WOMEN'S STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY IN IRAN
BEFORE AND AFTER THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION,

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the School of Education
University of Dayton, in partial fulfillment
of requirements for the degree
Master of Science in Education

by
Jalil Beheshtaein
School of Education
University of Dayton

Dayton, Ohio
April 1992
Approved by:

Official Advisor
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran's History</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Statement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Importance of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Note</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Related Literature</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in Social and Political Movements</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Resolutions of 1932</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Iranian Woman Today</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Iranian School System</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter V</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary, Conclusion, Recommendation</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices A</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices B</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies of Photos - Map of Iran</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For two thousand five hundred years, Iran was known as Persia. In 1935 Persia became officially Iran. This is one of the reasons many Iranians call themselves Persian. Persia and its greatest empire were ruling from the Nile to the Indus River and from Egypt to India. Due to its greatness and geographical importance, Persia was often invaded and finally lost its power and became a backward country and remained so until recent times.

In southeastern Iran a group of archeologists from Harvard University came across a mound which has a sign of civilization of approximately six thousand years. They saw a highly developed economic system and old writings, as well as magnificent samples of art. There were signs of financial statements between Mesopotamia in the West and the East.

Because of fabulous opportunity of its oil, Iran assumed in recent years a major role in history again. The world today needs endless sources of energy and the Middle East, especially Iran, can contribute to its needs by providing "liquid gold" thus making itself practically independent and probably one of the richest of the oil countries.

Iran is as big as Italy and France combined, with a population of 58,000,000. It has several mountains, and the largest river is 500 miles long with 60 miles of navigable water before it joins the Persian Gulf. Iran has fourteen states and the most famous cities are Tehran (capital), Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz, and Meshhad. (See appendix B)
The very first belief of Persians was in the sun, trees and streams. These three sources were the main ingredients of survival. The sun taught the Persians the beauty of light, heat and fire. The trees were a source of food, shelter and necessary to keep their animals alive. Streams kept them alive by providing water for their thirst and for their plants. Later, Prophet Zoroaster introduced his religion which his followers called Zoroastrianism.* He believed there is more to life than the sun, trees and streams; therefore he called for his people to believe in themselves and their feelings for each other. He started a foundation which was based on good thoughts, words and deeds. After Zoroaster came other prophets, most of whom were short lived until Moses and Jesus, who did not have much impact on Persia. Finally in the Seventh Century, Prophet Mohammad introduced his religion to Persians. He brought Islam from Mecca and told his followers to believe in one god who no one has seen, who never gave birth, and who never was born; there will not be any other god after him until eternity.

* Zoroastrians believed in Zoroaster, a Prophet in the sixth century B.C. He talked about the god of light and god of darkness (Iran pg. 18) and supported good through words and deeds.
PROBLEM STATEMENT

Since the first signs of civilization it was always thought that due to women's physical delicacy and softness they would be weak. In Iran, women also are the victims of inequalities before and after the Iranian Islamic revolution. Regardless of Iranian women's religion or being conservative or liberal, they have certain ideas of equality which are different from one another.

Throughout this study and in talking to Americans as well, it became evident that even in the most liberated country in the world, The United States of America, there are inequalities. These inequalities such as salary, job position or expression of ideas, whether in Iran or elsewhere, were created either by women themselves or they were brainwashed or programmed by others over a long period of time to accept these differences. For example, many conservative women told me (and I paraphrase) "We like some of the restrictions which exist in Iran today, since the role of women is clear and there is no ambiguity on what they are supposed to do or what is expected of them in the society."

In Iran there are three kinds of problems with the status of women. These problems produce inequalities and create a lack of unity. First, traditional native forces; second, the personal and social superego; and third, the behavior and ideas emerging from Western culture and its impact on the Iranian government before the revolution. Western ideas were often conflicting with Muslim religion and Iranian tradition. This is one of the reasons for the animosity among the two nations (Iran and the United States) and the reason Iranian women have been forced back to the old and strict traditions.
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Many Iranians immigrated abroad, especially since the Islamic revolution and the war with Iraq in 1980. The majority of the people inside and outside Iran are curious about the status of women personally, socially, and professionally: How have they changed, if there has been a change in their lives? Are they more desperate or better off than they were before the revolution?

PERSONAL NOTE

I was born in Iran-Shiraz. I came to the United States in 1974 and decided to stay after my graduation from college. I personally love both countries, regardless of their pitfalls. As far as my personal beliefs are concerned, no country is perfect and people should be able to live where they can live peacefully.

There are many Americans, Iranian-Americans, first generation Americans or Iranians who are here temporarily, who have never been in Iran, or who haven't been to Iran since the revolution. These people have the right to know the facts so they can decide for themselves where they want to live, how they want to live, and where it is best for them to establish their families.

HYPOTHESIS

The problem with women's equality has not changed since the revolution, but the problem has shifted from one group to another. Of course, in the eye of Muslim women who are practicing their religion, the Islamic revolution was the best thing that ever happened to them; this is not necessarily so for
other women who are not Muslim or for those choosing not to practice their religion. The big question is whether Mohammad the Prophet was forcing the people to practice his religion regardless of their faith or did the people have a choice to decide whether to join the religion or practice their faith freely.

DELIMITATIONS

This study is confined to an investigation of Iranian women and their status in terms of career, freedom, family responsibilities, economic well-being and, most important of all, their individual happiness.

