

Socio-Political Rights of Iranian Women before and After the Islamic Revolution; a Comparative Study

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(Received: 9 May 2019 Accepted: 18 June 2019)

Abstract

Feminism, as a social uprising, today is being considered by many thinkers and researchers. Proponents of this tendency believe that women are discriminated because of their sex and state they have certain needs that are not fulfilled in the society by governmental administrations. Therefore, fundamental changes must be made in the social, economic and political system to achieve females' basic rights and needs. Women's rights are among the issues to be addressed in various aspects and dimensions. In Iran, the women's movement has roughly coincided with the Constitutional Movement (1905-11) and continued throughout the Pahlavi regime (1925-79) and thereafter the Islamic Revolution (1979- present) in various forms. Applying a comparative and descriptive-analytical method, the present research aims to study the status of political-social rights of women in Iran before and after the 1979 Revolution, regarding the Iranian Constitution. Findings show that after the Islamic Revolution, the Constitution obliged the government to respect the rights of women in all aspects, including their civil participation, and then ensure and create favorable conditions for the development of women's personality and the revival of her material and spiritual rights. According to the Iranian Constitution, woman as an esteemed human being has the right to enter and control her own destiny. In other words, the guarantee of Iranian females' rights is the Constitution itself, which has initially focused on their political and social rights. Hence, it is proved that the situation of women has improved at least in the area of decision-making, and consequently their general status has grown since the Iranian Islamic Revolution.

Keywords: Feminism, Islamic Revolution of Iran, Social-political Rights, Woman.

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Introduction

Women have always been present along the history and paid role in its construction, even though their contributions are often masked or overshadowed. Throughout history, women have been present shoulder to shoulder of men in ups and downs of life and in the construction of society. Sometimes directly and occasionally by persuading men and creating the necessary motivations in them, they have shown their role in human history. In the last two recent centuries, particularly in the twentieth century, we have witnessed the formation and mobilization of a general movement called "Feminism" through the provision of objective grounds in society and the evolution of views on women's rights (Shakeri- Khouyi, 2009: 15). Based on this thought, the realities of life are not the same for all women, and numerous women are degraded in different ways (Donatella, 2004: 117). It is said that the social construction of woman is the hard core of feminist theory, finding a woman declined not because of her biological structure but within social and cultural structures (Paknia, 2004: 64). Feminism, which in terminology means "support of the political and social equality of women and men" (Mosaffa, 1997: 78; cf. Brabeck, 1997: 15 and Heywood; 2007: 30), is classified into two main approaches: in the light of the descriptive approach, women are considered as a real and existential subject or case, and in the normative approach, they are observed as they must be (Sajjadzadeh, 2005). Indeed, in the former, feminism describes women comparing to men as oppressed and marginalized and sees this as unlawful and unfair, and in the latter, women are entitled to rights, respect, and so on.

Contemporary feminism has taken great influence from the postmodern thoughts of Derrida and Michel Foucault, especially Foucault's emphasis of power and knowledge (Jamshidi, 2010: 13), and in this way, relativism, the rejection of any stereotypical belief about women and men, as well as the acceptance of bisexual society as the features of the postmodern age, has entered to feminist thought flows (Ehteshami, 2011: 84). In the analysis of postmodern feminists, masculinity and femininity have no determined meaning, but they are a function of discourses that, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual mentality always use temporary and changing meanings for the benefit of power relations and special social interests (Friedman, 2002: 143). Therefore, it can be said that feminism has always involved the organized, political, and social struggle of women to claim their full status in society and is founded on a discourse, in connection with other

social and political concerns of the community. Of course, the emergence and formation of feminist movements is generally combined with other social and political movements, for women themselves have found that their role as social and citizen members is inevitably linked to their role in the position of "woman" (Morotezi, 1999: 133). As well as, the postmodernism emphasizes that a comprehensive and exact definition of feminism, its followers and their demands is not possible without regarding the social circumstances and cultural features of every region. In other words, to know females' demands in each region one needs to pay attention to such conditions. Accordingly, postmodernism has led to some other concepts of feminism, including Islamic Feminism, Christian Feminism, Black Feminism, etc. (Karami & Shariat-Panahi, 2013: 234-5).

