



Empowering Women in Iran: Can This Be a Role Model for Islamic World?

Saima Shahid¹

Abstract

The central point of this paper is that; can the contemporary Iranian initiatives to empower their women be put as a role model for the rest of the Islamic countries? Because, as for the positions of women in the Arab Islamic world, various reports show that the women even in the oil rich Gulf States are still in the vulnerable conditions, be it the area of education, economic freedom, political or the social participations. The paper further aims to focus on this drawback and rather comes to the conclusion that the present western domination on the Muslim world is one of the main factors behind this. For example, a psychological pressure is being put with regards to their dress, hijab or burqa to demonstrate that Muslim women are incompatible to face the modern world as we have seen in the case of France and Switzerland where Muslim females are discouraged to come forward. In this paper, some of the prominent steps taken by the Iranian government to empower their women will be highlighted; For instance, the reasons behind the 60 % enrolment of women in higher education, more than 50% of teachers comprising of women and the emergence of Iranian women as writers, novelists, journalists, publishers and movie directors are some of the areas that indicate that women in Iran are marching to the new 21st century women's emancipation. In this context, the paper will seek the reasons behind all these development in modern Iran. Thus, this paper aims to explore the aspirations of women in Iranian society showing how they are moving forward along with their sound cultural background and ready to face the modern challenges despite encountering the western onslaught on the Islam and Islamic peoples.

Key Words: Women's Empowerment, Modern Challenges, Women's Emancipation, Hijab, Western Domination

¹ India-Arab Cultural Center, Jamia Millia Islamia (Central University), New Delhi, smsaif_2000@yahoo.com