




## PAPER DERIVED FROM THESIS

## Social Status of Afghan Women During The History and Its Impact on Their Contemporary Life

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT	
<b>Article History:</b> Received: 25 December 2023 Revised: 20 February 2024 Accepted: 15 March 2024		<b>SUBJECT &amp; OBJECTIVES:</b> One of the most significant issues in the contemporary world is women's legal status and social activities. Afghanistan is at the forefront of women's discussions due to its drastic changes and developments. This article aims to examine the status of women in this country's traditional and historical context to provide a solution to various issues and problems.	
<b>Key Words:</b>  Social Status Women Afghanistan Ġaznavīd Durani Ṭāliban Mujāhideen		<b>METHOD &amp; FINDING:</b> Our findings indicate that Afghan women have faced numerous challenges throughout history, although there were periods, such as the Kushan Empire age when they found a respectable position. The advent of Islam initially promoted cultural tolerance and respect for women, promoting their status among Muslim nations. However, during the ‘Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd Dynasties, class and racial discrimination contributed to a decline in women's status. The emergence of local dynasties such as the Ṭāhirīds, Ṣafārīds, and Sāmānīds brought political stability and gradual cultural development, although women's social participation remained limited. The Ġaznavīd era marked a turning point, providing a more favorable environment for women's education and rights, while the Timūrīd era witnessed the peak of women's involvement in social affairs.	
<b>DOI:</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.22034/imjpl.2024.10005">https://doi.org/10.22034/imjpl.2024.10005</a>		<b>CONCLUSION:</b> Overall, the status of Afghan women has fluctuated considerably, with their current situation experiencing significant ups and downs due to changing political circumstances. By reflecting on the past, we aim to provide insight into their status from history to the contemporary age.	
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## **Introduction**

The situation of women in Afghanistan under the Tāliban is tough, as they are excluded from government roles, schools, universities, and social life, leading to their isolation. The Tāliban's strict interpretation of Islam has undone two decades of progress in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which initially brought hope among oppressed minorities, especially women. However, the shortcomings of the Islamic Republic's government, marked by corruption and insecurity, ultimately frustrated public opinion and allowed the Tāliban to seize power. Of course, the economic burden of ongoing conflict and adverse global conditions have further reduced support for the republican government. In addition, efforts by human rights organizations and other non-governmental organizations to promote unbridled freedoms through their media arm within the country and to challenge the norms of traditional Islamic society have inadvertently contributed to the decline in the republican government's popularity.

The objective of this article is not to criticize the current regime or defend the previous government, but rather to examine the historical factors that have influenced, and in some ways imposed upon women's status in traditional Afghan society and their lifestyles.

## **Theoretical Foundations**

Women throughout history, have faced disrespect and marginalization, although

some ancient cultures accorded them relatively favorable positions. In general, patriarchal norms have prevented women from recognizing their identity and access to their rights and relegated them to subordinate roles in different civilizations, including ancient Iran, Rome, Greece, and Egypt. Before Islam, women were often considered the property of their husbands or male relatives. However, Islam granted women the right to own property, inherit, and trade, and recognized their dignity and equality with men. Unfortunately, over time, these rights were diminished by the influence of indigenous cultures in many Muslim societies, with Afghanistan being one of them.

Some key concepts are applied to the article. We will deal with the brief explanation of which in the following:

### **1. Social Status**

Social status and role are key concepts in social sciences, providing insights into individual positions and societal expectations. Social status refers to an individual's standing within a social structure, influencing their rights and privileges. As Bruce Cohen states, "social status refers to the social position and base that a person achieves in a group compared to other groups" (Cohen, 2007, p. 80). This highlights that social status is relative and affects access to resources and opportunities. In contrast, a role encompasses the behaviors and responsibilities expected

from individuals based on their social status. Giddens notes that social status refers to the differences between social groups in terms of the respect or social prestige that others give them (Giddens, 2002, p. 244). This indicates that roles are linked to societal perceptions of prestige, which can be influenced by various factors, including economic conditions. Our discussion on the 'social status of women' aims to explore Islam's perspective on this issue in all its dimensions.

