

Albanian intellectuals' opinion on the role of education in improving the position of women in society

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Abstract

Historical development of the position of women in human society pushes us to think that civilizations so far, have been very biased, because there have been made big differences between genders beings, male and female, respectively. These differences, as well as attempts to gender superiority are regarded as the main causes for the difficult position of women in society in different historical periods. In this context, historical sources indicate that the right approach to the issue of women has been given not only by women themselves, but also by men.

These efforts to overcome gender problems have opened avenues for research and serious engagement opportunities for many scholars. Many scientists, sociologists, philosophers, psychologists and writers, the problem of women have studied from different aspects. Some of them express their beliefs that for the improvement of women's position in society, it is the role of Education.

Main purpose of this paper is to present the opinions, beliefs and attitudes of some Albanian intellectuals regarding the role of education in improving the position of women in society. Also, we can say that, despite the overall social progress and economic growth, the key to improving the position of women in society was and remains education.

Keywords: Albanian intellectuals, women, society, education, beliefs, attitudes.

Introduction

The impact on the role of education in improving the position of women in society has been the topic that is discussed by many authors. Women, almost in all countries of the world, and during all historical periods, have been in a more difficult position than men. About the difficult position of women in society wrote Rousseau, Voltaire, Mary Wollstonecraft, Emma Goldman, Simone de Beauvoir, Lis Irigaraj, Elen Siksu, Mary Daly, Sheila Benhabib. Also, related to this, some scholars and renowned travelers as the following: Pouqueville, Hahn, Edith Durham etc. in their studies, among others, provide important data regarding the position of women in the Albanian society. In addition, the position of the Albanian women was treated by the famous Albanian Renaissance well known authors: Elena Gjika (Dora d'Istria), Jeronim De Rada, Sami Frashëri, Midhat Frashëri, Gjergj Fishta, etc.

They, along with the Albanian national issue, commit to improving the position of women in society. In their works they addressed various aspects of women's lives. Renaissance authors hoped that Albania's independence would lead to overcoming the dismal position of women in society, but also Albanian women after the formation of the Albanian state, were under the influence of habits inherited from the past. According to these customs, the Albanian society of the time, women's rights and

freedoms were not equal with those of men. Women, with all sufferings continued to keep passive attitudes towards the situation not knowing that without a constant struggle could their position could not improve.

World historiography proves that, even in Western countries there were real struggles to improve the position of women in society. According to Wollstonecraft, M. (1994), the woman wasn't free because of prejudice (p.192). As a possibility for overcoming this problem, she considered education of women (p.14). Regarding to this, numerous studies indicate serious Albanian and foreign authors who speak about the difficult position of women through the centuries and the role of education in improving it. As for Albanian researchers, as well as for foreign researchers, for the achievement of gender equality, the role of education is of particular significance.

Through this paper it is intended to lighten the opinion of some intellectuals on the role of education in improving the position of women in society. Also, we should note that the issue of women wasn't an independent problem from the other problems facing the Albanian society during different historical periods; however, this was a problem which entered within the general social problems. Regarding to this, Hughes, M. and Kroehler, C. J. (2005). have concluded that: "The quality of people's lives has much to do with individual choices, abilities, and aspirations. But social institutions also affect quality of live. Women's vastly different experiences in different societies illustrate the importance of social institutions for gender equality and women's quality of live (p.260)". Also, it should be mentioned that the "women problem" is a problem of democracy, and that a solution to gender and indeed other forms of inequity or injustice is to strive for more democratic educational institutions (Drake, P. and Owen, P. (1998), p.13-14)".

Midhat Frashëri about the role of education in improving the position of women in society

Midhat Frashëri was one of the biggest Albanian intellectuals who among other things was also engaged to women's issues. He was among the few, but not the only male with a deep objectivity to address the problem of women and fighting for the advancement of their lives. Evidence of his serious commitment is his book, *Woman: Book for women and for men* (1928). In this work the author presents the difficult position of women in Albanian society and expresses his opinion on the role played by education to improve the position of women in society. According to the opinion of Midhat Frashëri, the Albanian women only with education can improve their position in society. He built his main argument on a simple principle: if a woman is not educated, she is not prepared to become an equal partner to man. If she cannot become a partner of a male, then progress will be interrupted and the virtues of wisdom for truth should be the same for everyone.

