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Name: Maryam Poya

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Abstract of PhD Thesis

Explaining women's employment under the Islamic state in Iran

Women, Work and Islamism: Ideology and Resistance

This study examines women's employment in Iran between 1979-1997, analysing the changing position of the Islamic state in reaction to economic circumstances and women's responses. In making this assessment the interaction between economic circumstances, the institutionalisation of gender inequality and also the responses of women are examined. This study demonstrates that economic forces and women's struggle for change undermined the Islamic state's gender relations .

The Islamisation of state and society which followed the 1979 revolution involved an attempt by the Islamic state to seclude women within the home in accordance with the state's gender and employment policy and practices. The power of the state to transform gender relations, however, was constrained by the Iran - Iraq war, as the survival of many families depended on women's earnings. The end of the war with Iraq and the return of men to the workforce did not result in women's return to the home. Economic reconstruction and inflation increased women's participation in the workforce. This study demonstrates that in 1997, women's participation in the labour force, despite a rigid sexual division of labour imposed ideologically by the Islamic state is no less than it was in pre-1979.

However, the state continued to strengthen patriarchal relationships within the home, employment and wider society, thus maintaining that women's participation in the workforce is by nature temporary and that ultimately a woman's place is in the home. Women of different classes and with different levels of religiosity responded to the economic circumstances and the state's gender ideology. Their

participation in the political movements and their active role in the economy has raised gender consciousness. The result is an alliance between religious and secular women in urban areas who have demanded reforms and forced the Islamic state to return to the position of the reforms of pre-1979 in relation to women and the family, and women's education and employment.

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Glossary

Aghaye biroon The master of the outside of the house

Bazaar Market place

Bazaari Bazaar traders

Chador Literally means a tent. It is a full-length loose cover worn by women, which envelopes the body from head to toe. It is normally held in place by a hand under the chin or, if the woman is very strict, under the eyes. In official gatherings women usually wear black *chador*, while in unofficial occasions women choose to wear a colourful *chador*.

Chadori Women who wear *chador*

Dooreh getting together socially on a regular basis

Eddeh (Idda) A period of celibacy immediately after divorce or the death of a husband during which the woman may not remarry. This is normally for three menstrual cycles, and its purpose is to determine whether the woman is bearing a child from her previous husband.

Enghelabe Farhangi Eslami Islamic Cultural Revolution

Farsi The official and dominant language in Iran

Fesad Moral degeneration

Ghalibaf Carpet weaver

Gharbzadegi Westoxication; being influenced by Western culture. The term is used to describe those Iranians who embrace Western culture without reservation. *Gharbzadeh* is the person who is Westoxicated.

Ghesas (Qisas) Retribution for killing or injuring. The law of *Ghesas* is the penal law of the Islamic Republic and is based on the idea of the victim or victim's family having the right to retribution against the perpetrator of a crime against them.

Hadith The collected record of sayings and actions of the Prophet and Shia Imams. The importance of Hadith is second to that of Quran as the basis of Islamic jurisprudence

Hejab (Hijab) Literally means a partition or curtain. It describes a type of women's clothing which protects her body from the eyes of men who are forbidden to her. Women who did not fully observed the *hejab* were called *Bad Hejabi*

Hezbollahi Partisan of God. Fanatical supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini described themselves as *Hezbollahis*, conveying the meaning that they do not belong to earthly political parties and only follow God's word by following their leader Ayatollah Khomeini.

Jahad (Jihad) Islamic holy war against infidels, or to spread Islam. It is a duty of every Muslim man to participate in *jahad* if called upon. Women can play a role in a defensive *jahad* but not in an offensive one. Its current usage in the Islamic Republic also refers to the endeavour and sacrifices of the people for various Islamic and national causes.

Jahizieh Trousseau

Jangali Forest people

Karfarma employer

Kargahe Khanegi Household workshop

Kargar Low status workers

Karmand Middle to high status workers

Khaharane Zaynab Zaynab Sisters

Khanome khaneh The lady of the house

Maghmaeh A large scarf covering head, all hair and shoulders. It is worn with *roposh* as the dominant form of *hejab* in Iran since 1981.

Mahr Bride price agreed between the families of the bride and groom and written into the marriage contract. It is supposed to be paid by the husband to the wife on demand after consummation of the marriage. But the normal practice is for it to be paid on divorce.

Majles (Majlis) The Iranian national assembly or parliament.

Mujahedeen Warrior for God

Nafagheh Maintenance or alimony, in *Shia* Iran a husband is responsible, during the whole period of marriage, for the maintenance and keep-up of his wife and children. *Nafaghe* is also payable after divorce by a man to a woman if she has child custody.

Namahram Men or women who are forbidden to each other.

Rejal Statesmen

Roposh A long and loose dress with long sleeves, the dominant form of *hejab* in Iran since 1981

Savak The Secret Police under the Pahlavi

Shamsi Solar

Sharia Islamic canonical law. Refers to the totality of Islamic rules, encompassing all affairs of the Muslim community.

Shia A branch of Islam whose founders were partisans and followers of Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law. *Shia* believe that after the Prophet's death the leadership of Islam should have gone to Ali.

Shora Workers councils during the 1979 revolution

Shoraye Negahban The Council of Guardians, established in 1980 as a constitutional body in charge of reviewing/vetoing on religious grounds Parliamentary Bills.

Sigheh (Muta) Used as both name and verb for temporary marriage. It is a practice which is confined to the *Shia* branch of Islam, in which every man is entitled to have as many *sigheh* wives as he wishes. It is a form of marriage based on a contract, which is bound by a time limit of between one hour to ninety-nine years. Its aim is satisfaction of sexual urges, but children born in *sigheh* marriages are legitimate.

Tabaghe Social status

Tisab Acid

Ulama Islamic religious scholars

Velayat Fagih The Guardianship of the Islamic jurisprudence. It refers to Ayatollah Ayatollah Khomeini's thesis about the guardianship of the *fagih* as the head of state, which constitutes the basis of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic.

Zaifeh Literally means the weak half, a derogatory term used for women

Zakat Islamic tax

Zena (Zina) Fornication; adultery, sexual intercourse between men and women who are not married to each other. In the Islamic Republic Zena is a crime punishable by flogging or stoning to death.

Chronology

1890-1892 Protest against Tobacco Concession given to Britain. Women played an important role in cancelling the Concession.

1905-1911 Constitutional Revolution establishes a Constitution and a Parliament *Majles*. Formation of diverse women's movements, resulting in the establishment of girls' schools in 1907.

1917-1925 Women's participation in nationalist and communist movements

1925 Reza Khan becomes Shah, beginning of Pahlavi dynasty.

1935-36 Reza Shah initiates campaign to force women to abandon the veil in all public places.

1938 Women are admitted to Tehran University.

1941 August Allied forces occupy Iran, forcing Reza Shah's abdication in favour of his son Mohammad Reza Shah.

1951 Mossadegh becomes Prime Minister of Iran. Nationalisation of oil. Rise of women's movements in nationalist and communist movements

1953 Mossadegh is overthrown in a CIA - backed coup.

1957 Shah's secret service, SAVAK, is created with the help of the CIA.

1958 State control over women's movements. Various women's organisations are grouped into a High Council of Women. Ashraf Pahlavi, the Shah's twin sister, heads the new organisation.

1963 Shah declares his 'White Revolution'. Uprising against the Shah, violent demonstrations in major cities. Women achieve electoral rights.

1964 Ayatollah Khomeini sent into exile, first to Turkey then to Iraq.

1966 State control over women's movements. The Women's Organisation of Iran is established.

1967 *Majles* passes Family Protection Laws. Women are accepted to the judiciary and drafted into the police and the army.

1971 Price of crude oil increases.

1971 Fedayeen and Mujahedeen Guerilla Organisations are established.

1973 In Tehran the Gulf states agree to double their price of oil to \$11.65 a barrel.

1977 May A group of leading intellectuals protest against the Shah.

1977 June Protest of shanty-town dwellers against slum clearances.

1978 Formation of women's organisations

1978 January Shah attacks Ayatollah Khomeini in the media. Theology students riot in Qom.

1978 February Mass demonstrations in Tabriz.

1978 March Spread of mass demonstrations to other urban areas.

1978 August First wave of industrial strikes.

1978 September Ayatollah Khomeini calls for the overthrow of the Shah. Martial law is declared in Tehran and 11 other cities. Black Friday: hundreds of protesters are killed by police in Tehran. Telecommunications and other workers go on strike.

1978 October Ayatollah Khomeini is forced to leave Iraq and goes to Paris. Oil workers go on strike.

1978 November Shah appoints military government. National Television employees go on strike. Bank workers go on strike. Ayatollah Khomeini calls for Islamic Republic.

1978 December Millions protest on the streets against the Shah. General strike brings the economy to a halt.

1979 January Shah flees the country.

1979 February Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran and forms the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Armed insurrection. The Shah's Imperial Guard is defeated by revolutionaries. Army declares its neutrality. Political prisoners are released. Ayatollah Khomeini suspends Family Protection Laws. Formation of Workers Shoras.

1979 March Issuing of decrees appointing women as judges is stopped. Women are dismissed from military service. Ayatollah Khomeini announces that women must wear the Islamic dress. Thousands of women demonstrate against imposition of Islamic dress. Segregation of sports and education is proposed.

1979 April Women lawyers demand the installation of women judges. A referendum decides Iran is to be an Islamic Republic.

1979 May co-education is banned. Creation of Revolutionary Guards.

1979 June Married women are banned from attending high schools. The swearing-in ceremony of new judges takes place without the participation of women nominees. Women occupy Ministry of Justice for five days. Women employees of the Communication Corporation protest against the closure of the day-care centre at their work-place. They are threatened with mass lay-off. This is the first incident in the subsequent series of nursery closures.

1979 July Many women are flogged in public on charges of swimming in the men's section of the Caspian Sea. Three women are executed on charges of prostitution and corruption.

1979 August Government cracks down on the left, Kurds and other ethnic minorities.

1979 September Ayatollah Khomeini declares *Velayat Fagih* by the Assembly of Experts. At the School of Divinity in Mashhad University segregated classes are instituted.

1979 October New family legislation is ratified by the Council of Revolution giving right to divorce, *sighe* and custody of children exclusively to men. Women's demonstrations against the new legislation is attacked by *Hezbollah*.

1979 November Women occupy Ministry of Justice against the new family law. Tehran's prostitute quarter is closed. Over 50 hostages are taken from the US embassy. The conference of Women's Solidarity Council is held by candlelight, as the electricity supply of Tehran Polytechnic was cut off by the authorities in an attempt to stop the conference.

- 1979 December** The Islamic Constitution is ratified.
- 1980 February** Wearing of Islamic dress is made compulsory for nurses and other women employees of the Ministry of Health.
- 1980 March** Four women are elected to the new *Majles*.
- 1980 April** US imposes economic sanctions. Closure of the universities for "Islamic Cultural Revolution".
- 1980 May** Fatimah's birthday (daughter of Prophet Mohammad) is declared as Women's Day in Iran. Women are attacked and knifed in urban areas for not complying with Islamic dress and shops refuse to sell goods to them.
- 1980 June** Ayatollah Khomeini issues a decree that women are required to wear the Islamic dress.
- 1980 July** Implementation of compulsory Islamic dress starts. Women who do not comply are dismissed from their jobs. Women's demonstrations are attacked by *Hezbollah*
- 1980 September** The beginning of Iran/Iraq war.
- 1981 July** The Bill of Retribution is ratified.
- 1981 November** Maryam Behrouzi, a delegation of *Majles* representatives attends the China Population Conference and declares that abortion and sterilisation are against Islamic rules.
- 1981** All political organisations, women's organisations and workers' organisations are banned and ceased to exist.
- 1982** The government presents a draft bill on women's part-time work to the *Majles*.
- 1984** Zane Rouz Women's Magazine criticises the state policy on polygamy for being lax on men and unjust to women. Three of the existing women *Majles* deputies are re-elected. Women's entry to a whole range of technical, engineering and experimental sciences is prohibited.
- 1985 January** The High Council of Judiciary announces that a special civil appeal court has been set up to look into those family disputes which has not been

satisfactorily resolved by the *Sharia* courts. This signifies the failure of the system and women's growing protest against the system.

1985 Zane Rouz Women's Magazine continues to discuss the problems of unclear law, uncoordinated court verdicts and unsatisfactory treatment of women by the courts.

1986 Iran continues to export 1m b/d of oil despite the war. Reagan admits arms sales to Iran. OPEC cuts production to increase price of oil, which reaches \$13 a barrel.

1987 OPEC agrees to increase production by 5% and maintain \$18 a barrel price.

1988 Iran accepts UN Security Resolution 598, for immediate cease-fire. The state initiates a public debate about population control and the dangers of uncontrolled population growth. The three existing women *Majles* deputies are re-elected.

1989 May The policy on women's entry to higher education becomes less restrictive. It is announced that restrictions on women's entry to geology and agriculture are lifted.

1989 June Ayatollah Khomeini dies, Hashemi Rafsanjani is elected as President.

1989 July The Ministry of Health announces the government's policy on population control, based on distribution of free contraceptives through health centres in rural and urban areas which would cover 90% of the population.

1989 Women's magazines discuss methods of birth control extensively and recommend a wide variety of contraception. An authoritative collection of the Islamic Republic's family laws brought together a number of sources of guidance on the family including the Civil Code of 1931, The Family Protection Law of 1967 and 1975, The Special Civil Courts Act 1979, other legislations passed by the *Majles* and the various decrees by Ayatollah Khomeini.

1990 Iranian President defends his policy of encouraging foreign investment.

1990 Ayatollah Sanei expresses strong Islamic opposition against polygamy and raised the question of the acceptability of abortion as a method of birth control.

1992 The Office of Women's Affairs is created. Nine women are elected to the *Majles*.

1992 November-December Zanan women's magazine is published for the first time and publishes a series of articles challenging the established view that women cannot become judges.

1993 Autumn Farzaneh women's magazine is published for the first time and publishes a series of articles on women's high position in Islam.

1995 September A large number of delegates attend Beijing Conference on Women.

1996 January The Ministry of Justice appoints 200 women judicial counsellors to preserve more satisfactorily women's rights in courts.

1996 March - April *Majles* election, one hundred and ninety women candidates campaign for change in the law and better education and employment legislations for women. Thirteen women are elected to the *Majles*.

1996 October The *Majles* approves a motion presented by women deputies to create the Special Commission of Women's and Family's Affairs to reform laws to improve the protection of women's rights.

1997 July Nine women stand for the presidential election as a form of protest that women cannot become president. Women's magazines campaign in favour of Khatami the pragmatic candidate who becomes president, as oppose to Ayatollah Nouri the hard line cleric. Women's votes played an important role for president Khatami's victory.

Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the relationship between changes in women's employment, Islamic gender relations and the Iranian state. Initially the research tried to explain the growth in women's employment in Iran. But in the course of the field research it became apparent that this issue cannot be separated from the wider issues of the role of the state and economic and ideological factors which are historically determined and therefore changing at different periods. The contradictions arising from this complex relationship also raises the issue of women's resistance and the role of social class in this resistance which involve an overlap between secularity and religiosity in the particular period under investigation (1980s-1990s).

The thesis argues that women's struggle for change has led to a questioning of gender relations. This in its turn has challenged Islamic theology and thereby the Iranian theocratic state with the result that the state has been forced to adapt its ideological position and practices. It is further argued that, whereas Islamic theology and the state treat women as an unitary category, women's responses to employment and to the state have been differentiated by their socio-economic position and level of religiosity. Women in Iran are not a homogeneous category therefore it is necessary to analyse the experiences of employment of women of different classes and with different levels of religiosity. This makes it possible to assess the nature of their struggle for change and the impact which this has had on state ideology and on gender relations in both the public and the private spheres.

There are two objectives for researching the specific issue of women's experiences within the labour market and the labour force: Firstly, my personal interest and

commitment to, the role of women in Iran. After some years in exile, the 1979 revolution provided an opportunity for me to go back to Iran and become politically active in the revolutionary movement. My activities within the women's movement and in particular my involvement with women workers in their struggle within workers *shoras* (councils or grassroots trade union movements) which developed in this period in Iran inspired me and created the rationale for researching the issue of women's employment.

My second objective is to solve an academic puzzle - the interaction between economic factors, ideological factors and women's responses. Thus, there are a number of questions that I am investigating:

- How women's employment even within an Islamic framework, has undermined the Islamic state's ideology of female seclusion and its stated gender relationships?
- How women responded to economic forces and the ideological under-pinning of the Iranian state?
- How the issue of women's employment is related to the wider issues of the role of the state, class and ideology.

This research is also original in a number of ways:

- Women's employment has not yet been described, identified, analysed and included within Iranian women's studies.
- This omission is the result of giving too much attention to the importance of ideology and not taking into consideration the interaction between ideology, economy and gender.

- This field research based on women's life histories and work histories provided the ground for identifying research questions and locating different theoretical approaches for analysing and explaining the research questions.

The aim of the research is not purely academic. As an Iranian woman of a specific background and experience, I am included in the product of this research. My objective is, therefore, to contribute to the debate on women's issues in Iran in the hope that this will produce a greater understanding which locates women at the centre of the analysis of development, rather than at the periphery, and has a practical outcome in terms of showing both women and policy makers the importance of this issue.

1.2 The Iranian revolution and the development of the Islamic state

In February 1979 the regime of the oppressive modernising Pahlavi rulers of Iran (Reza Shah, 1925-1941, and Mohammad Reza Shah, 1941-1979) was overthrown by a popular revolution. The large scale participation of women in the revolutionary movement raised hopes that the role of women in Iranian society would change.

The state under the Pahlavi, as the agent of economic development, created favourable conditions for the expansion of capital. But it strengthened patriarchal structures throughout the society. In this thesis I use patriarchy to mean a set of power relations which explains women's subordination to men. Therefore, women experienced the economic, political and social changes differently to that of men. Through women's struggles for change a degree of reforms was achieved. These reforms, however, only touched the lives of a minority of women who had access to material resources. As a result, women's reaction to these changes were

different according to their class and level of religiosity (different levels of adherence to religious ideology). Consequently, there were at least two different groups of women in the revolutionary movements of the 1978 - 1979. Many women were participating because they were dissatisfied with the reforms which were made under the Pahlavi system, because they did not go far enough. At the same time, there were also many women who supported the revolution because they supported the Islamic leaders and their criticisms of the Pahlavi state, including their view that the role of women is distinct from that of men.

In April 1979 a referendum decided that Iran was to be an Islamic Republic under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. The reinforcement of Islamic gender relations was a major feature of the ideology of the new rulers. For years prior to the 1979 revolution, and especially after the establishment of the Islamic state, prominent Shia *ulama* (Islamic Shia scholars) such as Shariati (1990; 1990/1), Khomeini (1987/8), Mottahari (1981) and Nouri (1964/5)¹ criticised the Pahlavi reforms for promoting a capitalist and imperialist culture of consumerism, which included, for them specifically, the selling of women's labour. They argued that these reforms resulted in *fesad* (moral degeneration) and the breaking down of family values. In contrast they preached the ideology of seclusion, the complete withdrawal of women from the public sphere of employment and their confinement to the private sphere of the home. At the heart of this position was a belief in the biological differences between the sexes, that reproduction is the basic law of nature, and that within this process, biological men and women have specific roles and functions. They strongly emphasised the natural and biological relations between the sexes, arguing that women's primary activity is in the home, nurturing and creating an atmosphere of shelter and comfort for their family.

To assess the state's policies towards women it is important to divide the history of the post 1979 period into three different phases of Islamisation. Although there

are overlaps between different periods, each exhibited distinct characteristics in terms of women's employment. These are:

(i) - 1979 - 1981, the revolutionary period.

(ii) - 1981 - 1989, the period of Iran - Iraq war and the war economy.

(iii) - 1989 - 1990s, the period of post war, post Ayatollah Khomeini and reconstruction.

(i) In the period immediately after the 1979 revolution, the principles of Islamic gender relations were implemented as the policy and practice of the Iranian state. The state adopted the policy of seclusion of women - restricting women to the private domestic domain which required the complete exclusion of women from the public sphere.

During this period the Islamic state attempted to push women back to total dependence on men and family by reasserting the importance of the sphere of the home for women, family and the role of women and family in producing the ideal Islamic society free from the "corruption" and "moral degeneration" of the Pahlavi period. The aim of the state was, therefore, to exclude women from economic, social and political activities outside of the home, which were now constituted as public activities. Instead the state wanted to confine them to reproductive activities inside the home such as the bearing and rearing of children, and the care, socialisation and maintenance of the family, which were constituted as private. This was reflected in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran which emphasised women's priority in the home (Algar 1980). Also under the influence of the *ulama*, and in accordance with the Quran's view that women are only half the worth of men in legal and financial matters (Quran 1955: verse 282), and are too emotional and weak to be able to make hard decisions, women were excluded from professions such as managers and judges.

Women were offered voluntary redundancies, early retirement and part-time work in order to have time to fulfil their duty of motherhood. The state also implemented the policy of segregation - separate spheres for women in the public domain, as another step towards the exclusion of women from the public domain. Therefore, a set of practices was established, designed to control women's participation in the public sphere of the economy ranging from Islamic dress, separate seats and queues for males and females in all public places, to a rigid sexual segregation within the law, education and employment - a form of sexual apartheid (Poya 1992).

(ii) However, this period was a very short period. The Iran - Iraq war which started in September 1980 required some rethinking of this extreme position. Whereas the policy of seclusion which was adopted in the period immediately following the 1979 revolution required the complete exclusion of women from the public sphere, the policy of segregation accepts their limited and controlled involvement on the basis of the physical segregation of the sexes in all public spheres of life.

During the Iran - Iraq war (1980-1988), despite the Islamic gender ideology, a number of factors forced women to go out to work to feed their families. These factors included economic necessity arising from the flight of men to the war zones, inflation and a general level of unemployment as a result of Iran's isolation in the world market, intensified by the war and the war economy. Although there was a high level of male unemployment, these unemployed men were neither trained nor willing to do 'women's jobs' such as nursing, teaching, secretarial and administrative work. Women were also absorbed by the growing service sector. This was as a result of the nationalisation of banks and insurance companies after the 1979 revolution, which extended state employment. The Islamic state also confiscated industries and farms owned by the Pahlavi royal family and their close

associates which further increased state employment. The number of female state employees here also increased in consequence.

(iii) The end of the war with Iraq in 1988 and the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989 ushered in a third phase in the development of the Iranian state, effectively ending the policy and practice of "neither east nor west but Islamic republic", adopted by the Islamic state in the previous years, although the rhetoric remained strong. Opportunities for reducing Iran's isolation in the world market were developed by a gradual open door policy to the West. Generally the level of employment increased as a result of post war reconstruction. But a combination of inflation and male inability and unwillingness to perform women's jobs, has continued the necessity for women's participation.

This thesis will argue that the role of the war is also important as an event that raised ideological issues. The state used the war to promote the ideology of nationalism which played a significant role to legitimise its hegemony. The images of Iranian Muslim women became central representations of the politics of cultural autonomy and anti-Western and anti-imperialism. But these ideological factors interacted with material factors and affected women's expectations, and their position within the family and in the labour market. This sheds light on the limitation of the importance of ideological factors affecting women's position in the economy and society in a situation where economic pressures made a particular impact. Thus, this field research challenges the orthodox academic debate on this issue and the assumption that either the negative or positive aspects of Islamic ideology determine women's position.

1.3 The role of ideology

In each of the three periods outlined above the Iranian state sought different ways of reconciling the reality of economic development and women's response to employment with Islamic ideology. In the first phase (1979 -1981), an ideal Islamic image of Muslim womanhood was constructed on the model of the lives of women of early Islam, such as Fatimah, daughter of the prophet Mohammad and Zaynab, his grand daughter.

Their lives were celebrated for representing and symbolising motherhood and womanhood: Fatimah, the perfect mother and wife in the domestic sphere, and Zaynab, who fought alongside her brothers in the battlefields but who returned in peace time to take up her exalted responsibilities as a good wife and mother, educating the new generation of Muslim men and women (Khomeini 1987/8).

This image of Zaynab allowed the Islamic state to justify women's participation in the revolutionary period, despite its stated ideology that women's place is in the home. Initially, the state exploited the mobilisation of women by claiming that it was only a transition period to a truly Islamic state. During the revolutionary period the state benefited ideologically from mass participation of religious women wearing the *chador* (long black veil) in street demonstrations. Later during the first years of the war with Iraq, the state and the economy materially and ideologically benefited from the unpaid work of large number of women in the mosques, who communally produced food and medical aid for the soldiers. The voluntary nature of the work allowed the Islamic state to continue to use the image of Zaynab in justification. Later as large numbers of women obtained payment for their work outside of the home, the state still used this form of religious moralising to justify what should have been unjustifiable.

During the second and third phases (1981-1989 and 1989-1990s) when, as we have seen, factors such as inflation, male unemployment and the war economy increased women's active participation in the workforce, the state continued to use the dual roles of Fatimah and Zaynab to ideologically justify the return of women to the workforce in large numbers but it still argued that women's activities in the public sphere of life were only justified as a temporary phase, similar to the active role of Zaynab in war, compared to her more passive stance in peace. However, this temporary phase has been prolonged.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, more and more families have been relying on auxiliary or solely female earnings. The new generation has been politically and educationally socialised that a woman's place is in the home yet their personal experiences are very different. Moreover, in the same way that women who participated in the revolutionary phase experienced the importance of their contribution to the political movement, those who of necessity entered the workforce during and after the war against Iraq came to realise how important their economic contribution was to their families. This experience has raised the consciousness of women generally. As a result, the Islamic state has sought to reconcile the problem of its stated gender ideology and the reality of women's situation by introducing, alongside the dual role for women as Fatimah and Zaynab, the concept of segregation.

The systematic use of the two images of ideal Muslim women (Fatimah and Zaynab) and the process of segregation may be seen as a retreat from the ideal of seclusion. But I will argue that segregation has been relatively successful as a device to reconcile the needs of the economy with that of maintaining the ideological basis on which the state depends for its support. Although reluctantly, this policy and practice allowed the state to perpetuate women's employment, in a way which could be accommodated within its ideology. It has also been a

powerful instrument to place women in a disadvantaged position within the employment hierarchy. Women are easily, therefore, be excluded from upward mobility and are concentrated in low-paid and low-position jobs.

This change in the position of the state allowed me to establish a conceptual framework within which the link between the findings of the field research and the academic debate about the relationship between gender and development could be analysed. In this thesis I challenge the orthodox debate about the sexual division of labour and social relations between women and men². I have used these analytical concepts differently within the context of Iran in the particular period under investigation and I have arrived at a different outcome.

I use the concept of sexual division of labour within the context of Islamisation of state, economy and society to show how women were initially excluded from participating in the labour market and the labour force: but later were included as a result of the war and change in economic circumstances. However, I will argue that, despite women's increasing participation in the economy and society, gender social relations place women in a disadvantageous position within the labour market and the labour force.

I use the concept of social relations between women and men in the context of gendered roles in the home and in the wider society, including employment, to show patriarchal relations³. But I have used patriarchal relations within the context of class relations and level of religiosity to examine the change in the form and the degree of patriarchy under the Islamic state by analysing the structure of the labour market, the wage gap between women and men, the role of the state, the role of men and women within the family and in employment.

Furthermore, the analysis of women's employment and Islamic gender relations also provided a framework within which to consider the academic debate on state, capital and patriarchy in developing countries⁴. This thesis will argue that the Islamic state under economic pressure is committed to development within global capitalism, however, under ideological pressure constantly seek effective ways of patriarchal domination. This has created contradiction and conflicts between genders at the level of family, state and society and women constantly finding ways of rebelling against these forms of patriarchal relationships.

1.4 Women's responses

This thesis will also address women's resistance through an analysis of class and the overlap between class, secularity and religiosity. It will be argued that the response of women to state policy has differed according to their class and level of religiosity. Through an analysis of gender relations within the context of indigenous class formation and class structure I was able to examine the local perceptions of middle class and working class women. I will argue that these widely used phrases refer to different socio-economic status, but both groups of women have the same relationship to the system of social production. That is they are dependent upon the sale of their labour power for survival. The distinction between them is the degree of access to material resources and political power, as a result of the influence of the state and capital. Another equally important distinction is the influence of religion, cross-cutting these divisions, producing different levels of religiosity. The resulting form of social division has expression in terms of a division of labour within the family and in paid employment; in gender relationships within the family and outside in the wider society; in attitudes to male and female roles in fertility, sexuality and education, and in power, income, wealth and even world view.

The fact that class and ideological differences divide women, even though there are also issues that they face together, has produced different responses to the policies of the Islamic state from two main groups of women, each of which experienced internal contradictions. On the one hand, religious women may accept the ideology of the Islamic state which emphasises women's place in the home, but meanwhile they demand reforms and equality with men in both the spheres, of the home and of employment - until the ideal Islamic state and society is established and there is no need for women to go out to work. On the other hand secular women, or those who may be religious but do not practise religion, also demand equality with men and they question the nature of the Islamic state and its male dominated gender relations. More importantly, they wish to fulfil their potential through active participation in employment and career mobility but Islamic ideology is so strong that they have little choice other than to accept the hegemony of the state and therefore, to compromise.

The point of this thesis is to argue that the specific characteristics of the Islamic state mean that the way women in Iran have entered the public sphere of life is different to that of other women in other societies, and even in Iran, in comparison with the period prior to Islamisation of the state. These characteristics have also determined a form of state sponsored patriarchy, which exploits women's participation in the public arena, meanwhile, systematically threatening women's mobility and security through the promotion of the idea that women's place is in the home.

Women's ideas are shaped by both material and ideological factors. Women of different classes and with different levels of religiosity have different notions of what liberation is and how to achieve it. Working class and middle class women who are religious accept the view that Islamic gender relations liberate women from exploitation of consumerism, imposed by western capitalism. The majority

of these women support the state ideology, including its gender relations but they have found a growing conflict between holding on to Islamic ideology on the one hand and their economic, social and even personal material interests.

Some middle class women who may not be religious see the Islamic state as marginalising and oppressing women and they, therefore, oppose the Islamic state, even though they have no choice other than to comply with its rules and regulations. Nevertheless, as economic necessity bites deeper, women, whatever their class and levels of religiosity, press harder for reforms and equality with men. These struggles, however, take place within the Islamic framework and rhetoric, as no form of secularism is tolerated. Nevertheless, women are finding ways of raising secular issues within the Islamic framework. Different organs of the media, especially numerous women's newspapers and magazines discuss feminism, patriarchy, gender relations and even women's position within the family, education, law and employment under the Islamic state in Iran. Interaction through the media has created a form of unity between women of different classes and with different levels of religiosity and they demand change and reform. Within this framework, a limited degree of reform is being achieved, similar to the reforms made under the Pahlavi period.

The evidence and the level of success in improving women's status can be found through material factors which are measurable such as women's participation in politics, reformed laws on family, education and employment and the use of media by women. It can also be found in immeasurable factors, affecting the personal lives of women and men and their modes of negotiation. It can be noted for example, in the way middle class religious women who are constrained by the ideology; and poorer women, who are not only constrained by the ideology but have less access to material resources, feel about holding onto the ideology but behaving differently. Also, the way secular or less religious women who are less

constrained by the ideology but have more access to material resources, attempt to improve their status, even though their participation in the labour force is limited by the ideology which systematically emphasises a segregated labour force and labour market where female workers within the Islamic frame work are temporary.

The argument of this thesis, based on a field research in Iran, is of considerable contemporary relevance because:

- The state has the power to transform gender relations but it is also constrained by its own strategic imperatives: to expand the economy, to wage war, to reward allies and to deflect internal dissent.

- The patriarchal power of men, even when backed by state power, is never unitary: men's interests are divided and contradictory; they cannot unite around a policy which inhibits women from economic participation because some men's interests will dictate the use of patriarchal power to exploit female labour whilst the interests of others demand female exclusion.

Thus, my hypothesis is to prove that in the particular period under investigation (1980s-1990s) women's employment even within an Islamic framework, has undermined the Islamic state's ideology of female seclusion and its stated gender relationships. This is as a result of women's organised and individual responses to economic forces and the ideological under-pinning of the Iranian state.

1.5 Chapter summaries

Chapter two will discuss the difficult task of gathering evidence in Iran and why the study of feminist critiques of quantitative methods of analysis led me to use a

combination of qualitative methods, whilst still using quantitative data to test the validity of explanations. This chapter will also discuss the importance of interviews and how they helped me to identify different analytical tools to explain the interaction between economic and ideological factors which shaped women's employment in Iran and women's responses to these factors according to their social differentiation.

Based on interviews and women's experiences of employment under the Islamic state I identified two different themes of analysis: first, women's employment and gender relations in the home and the society; second, the interaction between ideological factors and economic factors in shaping women's employment. Therefore, in chapter three I critically review the general debate on the relationship between gender and development and the specific debate between Iranian secular feminists and Muslim feminists on the impact of Islamic ideology on women's participation in the economic sphere. The aim is to constitute a rationale for using the relevant theories to analyse the thesis questions and the thesis field work.

In chapter four I will argue that an explanation of women's employment under the Islamic state requires a historical analysis of the influence of the state, capital and religion. In the twentieth century, the inter-relationships between the process of capitalist development under foreign domination; Shia Islam ideology and class formation determined the way women were incorporated into the public sphere of life. Women actively participated in and responded to economic and ideological forces which led to the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s and provided a material basis for struggle against their subordination which was reflected in the 1979 revolution.

In February 1979, a popular revolution overthrew the Pahlavi state. In April 1979 a referendum decided to make Iran an Islamic Republic. Chapter five will discuss the Islamic state's economic system in isolation from the global economy, and the Islamic gender and employment policy which aimed at excluding women from the labour force. In this chapter, I will discuss the way in which throughout 1979-1981 the Islamic state strengthened patriarchal relationships by undoing the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s and how a process of sex segregation was a step towards the exclusion of women from the public domain, especially employment, and the way women responded differently to the process of segregation.

Chapter six will discuss the period of Iran-Iraq war (1981-1988). It will be argued that under the pressure from the war economy, the Islamic state had to end its isolationist economic policy. Also despite its ideology, the state was forced to change its gender and employment policy as the demand for and the supply of female labour increased. The state used the process of segregation to both accommodate the economic needs of the families to women's earnings and to maintain its ideology. Therefore, under economic pressure, the state was unable to exclude women from the workforce, but it used different ways of limiting and controlling the supply of female labour which placed women in a disadvantaged position within the labour market.

Chapter seven will demonstrate that a comparison of statistical data for pre 1979, 1980s and 1990s show that despite the initial attempt by the Islamic state to exclude women from employment, women's participation in the labour force has not changed. Moreover, the state, under economic pressure and women's responses had to revert back to the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s and abandon the *Sharia* interpretation of the laws and regulations which were initially designed to marginalise women in the economic sphere. The family law, the education and employment regulations were reformed and allowed women a greater

participation in the public domain. However, despite reforms, the theocratic state's foundation remain based on patriarchal relationships at the level of the state and the family which influences the structure of the labour market and places women in a subordinate position.

Chapter eight will discuss women's political responses in their varied ways to patriarchal gender relations. It will be argued that the reforms which were made in the 1980s and 1990s were the result of women's responses to the limitations of the state's policy on gender relations. The state, under economic pressure, was unable to abolish women's labour, but systematically continued to press hard for the ideology of women's place in the home. Women's participation in the labour market politicised them and raised gender consciousness to a degree which had never been experienced by previous generations. Religious women who participated in the making of the Islamic state and the suppression of the secular women's movement in the early 1980s changed their position in the 1990s. They sought a form of unity with secular women and debated women's issues within the media. This organised form of political struggle for change combined with women's individual responses to patriarchal relationships at home, at workplaces and the wider society has challenged Islamic theology and thereby the Iranian theocratic state.

Notes

¹. The date of publication of sources in Farsi (The official and dominant language in Iran) are according to the Iranian calendar. The Iranian *Shamsi* (Solar) calendar year starts on March 21. An Iranian year may be converted to the international year by adding 621. For example, the Iranian year 1343 refers to the period March 21, 1964, to March 20, 1965. Thus, throughout the thesis I have used this

system of conversion for all the Farsi sources where their date of publication is according to the Iranian calendar.

². This debate was pioneered by Ester Boserup's study of women in the process of economic development in 1970 and is still the dominant debate. For a critical review of this debate see Pearson (1994 and 1992).

³. For this discussion see Wallby (1990); Mies (1986); Elson and Pearson (1984) and Mackintosh (1984).

⁴. For this discussion see Moghadam (1993b) and Chhachhi (1991).

Chapter Two

Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodology used in this thesis. The research data includes primary sources: eighty interviews which took place at different stages between 1989 -1992 with women across occupations, and a group interview consisting of eight men and women in 1996, at the time of the parliamentary elections; 500 questionnaires which were distributed in 1990 and were collected in 1991 and 1992 and general observation at different stages during 1989 - 1996. The research data also includes secondary materials such as volumes of official statistics, press reports, legislation, and published and unpublished research on women in Iran in general as well as specific data about women and employment in Iran. The study of materials in Farsi involved the translation of the appropriate materials from Farsi to English.

The gathering of evidence in Iran between 1989 - 1992 was a problematic task. The study of feminist debates on qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis helped me to identify the appropriate method of gathering evidence for this thesis. In this chapter I will discuss why I used a combination of qualitative methods derived from different disciplines: sociology, anthropology, and oral history and why I use interviews with women workers, as the most important research material. The role of class and the overlap between secularity and religiosity played a significant role in the analysis of women's employment. Thus an examination of the indigenous class system in relation to the existing literature on this issue is necessary. Taking into consideration the local perceptions of class differentiation and referring to the debate on gender and class formation in

developing countries I will also explain why I use the Marxian categories of class to refer to my respondents.

I will also discuss the role of interviews in constructing the thesis questions and arguments and how I found sociological, anthropological and oral history methodology useful to eliciting individuals' own personal stories and experiences and explaining the conflicts and struggles which my respondents had faced and were facing in employment. This method allowed me to be an active participant by listening to my interviewees while also attending to my own response and trying to learn more from each woman. By using questionnaires and statistics I have also accumulated some quantitative data and I have used these data to gather and examine evidence in order to test the validity of the qualitative data.

2.2 Qualitative method verses quantitative method.

Throughout the last three decades feminist researchers have challenged the way social sciences have analysed women's issues. The starting point is the criticism of traditional methods of analysis which are male biased. That is, the questions which are raised and the ways set up to answer those questions are not from the perspective of female experiences. Stanley (1990) and Harding (1987) have argued that this approach has structured the creation of a male orientated epistemology and has excluded women from being the knowers. Moreover, this approach distorts our understanding of social life, as it ignores the ways gender shapes the social life of women and men differently.

Squires also provides a critical but nevertheless important case for using the qualitative research method. She argues that the merit of a women-centred subjective approach is that it revalues the very notion of objectivity and subjectivity. Women's personal and work experience challenges male values and

the construction of male knowledge, which does not reveal women's activities and contribution. In this context subjective methods are used as an alternative way of knowing (Squires 1989: 38-49).

She also argues that females are not one homogeneous category. Feminist theories and methodologies can be constructed based on women's experiences of material issues at particular historical period which can explain "the social relations between the sexes and the patriarchal relationships in relation to class and culture" (ibid: 49).

There are other criticisms. Graham (1983); Morgan (1981) and Stacey (1981) have argued that the survey method is limited and is not appropriate for counting women's contribution and analysing the social relationships between women and men in the home and at work. Jayaratne (1983:142-43) and Oakley (1981) have also argued that the use of qualitative research has the advantage of reflecting women's experiences as a whole.

Jayaratne makes a number of important points about the inadequacy of quantitative research for the analysis of women's work. Firstly she argues that in a quantitative research process, theory generates hypotheses which are then tested by research methodologies. Questionnaires and interviews measure aspects of the theory. The validity of the questions is tested by pilot studies. Before analysis, responses are quantified to facilitate analysis. Most analyses are statistical judgements which in turn test the hypotheses which are generated from the theory. This process might be appropriate for some research, but it is limited for analysing women's activities which are mostly not counted and are unremunerated. Therefore, she suggests that qualitative research allows a variety of methodologies which are more suitable for the analysis of women's activities, their paid and unpaid work; in and for the family (1983: 142-43).

Secondly in the quantitative or traditional research process, the data are analysed as numerical values. The purpose of the research process is to gather and examine evidence in order to test the validity of an explanation. This is a continuous process and no theory is ever proven correct. To feminist researchers this is unacceptable, as feminist theories, grounded in women's experiences, are aimed at improving the lives of women (ibid: 141).

Thirdly if existing theories seem inadequate to reflect the reality of women's work and women's lives, we could develop and add to the existing theories by relying on our findings based on women's experiences (ibid: 142-43)

In my research, I have used a degree of quantitative research methods, but not for the purpose of generating hypotheses which are then tested by research methodology. I have used the numerical data to gather and examine evidence in order to test the validity of an explanation. I have also used the existing theories to understand women's experiences, aiming to add to the existing theories by relying on my findings based on women's experiences.

As interviews are my most important research materials I found a case study or oral history methodology useful to explain the conflicts and struggles (both past and present) which my respondents have been facing in employment. In an oral history cross analysis, the oral evidence or a detailed analysis of the interviews is treated as a quarry from which to construct an argument (Thompson 1988: 238). This method has the merit of involving the individual's and groups' emotions and feelings and shows the conflicts and struggles that respondents are involved in. But it is also open to the criticism that it is too subjectivist.

Jayaratne identifies three main criticisms: Firstly, questions are open ended and answers could be long descriptions of the respondents feelings. Secondly, this qualitative answer is used to formulate a qualitative analysis. Thirdly, case histories do not permit generalisation, while generalisation is important for policy formation (Jayaratne 1983: 156-7).

Jayaratne, however, suggests the use of certain aspects of Freudian psychology as good examples of generalisation from a non-representative sample which make a qualitative method systematic and scientific. She identifies three stages in the researcher's analysis:

In the first stage the researcher is attempting to uncover the structure of an experience and therefore takes each bit of the subject's report and scrutinizes it to uncover its meaning. Crucial to this process is a way of thinking termed imaginal variation, in which a given feeling, thought or outcome is compared with other possibilities. The second stage of analysis involves construction of analytical categories that emerge from the themes identified in the first stage. to the greatest extent possible, one strives to allow the categories to emerge from the data themselves, rather than from a preconceived theoretical or empirical framework. Finally the research attempts to describe the relationships among the various categories in order to identify the pattern or structure of the experience - the ways in which the elements combine to create a unified whole. This approach is wholly qualitative and rigorously systematic (Jayaratne and Stewart 1991: 93).

I have therefore, attempted to use this method, as I feel that in the first stage, as an active participant I was listening to my interviewees while also attending to my own response and trying to learn more from each woman. Also as Anderson and Jack (1991: 19) have pointed out, each work history taught me a new dimension

of women and work. I scrutinised the meaning of different issues which emerged from each interview and I tried to understand and compare the experiences of each woman with another which were different according to their social differentiation. In the second stage, I identified three main themes of analysis which emerged from my data: the sexual division of labour; social relations between genders and the patriarchal gender relationships at the level of state and society, and in the third stage my intention was to find a relationship between these analytical concepts and the pattern of women's work experiences in Iran.

The appropriate use of both quantitative and qualitative methods have also been considered satisfactory to promote feminist theory and goals (Harding 1987 and Jayaratne 1983). For example, Harding suggests the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods as feminist research tools ie using methods which can best answer particular research questions. But always using them in ways which are consistent with broad feminist goals and ideology (Harding 1987).

Taking into consideration the debate over the merits and demerits of qualitative and quantitative research methods and my research questions I have used any and every means available for investigating the conditions of employment for women in Iran. Interviews, however, are my most important research materials. My hope is that the findings of the thesis could be used to inform policy proposals, to improve women's lives in Iran and to contribute to the larger collectivity of women and the link between gender and economy.

As Chanfrault - Duchet (1991: 90) has argued, interviews with a relatively small sample of women can be used in a way which is considered as qualitative, systematic and is aimed at theory development. Equally important, this form of analysis allows a historical analysis of women as fully historical persons who struggle to improve their status. She also argues that this approach is scientific

and is in the interest of women for it uses precise notions, theories and processes whose results will return to women and ultimately to society.

It is my hope that my field data relating to oral history will add to feminist consciousness, as an exchange for my respondents' help in producing this research, especially if this type of research will eventually lead to change in social relations and theoretical assumptions in the interest of women (Finch 1984: 86) I hope in the case of Iran this will lead to the promotion of women's status.

2.3 Specific aspects of sociological, anthropological and oral history method.

In this section I will discuss a number of specific aspects of sociological, anthropological and oral history methodology. This method is about collecting and analysing oral evidence about individuals' personal experience of situations and events. Oral evidence is the product of human action and is open to criticism of being biased. But it provides access to areas of unrecorded stories, power relationships, and the social and economic factors that determine decision making. The validity of the evidence or aspects of the evidence, however, can be checked with the documentary evidence (Bornet 1992).

Using this method and lessons learnt from oral historians I was able to identify the problem with statistical information which are biased against women. For example, as will be discussed in chapter seven, according to the official statistics in 1993-94, the share of female workers in state ministries was 30%; in large industrial enterprises it was 6% and in small firms 6%. However, my interviews show that these statistics do not include different categories of women workers who work and effectively contribute to their families and to the national and international economy. These are: unpaid agricultural workers and carpet weavers; petty commodity producers; and a large number of women workers who

are employed by many medium to small private enterprises, but their employers do not declare them as their workforce to evade tax and insurance.

Throughout the field research my observation also confirmed the validity of the interviews about women's unrecorded contributions. In the two villages that I visited in the North and in the East of Iran, all women agricultural workers and carpet weavers were unpaid family workers. Those whom I interviewed said that they had never been asked by the officials whether they work or not. The officials who visit villages ask men as the head of the households about members of households' economic activities. They also said that women's contribution is considered (by men and women) as natural and part of domestic life rather than a particular category of work such as agricultural work or carpet weaving. So they do not even appear in the official statistics as the unpaid workers.

My observation also confirmed my interview with ten petty commodity producers and traders that a large number of women are engaged in this occupation. The female queues outside the stores and shops which sell ration coupon goods are much longer than the male queues. These women make a living by buying cheaply from the rationing system and selling expensively in the black market. Many of my interviewees who worked for medium to small private enterprises told me that none of them were registered as workers. This was confirmed by my observation in 1992 when I counted 150 shops, in one street in North of Tehran, selling female clothes. They all employed female shop assistance, on average each shop employed three female workers at different times of the day, and none of them were registered as workers.

Thus, the oral evidence and my observation enabled me to find out firstly that despite the official statistics which show a large number of women work for the state, a much larger number of women work for small private enterprises.

Secondly, this is despite the pressure of ideology which makes seeking employment in the state enterprises desirable for women and men. Thirdly, women are working in variety of ways in unpaid and paid employment; to generate income or save expenditure for their families and increase the standard of living of their families. Haggis (1990) argues that the use of different research methods contributes to the exclusion or inclusion of women or in another word, to the production of a feminist knowledge. More importantly, as Pugh (1990) suggests on the basis of this feminist principle, I recognised my central role as a researcher and sought to use that positively in the research process.

The oral accounts also revealed the difference between women's level of earnings and men's level of earnings. It is recorded in the labour law that the head of the house hold and the bread-winner receives more wages, in terms of benefits. But it does not record that only a male person is considered as the bread-winner. It also does not record how women lose benefits because of their familial responsibilities and the absence of child care facilities. Some of these issues are revealed through the media and the official documents. But they do not reveal the difference between the level of women's contribution to the family in comparison with their husbands contribution and the unequal relationship between men and women in the family and in society as a whole.

More importantly they do not reveal whether access to paid employment is empowering for women. For this reason I have used four variables: number of children; education; male financial control and women's power of decision making to assess change in gender relationship as a result of material and ideological constraints. My calculation derives from women's words, the way they described themselves. Two of the variables, number of children and level of education is compatible with the official statistics. But the others are not and can only be explored through oral history.

Finnegan (1992) argues that in oral history method, the researcher takes an active role by drawing sources out from people's existing knowledge and experience. Bornet (1992) also suggests that this method involves interpersonal interaction and communication skills which allow an understanding of social differentiations in relation to gender, class and race inequalities.

