

POLITICAL & ECONOMICICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN IRAN

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During the Qajar period, the social structure of Iran was rather traditional, and it made no provision for the formal education of women, except for the reading of religious texts such as the Quran. Meanwhile, the old-fashioned primary schools were located in mosques or special houses known as “Maktabkhaneh”. However some religious-minded families retained private tutors to give instruction to their daughters in their households. These girls learned to read the Quran. The traditional Iranian society considered giving birth to children and doing housework the primary duties of women and confined men and women to separate parts of the house (Enayat, 2001).

There is a large gap between the large number of educated women entering the occupational market looking for jobs and the desirable expected status. There is no balance in the economic and cultural structure of Iran; although women are more willing to enter the governmental organizations, in spite of their higher education, they do not enjoy an equal position in occupations particularly in the governmental organizations and managerial posts.

Keywords: Women, Politic, participation, Education

INTRODUCTION

Women who wanted to go to the other side of the street they will be allowed from the guard and the men and women did not have the right to sit together in a carriage even if they were mothers and son or brother and sister. (Sansarian, 2005, p: 30).

Accept their destiny. In other words, patriarchal norms helped to structure gender relations where women were apparently subordinate to men and had no share in their families or social decision-making. In the political system of Iran, the Shah enjoyed absolute power and took all decisions himself without consulting others (Enayat, 2001).

This paternal absolutism affected all segments of the Iranian society and brought about a male-dominated culture. This culture is similar to the one remarked by Javaheri and Ghazati (2007) and Shaditalab (2002). Their studies show that in the managerial sections and resolution, particularly the political section, women mostly encountered

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cultural and traditional obstacles which resulted from the values and beliefs that rooted in the cultural domains of the Iranian society. These affected the men and woman's ways of thinking, which consequently led to the seclusion of women in politics.

Social attitude of the Iranian women is negative and socially lot of powers are deliberated to Iranian females, When the status of women compared to men is verified, it was observed that a large majority of 76.9% of the respondents indicated that status of women is lower than men, and only 8.4% of them indicated status is higher than men. Hence, we still find that still the perception of women regarding gender equality is negative; as there is gender bias against women, as most of them feel they were looked down. Hence, hypothesis 3 regarding social attitude of the Iranian women is negative is accepted. Studies in general indicate highly unequal gender relations which have developed in some of the architect colleges, as well as in wider society. Iranian women have not been given equal opportunities in their social activities or in their personal lives, and this was one of the factual reasons for friction.

Studies in general have observed that there are varying degrees of social stratification with respect to wealth, status and power, a situation which has affected the living conditions of both pre modern classes and modern classes. In equalities exists in all parts of the social, economic, educational and political systems of Iranian society. Iran's history, particularly during the past century, has been characterized by feudalism. This system has influenced and shaped the features of its social structure. Feudalism in Iran was somewhat unique, because in this system all class structure had been fluid than in many classical feudal societies. There was both upward and downward social motilities. So much so, that there was a clear line of social stratification, one which divided the state and people. An important step is to understand the dynamics of these social inequalities by examining cultural practices and ideology among different classes-elite or middle. Currently, educated people and professionals are playing a central role. The nature of involvement and impact on existing inequalities still remains unclear.

The issue of the rights of women has over the years become a large one, both nationally and internationally. On the international scale more particularly, women face discriminatory laws everyday, which try to oppress and control them. This is especially the case in parts of the Middle East. In Iran, a revolution twenty-one years ago completely turned the nation around. It went from a very "western-influenced" country to an Islamic fundamentalist state. The Iranian Revolution, in the name of the Quran and Islam, had enormous effects on the treatment and lives of women in Iran.

Women have been one of the most important social groups in Iranian civil rights movement between 1996 and 2000. Iranian female university students, intellectuals, journalists and political activists have raised the standards of political activism in Iran. Iranian feminists, religious or non-religious, are the noticeable part of these groups of Women who formed a substantial portion of the participants within this movement along with male university students, journalists, intellectuals and political activists. There are four areas of change to understand the influence of Iranian feminism on the civil rights movement. These are the roots of indigenized ideologies, the sources of the

non-violence strategy of the movement, the origins and goals of the civil rights movement, and the reasons of success and failure stories of Iranian feminism in getting its fair share of power in what reformers achieved in Iranian politics during the reform movement.

