



Analysis of the philosophical history of gender inequality and the revolutionary present scenario so far as rights of Islamic women is concerned

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Abstract

The project is on the topic "Analysis of the philosophical history of gender inequality and the revolutionary present scenario so far as rights of Islamic women is concerned" and it has been taken up with a view to not only elaborate on the topic but also to connect it with various other topics like present day scenario in international arena where women played unparalleled role in quest for getting political, social, educational and cultural rights. A conclusion has been given at the end of the project to give an overall analysis of the topic. Research is based on Doctrinal method in which no. of data has been taken from holy books, views of philosophers like *Bentham*, *James Mill*, *Immanuel Kant*, *Rawls* has also been incorporated to highlight past day political and social standing of women and finally picture of present day politics has been highlighted to give research final conclusion. Thus the project has been presented in the best possible way so that the readers of this project can get the maximum benefit out of it and it can give a concrete idea of the topic at hand and prima facie allow the readers to understand the topic.

Keywords: Islamic women, Arab spring, revolution, women's rights

Introduction

Women in history if at all were given certain rights, had never been given political rights. No matter what so ever was the reasons, but the fact remains that human society and its architect the great intellects and the philosopher who come up with the idea of civilized society and its principles ignored the role of the women, the real architect of the society.

Women in Islam are still struggling for their rights, be it political, social or educational. For ex in Saudi Arabia only after series of revolution the King Abdullah considered for the first time that women should be allowed to vote and be appointed in the constituent assembly to assist in law making. The Saudi women got their right to vote and run only 2-3 years back in the year 2015 local elections. The fate of the women is that the country still prohibits them from driving.

In this research paper I am working out reasons why the condition of women is such especially the Islamic women. Against the general ideas of people at large the Quran their religious guide (Islam) does not prohibits women participation in political life but it were the other reasons like they were considered intellectually weaker than man. Man feels unsecured with women presence in politics etc. that has resulted in their exclusion from the political life.

According to the prominent personality Sheikh Zoubir Bouchikhi ^[1], Islam nowhere explicitly allows or disallows voting rights to the Muslim women ^[2]. The Muslim

Majority countries adhering to the Islamic Principle of Quran had shown the disparity in time at which they permitted women right to vote which clearly indicates that these Islamic countries do not follow set pattern and had varied value system and tradition present within them. For example the Islamic country Saudi Arabia had permitted the women right to vote just 3 years back in the year 2015 whereas the world has also witnessed the fate of the women of the another country Azerbaijan who has granted them voting rights a century ago, in the year 1918.

The different stakeholders in the Muslim community itself often perceive the Islamic doctrine in different fashion while debating and discussing the women's right. Quoting the holy Quran, and the other sources of the Islamic law like the hadith, Islamic feminists on one hand argue presence of more egalitarian ideals in the Islamic doctrine while the conservatives on other hand consider and authoritatively profess that the present day gender inequalities are divinely ordained and to put weight to their argument they portrays the lives of well-known women in the early history of Muslim world as evidence.

Hypothesis

Researcher considered that the condition of women esp. Islamic women needs a positive change; as were devoid of basic fundamental rights in the nature of political, social, educational and cultural rights. They always were and still are considered weaker than man. The researcher is also of the view that present day uprising and civil war is also fought for equality in all spheres.

Objectives of study

- To determine the political, social and cultural rights of

¹ Imam of the Islamic Society of Greater Houston's Southeast Mosque

²The complex relationship between women and Islam is defined by both Islamic texts and the history and culture of the Muslim world. Sharia (Islamic law) provides for differences between women's and men's roles, rights, and obligations. Muslim-majority countries give women varying degrees of rights with regards to marriage, divorce, civil rights, legal status, dress code, and education. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Islam

women esp. of Islamic women.

- To provide necessary evidence and to analyze the current day politics with a view to determine course of action taken by women for realizing their rights

Views of Philosophers

Jeremy Bentham^[3]

The 18th century Utilitarian and classical liberal philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who was known for his way ahead thoughts and progressive outlook advocated for a absolute equality between sexes including the right to ballot and to participate in the governance of the state, and opposed stalwartly the dissimilar sexual moral standards society displays with respect to the women and men^[4].

In his much talked about creation "Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (1781)"^[5] Bentham sturdily condemned the common practice in many countries of the world to deny women's their fundamental rights by considering them of inferior minds akin to the infants or an medically insane male. Although this is considered as his first open advocacy in public for the rights of women but this is not the end.

