

Grey Literature and the Role of Women Pioneers in Qajar Era (1910-1920)

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Abstract

Iranian society in the Qajar era, despite having an ancient civilization and culture, had a medieval society with national and religious prejudices. During this era, due to the society's view of women and the lack of importance to their prosperity, their education was not considered. After constitutional revolution, newspapers and magazines became more active and their number increased day by day. In this time, newspapers became very popular among the people, and their news covered not only political and social subjects, but also the news of women of other nations in the form of apparent values, duties and status in the family. This news and information and intellectual progress led women to cooperate with the press of that time; because they considered it is the perfect tool to express their thoughts with others and connecting abroad. In this regard, women started publishing magazines in

order to awaken and increase the awareness of women in the society. The first magazine that was published by women was "Danesh". In this research, the articles of women's journals, that were published between 1910-1920, studied in order to obtain an understanding of the information needs of women in that period. This study surveys the topics and the number of articles written or translated by women. The research population consisted of 116 issues from seven titles of the women journals and a total of 569 articles were reviewed. Gradually, as these publications found their place in the society, a number of them, such as *Zaban-e Zanan* and *A'alam-e Nesvan*, addressed topics related to women's political rights and current political issues.

Keywords: Iranian women, Qajar era, Grey literature



Top: Logo of "Danesh", the First Iranian Women Magazine, 1910
 Midd: Logo of "Shokoufeh", the First Iranian Illustrated Women Magazine, 1913
 Bottom: Logo of "A'alam-e Nesvan", the First Iranian Women Magazine had the editorial board, 1920

Qajar Dynasty

The reign of the Qajar dynasty in Iran (1796-1925) is recognized as a period of dynamic political, economic, and cultural transformations. The last decades of the dynasty's rule were also marked by Iran's first twentieth-century revolution, the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, which resulted in the formation of an elected parliament and the drafting of a national constitution, both of which still comprise the backbone of Iran's government.

Social Status of Women During the Qajar

"Behind the closed doors at home, prohibited from everything in life, education, training and social life, women are regarded as mindless, like infants; they are confined to the burdens of household work and childbearing and are considered the slaves and servants of their husbands," wrote Bibi Khanum Astarabadi (1852-1920), an outspoken and prominent Qajar woman. Similarly, in describing women's absence in public, Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, a noted novelist commented: "No women can be seen in this country of men, but strangely, half of the walking population in the streets is wrapped in black bags from head to the toe without even an opening to breathe."

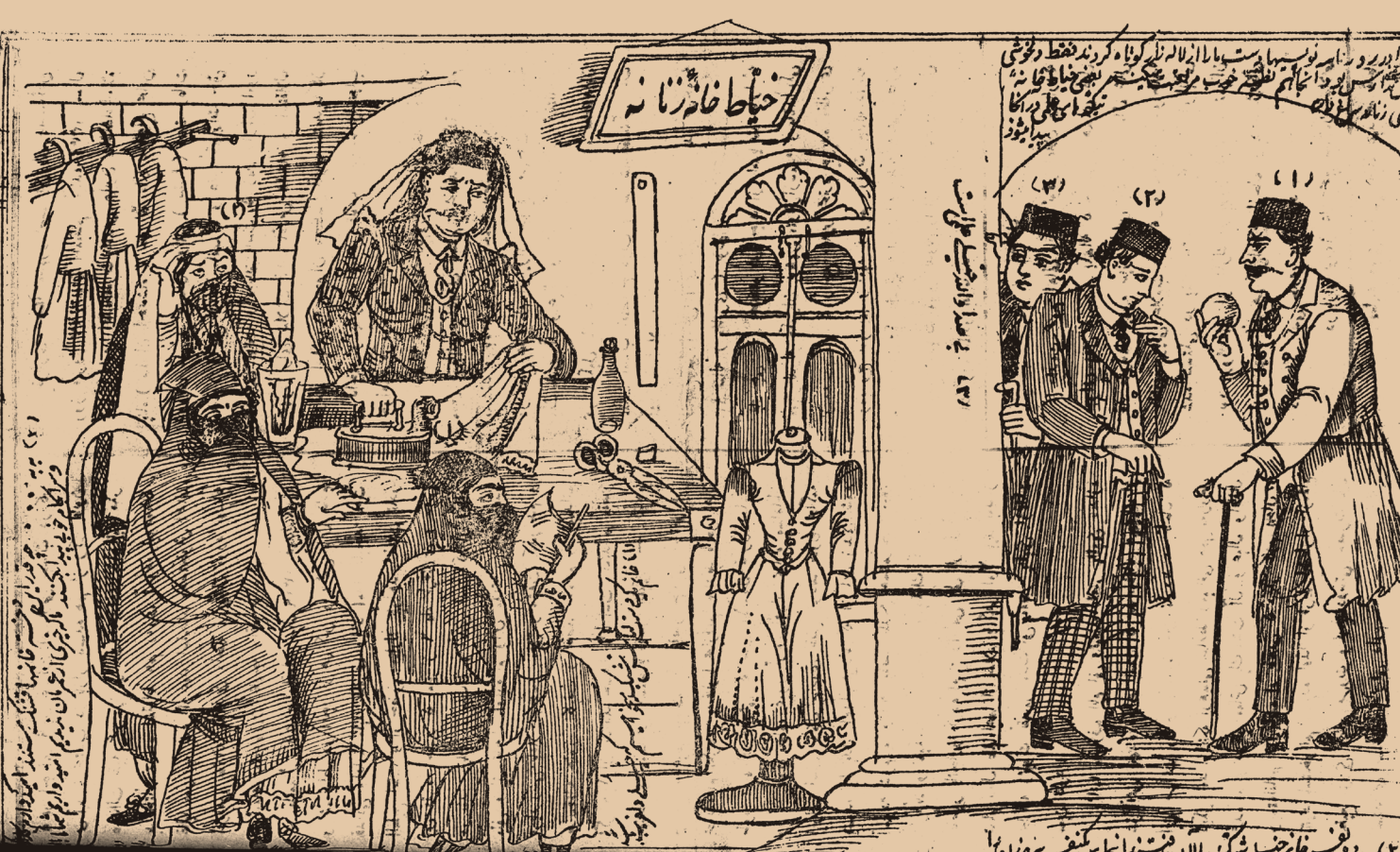
Yet, these invisible women were capable of action, as in the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911 when many women gathered in the streets of Tehran took off their veils and shouted: "Long live freedom. . . . We must . . . live the way we want!"