2.4 The field research

This research is based on eighty interviews with seventy six women in Iran over a period of four years (1989-1992) and a group of eight men and women in 1996. Four women I interviewed more than once at different times because of changes in their employment and personal circumstances. Fifty five women were wage earners and twenty five were non-wage earners.

The wage earners included twenty seven state employees: nine nurses; five school teachers; four bank clerks; three secretaries; three nursery school teachers; two university lecturers; one Visual Display Unit (VDU) operator and twelve employees of private enterprises: four journalists; two VDU operators; two managers/supervisors; two electronic engineers; one accountant and one secretary/administrative officer. Five nurses, one accountant and one VDU operator worked in both the state and private workplaces. Within the category of wage earners there were also sixteen assembly line workers: ten in a cooking oil factory, two in a pharmaceutical industry, two in a biscuit making factory and two in an electronic industry.

The twenty five non-wage earners included: ten petty commodity producers and traders buying cheaply from the coupon rationing system and selling them expensively in the black market either directly or by producing food and other

petty commodities for sale; nine rural agricultural / carpet weavers who were unpaid family workers whose products were sold by the male members of their families and six voluntary workers. Two of the agricultural workers/carpet weavers moved between unpaid family work and waged employment teaching at their local schools.

2.4.1 Social differentiation amongst women

Within Iranian studies the phrases 'working class' and 'middle class' are widely used without adequate analyses. They are also used by my respondents to express their social differentiation. These phrases are similar to the Weberian sociological approaches to stratification on the basis of occupation of individuals and their family. Although in this thesis I use these established phrases I understand them in the context of the broad definition of Marxian explanation of working class in relation to exploitation and social relations. This is because my respondents are divided into two categories of wage-earners and non-wage earners. Some consider themselves middle class and others working class. But in both cases they have the same relationship to the system of social production. That is they are dependent on selling their labour power for their livelihood. However, what distinguishes them from each other is the degree of access to material resources and the constraint imposed on them by Islamic ideology (level of religiosity). This is important because these distinctions determine women's responses and their mode of resistance to state ideology and to employment opportunities.

In Iran, as in other developing countries, different methods of mobilising and organising labour in production are evident; as the wage labour market developed, non-wage labour persisted. As it is argued by Bernstein (1994); Bernstein, Johnson and Thomas (1992) and Crow, Thorpe et al (1988: 38-41), the transformation of developing countries from pre capitalism to capitalism in the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries took place as part of a global process and led to the establishment of forms of production based on proletarian labour (capitalist production), semi proletarian (combines production using own means of production with wage labour) and petty commodity production (Household labour).

As I explained above, my respondents are divided into two categories of wage earners and non-wage earners. Some of the wage earners are *karmand* (middle to high status workers). Others are *kargar* (low status workers). Those who are categorised as *karmand* generally identify themselves as 'middle class' and those who are categorised as *kargar* generally identify themselves as 'working class'. However, urbanisation and family status can alter the class of individuals or families. For example, in my sample there are two teachers in rural areas who move between wage labour (as teachers) and non-wage labour (as unpaid agricultural workers/carpet weavers). Both of these women consider themselves *kargar* and working class rather than teacher, *karmand* and middle class. Also all the petty commodity producers and traders in Tehran despite their relative level of poverty consider themselves as middle class.

The terms *karmand* and *kargar* are local perceptions of economic status and occupational categories defined by the labour laws. Individuals and families, according to these status and categories, have different degrees of access to money, property, education, prestige. These categories also determine the *tabaghe* (social status) of an individual or a family and become social issues affecting marriage choices, where people live, how they dress and how they furnish their homes.

These local perceptions of working class and middle class are similar to the Weberian explanation of occupational categories. This view has been criticised

from a Marxist point of view for being descriptive on the basis of a sociological framework of ideas about stratification and not providing a satisfactory explanation of the processes of class formation, exploitative relations of production and social relations (Callinicos 1983).

The sociological approach to stratification has also been criticised from a gender and class perspective for seeing the family, rather than the individual, as the basic unit of class composition based on the occupation of the male headed household (Barrett 1988: 124-25; Acker 1973).

Marx (Capital 1956:33) and Marxists (for example, Callinicos 1983 and Kay 1979) define class with reference to relationship of ownership and control of means of production. Therefore, from this point of view, the proletariat is defined as being completely dependent on wage; and class is a social relationship through which one group exploits another within the process of production rather than what occupation they have (Cohen 1978:73-7).

The expansion of state employees and service industries in relation to manufacturing industries both in industrialised and industrialising countries in the second part of this century has led to debates within Marxism about the underlying relationship between capital and wage labour. For example, Offe (1985); Lukes (1984); Bauman 1982); Gorz (1982); Hobsbawm (1981) and Poulantzas (1975 and 1987) have argued that state employees and unproductive manual workers who circulate commodities and do not create surplus value are not part of the working class but of the new petty bourgeoisie.

Other writers such as Wright (1989); Callinicos (1983); Mandel (1978: 38-46) and Bravermann (1974) have argued that both the productive and unproductive workers are subject to the same fundamental constraints such as non-ownership

of means of production; lack of direct access to the means of livelihood; insufficient money to purchase the means of livelihood without more or less continuous sale of labour-power. They are also exploited in the same way; both have unpaid labour extracted from them. In the case of productive labour, unpaid labour time is appropriated as surplus value directly, whereas in the case of unproductive labour it is appropriated indirectly. Therefore, all kinds of labour which contributes directly or indirectly to the process of social production is productive. The rigid application of surplus value as the criterion by which to judge labour productive or unproductive ignores the contribution of many workers to social reproduction who may not produce surplus value directly (Kay 1979:133)

I will, therefore, argue that this second version of Marxian explanation can provide a more satisfactory analysis of class formation in relation to exploitation and social relations than the Weberian explanation of occupational categories. But from a gender and class perspective Marxist analysis is also open to criticism. For example, Marx also aggregates individuals into the family unit in the same way as in the sociological theory of stratification (Barrett 1988:126) as he sees the typical wage labourer as male and women and children as substitutes for the male labourer (Marx 1980: 395).

As Mies (1994: 113) argues in the process of proletarianisation "men are defined as wage earners and bread-winners". Therefore, a large number of women workers in developing countries are dependent on a male bread-winner; their work is not remunerated by a wage; their work is invisible in the statistics and is not protected by labour law and they cannot be easily unionised.

Therefore it is important to analyse the nature of women's relationship to the wage, domestic work and class structure (Mackintosh 1989: 163-179; Barrett

1988: 134; Gardiner 1977; Coulson, Magas and Wainwright 1975). This approach allows an historical analysis of gender relations within the context of class formation and class structure. From this perspective self employed workers and family workers are part of the working class as although they may not be involved in the production of surplus value directly they are dependent upon the sale of their labour power for survival (Gardiner 1977:157-8).

Taking these arguments into consideration, I have borrowed from Marx and Marxists the broad definition of the working class which recognises different status such as *Kargar* and *Karmand* rather than to use these different status according to Weberian explanation of strata.

Those who are *karmands* earn more than *kargars*. Marx recognised that some kind of labour cost more to produce and that processes of supply and demand determined their remuneration. Hence higher paid salary earners could also be thought of as wage-labourers because "the value of their labour power and their wages are determined as those of other wage earners, ie by the cost of production and reproduction of his specific labour-power, not by the product of his labour power" (1971: 292). Therefore wage labour may have a variety of relationships to the ownership and control of capital, as the state employees may not be in the same position as employees of capitalist firms.

2.4.2 The problems with gathering evidence in Iran

In summer 1989 I made my first exploratory field work trip to Tehran. My intention was to interview female industrial workers and investigate their employment status before and after the 1979 revolution. I faced enormous problems in the course of gathering evidence. The war with Iraq was ended and Ayatollah Khomeini was dead. Politically there was an atmosphere of chaos and

fear everywhere. The majority of the people were suffering from economic and political crisis. Many who opposed the Islamisation of the state were either executed, had disappeared or were still imprisoned. Many, especially those who supported the Islamisation of the state were either killed in the war with Iraq or were still prisoners of the war and their families were waiting for their return. Many of these families were left with mentally or physically disabled soldiers who have been sent back home during the war years.

With the help of a female friend with whom I was involved in the activities of the 1979 - 1981 women's movement in Iran, I interviewed 2 women from the Pharmaceutical industry and two women from the food industry. During 1979-1980 we had supported these women outside their factory gates where they were locked out for struggling to build workers *shoras* (councils) We helped these women and their colleagues to produce and distribute their bulletins. By September 1981 Islamic *shoras* were consolidated in the factories and any independent *shoras* were liquidated (Bayat 1987: 100-142, Poya: 1987: 143-149). It was no longer possible to participate in these forms of political struggle. I returned to London in 1982. But my friend worked as a scientist in one of the pharmaceutical factories and continued her contact with some of the women workers, including the four women that I interviewed in 1989. Without her it would have been impossible for me to have access to these women. During the revolution and until 1981 class barriers collapsed between those who were engaged in political struggles. But it became an obstacle once the political struggles were crushed. Therefore, as far as these women were concerned I was an outsider, especially since I lived abroad. But they trusted me because of my friend, she was working with them and she came from a religious family, so they could relate to her. Hence, they were willing to talk to me.

This was an informal group interview which took place at my friend's house. I used an approach based on the oral history method, described by Thompson. That is I did not have pre-set questions which I read out, rather I had a mental list of all the areas I wanted to cover in the interview. Throughout the interviews I kept the flow of conversation as near to an ordinary conversation as possible. I told the respondent about myself, my age, my marital status, the number of my children, my occupation, my thesis and the purpose of my interviews. I then said to them that for objective purposes I also need some information from them in regards to their personal details such as age, marital status, number of children, education and their job.

The data collected from these interviews included women's struggle in the work places, during the revolution and after, their condition of work, their domestic responsibilities, their other forms of work to increase the family income, their relationship to their husbands and other members of their families, their status within the workplace, within the family and within the society as a whole. These interviews helped me to clarify the research question. (Thompson, 1988; 198-200).

In this field trip, with the help of many friends, I also obtained a large number of official statistics from the ministries of Labour and Social Affairs; Budget and Organisation and Iran Statistical Centre. On my return to London I carried out substantial research on the historical background and the official statistics on women and employment.

This research took place part time during academic year holidays, as I worked full time as a lecturer in London. I returned to Iran in summer 1990 to continue the field research. I found that I had lost contact with the four women from the four industrial plants that I interviewed the previous year. My friend had left her job

and she no longer had any excuse to contact those women workers. The class differences between them could have turned the attention of the authorities to her and the women workers. Such a contact could have been interpreted as being politically motivated and subversive against the Islamic state.

I had no way of gaining access and therefore I had to abandon concentrating on interviewing female industrial workers alone and decided to interview women across different occupations, especially "middle" class women working for the growing service sector both in the state owned and privately owned enterprises, as I had more access to this group of women through my family, my extended family and friends.

In this field trip I interviewed 10 women. Some of these women were relatives and others were friends of my extended family. Some were working in the state owned enterprises as teachers, nurses and bank clerks, others in the middle to small scale private enterprises as clerks, secretaries or administrative workers.

These interviews took place in an atmosphere of fear. The majority of women, either themselves or members of their families have experienced political persecution by both regimes, of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and of Ayatollah Khomeini, and have suffered from the wounds of the eight years war with Iraq, economically, politically, socially and personally. Therefore they did not feel comfortable talking about their circumstances. Although I explained fully my intention and explained the purpose of my research as purely an academic exercise there were still uncertainties. I began by asking them general questions about their work history and the relationship between their paid job outside the home and their domestic responsibilities. After a few minutes, conversations became more relaxed and the women felt a common bond and gradually, began to talk to me and answer my questions more willingly. I divided my two main questions into 5

categories: 1) different occupations that women have had throughout their work history, 2) their employment status in terms of pay, conditions, retirement, pension and their level of education in comparison with men, 3) their marital status and the effect of having children on their employment, 4) husband's and family's attitudes to their work outside the home 5) the difference between the Shah's system and the Islamic system in terms of their employment status.

Question one allowed me to explore what occupations women are concentrated in and why. One important issue which was raised by my respondents was why, under ideological pressure, women preferred to work in large state owned enterprises.

Question two raised the issue of how women are discriminated against by the labour law as a result of Islamic gender ideology in Iran which does not recognise a woman as a bread-winner. Also how women lose benefits, pensions and years of service, because they cannot work late shifts and, in addition to official maternity leave, they take time off for long periods to look after their children.

Question three raised the issue of how women's exclusive responsibility for the reproduction and maintenance of the family place them in a disadvantaged position within the home and at paid work outside the home. The majority of women use their mothers, mothers-in-law, sisters, sisters-in-law, female members of their family, extended family and neighbours to look after their children while they go out to work.

Question four raised the issue of how in the majority of cases, husbands and male members of the family, under the influence of gender ideology, do not approve of the idea of women's work outside of the home. But in cases where a family needed the financial contribution of the woman, the man had no choice than to

permit her to go out to work. In Iran, by law, women have to obtain permission from their husbands or other male kin to go out to work; to study; to choose their place of residence or to go abroad. Wherever, permission is granted, it could be withdrawn at any time if a man feels that the woman's activities outside of the home can jeopardise the family honour. Since the Islamisation of the state, this law is practiced more thoroughly in the state owned enterprises than the private enterprises. This question also raised how women mobilise the ideological and material resources to cope with the conflicts arising from their participation in the labour market and how they constantly use every means to improve the standard of living of their families and their own status within the workplace and the home.

Question five made me aware that in the 1980s the general standard of living declined in comparison with the 1970s. However, the policy and practice of segregation imposed by the Islamic state opened up opportunities for many women to enter employment. Even those women who opposed the compulsory nature of the Islamic dress agreed with those who supported this policy that segregation has created space for women.

When I started the interviews, I had already carried out substantial research into the historical background and the official statistics of the research questions but did not know about women's work experiences. My own work experience in Iran consists of three years computer programming, in the 1960s and some journalism in the early 1980s.

So each interview added something new to my knowledge. I found women's personal and work histories empowering and validating the importance of their experience. Gluck and Patai argue that for this reason oral history work with women is assumed to be inherently feminist (Gluck and Patai 1991; 2). Also my purpose of interviewing women was not just seeking information or evidence of

value in itself. My purpose, on the one hand, was to make a subjective record of how each woman looked back at her life and work history, what she emphasised, what she missed out, the words she used to express a particular feelings (Thompson: 1988, 196-205), and on the other hand, how women struggle between the work in the home and outside of the home in order to improve the standard of living of their family and their own status in comparison with men.

In the course of interviews I made sure that the questions that I asked did not shape their testimony (ibid 202). For example I explained that I am not judging their political and religious views in itself. I want to use it for objective and subjective analyses in relation to women's experiences at work and the effect of their domestic responsibilities on their work outside the home and vice versa.

At this stage I decided to use questionnaires to obtain comparative evidence, using the interviews for raising questions and the questionnaires for testing the validity of some of the answers to the interviews. Also the questionnaires were designed as a comparative measure, alongside the interviews, to analyse women's place in the work force; their employment status; their level of education; their fertility rate; their class and level of religiosity; the degree of decision making within the family; the effect of their domestic responsibilities to their paid work and vice versa. The aim was to examine the degree of awareness, struggle and change for women of different social groups.

With the help of my daughters, my sister and female members of my extended family, we produced 500 questionnaires. These questionnaires went hand to hand from women to women to schools, nursery schools, universities, factories, offices, hospitals, banks and the homes of women who were engaged in self-employment and voluntary work. At work places the questionnaires had to go through the security systems and generally people were more nervous to put their words into

writing than to say their words in a conversation. Some completed the questionnaires fully and made comments. Others did not fully complete them (see appendix 2: Questionnaire).

In return to London I translated and transcribed the interviews into English. I realised that my interviews highlighted the thesis question and the analytical categories to explain the characteristics of women and employment in Iran in relation to the Islamic state and its gender roles and rules. Also women's strategies to struggle against their hostile environment. I decided that my interviews in the next field trip would be more structured, they could take a more objective/comparative approach.

I therefore continued with reviewing the literature and statistical work in London. In the summer of 1991 I made another field trip to Iran and interviewed 56 women. In Tehran, the capital city and the largest centre for industry and services, I visited a number of schools, banks, hospitals, medium size private enterprises and newspapers. These visits were made possible by friends and relatives who worked in these places and obtained permission for me through their line managers. In these workplaces I interviewed women in the teaching professions from nursery school teachers to university lecturers, women as bank clerks, nurses, VDU operators, secretaries, accountants and journalists. I also visited a number of women, in these professions, and working voluntarily, in their homes. All workplaces and individual women agreed to distribute and collect my questionnaires.

I also visited three industrial firms and interviewed a number of women industrial workers. These interviews were formal and short and I could not go back to the respondents to clarify certain points. These interviews were arranged by the authorities, I had limited time, I could only ask limited questions as the interviews

took place in the presence of the foreman or the manager. Therefore my respondents did not feel totally free to talk to me. However, the result was satisfactory.

One of these firms was The Margarin Company, part of the food industry, situated in Varamin, a city in the south of Tehran. On the same day that I visited the factory, they also had a visit from the ministry of health to introduce family planning and to distribute free contraception to female workers. They took me and the health visitors around the factory to observe the different stages of the production of cooking oil. Once the health visitors' discussion with the female workers about family planning ended, I interviewed fifteen women workers on the shop floor in the presence of the health visitors and the foreman.

My next visit was the Bel Air Company, part of the electronic industry, situated in the eastern part of Tehran. I interviewed two women technical engineers, two women assembly line workers and a male foreman who was working under the supervision of the female technical vice president and in charge of assembly workers. I was also allowed to visit the segregated assembly lines where women were working on the one side and men on the other side, producing radios and televisions. I was also invited to have lunch with female workers in the canteen. Women's lunch break was 12.30 - 1.00pm and then they went to the prayer room from 1.00-1.30. Men had lunch break from 1.00-1.30 and then they went to the prayer room from 1.30-2.00.

At Iran Hormone Company, part of the pharmaceutical industry, situated in Karaj a city in the west of Tehran, I interviewed a female pharmacist. They took me to the laboratory and showed me how men and women worked, not in segregated places, producing medicine.

All three firms agreed to distribute my questionnaires among the workforce and return to me.

Thus, some of these interviews took place at workplaces, they were formal, opportunities were very limited to talk freely, as officials were present. Others took place in the homes of the interviewees, were informal and more relaxed. I, therefore, used different styles. A friendly, informal, conversational approach with women who I knew quite well and the interviews took place in their homes. A more formal, controlled style of questioning with women who I did not know and the interviews took place at their work places. Finch (1984) and Oakley (1981) argue that less structured research strategies which avoid creating a hierarchical relationship between interviewer and interviewee are more suitable than formal, survey type interviewing because informal interviews do not turn women into objects. They also criticise the view that the interviewer is expected to remain detached, distant and in control.

I also travelled to a number of villages in Khorasan province, in the eastern part of Iran. This area is one of the biggest centres for carpet weaving and agricultural production. It is a very poor area in terms of climate and resources, water is extremely scarce as the area is close to the desert, people's standard of living is poor and the level of education and health is very low. This six days long journey and interviews were organised by a friend whose family come from this area. We stayed with my friend's aunt and his cousins, in an old village, where the houses are built of mud. Our hosts were medium size land owners and produced grapes, pistachio nuts, cumin, Saffron, cotton, wheat and barley throughout the year. Men and women worked on the land. Women were also carpet weavers. Men were the head of the households, they dealt with officials; middlemen; buying and selling of materials. Women hardly went out of the village. The carpet weaving was mainly the job of women and young girls. Boys who fail school usually end up doing

some carpet weaving. The carpet weaving takes place in the houses. In each house there is a room for carpet weaving which is also used as the sitting room. These rooms are called *Kargahe Khanegi* (Household workshop). Men are the *Karfarma* (employer) and women are *ghalibaf* (carpet weavers). These villages were self-sufficient, there were no shops, women produced all the family's clothes and daily food (bread, butter, cheese, vegetables and fruit). Women also did animal husbandry which was mainly to sell the animals or their products in the market by men.

To compare the condition of women carpet weavers/agricultural workers of this area with carpet weavers and agricultural workers of a comparatively richer area I also travelled to a number of villages in Mazandaran, in the north of Iran, where the climate is good and resources are not so scarce and people have a comparatively better standard of living and a higher level of health and education. This was a three days long journey which was organised by a friend who was working in the area as a civil engineer. Through this contact I was able to visit a few families and interview two female carpet weavers in their homes. In this area women are also engaged in the production of rice and tea.

In these interviews I added a number of questions to the previous questions: 1) What different tasks women have in their jobs 2) what is the difference between their jobs and men's jobs 3) how important their contribution is to their family 4) what do they do when they go home 5) what part of housework is carried out by men (if any) 6) what does it mean for women to work, does it mean more autonomy in decision making about themselves, their children and the family's expenditure.

These questions emerged from the previous years interviews. This time I used these questions explicitly while at the same time I allowed new points to be

developed out of each conversation. This restructuring of the questions allowed a more objective/comparative approach which was very fruitful as it allowed me to compare experiences and strategies of different women with each other.

I thought about the questions that I wanted to ask, the sequence of topics. I built a shape in my mind and let questions lead naturally from one to another. Questions one, two and three allowed a more detailed understanding of the sexual division of labour and the benefits of women's work to their families. I learned that women of all classes and with different levels of religiosity are exclusively responsible for domestic work. The neglect of this responsibility is socially and culturally unacceptable within the family and the society. As a result women's hours of work are very long, sometimes up to 14 hours a day.

Questions four and five allowed a more detailed exploration of the social relations between men and women and question six gave some insights into the ways in which women of different classes and with different levels of religiosity chose material and ideological resources to cope with gender ideology. Most importantly, how they struggled to improve their status within the home, at work and the wider society.

So the oral history method of using the detailed memories of the interviewees (Thompson: 1988, 201) proved to be very fruitful. I learned how women's work histories had a dimension of a female struggle against a hostile environment (Borland 1991; 67). Although only a few would identify themselves with feminism and feminist ideas the questions that I asked encouraged women to think about their status (Gluck 1991; 205) and the discrimination against them. They welcomed the idea that my intention is to raise the question of how important women's work is to their families and to the Iranian economy and society.

In this trip I collected 200 questionnaires. I did not know many women who helped me to distribute the questionnaires. They agreed to do so as friends of my family, my extended family and friends. So I had to rely on this network for collection of the questionnaires.

In April 1992 I went back to Tehran. In this trip I interviewed a group of ten women who were engaged in buying cheaply and selling expensively in the black market. There are a large number of women who are engaged in this work. This was a group interview which took place in Tehran in the home of one of my interviewees. She asked nine other women in her neighbourhood to join her in this interview and tell their stories as petty commodity producers and sellers. I asked them the same questions which were raised in the previous interviews. I learned that their earnings and their contribution is indispensable to their families. They do not count in the statistics, while without their contribution, their families would not survive the inflation and male unemployment.

On this trip I also collected 148 questionnaires. These together with the 200 questionnaires that I collected in 1991 represented: 31 voluntary workers; 35 self-employed; 50 industrial workers; 40 VDU operators; 28 nurses; 53 women in teaching profession; 55 administrative workers and clerks and 56 technicians; engineers, scientists and librarians. The remaining questionnaires were either not collected or they did not reach me.

When I started my interviews, because of political constraints, I did not know how many women and in what occupations I would have access to. So I took my chances wherever possible. But this wide range of interviews with women across different occupations, identifying themselves as belonging to different classes and with different levels of religiosity proved to be useful. A combination of

interviews and the questionnaires brought the best results for me. I learned from different points of views and picked up ideas and information which helped me to define the problem of women's participation in the labour market and the labour force in Iran. More importantly, examining the change in women's employment made me aware of the relationship between the role of state, economy and ideology.

This enabled me to locate different theoretical approaches for analysing and explaining the research questions (Thompson 1988: 196-205). A purely quantitative approach would not have allowed me to capture the most important features of the lives of women at work and at home. Throughout the interviews I found an interdependence between women's paid work and their contribution in the home, produced by economic and ideological factors.

I did not use a tape recorder, as my interviewees did not feel comfortable. Even if I could have recorded the interviews it would have been impossible to get them out of the country. No recorded materials would be allowed out of the country without being checked and obtaining permission from the Ministry of Islamic culture. I therefore, wrote the questions and answers in my notebook in Farsi and transcribed them into English, when I returned to London. Wherever possible I took photographs, some work places did not allow me to take photographs.

I also studied volumes of official statistics from the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Budget and Plan Organisation and Iran Statistical Centre. I extracted from this information, statistics in relation to women's employment, education and fertility rate. My aim was to analyse to what extent this information supported the questions raised in the interviews. In addition, I produced statistics from my questionnaires and interviews in relation to women's fertility rate; education; employment status; hours of work and the level of their earnings relative to men's

indicators of women's status in comparison with men and to what extent access to paid employment or the lack of it affect the degree of their autonomy and decision making.

The statistical data that I have used is from different periods. In chapters four and five I have used the statistics which were published by the Pahlavi regime in 1978. In chapters six and seven I have used the statistics which were published by the Islamic state in the 1980s and 1990s. Statistics based on gender distribution are not available systematically by either the Pahlavi or the Islamic regimes. Therefore, I have used the available statistics in the selected years for the state sector and the private sector of the economy which show gender distribution.

Furthermore I used a large volumes of daily newspapers and women's magazines, published under the Pahlavi; under the Islamic state and by the opposition to each regime both in Farsi and in English. The study of daily newspapers and weekly magazines involved the translation of the appropriate materials from Farsi to English. The data collected from this source included change in women's education; employment; fertility rate; Islamic laws and regulations in relation to women and family and women's reaction and attitude to these changes. In the first eighteen months after the 1979 revolution the media was independent of the state. Once the state consolidated its power the media was totally controlled by the state. However, as will be discussed in chapter eight, in the 1990s a form of pluralism came into existence within the Islamic framework. Some of the media expresses this pluralism. Different socio-economic and socio-political issues are published and produced, with the exception of blasphemous issues which are not tolerated and are subject to severe punishment.

The study of the constitutions (1909 and 1980) and the labour laws of the Pahlavi and the Islamic state, together with other researches in Farsi and in English were

also essential. This study enabled me to collect information about women's position generally and specifically in relation to employment in different periods and from different points of views. The similarities and differences between the period under the Pahlavi state and the Islamic state made me aware of the problem of continuity and change in relation to gender and employment.

Between 1989 and 1992 was the period that I carried out the field research and since then I have visited Iran regularly. In these visits I have observed the general changes in the socio-economic and socio-political situation and especially the effect of these changes on women, in particular in relation to women and employment. I have also visited some of my respondents on different occasions and observed the change in their attitudes to the Islamic dress; their domestic work; their paid work outside of the home; their standard of living; working conditions and men's attitude to women's contribution to the well being of the family. I have also observed an increasing interest in women's issues throughout the society which is expressed in the media, especially through television and radio which are widely used even in villages. I observed women's and men's attitude to media and political changes in relation to women's issues such as the role of women in the 1996 parliamentary election and change in legislation in relation to women and work.

This combination allowed me to construct the reality of women's employment; to understand the social relations between the genders from the point of the participants and their strategies to cope with the ideological constraints.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the theoretical and practical issues which have been raised in the production of this study. It has argued that, considering the problems

of gathering evidence in Iran, I had to use any and every mean available to me to investigate my research question. However, interviews are my most important research materials. I have argued that this research may be open to the criticism of being biased, on the grounds that it is based on a small sample of women's words in different occupations in Iran. But the validity of the evidence has been checked as much as possible with the documentary evidence. More importantly it is the product of women's unrecorded experiences and it aimed to capture the most important features of the lives of women at work and at home, which has affected - and been affected by - the state ideology, economic circumstances and gender relations in Iran as far as women's employment is concerned.

I used a combination of open-ended and semi structured interviews and structured questionnaires. These different types of interviews were time consuming and costly, but each have their own characteristic features. Most of my interviews were informal. In the first few interviews I used less structured questions which were broad but the results provided useful information which fitted into a more specific picture. This had a snowball affect as they conveyed women's experiences and views which led to new ideas and dimensions.

The semi-structured interviews provided some scope for the interviewees' interpretations, but it also allowed comparability with others. Interviews with women across occupations and with different levels of religiosity minimised the effect of the bias because they represent different types of experience in relation to women and employment in Iran.

Also through my structural questionnaires to 500 women and statistical analysis, I was able to collect considerable factual and standardised information which allowed comparison and generalisation. However, I am aware that the pre set questions in the questionnaires, could be misunderstood. For this reason, I tested

the reliability of the answers by firstly looking at the answers which are given to the same question in the interviews and secondly how often the same answer is repeated.

A purely quantitative approach would not have allowed me to capture the most important features of the lives of women at work and at home. Throughout the interviews, both formal and informal, I found an inter-dependence between women's paid work and their contribution in the home, produced by economic and ideological factors. Most importantly the use of different approaches has enabled me to put forward an alternative point of view to the existing view of women and employment in Iran.

Chapter Three

Islam, gender, employment and ideology: a review of literature

3.1 Introduction

In considering the relationship between Islamic ideology, gender and the employment of women in Iran, it is necessary to consider the debates which are central to two different bodies of literature. The first of these is the general debate on the relationship between gender and development where those who emphasise the role of the sexual division of labour are contrasted with those who see social relations between women and men as the most important factor because the form of gender relations which impacts most on women's employment is patriarchy. It will be argued that there are a number of materially grounded analyses of women in Muslim societies which have included women in the process of development. However, this debate has not been adequately applied to the study of Muslim societies because too much attention has been given to the importance of the role of ideology and very little analysis to economic factors.

The second is the specific debate between Iranian secular feminists and Muslim feminists in respect of gender roles and relations in economy and society, under the Islamic state in Iran. A critical examination of this debate is important as it has concentrated on the negative and positive aspects of Islamic ideology in relation to women's position generally. A specific study of women in the economic context is relatively absent from this debate. From a secular position and as a critic of the Islamic state gender relations, I started this research with the view that Islamic gender ideology leads to the marginalisation of women within the workforce, in comparison with Pahlavi period. However, through the process of my field research, I learned that in the 1980s and 1990s economic factors led to

the growth in women's employment in Iran and to some women beginning to question gender relations. Therefore, my aim is to assess the extent to which gender ideology played a role in determining women's employment in Iran, in the period under investigation (1980s and 1990s) and to judge the relevance of these debates to this thesis.

3.2 The debate on gender and development

The debate on women and development is useful for the explanation of women's employment in Iran. It involves an analysis of the sexual division of labour which identifies women within the labour force and the labour market as wage earners and non wage earners; hence women's role in social production. It also involves an examination of the gendered structures of social relations both in work and in the home which also helps to explain women's subordination within the home, employment and the wider society.

Before discussing this debate, it is important to define the concepts of gender and feminists and feminism. In feminist literature, the term gender is defined to mean culturally and socially constructed categories of male and female, as opposed to sex, which is biologically given (Elson and Pearson 1984; Mackintosh 1984; Rubin 1975; Oakley 1972). Gender roles and gender relations are connected to the distribution of power within society (Kandiyoti 1996: 6-7).

I use the terms feminists and feminism in their broadest sense. Feminists are activists, scholars and writers who are concerned with the oppressive, unequal man-woman relationship in the home, at work and in society because of their gender and who want to change it (Paidar: 1996; Mies 1986: 6-43). Feminism is used to refer to a number of school of thoughts: Secular feminism; Muslim feminism; Socialist feminism; Marxist feminism; Radical feminism.

The debate about women and development in developing countries during the 1960-1980s was dominated by two different approaches:

Boserup (1987), Sautu (1980) and Saffioti (1978) explained women's limited industrial participation in many developing countries as the result of Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) where this strategy focused on the production of consumer goods, relying on imported technology. The aim was to replace imported manufactured goods with locally produced goods. These writers argued that as household and workshop commodity production was transferred into capital intensive factory production, using wage labour, jobs tended to go to men¹.

In opposition to this view, Lim (1990; 1989; 1983), Foo and Lim (1989), Joekes (1987) explained high involvement of women in many other developing countries as the result of Export Oriented Industrialisation (EOI) where the pattern of industrialisation shifted from industrial production for supplying domestic markets to exports for the markets of industrialised countries. These writers argued that this strategy modified the structure and composition of the industrial labour force, as a result, a large number of women workers were employed in labour intensive techniques, particularly in textiles, garments and electronics production.

Pearson (1992 and 1994) has criticised both approaches for giving too much importance to the analysis of the sexual division of labour. She argues that an examination of the dynamics of industrialisation; the growth of wage labour; different industrial strategies and the way in which the labour force is selected and managed is important. Also the inclusion or exclusion of women from the industrial workforce is significant, because women's access to employment could enhance their standard of living, their contribution to the upward mobility of their

families and their independence from men. However, the social setting in which work takes place is also important. In many developing countries where women are involved in industries as the result of EOI women are low-paid, over-worked, exposed to health hazards with no job security and social benefits. This is because social relations are created between men and women in a wide range of interactions from within the family to workplace and the wider society. Therefore she argues that:

A fuller understanding of gender would also incorporate the gendered structures of social relations both in work and outside it - in political structures, intra-household relations and in a wide range of social interactions in which gender is an important, if not determinant factor, in determining the relative power and autonomy of different individuals to determine outcomes (1994: 339).

Other writers have also stressed the importance of the relationship between women's employment experience and gender relations in the home and the wider society.

In the field of gender and development in India, Kabeer (1994: 57-58) emphasises the deeply rooted effect of gender identity in men's and women's sense of their place in the home and outside of the home. Beneria and Sen (1981) have argued that even when women have access to material resources their process of socialisation has emphasised male domination. Therefore, women are not given the opportunity to control their sexuality, fertility or labour. Whitehead (1979) describes how ascribed gender relations places women in the sphere of the home and men out of the home which leads to different allocation of resources to men and women in law, tradition, family, society and even national and international policy making.

Humphrey's study of Brazilian process of industrialisation (1987: 36-51) shows that women are often recruited on the basis of their sex rather than their skills and are treated differently from men in terms of wage rates, and promotion practices and, despite economic development, the majority of women remain poor and the minority of women who have not been marginalised and have benefited from education and health policies have not been empowered. Humphrey, therefore, argues that the issue of gender and employment is influenced both by the sexual division of labour and by the social relations between women and men. However, the form of gender relations and women's subordination to men is not static, it can be changed under conditions of economic and technological change. But any real change in women's subordination must come from changes in social relations rather than change in the law (ibid: 174-175).

The publication of **Marriage and the Market, Women's Subordination Internationally and its Lessons** (Young et al 1984) contributed to a general theory of gender subordination. The authors suggested that in the process of development women are not marginalised but they are integrated into the workforce differently from men, because of the social relations of gender. Therefore it is important to examine the question of power relationship between genders and how the domestic arena determines gender relations and then is articulated with the broader economic arena.

3.2.1 Capitalism and patriarchy

The debate on gender and development is linked to the debate on capitalism and patriarchy. That is because, in the process of economic development and market integration patriarchy is seen as a set of power relations between genders which has great impact on women's employment. As Elson and Pearson wrote "There is

no way that capitalist exploitation of women as wage workers can simply replace gender subordination of women" (1984: 31). I, therefore, use the term patriarchy in this thesis to mean a set of power relations which explains women's subordination to men at home and in the wider society, including employment which is not fixed and given, but changeable through men's and women's responses to lived realities (Walby: 1990: 1-24; Mies 1986: 1-43; Mackintosh: 1984: 3-17).

During the 1970s and part of the 1980s three feminist theories dominated the debate on patriarchy: Radical feminism, Marxist feminism and Socialist feminism. Radical feminists believed in the importance of patriarchal sex oppression as the basis of women's subordination which is the foundation for divisions of labour by class and race. Marxist feminists believed in the importance of capitalist exploitation as the basis of women's subordination, which results in division of labour by sex and race. They began to analyse women's role in reproduction (domestic labour) as an arena of theoretical analysis within Marxist categories of capitalist and class analysis. Socialist feminists agreed with the concept of patriarchy but argued that there has to be class analysis in order to understand different forms of oppression. A demarcation between Marxists and socialists feminism was due to Marxism giving priority to capitalism and class. Therefore the distinctive socialist feminist project became the analysis of capitalism and patriarchy and the relationship between them (Evans 1995: 108-124; Sargent 1981: xx - xxi).

The publication of the **Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism** by Hartmann (1979 and 1981) raised questions about whether capitalism and patriarchy are two different and separate systems (dual system theory) or one system (single system theory).

For example, Young (1981) criticised Hartmann for giving too much importance to the Marxist theory of production relations over the feminist theory of gender relations. She argues that this suggests that there are two distinct systems of social relations, capitalism and patriarchy, which have distinct structures, movements and histories. She argues that if the material base of patriarchy lies fundamentally in men's control over women's labour power and if men maintain this by excluding women from access to productive resources, this proves that patriarchy and capitalism are not two different systems. Especially if patriarchal relationship goes beyond family relationship and exist within all institutions such as law, education and employment. Thus patriarchal relationships are not separable from social relations of capitalism. She suggests that capitalism and patriarchy constitute one single system in which the oppression of women is at the centre.

Harding's contribution is also important (1981). She agrees with Hartmann that the economic aspects of the division of labour by gender in the family maintain both patriarchy and capital. But she emphasises that the material base of patriarchy and capitalism is not only rooted in the economic aspects of the division of labour by gender in the family. It also emerges from an explanation of the historical and material conditions under which gendered interests are reproduced.

This debate contributed to the understanding of the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy, but was challenged by writers on developing countries for its Western ethnocentricity. They highlighted the specific experiences of women in developing countries. For example, Tinker (1990); Ward (1990); Agarwal (1988); Nash and Fernandez Kelly (1985) studied these issues in relation to international division of labour and Sen and Grown (1987); Beneria and

Roldan (1987), and Mies (1986) discussed these issues in relation to gender and class within the context of developing countries.

Walby argues that "in order to deal positively with these issues it is important to distinguish between degrees and forms of patriarchy" (1990: 174). The degree of oppression can be measured on a specific dimension such as the size of the wage gap between men and women. She also suggests that the form of patriarchy can be defined by the specific relations between the different patriarchal structures such as patriarchal relations in paid work; patriarchal relations in the state; patriarchal relation in sexuality; patriarchal relations in religions institutions, media and education (ibid:174-179). Walby also distinguishes between patriarchal control in the private sphere and the public sphere of life. (ibid: 179-185).

3.2.2 The state, capital and patriarchy

The relationship between the state, capitalism and patriarchy in developing countries is also important, because of the impact of colonialism and imperialism. Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) have studied the state's policies in a variety of societies and demonstrated that the state constructs men and women differently. Women are assigned status as mothers and revered as symbols of national and communal identity. Although their contribution is significant to the understanding of the relationship between state and women's subordination, it lacks an analysis of the relationship between the structure of patriarchy, the state and the economic system.

Chhachhi's study of India fills this gap. She argues that the relationship between patriarchy, the state and the economy of different developing countries, after decolonisation, has taken different forms. "But the transition from colonial to post-colonial nation states in the twentieth century has been along the Gramscian

model of 'the passive revolution'" (1991: 150). This is a concept used by Gramsci (1971: 106) to describe the Marxist explanation of the process of change from one social order to another. Chhachhi argues that the states in their post-colonial period are "interventionist only in the sphere of production, to create conditions for the development and expansion of capital" while they preserve the "traditional patriarchal family through the maintenance of separate personal laws" (ibid). She therefore, argues that the post-colonial states' commitment to capitalist development has led to the undermining of traditional patriarchal structures, but it has generated contradictions between capital and patriarchal interests. The evidence for this can be seen in India where Hindu, Sikh and Muslim fundamentalist groups exert pressure on the state to reassert traditional patriarchal controls. Therefore, the state as the manager and the negotiator between the old forces and the new forces is subject to the contradictory pressures from different social groups that seek power to guarantee their interests within the state. More importantly, Chhachhi examines the importance of these contradictory pressures on women. She argues that women's experiences of economic, political and social changes are different and they react to these changes differently according to their class, race, caste and community identities. (ibid: 147).

Therefore, an examination of the dynamics of the relationship between state, capital and patriarchy is important to the understanding of the institutionalisation of women's subordination. Women are neither homogenous nor passive victims of patriarchal domination.

3.3 The debate on gender and development in the study of Muslim societies

There are a large number of materially grounded analyses of women in Muslim societies which have included women in the process of development. For

example, Kandiyoti (1990, 1977) on Turkey; Myntti (1984) on Yemen; Nath (1978) on Kuwait; Schaefer Davis (1978) on Morocco; Gran (1977) on Egypt and Hijab (1988); Hammam (1981, 1980) and Yousef (1978 and 1974) generally on Muslim societies. Similarly, studies by Afkhami and Friedl (1994); Friedl (1991;1983;1981); Aghajanian (1991); Moghadam (1988); Afshar (1985); Bauer (1983); Kaveh-Mirani (1983); Gulick and Gulick (1978); Tapper (1978); Sedghi and Ashraf (1976) have analysed the material activities and experiences of women in Iran. These studies have investigated women's labour force participation, demographic behaviour, education and political activities in different countries at a particular historical period.

However, the debate outlined in part I of this chapter has not been adequately applied to the study of Muslim societies. This is partly because of the difficulty in obtaining data. But more importantly there has been a consensus that in these societies religious and ideological factors have determined women's position more than economic factors. Studies by Moghadam (1993a; 1988) and Afshar (1989) on Iran; Ramzi (1988) on Egypt; Altorki (1986) on Saudi Arabia; Marshall (1984) on North Africa and generally on Muslim societies by Clark, Ramsbey and Adler (1991); Boserup (1990); Ahmed (1986); Morgan (1984) and Walter (1981) have concluded that women's share of the labour force in different Islamic societies, in the period 1960-1980 has been less than other societies because of the pervasiveness of Islamic patriarchal gender relations.

Moghadam (1995) in her study of gender and development in the Arab World, has analysed the impact of the EOI strategy to the growth of the female labour force in Tunisia and Morocco in the 1980s. She argues that in the Arab region, only Tunisia and Morocco moved away from ISI to EOI and this contributed to the growth of female labour force. But she also confirms that much of this employment was in garment industries which were home-based or in small

unregistered workshops where wages were low and social security nonexistence (ibid:29).

The relationship between state, capitalism and patriarchy has received more attention in the study of Muslim societies than the development strategies adopted by states. Within this context, Moghadam (1993b) attributes the low level of female labour force participation in Muslim societies of the Middle East to the patriarchal family relationship and the state. She argues that the state as the agent of economic development reinforces patriarchal structures throughout society which adversely affect female labour force participation.

Moghadam (ibid), uses the term "neopatriarchal" state, which was originally used by Sharabi (1988) to describe various types of political regimes in the Middle East. She argues that despite their differences, the state in Islamic societies shares the essential features of neopatriarchy:

This is the product of the encounter between modernity and tradition in the context of dependent capitalism; it is modernized patriarchy. Whatever the outward (modern) forms of the contemporary neopatriarchal family, society, or state, their internal structures remain rooted in the patriarchal values and social relations of kinship, clan, and religious and ethnic groups (ibid:112).

Al-Hibri's discussion of capitalism and patriarchy as one single system in Muslim societies (1981) is also important. She argues that patriarchal social relations are part and parcel of processes of economic development in Muslim societies. But these patriarchal social relations are dynamic. This is apparent in the diverse attitude of Muslim women towards Islam. On the one hand Islam provides a firm foundation for patriarchy and on the other retains an active, powerful and even

dangerous image of women. Mernisi (1987: 27-65) has also argued that in Islam, women are feared because of their potential sexual power over men. Therefore, all sexual institutions such as polygamy, repudiation, sexual segregation can be perceived as strategies for containing their power. Al-Hibri, therefore, argues that such a society is dynamic because men constantly seek more effective ways of dominating women and women constantly finding ways of rebelling.

3.3.1 Bargaining with patriarchy

In the context of women's responses to patriarchal relationship Kandiyoti's analysis of the form of male domination in Muslim societies is important. She argues that in north Africa, the Muslim Middle East (including Turkey, Pakistan and Iran) and southern and eastern Asia (especially India and China) the form of male domination is "classic patriarchy" (1991: 31). The characteristics of such a patriarchy lies in the operation of the patrilocally extended household. The processes of economic development have limited the actual predominance of three-generational patriarchal households. However the culture of the authority of the senior man over other members of the family is strongly prevalent and is incorporated into state control over the family. Under classic patriarchy young girls are married at a young age and are subordinated to all the males and the senior females of her husband's household. Cousin marriage is encouraged. Women have no claim on their father's patrimony, whether the prevalent marriage payment is bride price or dowry. Their dowries are transferred directly to the bride groom's kin and do not take the form of productive property. Moreover, a proportion of bride price is retained by the bride's father. Women's access to and control over property is limited. Young brides often enter their husband's household effectively dispossessed and their survival lies in producing male offspring (ibid: 31-32).

She further argues that class or caste has an important impact on classic patriarchy but because access to resources is mediated through family, the observance of restrictive practices is important in the reproduction of family's status. Therefore, women will resist breaking the rules, as observing the rule will guarantee the honour and breaking the rule entails shame for them (ibid: 33).

Thus women in areas of classic patriarchy are unable to resist unfavourable labour relations to the extent which this results in devaluation of their labour. "In this instance ideology acts as a material force that results in a lucrative export commodity product by conveniently cheap labour" (ibid: 34). In some cases it appears that women participate in their own oppression by accepting male and state control over their lives because this enhances their self-worth. However women respond to the process of economic development and market integration differently. For some women these changes open up opportunities to step out of norms and for others these changes could be threatening because "they see the old order slipping away from them without any empowering alternative". As a result, women according to their class, caste and ethnicity adopt different strategies to "bargain with patriarchy" (ibid: 36).

Shukrallah's (1994: 16) account of women's experiences in Egypt also confirms that for many women, the rise of Islam in Egypt filled the gap for those who did not benefit from the process of economic development. Shukrallah argues that in Egypt, Islamic organisations try to convince and encourage many other women to conform to Islamic roles and rules of behaviour and as they press harder for the terms of gender relations, women are placed in a weaker negotiating position to improve their status within the family and the public sphere of life. But they are in a continuous process of renegotiation of the terms of their subordination (ibid: 30).

3.4 The debate between Iranian secular and Muslim feminists

Within the subject of gender and Iranian studies, the economic context is relatively absent (de Groot 1996). In the 1980s a large body of literature concentrated on the effect of Islamic gender ideology on women's lives. In this context, there was a similarity between the secular and Muslim feminists.

Both groups analysed *Sharia* to arrive at different conclusions. The secularists had mainly concentrated on the repressive nature of Islamic ideology and its effect on women's position within family, employment and the wider society. The Islamists, on the other hand, have responded by defending Islam as liberating women from consumerism of capitalism. In the 1990s the reality of women's situation in Iran changed this position. A number of secular feminists began to take into account women's struggle for change in Iran. Nevertheless, material issues such as the Iran - Iraq war and its aftermath which affected women's labour force participation and their struggle to improve their status was largely ignored by the secularists.

I use the term secular feminists to refer to those feminists who see religious influence in society as a negative aspect of today's societies and demand an end to the hegemony of religion on civil society and separation of religion from the state. I use the term Muslim feminists to refer to those feminists who within the Islamic framework in variety of ways (intellectually, politically or as activists) demand women's rights through reforms of Islamic laws and regulations (Tohidi 1996: 280).

Following the 1979 revolution and the establishment of the Islamic state, two opposing arguments dominated the debate about women's position. The secular feminists, mostly writing from exile, (Moghadam 1994; Moghadam 1993 a and b;

1991; 1988, Afshar 1991; 1989; 1987; 1985, Sanasarian 1986; 1982, Azari 1983, Nashat 1983, Tabari and Yeganeh 1982), challenged the Islamic state and its laws and regulations with regard to women's position both within the home and outside of the home, arguing that the Islamisation of the state had marginalised women's activities in the economic, social and political spheres of life. Inside Iran, on the other hand, Muslim feminists (Rahnavard n.d., Hashami 1980; 1981, Etezadi Tabatabai 1979; 1981) argued that the Islamisation of the state has liberated Iranian women from being treated, as under the Pahlavi, as commodities and sex objects.

