

Women in Persia

Ed by Nancy J. Hafner

Anna Q. Gray 1970

What is  
Date of article  
in  
Muslim World

1- I am sending you an article which I found very interesting on the issue of the women's Anjomān. I became quite excited to learn about the weekly newspaper called Danish (knowledge) which was edited by women and written for women. p.299

2- Your second question is more difficult to respond. Militants often most educated who were the chador. first it is argued that the status of Women were elevated by Islam from that of a chattel to a full person with legal rights. She may work, demand wages, get inheritance, control property, choose her spouse and initiate divorce. It is as well argued that the preconditions set for polygamy set by Mohammad himself are so very difficult that if Quran is to be practiced truly, no man can ever have more than a wife ( condition: A man should treat all wives equally in all respects) It is as well argued that the demand for women's liberation is really a European phenomenon ( industrial Revolution - breakdown of family and village cooperation) and World War I ( over supply of women, widows, and unmarried women forced to work and work for low pay) therefore it is argued that Iranian women do not have these experiences and problems and that their demands for liberation are misplaced imitations of the West . Ali Shariati the leading Islamic theoretician argues that the sexual freedom and the consequent increased fixation on the battle of the sexes is an Imperialist trick to keep Third World minds from thinking about true freedom and to sell European cosmetics and other sex-linked goods. ( not a exact quote)

Then is the concept of honor- A man is responsible for the behavior of his wife, sister, daughter, sometimes cousin who is not chaste- If a man's honour or "Izat" is stained ( his wife leaves the house without a chador - His sister is seen speaking to a man . etc ) the only way to remove the stain is by either physical abuse and locking the woman in the house or in some cases killing her. The Law and Shariat ( Religious law) both acquit a man who has committed a murder to clean his family of such shame.

As a result for a woman to even be able to leave the house and participate in meetings she has to prove that her husband's "Izat" is not harmed , the chador does that - while if she removes the chador in a neighbourhood where most people wear the chador, the neighbours will not respect the husband or the father or the brother and his "Izat" will be in danger. So many many times the man in the house really doesn't care where she goes as long as she is wearing the chador or the headscarf because this way he is safe in the neighbourhood

When she comes to the meetings she faces another problem. She has to prove to her male colleagues that the liberation she is talking about is different from the sexual liberation the Western women are after, that she seeking to abolish polygamy, she is demanding community property , nurseries for children, parttime jobs for working mothers, equal pay with men - not sexual freedom , that she will under any circumstances keep the tradition of virginity for women before marriage( reason for many murders)

and refrain from sexual activity unless she is married ( regardless of age). To take off the chador or the scarf exposes her to harsh attacks by fellow comrades. Claiming that what she is really seeking is freedom in sex. To avoid that problem and be able to deal with the more important issues such as the ones mentioned above she decides to wear the chador and deal with the more urgent problems rather than facing the attack that she is really according to Shariati a tool of Western Imperialism .

3- I am trying to get a hold of two women writers  
Homa Nateq - In fact I have written her a letter but have not received a response yet  
Simin Daneshvar - Her husband a martyr before the revolution was a marxist.

Also , I was glad to hear that the monthly newsletter of women has started publication again this month and I should get a copy of it this month .

I will write you more on this issue very soon

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4- Your last question as to how I transmit Marxist-Humanist ideas.

I think probably being a woman and an Iranian with the Iranian Revolution and the Hostage crisis I have mainly singled out philosophy as it relates to the particular political situation which has been discussed . Whether it was the hostage crisis and if that meant a revolutionary act

- In fact many times it has been the question of what is genuine anti-imperialism? or within the Jewish community the question becomes " is Zionism justified" ?

What I mean is that when I do remove the cloud of " anti-imperialist struggles " of the government in Iran. And refuse to be classified in the category of either for or against something rather pose the new alternative is when we can talk about everything; women, economics, personal relations .

The same is true : when speaking either to Jewish or Moslem women - when recognizing & both the right to self determination of Israelis and Palestinians I question what is the position of women in the future palestinian society going to be . What does all this struggle mean for her is she is doomed to the same fate as the Algerian women ? and then asking how could she transform that future and make sure it is her liberation that is to be gained if they aren't to face another aborted revolution.

I hope I have answered your questions at least partly If you are discussing these with Raya please give my best to her. We are all anxious to meet her in April.

Love

Neda

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