## 2. Afghanistan

is a landlocked country located in Central Asia, bordered by Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

## 3. Ġaznavīds

This dynasty ruled over Afghanistan and parts of India and Iran from 977 to 1186. At its greatest extent, the Ġaznavīd Empire stretched from the Oxus River to the Indus Valley. The dynasty was founded by Sabuktigin, who succeeded to the rule of Ġazna following the death of his father-in-law, Alp Tigin, an ex-general of the Samanid Empire.

## 4. Durrānī

This dynasty governed large parts of Afghanistan, northern India, and eastern Iran after the fall of the Afsharid state in Iran, from 1747 to 1823.

## 5. Mujāhideen

This term refers to various Islamist groups that fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union and the

government of the People's Democratic Republic of Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation.

## 6. Ṭāliban

Meaning 'students of religious sciences,' the Ṭāliban is an extremist Islamist religious-military organization comprised of Sunni Islamist clerics in Afghanistan. They now refer to themselves as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

## Literature Review

In this research, key historical texts such as *Afghanistan on the Path of History* by Mīr Ġulam Moḥammad Ġobār, *Afghanistan in the Last Five Centuries* by Mīr Moḥammad Ṣadiq Farhang, and *Afghanistan: War, Politics, and Society* by Antonio Giustozzi have been cited. However, aside from general works, several texts specifically addressing women's issues from various perspectives provide important background for this article.

One notable work is *Women in the History of Afghanistan* by Din Moḥammad Jāvid, which offers a historical-descriptive approach to women's issues. Another significant text is *Afghan Women Under the Pressure of Tradition and Modernity* by Sayed 'Abdullah Kaḍim. This book critiques traditional norms while favoring modernity, which may detract from its analytical value. Additionally, *Women's Access to Justice in Afghanistan* by Luccaro and Gaston

examines the situation of Afghan women during the era of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, providing a descriptive account of their efforts and achievements.

The book *Women in Afghanistan and the World* by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Mubārīz presents a broad overview of women's issues globally. However, its content appears to be a compilation of various articles and notes, resulting in a lack of logical flow. Lastly, the article *The Status of Women in the Ġaznavīd Era* by Ms. Khadija Piroti is informative but primarily offers a historical-descriptive perspective that is limited to a specific period.

The distinction of the present research lies in its extraction of information and data from general history books and works addressing political developments in Afghanistan, alongside articles focused on women's issues across different periods. This study employs a process-based approach to analyze the status of women, aiming to provide a unique perspective on their historical context. We specifically examine the historical status of Afghan women and highlight the influence of political, social, and cultural factors on their current conditions and contemporary lifestyles. In summary, our trend-oriented approach is designed to be more effective in understanding these dynamics.

### **Research Method**

This article aims to examine the social position of Afghan women and their role

models within the prevailing culture and social conditions, as well as their impact on these conditions, in a historical context. To conduct this analysis, we employed historical and analytical research methods to evaluate the evidence.

### **1. The Status of Women in Pre-Islamic Civilizations in Afghanistan**

The status of women in Afghanistan reveals significant challenges due to the country's turbulent history, characterized by political, social, and cultural crises since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Insecurity and war have resulted in the destruction or illegal sale of many ancient documents, while government surveillance and the dominance of various ideologies have distorted historical documents, complicating research in this field.

Throughout history, women have often faced unequal rights compared to men. Nevertheless, there have been periods when women in Afghanistan held respected positions. Zoroastrian teachings emphasized the importance of education for both sexes, focusing on skills for family management. Zoroastrianism encouraged newlyweds to promote kindness and honesty to foster a happy family life (Ḥosseinī Dehshīrī & Islami, 2012, p. 141).

During the Kushan period, Afghanistan emerged as a cultural crossroads that fostered tolerance and acceptance of diverse customs and traditions (Ġobār, 1989, Vol. 1, p. 66).

Evidence from inscriptions and artistic representations indicates that women played significant social roles, including holding government positions, in Khorasan and Transoxiana during the rise of Islam. During the Kushan period, Afghanistan became a cultural crossroads that fostered tolerance and acceptance of diverse customs and traditions (Ġobār, 1989, Vol. 1, p. 66).

## **2. The Status of Women in Early Islamic Centuries**

At the time of the rise of Islam, women in different societies lacked value and proper status. However, Islam recognized women as human beings elevated their status, and granted women rights that were not only progressive for that time, but are still relevant today.

