

**ATILIM UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS MASTER'S PROGRAMME**

**IRANIAN WOMEN RIGHTS AFTER THE REVOLUTION
1989-2013**

Master Thesis

Masoumeh Banaeinia

Ankara, 2017

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ACCEPTION AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis titled "Iranian Women Rights after the Revolution: 1989-2013" prepared by Masoumeh Banaeina meets with the committee's approval unanimous/ by a majority vote as Master's Thesis in the field of International Relations following the successful defense of the thesis conducted in July 10, 2017.



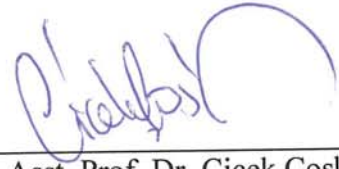
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ÖZ

BANAEINIA, Masoumeh. İran Devrimi Sonrası Kadın Hakları 1989_2013, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2017

İranlı kadınlar, İran devriminden sonra sosyo-politik haklar konusunda daima gündemin ilk konusu olmuştur. 1979 sonrasındaki kısıtlamalar dolayısıyla, Pavlavi rejimi ile mukayese edildiğinde, devrimin kurbanı oldukları zannedilmektedir. Bu tez, kadın meseleleri konusundaki politikalarına dayalı olarak 1989-2013 arasında politikalarının kadınları nasıl değiştirdiği ile ilgili üç devlet başkanı Rafsanjani, Khatami, ve Ahmadinejad üzerinde odaklanmaktadır.

Bu araştırmanın amacı, kadın hakları çalışmaları literatürüne katkı sağlamak olup, bu tezin savı İran'daki devrim sonrası süreçte, her bir başkanın yerel ve dış politikalarından etkilenen ve dini kuruluşlardan etkilenen kişisel vizyon ve ilişkiler konusunda kadın hakları üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır.

Bu araştırmadan elde edilen bulgular, sadece dış politika değil, ancak aynı zamanda da dış politikalar konusundaki siyasi ve diplomatik ilişkilerin de kadın meselelerini aynı derecede etkileyeceğini göstermektedir. Bundan başka, Pavlavi rejimi süresince bunlar, çağdaşlık sembolü olarak kullanıldılar ve devrim sonrası süreçte de İslam'ın sembolü oldular. İran politikalarının bir parçasıydılar. Asla İran vatandaşları olmadılar, sadece İran'ın sembolü oldular.

Anahtar Sözcükler

İranda Kadın Hakları, İslam Devrimi, İran Dış Politikası, İran Başkanlık politikaları, İran Kadın Aktivistler.

ABSTRACT

BANAEINIA, Masoumeh. Iranian Women Rights After the Revolution: 1989-2013 Master Thesis, Ankara, 2017

Iranian women have been always the first topic of the socio-political rights after Iranian revolution. Due to the restrictions after 1979, comparing with Pahlavi regime, they are supposed to be the victims of the revolution. This thesis will focus on the three presidencies of Rafsanjani, Khatami, and Ahmadinejad based on their policies on women issues and women socio-political participations, that how their policies changed the women affairs during 1989-2013.

The aim of this research is to contribute on women rights studies literature and the argument of this thesis focuses on the women rights during post-revolutionary period in Iran that have been affected with each president domestic, foreign policies, and their personal vision and relations with the religious establishment.

The findings from this thesis research will show that political and diplomatic relations not only affected foreign policy, but also regarding the impacts on foreign policies will influence in women affairs as well. Furthermore, during Pahlavi regime they were used as the symbol of modernity, and during post-revolutionary period they were the symbols of Islam. They are a part of Iranian politics. They have never been the Iranian citizens, they are only the Iranian symbols.

Keywords

Iranian Women Rights, Islamic Revolution, Iranian Presidential policies, Iranian foreign policies, Iranian women activities.

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ABBREVIATIONS

FLP : Family Law Protection

IAU : Islamic Azad University

ISNA : Iranian Student News Agency

N.O.C.I.R : National Olympic Committee of the Islamic Republic



INTRODUCTION

Women rights in Iran has been a topic which attracts attention of scholars and politicians during the last three decades , especially after 1979 revolution , which garnered worldwide attention to Iran and Iranian women. According to the article 638 of the penal code (The Islamic Punishment Rule) “women who appear in public places and roads without wearing Islamic *hijab*, shall be sentenced from ten days to two months imprisonment or a fine of fifty thousand to five hundred Rials.”¹ Waves of media started to do some activities and making propaganda for veil culture. Under these conditions Islamic republic started with its policy by forcing mainly on women and their way of life.

Regarding to this Haliday also states that regarding of the involving processes that have not yet run their course, such issues as the role of the army, a balanced evaluation of the Iranian revolution is not possible yet, the women destination are all ones on which the future alone will give us the full dossier and case history on which to base a judgment.²

Pahlavi regime had a different perspective related with the women’s rights. However women were free in veil and social activities, but they couldn’t attend these events as most of these facilities were belonging to royal families. Islamic revolution had negative sights on women’s lives. They were limited to society style of dressing and social activities especially in art, education and sport. It seemed to be supporting of Islamic movement and try to stop being closer to western women.

Since 1979 revolution with the forces of Imam Khomeini regarding veil, pressures in the governmental offices were increasing. In 1984 Islamic parliament passed the penal code for not wearing hijab in public places. Some disagreed with the necessity of veil debate, because they considered it as a personal matter not collective.

¹ *Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, Iranhrdc.org, date: July.18.2013, daccessed: Feb.7.2017

² Fred Halliday, “*Testimonies of Revolution.*” *MERIP Reports* 87, (May, 1980): 27-29

Among their arguments that hijab was not mandatory in the early Islam but it had been a subject to the whims and wishes of the people themselves.

Above mentioned condition regarding hijab were not acceptable by Iranian women who were in the position of losing freedom from way of dressing to have social activities like working in government, sport activities and So, after Ayatollah Khomeini's speeches, lots of women from north, center and west part of Tehran started to protest against the new rules. Their slogan was: "hijab has not bring innocent and purity should be inside"³ They tried a lot to get the equal rights like men. Although they haven't received any results, the rule of veiling force started to work after 9th of March 1979, exactly the day after International Women Day. Such moments of protests and women activities led to the spread the unfair vision for other countries about Iranian women. Freedom is one of the important basic parts of human rights and with this law the freedom in selecting clothes is taken from women and is completely human rights violation.

This thesis is about Iranian women rights after the Islamic revolution during three presidencies namely Rafsanjani, Khatami and Ahmadinejad. The research question is: How did the changes in presidencies affected the statue of the women in the year between 1989-2013? The reason that why the period between 1979-1989 will not be analyzed is that: After revolution, Iran experienced the eight year war with Iraq and this issue affected not only women, but also all issues in society. Standing powerful in front of enemy was more important than women issue those years, so the main policy concern was winning the war, therefore everyone with no gender limitation tried to have an affective role not only in society but even also in frontline, however after Rafsanjani in 1989 society turned back to the normal life style and the reconstruction of society was the step of being roles in their own positions.

The aim of this thesis is to contribute on women rights studies literature. This study will be dealing with the following issues: politics, veil, education, and social

³ *Chegoneh dar Avayehe Enghelab Hijab Ejbari Shod*, dw.com/fa-ir/date: 4.1.2014, accessed: 2.12.2017[Persian]

activities such as occupation, sport and art during the three presidency of Rafsanjani, Khatami and Ahmadinejad. The aim behind selecting women's rights is the fact of being neglected for a long time, especially in Iran. I am interested in this topic because of my own experience living in those years in Iran as a women.

By all these knowledge and interests, this thesis will focus on some Iranian women writers' books which all are published out of Iran by stressing of the Islamic revolution on their lives. These books are: *Perspolis* by Marjane Satrapi⁴, *Journey from the Land of No* by Roya Hakakian⁵, *Even After All This Time: A Story of Love, Revolution and Leaving Iran* by Afschineh Latifi⁶, *An Enduring Love: My Life with the shah* by Farah Pahlavi⁷, and *Reading Lolita in Tehran* by Azar Nafisi⁸. These are Revolution Memories with focusing on women lives, however this thesis is not a historical study.

More than these references, *Inside Iran; Women's Lives* by Jane Howard⁹, *Revolution and Women's Autobiography in Nineteenth-Centry* by Kathleen Hart¹⁰, *Iranian Revolution in Comparative Perspective* by Nikkier Keddi¹¹, *Hoghoghe Siasi-Ejtemai Zanan Ghabl va Baede az Pirouzi Enghelab Eslami* by Hasan Toghyangar¹², *Negahi be Shah* by Abbas Milani¹³, *Testimonies of Revolution* by Fred Halliday¹⁴, *Iranian Women Statues and Struggles* by Nikkie R. Keddie¹⁵, *Hazards of Modernity and Morality: Women, State and Ideology in Contemporary Iran in Women Islam and*

⁴ Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*. vol.1-2 (Paris: Pantheon Books, 2003).

⁵ Roya Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004).

⁶ Afschineh Latifi, *Even After All This Time: A Story of Love, Revolution, and Leaving Iran* (New York: Reagan Books, 2005).

⁷ Farah Pahlavi, *An Enduring Love: My Life with the Shah A Memoir*. trans. Patricia Clancy (New York: Miramax Books, 2004).

⁸ Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (New York: Random House, 2003).

⁹ Jane Howard, *Inside Iran; Women's Lives* (Washington, D.C: Mage Publishers 2002).

¹⁰ Kathleen Hart, *Revolution and Women's Autobiography in Nineteenth- Century France* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi B.V., 2004), 11.

¹¹ Nikkier Keddi, *Iranian Revolution in Comparative Perspective* (Texas: University of Texas 1986).

¹² Hasan Toghyangar, *Hoghoghe siasi-ejtemai zanan ghabl va baede az pirouzi enghelab eslami* (Tehran: Tebian Publisher 2005).

¹³ Abbas Milani, *Negahi be Shah* (Toronto: Persian circle 2013).

¹⁴ Fred Holliday, *Testimonies of Revolution*, (Merip Reports 87,1980).

¹⁵ Nikkie R. Keddie, *Iranian Women Statue and Struggles*, (Princeton University Press, 2007)

the state by Afsaneh Najmabadi¹⁶, *Politics in the Middle East* by James A. Bill and Carl Leiden¹⁷, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism* by Afary and Anderson¹⁸, *The Discourse on Modernization and the Problem of Cultural Integrity in Nineteenth-Century Iran, in Iran and Beyond* by Monica Ringer¹⁹, *The Politics of the 'Women's Question' in the Islamic Republic, 1979-1999 in Iran at the Crossroads* by Haleh Esfandiari²⁰, *On the Reconfiguration of the Public Sphere and the Changing Political* by Farideh Farhi²¹, *Women and Politics in Post-Islamist Iran: the Gender Conscious Drive to Change* by Azadeh Kian²², *Women in the Islamic republic of Iran: Legal, Social, and Ideological Changes* by Patricia J. Higgins²³, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* by A Bayat²⁴, *Participation of Women in Iran's Polity* by Heshmat Sadat Moinifar²⁵, *Feminisation of Iranian Higher Education* by Shavarini²⁶, *Third World Quarterly* by Homa Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr²⁷, *Discourse Needed on Islam Interpretation of Rights* by Leila al-Marayati²⁸, *Gender of Democracy: the Encounter between Feminism and Reformism in Contemporary Iran*, by P Paidar²⁹, *Women's Letter: Iranian Women's*

¹⁶ Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Hazards of Modernity and Morality: Women, State and Ideology in Contemporary Iran*, in *Women Islam and the State*. (Hong Kong: Macmillan, 1991).

¹⁷ James A. Bill and Carl Leiden, *Politics in the Middle East*. Second Edition (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown Company, 1998).

¹⁸ Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*, (Chicago University, 2005).

¹⁹ Monica Ringer, *"the Discourse on Modernization and the Problem of Cultural Integrity in Nineteenth-Century Iran, in Iran and Beyond."* (California: Mazda Publisher, 2000).

²⁰ Haleh Esfandiari, *"the Politics of the 'Women's Question' in the Islamic Republic, 1979- 1999 in Iran at the Crossroads."* ed Esposito, John L. and R.K. Ramazani (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

²¹ Farideh Farhi, *"on the Reconfiguration of the Public Sphere and the Changing Political Landscape of Postrevolutionary Iran."* (Newyork: Palgrave, 2001)

²² Azadeh Kian, *"Women and politics in Post-Islamist Iran: the gender conscious drive to change."* (Taylor & Francis, Ltd. 1997)

²³ Patricia J. Higgins, *"Women in the Islamic republic of Iran: legal, social, and ideological changes."* (The University of Chicago Press, 1985)

²⁴ A Bayat, *" Making Islam democratic: social movements and the Post-Islamist Turn."* (Stanford university press, 2007)

²⁵ Heshmat Sadat Moinifar, *"Participation of women in Iran's Polity."* (essay, 2011)

²⁶ Shavarini, *"Feminisation of Iranian higher education."* Review of Education 51 no. 4 (2005)

²⁷ Homa Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr, *"Third world Quarterly."* (London, Routledge, 2012)

²⁸ Leila al-Marayati, *"Discourse needed on Islam interpretation of right."* (Los Angeles time, 1998)

²⁹ P Paidar, *"the encounter between feminism and reformism in contemporary Iran."* (GENEVA, unrisd, 2001)

Day of Solidarity by N Ahmadi-Khorasani³⁰, *The Role of Women in Iran's New Popular Revolution* by Ramesh Sepehrrad³¹, *Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Legal Status, Social Positions, and Collective Action* by Valentine M.Moghadam³², *Good Hijabi, Bad Hijabi: the Politics of Women's Clothing in Iran* by Asghar JT³³, *Hope for Democracy in Iran* by Emadeddin Baghi³⁴, *Thirty-five Years of Forced Hijab: the Widespread and Systematic Violation of Women's Rights in Iran* by Masoumeh Faraji³⁵, *The Politics of Gender Segregation* by Rezai-Rashti³⁶, *Women in Higher Education in Iran: How the Islamic Revolution Contributed to an Increase in Female Enrollment* by Meredith Katherine Winn³⁷, *Moments of Strength: Iranian Women's Rights and the 1979 Revolution* by Caroline M.Brooks³⁸, *Missions for my Country* by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi³⁹, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East* by Beverley Milton-Edwards⁴⁰ and, *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives* by Barbre and Farrel et al⁴¹ are the useful references for this thesis research. Moreover, references are limited in English and Persian literature.