The opposing views of secular feminists and Muslim feminists had one common feature, in that they were dominated by an examination of Islamic ideology, the role of religious leaders and institutions in Iran, but they arrived at different conclusions. At the centre of the secularists' arguments was the view that the position of women in Iran has been deeply affected by the writings and attitudes of Shia *ulama* towards women and their role in society (Khomeini 1987/8; 1979; Mottahari 1981, Majlesi 1979, Tabatabai 1979/80, Nouri 1964/5). They pointed to a number of areas such as: bread-winning in the family; Islamic family law; biological differences between the sexes; differential process of socialisation of the sexes and the importance of the honour of the family as evidence of marginalisation of women in the public sphere of life.

Moghadam (1988: 223-228); Nashat (1983: 37-60) and Afshar (1987: 70-89; 1982:75-90) argue that the interpretation of Quranic verses by the Iranian *ulama* constitute the rationale for putting men entirely in charge of household expenditure and is therefore responsible for the socio-economic inequality which exists between the genders. As a result of this interpretation a woman has to be protected, looked after and controlled. The man is obliged to provide food, shelter and clothing for his wife and children. In return the woman has obligations

towards her husband including obeying his sexual needs. Men, as a result of their economic struggle, are given authority by Islamic ideology to manage the affairs of women and even to punish women if they do not comply with their rules. Thus, women's rights to own and hold personal property and possess income becomes irrelevant, as they are not allowed to dispose of them without their husband's permission.

Moghadam, Nashat, Afshar and Yeganeh (1982) also argue that there is a strong assertion by the *ulama* that biological differences determine the psychological, intellectual and legal status of women. Therefore, from the moment of birth, girls and boys are raised and treated differently. This given identity constructs different gender roles within society. Child bearing and child rearing are the woman's uniquely important contribution to society. Thus, marriage is an important institution to give a woman the identity which she deserves.

Furthermore, Afshar, Nashat and Yeganeh argue that the allocation of the sphere of the home to women, according to women's biological and intellectual differences has expression in the Islamic family law which clearly emphasises gendered socio-economic inequality and highlights the economic root of male superiority and male social and economic hegemony over women. For example, inheritance law specifies a female inheritance share half of the male's. The rationale for this is that the woman gets *Mahr* (bride price) and *nafaghe* (maintenance) from her husband.

Moghadam points out that the Quran does not discriminate explicitly against women's participation in the job market (1994). However, Quranic regulations concerning female sexuality lay the grounds for various forms of legal discrimination and occupational segregation of female labour. Women are treated

as a quasi-commodity which sets limitations on the non-sexual aspects of their lives, including participation in the labour market.

These issues raised by secular feminists were debated, written about and published outside of Iran to show the way women were marginalised by the Islamic state, both at home and outside of the home. Although these publications were banned in Iran, over the years they raised important questions about women's oppression in relation to changes since the 1979 revolution and the Islamisation of the state. They also raised questions for women in Iran who found themselves caught between the Islamic ideology advocating women's place in the home while the practical reality of their situation was that they had to go out to work in order to feed their families.

It was under these circumstances that the Islamists responded. In response to the secularist interrogation of Shia Islam ideology on women, the Muslim feminists constructed an ideal Islamic image of Muslim woman in the late 20th century, to oppose the image bound up in the culture of capitalism and imperialism which spread throughout the society under the Pahlavi period.

Rahnavard (n.d.: 50-85), Hashemi (1980 and 1981) and Etezadi Tabatabai (1979 and 1981) were the first Muslim feminists in Iran to argue that Islam is the only socio-economic and socio-political system which does not exploit and marginalise women because it specifies the sphere of home to women without confining women to the home. In this context they argued that under both capitalist and communist systems women are exploited as cheap workers; oppressed as sex objects and have lost their identity of femininity. Under Islam, a woman is encouraged to participate in economic activities, she gains and keeps the fruits of her labour and is free to invest or spend it in any way she wishes. Her work inside and outside of the home is regarded as valuable and is confirmed by her

entitlement to *nafaghe* - she can even charge her husband for nursing her own babies. At the same time she does not have any obligation in regard to supporting other members of the family or the society.

These writers acknowledged the Quran's view of women that men and women are biologically, psychologically and intellectually different. They agreed with male Islamic scholars that the cyclic nature of menstruation in women does disturb women's ability to testify and make judgement. Therefore, they argued, it is meaningless to demand equal rights for basically unequal beings. They stressed that the Quran has given different rights and responsibilities for the different creations of God. Thus, in their view the Islamic laws and regulations of marriage, divorce, custody of children, *mahr* and *nafaghe* were justified. They endorsed the Islamic constitution which emphasised that motherhood is the primary task of women. But by emphasising the role of Zaynab, they argued that women are not prohibited from working outside of the home, provided it is strictly within an Islamic framework.

A comparison of these two opposing views show that both Secularists and Muslim feminists concentrated on ideological rather than material issues. The Secularist emphasised the repressive nature of Islamic ideology and its effect on women's position within family, employment and the wider society. The Islamists, on the other hand, responded by defending Islamic ideology as liberating women from the consumerism inherent in capitalism. Material issues such as the Iran - Iraq war and its aftermath, which affected women's labour force participation and their struggle to improve their status, were largely ignored.

In the 1990s, however, a number of studies (Kian 1997; Paidar 1997; Mir-Hosseini 1993; Afshar 1994; Haeri 1994; Najmabadi 1991) indicated a shift in the position of the secular feminists. Paidar's study of women and the political process

in twentieth-century Iran showed that far from being marginal, the position of women was central to the political discourses of Iran under the Islamic state. Kian argued that women in Iran, through their involvement in politics, have forced the state to present a different reading of Islam and Islamic laws which is more attentive to the condition of women. Haeri argued that many Islamist women in Iran have used the institution of temporary marriage as a way to escape their marginal, restrictive, and unfavourable status. Afshar argued that although barred by prejudice and patriarchal power, women in Iran struggled on and their struggle has enabled them to negotiate better terms in education and employment. Mir-Hosseini suggested that women in Iran used the institution of *Mahr* to negotiate a better bargaining position in marriage and divorce. Najmabadi argued that women in Iran, despite strict moral codes of behaviour imposed by the state, had turned to feminism in order to carve out a social space of their own.

A comparison of these writings with the 1980s studies of women's issues in Iran shows that in the 1980s there was no dialogue between Muslim feminists and Secular feminists. But in the 1990s a form of dialogue is taking place between the Muslim feminists and Secular feminists which has led to a change in the position of a number of secular writers. In the 1990s, the parliamentary and presidential elections in Iran showed that gender had become a part of Islamic politics and that women played an important role in shaping this discourse. In the 1990s, women in Iran managed to alter the religious understandings of women's position. This was reflected in the reforms of family law, education and employment policies in relation to women. Most importantly, these changes had been made possible by the collaboration between secular women and religious women in Iran, who despite their disagreement on the nature of the Islamic state had a shared experience: the contradictions inherent in religious thinking on gender roles and relations and the reality of their lives. These factors, combined with the activities of secular feminists (both inside and outside of Iran) in opposing the

Islamic state's position on women, made gender, a political issue which was constantly discussed and debated. All these factors raised gender consciousness in Iran and led to women's struggle for change. As a result secular feminists had to review their position and acknowledge the changes in Iran.

These studies are very important and this thesis has benefited from them greatly. But an analysis of women, gender, ideology and economic life is missing from these analyses. This is a serious omission because throughout the 1980s and 1990s there has been unprecedented socio-economic and socio-political changes in Iran which have affected the Islamic position on women's employment.

3.5 The relevance of these debates to this thesis

In Part I, within the field of women and development, I have reviewed the debates and discussions on the sexual division of labour and social relations between the genders. This analysis is relevant to the study of women and development in Iran, because the Iranian process of industrialisation was based on Import Substitution Industrialisation and an attempt to export promotion under the Pahlavi and under the Islamic state (Nomani and Rahnema 1994: 160-184; Rahnema and Nomani: 1990: 273-299; Halliday 1979: 173-210). This means that technology was imported to develop the oil industry, the revenue from which funded the creation of other industries for the production of consumer goods. I do not agree with the view that ISI development strategy marginalised women in the labour force. I will argue that this process, even though uneven, improved women's status in comparison with the previous generations in terms of life expectancy; fertility rate; literacy rate and labour force participation. Despite these relative changes, however, only a small minority are real beneficiaries of the process of economic, social and political development and even they are not empowered.

An analysis of the sexual division of labour under the Islamic state is important because it identifies women within the labour force and the labour market as wage workers, as unpaid family workers and as petty commodity producers. In other words, the sexual division of labour for women depends on the social relations of production under which the work is performed. I will also argue that an analysis of the social relations between women and men is equally important to assess the way men and women are integrated to the workforce differently. Only through an analysis of social relations of gender I have been able to account for women's subordination in work, in the home and in society as a whole.

Also a critical study of the literature on capitalism and patriarchy, the state, capital and patriarchy and women's resistance to and struggles against patriarchal gender relations enabled me to make use of the major insights gained from these feminist theories whilst attending to the issue of women and employment in Iran. For example, Al-Hibiri's analysis of a single system of patriarchy and capitalism in Muslim societies (1981) can be applied to Iran, as patriarchal social relations are part and parcel of the process of economic development. Within this context as it is suggested by Walby (1990) I have distinguished between the form and the degree of patriarchal relationship by analysing the wage gap between men and women workers as well as the patriarchal relationship within the education, employment and the law.

Kandiyoti's analysis of classic patriarchy (1991) is also relevant to Iran in two different ways. Firstly the characteristics of classic patriarchy have been apparent in Iran, despite economic transformation. These characteristics have been particularly strengthened under the Islamic state. Secondly, women have been responding to economic, political and social changes in different ways using material resources and ideological constraints. The power of Islamic ideology, leadership and institutions may have reduced women's bargaining position, but

within the Islamic framework a larger number of women are exposed to gender conciseness and unfavourable gender relations and are struggling to improve their status. I, therefore, disagree with the view that ideological factors imposed by the Islamic state determined women's employment. On the contrary, I will argue that in the period under investigation, material factors as well as women's responses have been equally important, if not more important, than ideological factors.

Chhachhi's (1991) and Moghadam's (1993b) analysis are also important to understand the role of the state as the agent of economic development and social control. I therefore, use this analysis to assess the Islamic state in Iran which in the 1990s has been seeking further integration and incorporation into the world market. For this purpose, it has abandoned its fundamentalist slogans to a great degree. It has also reformed laws and regulations in relation to women and family, women and education and employment. Nevertheless, the state protects and regulates the family and male domination throughout the society by exercising control over women. This is to ensure that the increase in the number of working women does not lead to the break down of patriarchal control.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have critically surveyed two different bodies of literature to help explain the conceptual framework and the main themes of this thesis.

Firstly, the field of women and development, I have reviewed the debates and discussions on the sexual division of labour and social relations between the genders. I have argued (and as will be argued throughout the thesis) that this case study of Iran demonstrates that women's employment is determined by the sexual division of labour and the social relations between men and women; in other words, by social relations of production and by social relations between women

and men. I have also used the socialist feminist analysis of capitalism and patriarchy to explain women's subordination within family and employment and society. Furthermore, I have used the debate on the state, capital and patriarchy and women's responses to patriarchal gender relations to analyse women's resistance and their struggle for change in Iran.

The use of these concepts and theories and their application to the specificities of the Iranian situation revealed the importance of the role of the state. As will be argued in the following chapters the role of the state was crucial in determining the sexual division of labour and patriarchal gender relations. Nevertheless, the role of the state was dynamic and contradictory, as under economic pressure and women's resistance it had to change its ideological position.

Secondly, I have reviewed the debate between the secular and Muslim feminists on women's participation in the public sphere of life. I have argued that the secularists interrogation of Islamic organisation, leadership and ideology has had the great merit of drawing the attention of scholars and activists both inside and outside of Iran to the oppressive nature of Islam on women's issues. However, the impact of material changes and women's varied responses are absent from these analyses. Therefore this thesis will analyse women's resistance and the role of class in this resistance which explain change in gender consciousness and gender relations.

Therefore, a critical analysis of these debates in the context of women's employment in Iran allowed me to study the conceptual relationships between state, capital, class and gender ideology.

Notes

¹. These studies from different perspectives - Boserup's study based on a market oriented theoretical model and Saffioti's study based on Marxist dependency

theory - are important because they draw attention to the issue of development, industrialisation and women's employment situation.

Chapter four

Continuity and change, a historical approach

4.1 Introduction

The experience of the 1979 revolution and the process of Islamisation of the state and society resulted from the processes of socio-economic and socio-political development of Iran in this century. The economic and political structures which developed during the Pahlavi period entailed an inter-relationship and inter-dependency between economic development and religious ideology. Industrialisation created new social classes and increased the process of proletarianisation. Female paid employment became crucial for the families, especially in the 1960s - 1970s. But cultural values based on Shia Islam ideology continued and created conflict and obstacles on the path of women's participation in the public sphere of life, in particular paid employment.

This chapter will assess the way gender is historically implicated in the political economy of Iran. The early stage of capitalist development, changing class structure, social and political reforms, and how women related to these changes in the pre-Pahlavi period, are important factors, as they laid the foundation of continuity and change in the pre and post Pahlavi era. The chapter, however, will concentrate on the Pahlavi period and analyses how males and females have been incorporated differently into economic, political and social processes. Thus, the pre 1979 period has been divided into two periods of socio-economic and socio-political development (1925-1960 and 1960-1979). The focus is on two different aspects of the same historical periods (gender and the economic processes and gender and politics). 1925-1960 is the period of rapid integration of Iran into the world economy under Reza Shah and the British and later American domination;

and 1960-1979 is the period of the oil boom economy under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and American domination, ending with the 1979 revolution and the establishment of the Islamic state. The aim is to analyse the role of the state and its social and political institutions in determining gender relations within the economy and the society of Iran by looking into the processes of continuity as well as change. It will be argued that at different points in the modern history of Iran, the interaction between the state, Shia Islam, capitalism and imperialism affected gender relations. Women of different classes and with different levels of religiosity participated in economic and political activities and at different levels struggled against the patriarchal state and its institutions. They achieved a great degree of change. However, as a result of the inter-dependency and inter-relationship between economic development and religious ideology and despite economic and political changes the state, perpetuated female subordination.

4.2 Early capitalist development, class structure and women's responses

Capitalist development in Iran was the result of the need of the European capitalist market to import Iranian goods, and to export European manufacturing goods into Iran in the nineteenth century. Iran was never colonised or formally ruled by a foreign power. The rivalry between Russian and British empires left Iran to maintain its independence (Tabari 1983:53). Nevertheless, Iran's integration to the world system, although had its own characteristics, shared those features of uneven economic development experienced by countries colonised by foreign powers.

For example, in this period, the population of Iran was classified into four social groups: the landed aristocracy; the propertied middle class; urban wage earners and the vast majority of the rural population (Abrahamian 1982: 33-34).

However, the British and Russian trading activities in Iran led to the decline of

landed proprietors as they gradually became large scale profiteers, disposing of cash crops such as cotton, opium, silk, dried fruits and nuts in foreign markets. As a result the economy was transformed from being largely based on transactions in kind to a monetised economy. Thus, the influence of western capitalism meant that the old industries were destroyed through trade and imports of foreign goods but, on the other hand this influence resulted in higher growth of the urban population, the growth of non-agricultural activities and commercial agriculture. Therefore the change in the organisation of production, under the influence of the global market changed the pre-existing patterns of economic and social life through the introduction of new organisation of labour consisting of proletarians, semi proletarians and petty commodity producers. These diverse forms of labour organisation still persist today characterising uneven development in the context of global capitalism.

As it is argued by Bernstein, Johnson and Thomas (1992: 193-194):

If we view the global history of capitalism, we see that it has absorbed, created and combined many diverse social forms in the course of its uneven and contradictory development. For example, capitalism is usually characterized by the employment of wage labour (or full proletarianisation) but other labour regimes can and do co-exist under capitalism.

In this period, women played an important role in the process of economic development. Before the discovery of oil in 1914, the main exports of the country were agricultural products and handicrafts. In rural areas, rice, butter, dried fruits, and tea were exclusively produced by women and women had an important role in the production of other goods such as wheat, barley, tobacco, cotton, hides, skins, raw silk, drugs, dyes and manufactured silk, woollen and cotton (Issawi 1971: 132-34). In urban areas, capitalist relationships between the weaver and

those who ran and controlled carpet-making emerged. The mass of the workers, mainly women and children were paid a wage below subsistence and controlled neither the raw material nor the finished product (Seyf 1994/95:190-201). Thus women worked as part of the early proletarians, semi proletarians and petty commodity producers.

Towards the end of the century, carpet weaving became an important manufacturing industry, employing a large number of the urban workforce. But the most common form of organisation remained small scale domestic production, where women were the main labour force. Nevertheless, women also remained solely responsible for the reproduction of the family and the household despite demand for their labour in a product which brought cash for their families, created profits for the foreign and indigenous owners and revenue for the country (Seyf *ibid*: 143-156; Issawi 1971: 304-05).

In 1914 the economic organisation of Iran began to change. With the discovery of large quantities of oil, Britain began to exploit Iran's oil through the activities of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (Issawi, 1971: 316-322). Although gradually Iran benefited from a share of its oil production, export and income, a significant contribution to Iran's economy still came from agriculture and handicrafts produced largely by women (Kazemi 1980: 32-3).

In this period, Clara Rice, a member of a Christian mission who travelled widely in Iran recorded the importance of women's unpaid work in rural areas, as agriculturalists, pastoralists and carpet weavers as well as producing food and clothes for their families. (Azad 1987/88:46-49; 63; 171-181).

4.2.1 Social and political reforms and women's responses

The process of economic development in Iran, led to social and political changes. A number of students, government officials and merchants associated with the landed aristocracy and the propertied middle class travelled to Europe and were impressed by the achievements of Europe's Industrial Revolutions. This interaction, therefore, instigated social and political changes, as these middle classes pressurised the Qajar Shahs to centralise and strengthen the state; creating a new army; secular courts and schools on the European model (Bakhash 1978:1-3). However, the *ulama* (religious leaders) who were themselves a part of the landed aristocracy and the propertied middle class, opposed the process of modernisation of education and the courts as these changes would have undermined their traditional role including the collection of religious taxes, and their position as judges, educators and guild leaders. Hence a conflict and separation of class interest was created within this social group. The former was in favour of modernisation of the economy and society, the latter was against the modernisation processes and in favour of the return to religion and the *Sharia*.

During the second half of the nineteenth century Britain and Russia, both forced their own banks upon Iran and imposed indirect exploitation by acquiring "concessions" to collect taxes, and extract and market raw materials and agricultural products, in exchange for an often paltry sum paid to the Qajar Shahs. In 1890 a British company obtained the monopoly over production, sale and export of tobacco from Iran, and this concession produced a massive wave of popular discontent. Two opposing forces were united against foreign domination with two different objectives: The producers of tobacco and the merchants who exported it were in favour of Iran's integration to the world market without foreign domination; and the *ulama* who objected to foreign domination, because

their economic, political and social power were declining as a result of Iran's integration to the world market (Algar 1969; Keddie 1966).

This alliance called for a boycott of the use of tobacco. Strikes and street demonstrations made the anti-concession campaign highly successful. Women participated in street demonstrations for the first time in the agitation over the tobacco concession. Even the wives of the Shah and the women in the harems were influential as part of this mass anti-imperialist movement. They boycotted the smoking of tobacco and broke their pipes. As a result the Shah was forced to cancel the concession (Hendessi 1990:5; Bahar 1983:172; Bayat Philipp 1978: 297).

The experience of the anti-tobacco uprising led to the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911 which had an important influence on the development of women's political participation. The Constitutional Revolution was also won out of the alliance of the two opposing forces: Secularist merchants (who were involved in trade, money lending and establishment of industries and were supported by liberal intellectuals) demanded a fair chance against foreign capital and fundamental economic, political and ideological change; whilst the *ulama* demanded an end to foreign domination and the return of religious power and tradition (Keddie 1966; Browne 1910). In the literature, the former is referred to as the modern middle class and the latter as the traditional middle class (Najmabadi 1991: 49-66; Abrahamian 1982: 58-69). Each of them sought the support of women across the society. As Paidar (1997: 73) writes:

Women, were considered as significant to the nation because of their role as biological reproducers of the nation, educators of children, transmitters of culture and participants in national life. Their position in any society, it followed, was central to the definition of that society. A social and political

redefinition of Iranian society, therefore, had to entail a reorganisation of women's position.

This gave rise to a diverse women's movement in Iran, as some women supported the modernists and others supported the *ulama*. Nevertheless their collective political actions created a space and opportunity for women to organise themselves and participate in political movements (ibid: 74).

The Shah's reaction to the constitutional struggle was to disrupt this alliance and construct an alliance of his own with the *ulama* - offering the closure of the western-style schools that educated girls. (Sanasarian 1982:18-24 Nashat 1983: 22-24). These schools became centres for the raising of women's consciousness in Iran. Through these schools a small number of young women from upper and middle classes learned about the French women's involvement in the Paris Commune, British women's fight for the vote and Russian women's struggle against the Tsar. These stories had great importance for women in Iran during this period and were repeated from woman to woman, in family circles, in mosques and even in public baths (Nahid 1981:16).

During the constitutional movement women graduates of these schools established girls' schools themselves. Although they were opposed by the Islamic clergy, the struggle for the establishment of girls' schools continued and greatly developed women's consciousness in Iran (Sanasarian 1982: 39; Nahid 1981:19). Women wearing the *chador* participated in sit-ins and demonstrations and fought for women's rights (Bahar 1983:174, 188; Abrahamian 1982: 109). Women's organisations and newspapers also played an important role for the establishment of a constitutional government and an end to foreign intervention and domination (Paidar: 1997: 66, 92; Hendessi 1990: 6; Jayawardena 1986: 64-5; Sanasarian 1982: 21; Bayat-Philipp1978: 298, 307).

For many women the constitutional movement was to bring about their emancipation through economic development and progress associated with western democracy. The demands of women were education for women, and the abolition of seclusion and early marriage. This early women's movement was a secular movement which viewed Islam as traditionalism and backwardness (Paidar 1996:52).

The majority of these early feminists, took sides with their men and avoided direct confrontation with Islam. Instead, they blamed men within the family and society for women's subordination (Adamiyat and Nategh 1978: 20-27) and glorified pre Islamic Iran and Babism, a reformist movement (1820-1850) which had challenged Shia Islam, demanded greater social justice; freedom of trade and rights of personal property; the reduction of unjust taxes; a higher status for women; limits on polygamy; a prohibition on violence against women and measures for their education (Jayawardena 1986:61; Bahar 1983: 171; Keddie 1981: 50; Bayat-Philipp1978:296).

The constitution was won and the Qajar dynasty was defeated. But as a result of the persistence of the power of Islamic ideology and the secularists' concessions to the Islamists, women's rights were sacrificed. Alongside the insane and criminals, the female population of Iran was denied the right to vote. But women's struggle continued through establishment of girls' schools, women's newspapers and societies (Nashat 1983: 23-24; Sanasarian 1982: 42-43).

With the outbreak of the First World War, British and Russian troops occupied almost all of Iran, creating widespread, popular opposition to the occupying powers. During this period, political organisation, women's groups, trade union organisations and radical newspapers appeared throughout the country. In the

north of Iran, popular support for nationalist and communist movements expanded rapidly. After the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks rapidly abandoned Tsarist privileges in Iran. This concentrated popular anger against the British, who retained control in oil-rich South Iran (Zabih 1966: 1-35; Degras 1950: 28-29). Women supporters and activists in the nationalist *Jangali* (Forest people) and Communist movements organised women's groups and produced several women's publications and newspapers during this period of anti-imperialist agitation (Abrahamian 1982:128; Sanasarian 1982; Nahid 1981: 111-113).

The women's movement of the 1920s was different to the constitutional women's movement. During the constitutional period the women's movement was part of the nationalist movement. In the 1920s the women's movement in Iran achieved a degree of independence from the political parties (Paidar 1997:91). The women's movement in this period was a small secularist movement pioneered by modern middle class women in association with the nationalist and communist movements. This movement was diverse in its ideological struggle; but through their political activities they demanded equal opportunities in education and political rights for women; were against child marriage and polygamy; against the *Chador* and Islamic laws, as well as participating in the fight against imperialist domination. Although they were a minority, they achieved a degree of reform especially in the area of female education which was beneficial to the majority of women. But the unholy alliance between the religious clergy and secularists made it impossible for them to develop fully and achieve more.

To conclude, the process of economic development and class formation was part of a global process which took place under foreign intervention; imperialist domination and Shia clergy's influence. This created uneven socio-economic development. The new social classes which emerged remained differentiated on the degree of economic integration and level of religious influence. All these

different factors affected gender issues. Women played an important role in the economy. Nevertheless, in rural areas, they remained predominantly unpaid workers and in urban industrial centres they constituted the low-paid workers, even though their products were sold on national and international markets and the state and the family benefited from their economic participation. A small but significant number of women actively participated in nationalist and communist movements. They raised feminist issues in relation to women and family, women and education and veiling. Their activities laid the foundation for future women's movements and struggle for women's emancipation.

4.3 1925-1960

4.3.1 Gender and economic processes under the Pahlavi

This section will examine socio-economic development under the Pahlavi and the position of women in this processes.

In December 1925, the Qajar King was deposed and Reza Pahlavi declared himself the Shah of the Pahlavi Dynasty. Under the influence of the British he was committed to building a modern state and economy. Iranian economic development in this period largely centred on development of the infrastructure. These developments were linked to the Shah's desire effectively to control the country through the army and to the desire of British capital to exploit the oil resources with greater ease, but they also laid the foundation for industrial development in this period. Industrial development under Reza Shah began during the global depression of the 1930s, when the terms of trade were in Iran's favour, as oil was exported in return for the imports of capital goods. The industrialisation drive increased government revenue which was financed through taxation and by the growth of oil revenue. The government introduced high

tariffs, income tax and imposed state monopolies in some consumer goods, to increase state revenue (Abrahamian 1982:135-165).

Rapid integration into the world economy created new social classes. The landed aristocracy and the propertied middle class declined in economic, social and political power. The modern middle class who were in favour of secular changes were attracted to Reza Shah's modernisation of the economy and society and became the new bourgeoisie and the professional salary earners. They were encouraged by Reza Shah actively to participate in the growing state bureaucracy. The traditional middle class which was opposed to modernisation lost much of its economic and political power and this created intense hatred for Reza Shah.

In this period women were encouraged to go to universities, become teachers and work for the growing state sector of the economy. The state bureaucracy grew fast and absorbed a small number of modern middle class women (Najmabadi 1991:54). However, the process of industrialisation and the development of a market economy which might have required female labour force participation was limited. In the 1920s - 1930s, 79% of the population still lived in the rural areas (Momeni 1977: 335). Agriculture and household centred industries remained important economically and women's unpaid work in agriculture and pastoral nomadic activities continued (Halliday: 1979: 14).

In this period, the economic depression reached Iran. Low wages, long working hours and bad labour conditions caused widespread industrial discontent. Reza Shah's state increasingly faced gender, class and ethnic opposition. In 1941, Britain and Russia invaded Iran in favour of the allies, fearing Reza Shah's pro-German attitude. The occupying powers forced the Shah to leave the country and to abdicate in favour of his son Mohammad Reza.

Industrialisation and economic development, especially in the 1940s-1950s, which involved the provision of better health and education, led to decrease in the death rate while the birth rate remained high which meant a rapid increase of the population. Iran's population increased from 9,860,000 in 1900 to 19,880,000 in 1955 and the urban population increased from 21% to 30% in 1955, as a result of industrialisation and migration from rural areas to urban areas (Momeni 1977: 335).

Sectoral statistical data only exist from 1956 onwards. Very little detailed information about women's economic participation is available, but there is a general consensus that in the 1940s - 1950s, 90% of the population were either nomadic pastoralists or were engaged in agricultural work (Halliday, 1979:14). Only 200,000 people worked in industries of whom 120,000 were working with modern technology (Razaghi 1988-89:24). In this period, 40% of revenue came from the agricultural sector, 10% from the oil industry, 20% from other industries and the rest from unspecified sources (Behnam 1977:47-48). Therefore, until the 1950s, the significant contribution to Iran's economy came from agriculture, where women played an important role in the production of food and labour intensive goods in household centred industries. According to statistics, in 1956-57 over 50% of the population lived in rural areas. As a result of the high birth rate, lack of sanitation and malnutrition the female mortality rate was higher than the male. As in most developing countries the female population was 2% less than the male population (Iran Statistical Year-book 1996:35).

In 1941, within the paid labour market 13,000 women workers were counted. This figure increased to 573,000 in 1956. Although child labour was prohibited, many children, the majority of them girls, worked in factories. Child labour in 1956 did not differ much from the 1930s. Women were mostly employed in carpet weaving, textile and spinning factories; in factories making matches, glass

and cardboard boxes, in tea factories, cotton cleaning and gunny sack factories and in the embroidery industries. In the service sector they remained in the lowest grades of cleaning, catering, education and health. These women were categorised as unskilled labourers and therefore received a much lower wage rate than male workers (Afshar 1989: 43-44; Sanasarian 1982: 97).

To conclude, under Reza Pahlavi, economic development took place through state-building and the modernisation of economy and society. Development indicators such as provision of health, education and employment reflected a change in the social and economic make-up of the Iranian society. Women were encouraged to participate in paid work, especially in the state sector. Nevertheless in the 1940s and 1950s Iran's economy was still based on agriculture and women constituted the majority of the unpaid workforce in rural areas and in urban areas they remained low-paid workers.

4.3.2 Gender and politics

Under the early years of Reza Shah's rule, some women's organisations and publications continued their activities. Afaghe Parsa, a member of Anjomane Nesvane Vatankhah (Patriotic Women's League) represented Iranian women at the International Congress of Women in Paris in 1926. *Alame Nesvan* (Women's Universe) magazine was published in 1930 and encouraged Iranian women's participation and representation at the Asian Women's conference to be held in India in 1931. In 1927 in Rasht in the north of Iran, four women, among them Roshanak Noodoost set up Anjoman Payke Saadat (The Messenger of Prosperity Organisation) published a magazine and established a girls' school both called *Payke Saadat*, and for the first time declared the 8 March as Women's Day in Iran. In the same year Zandokhte Shirazi, a poet and writer founded the Majmae Enghelabe Zanan (Revolutionary Women's League) in Shiraz, in the south of Iran,

and in 1931-32 published *Dokhtarane Iran* (Iranian Women) newspaper (Sanasarian 1982: 54 and Nahid 1981: 111-113)

The founders of these organisations and publications were middle class women but they were conscious of the degrading conditions of working class women and worked hard to change these unfavourable circumstances. Under the dictatorial regime of Reza Shah the power of the Islamic clergy declined. However, the power of Islamic ideology on issues relating to women and the family remained strong (Paidar 1997: 120-123). Therefore, most feminists in this period concentrated on female education, health, unequal marriage and divorce laws. They only indirectly argued about the question of the veil and women's right to vote. Some of the leading members of this period were from Muslim families and considered the teaching of Islam necessary. But they were critical of the way women were treated. They argued that child marriage and not allowing women to be educated and to participate in the public sphere of life was unIslamic. Other leaders and organisations such as Nesvane Vatankhah under the leadership of Mohtaram Iskandari, who was a socialist, mobilised rallies and demonstrations against the clergy and the Islamic law (Sanasarian 1982: 46-47 and 54; Abrahamian 1982: 128).

Soon Reza Shah's power was consolidated and with it all organisations, including women's organisations, were suppressed. In 1935 he ordered the establishment of the Kanoone Banovan (Ladies Centre). The aim was not to promote equal rights for women but to create one women's organisation under the control of the state. He only allowed charity work, sports clubs and adult literacy for women. During 1935-36, as part of his modernisation of society, he campaigned to force women to abandon the veil in all public places. In 1937, the celebration of the 8 March was prohibited and 7 January was declared Women's Day, the first official day of the public unveiling campaign. Women responded to these actions differently,

many considered this to be not in support of women's emancipation but of police repression. But many celebrated the occasion. For example, Parvin Etesami (1907-1941) a well known woman poet who lived long to see it happening celebrated the occasion with a famous poem (Jayawardena 1986: 69; Bayat-Philipp 1978: 306).

There was very little resistance to Reza Shah's autocratic state. Partly because individuals feared for their lives and organisations feared repression. Also because many feminist leaders of the previous period were disappointed with the secular constitutionalists who made concessions to the *ulama* and as a result, female suffrage and reform of female education and employment was sacrificed. Thus many welcomed Reza Shah's limited reforms of education and generally the modernisation of the economy and political and social changes. Seddighe Doulatbadi, the founder of Sazeman Sherkate Khavatin became the president of the Kanoone Banovan in 1937 and Fakhrozma Argum a member of Nesvane Vatankhah also joined the centre and edited two periodicals *Banonan* (Ladies) and *Ayandeh Iran* (Iran's future). For these women who for long struggled for female education and employment, on their own and without the support of their male counterparts, Reza Shah's limited reforms were a blessing (Najmabadi 1991: 57-58). For example, by 1933 the number of girls' school had increased from 41 in 1910 to 870 and the enrolment of girls increased from 2167 in 1910 to 50,000 (Sanasarian 1982: 62).

Reza Shah's reforms were based on massive repression of all political groups from communists to liberals and to protesting clergy, and trade unions, women's organisations and nationalities (Najmabadi 1991:52 and Abrahamian 1982: 135-165). Iran's population has always been only two thirds Persian and Farsi (the official language) speakers with a third comprised of other nationalities and ethnic groups (Abrahamian 1982:12).

Under Reza Shah's state these minorities were denied linguistic, cultural and national rights as well as other civil rights denied to the majority of the population. As a result there has existed a long tradition of fighting against the central state authority.

The aim of Reza Shah's reform was to centralise state power which also meant keeping the clergy and religious institutions under strict control. Despite this, the reforms in relation to women and family remained ambiguous and not necessarily in contradiction with the basic *Sharia* law. For example the age of marriage was left to the interpretation of the age of puberty; a woman had the right to object to her husband marrying another wife and the man had to inform his wife if he intended to marry another woman. But, in many parts of the country civil courts did not exist and the local clergies remained in power and dealt with marriage and divorce issues according to their own interpretation of the law. The law continued to regard men as superior and they retained their Muslim privileges of having as many as four wives at a time and divorcing at will. Men were still recognised as the legal head of the family and enjoyed more favourable inheritance rights. Women remained deprived of the right to vote and could not stand for election. Nevertheless, these limited reforms led to a long lasting political conflict between Shia Islam leaders and the Pahlavi regime. At the heart of this conflict was the issue of women's unveiling and their participation in the public sphere of life (Sanasarian 1982 60-61; Yeganeh 1982: 32)

After Reza Shah's abdication in 1941, the power of the state declined. As a result in the 1940s and early 1950s women's publications and organisations flourished and women's role in social and political activities expanded: *Zanane Pishraw* (Progressive Women) was published by Sedigheh Ganjeh; *Ghiayme Zanan* (Women's Revolt) was published by Soghra Aliabadi; *Hoghughe Zanan*

(Women's Rights) was published by Ebtehaj Mostahag; *Azadi Zanan* (The Emancipation of Women) was published by Zafardokht Ardalan; *Zane Mobarez* (Militant Women) was published by Kobra Saremi; *Banu* (The Lady) was published by Nayereh Saidi; *Baniye Iran* (Iran's Lady) was published by Malekeh Etezadi (Paidar 1997:125-128).

Badrulmoluk Bamdad founded Jamiyate Zanane Iran (Iranian Women's League) and published *Zane Emruz* (Today's Woman); Safiyeh Firuz founded Hezbe Zanane Iran (Iranian Women's Party) and Published *Zanane Iran* (Iran's Women). Fatimah Sayyah, the first woman professor from Tehran University, worked as a writer and a journalist and represented Iran at the United Nations. She edited *Zanane Iran* and raised issues for women's suffrage and their right to education and employment (Bahar 1983:180). In 1945 Hezbe Zanane Iran was transformed into the National Council of Women. These organisations and publications campaigned for women's education, legal rights, equality of rights in marriage and divorce and women's suffrage. The representative of these organisations attended international conferences in Paris (1946); in New York (1946) in Delhi (1947); in Beirut (1949) and Geneva (1953). Besides these a number of professional, religious and charity organisations were also established to promote health and education of women (Paidar 1997:128).

Tashkilateh Zanane Iran (The Organisation of Iranian Women) was the biggest women's organisation¹ and later became known as *Jameheye Demokratike Zanan* (the Society of Democratic Women). Its leading members were Zahra and Taj Iskandari, Maryam Firouz, Khadijeh Keshawarz, Akhtar Kambakhsh and Badrimonir Alavi, associated with the secular women's movement of the previous period. It published the monthly magazine of *Bidarie Ma* (Our Awakening). It had branches in major cities and their active members travelled to rural areas. They organised public meetings and through consciousness-raising activities

raised issues in relation to prostitution; unpaid work of women and child labour and demanded women's rights to social and political participation; education; health; employment; child care facilities and equal pay (Bahar 1983: 180; Yeganeh 1982: 33).

During 1951-1953 women supporters of the nationalist movement and activists within Jebhe Melli (The National Front) played an important role in support of the nationalist government of Mossadegh by selling national government bonds to raise funds. Jebhe Melli's members and supporters consisted of both the modern and traditional middle classes. These women organisations were independent of the state. But they were closely related to different political parties. Therefore their political activities ranged from campaigning and raising issues in relation to Iran's independence from foreign domination to socialism and to promoting specific feminist issues.

Despite their diversity, their collective activities influenced the reform of the labour law, which if it was implemented, could have been beneficial to female workers who constituted a large number of agricultural and handicraft workers. For example, in 1946 factory work was limited to 48 hours a week. Overtime was made voluntary. Children could not work more than six hours a day and no child less than ten years old was allowed to work in factories. Women were to have twelve week paid maternity leave. A minimum wage was established based on subsistence costs for a family of four (Keddie 1981: 121).

In 1952 the National Council of Women which was a confederation of various women's groups wrote a petition demanding political and economic rights for women, especially the right to vote. They collected 100,000 signatures and sent them to Prime Minister Mossadegh, the *Majlis* and the United Nations. But under pressure from the religious wing of the Jebhe Melli and the clergy women were

not granted the right to vote under Mossadegh's premiership. (Sanasarian 1982: 75; Abrahamian 1982:336).

Nevertheless, during the CIA coup d'etat of 1953 and overthrow of Mossadegh, many women, under the leadership of different women's organisations, fought side by side with men, against the government's forces and some were killed. After the defeat of the nationalist and communist movements Mohammad Reza Shah crushed all opposition including women's organisations and publications. In 1958, Shoraye Aliye Jamiate Zanan (The High Council of Women's Organisation) was formed under the presidency of Ashraf Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza Shah's twin sister. Some of the feminist activists of the previous period joined this organisation in order to be able to carry on the pressure for reforms on women's issues. For example, Nurol Hoda Manganeh who was a member of the old Nesvane Vatankhah joined this organisation and edited *Bibi* magazine in 1955 and wrote for various periodicals and journals on women's issues (Sanasarian 1982: 83-85; Yeganeh 1982: 32).

A number of women's publications continued to be produced under the supervision of the state: *Ettellaat Banovan* (Women's Information); *Nedaye Zanan* (Women's Call); *Bamuye Iran* (Iran's Lady) and *Zanane Iran* (Women of Iran). A number of women's organisations also continued their activities with the general consent of the government: Jamiyat Rah Now (The New Path League); The League of Women Supporters of the Declaration of Human Rights; The Association of Women Lawyers and Federation of Women's Organisations. These organisations, despite political repression campaigned for women's rights, especially for women's rights to vote (Paidar 1997:134-137).

To conclude, during 1925-1960 the authoritarian state of Pahlavi did not allow women's independent organisations and actions. However, at any opportunity

women used the weakening of the state to set up women's organisations and struggled for reforms. Despite a drive to secularisation of the state *Sharia* remained untouched in laws concerning women, especially in the area of morality, marriage, divorce, and family relationships.

4.4 1960 - 1979

4.4.1 Gender and economic processes

This section will assess the process of economic development in the 1960s and 1970s. These two decades transformed Iran's economy and society on a much greater scale than previous periods. Nevertheless women were incorporated into the economic processes differently from men.

The years 1960 - 1965 were years of massive economic and political changes. In June 1963, after months of mass strikes, demonstrations and university occupations, where thousands were injured and some were killed. Mohammad Reza Shah, hereafter referred to as the Shah, launched a programme of reform, known as the White Revolution of the Shah and the People.

The White Revolution further transformed Iranian economy and society. Its programme (land reform; industrialisation; nationalisation of natural resources; female suffrage; formation of a literacy and health corps) was to provide a stable social, economic and political system. Two important social groups: medium sized capitalist farmers and entrepreneurs, emerged who had an interest in maintaining the regime. The vastly expanded numbers of state employees, mainly in the cities, also benefited from the reforms.

Land reform did not re-distribute the land on a massive scale, but it established capitalist relations of production in agriculture. Over 100,000 individuals owned

and controlled five to six million hectares of land and a small number owned and controlled medium size lands. The land reform also created 1.5 million small holdings and landless agricultural workers. This was done by the introduction of money through rents and loans. The land owners were provided with capital in order to employ wage labourers and produce for the national market (Moaddel 1991:318).

Land reform, limited the economic power of the clergy, who for centuries, had relied on donations from large pre-capitalist landowners as well as donations from the *Bazaar* (market place). Land reform ended a main source of their revenue, leaving them dependent on the *Bazaar* which was itself being undermined by the industrialisation of the economy. The establishment of a Literacy Corps, under which young men were conscripted into the army and sent as teachers into the rural areas expanded secular education and totally undermined the role of the clergy in education.

In 1960 when the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was formed, Iran was the smallest producer and exporter but by 1970 it had become the second largest in the world. Iran's share of its oil increased to 96%. Iran gained ownership and control over the price and the level of its production previously controlled and owned by the oil majors. As a result oil revenue increased to \$22 billions (Halliday, 1979:143).

The oil money was the instigator of economic development. As the recipient of oil revenues the state became the main force for industrial growth. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Iran increased ten fold between 1962 and 1974. Industrial production accounted for 15% of the GDP and employed around 20% of the economically active population. By 1975, 60% of all industrial investment was directed by the state. The state also undertook the building of

infrastructure. The private sector subsidised by the state concentrated on light industries whilst foreign capital invested in areas of technology and management in both heavy and light industries. Official policy on foreign investment under the Shah's regime favoured joint ventures.

In this period, Iran's economic development was compared with that of Mexico and was seen as potentially able to become a major industrial power by the end of the century (Halliday 1979:167-8). The state, as the recipient of the oil income and the main agent of economic development was closely linked to the western powers, especially the USA which had both economic and political interests in Iran and throughout the region. The bourgeoisie, consisting of one thousand families, controlled key sectors of the economy and was also closely tied to international capital and with the Pahlavi family. They owned 85% of the major private firms involved in agribusiness, banking, manufacturing, foreign trade, insurance, and urban construction and occupied positions such as senior civil servants, and high ranking military officers (Moaddel: 1991: 317). The process of industrialisation relatively declined the role of the Bazaar. But still a large number of merchants were engaged in the bazaar as wholesale traders and retailers and controlled a third of imports and two thirds of retail trade (ibid:318). The commercialisation of agriculture and the growth of manufacturing industry speeded up the process of proletarianisation. However, semi proletarianisation and petty commodity production as other forms of labour organisation persisted.

Economic growth led to the improvement in material welfare, especially in the areas of health, education, provision of new types of consumer goods, and the strength of the labour force. (Abrahamian 1982: 426-435; Halliday, 1979: 138-173). However, the process of economic development was uneven, modern technology did not reach the majority of industries. In textile industries where women constituted the majority of the workforce, production remained labour

intensive and productivity remained low (Bartsch: 1977: 323-24). The process of proletarianisation intensified. However, the multiplicity of ways of using labour discriminated against female labour who constituted a greater share of semi-skilled, unskilled and unpaid family workers in comparison with male workers. Improvement in health led to lower mortality rates but despite better education and family planning, the rate of population growth remained as high as 2.7%. Despite industrialisation and urbanisation, there was widespread malnutrition, low life expectancy and high infant mortality. Half of the population lived in rural areas and the female population continued to be less than the male population (Iran Statistical Year-book 1996:35).

In rural areas, women's unpaid work in agriculture and in pastoral nomadic activities continued. Land reform and the introduction of wage labour had little effect on the role of women as unpaid agricultural producers and carpet weavers. In some ways women's position deteriorated. The small plots of land distributed to poor peasants were not enough for their survival, they were neither able to benefit from rent nor in a position to obtain loans or, if they did, to pay back their debt. This led to male migration to the cities, leaving the land and the production to women. As is shown in table 4.1, in the majority of cases, a woman followed her husband and family or migrated in order to marry a husband who was chosen for her.

Table 4.1: Comparison of female and male reasons for migration in rural and urban areas in 1972.

	Urban areas		Rural areas	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Female				
Looking for work	165000	13000	4000	*
Better work	620000	2000	71000	*
Job Transfer	177000	9000	17000	1000
Education	24000	3000	1000	0
Marriage	3000	275000	1000	48000
With family	921000	1506000	104000	
133000				
Other	112000	23000	40000	2000
Total	2022000	1831000	238000	
184000				

* represents less than 1000 persons

Source: Extracted from Iran Year-book 1977:39

The family remained interconnected with the labour market and women's choice and power of decision making were not equal to men's. Women were much more confined than men in their job opportunities. Their triple role as mothers, wives and workers affected their chances in the labour market. The mechanisation of agriculture did not affect women's work, mainly weeding, picking, planting and harvesting, and often increased women's hours of work where better ploughed and irrigated land extended their responsibilities (Tabari 1982:7). Table 4.2, shows that despite improvement in female literacy rate, the gap between male and female literacy rate was still high.

Table 4.2: Comparison of female and male literacy rate in urban and rural areas 1966 -1977

Total population		Literacy rate		
Years	Total	Female	Male	
1966-67	29.4	17.9	40.1	
1976-77	47.5	35.5	58.9	
Urban areas		Literacy rate		
Years	Total	Female	Male	
1966-67	50.4	38.3	61.4	
1976-77	65.4	55.6	74.4	
Rural areas		Literacy rate		
Years	Total	Female	Male	
1966-67	15.1	4.3	25.4	
1976-77	30.5	17.3	43.6	

Source: Extracted and calculated from Iran Statistical year-book 1992: 113

Therefore, males benefited from education opportunities more than females which could explain why women were concentrated in low-paid jobs within the labour market. Thus, the state and its institutions, the family, the education system and the labour market pervade gender division and the continuation and perpetuation of women's subordination.

In some areas, life for women was different. Among the nomadic pastoralists, women work remained an important part of the nomadic household economy and survival: milking; milk processing (yogurt, butter, cheese and oil); preparation of animal derivatives (skin, hair and wool); care of animals; light firewood collection; bringing of water; gathering wild plants; bread baking; cooking and child care; weaving; spinning and dyeing the yarn. Women prepared the goods to be taken to

towns by men for trade, but they did not receive any payment for their work (Beck 1978:358-360).

In the 1970s, 13% of all women over the age of 12 or 1.4 million were in paid employment. In industries 70% of all cloth weaving employment and 72% of carpet weaving employment was in the rural sector (Halliday 1979: 191-193). 90% of this workforce was female and 40% of them were under the age of fifteen. They either worked as unpaid family workers or received very low wages, worked in appalling conditions and were at the mercy of the middle-men who employed them (Tabari 1982:7). In 1970 in Yazd textile mills women were employed and were paid 75 pence per day (Fischer 1978:192-193).

As is shown in table 4.2 in urban areas the literacy rate amongst women was higher than in rural areas. This was an important factor for women in urban areas to have better employment opportunities. Also in urban areas, the growth of industries and services and the state bureaucracy provided better opportunities for women's participation in the labour force. In 1974/75 the state ministries (the majority of them in urban areas) employed 297,863 workers of which 29% were females; in 1972/3 the large industries employing more than ten workers (the majority of them private enterprises in urban areas) employed 249,649 workers of which 8% were women and in 1972/73 the small private enterprises employed 6,922,000 workers of which 9% were women and the majority of them (17%) were unpaid family workers who worked in household-centred work places in rural areas (Iran Statistical Year-book 1977/78: 66, 386, 50).

