

## Understanding the Evolutions of Iranian Women's Identity

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### ABSTRACT

The living and social nature of women has always been questioned by traditional and modern political systems, forces and social currents, from both religious and secular sides. To explain this subject methodically, the problem of research can be made more comprehensible by formulating the concept of "Living Shi'ism", which is considered as a manifestation of collective unconsciousness and the context of political and social action. The main question of the article is what the role, weight and influence of Living Shi'ism ideas are in the processes of shaping women's political and social behaviors in contemporary Iranian history? Living Shi'ism in Iran is not entirely Shiite, but it borrowed concepts and received influences as a result of interaction and intellectual contact with intellectual currents and ideologies. Findings showed the process of political and social identification of Iranian women is influenced by a set of thinking styles and patterns based on Shiite teachings or alienation and borrowing from new intellectual currents making any socio-political status conditional on their acceptance and reform. Patterns such as modern Iranian woman, Shiite autocratic woman, left feminist woman, armed Mujahid woman, housewife with hijab, Religious Modern woman and the emergence of dual hijab /veil and woman with hijab /chaste woman are examples of empathy or women's encounter with Living Shi'ism in different periods of Iranian contemporary history. Hence social structures such as unveiling, forced hijab, the transformation of hijab from a religious to political matter, and the formation of foregoing currents are not sudden, but a gradual process of women's biological interaction with Iranian society.

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## 1. Introduction

The present study contains a discussion on the Iranian women in contemporary era. In the fourteenth century, there were many actors, including political systems, religious and secular forces, political and social

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thinkers, each of whom tried to shape ideas and introduce archetypes to women according to their ideas and will. Living Shi'ism as a form of life in contemporary Iranians is a set of models based on the values and norms of the Shiite religion that has an accepted, legitimate and applied form at the individual and social levels. The Living Shi'ism elements of women in this study with an emphasis on Bodily Experience (imperative patterns on women's bodies, including type of clothing, quality of presence, etc.) with the definition of social and political attitudes, has become a unique way of thinking in each period (Thurfjell, 2006:75). In contemporary Iran, political and social events have marked the transformation of the position of women in society, and the issue of women can be understood in the form of innovative and ijtehad affairs<sup>1</sup>. In the present study, Living Shi'ism is not completely dependent on political systems but feeds from various sources as a fluid case and formulates, prescribes various patterns and even distorts or transforms some secular patterns<sup>2</sup>. For example, the position of "queen" never took shape (except for a short period in the late Pahlavi period) in the long history of the Iranian monarchy influenced by the collective unconscious elements of ancient Iran and Living Shi'ism; instead, the phenomenon of the "Harem" as a non-Shiite and non-Iranian element finds considerable historical permanence in the history of Iran. The issue addressed in the research can be effective in understanding why women in contemporary Iran were seen as a "social problem" both by the secular political system of the first Pahlavi and by Shiite religious forces such as the society of Devotees of Islam (*Jamiat Fadaiyan-e-Islam*). Thus, it is worth studying to find out how some fundamental ideas emerged in contemporary Iran and influenced women and made the face of contemporary Iranian women modern? Naturally, in this course of evolution, not only one single

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1. Some travelogues, such as the travelogue of Jean Chardin and the travelogue of Ms. Awliya Kermani, present general anthropological data on the status of women.

2. In this regard, we can refer to the formation of Shiite feminism after the Islamic Revolution, which is trying to borrow and blend the concept of elements of Shiism and feminism. For more information, see Karami, Mohammad Taghi and others (2013)

political system, or a current and an individual, but several factors were involved, which this study tries to address.

## **2. Research methodology**

The theoretical framework of the present study is shaped by the methodology of Stuart Hughes. The main purpose of this study is to clarify how from the time of the pre-constitutional developments until the end of the fourteenth century SH, different perceptions of the position and function of Iranian women were formed, which had not been relevant before then. Stuart Hughes, emphasizing the interaction of text and reality, considers the full understanding of thinkers' thoughts to be dependent on the understanding of the environment and the understanding of the social environment on the understanding of the ideas of that period. One of the key concepts in this research is Style of Thought. At the heart of the concept of style of thought lies an interaction between and among thinkers of a century. By emphasizing the inherent similarity, ideas can be found which on the surface may not be similar to each other (Hughes: 2007: 34). In Hughes's methodology, Style of thought is an attempt to find common ground among thinkers of an age. Intellectual history is another main concept in this article. In the intellectual history approach, the social and individual environment is as important as the thought or even more important, and individuals are like heroes who have created concepts and ideas. In intellectual history, the social and individual environment is as important as the thought itself, and individuals are the protagonists. The author of intellectual history tries to get to know a period through the important and prominent ideas of that period, and the ideas are not always unified and pure, but are mixed with different and fragmented elements. As a result, it is necessary to decipher how some key thoughts and ideas surfaced in contemporary Iran and influenced women and transformed them into people whom we can see at the present time. Naturally, in this evolution, not just a political system, a current and an individual, but several factors have played a role which this study tries to address.

