
Women in Afghanistan

Mohammad Fahim Kohdamany

LLB - Andhra University
Visakhapatnam, India

Abstract

Living in Afghanistan has shown me about the many different aspects that have shaped these women into who they are today. Family is the most important element for a woman in Afghanistan. They have survived through incredibly harsh periods, when education for women was illegal and when being out in public without a male accompaniment was a punishable act as well. Taliban seized control over Kabul (capital of Afghanistan) in 1996. They imposed extreme rules that banished women from the work; they closed schools for girls, denied women from university, force women to wear Burqa. The women in Afghanistan have been crying for help throughout the years. 2001, was a year of happiness for women, new government came to existence and women get involved to their government and took a stand for women rights. New government under the chairmanship of Hamid Karzai give them the opportunity to breath safely after long dark years, now they have right to vote and participate in public debates, women can go to university and they are able to work and are being out without a male accompaniment. Bright days are ahead for women in Afghanistan new election and new president is a new hope for them to get engaged in governmental affairs, now women have better access to health service, 20 percent of all prosecutors and judges are women. They are none under the Taliban.

Many Afghan women have played very important and influential roles in the history of Afghanistan, However their actions and contributions are not well documented in the Afghan history books. Many women have died defending the country against foreigner invaders and risking their lives to educate the next generation of women.

Women before the Taliban

Until the conflicts of the 1970, the 20th century had seen relatively steady progression for women's right. In the country, Afghan women were first eligible to vote in 1919 – only a year after women in UK were giving voting rights, and a year before the women in the United States were allowed to vote. In 1960 a new constitution brought equality to many areas of life for women, including, political Participation and public debates. They were treated equal in the eye of law, they had every right, that a man had. In Afghanistan the statute of women has been something debated since the establishment of nation. Before Afghanistan was fully independent nation. Under the rule of Abdul Rahmankhan, he implemented many changes; he instituted many reforms that included required marriage. Registration, women were not having to marry

her husband next closest male relative if her husband passed away, and also if a women wanted to stay with her husband or not before she went through puberty.

After Abdul Rahmankhan, Afghanistan became independent in 1919, under the rule of king Amanullah, who established a monarchy . King wanted to give women more freedom .he says if women wanted to go to the park, they would not have to cover their faces .he established the first girls school in the history of Afghanistan in 1920, he eliminated slavery which made women free from cohabitation without being married. Then Zaher Shah brought some changes in women life in Afghanistan, Daoud khan give women a chance ,equal job opportunities to that of men where offered to women and women were able to work in different jobs. After the Soviet possession in Afghanistan, Afghanistan was plunged into a state of violent power struggle, many different groups were fighting for power and these groups sent country to the hell, back to 15th century. An Afghan female says what Afghanistan she saw when she was child. Horia Seddiqi an Afghan female says: “As a girl, I remember my mother wearing miniskirt and taking us to cinema. And my aunt went to university in Kabul”.

During the Taliban

Taliban ruled in Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001. They implemented the strictest law. During the Taliban rule in Afghanistan , all the nation were on a dark hole and this has given their freedom, Women were experiencing the most hilarious moments .Women were totally prohibited from working and from wearing anything except Burqa. They were forbidden to be in public without a male relative or companion, which they called Mahram. In 1998 restrictions became more servers, the Taliban ordered that windows in Kabul be blackened so Women could not be seen inside their homes from the outside Women were forbidden to see a male doctor, even though very few female doctors were allowed to Work. Under the Taliban, women and girls were discriminated against in many ways, for the crimes of being born a girl; they were enforcing their own law. Women and girls were banned from going to school or university , banned from showing their skin in public, and banned from being involved in politics or speaking publicity .There were many other ways their rights were denied to them .women were essentially invisible in Public life , they were imprisoned in their homes .Violence against women and girls was rife .they were not treated as a human, but as an animal , There was no life and no hope for women in Afghanistan .Taliban were killing women in public and no could claim their rights.

A 15 years old girl in Kabul said that “they shot my father in front of me. It was nine o ‘clock at night. They came to your house and told him they had orders to kill him because he allowed me to go to school. I cannot describe what they did to me after killing of my father”. Generally women had no hope, they were in the middle of dark situation, they forgot the smile and life.

New government 2001

After the removal of Taliban regime from Afghanistan a new government was formed. The Karzai administration has relaxed policy around women right. And in Kabul women can be seen driving

cars and engaging in other activities that they would have previously banned from participating in. Women's position improved, girls were going to school and participating in public debates, entertainment and sports. There have been undeniable improvements for women and girls since the fall of the Taliban. More than 100 organizations established for women and new laws passed for them. Elimination of violence against women (EVAW), passed by presidential decree. Women participation in public life, Girls access to education, after 2001 42 percent of students were girls who enrolled at school Universities.