The goal of Islam was to enlighten society and promote respect and dignity for everyone, especially the lower classes. It dismantled class structures and claimed that all humanity has a common origin. Islam established an equal relationship between rulers and subordinates and thus transformed and improved human relations. According to Islam, both men and women are equal and piety is the criterion of superiority (The Quran, 49: 13). This principle allowed women to actively participate in political, social, economic, and military fields.

Unfortunately in Khorasan, with the rise of the Umayyad rulers, the spirit of

Islamic justice decreased and led to the revival of class distinctions between Arabs and non-Arabs. This offended many Muslims and provoked rebellions, such as those led by Abū Muslim Khorāsāni and Yaḥyā ibn Zayd. In this way, the social chaos caused by the unrest hurt the cultural and social conditions, and therefore, until the establishment of independent local governments in Afghanistan, we will not find prominent figures among women. It is worth mentioning that during the uprising of Abū Muslim, a woman named Bibi Sity was mentioned, although later she chose seclusion and became a Šūfist (Jāvīd, 2003, p. 36; Ḥusseinī, 1994, p. 43).

## **3. Women in the Era of Independent Local Governments**

### **3.1. Ṭāhirīds, Šafārīds, and Sāmānīds Eras**

The decline of political unrest and the emergence of independent local governments led to a shift in focus towards cultural affairs. While the Ṭāherīds were able to achieve political independence, the Šafārīd state recognized the Dari language, and Dari literature flourished during this period with notable works in prose and verse. Key texts such as Ṭabarī's exegesis and history, *Kalila wa Dimna*, and *'Aja'ib al-Buldan* were translated into Dari, and prominent poets such as Rūdakī Samarqandī and Rabī'a Balkhī emerged (Ġobār, 1989, Vol. 1, p. 99).

Bukhārā, the capital of the Sāmānīds, became a center of learning, where Avicenna was introduced to the works of Aristotle and al-Fārābī. Local governments throughout Afghanistan reflected this cultural renaissance.

But among all these prominent male figures, only one woman is mentioned i.e., Rabia al-Quzdari Balkhi, the first female poet in the Persian language. This shows that despite their presence and efforts, women were not given a proper place compared to their male counterparts. Rabia Balkhi was a contemporary of Rūdakī of Samarqand, and according to available documents, she met him. Her life is mentioned in the *Nafhat al-Auns* of Maulana Jami and also in the *Zanaan 'Arif*, and Sheikh 'Aṭṭār discussed her in one of his Mathnawis (Hedāyat, 2003, Vol. 1, p. 820).

### **3.2. Women During The Ġaznavīd (977-1186) and Ġūrīd (1175-1215) Period**

With the rise of the Ġaznavīds in Afghanistan, the status of women began to improve (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, 2004, Vol. 2, p. 370).

During the Sāmānīd and Ġaznavīd periods, Khorasan gradually stabilized after a long period of disorder and, with the support of the court of the Baghdad Caliphate, fostered cultural development.

Sources related to the Ġaznavīd period indicate that women could learn various sciences and were knowledgeable in religious sciences, the Quran and Ḥadīth, and skilled in

cooking (Piroti, 2010, p. 142). Women also played decisive roles in the political arena, including the appointment and dismissal of the sultan. Political marriages between rulers were common to maintain stability in the Ġaznavīd state. Notable examples include the marriage of Maḥmūd Ġaznavī to the daughter of Ilak Naṣr Khan (Bayhaqī, 2007, Vol. 1, pp. 243-244).

Women in the Ġūrīd dynasty played an important role in culture and society, especially in the harems, and influenced political affairs. Although their influence was certainly less evident compared to neighboring dynasties such as the Ġaznavīds and Seljūks, there are significant instances of women's involvement in politics (Jowzjāni, 1984, Vol. 1, p. 355; Khvāndamīr, 2001, Vol. 2, p. 654).

Beyond politics, women in Ghor contributed to culture and knowledge. Notable among them was Māh Mālik, daughter of Sulṭān Ġiyāth al-Dīn (1163-1164), who was an educated woman with an interest in history (Jowzjāni, Vol. 1, p. 370).