### 3. Theoretical foundations of research

Living Shi'ism of Iranian women is influenced by two fundamental propositions and their interpretations. First, according to the common interpretation in the view of the Qur'an, any domination of women over men is forbidden<sup>1</sup>. However, Nasr Hamed Abu Zayd, one of the neo-Mu'tazilite thinkers, considers these interpretations to be historical and often related to the ethnicities that have gradually introduced it to Islam (Moslehzadeh, 2021). Similar to the approach of Ibn Rushd, the philosopher from the Islamic Morocco, who considers the issue of illegitimacy of women's political and religious positions as a proposition not in Arabic but influenced by Iranian society, which has gradually entered Islamic literature (Feirahi, 2010)

The second statement is the well-known interpretation of "the deficiency of women" attributed to the first Imam of the Shiites<sup>2</sup>. However, in recent research, this interpretation has been criticized and analyzed in terms of time, and context of writing the text. For example, in a study, the image of a woman in Nahj al-Balaghah is compared with the image of a woman in other books of the time, and it is concluded that the image in Nahj al-Balaghah is consistent with the anti-feminist view of Iraq in the age of text collection, thus the idea did not reflect the thoughts of the first Shiite Imam. (Inloes, 2015)

The issue of women in the Iranian social scene begins with the pre-constitutional developments and through the Iranians' acquaintance with the West and the necessity of renewal and the modernization of society in the middle of the Qajar period. The Constitutional Revolution, like other areas, was effective in transforming the role and social status of women and opened new horizons for their political and social figures (Farhadivand, 2020). Among the means of this transformation was the establishment of public schools and publications, which were established with the efforts of

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1. The Holy Quran, An-Nisa / 34

٢...إِنَّ النِّسَاءَ نَوَاقِصُ الْإِيمَانِ نَوَاقِصُ الْخَطُوطِ نَوَاقِصُ الْعُقُودِ

O people! Women are deficient in Faith, deficient in shares and deficient in intelligence ... For more information, see Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 80

intellectual women and some constitutionalist intellectual representatives. Namous School, Jandarak, and Dar-Al-Moalemat College, which were among the first and most important educational centers of their time, as well as associations and publications, were a desirable practical platform for women to revitalize women's capacities (Bamdad, 1967:33). Among the first women's publications, we can mention "Zaban-e Zanan" (Language of Women) under the management of Sedigheh Dolatabadi in Isfahan and "Namey-e Banovan" (Women's Letter) under the management of Shahnaz Azad. These two publications mentioned the purpose of their publication as "the awakening and salvation of the poor and oppressive women of Iran" (Nouri Niyaraki, 2019:59).

### **3.1. Religious Currents**

It should be said that Shiites in Iran are not a homogeneous current of thought and depending on receiving and understanding of Shiite teachings, they have various interpretations of women's duties, functions and issues. From a historical and jurisprudential point of view, the Akhbari/Usuli dispute was the opening of inter-religious debates and one of the turning points in Living Shi'ism of women. This conflict became a real challenge at the political and social level during the Qajar period.

Akhbari approach with emphasis on the continuation of the role of Imam, did not feel the need to invent a new method for the interpretation and implementation of jurisprudence and considered it sufficient to rely on existing narrations and hadiths (news); In contrast, Usuli approach, the existence of some kind of institutional guiding organization was necessary for society, and the task of the world was not merely to study the news, but the methodology of jurisprudence (principles). One of the consequences of the victory of the Usuli school over the Akhbaris was the dynamism of Shiite jurisprudence in the context of the conditions of time and the requirements of society and Usuli teachings caused a more flexible perception of the application of jurisprudence in emerging social issues and in later periods

provided the necessary jurisprudential background for women in Living Shi'ism. Relying on this approach, Akhund Khorasani raised issues such as the permissibility of feeding Muslim children from the milk of non-Muslim mothers, and the permission of a Muslim man to marry women of the Book (Sabour, 2010:124). Ayatollah Naeini, while defending the education of women in schools, and not extending the lack of hijab of women in the West to Iranian women answered to the criticisms of Sheikh Fazlullah Nouri about freedom, equality of rights, the establishment of girls' schools and the lack of hijab for women after the Constitutional Revolution. Shortly after, Ayatollah Modarres also proposed new views on women's clothing, emphasizing that there is no legal obligation to cover a woman's hands and face in terms of hijab (Khajeh Nouri, 1978:81).

