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بعرض خوانندگان ارجمند پورتال "افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان" برسد، که تا کنون چهار فصل اول کتاب ارزنده "AFGHAN WOMEN: UNDER THE SHADOW OF TERROR AND POLITIC" اثر نویسنده گرانقدر خانم عالیہ اکبر راوی میاخیل، در پورتال نشر گردیده و اینک مقدمه کتاب، ذیلاً تقدیم میگردد.

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„AFGHAN WOMEN: UNDER THE SHADOW OF TERROR AND POLITIC”

Introduction

Afghanistan has played a substantial role in changing the course of world history. Having been inflicted by war and destruction, the Afghan people have had to pay with the loss of lives and the deterioration of their homeland. The constant fight for freedom from different oppressors and the unique political geographical existence remain a main obstacle of Afghan people who have spent their life in war zone. The conservative social culture of Afghan people along history and especially throughout the 20th century was hardly a far cry from the rest of world's socio-political development. The culture became mostly patriarchal and male dominated, thus diminishing and almost eliminating the role of the female. Women have been suppressed in many of the third world countries, Afghanistan is not an exception. Women's suppression began as early as 1978 during the time of the Soviet uprising in Kabul. The self appointed Northern Alliance Mujahedeen's (1992-1996) record of discrimination and unfair treatment of women paved the way for the Taliban to continue in their footsteps.

The impact of Afghanistan's conservative culture on women has been especially harsh, especially because of the sheer physiological difference between women and men. Women are viewed as the weaker sex mostly due to tribal laws and sanctions. Gender roles are also imbedded through generations by kinship in many rural regions of the country. In light of the recent political climate, tribal laws have been enforced as opposed to Islamic or constitutional laws. According to tribal laws, marriage is used as a tool to build relationships and alliances between different tribal groups, therefore divorce is unheard of and women are merely used as pawns in a trading game. Because education is the key to

empowerment, these women are also kept from receiving any formal or informal education. It is expected that the women entering this relationship are completely obedient to not only the husband but the husband's family as well. It is a well understood fact that women are the "honor" of the family, the bearer of children and a symbol of domesticity. Therefore they are to remain voiceless in any matters that do not deal directly with the sphere of their existence in the home.

One of the biggest scandals regarding women's roles and the reputation of women came in late 1927, when King Amanullah and his wife Soraya visited Europe. The royals dined and wined with the most prominent people in England. They received honorary degrees from the University of Oxford the following year. The royal couple was so impressed with Europe that they finally settled there after the King's reign. Upon returning to Afghanistan from their first trip, the King tried to implement some of the social and political customs of Europe in Afghanistan. During this same time period both Turkey and Egypt (which are predominantly Muslim) were on the same path to social and political modernization. The educated elite in Afghanistan wanted to adopt and emulate the developmental models that were being set forth by nations such as Turkey and Egypt. However, pictures of the Queen without her veil, dining with foreign dignitaries and an especially notable picture of the Queen having her hand kissed by the leader of France caused outrage among the conservatives. They viewed it as blatant dishonor to the Afghan culture and religion. This led to hostility and discontent with the King and Queen among Afghan people. Eventually, because of the backlash and demoralization of the King and Queen's character, they were forced out of office.

Many conservative Afghans in the rural areas felt that the reforms suggested by King Amanullah in regards to women were too "western" for their society and the proposed changes were against the dogmas of Islam. The rural communities and provinces reacted harshly to these changes because they felt their patriarchal societies were being threatened. Changes regarding gender roles were not accepted easily if at all among those poorly educated residing in the country sides of Afghanistan. The main points Amanullah stressed were that of polygamy, the "bride price" and education for girls. All three points were deemed as too radical for Afghans to accept. This difference in viewpoint started many conflicts between traditionalists and elite modernists. All disagreements were in regards to the proposal of change in women's roles. Despite these setbacks, an institution was set forth in 1924 that granted women the right to choose their own partners for marriage and the "buying" and "selling" of women into marriages was outlawed. Patriarchs saw this as a perpetual loss of the power and stronghold they had established over their daughters and began to feel as though they had diminished social status, familial control and financial security with the abolishment of bride prices.

The change proved to be too much for the rural regions and many of the provinces in the outskirts of Afghanistan refused to adhere to the new laws and by 1928 they had started protesting the freedoms experienced by women in the city of Kabul. Despite their discontent, Afghanistan's tribal grand council, the Loya Jirga raised the age of consent for marriage for women to 18 and 21 for men. In addition, polygamy was officially abolished. A group of tribal leaders and elected officials coming together to democratically arrive at decisions.

Following the exile of King Amanullah, other rulers tried to introduce change for women's rights in Afghanistan. However all of them had to tread carefully in an effort to avoid conflict with tribal and religious leaders. Another notable leader was King Nadir Shah who ruled during the 1930's and opened several schools for girls. He was assassinated in 1933 by who many believe to have been extremists who opposed his efforts for women's rights.

It was not until the 1970's that there was a rise in women's education, women faculty in universities and women represented in the Parliament. The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan brought about the most rapid social and economic change in 1978. With it came high hate crimes against women, including reported incidents of women killed for donning what was considered "Western" clothing and the general sexual harassment of women who wanted social changes for themselves.