The problem of equality for women is due to several factors. First, understanding the Islamic rules is problematic -- rules which are very clearly stated in Quran. Second, there are many traditions and differences in cultures which usually conflict with the socio-politics of Western countries and which are trying to find their way into Iran (for example, Western clothing such as mini-skirts and cosmetics). Thirdly, the gradual historical and social awakening of the Iranian women in the twentieth century has created problems. Finally, the present economic, social, familial and political role of women in Iran is creating difficulties for those seeking to reconcile religious ideals and social agendas. These four inter-related subjects are, respectively the root, the stem, and the fruit of the struggle of women for social equality.
Prior to Reza Shah's modernizing attempts, Persia possessed a fixed pattern which defined the role of men and women at the various social stratifications of the society. The urban community was organized into wards, which consisted of professional, religious, educational and recreational institutions. This social organization also developed formal and informal lines of communication through religious and guild leaders. These traditional institutions of urban Iran were related to a system of values which confined women to home life. Although, in their view, the men were often kind and tender and on occasion desired to help educate their spouse, the women generally were limited to their household experiences.

Religious traditions fostered the belief that a girl's best chance for a happy life was an early marriage. Under Islamic laws and custom, which forms the basis of the present judicial system of Iran and is based on the Quran, marriage is given preference to celibacy! Also Quran forbids infanticide, marriage by capture and exclusion of women from inheritance, although differences

Quran: IX 72 This is the Muslims' book of God. Muslims believe that the word of God was sent to them by an angel through the Prophet Mohammad.
between the sexes and the choice of plural marriages is subject to interpretation of different branches of Islam which consist of Shia and Sunni. The branches of Islam are not conceptually unlike denominations in Christianity.

Islam is very clear about women's rights and their duties, but later more was added to Quran, which is called Hadith (a record of actions and sayings of the Prophet). This is where the interpretation of Quran brings differences between Sunni and Shia which are two basic sects of Islam. In addition to the orthodox Sunni view of the Quran, the Persian Shia sect has added a provision for temporary marriages, in an effort to overcome loneliness, prostitution and illegitimacy. In fact, childless and unhappy marriages are still the major reasons for the continuation of polygamy and mutual marriages in tradition-oriented groups.

In tribal and rural areas, education has generally been limited to simple day-to-day experiences in a simple environment. Although the tribal and village women participated in simple economy and the struggle for survival in a male dominated society, they are helpless and have little autonomy. On the other hand, women of the ruling aristocracy, whether urban, rural or tribal in an artful rule-society, though limited in being able to make autonomous decisions, have influenced the decision making in a variety of subtle ways.

Arasteh, H. Man And Society In Iran, (Pg. 60)
Fathi, Asghar Women And The Family In Iran, (pg. 14)
The striving by women for social rights and recognition is a twentieth century social phenomenon. Much of the striving is due to contact with the West and the advancement of education and economic improvement, although the method of introducing this change has not always been the most comprehensive.

WOMEN IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, only the boldest and most talented of upper class Iranian women moved socially outside their homes. Some women spoke French and other foreign languages, were well read and wrote poetry and occasionally engaged in various business activities. The majority of urban women, however, took little direct interest in community and social affairs, although they could, when the occasions demanded, influence their husbands on important decisions. It was not until 1908 that women actively got involved politically and marched throughout cities such as Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz, demanding their rights. During the decades since their first public demonstration, Iranian women gained advocates among male writers, merchants, and travelers who saw the need for freedom and education of European women.

One of the most outstanding graduates of the American School For Girls in Tehran was Parvin-Tusami. She knew Arabic and Persian (Farsi) languages prior to her school enrollment, which she learned from her father, a prominent journal editor.
However, Parvin did not take any part in women's organizations, nor did she accept the offer to tutor the queen. In one of her poems, "The Plant of Desire" (Nihal-i-Arezu), she revealed her concern for the advancement of her sex. She wrote:

The inferiority of women in Persian is all due to their ignorance. Be it male or female, superiority and rank arise from learning. From this lamp of knowledge, which is in our hand today, the highway of effort and realm of prosperity are illuminated. It is better that every girl would know the value of education so that no one could say: "The son is clever and the daughter is dull."

During the twenties and the thirties, several feminists showed what women could do if they were given the chance. The courageous Sara-Khanum brought to the surface a determination to follow a Western pattern of life in Persia during the twenties. Before any other women dared to do so, she appeared in public without a veil. This was the time that the Persian government employed a woman, and through her persistence, she managed to represent the country at the International Trade Fair in Philadelphia in 1926.

In 1929 the government approved the change to Western dress. The Iranian feminists gained additional support from the meeting of the Oriental Feminist Congress, held in Tehran in 1932. This attracted many women from other countries, which resulted in Congress to pass resolutions for women's equality.
In the twentieth century it was estimated that several thousand Iranian women could read and write, yet few of them belonged to any women's groups. A number of women's publications undertook an extensive educational campaign. One of the first papers was Knowledge (Danish). In 1910, the Tehran Weekly, Iranian Women (Zanan Iran) and World Of Women (Jahan-Zan) was introduced to the public. It was in 1933 that the *Journal Of The Alumni Of The American School For Girls* found its way to Iran and boosted the participation of women in family and community life. It also gave information on education, health, children, cooking, sewing and gardening. A more strongly worded paper for women's rights was called *Ladies* (Banavan) and vigorously denounced the veiling of women; subsequently the government jailed its editor who was Khanum-Shahnaz-Arad.