Iranian feminist are actively involved in a social movement; this movement emerged out of a populist mass movement, i.e. the Islamic Revolution that instead of fulfilling their demands made the discriminations and inequalities worse for women. The regime could not close the whole society after the end of Iran-Iraq war and the hibernated demands came out of every corner of the society, even the religious base of the government. Women played a central role in years after 1996 in the reform movement that then led to domination of the reformists in the Iranian parliament, municipalities and presidential office.

Women's position in the Qajar's era is of particular significance since it coincides with the emerging women's social and political movements in the West. In fact, two movements on the part of people took place in Iran in Qajar's era, and this was in response to the demands of the dictators of the time, in which the fundamental role of women could not be denied (Mohammadi, 2009).

RURAL WOMEN

Most of his data about rural women have been collected through the International Labor Organization. This study puts forward the idea that under harsh conditions women are forced to work. There are three main factors on the work and income-generating opportunities of rural women as follows: 1- limited access to land and related resources; 2-lack of control on their work and the result of their activities; and 3-lack of movements related to family responsibilities or the cultural and social norms. This study shows that rural women need help for the establishment of independent organizations and for developing rural, non-governmental organizations. This study suggests that farm land must be given to women and their husbands separately, national surveys should be done for finding out the extent of the partnership of women, and regulations must be set to eliminate income discriminations.

In 1986, a study was conducted on the physical health of women and its relationship with their social activities in the active period of motherhood. In this study women who were in the active period of motherhood in 1956 were under investigation. Later in 1986 in order to find out the physical health status of the same women at old ages another study was conducted. The analysis of data in this study showed that those mothers who in their active period of motherhood had other roles in addition to motherhood and life partnership were in better physical condition at old ages than those mothers who just had the abovementioned two roles.

According to Shamim (2008), this concession granted Great Britain a full monopoly over the production, sale, and export of tobacco in Iran for fifty years. The protest climaxed in a widely-obeyed fatwa against tobacco use issued by the Grand *Âyat-Allâh* Mirza Shirazi in December 1891. It is important to note that women participated along with men from the beginning to the end of this movement. For example, women (including those at the Court who had never failed to obey the king)

played an active role in this event and broke all the hookahs, following their religious leader, Mirza Shirazi, and resisting against the direct orders and the absolute power of Nasir al-Din Shah.

According to Delrish (1996), the role of Iranian women in the Tobacco movement was significant, but traditional views and patriarchy culture did not allow women to use of this movement to improve their situation in society.

The social activities of women were found to increase during the Constitutional Revolution. Among other, they created private associations and hidden organizations, participated in the protests, and also struggled for the victory of the armed and non-violence Constitution (khodadad, 2008).

From 1907 to 1911, women's activities were more serious in the Qajar period. They formed several organizations, such as Women's Freedom Forum, Women Unions and Revolutionary Women Forum (Afarai, 1998).

Afarai (1998) is apparently aware of the fact that the beginning of the Iranian women's political movement had occurred during the early 20th century when he asserts, "in those days, women activist who commonly came from the upper class started to establish women's assemblies, unisex schools, health centers and several other institutions for girls and women" (p. 9).

Women were still denied the right to vote despite the effective role they played in the Constitutional Revolution. The Constitutional Law and the election rights it entailed deprived women of political participation and specified it to men (Maknun, 2000).

The status of women in Iran drastically changed when Reza Khan came to power in 1925 and "emphasized the importance of women within the state because they made up half of the population" (Chaido, 2006, p. 1).