Bentham's stance toward women was in fact an accepted application of his own advocated principle of greatest happiness. Bentham authoritatively stated that he is unable to find any justified reason why the Female sex should be devoid of their rights to happiness vis-a-vis male counterpart.

He demanded for just about total emancipation for women which ranges from a political freedom that eventually would permit women to vote and to participate as equals in the legislative and executive branches of government. He also argued for personal freedom that would permit women to obtain a divorce to end the cruelty and violence made to her by her husband and insisted on some modification of the double standard in sexual matters.

James Mill^[6]

The author of the book "History of British India (1817)"^[7] and the great philosopher James Mill professed that the status of the women in any given society is the decisive test for

³ History of feminism is the chronological narrative of the movements and ideologies aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights for women. available at http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/polsc101-3.2.3_History-of-Feminism.pdf, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_feminism,

⁴ The history of feminism is the history of feminist movements and their efforts to overturn injustices of gender inequality. Feminist scholars have divided feminism's history into three "waves". Available at <http://www.artandpopularculture.com/Feminist>

⁵ An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation is a text by Jeremy Bentham. Printed for publication 1780, published 1789, http://www.artandpopularculture.com/Introduction_to_the_Principles_of_Morals_and_Legislation

⁶ James Mill (6 April 1773 – 23 June 1836) was a Scottish historian, economist, political theorist, and philosopher. He was a founder of classical economics, together with David Ricardo and the father of influential philosopher of liberalism, John Stuart Mill. Available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Mill

⁷ *The History of British India* is a history of British India by the 19th century British philosopher and imperial political theorist James Mill. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_History_of_British_India, http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=1867&Itemid=27

analyzing how highly developed that society is.

In his construction "*The Subjection of Women*" (1869) he presented authoritative opinion to a greater extent in an astringent hostility to the so called social and legal disparities universally forced upon women by the patriarchal society. He explained the realistic intricacy of arguing effectively in opposition to a commonly held belief that is deeply-entrenched within the minds of the people, despite the fact that it relies upon a vaguely-expressed assumption of the accepted supremacy of males^[8].

Mill in his articulation "Essay on Government"^[9], acknowledged Bentham's outlook on women, he advocated referring Bentham's principle that every human being, irrespective of the fact that whether he is a male or female is the only and best judge of his own interests." Mill's advocacy for the rights of the women got momentum after he met his idealized woman in the year 1830, Harriet Taylor. Mill and his better half then wrote at length on the political right of the women of the world in their articulation "Essay on Sex Equality"^[10].

Immanuel Kant

But unfortunately another significant thinker and philosopher Immanuel Kant was of the different opinion. Although he professed a kind of society in which citizens were given Independence in a sense that they are subject to the laws^[11] made by them only through the legislature and hence not subject to someone else Jurisdiction. But sadly the Modern and progressive views was limited to the males of the society. He excluded from the law making process the women and the children, by advocating the reasoning that their omission is natural as they lack economic independence. While denying the women and the children full citizenship by not supporting their right akin to the males he gave them Consolation by advocating for them "second class citizenship". He justified his stand by professing for them Right to freedom and right to equality as just a member of the society.

Rawls

Rawls in his theory of "Political Liberalism"^[12] advocated political rights to women group but he said women's rights are among those political principles that we might have to

⁸ One of John Stuart Mill's last and finest literary efforts "the subjection of women" was written in support of a political cause of which he had long been a leading champion. <http://www.philosophypages.com/hy/5q.htm>

⁹ In James Mill's essay on Government, Mill maintains that government is merely a means to an end, viz. the happiness of the whole community and the individuals composing it. from *The Encyclopedia Britannica* 1820, <http://studymore.org.uk/xmilgov.htm>

¹⁰ With the help his long-time companion Harriet Taylor, Mill became a powerful champion of lofty moral and social ideals, <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/E/bo3620983.html>

¹¹ Kant wrote his social and political philosophy in order to champion the Enlightenment in general and the idea of freedom in particular. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-social-political/>

¹² *Political Liberalism* is an update to John Rawls's *Theory of Justice* (1971), in which he attempts to show that his theory of justice is not a "comprehensive conception of the good", but is instead compatible with a liberal conception of the role of justice: namely, that government should be neutral between competing conceptions of the good. <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/1341828?uid=2&uid=4&sid=21103162566507>

sacrifice, in order to achieve stable political institutions.