In a brief critique of feminism, a glance at the activities of feminists after decades, but after two centuries of political and cultural efforts, shows that this movement has not achieved the expected results, despite the positive achievements that have brought for women. If raising awareness, promoting the level of education and raising the level of women's social, economic, and political participation are of the positive achievements of feminism, along with these, there is a continuation of all kinds of inequalities and sexual oppressions in various ways, sometimes with a glamorous outlook against women, mostly because of feminist theories and activities (for details see: Bisong BP. & Ekan SA, 2014; Motahari, 1990: 24; Faker-Meibodi and Golgoli, n.d.).

Women are statistically half of the community and have a decisive role in the survival of the expansion of the human race. They are educator of generations on the planet and sociologists, considering the family as a fundamental constituent of society, say that families are made up of women and men. Here, the study of women's social status in Islam is of particular importance, as well. In Islam, women play a central role in family formation and survival, and educate children and bring them to society. Some believe the key themes of this concept in the Qur'anic principles are summarized to "gender equality and social justice" and since "Islamic feminism" finds it impossible to establish equality and social justice in mere-patriarchal structures, it goes on to advance the original message of Islam and eliminate such structure from the remnants of Islamic cultures (Badran, 2002). To properly understand the status and dignity of a woman in Islam, we should know what the status of woman in other religions and thoughts was. Will Durant writes: "Among the first tribes, they set women as dirty jobs, sold them at a low price, and

avoided the breath of women. In Russia, they gave the groom to thrash his wife” (Will Durant, 1992: 700). In Hammurabi's rule, “If a person kills a girl, he should give his daughter to the victim’s father. to be killed as blood money” (Nouri, 1995: 7977). In Greece, when Plato spoke of teaching and education of woman, it was a ridiculous word, as far as Plato was grateful of being created as a man. The female character in Plato's works is a woman's spinneret and cloth weaver. In his words, he always referred to woman in the sense of a degraded, weak, and timid person. This way of thinking about women is also apparent in Aristotle's thought. In his view, the woman is equal to a man who is barren and infertile, because in any case the woman is defective. He sees the existence of a woman only for reproduction, not other matters. Also in Greece, the woman did not inherit her husband's property. In Sparta, women were offered to other men for reform of the generation of their husbands, and prostitution was allowed. The Romans had a proverb saying "woman could not be called human" (Will Durant, 1992: 711). Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), with the diminution of women’s brain and genius, introduces them as empty of any kind of ingenuity and innovation, who only deals with small things such as make-up and so on (Okin, 2004: 182). Saint Augustine (354-430) also says on the position of woman: "An animal that is neither firm nor consistent, but spiteful and loser, which is the source of all controversies, conflicts, injustices, and oppressions" (Sattari, 1993: 61). Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), in a tone of humility, considered the brain of women equal to the size of the brain of gorillas and the like (Shalit, Goharian, et al. 2007: 149). The Church was no exception to this rule, and it always had a dualistic view of women; on one hand, women like the Virgin Mary were praised by the Church and, on the other, they were sin symbol like Eve because they believed that Eve deceived and led Adam to Satan and committing sin before God (Heydarian, 2006: 66). Based on this view, feminists, and in particular liberal feminism, put forward the theory of equality between men and women in extreme ways in all its dimensions.

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) raised a new model of Islamic administration and political power in 1979 under the leadership of Ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeini (known as Imam Khomeini), founded on Shi’a Islam’s beliefs that has made basic changes in its consideration of women’s rights. Indeed, the Iranian revolution was a core point of political participations of women, compared to the last. One of the achievements of the Revolution for women is to regain their humanity and get out of the way of mere-sexual attention. It presented a new value

symbol of life for women in society, a model that portrayed an Islamic identity proportional to their status, which of course was one of the first Revolution's promises; a woman who is not only independent but also responsible for the Islamic rule. By increasing awareness and expanding higher education in the country, they have upgraded their capacities and women can no longer remain on the brink of social political events. Nowadays they are demanding positions to achieve better status (See: Eivazi, 2006: 53-59).