In urban employment 200,000 were in a professional category, working within the state and service sector of the economy as doctors; engineers; architects; pharmacists; university professors; and judges. Some women became parliamentary deputies, senators, ministers and ambassadors. In other occupations

the proportion of women was: 45% in teaching; 44% in clerical and administrative positions; 11% in medical and para-medical positions (Najmabadi 1991:61; Halliday 1979:191-193).

The rapid and uneven industrial development in this period affected only a very small sector within the economy, creating regional, class and gender differentiations. In 1978, the Gross National Product (GNP) per capita reached above \$2000. However, 87% of Iran's villages had no school, only 1% had a medical facility of any sort, 40-50% of the budget went on military spending and prices had risen steeply. The investment programme was highly import consuming. By 1978, non-oil exports covered only 3.1 per cent of imports making the country's growth dependent mainly on oil exports. The country's imports consisted mainly of capital goods, semi-manufactured goods, food, arms and consumption goods to satisfy the growing demand of the newly rich middle class (Abrahamian 1982: 426-435; Halliday 1979: -173).

This pattern resulted in middle class prosperity, concentrated in a large state bureaucracy and in a service sector enjoying salary increases of over 30 per cent per year, compared to a lower income group which remained squeezed under the pressure of high inflation, on average 15% per annum between 1974 and 1978. Under these circumstances for the majority of the population the state was an institution which served the interests of foreign powers and the dominant classes.

By the end of 1975 the fall off in oil demand, coupled with the high rate of domestic and international inflation, led to cash flow problems. To carry out and finance its industrialisation plans, Iran had to borrow massively from the international banks. Iran then was seen as a country unable to feed large parts of its population, in massive debt to the international banks and with a falling oil revenue. The ruling class went on an orgy of corruption and speculation, spending

and making quick profits and salting away their monies in foreign banks (Abrahamian 1982: 426-435; Halliday 1979: -173).

Property speculation, corruption and hoarding of commodities led to an inflation rate of near 40%. Rent consumed an average of one quarter of earnings, cheap food went off the market, industrial production began to fall back, and official figures estimated an unemployment rate of 15%, with no benefits. During this time Iran became the largest market for arms imports in the world. The number of American military advisers reached 24,000 and it was expected to grow to about 60,000. Sazemaneh Ettellaat Va Amniat Keshvar (SAVAK, the secret police) was expanded and employed over 5300 full time agents and a large but unknown number of part-time informers. In 1973 Tehran became the headquarter of the Central Intelligent Agency (CIA) in the Middle East and in 1975, Hezbe-Rastakhiz (the Resurgence Party) was established and the Shah declared Iran a one party system (Abrahamian 1982: 435-446; Halliday, 1979: 64-103)

In conclusion, economic transformation in the 1960s and 1970s marginalised the role of the clergy in economy and society, but as will be discussed in the next section *Sharia* law determined gender roles and relations within family and society. The oil economy became the dominant source of accumulation and surplus which led to industrialisation, the building of infra-structure and improved health; education and employment opportunities. However, the process of economic development was structurally and spatially uneven. The state bureaucracy provided a limited employment opportunity for a minority of women in urban areas. The majority of women constituted the bulk of semi-skilled, unskilled and unpaid family workers, working in industries where new technology was not applied and production remained labour intensive. The female population remained less than the male population which is the characteristic of many

developing countries where women's health was neglected and female's education lagged behind male's.

4.4.2 Gender and Politics

This section will examine the contradiction between modernisation of the economy and society and the persistence of Shia ideology on gender roles and relations and how state-sponsored patriarchy perpetuated female subordination, despite economic and political changes. It will also assess women's responses and their struggle for change under the repressive regime of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi during 1960s-1970s.

The weakening of state power prior to the 1963 White Revolution allowed a degree of political struggle by women, workers, students and the clergy. In 1962 various women's organisations of the previous decade became active again. They campaigned vigorously for women's right to vote, by lobbying ministers and *Majlis* deputies. Finally the law was drafted but under the pressure of the clergy and their opposition to the bill, its implementation was postponed. The women's campaign intensified, petitions were signed, letters were sent to media and the politicians. In January 1963 they refused to celebrate Reza Shah's Women's Day, the day of compulsory unveiling. Women teachers, civil servants and employees of private enterprises called for a day of general strike and marched to the prime minister's office and presented their demand. Finally on 27 February 1963 women achieved electoral rights (Hendessi 1990:8; Sanasarian 1982: 82-83).

The White Revolution allowed Mohammad Reza Shah to consolidate his power under American intervention. The increase in oil revenue changed the character of the state. The state no longer relied on taxation for revenue but solely on oil revenue. This made Mohammad Reza Shah's dictatorial state different from his

father's. Under Reza Shah the political elite participated in the decision making, to a degree. Under Mohammad Reza Shah they were silenced. He saw himself not just as the head of state, but as the state itself. As a result citizens were no longer expected to participate in state-building. He was building a state based on the oil revenue and the citizens were to serve it, benefit from it, and be obedient and grateful to him (Najmabadi 1991:58-59).

Therefore, women's activities were not only controlled by the state but were also initiated by the state. In his famous interview with Oriana Fallaci the Shah rejected the whole notion of gender equality by expressing his contemptuous attitude to women. He asserted that "you may be equal in the eyes of the law but not in ability, as you have never produced a Michelangelo, a Bach or even a good chef" (Fallaci 1976:271-272). But under internal and international pressure he made some reforms for and on behalf of women at times suitable to his international image. In 1963 six women were elected as the *Majlis* deputies and two women were appointed by the Shah to the senate. In 1965 he appointed Faroukhru Parsa as the first female minister for education (Sanasarian 1982: 79-100).

In 1966 Shoraye Aliye Jamiate Zanan (High Council of Women's Association) was dissolved and replaced by Sazemaneh Zanan Iran (Women Organisation of Iran, WOI). Thirty three associations (religious and national minorities, charity and some professional groups) constituted its structure and membership (Iran Almanac 1967: 518-525). Many active members of this organisation came from political families who were involved in the political struggles of the previous decades. They developed certain ideas for reform of family law but they had to wait until the time was right for the Shah to grant the reforms. For example in the mid 1970s, Manochehrian, a woman senator and a lawyer proposed that the requirement of the husband's permission for a married woman to obtain a passport

be eliminated. Her proposal was rejected and she was forced to resign her seat (Najmabadi 1991:63).

Nevertheless, the WOI created family welfare centres in various parts of the country. It provided health, education, legal aid, child care facilities, vocational training and free contraception. In 1967 the Family Protection Act (FPA) reformed the family law. According to this reform a man could only marry a second wife with the permission of the court. In 1975 the consent of the first wife was added to the 1967 reform, unless the first wife was unable to have sexual relationship with her husband or unable to bear children. The first wife also had the right to ask for divorce if her husband married a second wife. A woman could apply for divorce if her husband was unable to have sexual relationship with her; unable to provide for her; ill-treated her; suffered from contagious disease; abandoned her or was insane. Divorce could only be obtained in the civil courts. The 1975 Act also increased the age of marriage to 18 for women and 20 for men. In 1977 abortion was legalised, but married women had to obtain their husband's written consent. Unmarried women with their own written request could have an abortion.

These reforms were ambiguous. For example, in the majority of cases consent to a husband's polygamy was often given by the woman because of fear of violence from the husband. Also these reforms were not contradictory to the *Sharia* law, they were modified and left women as inferior beings in the following ways: the man was still the head of the family; a wife was still legally forbidden to hold a job which the husband may consider damaging to the dignity and prestige of the family; a woman could not leave the country without the permission of her husband or father; the wife was not free to choose her place of residence; a woman, regardless of her age, had to obtain permission of her father to marry for the first time; at divorce, the father retained the custody of the children. Even with

the husband's death, it was the grandfather on the fathers' side that automatically became the guardian over the children and not the children's mother; according to *Ghesas* (the law of retribution), a part of *Sharia* law, it was not a criminal offence for a man to kill his wife for the defence of his dignity; women could not be employed as members of the political staff to the foreign ministry; in the course of land reform, the land was sold only to men; the Muslim system of polygamy under which a man can have four wives remained legal, although the number of polygamous marriages declined for economic reasons and strengthened the nuclear family relationship. *Sighe* (temporary marriage) when in Shia Islam, a man took a woman as his wife for a limited period, continued to be sanctioned by the clergy (Bahar 1983: 182; Sanasarian 1982: 88-96).

The reform of the labour law was a step forward for female workers. For example, in the 1970s employers were responsible for payment for a woman's maternity leave through the workers' insurance scheme. Paid maternity leave was ten weeks (Six weeks before and four weeks after childbirth). All workplaces which had more than ten women with babies had to organise a nursery and women workers were allowed to breast feed every three hours. However, many workplaces did not have a nursery and women workers had to leave their children with their parents, friends and neighbours. Also women (except nurses) were forbidden to work between 10 pm - 6am and to do heavy work, as women were considered weak. This was in accordance with Islamic ideology of giving priority to family structure and making women available for their families which discriminated against women as they were categorised unskilled and therefore law-paid (Pakizehgi 1978:222-223).

Similarly, by 1975, the number of women in highly professional categories increased: 18 female *Majlis* deputies, 2 senators, 2 deputy ministers, 28 court lawyers and a few hundred councillors. In 1975 the Shah ordered the WOI to join

the Rastakhiz party and selected five women to be on the executive board of the party. But in the summer of 1978 when political opposition to the Shah's system escalated, he gave concessions to the religious leaders who were asking for greater adherence to Islam by reversing women's rights. He reduced the age of marriage for girls from eighteen to fifteen and dropped the post of Minister of State for Women's Affairs. Mahnaz Afkhami, who was also the Secretary-general of the WOI was not given any other cabinet post (Sanasarian 1982:100-114).

These reforms had been part of the culture of modernity which resulted from the development of capitalism in Iran with its accompanying industrialisation and the establishment of new political and social institutions based on the western model. They barely affected the lives of the majority of rural working women who remained poor, illiterate and unpaid family workers. In urban areas the majority of working class women constituted the first generation of rural migrants who lived in shanty towns or in poverty, with limited education and a subsistence wage. Both groups remained attached to Islamic values.

Thus the Shah's state, in the 1960s and 1970s, only entitled a minority of women to some reforms. Moreover, the *Bazaar* economy and its associated traditional middle class were weakened. This meant that the role of those who carried on retail, export trade and manufacture of traditional commodities declined. The growth of supermarkets, department stores and large banks, reduced the role of the *Bazaar*. Instead those who, with the help of the state, carried on retail, import, export and manufacture of modern commodities or those who participated in the state bureaucracy became the dominant class, encouraged and supported by the state. As a result the political power of the traditional middle class was also undermined by the weakening of the religious institution, the mosque. Nevertheless the uneven economic development meant that their

economic and political decline was relative. The massive migration from the rural areas made their existence viable as there was a need for petty retailers, *Bazaar* wholesalers and money lenders. Therefore their numbers remained considerable and they became hostile to the Shah's reforms as the traditional *Bazaar* values - the close family, financial and cultural ties of the Bazaar with the *ulama* - were being undermined by modern values associated with the modernisation of the economy, society, and the state (Keddie 1981:244-245).

The impact of this form of modernisation, in this period, was particularly painful for the traditional middle class women. They had to go through the process of modernisation of the education system and the job market by observing the absolute Islamic values of segregation, including wearing the *chador* dictated by their families, especially male relatives who regarded the culture of modernity as horrific and inappropriate for their women.

But for respecting these values and traditions they had to pay the heavy price of being labelled as backward in schools, universities and workplaces. These women were torn between their families' traditional values and a society which promoted western values, including the wearing of the latest European fashion. They were expected by their families to leave their home wearing the *chador* as a sign of honouring their family's norm and tradition. But outside of the home they felt rejected for wearing the *chador* which was assumed to be the sign of backwardness. Many tried to resolve this dilemma by accommodating both values. They left home veiled and took their veil off before entering schools, universities or the workplaces. But many others under the pressure of the family took a defensive position and wore the veil outside of the home as a sign of protest to the uneven economic, political and social change (Tabari 1982:9-10).

The impact of modernisation and secularisation on the modern middle class was different. It allowed the development of new ideas, and encouraged a degree of struggle to challenge the patriarchal values. Despite political repression and the continuation of traditional values attached to Shia Islam gender ideology a small but nevertheless significant number of women, to a limited extent, experienced some aspects of the women's liberation which was occurring in other parts of the world. These women began to fight traditional values as a way of freeing themselves from the double standard of male centred values and perceptions on how women should behave. They fought for divorce and refused *Mahr* and *Nafaghe* which are essential conditions in an Islamic marriage. The rejection of the Islamic institution of marriage was a protest against the treatment of female sexuality and her reproductive role as a tradeable commodity. It was also against male entitlement to female services ranging from control over her sexuality and fertility to her activities inside and outside of the home. They began temporary or permanent relationships with men, including sexual relationships, outside marriage. But their experience was no less painful than the traditional middle class women, as this behaviour was unacceptable and unforgivable within the family and society. Families, regardless of their secular or Islamic sympathies began to reject *Gharbzadegi* (Westoxication) which meant the celebration of the corrupt culture of the West. *Gharbzadeh* woman, a woman who transgressed the norm of her community went under enormous attack. The imposition of social control, with a varied degree according to the degree of secular belief of the family was a common thread throughout the society to denounce the *Gharbzadeh* woman and limit her moral behaviour (Najmabadi 1991: 64-65).

My own experience of this period was similar to that of many young women who were the victims of the contradictory rules of having secular education and being expected to participate in the public sphere of life but at the same time bound to the Islamic values of morality. My process of socialisation was totally secular and

members of my family were supporters of the communist and nationalist movements in the 1950s when close relatives were imprisoned and tortured. In the 1960s and 1970s, when these movements were suppressed, my family became sympathetic to the Shah's process of modernisation. However, they pressurised me to get married when I was seventeen and still at school. Their fear was that the culture of *Gharbzadegi* may lead me to moral degeneration. Under these pressures I got married, hoping to be able to free myself from my family's double standard values. My marriage only survived three years during which time I had two children and did not feel free from the male-centred values and perceptions. I resented all the forces that inhibited my potential and I dared to break the norm by leaving my husband and demanded divorce. My punishment was to be denied not only the custody of my children according to the Islamic law but also not having access to visit them.

Many women suffered from another form of dual role which was expected from them by religion and the state. In 1992 when I interviewed four Iranian women in London about their experiences of the 1960s-1970s in Iran, Mandana explained the way she was forced by her own mother to go through a virginity test, in case she was not a virgin and therefore, unable to marry a man who was superior to her. Mana, despite her secular education and style of life was made so paranoid about her virginity that when she went for her entry examination for a teachers' training course, she wrote nothing on the answer sheet in order to fail, because part of the examination involved a virginity test and she was scared by the idea that she may not be a virgin. These experiences may be unique as individual cases but they also represent the experiences of many others (Poya 1992: 141-162).

My generation was greatly inspired by Forough Farokhzad (1935-1967) a great feminist, poet and film maker. She married when she was sixteen and was eighteen when her son was born. Two years later she left her husband and she lost

the custody of her child and was denied visits with him. She expressed her pain and grief in her poetry collections *Asir* (Captive) and *Divar* (Wall). She lived a free and varied life usually reserved for men. She dared to write about her sexuality, her feelings and activities in her poetry. In her other collections *Osian* (Rebellion), *Tavaledi Digar* (Another Birth) and *Iman Biavarim be Aghaze Fasle Sard* (Let us believe in the dawn of the cold season) she expressed the feeling of many young women of that period who were the victim of the popular perception of the illegitimacy and immorality of breaking the norm. In 1967 at the age of thirty two she died in a car accident. She devoted her life and her poetry to exposing the double standard of male-centred values and perceptions and how women were manipulated by those values and perceptions which had confusing affect on their lives, making them unable to operate within a patriarchal system. Her poetry expressed hostility towards a secular state and economy which preserved all the traditional values which were a hindrance to changing the unequal treatment of men and women. (Milani 1985: 317-331; Keddie 1981:196; Warnock Fernea and Qattan Bezirgan 1977:291-319).

In the 1970s women's political participation both inside and outside of the country increased. Many women during this period realised that as long as poverty and repression exist in Iran women would continue to be regarded as inferior beings. They played an important role in the fight back against the system. Even the official statistics estimated that there were thousands of women political prisoners in the Shah's jails. While torture was a common fate for all political prisoners in the Shah's jail, the women were subjected to particularly cruel and degrading forms of torture, including rape. Abroad Iranian women joined the anti-Shah struggle and were active for many years in student, political and women's organisations.

The secular opposition consisted of a number of small organisations, operating underground. The most important one was Cherikhaye Fedaiye Khalghe (Fedayeen Guerilla Organisation) which developed out of a split from the pro Soviet Tudeh Party. They believed in armed struggle as the prime means of overthrowing the regime. They adopted a variant of Marxist dependency theory and borrowed an analysis and strategy of national liberation that called for popular unity of the masses against the regime and imperialism. Many women activists joined this organisation in Iran, many were arrested, tortured and killed. Well known among them was Ashraf Dehghani one of the founding and leading member of the organisation who escaped from prison and in exile wrote her book *Hemaseh Moghavemat* (The legend of Resistance) and revealed facts about the condition of political prisoners in Iran. She continued her struggle in exile and returned to Iran during the 1979 revolution (Bahar 1983: 184).

But, within the secular left, there was ignorance and lack of interest in women's issues. Struggle against gender inequality was considered divisive and jeopardizing to the unity of the movement. The task was to raise the slogan of equality and liberation of women and wait until the victory of socialism. Disillusioned and isolated both on personal and political levels I joined the many other Iranian women abroad. I became involved in the women's and students' movement of the 1970s, but soon became known to SAVAK and had to remain in exile until the 1979 revolution.

As a whole the secular left was isolated. They failed to understand the contradictory changes which were taking place in Iran. Blindly, they followed their formulae for liberation and socialism, failing to relate to the majority of the population, who were affected by the contradictions of economic and socio-political development. They did not relate to class, gender and racial inequalities in society except in an abstract way, as was the case with religion and religious

values. This facilitated the easy takeover of power by the conservative Islamic opposition.

Beside the secular opposition there was also an Islamic opposition. The most important one was Mujahedeen Khalgh (The Islamic Guerilla organisation) which developed from the religious wing of the National Front led by Ayatollah Taleghani in the 1960s. They believed in a link between Islam and modern ideas (Abrahamian: 1982: 464-473; Keddie 1981: 236-239). Many women joined the Mojahedeen. Two women, Mother Rezai and Mother Shayegan symbolised the resistance of Iranian mothers whose children were tortured and killed by SAVAK but they remained in opposition and they themselves were arrested and tortured (Bahar 1983: 183-184).

Ali Shariati, a French educated sociologist inspired by Frantz Fanon, was the ideologue of modernised Islam². His message was that Islam, particularly Shi'ism, was a revolutionary ideology that permeated all spheres of life, especially politics, and inspired true believers to fight against all forms of oppression, exploitation and social injustice. Ayatollah Khomeini also led the clerical opposition to the Shah's regime from exile first in Turkey and later in Iraq in the 1960s and 1970s. He opposed the regime for being a threat to Islam and to nationalism in Iran. He did not attack the communists; nationalists and women's rights issues. He attacked the Shah's regime for exploiting the country's resources and the people and for using women as sex objects to promote consumerism. He stated that in Islam women and men are equal (Abrahamian 1982: 450-480; Sanasarian 1982: 117).

In reality, Shariati's Islamic populism complemented Khomeini's theory of *Velayat Fagih* (the governance of the religious jurist). This meant the Islamisation of the state and society on the model of the original Islamic community of prophet

Muhammad and his immediate successors. This fundamentalist Islam insists that Islam is a religion and a state. An Islamic state must apply the tenets of Islamic doctrine, above all *Sharia* law to all aspects of social and economic life. So Ayatollah Khomeini was explicitly rejecting the secular state. Throughout the 1970s he urged not only an adherence to Islamic law but the establishment of an Islamic state (Bakhash 1985: 38-40; Rose 1983 :166-188). Shariati did not oppose this but he insisted that all modern concepts and doctrines of European social thought are contained in a superior form in the Quran. This gave an illusion to the opposition. They interpreted Shariati's writing and speeches as being secular and believed that Ayatollah Khomeini was on their side (Zubaida 1982).

Shariati died in 1977 and left Ayatollah Khomeini as the leader of the opposition. In October 1978 Ayatollah Khomeini moved to Neuphle-le-Chateau near Paris. This strengthened his opposition as he had access to journalists from the world's leading media to express his views. Iranian political leaders (National Front, Fedayeen, Mujahedeen and the Tudeh party) visited Ayatollah Khomeini in his new head-quarters and acknowledged Khomeini's domination of the opposition movement. The groundwork was laid for the Islamic state.

In January 1979 as a journalist I visited Ayatollah Khomeini in Neuphle-le-Chateau. I was told that I had to wear a black *chador*, otherwise he would not receive me. I explained to him that my family and close relatives opposed the Shah's regime and suffered persecution and that I had also suffered personal and political repression. Thus, as a woman who was looking forward to an end to the dictatorial system of the Pahlavi I was desperate to know whether women in Islamic Iran would be allowed to study in higher education; work equally along side men in paid employment and would have equal rights with men within family and the law. He did not answer my questions and practically asked me to leave by

angrily saying that "Yes, we have said it all, the problem is that you are talking too much woman, goodbye".

The secular opposition and the traditional middle class cemented their alliance with Ayatollah Khomeini. The struggle in the streets and workplaces intensified. Khomeini's and Shariati's messages expressed the feelings and aspirations of the urban poor more effectively than the liberal and the left political groups who were attracted to Shariati's views. The majority of the population could not identify with the secular opposition. They found religious opposition more identifiable. There was a world apart between their life and a small majority who benefited from the process of economic development under the Pahlavi. The Islamic opposition took the form of nationalism in favour of independence from the Shah's repressive regime and its American ally

Throughout 1978 opposition to the Shah's regime escalated. Up until June 1978, the demonstrations were predominantly composed of intellectuals, students and the urban poor. From September 1978, workers effectively shut down almost all industrial establishments and services. Among the first strikers were women in telecommunications, nurses and hospital workers. As the strikes spread, with oil workers playing the most important role by reducing production to the amount necessary for internal consumption, women teachers, civil servants, and factory workers also participated intensively. (Bahar 1983: 184-188; Abrahamian 1982:496-525).

Finally on 16th January, 1979 after 18 months of bitter struggle, the Shah was forced to leave the country. On 1st February Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran from his exile in Paris. Five days later he declared himself the head of the state. The nationalist and communist organisations mistakenly regarded Khomeini's Islamic anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism as an advance towards

nationalism and socialism. So they participated in the establishment of the Islamic state.

In conclusion, women's struggle in the early 1960s led to women's suffrage. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s a powerful repressive state emerged which suppressed all movements, including the women's movement. Nevertheless women's actions achieved a degree of reforms in relation to women and family; women and education and employment. These reforms, however, only touched the lives of a minority of women in urban areas and even they were bound by the religious values of morality. As a result the majority of women were hostile to the modernisation of economy and society. A minority who benefited from material changes also suffered as they were caught between the contradictory demands of religion and the state. The uneven socio-economic and socio-political development led to mass opposition which led to the 1979 revolution. The mass participation of women reflected not just their desire to change the dictatorial system of the Pahlavi but also their struggle against the patriarchal social relations which was part and parcel of processes of economic development.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the inter-relationship between the process of capitalist development under foreign domination; Shia Islam ideology and class formation in the twentieth century in Iran has produced uneven economic, social and political developments. The state, as the main agent of capital accumulation, determined and regulated social relations within production and reproduction and simultaneously between classes and gender. It, therefore, operated as one single system of capitalism and patriarchy and determined the way women should be incorporated into the public sphere of life.

Under the influence of the state, capital and religion, social classes at different periods have had differential access to material resources, the values attached to religious ideology and political power. Whenever the power of the state weakened, women struggled and forced the state to reform. Reforms were made in relation to women's education, employment, unveiling and de-segregation.

But the uneven development did not allow the majority of women to benefit from the changes. The majority of working women remained unpaid workers or low-paid workers. A minority of women benefited from the secular education, reform of the family law and the opportunities in the labour market. Some even occupied important positions. Despite this women's independence in the family and their independent presence in the public sphere were opposed. The state maintained its legitimacy by making concessions to Shia Islam gender ideology. Although the form of female subordination changed at different periods and affected different classes differently, gender identity based on Islamic tradition maintained sexual hierarchies, sexual division of labour and as a result female subordination.

Notes

¹. This organisation was the *Tudeh* (masses) Party's, the pro-Soviet communist party women's organisation.

². For an excellent analysis of Shariati's role see Rahnema A (1998) The Islamic utopian, a political biography of Ali Shariati (I.B. Tauris) and Rahnema A (1994) "Ali Shariati, teacher, preacher, rebel" in Rahnema A, Pioneers of Islamic Revival (Zed Books).

Chapter Five

1979-1981

The Islamic sexual division of labour

5.1 Introduction

Following the 1979 revolution, the Islamic state rejected the economic policy of the Pahlavis and advocated an Islamic command economy, isolated from the global economy. It expanded the state sector and it intended to isolate the private sector of the economy. This policy, combined with an international trade ban on Iran, led to economic depression. During this period, the state, based on the principles of its Islamic gender relations, also implemented policies which aimed at the seclusion of women. This policy required the complete exclusion of women from the public sphere, especially employment. The Islamic defence of women's place in the home was that during the Pahlavi era a culture of consumerism was promoted which led to moral degeneration and the breaking down of Islamic values. The state, therefore, strengthened patriarchal relations in marriage and family life, by undoing the reforms of the family law. Based on the natural and biological relations between men and women, motherhood and wifeness were considered the most important tasks for women and bread-winning was the responsibility of men. This process of exclusion of women from the labour market was to begin with a policy of gender segregation in the public domain: strict dress codes for women, the introduction of gender division in education and employment which inevitably resulted in many women losing their jobs.

5.2 The numbers and disposition of women in the economy on the eve of revolution

This section will examine the statistical data for female workforce participation before the 1979 revolution. The statistics published under the Pahlavi in 1978 included the state ministries' employment in 1974/75 which was a total of 297,863 of which 87,474 were women and 210,389 were men (Iran Statistical Year-book 1977/78:66). According to the Iranian national census, the state sector was that which employed workers who worked either in government or government-affiliated organisations for a wage or salary. Government-affiliated organisations were those in which at least half of their stock was government-owned. They operated under Ghanoone Estekhdame Keshvari (The Country's Employment Law).

According to these statistics, women constituted 29% of the total workforce within different ministries in 1974/75. The percentage of women workers was highest in the ministries of education (41%); higher education (39%); tourism (27%); trade (27%) and health (26%).

Aside from the administrative sector there were in 1972/73 3973 large industrial enterprises in Iran which employed more than ten workers. 3834 of these industries (97%) were owned and controlled by private entrepreneurs; 89 of them (2%) were owned and controlled by the state and 50 of them (1%) were joint ventures between the state and the private entrepreneur. They employed a total workforce of 249,649 of which 230,190 were men and 19,459 were women (Statistical Year-book 1977/78: 383-7). Women constituted 8% of the total workforce within these industries. The percentage of women workers was higher in smaller industries categorised as "others" (15%); textile industry (10%); chemicals (11%) and Food industries (9%).

Beside these industries, there were also a large number of small privately owned enterprises which were divided into the following categories of people: employers (all persons who were active in the private sector, who owned all or part of an establishment, and who had at least one employee); self-employed (all persons who were active in the private sector and owned all or part of an establishment but either worked alone or employed only unpaid family workers); unpaid family workers (all persons who worked in a shop, factory, farm or other types of establishment owned by another member of their household or by a relative and received no wage or salary); private sector employee (all persons in the private sector who worked for a wage or salary. These were firms which employed less than ten people).

These enterprises operated under Ghanoone Kar va Omoreh Ejtemaie (The Labour Law and Social Affairs). In 1972/73 these industries employed 6,922,000 of which 648,000 were women and 6,118,000 were men (Iran Statistical Year-book 1977/78: 50). Women constituted 9% of the total workforce within these industries. 17% worked as unpaid family workers; 10% as wage and salary earners; 7.% as self employed and 1% as employers.

5.3 The Islamic state's initial programme of a minimal demand for female labour

This section will assess the Islamic state's initial economic strategy, during 1979-1981 and its policy on gender and employment. After the revolution in 1979 and the establishment of the Islamic state, Ayatollah Khomeini, as the head of state, rejected the previous economic strategy under the Pahlavi. He argued that the Shah and his regime had plundered the country's resources by over-spending and promoting western-oriented consumerism. He blamed the west, the east and their

agents in Iran for ruining the economy. He suggested that an Islamic economic system, based on self-sufficiency would end all the plundering and usurpation of wealth (Rahnema and Nomani 1990: 235-237; Algar 1981: 115-116).

Hence the political slogan of "Neither East, Nor West, but Islamic Republic" became popular. The ideal Islamic economic system was seen as self-sufficiency and agriculturally-oriented small scale production, with little or ideally no contact with the outside world's values, ideas, production relations or technology. It was claimed that under an Islamic economic system land, labour and capital would be utilised according to *Sharia*. This allotted landlords a fair amount of rent, the capitalists were entitled to a fair amount of profit and the workers were entitled to a fair wage. The ideal relationship between labour and capital was based on co-operation. Wage bargaining and trade unionism were considered unfair and both the capitalist and the workers were prohibited from exploiting one another. Borrowing was to be interest free, but despite this capital could grow because Islam allows profit which acts as an incentive to save. Moreover, the institution of *zakat* (Islamic tax) would inhibit accumulation and concentration of capital in few hands. The Islamic state was entitled to hold considerable economic power: to own property; receive taxes; organise and dispose of state and public properties and revenues.

This philosophy engendered policies which led to the confiscation of the properties of the Pahlavi and their allies - private domestic owners of capital and the owners of foreign capital who had fled the country. Their property was brought under state ownership and control. Bonyade Mostasaffin (The Foundation for the Disadvantaged) was established to administer these properties including 200 large factories, farms, banks, hotels and trading companies (Rahnema and Momeni 1990: 240). A large state bureaucracy was created to administer the Islamisation of society. The workers in this new social bureaucracy

consisted of some of the traditional middle class, the urban poor and lumpen elements who provided an important element of Khomeini's support in the vital years after the fall of the Shah (Poya 1991).

There was no controversy among the Islamic leaders on the economic role of the state. However, there was a dispute over the extent and the means by which the state should intervene in the operation of the private sector (Rahnema and Nomani 1990:146-159). Moreover, the enlarged state sector was heavily underfunded. A ban on Iranian oil imports had been adopted immediately after the US embassy occupation in November 1979 (see chapter eight). This led to a fall in oil revenue which diminished the state's capacity to invest and to subsidise. The private entrepreneurs who remained in the country and continued their activities under the Islamic state also relied on state regulation and subsidies. Therefore all sectors of the economy suffered and the result was rising unemployment.

Iran's isolation in the world market also meant that the value of the Rial (Iran's currency) collapsed in the world market. In 1979 the value of the Rial in the foreign exchange markets fell by 25 fold (\$1 = 70 Rials became \$1 = 1750 Rials). This situation undermined Iran in foreign trade and created shortages and inflation. Under pressure from the *shoras* (workers councils which will be discussed further in chapter eight) the level of wages had increased. However, as a result of inflation real wages fell and therefore the wage increases did not help many poorer families. Unemployment and inflation drastically reduced purchasing power (Poya: 1991: 96-99).

Moreover, during this period the public behaviour of women became a central issue. The Shah's regime was denounced as decadent and the cause of corruption of womanhood. A liberated woman was declared to be one who followed the path of Fatimah, daughter of the prophet Mohammad and Zaynab her daughter. As

previously explained, Fatimah represents and symbolises motherhood and womanhood, the perfect mother and wife in the sphere of the home, and Zaynab represents and symbolises the woman in the political and social sphere of life, fighting alongside men in the battlefields for Islam. A large number of women were sacked because they did not comply with Islamic dress and behaviour codes. Many others were offered early retirement and redundancy. Hence economic depression, combined with the state's policy of women's place in the home, reduced the demand for women's labour and increased the level of impoverishment.

The explanation for sending women back to the home was that, like Zaynab, women had fulfilled their responsibilities in the public sphere of political life through demonstrations to bring about the revolution, the Islamic state and society. Now that the Islamic state had been established they had to go back to their main responsibility and concentrate on their activities in the sphere of the home and the family, acting "like Fatimah".

At the heart of this position was a belief in the biological and psychological differences between the sexes, expressed in the writings of prominent Shia clergy in Iran such as Majlesi, Motahhari, Nouri and Tabatabai. Nouri (1964/5) and Tabatabai (1979/80) have used this argument to exclude women from holding positions in government, the assumption of the profession of judges, managerial positions and participation in war. Majlesi (1979) has also used these arguments to justify women's place in the home and allocating the responsibility of bread-winning and the protection of the family honour to men. Motahhari's book on **The Rights of Women in Islam** (1981) extensively discusses the relationship between the differences between women and men and the question of men's responsibility to maintain women, children and the family. Thus, according to this position, women had to be protected, looked after and controlled by men.

Even Shariati's writings (1990/1) which were considered by the liberal and the left wing political groups as progressive and radical, advocated the same principle by suggesting that the ideal woman in an Islamic society is Fatimah:

As a mother she raised a daughter like Zaynab and sons like Hosein and Hassan. In a different aspect she was an exemplary wife, one that stayed every inch of the way with Ali through his loneliness, difficulties, problems and great moments (1990/1: 239).

On this basis Zahra Rahnavard, a writer on women's issues and known as a Muslim feminist, argued:

Motherhood and wifhood is the road to freedom and liberation. A woman has the revolutionary responsibility of showing the right path and prohibiting the wrong deed, decrying the false and teaching the right. It is women who teach the future generations and it is women who must endorse or reject any political agenda (n.d: 103-110).

As a result of this ideology the state either forbade employment or made conditions increasingly difficult. Many women lost their jobs in the legal profession. Many others were removed from top level government posts. On 3 March 1979, a decree forbade women judges to work since, according to Islam, women are not fit to judge. Only those with the following characteristics can be judges: "Male, adult, Muslim, Shia, just, *mojtahed* (practising religious jurisprudence), legitimate child, with good and strong memory, able to write and read and visualise" (*Payame Hajar* 29.1.1992; *Zanan* nos 4-6 1993). Following this, the ministry of justice refused to issue decrees confirming women judges

(*Ayandegan* March - July 1979) and qualified women were told to apply for administrative posts in the judiciary.

On 6 March 1979, the Minister of Defence, General Madani, declared that women would not be drafted into the army in future. All women serving their conscription terms were dismissed and released from military service. On 9 June 1979 the swearing-in ceremony of new judges took place without the participation of women nominees. The minister of justice told the press that other posts would be given to women who had been trained for judicial responsibilities. On October 1979 the cabinet ratified a decree officially transferring women judges and lawyers to legal departments in other ministries to perform tasks rather than being judges (Moghadam 1988: 226; Tabari and Yeganeh 1982: 235-236).

On 2nd December 1979 the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran was ratified and determined women's contemporary position. It declared that the Islamic foundation of the state will be derived from Khomeini's theory of *velayat faghih*. Under the heading "Women and the Constitution" it stated:

The family is the cornerstone of society and the primary institution for the growth and improvement of the individual; consensus and ideological belief in the principle that the formation of family is fundamental for the future development of the individual is one of the main aims of the Islamic government (Nashat: 1983:207).

A variety of methods were used to discourage women from employment. A large number of women were sacked for not complying with *Hejabe Eslami* (Islamic dress). Azar, a 35 year old teacher, explained:

As Islamisation spread and was consolidated, things became more and more difficult. One could be dismissed for "unIslamic" behaviour, that is for talking to male colleagues or wearing make up. Finally, when wearing Islamic clothes became compulsory, a large number of women were sacked for being *bad hejabi* (not complying with Islamic dress).

Maryam, a teacher, also explained how women were pushed out of workplaces:

The condition of work became very harsh. The staff rooms were segregated. If women talked to men, it was "unIslamic" behaviour and enough to cause dismissal. Before Islamisation colleagues and friends used to organise *dooreh* (getting together socially) in the evenings or at the weekends. It was a cheap and enjoyable form of entertainment as well as catching up with the news about our profession, our job and condition of work. We had to stop these gatherings, in case the informers reported us to the authorities for "unIslamic" behaviour. I am a religious woman, even under the Shah I dressed and behaved modestly. These rules and regulations are not Islamic. Those who are in control are opportunist, they are corrupt and they do anything to become the new elite.

On 6 May 1980, the Islamic Republic Party declared that Fatimah's birthday, occurring in 1980 on 6 May, was to be celebrated as Women's Day. This was to emphasise the Islamic character of the state and signify the virtues of motherhood as symbolised by Fatimah. Following this, more women lost their jobs (Tabari and Yeganeh 1982: 237).

The age of retirement for females was reduced from 50 to 45 and their years of service were reduced from 30 to 25 to make them eligible for retirement. Maryam explained:

The retirement law changed. They offered early retirement. If women were 45 and had 25 years of service they could retire and take home 25 days salary a month. Before, men and women had to have 30 years of service. I, alongside many women applied for early retirement. The conditions of work were very hard.

On 22 July 1980 all co-educational schools were abolished. Teaching was segregated, women teachers assigned to girls' schools and male teachers to boys' schools. The Islamists argued that male heads of departments must replace female secretaries with male secretaries. Male nurses should look after the male patients and male teachers should teach male students.

When I interviewed a number of nurses, I learned that although nursing was seen as "naturally" a woman's job, it was never considered a respectable job for a woman. It was believed that relationships between male doctors' and female nurses could lead to *fesad*, for which women were responsible and blamed. Nursing required night shift work and close contact between female nurses, male patients and male doctors which was not respectable. After Islamisation, this ideology was used to segregate the nursing profession and as a result, many female nurses lost their job.

Unfortunately - for the period 1979 - 1986 - there are no statistics available, based on gender distribution, to show the effect of this policy on women's employment. However, my field research showed that the Islamic state's initial programme was based on the goal of a minimal demand for female labour which was put into effect by a series of measures of exclusion and moral pressure on women.

5.4 Patriarchal relations in marriage and family life

The state's policies on employment were reinforced by a strengthening of patriarchal relations in marriage and family life through laws and regulations based on traditional interpretation of *Sharia*.

On 26 February 1979, a few days after the revolution, the attack on the gains of the revolution began with attacks on women's rights. The Family Protection Act, the Shah's minimal reform of women's rights, was suspended. Ayatollah Khomeini returned to men the exclusive rights to divorce and permitted them to take four permanent and an unlimited number of temporary wives (*sighe*) without the first wife's permission.

The institution of *sighe* is a contract made for a period of time which could be for an hour or more. There is no divorce, the transaction ends at the end of the period and the woman has to wait 45 days (*eddeh*), before entering another sexual relationship, in case of pregnancy (Haeri 1994; 1989).

According to articles 941,077 and 1,113 of the Islamic constitution the man has no obligation to maintain the temporary wife. Therefore, there is no *mahr*, nor *nafaghe* and she has no inheritance rights (*Keyhan* 11.12.1990; 24.12.1990). Conventionally, female virgins do not become *sighe*. A woman who becomes *sighe* is labelled as "not a good woman".

In April 1979, Ghale Shahre Noe (the Tehran prostitution quarter) was burned down by the *Hezbollah* (Partisans of God). 8000 women lived in the Ghale. Many of them burned to death and many became homeless. In July 12 1979, three prostitutes were executed. This was following Khomeini's speech when he said "if you flog four prostitutes, prostitution will end". Later in the year, Ghale Shahre

Noe was officially closed down by the Kanone Hemayate Eslami (The Centre For Islamic Protection). It ordered all prostitutes to introduce themselves to Daftare Ezdevaje Bonyade Eslami (The Islamic Foundation Marriage Bureau) where the women were made to become *sighe*.

On 2 October 1979 the Islamic family legislation was ratified by the Council of Islamic Revolution and included: a husband's right to forbid his wife to take employment; a woman had to obtain permission from her male kin to work, to travel, to study and to change her place of residence; in case of divorce, a father's right to have the custody of female children after seven years of age and of male children after two years of age and to his relatives in case of his death; the banning of the use of contraceptives and making the practice of abortion illegal (Tabari and Yeganeh 1982: 236; Keyhan 7.3.1979).

On 2nd December 1979 the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran was ratified and determined women's contemporary position:

In the creation of Islamic social institutions, all elements of humanity that hitherto served the multifaceted foreign exploitation of our country are to regain their true identity and human rights. As a part of this process, it is only natural that women should benefit from a particularly large augmentation of their rights because of the greater oppression that they suffered under the despotic regime. The family is the fundamental unit of society and the major centre for the growth and advancement of humanity. Compatibility with respect to belief and ideal is the main consideration in the establishment of a family, for the family provides the primary basis for humanity's development and growth. It is the duty of Islamic government to provide the necessary facilities for the attainment of this goal. This view of the family unit delivers woman from being regarded as an object or as an

instrument in the service of consumerism and exploitation. Not only does woman recover thereby her momentous and precious function of motherhood, rearing alert and active human beings, she also becomes the fellow struggler of man in all the different areas of life. Given the weighty responsibilities that woman thus assumes, she is accorded in Islam great value and nobility (The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran 1991:13).

In July 1981 The *Ghesas* law (The Bill of Retribution) replaced the civil laws. This meant that women were denied the minimum protection which had been offered to them by the civil law in cases of marriage, divorce, custody of children, freedom of movement, murder, adultery, lesbianism, abortion and many other issues. According to *Qhesas* law, harsh sentences, such as lashes and stoning to death were to be practised on women for violations ranging from not totally complying with the Islamic dress code through to adultery. To prove murder only male testimony was to be accepted. If a woman was killed by her husband because of adultery, her murder was not considered a crime (Paidar 1997: 348-353; Afkhami and Friedl 1994:180-189; Tabari and Yeganeh 1982: 94-98).

Initially the Islamic state encouraged temporary marriage. The rationale for encouraging *sighe* was to bring about Islamic morality and harmony. However, a combination of economic problems together with men's easy access to divorce and temporary marriage created chaos and disorder in family relations and in the wider society.

Zane Rouz weekly women's magazine reported that despite the closing down of the prostitution quarters, neither prostitution nor adultery had not been eradicated. It also reported that under these circumstances women had become the victims of gender differential treatment by the law. It demonstrated that a

larger percentage of women than men were sentenced to death because of prostitution. Many of them were forced to prostitution because of poverty. Many of these women were accused of adultery and were therefore executed. This was because adultery was proven on the basis of men's testimonies, and women's testimonies alone did not disprove adultery. In cases where four men gave testimonies, women were sentenced to death (*Zane Rouz* 12.7.1980).

The chaos in family relationships and within the wider society worsened further when physically and psychologically disabled men began to return from the war fronts. Women were encouraged to marry these disabled men from the war. Ayatollah Khomeini suggested that:

Those sisters who have lost their husbands in the war must remarry with the disabled from the war in order to share their pain and bring more children to society (*Zane Rouz* 2. 10; 12.6.1981).

And Mrs. Behrouzi, a member of the *Majles* also argued that:

Marriage is a way to overcome many problems such as *zena* (adultery), poverty and prostitution (*Zane Rouz* 12.6.1981).¹

In conclusion, during this period, the Islamic state strengthened patriarchal relationships in marriage and family life by undoing the reforms of the family law. The significance of these changes was to establish the Islamic state's hegemony over family life. The Islamic state became the voice of religious social groups who had objected to economic transformation under the Pahlavi, which, according to them, created an undesirable necessity for women to work outside the home. Under the Islamic state women's priority was to be in the home and female's

sexuality and fertility was to be controlled by men and by the state through unreformed Islamic family laws, especially marriage and divorce laws.

5.5 Gender segregation in sports, education and public places

This section will discuss gender segregation in sports, education system and public places. The aim is to investigate the level of success and failure of the state to fully implement gender segregation and to what extent the state succeeded to exclude women from the public domain.

On 9 March 1979, women were barred from sports on the grounds that coaches, judges and spectators in such events included men. On 8 July 1979 several Caspian Sea resort towns initiated a sexual segregation of the sea. Many women were flogged in public during the summer of 1979 on charges of swimming in the men's section. (Tabari and Yeganeh 1982:233; Ayandegan 31.1 1979)

Within the education system gender segregation affected women even more adversely. The Islamic state's policy of excluding women from certain fields of study and areas of specialisation was to reinforce the ideology of women's place in the home and to control female's supply of labour. On 21 May 1979 the ministry of education banned co-education. Educational institutions were ordered to segregate all classes. Many institutions indicated that since the number of female students alone would not justify setting up separate classes they would be unable to register any female students. In late September 1979, when schools opened, female students of technical training schools staged a protest against the suspension of their studies as a result of this decision. They were told to change their courses of training to fields where there were enough female students to justify separate training courses (Tabari and Yeganeh 1982: 235).

On 3 June 1979 the Ministry of Education banned married women from attending ordinary high schools, They were told they should continue studies on their own and take part in special examinations in order to obtain final degrees. Coupled with the lowering of the minimum age for marriage of women to 13 years, this meant a lowering of educational levels for women (ibid: 235).

In the academic year 1979-1980, the first post revolution nationwide entrance examination women were not admitted to degree courses in Mining; Islamic Jurisprudence; Foundations of Islamic Law; Islamic Culture and Iranian Civilisation. At the same time nursing schools admitted only single women (Mojab 1987:4-5).

Gender segregation of the education system had a particularly negative effect on female education in rural areas. Azar, a school teacher and one of my respondents explained:

In the 1970s mixed schools opened and it became acceptable that boys and girls go to school together. In most rural areas there was only one school in a whole village. Because mixed schools were accepted by the rural population, girls were sent to the mixed school. But since Islamisation, girls' education has suffered. Because where there is only one school in a whole village only boys are given the chance.

According to the Islamic state and the Islamic tenet advocated by the Islamic scholars women were biologically and psychologically different from men. Therefore, women and men had to be prepared for life differently. The importance given to women's place in the home had logically led to a different education system for male and female. For example Article 30 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated that the government was committed to provide

free education for all, but Article 21 of the Constitution emphasised that women's rights to free education would be assured in conformity with Islamic criteria (Algar 1980; Higgins and Shoar-Ghaffari 1994). The basic goal of female education was the reproduction and stability of family and family relationships based on Islamic rights and morality, rather than preparing women for employment (Mehran 1989; Mohsenpour 1988).

As a result women were excluded from studying in many institutions. Either the priority was given to male students or many courses were identified as unsuitable for women. In April 1980 Ayatollah Khomeini made a decree for *Enghelabe Farhangi Eslami* (Islamic Cultural Revolution). The aim was to purge the universities from all opposition to the process of Islamisation from left or right and to give total political power to the Islamic societies which replaced student organisations. Following an armed attack on the universities' campuses, injuring many students, all higher education institutions closed down (Mojab 1987: 6).

Segregating women and men in public places had not been anything like as successful. For example, to specify certain rooms to men and certain rooms to women in work places had not been possible. To successfully implement this policy new buildings would have had to be built to create more space. Nevertheless, in some cases women themselves had initiated segregation in work places because it created space for them. Fataneh a bank clerk explained:

In our work place the management did not insist on segregating women and men into different rooms. But women prefer to work in a room without men, as they feel free and more comfortable to move around. For this reason we organise the rooms in a way that men and women are segregated.

Similarly, segregation on the buses had not been totally successful. On 30th July 1980 The Tehran Bus Company announced that the first three rows of seats in buses would be allocated to women passengers (Tabari and Yeganeh 1982: 238). Later most buses specified a section at the back of the buses for female passengers. The proportion was one third of the bus seats for women and two thirds for men. The assumption was that this corresponded with the official size of the male and female workforce but in the rush hours the iron barriers in the middle of the buses were removed on many busy lines because women had the responsibility of taking their children to the nursery schools or alternatively to their families and friends, before they go to work.

But generally women had welcomed segregation on the buses. Fatemah a school teacher explained:

Many women prefer the segregation on the buses, we feel more comfortable, as we are not sexually harassed by men.