Feminist newspapers in other cities also came to life for women's rights. In Isfahan, Banu-Sadighe interpreted news call *Jahan-Zanan*, which was published first in 1920. She moved to Tehran in 1922 and published a journal by the same name. She is also the founder of the organization called Woman's Society (Kanun-Zanan). The Meshad bi-monthly paper, *Jahan-Zanan* was published in 1921. The first issue of *Jamait Nizvan Vatankha-Iran*, the journal of the society of Iranian patriotic women was published in 1924. The journal carved special articles such as famous women in the world and their achievements, political and religious news, which were all essential to the enlightenment of women in Iran.
The bi-weekly, *Women Of The East, (Nizvan-Sharq)* started in 1926 under the sponsorship of the ministry of education, with Rushanak as its editor. In 1929 the government approved the change to Western dress. Ten years later in order to promote Western culture in Iran, government officials received one month's extra pay annually to enable them to buy new Western style clothes for themselves and their families. It was the same year in which the government passed a law making it illegal for women to wear a veil. This law also was applied to schools, which every girl had to appear in European dress. The ministry required girls to enroll in physical education classes and on special occasions they marched in public parades. Many extreme religious people ordered their daughters not to attend school. Later religious people organized private schools all over the country for their children who were given the right to wear veils (chador).

The Iranian feminists gained additional support from the meeting of the Oriental Feminist Congress, held in Tehran in 1932, which attracted women from many countries and resulted in the congress passing the following resolutions:

1) The right of women to vote when qualified, and to be elected to office

2) Compulsory education for boys and girls

3) Equal salaries to men and women

4) Educational training for adult women

5) Kindergartens, playgrounds, and educational cinemas should be arranged by the government
6) The morals of men should be improved
7) The health conditions of a couple should be determined before marriage
8) Polygamy must be forbidden
9) Alcoholic liquors and narcotics should be prohibited
10) Female police should be organized to examine public health and sanitary conditions

Beginning in 1935, the government instituted a number of reforms, enforced by law, in order to improve the position of women. During this time girls had more opportunity to attend secondary and university levels. The University of Tehran admitted women on campus for enrollment in 1934. The Shiraz Journal began in 1937 by Banu Zand Dakuk. At this time legislation modernized marriage and divorce practices. The minimum age was set for boys and girls as eighteen and fifteen respectively. Also legislation gave the right for women to insert a clause in their marriage contract to make it difficult for husbands to get a divorce. Furthermore, if their husbands decided to marry a second wife, the husband had to obtain the first wife's permission before the marriage. Women were also given the right to refuse to marry unless it was written in their marriage contract that their husband had no right to marry another women.
As time has passed, Iranian women have strengthened their position in the society and they have been given more rights. Dowry payment, customarily given by the girl's father to her at the time of marriage is still being practiced in traditional families. The dowry remains the wife's property all her life, and in the event of divorce she keeps it. In the same instance, the husband commits to pay to the family of the girl a sum of money either at the time of marriage or if a divorce would occur, in order to protect the girl's future. According to Islamic tradition, which was practiced before the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979, a man may divorce his wife by merely repeating three times before witnesses and a religious authority or in a court of law, "I divorce you." This tradition required additional procedures in an event of existence of any children. The child or children are generally given to their mother and she has the legal custody only up to age seven, after which they go to their father.

Before the Islamic revolution, the modern Iranian woman found employment open to her in a number of fields. Women started working in the factories, offices, banks, stores, hospitals, and schools; they held jobs as clerks, nurses, pharmacists, technicians, physicians, chemists, engineers, social workers, writers, business women, etc. Prior to the revolution, Iran had eight women as members of the Iranian Parliament and Senate.
THE IRANIAN WOMAN TODAY

In the late 1960's and the early 1970's most Iranians were educated enough to see that the Shah (King of Iran, Mohammad-Reza-Pahlavi), his family, his relatives, and the people who were close to him were ignoring the poor and they were busy enjoying the money which came from oil. Little kings all over the country were the Shah's puppets. Meanwhile, these puppets were poor people's masters. This was the only way that the Shah could keep his dictatorship alive while he was selling the idea to the rest of the world that he was treating everyone fairly.

The world thought that Iran was becoming one of the most modern countries in the Middle East, but the truth was that the modernization was only for five to ten percent of the people and many people were starving to death. As late as 1978 many villages around the big cities did not have electricity or refrigeration or even proper plumbing. At the same time the Shah and his people, in their own fantasy world, were busy hosting their friends and spending billions of dollars to impress those people which money is their only motivation in life. There was much criticism about the Shah and his followers losing billions of dollars in cassinos all over the world while poor farmers and city people could not afford to feed themselves and their families. People who were open minded and intellectual enough to bring these issues to surface (whistle blowers) were often tortured and killed by the Shah's secret agents.
In 1976-77, while Barbara Walters asked the Shah if his secret police were torturing innocent people who were against his regime with electric shocks on their testicles and Pepsi bottles inserted into their rectums, he replied facetiously, "No Barbara, they use broken ones," leading Ms. Walters and all viewers to believe that there was no such thing going on and that this was just a joke or rumor. These signs of corruption lead the country to a point that everyone became united to overthrow Shah's regime who were backed by Western countries.

In 1978-79 Islamic revolution overthrew the Shah and his regime. Later a group of Islamic fanatics took over the United States Embassy in Tehran and took fifty-three hostages. The hatred for American government, but not necessarily for Americans, escalated with lots of emphasis from the Islamic regime, as well as Muslim countries all over the world.

During the hostage takeover women were treated with more respect and a few of them were released. Captors at the same time released several blacks. Their reason for the release was that blacks and women were oppressed for so many years that they did not need to suffer anymore.

