



EDUCATION XXV. WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN THE QAJAR PERIOD

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The premodern conception of women's education was varied. In some medieval books of ethical instruction and counsel (see ANDARZ ii) teaching women to read was recommended (Fānī Kašmīrī, p. 141), whereas other authors warned against it (Kay Kāvūs, p. 98; cf. Qoṭb-al-Dīn, pp. 135, 142; Ṭūsī, pp. 229-30, Šojā', p. 220; Dawwānī, p. 206). In the Qajar period girls were sometimes sent to *maktabs* (see iii, above) until the age of eight or nine years, to be taught rudimentary reading and writing and to receive religious instruction. There were, however, also a number of women who were educated beyond such rudimentary levels at home, for example Āmena Baygom, daughter of Mollā Moḥammad-Taqī Majlesī (d. 1070/1659) and wife of Mollā Moḥammad-Šāleḥ Māzandarānī (d. 1081/1670; Beheštī, III, pp. 208-09); Ḥamīda Ešfahānī (d. 1087/1677), daughter of Moḥammad-Šarīf Ešfahānī; and her daughter Fāṭema (Beheštī, III, pp. 66-67). Occasionally women were described as *mojtaheda*, *faqīha* (see FAQĪH), *'ālema*, and *mojāza*, indicating that they had reached the highest levels of religious knowledge and had received permission to teach theology (*ejtehād*, q.v.) and to grant their students similar



authorization (Yādgār-Āzādī, pp. 30-31). Two such figures in the 19th century were Nūr-Jahān Ṭehrānī, author of *Nejāt al-moslemāt*, a 372-page manuscript written in 1224/1809, and Fāṭema Baraġānī Qorrat-al-'Ayn (1231-68/1814-52), a Babi leader (Amanat, pp. 295-331; Milani, pp. 77-99). In modern times Fāṭema Amīn (1303-1403/1886-1983) attained similar status (Beheštī, I, pp. 122-26; *Zan-e rūz*, 30 Kordād 1371/6 June 1992, pp. 4, 60; 24 Mordād 1371/ 8 August 1992, pp. 6-9, 57).

Qajar histories, biographical dictionaries, and memoirs provide information on educated women of the court. Moḥammad-Ḥasan E'temād-al-Salṭana (q.v.) mentioned forty women who were well educated, wrote poetry and prose, were accomplished calligraphers and painters, or were versed in languages like Ottoman Turkish and French. Some also had private libraries and female scribes, as seals and inscriptions on surviving manuscripts attest. Among the most important writings by women of this period are *Ma'āyeb al-rejāl* by an author identified on the manuscript as Bībī Kānom Estarābādī (b. 1274/1858) and *Kāṭerāt* by Tāj-al-Salṭana (b. 1301/1883).

The beginnings of modern women's education. As cultural interactions between Persia and Europe intensified, one of the issues defining the differences between the two cultures was the status of women (Tavakoli-Targhi; cf. Abū Ṭāleb, pp. 234-36). Thinkers associated with the Babi movement (see BABISM) were among the earliest advocates of women's literacy and education (Āqā Khan and Rūḥī, pp. 9, 121, 139). Even contemporaries who were not Babis, like Mīrzā Faṭḥ-'Alī Ākūndzāda (q.v.; pp. 135-36, 177-78), praised the Isma'ilis and the Babis for educating their daughters and sons in similar fashion. 'Abd-al-Raḥīm Ṭālebof, in his *Ketāb-e Aḥmad*, modeled on Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* (p. 44), depicted Aḥmad's sisters, Māhroḳ and Zaynab, as participating marginally in his educational regime and benefiting from it.

Some Muslim religious leaders, like Shaikh Faẓl-Allāh Nūrī, regarded both “the opening of schools for women's education and elementary schools for young girls” and the “spread of houses of prostitution” as constitutionalist breaches of Islamic law (Nūrī, pp. 28, 62). Others, like Ḥājj Mīrzā Hādī Dawlatābādī, father of Ṣadīqa Dawlatābādī (q.q.v.); Shaikh Hādī Najmābādī, father of Āqā-Beygom and Bībī Najmābādī; and Shaikh Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Yazdī, husband of Ṣafīya Yazdī, supported establishment of new schools for girls, and female members of their own families were active educators.

Modern schools. Establishment of modern elementary schools for girls began



in the 19th century, when American Presbyterian missionaries established the first such school in Urmia in 1253/1838 for Assyrian Christian children (see xv, above). In 1282/1865 the Daughters of Charity (Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul) opened schools for girls in Urmia, Salmās, Tabrīz, and Isfahan and in 1292/1875 one in Tehran. In 1313/1895 the American school for girls was established in Tehran (for these schools, see Wezārat-e ma'āref, p. 62; "Tārīkča," p. 462). Various religious denominations in Persia also sponsored schools for girls. The Armenians opened such schools in Tehran in 1287/1870, in Qazvīn in 1307/1889, in Solṭānābād in 1318/1900, and in Isfahan in 1321/1903. Etteḥād, the first Jewish school for girls in Tehran, was established by the Alliance Israélite Universelle in 1316/1898. In Kermān Zoroastrians established Enāt-e jamšīdī for girls in 1320/1902. Tarbīat-e banāt was established in Tehran by Bahais in 1329/1911 (for these schools, see Wezārat-e ma'āref, pp. 74, 110, 124, 130, 142, 158; Qawīmī, p. 142).

The first modern Muslim school for girls in Persia may have been Parvareš, established in the Tehran home of Mīrzā Ḥasan Rošdīya in 1321/1903, with Ṭūbā Rošdīya, his sister-in-law, as the first principal. Also in Tehran Mokaddarāt was established in 1323/1905, Ḥormatīya-ye sādāt and Dūšizagān in 1324/1906; Ṭūba Āzmūda opened Nāmūs in 1326/1908. Similar schools were opened in provincial capitals: Banāt in Qazvīn in 1326/1908, Banāt-e eslāmī in Rašt in 1329/1911, and Fāṭemīya in Shiraz in 1339/1920 (Wezārat-e ma'āref, 1306 Š./1927, pp. 112, 132, 142, 162; "Tārīkča," p. 462; Š. Rošdīya, p. 148; Qawīmī, pp. 128, 131). By 1329/1911 there were forty-seven schools for girls in Tehran alone, with an enrollment of 2,187 pupils, compared to seventy-eight for boys, with an enrollment of 8,344 (Manšūr-al-Salṭana, appended tables).

In a report presented in 1329/1911 the constitutionalist government proposed subsidizing five elementary schools for girls, with a large portion of the total of 4,000 tomans earmarked for one of the better ones. The selected school would be oriented toward training women teachers, of whom there was a shortage (Manšūr-al-Salṭana, p. 22). It is not clear that this scheme was ever carried out. In 1335-36/1917-18 the first ten state schools for girls were established, with a total enrollment of 938 (Ḥasībī, p. 85; Bāmdād, p. 62). In the same year a teachers'-training school for women, Dār al-mo'allemt was opened, with Yūsuf Khan Rišar (Richard) Mo'addeb-al-Molk as principal (see xviii, above). Two years later the first government intermediate school for girls was opened, with a three-year program. Forty-five girls were graduated from this school in 1342/1924. Many private girls' schools also began to extend their curricula



beyond the elementary grades, though there was no state support for secondary education for girls beyond the three intermediate years until 1939.

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