Women's political and social participations in different countries all over the world have encountered obstacles in psychological, character, social, economic and political dimensions and the cultural factors seem to have played the most significant role in reducing the presence of women in the society, particularly in the managerial levels. Iran is no exception to the insignificant role women are required to play in the social and political activities. Due to their vastness, cultural factors can take different forms. Variables like women's own ideology, their families' and social viewpoints, religious norms, and the common social customs can all be assumed as aspects of cultural factors. Hence, for the social and political participation of women to increase, there is a need for a comprehensive cultural planning that can elevate the level of public understanding in terms of the significance of women's social and political participations and trigger women's better realization of their own values and capabilities which can increase their social and political participations. Sociologists and researchers in the area of women's issues attribute the reasons behind the negligible participation of women in social and political activities to gender stereotypes and beliefs, owing to the prevalence of patriarchy beliefs in the society. In fact, such a patriarchy culture has resulted in dividing the responsibilities into housework and social work and leaving the house responsibilities to women, depriving them of the opportunity to have an equal share with men. Of course, such a division of responsibilities is not specific to Iran alone as there has been a division between the public and private areas in the

West. Thus, “limiting women in the house and assuming their thoughts, ideas and actions to be unimportant will oppress their creativity and unlimited power within them, lowering their self-esteem and efficiency” (Shaditalab, 2002, p. 6).

The equation of man equal capable and woman equal incapable is considered so valid these days that when there is a woman performing a job ensures unimportance of skill and specialization in it. This leads to the opinion that the gender of the worker is a better indicator of its specialized nature (Pearson, 1992).

Ahmadi-Nia (2001) states that women’s life in Iran and in the developing world is affected by the “views and ideologies of men in their environment. The man can be the father who supervises his daughter’s level of education or the husband who determines his wife’s continuing her studies or being active in society”(p, 37).

WOMEN IN POLITICS

Quran: They maintain that Chapter 4, verse 34 of the Quran which reads thus: ‘Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them’, has virtually closed the door to women’s advancement to higher positions. For them, this verse has sanctioned men’s authority over women and made the domain of politics or power an exclusively male preserve. This is because men have strong leadership characteristics which entitle them to rule over women who tend to be weak and more emotional. According to them, the verse is clear in entrusting men (not women) with the Qiwama or guardianship. It follows that since men are the caretakers (Qawwamun) of women, it is not possible for them to hold positions of authority which would allow them to exercise power over men.

THE UNIVERSAL NOTICE CHILD SURVIVAL, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUPPORT

Women in playing their various roles have a big determining share in children’s welfare. Women’s situation and their access to education and other services can highly influence social and economic flourish. Trying to promote the social standpoint and significance of women in development of a society and country must begin with young girls; it feels necessary that opportunities such as good health care, nutrition, and education be provided for the girls so that they can to their best flourish their talents in every field (UNESCO, 1992: 9).

To reform women’s status quo, UNESCO emphasizes three key issues:

Eliminating social tropisms which impede women’s participation and contribution in the decision making process.

Eliminating the obstacles impeding women’s registration in different higher education levels, and Paying attention to sex aspects in curricula and escalating their confidence and academic readiness in taking responsibilities and getting jobs.

When women’s social, economic, and political standpoint is investigated in different countries, obvious discrepancies are encountered. For example, in many cases girls and women are restricted in social, cultural, and economic affairs: In developing countries, young girls compared to young boys face malnutrition, poor health care and poor educational facilities.

In developing countries, women enjoy two thirds of men's literacy level. In developing countries, pregnant women are fifty times more in danger of death than those in developed countries. A major portion of what women and young girls accomplish remains hidden since their accomplishment does not appear in national auditing and census. Women's working hours are 25 % longer than those of men, and most of their work is at home providing and preparing food products for which they are not paid at all. Although their working hours are longer than those of men, they enjoy less vocational and educational facilities and get lower pay. Cultural, social, legal, and economic obstacles for women and young girls' development are far more than those men and young boys face. Women's participation share in regional and national decision making is far more limited than men's, thus unequal (UNESCO, 1992: 14).