Iranian women and men have to live under Islamic law. Of course there are other religions in Iran which have to practice Muslim rules outside their homes. For instance, during Ramazan (one month of fasting, from sunrise until sunset) no one is allowed to eat, drink or smoke at any public place. Basic rules of Islam applies for Sunnis and Shias, but there are difference in inheritance, marriage and divorce.
The pre-and-post revolutionary position of the Iranian woman is quite obvious. "Before the revolution it was quite clear that Western industrialization had penetrated the Iranian culture and affected the family according to the western model." This assumption now appears to be incorrect. The reason being that the westernization of a few has not affected the basic structure of the Iranian society. Meanwhile, family institutions based on women's traditional forms are stronger but there is limited opportunity for women's development.

One of the recent actions has been the military training of women. Today women are dressed in black chadors (veil) carrying automatic rifles. Due to the need of handling rifles, the government has introduced a special style of the traditional chador which is called monto (it has a long tentshape dress with long sleeves and hood). (See appendix B) Iranian women are mostly motivated for a cause that is their religion and everlasting life in Paradise. Therefore, other issues, such as wealth, job rank and style are of secondary importance. This gives the spouse more chance to accept a less economically secure partner. It is hoped that the age gap will be reduced and ultimately the maher (amount offered to bride at the time of wedding) will be less. In the past, depending upon the economic status of the male, maher fluctuated. Also, male had to marry at a later age in order to bring their financial status to a more acceptable stage to impress the in-laws. Now Iranians are marrying younger. This ultimately brings fewer illegitimate children and more responsible family life.
In the Muslim world temporary marriages were reintroduced in order to prevent prostitution and helping youngsters concentrate on more important issues and causes, rather than constant agony and suffering of lacking a partner after puberty. There are critics who call this legal prostitution.

There are limited opportunities for the roles that women play in society. In Islamic law women are considered emotional; therefore, women are not allowed to become judges. They can run for parliament if elected. Due to the revolution many industries and foreign companies closed down. When this occurred many women lost their jobs and their opportunity to get those jobs back decreased tremendously. Consequently women are encouraged to adapt to the traditional status of wife and motherhood.

There are two central issues which deserve to be pointed out in the Iranian school system. During the Pahlavi-Regime before the revolution, the government was trying to desegregate schools by sex as much as they could, even though segregated schools were available. After the revolution, segregation did not affect the universities, which is quite meaningful since college students are more mature and responsible adults. Therefore, their physical and emotional need for each other is based on a meaningful relationship. But all other schools were segregated by sex after the revolution (1979-1980). No one is allowed to wear cosmetics or any different style of clothing in public. As a result many businesses went bankrupt, unemployment rose and the feeling of insecurity and depression increased.
The Islamic revolution has brought back the traditional norms regulating women's family and social life. At the same time, since there is strong emphasis on the higher education to "Islamize" the universities and schools in general, what the future might bring is yet to be seen.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This work is about the status of women before, during and after the Iranian Islamic revolution. There are four major sources of information. First, references and related study about women. Second, the background and history of Iran. Third, newspapers and television interviews concerning women's rights. And finally, two personal interviews with two Iranian women living in the United States. The women were questioned by the author and their responses were recorded. Their responses were analyzed based on major similarities and differences as well as their most important concerns. One of the Iranian women who was interviewed by the author is Behnaz Sherrin. She is in her early thirties and was born in one of the suburbs of Tehran (capital city of Iran). She is married and has one daughter. Behnaz is teaching math in high school. She considers herself a conservative and a believer of Islam. The second interview was with Mahnaz Farhad. She is married as well and has been in the United States for almost forty years. Mahnaz teaches at a university, and even though she was born in Iran and into a Muslim family, she does not practice any religion. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed in February, 1992.
CHAPTER IV
INTERVIEWS

Throughout the twenty-two years in which the author has lived in Iran and the eighteen years in the United States of America, he discovered many issues that were very important to women: equal employment opportunity, equal rights, freedom of clothing, cosmetic issues, responsibility of their children, breast feeding versus the bottle, inheritance, work responsibilities, freedom of choice (e.g., not having to live under a male dominated society or family), and finally, the rules, values, and obligations towards their religion as well as Western influence on their daily lives.

The data and categories from the interviews were inductively derived after analyzing and examining of all interview notes. From broad categories data emerged and are discussed below. The two interviewees are professional women who were born in Iran but subsequently decided to reside in the United States of America. The two women whose pseudonyms are Mrs. Mahnaz Farhad, who is teaching in a university setting and does not believe in any religion, and Mrs. Behnaz Sheerin who is teaching in high school, but is a believer of Islam were interviewed by the author in February 1992. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

The interview analysis yielded four relatively narrow categories. These were, in order of importance, as follows: polygamy, equal opportunity employment, freedom of clothing and inheritance.
POLYGAMY. Polygamy started with Prophet Mohammad, the Founder of Islam. Under certain special circumstances polygamy allowed men to acquire several wives. In this matter Mrs. Farhad noted:

It depends on one's interpretation of religious sources. Education is the way to socialize people on consequences of polygamy.