Women's meetings (Dialogue about life, spouse and married life)



Superstition (Planning and decision making for life based on divination and astrology)

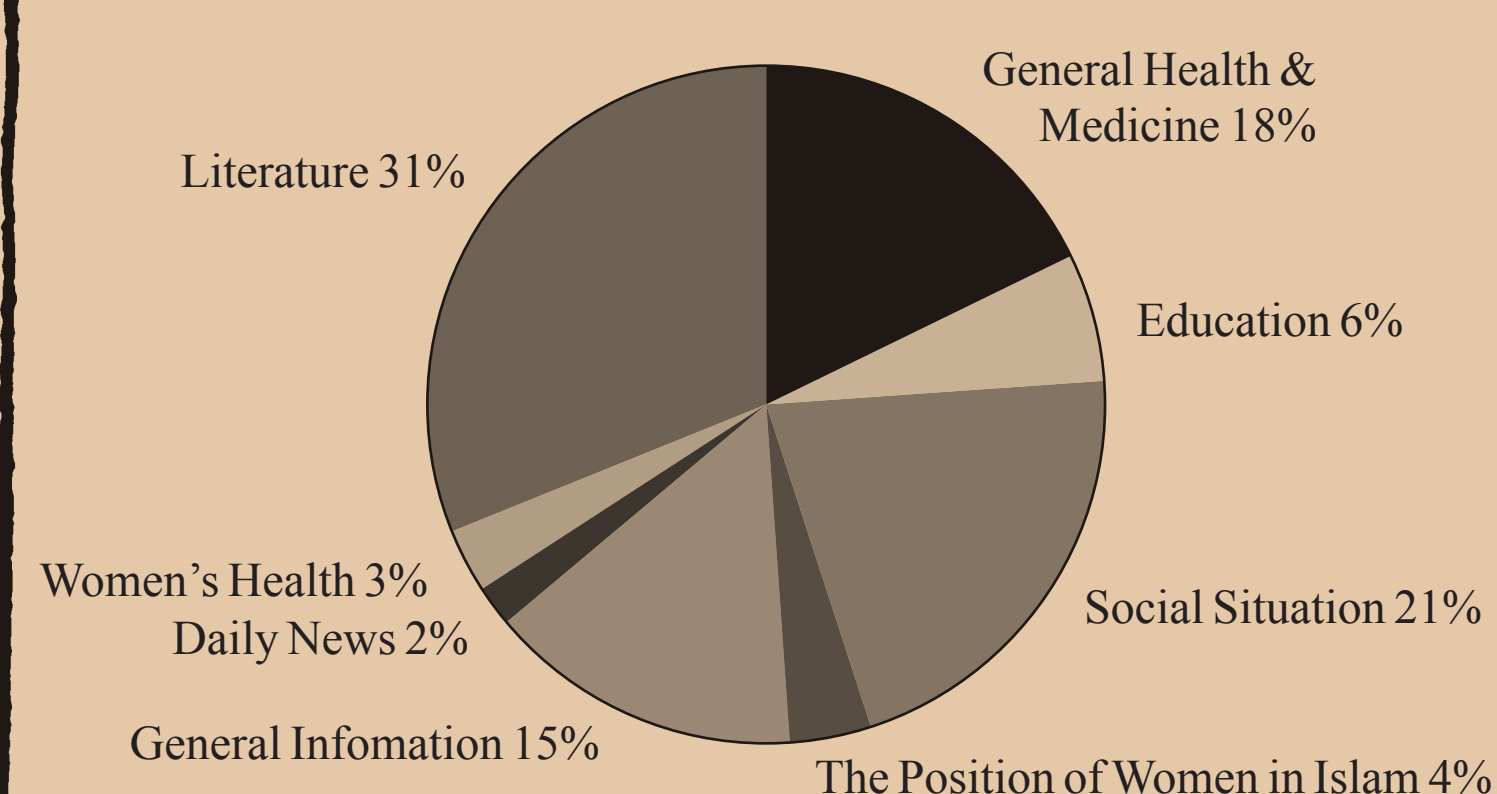


Intellectual development and the beginning of activity in the community (Women's sewing shop)

Findings

A review of these journals shows that women initially tried to cover subjects such as childbearing, marriage, health, etc. in their own media. These media were a window to address the most basic information needs of women, such as health and psychological topics. It was especially important to inform women about the health and protection of children at a time when infectious diseases such as smallpox were pandemic. Later, the purpose of these journals changed to take women out of the space created by their dominant culture or society, to bring them into the community, and to make them aware of the right to equality with men, while preserving their dignity as mothers and females.

Frequency of Thematic Coverage of Articles



Frequency of Compiled & Translated Articles by Gender