### **3.3. Women During the Seljūks and Khwārazmīān (1077-1231) Era**

The Seljūks (1037-1308), like their Ġaznavīd counterparts, facilitated the participation of upper-class women in political and social affairs. Women's roles during this period included political intervention, strategic marriages to strengthen dynastic power, and cultural

activities common practices among dynasties for survival.

Despite Khwāja Nizām al-Mulk's concerns about women's influence, Seljūk women actively participated in political, social, and cultural affairs, often consulting on educational and judicial matters (Raḥīmpūr Azgādī & 'Alāsvand, 2017, p. 115). They used their wealth to finance schools, mosques, and public works and to promote Islamic culture (Ibid., p. 117).

The era of the Khwārazm kings (1041-1231) can be seen as a continuation of the Seljūk period in terms of the role of women. Turkān Khātūn, the mother of Sulṭān Shāh, had a significant influence on government affairs and played a key role in the conflicts between her son and Teksh after the fall of the Arslan dynasty (Dāneshjū et al, 2018, 38-39).

### **3.4. Women During the Timūrīd (1370–1507) Era**

The most important government that was formed after the Mongol invasion was the Timūrīd government, of which Afghanistan was part of their territory, and later, Timūr's successor, Shāh Rukh, made Herat the center of his government. His period was one of the brightest historical periods for women in all social affairs. The presence of women in social, cultural, and political activities of this period shows their power and influence and also shows the change in society's attitude towards

their role and social position. The Timūrīd rulers of Herat, who ruled from 1404 to 1506, took a long time to create a magnificent and lasting civilization.

Although Timūr was a warrior and power manager, he was interested in art and artists. Sharaf al-Dīn Ali Yazdī pointed out this point in his book and wrote, "From the guilds of artists and craftsmen, everyone who was famous in some of the categories was sent to Samarkand" (Yazdī, 2008, Vol. 1, p. 290).

After the death of Timūr, his son Shāh Rukh (1405-1447) sat on the throne. Shāh Rukh and his wife Govharshād Agheh, who founded the Timūrīd dynasty in Herat, were the creators of a movement that made important progress in cultural life, especially in the field of arts and intellectual research, and in this way, by lighting the lamp of science, literature, wisdom, and mysticism became famous in Herat (Jāvīd, 2003, p. 50).

## **4. Status of Women After the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Afghanistan**

### **4.1. The Durrānī Kingdom**

The Timūrīd rule collapsed with the increasing power of its neighbors and internal conflicts. But in the late 18th century (1747), after the death of Nāder Shāh Afshār, Aḥmad Shāh 'Abdali took over and established a government that stretched from Herat to Delhi and from the Amu Darya in the north to the Arabian Sea in the south.

Aḥmad Shāh was able to restore political unity in Afghanistan, but he focused more on organizing military affairs and neglected cultural and economic development (Farhang, 1988, p. 78; Ġobār, 1989, p. 360). Cities were destroyed, aqueducts dried up, and the economy suffered from foreign wars. As a result, national wealth, peace, and cultural progress declined, and many scientific centers were destroyed (Azraq, 1991, p. 46; Jāvīd, 2003, pp. 65-66).

During Aḥmad Shāh's reign, women were mostly confined to the home, and he enforced laws in his realm that combined Islamic law and Pashtūn tribal traditions known as Pashtūnwali i.e., a set of laws that regulate the life of Pashtūn-populated areas and consists of specific beliefs and customs (Ford-Lewis, 1988, as cited in Shafāi, 2014, p. 394), and these orders were the guidelines for his statesmen regarding women. Some of these come in the following:

- Pashtūn girls were prohibited from marrying outside their tribe, while boys were not prohibited.
- Girls were deprived of their father's inheritance.
- A widow was often forced to marry her husband's brother or close relative.
- If the husband had no heir, the woman had to stay in his house and rely on his property for support.
- When a woman died in her husband's house, her family could not claim her dowry.

- Divorce after marriage was prohibited (Iti'zad al-Saltanah, 1986, pp. 36-37).

These regulations placed restrictions on women that conflicted with their religious rights. For example, Islam allows widows to remarry freely after the death of their husbands, and daughters have the right to inherit. However, since in tribal societies, giving inheritance to daughters could result in the transfer of property to outsiders, this prompted Aḥmad Shāh to prohibit daughters from inheriting.