Based on facts, even in Albania as in any other countries, the number of women and men is almost equal, the author requested that the figure of students of both sexes to be equal. However, in Albania, the reality was quite different. The number of boys who attended school was much larger than of girls. According to 1927 statistics, the number of students in Albania was 25 828, while that of females students was only

5734. There were over 606 primary and secondary schools in Albania, and only 44 schools were for girls in big towns (p. 19.)

According to Frashëri, S. (1928), the Education Act anticipated that in elementary schools had to go even girls despite the small number of them. "Education Act clearly sets that learning was compulsory where it was possible, respectively the places with schools. Albania had 606 elementary and high schools with only 2538 female students (p. 19)".

These statistics are for the education of girls, ie the small number of educated girls was a concern for the author. In his opinion, we need to have a capital of knowledge, feelings, strong principles and the greater is this moral capital, we would have better life. In this way we would face easily difficulties we may face. Then, we have to believe that the level of intelligence and education of women plays a crucial role in this world, said the author.

He expresses his conviction that we cannot hope on implementing elementary duties either as individuals or nation, particularly, if we have half of population ignorant. Women should form a strong character of themselves, not only to act as a character of child, but they have to be educated.

Mid'hat Frashëri's book "*Woman...*", dedicated to the teachers who he considered faithful teachers in the Albanian society. He hoped, teachers would make the future educated generation just for the sake of not dividing people in two parts, by doing this, it was impossible to reach a general goal to shape a national progress. In relation to this, he wrote: "You, teachers are obliged to shape the future generation with enthusiasm and liveliness. "You will prevail the spirit of youth with love of fatherland, with an ideal of progress", "you will give them the force of living, and that of joy of life", "through your daily work and efforts make their future bright". Mid'hat Frashëri asking teachers to respect women's right, wrote the following: "You the torches of this ideal, could you stay idle, doing nothing, but just watching women who seek for knowledge and for brighter days, the ones who is your companion, who suffers much? I do not believe success can be reached by dividing people in two parts, by dividing women in one side, by making the population in two parts. By doing this, we cannot ever build a strong national castle (65)".

Midhat Frashëri viewed the situation of women in Albania from two perspectives: by education and society of that time and by Albania's ancient customs. The author That Was convinced the role of educated woman in shaping a nation is unquestionable. Hereby, women should not swear left on second row if there is a desire to advance a nation. Women should be educated along with men. To achieve this goal, there should be constant struggle for women's education and abolishment of old habits.

Midhat Frashëri throughout his life was committed to creating a new society, civilized society. He busied himself for a society based on equality, a society where there would be no slaves or servants or individual deprived of the right to live freely. This society required independent woman and free from prejudices and social restrictions. To the intellectual Albanian families it was clear that a free person is responsible for his way of life, so the most important issue on the education of women was how to live well and be happy based on skills and personal values of women. Dignity can be manifested only when woman is free from its prejudices and progress can be made

through continuous efforts to eliminate them.

Midhat Frashëri, analyzing living conditions of the Albanian woman, was not sure to anticipate a nearby solution on in its favor. However, he hoped that the movements that have involved many European countries would include Albania and will help improve the ideas, customs and laws that belong to female.

Midhat Frashëri knew, it was not enough just talking about women's rights, the unfavorable position that it had in the society of that time, but required a greater support of woman itself. In this regard he wrote: "The sense of altruism and humanity, the least selfish interests and our interest ask to try to heal sicknesses and those that fate does suffer, the body of society needs health and strength, in all his limbs." According to the author, there is a new task for the woman, and that is the burden that society assigns to heal physical and moral atmosphere in society. Then, teach the girl, sister and your wife that the honor and greatness do not come with jeweler or silk, but with the services and kindness we can do, advised Midhat Frashëri.

Love to people regardless of gender, Midhat Frashëri urged supporting what he believed was right; it was the demand for equality between men and women, equality in terms of equal values derived from human independence.

He thought that the credit for changing the position of women was the French Revolution of the eighteenth century. Here was born the movement for freedom and equality of women and it is called feminism. While in Western countries feminism was rising, in Albania the situation was different. Mid'hat Frashëri thought the role of woman in Albania was fading.