Additional information and more detail was given by Mrs. Behnaz Sheerin:

I personally would not feel comfortable to be married to someone who has other wives. However there are other reasons why Islam allowed it during the Seventh Century. Polygamy was not meant for just the pleasure of men as it has been interpreted. One of the reasons was that after the war while Prophet Mohammad was living, many men went to war and were killed. Therefore, there were not too many men left to take care of the women and their needs, whether financially or emotionally. Another reason, which is my personal belief is that if I would become paralyzed and am unable to meet my husband's needs, I would give him my blessing to marry another woman so he does not have to suffer for the rest of his life as long as he is taking care of me at the same time. Also, if having children is very important to him and I cannot give him that, I do not mind for him to marry another woman, either temporarily or permanently, as long as he or both of us can afford it.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY. There are many jobs which are not available to women at the present time, although before the revolution it was becoming easier for women to find their desired occupation. Still difficulties existed but not as much as after the revolution. Mrs. Farhad found it disgusting that equal employment opportunities do not exist in Iran for women. Men and women should unite to provide for equal opportunity for everyone. Mrs. Sheerin's point of view was very much the same as Mrs. Farhad as she explains:

Most definitely it is sad. One of the reasons was because I had to discontinue my education at the University after the revolution solely because the future job would require close contact with men.
INHERITANCE. Due to Iranian way of life men generally are the sole bread winners of the family. Therefore, most men's inheritance goes to the son/sons, which automatically makes him the person in charge of the family and their needs. The second most important would be the daughter; the third is the mother. Nevertheless, in case a son does not exist the daughter would take care of the mother. If there is a will, the distribution of wealth goes according to the established hierarchy. In case of the lack of a will from the father, the inheritance is divided as follows: The mother receives 1/8, sons will each receive 2/3 rds and the daughter 1/3. As Mrs. Farhad stated:

The lack of equal distribution is only true in cases of intestate death. Inheritance can be willed as one wants to.

Mrs. Sheerin stated:

Every law or regulation that Muslim religion initiates has a meaningful reason. In the Muslim world, the man is in charge of finance and working outside his home. The wife is in charge of the house and children. Usually, this is well understood by the husband and wife; therefore, their son will be in charge of all family members, including his own. Consequently, it makes sense for the son to inherit the most.

FREEDOM OF CLOTHING. Iran has gone through several changes during the past century. At the beginning of the 19th Century all Iranian women had hejab (covering all body parts except face). Beginning in the 1930's women began to wear the clothing of their choice, until the Islamic Revolution, when everyone in Iran, Muslims or else, had to go back to hejab. Mrs. Farhad put it this way:

Freedom of choice in dress is important. It enable people to express themselves when they are in public. Clothing is a good tool to enable another person to get an idea of what kind of personality or background an individual might have; especially at times when there is not much time to verbalize or express themselves.
Mrs. Sheerin had pretty much the same idea except she seemed to be more realistic about clothing in the workplace. She mentioned:

Generally I don't think religion should force hejab on a woman. If I am in love with my husband it means that I would do anything to make him happy. Therefore, I do not mind to sacrifice. If my husband's wish would be for me to wear hejab, I would do so. Luckily, my husband does not force me into wearing any particular clothing. When something is forced it has a negative reaction. Furthermore, realistically we are living in a male dominated world, especially in the United States. It bothers me that women have to dress in such a way that is appealing to men so they can get the desired job. It is degrading to females. At the same time, I am pleased whenever a man compliments me about my taste in clothing, so I think it is solely up to the woman to use good judgment in choosing her clothing appropriately and accordingly.
In this study I have tried to provide information for all Iranians, especially those who immigrated to the United States. Since the Islamic Revolution and the war with Iraq in 1980, the majority of people inside and outside Iran are curious about the status of women socially, their careers and family lives. I became curious and inspired by my background as an Iranian, which enabled me to delve into research on the Iranian woman. Since 1974 I have been in Iran several times. I have experienced and seen the changes myself. I also began collecting books, journals, newspaper articles and recorded television programs with regard Iranian women. In this qualitative study I interviewed two Iranian women and their comments were recorded. I added some information about Iran's history and its geographical locations, including its major cities. Also included are copies of photos which support the dress code of the female students and their teachers before and after the revolution. (See appendix B)

CONCLUSION

I could not develop any empirical generalizations regarding the role of the woman in Iran, but I was able to generate some impressions about women's views. I am very much aware that a few of the factors and data included in the interviews may be contaminated by my own subjective views or selected memories.
Furthermore, despite their questionable validity, I perceive the women's comments as an important source of information on the topic of how women have been struggling for equality in Iran since the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. However, if I would have interviewed two women who had been living Iran before, during and after the revolution, a different set of impressions and perspective might have emerged.

This study sheds some light on the freedom of women and their struggle to be equal to men in Iran. Specifically, it examines how American-Iranian women view the life of women in Iran. I present ideas from the interviews which are supported by many professionals and scholars around the world, and which are suggested of important changes needed to address the needs of women in Iran. First, polygamy should be made illegal otherwise the door is open for men to take advantage of women for their own pleasure. Second, women need opportunities to pursue knowledge and careers as they please. Finally, freedom of choice of clothing is needed so that women can fully express themselves.

While this study provides some perspectives on Iranian women as well as females in general, it also might raise other issues or questions which need further study and research. For instance, Islam prohibits females from exposing their hair, yet the *Iran Times* reported that covering hair at all times, especially in hot climates causes damage to the hair and scalp. These kinds of contrary issues should be studied and other alternatives should be presented so that Iranian women can live in peace and harmony with their male counterparts.
1. Would you please state, how important is your religion to you?  
   I have none.
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, if 10 is fully Americanized, where do you fit in and why?  
   5
3. As you know, certain jobs or professions are not available for women. What is your opinion about the lack of equal opportunity in employment?  
   Disgusted - men and women should unite to invade for eq. eq.
4. What is your feeling about inheritance, either from the father to the daughter or from the husband to the wife, which is less than the father to the son? This is only in cases of intestate death. Inheritance can be willed as one wants to.
5. How do you feel about the fact that you are not able to wear makeup in public, is this a concern for you?  
   NO - least significant issue
6. Please elaborate about polygamy and your personal opinion in this matter. It depends on one's interpretation of religious sources. Education is the key to socialize people on consequences of polygamy.
7. What are your views about mandatory Hejab (covering of the body in front of everybody except the immediate family)?  
   I am for freedom of choice in dress.
3. In general, did the revolution help or hurt you?  
   I am not affected because I don't live in Iran.
9. If you were given a choice, what are some of the things you would like to see changed in Iran?  
   Revolutions take long time.
   Gradually - in time, radical aspects will subside for the better.
10. Finally, as an Iranian living in the United States, what are some of the inequalities that you see among American women which exist in Iran as well?  
   Very similar - the difference is in degree of choices available and the degree of male suppression - discrimination.
Comment: I believe these questions should be asked only from persons who live in Iran. Good luck!
How important is your religion to you?
I think it is important to me.