These strictures and the imposition of Pashtūn tribal culture on the country and the increasing expansion of class society had divided the society into two classes, the rich and the poor, which benefited the Durrānī tribes and other Pashtūns, but this caused the country to lose its balance. Meanwhile, the rich who were at the head of the royal family and the princes were open to their desires, and the poor and needy were increasingly poor. The class gap made another aspect of Abdali's behavior with women manifest, which is the formation of harems of Abdali rulers.

One of these princes was Timūr Shāh, who had many wives (Farrukh, 1992, p. 108). Timūr Shāh spent all the huge wealth that the Abdali government had acquired through taxes and occasional raids on India on his harem, which included 300 women and concubines (Farhang, 1988, Vol. 1, p. 111).

This was the general condition of women during the Abdali period. Although 'Aisha Durrānī and Fīrūzeh Kābulī were poets and literate women who lived during the time of the Abdali Shāhs. A poetry notebook has been preserved from 'Aisha Durrānī, but only scattered verses have survived from Fīrūzeh Kābulī (Anoūsheh, 2002, Vol. 3, p. 789). Of course, it should be noted that during the time of the Abdali Shāhs, women participated in political and social affairs through political marriages that were carried out to consolidate the foundations of power.

#### **4.2. The Rule of Nāder Khān and His Family**

After the government of Amānullāh and during the rebel government of Bacha Saqaw, the first thing that was done was to close the women's schools and the *Kābul Women's Association* and the *Irshād al-Niswān* magazine and forcibly return the Afghan students sent from Turkey (Jāvīd, 2003, p. 87). After him, the same process continued during the time of Nāder Khān, because he wanted a limited and slow transformation in the administration of the government only in the military field so as not to harm the interests and influence of those in power, so that in this way he could take the throne of Afghanistan. keep for yourself (Ġobār, 1989, Vol. 2, pp. 34-35).

But after the end of the four-year rule of Nāder Khān and during the time

of his son Zāhir Shāh, the situation of the Afghan society began to improve. The social presence of women and education among women developed, and special schools for women were established, and the number of students reached six thousand girls, and the total number of school students in this period was more than one hundred thousand (Jāvīd, 2003, p. 87).

Under the pressure of the international system and the Kennedy doctrine, the government was forced to take measures to reform social structures. Meanwhile, women wanted active presence and participation in the country's social and political system at the same time as the Shāh's reforms. These reforms led to the social classification of women and the persuasion of some elites to communist ideas, and it was during this period that the women's democratic organization was formed and women entered the parliament in the first elections (Meḥrabī, 2010, p. 342).

During the period of Moḥammad Zāhir Shāh, there were three female ministers in the cabinet, and until the early 1990s, most of the teachers, half of the government employees, and 70% of the doctors in this country were women (Zafaranchi, 2010, p. 174).

#### **4.3. Women in The Communist Government (1978)**

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan took power in 1978 after a

coup and aimed to change the country's political and social structures through a reform program. The communist government sought revolutionary social change, modern state-building, and the restoration of women's rights (Moghadam, 2002). Their reforms mirrored those of King Amānullāh, particularly in establishing compulsory education for all citizens. However, opposition to traditional symbols such as religion and internal party purges quickly undermined their authority (Giustozzi, 2000, pp. 16–17).

The regime's main slogan was women's freedom, education, and work. Shortly after the Saur coup, the Revolutionary Council announced policies that emphasized equal rights for men and women in various fields. A new Ministry of Social Affairs was established under the leadership of Anahita Ratebzad, later renamed the 'People's Organization of Afghan Women' (Kādim, 2005, p. 346).

The party introduced land reform, abolished the bride price i.e., Shīr bahā, and set the minimum age of marriage at 16 for girls and 18 for boys (Kādim, 2005, p. 353; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003, p. 6).

It is worth noting that significant progress has been made in women's education and employment, especially in urban areas such as Kābul. Women began to work in various sectors such as the police, factories, and hospitals (Giustozzi, 2000, p. 35). Educational

opportunities increased and the number of female teachers in Kābul tripled between 1980 and 1986. In Mazar-i-Sharīf in 1990, 43 out of 46 high schools employed female teachers (Ibid., p. 36). However, this progress was limited in rural areas, where local mullahs aligned with the Mujāhideen often restricted women's participation in development programs (Ibid., pp. 36-37).