Hope for a fresh breath

Women in Afghanistan has suffered a lot, they were tired of their life and the struggles. When new government came to role, Hope came to Afghan women and they were happy that they are not imprisoned any more, they can be in public they can vote and they can have the equal rights that men has. Hamid Karzai government gave them the rights they needed, full freedom for women, and now after long dark years they can breathe safely and be happy of life. According to Nick Danzinger a photographer from United states who recently paid a visit to Afghanistan, he says. "Much has been achieved after the fall of the Taliban, More than 2.7 million girls are now in education and laws have been passed to ban child marriages, honour killings and the practice of daughters being given away by their families like commodities to settle disputes, But much remains to be tackled. Yes, He is right, by all the assesst of government, Still we are witness of the problems which are faced by women.

Afghan women activists after the Taliban

Dr. Sima Samar

Sima Samar is a well known women's and human rights advocate, activist and a social worker within national and international forums, she served as minister of Women affairs from 2001 to 2003. Samar obtained her degree in medicine from Kabul university in 1982, during the Soviet regime she fled to Pakistan and established the Shuhada Organization to take health care of Afghan refugees women in Queta, Pakistan. This organization was dedicated to the provision of health care of Afghan women and girls, training of medical staff and education. "I have no fear anymore; I know that nothing is impossible. I think of the days when I went to Jaghori (a district in Ghazni province), my home town, and I felt I was alone in my endeavours. Today I enjoy the full support of the Afghan people. With enough collective effort and determination, things can be done, Change can be happen" she says. Now she is the chairperson of the Afghan independent human rights commission since 2005. She owed lots of national and international awards in her career.

Fawzia Koofi:

Koofi, a lady who left to dies in the sun after birth by her mother. But she survived, despite the abuse of her family, the exploitative Taliban regime, the murder of her father, brother and husband and huge attempts on her life, she rose to become the first Afghani parliament speaker.

Her women rights engagement is that she made it a priority to defend women's right in Afghanistan. Some of the key women's initiative that she has championed during her tenure as an MP include: the improvement of women's living conditions in Afghan prisons, the establishment of a commission to combat the issue of violence against the children, specially against children. Also she promoted the level of education for women in her homeland Badakhshan (a province in Afghanistan). Law maker, women right advocate and candidate for residential elections. Koofi is a leader with a vision to change Afghanistan Into a society that is based on the rule of law, Civility and human rights. despite numerous attacks on her life, what she most afraid of is being Misunderstood by people.

"I am not afraid to die for my values" she says. Afghanistan first female speaker of parliament and the highest ranking women in Afghan politics. That makes her a target for opponents of women's right in Afghanistan, including the fearsome Taliban. Koofi refused to be cowed. she even plans to run for president in two years. Her priority is to defend women rights in Afghanistan. Her book *The Favorite Daughter*, explains the lifeshehad.

Malalay Joya

She was 27 when she sealed a seat in Afghanistan parliament in 2007, for her speeches against Mujahedin she was suspended from the parliament of Afghanistan. She was elected to the Loyajerga (An assembly to debate the proposed Afghan constitution), when she stood up and publicly criticized the room full of men (Mujahidin). "why would you allow criminals to be present? warlords are responsible for our country situation. The most anti women people in the society who brought our country to this state and they intend. To do the same again" She was called The bravest women in Afghanistan by BBC. Time magazine placed her on their annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world. Foreign policy magazine listed Joya in its annual list of top 100 global thinkers. The Guardian listed her among top 100 women activists on March 2011. "I started working as an activist when I was very young, grade 8. I worked in refugee camps during the war with Soviet Union when family were refugees in Iran. In every house that I went everyone had different stories of suffering. No movie maker, no writer is able to write about these tragedies that we have suffered. Not only in Afghanistan but also Palestine, Iraq. The children of Afghanistan is like the children of Palestine, they fight against the enemies with only stones. These kinds of children are my heroes and heroines," she says, She has much more International peace awards.

Farkhunda Zahra Naderi:

Naderi, as one of the women rights activists in Afghanistan, raised the first voice for the membership of women in Afghan Supreme court, and after she took a seat in Afghan Parliament in 2010 by direct and fair voting by people. She shared the idea with the women committee members in Afghan parliament and also presented in the General assembly. The youngest female parliament member in Afghanistan, is the Member of women affairs, human rights and civil society of Afghan Parliament Farkhunda Zahra Naderi, the N-Peace award winner. the international peace network introduces peace award in 2012 among 100 peace builder from 6

south Asian countries ,and Zahra won the award for her efforts for women in behalf of Afghanistan. Her work, patient and talent made her one of the famous women activist in Afghanistan.

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