciple relationships.

4. **Emphasis on Ethics and Spirituality:** While knowledge and skills are important, special attention must be given to nurturing students' ethics and self-purification as the central focus of *shagird-parvari*, ensuring holistic training.

5. **Expanding Knowledge and Scientific Circles:** Establishing and supporting continuous master-disciple circles and sessions in seminaries and universities, particularly with a civilizational outlook, is essential for maintaining and deepening this tradition.

6. **Local Cultural and Social Considerations:** Customizing *shagird-parvari* methods to suit the specific cultural, social contexts, and needs of the youth in each Islamic society can significantly boost its effectiveness.

7. **Continuous Evaluation and Feedback System:** Designing qualitative assessment systems to measure the effectiveness of *shagird-parvari* in students' ethical, scientific, and cultural development is vital for continuous improvement of the educational process.

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