The establishment of the seminary in Qom in 1922 gave the clergy a policy-making and executive focus to deal with social anomalies, though this confrontation did not take place directly with the political system. Due to the construction of the absolute Pahlavi government and their complete domination of society, religious forces had a defensive role and negative accompaniment until September 1941. Therefore, there was no serious reaction to the clash between Reza Shah and Ayatollah Bafghi as a result of Bafghi's protest against the entry of unveiled court women into the shrine in Qom. On the other hand, the influence of new ideas as well as time conditions were not ineffective in this defensive approach. For example, in the years when women were not allowed to wear chadors, a woman in a long coat and hat gets to Ayatollah Abdul Karim Haeri, the founder of the seminary in Qom, and asked about her dress as a religious hijab, which Ayatollah Haeri also confirmed.

Haeri, when confronted with the objection to why it is expedient and not to consider the chador as a hijab, responds by calling his statement a divine decree (Mohaghegh Damad, 2000). In another fatwa, he said that praying in "western- like clothes" was not prohibited (Haeri Yazdi, 2015:38). During the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, jurists and some religious figures gradually

entered the field of theorizing and pragmatism, depending on their perception of Shiite teachings. One of the first jurisprudential positions on women was taken by Seyyed Mohammad Behbahani (1874-1963) who, along with a group of Mujtahids, forbade the appearance of unveiled women in public places (Akhavi, 1993:68). However, jurists and religious figures did not agree on the type and quality of women's hijab. For example, Allameh Tabatabai (1901-1981) proposed the Islamic hijab in the form of a cover and in his view the purpose of hijab is that a woman should not show and have to cover herself in any way. Therefore, the chador is not the target itself, but also the cover (and coverer) is of significance (Rakhshad, 2002:31).

### **3.1.1. The Pattern of a Family-Oriented Woman with Hijab**

The society of Devotees of Islam (*Jamiat Fadaian-e-Islam*) by defining women as a problem of society and religion, sought to solve the problem and provide suggestions for the establishment of a women's university, women's factory, and women's participation in Friday prayers. In addition to being influenced by the *Muslim Brotherhood* (*Jamā'at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*) and its leaders, especially Seyyed Qutb in the political sphere, *Jamiat Fadaian-e-Islam* was also influenced by social issues such as women's social roles, hijab, freedoms and rights (Bouzarinezhad, 2019). *Jamiat Fadaian-e-Islam* tried to counter the process of secularization of women's social-legal sphere by Reza Shah and the activities of groups such as Bahmad Azadegan (Ahmad Kasravi's followers). Sayyed Mojtaba Mirlohi, known as Navvab Safavi considered women to be corruptive and problematic. He believed that "the fire of lust from the naked bodies of women ... burn the society", so the hijab of women saves the society (Mirlohi, 1989:81). To rectify the situation, he presented plans for government ministries, and instructed the Pahlavi Interior Ministry to hold Friday and congregational prayers throughout the country and for women to attend, expand temporary marriages, and separate men and women in public places (Mirlohi, 1950:29). From Fadaian-e-

Islam's view, women's employment depends on the establishment of women's offices and factories with female managers (ibid.).

### **3.1.2. The model of a non-political woman**

The thinking style of jurists such as Ayatollah Khomeini in this period influenced by the bodily experience, the presence and participation of women in political affairs and decision-making for society, considered a kind of guardianship that was not permissible for women. The difference between Ayatollah Khomeini's views in 1962 on the prohibition of political suffrage for women and in 1979 on the invitation of women to participate in referendums, elections and demonstrations can also be analyzed in this regard. During this period, for Ayatollah Khomeini, deprivation of speech freedom, expression, and thought took precedence over women's political freedom. Therefore, he believed that "the issue of women's right to participate in elections is not an obstacle, but their right to be elected leads to prostitution". Ayatollah Khomeini later, in a joint statement with a group of clerics, stressed the illegitimacy of the women's participation plan in the elections. This trend and positions, of course, changed due to the living Shi'ism developments of women and also the need for political and social mobilization of women in the Islamic Revolution.