The descriptive research is one of the methodology which was used in order to understand the main idea of women in Iranian society. During the research of the thesis mainly secondary sources has been used such as old Iranian newspapers, old

³⁰ N Ahmadi-Khorasani, "Women's letter: Iranian women's day of solidarity." (Tehran, Iranian women's cultural center, 2006)

³¹ Ramesh Sepehrrad, "the role of women in Iran's new popular revolution." (The Brown Journal of World Affairs, 2003)

³² Valentine M.Moghadam, "Women in the Islamic republic of Iran: Legal status, social positions, and collective action." (2004)

³³ Asghar JT, "Good hijabi, bad hijabi: the politics of women's clothing in Iran" (Georgetown-Qatar university, 2015)

³⁴ Emadeddin Baghi, "Hope for democracy in Iran." (The Washington Post, 2004)

³⁵ Masoumeh Faraji, "Thirty-five years of forced hijab: the widespread and systematic violation of women's rights in Iran." (Justice for Iran 2014)

³⁶ Rezai-Rashti, "the politics of gender segregation." (Published online, 2015)

³⁷ Meredith Katherine Winn, "Women in higher education in Iran: how the Islamic revolution contributed to an increase in female enrollment." (Pepperdine University, 2016)

³⁸ Caroline M.Brooks, "Moments of strength: Iranian women's rights and the 1979 revolution, (Colby college." (2008)

³⁹ Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, "Missions for my country." (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961)

⁴⁰ Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2011

⁴¹ Barbre and Farrel et al, "Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives" (Indiana University Press, 1989)

magazines, Persian books, interviews with Iranian women who experienced two regimes, their activities and also my own experience are reflected. By the fact that Iranian women with the low level class are not mentioned in these published books as memory writers or as a person of sharing experiences, so this study will cover from all segments of the society.

After the revolution Iranian women were depressed due to their life which were totally changed. During Rafsanjani period he tried to get the women rights with the Islamic state framework as a pragmatic politician to make a normal society, however Khatami was a modernist politician and he was deeply believing to get the western values and this is the sence that Khatami is diffrent from Rafsanjani as the reformist politicians which caused some problems with the religous institutions, cleries and *Ulemas* in his government. Furthermore, during Ahmadinejad as a conservative politician, women had more restrictions especially on veiling issue and social activities. Although he had a show off of introducing female ministers to the parliament to have high governmental posts, but it had no reflection in the social life of women.

As the critics argue, the private narratives' facts are the principles revealed from real situations in the world, among lived experiences in the social relationships, base on the passionate trust.⁴²

Likewise, Hasan Toghyangar's in his book, *Iranian women socio-political rights before and after revolution* noted that, during post-revolutionary in Iran, women rights affairs are based on their values, moreover the laws regarding women issues are stated by Islamic values. Due to improving society women should be improved in socio-political participations and have to make an effective rule in social life.⁴³

In order to analyze the discussed issues clearly, in the second chapter, Historical Background, by a background information from Pahlavi regime and their policies on

⁴² Barbre and Farrel et al, "*Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives*" p:263.

⁴³ Hasan Toghyangar, *Hoghoghe siasi-ejtemai zanan ghabl va baede az pirouzi enghelab eslami* (Tehran: Tebian Publisher 2005)P:12-13

women issues that how they influenced women life society and a brief analysis of women's role in the revolution will make a framework of women position before 1979 during Pahlavi era. The following third chapter, Rafsanjani Presidency, will start with the analysis of studying of policies on Iranian women during 1989-1997 in Rafsanjani presidency that how the reconstruction years after Iran-Iraq war influenced the women life style and the Iranian women activities will be analyzed in these years as well. Rafsanjani era was the turning point of post revolution, that even by changing policy regarding women rights still had certain limitations. He tried to improve women education by establishing the Islamic Azad Universities all around Iran.

Fourth chapter, Khatami presidency, will focus on the presidential policies of Khatami from 1997 to 2005 on women issues, that how the civilization speeches affected women lives and their activities. During Khatami presidency, the policy on women issues were more and more flexible and the women activities were more in an open area but it was the most problematic time among the presidencies in Iran after the revolution.

Fifth chapter is on Ahmadinejad presidency from 2005-2013 which the policies was too close to the early years of revolution by focusing on women veil pressures and life style and the women activities in society with these limitations will be discussed, however, these eight years were the turning point of women appearances in society.

The sixth chapter, Conclusion, will argue that, western societies perceive Iranian women as a symbol reflecting the domestic problems of Iran after the revolution, however there were also the symbol of modernism during Pahlavi regime as well. This chapter will also focus on the Iranian women rights during the three different presidencies.

FIRST CHAPTER

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The social status of women in Iran during different periods of history and culture has been changed. For example the Arab's invasion of Iran caused to accept the Islamic Arabic values among Iranians. These changes directly affected the statues of women. During the political upheavals of the constitutional revolution during 1905-1911 in Qajar dynasty, outer activities of women were more. They established private clubs and secret organizations. Also they participated in protests and armed struggles for constitutional and non-violent actions.

The aim of this chapter is to make a framework of the women rights before revolution, political and sociological background of Iranian women with the main focus of pre and post-revolutionary from 1926 to 1979 will be analyzed. It will start with a description of Reza Shah Pahlavi's efforts of the modernization, then, it will be discussed the same efforts during the Mohammad Reza Pahlavi period by focusing on women rights issue. The next discussion point in this chapter will be the revolution and the effect of that in the socio-political arena in women lives.

Since it is written in *Photius* website, Reza Shah after meeting with Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in turkey started to elevate the statues of women in order to modernize them to be able to compete with western women. He commanded to establish the educational institutes especially Tehran University to take action for registering girls, and in 1936, Reza Shah enacted the veil ban rule and changing the style of wearing especially for women, attracted the west culture more with their modernized society.⁴⁴ The biggest change was controlling the law by the state which was replacing from the clerics and *Ulema*. However, Keddie states, this reforms and actions of Reza shah could not stop *Ulema*'s influence continuing on the gender issues. This can also be an

⁴⁴ *Iran the Beginnings of Modernization the Post-1925*, Photis.com, date: 11.10.2004, accessed: 2.2.2017

example of Iran's putting less restriction on financial and other powers of *Ulema* than any other Middle Eastern countries.⁴⁵

Another event in the history of Iran during Reza Shah period was tearing off all women's chadors and it had negative reactions while he was abdicated from the throne in 1941.

Reza Shah period is criticized by even his cabinet members due to forced changes in general. For example, Najmabadi states, in late 1930s, although women were not forced for entering the labor forces, and they were free for choosing job opportunities, but it was urged to enter universities, and become teachers, professors, as an advancement in the newly forming state bureaucracy. The new state structure was built on the form of modernization norms eliminating what is labelled as backwardness.⁴⁶

Mohammad Reza Shah succeeded to the throne at the age of twenty-two in 1941. During the years 1951- 53, Mohammad Mossadeg, the Prime Minister those years was leading a nationalist and social democratic coalition. His campaign of Nationalization the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was against the two British and United States companies. As Bill and Leiden also stated it is almost impossible to neglect and ignore this fact that the Iranian domestic and foreign policy was under the effect of International forces constantly.⁴⁷ During this period, the discussions on gender issues was not as important as the nationalization of oil and even it was the main concern of those years in the country.

Afary and Anderson have the same opinion with the feminist historians Parvin Paidar and Maryam Matin- Daftati regarding Mosaddeg coalition and women rights in the breakdown and segregation of Mosaddeg's coalition, the newly emerging

⁴⁵ Nikkie R. Keddie, *Iranian Women's Status and Struggles since 1979*, *Journal of International Affairs* 60, no.2 (Spring- Summer 2007), p: 20.

⁴⁶ Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Hazards of Modernity and Morality: Women, State and Ideology in Contemporary Iran," in *Women Islam and the State*. ed. Deniz Kandiyoti (Hong Kong: Machmillan, 1991), 54-55.

⁴⁷ James A. Bill and Carl Leiden, *Politics in the Middle East*. Second Edition (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown Company, 1998), 282.

movement for women's right was another important statute that was not taken into consideration.⁴⁸

Since 1953, the process of modernization showed a different scene. This was influenced by SAVAK, the secret political police, and by women who achieved their own rights. The forces of SAVAK and its strong policy of punishment made the society anger against regime. With all those mentioned memories, women achieved to be in more visible positions. In media women were shown by fashionable clothes including short skirts. In Middle Eastern countries the idealized Islam turned back to the western countries culture however their society always put strict laws on women.

Monica Ringer, in *The Discourse on Modernization and the Problem of Cultural Integrity in Nineteenth-Century Iran*, asserted, Moreover, since we take a look at the pre-modern Middle Eastern women generally, it is too easy to comment that the interpretations of laws, rules and custom always put strict restrictions on women. However, there were several cases as women even became the facto rulers in Iran, Ottoman Empire, South Asia and Mamluk Egypt.⁴⁹

During 1953-1963 there was not any obvious reformist action from Pahlavi for the women rights, however in 1963, Shah enacted some reforms seriously, named White Revolution. It was included a new election law which most women voted. Shah was convinced with the importance of gender issue in terms of economy by showing a modern image of women in the labor force. Later the Independent Women's Organizations united under the name of Iranian Women's Organization, which was under the control of Ashraf Pahlavi. It seemed to be an important change about equal rights of the sexes. Female initiated divorce became possible and even since 1975, it was also possible for women to have a limited right for child custody. However, these

⁴⁸ Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*, 73.

⁴⁹ Monica Ringer, "The Discourse on Modernization and the Problem of Cultural Integrity in Nineteenth-Century Iran," in *Iran and Beyond*. ed. Rudi Matthee and Beth Baron (California: Mazda Publishers Inc., 2000), p:57.

laws were originally western oriented and opposed by the religious traditionalists and all Shah's attitude was criticized by scholars and *Ulemas*.

In an article written by an Iranian leftist journalist it is interpreted as Regarding his father's actions, M. Reza Shah attempted to force Women into emancipation and feeling free by imposing other changes from above. However the new rules while progressive on paper, were for the most part not transmuted into reality. Although some of the archaic laws were altered, but others were not. Most of the women were not affected by these new laws.⁵⁰

Supporting the dressing issue and the divorce right was an improvement of women rights during Shah regime. Another important point which is mentioned by Najmabadi is, after 1960s, the atmosphere of 1950s for women society started to change. Women of various styles in society including the mid and upper classes that were only participated in charitable works previously, had started working in high level job opportunities and even in governmental posts.⁵¹

Moreover, only rights in marriage, Children custody and divorce improved. And the revision of this law was in 1967, for minimum marriage age which rose to fifteen in 1967, and then to eighteen in 1975 for women.

In Mohammad Reza shah period, the first female lawyers in the national assembly were voted in 1963. During this period two women: Farrokhroo Parsa and Mahnaz Afkhami also served as the ministers. Many women were also active in political parties as the most characteristic, one can be noted: Ashraf Dehghani . Although women in this period were not allowed to wear hijab, but they were free to attend all activities like arts including cinema, which lots of actresses played in different films, and attending all sports activities.

⁵⁰ Hammed Shahidian, "The Iranian Left and the 'Women Question' in the Revolution of 1978-79," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no.2 (May 1994), p: 10.

⁵¹ Najmabadi, "Hazards of Modernity and Morality: Women, State and Ideology in Contemporary Iran," p:62.

Mahnaz Afkami, the minister of the Iranian Women's Organization at that time was criticized from many people. As Haleh Esfandiari noted, in the political arena women has received the right to attend voting. Within the monarchy these new changes not only affected the women rights in big cities but also it spread all over the country for women education and organizations.⁵²

The women rights in Iran during 1970s was limited to veiling. They were free in choosing clothes styles but in case of social activities as a decision maker in the society, they had no extra rights or power. Focusing on veil issue led the society to ignore other women rights, so they had enough motivation to join the Imam Khomeini movement.

Traditionally in Iran, women participation in politics were too limited, but after Qajar dynasty their activities increased. With the implementation of anti-religious policies for veil in Reza Shah Pahlavi period and trying to impose western life style to women during Mohammad Reza Shah, women's Islamic community played a positive role in the movement of Imam Khomeini. As *Tahiyat* website has reported that Iranian women presences in the victory of Islamic revolution had several forms. Someone were gathering news, someone gave shelters to activists or injured people, and lots of them were protesting in the streets, even some of them were fighting with guns, as Imam Khomeini said: we owe this movement to women.⁵³

Since the revolution of Islamic republic of Iran women were forced to wear hijab, and most of the female in governmental offices were unemployed due to no balance on dressing rule. Girls and boys schools were separated and there was a job limitation for women. As Keddie stated that: 1979 revolution consequences shows a huge paradox with the obligation of the revolution. The revolution had guaranteed to improve the poor and deprived rural and the urban areas. Although, Imam Khomeini showed that he did not have any views egalitarian with his follower clerics later in

⁵² Haleh Esfandiari, "The Politics of the 'Women's Question' in the Islamic Republic, 1979- 1999'," in *Iran at the Crossroads*. ed Esposito, John L. and R.K. Ramazani (New York:Palgrave, 2001), p:79.