#### **4.4. Women in Mujāhideen and Ṭaliban Government (In the First Round)**

The truth is that the political and social conditions that emerged in Afghanistan in the 1970s, due to severe backwardness in all dimensions, caused Afghanistan to develop in a caricatured and unbalanced way in the field of education and training in the cities, while the main base of the country was still traditional and backward. This led to the penetration of educated youth by imported Marxist teachings and political Islamism. Which prepared the ground for subsequent events in Afghanistan.

In general, the formation of such a situation can be summarized in the political, economic, and cultural axes. In the political dimension, it should be noted that the ineffective policies of the royal regime and their oppression and tyranny, which were accompanied by extreme ethnicism and exploitation of disadvantaged groups, led to public dissatisfaction. Another reason was the

poverty and misery of the people and the adoption of ineffective economic policies that had been rampant in Afghan society for years, but the rulers only thought about their own sovereignty and benefits.

This widespread poverty and deprivation is also one of the reasons for public dissatisfaction and the people and intellectuals taking sides against the governments. On the other hand, the illiteracy of the people in the country on the one hand, and the entry of Marxist ideas and values from the northern borders of the country on the other confused the people and ultimately attracted intellectuals to Marxist ideas.

The Afghan Mujāhideen, who fought against the communist government in Kābul, were the product of such a complex and ambiguous situation. Ambiguous because the Afghan Mujāhideen focused all their thoughts and efforts on the war and suffered from the lack of a plan for the future of the country at the same time were divided into several groups.

The establishment of the Islamist Mujāhideen government in Afghanistan led to significant destruction and an escalation of civil wars because the unity between the warring factions fell apart. The common goal of the Mujāhideen, who were initially united in their Jihad against the communist regime, faded with the fall of Dr. Najibullah's government and was replaced by ethnic

interests represented by various party and jihadi organizations (Mubāriz, 2000, pp. 49-50; Tanīn, 2005, p. 400).

The Mujāhideen who entered Kābul closed universities, libraries, and schools or set them on fire as a result of the war. Women were forced to wear the Burqa' and fewer women were seen on television and in professional jobs. The intervening years of 1992-1996 witnessed unprecedented violence by Mujāhideen groups, and women were forced to migrate to villages that were safer than the centers of conflict or to seek refuge in neighboring countries to avoid rape and forced marriages (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003, p. 7).

In the context of women's issues, it should be said that the Mujāhideen government did not prevent girls from studying or women from working, and of course, a fatwa was issued to separate women's education and work. But the crisis of insecurity and war had so dominated the lives, wealth, and honor of the people that women's education and work had practically stopped.

The dominance of the Tāliban, these extremist Islamists, over Afghanistan, was a natural extension of the Mujāhideen 's rule over the country. The continuation of civil wars and the insecurity of communication routes had turned Afghanistan into thousands of islands of power under the control of jihadi commanders. In this chaotic situation, the Pakistani government,

which had always considered Afghanistan a way to access the gas resources of Central Asia and trade with those countries, decided to introduce the reserve forces that had been trained in Pakistani schools during the years of jihad as the Ṭāliban Islamic movement to reach the countries of Central Asia.

What caused the Ṭāliban movement to form in the first place is not very clear, and everyone cites a reason (Mubāriz, 2000, 228). But what is clear is that without foreign support, such an attack would not have been possible for any of the Mujāhideen groups in terms of manpower, logistical facilities, and financing of the war.

After taking control of Kandahar, the Ṭāliban quickly advanced towards the Pashtūn-dominated southern provinces, with the only major obstacle in their way being non-Pashtūn groups.

#### **4.5. Women in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2003)**

The government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which was formed after the Bonn Agreement, can be considered a golden era for women's participation in political, social, economic, and educational affairs. After the fall of the Ṭāliban and the establishment of the Islamic Republic and the adoption of a new constitution in the country, government laws were enacted based on the participation of all ethnic groups and socio-political groups. Special attention was paid to the

legal rights of women, and special quotas were even set for them to compensate for their lack of presence in the social scene.

In general, the actions of the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in the field of women's issues can be divided into legislative and practical measures.

