



Women, Political-academic Movement, and Social Cause; a Prospective

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ABSTRACT

The society's attitudes towards women's occupation are positively changing. Over 68 % of statistical community of Iranian National Values and Attitudes strongly oppose the idea that women should only work at home having no right to involve in outside work., by scrutinizing the first 14 year-newspapers of post revolution in Iran, came to this conclusion that there is a pinhole of hope in attitudes towards women occupation in Iran because the optimistic disposition toward women's employment has increased from 14 % in the first round (1979-1982) to 33 % in the second round (1983-1987) to 53 % in the third round (1987-1992) The investigation of women's occupational status in governmental organizations indicates that in 1996 of all working managers in the governmental organizations only 3.14 % were female which declined to 2.98 % in 2001 (Women's Participation Center, 2003: 3); that is, 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 (Vatan Parast, 2001: 72).

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Introduction

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. (Ahmad, 1984)

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. (Eezazi, 1997, p.115)

The opinion that class inequalities is to a great extent dominating the gender stratification was not stated as a hypothesis until recently. However, this issue is openly discussed. "John GoldThrope" has defended and supported what he called the "common view" in stratum analysis. That is to say,

the paid work of women compared to that of men is of less importance and therefore women can be considered in the same stratum that their husbands are. (Goldthrope, 1983) To him, since the majority of women are economically dependant on their spouses, it can be concluded that their class status is under the dominance of the class status of their husbands (Geedenz, 1994, 240)

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:

1. Eliminating social tropisms which impede women's participation and contribution in the decision making process.
2. Eliminating the obstacles impeding women's registration in different higher education levels, and
3. Paying attention to sex aspects in curricula and escalating their confidence and academic readiness in taking responsibilities and getting jobs (Moeen, 1992. p. 37).

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:

- a. In developing countries, young girls compared to young boys face malnutrition, poor health care and poor educational facilities.
- b. In developing countries, women enjoy two thirds of men's literacy level.
- c. In developing countries, pregnant women are fifty times more in danger of death than those in developed countries.
- d. 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.
- e. Although their working hours are longer than those of men, they enjoy less vocational and educational facilities and get lower pay.
- f. Cultural, social, legal, and economic obstacles for women and young girls' development are far more than those men and young boys face.
- g. Women's participation share in regional and national decision making is far more limited than men's, thus unequal (UNESCO, 1992: 14)

Educated Women in Collegial Community

In the early years of revolution and simultaneously with the cultural revolution till the end of the war between Iran and Iraq (1980-1988), and with the development and expansion of girls' education in primary, junior high school, and high school, the higher education policies were grossly modified by increasing the number of state university candidates and establishing private colleges and universities where the ground for the promotion of girls' knowledge was prepared. Moreover, simultaneously attempts were made to segregate girls and boys' universities or at least the classes, and fields of study were tried to match with vocations suitable for women. In 1984, of 169 fields of study, 91 could not be chosen by the girls- mostly the technical and engineering ones, and according to the Act passed in 1985, girls were banned from continuing their studies overseas unless they were married (Shadi, 2002: 274).

The second round relates post-war period (1989-1998) where educated women were affected by lack of cognitive coordination resulting from the first period. A multi-cognitive contradiction developed among this group of intellectuals who had passed a grossly different sociability placed them in a very tense situation. For example, votes for the stoppage of their (women) activity in official and non-official business squares, woman-eliminating employment policies, segregation of female and male individuals at work and classes, restrictive policies in getting jobs and choosing fields of study, expectations from them to play just womanly roles only at home and prohibition of their presence in some assemblies were among the most important problematic and disappointing restrictions which caused them to protest against the fundamental value adaptabilities and ideas with the societal realities that then resulted in their marginality, position instability, loss of their social standing and relative deprivation. In this period, as in pre-revolution era, women were distributed among polar social and cultural values but in a conflicting shield trying to challenge the ideals striving to overcome all the intellectual women community (ibid: 275), and from then on a group of new intellectuals replaced the emigrated educated, retired, experienced and sedentary women intellectuals, and a new trend and approach began in women community of Iran.

In the past five years, women have been more dynamically trying to achieve higher positions. They believe they do not enjoy good standing in the universities, and they cannot practice their knowledge and are not considered seriously (Zahedi, 1994: 10). They complain that in spite of the fact that the number of girl students has increased, the facility structure is not proportionate to the increase. For example, the women faculty of universities has witnessed an increase of only 2 %- 17.4 % in 1979, 19.6 % in 1998 (Zaker Salehi, 2001: 8), and more interestingly, based on the statistics of Ministry of Science, Technology, and Research, in 2000-2001 the percentage of full-time woman faculty was only 18.5 % of the whole faculty community. Unfortunately, in some cases the statistical figures are indicative of decline in the percentage. For example, in 1979, the number of woman researches was 3410 (21.5 %) of the entire 15,888 researchers, while the same in 1997 was 11,658 women researchers of a total of 58,710 researchers of the country (19.6 %) that shows a decline (Tavakol, 1998: 19).