This research, in a descriptive-analytical-comparative method, seeks to examine a variety of views on the issue of women's rights, and their political and social participation before and after the IRI. In this regard, the main concern of the article is to answer these questions: 'What are certain articles in the Iranian Constitution to examine their advocated rights?' 'How did the states after the Revolution understand the rights of women' and 'What is their guarantee of fulfilling it?' In addition, to make a good comparison between females' position before and after the revolution, a glance also is taken into women's roles, activities, and rights before 1979.

Almost from the east to the west of the Islamic world, over the last decades, there has been a serious and active approach to women's issues. There are numerous and significant works in this field, particularly in Muslim languages like Arabic and Persian. These efforts indicate that the defense of women's rights today is one of the major concerns of Islamic scholars, so that some experts focus on this issue, and even the emergence of the "Islamic Feminism Movement" could be regarded as the result of this attitude. The jurists and exegetes have also paid special attention to the topic and looked at religious texts with contemporary sights, reviewing the religious texts and so changing some previous views. As for the issue of women's rights in Iran, most works including various books and articles studied one aspect or dimension of this area. For instance, Karami (2015)'s research entitled "Islamic State Cultural Responsibility in the Management of Women's Employment," (Karami, 2017) only studies a piece of this expanded topic, which, of course, have not been able to make a significant comparison between women's rights before and after the Revolution. Other writings deserved to be mentioned here are: the study of Farzand Vahi et al. (2015) entitled: "Review of Some of Women's political and social rights in Islam" (Farzand Vahi, 2015), Jalali and Mousavi's paper (2013) of "Women's Political Rights in the View of Islam and International Human Rights Documents," (Jalali, 2013) and Habibi Fathabadi and Paknia's (2010) research of "The

Socio-Political rights of Iranian Women before and after the Islamic Revolution; a Comparative Study

Role of Women in Social and Cultural Development from the Constitutional Revolution to the Islamic Revolution" (Habibi-Fathabadi and Paknia; 2010). In addition, in an article belonging to the Turkish Muslim Community (2014), the authors Hatice Bekir, Hande Şahin and Remzi Aydin studied the "Undergraduate Students' Perceptions on Women's Place in a Family." (Bekir, Şahin, and Aydin, 2014) The purpose was to understand the level of university students' perception about woman.

1. Iranian Women after the Arrival of Islam

Muslims' army came to Persian Land and brought Islam to the people. Throughout Iran's history after the rise of Islam, women became known for their knowledge, power and courage. The oldest document of the women's rule dates back to 53 AH in Bukhara, when 'Ubaydullah bin Zīyād was the ruler of Khorasan in Iran, and his governor in Bukhara passed away, then his mother moved to his place, as the governor (Azad, 1987: 123-156). The rule of women has always been emerged in various ways; sometimes they played a direct role, and sometimes even though there was no direct and external emergence, the power of men has been driven by the secretive power of women. In fact, the involvement of women in the government arose from their maternal power (Hejazi, 1997: 141).

During the Safavid period, face covering (*borqa'*) and long veil (*chādor*) were widely used by women, although some of them used to ride horse in war or were skillful in shooting. The majority of women were usually limited to eating, sleeping, and giving birth. This was not only applied to ordinary women, but those in the imperial court also had to follow this general rule. Shah Ismail, the first Safavid king, at the very beginning of his efforts to consolidate his authority, did not refrain from massacring people, especially women, in the course of domination of the cities, and had great oppression to this class of people. In spite of his ancestor, Shah Abbas did not apply much hardship, so that at his time, except for the women belonged to the high-political class; the others were seen in the street and bazar. Even in 1018 AH, he ordered the weekly walks in the Four Gardens (*Chāhār-Bāq*) and Thirty-three Bridges (*Sīo-Se Pol*) in every Wednesday (Azad, 1987: 130-131).