Divided queues, and divided seats in cinemas, public halls, colleges and universities had been successful. The state, therefore, in this period succeeded in segregating the sexes, in sport grounds, within the education system and public places. Women's responses had been different. In some cases they had accepted it and in other cases they had rejected it. The majority of women did not object to segregation in public places, even if they had to sit separate from their husbands, as this had reduced sexual harassment and allowed women to participate in the public sphere of life, without their families' objection. To conclude, the level of success and failure of the state's policy of sex segregation had largely been to do with women's responses. As will be discussed in chapter seven, women's objection to sex segregation in sports and education led to reforms and change in the position of state.

5.6 The Islamic dress, an effective measure of gender segregation.

This section will discuss the way the state succeeded to implement the policy and practice of wearing the Islamic dress. It will also discuss women's diverse responses according to their social class and levels of religiosity.

In July 1980, after several months of bitter struggle by secular women in urban areas against Islamic dress, the wearing of *hejab eslami* became compulsory (to be discussed further in chapter eight). The uniform consisted of wearing a *roposh* (a long dress with long sleeves); a pair of trousers underneath; thick socks, tights or stockings and a *maghnae* (a very large scarf covering head, all hair and shoulders). At work places this uniform had to be either in black, grey or dark brown. It was to comply with the religious tenets of female look, to cover the whole body of the female person except the face and the two hands.

In work places, petitions were circulated in several government ministries, asking women employees, voluntarily to add their signatures to a statement supporting Islamic dress. Those who did not comply were sacked. Women television broadcasters who refused were replaced with women wearing full Islamic dress. Shops were ordered to refuse to sell goods to women without the Islamic dress. The media began an ideological war on women not complying with Islamic dress, accused of being communist or capitalist (Poya 1992; 1987: 153; Tabari and Yeganeh 1982: 233).

Soon there were new security units: Sarollah (The Blood of God), Ershad Eslami (Islamic Guidance), Komiteh (local Islamic councils) and Pasdaran (The Revolutionary Guards). They patrolled the cities, hunting for the opposition and for women without *hejab*. No woman dared to appear in public without Islamic

dress because so many women's bones were broken and their faces were burned with acid. A woman whose scarf did not completely cover her forehead was stopped by a male Komiteh member, who pulled her scarf down and pushed a drawing pin into her forehead to hold her scarf down.

This form of segregation had been successful. Despite mass struggle by women in 1979-1981 against the compulsory *hejab*, the majority of women had accepted it and some had welcomed it.

Women who identified themselves as middle class, with lower level of religiosity, objected to it. But because they were a minority, their objection had been limited to the modification of the uniform. Because they had greater access to money and a lesser degree of ideological constraint, they were able to wear a modified version of the dress, sometimes compatible with the latest international fashion, in terms of the shape and the colour of the uniform. However, at work places they had to comply with the uniform. When I interviewed a number of these women, I was surprised to hear even from them that although they objected to it, they found it more comfortable as it had reduced the degree of sexism. Zohreh the manager of the laboratory of a chemical industry explained:

I do not like to wear the *hejabe eslami*. It is ugly and I feel that women have to cover their body because men cannot help themselves to be sexist, sexually harass women and look at women as a sex object. But I have no choice than to accept that this is an unfortunate reality of our society. Exactly for this reason now that I am covered head to toe my work my expertise is appreciated much more than under the previous system. Now they look at me as a scientist while before they looked at me as a sex object.

The policy of *hejabe eslami* had not affected women of rural areas and belonging to different nationalities. They had continued to wear their national dress at home and at work which is usually family centred. As always, even under the Pahlavi, they only wore the *hejab* at the time of public gatherings, especially when they received outside guests. They had, therefore, welcomed this policy, as they identify with the Islamic practice of *hejab*.

Women who identified themselves as middle class or working class with high level of religiosity, had welcomed this uniform. This was despite their differences in terms of access to money and the amount of money they may or may not spend on a more or less sophisticated form of the uniform. Islamic dress had given them the identity of "good woman", advocated by the Islamic tenets and enforced by their own process of socialisation.

As is discussed in chapter four, under the Pahlavi a culture of modernity had regarded women who wore the Islamic dress as backward. These religious women were prohibited from working by male members of their families who did not regard the culture of modernity under the Pahlavi as appropriate for their women. Under the Islamic state, however, this group of women found gender segregation to their benefit, enabling some of them to have more opportunity to enter paid employment. Maryam explained:

I like to wear the *hejabe eslami*. I feel that this is respecting the views of people like me. Under the previous regime, I could not get a job as a nurse because I was wearing the *chador*. In 1976 one hospital, Sevomeh Shaaban, was set up by the Islamic *Bazaaris* (Islamic traders from the Bazaar). This was the only hospital which employed women like me.

In many cases *hejabe eslami* became a source of power for religious women. Many religious women were employed by the Islamic security organisations to ensure the full implementation of the practice of *hejab*. They became agents of the state in implementing social control and this was approved by their male kin. This was empowering for them. They used their power against secular women by supporting the patriarchal rules and roles for women. They supported the state which created these measures for their empowerment.

Mana, one of my respondents explained:

Many times I was arrested in the streets for not fully complying with compulsory *hejab*. I was always asked similar questions by female members of the Islamic security forces: Sister, how could your heart allow you to let the eyes of a *namahram* (strange) man look at your body? How could you make him guilty of sin? I was dying to ask her: Sister why in your eyes am I guilty of his sin? Why is it that I am not only sinful for not being ashamed of my own body, but also guilty because a man harasses me by looking at me as a sex object? Why am I responsible for his faults, and why is it me who is driving a pure man to sin? Why do you see your value and your power in what you do for men, and for this you deny your own body and your visible presence? I couldn't, though. If I had, I would have ended up in jail (Poya 1992)

To conclude, the state succeeded in imposing the full implementation of the policy and practice of *hejab*. For secular women these measures were repressive. For religious women they were liberating. Despite these diverse responses, the majority shared the view that this form of segregation had created space and more opportunity for females to enter employment.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that in the first phase of Islamisation (1979-1981) the state's initial gender and employment policy aimed at excluding women from the labour force. My field research demonstrated that the ideological effect of women's place in the home, combined with economic depression and change in laws, regulations, customs, policies and practices reduced the demand for female labour. The Islamic state also strengthened patriarchal relations by creating separate spheres for women in the public domain which ensured that women's reproductive role within the family was more important than their role in the public sphere of life, especially in employment. The aim was to restrict women to the private domestic domain and exclude the supply of female labour. In this short period the impact of Islamic gender ideology was overwhelming. But the development of secular and religious responses to state Islamisation were diversified. This process of diversification combined with the impact of economic circumstances of the war years soon changed the position of the theocratic state on women's employment.

Notes

¹. Arranged marriages with soldiers continued, but did not seem to resolve the social problems. As late as 1987 in a series of articles the newspaper *Ettellaat* continued to encourage this form of marriage "as a way to combat moral degeneration". However the same articles pointed out that "the economic problems of inflation, male unemployment and high rate of *mahr* had decreased the number of marriages" (*Ettellaat* 15 - 17.12.1987). To help this desperate situation Janbazan (the Freedom Fighters) organisation was set up and the *Majlis* ratified article 20 of the law which allocated 1 milliard Rials to this organisation to

arrange and encourage marriage for the soldiers. In 1990 this fund increased to 2.5 milliard Rials (*Keyhan* 14.11.1990).

Chapter six

1981-1989

The impact of the Iran - Iraq war

Accommodating mechanisms

6.1 Introduction

Following the beginning of Iran - Iraq war the Islamic state's economic and gender and employment policies changed. The state had to respond to pressures of war, economic dislocations and rigidities in the labour market. In this chapter, based on my interviews and the analysis of statistical data, I have investigated the factors which determined the demand of the state and the private employers for female labour. I will also discuss the way in which in this period, the policy of sex segregation began to adapt. It maintained the ideological stance of the Islamic state yet at the same time, accommodated the economic circumstances. Although the ideological constraint placed women in a disadvantageous position within the labour market, paradoxically in some cases gender segregation opened up opportunities for many religious women to enter employment and even occupy important positions for the first time. At the same time, the imposition of social control by the state (and men) and also self control by women themselves were major obstacles to the upward mobility of many female workers. It will be argued that the role of the war was not limited to its effect on the supply of and demand for female labour. It was an event which raised ideological issues to legitimise state's hegemony. However, these ideological issues interacted with material circumstances of women and men and provided the ground for changing the position of women in society.

6.2 The impact of the state sector's demand for female labour

This section will examine the change in demand for female labour by the state sector of the economy, during 1981-89. Despite the ideological effect of Islamic gender ideology, a number of factors soon increased the state's demand for female labour. The Iran-Iraq war (1980-1989) was one turning point when the flight of men to the war zones reduced the supply of male labour. Inflation was another factor. Also, a general level of male unemployment as a result of Iran's isolation in the world market; the war and the war economy increased the supply of women seeking work or resisting exclusion. There were also rigidities in the system, determined by the ideology of a gendered division of labour which generated continuing particular demands for female labour. Men were neither trained nor ideologically willing to do "women's jobs" such as nursing, teaching, secretarial and administrative work.

In this period, the state gradually changed its original policy of self-sufficiency and its attempt to operate in isolation from a world economy dominated by the West. The Islamic regime gradually began to reverse this economic policy, while continuing the slogan of "neither East, nor West". It is now widely recognised that in this period, Iran, western and eastern countries, continued their political rhetoric against each other but at the same time Iran's oil was purchased and arms were sold to Iran by the back door. Therefore, there was a return to the economic policy of Import Substitution Industrialisation. However, the terms of trade moved against Iran. The Islamic state began to pay for imports through barter deals. Cheap oil was sold in return for expensive imports. The priority was given to food and military equipment. All these resulted in hoarding, shortages and a ration system and consequently a high level of inflation, officially recorded at 30% in the 1980s (Behdad 1995; Pessaran 1995; Poya 1991).

During this period, Islamic ideology in terms of female participation outside the home also changed. Compared to the previous period when the emphasis was to send women back to the home, women were now mobilised by the state to cook, sew and prepare medicines, in the mosques, for men at the war fronts, acting as Zaynab, as suggested by the Islamic state.

As a result, the demand for the unpaid labour of women increased and the state benefited from it economically and politically. Basseej Khaharan (The women's organisation of the mobilisation of the irregulars for the war), one of many Islamic state organisations, had the responsibility for recruiting large numbers of women. The sons, husbands and fathers of many of these women were fighting in the war. During this period, the organisation was financed by donations made by its supporters. They mobilised women in large numbers in mass street demonstrations and in the mosques to produce food, clothes, blankets and medicine for the men in the war fronts. These women were called *Khaharane Zaynab* (Zaynab's Sisters). Once again Zaynab became the symbol of womanhood. The process of recruiting these women to unpaid work continued throughout the war years. There are no statistics to show the number of these women. But as late as December 1988 the daily newspaper *Ettellaat* reported that:

Basseej Khaharan had a number of tasks: Military and ideological training of women; helping the families of the Martyred (the families of those who died in the war) and the families of the prisoners of the war and to serve in the literacy corp, to teach in poor rural areas voluntarily. Their main task, however, was to prepare medicines, repairing the soldiers' clothes and preparing food for the soldiers in the front lines (*Ettellaat* 30.11.1988).

Even under these circumstances, where the state mobilised women to be active outside the sphere of the home, the emphasis was on women's priority in the home. In an interview with a member of Basseej one of the women argued that "although I am married and have children, my activities have no adverse effect on my duties at home (*Basseej Khaharan* 30.11.1988). Elsewhere, *Jebheh Ettellaat* (the supplement to *Ettellaat* daily newspaper) covering the war news reminded women that "in Islam it is not necessary for women to go to war. Obeying the husband is equal to becoming a *mujahedeen*" (warrior for God) (*Jebhe Ettellaat* 25.9.1989).

Unlike the previous period when women were forced out of jobs, they were now encouraged to work part time. Zahra Rahnavard, a female state spokesperson on women's issues and known as a Muslim feminist writer, condemned the Shah's regime for encouraging female employment which led to women's independence and the weakening of family unity, which was against the Islamic state's principles. *Keyhan* daily national newspaper of 5.8.1981 reported her views:

Women under the previous system entered employment for a number of reasons: the hatred of family life; to be independent; to help the family's budget as the man's earnings were not enough; a few because of their specialisation but generally insecurity in relation to the family. The Shah's objective was therefore to: disrupt family life; to increase bureaucracy; to create sexual chaos; and generally to create pro-western family life.

Instead she put forward an alternative situation for the ideal Muslim women:

Men are responsible for *nafagheh*, therefore, they must maintain the family. Women's priority is to bring up children and perform domestic duties. Only under certain circumstances could women go out to work: if their domestic

duties are not neglected and if this work is to promote Islamic values. Under present economic difficulties, where women are forced to go out to work, the government must promote men's employment enabling them to maintain their families. Women's hours of work must be reduced to allow them to perform their domestic duties satisfactorily. Women who have specialisation and are financially secure must give up part of their earnings to help the economic problems of the country.

These arguments were not only ideological in terms of an Islamic philosophy that women's place is in the home to serve men and the family. They also reinforced gender subordination for the benefit of the state. Employing women part time, paying women half a salary, and reducing the hours of nursery schools, saved government expenditure.

Zane Rouz weekly women's magazine also suggested that women who had children could return to part time work if their children were three years of age. This way the state nurseries would operate half of the time and women could look after their children the other half (*Zane Rouz* 14.5.1982).

Two years later in March 1984 Ayatollah Khomeini announced that:

Women can participate in economic, political and social affairs within the Islamic laws and regulations (*Ettellaat* 31.3.1984).

This was a breakthrough. The economic pressure and the war was so hard on families that the state had to compromise its original position. However, this reconciliation needed Khomeini's approval. His speech legitimised women's work outside the home, as did a later speech of President Rafsanjani, but argued that the management of their money and property had to be supervised by men:

Women, after performing their main responsibility of domestic work, could be involved in all levels of economic, social and political affairs. But, in Islam, because of the principle of *Mahr* and *Nafaghe*, women are not responsible for the bread-winning of the family (*Ettellaat* 25.4.1984).

Thus, during this period, the demand for female labour increased and was legitimised by the state. But the emphasis remained on the part-time work of women which reduced women's opportunity, ability and willingness to be in full time employment with its full-time entitlement. In April 1985 the *Majlis* passed a law about women's part-time work. Part time work was defined as half of the time of full time work, receiving half of the salary of the full-time work, without any subsidies and entitlements. The minimum period of work was one year. Women were given the opportunity to contribute to their pension according to the full time rate. They also had the same rights as full time workers, in terms of maternity leave, but only received part time pay (*Ettellaat* 8.4.1985).

The Islamic state inherited the Pahlavi structure of the state sector of the economy (and the private sector of the economy which will be discussed in the next section). The only difference was that a number of state ministries which operated under the previous system closed down (Tourism, Rural Development and Art and Culture). But new ministries were formed (Plan and Budget; Accounting; Industries; Heavy Industries; Oil; and Radio Television). Many Islamic institutions were also formed and some of them became ministries: Pasdaran (the Revolutionary Guards); Jihad (Reconstruction crusades) and Ershade Eslami (Islamic Guidance). Other Islamic organisations also operated under state supervision: the Komitehs (local Islamic councils); Basseej (mobilisation of irregulars for the war) and Islamic societies (Anjomane Eslami) which replaced the shoras (workers' councils which will be discussed in chapter

eight). These ministries and state organisations employed a large number of both male and female workers.

According to official statistics, by 1986/87, 54,388 men and 579 women were employed in the Reconstruction Crusade and 7,083 men and 1,420 women were employed in Islamic Guidance organisations (Iran Statistical Yearbook 1986/87: 86). Many more were employed in other Islamic organisations (Pasdaran, Komiteh, Baseej and Islamic societies) for which there are no figures available. In 1986/87 state ministries employed 1,433,966 of which 1,014,422 were men and 419,544 were women. Thus comparing the figures between 1986/87 and the pre-revolution situation (which was discussed in chapter five) the total percentage of female workers (29%) in different ministries did not change. In some ministries the percentage of female workers fell whilst in others it increased. For example, the percentage of women in ministry of education increased from 41% to 43%; their percentage in ministry of health increased from 26% to 41%. But, their share in the ministry of higher education fell from 39% to 19% and in the ministry of trade fell from 27 to 8%. The ministry of tourism with its female workforce of 27% closed down. But the ministry of Islamic guidance's female workforce reached 17% .

The increase in the share of women in ministries of education and health was because despite the initial attempt to stop female nurses and female teachers attending to male patients and teaching male students, the demand for female teachers and nurses increased. Also, a significant number of women were employed in secretarial and administrative tasks.

I interviewed a number of these women. They all pointed out that the demand for male nurses, secretaries and teachers increased. Many men were trained and employed in these professions, but there was still a severe shortage of labour in

these fields mainly because these professions were seen as women's jobs.

Maryam, a 35 year old nurse, explained:

Initially during the early years of the war, the injured Islamic soldiers objected to being treated by female nurses. Later, however, they had no choice as there was a real shortage of nurses and very few men wanted to become a nurse.

The state, therefore, had to intervene and appeal to the soldiers that female nurses should be accepted. In a series of articles, *Etteellaat* daily newspaper reported that according to the international standard, for every 1,000 persons there had to be at least 3 nurses. That means Iran should at least have 120,000 nurses, while there were only 7,100. The articles also discussed the importance of female nurses and how they should be respected (*Ettellaat* 16.1.1986-19.1.1986)

Similarly many female teachers returned to work, as sex segregation exacerbated the already existing shortage of teachers. Maryam explained:

Under the Shah's regime male and female teachers taught at both single sex and mixed schools. After the revolution, all schools became single sex. Male teachers were to teach at boys' schools and female teachers at girls' schools. The result was that many girls' schools were left with very few teachers. So they allowed female and male teachers to teach at all primary schools but not at secondary schools.

The demand for women to re-enter administrative and secretarial work also continued. Although men were also encouraged to enter these jobs, they were traditionally categorised as women's jobs. Shahnaz, a 44 year old head of a university department explained:

To employ male secretaries for male heads of departments and managers did not work out. Male secretaries were not as good as female secretaries. So female secretaries returned to work.

In conclusion, in the 1980s the Islamic ideology on female participation in the workforce changed. In the early 1980s women's unpaid labour could be justified in the interest of the state's war efforts. The Iran-Iraq war increased the demand for female labour. Throughout the 1980s, and especially by mid 1980s, state ministries employed a large number of women. Islamic organisations were formed and increasingly employed women to deal with women's affairs. In the fields of education, health and administrative work the demand for female labour increased because of the inability and/or unwillingness of men doing women's jobs. Nevertheless, the Islamic state still emphasised women's place in the home and women's part time work outside of the home. This way the state was successful to reinforce its stated gender ideology. Moreover, the state saved expenditure by entitling women to half a wage and not providing child care facilities.

6.3 The impact of the private sector's demand for female labour

This section will examine the change in demand for female labour by the private sector of the economy, during 1981-1988.

The domestic crisis and the war with Iraq put pressure on Islamic statism and the Islamic command economy. By the mid 1980s the faction within the regime in favour of state intervention weakened. The faction in favour of limitations on state intervention gradually took state power. On the basis of *Sharia*, private property was revaluated and, the state encouraged the private entrepreneur to invest and to operate free from regulations and restrictions (Poya 1991: 96-99).

Despite significant nationalisation in the first phase of Islamisation; lack of investment by the private entrepreneur and lack of subsidies by the state in the privately owned and controlled enterprises, private ownership of land and capital prevailed. Under the Islamic state the structure of the private sector of the economy remained the same as under the Pahlavi. In 1986/87 the small private enterprises employed 7,119,000 workers of which 6,610,000 were men and 509,000 were women (Iran Statistical Yearbook 1993: 69) in comparison with 1972/73 figure when these enterprises employed 6,922,000 workers of which 6,118,000 were men and 648,000 were women (Iran Statistical Yearbook 1977/78: 50). Despite an increase in the total number of male and female workers, the percentage of the female workforce in different categories of private enterprises showed a negative trend in comparison with before the revolution (discussed in chapter five): Women's share in the total fell from 9% to 7%. For unpaid family workers women's share increased from 17% to 43% (the majority of these women worked in rural areas working as carpet weavers and agricultural workers in household centred workshops); women's share as wage and salary earners fell from 10% to 5%; their share of self-employment also fell from 7% to 4% but their share as employers increased from 1% to 4%, the majority of these workers worked in urban areas.

These statistics are useful tools to indicate where women are in the labour market. However, my field research casts doubt on these statistics. In rural areas many more women work as carpet weavers, cloth weavers and agricultural workers than the statistics suggest. They are unpaid family workers whose work is invisible in the statistics. The product of their labour is sold by the male members of their families in the market. Golrang, a carpet weaver and agricultural worker explained:

I have been a carpet weaver and an agricultural worker since I was seven years of age. I help my father in animal husbandry and my mother in agricultural work and carpet weaving. Women do not get paid. In a good year, when my father returns from selling the goods in the market, he gives my mother a sack or two of rice to sell within the village. With this money my mother buys gold, silver, household materials and appliances for me and my sister's *jahizieh* (trousseau). Similarly for carpet weaving; my father sells the carpets in the market or sometimes he gives my mother a carpet to sell in the neighbourhood and she spends the money for me.

Thus a large number of women who work in rural areas are not rewarded fully as wage labourers and they do not appear in the statistics. In fact, the Islamic state has not intervened in the working condition of these workers, because it is unpaid and within the home.

In urban areas also, many women work as self employed and petty commodity producers and sellers. But they do not appear in the statistics, although their contribution is essential for the well being of their families. I interviewed a group of ten women who worked as self-employed in a variety of jobs. Fataneh explained:

I make hand bags, blankets and sheets and sell them to the co-operatives. Sometimes I manage to sell 5 - 10 of each every day. This way I have been able to pay off all our debts.

Maryam explained:

I make pickles, jam, tomato puree and dried herbs and I sell them to the neighbours and to the shops in the area. This way I feed the family.

Pari explained:

I make decorative combs and hair clips. This help us keep going.

Pouran explained:

One day as I was driving, I saw two women in the neighbourhood waiting for a taxi. I offered them a lift. They insisted on paying me. From then, I discussed this with women in the neighbourhood and asked them to use me as a taxi driver. They agreed. I became a lady cab. I also work as a taxi driver for the local nursery school. Without my earnings it would be impossible to survive the inflation.

Zari explained:

I buy blank T-Shirts, imprint on them and I sell them to the co-operatives. This way I have been able to help with the mortgage.

Badri explained:

I grow plants and sell them door to door and to the co-ops.

They explained that their husbands' earnings were not enough to feed the family. They therefore had to take the initiative of producing different goods at home and selling them door to door or to the co-operative chain stores. Although they recognised that their earning was important for their families. They did not categorise themselves as self-employed workers. Furthermore, no-one ever asked them what they did and they thought that if they were asked for statistical

purposes, they would categorise themselves as housewife, because the petty commodities that they produced for sale were produced while they were doing the housework. They also explained that they and many women in the neighbourhood were also involved in buying rationed food cheaply and selling it in the black market, which could also be categorised as self-employed. But they did not appear in the statistics.

In urban (and rural areas) there are also a large number of women who are salary and wage earners, working for many small private sector firms. These women were not registered because by not registering their workers the employers escape paying tax to the state and benefits and insurance to their workers. Furthermore these workers did not appear in the statistics. In mid 1980s, the demand from these industries for female workers increased. This increase was dictated by the cheapness, flexibility and disposability of female workforce, but hidden as a response to state labour laws.

According to the law employers had to register their workers by contributing the equivalent of 20% of each workers' salary for their registration and insurance. Once the workers were registered, 7% of their wage or salary was deducted for their insurance contribution. This meant that if employers did not register their workers and did not contribute to their insurance, the workers could not be registered and no national insurance was paid. Benefits such as paid holidays, sickness benefits, maternity benefits, insurance, tax allowances, pension and retirement were paid only to workers who were registered (The Labour Law 1981/82: 277-375).

There were male and female workers who worked for private sector enterprises and were not registered. They were paid below the national minimum wage and they received no benefits or subsidies. But a large number of firms preferred to

employ women because they could be hired and fired easily and many women entered and left these firms because this was the only way that they could get a job for a period of time and the rest of the time perform their domestic duties. Women with children, were particularly at the mercy of these employers because they often arrived late, left early and brought their children to work part of the time because of the lack of or the shortage of nursery schools. In the late 1980s and in the 1990s the increase in the population of children under ten years of age also created shortages of schools and teachers. As a result a shift system was introduced at schools. Tahereh explained how this made women's employment more problematic and private enterprises exploited women workers more than ever before:

For four years I worked in a private medical clinic from 7am - 2pm. I had no break, I was paid half of the national minimum wage. The employer did not pay insurance for me or other workers. Therefore we received no benefits because we were not even registered anywhere as workers. We could see with our own eyes how the employer bribed the government agents in order to get away from paying tax and insurance. When my son was under 7 years of age (school age) my mother-in-law looked after him, because in these firms there were no work place nurseries; state nurseries gave priority to state sector workers and I could not afford a private nursery's fees. When my son was seven he went to school, morning shift only, 7.30 - 11.30. He then came to my workplace, stayed with me until I finished work at 2pm. Because of this they made me work over time and during holidays without pay, to compensate for the hours that my son was there. Finally when I complained to the Ministry of Labour the attitude was that I should have known my rights better.

Lily also had similar experience:

I worked in a private company for 2 years. They would not pay insurance, although they paid the agreed minimum wage. When my first son was born I left the job for a year to look after him. When he was one year old, I left him with my mother-in-law and went back to work as a receptionist in a private clinic for two years. Again they paid no insurance for me. So for four years, although I was paid the minimum wage I was not registered as a worker and lost all benefits and years of service. My second son was born, I left my job for another year and I returned to work when he was one year old. I got a job in a paint-making firm as a secretary. I demanded that they should register me and pay insurance for me. After a while they agreed and as a result I was registered as part of the workforce and received all the benefits. But going to work with two children was very difficult. At lunch time I had to bring my older son to work until 2pm. As a result they made me work unpaid overtime and I lost many days of my paid holidays in order to pay back for the hours that I went to collect my son and brought him to work for 2 hours every day.

Throughout 1980s the number of female workers in these firms increased. For example the government instructed the shops which sell female clothes to employ female shop assistants only. A majority of these shops did not register their workers. By the time the law caught up with them, they sacked the women and employed new ones. These examples illustrate that a large number of women in urban areas were also invisible in the workforce statistics, while their contribution was essential for their families and for the national economy.

It is the gender ideology which places these women workers in a disadvantaged position by undercounting and undervaluing their work. According to the labour laws the minimum wage in the mid 1980s was 45,000 Rials a month. Workers

categorised as hourly paid, daily paid, seasonal workers or contract workers (those who were employed for one year at a time) only received the minimum wage, without any benefits or subsidies. The benefits and subsidies were extremely important and they made a great deal of difference in the final calculation of what the worker took home. For example the salary of a registered full-time worker included 45000 Rials fixed minimum wage plus child benefit (calculated on the basis of three times one day's salary per month) housing benefit, food and cash bonuses and subsidies. These workers were also entitled to paid holidays and sickness benefits (Labour Law 1981-82). However, as was discussed above, the majority of female workers did not receive these benefits because they were not registered by the private firms.

The private sector of the economy included employers, self-employed, unpaid family workers and wage and salary earners who worked in small enterprises employing less than ten workers. The majority of the workforce in Iran was working in these categories rather than being employed by large private enterprises or the state owned and controlled enterprises. In this section I have demonstrated that the percentage of female workers in these categories were greater than appears in the official statistics. Moreover, by the 1980s, the small private enterprises which employed wage earners had resumed production and the demand for female labour increased. But the demand was determined by its cheapness, flexibility and disposability.

6.4 Women's preference for work in the state sector.

This section, based on interviews, will argue that the state sector of the economy is more attractive to workers seeking jobs than the private sector of the economy. However, women's preference for work in this sector was determined by gender ideology, enforced by the state's policy and practice. Generally, the job security of

the state sector had made this sector more attractive to both men and women, despite lower level of wages in this sector in comparison with the private sector. Banks, whether state owned or privately owned, had similar employment conditions and had special advantages. For example they offer favourable mortgage schemes to their employees. After the death of an employee, the loan would be cancelled and the property would be transferred to the inheritors.

However, women preferred to work in state enterprises for ideological reasons. State workplaces were physically large, and sexual segregation and social control could be implemented easily in order to avoid *fesad*. This was because women were regarded as both corrupting and corruptible. The concept of sexual harassment did not exist for the state and for men. Women recognised the abuse of power by men over women but this ideology is so deeply rooted in the minds of men and women that they believed that the mixing of the genders could create moral degeneration. Thus, they saw the solution in segregation and the state as a location for moral safety. Fataneh and Maly were both bank workers and identified themselves as middle class with low level of religiosity. They believed that:

The state sector has large work places where *fesad* (moral degeneration) can rarely happen. In the small private sector work places, there is a great deal of *fesad*, because men and women work closely together. Many women prefer to work for the state sector, they feel safer in these large places, both in terms of relationship between the sexes and sexual harassment.

And for Azar who identified herself as middle class and religious:

For religious families, women working in the private sector is out of question. Within the state sector, teaching is the most respectable profession.

Besides the importance of morality, women also preferred working for Banks and the state sector because the flexibility of the hours of work allowed women to perform their domestic work more easily. For example banks had their own employment regulations, which were advantageous to women. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s banks introduced flexible hours of work for women who had children. Many women found this helpful to them, as they could work three days a week flexible hours, even though they were paid half a salary of a full time employee. Also these women were offered one year unpaid maternity leave without losing the security of their job. Although, this gap was not calculated in their years of service, many women accepted the offer because the regulation allowed them to go back to their job after the leave.

Beside banking, nursing was another profession where women were concentrated, and working in state hospitals was regarded as preferable for female nurses. However, despite the ideology, low wages and bad condition of work in the state sector forced the poorer women to work in the private sector or both.

Forough, a 45 year old, nurse described her experience:

I have worked in both private and state hospitals. In some ways nurses prefer to work in private hospitals, because conditions of work are less harsh than in the state hospitals. The state hospitals are overcrowded, there are terrible shortages of medicine, food and equipment. The salaries are also higher in the private hospitals. However, there is more job security and flexibility in the state hospitals, you have a life time job. No one can dismiss

you providing you keep your head down and do as you are told. You don't have this security in the private sector. There is a great deal of competition and with the slightest problem you can lose your job. But still the harsh conditions of work in the state run hospitals and very low wages force many women to seek jobs in the private hospitals.

To conclude, choice between working in the state sector or private sector was different for women and men. Men chose to work in the state sector because of the material advantages of this sector. Women, however, chose this sector for ideological reasons. Even when they considered the material advantages of this sector, it was ideologically based. In some cases the economic pressure forces women to work in both sectors or move between the private and the public enterprises. Hence, the pressure of ideology controlled the supply of their labour.

6.5 Gender segregation within employment

This section will assess women's responses to sex segregation within employment and, the positive and negative effects of this policy on women's employment.

In some cases, segregating women and men in work places increased female's employment. As is discussed in chapter five, the policy of segregation opened up opportunities for a large number of women to be employed in boutiques and shops to serve women only. Also supervisory positions were created for females in some factories where male and female workers were segregated on assembly line production. When I visited Bel Air radio and television factory I observed that women worked on one side of the assembly line and men on the other. Zahra the female supervisor of women's assembly line explained:

Complete segregation is not always practical. There is a division of labour between female and male workers. Women assemble the smallest items, as they have small fingers, and men carry heavy items. But sometimes to accomplish their task they have to move around and mix with male workers. Since Islamisation we have female supervisors for female workers, like myself, which we did not have before. This is to reduce the amount of contact between the male and female workers but has created higher positions for some women.

Mansoureh a VDU operator also confirmed that:

There are some positive aspects to segregation. We work in a much more relaxed atmosphere because there is much less sexual harassment. This means that many religious women feel comfortable to go out to work while under the previous system they could not. Before, all supervisors were men, now we have female supervisors which is good.

Although segregation had created opportunity for some women to become supervisors and managers, their numbers are very small and wherever there was a position as manager or supervisor, there was a male person above them. This was to comply with the religious ideology that women should not be in the position of judging and managing. The ideological effect of women's priority in the home was to stigmatise women who were participating in the public sphere of employment. The ideology of segregation, therefore, had imposed social control on women and enforced an inferior position for women in relation to men.

Zohreh, the manager of a laboratory in a chemical industry explained:

I am a scientist and I have a great responsibility as the head of the team and the head of the section. I have to control the whole of the production process, from controlling the raw materials, to the control of formulas and packaging. I have eleven specialists who work under my supervision. But because I am a woman, I have to work ten times harder than my male counterpart who has been given a higher position than me. To prove that I am able in my position. I constantly have to translate the latest formulas and research about the most up to date ways of producing medicine until they recognise my expertise. The male colleagues get others to do their work for them and with a few speeches and letters prove their ability. After one year, one male colleague has received a company car. After seven years, I have been given access to a car with a driver to drive me from my home to work and return. Their reasoning is that I am a woman and did not need a car, because my husband has a car (See appendix 1: interview c).

The inferiority in the eyes of the law is the basis of women not being promoted at work places to higher position: Shahnaz, a university lecturer, explained:

Most heads of departments and principles are male. Teaching is considered the right profession for women but not promotion to high position in the education system. Women do reach some high positions because of their high standard of education and experience but there is always a limit for them to go any further. They are not promoted because the criterion for promotion is not education and experience, it is gender ideology. Even if women have a high position they can not go any further. For example, women never go out of their work places to meetings and conferences, meeting other heads of sections and principals. It is not seen as good for women to keep going in and out of their workplace. While male colleagues are constantly after their promotion and they achieve it.

Negative aspects of segregation excluded women from further and upward mobility. Zohreh, a scientist and the manager of a laboratory explained how segregation reduced mobility, even if Islamic laws were reformed and did not totally exclude women from work. Even when women had the knowledge and expertise, lack of access to information and negotiation placed them in inferior positions:

Men sit together, talk together and support each other. Women are too busy working hard to prove their abilities. Men make relationships between themselves from management positions to the security officers at the factory gate. This way they create a support network which allows them to manage all their affairs and step up the ladder of promotion and success. Women are ideologically prohibited to do this.

Simin, an accountant, also explained how male workers created their own support system and network and excluded women from it. This was one of the ways for their upward mobility and segregation had made it easy for them:

I am the head of industrial accounting. But my managing director never asks me to go with him to discuss the business with the bank manager. He goes with a male accountant. It does not look good if he goes with me. This excludes me from further mobility, while allowing the male accountant who is in a lower position to me to be promoted.

Mahin, a nursery school teacher, and Shahin, a bank clerk, explained how the ideology of segregation controlled women's movement within work places. Women's movement was only allowed if it was directly related to their domestic responsibilities. This had a negative affect on their upward mobility within their

employment, while men's movement was naturally related to their position and further mobility within employment. They both had similar experiences:

During the break time women never go out, while men go out to meet with other colleagues. If women have to go out which is usually to deal with their domestic and child care problems they have to fill a form and take time off which is calculated and deducted from their salary. For men, however, it is so normal to go out that it is naturally accepted as going out for business.

Nahid, the technical vice president of an electronic firm confirmed that even if women worked better and harder than their male counterparts segregation limited their mobility within the workforce:

In this factory I am the only female person in the position of management. Male managers usually come late and leave early. But I work 10 - 12 hours a day to prove my suitability. I never go out to meet any colleagues. I am never invited to meetings and conferences, while I am more knowledgeable about new technology and scientific management than any of my male colleagues.

In Iran, female journalists have perhaps the hardest time to fulfil their task under pressure of the ideology of segregation. If going to places, hearing people and getting engaged in discussions and debates are important part of a journalist's work, in Iran, female journalists could not go to places and get involved in discussions and debates. This is because these activities are considered to be undignified for women, while when men did the same it was considered to be part of their knowledge, specialisation and efficiency. Shahrzad, a journalist explained:

Many female journalists are forced to accept this attitude. They put their heads down and do what they are told, in order to prove their dignity. A good female journalist is the one who is quiet and her head is down. Those who argue and get involved in discussions and debates are not good women. Female journalists are not sent to other cities or abroad for journalism. Unmarried female journalists are an even in worse position. Very few responsibilities are given to them. Married women with children sometimes have to leave early or arrive late because of child care problems. They usually welcome that they are excluded from being sent to other cities and abroad, otherwise they will be under more pressure for fulfilling their domestic work as well as their journalist tasks. As a result they are given the least important jobs and they are treated badly even if they are good journalists and write well. Women journalists are usually considered as not being able to do their job properly.

Zhila, another journalist, also explained:

All editors and head of sections are men. Female journalists' activities are very restricted. They are never sent to other cities let alone abroad. Ministries and other workplaces mostly stress that they don't want women journalists. I am the only female journalist in the political department. But my male colleagues believe that because I am a female, I am emotional and weak so I cannot do my job effectively. So I have to work much harder to prove that I am a good journalist. They appreciate that I am a good writer. But they send a male colleague to collect information and then they ask me to write and rewrite his materials which will then be published in his name.

Gender segregation within employment had some positive effects. In some cases it had increased female's supply of labour and had opened up opportunities for

women to enter high position such as managing and supervising women workers. However, in the majority of cases the negative aspects of segregation had imposed social control on women and had enforced an inferior position for women in relation to men.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, based on the analysis of my field research data, I have argued that in the second phase of Islamisation (1981-1989), the state used the war to legitimise its hegemony. But material factors, arising from economic circumstances of the war years affected women's expectations, family relations and their positions in the labour market and consequently had a powerful impact on the Islamic ideology on female participation in the workforce. The demand for female labour gradually increased both in the state and private sectors of the economy. Women were engaged in a variety of occupations and their contribution was absolutely necessary for the well being of their families. In this period, the state used different perceptions and the process of segregation as accommodating mechanisms to perpetuate women's employment, despite its stated ideology that women's place is in the home. These mechanisms were then used by the state to control the supply of female labour and exclude most women from upward mobility.

Chapter seven

1989-1997

Real reversal

7.1 Introduction

The end of the war with Iraq in 1988 and the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989 marked a real reversal of the state's economic and gender and employment policies. This chapter will argue that despite the initial attempt by the Islamic state to exclude women from employment, a comparison of the statistical data of pre 1979, with the 1980s and the 1990s, shows that women's participation in the labour force had barely changed. In this period, under socio-economic pressure and women's responses, the state relaxed measures which were initially designed to control women's position in the public sphere of the economy. The family law, education and employment regulations were reformed. However, despite these reforms, patriarchal relationships continued to impact on women's employment. Based on the interviews I will argue that gendered roles in the domestic domain; the necessity of men's permission; lack of or shortage of nursery schools; gender blind policies and state intervention to influence the structure of the labour market, are among factors ensuring women's subordination within the workforce.

7.2 The numbers and disposition of women in the economy in the 1990s

In this section I will compare the statistical data for the state and privately owned and controlled enterprises in three different periods: before 1979; in mid 1980s and in the 1990s. My aim is to examine the extent by which the Islamic state was able to abolish female labour as was its stated aim. A comparison of 1993/94

figures with mid 1980s and pre-revolution figures shows that the total percentage of female workers in state ministries did not fall - in fact it increased from 29% to 30%. As is shown in table 7.1, during this period the percentage of women workers increased in the ministries of education; health and justice. It fell in ministries of trade and higher education and ministry of tourism which its female workforce was 27% closed down. However, the percentage of female workers in ministry of industries increased and the ministry of Islamic guidance's female workforce reached 17%. In other new ministries the number of female workers increased between mid 1980s and 1990s. For example, the number of females employed in the Reconstruction Crusade increased from 579 in 1986/87 to 1,234 in 1989/90; to 1,438 in 1991/92 and 1,751 in 1993/94 (Iran Statistical Year-books 1988/89: 69; 1992/93: 79 and 1994/5:71).

Table 7.1 Percentage of female workforce in selected state ministries, in selected years

Ministries	1974/75	1986/87	1993/94
Total	29	29	30
Education	41	43	42
Trade	27	8	10
Health	26	41	41
Justice	6	10	19
Higher Ed	39	19	20
Tourism	27		
Industries	-	5	14
Islamic Guidance	-	17	17

Source: Extracted and calculated from Iran Statistical Year-books 1977/78: 66; 1986/87: 86 and 1996: 71.

A comparison of 1993/94 figures with mid 1980s and pre-revolution's figures for large industrial enterprises (state and privately owned) employing more than ten workers shows that the number of these enterprises increased from 3973 in 1972/73 (Iran Statistical Year-books 1977/78: 383) to 5,922 in 1993/4 (Iran Statistical Year-books 1994/5: 164). In 1993-94 these industries employed

619,437 workers of which 34,479 were women and 584,958 were men (Iran Statistical Year-books 1994/5: 158) in comparison with 1972/73 when these industries employed 19,459 women and 230,190 men (Statistical Year-books 1977/78: 386). As is shown in table 7.2, in 1993/4 women's share of the total workforce in these industries fell from 8% to 6% in mid 1980s and remained the same in the 1990s. In most industries the female share fell with the exception of industries producing basic metal; paper, cardboard, print and publishing, and wood and wood product.

Table 7.2. Percentage of female workforce in different types of industries within the large industrial enterprises, in selected years

Type of industries	1972/73	1984/85	1993/94
Total	8	6	6
Food, beverages & tobacco	9	6	6
Textile, clothes & leather	10	7	6
Wood and wood products	1	1	2
Paper, cardboard, print & publishing	3	2	4
Chemicals	11	8	9
Non-metallic minerals products not including coal and petroleum	4	6	3
Basic metal	1	0	7
Machinery and tool making	6	5	1
Others	15	10	5

Source: extracted and calculated from Iran Statistical Year-book 1977/78: 386; Large Industrial enterprises statistics 1985/86: 41-43 and Iran Statistical Year-book 1996:158.

A comparison of 1993/4 figures for small private enterprises in 1993-94 with mid 1980s figures and pre revolution's figures also shows a fall in the total percentage of women workers in these industries from 9% to 6%. As is shown in table 7.3, according to these statistics, female's share of unpaid family workers increased from 17% in 1972/3 to 43% in 1986/7 and to 44% in 1991/92; the share of female wage and salary earners decreased from 10% in 1972/3 to 5% in 1986/7 and remained the same in 1991/2; the figures for female self-employed decreased

from 7% in 1972/3 to 4% in 1986/7 and increased to 5% in 1991/2 which is still less than before the revolution. But the figures for the category employer increased from 1% to 4% in 1986/7 and decreased to 2% which is higher than before 1979 revolution.

Table 7.3 Percentage of female workforce in small private enterprises in selected years

Type of employment	1972/73	1986/87	1991/92
Employer	1	4	2
Self-employed	7	4	5
Wage and salary earner	10	5	5
Unpaid family worker	17	43	44
Total	9	7	6

Source: Extracted and calculated from Iran Statistical Year-books 1977/78: 50; 1993: 69 and 1996: 66

However, many of my respondents expressed doubts about the figures for female employment in small private enterprises. Firstly those who collect statistics, mainly men, do not talk directly to women. Secondly, as is discussed in chapter six, many women who may be working as employers, self-employed or unpaid family workers do not declare themselves as workers because they see themselves primarily as house-wives. Thus, the actual number of women in these enterprises must be higher than what the statistics show. Having considered this problem and assuming that this problem existed under the Pahlavi, it can be concluded that the percentage of female workers in state ministries has increased but in private industries has decreased. Nevertheless this analysis based on the sexual division of labour under the Islamic state shows that the Islamic state was unable to abolish women's labour.

Despite state ideology women have not been marginalised but are involved in a variety of employments where their contribution is absolutely necessary to improve the standard of living of their families.

7.3 Shifts in the position of the state

The war with Iraq ended in 1988. Both sides claimed victory for a war which lasted eight years. It was estimated that one million Iranians and half a million Iraqis died and a million others were left physically and psychologically disabled. Ayatollah Khomeini died on 3 June 1989. War reconstruction began and economic relations were liberalised. In the 1990s, the restructuring of the economy was a move towards further integration to the global economy.

Despite the emphasis on Islamic moral, ethical and financial laws, the Islamic economic system in Iran rapidly adapted to world capitalism. Islamic economic laws and regulations were modified to allow the operation of a capitalist mode of production based on private ownership of the means of production with an Islamic flavour. For example production and consumption of alcoholic beverages and pork was prohibited. Nevertheless alcoholic beverages were produced and distributed in the underground economy. Whilst interest was officially prohibited, it was charged in the uncontrolled financial markets of the Bazaar. Fees, bonuses, prizes and discounts have replaced the interest rate in the controlled and nationalised banking system (Rahnema and Nomani 1990: 159-161).

However, the absence of interest rate remained a problem. It did not and still does not operate as a mechanism to adjust inflation. It had, therefore, created a very high rate of inflation (officially recorded at 40 - 45% in the 1990s) which severely reduced purchasing power. Despite its rhetoric, the Islamic Republic had also followed the economic strategy of the former regime (Import Substitution Industrialisation). The Iranian economy relies heavily on oil. Crude oil was produced and sold on the world market to provide the capital and a major part of

foreign exchange was used for the private and public sectors of the economy (Behdad 1995; Pessaran 1995; Poya 1991).

Moreover, the liberalisation of the economy did not lead to economic growth. Productive investment remained low and the currency remained outside world currency markets. The foreign exchange problem created an unstable economy and discouraged entrepreneurs from making long term investments. Iran's traders exchanged Rials under different exchange rates. Although the state provided a favourable exchange rate for entrepreneurs and traders, they were only involved in short term investments and trade, made quick profits and moved their profits to foreign banks. The process of impoverishment, especially of the poor who constructed the backbone of the Islamic regime had been intensified (ibid).

Nevertheless, despite these economic problems, the oil money had helped to generate funds. In the 1990s the Gulf war and the American destruction of Iraq's economy pushed oil prices up and Iran benefited. Iran's oil revenue increased to \$18b. The GDP began to rise, imports of goods increased from \$10b to \$24b, and as a result, consumption increased (Poya 1991). Thus, the general level of demand for labour whether male or female had increased as a result of post war reconstruction. Male inability and unwillingness to perform women's jobs also increased the demand for female workers in particular sectors. As a result women's participation in both the official and statistically accounted for, and the unofficial and undercounted labour market had increased. Nevertheless, rhetorically the Islamic state had continued its stated ideology of women's place being in the home and controlled conditions of women's employment.

In this period the prisoners of war returned. The voluntary work of women in Islamic organisations declined. But in the absence of state welfare to subsidise the unemployed, the war veterans and their families, more opportunities were created

for women's participation in the labour force. Priority for training and employment opportunities were given to women who lost their male members of their families in the war. A large number of women who worked in the Islamic organisations on a voluntary basis were now employed by these organisations and were paid a wage.

But state propaganda continued to emphasise part time work for women. In his speech on Iran's women's Day, the birthday of Fatimah, President Rafsanjani announced that the law for part-time work of women would allow women to spend half of their time in economic and social activities outside of the home and the other half in their home, performing their domestic duties (*Keyhan* 26.12.1991). On the same day, Khamenei who replaced Ayatollah Khomeini as the spiritual leader also reminded women that family was a natural institution and was the basis for women's activities. Women with all their expertise and knowledge must first fulfil their family role (*Keyhan* 26.12.1991).

7.4 The reform of the family law

This section will discuss the factors which led to change in the position of the state and consequently the reform of the family law. The end of the war with Iraq in 1988 and Khomeini's death in 1989 coincided with massive economic and social crisis and with demands for liberalisation of the economy and society. The government controlled media expressed the changing position of the Islamic state. They reported the statistics about population explosion and argued that this problem was partly the result of arranged marriages and encouraging marriages "as a way to combat moral degeneration" and partly the result of the banning of contraceptives. According to official statistics Iran's population increased from 33,708,744 in 1976/77 to 49,445,010 in 1986/87 and to 55,837,163 in 1991/92 (*Iran Statistical Year-book* 1996:35).