Yet Imam's opposition to women's suffrage in the White Revolution was not in any way due to his opposition to the presence of women. He legally raised the question if women's suffrage had been in the constitution, why it had not been implemented up until then and if it had not been in the constitution why it was added back then. Imam was aware of the regime's manipulation in this matter and the possible abuse of women. (Khomeini:1986:235)

### **3.1.3. The anti-tyranny free Woman model**

Women were one of the most active social strata in the developments leading up to the 1978 revolution. About 150 of the martyrs of the Islamic



Revolution were women. Therefore, the presence of women was the main topic of the 1978 revolution. Therefore; The political and religious leaders of the revolution also commented on the situation of women in line with the developments. Hence, the situation of women was also subject to post-revolutionary developments. The central signifier of Ayatollah Taleghani's political speech was the abolition of tyranny and freedom. Therefore, the issue of women should be analyzed from the perspective of his view of these issues. For Ayatollah Taleghani, freedom arises from divine rights and in connection with religion, tolerance and the denial of tyranny. For him, it was possible to establish democracy and its real carriers in the light of the Islamic justice, and in the next step, systematization was achieved by emphasizing the establishment of democratic institutions such as the council, the right to vote for all, including women, and direct participation in their destiny. (Taleghani, 1979) Taleghani's main innovation regarding women was the legitimacy of women's presence and activity in the council system and not limiting hijab to chador but believing in covering. (Ibid)

#### **3.1.4. The model of a housewife Woman with hijab**

The Shiite clergy have learned through alienation and leftist organizational models that inclusive political and social mobilization was not possible without women. Influenced by the political atmosphere, it emphasized on women's participation by observing hijab and prioritizing the educational and childbearing role of women with employment. This model was invented and propagated by Ayatollah Morteza Motahari. In this model, the first duty of a woman is motherhood and housekeeping, and the precondition for entering into political and social issues is hijab (Motahari, 2019:56). Although Ayatollah Motahari considered the power of female superiority over man in emotional matters but not in intellect and body, he considered man as the head of the family and woman as a member of this circle. A man is eligible to ban a woman from a certain job based upon the family interests (Ibid:61).

### **3.1.5. The model of an autocratic Shiite woman**

Ali Shariati highlighted the yesterday's solutions to the problem of today's women, and with the help of reconstructed logic (Spragens, 2020:48) considered "Fatemeh and Zeinab" as "reconstructed women for modern society" as materials through which, women's social capital of ideological Islam was formed. Shariati's invention is in the construction of the archetype and theoretical formulation of the historical and Islamic woman. She calls Fatemeh, Zeinab and Marie Curie the role models of Iranian women. Criticizing the current situation of Iranian women, Shariati (1971) believed that women in Islamic society have become a "child-rearing factory" and are more of a "mother of a child" and a "wife for the husband" and the social role of the woman is reduced to a "washing machine" and her human understanding to a "mother of a child". Shariati portrays three distinct existential figures of Iranian women, including traditional women, European modern women, and Fatemeh-like in society, one of whom had to be chosen over the time.

First, the traditional and pretender to piety woman who recognizes the old and current traditions and customs biased and unknowingly in the society as the only right way of life. The second is the modern European-like woman, who has become alien to herself and accepts the western way of life and values as a way of modernization and progress. While the third category is a woman who thinks like Fatima as the symbol of chastity in Islam; It has political and social responsibilities and has no passive role. This woman knows both the faces of the inherited traditional woman and the imported woman, and knows that neither is compatible with Islam, humanity and freedom (Shariati, 2005:96).

Shariati (1971) considered historical inequalities for women to include male headship, polygamy, temporary marriage, hijab, and marital financial obligations (dowry, alimony). Shariati found hijab as a "conscious cover" and "Islamic ruling" and considered it different from 'chador'. In his opinion, 'chador' was a form of clothing in the past, which was a sign of

reputation and prestige but in today's world, it is considered as an obstacle to women (Shariati, 2005:37).