2. Women in the Qajar Age

There was little length between a girl's childhood and her marriage in the Qajar era. Girls often got married between seven and thirteen. In fact,

factors such as achieving economic independence, the relatively rapid growth of girls, and low average life expectancy due to the spread of various diseases have contributed to the increase in these early marriages. On the other hand, common social beliefs led to these early marriages. Accordingly, the happiest girls were those who were mature in their husbands' home (See Delrish, 1996: 122-127). In the Qajar period, women's attitudes to acceptance were fate and surrender. For example, girls were taught to sit quietly and have little mobility, not to question and had to obey men-even their younger brother. This socialization pattern continued until many periods later (Sanasarian, 1982: 30). At that time, no social group could defend its rights and interests. This became more intense for women in terms of the gender segregation that existed at that time. They were faced severe restrictions, such as being deprived in relationship and interaction with the outside world (Sanasarian, 1982: 38). In sum, the Qajar era was a superstitious society in which women and men believed hard to superstitions, that, of course, women were at the forefront. However, there never was a serious obstacle to women's participation in the social arena; women found that they can live in another way, and the necessity of such a change was transferred at least to a part of them, through lectures and in particular newspapers, directly or indirectly. Even some of the Iranian enlightened women published articles in Iranian newspapers, which used to publish outside Iran before the Constitutional Revolution, in order to awaken women (See Delrish; *ibid*).

2.1. The Constitutional Revolution

In the early stages of the Constitutional Revolution (late 1891 - early 1901), women were mostly influenced by clerics. However, because of their support for constitutionalism, they managed to emerge from their homes and participated in demonstrations and other behaviors that were considered non-traditional, such as the "rioting of bread." Slowly the movement of women became more tangible and more independent. They set up associations, private courses, and did social awareness activities which made them become more active and grew higher in the world outside their homes (Sanasarian, 1982: 38). Women were actively present at the moments of this important political movement. Women took an important responsibility when opposition began with the government and men sat repeatedly at home. They were responsible for protecting men's lives while accompanying them to bring the scholars (*Ulamā* or clergymen) to the mosque for speeches. One of these women was a strong person known by everywhere as the wife of Heidar Khan Tabrizi.

Socio-Political rights of Iranian Women before and after the Islamic Revolution; a Comparative Study

She was prepared by Tehrani liberal women, with the help of other women and the clubs hidden under their veil, to support *Ulamā* while they were delivering speeches on pulpit. The active participation of women in these historical and national events continued after the Major Migration. By issuing the constitutional order by Mozaffar al-Din Shah in 1324 AH, this perseverance was not only being abandoned but more broadly and with a special insight emerged in the way of political and cultural aspirations; e.g., participation in the boycott of the parliamentary system, ratification of the constitutional amendment, the struggle in the era of minor tyranny to re-establish the parliamentary system, etc. However, women's rights were violated in the first parliamentary resolution; in the third and the fifth articles of parliament's elections code (See Kar, 1997), women were considered along with children, mads, and foreigners, deprived of the right to either vote or to be elected as representatives (Azad, 2004: 85-117).

Women's associations did a lot of non-violent actions in defense of the constitution, as well as forcing Britain and Russia to leave Iran. Also during the establishment of the National Bank by the Parliament, they sold jewelries and purchased shares from the government. Modern women were boycotting foreign goods, for example, they tried to persuade cafes to shut down sugar imports. These associations held massive meetings about the role of women in the 1911 national movement to remove Britain and Russia from Iran. Morgan Schuster, on the presence of women in the community, believes that Iranian women have made valuable efforts and services to implement the Constitutional Revolution. The popular Iranian women who did not have much political and social experience progressed as such a hundred years and worked on such issues as teaching, journalism, the establishment of women's clubs, and political struggles, and finally, over some years, they reached significant achievements which Western women could not reach throughout decades and even a century (Afari, 1998: 7).

3. Political Status of Women in Pahlavi Period

By the onset of his rule, Reza Shah started social reforms and secularization of society. Among the social reforms, the most effective reform belonged to the education system; Girls' education by governmental centers, which was not implemented in practice despite the constitution, was carried out by Reza Shah. Reforms in the women's area were considered greatly among Reza Shah's operations. He began to improve the situation of women after his visit to Turkey. Another

important event in this period was the decree of the removing veils and the ban on wearing veils for women. It must be emphasized that all of these so-called reforms by Reza Shah, were done because of his secularizing policy, as mentioned above. In fact, he did not succeed to give Iranian women their rights, but he tried to make a secular Iran according to the western model. Moreover, despite all the changes that took place, "the law still held men more important in matters of affairs." In addition, women were still deprived of the right to vote and to run for general elections. Although Reza Shah accepted the reforms in Turkey, the right to vote of Turkish women in 1934 had not influenced Reza Shah's decision. In general, the compulsory removing of women's veil was one of the reasons that led to their sitting at homes and their diminutive presence in social, legal, and social arenas (see Tavana, 2001: 269-275).

