

# Status of Women in Ancient Iran And Other Ancient Countries

Dr. Pervin Shakiba

(Summary of Article in Farsi)

Pouruchista, Oh youngest daughter of Zarathushtra, this gentleman with good thoughts and truthfulness asks your hand in marriage. You consult your wisdom and make your decision based on your good thoughts, in the performance of this righteous duty,.

We see that Zarathushtra wants his daughter Pouruchista to have a free hand in accepting or not accepting the marriage proposal made by the young Jamasp. The important thing is that Zarathushtra wants her to use her wisdom and make her own choice. It is also worth noting that Zarathushtra had named his daughter Pouruchista, which means Full of Knowledge.

In Avesta women are shown to share the responsibilities with men. Men and women are equally praised for their deeds in Avesta. Zarathushtra in his advice to parents recommends that they should facilitate both the sons and daughter to acquire knowledge. Every where we see that Zarathushtra mentions mother and father men and women son and daughter and he does not differentiate between sexes.

In the wedding ceremony prayer recited by the priest, husband and wife are equally made responsible for all decision and actions to be taken.

It is worth noting that with the passage of time changes were introduced to the disadvantage of women. Most of which happened due to the influence of the Semitic race on the Aryan race.

In other ancient countries except Egypt women were seen as a child-producing slave. The Assyrians who were always at war needed men to fight these wars and they expected women to produce as many recruits as possible for the army. Girls were accepted in marriage after receiving money. The husband could sell his wife in Assyria and in old age she could be send away from the house that she had lived all her life. Women could not ask for divorce but men could just divorce by making a

statement to that effect. If a woman would make such a statement she would be thrown into the river. If a woman did not bear a child she would be sent away while if a man could not produce a baby women had no such right.

Among Chinese it was believed that boys were created by God while girls were created by the Devil. Baby girls were sold as slaves and if there were no buyers they were drowned in the river. Husbands could sell their wives or kill them. Girls were used as sacrifice to the gods.

In India during the Vedic period women were treated as equals but after that they were treated worse than animals. On the death of her husband she had to be burned alive in the same pyre that burned her husband. Like in Arabia and China girls could be killed.

In Arabia girls were buried alive, men would give away their wife in gamble. In Rome women were considered as troublemakers and were only used to create more soldiers to meet the needs of their constant war. A Roman could sell his wives just like he sold his slaves. In Greece women were treated like goods. Aristotle rated women next to slaves and below men. Plato considered men to be above women but gave her the right to conduct the affairs in the house and if a woman had the ability he thought she should have the right to even rule.

In Iran we see that women were rulers and if at the time of the death of the king the prince were a child the mother would rule till the son became an adult, Queen Homa mother of king Ardeshir was one such example. Women ruled Iran during different periods in History, Pourandokht and Azarmidokht are examples of successive queens who ruled Iran. Women in Iran lost their status when Iran lost its power to Arabs.

In Egypt women were respected and shared power and old ladies were given special respect. Women were also traders in Egypt and attend the court and parties in their best attire and they also had religious powers.

Women in ancient Iran compared to women in other nations had great respect and were highly placed in society. They even participated in sports like horse racing, polo, archery etc. After the attack of the Arabs they lost all their personal and social rights and were treated in par with women in other parts of the world.