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Mothers Of the Rising Nations

The Futurology of Feminism's Role in Developing Countries



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Mothers of the Rising Nations

The Futurology of Feminism's Role in Developing Countries

To my friend and sister, Anna Von Hinuber

Introduction

The discourse upon feminism and feminist movements seems either easy or difficult. Part of its difficulty is due to its variety of orientations that in somehow cause some serious conflicts in the area of opinion and action. On the other hand, besides these varieties in orientations, one can mention the variety of different and contradictory interpretations in feminism, and its achievements and consequences, which implies the necessity of cautious and comprehensive thinking in discourse. Investigating the consequences of feminism in west world, the present writing is seeking to inspect the evolution of present topic in regards to the society of Iran, with a futurology approach. Therefore, in the first section of the book, the feminism in west is delineated and in the next section its future vision in developing countries will be presented.

Disjunction between the Doctrines of Feminism and Modernism

Modernity is known as a lifestyle and way of thinking in European and North American people lived after 17th century. The evolutions of western life after modernity was so ample and deep that western historians tend to introduce that as a historical turning point in the western civilization history. However, newer historians, in addition to accepting the tremendous changes caused by modernity, they consider this period along the previous periods of western civilization history [1].

The foundation of modernity civilization can be categorized in three elements, modernity conversation (illustration), new models and structures of economics and politics, and eventually the institutions of modern society such as government and bureaucracy. The differences and changes in each foregoing elements justify the changes in western people's lifestyle in comparison to previous periods. It is natural that the underhung evolutions in modernity affect the women's individual and social life and consequently it was influential on the patterns of family. The modernity doctrines emphasize the individualism, de-authorization, and secularism besides the values dominated on new economics, which usually is formed by accumulation of wealth and increase in manufacturing, gradually forced society and western women to review their traditional lifestyles. Investigating the consequences and achievements of feminism's movements shows that emphasis on legal freedom, relative

welfare of women, and enhancement in social political opportunities, are some of the achievements of feminism's movements that frequently mentioned by feminisms. While regardless of whether they are completely positive or negative, these achievements are the cause of capitalism and domination of modern conversation. In fact, in 19th century, the pinnacle of the first wave feminism movements, is the century of minority movements and revolutions in America, which feminism's movement itself affected by many of these movements [2]. Modernity and its economic pattern, capitalism, needs anti-ideology and denial of the conflicts between minorities and the modernity system. Capitalism in west should have acted on solving the problem of social minorities like Jews, race minorities like colored, economical minorities like slaves and workers, and sexual minorities. Obviously, it doesn't mean that modernity anti-ideology and anti-minority wasn't faced any resistance inside the capitalism and majority class, but still the role of fighting and consistency of minorities couldn't be ignored in this field. Even there is a discourse that many of achievements known as the achievements of feminism's movements, are eventually the result of capitalism and modern conversations. However, one can be disagreed with Davidson's saying that "All things feminism has done for women in recent century doesn't worth more than a washing machine." [3]. As a witness to this, one can mention the opinions of many western writers that basically feminism is a movement of 20th century and the fighting of western women in 19th century is introduced as the

continuation of inside conversation movements in modernity [4]. There is no doubt that regardless of examples and their domains, historically women suffered from deprivations and discriminations. And despite the existence of feminism's movements and industrial developments, women still suffer from discriminations and violence, and intrinsically there is no difference between the presence of sexual anomalies among developed and developing countries. However, the forms of oppression, discrimination and their domain are different among various civilizations. It is natural that in companion with the existence of inequality, oppression and discrimination against women, there should exist a defense for women rights and fighting against inequalities among two sexes. In fact, fighting against discrimination and oppression is originated from understanding and interpretation of these concepts among different societies. The existing differences among people who based on their religious and human education defend the suppressed women rights and those who based on the values and norms of modernism and offensive behaviors try to remove all the symbols and realities of these differences, are so deep that the examples of these two can be easily separated. The feminist movement and its doctrines influenced many of our individual and social life. It is massively observed that the people who are against feminism and criticize the achievements of feminism, do not accompany with the critics.

General Characteristics of Western Feminism

As it is demonstrated before, one of the issues appears in feminism's discussion, is the existence of various orientation that somehow represents the contradictory positions. So, speaking about feminism in a way that spans all the orientations and their doctrines, although is inherently difficult but it doesn't lie in the goal of this writing. Nevertheless, some common statements can be stated about purposes, goals, methods, origins and consequences of feminist movement.