### **3.1.6. Religious Modernism Model**

Ali Shariati attempted to employ old solutions for problems of women today. Using reconstructed logic instead of logic-in-use, he considered "Fatima and Zainab" as "archetypes" to be used as role models through whom ideological Islam's social capital for women could be rebuilt. Shariati's innovation is the construction of the archetype and theoretical formulation of a historical, Islamic woman. Criticizing the situation of Iranian women, he believed that women in Islamic society had become a "child-rearing factory" and were not recognized on their merits but they were thought of as "mother of a child" and "wife of a man". He further argued that a woman's social role was more like that of a "washing machine" and her human understanding was limited to rearing a child (Shariati; 1971: 127). Shariati depicts three distinct pictures for Iranian women: the traditional woman, the modern European woman, and the Fatimi woman from whom the women of that period had to choose one (Shariati; 2005: 39). He identified some historical inequalities including male-dominated families, polygamy, and temporary marriage (Shariati; 1971: 35). Shariati defended hijab as a "chosen cover" and an "Islamic ruling". He also considered hijab distinct from chador. According to him, in the past, chador was a form of clothing that was a sign of prestige and group identity, but in today's world, it is more like a hindrance which limits women (ibid: 37). In general, regarding the thinking style of women in this period, we should mention the forces that shaped their style of thinking: religious forces, left forces, national and religious forces, and the Pahlavi government. The process of secularization of women, which began in Reza Shah Pahlavi's period, faced serious obstacles including religious forces, leftists, and some women who wanted to play a role in politics and society. Therefore, the political establishment in 1962 responded to some of the demands and recognized women's right to vote and involvement in politics.

With the passage of this law, more than 20 women entered the Senate, the National Assembly and the executive branch. Although religious groups were trying to limit women socially and politically, other political currents such as the Tudeh Party, the National Front, elites and women intellectuals, were able to bring about a major change regarding women's role. One of the most important results of the fusion of Shiite living, Shi'ism and women's affairs after the Islamic Revolution is the emergence of a new religious thought. After the Islamic Revolution, some women as well as some modernist clerics questioned how Iranian women's approach with emphasis on Shiite living should be formulated given dramatic changes in Iran and modernization of the country. One of these models is religious modernism. Women who believed in this model, accepted to observe hijab but at the same time strived for more involvement in social and political affairs. In fact, this group wanted to launch a new initiative through which they could adhere to religious principles and rules, and at the same time stay politically and socially involved in the modern world. This model tried to harmonize the freedom of women and their legal equality with those of men within the framework of the Islamic Republic by interpreting Islamic laws. From this perspective, we can refer to the views and opinions of thinkers in this respect. For example, Seyyed Mohammad Hussein Fazlullah considers men and women to be equal in intellect. Seyyed Mohammad Ishaq Fayyaz in his book "The position of women in the political system of Islam" by presenting a special definition of sharia and non-sharia governments, considers it permissible for women to hold all public positions such as leadership, judgeship, military commandership and religious authority position.

In addition to afore-mentioned individuals, Yousef Sanei and Seyyed Musa Sadr can also be mentioned as the jurisprudential supporters of this model. Influenced by the views of some religious modernists such as Mohammad Mehdi Shamsuddin and new political and social developments, Ayatollah Sanei began a new formulation of women, society and politics under the title of "women are equal to men and can be guardians" (Sanei:

2013). He believed that the problem of existing laws on women is their incompatibility with Islam and the developments of modern societies (Ibid).

Therefore, he did not consider Maleness and masculinity as a condition in guardianship, leadership, being a religious authority, judgeship and other aspects of a jurist. Ayatollah Sanei also pointed to the transience of some laws and the impact of geographical factors and society on women. He also believed in the legal and intellectual equality between men and women. Furthermore, he maintained that women and men should be treated equally in retribution, blood money and attestation. He declared man's marrying to other women without the consent of his wife haram and determined thirteen as the age of puberty for girls. Ayatollah Sanei stated that the mother could have the guardianship of her children after her husband's demise (ibid). According to Sadr, one of the most important obstacles to improve the status of women in Islamic societies is the integration of the social habits of some nations with the original Islamic teachings. Therefore, he believed separating these habits from Islamic teachings is necessary to clarify views of Islam for contemporary women. Sadr saw hijab as a "women's weapon to harness the outbreak of femininity" and believed that women should be present in society without signs of femininity. Sadr also took an innovative view of marriage, arguing that the Qur'an has introduced marriage of two Muslims as a small democratic institution in which man and woman could determine the limits of their authority on the basis of a prior agreement (Sadr, 2018: 91-95). In terms of the effects of intellectual forces, it should be noted that the growth of social interactions and networks, the increase of immigration and social criticism, as well as the necessities of modern life, have introduced new forms of unconventional female functions into Iranian society. The prevalence of white marriage, the departure of reproduction outside the conventional framework (sperm bank), has shaped the patterns of women's lives very differently from the past. In addition, the role transformation from a mother into a wife and non-adherence to modern childbearing patterns are new dimensions of contemporary Iranian women's lifestyle.