⁵³ *Nagheshe Zanan dar Piroozi Enghelabe Islami va Nehzate Imam Khomeini*, tahiyate.ir. date: April 20, 2014, accessed: Feb 5, 2017. [Persian]

women affairs. Thus, they have quickly changed most of the rules regarding freedom and rights for women just as FLP, to support the Islamic laws.⁵⁴

The revolution was formed by the belief that no need to make a law because Khomeini's word is above the laws. Therefore, with the supervision of sharia laws, the government could enter the privacy of people's lives especially women. Farhi argues that the most affected gender in the Revolution were women, deputation of the domesticated women came to symbolize the search for validity and cultural reinforcement, female manners, appearances, and activities types, as well as public speech about women, came to be defined and arranged by the political and cultural goals of several political movements, the state, and the leadership.⁵⁵

In a similar way Esfandiari states that the clerics specified a traditional role for women under the new rules. They conceived women as housewives and mothers primarily, entrusted for raising children and dividing the needs and heeding the wise leading for husbands, fathers and brothers.⁵⁶ Under the Islamic Republic, the government forced women into the positions that they expected from them, in public and even private situations. The government intervention was in all issues of women's lives, like education areas, the dressing and the manner interact with men. By these forcing on women, men became the decision maker in private and social life for women.

Esfandiari also noted that, Contrary to these restrictions in society, men and women continued to oppose the authorities by going out to the public places together. The number of the women writers, translators, painters, film directors,... has duplicated during the last two decades. They tried to express their feelings and thoughts in the Islamic republic and they have gained international recognition.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Keddie, "Iranian Women's Status and Struggles since 1979," (Journal of International Affairs Editorial Board, 1981), p: 23.

⁵⁵ Farideh Farhi, "On the Reconfiguration of the Public Sphere and the Changing Political Landscape of Postrevolutionary Iran," in *Iran at the Crossroads*. ed Esposito, John L. and R.K. Ramazani." (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p:65-66.

⁵⁶ Esfandiari, "The Politics of the 'Women's Question' in the Islamic Republic." 1979-1999, (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2001) 75.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p: 84-85.

To sum up, this chapter provides a brief summary of women situation within the pre and post -revolutionary in Iran. It is clear that the main roles in governments was always harsh for women in Iran. Forced to be fashionable in Reza shah period and being modernized in Mohammad Reza regime, and then forcing to wear hijab after revolution were all under the control of the governors. These issues affected the educational area, sport and art activities for women. Modernization policies of Reza shah and on the other hand transforming to another regime with an enforcement to respect sharia values by controlling all activities were all disappointing due to creating difficulties for Iranian women.

Throughout both regimes, women were always at the center of discussions to be promoted or demoted. Their roles have been changed during different regime's policies. Therefore, women were always forced to be a political subject in Iran. The difficulties of being an actress, a writer, a sportswoman, and ... within the circumstances changes, made it harder for them to show their own appearances in society, and they had to manage to get their own rights in public despite the policies against them.

In the coming chapters the policies on women and their activities will come in detail within years 1989-2013. The coming chapter will provide the policies on Iranian women in Rafsanjani presidency, 1989-1997.



CHAPTER TWO

IRANIAN WOMEN DURING RAFSANJANI PRESIDENCY (1989-1997)

Constructional era refers to the presidency of Akbar Rafsanjani. The main concern of this government was the reconstruction of the country after the eight year war that had left many ruins and needed to be renovated as soon as possible. Society was in the stipulation of high risk and it was the first time after revolution that men and women had to play roles within the same complex together. Building up a new society was too hard from political issues to economic ones. Adopting in these conditions and being next to men step by step just point out the power of Iranian women.

Their president had both the intellectual and the emotional basis for the formation of his thoughts about social justice. In his first speech after being executive of the country, he mentioned himself as Amirkabir⁵⁸ of the time, a very effective peace maker and builder one. During this time, some members of the government started negotiating against him, and criticized him. Although some authorities refused to help him in his policy of renewing government, society, women affairs, sports, and economy of the country, he followed his own policy and one of the fundamental issues in his policy was the women issue. He recovered the statue of women. His main policy was to get rid of international isolation. He started to communicate with other societies even the western ones and these actions affected women affairs as well.

The Atlantic website has reported that, the speeches of the new president of Iran indicated that the first step to the new basis of re-establishing relations with USA after eight years war with Iraq. As the president, he tried to ease communications and society controls, by opening up the economic issue to the private sector, and improving relations with the outside of Iran, particularly the United States. He also launched a shake-out program of reconstructioning to deal with the physical injured inflicted by the war with Iraq.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, *“Amir Kabir or the Champion of Struggle against Colonization”* (Tehran: Farahani Press, 1967)

⁵⁹ *The Long Career Of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani*, theatlantic.com, date: JAN 8, 2017, accessed: Feb 30, 2017

One of the goals of the Islamic revolution was to maintain development in all regions of the country that according to the priorities of the government in the first ten years of the Islamic revolution which mostly combat to stress on war and pressure, the country's economy was in difficult conditions. Now such an agreement is forming after the war that public opinion expects from it, to stabilize the situation in the country. Naturally, economic instructions and rebuilding of infrastructures were for places which were destroyed during the war, however after 1989, president Rafsanjani particularly looked at the reconstruction of cultural and social issues of women and family affairs.

As Kian states, Since ending the war, the High Council of Cultural Revolution', chaired by president Rafsanjani founded the 'Socio-Cultural Council of Women' to promote women's in economic and social statues. Kian argues that 'the implementation of 'Reconstruction Policies' provided an opportunity for a new generation of gender-conscious Islamist women to seek allies among secular women, to present a modern reading of Islam, and make radical demands for change in women's status by using politics as a potent agent.⁶⁰

2.1. Politics

Women in the victory of Islamic republic of Iran in 1979 played an important part. As Higgins argue that, many witnesses and observers have hinted that the increasing sense of power and self-confidence, they expanded political consciousness, and in the aftermath of these political activities many women received respect.⁶¹ They have shown the brave personality to face enemies and overcome whole pressures and dissonant felling regarding war as far as the Islamic leader of Iran named them the lion-hearted women in the world. Their participation alongside with men will last for the history of Islamic republic of Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the revolution, referred women participation such acute and he assigned and praised them

⁶⁰ Azadeh Kian, *Women and Politics in Post-Islamist Iran: the Gender Conscious drive to change*, 1997, p.75 in *Participation of Women in Iran's Polity*, Heshmat Sadat Moinifar, Gemc journal, 2011, p:30

⁶¹ Patricia J. Higgins, *Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Legal, Social, and Ideological changes*, the University of Chicago Press 1985, p.486

in many negotiations of state men and also he has endorsed women rights in politics as a religious duty: “the lion-hearted ones whose great efforts saved Islam from captivity of the foreigners, who alongside men secured the victory of Islam and from now they have the right to intervene in politics. It is their duty... Islam is a political religion. In Islam, everything, even praying, is political”.⁶²

These attitudes of the Islamic Revolution leader paved the way of state men such as presidents to authorize women for political activities. During the Iran-Iraq war, women participated by any means possible to support the country. In the first decade of revolution, political activities were full of honor and since Rafsanjani presidency, they kept continuing to win more honor. Reconstruction policies which have implemented since the end of war has provided a situation to improve the women political issue in Iran. Kian notes that, two periods have distinguished Iranian women statue regarding to the Iranian state’s policies on women: first one the Revolutionary period, which began after victory and triumph of the Revolution and ended in 1988, and the second period is the reconstruction era during Rafsanjani government.⁶³

By new Islamic rules there was no limitation for Iranian women to access higher positions in the government, however the male-dominated culture in the society took time to change, a new society which was based on Islamic rules. Actually the Iran-Iraq war was an advantage for Iranian women activities in politics which lots of young women volunteers were sent to the first line of the front in those years. Before reconstruction period, war was the central issue in the management of the country, hence the government since Rafsanjani presidency was devoid of special policy problem on women political activities. Bayat in *Making Islam Democratic* notes that, since there was some overlap on culture and democracy issues, ‘the left’ in Iran, in contrariwise to the most other political parties, tended to be more regressive on democracy and women’s rights issues. Conversely the economic liberals, particularly during Rafsanjani government, more strongly espoused the improving of women’s legal statues and accessing to the educational system. During Rafsanjani’s presidency

⁶² Rohollah Khomeini, *Sahifeh-e Nur*, 1992, pp.136-152, [Persian]

⁶³ Azadeh Kian, *Women and Politics in Post-Islamist Iran: the Gender Conscious drive to change*, 1997, p.75

women found more opportunities to fulfill within political arenas both inside and outside governmental structures, yet his government never articulated concrete programmes or policies on gender issues.⁶⁴

Women statue and gender equality has been one of the main political issues in Iran, especially after revolution. According to the Ministry of Interiors report in 2009, there was just three female deputies out of two hundred and sixty-eight in the parliament. Female parliamentarians occupied only 1.5% of the seats in the first three parliament. However their presence in the 1992 elections doubled to reach a total of nine which was 3.3% of the seats, to 13 in 1996 elections.⁶⁵ While the Iranian political process in the reconstruction era was still based on male-dominated decision-makers, women activities in political arena has increased and Iranian government has tried to promote their increased participations. Hence, increased numbers of female representatives in Iranian government's key posts, was evident.

2.2. Veiling

It is written in Tebyan religious website about Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective regarding veil that it was too strict and direct in order to keep the Islamic values by hijab. Islamic revolution leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei with the emphasis on addressing the economic statues for cabinet members had affirmed: "opening nods in the life of a nation that has undergone eight years of war and has endured problems and international pressure, doesn't mean to avoid the spiritual meaning and ideals".⁶⁶

These ideas of the high religious leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, to live closer to spiritual affairs totally shows the complete domination of religious thinking and expecting people to be in this strict line. The hardest part of the hypersensitive terms was for women. All women have been forced since the revolution for observing veil in public places, otherwise they were arrested or prosecuted. Considering these laws it

⁶⁴ A Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007

⁶⁵ Ministry of Interior, *Gozaresh-e Entekhabat Majlis-e Shoraye Eslami (Majlis Election Report)*, 2009.

⁶⁶ *Falsafeye Hijab az Didgah-e Imam Khomeini*, tebyan-ardebil.ir, date: dec 26, 2016, accessed: 5/12/2016

was supposed that, the community health was based on women veiling and in all conditions if there was a problematic contact between men and women, even unexpected, the only existing temptation in their ideas, was veil. They expected women to completely cover themselves with scarves, long dresses with the slogan to keep the society far away from sin and crime, and if they confront a crime, the first guilty person in the country were women. Even the oppositions had to be in the way of hijab. Religious thoughts didn't want Iranian women to become westernized due to their expectation that they will lose women control by creating chaos.

Since 1985, following the severe repression of women's opposition to Islamic hijab laws, the expression of 'improper hijab' entered the official state vocabulary. As it is reflected in *Jomhuri Newspaper*, Tehran public prosecutor of ordered disciplinary forces to dissuade all 'inappropriate hijab' citizens.⁶⁷ These stipulations of the government affected women, men and even whole society. Men put more screws on women, for example they considered a right for themselves the lack of attention for women who hadn't have a complete hijab or even their attention was not polite. It's not a judge about all people in Iran those days, but as a result of being up to average, if women were working in governmental offices, they experienced discrimination in their workplaces. In the mid of 1980s and throughout the Iran-Iraq war ceasefire, presidency of Rafsanjani was continuing on keeping the values of hijab. In reality, during 1989-1997 was accompanied with more freedom and less imposition on women in public places and enforcing hijab was allocated to governmental offices intelligence services.

It will be argued that the women veiling in the early revolution and during presidency of Rafsanjani was clearly different. Around 1979 and during the years of war, women veiling was too rigid, dark colors and completely closed scarves with long dresses or chadors were used, but after 1989, during Rafsanjani presidency, women way of dressing was a little more flexible, although the governmental authorities tried to set them back by arresting or noticing in the street. They accused Rafsanjani that, due to his tendency to have relationship with US, the west culture had started to be imported to the country. Rafsanjani's government also eased social controls: women

⁶⁷ *Jomhuri Eslami Newspaper*, dated: May 26, 1985

were freer to choose their style of Islamic head covering and to wear a little makeup in public, young men and women could have group gathering freely in public, and the revolution-era ban on music was eased.

Granting all these, he was not an unveiling supporter. He had no difficulty with colors and veiling style, and even in one of his speeches among young reporters, one of them asked Rafsanjani about way of dressing, he replied that: “his problem is unveiling, if you are veiled enough, its shape and its color can be shaped by women desires”.⁶⁸ His way of supporting women dressing reflects his respect to women and making women to feel self-respected to have energy and motivation to make a positive role in the society.

All girls above the age of 7 should be observed with full hijab by the Islamic Republic laws force after revolution. All seven years old school girls cover their head and body with Islamic clothes. In early years after the revolution, it was not acceptable for the women in Iran. It was hard for them to accept it easily in their work places, streets, etc. This argument will be supported by some interviews in this part with those women who have different experiences about hijab during the presidency of Rafsanjani. The first presence of women in the society after Iran-Iraq war had lots of problems for women particularly for the female governmental employees.