A) Denial of Sexual Discrimination

One of the basic lessons of many feminist movements is the denial of the differences between men and women in acceptance of roles and specified social works. It can be said that as sexual clichés, almost all movements and feminist orientations deny the division of social work among two sexes. Since family is the most important institute that is formed based on the feminine and masculine behavior, in feminist point of view this institute either needs a pattern correction or basically needs an anarchist revolution. However, what is important among these issues is that the supporters of feminism instead of representing evidence to approve this claim, they usually focus their attempts on forming a society to deny the behavioral differences between two sexes and attribute the patterns of behavioral differences to cultural reasons and at the same time they try to formalize this idea in legal and educational contexts. For instance, one the most important international documents about women rights is “the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women”. In the first clause of this convention, which its contexts are repeated in many other international conventions, is stated that the phrase “discrimination against women” in this convention means assigning any difference, exception or limitation based on sex. Despite the affluent battles exists among feminist orientations on the conflict about difference or

equality between two sexes, none of the feminist orientations withdrew their motto of behaviors denial and special role of men and women. In our country, two types of behavior is notable facing this idea. The first is the opinion of people who absolutely consider the similarity of roles and deny the differences in roles and behavior between two sexes, or in feminist term they deny sexual clichés and based on that they try to form a type of internal consensus in favor of this idea and block any room for doubt or questioning regarding this opinion. This group performed one of the most important strategies in feminist movement in review of textbooks in recent years, which is the denial of sexual clichés in education. But since the second group don't have a correct understanding of feminist mottos, they don't deny the feminine behavior and masculine roles. However they practically follow ideas and programs that results in the denial of the differences in social behaviors, which in fact is the most important strategy of feminist movement.

B) Historical Discrimination and Oppression

One of the claims of feminist movements, especially among the second wave feminist movements and after that, is the idea of historical discrimination and oppression against women and the theory of sexual oppression. Although there are disagreements among feminist orientations about the examples of discrimination and oppression, but basically the acceptance of sexual oppression and discrimination against women are common historically, except for the period of primitive matriarchy. The idea of equal rights and opportunities between two sexes, advertised by liberal feminists during the first wave of feminism, has resulted in equal rights and educational, political, and economical opportunities among men and women until 1920. Nevertheless, after the sixth decade of 20th century, feminist movement appeared again, this time with more power and diversity. Stating that the origin of inferiority or oppression against women should be searched in more complicated elements such as language, culture and patriarchy dominating systems, they refuse to attribute the equal rights and opportunities to equalize two sexes. The main emphasis of feminists on the existence of oppression and discrimination against women in the second half of the 20th century, contrary to the existence of legal equality structures and praising equal opportunities to both sexes in western countries (western Europe and North America), refers to inequality of women in high paying managing jobs and political position,

injustice in payment for the same job between men and women, and excessive work load due to taking tasks and responsibilities in two area of general (outside the house) and private (inside the family as a mother or spouse).

The feminist movement starts multi-level measures in improving women's condition in second wave. First, forcing the employers (who mostly include private employers) to follow the equal patterns in recruiting women, job promotion and equal pay and benefits between two sexes. In the next level, observing no equality between two sexes in results, the feminist movement devised the idea of "positive discrimination" [6]. The positive discrimination is a set of measures and policies that suggests minorities or vulnerable group of people should acquire more benefits to provide chances in competing and having access to equal opportunities. Analyzing feminist reactions demonstrate that the feminist movement now wants equal results instead of equal opportunities. The positive discrimination couldn't be considered as a temporary policy towards equality, because as it is exactly obvious from its name, at least in transitive period, this policy wants to increase the accessibility in one way and decrease it in the other way. So, on the contrary, it will create an equal situation. But in long term, and perhaps in "teleological" way it may lead to equal and balanced positions. In summary it can be said that since there is no way to compensate this vacuity, this illegal and inde-

fensible inequality that exists in distributing social benefits among groups, makes us feel the necessity of positive discrimination to lead to fair distribution [8].