In the legislative part, the new Afghan government took important steps to remove the restrictions that the Ṭāliban had placed on women's rights. For example, in 2004, the Afghan government adopted a new constitution, according to which all Afghan citizens, including women, enjoyed equal rights (*Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004/2013, Art. 22*). In early 2003, Afghanistan joined the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In 2007, the Ministry of Women's Affairs approved the National Action Plan for Women, which included better development, education, and laws that would achieve full equality for women in Afghanistan (Luccaro & Gaston, 2014, p. 4).

In the practical part, the government has been working on ensuring women's rights in social, political, educational, and economic life, especially in cases where the government has recognized them through laws and regulations and has

provided the basis for their increasing participation in various fields.

One of these areas was the participation of women in parliamentary elections, both as voters and as candidates. Another measure was the use of positive discrimination to make women's political participation effective (Maghṣūdī & GhalehDār, 2010, pp. 196-198).

This led to a significant increase in women's participation. In the field of education, the level of women's participation was extraordinary. After a period of stagnation, young girls now had great motivation and hope for their future and had a significant presence in schools, universities, and higher education institutions. According to Oxfam, the number of girls in schools in Afghanistan was about 2.4 million, a significant increase from the 5,000 who were enrolled in schools in 2001 (Luccaro & Gaston, 2014, p. 4).

#### **4.6. Return of the Ṭāliban**

The fall of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the return of the Ṭāliban to power primarily affected women and ethnic and religious minorities. The first period of the Ṭāliban government from 1996 to 2001 was accompanied by severe restrictions on Afghan women, including in the fields of education and employment. However, by referring to the Quran and Ḥadīths, numerous examples can be found condemning

ignorance and its negative consequences (Askarinejad et al, 2024, p. 84).

However, violent behavior and extreme interpretations of Islamic teachings marginalized the people of the country, especially ethnic minorities and women, and led to widespread skepticism towards the Ṭāliban.

Despite the current Ṭāliban's claims that they have changed from their past, the Afghan people remain skeptical because the new Ṭāliban have mastered political disunity and use manipulated rhetoric instead of real transformation. Since the Ṭāliban came back to power, many restrictions such as closing girls' schools, banning the presence of female students in universities, and limiting the presence of women in public life and the media show that not much has changed since their return to power. During nearly three years of rule, they have slowly and creepily imposed numerous restrictions without improving the status of women, which we will not go into detail here, as they have been well documented in various media (Rashīd, 2010; Andīshmand, 2003).

#### **5. Future Prospects of Women in Afghanistan**

The situation of women in Afghanistan under the Ṭāliban is dire and significantly deviates from the rights that Islam provides for them and that are respected in other Islamic countries. Since the Ṭāliban regained power in 2021, they have imposed severe restrictions on

women's rights, including education, employment, and public life. However, the future of Afghan women's status will depend on several following factors:

- **International and Regional Pressures**

Continued support from the international community and regional countries may influence the Taliban's policies towards women.

- **Emergence of Popular Movements**

The resistance and determination of Afghan women to defend their rights could lead to wider protests and act as a catalyst for change.

- **Cultural Change**

Efforts to foster sustainable cultural change could gradually change society's attitudes towards women's rights, especially as younger generations advocate for equality and education.

- **Political Dynamics**

Domestic and external political developments, including negotiations with opposition groups and possible changes in Taliban leadership, will affect women's rights. While the current outlook is bleak, there is potential for change driven by both domestic and external factors.

## **Conclusion**

This article examines the historical social status of Afghan women and its impact on their current lives, revealing how cultural and social influences have shaped their experiences. Although

women enjoyed relative respect during certain periods, political and social turmoil significantly affected their status. Despite Islam promoting cultural tolerance and respect for women, the 'Umayyad and 'Abbāsid governments perpetuated class and racial discrimination, leading to a decline in the status of non-Arabs and women in Afghanistan.

While local governments brought about political and social development, the lack of prominent women figures among the prominent figures of the period reflects their low status in society. It was the rise of the Ghaznavids that created a more favorable environment for the advancement of women's rights, which reached its peak during the Timurid era. However, after the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the rise of the Abdali dynasty, Afghan women once again faced a decline in their social role. Overall, from a historical perspective, the status of women in Afghanistan clearly witnessed fluctuations, deeply influenced by the prevailing political and social conditions.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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