Bentham also gave preference to this view, according to Bentham at times there was no political state in existence where he could have had coined the idea of admitting the women's in the administration of the state in full capacity which could be accepted without arguing that it will affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the administration in one way or another.

He was way ahead of other contemporary thinkers of his time and he gave proper justification for the exclusion of the women's from the law making & administration of the state by stating that it is not the women that lack the ability and intellect to effectively discharge their duty as administrator or legislature as the case may be but it is the man who lacks maturity and courage to work shoulder to shoulder with women without being unsure. The men of that age were unable to effectively perform their duty while women are working on next seat. He manifestly alleged that men correlate women to a great extent only with their sexual role and for pleasing the women for that matter they would go to any extent. He drew an analogy of man of that time with the proud peacocks, which by nature disperses its energies in posturing & preening for pleasing the female peacocks.

So looking at the view of the different theorist it can be rightly conclude that though theoretically all advocated political rights of women but in practice they favored philosophy of patriarchal society because the society than was so self obsessed and adamant with pre-conceive notion that women's are inferior that avocations by someone of the inclusion of the women in the political life was then untenable and unacceptable norm. And that's the reason that this ideology has left no choice with the women but to out rightly rejecting Gandhian Philosophy as a solution. Then what should be the path for women to accomplish their goal.

Wave of change

Changes in the past one decade have proved wrong the earlier misconception of Islamic world that women are intellectually inferior than man. In 1988 Pakistan became the first Muslim Majority state with a female Prime Minister ^[13] and number of other countries of the world in which Muslims are a majority, including Indonesia ^[14], Pakistan, Bangladesh ^[15], Turkey, And Kyrgyzstan have been led by women in the past decade.

Present Day Politics

Recent revolution in North Africa and Arabian countries has shown the path ahead. The Arab world is not only shifting

¹³ Benazir Bhutto (21 June 1953 – 27 December 2007) was first female Pakistani politician and stateswoman who served as the 11th Prime Minister of Pakistan in two non-consecutive terms from November 1988 until October 1990, and 1993 until her final dismissal on November 1996.

¹⁴ Megawati Sukarnoputri was the fifth President of Indonesia (2001-2004) and the first female President of Indonesia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Presidents_of_Indonesia

¹⁵ Begum Khaleda Zia is a Bangladeshi politician who was the Prime Minister of Bangladesh from 1991 to 1996 and again from 2001 to 2006. When she took office in 1991, she was the first woman in the country's history and second in the Muslim world (after Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan in 1988–1990) to head a democratic government as prime minister. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khaleda_Zia

from autocracy to constitutional democracy but also started recognizing political rights of women though to a limited extent as evident from Saudi Arabia's example. The success of revolution in one country resulted in spread of it to number of other Muslim majority countries, where Islamic women's univocally raised their voices for constitutional setup and equal political and social rights. Although the goal is yet to be achieved but women has to fight for their right.

One can ask the question whether the revolts of the Arab springs have enhanced the position of women's right in the region. The answer is in affirmative as well as in negation. There is development in women's position as her rights and issues are now discussed on the internet and media. People in general and women in particular have realized the importance and need of recognizing women's rights. No, because there is still a long way to go before women can be put in their proper place.

Women in Arab Nations- the Arab spring was not only an anger and anguish against the authoritative regime but was also a revolt for the equal status of the women for their position their role in the 21st century. It was a precursor one can say where women authoritatively asked for their share of resources and equal standing with the male counterparts akin to the one available to the women's in the other parts of the world. The women once again the true heroes of the revolt were sidelined purposefully to water down their demand and share in social, political and economic activities.

The message that women via this revolt gave to the society was loud and crystal clear that changes do happen and the time has ripened for it. They know the fight for their rights isn't going to be easy but are ready to impact and change the caretakers of crooked government. When women were in command of the protest crusade, the crusade was not aggressive and brutal and the result of which is that their act of bringing to the streets the protest for freedom, dignity and human rights are part of a emergent and upbeat trend worldwide ^[16].

Few Years back when in Bahrain the Woman without any external aid and support from male counterpart stood up against the Bahraini security police in the presence of a mob and amidst the intense cloud of tear gas, they showed to the world that they can withstand the groping and attacks and can fight under all odds without fear as they can no more bear the inequality and oppression. The women turned out to be hero who withstand man handling by the security force but refuse to submit or step back. They stood for dual goal of making Egypt a better place for its citizen and snatching equal rights for the women.

Women during Arab uprising turned out as icons for women's in other part of the world who encourages and instill energy to fight for their rights.