In order to get the main point of enforcement of hijab laws over women in Iran, three interviews will be examined in this chapter. The interviews are done from different types of society levels, a nurse, a university professor and a housewife, to reflect different ideas from different segments of the society. The gender-based discrimination was obvious in offices, universities and public places, which still have received less attention among human rights activists. The violation of the civil rights of women were in the hands of authorities with the name of supporting Islam.

⁶⁸ *Kodam Hashemi Rafsanjani*, [youtube.com/watch?v=UiwoAsR2Pps](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiwoAsR2Pps), date: May 29, 2011, accessed: March 12, 2017

2.2.1. Interview1

The first time I was forced to work with my veil, I was unable to stop the tears, I had to cover my head completely with scarf that I couldn't breathe, I was hidden in hiding. I remember the first day in details. The government officials made a rule for women to be fined if they did not obey the new rules, and even after some fines they would be fired from job. I had worn dark blue coat with a white scarf, the securities did not let me go inside, while I had lots of waves of protests against him, he told me the color of your scarf is not acceptable and there won't be any excuse about it. That day was the worst time of my work life. I was disappointed with the revolution who let a young man, same age as my son, to have such an abusive conversation with me. Finally, I had to accept that situation. However after Rafsanjani presidency we felt more relax of choosing light colors for our clothes and we were satisfied of the reverse of women issues and those terrifying days was over.⁶⁹

2.2.2. Interview2

As a university professor when I was in the class, I couldn't concentrate on my teaching with hijab, I was afraid of moving if my scarf or uniform move, and I think I was not the only one and it wasted so much energy from all women professors, While the instructor was male, he would have the chance to concentrate on teaching without thinking these things. I wrote some letters to president Rafsanjani about these problems, but the only change was done on the coloring and the style of veiling.⁷⁰

Next memory is about outside of the capital which shows the situations outside Tehran, in small cities, was worse than it.

2.2.3. Interview3

I wanted to enter a court in a town outside of Tehran. I dressed normal daily style used in Tehran courts .There was a soldier in front of my arrival, he prevented

⁶⁹ *Interview with a Nurse, Iran/ Tehran, accessed:4.1.2017*

⁷⁰ *Interview with a Professor, Iran/Tehran, access:4.1.2017*

me from entering due to lack of chador in my hijab. I resisted against his behavior, and I asked him to meet his boss deputy, I told them a lot that they cannot prevent me from attending the court and their behavior is based on the law of criminalizing women, I act according to the law and I have full hijab, however in the second round of Rafsanjani presidency I had the same experience, but chador was not forced and with a uniform and scarf I could enter courts and some other governmental offices. And also the behavior was more polite.⁷¹

2.3. Education

Education is one of the most objective items in women affairs in all communities. In developed countries, most expenses of the society have spent for the educational services and it is compulsory and free of charge. Having educated and knowledgeable women is the basis of a successful community. Being modern and well fashioned in the 21st century is not enough to be ameliorated and society needs studying sciences. By being well educated with women, the society will achieve more rather than only with educated men. It seems Rafsanjani knew it well, so he established a university with lots of branches around the country. Moinifar argues that, based on the constitution, education up to PH.D. level without any segregation is free of charge in Iran for both men and women. Although the governmental universities were not able to provide enough seats for them, as a result many people have to pay lots of money for entering the open universities in Iran.⁷²

One of Rafsanjani's services in women affairs during numerous responsibilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran was establishing and supporting the Islamic Azad University (IAU) all around the country and with increasing numbers of accepting girls. His policy on that issue led to an increase in the numbers of educated women those years and the main process of having more educated women have started. By increasing the numbers of universities, it became possible for all women to attend universities who desired to continue studying. He considered that most universities

⁷¹ *Interview with a Housewife, Iran/Shiraz, access:5.1.2017*

⁷² Heshmat Sadat Moinifar, *Participation of Women in Iran's Polity*, Essay, GEMC journal, 2011, p.30.

were in big cities and there were lots of girls with ambitions and desires of higher education, but still were in prejudiced families who did not let them to leave their own cities alone even for studying. Educated families were even scaring in those years. Despite the low supporting base on that issue, Rafsanjani continued his policy and increased the number of the universities country-wide. Islamic Azad University, is the memorial of Rafsanjani, through the development of knowledge in society, especially in the women affairs.

ISNA (Iranian Students News Agency) has reported Rafsanjani's words in his demise reportage: "As I read the new world history, I realized that the developed countries which are in a high level of sciences, have progressed scientifically. It was very frustrating that universities were closed during war, but after that we could bring science to the people's houses with educating women, because they were not allowed to study in far cities".⁷³

Although Iranian women experienced all those dissonant feelings about the changes in society after the revolution as was mentioned in previous part, but since they faced the renewing processes in women affairs in the reconstruction era in Rafsanjani's presidency, they have tried to keep it. They welcomed the new changes and used all prepared facilities for making a better society. However these new steps need time for an ideal society, but the female participations in the universities improved. They tried to find themselves and have a role outside the family communities, hence they received the self-confidence to attend in the occupation communities.

Regarding to this, Shavarini states that, the 1990s implicated a shift regarding women's participations in education. Contrary to the low levels of women enrolling in tertiary education straightly following the Islamic revolution, the numbers of women attending university promote at unprecedented levels during the 1990s. This step of

⁷³ *Daneshgah Azad Yadegare Paydare Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani*, isna.ir/news/95102113418/, date: Jan 10, 2017, accessed: Feb 11, 2017, [Persian]

increasing enrollment was also signed by the lifting of many of the restrictions on women accomplishment during the previous decade.⁷⁴

According to these remarks the Statistical Center of Iran reported that: “Almost a decade after the Islamic revolution (1979), in 1986, 65 percent of urban women (and 80 percent of urban men) were literate, while 36 percent of rural women (and 60 percent of rural men) were literate. A decade later, in 1996, 84 percent of urban women were literate while the figure for rural women was 60 percent”.⁷⁵ In a similarity Heshmat Sadat Moinifar, in *Family Planning Programs and population Growth in Post Revolutionary Iran*, have stated the statistics of women participation in educational systems: “The 110% increase in the literacy rate of rural women in 1976-86 (as compared with a mere 37.5% gain for men), as well as its 71% rise between 1986 and 1996 for rural women, (as compared with a gain of 28% for rural men) are impressive. While the total number of students attending high school and universities had increased 4.45 times between 1976 and 1996, those from rural areas had risen by a factor of 9.4. The number of university students from rural areas (93,000) revealed by the 1996 census equals 23.25 times and 7.75 times of those registered in 1976 and 1986 censuses, respectively”.⁷⁶

2.4. Social Activities

Iranian women’s social activities during president Rafsanjani’s government will be examined in this chapter from different issues. One of them is art which reflects a female presence in the society. Women employment is the other one which is a fundamental issue in the analysis of the role of women in a society and Sport that the health of a community is based on this one. These elements together can build up a healthy society. In each society which the revolution arises, the political system is not the only issue which experience diversity in the society. Social, cultural and art issues

⁷⁴ Shavarini, “*Feminisation of Iranian Higher Education*”, (Springer publication, 2005) p.335

⁷⁵ *Statistical Center of Iran, Yearbook of Iran*, 1997, p: 18

⁷⁶ Heshmat Sadat Moinifar, *Family Planning Programs and population Growth in Post Revolutionary Iran*, PhD Thesis, 1999, pp.86-87 in Heshmat Sadat Moinifar, *Participation of Women IN Iran’s Polity*, GEMC Journal, 2011

will also change and may extend to the individual internal revolution too. Iran's Islamic Revolution, due to religious and ideological forces and elements that were involved in its formation, is a cultural revolution more than a political one. In addition, changing the system of government, was an evolution of culture and thought. Art and culture are related to each other and there is a cause and effect between them. It is obvious that Iran experienced a fundamental transformation after the revolution in art and the time of this evolution is during the presidency of Rafsanjani.

After Iran-Iraq war and the Rafsanjani period as was mentioned in previous part, for reconstructing the country, he had special actions for women affairs. One of them was their presences in art. The most problematic evolution in a society after any revolution is art. Artists are always seen as suspects in the society. Their ideas are their weapons by their creativities since they face any oppositions in the society. They are freer than other communities to say the problems by showing them with their arts. So after an Islamic revolution, this step had to be set by a wise person. Rasul Sadr Ameli, a famous Iranian director, who produced a film in 2002, named: *I Am Taraneh, Fifteen Years Old – 2002* about a young Iranian girl who experienced some social problems in the society, has noted that Rafsanjani was always impressive in art and culture. If there was not any kindness of him to art society, for sure there was not any improvement in all kinds of art, cinema, music, theater and.. No doubt he had positive impact in this issue.⁷⁷

Veil issue is very effective in art, as being comfortable in veil, will start an open society in art as well. Art includes cinema, music (playing/singing), painting, and ect. Among all types of art, cinema and singing are the provocative discussions of women issues in Islamic republics. Letting women artists to start feeling free in attending movies without chador and producing films out of the atmosphere of war and religion, they could show themselves as an important factor to be seen in the country. Regarding to this issue ANA has reported these opportunities in art during Rafsanjani's presidency that directors could make films about women and their problems. These cultural actions were good steps for women. Since the Islamic Revolution and

⁷⁷ Rasul Sadrameli, imdb.com/name/nm0755658/, accessed: 2/23/2017

conditions of the women's activities in the field of music are greatly reduced, but the need and the needs of society, market demand, the strength of women artists and other factors, are the reasons of changing community policies, Until the late President Rafsanjani's second round, the group women singing was allowed.⁷⁸

The society in Rafsanjani presidency were preparing an open community for art issues in women affairs. Young women and girls were attending different art classes like painting or music, but women activities in cinema was one of the most problematic part of art and also it was adorable. The way of their veiling and makeup were important. The films, serials and movies during eight year war were about war and the veil style was according the Islamic republic rules, but after Rafsanjani presidency it was totally changed.

Some female directors from those years who have made films about women issues and families are Tahmineh Milani, Pouran Derakhshandeh, Rakhshan Bani Etemad and Marzieh Boroumand. Among these successful and famous female directors in Iran Tahmineh Milani was the most famous ones whose movies were based on these characteristics:

1. Family statues of women in Iran's male-dominated society.
2. Misogyny of male-dominated society.
3. Problems that women have with their husbands.
4. Representation of gang women's issues and life that were hurt from men and since leaving prison try to take revenge.
5. Women who can deal with today's society which was full of damages.

⁷⁸ Payerizi Hozur Zanan dar Doulate Sazandegi/ Tavajoh Vizhe Ayatollah Hashemi Radsanjani be Hozure Ejtemai va Siasi Zanan, ana.ir/news/176198, date: Jan 10, 2017, accessed: Feb 23, 2017, [Persian]

Here are some of her movies which were produced with women subject during presidency of Rafsanjani:

“Bach'che'hā-ye Talāgh (Children of Divorce), 1989, it was about a female university student social life.

“Afsāneh-ye Āh (The Legend of Sigh), 1991, a story about a widowed woman young ages life, “Eshgh va Marg” (love and die)1991 is about a love story,

“Dige Che Khabar” (what else is new) 1992, this story was based on the life a female university student and occupation life”.⁷⁹

So far this thesis has focused on the positive development on Iranian women issues since Rafsanjani, furthermore women of Iran are very lucky that the Rafsanjani's daughters, had impressed roles in the policy of their father. When he was elected as a president in 1989, he received the first request from his daughter Fatemeh.

The center for women participation has reported that, since women were without official deputies in the governmental posts, in 1992 the ‘Office of Women Affairs’, an offshoot to the president office was established to discover problems and leakage of women. Furthermore the tendency is a trend towards a greater number of women holding top managerial posts is the other point in this issue which consist of the appointment of four female deputy ministers and advisors to ministers and governors, director generals, both in ministers and at the provincial deputy governor generals.⁸⁰

However, despite all these categories, the Ministries still run by men, but women's participation in the government has started from that time.

1. Faezeh Rafsanjani became the head of ‘National Olympic Committee’ and the head of ‘Women Sport Islamic Federation’.

⁷⁹ Tahmineh Milani, imdb.com/name/nm0586841/ accessed: Feb 2, 2017

⁸⁰ Center for Women Participation, *National Report on Women's Status in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 2005, 0.76.

2. Fatemeh Ramezanzadeh became the general director of 'Health Deputy for Family', in the ministry of health
3. Masoumeh Ebtekar became the head of the 'NGO Women Affairs'
4. Rafat Bayat became the head of another Women Non-Governmental Organizations.