In daily life do you exercise your religion?
Not 100%, but 80% I consider in my daily life. It is important to me.

On a scale of 1-10 if 10 is fully Americanized, where do you fit in and why?
I feel maybe a 6 in Americanized. Why is because I like what I am and I like who I am. I am very comfortable with who I am. That is why going from one place to another place really does not change me that much. It is not going to change me.

In what ways do you consider yourself Iranian?
I think in a religious way. That I still have a lot of morality and values and I enjoy having them. I think that one of the reasons that people at work or at places with my husband or whoever is around me, they like me is because of who I am. I am not a fake person and I enjoy being who I am.

Would you relate the ethics and morals that you were pointing out? Do you relate it directly to the religion or in a hypothetical case if you weren't religious, would you say like those morals did not exist?
No, it would not.

As you know certain jobs or professions are not available for women in Iran. What is your opinion about lack of equal opportunity?
Yes, most definitely. It is sad. One of the reasons is because I would love to major in something that I would have to work with men a lot and I couldn't continue this after the Revolution happened. I couldn't pursue that career because it involved working with men and this is sad in a way because we do not have the same opportunities that men do. That is true, that is sad.

Now of course some of these things were also true before the revolution, so how did you see it before and how did you see it after the Revolution?
Well that is true, it was like that before and some of it even you see it right in the United States. Most certainly society will never accept us as equal to men. That is true, it is happening right here in America. I was a ejected (?) in Iran and in America and I have seen both ways. However, because the religion limits you to certain values and certain things the situations and the revolution that is happening right now in Iran, you feel that as a woman even more so. There is more lack of opportunities in that way and also Muslim culture or Islam culture values the women more on other issues than on the job. Islam thinks that being a wife in itself is a job, it is a very important job. Being a mother in itself is a very important job. So Islam is very much emphasized that a women is complete just being a wife and a mother and how important these two roles are. I think this is true. I am a wife and a mother and a working person and I most certainly can not do all of them right. When I go back to work or when I am working, I am not a
perfect wife, than if I do not work. I am a much better wife when I don't work than when I work. I would certainly be a better mother if I couldn't work. This is also a very important job. But, I often get full satisfied working too. It makes me feels good, it makes me feel like I am not just always to stay at home and do house work and house wife. I feel like I have a little bit more of what I get some satisfaction out of that too. So it is not so much that Islam thinks that Iranian people they think that women are lower than a man. But they think that a women's job is so important being a woman, mother and wife that you don't need to work with men and doing a hard job or so forth.

If I understand you correctly, if you were given a choice as far as being a mother 100%, and not needing the financial aspect, you would rather be a full-time mother and not work. Is that what I heard?

Well, lets say that I would rather work part-time. But I need to work too. I think it is good for myself, you know it brings me a better satisfaction as a women. But not as full-time work. I think full-time is very difficult to do it. It is very difficult. But I would like to have a part-time job outside of the house so I feel that I am with the society and people.

That is funny because my sister-in-law in Iran feels the same way, even though that my brother provides everything and he always says that you don't need to work. But she feels that her part-time job outside of the home keeps her in tune with what is going on in the society and she wants to be a part of it.

Okay, now my next question is, what is your feeling about inheritance either from father to daughter or from husband to wife, which we know is not equal. Again, I should add that it is somewhat close to the same laws, before and after the Revolution. So what are your feelings about that?

Well, I think that first of all you know the ideology behind these. It is not just so much that in the world the boys are more important than girls, that's why boys get more. I hope you know that that is not the ideology behind it. The ideology behind it is that the son gets more, because the son in Iran is responsible for everything. The son is responsible for taking care of the parents, the wife, the children, everything. Islam limits women to very little. The women in Islam are hardly responsible for anything. As you know, even when a husband and wife get a divorce the women have no responsibility to the children. The husband has to take the children, take care of the children, grow the children and the wife just basically leaves the husband, gets married and has her own new life. In the United States after a husband and a wife get a divorce, the wife has to not only support herself, she also has to support all the children and she has to raise all the children. It is very difficult to be a women and do all of that. So that is one of the reasons that the son inherits twice more than the daughter. It is not so much that they want to down grade or just say simply that boys are better than girls or anything like that. It is not like that at all. It is because the women hardly have any responsibilities in this matter. That is why the son gets twice as much as the daughter. Because the son is responsible for everything. I don't have any problem with this. I have a brother and I don't have any plans to take care of my father and mother when they
get old. I am planning that he is going to get twice as much as me and 
that is fine with me and he will have to take care of my mother and my 
father and in case of God forbid if my father passed away, my mother 
plans to be with my brother. Now if I wanted to bring my mother sometime 
for a vacation to my house, I would like to do that once in a while, but 
I have no responsibility to her illness, to taking care of her, to 
nothing at all. So let him have some more, so he can take care of my 
mother.