Moreover, they argue that even if they have to accept the view which states that this verse deals specifically with family affairs and cannot be generalized to include male-female relations in public life, the proof still stands: women cannot rule over men. For if they are unqualified to manage their family undertakings, by the same token, they are unfit to handle public matters. However, many of them are of the strong opinion that this verse (4: 34) deals exclusively with family affairs and has nothing to do with the relationships between men and women in public life. This is because the verse is mentioned solely within the context of married life, in which one party the husband is charged with the responsibility of being the head and caretaker of the family, bearing in mind that relieving the wife from such a responsibility is by no means an indication of her inability to do the job properly; on the contrary, she can easily replace him if he is absent (for whatever reason) or unfit to fulfill his duty. Therefore, it is not right to generalize the ruling of this verse (which handles only marital matters) to encompass the relationships between men and women in society, so as to deny women the opportunity to hold public offices.

ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY INCREASE

Political participation and contribution increase (educational women are more aware of their rights and are more able and practical to use them, so they are more willing to participate in political activities).

Health and wellness improvement (in national level, women's education brings about longer life expectancy, fewer children, less death rate, and less birth rate; in family level, their education contributes to higher family income, and has more positive and promising effects on the family's health and wellness).

Older-age marriage (educated girls are less willing to marry at young age since they consider their economic opportunities).

Less pregnancy (an educated woman desires fewer children and prevents pregnancy. She would like to bear children at longer intervals), women in developed countries enjoy higher level of education and, compared to those in developing and underdeveloped countries, they have better and more comfortable life. It is obvious that women's education is one of the most effective factors in development and mutually it [education] gets affected by it [development]. That is why today in most countries, educational activities are more welcomed by women because lack of their access to

educational opportunities is not only a dispossession, but along with other deprivations are a cause to other deprivations in the society. Development of women's education can create new spheres and opportunities in different economic and political grounds. By investigating the advocates' viewpoints on girls and women's higher education and the other social, economic, and cultural activities, their reasons can be classified in eight general axes:

Contribution to regime's reliability and credibility: the elevation of regime's reliability can disparage and eliminate enemies' propaganda intended to disgrace the Islamic Republic System
Contribution to social development: Women's education and their other activities in different spheres can help reduce underdevelopment, facilitate and speed up the development, increase the capacity and span of development, and finally pave the grounds for improvement, progress, and advancement.

Elimination of inequalities: Through women's education and their activities in other shares, sexual discrimination can be eliminated or at last reduced, women's civil rights can be guaranteed, family power can be balanced, and justice and equality can be achieved and practiced.

Cultural awareness: Women's education and their other activities in other spheres can elevate their and the society's cultural awareness. It helps improve the society's awareness and knowledge, develop educational agents, develop general culture, elevate humans and human communities, develop cultural adaptability, develop women's intellectuality, increase women's general knowledge, make women know better about the world, learn living skills, and turn the family into an educational cannon.

Contribution to family standards: Women's education and activities in other spheres helps reduce children and mother's death rare, increase marriage age, reduce the birth intervals and pregnancy span, delay the first child's birth, develop one-child families, increase life expectancy, and escalate general healthy care of children.

Economic contribution: Women's education and other activities in other spheres help make them independent, will to get better jobs, increase vocational opportunities, increase family income, develop vocational motivation, increase fruition, enjoy better financial opportunities, increase national gross, income, and increase the number of taxpayers.

Marital contribution: Women's education and other activities in other spheres help more stabilize the family institution, educate prospective generation[s], get better facilities on marriage, prevent from the rising of candid despotism, and motivate their children to marry high-profile girls and/or boys.

Participation: Women's education and other activities in other spheres help women experience participation in practical social institutions, increase their access to power, enjoy better social opportunities, make people pay attention to women's standing in the society, undertake macro and micro responsibilities such as management, improve the quality of management by educated, talented, and interested women's management.

As for the link made in the Hadith (traditions) between women's intellectual deficiency and their testimony in law, one might point out that the connection occurs only in one case, namely, the evidence which requires the testimony of one man and two women. This testimony is mentioned in the Quran in Chapter 2, verse 282, which

deals solely with financial matters. And this is the only testimony in which the issue of gender is a dominant factor; in other testimonies the Quran stipulates the justice rather than gender.