Other important and fundamental factor in the policy of president Rafsanjani in women affairs was sport. As it is reported in Tarafdari website about Rafsanjani speeches: Women need to exercise because of their physical condition, if not more than men, not less. Women athletes because of their mental vitality, in addition to national and international works have great impact on their families and society, and in addition to men's sports, for women's physical conditions, is the necessities of their lives."⁸¹

Rafsanjani, was constructive among all the presidents of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iranwire website has noted that, In the last years of his presidency, he made Iran a member of the International Shooting Sport Federation, and he was the first man who entered the negotiations of lifting the sanctions of chess by Ayatollah Khomeini, and even the first one of women sport.⁸² From the first days of his presidency he mentioned women sport as one of the important issues in women affairs. Iranwire website argued that, the most effective role that has Rafsanjani played in sports, was receiving the lisenche of Iranian women athletes presentation in international competitions. Rafsanjani got the license of Iranian girl athletes at the Asian Championships in Beijing from Mr. Khamenei.⁸³

By establishing two great women sport organizations with heading female managers. Lots of girls attended the sports clubs again (same as art). During Rafsanjani period, by intriguing for women sports, the consequences will be perceive in next presidencies. Starting up sports clubs, paved the way for women to be promoted for

⁸¹ *Varzesh dar Negah va Kalame Marhom Ayatollah Akbar Hashem Rafsanjani*, tarafdari.com/ accessed: Feb 12, 2017, [persian]

⁸² *Yadegarhaye Hashemi Rafsanjani dar Varzesh*, iranwire.com/fa/features/20207, date: Jan 11, 2017, accessed: Feb 2, 2017, [Persian]

⁸³ *Ibid*

next years and it will be argued in next chapter. But in the last years of Rafsanjani's second round, as it is noted in N.O.C.I.R.IRAN, They participated the Asian competitions. Although they couldn't receive any medals, but their attendance for the first time was valuable for the sport life of Iran. In shooting 1990 and 1994.⁸⁴

He opened the field of female athletes Activity with Starting with the 1990 Asian Games in Beijing, the first Iranian women's participation in international competitions after the revolution. Sports index Rafsanjani's family, was a girl called Faezeh Rafsanjani who was the most important element in sporting family. BBC Persian reported in its website about the policies on women sport during 1989-1997 that , Rafsanjani in 1998 launched community for her named: the Islamic Federation of Women Sport, a Non-governmental organization which was under the supervision of physical education organization.⁸⁵

Revival of women's sport in the Rafsanjani presidency can be most practical achievement of him and In proportion to all the presidents before and after him, was more pragmatic.

First Islamic Federation of Women Sport was only for the Muslim girls from Muslim countries participations, and these competitions were held in 1993 and 1997 were held this competition only for women of Islamic countries in Tehran, but in 2001, in Tehran and Rasht Muslim women and non-Muslim countries participated. As BBC reports in 2005 this competition changes to the name: 'Women Islamic Games' which in addition to Muslim women of Islamic and non-Islamic countries, non-Muslim women, be able to participate in it'.⁸⁶ What he left in the field of sport, first was a chess release from lawful sanctions and then the permanent presence of women in international competitions, one of the two important factors in sport was directly for women sport affairs.

⁸⁴ *Iran dar Bazihaye Asiai*, olympic.ir/fa/history/iraninasiangames, accessed: Apr 5, 2017, [Persian]

⁸⁵ Women in Politics, BBC.com/Persian/iran-features-38630050, date: Jan 16, 2017, accessed: Jan 2, 2017[Persian]

⁸⁶ Ibid



CHAPTER THREE

IRANIAN WOMEN DURING KHATAMI PRESIDENCY (1997-2005)

The 1997 presidential election was a turning point in the politics of Iran. This election represented a new part in women's struggle for gender equality. It was the first competitive presidential elections between Khatami and Nategh Nouri in the history of Iranian revolution. Khatami became the most popular candidate in this election regarding his policy of freedom of expression, justice for women, and dialogue of civilizations. Finally he won 70 percent of the vote. Although the gender election participation was not track officially in Iran, but it was obvious that, majority of the people voting for Khatami were composed of women and young people. The reformist government had started by the Khatami presidency and their political victory lead to a freer public sphere, and formation of various women organizations and NGOs.

These various unbelievable reforms lead to an announcement of danger for theocracies and hard religious thinkers in the government. As Sadeghi noted, both the Guardian Council and the judiciary, that were under the control of conservatives, used their veto power over in parliament to strike down parliamentary laws on the grounds that they were un-Islamic. This prevented reformists from different constituencies, including some groups of women.⁸⁷

Khatami's presidency was a new era in Iranian women life. Women presences in society, activities in their social life-style was more than double than the previous terms. Although during 1997-2005 women activities and their presence in society was more than previous governments, but there are lots of dark events during these years which affected Iranian women policies. Regarding these issues Laila al-Marayati argues that: "Khatami's presidency has been one of the darkest periods in terms of passage of legislation affecting women. The parliament, with the encouragement of religious leaders, proposed and passed a number of laws that jeopardize the health, education, and wellbeing of women and girls in Iran. Any discussion of women rights

⁸⁷ Sadeghi, *the foot soldiers of the Islamic Republics "culture of modesty"* in Homa Hoofar & Shadi Sadr, *Third World Quarterly*, London, Routledge, 2012

outside of Islamic law is prohibited according to a bill passed by the parliament in August 1998. Publications are banned from defending women's rights in a manner that may provoke conflict between genders".⁸⁸

3.1. Politics

In 1997 presidential election, which Khatami was the victorious, nine women attempted to become the candidates, although they were rejected by Guardian Council, but Faizeh Rafsanjani⁸⁹ in a press interview (July 1997) asserts: "What is the difference between the presidency of the Republic (Iran) and the management of a government service? None. Both positions involve responsibilities in the executive branch. Therefore, why should a woman not lead the country when she can legitimately be at the head of a government service?"⁹⁰

Women participation in Iranian politics was limited to national elections in 1990s, but actually their vote led to the victory of Khatami. So, women roles in Iranian politics can be determined in two areas. First in the country political participation and second being a decision making person in the political areas. However still it was a fact that the high political decision making process was belong to the male-dominated society. Although women activities in the political participation was significant, but president must to be a man. Seventh parliament in 1997 formed with the majority of reformists which resulted to the opponent intolerance in council. Homa Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr noted that, facing with the lack of advancement and threatening of even more regressive gender policies, both reformist and Islamic activist women convened that they could not enumerate on their male counterparts for the perception of gender equality. In order to extend to the public and use every possible political space, they reconstruct their own women-only organizations and integration around particular

⁸⁸ Laila al-Marayati, *Discourse needed on Islam interpretation of rights*, Los Angeles Times, 16 May 1998 in *the Role of Women in Iran's New Popular Revolution* by Ramesh Sepéhrrad

⁸⁹ She is the President of the 'Islamic Countries Sports Solidarity Council', and the youngest daughter of the president Rafsanjani (1989-1997), who gained the second highest number of Tehran votes in the March-April 1996 Parliament election.

⁹⁰ Heshmat Sadat Moinifar, *Participation of Women in Iran's Polity*, GEMC journal, 2011

political platforms, even many continued also to work with mainstream political parties.⁹¹

In addition two groups formed during Khatami, Reformists and Islamists. The freedom of expression in the reformist area provided Islamists a dangerous position which in the way of Islam, the limitations for women won't let them to be free in the public sphere, so they tried to establish the Islamist women organization. The largest and most influential society in these organizations was Zeinab Society. As Homa Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr argue that: "with more than 82 branches in Tehran and 60 in other cities and towns, Zeinab Society commands a formidable network for mobilising large numbers of women. Their political strategy is generally to attack one issue at a time, forming in an umbrella coalition with other Islamist organizations and lobbying within the political system, especially among influential religious leaders".⁹²

So far, the women position in the reformist, within the overarching mandate were trying to improve women positions within family, society and rise their political presences by keeping their independence from male political structures. Since making distances between two groups, the hard religious thinkers field narrowed dawn for president Khatami policies. However Khatami's government tried to do the best in the women political policy with law supporting. Paidar has noted in the *Gender of Democracy* that, Khatami's reformist government brought up the limited exptension of civil society and public participation, secular women were free in writing and began writing more openly for Islamist women magazines, creating more direct communication and cooperation between diverse forms of feminist activism ideologically. Actually this was the dawn of a realistic feminism.⁹³

The public sphere of Khatami policy led women to access networks to remain the political world by transforming news. With all these situations Iran experienced

⁹¹ Hooma Hoodfar & Shadi Sadr, *Islamic Politics and Women Quest for Gender Equality in Iran*, (London/ Routledge), 2012

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ P Paidar, *Gender of Democracy: The Encounter between Feminism and Reformism in Contemporary Iran*, DGHR Paper 6, GENEVA: unrisd,2001

some actions from Iranian women activist too, as Ahmadi Khorasani states: “however it was Shirin Ebadi’s receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize for her promotion of democracy and women’s and children’s rights that brought recognition and energy to the Iranian women movement as a whole, but especially to the secular women’s movement, which was now firmly a force to be reckoned with. In fact in June 2005, secular women collaboratively organized the largest oppositional protest since the early years of the revolution, demanding a revision of the constitution to put an end to legal discrimination against women”.⁹⁴

By the highest increasing desire of political activities during 1997-2005, Iranian women have experienced a dark period of their lives, despite the efforts of the president. The principle roots of the Islamic Revolution after 1979 was based on *velayate-e faghih*⁹⁵ control. Ramesh Sepehrrad noted that, when Khatami defence *velayate-e faghih* he is defending the degradation of women.⁹⁶

After Islamic revolution of Iran, *Velayet-e-faqih*, the religious leader of the government became the first person in the country. As Beverley Milton-Edwards in (book) asserted that: “the new political order which followed the departure of *Shah*, led by the *Shi’a* leader Ayatollah Khomeini, has been characterized by theocracy rather than democracy or other types of the rules.”⁹⁷ Hence, with *velayet-e-faqih*, who is the religious leader, the theocratic rules are above other rules such as democracy. Moreover, since the Iranian women were the identity of Islam after Iranian revolution, received the first impact of the *velayet-e-faqih* in Iran whom had to obey the Islamic

⁹⁴ N Ahmadi-Khorasani, *Women’s Letter: Iranian Women’s day of Solidarity*, Tehran: Iranian Women’s Cultural Center, 2006 in *Third World Quarterly*, Homa Hoodfar & Shadi Sadr.

⁹⁵ The doctrine of *Wilayat al-Faqih* forms the central axis of contemporary Shi’a political thought. It advocates a guardianship-based political system, which relies upon a just and capable jurist (faqih) to assume the leadership of the government in the absence of an infallible Imam. However, although the guardianship of a high-ranking religious scholar is universally accepted amongst all Shi’a theories of governance, any disagreement is focused on the details such as the role of the jurist and the scope of his authority. Because the theory of *Wilayat al-Faqih* has emerged from Imamate - which constitutes a cornerstone of *Shi’ism* - it is necessary to understand this political doctrine within the context of this concept of leadership. By comparing it to the tradition political theory of Sunni jurists - the doctrine of caliphate - and characterizing it’s major features, we will be able to better understand and appreciate the doctrine of *Wilayat al-Faqih*.

⁹⁶ Ramesh Sepehrrad, *The Role of Women in Iran’s New Popular Revolution*, winter/spring 2003

⁹⁷ Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2011

rules. Furthermore after Ayatollah Khomeini, Ayatollah Khamenei became the *valy-e-faghih* in Iran.

Valentine M. Moghadam in *Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran: legal status, Social Positions, and Collective Action* noted that, Widening gap between government and people in all issues, became more that the women issue was the most important among them. In the later consequences of the presidential elections in 1997, newly-elected president Khatami named Masoumeh Ebtekar, an American educated lecturer who had been the media voice of the radical students who seized the U.S. Embassy in 1979, as a vice president in charge of environmental affairs, then the Culture Minister Ata'ollah Mohajerani appointed Aazam Nouri as deputy culture minister for legal and parliamentary affairs, and Interior Minister Abdollah Nouri named Zahra Shojai⁹⁸ as Iran's first director-general for women affairs.⁹⁹

These are the first women who served the top governmental positions since 1979 revolution. In the second round of elections, president Khatami, became closer to the conservative clerics due to the serious limitations, which was run by government for reform agenda.

3.2. Veiling

Peaceful policy in veiling during Khatami's government who allowed women to wear long uniforms, rather than chador, led to new problems again. All forced hijab laws against women violated the rights of gender issues. Even it violated the rights which belong to women who were not interested to hijab or were not Muslims originally. By all these inequality, there were punishment as well. It resulted to silent protest from women whom were adding more make-up and wearing tights clothes, which were never ever used normally in Pahlavi regime in the public places.

⁹⁸ The Iranian media described Shojai, who had been a professor at al-Zahra University in Tehran and a member of the Interior Ministry's Women Commission, as "a long-time women's rights activist." Associated Press, "Women Named Iran Culture Deputy", Aug. 31, 1997, via Internet.