Also not being able to wear makeup in Iran and also not being able to 
have any cosmetics in public, is that a concern to you?

Well, in this time in Iran first of all women are all pretty much covered 
up. You are very much covered up under the chador, so hardly any 
beauty shows up. The hair is covered up and even the face, you don't 
see as much as you have, so really there isn't a need to put so much 
makeup. However personally I put makeup on sitting here, because I 
want to be accepted and I want to go through all the garbage that all 
the American women go through. Yes, I want to do something that I look 
good and I want to be accepted and that is one of the ways and it is 
sad but that is one of the ways that can work, I can be one of the 
group. Maybe I don't feel very pretty, maybe your right maybe I don't 
have that much confidence in me. But if I am in Iran and nobody wears 
makeup, I don't wear makeup. I never wear makeup around the house or 
I never wear makeup for my close friends, when they come. When I go out-
side and because I want to be one of the guys, I will do what they do 
to survive basically, because this is my work place and I need to earn 
money and I need to look presentable and all the things that go with it.

Would you please elaborate about polygamy and your personal opinion in 
this matter.

Well, I personally would not feel very comfortable to be married to 
someone who has other wives. I would not marry someone who already has 
a couple of wives. However, there is also another ideology or there was 
something else behind it. It was not just something for men to enjoy 
the pleasure of many women. It wasn't that at all. First of all this 
came after the war, the Prophet Mohammad had, because there were too many 
women and there weren't that many men. Also in the old days women did not 
know how to support themselves. In the old days they were very much 
financially depended on men for financial support. That is why the 
Prophet Mohammad says if a man can support financially, also emotionally, 
also physically and if it is fine with all the wives and everything, they 
can go ahead and have more than one wife. However, if God forbid and I 
ever lose my job and I don't have a job or I am paralyzed and totally 
depend on my husband for physical, emotional and financial support, I 
would rather my husband not divorce me. However, I feel like he should 
have a chance, I don't think he should suffer with me in the house. If 
he has enough money to provide a house for another wife, I think I could 
live with it, that he could go and have another wife and have me at the 
same time. If I could support myself financially, I would get a divorce, 
I would not live in this current situation. But if I could not support 
myself financially, I don't think he should also suffer just because I 
am suffering. Or if I could not give him children, I believe that he 
should just go ahead and if I am financially dependent on him, he should 
keep me, but he should be able to get married and have a child from the 
other women. He would be happy and I am happy and at the same time I am 
taken care of too.
Well that is a very very interesting view that you have. But out of my own curiosity, like in Iran I think we have the same vows in the beginning of marriage, as in health, happiness, sadness, they cover practically everything and they vow on it that they will be together. So what is wrong with that vow, even if something as you said, God forbid happens that you are incapacitated, so what is wrong with him being around?

Because, that is absolutely true, you are absolutely right, but I think you have a point there. I will tell you where the problem is. The problem is that we are all human and God made us as a human and humans have need. If I can't be involved in a sexual activity with my husband for many many years, if I am incapable of doing this, then I am depriving another human being of something very natural, something very nice. I am depriving him of that and at the same time I need him for financial support. So I appreciate this law of Islam that he lets me live with him, or if he can provide me with another house so that I can have the house and his support and all of that, and at the same time he doesn't have to be miserable just living with me, because I don't believe he would be happy to live with me for many years. He is a human being he has needs. He goes outside and sees these beautiful women and he has been deprived of that, which he shouldn't be really. And besides I don't believe that men are better than women, but I believe that they have different needs and their needs are totally different from each other. You might say well, if he can go and have four wives, why can't you go and have four husbands. That is true, however if I get pregnant I don't know which man this child is from. But if he gets three of us pregnant, we all know that we have the same kids by him, if you look at it that way. However, I once said that if you really read the Koran, very pletely you will see that for every different circumstance there is a different circumstance of other things. So what I am trying to say to you, is that really I would not live with a husband that wants to go and get another wife. If I had a husband with two wives, I would never marry this person. Or if I am perfectly healthy normal human being and if I have a job, I won't put up with this. But however, this is for very very different circumstances. And what I love about Islam is that Islam understands that you are a human being and you have needs and you are different and all of that.

Q. Very good. What are you views about mandatory hejab. Let me explain what I mean by hejab. Covering the body in front of everybody except the immediate family.

Well, first of all let me tell you not my opinion, not from my point of view. Because I will tell you my personal opinion. First of all let me tell you generally that I don't think religion should be forced. I don't think hejab should be forced. I think it should be something, it is like you fall in love, like you fall in love with someone and you are ready to do anything from them. Because you believe in this person and you love this person and you are ready to do anything. I personally have a love affair with the religion myself. When I fell in love with it there were a lot of things that I would even do, but to be honest with you I get tempted once in a while. But because I am in love, I would not do these things. However, I personally don't think that this should be forced. I think this is the number one mistake that I feel that the Iranians are making. As much as they believe is right, people believe in Iran, however it should not be forced. Because when something is forced
it has a very very bad, negative reaction. So I don't think it should be forced. What do I think, to be honest with you, I think that I would love it when a man who I work with at the work place will admire me for my job qualities, for my brain, for my knowledge and he thinks of me very high. I like when I work with a man and he doesn't think of me as being a woman, but this is really a bunch of garbage. When we go over there and we dress up, I know that there is no way to get a man to think of me as a coworker. I put makeup on and I wear matched clothes and I am sure that they do. However, this is also another part. Do I like it. I don't like it really because I think it is wrong, not so much for religion, but because I am working with this person. So it is not really right. Why am I doing it, I guess I am trying to fit into society. Am I happy about it, I hope that whenever I get an evaluation from any boss or when I work with a coworker, I hope that I get a compliment only for my job value. This is very degrading to a women when you don't get that. When you get a compliment or other things and you don't get a compliment on your work quality. I still sometimes think this is degrading I guess that is just part of being

In general has the Revolution been any help to you or not? Did it really help you or did it mostly hurt you in some way?