In July 1989, the Ministry of Health for the first time announced plans for a government policy on population control. In February 1990 Ayatollah Sanei even raised the question of acceptability of abortion as a method of birth control (Zane Rouz 3.2.1990). This was in complete contrast to the official policy in the early 1980s when Ayatollah Khomeini emphasised that "abortion, regardless of the stage of pregnancy, and sterilisation were prohibited in Islam" (Paidar 1997: 288-289). The media waged a massive campaign for population control. Posters were put up in the streets, factories, offices, schools and universities calling for national awareness and population control. Newspapers warned about the link between poverty; illiteracy; unemployment and population increase. *Keyhan* newspaper in a series of articles reported:

The total land under cultivation is only 12 million hectares which is only enough to feed 30 million persons. The rate of population growth among the 6-10 years age group is 4.7% per annum. This means that in the last 15 years their number has been doubled. If this trend continues, Iran's school student population will grow to 27 million within the next 20 years. They need employment which the state cannot provide. One employed person is responsible for feeding 3.5 persons. In order to maintain this level of employment the state has to create 950,000 jobs every year while between 1976 - 1986 only 190,000 jobs were created. In terms of health the rate of population increase has been 3% while the rate of increase in opening health centres has been 1.3% (*Keyhan* 18, 21, 25.9.1991).

The media also criticised the family law for the population explosion:

The model of having many children means poverty, more people living in shanty towns and higher mortality rates. All the regulations in relation to

encouraging the population increase must be abandoned and policies in relation to population control must replace them. Female education, health and employment must be improved, as an effective way to decrease the growing population. The ministry of health and education must campaign and help people to understand the importance of the use of birth control. Higher budgets should be allocated for female's education, health and employment (*Keyhan* 22, 23, 26.9.1991).

The media, especially women's magazines encouraged the use of contraceptives. Different forms of contraception (pills, condom, coil and sterilisation) were made free of charge and available on demand. *Keyhan* reported that there was widespread back street abortion and warned about the dangers of this practice. As is shown in table 7.4 it also provided information about the percentage increase in the use of different forms of contraception between 1989 - 1991 (*Keyhan* 18-24.0.1991).

Table 7.4 Percentage increase in the use of contraception 1989-1991

	Pills	Condom	Coil
1989-90	7612350	15707136	96809
1990-91	8079933	37938343	133121
% increase	6	141	37

Source: calculated on the basis of information in *Keyhan* newspaper 19 September 1991.

On 11.3.1992 the same newspaper announced that 330 hospitals around the country were distributing different forms of contraception free of charge.

Other reforms were also made in laws regarding marriage, divorce and custody of children. High Judicial Council agreed with a new clause in the marriage law. It announced that women, at the time of marriage, may request that the clause

"Condition under the Marriage law" be included in their marriage contract. Under this clause a woman had the right to: ask for divorce; refuse the husband the right to marry another woman; have the custody of her children, boys to their adulthood and girls as long as she did not get married to another man. Also a man no longer had the unilateral right to divorce his wife, by simply registering his will at a registry office without the woman's knowledge; men and women had to go to the civil courts for divorce and the registry offices could only register divorce with a civil court's decree. If a man decided to divorce his wife unjustly he had to pay compensation to her. Similar reform allowed female lawyers to practise family law in the civil courts. The law stated that "In each civil court a woman who has knowledge of the law must be present to deal with divorce cases" (*Keyhan* 19.10.1991; 25.9.1991; *Zane Rouz* 18.8.1991). At the 1997 International Conference on Middle Eastern Studies, Mehranguiz Kaar, a female lawyer from Tehran at a Round Table on the Situation of Women in Iran argued that:

After the revolution the religious leaders insisted that in Islamic laws women do not have the right to be judges and female judges were sacked. In mid 1990s we have seen a step towards ratifying and returning to the previous situation. There is now a law which allows women to act as judges but not judges who give definitive judgement which delineate the part of the law and their signature in this context is not validated. According to the law women can be research judges. They prepare the case, they prepare the evidence, they prepare the argument and they present it to a male judge who makes the final decision on the basis of the research judges. This has allowed women lawyers predominantly act as judges in family law, but by law they can be research judges in different areas of law. Before this law, according to *Sharia*, women had no right to be judges. Now in practice women are acting as judicial councillors. Remarkably the clergies are now stating that in principle in Islamic term there is no barrier to women acting

as full judges and giving full judgement in all cases. For many Iranian women, this is a step leading to a future position. It is for this reason that we feel that fundamental changes is taking place and in this process we are gaining certain ground which has been gained so hard that it would be extremely difficult to lose. They are permanent footage and there is a way forward.

Furthermore, the Islamic state legitimised male and female relationships outside marriage, through the reform of the *sighe* law. President Rafsanjai acknowledged the view that sex outside marriage was not acceptable and if it was practised it had heavy penalties ranging from stoning to death and one hundred lashes, according to the severity of the sin. Thus he argued that *sighe* could resolve the problem of moral degeneration in an Islamic society. But he also acknowledged that *sighe* could resolve the sexual need of men and women, and not just men. He argued that the practice of temporary marriage had to be made more acceptable. Women as well as men could initiate such a marriage. There was no need for marriage ceremony to be conducted by a clergyman and to be registered in the presence of witness. The man and the woman could recite the formula even in Farsi, if they found the Arabic version difficult. Through this private and verbal contract the man and the woman could be together for any length of time (*Zane Rouz* November 1990).

Throughout November and December 1990 a heated debate took place in the Iranian media about the advantages and disadvantages of this reform. The middle classes with a lesser level of religiosity regarded it as legalised prostitution. Other social groups with higher level of religiosity regarded Rafsanjani's reform as preferable to the decadent western style promiscuity and free love (Haeri 1989; 1994). However, despite the initial attempt by the Islamic state to encourage temporary marriage and president Rafsanjani's reform, the practice of temporary

marriage remained marginal and stigmatised. In particular virgin women could not initiate *sighe* without jeopardising their future marriageability.

More importantly, changing the law did not easily change people's attitudes. The cultural values attached to the principle of marriage and virginity was so deeply rooted that despite acknowledging female sexuality and giving a lesser degree of importance to the question of virginity, many were reluctant to accept male-female sexual relationships outside permanent marriage.

However, the most important effect of this reform was the way some women reacted and used the reform to legitimise their freedom of movement and employment status. Laila explained:

After getting divorced from my first husband I set up a small media and communication business to publish a literature and art magazine. But it was impossible because I was a divorced woman, living with my two children without a husband. Meanwhile I became fond of a male colleague. We wanted to be together and work together. This was another impossibility. I did not want to marry him. I wanted to get to know him. I, therefore, proposed to him a temporary marriage for a year. Everyone around us disapproved, they thought it was degrading for me. But for me this was the only way to work without being harassed by the neighbours and the people who I worked with.

In the 1990s the state, partly under socio-economic pressures and partly women's responses (to be discussed in chapter eight), changed its initial position of attempting to seclude women within the home. A programme of family planning to control the population, the reform of marriage and divorce laws and allowing women to act as judicial councillors were all major concessions that the Islamic

state had to make in order to accept the reality of women's situation and gave women a relatively better bargaining position within the family law.

7.5 The reform of the education system

In this section I will assess the reversal of the Islamic state's position on female education.

As noted in chapter five, in 1980 all higher education institutions closed down. In 1984, they reopened with the slogan "Religion before Science" and major changes were introduced. The changes included general criteria for all applicants: believing in Islam or one of the religions recognised by the Islamic Constitution and having no connection with political parties, categorised as anti-government or atheistic. Male applicants also had to meet very strict requirements of military service (Mojab 1987: 6). The aim was to create a totally religious generation (Higgins and Shoar-Ghaffari 1994: 36-40; Matini 1989; Echo of Iran no 6 1986).

The criteria for female applicants, however, signified Islamic gender ideology in operation. Women were not admitted to a large number of courses. For example 64% of the institutions did not admit women to Mathematical and Technical Sciences. 17% did not admit women to courses categorised as Experimental Sciences. These were Veterinary Sciences; Animal science; Agrarian Studies; Geology; Disease Control and Natural Resources. Conversely, Midwifery; Family Hygiene and Sewing as part of Art and Design courses admitted only women. In other areas the maximum limits for female applicants ranged between 25% to 50% (Mojab 1987: 7).

Finally, in 1985, the *Majles* passed a law which prohibited unmarried women from going abroad to study. Their underlying philosophy was that these unmarried women may be affected by western values and cultures.

However, in the second half of the 1980s and in the 1990s the education system was reformed, allowing women a greater participation in previously restricted fields of study. As is shown in table 7.5, although female literacy rate lagged behind male education, the gap was narrowing, especially in urban areas, in comparison with pre 1979 period.

Table 7.5 Percentage of female literacy rate in urban and rural areas -1976 - 1992

Years	Total	Female	Male
1976-77	47.5	35.5	58.9
1986-87	61.8	52.1	71
1991-92	74	67	80

Urban areas		Literacy rate		
Years	Total	Female	Male	
1976-77	65.4	55.6	74.4	
1986-87	73.1	65.4	80.4	
1991-92	no figures are available			

Rural areas		Literacy rate		
Years	Total	Female	Male	
1976-77	30.5	17.3	43.6	
1986-87	48.4	36.3	60	
1991-92	no figures are available			

Source: Extracted and calculated from Iran Statistical year-books 1992: 113 and 1996: 432.

Also as is shown in table 7.6 a detailed analysis of women's education under the Islamic Republic shows that female participation had increased at all levels of

education (in both urban and rural areas with the exception of middle school). This was despite all the limitations of Islamic gender ideology and the Islamic state's intention of secluding women in the home.

Table 7.6 Percentage of female educational level in selected years

Total			
Education level	1976/77	1986/87	1991/2
Primary school	35	43	45
Middle School	43	38	40
Secondary School	35	40	41
Higher education	26	28	33
Total	35	40	43
Urban areas			
	40	45	46
	50	43	44
	37	43	44
	27	29	35
	38	43	44
Rural areas			
	27	39	44
	26	30	33
	19	24	27
	15	14	15
	26	36	39

Source: Extracted and calculated from Iran Statistical Year-books 1981/82: 113; 1989/90: 108; and 1994/95: 433.

The percentage increase in female education was not homogeneous for all urban and rural areas. When in 1991 I visited a number of villages in the east and the north of Iran I learned that in the poor areas of the east very few girls went to school but in the comparatively richer areas of the north most girls went to school alongside boys. This was a change from the first phase of Islamisation when educational segregation excluded female children from going to school in rural areas. Nevertheless, as is also shown by Higgins and Shoar-Ghaffari's detailed analysis of women's education in poorer parts of the country and in non-Persian ethnic provinces the education level was generally low, though especially for

female education. Still here too the gap was narrowing (Higgins and Shoar-Ghaffari 1994).

To analyse the gender differentiation in areas of specialisation I have also compared male and female higher education degrees in different fields of study (Medicine; Humanities; Science; Technical and Engineering; Agriculture; Arts and Architecture) for the academic years 1992/93 - 1993/94 and 1994/95 - 1995/96. As is shown in table 7.7 only in Medicine was the percentage of females comparable or higher than males at different levels of further and higher education. In other areas the gap was very wide because priority was given to male students and these fields of study were considered unsuitable for female students.

Table 7.7 Percentage of female further and higher education degrees in different fields of study in the academic years 1992/3 -1993/4 and 1994/5 - 1995/6

	Higher Diploma	BA/BSC	MA/MSC	PHD
1992/93 - 1993/94 %	%	%	%	
Medicine	51	71	55	40
Humanities	12	32	15	13
Science	20	38	19	22
Technical & Engineering	3	7	4	4
Agriculture	1	3	3	8
Arts & Architecture	47	45	20	7
1994/95 - 1995/96				
Medicine	55	67	52	44
Humanities	18	33	15	17
Science	25	39	17	17
Technical & Engineering	4	9	4	5
Agriculture	11	11	2	6
Arts & Architecture	51	46	20	9

Source: Extracted and calculated from Iran statistical Year-books 1995: 471-2 and 1996:472-3.

The establishment of Alzahra University, a women-only university played an important role. The female lecturers had exploited the idea of the university as a single sex institution and had opened up opportunities for female students to study in many courses which were not available in other universities. Fatemeh, head of a department explained:

Alzahra university, the only female university in Iran, provides many science degree courses for females and has increased the number of female students in many higher degree courses. However, in other universities there are many courses which are closed to women. For example Chemistry; Physics; Medicines; Dentistry and Biology courses give priority to male students. This is even written in the guide books for entry examination to university degree courses, which in reality closes many doors to women's education and employment.

The regulations concerning not admitting female to study agricultural studies (*Keyhan* 16.5.1989) and law (*Keyhan* 25.9.1991) were also modified, creating more opportunities for women to study and work in these fields.

These reforms were as a result of pressure on the state by women who had to participate in the labour market despite the Islamic ideology. For example in 1990 religious women objected to the 1985 education law which excluded unmarried female students from studying abroad. They argued that they supported the Islamic state, but their interests were defined in both gender and class terms that the Islamic state was failing them by ignoring their interests. A group of these women wrote a letter to *Keyhan* complaining that:

This law discriminates against religious working class women who rely for their studies on government financial help. Those women who have money can go abroad despite the law and continue their education. It is also gender discrimination, because why should moral degeneration only apply to women and not to men? We appreciate the importance of marriage and for this reason we appeal to the *Majles* to reform the law and allow women of over 28 years of age who have a good record of Islamic behaviour to be allowed to continue their higher education abroad (*Keyhan* 22.11.1990).

In the 1980s, the state policy of sex segregation in sports was successful and women's sport suffered severely. However, in the 1990s women only sport grounds were created in swimming; table tennis; horse riding; skiing, shooting and chess. The state also allowed women to compete internationally in those sports such as flatwater kayaking that did not require compromising their *hejab* (*The Guardian* 1.11.1995).

Also the interaction between ideological factors and material circumstances has changed gender consciousness and attitudes to female education. Many families regard higher education as a valuable asset for females as well as for males. The ideal future is seen to depend on becoming a university graduate. The idea of "marriage after university; work after university; independence after university" is becoming a shared value expressed by many young women. Although many female graduates do not enter the workforce, as their priority is to get married and have children, many young women's attitude is that "if I do not get married, I will get a job" (Farhadpour 1998). This is also evident in the statistics for the age of marriage. Although officially the age of marriage for girls is nine, in practice the average age of marriage is twenty one in both urban and rural areas (*Iran Statistical Year-book* 1996:52).

Kaar (an Iranian lawyer) explained:

The *Sharia* law is contradictory with civil law. For example, according to *Sharia* law nine years old girls can get married. According to education law, all children age seven must go to school, otherwise their parents can be punished for not respecting the civil law of compulsory education for children. Also conventionally a nine year old is considered a child. This is one of the contradictions which have united all women, regardless of their class and levels of religiosity to pressurise the state for reform(Kaar 1997).

In conclusion, in the 1990s the state under socio-economic pressures and women's responses changed its position. The education system was reformed which provided better opportunities for women to enter employment.

7.6 Patriarchal relationship and women's employment

The initial changes which were made to underwrite patriarchal relations in the public and private spheres of life did not seclude women within the home and as is discussed in previous sections the state had to change its position and reformed the laws and regulations.

However, as I argued in chapter three (literature review), Kandiyoti's characteristics of classic patriarchy (1991:31-35) is more prevalent in Iran under the Islamic state than under the Pahlavi. The ideology of the patrilocal household and the authority of the senior man had been strengthened. Even in prosperous urban areas, such as Tehran, economic hardship had forced many young families to abandon their nuclear unit and live with their parents. Azar, a school teacher, explained:

We live with my husband's family firstly because we cannot afford to have a place of our own. Secondly, because my husband works outside Tehran most of the time and in the eyes of my husband's family it is not good that I live on my own. They are a religious family. They don't like the idea that I work outside the home but there is not much choice, as we need the money. To compensate for this I have to do most of the housework. My brother-in-law and his family also live in the same household. My sister-in-law and I share the housework between us. She sometimes helps me with my son. For example, if I can not take him to school or collect him from school on time, she does it for me. As a result, I end up doing most of the housework which is the work of three families.

The cultural values attached to the importance of marriage and total compliance with the practice of *mahr* and *nafaghe* had increased to the extent that its practice is a source of prestige and to deviate from it is to dishonour the family. Minoo explained:

I was a student in London and there I lived with my boyfriend. When we returned to Tehran, under pressure from our families we had to get married. Before the marriage ceremony our families bargained over the rate of my *mahr* for a long time and finally agreed a price. I had to go along with this degrading practice because in the eyes of my family I have already dishonoured myself and my family by losing my virginity to a man and living with him without being married to him. My mother wanted to regain my honour and the honour of our family. She was satisfied by succeeding to get

my husband's family to agree to the amount of my *mahr* equal to my husband's sister (my sister-in-law) who was married a few months ago.

In rural areas, in particular, many poorer women were forced to marry older men in order to survive poverty and deprivation. Zahra a young carpet weaver and agricultural worker explained:

My family who live in the next village are very poor, they have no land of their own and work as agricultural workers. Three years ago they married me to my husband who is 70 years of age, because they couldn't afford to keep me any more. My husband owns his land. I gave him a son. He has six older children from his first marriage. His daughter, Maryam, is older than me . But he likes to have more children.

Marriage of cousins had also become more common and popular than during the period between 1960s-1970s. Segregation of the sexes in public places had led to a situation where public gathering and entertainment were non-existent. There are divided seats in all public places such as cinemas, theatres and concert halls. Only those who were married with each other or were related through the extended family could sit together in the restaurants or walk together in the streets, parks, mountains and other public places. People's movements were strictly under the surveillance of the Islamic security forces. The degree of punishment for non-conformity varied from imprisonment, eighty lashes and severe warning. As a result, in the majority of cases, the extended family gathering was the only form of entertainment. This situation had reduced the chances of men and women meeting and getting to know each other.

If women were not married and had no children, they were expected to look after the old and the sick within their family. Shahin a 40 year old administrative officer explained:

After my divorce, everyone in my family expected me to look after my old and sick parents instead of continuing my education and seeking a career through employment, especially as I had no children. As a result I have been looking after my parents for many years. Since my mother died I have been looking after my father and for the last two years I have been working part time, in the afternoons, in my brother's company. I wake up at 7am, make breakfast for my father, give his medicines, do cleaning, washing, shopping and cooking. After lunch I give my father's medicines and I put him to bed for an afternoon nap and then I go out to work. At work I have a large number of responsibilities, administrative work, secretarial work and as telephone operator. I also help with the VDU operators, planners, accountant and the librarian. Every body expects me to work harder because I am not married and have no children. They seem to forget that looking after an old sick man is as demanding as looking after a child. I end up working at the weekends and in the public holidays. I work harder than my brother who is the managing director of the company. I feel that if I was not a woman and I was not expected to look after my parents I should have been the managing director.

A married woman had prestige and social status and a single or divorced woman had neither prestige nor status. Women's virginity was the most important factor determining the honour of the husband and the family. Mally explained how these values forced women to abandon their children for the honour of the family:

When I was sixteen I married and I have a son from that marriage. After a few years he divorced me to marry another woman. Life was hell, because I was a divorced woman and had a child on my own. I met my second husband. He was also divorced and had a son from his first marriage. It appeared that it could be an equal relationship but it was not and it is not. When we decided to marry, he told me that his family's honour would be in jeopardy if they found out that I was not a virgin, a divorced woman with a child. I had no choice than to hide this reality and send my son to be brought up by my mother. Since then I have been pretending that he is my younger brother but my husband does not have this problem. He regularly meets his son, who lives with his mother, and he does not need to lie about him.

Therefore, the state reformed laws. But patriarchal control over women was seen as being essential because of the link between the honour of the family and the honour of the community and society - which women were responsible for. Thus, if women had to participate in the workforce, and if this threatened patriarchal authority of the man or men within the family. The state was to ensure the operation of patriarchy at the level of the state and the family. The slogans on the walls and outside workplaces read:

"Sister, your *hejab* is more effective than my blood" signed "on behalf of martyred soldiers of Islam (Soldiers who died in the war with Iraq)"; "Women who are not observing the proper *hejab*, are offering their sexuality", "Women who do not observe the proper *hejab*, show how dishonourable their men are" (Maiyar 1995, no14)

Also, as was discussed in earlier sections, women actively participated in and responded to the economic forces and the reversal of the state's position provided

better opportunities for women to enter employment. However, the position of women workers as major or auxiliary contributors to the family income was not recognised. Furthermore, their subordinate position within the labour market was reinforced by gender ascriptive relations. Based on interviews, in the next sections, I will argue that factors such as gendered roles in the domestic domain; the necessity of men's permission; the lack of or shortage of nursery schools and the state's gender blind policies, allow men and the state to control and restrict women's ability to sell their labour power and place them in a disadvantaged position within the labour market. Social class, access to material resources and level of religiosity also affected women's position within employment and the home.

7.6.1 Gendered roles in the domestic domain

This section will discuss the relationship between marriage and work for women in Iran under the Islamic state. It will be argued that the importance given to marriage institution and women's exclusive responsibility to perform domestic duty put constraint on the supply of female labour. The constraint, however, is determined by class and levels of religiosity.

As is discussed in chapter five, the authorities used the concepts of *Mahr* and *Nafaghe* to justify women's place in the home, performing domestic duties. Thus, under economic pressure women went out to work but the ideology of female domesticity restricted the supply of their labour and put them in a disadvantaged position within the labour market. Maryam, a teacher and the mother of 4 children, explained:

I worked as a Physical Education teacher. It was so hard to work as a PE teacher and at the same time be solely responsible for the housework and

looking after the children, as my husband never took any responsibility. In the morning I had to rush, take children to my mother and go to work. When I finished work, I had to do shopping, collect children and go home, to cook; clean, wash and to help with my children's home work. I was always exhausted. As a PE teacher I was expected to be fit and lively, but I wasn't. Most PE female teachers are in the same situation. Some headmistresses were sympathetic, most headmasters were not. As a result most of the time I was demoted. This meant that I had to work in rough working class areas with less resources, while male PE teachers were promoted to middle class areas with more resources.

Moreover, the ideological effect of the institution of marriage and the concepts of *mahr* and *nafaghe* gave the responsibility for the domestic work exclusively to women. The Islamisation of the state and the emphasis on women's place in the home had meant that the only part of the domestic work that men were willing to help with was shopping which was an activity outside of the home, and carrying heavy objects which was seen as masculine. Mahin a 33 year old nursery school teacher explained:

I do all the house work. The only work that my husband is willing to do is shopping and carrying the paraffin and the gas containers from one floor to another.

It was also because of gender-based processes of socialisation. The majority of men before marriage lived with their family, where their mothers or other female members of the family did the domestic work. Fataneh, 37 year old nursery school teacher, said:

My husband, my children and I live with my parents who own the house. My sister is also living with us. My mother does all the housework. My sister and I help her when we return home from work. My husband and my father don't touch anything, if they attempt to do anything, it is bound to go wrong. Housework is not men's work. They don't know how to do it and women should respect this. I teach my daughter how to do the housework but not my son.

The attitude to domestic work was also different according to women's access to resources and their level of religiosity. The poorer the women were, and the higher their level of religiosity, the harder they worked and their hours of work were longer. In rural areas the work of women was totally household centred and there was little distinction between their productive work which was sold in the market by men and their domestic work. When I asked Ameh Khanom a 57 year old agricultural worker and a carpet weaver whether men do any domestic work, she lowered her voice and whispered in my ears that:

It is wrong if men do any housework. The house work is naturally woman's work. It is a disgrace if men do the house work. Only if something goes wrong with the electricity or the water pump then it is men's job to fix them.

In a group interview at Margarin factory all seven women that I interviewed explained that they and their daughters or daughters-in-law carried out the domestic work, but not sons, sons-in-law or husbands. They also thought that it would be a disgrace if men did the housework, even though they were unemployed and stayed at home all day while their wives or daughters worked in the factory. The idea of men sitting at home and women going out to work was such a disgrace for these women that they voluntarily approached the

management to make them unemployed and gave their jobs to their husbands and sons (see appendix 1: interview b).

Women who had better access to resources spend less time on domestic work but ideologically they were responsible for it. Nahid, the technical vice president of an electronic firm, age 33 explained that:

I have a servant who does all the housework. But if she is not around for any reason I do all the housework myself. Mainly because my husband does not know how to do it.

Domestic work was crucial to the standard of living of all families. Men and children depended on women to do this work for them and benefited from it. This division of labour, however, increased women's hours of work, regardless of the degree of their access to resources and their level of religiosity. Only a minority of urban women who had chosen to be unmarried and had no children and had made a hard decision to concentrate on their upward mobility through a career could escape domestic work. As is shown in table 7.8 on the basis of seventy six interviews I calculated the average daily hours of work of women in rural and urban areas:

Table 7.8 Average daily hours of work of women in rural and urban areas.

Type of Work	Rural		Urban	
	Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried
Unwaged	12	12	-	-
Waged			8	12
Housework	4	4	4	-
Shopping	-	-	3	-
Helping with children's studies	-	-	2	-
Total	16 hours	16 hours	17 hours	12 hours

Source: Calculated on the basis of 76 interviews.

To conclude, despite reforms, gendered roles in the domestic domain which was an important justification for the ideology of women's place in the home restricted women's participation in employment.

7.6.2 The necessity of men's permission

Despite reforms, it is conventional and according to *Sharia*, that women must obtain permission from their husbands and / or other male head of the family to seek employment and to be employed. This section will discuss the restriction imposed on supply of female labour through male's control over the sale of female labour. All the women that I interviewed had to obtain permission to go out to work from their male kin. The majority of my respondents explicitly stated that they would stop working the moment their husbands asked them to leave their job. This is not only to comply with the state regulation but also to comply with the ideology of male domination within the family. In the majority of cases men do give permission to women to go out to work, mainly because women's earnings are essential for the family's survival.

The class and the level of religiosity play an important role in the practice of such an ideological stance. For example, those women who identify themselves as *Kargar* with high level of religiosity are poorer women where families need their earnings. Under these circumstances and despite the ideology, men and women have to accept that women must go out to work. As a result male permission to a women is pure formality. When I interviewed a number of women, factory workers and agricultural workers/carpet weavers and asked them about how they obtained permission to go out to work from their male kin, they looked at me as if I was asking a strange question and then they laughed and said "men have to give permission, there is no choice".

Those identified themselves as middle class with a greater degree of religiosity suffered a greater degree of subordination than those who identified themselves as middle class with a lesser degree of religiosity. They practiced the values attached to Islamic gender ideology to a greater extent. If a woman had to go out to work, they were under enormous pressure. Maryam a nurse explained:

I will not work unless I have my husband's permission. My husband and I believe that my prime duty is my domestic activity. We therefore both feel uneasy about my work, as a nurse. To be *khanomeh khaneh* (the lady of the home) and *aghayeh biroon* (the master of the outside of the home) is a difficult task. It is like to run two hostile worlds and keep them in harmony. But we have no choice. My salary is important for the survival of the family.

Another Maryam, a teacher, expressed similar feelings:

We are a religious family. In religious families, women should not go out to work. But we had no choice, I had to go out to work in order to help to feed the family. I had a good opportunity to get a job in a bank. But my brother would not give me permission. He said that it was a disgrace for him if I work, especially in the same workplace. I became a teacher. When I married it was the same story, my husband did not want me to go out to work, but because of financial problems he had to agree that I continue with my job as a Physical Education teacher. However, he would not agree that I go to games on Fridays (the weekend in Iran). He wouldn't agree that I teach at boys' schools. As a result, I lost overtime pay, bonuses and any opportunity to be promoted. Most female teachers faced the same problems, while male teachers had none of these problems on their way of upward mobility.

However, women who identified themselves as "Non religious middle class", were under less ideological pressure from men and the family and because they had better access to material resources the question of husband's permission was more implicit rather than explicit. They had to comply with the law and to acknowledge male domination within the marriage and the family. But, they had a greater degree of autonomy in decision making about the supply of their labour.

Maly, the head of a section in a bank explained:

For non-religious middle class, it is prestigious that women go out to work and their work is valued but they are expected to give priority to domestic duties. Women who work are respected, they have more control over their property, belongings and decision making (also see appendix 1: interviews c and d).

The necessity of men's permission was a formality which was practiced to a larger or lesser degree, depending on the social class and levels of religiosity of men and women. It was to comply with the ideology of male domination within the family which had been strengthened by the Islamic state. It controlled and restricted women's ability to sell their labour power.

7.6.3 Lack of or shortage of nursery schools

This section will describe the shortage and lack of child care provision by the state as an obstacle to the sale of women's labour. Article 78 of the employment law, which was ratified in October 1991, stated that all work places that employed women workers must have a nursery school, operating under the supervision of the ministry of health. The employer must allow women workers to

breast feed their babies every three hours, for half an hour. Furthermore, these hours should not be deducted from their wages or salaries (*Keyhan* 7.1.1992).

According to *Keyhan* newspaper in 1990 there were only 930 nurseries across the country, operated under the supervision of Ministry of Health, 300 of which were privately owned and controlled and were situated in Tehran, the capital city (*Keyhan* 6.1.1992). Less than half a million children (out of a potential cohort of 15 million) attended such nurseries (*Keyhan* newspaper 27.7.1991).

These nursery schools operated under Sazemane Behzisty va Behdasht (Well Living and Health Organisation) which is part of the Ministry of Health. There were three different forms of nursery schools in Iran: Workplace nurseries, state nurseries, subsidised by the state and privately owned nurseries.

Some large industrial enterprises (employing more than ten workers) had workplace nursery schools. They accepted under 7s (school age) and were free of charge. Each woman worker had the right to take three of her children to these nursery schools. For other children, she was paid up to 8,000 Rials for each child to be looked after in the state nurseries, outside the factory. With slight variation, this was the case in the three industrial plants (Bel Air Radio and Television factory, Margarin Cooking Oil factory and Iran Hormon Pharmaceutical factory) that I visited in 1991.

Some work places such as banks, schools hospitals and some ministries also had nursery schools. They were not free of charge but they were subsidised. The majority of the state sector work places that I visited had such a nursery schools but many women could not afford to pay the subsidised fees. Fataneh, mother of two children and a bank clerk explained:

The work place nursery charges between 4000 - 12000 Rials per month, per child. It was too expensive for me. Most of the time my mother and mother-in-law looked after my children. Otherwise it would have been impossible for me to go out to work.

There were also state nurseries, subsidised by the state. They charged more than the work place nurseries within the state sector. But they were overcrowded, usually 45 children in each age group, which was against the labour law. *Keyhan* daily newspaper reported that according to the ministry of health each age group must not exceed thirty children (*Keyhan* 9.1.1992). They did not have qualified staff and there was evidence of health and educational hazards in many of these institutions (*Keyhan* 14.1.1992).

In a series of articles in 1992, *Keyhan* daily newspaper reported a number of complaints made by women. Nursery fees had increased between 30 - 50%. This meant that a large number of women could not go out to work. As a result, families' standard of living had fallen. If the government was keen to return women to employment and use their expertise it must provide nursery facilities (*Keyhan* 8.1.1992). Women demanded that either the government had to provide better and cheaper state nursery schools or increase their wages so that they could afford the private nurseries fees (*Keyhan* 5-14.1.1992).

The fees of private nurseries varied. The cheapest was 30,000 Rials per month, per child, an equivalent of one month salary of a low paid worker in early 1990s. In 1992, a year after the ratification of the labour law, stating that workplaces which employ female workers must provide nursery schools, many of these nurseries had to close down for being underused and because of lack of profit. Many state nurseries and work place nurseries also closed down because of general economic recession (*Keyhan* 27.7.1991). High taxation, high insurance

premiums, low level of pay to the nursery workers, high rate, high rent, shortage of appropriate food, technology for disabled children and lack of general nursery school resources were identified as reasons for the closure of these nursery schools (*Keyhan* 7.1.1992).

The response of some employers to women's objections to lack of nurseries was "we have more important things to do". Some increased women's wages, but women complained that this proportion was much less than what they had to pay for nurseries. For example some employers agreed to pay 3,000 Rials per month, per child while nursery fees were 30,000 Rials per months, per child (*Keyhan* 7.1.1992).

The majority of the women whom I interviewed and the majority of my questionnaires showed that women used their mothers or mothers-in-law to look after their children.

Table 7. 9 Type of child care facilities and women's options

Type of facilities	Questionnaire	Interviews
Female kin	237	43
Workplace nursery	20	10
State nursery	27	12
Private nursery	8	5

Source : Calculated on the basis of 348 questionnaires and 76 interviews.

For the majority of women any form of nursery school which charged a fee was too expensive. Maryam a teacher with four children explained:

Without my mother it would have been impossible for me to go out to work. I could neither afford the expensive private nursery schools nor overcrowded and poor condition of state nurseries.

Thus, the shortage and lack of nursery schools reduced the supply of female labour. Paid maternity leave was 3 months for the first and the second child and then one month for other children. But most women took one or two years unpaid maternity leave, until their children were older, enabling them to leave their children with their female kin. This put women in a disadvantaged position in comparison with men in the labour market and had a negative effect on their grade, salaries, years of service, insurance, and pension schemes. Mansoureh, a 35 year old VDU operator explained:

I have two children. I have lost 2 years of service, as I had to take 2 years unpaid leave, one year for each child. Most women in our workplace are in the same position. We lose years of service for bringing up children. I have worked the same number of years as some of my male colleagues, but because I have lost 2 years of service for bringing up children, I am behind of them in terms of grade and salary.

Fataneh 48 year old bank clerk had similar experience:

I have 4 children, I had to take 7 years unpaid leave to bring them up at different times. As a result I have lost 7 years of service, affecting my years of service, insurance scheme, pension scheme and all other benefits and bonuses.

Despite reforms and changes in the laws and regulations, the shortage of nursery schools or lack of them were important obstacles in the way of female supply of labour.

7.6.4 Gender blind policies

The state's laws and regulations were also gender-based. They did not take into consideration women's domestic responsibilities and this also placed constraints on the supply of women's labour and added to their hours of work. For example, Lily, a 29 year old secretary, explained how segregation on the buses, and specifying that 1/3 of the buses was for women only, added to women's hours of work:

Going to work with two children was very difficult. I had to take one child to his school and the other to his nursery school. Since they segregated the buses, only 1/3 of the bus is allocated to women, on the basis that less women go out to work than men. Even if this is the case, they do not consider that this is not enough for women with 2,3,4, or 5 children going to work early in the morning. My children and I have to leave the house two hours earlier every morning. By the time I got to work I felt exhausted.

Tahereh, 28 year old secretary, explained how the rationing system added to women's hours of work:

To do the shopping within the rationing system is a great task. One coupon has to be taken to the north of Tehran and another to the south in order to buy the necessities cheaper than in the black market. If you don't go on time your coupons will be out of date. Sometimes it becomes impossible to do the work outside of the home as well as the housework and help children with their studies.

In October 1990 the hours of work of the state sector employees changed from 7 - 3 to 9 -5. This created enormous problems for women workers and added to

their hours of work. In a number of articles in newspapers and magazines women described their problems:

"I have two children, 5 and 7 years of age. With the change in the hours of work I do not see my children from 7am - 7pm. I am not able to help them with their homework." "Nursery schools only keep children up to 3 - 4pm. We have no choice than to bring our children to our work place until 5pm. This is creating problems for us in the work place". "Before the change in the hours of work I finished work at the same time as the nursery school. This allowed me to collect my children on the way home. Now I have to take leave to collect my children which is deducted from my wages" (*Keyhan* 22.10.1990; *Zane Rouz* 12.10.1990).

Shahin, one of my respondents expressed similar worries:

Before the change in hours of work I had more time to do the housework. Now I get home around 5.30. I do the cleaning, the washing and the cooking. After dinner I help children with their home work and get them ready to bed. I then have to cook tomorrow's lunch for my children because they only go to school half a day and also do the ironing and other bits and pieces. I sometimes find myself working until 1 or 2 am. I don't get enough sleep and I am always very tired.

The state's social and economic policies were based on the assumption that women's place was in the home. These gender blind policies restricted the supply of female labour.

7.6.5 The structure of the labour market

This section will argue that the structure of the labour market is based on the patriarchal relationships within the home and the wider society and according to the Islamic state's gender ideology.

One important effect of such stated gender ideology was the refusal to recognise women as bread-winners. Therefore, their benefits were calculated as a single person. A single person received half of a married person's allowances and subsidies. For example, employers paid 3,000 Rials per month to a single person and 7,000 Rials to a married person in the form of goods or food subsidies. Sometimes instead of cash bonus, coupons were given for food items. These coupons could be sold in the black market, if they were not needed for the household use and they added a considerable amount to the income of the family.

Women did not receive child benefit, even if they had children. They did not receive the married person's allowance, even if they were married. This reduced their level of salary drastically, in comparison with men's. For the same reason, women's tax, pension and retirement deductions and allowances were also calculated on the basis of a single person. For example after her death a woman's pension would stop while a man's pension would be transferred to his family. Women and men were entitled to health schemes but women could only use the scheme for themselves and not for their families. Fataneh explained:

Banks have their own annual bonus schemes which is not a part of the national agreement. It is an arbitrary amount which is paid to the employees. Many women do not receive this bonus because they are not considered as the head of their family. Under special circumstances some women may receive some bonus, but much less than men.

In 1990 *Zane Rouz* weekly women magazine published an article, describing the government approval of the new year bonus to workers. This also revealed the gender differential treatment within the labour force and the labour market.

Each employee who is married and has children will receive 100,000 Rials. Each employee who is not married will receive 70,000 Rials. Married women are considered as single persons (*Zane Rouz* 4.3.1990).

According to my field research, women earn 50% to 25% less than their husbands, because as was discussed in the previous sections, they were not categorised as the bread-winners and were excluded from benefits and subsidies. However, they spend all of their earnings on the household. Men earn more and spend a lesser percentage of their earnings on the household expenditure and, therefore, save more. Fatemeh explained:

I earn 70,000 Rials per month, I pay the rent which is 30,000 Rials per month and after consulting my husband I spend the rest on household expenditure. My husband earns 100,000 Rials per months. I think I pay for half of the household expenditure and he pays for the other half. He must make some savings.

In some cases where women had access to resources and were less constrained by ideology they were able to spend less and save more. Fereshteh explained:

As an electric engineer and supervisor, I earn 200,000 Rials per month. My husband who has the same level of education is a manager and earns 300,000 Rials per month, because he is the bread-winner. I spend very little of my money on household expenditure, I spend it on what I want and I

mostly save. I do, however, consult with my husband about what I would be spending my money on, because tradition and the norm dictates to me that I should respect him and get his approval.

In another article *Zanan* Monthly Magazine reported another way by which women were in a disadvantaged position. The article pointed out that within the state sector the percentage of women who had higher education was 18%, while only 6% of men had higher education. But only 3% of these women occupied high positions. The article reported interviews with a number of women in high positions and asked their opinion. Dr. Firouzeh Khalatbari, female assistant director of the economic affairs of the Bank Markazi Iran, (the central bank of Iran) explained:

This is not surprising. In a patriarchal developing country it is natural that the criterion for reaching high status is not superiority in educational level.

Dr. Jaleh Shadi female sociologist in Tehran University expressed a similar view:

To encourage women to retire early, the media portraying women as mothers and wives, not allowing women to work in managerial positions, and not considering women as the bread-winners of their families are a few reasons among many to explain why there are few women occupying high positions.

The article also confirmed that many married women had to pay higher rate of taxation because they were not considered bread-winners. Nahid Javanmard female barrister and lecturer in employment law, business law and civil law in Azad University pointed out that:

In the eyes of the law men and women may be equal but the employers treat women and men differently (*Zanan* 22.11.1990).

In the late 1980s - 1990s the state attempted economic expansion and had to respond to pressures of war, economic dislocation and rigidities in the labour market. As a result there was a shift in the state's position. Expediency replaced the initial hard ideological line and consequently a pragmatic acceptance of increase in female labour force. Nevertheless the social relations of gender remained tightly controlled by men and by the state.

7.6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the Islamic state, despite its initial attempt, did not succeed in abolishing women's labour and secluding women within the home. In the 1990s under socio-economic pressure and women's responses, the family law, the education system and the employment regulations were reformed. But the continuing patriarchal control over women within the home and employment restricted women's ability to sell their labour power. The structure of the labour market revealed how the state, unable to abolish women's labour, differentiated between women's condition of work and men's condition of work. The construction of gender roles and gender rules by the Islamic state in the home, in the workplace and in society as a whole continued to place women in a disadvantaged position within the labour market and the family.

Chapter eight

Women's political responses to the patriarchal gender relations

8.1 Introduction

"The legal reform which had taken place was the result of women's activities inside and outside of the country, of activists and scholars who had constantly struggled for change. These struggles had ensured that it was no longer possible to offer the kind of traditional interpretation of the Islamic laws that was entirely detrimental to women" (Kaar 1997).

During the years 1979-1981 religious and secular women saw the revolution as a first step towards liberation from the uneven economic and political developments of the Pahlavi state. This was mainly an urban movement, especially in big industrial cities such as Tehran. The majority of women who were engaged in this movement were waged workers, including industrial workers who were engaged in worker's struggles within the workers' councils (*shoras*). After the establishment of the Islamic state secular women's organisations were driven underground or disappeared and workers *shoras* were replaced by Islamic Societies. Throughout the 1980s only religious women's organisations and actions were favoured by the Islamic state and only in the interest of the war efforts. However, by the late 1980's many religious women were politicised. Their work experience in paid and unpaid work and their active participation in the political movements raised their consciousness about the limitations of the Islamic state gender relations. In the 1990s, many religious women who supported the Islamic state and opposed secular women's movement in the first phase of Islamisation, changed their position and invited secular women to join them in the debate on women's issues within the media and politics. For many secular women the Islamic state severely limits their struggle for a better society free from religion.

They see the state holding on to its patriarchal gender relations, as its survival depends on it. However, under this theocratic state, where they have no access to political sphere, some see their unity with religious women as the only way that they could challenge the Iranian state. In previous chapters I argued that women actively participated in and responded to economic processes and forced the state to adapt its ideological position and practices. Here I focus on the forms those responses and struggles have taken. I will argue that a combination of women's political activism and their individual survival strategies led to gender consciousness on a scale which has never been experienced in Iran. Through class analysis, my aim here is to show how women's organised and individual responses constitute a form of constraint on the extent of state power and the patriarchal power of men.

8.2 Women's political response to the revolution in 1979

This section will discuss the mass participation of women in the 1979 revolution and the struggle of women workers for trade union rights within the *shoras*.

8.2.1 The mass participation of women in the revolution

Why women of different social classes and with different levels of religiosity participated on a mass scale in the 1979 revolution? During this period, millions of women took part in everyday demonstrations, predominantly wearing the black *chador*. The majority were religious women who, as is recorded in chapter four, were considered backward and had no place under the Pahlavi regime. Many young women of these families had been forced to imitate western values, including the wearing of the latest European fashion when they went to work or

to university, whilst their families insisted that they should behave according to religious values, including the wearing of *chador*. This imbalance resulted in a crisis for them. Thus their support for Ayatollah Khomeini was a political act against alienation and dissatisfaction and reflected their anger. More importantly, when I interviewed a number of these women, I learned that behind the passive image which was given to them by the media and the state (serving God and men) was another reality, of strong women, taking initiatives, organising and raising the consciousness of men and women about injustice and inequality.

One of my respondents was Azam Taleghani who was a member of the *Majles* during the revolutionary period of 1979 - 1981 and the head of the Women's Society of the Islamic Revolution. She explained about women's activities during the revolution:

Women carried their children on their shoulders and attended meetings, conferences and marches. Many were killed during the street demonstrations against the Shah's regime. We worked in hospitals all day and night and looked after the injured. Women left their homes and their husbands to work in hospitals and in the mosques. They only went home a few hours a day to sort out things for their children. Those who had young children organised collective child care facilities in the neighbourhood, allowing time for everyone to do their share of voluntary work. Women attacked police stations and barracks, confiscated arms and distributed them amongst the revolutionaries.

Forough, another participant in the revolutionary movement, also explained how during the revolution, in her neighbourhood, women took the initiative to work in the hospitals. They forced men to accept their work outside the home and made them contribute financially to the revolutionary cause:

My uncles are *Bazaar* merchants. I phoned them one day and told them that I and many other women, rich and poor, from the neighbourhood have decided to go and help the injured in the hospitals. I told them that they should make themselves useful and send us a large amount of cotton materials. They listened and we women sat by our sewing machines, and within a day or two we cut the materials they sent and made massive amount of bandages, we washed them, ironed them and took them to hospitals.

It should be noted that the mass movement also included secular women. Even the women members of the Women's Organisation of Iran (the Pahlavi state-sponsored women's organisation) supported the movement, despite the fact that their headquarters were burnt down by the Islamists (Sanasarian 1982: 117). Many women joined the demonstrations everyday without *chador* and everyday were given scarves by the march organisers who pleaded with them to wear it as a sign of unity for the overthrow of the Shah. One woman activist showed me a whole wardrobe full of scarves which she collected on the demonstrations. This gave the women's response to the revolution an Islamic flavour.

What was important for all these women, religious or secular, was the fact that they all felt that this was the time to fight for change. Parvaneh summed it all up:

Many friends were in jail and under torture. Many were executed. I was anti-Shah, but there was no concrete political guidance for my generation. I found religion as a way of survival. I was not fundamentalistically religious. I prayed, but I wore a miniskirt. I fasted, but broke my fast with a sandwich and a Coca-Cola in the cinema. I found religion fulfilling and securing my life but I did not like the religious implication that women should stay at

home. I did not want to stay at home. I wanted to be educated and be an artist (Poya 1992: 149).

To conclude, the majority of women despite their class differentiation and levels of religiosity celebrated the revolution and took the revolution as a first step towards improving their status within family, employment and the wider society.

8.2.2 Women's struggle within the shoras

The 1979 revolution provided an opportunity for trade union activities. Women's participation in the *shoras* raised gender consciousness, as their struggle for better wages and conditions of work had a gender dimension.

One important feature of the early days of revolution was the rise of the *shoras*. They survived for eighteen months and played an important political role in securing basic trade union rights in Iran. Female and male workers actively participated in these *shoras*. In rural areas, where the impact of the revolution was not as much as in the urban areas, confrontation between landlords and agricultural workers became widespread and *shoras* were set up to re-distribute the land to agricultural workers and organise production. In the oil industry and other established industries, where the practices of trade union activities existed and some workers remembered their own involvement or their parents or close relatives' involvements in the working class activities of 1940s-1950s, helped in the formation of these *shoras*. But in industries where the workforce had mainly migrated from the rural areas since the 1960s, the *shoras* could not be created on the basis of historical experience. The pre-revolutionary strike committees were the basis of these *shoras* (Bayat 1987: 109-113).

A few days after the revolution, Khomeinie sent a message to the workers asking them to go back to work in the name of Islam and revolution. The workers went back to work, but they found no change, the same wages, and the same conditions. They reacted quickly against the same system. In many factories, the manager or the owner had fled the country. Therefore, their absence provided an opportunity for the workers to immediately create *shoras*. In other factories where there existed the same management, the same supervisor and even the same SAVAK representatives, this became the reason for the creation of the *shoras*. The workers formed committees within *shoras* to secure different demands including: better wages and conditions; health and insurance; participation in decision making; contact with other *shoras*; publicity for workers' news; the organisation of strike funds and the establishment of women's committees, dealing with specific demands of women workers (Bayat 1987: 102-112; Poya 1987:143-149).

Soon the independent role of the *shoras* were undermined. The government declared workers' intervention in management affairs to be unIslamic. Islamic societies were formed and began to intervene in the affairs of the *shoras* and to support the state-appointed managers. The workers faced the danger of losing all their revolutionary gains and being thrown back to where they had started. In protest, Shoraye Moassesse Ettihadieh Sarasariehe Karegarane Iran (The Founding Council of Iranian Workers Union Throughout the Country) was formed to strengthen the individual *shoras* and to establish unity between them. On 1 March 1979, this body published a 24 point demand, including basic rights of workers to better wage, conditions and trade union recognition. Following this, Ayatollah Khomeini, who for a long time had not publicly expressed any views about the *shoras*, made a speech and asked the workers to respect the Islamic societies (which replaced the *shoras*) to save Iran from capitalism, imperialism and communism (ibid).