The right to vote for women after September 1920 was reintroduced with the occupation of Iran by the Allies and the rejection of Reza Shah from the monarchy. In the years after Reza Shah, women were also active in creating a relatively open space and the activities of parties and groups, and raised their demands. In 1921, the Women's Party of Iran was founded. Among the goals of this party, the emphasis was on promoting women's social status, increasing education and awareness among women. A wide-ranging campaign of rights for voting was began and the more enlightened men of the Parliament were encouraged to support women's suffrage (Ahmadi Khorasani and Ardalan, 2003: 108-119).

In spite of females' participations in social and political activities in the society of Iran in Qajar and Pahlavi periods, but they have no particular position concerning their rights in the society. The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) presented a new model of Islamic administration and political power in 1979 that has made basic changes in its consideration of women's rights. Indeed, the Iranian revolution was a core point of political participations of women, compared to the last. It raised a new value symbol of life for women in society, a model that portrayed an Islamic identity proportional to their status, which of course was one of the first Revolution's promises; a woman who is not only independent but also responsible for the Islamic rule. In the following, it is argued that the situation of Iranian woman has changed after the revolution, especially concerning the Constitutional Articles regarding women's rights in Iran.

4. Women in the Islamic Revolution of Iran

Undoubtedly, women had a great role in the process of the Iranian Islamic revolution; they, on the one hand, to put end the suffering of the identity crisis that had rooted in them, and, on the other, to show their anger and disgust at the king's regime, willingly welcomed Islamic teachings being propagated by revolutionaries, and re-elected the veil as a religious symbol. Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the revolution, about the role of women in the Islamic state, says:

“You, the respectable ladies, revolted for the sake of God, and you will stay firmly for Him, so you will not be harmed in this uprising. Whatever you can squeeze your lines and keep up the revolution, go ahead. Our women are free and we are also in favor of freedom. I see a strange transformation in women's society that is more than a development that has occurred in the men's community. Women have very well served this honorable Islamic society, and the service of men is also due to their helps. I hope this unity of the word will be protected so that they are immune of harm” (Mousavi Khomeini, 1994: vol. 5, 153).

Women with a broad share in the Revolution wanted to have active role and good statues based on the Islamic teachings; they participated actively in the process of the revolution, and it is natural that they want to continue this partnership in many fields, like men, in a system that meritocracy, equality, justice, non-discrimination, etc. are at the heart of their principles (Naji-Rad, 2003: 274-275).

After the victory, the Iranian Constitution was drafted in accordance with the Islamic *Sharī'a*. Putting the title of "woman" on the introduction and text of the Constitution reflects her importance, value and serious responsibilities in society. Paying attention to the rights of women and recognizing their wide presence in the Islamic community have provided the opportunity for the growth and prosperity of their talents and personality in various fields of society. Article 13 (Ma'aref: 2009 and Mansour, 2018), paragraph 13, refers to the public participation in determining their political, economic, social and cultural status; the term "public" here refers to equality of rights of women and men in this matter. The Article 6 is also worded as follows: "The affairs of the country should be governed by public votes." It also affirms the equal participation of men and women. In Articles 20 and 21, it is pointed out that all people of the nation, both men and women, are equally protected by Law and enjoy all human, economic, social and ... rights, observing the standards of Islam. It is also stated that the government must guarantee women's rights in all respects in accordance with Islamic

standards. Article 56 also affirms the rule of humans in determining their own social destiny, which is also commonly referred to, that is, both men and women. In other Constitutional Articles, the equal right for men and women to be chosen as members of Islamic Councils or representatives of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament), is noticed and mentioned as well (see: Article 20). Regarding political participations of women, Khomeini says:

“Political affairs are not specific to only one class of people, just as science is not only for one class. As men must interfere in political affairs and maintain their own society, women must be present in social and political activities with men together, albeit with the preservation of what Islam has said” (Mousavi Khomeini, 1999, 57).