C) Equality

Equality is known as the most important motto and purpose of feminist movements. Even though in radical and postmodern feminist orientations this motto is less significant, but this origins from the frustration of feminist movements from realization the equality. The feminists' argument on equality mainly have roots in primitive modern secularism and individualism. The emphasis of modernity conversation is on a person to have equal access to equal rights and values, but soon or later, they address that to women. If a person is the subject of having access to rights and opportunities, why women are excluded from these rights, while they form half of our society. The ruling values of capitalism - based on which human and social values emerge in wealth accumulation, manufacturing power and providing income - introduce equality in gaining wealth and monetary power as the most important area of attaining equality. Studying the history full of ups and downs of feminism, especially after 1920, shows that the ups and downs of feminist movements, have a completely meaningful relation with social economic policies of governments confronting women issues. The social demonstrations of women reduced after the improvements in economics condition or supportive policies of governments for women and their work force, and as a result the attention to feminist movements fell down. Obviously when the economic support of governments decreased and the life pressure on

women increased, the social demonstration of women and feminist movements regained the power [9].

Some valuable points are mentioned in criticizing the equality seeking of feminisms, but the issue that is paid less attention to is the effect of social economical legal structures. Attention to origins of feminism's history, either in first wave or the second wave, justifies the goal of equality seeking in feminism.

In feminists' interpretation, the period prior to the first wave of feminism in west is considered as the period of inferiority of women. Based on historical reports, there was a system of legal differences between two sexes in medieval societies, which last until the beginning of the capitalism's period. However, in western territories before modernity, the differences in legal systems were documented as cultural and legal customs and because of that there were various customs in christen and medieval territories in legal relations between men and women, generally and privately. Despite the existence of exaggerating reports of inferiority of women in western societies, some reports indicate that the women's conditions in pre-modern period were not as hard and overwhelming as feminists claim. These groups believe that in some western territories marriage was far more equalized in pre-modern period than industrial one. The other group of historians consider this analysis to be even optimistic and also believe that in fact industrialization converted the domination of men over women from home to work place.

By any means, with the domination of modern conversation and their basic principles such as individualism, in fact it was the modernity conversation that provoked the idea of equality. Modernity equality and first wave of feminism brought the complete equal rights between two sexes until 1920. The characteristic of the system which seeks equality between two sexes is absolute equal rights between two sexes in every aspects, even family and its current affairs.

The existence of cultures and western family customs, and the occurrence of world war one and two, postponed the unveiling of the consequences of the absolute equality. After the end of world war two and economic short after war, dismissing women from the jobs they had during the war started. Discriminating in jobs, sexual harassments, less income in comparison with men at the same position, no promotion for women and not being able to get higher jobs were known as parts of the women issues in general and economical aspects. While due to their intrinsic intentions and social customs, women still bear the domestic chores which was forty hours a week.

Modern conversation consider the individualization both as legal and standard of responsibility. The ruling of the system seeking equality and individual responsibility, besides the inequality of responsibilities and duties in family, and the relations between two sexes, provide a fragile atmosphere for women society, which results in the

summit of feminist movement in 1960 to 1980. The feminist movement in one hand followed the idea of eternal equality, and on the other hand sets its priority to fight against family, because in simplest interpretation, family would postpone the opportunity of getting results in equality.

D) Critical Approach against Family

The relations between feminism movement and family can be analyzed in two levels: the first level is the feminist opinions and theories about families and the second level is the consequences of the feminist comments and programs on family structure. The contents about this issue will be followed, but regarding to feminist comments and programs on family it could be said that the feminist movement starts its move by criticizing family and their dependent roles. It is obvious that like other similar issues, feminist criticizing the family basis started from gentler issues and end up with more radical one. The first criticism of feminists that mostly stated by liberal feminists, was the suppression of women in taking social roles rather than their maternal and marital roles. Renowned people of this group believed that women should reduce their dependency to family and they should resist to this belief that home is the suitable place for them. However, parallel to radicalization of critical position of feminism movement, criticism of family is intensified in feminist literature. In Marxist feminists' point of view, the origin of oppression against women is family, i.e. the ideology of family and their appropriate social structures. The ideology of family leads to a labor division in which man provides materialistic resources and woman provides free services.

Criticism and denial of family in feminist literature permeates to the roles depended to the family. The feminist movement act on criticism against these roles step by step. In the first step and in Marxist and liberal feminism literature, the role of housekeeping women is known at the same level of slavery. And in the next step, in radical and social feminism literature, the maternal and marital roles of women challenged: in order to empathize with women and cover their social conditions as second rate citizen, they are appreciated as mothers. Sanctity and disdain are the two sides of the same coin of social rubbery from women. In society based on equal human rights for everybody, there is no need to legal marriage. Radical feminists put their steps further from denying the family, motherhood and wifehood, and produce contexts to resist family. Theorizing about homosexuality and the denial of heterosexuality, global sorority and defending the theory of abortion, are parts of the efforts done by this group to resist the theory of family and their dependent roles.