⁹⁹ Valentine M. Moghadam, *Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Legal Status, Social Positions, and Collective Action*, 2004

Asghar TJ in the *politics of women's clothing in Iran* noted that, soon after that situation for *hijab*, women using more perfume and make up. Furthermore, many started highlighting the curves on their body, moreover showing their feet, and wearing their scarves in a way that revealed most of their hair. This *hijab* style made it easier for women to sustain life under the regime, especially during the summers women were into wearing shorter uniforms and pants, bright colored *hijabs*, and tighter clothes. These fashion change gave escalate to the term.¹⁰⁰

As a result of these, the government had to make the new rules, however it was never enforced. Soon after, cultural council, an organization associated with the ministry of Islamic Guidance approved the implementation procedures for promotion of a culture of chastity” on February 4, 2005. It mandated the disciplinary forces with the task of “Declaring the limits and legal definition of modesty and standards of improper hijab in society with the aim of recognizing its manifestations” as well as “taking legal steps to confront individuals with improper hijab.”¹⁰¹

Religion has been always a part of the state in Iran particularly since 1979 revolution the *Shi'a* became officially the religion of the country and the new version of globalization could not match with it, in fact the gender inequality and women rights were the resulted of religion states. Moghadam noted that, women in Iran are speaking out about their protests towards their second-step citizenship in both the public sphere of the state and the private sphere of the family, then young religious and secular women who dislike compulsive *hijab* (veiling) have pointed informal acts of resistance, as preferable from organized protests against it.¹⁰²

The standard limits of hijab had changed in society with the aim of controlling society according the new improved networking community and keeping the Islamic values at the same time. Masoumeh Faraji stated: among the other responsibilities

¹⁰⁰ Asghar JT, *Good Hijabi, Bad Hijabi: The Politics of Women's Clothing in Iran*, Georgetown University-Qatar, March 2015

¹⁰¹ New Law Published in Siyasat Newspaper on May 19,2010

¹⁰² Valentine M. Moghadam, *Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Legal Status, Social Positions, and Collective Action*, 2004, p:9

allocated to disciplinary forces was “warning individuals with improper hijab and confronting them in public in accordance with the laws,” “proposing bills to policymakers regarding proper coverage while driving a vehicle” and “supervision as well as legal and fundamental supervision of recreational and public spaces such as parks, cinemas, sports facilities, mountains, beaches, islands, free trade zones, airports and terminals.” Furthermore, the regulation hold the forces responsible for “full supervision over legal limits of chastity in residential complexes high rises and gated developments.”¹⁰³

This thesis has provided an interview with a young university student who experienced notices from an elder man in a shopping center:

In 2002, I was a Khatami supporter. Me and some other university students who were in the reformist community started to wear Green Scarf in the public places to show the strong community of Khatami supporters to his opponents. Green scarf was famous those years. I had a little make up and my feet was a little shown between my socks and jeans. An old man started shouting at me that you won't have any future with supporting this president. Let's continue, however your make up and unveiling clearly show the deep instability of this community! So I told him if I had full dark black hijab adding make up would you let yourself to enter my privacy or your problem is only the Green scarf?!¹⁰⁴

3.3. Education

While the legal changes were slowly forming in favor of Iranian women during Khatami presidency, for upgrading their statue more in society was education of women. Hijab laws in universities were a part of women educational life in Iran since 1979. Female dress-style was changed during Khatami government and most of university students who were fans of Khatami could deal with hijab laws since 1997, actually it was a sign of support, but the *basij* and governmental forces were out of

¹⁰³ Thirty- five Years of Forced Hijab, justice for Iran publication, March 2014

¹⁰⁴ Interview with a painter, Iran/Tehran. d.a: 4/22/2017

Khatami presidency and restriction on hijab was expanded during Khatami government. These restrictions were out of Khatami authorities with the most pressures in universities. With all these limitations the lifting the ban on sending female students abroad was run with Khatami. It was one of the biggest achievements for female in educational services. Although it was full of arguments but finally Khatami government approved it. The NGO alternative report on Iran has noted that, on 7 January 2001, the new parliament voted to modify a law that forbids women studying abroad without the permission of a male caretaker. A few days later, the council of Guardians, the nominated body of religion in Iranian government, reversed the amendment.¹⁰⁵

Along with sending the female students abroad, Khatami's policy for women education inside Iran was successful as well and the female university students was the highest since establishing universities in Iran. As Emadeddin Baghi regarding female higher education in Iran asserts that, indeed, during the academic year 2002-2003, women's registrations exceeded those of men for the first time since universities were established in Iran in the 1930s. Women maintained 12 percent of publishing house directorships and are 22 percent of the members of the professional association of Journalists.¹⁰⁶

According to the number statistics of both male and female students who entered universities, the center for women participations has reported that, youth literacy rate (aged 15-24) increased from 92% in 1997 to 96% in 2003 for females and from 96% to 98% for males in the same year, in which it shows the 4% increase for girls and 2% increase for boys.¹⁰⁷

This improvement on women education could affect the women presences in society and their attending in different occupations. Their knowledge was a key to the

¹⁰⁵ NGO Alternative Report on Iran, NCWDI. Available from Worldwide Web: womenaction.otg/global/ncwdi.htm.

¹⁰⁶ Emadeddin Baghi, "Hope for Democracy in Iran", The Washington Post October 25,2004, p.A19

¹⁰⁷ Center for Women's Participation, *National Report on Women's Status in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 2005, p.76-78.

world of business, higher position in society and communicate beside men. Khatami policy on women educational service was a positive step in women affairs.

3.4. Social Activities

During Khatami government the women status had improved due to the policy of ‘dialogue of civilizations’. They could communicate with many societies easier, they were freer to choose colorful clothes and freer to choose different models. Their dark clothes replaced with light ones. The Islamic dresses with light colors had entered market. 1997 presidential election emerges as a turning point in the electoral social life in Iran. It represented a new chapter in women’s equality social life.

In order to analyze the discussed issues clearly, this thesis provided some information in four sections of women social activities: Art, Sport, and Occupation.

Revolution in culture and art affected to the women art society as well. But the society in Khatami government was not the same as first decades after 1979. Cosmetics were banned after revolution and if women wore lipstick in public they were threatened to punishment, but in the cultural reform movement by president Khatami, the cinema and theater with attending more women could use makeup due to their roles and cinema society growth in the women affairs a lot. The desired female art activities was coming true for the first time during Khatami presidency since revolution. One of the remarkable achievements in the reform movement that must be noted here is the fundamental growth in culture and art. According to the statistics of Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance more than 70% cultural NGOs was in the Khatami government, furthermore most of them were for cinema, making movies, short movies production and documentaries with the women and society issue. During Khatami presidency, the problem and difficulties about women and society the red privacy was removed. With the immaterial look to women the directors paid more attentions to prostitutes, fugitive girls, virginity, raping and pregnancy with freer atmosphere to talk about these issues.¹⁰⁸ As it was mentioned in this thesis about the movie production

¹⁰⁸ *Cinema dar Doure Eslahat*, aftabnews.ir/vdcj.veofuqemtsfzu.html, Aug 4,2005, accessed: March 4,2017, [Persian]

with women various problems title in society by Tahmineh Milani, during Khatami presidency Iran has more movies from the same director like: “

1. Two Women, 1999

It was about two women charts the lives of two promising architecture students over the course of the first turbulent years of the Islamic Republic.

2. The Hidden Half, 2001

This story was about an official who is sent from his home in Tehran to hear the final appeal of a woman sentenced to death, a political prisoner.

3. Fifth Reaction, 2003

It is about a woman who loses her home and two sons after her husband accidental death when her stubborn and powerful father-in-law forces her to return to her parents”.¹⁰⁹

Women participation and activities in society during Khatami had improved and the female status changed from the first decade of Islamic Revolution. Center of women participation reported that another milestone in the female political presence of the country at the policy level has been the nationwide” city and local council elections. Number of female candidates in which most of them are below 40 years of age illustrates their will and commitment of full political participation. In 1999, in Tehran considered as the most significant city in the council elections, two of the top five winners were women. In 2005, 11% of all elected city council representatives were women. In the second round of the local council elections, the number of female candidates had increased, which is clear indication of women’s political public

¹⁰⁹ *The Hidden Half*, m.imdb.com/title/tt0277925/ date:2001, accessed: Feb 5, 2017.

expression in this area. The interesting factor is that the rural female candidates are more than than urban ones.¹¹⁰

It also reported that contrary to the significant achievement in education, the women labor force participation was only 13 percent which is very low compared to other societies and has been almost constant since revolution up to now.¹¹¹

Another effective process which resulted positively to women lives since revolution is sport. The common simple elements of sport changed the life of women after revolution. The efforts of president Rafsanjani kept continuing in Khatami's government as well. Despite lots of sports clubs around the country even in small cities, the budget which was considered for sport improved the sport community in the world. The first female athletes who won the medal in Olympics were in Khatami presidency. Jamejam newspaper has reported the Asian Olympics games in 1998 in Thailand which it was with no medal for the female athletes team ,but in 2002 the Asian Olympics games in Busan in South Korea was an important event in the history of women sport. They bring two silver medals to Iran, Parvaneh Tehrani in Tekvando and Nasim Hassanpour in Shooting.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Center for Women Participation, *National Report on Women's Status in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 2005, p.78

¹¹¹ Ibid, p.86-87

¹¹² Jamehamnewspaper in m.jaaar.com/archieve/jamejam. Title of news: the women Iranian sport historic, No. of news: 1956026458808175077[Persian]



CHAPTER FOUR

IRANIAN WOMEN DURING AHMADINEJAD PRESIDENCY (2005-2013)

After the presidency of Khatami, the next president was Ahmadinejad. During his government from 2005 to 2013 Iran experienced the unexpected events in all issues such as women affairs. No one could have predicted his international negative limelight. He was too far away from the reformist values which were gained since revolution by changing the socio-political issues fundamentally. Furthermore the strong dissatisfaction among public started to grow after he came to power.

Generally the unpredictability of his policy on women affairs was unbalanced. Gender inequality was one of the women concern during his presidency. Because of the sanctions and Iran's worst condition in economical issues, new rules of his government caused the unemployment of lots of practitioner women, however he was leading in introducing female ministers to the parliament which will be discussed in next part. In addition to these situations, Religion has taken a backseat in his governmental policy, furthermore his lack of democratic structure caused the inequality in gender issues again. As Homa Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr emphasized in *Islamic Politics and Women's Quest for Gender Equality in Iran* that, since Ahmadinejad presidential election, the major obstacle to gender equality in the case of Iran and *Shi'ism*, was too evident to have more to do with lack of democratic state structure and intrinsic conflict between religion, tradition and the modern democratic elements.¹¹³ This chapter will analyze his policies on women affairs in different areas.

4.1. Politics

Women political rights and political activities is an important issue in the Iranian history, especially after 1979. They suffer from inequality between men and women considerably. These discriminations after two presidencies strives of Rafsanjani and Khatami, intensified subsequently. After Ahmadinejad election success, the

¹¹³ Homa Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr, *Islamic Politics and Women's Quest for Gender Equality in Iran*, 2012, London, Routledge Publication, p:886

government tried to launch the Shari'a more in policies on women. Homa Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr also stated about the women policies in politics that, since Ahmadinejad's first round presidency the government policies have been manipulated to undo the reforms which women could manage more than two decades that they smear and denigrate as 'creeping secularization' by westernizing the country with lack of state democratization and basing on *Sharia* rules navigated the Iranian society to prevent women of participating political activities.¹¹⁴ They also added, these restrictions on women illustrated a step backward for those who were trying to expand a domestic strategy for improving women rights via new reading of *Sharia*. So, this state of affairs appointed the question of whether the present state structure could lend itself to democratization?¹¹⁵ Nevertheless however, Iranian women tend to insist more on their rights and independence in political structures. Ahmadinejad's rising to power caused the widespread of women dissent due to the rising the name of *Shari'a* on strict rules, whereas it was undermining the religious legitimacy. Despite the new different legal system, he nominated three women in his second round of presidency to the parliament in the ministerial posts due to the disputed re-election victory in June 2009.

Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election victory forced him to nominate three women to the parliament for ministerial posts. In June 2009, in the competitive presidential elections between Mir Hossein Mousavi, the prime minister of Iran during Iran-Iraq war and Ahmadinejad that lead the victory of him, people protested in the streets regarding their claim of election fraud. Hence, Ahmadinejad felt obliged to attract the public attention. However after nominating three women to the parliament only one of them was confirmed. Regarding to this Shahrokni in *All the President's Women* noted that, although there were female ministers and vice president in Ahmadinejad government, which was a growth in the key political posts, there were still impending laws, gender clichés and social obstacles in the area and power and even decision makers for women political participation in Iran during 2005-2013.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p:896

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹¹⁶ N Shahrokni, *All the President's Women*, Middle East Report, 2009, p:253

Al-monitor website reported that, Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi, the only woman who received the confirmation from parliament in Ahmadinejad cabinet, became the Health minister. Although her efforts was sufficient to satisfy the government, Ahmadinejad dismissed her at the end of his second round of presidency just because of her insistence on keeping Bagher Larijani, her deputy at the Ministry of Health.¹¹⁷

In the government of president Ahmadinejad with the most emphasizing of women role in families, his government showed the increased women political posts by female ministers and vice president in both presidency rounds. It was interesting that, although Ahmadinejad was emphasizing the role of women in families, his government allocated increased political posts for women including female ministers and vice presidents in both presidency rounds. It was increasing that although Ahmadinejad was emphasizing the role of women in families, his government allocated increased political posts for women including female ministers and vice president in both presidency rounds. Regarding to this issue Heshmat Sadat Moinifar asserts that, however there were two female minister and vice president in his Cabinet, which was an increase in key political posts than before. Despite claims and efforts which was made by the Islamic republic of Iran during 2005-2013, for Iranian women political participations, there were still impending laws, gender clichés, and social obstacles in the area of power and decision makers.¹¹⁸ In fact, despite his serious willingness to participate women in politics even as decision makers, his presidency was the dimmer period for women political policies and activities, he had closed all the doors of political powers to women in Iran.

4.2. Veiling

Since the establishment of the government of Ahmadinejad (August 2005) with fostering the fundamental changes in women affairs, one of the heavy laws was related with veiling style. He was imposed new restrictive rules on women dressing. Ahmadinejad's presidency was worse than the early revolution era in the case of hijab.

¹¹⁷ *Will this woman become Iran's first female president?*, al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02, February 23, 2017 by Saeid Jafari, accessed: May 20, 2017.

¹¹⁸ Heshmat Sadat Moinifar, *Participation of Women in Iran's Polity*, GEMC journal, 2011

The policy of his government was, 'Islamic republic should have Islamic women'. By putting lots of pressures in public places, universities, shopping centers with police forces, they created frightening society for women. During his government, even the teenager girls had experienced arresting by police due to not observing hijab in a proper manner.