According to the Constitution, there is no obstacle for women to participate in legislation; none of the constitutional Articles prohibits women from participating in legislation because all the people of the nation, including men and women, are protected by Law and enjoy all the Human, political, economic, and cultural rights, provided that they comply with the principles of Islam (Iranian Constitution, Article 20). Therefore, women without any restrictions can choose the members of the Parliament and also they themselves could be elected representatives. Women directly participate in the appointment of six jurists of the Guardian Council, which are responsible for making laws comply with Islamic Law, but the participation of female parliamentary representatives in the election of these individuals is direct. Under the Constitutional Law, women were involved in the legislative elections every year after the Revolution, and were elected as representatives as well. Women's participation in the parliamentary representation is also significant, indicating the availability of an active ground for women in the legislative system. For this reason, in the first parliamentary elections (1979-1983) four female representatives and in the second period (1983-1987) four women also came to the Parliament. The number of female representatives in the first two round of the Parliament was 6.1 percent of all seats, as well as the highest education was master and the lowest was sixth grade of elementary. The average age of female representatives of these two periods is 43.5 years (Arshadi, 2005: 79). In the third round (1987-1991), four females were members, with an average age of 48.7 years, the highest degree was master and their ratio to the total number of representatives was 6.1%. In the 4th Parliament (1991-1995), the number of females reached 9, with an average age of 41.5 years, the highest degree of doctorate, and the ratio of women representatives to the total

Socio-Political rights of Iranian Women before and after the Islamic Revolution; a Comparative Study

number was 6.3%. This parliament passed laws on women, such as the "law on the provision of those women who are without a supervisor, including husband or parents" (November 24, 1992); under this law, the government should provide facilities for the poor women, the elderly, and the women without supervision and so on, and supplies their needs. According to the law on the amendment of "the Paragraph related to the terms of the Selection of Judges" (December 12, 1993), the Head of the Judiciary was allowed to hire women who qualify for the law of selection of judges, with a judicial base for the positions of senior administrative advisers, judicial and administrative judge of investigation, etc. Similarly, by the adoption of another law (September 21, 1995), in case a woman's insured husband dies and she decides to marry again and then her second husband dies too, the government is allowed to pay the woman from the fund of the husband's insurance, and if the second husband is covered by social insurance, she is eligible to be paid by either the first or second spouse's fund of insurance (Gramizadegan, 2005: 392). The number of female representatives in the fifth Parliament (1994-1999) exceeded to 14. Women were more active than before, resulted in the ratification of 21 laws on women's rights. On October 15, 1996, the female employed workers or retired without husband, or those whose husbands were disabled, and themselves were responsible for the expenses of children, were eligible to receive income support from the state. One of the good practices of the fifth Parliament was the establishment of The Women, Youth and Family Affairs Commission, on December 14, 1996, at least half of whose members would be female candidates in the presence of female representatives in Parliament. The most important laws of the fifth Parliament were the law on the calculation of dowry (*mehrieh*) at the rate of the day, ratified on June 6, 1997. Accordingly, if the dowry is the prevailing currency, it would be calculated and paid equivalent to the annual index determined by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Arshadi, 2005: 80-81).

With the advent of women in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament), it was possible for them to influence on making projects and strive to pass them on their rights. In addition, they were able to encourage the government to submit bills on women through their legal personalities. In sum, the Parliament from the beginning, witnessed the efforts of female representatives to assist women through the ratification of laws. With the increase of their numbers and education, in particular from the fourth round onwards, women endeavored more and more to defense or consolidate women's rights. The establishment of The

Women, Youth and Family Affairs Commission in the Fifth Parliament and the formation of the Women party in the Sixth Parliament, led to the adoption of more laws on the issue of women and family, were not only quantitatively but also qualitatively grown up.