Well I guessed it hurt me, because the traveling is difficult. You can't travel very easy to go back and forth because of the Revolution. There is a lot of things that came out of it, that is the biggest part I guess to be honest with you. Did it help me, I guess maybe in a spiritual way it helped me, because I enjoy reading a lot of the magazines that were not allowed during the Shah's time. The Shah had such a control over the magazines and books. But now there is more freedom with the books and magazines and you have access to a lot of things. I enjoy that very much.

If you are given a choice, what are some of the things that you would like to change at this time?

Okay, I think one of the most important things that I wish could be changed, I would really let the Iranian people choose the religion themselves. I would not force them on it. Because when you force them on it, believe me it is awful. It has a very negative impact on the person and the person will totally reject the religion and everybody will be miserable. I think it has to be advertised and the government should encourage people to read books, to show movies, to try to encourage them in different ways, rather than pushing them. Because as I said before, this has a very bad negative impact and believe me there will be a lot of people who would reject everything. The religion and anything that goes with it. So I think the best way really, I think would be that they should find it for themselves and they should fall in love themselves with it. I will give you an example. One of the examples is that breast feeding. You know that Islam about 1600 or 1400 years ago said that a women should breast feed. The women should breast feed and have a good value for the mother and the child itself. They said that breast feeding should continue exactly two years, per Islam. And then what happened at old ages, people used to do it without questioning it. But Islam there is always something behind what they say. That is what I love so much about Islam. Because if they say no, there is a reason behind it. If they say yes, there is a yes behind it. But in the old days, people would
do it and never question it. They would say the Prophet Mohammad said we had to breast feed, so they breast fed and this went on and no one asked any questions. In the 60's in the US and in my country at the same time, breast feeding was very much looked down upon. The women were encouraged not to breast feed, because it wasn't classy, it wasn't nice. My own mother only would breast feed for about 4 months and then she discontinued to breast feed any of her children. Now, we came about 30 years later, I am her daughter and it is kind of, not very easy to do. Of course it is easier not to breast feed, however when I read a lot of books and right now the researchers found that when you breast feed you have less chance of getting breast cancer. When you breast feed your child will not have as many allergies, they digest much easier, their digestive system works much better and the benefits go on and on for the mother and the child. And right now doctors and researchers in the twentieth century are encouraging both sides to breast feed because the child will also get the security because they are noticing that the children that are breast fed are much more secure when they were older, than those that were not breast fed. The children who were breast fed were more secure about themselves, they like themselves more, they often adapted to jobs better, they were happier, healthier children than the ones who did not feed them.

Now however, after you have seen that and you are not pushing this breast feeding, only try it on the mother. Let them read books about it, research about it, advertise about it. It is much feeling and nobody is pushing me, nobody is making me, but I enjoy this, I enjoy this very much. This is my choice. I know she feels (the child) very comfortable, she is very quiet when I do it and I feel that we are both getting something out of it. So I feel that they should let people make the decision for themselves, instead of being pushed. I think that is one of the things that is really going to turn off to a lot of people in Iran.

Since you brought this up, I always thought about other religions, because in Iran there were so many religions before Islam came to Iran. This was after the Arab attacking Persia, so there are so many Zortastrians?, Jews and Catholics, which I think it makes a lot of since the point that it should not be forced upon.

No, it shouldn't because when it is forced on, you have a bad effect and I would like to add one more thing to it. When I came to US, I was very I was Muslim because of my past. I didn't do research or anything like that. And you are asking how come all of this interest. Let me tell this one. What I like about the US, the US allows me to go and research about all of them. Another advantage of being from a middle classed family you are not privileged to be spoiled, but you are not too poor that you can not enjoy life or test life. Because my father was sending me money, I didn't need to work so much, so I went to school and on my spare time I really studied all the other religions and I really worked on everything. Why did I like Islam, I really didn't choose Islam because I was prejudiced to it because I was born from my past and I was Muslim. That was not the reason. The reason was because I feel like Islam was not so much satisfying my spiritual needs, it was satisfying my daily needs. Whenever I needed daily needs, like right now I am raising a child right now, I now exactly what to do. It has rules for me, what to do with her, what to do, what not to do. It is so much talks about when to stop breast feeding, when not to stop, when to do what, when not to do what. And so much all the religion is good, spiritual and wonderful and we think they are all good, but this one in particular is satisfying my daily needs. Everytime I need something, I don't really need to think about it,

33
I can just go right to my book and so far it has been working for me.

I think no matter how much we try, I think it is very sad, but I think society will never see us as equal to men. I am sure this is the way it is in Iran as it is in the US. Even in here, I here all the time the men complaining in my own country, my sister complains that how she does twice the job a man does, but she gets half the credit. Even in here too I know for a fact that they would treat us harder than my husband, but I get less credit and of course I get less money than he does. Now you can go and sue me for this part, but it is the truth, that is exactly how I feel. I don't think that is going to change anytime soon. Maybe in 100 years or something, but I don't see that changing anytime soon. I don't see it.
AFTER THE REVOLUTION


Quran. The book that Muslims believe was sent to them through Mohammad the Prophet of Islam.