In general, regarding the thinking style of women in the Islamic Republic, it should be noted that in this period, the experience of the biological body and the social body are tied to the political body of women and create new concepts such as revolutionary, mujahid and ideologically independent women. Changing laws related to women in all areas, changing the time of Mother's Day are religious and political symbols which are helpful in understanding the social and lifestyle changes of women in the Islamic Republic. Regarding women's Shiite living, with the re-adoption of the family planning policy in the 1980s, Shiite clergy began a jurisprudential rethink in terms of fertility and reproduction. Therefore, in 1989, the government announced a program called "Family Planning", according to which the Ministries of Health, Culture, Higher Education, Education and Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting were responsible for implementing various educational and propaganda programs in order to create the right culture to control the population. When Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa on population control stating that "there is no problem in controlling the population if it does not cause infertility and if it is necessary to control the population". Following this fatwa not only the government but also Friday congregational leaders across the country tried to convince people to pursue Family Planning policy.

### **3.1.7. The Model of a Mujahid Woman with a Hijab**

The study of the position and role of women on the fronts and battlefields is less discussed from a historical perspective. About 7,000 women lost their lives in the geography of Iran between 1980 and 1988, and the number of female disabled veterans reached 9,000 (Ohadi, 2021). Unlike most previous models, this approach was spontaneously introduced by Iranian women. The ideology and propaganda of the war was mainly focused on the presence of women behind the scenes providing the logistical services required by male soldiers, and the direct presence of women on the Iran-Iraq war front remained silent.

The memoirs of people such as Zohreh Hosseini, Fatemeh Jooshi and Masoumeh Ramhormozi have shown they have been ridiculed for their field presence and have been asked to cook rather than to fight. (Mateo Mohammad, 2020:76) The eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, like the Revolution of 1978, became a vehicle for Iranian women to take action to consolidate their position in Iranian society. For women during the war, 18 roles have been enumerated, including driver, nurse, doctor, soldier, guardian of the ammunition depot and lifeguard of the captured Iraqi commander, pilot, defender of the bodies of the martyrs, and so on. Shahnaz Haji Shah, Shahla Deh Bozorgi, Leila Hassanzadeh, Tahmineh Ardakani were the most prominent representatives of this model.

### **3.2. Political & Social Currents Affecting Living Shi'ism**

As mentioned, various factors and currents are involved in shaping the living Shi'ism of the women, the political system, social forces and intellectuals to name a few.

#### **3.2.1. Semi-secular Political Systems of the First and Second Pahlavi**

##### **Iranian woman as a social Problem,**

Women, as one of the social strata, were considered by Reza Shah as one of the most important forces for authoritarian development, and a change in their position and social role was inevitable for him. Reza Shah (1960) believed in the need to change the position of women in Iran, unlike the past when women were not considered to shape "half of our country's population", as if half of the country's working forces were disabled and women were not considered part of Iran's population. Therefore, he advised the women to define and play a social and economic role for themselves (Pahlavi, 1960: 86). During this period, two major developments took place towards Iranian women. First, the emergence of Iranian women as a social problem and second, the beginning of the process of secularization of women via de-sharia and the transformation of women into citizens and the

definition of individual and social rights independent of men. In line with this approach, the government bureaucracy established the "Iranian Women's Center" with the aim of promoting issues related to education, health, fashion, and housekeeping. Also, for the first time in the official calendar of Iran, a day called Woman / Mother's Day was invented on the occasion of the establishment of the Mother and Infant Support Agency on December 16, 1961.

The 37-year period of the second Pahlavi is also very similar to the previous period. Many of the actions of religious currents during this period, such as those of the left and intellectuals, were either in line with the previous trend, or, like the Jamiat Fadaiyan-e-Islam and other religious forces, were in response to previous developments such as the Hijab Prohibition Act. Along with the political and social developments, the period after the occupation of Iran in September 1941 up to the coup d'etat of 1953, when the Shah needed to modernize power and rebuild a modern absolute government, provided a suitable space for women to organize and improve their capacity to play a role in political and social developments. In this regard, Mohammad Reza Shah believed that the issue of the discovery of hijab was an example of corrective measures, and after Reza Shah's deportation, some women deviated from the rules related to the discovery of hijab; But "the government and I have chosen to leave this to our normal course and not resort to force to implement it (Pahlavi, 1960:215).

The more serious entry of women into politics and society became more prominent during this period, and after the Tudeh Party, the Democratic Party of Iran, founded by Ahmad Ghavam in 1945, became one of the first parties to formally form the "Women's Branch" which emphasized the equal rights of men and women and the right of women to participate in elections (Modir Shanechi, 2015:29). The given model of Mohammad Reza Shah for women was followed via state means such as radio, television, cinema and publications.