During this period I was engaged in trade union activities with women industrial workers in four factories: Serum Sazi (Vaccine making) and Squibb (both factories part of the pharmaceutical industry); Minoo Biscuit-making factory (part of the food industry) and Gherghereh Ziba (Beautiful thread) in the textile industry. A woman friend and I helped these women in their struggles within the *shoras*. The weakening of the *shoras* was particularly damaging to female workers. In their short life, these *shoras* played an important role for women workers. For example the setting up of work place nurseries allowed women to continue to work outside the home without worrying about their children being left in the streets or alone at home. Zahra one of the female members of the Serum Sazi's *shora* explained at the time:

The most important problem for women workers in this factory, like everywhere else, is the child care problem. Most women leave their jobs when they become pregnant. Some will come back to work when their babies are older, they usually leave their children with their family, relatives or even sometimes with neighbours. Most women workers are either young women who are not married or do not have children or are middle aged women whose children are grown up. One of our demands is, therefore, a work place nursery, which we pushed through the *shora* and we won the battle with the management. The management has agreed to build a nursery but they said that the *shora* is responsible for finding appropriate land near the factory. We considered this a way to put us off, but we are actively looking for appropriate land.

The setting up of literacy classes was also important because the literacy gap between male and female workers meant that illiterate women were automatically

categorised as unskilled and therefore, low-paid workers. Fatemeh from Squibb factory explained:

Equal pay legislation operates in this factory. Women are supposed to be paid equal to men for doing the same job, but in the majority of cases the lower educational status of women prevents them obtaining equal wage with men. For example, men and women work with machines, but only those who are literate get extra payment. Because there is more illiteracy among women they do not get the extra payment. So in reality equal wage for doing equal job does not exist. That is why we are demanding literacy classes for the illiterates.

Health issues were particularly important for female workers, such as the use of chemicals in the pharmaceutical industry or the harsh conditions of work in textile industry which were dangerous to their reproductive system. Zahra from Serum Sazi explained:

The condition of work is still very harsh. The air is extremely polluted with chemicals. There is no proper ventilation. Most workers suffer from weak eye sight, chest problems and skin diseases. We need a *shora* to push for proper ventilation, masks and spectacles to protect us. We need showers and sinks to wash the chemicals off our face, hands and body. There is only one shower and one sink in the whole factory which is not enough. There is never any soap. We hardly use the shower because we are not allowed to use it within the working hours; if we do, we have to work extra hours in order to cover for the time that we spent in the shower. The majority of workers in this factory are women and the effect of chemicals on women is worse than on men because if they are pregnant or if they breast feed they suffer more and they transfer the chemicals to their babies.

In this period women's trade union activities also raised gender consciousness. For the first time these women were engaged in independent trade union activities as women. This was significant in a number of ways: The *shoras* were under attack by the Islamic state. Both female and male workers were struggling to save the *shoras*. But male workers were against female representation. They believed that women should leave these activities to men. On the other hand women believed that they should be represented in the *shoras* as women workers, because they had specific demands affecting female workers. Zahra from Serum Sazi explained:

In this factory 60% of the workers are women. After the revolution, men workers could not ignore us as our numbers were more than theirs. They could not exclude us from the *shoras*. We managed to have 4 women representing 60% of the workers and 11 men representing 40% of the workers.

And Mehri from Gherghereh Ziba explained:

After the revolution we wanted to create our *shora*. We elected a committee, the meeting was nearly ending and there was no talk about women's participation in the *shora* and their representation. Suddenly one of the women from the back of the hall shouted that women should also be in the *shora*, we have to have our own representatives. There was a lot of disagreement from the men, they argued that this is not women's business, it is bad for women to engage themselves in these affairs, this means women following men's path. Women argued that how come that it is not bad to follow your path into work every day but it is bad for us to speak for

ourselves and defend our rights? Finally after a lot of argument 5 men and 2 women were elected as representatives of the *shora*.

After a few months the Islamic state began consolidating its power through Islamisation of the whole society. Islamic organisations, including Islamic societies replaced all independent organisations, including the *shoras*. Strikes and sit-ins were labelled "communist and imperialist conspiracies" and were attacked by armed police. It was no longer possible for us to continue to work with these women. However, this period was an important period for women workers and activists. These struggles delayed the Islamic state monopolising its power and consolidating its autocratic rule. This allowed women workers and activists to participate in political struggle, the experience of which was extremely important and to be useful to them at a later stage. Despite the Islamisation, the struggle for trade unionism continued. When I interviewed four of these women in 1989 (ten years later) I learned that they were still engaged in fighting for better conditions of work within the Islamic Societies which replaced the *shoras* in work places. Badri from Gherghereh Ziba explained:

The condition of work is still very hard. The majority of women work in the morning shift which is from 6am to 2pm. We only have fifteen minutes breakfast time, when they give us one potato, a bowl of beans and a piece of bread. We have to eat our breakfast next to our machine which will be switched on when the fifteen minutes break is over. The air is very polluted. Bits of cottons hang in the air, sometimes we feel as though we have swallowed about a kilogram of cotton with our breakfast. We have been protesting for a long time demanding to be given more time and a canteen to eat our breakfast, but the Islamic Societies have been ignoring our demands. We also suffer from noise and injury to our eyesight and fingers. The machines are very noisy and we must keep our eyes open all the time

and look at every individual thread very carefully that they don't get entangled with each other and at the same time we must clean each individual buckle. This makes our eyes red and weak and makes our fingers injured. We have, therefore, been demanding that under such hard conditions of work, we should at least have a lunch break as we get up at 4am to be able to be at work by 6am and by the time we get home it is 4pm. All we have had to eat is a potato, a bowl of beans and a piece of bread. So far we have not been successful in our demands but we are trying and we will not give up.

To conclude, for women industrial workers the revolution was an instrument by which they could struggle for change and improve their conditions of work. These women, by fighting for the specific demands of women workers learned through their collective experience that women's rights could only be achieved through their own participation and representation. Furthermore, they learned that they do not have to be submissive to their male folk in order to improve their status.

8.3 Women's political response to the Islamic state

In April 1979 a referendum decided that Iran was to be an Islamic Republic under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. Women's response to the Islamic state differed according to their socio-economic status and level of religiosity. This section will discuss why secular women waged a political campaign against the Islamisation of the state and why religious women welcomed and supported the Islamic state.

8.3.1 Secular women's response

During the revolution and after, various women's organisations were formed. Each published their own literature and campaigned for women's rights: Etehade Melli Zanan (National Union of Women)¹. It produced a paper, *Barabari* (Equality) and later a magazine, *Zanan Dar Mobareze* (Women in struggle). Anjomane Rahaie Zan (The Emancipation of Women Society) was the women's organisation of Communist Unity. It produced a paper, *Rahaie Zan* (Emancipation of Women). Jamiate Bidarie Zan (The Awakening of Women Society) was formed by women members of a pro-China political Organisation. It produced a paper *Bidarie Zan* (Woman's Awakening). Jamiate Zanane Mobarez (Militant Women Society) was the women's organisation of The Union of Iranian Communists which also had its paper, *Zanane Mobarez* (Militant Women). Etehade Enghelabie Zanane Mobarez (Revolutionary Unity of Militant Women) was the women's organisation of the Maoist Communist Party of Workers and Peasants and its paper was *Sepideh Sorkh* (The Red Dawn). (Tabari and Yeganeh 1982: 201-229).

There was a similarity between these organisations and the women's organisations of the 1940s - 1960s, as these organisations were the sister organisations of various Marxist groups. A great celebration was prepared for 8 March of 1979 after so many years of repression under the Shah's patriarchal state. However, it was on the eve of this celebration that Ayatollah Khomeini announced that women must wear *hejabe eslami*. In response to such a proclamation hundreds of thousands of women who had been preparing to celebrate International Women's Day, understood that they had to turn the day into a day of action against the regime. Mass meetings were organised in girls' schools, colleges and the Tehran University, against Khomeini's Islamic laws. The demonstrators marched in the

streets of Tehran to the Ministry of Justice and the Prime Minister's office and shouted the slogans:

"In the dawn of freedom, we already lack freedom", "Down with dictatorship", "We gave our lives for freedom, and we will fight again"

The *Hezbollahi* men attacked the demonstrators with stones, shouting:

"Our belief is not your belief. Get lost communists"; "Either you put scarf on your heads or we hit you on the head"; "Either *hejab* or *tisab* (acid)".

This demonstration was the first mass demonstration of secular women after the revolution. They marched without wearing the *chador* or scarf against Ayatollah Khomeini and not the Shah. For a whole week there were further protest meetings and demonstrations against the Islamic state's anti-women legislations.

To undermine this impressive protest movement the clergy encouraged and organised religious women's counter demonstrations. The state portrayed the demonstration of a large number of women wearing the black *chador* as Islamic women fighting ("like Zaynab") alongside their brothers in the war against the enemies of Islam. These women marched confidently, rejuvenated and glorified by the Islamic values. They condemned the secular women's demonstrations as anti-Islamic. They supported the Islamic political system without questioning the clergies rules and regulations which were imposing social control and depriving all women of their most elementary rights. These women were excited and moved not just by their belief in Islam but also by their involvement in political activities acknowledged and supported by the state. In our view (the secular women) the Islamic state exploited the participation of these women as an effective way to crush the secular women's movement which was struggling against the seclusion

of women within the home. In the eyes of religious women, the Islamic state provided measures for their empowerment; they were out of their seclusion in the home and their male kin had no objection to their participation in the activities in the streets as they were out marching and demonstrating for Islam and Ayatollah Khomeini. The Islamic state successfully exploited the participation of these women and instituted further attacks on women's rights.

In order to mount an effective campaign against Ayatollah Khomeini, many organisations and individual secular feminists agreed with each other that a united women's movement had to be built. As a result *Shoraye Hambastegie Zanan* (The Women's Solidarity Council) was formed. Beside these organisations, many women formed women's groups in offices and workplaces and worked with the United Council. Whatever the women's political orientations, they all saw the need to build their own women's organisations and, regardless of their political differences, to unite against the Islamic state's attack on women's rights.

Other organisations were set up to support the Islamic state: *Tashkilate Demokratike Zanane Iran* (Democratic Association of Iranian Women) the Tudeh Party's women's organisation; *Zanane Tarafdare Nehzate Azadie Iran* (Women Adherents of Freedom Movement of Iran); *Sazemane Zanane Jebhe Melli* (Women's Organisation of National Front). There was also *Jamiate Zanane Enghelabe Eslami* (Women's Society of Islamic Revolution) which was not a secular organisation. But some women within these organisations also supported the Council's activities and the independent women's movement. Although they supported Khomeini's leadership and the formation of the Islamic state, they felt that women's rights were under threat and had to be fought for.

The women who were active in the independent women's movement were predominantly secular and worked as teachers; nurses; students; lawyers; writers

and office workers. But they also participated in supporting the activities of female industrial workers in factories, setting up workplace nurseries and organising for women's participation in the election of workers' *shoras*. They also tried to engage women with the general issues and activities of the Women's Solidarity Council. Some went to Kurdistan to fight with the national minorities against the central government.

The Council embarked on a long campaign of joint activities to culminate in a day of action on 25 November 1979. This period was a very critical one for the Islamic state. Many women were in opposition. Factories were occupied by workers. Demonstrations and meetings of the unemployed were taking place all over the country. Peasants were seizing the land and were constantly fighting with the regime's Revolutionary Guards. The war between the national minorities and the central government was reaching its highest stage. The Islamic regime was divided and the fight for power within different factions of the regime was intensifying. It was at this point that the regime adopted its anti-imperialist slogans and activities. This was a successful strategy to undermine the opposition and to unite different forces under Khomeini's leadership and the Islamic state.

An anti-imperialist demonstration around the occupation of the United States' embassy was organised for 25 November 1979 which was the same day as the Women's Solidarity Council's day of action. The male dominated leaders of the secular opposition argued that the women's day of action had to be called off. The Fedayeen Organisation, the biggest on the left, withdrew its support from the Women's Day of Action and joined the regime's demonstration. Despite this defection many women members of the Fedayeen's women's organisation (Ettehad-e Melli Zananeh) supported the Women's Solidarity Council's activities and the conference went ahead in Tehran Polytechnic. In an attempt to stop the conference, Islamic Guards cut off the electricity supply of the Polytechnic but the

conference was held successfully by candlelight. The conference condemned the measures taken by the regime against women and passed resolutions for further activities.

Meanwhile, as is discussed in chapter five the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran was ratified, a constitution which determined women's contemporary position as a mother and a wife. *Sharia* law replaced civil law and as a result women were denied the minimum reforms which they had gained under the Pahlavi (Paidar 1995: 256-262).

In March 1980 The Women's Solidarity Council organised to celebrate 8 March as International Women's Day. Ettehad-e Melli Zanan, the Fedayeen's women's organisation, withdrew its support for Women's Day in order to disassociate itself from the Solidarity Council which was known as a major force against the process of Islamisation. As a result it held a separate rally on International Women's Day and this was the beginning of the end of the Women's Solidarity Council as an effective independent women's movement. On 6 May Ayatollah Khomeini made a speech in which he declared his birthday and Fatimah's (daughter of prophet Mohammad) birthday, which occurred in 1980 on 6 May, to be celebrated as Women's Day in Iran.

In July 1980, after several months of bitter struggle by secular women against Islamic dress, the wearing of the Islamic *hejab* became compulsory. For the older generation of women, especially those who were involved in the women's movement of the 1930s - 1950s this situation brought back memories of the dictatorial regime of Reza Shah Pahlavi which forced women to take their *chadors* off in 1936. For many women it was ironic that the women's movement of the 1930s had to oppose the dictatorial regime of the Pahlavi for using violence and coercive measures to force women to take their *chadors* off and wear hats,

and in the 1980s the women's movement had to oppose the Islamic state for using violence and coercive measures to force women to wear *hejabe eslami*. In both cases the state implemented its policy by force and through violence, as large sections of the population opposed the compulsory nature of the policy. In the 1930s even the secular women who were in favour of modern political and economic development were not too keen to take their *chador* off and wear Western style hats. During the 1979 - 1981 period even the religious women who sympathised with the Islamic state were opposed to the violent way the policy was implemented. In opposition to the compulsory implementation of *hejab* women's groups and organisations demonstrated once again in front of the President's Office. Thousands of women were attacked by religious fanatics, using knives, clubs and stones.

In Squibb pharmaceutical factory where I was involved with women workers in the establishment of the *shora* only 20% of women workers wore *chador*. When the wearing of the *hejab* became compulsory, all women workers, including the *chadori* women protested and demonstrated outside of the factory, demanded that the wearing of the *hejab* should be voluntary.

By mid 1981, all political organisations, women's organisations and workers' organisations had been banned and ceased to exist. There are no statistics available but it was widely believed that half of the political prisoners were women, the only form of equality given to women in the Islamic state. Women were raped in jail and this was justified by the Islamic law of temporary marriage. One family told me that they received the news of their seventeen year old daughter's execution, when a member of the Revolutionary Guards returned her belongings and gave the parents 600 Rials (equivalent to £3 in 1980). The Guard explained that the Islamic state's policy was not to execute virgins, because if a woman dies a virgin she will go to heaven. Because the young woman acted

against the Islamic state, she did not deserve to go to heaven. Therefore one of the Guards temporarily married her the night before her execution and the money was the price for the temporary marriage.

For many secular women, the Pahlavi period had opened up opportunities (however small) to females to increase their chances of breaking the traditional rules and regulations. These women, however had begun to struggle against the patriarchal state of Pahlavi to achieve a degree of autonomy in decision-making about their sexuality, fertility, earning and expenditure. This was observed and understood by many religious women who also began to question their own status and what they may be able to achieve, if they risked breaking the rules and regulations. Azar, one of my respondents confirmed this view:

My parents were insisting that I should marry, as it was a disgrace for them that I was 20 years of age and unmarried. But I resisted, I did not want to be married. They did not force my brother to marry who lived with his Iranian girlfriend in London. I wanted to be independent, earn my own money, go and see the world and then marry, if I wanted to.

For many secular women, with the Islamisation of the state, they lost everything that they had gained under the Pahlavi and it was no longer possible to secure even the basic rights for women. Many chose to live in exile. Alma explained:

I felt I was nothing but a subhuman in that society. The Islamic state in Iran was founded on sexual apartheid as well as dictatorship and repression.

Under this system of apartheid, women were directly segregated and secluded by the laws of the state. There was no way out. This regime was about absolute control over the female body and mind. Women were limited to the rights, roles and tasks that the state saw fit for them (Poya 1992:159).

Many of these exiled women benefited from the socio-economic changes of the Pahlavi period. Despite this, many of them participated in the 1978-1979 movements and played an important role in the overthrow of that system, both inside and outside of Iran. They therefore felt and still feel, betrayed by the Islamic system which has replaced it (Poya 1992) and especially when they see a large number of women participating in the reproduction of this Islamic patriarchal order. Now they use their academic work and their activities in campaigns for women's rights as a way of struggling with the patriarchal system in Iran by analysing women's position in Iran and drawing the attention of world public opinion to women's position in Iran.

Secular women in Iran bravely struggled for eighteen months against the Islamic state's coercive measures. A combination of the use of coercion and the mobilisation of religious women by the state led to the defeat of the secular women's organisations and actions. Following mass political repression, imprisonment and executions in 1981-1982, any form of secular opposition, including women's organisations, had either disappeared, been driven underground or exiled abroad. Only religious women's organisations, under the control of the state, were allowed.

8.3.2 Religious women's response

This section will analyse the reasons why religious women found the Islamic state liberating and how the Islamic state opened up opportunities for them to be engaged in organised political activities within the Islamic framework. After the 1979 revolution and the establishment of the Islamic state, a large number of women, some from the deprived and others from more privileged sectors of society were attracted to the Islamic system. Under the Pahlavi period they had experienced nothing but humiliation and deprivation, because of their level of religiosity and commitment to Islamic values. They had felt marginalised because they were ideologically and materially debased, degraded and neglected. The modern Pahlavi state ideologically restricted their chances of having access to secular education and employment. Therefore, they did not benefit from the modern socio-economic system which undermined some aspects of the patriarchal gender relations. On the contrary, as is discussed in chapter four, the modern system was threatening to them. Because the state considered them as backward, if they did not give up their religious values and norms and their male kin prohibited them from participating in the changes which were taking place which required the abandonment of religious values.

Hence they envied and detested other women who benefited from the changes and adopted a western lifestyle. The Islamic regime exploited such sentiments and won these women to its side. These women became the staunch supporters of the Islamic regime. The regime declared them the guardians of Islamic society and the upholders of that society's new morality and values. These women became the symbol of Islamic womanhood. The Islamic state and its hegemonic ideology opened up opportunities for them to have access to resources both materially and

ideologically and provided them with a space to exercise power. Thus, these women willingly and actively participated in the making of this patriarchal system which enhanced their sense of control and self-worth.

From the secularists' point of view these women may be seen as actively participating in the reproduction of the patriarchal order (Hendessi 1995: 12-15 and Afshar 1994: 15-20). But for religious women, this patriarchal order has opened up opportunities for them to move out of the home and become engaged in positions of power as activists in the Islamic system.

In the 1980s, many worked as voluntary workers for Islamic organisations. This brought them prestige. Some worked because of religious commitment; others to promote the ideology of the Islamic state nationally and internationally. Larger numbers, however, worked for financial reasons. They were not paid a wage, but were subsidised by the state. For example, they were rewarded with free accommodation from the confiscated houses belonging to those who fled the country, and a greater share of rations which they sold in the black market so as to earn a living. These women, despite their social differentiation, were committed to the Islamic state and did not question its philosophy of the women's place in the home. However, (as was discussed in previous sections) their collective political activities in the revolutionary period of 1978-1981 and (as was discussed in previous chapters) their participation in the paid and unpaid work in the 1980s gave them a sense of collective consciousness against their limited role in the home. Azam Taleghani a member of *Majlis* in 1979-1981 explained how women's experiences of voluntary work politicised them:

During the war we joined the Baaseej Khaharan organisation, we worked in the mosques, prepared food, blankets and medicines for the men at the war

front. In the war zone areas such as Ghasre Shirin, Bakhtaran and Sare Paule Zahab women were involved in the distribution of arms amongst the population and the soldiers. In these areas women set up mobile hospitals and looked after the injured. As the war continued, women had to return to their homes but they still continued their voluntary work and had to organise their time in a way to allow them to do their house work and their voluntary work in order to keep male family members happy.

During this period, Taleghani's organisation (Women's Society of Islamic Revolution), voluntarily trained women, teaching them sewing, knitting and electronic work. This period of training allowed these women to be employed in textile and electronic industries. The organisation also ran support classes in Mathematics and Farsi for poorer students who needed help with their studies. Forough, another woman, described her voluntary activities during the war with Iraq:

During the war we became active once again. We went to demonstrations, meetings and conferences. My husband couldn't disagree, It was all for God. I took the children with me or left them with other women in the neighbourhood who agreed to look after the children while others went to these activities. We made trips to the Beheshte Zahra cemetery to comfort those who had lost their sons, husbands or fathers in the war. We helped the refugees from the war zone areas and in the mosques we cooked food and canned it and we made blankets and clothes.

Despite a fall in the number of these voluntary workers by 1991 there were still a small, but nevertheless, significant number of women who worked on a voluntary basis for the Islamic organisations. Most of these women, however, had no

children or their children were grown up. I asked one active member of the literacy crusade the reason for her activities. She replied:

I teach in Isfahan (central Iran) in the morning and I fly to Mashahd (Eastern Iran) in the evening, teaching Quran and religious education. I do it for God, I hope that God will accept my services, as I feel that I am not doing enough for him. However, if my husband does not agree, God will not agree either, therefore I will stop my activities the moment he [the husband] asks me to.

In conclusion, the Islamic state provided material and ideological opportunities for religious women to exercise a degree of power, in comparison with their status under the Pahlavi. However, by emphasising women's place as in the home, the state ignored the responses of women in their varied ways and intensified the patriarchal relationship. It used the symbol of good women (Fatimah and Zaynab) to legitimise the political participation of women and thereby politically benefited from women's participation in favour of the Islamic state. Nevertheless, their activism in the political movements and their participation in paid and unpaid work raised their gender consciousness and as will be discussed in the next section they began to question the limitations of the state's gender ideology.

8.4 Pragmatic state control and women's response

In the first phase of Islamisation 1979 - 1981, the Islamic state brutally suppressed the secular women's organisations and activities. In the second phase of Islamisation, the state accommodated the activities of religious women, but only in the interest of the state. During this period, (as was discussed in previous

chapters) the Islamic state, under socio-economic pressures was unable to resist the laws of the integrated global market dominated by the west. It therefore adapted to it, to a large extent. This meant that it had to abandon the utopian ideal Islamic state with no or little integration to world capitalism. I also argued in the previous chapters that the state under economic pressure and the need of the families for women's earning had to reconcile its stated ideology in relation to women's employment and it reformed the family law, female education and employment. Nevertheless the state constantly reasserted patriarchal control, by emphasising the ideal of women's place in the home and the temporary nature of women's participation in the public sphere of life.

Many women, especially religious women found a contradiction between the stated gender relations and their experiences of their participation in the political movements and their participation in the labour force. This created conflicts between genders within the family and the wider society and women responded. Their participation in the workforce and in political movements had given them a sense of empowerment and on the other hand had raised gender consciousness about the ideology of women's place in the home. As a result, in the 1990s, they began to question gender differential treatment, advocated by the state. In this section I will focus on women's activism (through media and politics) which forced the Islamic state towards pragmatism.

8.4.1 Media

In this section I shall argue that although in the 1980s religious women and secular women were a world apart, by the 1990s, a form of unity has come about

between women, despite their social differentiation and through identification of similar problems and experiences. This has been facilitated by the media, especially women's magazines and journals. These publications discuss, within an Islamic framework, women's issues, ranging from debates over feminism and patriarchy, to women's position within the family, employment, law and education. They also represented different forms of Muslim feminism in Iran. For example, women who are active around *Payame Zan* magazine limit their activities to the interpretation of the Quran and *Hadith* (The collected records of Prophet Mohammad) which are complementary to women's issues. *Zane Rouz* and *Payame Hajar* have put a step further and have criticised laws and regulations which are detrimental to women and have suggested reforms. Zanan have questioned gender relations through the analysis of different feminist schools of thought and women's issues in Islam. *Farzaneh* has devoted its pages to research feminist issues in Iran and in other countries and have made contacts with feminist organisations around the world (Tohidi 1996:279-286).

Other magazines, newspapers, television and radio also discuss women's issues with women's participation. One example of media intervention and response was in the summer of 1995. The strong and powerful presence of religious Iranian women, wearing black *chador*, who were delegates from Iran to the International Women's Conference in Beijing raised questions over gender issues in Iran. Many secular Iranian women, exiled abroad, also attended the conference. Their interaction raised many questions in relation to women's economic, social and political roles in Iran. Many important issues relating to women's role in education, employment and population control were raised and led to heated debates within the Iranian media about inequalities between women and men in Islamic Iran. For example, *Payame Emrouz* (Today's Message), a monthly economic, social and cultural magazine, wrote:

Women are half of the population but only a small percentage of them are employed or self employed. Their activities are mainly concentrated in domestic work. National development would be impossible without women's economic participation (*Payame Emrouz* no.8 1995).

In opposition to this view, another publication *Sobh* (Morning) weekly newspaper wrote:

Even if we accept that women's presence in economic activities is necessary we must make sure that women's priority is in the home (*Sobh* no 26 1995).

The female chief editor of *Maiyar* (Criterion) monthly magazine and the author of an article: "Would you have been in this position, if you were a woman?" based on interviewing a number of men in high positions, concluded that the ideology of women's priority in the home was an obstacle to their upward mobility (*Maiyar* no. 15 1995).

Women's magazines and journals, in particular, have played an important role as a forum for the views of both religious and secular women. These publications, although they were set up by religious women and supporters of the Islamic state, decided to have a wider audience by inviting secular women to contribute to the debate on women's issues. For example, Shahla Shirkat the editor of *Zanan* suggested that "we should tolerate and respect each others' conviction. Even though we do not share the same philosophy, belief and thought, we can and should work together (Kian 1997:91). In the 1980s, Mahbobeh Abbas-Gholizadeh (Ommi) wrote a number of articles in *Zane Rouz* rejecting feminism, especially the notion of Muslim feminism in Iran. In the 1990s, however, she changed her position and as the editor of *Farzaneh* argued that women's issues

and feminism must be studied systematically and her aim in *Farzaneh* is just to do this task (Tohidi 1996: 279-280). The aim of these Muslim feminists have been to put pressure on the Islamic state by emphasising that the inequalities between men and women are not initiated by the Quran, but rather by the interpretation of religious authorities of the divine laws. More importantly, by taking this position, they have succeeded to force the state to reforms the family laws, the employment legislations and constitutional law.

In the process of parliamentary elections in 1996 and the presidential election in 1997, *Zanan* magazine published different views by women on women's demands for reforms of the family law; female education and employment regulations. Moreover, in the summer of 1997, in a series of articles in the form of a round table discussed the question of "What is the most important problem facing women in Iran?". The magazine also sent the following questions to be discussed at a round table at the 1997 International Conference on Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Oxford in Britain:

1. What was the most important problem facing women in Iran? If there was a list of burning issues, what issues came on top of the list?
2. Having defined what the problems were, how far the problems were related to the wider political context and how far were they related directly to the position of women?
3. Whether women in Iran had a problem which united them all?. If so, how much of these problems were specifically related to the Iranian context and how much are they related to the universal context?
4. What was the root problem?

Considering this wide agenda and time constraints, the participants, including Kaar, a woman lawyer from Iran, decided to discuss the important issue of women's political participation in Iran and the struggles of women to seek formal political influence within the legislature.

Kaar emphasised that in the 1990s both secular and Muslim feminists in Iran rejected the institutionalised inequalities and increasingly demanded further changes. More importantly, she argued that the legal reform which had taken place was the result of women's activities inside and outside of the country and that this situation is irreversible.

This discussion raised the whole issue of whether women's demands in Iran were "feminist issues". Kaar explained that these demands might be feminist demands within the global context, but not in the Iranian context. Under the Islamic state such labels were not used. These issues were however debated and discussed as part of the issue of equality of humanity.

The importance of media in expressing women's activism is also evident in the increasing number of female journalists in Iran. Despite enormous restrictions imposed on them by the process of segregation (discussed in chapter six), in the 1990s, there are far more female journalists in Iran than in the 1970s, the height of Westernisation and the reforms which were made by the Pahlavi state (Farhadpour 1998). In 1972 there were 2000 journalists in Iran and only fifty of them were women. In other words, 2.5% of the total journalists were women. In 1997 the total number of journalists reached 4000 and 400 of them were women or 10% which shows an increase of 7.5% during this period. Iranian women

journalists are on average five years younger than their male colleagues, but they are considerably better educated - with 50% at graduate level, while the average for the entire profession is 35% (Shahidi 1997). This was facilitated by Muslim feminists who were in position of power. Shahla Habibi, advisor on women's issues under president Rafsanjani argued:

We need more reporters, producers and directors with expertise on women's issues. Just as economics needs to be covered by a journalist who knows about economics, journalists covering women's issues should be aware of women's mentality, language, literature, and their desirable status from the point of view of religion and tradition ... journalists have to be educated about women's issues and special women's groups have to be set up within the various media organisations (Shahidi 1997).

In conclusion, urban working women, regardless of their social differentiation have used the media to interact with each other on feminist issues and demands, despite restriction imposed by the Islamic state. Moreover, they used the media as a medium to struggle for change. This was also evident in their political participation.

8.4.2 Politics

Under the Islamic state no form of secularism is tolerated. Secular organisations do not exist, but Islamic political parties and organisations operate and express different opinions about economic, political, social and foreign affairs. Within

strict bounds, there are universal suffrage and freedom of speech, press and assembly. Many people feel they are participating in political life, eagerly following the debates in the *Majlis*, the judicial system and the government through media. This form of Islamic pluralism and parliamentary rule is different from the autocratic state under the Pahlavi in which no opposition was tolerated, even within the ruling class. The Islamic state has no other choice but to accommodate this limited pluralist system. The 1979 revolution which led to the overthrow of the Pahlavi system and the impact of the different movements which opposed the establishment of the Islamic state are not forgotten and the majority of the people still demand democratic change.

Women's role in this process has been significant. They have been actively participating in the political arena, on gender issues, as voters and as elected members of the *Majles*. In the parliamentary election of April 1996 and the presidential election of May 1997, women's participation showed that gender had become an important part of shaping politics in Islamic Iran. One important feature of the parliamentary election in 1996 was that 190 women competed with 3010 men for 270 seats. As was widely reported in the media, especially women's magazines, the majority of women voted for female candidates on the ground that only women could change women's situation. Even in conservative regions (Isfahan and Malayer) women competed with men and in some cases with the clergy and either they won the election or won a large number of votes (*Keyhan* 28.3.1996; *Iran Focus*, February-April 1996).

In 1996 I interviewed a number of men and women about this matter. There were at least three different explanations. For example, a middle aged man from Malayer who voted for the female candidate said that he voted for that *zaifeh* (the

weak half) because "her programme was better than others". A young woman's response was that "only women can do things for women". And an older woman's response was "women are less corrupt and work better when they get to positions of power" The women's issues and the question of female candidates were debated within family circles. Faezeh Rafsanjani who stood as Tehran candidate against the prominent conservative clergy Nateghe Nouri became extremely popular among young women of both religious and secular middle classes, for suggesting that if elected she would create women-only sport grounds, including horse riding and women only cycling lanes. Not only religious women voted for her, but secular women too, despite the fact that she was the daughter of a clergyman (ex-president Rafsanjani). In the election she came second. It was widely believed that the way the votes were counted was rigged, as it would have been embarrassing for the Islamic state that a young women competed with a prominent clergyman and won the election. Nevertheless thirteen women were elected to the *Majles*.

In the 1997 presidential election once again women's issues were at the centre of political debates. Despite the fact that according to the religious law and the article 115 of the constitution women could not become president, nine women stood for the presidential election (*Iran Focus* May - June 1997; *Payame Emrouz* no. 19: 1997; *Zanan* no. 34 1997). This action was a form of protest, forcing the state to admit to its own limitations. This was explained by one of the candidates, Azam Taleghani - the head of Women's Society Of Islamic Revolution and the editor of *Payame Hajar* (one of the women's magazines). She announced that her intention was firstly "to sort out the interpretation of the term *rejal* (statesmen)" which is ambiguously defined in the constitution. Secondly she said "It was my religious duty to stand for the presidential election. Otherwise, the rights of half of the population of this country would have been wasted and I would have been

responsible and accountable to God for such an injustice". Thirdly, she explained "I have discussed the issue of whether women could be the president of the Islamic Republic or not with a number of clergymen in order to pave the way for the future, even if this may cause problems for me at present" (*Payame Emrouz* and *Zanan* *ibid*).

Despite these attempts, all female applicants were rejected by *Shoraye Negahban* (the Council of Guardians). But women's issues were still at the heart of the debate and the main question was who will be Iran's next president. *Zanan* magazine asked a number of questions from Khatami (the pragmatic candidate) and Nateghe Nouri (the conservative candidate who had competed with Faezeh Rafsanjani in the 1996 parliamentary election) about their views on women's issues. Khatami's answers were sympathetic, but Nateghe Nouri refused to answer them. The magazine also interviewed a number of women in academic, artistic, political and scientific positions about their demands from the candidates (*Zanan* *ibid*).

As a result of these campaigns, the majority of women and youth, (especially young women) voted for Khatami who won a landslide victory against Nateghe Nouri. Once again women played a decisive role. Gender consciousness determined the outcome of the election. They voted for Khatami, because they believed that under his presidency women's issues could be fought for more easily than under conservative Nouri. It was expected that two women would be included in Khatami's cabinet. Fatemeh Ramazanzadeh, a *Majles* deputy and Iran's representative at the Cairo Population and Development Conference in 1994 was expected to be the minister of health and the popular Faezeh Hashemi was nominated to be the minister of sport, a new ministry to be created for youth

(Iran Focus June 1997). However, in response to the pressure of conservative clergy, president Khatami refused to include any female ministers in his cabinet which was formed in August 1997. But two women, Masoomeh Ebtekar and Zahra Shojaie were appointed to the vice president positions.

In the first and the second phases of Islamisation (1979-1989) the Islamic state isolated secular women and only favoured the participation of religious women in the interest of the patriarchal state. In the third phase of Islamisation (1990s), however, especially in the 1996 and 1997 elections and especially in urban areas, women participated in politics on a mass scale, despite their social differentiation. This was because women, regardless of their class and levels of religiosity, had experienced shared problems: Islamic family law enforced male domination and interest at the level of family, work and the wider society, despite the fact that they generated income for their families, saved expenditure for the state. The religious women especially felt that they had accommodated to state patriarchy by supporting it, but their interests were ignored by the state. This raised women's consciousness about the limitations of gender ideology advocated by the state. Although, the gender-based subordination of women was deeply ingrained in the consciousness of both men and women, women (and men) also saw from their own experiences, that the state and the family benefited from women's employment.

Moreover, these shared problems and experiences had closed the gap between religious women who were the supporters of the Islamic system and the secular women who opposed the Islamic system. They were both aware that despite their economic and political participation, the institutionalisation of patriarchy had strengthened male domination and women's subordination. They both wanted

changes to their circumstances and they had made the men and the state accept their participation and their demand.

Under the Islamic state where no form of secularism is tolerated, only Muslim feminists have access to political spheres. Female political activists such as Shahla Habibi (daughter of Ayatollah Habibi); Fatimah and Faezeh Rafsanjani (daughters of ex-president Rafsanjani) and Azam Taleghani (daughter of the late Ayatollah Taleghani) within the Islamic state apparatus have tried to re-interpret Islamic laws and regulations in favour of women's participation in the economic and political spheres. Taking into consideration the limitations of the theocratic state, many secular feminists in Iran feel that although the real change should come from an end to theocracy of the state, these reforms are not in contradiction and conflict with their demands for the right to equal treatment of men and women within the family, employment and the wider society. More importantly, the unity between secular and Muslim feminists has challenged Islamic theology and thereby the Iranian theocratic state with the result that the state has been forced to adapt its ideological position and practices.

To conclude, in the 1990s, in urban areas a degree of collaboration between religious and secular working women was taking place. Through the media they were interacting and through this interaction they had identified their shared problems and experiences. Despite their views on the Islamic nature of the state, they were questioning their subordination.

8.5 Women's individual responses

In the previous sections of this chapter I explained the importance of women's organised responses and their struggle to shift the position of the state. I argued that the evidence for the change in the ideological position and the practices of the state can be found through material factors which are measurable such as women's participation in politics and the use of media by women as well as the reformed family law, education and employment regulations which were discussed in chapter seven. I also argued (in chapter seven) that despite these reforms, patriarchal relationship had been strengthened and the Islamic state still tightened its control on women in employment, within the family and the wider society. In this section I will argue that beside the organised forms of struggle by many women, the majority of women also struggle on an individual basis against patriarchal gender relations at home, at work and in the wider society. This form of struggle is equally important because as was discussed in chapter three (literature review) the form of gender relations and women's subordination to men is not static, it can be changed under economic conditions. But any real change in women's subordination must come from changes in social relations rather than change in the law. Therefore, women's individual responses to patriarchal relationships could also have great impact on the position of women within the family and employment. I will further argue that women's individual responses differ according to their class and levels of religiosity.

Kandiyoti (1991; 35-38) argues that individual women interpret and reinterpret patriarchal ideology and use it as a form of struggle. This shows that women are not passive victims of ideology. This analysis is important because it explains why in Iran, many women accepted their subordinate position and some participated in the reproduction of their own subordination by policing the patriarchal state and

its rules and regulations. For many women their involvement in policing the patriarchal state, was the source of their empowerment. In this sense the ideology had a material basis which women used to improve their status. thus, the acceptance of the ruling ideology was not just as a result of false consciousness (Molyneux 1985: 227-254). In effect it was a way of bargaining with patriarchy.

In previous chapters I have argued that the ideology of seclusion as the desirable objective of the Islamic state; and the process of segregation created constraints in the way of women's mobility within the labour force and the labour market. However, the degree and the level of constraint, varied for different women as their access to material resources, and the ideological constraints, were different. Thus, women chose different strategies: sometimes they rebelled against the stated gender ideology and at other times they conformed to it. They chose these strategies to achieve a particular goal: to survive, to secure a better future and even improve their economic and social status.

This analysis also provides a historical understanding of a particular form of patriarchy in a particular society. Moreover, it shows that it is the impact of the level of access to material resources and ideological constraints on patriarchal relationships which produces different complexities in terms of women's strategies.

Grown and Sebstad (1989: 941), in the context of analysing women's poverty and livelihood activities, argue that women mobilise their resources and opportunities and use a mix of survival strategies to achieve their goals. They identify three different goals: For the poorest, survival is the goal, as they cannot risk the

survival of themselves or their families to go any further. For those whose basic survival is assured, their goal may shift to security. The available resources allow a degree of flexibility and risk. Finally, for those who have achieved basic security, the goal may change to growth. Over time, women may move between different levels of achieving one goal or the other. (ibid: 941).

I, therefore, use these concepts alongside with Kandiyoti's concept of bargaining with patriarchy to analyse how women in Iran struggled on an individual basis against the conflicts arising from the Islamic gender ideology and the material reality of their lives. I have used this approach within the context of indigenous class system combined with different levels of religiosity to show how, the ideological dependence on men, especially for poorer women, restricted the range of options available to them. For some women survival or higher status was achieved through observing the traditional Islamic rules. For others, it was achieved through rebelling against the rules. But in the majority of cases women chose a mix of strategy to survive the gender conflicts and only in this way they were able to improve their circumstances.

8.5.1 Bargaining with patriarchy by breaking its rules

In urban areas, some women are in an advantaged position materially and are less constrained by ideological pressures. Therefore, they are in a position to bargain with patriarchy by breaking its rules.

According to official statistics, the female population of Iran in 1991-1992 was 27,068,713 in comparison with the male population which was 28,768,450.

15,401,354 or 56% lived in urban areas (Iran Statistical Year-book 1996:35). In urban areas women had better access to resources in comparison with rural women. As is discussed in chapter seven the level of literacy; further and higher education was higher for female in urban areas than in rural areas. Secular women, who had more access to material resources and were less constrained by religious values had the option of not getting married or marrying after they had completed their higher education. Many of these women resisted patriarchal gender relations by breaking its rules, even though this may resulted in losses on the family front for them. Unmarried women and divorced women paid a heavy price for clinging to their independence from men by finding empowerment in a career, in employment. They may be labelled as "not good women" or, in the case of divorced women, may even faced the loss of custody of their children, but this was their way of bargaining with patriarchy. Their access to material resources combined with being less constrained by the values attached to the ideology of Shia Islam enabled them to struggle against the conflicts and secure a better future and or improve their status in their chosen way.

Single women had a greater degree of autonomy to make decision about their sexuality, fertility, their earning and the disposal of their income. Even if they did not need to go out to work out of economic necessity, they chose to have a career in order to be independent and as a way of upward mobility. However, the norm did not allow them to live on their own, hence they usually lived with their parents and chose to give them a portion of their earnings to ensure their independence from them. Their motivation, despite the Islamic gender ideology, was to improve their status, their place and power in comparison with men within the wider society. Simin, a 33 year old accountant identifying herself as middle class with low level of religiosity explained:

I have no intention of getting married. Segregation does not allow me to meet a suitable person. I cannot marry someone who is in lower position in terms of education and employment. Men don't like women who are in higher position than themselves because this makes it harder for them to have control over women. I live with my parents to keep people's mouth shut. I work for the state sector in the morning and in a private company in the afternoon and evening. I leave the house at 7am and return home at 9pm. The state sector gives me the security and I earn a lot of money in the private sector.

To conclude, in urban areas, there were a minority of women who had more access to material resources and wage employment and were less constrained by the pressure of ideology. Therefore they were able to bargain with patriarchy by breaking its rules.

8.5.2 Bargaining with patriarchy by conforming to its rules

This section will discuss the response of many religious women especially those who had less access to material resources and wage employment and, therefore, bargained with patriarchy by conforming to its rules. This was especially apparent in rural areas. In 1991-1992 the female population of rural areas was 11,491,693. That is in comparison with urban areas 42% lived in rural areas (Iran Statistical Year-book 1996: 35). They were amongst the poorest and were most affected by gender inequality. The reform of the family law, education and employment regulations had not affected these women greatly. As is discussed in chapter seven, despite education reform and increase in the percentage of literacy rate still 64% of the female rural population is illiterate (Iran Statistical Year-book 1996:

432). They married at young age, usually in their mid teenage years. They had high rate of fertility and they started working on the land and as carpet weavers when they were five or six years of age. Their work was important for the household, national and international markets. However, the majority of them were not recorded in the statistics as part of the work force.

Thus, the majority of female agricultural workers whose access to material resources were limited and were constrained by gender ideology achieved their goal by conforming to the rules of separate spheres for women and men. This was their way of bargaining with patriarchy because as Kandiyoti argues "in situations where the observance of restrictive practices is a crucial element in the reproduction of family status, women will resist breaking the rules" (1991:33). I would therefore agree with Kandiyoti's analysis that under classic patriarchy women accommodate to the system and "their passive resistance takes the form of claiming their half of this particular patriarchal bargain - protection in exchange for submissiveness and propriety, and a confirmation that male honour is indeed dependent on their responsible conduct" (ibid: 36).

The labour of these women had always been demanded, but it is secluded and segregated labour. In this sense they were not exposed to the same conflicts that women who were drawn into wage labour were. Hence these women were not acting against those conflicts. Nevertheless, they were aware of their contribution but under the pressure of gender ideology they believed decisions had to be made by men. The only time that they participated in decision making was in their old age. Especially when their daughters get married. The preparation of *jahizieh* (trousseau) was the responsibility of women, especially older women. Ameh Khanom, a 57 year old carpet weaver and agricultural worker and mother of eight children explained:

We have a good annual income from the production of grapes, cumin, barley, cotton, wheat, pistachio and carpet weaving. These are mostly women's jobs, especially carpet weaving. Boys up to age of ten weave carpets and then they go to school but girls remain carpet weavers and work on the land. Women also produce milk, yoghurt, butter, cheese and bread. A large part of our income pays for raw materials, machinery and access to water. Men take the products to the market and sell them to government agents. We never go to the market, as this is men's job. My husband gives me a lot of money to prepare *jahizieh* for our daughters.

For Ameh Khanom the most important issue was that she achieved her goal and ultimately gained power by conforming to what was expected from her. Therefore, she was not simply submitting to her subordinate position, her survival and the survival of her family depend on her acceptance of her position.

The case of Akhtar in a village in the north of Iran was also similar. She left school when she was ten years old and continued carpet-weaving and working on the land. She married when she was sixteen. She followed her husband, who was a soldier, to Chahbahar in the south of Iran. She had four children. She also found survival and security through conforming to an ascribed role, although she was totally aware of her ability to earn money. She explained:

I finish all the housework in the morning. I then spend the rest of my time knitting, sewing and doing embroidery. My husband sells them all. Every summer I come back to my village and weave carpets. In a good month I

could earn up to 200,000 rials. My husband sells the carpets. He is very happy with me and appreciates my work.

In these cases women were outside wage employment. But even in the case of industrial workers in Margarine factory (see appendix one, interview b) a similar form of patriarchal bargain was evident. These women, although wage earners, could not build on their experience of wage labour as a mean to challenge patriarchy. Thus their strategy was to secure their honour and pride for their families and community by refusing to use contraceptives until they produced sons and they even attempted to give up their jobs in favour of their male kin, in order to gain respectability.

In conclusion, in cases where women were outside wage employment or the observance of restrictive practices were crucial elements in the reproduction of family status, women had no choice than to observe the rules even if this led to the reproduction of their own subordination. But they were also actively participating in cultural negotiations to reinterpret the rules and regulations to their advantage, rather than passively accepting the patriarchal rule. They were, therefore, mobilising their material resources and ideological constraints in order to achieve their goals. Some were able to move from survival to security and others to move forward and improve their own and their families' status.

8.5.3 A mix of strategies

Those who rebelled against the patriarchal rules were a small section of the society. Those who conformed to the rules were also not the majority. The majority of women, both in rural and urban areas bargained with patriarchy by using a mixture of conformity and rebellion. The degree of access to material resources and ideological constraint determined to what extent they conformed or rebelled and their ability to achieve a particular goal.

In urban areas where there was greater access to material resources and less constraint of gender ideology, women attempted in various ways to resolve gender conflicts within the home and within employment and improve their status. As is discussed in chapter seven, in some cases women took the whole responsibility for domestic work to keep the family and their husbands satisfied. At the same time, they also worked doubly hard within their profession to prove that they were as good as men. As a result women's average daily hours of work increased up to seventeen hours (see appendix 1: interview c).

In other cases, as many of my respondents pointed out, women had to deny their greater access to resources and mobility in order to maintain the honour of the husband and the family. They had to pretend to the members of their families and community that the husband was in charge, he was the bread-winner and the property and belongings were his. This is similar to Mernissi's concept of "sexual anomie" (1987: 148-153) where men are frustrated and humiliated at being unable to fulfil their role as the bread-winner. In order to reduce the tension and conflict

women bargained with patriarchy by denying their greater access to material resources, because this was the only way they could gain respectability.

In rural areas those women who had some access to material resources but were heavily constrained by gender ideology also attempted to achieve their goals by using a mix of strategies. For example, Maryam who lived in a small village was not exposed to economic hardship and insecurity as much as Zahra (her step mother, see appendix one, interview c). She had cousins and brothers in the big cities, who were examples of choice and possibility of change. From the moment that we arrived, Maryam tried hard to convince her cousin who lived in the city to negotiate with her father in order to allow her to leave the village and go to a nearby city, to continue her education:

I have been working as a carpet weaver and agricultural worker since I was ten years old. I have just finished primary school education this summer. It took me such a long time to achieve this level of education because during school-time, I had to leave school and concentrate on working on the land and weaving carpets. I live with my father, step-mother (Zahra) and my step-brother. I have four brothers and three sisters who are all married and live in big cities. My father sells the carpets and the agricultural products that my step-mother and I produce. In return for the work that I do, my father prepares *Jahizieh* (trousseau) for me, clothes and household appliances for when I get married. I don't want to get married. I want to go to Kashmar and finish my education and later, hopefully, go to Tehran and work as a nurse. But my father does not allow me. He says If I go he has to hire labourers who will cost him a lot of money. Also if I go to the cities without being married people will talk and I'll be a disgrace for my father.

One of my brothers lives in Kashmar. I could go and live with him and his family. This way people won't talk. I want to get my cousin to mediate, if he does, my father may agree.