While in other countries there were taken politically into consideration rights, including the right to vote, in Albania it was about their basic rights, rights that should have every human being: the rights to develop morally and intellectually. Regarding this, the author ascertained that in Albania was too far from the feminist movement and he did not consider it as necessary to upraise an artificial movement. Midhat Frashëri, with its views, more than a defender of feminism or women's political rights, appears in the role of judge, who has duties towards women, which, of course, is half of the population.

Midhat Frashëri attempted to assign moral role of women in family and society. According to him, the woman is the main pillar of family. She is required to educate children and to be successful. As a result of this she has to be educated herself. Also, for the family, of great importance is the relationship between spouses. In a family where there is a master and slaves, there does not exist happiness. A family of such type is far from human purpose for which she was created. Which family provides a humanist education of new generations, marital relations are based on sincere love and mutual trust and understanding. These circumstances influence in the creation of a healthy family atmosphere.

Noting the rapid economic development of other countries, Midhat Frashëri attempted to suggest his compatriots that the future of the nation depends on their willingness and commitment to raising the level of education of people in general.

Only when the mother is capable to educate her son and daughter and inspire them with high quality, it can be expected that people and the nation are healthy, developed and civilized. Civilization requires acknowledging the value of virtue, the honor of

the motherland; to live, to feel, to judge better; to respect the rights of others and to fill it with full conviction of our duties to the people and society. In the opinion of the author, to achieve the goal, we must make efforts to free ourselves from the bondage of ignorance.

This situation will not improve if half of humanity, wife, mother or our daughter would not be able to help. Life every day is getting more serious, hard, a strict warfare, and therefore homeland needs wise and intelligent workers. To cope with life's challenges, it is imperative that women be as capable as males.

He expressed the conviction that a nation which does not seek to exalt morally, materially and intellectually the level of woman, cannot be called civilized.

Dora d'Istria about women equality

Dora d'Istria, a Romanian princess of Albanian origin, was one of the outstanding women of the XIX century, who was committed to extraordinary dedication to equality between men and women. Her works addressing this issue are the best proof. Some of these works are: "Women in the East", "Women in the West", "A Woman for Women", "Women of Asia" and others. In her works, the author gives her views on women's education, and tried to provide women a meriting position in society.

Based on the writing, it is clear its deep concern for women's issues. The author, seeking resolution of key issues were the main obstacles to the development of the female personality. She does not stop at a concrete problem, but handling problems of all kinds, ranging from the position of women in the family, the role and importance to the education of children, then, the participation of women in all spheres of life and problems of this nature relating directly or indirectly to women's dignity. Through studies of Dora d'Istria and its commitment as a worthy fighter of women's issues in general, on the one hand clearly out of her efforts to improve the position of women in society, on the other hand, we will understand the true dimensions of the whole movement of the Renaissance and the commitment to the emancipation of women, commitments which were quite progressive when considering social conditions and circumstances of the time. Being under the rule of foreigners for centuries, it is clearly known that the demand of women emancipation cannot be put in the first place.

D'Istria, Dora, (1860) tried to show the role and importance of Albanian women in family and society, expressing its conviction that the Albanian woman in the world participates in all aspects of social life (p.245). On the day when women manage to realize (through) education that males' theocracy relies on brutal force, they will clearly see that they would be working for their interests and then would dedicate themselves to the real principles of their life. Let us pave the road to the strong and intelligent woman, says author, areas of mental work, and then it will bring all the venom and wrath to the opposite sex. "Then she would not lack forces for higher airfares, with fine intuition that she discovers in the form of soft noble. Then, when her talent is revealed like her husband's works, with all her brave deeds of her mind, we will acclaim her. There should be one thing clear; she would be able to realize one thing that above everything is virtual spirit, which gives her honor and glory, but not her physical appearance (p. 152). "

Dora d'Istria fought vigorously for the rights of women, in general, its freedom and gender equality. Her commitment to women's issues made Dora d'Istria to be in the minds of those rights who fought with great commitment throughout their life. Lighting of her figure is an example of women's resistance to the vicissitudes of life, and self-study and analysis of the work of Dora d'Istria which emphasize clearly women's abilities in every area of life. Skills of women cannot come out without their proper education. That's why, this remarkable intellectual committed to the wide awareness opinion regarding the role of women's education for any society. Besides the moral and intellectual emancipation, the problems associated with the contribution of women in political and social life are very interesting to be presented. In her work, Dora d'Istria tried to show that, if the mission of women in society generally summarized only in the family circle, where it is moral ground, if the education of children and performance as housewife require all her wisdom, this does not mean that its intellect cannot be withdrawn to other areas where she can make her contribution like a man.