Holding national ceremonies such as “Teen Princess”, publishing women's magazines of “Etela’at” and “Zan-e Rooz”, etc. were among the most important channels for the socialization of modern Iranian women. After the failure of the Iranian Women's Association, which was established in 1935 to socialize and educate a new generation of modern and non-religious women, the government merged all committees and organizations and established the "Supreme Council of the Iranian Women's Association" in 1959 with the aim of combating women's illiteracy (Sanasarian, 2005:118). The failure of the Supreme Council of Women in achieving the set goals led to its dissolution in 1966 and the government's re-intervention in women's organizations by replacing the Supreme Council with the "Iranian Women's Organization". The mission of this organization was to provide welfare, educational, legal, advertising and political services to women.

This organization (1966-1978) was established with the aim of organizing associations, women's organizations and advancing government modernization programs in the field of women, some of which were presented during the White Revolution (Abrahamian, 1982: 245).

### **3.2.2. Left & Marxist Forces**

Restrictions on religious forces during Reza Shah's reign provided a good opportunity for left-wing forces to strengthen social activities. The Women's Awakening Society (1926-1929) was established with the aim of developing educational activities, holding reading and writing classes, eradicating illiteracy, and forming an acting board (Kambakhsh, 1972:64).

In 1927, the *Jamiat of Peyke Saadat Nesvan* (The Women's Happiness Messenger Association) started discussing issues such as the emancipation of women in the country of councils, the false and childish image from social inequality between men and women due to physical differences (issue 6), and the critique on temporary marriage (issue 4).

The branches of the association were also established in Isfahan, Qazvin and Tehran. In Shiraz, the Women's Revolutionary Assembly was founded by the famous poet Zandakht Shirazi in 1927, and published articles concerning criticizing women's hijab, promoting freedom and equality of women's rights in a magazine called "Iranian Girls" (Dokhtaran-e Iran) (Farokhzad, 2002:28).

Taghi Arani, one of the most important leftist figures of this period, in his article "Women and Materialism" and other leftist thinkers criticizing Reza Shah's authoritarian reforms in the field of women believed that, "pulling out Chador of old women in public places" in a situation where "Tehran lacked tap water" was considered a reason for the misguidance of these actions (Tabari, 2016:75).

### **3.2.3. The model of left feminism (Tudeh Party)**

In the years after the 1941s, the Tudeh Party of Iran, with the creation of the "High Council of Women" and then the "Organization of Women's Party", laid the groundwork for the liberation from the male political organization and formed an important institution in the political socialization of Iranian women. Following Marxism, the party found the oppression of Iranian women a historical issue, not a biological one (Yvonne Davis, 1983:8). Hence, they viewed the issue of women from the perspective of Marxist feminism, and argued that women's emancipation is their participation in production while depending on the overthrow of the capitalist system.

The activities of the Tudeh Party were created after the 1941s with the formation of the "Women's Organization" for the members and then for the followers of the party. In 1946, this organization gave way to the "Democratic Women's Organization" which emphasized holding a national congress of women, asking for full equality between men and women, protecting women's suffrage, and encouraging women to ignore the election law and participate in the 1953 referendum (Abrahamian, 1982:96). The model also focused on the justice-seeking aspects of women's rights, the

issue of poverty and discrimination, and the liberating aspects of Marxism. They called for the determination of political and social rights for women, equal men for equal work, the establishment of literacy classes for women, sports and educational clubs for women, and more schools for girls. Of course, it should be noted that the Tudeh Party of Iran, which in the first period of its activity (1941-1953) was associated with the most advanced demands of the fledgling women's movement, and became an active and modern party for women. After the Islamic Revolution when they faced some challenges concerning women and society, the Tudeh Party advised women to wear the "anti-imperialist veil". The transformation of the Tudeh Party from the class struggle to the struggle against imperialism changed the Tudeh view of women. The common function of the statements announcing the existence of various women's organizations was the emphasis on "working women" and "participation in anti-imperialist struggle" (Donya, 1979).

#### **3.2.4. National & Intellectual Forces**

The National Front's intellectual borrowing from Mohammad Mosaddegh's views makes it necessary to study his views on women. In general, Mosaddegh believed in equal rights for men and women, opposed polygamy, and agreed to give women the right to vote (Mosaddegh, 1999, 30-32).

In his critique of polygamy, Mosaddegh argued that polygamy has socially abnormal effects, and if it is considered that a woman should belong to only one man and should not have relations with several men; likewise, a man should be in relationship with only one women in the name of justice (ibid.).