The investigation of women's position in development process reveals many issues. In comparing the educational standing of women, two indexes of Sex Development Index and Sex Improvement Index are used. The sex-development index is the findings of Human Development Index. In addition, it shows the sex inequalities.

It is observed that based on the report of the UN, Iran is in the middle of Sex Development Index Table while it enjoys a lower position in Sex Improvement Index.

In connection with the social development measurement in the education sector, with an emphasis on women's standing, six indexes are defined:

- a. The ratio of female university students to the total number of students
- b. The ratio of female fulltime faculty members to the total number of all university and higher education center faculty members
- c. The ratio of female university students to male university students
- d. The ratio of female students to male students admitted to governmental and non-governmental universities
- e. The ratio of female graduates to male graduates of governmental and non-governmental universities
- f. The percentage of female students in technical and engineering fields of study compared to that of all students of these fields (Karimi, 2003: 129).

When urbanization trend started to increase and literacy level began to develop in Iran in the 1960s, women were more affected by the movement, and they tried to more activate in political and social squares where the number of women increased in universities and a new movement initiated in women community. Today, women strongly challenge the cultural pictures men have drawn of them such attributes as light-minded, feeble, idle, etc. and thought inclination as the secondary and tag-along creature (Lorestani, 2002: 72). Although no one denies this movement, there is no complex agreement on it. Jalaeepor, H. R., a sociologist and journalist, holds that this modern movement of Iranian women is still a social issue and there will be a long way to learn the hard way of 'Social Cause'. Since in the past 100 years there has been great development in feminism, Iranian women's search is sociologically a 'Social issue' rather than a 'cause'. Most women, though not familiar with the feministic literature, want to take their own rights. They have experienced that by having

independent jobs they can devastate patriarchalism. Moreover, women's consuming interest in learning more and more has turned into a great social value.

Girls' getting educated accompanied by getting adapted to new opportunities and enjoying family size adjustment services and tending to have fewer and fewer children, can bring about a lot of prosperous advantages to the society:

- a. Economic productivity increase
- b. 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).
- c. 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).
- d. Older-age marriage (educated girls are less willing to marry at young age since they consider their economic opportunities).
- e. Less pregnancy (an educated woman desires fewer children and prevents pregnancy. She would like to bear children at longer intervals).
- f. More effective investment in prospective generation (educated women's children, particularly girls, are more likely to access more and higher education) (Rezaee, 2003: 31). In line with this, it is observed that families' disposition towards and impression of their children's education, especially their daughters, have highly contributed to the higher education trend (Peike Sanjesh, Mon. 5th of Ordibehesht, 2003: 4). It is also observed that highly educated parents would like their children to possess higher education than they themselves do, and even less educated parents would like their children to reach more and higher education levels and compensate their [parents] lagging (Keivanfar, 2002: 22).

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 (Sakori Rad, 2001: 3).

By investigating the advocators' 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:

- a. 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
- b. 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.
- c. Elimination of inequalities: Through women's education and their activities in other shares, sexual discrimination can be

eliminated or at least reduced, women's civil rights can be guaranteed, family power can be balanced, and justice and equality can be achieved and practiced.

d. 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.

e. 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.

f. 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.

g. 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.

h. 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.

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 [women] 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. Sarokhani, B. in "An Introduction to the Sociology of Family" says, "Homogeneous spouse educationally is always in favor of the women; that is, it creates the grounds for her promotion. In fact, the congeniality of wife and husband means the sameness in class because in such societies, the educational level and class hierarchy are closely related to each other and education is an index of cultural, global, ideological, and thought standard.

Therefore, the relationship of education means an indication of similar perspectives (Sarokhani, 1991: 62). 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 (Bina, 2002: 15).

a. 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 (Zaker Salehi, 2001: 8).

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 good-will (Imani, 2002: 24).

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 (Movahedi, 2001: 19).

b. 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 (Imani, 2002: 21).

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 (Movahedi, 2001: 19).

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. This conflict brings about double stress and confusion (Shakori Rad, 2001: 31). Sayyideh Masoumeh Maamori, in her MA dissertation in Sociology, Tarbiat Moddaress University, says, "Women's participation which has gone under little cultural factors ruling over different sections of the country is not equal: Provinces which have economically developed enjoy little of women's participation. Since, according to traditional culture and school of thought, women have to attend to only housework, it has caused them just to stay home and not to do or get any job outside (Maamori, 1997: 396).

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. (Michele, 1975, p. 178).

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