Hooma Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr regarding to this issue asserted that, to response to the infliction of restrictive dress code, the government had more control and pressures over women with more polices.¹¹⁹ The result was totally opposite. Women couldn't accept new imposing rules and the hijab issue was even worse than Pahlavi regime. Using more make-up and short and tight uniforms in the streets was a silent-way of protesting against Ahmadinejad's veiling policy. Two years after his starting of presidency, in 2007, his government established a new police group named: 'Guidance Patrols' to notice women and most of the time arresting even pregnant women. Masoumeh Faraji stated that, since 2007, the disciplinary forces in Iran settled a new police group named "guidance patrols for monitoring the public spaces and community centers, operating as one of the fellow charged with the implement of this act. The distinguishing the criteria of the implication of 'improper hijab' and after a few hours after arresting them, the detained women had to provide Islamic uniforms before releasing from their families. Those who were declining to cooperate with police were transmissive to judicial courts.¹²⁰

The darkest period of Islamic Republic after revolution was during the presidency of Ahmadinejad and the state government directed to undo the reform policies which were managed more than two and a half decades before, that Ahmadinejad's government mention it as denigrate of religious and entering westernization. For veiling issue during 2005-2013, women had no right to oppose the new strict rules due to the unbelievable pressures. One memory which can show the

¹¹⁹ Homa Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr, *Islamic Politics and Women's Quest for Gender Equality in Iran*, 2012, London, Routledge Publication

¹²⁰ Masoumeh Faraji, *Thirty-five Years of Forced Hijab: The Widespread and Systematic Violation of Women's Rights in Iran*, March 2014

hard situations in society during Ahmadinejad government will be added to this part. It is an interview with a salesman whose wife was pregnant in 2007.

It was summer and we were shopping in the streets. Since the weather was too hot, my wife couldn't close her scarf completely. Due being pregnant in 7th month it was too hard for her to breathe easily. Suddenly we saw three angry women in black chador coming to us very fast. As my wife saw them she understood why they are coming and started shaking because of fear. I explained my wife's situation to female polices, but they forced us to go to the police station together to give an undertaking while my wife was crying! He added still my wife cannot talk about that day, because she suffered from fear a lot.¹²¹

4.3. Education

All lenient laws under the reformist presidency of Khatami were destroyed under the conservative presidency of president Ahmadinejad in the women educational issues. Since 2005, the new government attempted to discourage women participation in universities in indirect ways. His policy was based on the power from ignorance of society. In Iran, there is a rigorous entering exam called 'kunkur'. After passing the first step of this entering exam which is getting enough marks, the participants have to choose their favorite field of study. During Ahmadinejad government the options of choosing fields for females reduced and most of female participated kunkur were disappointed of continuing studying in universities.

As Rezai-Rahti stated the conservative government of Ahmadinejad reacted to this overturn of the gender gap by executing a strict relapse to gender segregation. Not only the women were banned from 77 study fields of study at the university level, but men were also restricted from certain fields at universities, but also men were limited to choose some certain fields of study supposed to be feminine. The gendering policy of higher educational system was planned to limit women options in choosing fields.

¹²¹ Interview with a salesman/ Iran/Chalous. d.a: 5/2/2017

Furthermore during Ahmadinejad government, the Iranian minister of science cultivated this policy of sex segregation in higher educational system too.¹²²

Other important issue which happen during his presidency was firing the reformist professors whom were appointed during the presidency of Khatami. They were supporters of other parties in Iran. Among them female professors were more. Shahrivari noted numerous reformist professors were dismissed from higher educational system during Ahmadinejad government. Moreover female's high university academic prosperity led to a national debate of a gender quotas establishment¹²³ Women's rights in education was forgotten in Ahmadinejad policy. The inequality in gender issue was totally clear during his government. He segregated genders in universities, campus, libraries and.. but did not stop the inequality in education and it was too hard for women to make up the system. Iranian women experienced the significant challenges of gender inequality in educational system after revolution during 2005-2013.

Regarding this Meredith Katherine Winn in *Women in Higher Education in Iran: How the Islamic Revolution Contributed to an Increase in Female Enrollment* asserts that even after the gender segregation in universities, women were still facing so many challenges regarding the prospects after receiving their educational degrees.¹²⁴ Like other women rights, Ahmadinejad destroyed the education option as well and it was the only free option in women affairs which was left for them. Comparing with the presidencies of Rafsanjani and Khatami, Ahmadinejad policy couldn't continue their ways, if he could, society could face more improvements. The most important thing for Ahmadinejad was gender issue, educational system or others were the options to settle strict laws for gender inequality.

¹²² Rezai-Rashti, *The Politics of Gender Segregation*, p.480 in *Women in Higher Education in Iran: How the Islamic Revolution Contributed to an Increase in Female Enrollment* by Meredith Katherine Winn, Pepperdine University, 2016

¹²³ Shahrivari, *Feminisation of Iranian Higher Education*, p.331

¹²⁴ Meredith Katherine Winn, *Women in Higher Education in Iran: How the Islamic Revolution Contributed to an Increase in Female Enrollment*, Pepperdine University, 2016, Vol.10

4.4. Social Activities

Iranian women social activities during the presidency of Ahmadinejad from 2005-2013 will be examined in this part. The positive impact of Rafsanjani and Khatami government is obvious for social activities of women. One of them was art which will be discussed here as well. It is no wonder that, there were restrictions in art issue like other restrictions in women affairs during Ahmadinejad government. His government glance over art and sometimes its hostile attitude for art, caused unbelievable depression in society. Cinema as a part of art, lost its obtained value during his presidency.

Majid Majidi, a famous Iranian director in an interview noted the irretrievable damages of Ahmadinejad government in the sphere of art and culture with the managers without sufficient standard capacity, decreased the standard level of Iranian cinema because of slogan manners, with no specified schedule.¹²⁵

Besides all these regressions, like Education, Politics, .. Cinema had gender discriminations as well which had louder voice. Female actresses payments in compare with the male actors payments was too low and they protests about it, so women participations in cinema decreased. BBC website in an article dated 8th of February in 2016 reports In last Fajr International Film Festival¹²⁶ during Ahmadinejad, there was no female musicians, no female director of photography, only 3% female set designers, only 1% female editor, and only 4% female producers, and only two movies were

¹²⁵ *Dar Doreye Ahmadinejad Sath Cinama va Farhang ra Paen Avardand*, [aftabnews.ir/fa/news/225498/date:1.2.2014, d.a. 5.5.2017](http://aftabnews.ir/fa/news/225498/date:1.2.2014,d.a.5.5.2017) [Persian]

¹²⁶ Founded in 1982, *Fajr International Film Festival (FIFF)* is Iran's largest annual film festival held in Tehran. It is an event that celebrates cultural exchange, displays creative achievements of highly acclaimed cineastes and pays tribute to quality local and international films. Since its establishment, *Fajr International Film Festival* has played a vital role in the development of the Iranian Cinema. Every year, veteran directors and new filmmakers devotedly present their works in the festival, filmfreeway.com/festival/FIFF

presented in festival by female directors, *Khanoom* movie by Tina Pakravan and *Ghesseha* by Rakhshan Bani Etemad.¹²⁷

Another part of art that was always influenced by new rules in Islamic Republic after 1979 Iranian revolution is music. Music was effected by different policies during the three previous decades. During Ahmadinejad presidency, music losses were worse than cinema. Ahmadinejad government had lack of attention in improving music statue, which were irreparable and need time to revival. Arresting musicians had recorded in the history of Iran with cooperating female musicians. As in the article of *zendane Ahmadinejad baray ahali musighi (Ahmadinejad's prison for Musicians)* asserted in early 2008, in the first record of Ahmadinejad's president, music lost its value regarding unlawful consideration and pop music was totally banned!¹²⁸

Besides art, the other important issue which will be examined in this thesis, is the female occupation in social activities of president Ahmadinejad. Since the establishment of Ahmadinejad government, there has been no evidence changing in favor of Iranian women affairs. However, Iranian women could show their power and stability with all restrictions against them. One of the most important issue regarding economic, occupation and female social activities during 2005-2013 was, Iran experienced sanctions during Ahmadinejad and it had a huge impact on women occupation. For economic issues, they had lost their jobs, despite the claims that female decision making is possible, but they were always confronting with new impending laws and gender-based discriminations in this part as well. Regarding women participation in the society during Ahmadinejad Moinifar stated the following remark regarding the new government: 'Center for Participation of Women' which was under supervision of the president of the republic changed name to the 'Center for Women Affairs and Family'. The lesser emphasis on women issue compared to Khatami (1998-2005) was obvious. President's first deputy repeatedly announced that the new

¹²⁷ *Hozore Kamrange Zanan dar Poshte Dorbine Cinamaye Iran*, bbc.com/Persian/arts/2016/02/160208-151-fajr-film-festival-women. Date:2.8.2016, d.a: 5.6.2017[Persian]

¹²⁸ *Zendane Ahmadinejad Baraye Ahali Musighi/ Fazaye Baz Dar Dolate Rouhani Shokofa Mishavad/ Aghaze Avazekhanie Enferadie Zanan*, namehnews.ir/fa/news/123584, date:4.6.2014 , d.a: 5.1.2017

government has not expressed any commitments regarding a new strategy for improving women's statuses.¹²⁹

Women issues were not on the top of presidential agenda during 2005-2013, thus it was clear that the government felt no responsible towards women in occupational affairs. Huge number of Iranian women lost their jobs, due to the new rules of government, and if others could stay in their positions, they had confronted a new rule which was restricted men and women to communicate with each other in office places. They had to work separately. As it was mentioned before he introduced three women to the parliament for his cabinet members as ministers, however, only Marzieh Dastjerdi became the Health minister, but Sosan Keshavarz and Fatemeh Ajorlou faced disqualification. Ahmadinejad was leading to introduce women in top governmental positions and he broke this taboo, however he had his own policy for them and it was another gender-inequality which was one of his worst policies in women affairs. In fact, economic stagnancy and lack of funds, sacrificed women as the first victims of losing jobs.

Religious had taken a backseat in Ahmadinejad governmental policies, furthermore his lack of democratic structures caused the unfair treatment in gender issues again. As Homa Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr in *Islamic Politics and Women's Quest for Gender Equality in Iran* asserted since the election of Ahmadinejad in 2005, *shari'a* has taken a backseat and emphasis is placed on the conservative radical Islamist vision in relation to gender policies. Thus at least in the case of Iran and *Shi'ism*, the larger obstacle to gender equality appears to have more to do with a lack of democratic state structure than with any intrinsic incompatibility between religious tradition and modern democratic principles.¹³⁰

The other important issue in women affairs in social activities is Sport. Actually sport is the only sphere in Ahmadinejad governmental dossier had positive achievements. By qualified managers and sport officials' consultation with

¹²⁹ Heshmat Sadat Moinifar, *Participation of Women in Iran's Polity*, GEMC journal, 2011

¹³⁰ Homa Hoodfar and Shadi Sadr, *Islamic Politics and Women's Quest for Gender Equality in Iran*, 2012, London, Routledge Publication, p:886

international societies in different fields of sport and specifically for women with Islamic comfortable clothes designing, they could improve women sport affairs. It was the only sphere from Rafsanjani and Khatami which Ahmadinejad tried to keep it on top of international sport societies. The budget to the sport federation was enough to investment.

One of the Ahmadinejad's effort in female sport society was the revocation of women entering banned to sport stadiums. After Iranian revolution women entering to sport stadiums for male sport competitions was banned. Ahmadinejad website has reported that he issued the revocation of women entering banned to sport stadiums, although it was refused from high religious officials.¹³¹ During his government there was improvement in women expeditionary in sport competitions, receiving medals, sport activities options inside and outside arena. No doubt that women sport improvement is unbelievable during Ahmadinejad.

Ahmadinejad's website added that in 2010, Asian games of Guanjou, Iranian women team received 14 medals including gold, silver and bronze. Furthermore, in 2013 of Olympics and para-Olympics games in London, there were 17 female athlete in Iranian team in 9 sport fields. The Gold medal of London para-Olympics was for the Archer lady, named Zahra Nemati, who became the best athlete in 2013.¹³²

¹³¹ *Dastavardhaye Doulate Ahmadinejad/ Roshd Varzeshe Zanane Iran dar Doulathaye Nohom va Dahom,* Ahmadinejad.ir/23-dah-va-nohom-haye-doulat-dar-iran-zanan-varzesh-roshd, date:6.20.2015, d.a:5.1.2017

¹³² Ibid

CONCLUSION

Pre-revolutionary period in Iran seems to pay more attention in women rights and gender-male discrimination comparing with post-revolutionary Iran. Among all rights which are mentioned in this thesis, veiling was the biggest political change in Iranian women rights after 1979. Of course they were free in choosing different veil styles during Pahlavi, but are Iranian women the real victims of Iranian revolution? Or, did Pahlavi regime give any powers or extra rights to Iranian women due to unveiled laws?

The unveiled women gave political power to the Pahlavi government. Pahlavi dynasty was too connected, related, and dependent on the west and they were focused on the westernization of the country and women were at the center of their project, in fact the government promotion in educating women was one of the westernizing program as well. Shah's concern was the image of Iran from outside. Their concern was not the Iranian women rights. Furthermore, the most important concern of Pahlavi dynasty was how they are viewed from the western societies. The Iranian women statue by foreigners was judged by their veil, beauty and fashioned style, since the aesthetic symbolism was always their symbol statue to the world.

By bolding this symbol, shah could get more attention from west that lead to the more political power. Convincing US, Britain and other western societies by focusing unveiled situation for women, other women rights were ignored. Regarding to this Caroline M. Brooks in *Moments of Strength: Iranian Women's Rights and the 1979 Revolution* stated during Pahlavi regime by focusing on veil issue the analyses from western societies about Iranian women situation, tended to ignore all actions and powers about the Iranian female population both in politics and society.¹³³

Women were free in every realm alongside with men during Pahlavi regime and they were the benefits of living in a modern society. However Shah did much efforts, and he was too serious on his beloved country, is development. He wanted to be sure

¹³³ Caroline M. Brooks, *Moments of Strength: Iranian Women's Rights and the 1979 Revolution*, Colby college, 2008

that Iran was formulated by the western structure and nothing was left for his people especially for women in order to be modernized like western women.