Mosaddegh was one of the serious opponents of "unveiling" during the reign of Reza Shah; at the same time, he believed these issues should be resolved peacefully and through the 'evolution' and development of the people." (Key Ostovan, 1948:63). His suggestion was to implement it gradually and to start it from the schoolgirls (ibid. p.34). In December 1952,

the Mosaddegh government proposed a law on women's participation in elections (Rahnama, 2005:69). In the field of intellectuals, the 'Jangal movement', Seyyed Jamaluddin Asadabadi, Mirzadeh Eshghi and some influential women in this period have considerable views and actions.

Although Seyyed Jamal al-Din al-Asadabadi (1838-1896) in the period of Nasser al-Din Shah in private and open letters emphasized the necessity to establish a sharia government to implement Islamic rules (Khosrowshahi, 2000:49), he opposed wearing veil at a time when most Muslims considered it necessary to wear it and he believed, "unveiling is good if it does not result in corruption (because) a woman's strength is in her nature (Razavi, 2018:36).

In its code of conduct, the Jungle Movement also included clauses on women's rights, including "the complete freedom of human beings to use their natural powers," freedom of thought, opinion, and assemblies, as well as equality between men and women in civil and social rights (Rezazadeh *Fakhrayi*, 1965: 22-36).

In the post-Islamic period, the growth of communication and interactive social networks, the increase of immigration and social criticism, as well as the necessities of modern life, have introduced new forms of unconventional female functions into Iranian society. The prevalence of white marriage, going beyond the traditional framework of reproduction (sperm bank), has shaped the patterns of women's lives very differently from the past. The combination of these factors caused women to face a generational gap in the field of norms and behaviors. Also, the transformation of the role of mother to wife, non-adherence to new patterns of childbearing and definition of a private sphere for women and economic capabilities in the framework of financial independence are the new dimensions of contemporary Iranian women.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Models such as the modern Iranian woman, the Shiite independent woman, the leftist feminist woman, the armed committed woman, the housewife woman, the ideologically independent woman, the religious modernist model are examples of compatibility and confrontation of the Iranian women with the Shiite living in different periods of contemporary Iranian history. This study tried to discover how duties and political and social functions of women were influenced by different currents of thought from the Constitutional Revolution until the end of the fourteenth century (Solar Hijri). The position of women in the social relations in Iranian society has always been affected by teachings of Islam, especially Shiism. Therefore, as shown in this study, women's Shiite living is not a pure and unaffected concept, but a concept influenced by currents of thoughts and thinkers, each of them has had an impact on the formation of women's thinking style throughout the fourteenth century (SH). Shiite Islam, through its rituals, emotions, processes, and religious experiences, has turned into a system which is present in all stages of Iranian women's life and gives meaning to it. Results of these life interactions are also in the form of representation of female "self", political and legal endeavors, expansion of hijab from a female bodily experience into a political and religious conflict, transformation of Shiite values, tastes and rituals (such as party and organizational marriage in MEK) and introduction of just religious and secular gender equality models. In addition, at the heart of Shiite living, intellectual conflicts such as the conflict between a free woman and a Muslim woman, a modern woman with a traditional woman, or more specifically the duality of veil / hijab can be identified. They all have their own jurisprudential and social representatives and proponents who have expressed themselves in different shapes and forms over time.

The impact of political developments on Living-Shi'ism has been such that developments such as the Islamic Revolution and the eight-year war against Iraq, provided a good platform for stabilizing the presence and

activities of women. Shiite Islam and Living-Shi'ism in Iran in the fourteenth century AH, through rituals, emotions and religious processes and experiences has become a system that is present in all life stages of Iranian women and makes it meaningful. The outcomes of this living interaction are the representation of the female "I", political and legal endeavors, the extension of the hijab from a female body experience to political and religious conflict, the essential Shiite transformation of values, tastes and rituals (such as party and organizational marriage), and the creation of gender justice models in the form of Shiite feminism. Also in the heart of Living-Shi'ism, intellectual and discourse conflicts such as the conflict between free and Muslim woman, modern and traditional woman, woman with hijab and woman with chastity, or more specifically the duality of cover/hijab or conflict of hijab/ chastity can be enlisted as having their own jurisprudential and social representatives which have different appearance in terms of the historical context upon the objective situation.

It seems, with a better understanding of the historical trends and evolution of women in contemporary Iran, which is not entirely Shiite and is influenced by various intellectual and socio-political currents, it is possible to better comprehend the relationship between Iranian women and society and governance in the Living-Shi'ism context. From this perspective, unveiling is not entirely taken by Reza Shah Pahlavi, but the compulsory wearing of the hijab after the Islamic Revolution is supported by a priori social and cultural contexts, not matters that are formed suddenly and cannot be attributed to one single person or a lone political event.

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