

The Islamic Revolution in Iran and Women's Role

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The Islamic Revolution triumphed in Iran on 22nd Bahman (Feb.11,1979), under the leadership of Imam Khomeini and participated by the overwhelming majority of people. The revolution paved the way for establishment of the Islamic Republic Government. All people took part in the revolution, and women played a vital role there.

Women have devotedly played a crucial role in the Islamic Revolution by uncovering the enemies' conspiracies and have been a firm support for the society. They have been as active as men in all arenas and have contributed to the growth of the Islamic Revolution. In some cases, they have involved in much more important, active roles than men. They have been fighting not only directly but also indirectly by encourag-

ing their husbands and children. They have been responsible in bringing up some strong, pious children to present the Islamic society, which has always been critical to the Islamic Revolution.

Imam Khomeini used to say, «In the revolution, women have more rights than men.»

Here you will read a brief but useful article once published in Tehran Times on the different aspects of Islamic Revolution of Iran.

Participation in Political Processes

The extent of women's participation in the political processes of a country, or the activities women undertake to achieve political objectives, are characterized by a society's prevailing socio-economic status and its cultural norms and values. The

lack of interest on the part of many women in political affairs does not necessarily reflect the existence of inequality between men and women in a given society. In fact, absence of women's participation in politics derives from a set of complex historical and social factors as well as from their own particular position in society. Nearly all modern nation-states of the world recognize equal rights for men and women in their respective constitutions. Nevertheless, there are only a limited number of women who are high ranking officials or hold political offices.

Women's participation in political processes in the Islamic Republic of Iran can be evaluated at two distinct levels: mass participation and elite participation.

Political Participation at the Mass Level

Political participation of women at the mass level has been exhibited in the process of the Islamic Revolution, in national elections, in the mobilization of war-time resources, in demonstrations and marches to show opposition to, or support for, different issues and in group meetings and associations.

Iranian women's efforts in the mobilization of the economy during the eight-year imposed war remain a prominent example of political participation on the part of women. Their tireless efforts behind the frontlines, their financial donations

and personal sacrifices as well as the encouragement they gave to the public to partake directly and indirectly in the defense of the homeland helped in the reversal of the tide of aggression.

Women's mobilization units, which were established in mosques and government organizations and factories in 1981, are still active in the implementation of the country's reconstruction programs and economic development as well as in areas of training, education, research, sports and arts.

Political Participation at the Elite Level

At the elite level, women's participation and activities have extended into the domains of

the legislative, executive and judiciary branches as described below.

Representation in the Legislature

According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, enacted in 1980, all men and women enjoy equal rights in their participation or nomination in the election process. However, as is the case in so many other countries, women representatives form a small percentage of the legislature.

The increasing participation of women, both as electors and candidates, as evidenced by their increasing turn-out in successive parliamentary elections, is indicative of women's growing awareness of their own social and political responsibilities. In comparison with previous elections, the number of women representatives in the latest election for the Islamic Consultative Assembly increased by 120 percent. The number of women candidates in this election also increased by 125 percent. Women have a significant role in the organization of various election activities. In fact, 50 percent of the administrative work in elections is carried out by women.

A noteworthy fact is that women representatives of the present Assembly serve as members on a number of important parliamentary committees.





Representation at the Executive Level and in the Private Sector

The Women's Affairs Advisory Post, established at the President's Office in 1992, is the highest ranking official position held by an Iranian woman. In addition, a number of ministerial counselors are women and 342 women hold general management posts in government organizations. The Women's Social and Cultural Council (WSCC) is another important decision-making institution where fifteen educated professionals draw out plans and submit carefully-studied proposals for the adoption of correct policies on social and cultural issues confronting women.

It must however be mentioned that while the presence of women at higher levels of decision-making is vigorously sought by

the organizations that promote women's status, women's activities in the middle echelons of the governmental hierarchy are instrumental in the current planning and execution of projects that benefit woman. The number of women holding middle-managerial positions is on the increase and women are steadily occupying middle management positions throughout the country. In addition, a great number of women own and operate businesses in manufacturing and trade or handle managerial jobs in private sector companies.

Representation at the Judiciary Level

There has been steady progress in women's representation at high levels of jurisdiction and now women serve as advisors to law courts. At present,

the number of women who are registered attorneys-at-law is 185 out of a total of 2,661 registered attorneys. Since 1991, there has been competent and powerful representation of the Judiciary Branch at the Bureau of Women's Affairs attending to women's judicial issues and promoting women's rights.

Women's Participation in Cultural Fields

In general, Iranian women prefer cultural activities in their social employment. Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, women have been increasingly active in the writing and translation of books and, in fact, their progress in this sphere has been so prominent that many have been awarded prizes for the «Book of the Year.» Women's managerial endeavors in publishing cent-

ers are also quite noticeable. According to a recent survey, 13 percent of Iranian journalists are women, which shows a significant increase over previous years. The average age of women journalists is 23. The survey also indicates that 60 percent of women journalists in Iran are engaged in press and publications which are more or less connected with government and public institutions.

The rest are active in the independent press. About 22 percent of women journalists, whose average educational level is a bachelor's degree, are active in news reporting. Of women journalists, 18 percent hold a master's degree and 6 percent have doctorate degrees. Moreover, journalism constitutes the only source of income for 41 percent of women journalists in Iran.

According to present statistics, 900 women are active in film production and 1,800 are employed in activities connected with the television broadcasting network. A seminar on «Women and the Mass Media» convened in Tehran in 1994, highlighted many of the activities undertaken by women in the mass media in Iran.

In addition to the above-mentioned cultural fields, Iranian women have proved and established their abilities and talents in painting, graphic architecture, sculpture and other arts.

Women's Participation in Economic Fields

Even though fourteen centu-

ries have passed since complete economic independence was foreseen and guaranteed for women by Islam, domination and oppression world-wide has prevented women from achieving their principle economic rights and privileges.

In today's Iranian society, women have demonstrated that they have capabilities and potential talents which, under proper conditions, can greatly contribute to the national wealth and economic development. The awareness and voluntary participation of Iranian women in a wide range of economic fields have greatly increased since they have been provided with more technical experience and scientific knowledge.

About 50 percent of Iranian women live in rural areas. Almost 100 percent of these rural women participate in some

form of agricultural processing or cottage industry. Maximizing women's participation in economic activities is a prime objective of the employment schemes of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Provision of loans to women, supplying them with the means of production and raw materials and organizing training courses and workshops to promote their knowledge and technical capability will contribute to their increased presence in economic activities.