One of the most important laws shaping the future of women is the Fourth Development Plan of Iran; it is the first program which is based on a long period of twenty years. Regarding the long-term program of the Twenty-year Vision Document, the Fourth Development Plan addresses women's issues in accordance with paragraph 14 of the Document. This paragraph emphasizes the legal and social rights of women and, in order to achieve this, the constructive role of females have been considered in both the family and social-political scenes. In the Fourth Development Plan, several issues have been devoted to the issue of women, including: according to Article 30, the government is required, in order to implement Article 31 of the Iranian Constitution, to pay support fees to those who build houses for homeless women. In Article 45, executive agencies were required to spend a percentage of their funding on the design and implementation of in-service training courses for staff, especially women. In addition, Article 89 emphasizes the elaboration and approval of the comprehensive empowerment and protection of women's rights in the legal, social and economic dimensions, as well as the implementation thereof, and Article 100 provides the necessary freedom and security for the development of social associations in the field of protection of women's rights. Article 101 mentions equal pay for women and men in equal jobs, equality of opportunities for women and men, and the empowerment of women through access to appropriate employment opportunities, and Article 102 emphasizes on empowering women to achieve the social equilibrium necessary to the formation of activities of women's cooperative units (see: Collections of Rules of the Fourth Development Plan of Economy).

Conclusion

The role of women in the constitutional movement and its aspirations, which was influenced by social changes, turned this movement into a massive social, cultural and political movement, in which the status of women also was changed along with other social dimensions. Hence, constitutionality should be a milestone in the cultural history of Iran; because of tremendous influences on changing attitudes even among women. Women in Islam, in addition to financial, educational, social and

Socio-Political rights of Iranian Women before and after the Islamic Revolution; a Comparative Study

political rights, were present at the political and social scenes, proved through historical evidences.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, a woman as an esteemed human being has the right to interfere in her own destiny. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the presence of women in various political and social fields under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini was significant. The Iranian Constitution has paid attention to the political rights of women and has accepted the principle of participation of men and women in community affairs, observing Islamic norms. None of the government and executive positions has the qualification of masculinity; i.e. women can enter various fields of execution and government.

Regarding the previous liens, it can be concluded that during the years after the Islamic Revolution and in accordance with the Constitutional Articles, women were allowed to vote as well as they could be elected by people as Parliamentary Representatives in the Islamic Consultative Assembly. The representatives have ratified general and gender (especially for women) laws, which have directly and indirectly improved the status of women in various political, social, cultural and economic spheres. Similarly, it happened in other legislative centers such as the state, governmental organizations and institutes associated with women and others that are firstly constitutionally licensed or on the basis of which they are authorized to legislate, and secondly women include some of their members. In addition, by studying the Constitution regarding women's employment, it is proved that the Constitution has more capacity to improve the welfare of women.

Historic evidences prove that women had no adequate political-social rights before the Islamic Revolution, and in terms of social status and political positions they were in a closed and passive space. They also did not have the right to vote and even to have ordinary requests. In the meantime, the Iranian woman evolved with the advent of the Islamic Revolution; the Muslim and committed women of the country very actively and constructively took steps to promote the goals of the Islamic Revolution in the political-social scenes, and then huge social movements with their participation were formed. Therefore, after the Islamic Revolution, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran has paid attention to the social-political rights of women and has accepted the principle of participation of men and women in community affairs by observing Islamic standards. Several Articles of the Constitution are devoted to explain the connection between women and the Legislature. In these Articles, two general issues can be inferred: first, legislation is not

specific to only men, and, second, women are not prohibited to participate in legislation. None of the Constitutional Articles prohibits women from participating in legislation.

After the Islamic Revolution, the Constitution obliged the government to respect the rights of women in all respects, including their civil participation, according to Islamic standards, and then ensure and create favorable conditions for the development of women's personality and the revival of her material and spiritual rights. Therefore, the guarantee of women's rights is the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran itself, which has initially focused on women's political and social rights. Also, the leader and founder of the Islamic Republic did not recognize the political affairs for a particular class and shared it with everyone. In other words, the situation of women has improved at least in the area of decision-making, and consequently their general status has grown since the Iranian Islamic Revolution. However, as we observe in the Iranian community, there is a long way to achieve a good state for women in the society, according to the Constitution and Islamic norms. Although Iranian women are mentioned in Constitutional Articles and governmental affairs, but they need more and more attention, support, and defense from the government to reach what really deserves them.

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