As he wrote in his book, *Missions for My Country* Today our country has far to go to catch up, and it is not sufficient merely to 'catch up'. My country conditions is considerably differ from those in the west, and we need to adopt too. We must adjusting both the technology to our culture and our culture to the technology. With our great scholarly tradition and thousands of young men and women university-trained, I foresee that my country may help provide leadership in the worldwide.¹³⁴

He had brought Iran up to western standards by the twentieth century. Another important factor for Iranian women was entering the labor market. He encouraged them to enter the labor forces and then became an important role in the economy parts of the society, to be in harmony of the occupational system of US. Iranian women once again became another western reform in Iran. M.R. Shah in *The Revolution of the Shah and the People*, stated more facilities for part time work, will let fuller use of housewives and provide them with the opportunity and chance to play a worthy role in the social reconstruction even while administering and supervising the home, women are effective participators in activities is an fundamental requirements for all development and progress.¹³⁵ Women had entered labor force and continued higher education in significant numbers and it led judging Iran by the statue of its women from outside of the country.

Oriana Fallaci, an Italian journalist, had an interview with M.R Shah. Here shah's frankly speaking about women issue. Women will have an important role in men's life if they're beautiful. Both men and women are equals in the eyes of the law and state but actually no! they are not equal. Excuse me to say this, in the ability, women can never produce a Michelangelo or a Bach. They have never been a great chef. They lacked the opportunity and chances to be even a great chef in the history.

¹³⁴ Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, *Missions for My Country* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961),p:132

¹³⁵ Mohammad Reza Shah in Rmesh Sanghvi *The Revolution of the Shah and the People* (London: Transorient, 1967) as quoted by Sedghi, *Women and Politics in Iran*. P:109, in Caroline M. Brooks, *Moments of Strength: Iranian Women's Rights and the 1979 Revolution*, Colby college, 2008

They have produced nothing great, nothing! When they govern, they are too much harder than us [men]. They are much crueler. Much more bloodthirsty. You are evil schemers, you are evil. All of you [women].¹³⁶

As Beverley Milton-Edwards in *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East* stated that: “ it was this controlling environment that encouraged a generation of Iranian women to turn to Islam as a source for the construction of their identity as women and opposition to the state and its image of the modern Iranian women.”¹³⁷

Actually he used women as a leverage, to take power from religious leaders, *Ulama* and to get support convince from westerns. Female identity in Iran, based on the Islamic structures after 1979 revolution by wearing hijab and chadors confirmed the Islamic Persian women and women veiling showed the religious aspects of Iranian Islamic Republic to other societies. It was the factor that western countries tried to judge new culture by putting the limitation on women. This limitation on veiling issue resulted with the restrictions on Education, Occupation, Social activities. By being independent from western countries and having power under the name of Islam again, new Iranian government used women as a symbol of proving Islam in the country and getting power from west and give it to religious leaders *Uama*. Alireza Nobari stated since 1979 revolution, there has been a huge negative perspective on women issues from western societies regarding the new Islamic changes on women affairs, Khomeini’s policy was based on the Islamic thoughts, that had more benefits for women, furthermore there is no limitation in female’s freedom. In a similarity way he added about Imam Khomeini speeches regarding women which Islam’s basic structure is not against the female society freedom. Islam is opposed to this idea that women are as objects and will give them back their identity. Women and men are equals. Both of them are free in choosing their life-styles. However, shah’s regime destroyed all women freedom.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Oriana Fallaci, *Interview With Histort* (New York: Liveright Publishing Company, 1976).

¹³⁷ Beverley Milton-Edwards, *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2011, p:164

¹³⁸ Ayatollah Khomeini in Ali-Reza Nobari, ed., *Iran Erupts: Independence, News and Analysis of the Iranian National Movement* (Stanford: Iran-American Documentation Group, 1978).p:13 in Caroline M. Brooks, *Moments of Strength: Iranian Women’s Rights and the 1979 Revolution*, Colby college, 2008

Women rights had changed after 1979 and it was totally different from the rights which shah had considered for them. Again women became the first tool for the new Islamic government. Another interview of Oriana Fallaci with Ayatollah Khomeini will be added regarding women rights after the revolution and democracy. Fallaci: when you speak of women, you connect them with the Islamic movement. But the question is this: Did these women were killed for freedom, or for Islam? Khomeini: for Islam. Women fought for Islam. Islam means everything. Also includes those things that you call freedom and democracy in your world. Yes, Islam includes everything. Because it is everything. Fallaci: So, Imam, what do you mean of democracy. You banned the world democratic in your country, by saying not a word more, not a word less. Khomeini: to begin with, the word Islam does not need any adjectives like democratic. Democracy is an adjective. Because Islam is everything, so it means everything. It is a shame for us to add another word next the word Islam, it is perfect alone.¹³⁹

The newly formed Islamic society after revolution was influenced from Iran-Iraq war. Because of the political and physical threat, there was a unity of men and women together and society became stronger after Saddam Hussain attack to the country. After Iran-Iraq ceasefire Iran became an important and powerful country in middle-east. In fact the long war with Iraq provided stronger policies on women, rather than the undermined policies on them.

After Iran-Iraq ceasefire and establishing the reconstruction government by president Rafsanjani, Iran experienced a new period of society, especially in women issues. Since 1989, as mentioned before, country was in a normal situations in every realm since ending the war with Iraq. Women rights issue which was ignored during war with Saddam Hussain like other issues in society, started to become flexible more than before. Three presidencies of Rafsanjani, Khatami and Ahmadinejad have different policies on women issues.

¹³⁹ Orianna Fallaci, *"An Interview with Khomeini"*, Newyork, October 1979

From those three presidencies, the most difficult one in women affairs was Rafsanjani presidency. Because after 1979 revolution, religion has been the basic part of society and women were at the center of it by a new version of worldwide modernity among the religious conservative leaders who had the political power as well. It is obvious that for moving forward, government need a strong and bright political person for balancing the modern ideology and the Islamic thoughts of revolution.

In those years, Iran's policies was based on religion and during Rafsanjani, women and men were not in competition to reach the gender equality in the country, due to religious visions in society. However Rafsanjani could manage it those years and lead it to other presidencies in a good way. Comparing with Khatami and Ahmadinejad, Khatami could continue and keep the values of Rafsanjani's government in women issues. His policies was on keeping the religious values by being updated with modernity. Both Rafsanjani and Khatami were the reformist leaders and by the fact that Rafsanjani's government was the first government in the reconstruction process of the country, but Khatami's government faced opposite opinions among conservatives religious leaders. His civilization slogan was the reason which make them critical. However he didn't give opportunity for women to enter parliament on his governmental posts, but his government was always fundamentally working in women affairs policy.

Civilization slogan was the door of entering modernity to the country, as modernity enters, the strong vision of hard religious thinkers became inconspicuous, and its benefit belongs women the most. However vice versa Ahmadinejad tried to close all doors to modernity. All doors of country to the developed societies. His policy about communicating with countries was not based on improving his society and his government was managing by his excited management. His poor political policies affected women issues as well. However his government used women in top political posts in his second round of presidency and brought them to power. Although women were useful in his government in the creation of state structure, but it was just a show off for getting attention after the controversial presidential elections in 2009. Ahmadinejad's government satisfy the religious leaders in women issues during his presidencies, thus his government never experienced any pressure of police forces and

no challenges from *Ulema* and religious establishment during his two rounds presidencies.

Gender equality has been always a subject in women issues. Islamisation policies in women rights had been increased from 2005 in Iran, a framework of Islamic thoughts to get the women rights in advance. Policy was based on encouraging women to stay in family. In contrast, Rafsanjani and Khatami who were encouraging women to attend in social activities. Khatami eased all restrictions in women activities and social participations by running country with freedom of expression, justice for women and dialogue of civilizations furthermore the parliament members who were reformist, had supported him and it led the country to a freer public sphere.

Rafsanjani and Khatami tended to remove the dictatorial sphere from Iranian female society by being more liberal instead of conservative. Furthermore, in the realm of politics, women were more visible during two presidencies of Khatami and Rafsanjani. By all these presidencies and their policies, women rights development during 1989-2005 was renewing the women statues after a long war with the neighbor country, however during 2005-2013 was the worst time of presidential policies to get women rights for gender equality.

All these three presidencies had both advantages and disadvantages in women rights. After late Rafsanjani who tried to improve self-confidence in women life and promoting them to attend in different social activities, his way of communication with the west and thought banning isolated policies, led the Iranian women society to a high position inside and outside of Iran, however gender segregation was clear during Ahmadinejad.

Like the early revolution, which men and women were totally separated from each other in different activities, during Ahmadinejad women experienced the same and it was a flash back to twenty years before. Women were supposed to be a separate citizenship from men in Iran, with different rules and state laws during his presidency. Although by new improving rules Rafsanjani and Khatami could manage and stop the conservative rules, but Ahmadinejad destroyed them all. Actually Ahmadinejad's

policy in women affairs was a symbolic power for state to control the country. The symbolic power which was the identity of Iranian Islamic Revolution. However Iranian women could maintain in regular and high-profile presence. Moreover, the interviews which were done in previous chapters reflect the kinds of changes in veiling issue, create changes on the minds of the people and the women rights.

Although women could keep their presences in the society during Ahmadinejad, but their political discussions were freer during Rafsanjani and Khatami. By comparing the policies of these three presidencies, and even connecting advantages and disadvantages, it is clear that, Iranian revolution is the only revolution in the world which could keep the national and international Iranian women validity and also could keep the social and economic welfare. Iranian women were not dependent to other societies after 1979 revolution regarding being provided inside Iran with both advantages and disadvantages of presidential policies. Since Iranian revolution get the power from western societies and let *Ulema* to have this power based on the *Islamic* rules, nevertheless this authority were inside the Iran.

In the realm of democracy in women affairs, Khatami and late Rafsanjani could keep this value rather than Ahmadinejad. In fact Ahmadinejad's government was after Khatami and Rafsanjani, but we do not see any improvement in women affairs during his presidency, just high governmental posts which was considered as a show off policy. The fact is that: there was a low supporting in women issue during Ahmadinejad. The structural and fundamental changes between presidencies of late Rafsanjani, Khatami and Ahmadinejad was: Rafsanjani and Khatami policies in women affairs was looking ahead to future and modernity by keeping Islamic values in society, furthermore, they tried to ban all restrictions for women improvement under the name of Islam and showed that women can get higher positions with Islamic policies as well ,however Ahmadinejad's women affairs policy was looking back and trying to control women in the society with faded rules policies in the twenty-first century.

One of the most effective policies in women affairs during all three presidencies was their diplomatic relations with other countries. Iranian foreign policy, after 1979

revolution, was in the top level of Iranian diplomacy during Rafsanjani and Khatami. As the leaders get more open to the outside world, they provided more opportunities for women. Thus, women affairs improved in late Rafsanjani and Khatami the most.

Some of the advantages of Rafsanjani and Khatami was related to the communication with other societies, especially west countries. Their way of creation a connection with other countries paved the way for Iranian Muslim women to be improved by each steps by the new world forward. Rafsanjani's policy in women affairs acting was harder than Khatami due to the reconstructing the country. Khatami's policy in dialogue of civilization eased the way of this policy. However, his government was under lots of pressures of conservative leaders. Both presidents ignored the theory that 'Islam is anti-modern'. They had related Islam and modernity together in the Iranian government politics. These related issues influenced women affairs as well. Thus, women who were the identity of Iranian Islamic Republic from 1979 revolution, became freer in social activities.

By rejecting the belief that Islam is the religion of ignorance, they could have a modern society in the new Iranian politics for women. Rafsanjani's government need more time for changing the male-dominated culture. However his policy in women issues caused the increasing members of female activities, which is undoubtable the only female high presences in society among all revolutions. Khatami's concern in the sphere of women activities and society presentation was the same as late Rafsanjani. Otherwise, Ahmadinejad female policy was based on making women stay at home and decreasing their presences in society. One of Ahmadinejad's problematic issues in his government, was the sanction imposed on Iran.

Due to sanctions and economic problems, women were the first victims in Iran of losing jobs and leaving the labor forces. By these actions, they were good reasons for Ahmadinejad's government to have a male-dominated society. The male-dominated situations which Rafsanjani's government tried to remove it from society. His policy on women issues destroyed all efforts of Rafsanjani and Khatami and it caused the controvertial presidential elections in 2009.

Again it should be considered that the president in Iran is not the top decision maker in the country. The top governmental post in Iran is *Valy-e-gaqih* , however there are three powers in Iran with their own duties, named : Legislature, Judiciary and Executive power. Moreover, the president authorities is limited to the Executive power.

In the end, women in Iran comparing in both pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary era, pre-revolutionary during Pahlavi regime and during the presidencies of Rafsanjani, Khatami and Ahmadinejad after revolutions, were always influenced by different policies. They have never received any democratic state structure in the pre-revolutionary as was mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. The dynasty regime used them for modernity symbols, and in the post-revolutionary period they were the symbols of Islam. They are a part of Iranian culture, and Iranian politics, unexpected. They have never been the Iranian citizens, they are only the Iranian symbols. However, the presidencies of Rafsanjani and Khatami was improving women issues towards all limitations. By all policies, today Iranian women are in the same level of knowledge and after more than three decades of 1979 revolution, they have enough self-confidence to compete with the first world countries women in all areas and no Islamic rules could prevent them to be improved.



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