The incident that the world witnessed few years back at Cairo's was the indication to the world that the young women mostly student who are educated and can compete boys in nearly all field will no more remain within the four

¹⁶ Women's Voices on the Arab Spring: Lys Anzia Lys Anzia - Founder/ Editor-at-large for Women's News Network at <http://www.vitalvoices.org/node/2400>

boundaries. The very fact that mostly women in the protest were young student or full-time activists or were housewives is of great importance and it's a sign of future revolt which will be impossible for the state to suppress. Even the grandmothers, daughters, and pregnant ladies took part in the protest.

As the grasp of the crooked regime collapses the directed violence increased in intensity and volume with the world watching the fate of the people. The most significant element to consider is this series of incident was that in the court of human civilization worldwide the women were winning. No measure of police torture, administrative corruption and condoned violence has threatened the women. Neither the brutal rape and injury can instill fear nor can the death hold them down. And if women's in the Arab spring were knocked down, they stood up again with more courage and anger.

Looking globally the women's in the Arab countries are way behind from the women's of other countries. The female labor force involvement is lowest in the Arab countries vis-à-vis other nations of the world. where the global average is around 52% the figure with respect to the Arab Nation is Just half the global average, i.e. 26%.: They face insurmountable barriers, favoritism, legal and dogmatic obstacles, lack of economic prospect, underprivileged working environment, and the dearth of the societal and the much needed institutional support required to pull them into financial and public life. In Reality, the actual "Arab Spring" is about the essential paradigm change, the renovation of women's role in the 21st century as a tool for economic growth and their empowerment [17].

Change witnessed in the condition of Arab women in last decades

If we look at the changes that took place in the world in the last one or two decade, it is impossible to overlook the rapid progress that the countries in the Arab world specifically the middle east and the north east countries have made in falling gender gaps in the field of education, in enhancing the longevity, i.e. life expectancy, and in bringing down the fertility levels. If we compare the developing regions of the world, the countries of the Middle East and also the North Africa, commonly called as MENA [18] has in the period between 1990 to 2008 accomplished tremendous declines around 59% in the maternal mortality, which is undoubtedly a result of empowerment of the women of these countries. Not only this again in the past one decade, enrollments of the women's in the school and collages in the MENA countries have grown more rapidly their male counterparts enrollments, with the female-to-male ratios presently in the high nineties and more interestingly the females are now more expectedly than men to attend university. Their performance in education at all levels is healthier than male counterparts. With its noteworthy progress in the education of the women's, the Arab world has augmented women's productive potential and

earning capacity. But unfortunately the low level of women involvement in the economic field implies that the region has failed to realize the women potential to its fullest. The human capital of women is being wasted.

Conclusion

People has to realize that women in this contemporary world is at par with male counterparts in almost every field and thus there is a greater need to recognize women's political, cultural, social, economical and educational rights. World in general and Arabian countries in particular has to realize that women has awaken and in event of not providing them equal rights, they can be instrumental in transforming the administrative and political structure of the country as has been evident from recent uprising in countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen; civil uprisings in Syria& Bahrain; most voilent protests that the world has witnessed in the countries like Morocco, Kuwait, Jordan, Algeria, and most effected Sudan; and small remonstrations that have taken place in countries like Djibouti, Saudi Arabia peninsula, Mauritania, the disputed Palestinian region and the great Western Sahara region. It is for rest of the world to decide that whether they want women to pursue the same path as been evident in Arab spring or else they will gradually transfer the authority in the hands of women by giving them equal political, cultural, economical and educational rights. If the world has still not perceived the anger and the anguish of the women at large, or they are still not ready to share the resources and the power they will soon witness the revolution that will leave unparallel imprints in the history of the human civilization.

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¹⁷ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-nasser-h-saidi/the-real-arab-spring-is-a_b_4206716.html

¹⁸ The term MENA, for "Middle East and North Africa", is an acronym often used in academic, military planning, disaster relief, and business writing. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MENA>

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16. An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation is a text by Jeremy Bentham. Printed for publication published http://www.artandpopularculture.com/Introduction_to_the_Principles_of_Morals_and_Legislation In recent years, biased ferrite material for microstrip antenna structures has attracted noticeable attention. Ferrite is one of the important magnetic materials which are used as in both types single and polycrystalline. Some novel characteristics of polycrystalline ferrite over normal dielectric material make it very useful in microwave antenna applications. Different types of polycrystalline ferrites have their specific advantages as Li substituted ferrites has high dielectric constant, low, 1780-1789,