Therefore, it is not right to use this verse in order to accuse women of being intellectually deficient. For it is no more than a guiding verse aiming at promoting justice when dealing with complicated financial issues. In other words, the verse is meant to give advice that if, under certain circumstances, men are not available to testify, the alternative is to accept the testimony of two women (who could be ordinary members of the public, having little or no experience with financial matters, or who could be undergoing temporary disturbances resulting from menstruation or postnatal conditions) as being equal to that of man; the aim here being is to ensure that precautionary measures are in place when dealing with an area where women are less likely to be experts.

The deficiency referred to in the Hadtih, therefore, is not natural but rather contingent or casual and does not necessarily contradict the fact that there are women who possess high qualities and enjoy special capacities is announced by the Central Bank each year according to the prices and the inflation resulting from economic fluctuations. As a result of this amendment, women's legal rights in respect of the marriage portion have increased one-hundred fold.

Furthermore, by investigating the cons' viewpoints on girl students' presence and participation in different squares of the society, eight reasons can be concluded:

Security: the opposing group believes that girl students' participation in social and political squares causes a gap between/among different groups of the society, brings on dissatisfaction among people because of their educated girls' unemployment, Social: the opposing group believes that girl students' participation in social and political squares causes/develops social crises, impairs the social balance, and brings about nation crisis. Social abnormalities: The opposing group believes that girl students' participation in social and political squares causes/increases women's expectations, and helps their movement towards the formation of negative causes of feminism.

Mental problems: Mental and social problems such as depression, anxiety, addiction, and offences, society's mental health being threatened, moral deviations, and threats to families and eventually the society all result from girls' higher education and their participation in political, social, spheres. Familial problems: It is believed that women's higher education and other activities cause the divorce rate, marriage crisis, marriage age to increase, familial crises to develop, educated women marrying with uneducated men to decrease, the number of for-sure-to-remain single to increase, and the vulnerability of bachelorhood to lengthen. Economic problems: Women's higher education, and other activities in other spheres cause problems resulting from the women as workforce, the increase of unemployment, the increase of specialized women, the increase of stay-at-home men, and the waste of capital and human resources employed in women's education. Management: Women's higher education and other activities in other spheres bring about transitions in the management and administrative structure of the country.

One group maintains that girls' collegial education results in their success in achieving a better marrying with a better man from a better family. Another group holds that there is a direct relationship between women's education and divorce rate increase, on the other hand, studies convincingly indicate that women's education helps control births and form smaller families, and educated parents have fewer children than those uneducated. Moreover, girls' education causes their marriage to delay.

POSITIVE AND OPTIMISTIC CONSEQUENCES

All social planners in the world have come to this conclusion that the society which keeps half of its population away from effective employment will never develop, and if the improvement of family life is the purpose, women's employment must be encouraged because occupation of new opportunities by women does not necessarily mean that men get limited in action and employment, but they contribute to the manner of production and occupation at all levels in the society, and profoundly affect the economic, social, and cultural structure.

That women economically get independent and have a share in living costs or take better roles is not a crisis; the least reason is that if in a competition square-to some extent unequal and imposed- some are determined to compensate for their backwardness, how and with what logic can they create problems and obstacles in their way? Moreover, as women will to manifest their abilities and skills in very difficult situations, how and with what reason can one create obstacles in their way, whether they win or lose? This trial is their absolute right whose deprivation is not fair even if it is for their more vulnerability or for advisability and goodwill.

Of all the positive consequences of women's working in the family and society are the escalation of health care, better enjoyment of material and spiritual resources, increase of women's managerial power in the family, increase of women's confidence in a society, filling the leisure time and prevention of social problems, women's social security against different crises, the flourish of women's humane gifts, the development of responsibility among women for their families, and escalation of more self-confidence and constructivism in the society.

NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

It feels necessary that women get far less engaged in work which men can do because they [women] have some other responsibilities that men cannot accomplish such as bearing children, rearing them, feeding them, home-educating them, and some other responsibilities like matrimony. It feels necessary that in general women take less social and occupational responsibilities and let men undertake them.