This way, Maryam also actively participated in cultural negotiations with her father, her extended family, and her community through her cousin. It was a risk for her but she succeeded. As a result of mediation she secured a better future for herself by leaving the village, moving to a city and continuing her education. The experience of one side of the family doing better by moving to the city was a contradiction for her and everyone else in the village. Our visit stirred up this contradiction. Maryam used the confusion which was created as a result, broke the rules and achieved her goal of securing a better future. However, she could only rebel against one set of rules by conforming to another set of rules. She had to accept to be under the control of her brother in a city in order to be free from being under the control of her old father in a village. Only this way she could finish her education and work as a nurse, which was her goal.

Similarly, in a village in Mazandaran, Golrang who was a carpet weaver and agricultural worker, managed to continue her education, achieved a high school diploma and began to work as a teacher in the school village. This allowed her to escape the pressure from her family to get married. She explained:

It is unusual in the village that I am twenty three years old and have not been married yet, but there is no real pressure. My father and my mother agree with my work as a teacher. But I don't think the people in the village value my teaching job, because nobody ever says anything, while they value

the carpets that I weave, because they talk about it. I continue with both and I like both jobs and I also help my mother and father with the agricultural production. My father sells the carpets that my mother, my sisters and I weave and also the agricultural products that we produce. But most of the time I keep my earnings from teaching. If my family need money, I give my salary to my father, but if they do not need it, I keep it for myself.

In this case Golrang was able to mobilise the ideological constraints to her advantage, in comparison with her sister Akhtar. On the one hand she was conforming to the norm by working as an agricultural worker and a carpet weaver and accepting the appropriation of her labour by her father. On the other hand, she took the opportunity of making a choice not to get married, continued her education, worked as a teacher, earned a wage and, most importantly, made decisions about whether to save her money or help her family with her earnings.

Thus, in the majority of cases, the strength of male authority in the family and at the level of the state, did not allow much rebellion against the norm. In order to survive poverty or to achieve a sense of righteousness and self-worth, total conformity is more wide-spread than rebellion. However, the further economic integration of Iran to world market in the late 1980s and 1990s and a relative improvement in female education and employment opportunities and the reform of some aspects of the family law have led to a further integration of material and ideological factors. As a result in the majority of cases women chose a mixture of conformity and rebellion to struggle against the conflict arising from material and ideological integration.

Although the patriarchal bargain was based on women's individual responses against patriarchal relations, nevertheless it was a pattern which could be observed throughout the society. This form of struggle, combined with different forms of organised and collective responses of women (discussed in the first part of this chapter) has increased gender consciousness and had affected the state's gender relations.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the political participation of women in Iran since 1979 revolution. It has been argued that women responded to patriarchal gender ideology in both an organised and on an individual basis. Within this framework, their responses were different according to their social class and levels of religiosity. The mass participation of women in the revolution of 1979, and women's struggles within the *shoras*, expressed how women, in their varied ways, initially took the revolution as a liberation. The Islamic state suppressed the secular women's movement. It only favoured the religious women's organisations and actions. This created a world apart between these two groups of women in the 1980s. Secular women's opposition (both inside and outside of Iran) to state patriarchy continued and kept women's issues alive and kicking. Religious women experienced the gender differential treatment by the state that they gave their support to. As a result in the 1990s, a form of unity had come about between these women, despite their social differentiation. Women's participation in economic and political activities had increased gender consciousness, especially among the new generation who had not experienced the secular way of life which was experienced by their parents. Thus they constantly put pressure on the state's patriarchal relations. This has produced dynamism within Islamic society as the

material and ideological basis of the Islamic state had been brought under question.

Beside organised struggles women had also responded to the patriarchal control of men and the state on an individual basis by choosing different strategies to negotiate with different forms of patriarchy. I have argued that the availability of resources or lack of them, both ideological and material, provided different bases from which women struggled to survive, to secure a better future or even improve their status.

More importantly, women's organised and individual responses had been complementary to each other. Together they had generated gender consciousness, and within the Islamic framework had transformed gender relations.

Notes

¹. Ettehade Melli Zanan (National Union of Women) was the biggest women's organisation. It was the Fedayeen women's organisation.

Chapter nine

Summary and conclusion

This thesis has investigated the changes in women's employment in Iran under the Islamic state (1979-1997). The preceding chapters established that the Islamic state, under pressure from socio-economic factors and women's struggles for change, was unable to abolish women's labour. Women's level of employment in this period did not fall, in comparison with pre 1979 period - even though the Islamic state strengthened the patriarchal relationships which are detrimental to women's employment status. Women's participation in the labour force and the labour market politicised many women and challenged Islamic theology and thereby the Islamic state.

In analysing women's employment in Iran, I have drawn on two existing gender scholarships:

Firstly the general debate on gender and employment in Africa, Asia and Latin America offered insights to analyse women's employment in Iran. A comparative evaluation between the analytical approaches offered by this debate and the specificities of the Iranian situation demonstrated similarities and differences between women's employment in Iran and elsewhere. An analysis of sexual division of labour under the Islamic state showed that the inclusion or exclusion of women from the labour market and the labour force is significant as women's access to employment could enhance their standard of living, their contribution to the upward mobility of their families and their ability to struggle against patriarchal gender relations within the family and the wider society. An analysis of social relations of gender under the Islamic state also allowed me to focus on the relationship between women's employment experiences and gender relations in the

home and the wider society; the way women are integrated into the workforce differently from men; even when women have access to employment they are treated differently from men in terms of wage rates and promotion practices. This analysis also shed light on the question of capitalism and patriarchy in Iran. That is in the process of economic development patriarchal gender relations, a set of power relations between genders, has great impact on women's employment.

The main contribution of the empirical work to this debate, however, is that economic policy alone does not determine the inclusion or exclusion of women. The role of the state and its gender ideology is also significant, but it is dynamic and changes under economic circumstances determined by indigenous and global circumstances. The Islamic state despite its criticisms of the Pahlavi system has remained the agent of economic development, it has maintained capital while strengthening patriarchal relationships in accordance with its gender ideology. However, analysing the specific form of state sponsored patriarchal relationships within the context of the indigenous class system and different levels of adherence to religious ideology (religiosity) revealed the dynamic and contradictory nature of patriarchal relations. I have argued that ideological controls on women interacted with material aspects of gender in the family and the wider society and resulted in contradiction and gender conflict. If under the Pahlavi state, the contradiction of modernisation and Westernisation were the cause of conflicts in the 1970s, it is the contradiction of Islamisation in the 1990s which is the cause of conflicts. This is particularly apparent in the women's struggle for change in their varied ways and the unity between the secular and Muslim feminists.

The second significant area of enquiry which I considered in order to analyse women's employment in Iran is the debate between the Iranian secular and Muslim feminists on the role of ideology, determining women's position in Iran. This debate offered an insight into the oppressive nature of gender roles and

relations in Iran. More importantly, it had the advantage of engaging the two opposing feminists inside and outside of Iran.

However, this debate is limited in two ways. It is mainly focused on the interrogation of religious ideology based on textual analysis and therefore, is lacking social investigation. More importantly, the analysis of women, gender and economic life in Iran under the Islamic state is missing from these studies. I, therefore, hope that this analysis of women's employment which is grounded in a concrete setting, as it is based on material circumstances of women, will fill this gap. As I have argued throughout the thesis in different phases of Islamisation, women's employment was determined by the interaction between economic and ideological forces and most importantly by women's responses, in their varied ways, to these forces.

The contribution of this thesis can be summarised in three broad sections: The impact of economic factors on women's employment, the impact of ideological factors on women's employment and women's responses to economic and ideological factors. This chapter will discuss these three threads which ran through the preceding chapters.

9.1 The impact of economic factors on women's employment

In the period 1979-1981, the clergy attempted to exclude women from the labour force. They used the *Sharia* as a source of authority and justification to establish a traditional interpretation of gender roles and relations. Accordingly laws and regulations were designed to minimise the demand for female labour and to control women's participation in the public sphere of life. On the basis of the patriarchal mandate of the *Sharia*, women's activities were to be restricted to the arena of the private sphere of the family which was believed to be the basic unit of

society. Therefore, the Islamic state's initial programme of action (legal changes, decrees, forms of implementation) was based on the goal of a minimal demand for female paid labour.

In the period 1981-1988, the Iran-Iraq war changed economic circumstances. One important change was the need of families for women's earnings. I examined the factors which determined the demand (from employers, public and private) for female labour in this period. I demonstrated that the state over time, in response to pressures of war, economic dislocation and rigidities in the labour market (male inability or unwillingness to do jobs categorised as 'women's jobs') had to replace its initial hard ideological line with expediency and consequently accepted the increase in female labour force. The private sector of the economy exploited this situation and increased its demand for female labour, which compared with male labour was cheaper, more flexible and easily disposable because of women's exclusive responsibility for domestic work.

I have argued that the material factors, arising from economic circumstances of the war years, had a powerful impact on Islamic ideological attitudes to female's participation in the workforce. The process of segregation which had aimed at exclusion of women from employment, paradoxically, opened up opportunities for many religious women to enter employment.

In the period 1989-1997 female employment continued to rise, as a result of economic expansion and rising inflation. By comparing the statistical data for women's employment in the 1990s and pre 1979 I demonstrated that far from being marginalised, women's participation in the workforce in 1997 was no different from that of 1979. Despite a rigid sexual division of labour imposed for ideological reasons by the Islamic state, women actively participated in a variety of ways as wage earners and non-wage earners. Their contribution was absolutely

necessary for the well being of their families and the product of their labour was sold on the national and international markets.

Hence I have argued that the Islamic state's powerful attempt to exclude women from the labour force did not succeed. On the contrary socio-economic pressure and women's struggle for change forced the state to make major concessions. This was reflected in the reforms of family law; the education system and the employment laws and regulations which improved female employment. For example, the leaders of the Islamic Republic were forced to advocate birth control which had been banned by the same clergy in the first phase of Islamisation. Also the same clergy who in the 1980s argued that, according to *Sharia*, women had no right to be judges, and consequently sacked female judges, stated, in the 1990s, that in principle there is no barrier for women to work as judges. As a result women began to work as judicial councillors.

An analysis of sexual division of labour under the Islamic state provided a ground to investigate women's employment within the context of the impact of economic factors and the role of the state. I have concluded that during 1979-1997, the Islamic state, as the main agent of economic development and social control, under pressure from economic circumstances, largely adapted to the world economy. Its position on women's employment also changed partly as a result of socio-economic factors such as the war economy, inflation, the rigidities in the labour market. This led to women's participation in the economy, despite the Islamic ideology. More importantly, women's employment led to contradictions between the theory and the practice of Islamic gender ideology based on *Sharia*. The state had to accommodate economic necessities which determined women's employment. Thus, under economic pressure, state action, even backed by a powerful ideological hegemony was frustrated in its ability to implement its gender policy.

9.2 The impact of ideological factors on women's employment

Under economic pressure the state failed to seclude women within the private domestic domain. However, it imposed sex segregation - the creation of separate spheres for women in the public domain. The state also used different perceptions of Fatimah and Zaynab as successful accommodating mechanisms to justify women's employment within its ideology.

The policy and practice of segregation created space for many religious women to enter and remain in employment (the secular women workers were coerced into observing the process of segregation). But this also became a source of their subordinate position to men in workplaces because the state and the employers used segregation to impose social control on women in work and thus controlled and restricted women's movements and their upward mobility prospects.

Many women who could not have access to large state enterprises which observed sex segregation fully, had to work in small private enterprises. But although this meant that under economic pressure ideology became a secondary factor determining women's employment, the pressure of ideology was still detrimental to women. The majority of women workers who work for these small firms are not registered as workers. Therefore, they are not protected by the labour law, they are hired and fired easily and they had to accept low-paid and low-position jobs because of the demands of domestic work, child care and / or care of elderly relatives.

The poorer the women, and the more they are constrained by religious values, the more devalued is their labour. In rural areas where half of the population live, they supported the Islamic state and hoped that the process of Islamisation would

improve their circumstances. But Islamisation reinforced gendered labour relations. The products of female unpaid family workers continued to be appropriated by the male members of their families. This was because men were the heads of households and women were prohibited from dealing with money and the market. Women's products were sold on the national and international markets but they were not even counted and recorded in the statistics as participants in the labour force.

In urban areas where women had better access to permanent employment and were less constrained by the traditional values attached to *Shia* Islamic ideology, their labour was devalued because they were not considered bread-winners. The ideology of femininity and domestic responsibility meant they did not work shifts; and women in the professions did not become involved in additional activities such as going to conferences and meetings, which were essential for promotion and reaching higher positions. At a time of economic restructuring women's hours of work increased which was the expression of unequal gender relations within the home.

The policy and practice of women obtaining permission from their husbands, fathers and other male kin to go out to work; men granting permission only if the honour of the family is maintained and if the domestic work is given priority; were among many factors which put constraints on female labour and made women's position vulnerable. Under these circumstances, women were forced to accept unfavourable labour relations in the labour force.

Despite the reforms of family law, which to some extent released women from their total domination by men, the cultural value attached to the importance of marriage and total compliance with the practice of *mahr* and *nafaghe* increased. These ideological factors, combined with economic problems arising from post-

war reconstruction and inflation weakened nuclear family relationships. Many families became financially dependent on the older generation for their survival. As a result, extended family relationships strengthened and the authority of the men as the bread-winners increased.

An analysis of gender relations within the context of the impact of ideological factors and the role of state on women's employment enabled me to assess patriarchal relations under the Islamic state. I have demonstrated that women are not confined and isolated within the domestic space, but they are integrated into the workforce differently from men. The state, under the pressure from economic and ideological forces maintained both patriarchy and capital by allocating power relationship within the family and the wider society. Therefore, despite reforms women's participation in employment and women's physical predominance in decision-making are effectively controlled. Women, even when they have access to employment and material resources had to adapt to the ideological needs of the male-dominated family and society which dictated unequal gender relations and placed women in a disadvantageous position in employment.

9.3 Women's responses

In preceding chapters I have also addressed the response of women to the material and ideological factors which shaped their employment status. I argued that historically the uneven economic development in Iran involved foreign domination and the influence of Shia Islam ideology which determined the process of class formation and produced different levels of religiosity which tied in with their class. Two different groups of women participated in the 1979 revolution: secular women who were dissatisfied with the Shah's reform and religious women who were the supporters of the Islamic leaders. This was an

urban movement and the majority of the women who participated in the revolutionary movement (1979-1981) were engaged in waged employment.

In the first phase of Islamisation, the Islamic state suppressed secular women's organisations. A combination of severe coercive measures against secular women and the mobilisation of religious women against them led to the defeat of the secular women's movement. The state also suppressed the industrial workers *shoras* where many women workers were struggling for trade union rights. Many of these women workers were religious and supporters of the Islamic state, but their organisations and their struggles for trade union rights were threatening the stability of the state. The Islamic state only allowed the participation of religious women who unconditionally supported the state and it exploited their participation as "Zaynabs", performing a temporary duty in favour of the Islamic state.

In the second phase of Islamisation (1981-1988) a large number of religious women were attracted to the Islamic state. The image of Zaynab was attractive, which allowed their participation in the labour force and the political movement. They supported the Islamic state, without at first questioning the Islamic gender ideology based on traditional interpretation of *Sharia*. However, in the third phase of Islamisation (1988-1997) their participation in the labour market politicised them and gave them a sense of collective consciousness against the limited role which was assigned to them by the Islamic state. They felt that the state that they gave their unconditional support to had ignored them. Although they continued to support it, they became more critical of it.

Through the study of the media I showed that in the third phase of Islamisation (1988-1997) the demand of many women for reform, especially religious women, led to a collaboration between Muslim and secular feminists in Iran who used the

media to discuss women's issues and the limitations of the state's gender ideology. These debates reflected the voices of many women, despite their class and levels of religiosity, who wanted change and objected to the conservative clergy who wanted to retain the status quo. This was also reflected in women's participation in politics as voters and candidates in parliamentary and presidential elections in 1996 and 1997. This movement highlighted the development of gender consciousness on a scale which has never existed in the modern history of Iran. In urban areas where half of the population lived, women of different classes and with different levels of religiosity, despite their disagreements on the nature of the Islamic state, had come together and demanded reforms. More importantly, they succeeded in forcing the state to re-interpret the *Sharia* from a pragmatic stance.

An analysis of indigenous class system combined with different levels of secularity and religiosity also enabled me to examine women's survival strategies. Through women's work histories and life histories I demonstrated their struggle for change on an individual basis against the conflicts arising from the stated gender ideology and the material practices of their lives. I showed how women mobilised their available material resources (wealth, employment, money, education, law) and against the ideological constraints (traditional values attached to Islamic rules and regulations) to struggle in different ways and to improve their position and power in comparison with men. I have suggested that women's access to resources and the level of ideological constraints determined their chosen survival strategies.

The different forms of individual and organised responses evidently showed a widespread development of gender consciousness which challenged the Islamic state's gender relations. This is a very important development which is largely as a result of women's participation in the labour force and the labour market, conditioned by the *Sharia*. It is important to recognise that women's individual responses have had an impact on patriarchal power of men, even backed by state

power, as many men now realise the importance of women's economic participation. Also it is important to celebrate the unity of Muslim feminists and secular feminists in Iran, that through their collective struggle they forced the Islamic state to enact a degree of reform and created opportunities for female education and employment. This new women's movement has also had a significant impact by restricting the state power to exclude women from participating in the labour force.

In conclusion: in an attempt to explain women's employment under the Islamic state I was able to consider the relationships between the workings of capital, state, patriarchy and class system in Iran. I have argued that their operations have been antagonistic as well as collaborative. The role of state has been crucial as affecting and being affected by economic circumstances and ideological factors. This study based on field work demonstrates that patriarchal social relations were dynamic. The Islamic state's determination to regulate gender roles and relations based on traditional interpretation of *Sharia* failed and was forced to be pragmatic. Gendered laws and beliefs which played an important role in determining women's employment were changed in response to change in economic circumstances and women's struggle.

More importantly, the interaction between economic and ideological factors led to gender consciousness and women's struggle for change. The indigenous class system, combined with different levels of religiosity and conflicting interests determined the different ways women rebelled against state sponsored patriarchal system. This is important because despite extensive critique of Western ahistorical ethnocentric depictions of Muslim societies, the case of women in Iran is frequently presented as the ultimate manifestation of women's oppression.

This case study has demonstrated that the level of gender consciousness is much greater now in the 1990s under the Islamic state than at the height of socio-economic transformation and Westernisation in the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, the subordination of women in Iran can not be attributed solely to Islamic ideology and practice. It has to be analysed within a wider perspective which involves material circumstances and change in gender relations.

The overlap between secularity and religiosity and the unity between the secular and religious women has produced reforms. These reforms are limited, they are made within the patriarchal Islamic framework where the state is strongly committed to women's subordination to men within the family and the society. The Islamic state, despite its dynamic nature, is a system which severely limits secular women's struggle for a better society, free from religion, and it will hold on to its patriarchal gender relations, as its survival depends on it. Thus, there is still a long way to go. This issue is clearly outside the scope of this thesis and is an important area of future research and investigation. Nevertheless, as long as women's struggle will continue the deeply rooted patriarchal nature of the Islamic state cannot be secured and the women's movement can play a key part in changes which may encompass the entire society.

Appendix

1: Interview

There are four stories here to show the different ways that individual women, according to their class and levels of religiosity, struggle to survive the pressure of economic circumstances and gender ideology.

a) Zahra a carpet weaver and agricultural worker

b) A group interview with women assembly workers at Margarine cooking oil factory

c) Zohreh a pharmacist and a manager in a chemical industry

d) Monireh a journalist

Case Study 1. Zahra a carpet weaver and agricultural worker in a village in Khorasan, August 1991.

Zahra was a young woman. She was not sure how old she was - may be 20 or 30. Four years ago her father married her to an old man, age 70 or 80, because he was too poor and could no longer afford to keep Zahra. Zahra's parents were carpet weavers and agricultural workers. But unlike Zahra's husband they did not own their small plot of land. They were labourers and worked for those who owned their land. After marrying the old man, Zahra became pregnant and had a baby. Zahra's step-daughter, Maryam who was twenty years of age also lived with them. Maryam was the old man's daughter from his previous marriage.

Zahra could not remember very well but she said that she has been working since she was four years of age, as a carpet weaver and an agricultural worker for her father. She never went to school and she could not read and write.

She worked from dawn to dusk. When I visited the village, she, alongside many other women, was picking grapes. Zahra took her child with her to work. He played on the land with other children. Older children looked after smaller children. In the mornings women picked grapes and put them into the baskets, men took them to special rooms to be washed and cleaned. In the afternoons, women washed the grapes and prepared them to be put on the wires, to be dried. At other times of the year Zahra alongside other women in the village worked on the land producing barley, wheat, cumin, Saffron and pistachio nuts. Zahra, like all other women in the village, weaved carpets in the evenings and in the winter where there was little agricultural work. Zahra's husband sold the agricultural products and the carpets that she produced. Once a year, he bought clothes for Zahra and took her to the holy city of Mashhad, in the same province, to visit Imam Reza's (Descendant of Ali and Fatimah, a leader of the Shia community) tomb. Twice a week he also took Zahra to the nearby village, where her family lived. They travelled by her husband's motorbike. Zahra and her little boy sat behind him. She enjoyed this ride and thought that it was fun. She never went to visit her family without her husband as it is a disgrace for a woman to go from one village to another village, on her own.

Like all the women in the village, after the sun set Zahra went home and did all the house work with the help of her step-daughter. She thought that house work must be done by women, as it is a disgrace for men to do the house work. She thought that her husband, even though is very old, was a good man, because he was looking after her. She did not want to have any more children because her

husband was so old. But she said that her husband says that whatever is the wish of Allah. She felt that she had to respect the God's wish and her husband's wish.

Case Study 2: A group interview with women assembly workers at Margarine cooking oil factory. Varamin, August 1991

This factory is an old plant. It is a state-private joint venture. Women work with old machinery, performing a number of tasks on the assembly line. The tasks included: filling the oil cans by pressing a handle; closing the door of the oil cans by pressing another handle; to seal the can by pushing a handle; clean the can; to weigh the can to make sure that it is the right amount; and to move the filled and weighed cans and put them out of the rail. The hours of work was from 7am until 3.30pm. The factory employed 700 male workers and 40 female workers. Because of lack of space it has not been possible to segregate the workforce, but women were mainly concentrated in packaging and administrative work. The women workers were from the nearby villages and were mostly illiterate. Some had primary education.

It was near lunch time, the foreman asked women workers to stop work and assemble in the factory's mosque to listen to the health visitors about the use of contraception. The health visitors explained to the women about the importance of not having too many children, as the country is in economic difficulties. Therefore too many children means more poverty, more bad housing, more bad education and more unemployment. They also explained that different forms of contraception are available free of charge and assured them about their safety and that it is permitted by the religious authority. Most women were between 40 - 50 years of age and on average had 5 -6 children who were grown up and had their own family. Most women didn't think they would get pregnant and found the discussion irrelevant. One of them was really interested in how a woman could

become pregnant because her daughter-in-law has failed to get pregnant. After this session, it was my turn to interview the women workers. The foreman chose a woman to answer my questions. Fatimah was 53 years of age, married with five children. She has been working in this factory for the last 15 years. She has worked in a number of capacities: as a telephone operator, controlling oil cans and now delivering letters from one section to another section within the factory.

At this point other women began to talk about their job. They explained that most of them worked on the packaging line and each of them had a task which was repeated all day. Their task was hard, as each worker had to fill 37 plates, each plate had 5 cans of oil, each can of oil had the capacity of 7 kilograms of oil. They had all been working for 15 -16 years.

They were all full time workers. They said that under the Shah there were more women workers. Now because the factory produces less than before, a number of women and men have been laid off. The situation was the same everywhere, most of them said that their husbands, sons and brothers were unemployed. They found this situation intolerable. Because they went out to work everyday and their men sat at home which was a disgrace. This was so hard to cope with, that at different occasions they had pleaded to the management to give their jobs to their men. But the management had refused because the work which was performed by women was considered a woman's job and could not be done by men. In some cases men were not willing to do packaging and administrative work because these were women's jobs.

Their lunch break was divided into one half hour to have lunch and the other half hour to go to the factory's mosque and pray. Most of them, however, did not pray at lunch time and instead had a rest. When they went home they washed and cleaned and in peace prayed five times, to cover for the whole day.

When I asked whether their husbands and fathers agreed with their work, they laughed, they did not think the question was relevant as there was no choice, their family could not manage without their earnings.

They travelled to work and returned home by the factory's bus service, they usually arrived home at 4.30 and began the house work until late at night. They did not believe that men should work in the house, they thought this was a disgrace. Two of them had their daughters and/or their daughters-in-law living with them and they helped them with their housework but not sons or sons-in-law.

Case Study 3: Zohreh a pharmacist and the manager of a laboratory in a chemical industry, August 1991.

This modern factory employed 150 workers and employees, 80 women and 70 men. Women mostly worked in the laboratory and in the packaging department.

Zohreh was 30 years of age, married with two children. She has been working for 14 years as a scientist within different firms of the pharmaceutical industry. She worked from 7am - 3.30pm. Her responsibility was the control of the whole production process which involved numerous and sensitive tasks: to control the size of the moisture in different forms of tablets; to control the formulas; to control the raw materials; to supervise the production units, the work of other laboratory workers and the packaging department. The work of the laboratory was team work, she was the head of the team and 11 specialists worked under her supervision. Thus she had to specialise in a number of tasks such as production, technology and packaging.

Zohreh said that if she was a man with all these specialisations and work experiences, she would have been in a much higher position. To prove her abilities she had to translate 20 formula or recent research about the most up-to-date ways of producing medicines until they recognised the importance of her work, while a man in her position proved his ability by saying a few words at meetings and conferences.

This company was one of those private companies which had been confiscated by the Islamic state when the owner escaped the country after the revolution. It operated under the ministry of industries. Men and women earn equal pay for equal work; subsidies and benefits at high level of earnings are nearly the same for men and women.

However, Zohreh had lost some benefits. A male manager, after a year of work experience had received a company car. After seven years, she had not received one, instead they had given her access to a car with a driver as a means of transport for coming to work and going back home. She had been told that she was a woman, she did not really need a car, because her husband had a car.

Zohreh explained the way men sat together, talked and joked, they enjoyed working together, while women could not, as it was bad for women to talk and joke. Men were cliquish, they made a support system among themselves from management positions to the security officers at the gate, this way they managed all their affairs and stepped up the ladder of promotion and success much quicker than women. Women were not able to do so, because their mobility was limited. Furthermore because of her sensitive position, she was not popular with the managing director, as her job was, sometimes to criticise in order to promote the quality control.

Zohreh said that women were never sent abroad to conferences and they hardly went out of the company to meetings and conferences. However, she thought that although segregation discriminated against women and created obstacles in the way of their promotion, the atmosphere in the workplaces was healthier, there was much less sexual harassment. Under the previous system, women's specialisation and expertise were not important, their looks, their hair style, their clothes and their femininity were important and were criterion for their progress and promotion. Also there was a great degree of sexual harassment, if women did what the boss wanted them to do they would be promoted, otherwise they could have lost their job. These things did not happen any more. She said she preferred this system, although she was a modern middle class woman and not religious and very unhappy that she was forced to wear the Islamic cover.

Zohreh earned 350000 rials a month which was the highest salary for a woman in her position. Her salary paid for half of the household expenditure. Her children went to private school, they travelled to school and back by the school's private bus service. She also provided them with private language tutors and physical education. When they were younger her mother looked after them and later they went to a private nursery school.

Zohreh arrived home in the afternoons around 4.30pm. After a little rest she did the house-work: cleaning; washing; cooking and shopping. Some days she worked until 1am. Her husband did not touch the house-work, he was a businessman and usually did not return home until 10pm. After finishing the house-work Zohreh had dinner with her children and helped them with their home-work. After children had gone to bed she attended to her private study, to catch up with the latest information, knowledge and technology, in relation to her job.

She said that for her husband it was not important that she was a doctor, an academic and a manager, he wanted a wife, so to avoid troubles at home she tried to be a wife. She finished all her house-work, children's work including helping them with their home-work and all her own private study before her husband came home. When he arrived she brought his dinner and kept his company. She even danced for him, if he wished. She was in a much higher position than her husband academically and professionally. But if she did not do what he wanted her to do, she would have been in trouble and he could have refused to agree to her work outside of the home. Zohreh thought that many women who worked outside the home had many problems with their husbands. The only way to avoid trouble was to do what they want a woman to do and keep them happy and quiet. She said that she was a very lucky woman that her husband did not come home until late at night. If he came home earlier, she could not have finished all the house-work, children's work and her own research. This was the only way that she could have had her husband's agreement to go out to work, as long as he was not involved with the house-work, children's work and she devoted her time to him when he came home. For Zohreh this was a small price to pay for hanging on to her career.

Case Study 4: Monireh, a journalist. Tehran, August 1991.

Monireh is 34 years of age, single and had no children, she had a BA in media studies and journalism. She had been a journalist for seven years, working for different newspapers.

Monireh started her career as a 'sitting' journalist, this term is used for those journalists who worked from the office and gathered news and information around the country by telephone and by letters. She was responsible for the exclusive news of small cities. This was not very dynamic, it was rather very static

job. After a while, she moved to another section dealing with the news of the Majlis, (the parliament). She hated the Islamic cover. She could not refuse to wear it but she refused to wear it properly, always either showing a bit of her hair from under the scarf or putting her hair up under the scarf, looking odd. She became known as a bad *hejabi*, an abusive term used for women who were ridiculing the Islamic dress by not observing it fully, according to the rules.

She was under a lot of pressure by men and women who were religiously committed. She was not sacked because her work was too good and they could not do without her. But she was discriminated against and was treated very badly. She remained a 'sitting' journalist. She was not sent out of the office to gather news and information. She had to listen to the radio station which broadcasted speeches and debates from the parliament, and prepared articles on the latest economic and political issues. She worked very hard, most days she worked from 7am until 7 - 8 pm, to prove that she was a good journalist.

Her specialisation was in economic and political affairs but they refused to send her to the parliament. Instead they sent a woman with *chador* (full black cover) who knew nothing about these issues. Monireh prepared the appropriate questions for her to ask at the parliament, and on the basis of the information that she brought back she wrote the articles. She worked very hard to fill the gaps by listening to the debates on the radio and tried to make sense of the incomplete materials that she received from the Islamic woman.

Her salary remained low, in comparison with the number of hours that she worked and her responsibilities. Her duties were equal to the responsibility of the head of the section. In all newspapers, this position belonged to men and not women, even though women did all the work. Only in Zane Rouz, the weekly

national women's magazine, where most journalists were women, the head of sections were also women.

Women were not usually sent to other cities or abroad. Unmarried women were in a more difficult situation. Very few responsibilities were given to them in comparison with married women. This was another problem that Monireh had, as she was not married. She was very angry that most women accepted this situation, there was no attempt by women to change their circumstances, as a result pressure on women and discrimination against them was becoming more intense.

Married women with children usually had to leave early and to come late to work because of their domestic responsibilities. They welcomed not being sent out to other cities and abroad, because they believed that if they went, they would be under pressure and would be scrutinized. All these allowed the male managers and heads of sections to look at women as inferiors and assumed that they were not able to do their job as well as men.

Monireh complained that according to the new labour law women could retire after 20 years of service. Many women welcomed this new law, because they found working outside of the home intolerable. She thought that this was a wrong attitude because it allowed men to push women back to the homes more severely. She believed that if women want to have a better position in society, they have to fight for it and not to accept whatever they want them to be.

The official hours of work was from 7.30 am until 2.30 pm. But Monireh worked much longer hours to prove that she was a good journalist. From 7.30 - 12.30 she listened to the radio station which reported live from the parliament and she took notes. If there was an important issue, she wrote an article. From 12.30 - 2.30 she

produced analytical reports and news. Usually there was very little information, therefore her task was hard but she did her best with the limited resources at her disposal. Articles were mainly in the form of news and reports, questions had to be formulated in a way that is understandable for different people with different levels of education. Economics and legal issues had to be written in simple and popular form. She was also responsible for head-lines and sub-headings which could have been critical for a national newspaper which was distributed widely inside the country and for an audience outside of the country. As a result, she worked until 4.30 - 5.30 pm and sometimes when it was very busy she worked until 8 - 8.30 pm.

Some days there was less work, especially, when the policy was not to report too much. Under these circumstances she read and studied to be up-to-date with news and analysis. At other times there was too much work, for example, around the financial year and the debate over the budget, the parliament's sessions were 7.30 am - 12.30 pm, 2.30 - 5.30 pm and 7 - 10.30 pm. She had to report and produce articles for each session. Under these circumstances she worked 15 - 16 hours a day. Sometimes she went home at 10.30 and she worked at home until early hours of the morning to be able to deliver the articles on time for the next day.

Monireh also complained that in the eyes of the labour law, men and women received equal wage for equal work. But in reality, men received more than women for less work, because they were considered to be the bread-winners. The benefits and subsidies were based on 'writing commission'. Men automatically received this commission, as being the head of families and bread-winners, even if they did not write as much as women. Men travelled to other cities and abroad and received large amounts of money, as travel expenses, but women were not allowed to travel and therefore do not receive this allowances

Journalists have to go to places, hear people and get engaged in discussions and debates, women were not sent to places. Even when they were, they were not allowed to get involved in discussions and debates, because this was considered to be undignified for women. When men do the same, it was considered to be part of their knowledge, their specialisation and efficiency. Women accepted this state of affairs. They put their heads down and they did as they were told, in order to prove their dignity. A good woman was the one who was quiet and her head was down. A bad woman was the one who argued and got involved in discussions and debates. Monireh was working hard to prove that it was possible to do a good job as a journalist and have dignity. This was a hard task but she believed it was possible, she was trying hard but she felt that unfortunately she was the only one, other women, even if they agreed with her, did not have the courage to do what she did.

In this work place because of lack of space, women and men work next to each other in different offices. But segregation is in another form. For example, if men joke, women were not allowed to laugh, because this might have harmed their dignity. This had created such a problem for women, as men worked in a relaxed atmosphere while women worked under enormous stress and pressure because they were not even allowed to laugh at jokes. Sometimes women were even warned for looking around.

After 7 years of hard work, Monireh received 70000 rials a months. She lives with her mother and paid 1/4 of the household expenditure. Her mother did all the housework and did not let Monireh to do any house work. She was very proud of her and agreed with her work, but she was worried that sometimes she got home late at night.

Monireh worked very hard and under enormous pressure, but when she wrote a worthwhile project and article, she was satisfied. She felt that her relatives, friends and her colleagues recognised and appreciated her work. At work they had realised the importance of her work, because whenever she was ill and did not go to work, they kept calling her because no one worked as hard as, and as good as her.

She believed that women were seen as a threat to men's jobs, because women did a better job, they worked faster and more efficiently. But they usually ended up doing static jobs which had little promotion. She also believed that if she was allowed to go out to the parliament, to other cities or abroad, she could have produced much better work, but they would not allow her. So there was a limited amount of work that she could have done, both in terms of quality and quantity.

Despite all the problem, she loved her job and her profession and she had devoted her life to it. She did not want to get married. She felt very lonely and isolated but she could not possibly marry someone who she did not know. Segregation did not allow men and women meet freely and to get to know each other. If she was going to get married he should have been someone who would not stop her career and her personal interests. Once she met a man who she would have liked to marry, but he wanted her to be at home at 2.30 pm and not working late. This was impossible for Monireh as her work and her battle at work to change the attitudes towards women's work was too important for her. On the other hand an unmarried woman had a hard time. Unmarried women become the victim, men assumed that they were waiting to be used by them. Therefore limitations, restrictions and confinement was enormous.

2: Questionnaire

The skeleton of this questionnaire was designed in London in 1990. When I decided to use it in Iran, with the help of my daughter, my sister and other female members of my family and friends we changed some parts of it to fit with the Iranian situation. The aim was to obtain the maximum amount of information. For example we had to put the heading "In the name of the God" as all official documents have such a heading and without it nothing would be processed. Question number 20 was to find out what percentage of women received their salary themselves. Salaries were received in cash or in the form of a cheque by signing a document. Many women's salaries or wages were received by male member of their family. Question number 22 and 23 tried to find out how important was a woman's wage or salary to her family's expenditure. Usually women at the first instance, said that it was not important and it was for their personal use. But when the question was opened she revealed that it was very important.

I have chosen three of the questionnaires to show the different ways women had treated the questions and had answered them.

Are you working outside the home? Yes **X** No

Are you a housewife and perform your social and economic activities at home?

Yes No

Is your work voluntary? For example working for the Literacy Corp or Mobilisation Organisation? Yes No

8. In case you are employed or engaged in voluntary work outside the home and have children please state what do you do with your children during your hours of absence from home: Work place nursery **X** State nursery Private nursery

Nanny Leave with friends Neighbours Family and relatives **X**

9. Do you get paid for your work? Yes **X** No

10. Do you have any other source of income? Yes No **X**

If yes please state what is/are the source/s of your income.

11. Why do you work: Financial needs **X** Social or cultural needs
For Charity and religious purposes To be independent
To help the family Other

12. Why have you chosen this work? Financial needs **X** Personal choice
Family's choice Social prestige In relation to your specialisation
Other

13. In case your work is a voluntary work? do you get any expenses and bonuses such as: Travel expenses Social promotion Or purely to help others

14. If you get paid for your work, what does your salary pays for? Rent
Food and clothes **X** Children's expenses **X** Saving
Own personal expenses **X**

15. Does your family agree with your work? Yes **X** No
Does your husband agree? Yes No

16. In your opinion what kind of work is suitable for women?
Health service Teaching Doing productive work at home
Management Directorship Administrative work
To be a *Karmand* **X** Other

17. In your opinion which sector of the economy is more suitable for women to work in? State enterprises **X** Private enterprises Self-employment

18. Are you the only wage earner in your family? Yes No **X**

If yes, is your wage enough to run the family? Yes No **X**

If no, how do you manage, do you have other jobs? Explain

If no, who are other wage earners in your family? Husband **X**

Mother Father Brother Sister Son
Daughter **X** Other?

19. To what extent is your wage important to the family, in comparison with other members of the family? More than others The same as others **X**
Less than others Has no effect

20. Who receives your salary? Yourself **X** Your husband
Your parents Your children? Your male children?

21. Who decides about how your salary or wage should be spent? Yourself

In consultation with your husband or your parents

Collectively with other members of the family **X**

22. How much of your salary is spent on personal expenses? All of it

Most of it Half of it Less than half of it A small amount of it **X**

None of it

23. What is your salary spent on? Travel expenses

Children's nursery Clothes **X** Children's education **X** Other

24. Who does the housework in your absence? Mother Mother-in-law

Sister Sister-in-law Husband Children No-one **X**

Other

25. What is your present occupation? **Assembly worker**

26. Date of employment? **1975**

27. What is your position at work?

28. Type of work?

29. Which sector of the economy do you work for? State **X**

Private Self-employed

30. Hours of work: Full-time **X** Part-time Normal hours **X** Shift
work

Which shifts? Day Evening Night

31. How many hours a day do you work? 4 8 **X** 12 Other

32. What form of salary do you receive? Full-time **X** Part-time daily
Part-time contract work Hourly paid Other

33. How much salary or wage do you receive per month? **5230 rials**

34. Do you receive any form of bonuses or benefits? Yes **X** No Explain

35. Your previous employment :

Date of employment The date that you left this job The reason that you left this
job

1-

2-

3-

4-

Other explanation?

36. If you have left any of your jobs, what was the affect of that on your retirement and pension funds?

37. Please explain any work experience.

Are you working outside the home? Yes No

Are you a housewife and perform your social and economic activities at home?

Yes **X** No

Is your work voluntary? For example working for the Literacy Corp or Mobilisation Organisation? Yes **X** No

8. In case you are employed or engaged in voluntary work outside the home and have children please state what do you do with your children during your hours of absence from home: Work place nursery State nursery Private nursery

Nanny Leave with friends Neighbours Family and relatives

9. Do you get paid for your work? Yes No **X**

10. Do you have any other source of income? Yes **X** No

If yes please state what is/are the source/s of your income.

Because my husband disappeared in the war, I receive 30,000 rials per month from the Martyred Foundation

11. Why do you work: Financial needs Social or cultural needs
For Charity and religious purposes **X** To be independent
To help the family Other **I work voluntarily to please the God**

12. Why have you chosen this work? Financial needs Personal choice **X**

Family's choice Social prestige In relation to your specialisation

Other

13. In case your work is a voluntary work? do you get any expenses and bonuses such as: Travel expenses Social promotion Or purely to help others

14. If you get paid for your work, what does your salary pays for? Rent
Food and clothes Children's expenses Saving
Own personal expenses

15. Does your family agree with your work? Yes No
Does your husband agree? Yes No

16. In your opinion what kind of work is suitable for women?
Health Service Teaching doing productive work at home
management directorship Administrative work
To be a *Karmand* Other
Whatever the God approves of

17. In your opinion which sector of the economy is more suitable for women to work in? State enterprises Private enterprises Self-employment

18. Are you the only wage earner in your family? Yes X No
If yes, is your wage enough to run the family? Yes No X
If no, how do you manage, do you have other jobs? Explain
If no, who are other wage earners in your family? Husband
Mother Father Brother Sister Son
Daughter Other?

19. To what extent is your wage important to the family, in comparison with other members of the family? More than others The same as others
Less than others Has no effect

20. Who receives your salary? Yourself Your husband
Your parents Your children? Your male children?

21. Who decides about how your salary or wage should be spent? Yourself

In consultation with your husband or your parents

Collectively with other members of the family

22. How much of your salary is spent on personal expenses? All of it
Most of it Half of it Less than half of it A small amount of it
None of it

23. What is your salary spent on? Travel expenses
Children's nursery Clothes X Children's education Other

24. Who does the housework in your absence? Mother Mother-in-law

Sister Sister-in-law Husband Children No-one
Other

25. What is your present occupation?

26. Date of employment?

27. What is your position at work?

28. Type of work?

29. Which sector of the economy do you work for? State Private Self-employed

30. Hours of work: Full-time Part-time Normal hours Shift work

Which shifts? Day Evening Night

31. How many hours a day do you work? 4 8 12 Other

32. What form of salary do you receive? Full-time Part-time daily Part-time contract work Hourly paid Other

33. How much salary or wage do you receive per month?

34. Do you receive any form of bonuses or benefits? Yes No Explain

35. Your previous employment :

Date of employment The date that you left this job The reason that you left this job

1-

2-

3-

4-

Other explanation?

36. If you have left any of your jobs, what was the affect of that on your retirement and pension funds?

37. Please explain any work experience.

In the name of the God

The aim of this questionnaire is merely to collect statistical information for an academic purpose. This information will not be used to determine an individual women's social and economic status. Therefore it is not necessary for women to put their name and the name of their work place. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated as you help a PhD student to write her thesis on the social and economic status of women in Iran. Please read the questions very carefully and answer them as clearly and accurately as possible. I thank you in advance.

1. Date of completion of the questionnaire. **23.9.1991**

2. Age: Under 18 18-25 25-30 30-40 **X**
40-50 50-60 Over 60

3. Education: Primary Pre-Secondary Secondary Diploma
Post DiplomaBA MA **X** PhD Other

4. Marital status: Single Married **X** Date **March 1979** Divorced
Date Widowed Date

5. If you are divorced? Give reasons: Financial Personal
Family interference Unable to have children Other

6. No. of Children **2 sons** Their age: **7 and 10.**

7. Are you engaged in social and economic activities other than your work in the home? Yes **X** No Explain the kind of activity.

Are you working outside the home? Yes **X** No

Are you a housewife and perform your social and economic activities at home?

Yes No

Is your work voluntary? For example working for the Literacy Corp or Mobilisation Organisation? Yes No

8. In case you are employed or engaged in voluntary work outside the home and have children please state what do you do with your children during your hours of absence from home: Work place nursery State nursery Private nursery

Nanny Leave with friends Neighbours Family and relatives

My children go to school, whenever necessary my family and my husband's family will help me.

9. Do you get paid for your work? Yes **X** No

10. Do you have any other source of income? Yes No **X**

If yes please state what is/are the source/s of your income.

11. Why do you work: Financial needs **X** Social or cultural needs **X**

For Charity and religious purposes **X** To be independent **X**

To help the family **X** Other **All of these are reasons for me to go out to work**

12. Why have you chosen this work? Financial needs Personal choice **X**

Family's choice Social prestige In relation to your specialisation **X** Other

13. In case your work is a voluntary work? do you get any expenses and bonuses such as: Travel expenses Social promotion Or purely to help others

14. If you get paid for your work, what does your salary pays for? Rent **X**
Food and clothes **X** Children's expenses **X** Saving
Own personal expenses

15. Does your family agree with your work? Yes **X** No

Does your husband agree? Yes **X** No **X**

Yes and No because he agrees in some ways and he does not agree in other ways.

16. In your opinion what kind of work is suitable for women?

Health service Teaching Doing productive work at home
Management Directorship Administrative work
To be a *Karmand* Other

Why? In my view all of these professions could be suitable or not suitable, depending on an individual's choice and ability

17. In your opinion which sector of the economy is more suitable for women to work in? State enterprises **X** Private enterprises Self-employment

18. Are you the only wage earner in your family? Yes No **X**

If yes, is your wage enough to run the family? Yes No

If no, how do you manage, do you have other jobs? Explain

If no, who are other wage earners in your family? Husband **X**
 Mother Father Brother Sister Son
 Daughter Other?

19. To what extent is your wage important to the family, in comparison with other members of the family? More than others **X** The same as others
 Less than others Has no effect

At present more than others

20. Who receives your salary? Yourself **X** Your husband
 Your parents Your children? Your male children?

21. Who decides about how your salary or wage should be spent? Yourself

In consultation with your husband or your parents
 Collectively with other members of the family **X**

22. How much of your salary is spent on personal expenses? All of it
 Most of it Half of it Less than half of it A small amount of it **X**
 None of it

23. What is your salary spent on? Travel expenses **X**
 Children's nursery Clothes **X** Children's education Other

24. Who does the housework in your absence? Mother Mother-in-law
 Sister Sister-in-law Husband Children No-one **X**
 Other

25. What is your present occupation? **University lecturer**

26. Date of employment? **1990**

27. What is your position at work? **Lecturer**

28. Type of work? **Teaching**

29. Which sector of the economy do you work for? **State X** **Private**
Self-employed

30. Hours of work: **Full-time X** **Part-time** **Normal hours** **Shift**
work

Which shifts? **Day** **Evening** **Night**

31. How many hours a day do you work? **4** **8 X** **12** **Other**

I work 8 hours a day at the university and I work between 8 -10 hours a day at home doing the house-work So I work between 16-18 hours a day.

32. What form of salary do you receive? **Full-time X** **Part-time daily**
Part-time contract work **Hourly paid** **Other**

33... How much salary or wage do you receive per month? **200,000 rials**

34. Do you receive any form of bonuses or benefits? **Yes X** **No** **Explain**
Only through over-time

35. Your previous employment: **Bank employee, a private enterprise employee, administrative officer at the university**

Date of employment/ The date that you left this job/The reason that you left this job

1-1974-1975 / I left this job to continue my higher education.

2- 1976-1979 / I left this job to go and work for the state sector

3- 1979-1990 / I left the administrative work and started my academic career

4-

Other explanation?

36. If you have left any of your jobs, what was the affect of that on your retirement and pension funds?

All the years that I worked in an private company does not count towards my years of service whether in terms of salary scale or pension fund. My years of work in the state sector is only counted towards my pension fund but not my salary scale.

37. Please explain any work experience.

Women's contribution to family and society is extremely important. They work harder than men and they carry a heavy responsibility on their shoulders. A woman's work within the home is considered her natural duty, while if a man helps with the house-work, he has performed a great favour to his family. This has such a deeply psychological affect that many women believe in this state of affair. Women work outside of the home under massive pressure, employers are not sympathetic to women's domestic problem and child care. If women have to leave early or arrive late because of child care problem, they are treated as someone who is not serious in her work. Although women's earning is important for the family, if children become ill or something goes wrong in the house, women are blamed

because they have not treated their domestic responsibility seriously. This creates many problems within the family, between husband and wife and even between children and the mother. Other problems such as shortage of nursery schools, short maternity leave and looking after children under 3 years of age, which are critical age, are added problems for women.

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