Women's negative consequences such as their physical and mental pressure, dissatisfaction of family's emotional needs, anxiety and stress from their children's being away from them, impossibility of their doing their part such as being a good mother, and some other bad social relationships due to the lack of Islamic standards in the society.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

Cultural, social, and economic development will not be possible unless all sections of a society take part in the process. Their economic participation in line with their cultural contribution is of great importance. Economic participation is very important, but it is not the final determining factor in women's social life. The emphasis national and international organizations put on women workforce, their participation in economic spheres and emphasizing on this index of development is in fact a deviation of women's position. Position of her standing can be possible through development in education. High illiteracy of women compared to men is the essential factor in limiting their participation in economic and social development. Therefore, the promotion of education of women and the level of their contribution and participation in society is a necessity, not an economic device (Shaditalab, 2002: 26).

Preventive factors impeding women's social participation is complicated and extensive spectrum of variables which turns it [participation] into a very unsolvable and unstructured issue. On the one hand, integration of common law, traditional thought, and religious rules which all can directly result from personal ideology has restrictively ended in incongruity on women's jobs. People personally judge and issue orders on what is good and what is bad. On the other hand, women are challenging the conflicting world of their roles and duties and restrictions they face. Women of the third world countries who must abide all or some of traditions have to accept roles and responsibilities that modern world requires them which in its return results in conflict in roles and duties. Thus, Ala-Eddini (2005, p. 125) concludes that "women's dependence to family, their husbands' ideology and housework are the obstacles in the way of their effective participation in society and their promotion in various occupational and managerial positions". Such issues are discussed in the Theory of Gender Differences, according to which there is a difference between the position and status of women and men. According to Jariah (2008) the unequal look at men's and women's roles stem from gender stereotypes that are formed in the cultural and traditional structure of a society and are closely related with the process of recognition in it.

THE THEORY OF FEMINISM

All feministic movements support and advocate women's education, but their manner of dealing with the issue and their programs, defenses, and strategies are different:

Liberal feministic viewpoints have been highly effective in education, and in fact, girls' access to equal opportunities in education system is due to this group's attempts. In liberal feminists' opinion, girls must have equal rights of educations as boys do. This group of feminists maintain that 'success' is in educational improvement and promotion, better results in exams and increase in the number of girl entrees into the colleges and universities.

Feminists' Radical Analytical View on Educational System: Deil Spender says that in educational system knowledge is not neutral and respects manly assumptions about the world. For example, on the importance of objective hypotheses rather than the subjective assumptions or on enjoying the science to overcome nature instead of

getting along with it, the schooling system has placed teachers at a high position of 'an expert' who transfer knowledge to others and are far better than others. This assumption is indicative of manly ideology. Girls and boys learn that great artists, scientists, writers, and sociologists have all been 'men'. In all fields, men are pictured far better than women and rarely in this knowledge can one find any reflection on women's life experiences. The significance of diligence and competitiveness in the individual success squares which lies in the heart of educational system is a manly approach as believed by the feminists.

Marxists and Sociologists' Feministic Viewpoints: Both groups believe that sex ideology must be sought in a broader context that is the capitalist community. In this community, school is government's main means of guaranteeing the recreation of production; that is, when the next generation finishes school, in addition to acquiring skills appropriate to their standing in the work market, it equips him with suitable and disposition towards work-market. The Marxist feminists maintain that school recreates sex division and is a ground for the girls to prepare themselves for their own suited position and for accepting the allocated jobs. According to Ann Mary Valop, the role of family and school is to prepare women for low-earning jobs in the secondary work market and for housekeeping. Michael Barat suggests that women enjoy a bi-fold relationship with class structure of the society. That is to say, on the one hand, girls are being prepared for their prospective standing in the work market by being educated based on their background, and, on the other hand, they prepare themselves for the preconception they have for undertaking the household responsibilities such as rearing children, cleaning, cooking under the control of man: husband (Abot, 2002: 93-6).

CONCLUSION

Ruber Blood and Donaldolof have done studies about the distribution of decision making between wife and husband. Through probability sampling they interviewed hundreds of families in Detroit district and found that the power of the husband has a positive correlation with his level of education, as well as his income. The same is true about women also especially when the woman is employed. However, in cases that there is disagreement between wife and husband, the husband has more power. Based on the data collected Ruber Blood and Donaldolof have also found that the wife or husband who gets the higher salary has the upper hand in decision making.

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