Jeronim De Rada about women and society

Even one of the close associates of Dora d'Istria, Jeronim De Rada, was taken with the introduction of the female figure in his work. In his poem center stands the figure of Serafina Topia. Through his image, he presents his progressive ideas and his commitment to the different treatment of women in society. According to Kryeziu, R. (1978), Serafina Topia embodies the wishes of De Rada for a better tomorrow in the Albanian society (p. 281). Hope for a brighter future, made the author to escape from reality into the imaginary world. He escaped the reality even with the fact that it presents as an intellectual. Only intellectual women will change the Albanian society, but this is impossible without educated women.

Sami Frasheri commitment to gender equality

In the opinion of the great Albanian intellectual, Sami Frashëri (1850-1904), the importance of understanding the value of a woman is late and never has been acted on her as it has been requested according to needs. According to Frasheri, S. (1879), "The woman is the foundation of human society. It is the backbone of general morality. It is the flower of humanity, entering the sacred marriage that builds family has saved the man from cruelty, bringing in the way of civilization. "A woman is exemplary moral reflection, but as a defender of morality of society, also can be an example of the immorality of human society ".

Even Sami Frashëri and other Albanian Renaissance authors think that the main obstacle to the equality of women is their education and upbringing. With this in mind, he justified the behavior of the mistakes made by women. "If we take into account in particular, that women are so backward and perhaps in knowledge and education, then neither faults nor their mistakes should be counted ".

Even being flawed in terms of knowledge and education, women naturally have enough ingenuity to make them different from the indicted men of rude. With

this possibility and their talent, if they have learned as much as men, there is no doubt that women would be equipped with knowledge and education more than men. Unfortunately, there are still men who see learning and educated of women as harmful, says Sami. In opinion of these people, wisdom of women is harmful and reason of quarrel in human society! When a male commits a misdeed, they attribute it to his ignorance. Why this rule is not applied to women, too? Faults or errors committed by women are not accepted as a result of ignorance. Why don't they have confidence on one thing, if they were enlightened with knowledge and education, women would not make such faults and mistakes. In contrary, we think that even wise men would enlarge women's faults. Faults and mistakes committed by women in this world, quarrels and other misdeeds allure the results of lack of knowledge and education. Also faults the change we see the women come not only from the lack of education. Vices such as greed, ambition, selfishness, anger, are harmful and evil to human beings. It is not denied that these vices appear more strongly among women than among men. The wellbeing of humanity depends on education. An honest woman may be jealous, more petulant than a dishonest woman, but the feelings and her character would never harass to do or speak what others do.

Since women have a tremendous role in the family and beyond it, they must be educated, Sami ascertained. This is the main reason that people reasonably have requested women's education. In order, woman, to be honored and to be able to fulfill its sacred tasks, it should strive to achieve wisdom "just to think how necessary is to highlight culture and education", said Sami. I do not want to talk about a woman who does not possess knowledge and education as such she is not able to preserve her sacred rights. I do not wish to speak about it longer, but one think is true, evil arise from ignorance and such men lose respect for the nature of women, said Sami, convinced that the respondent women, as men sued can bring worse things to society. However, he willingly had talked about the importance of educated women. The woman who banishes ignorance and is adorned with the most varied knowledge is the miracle of society. "Let me say only this: an educated woman satisfies my father, mother, all members of the family, and it is obvious that she attracts her husband, and manages to give proper education to children.

On the other side, an uneducated woman, the most despairs parents and all of her family, as well as people around and become a disgust person by making her own husband desperate, unfortunate and ill-mannered children. According to Sami Frasherri, "Such a person darkens their life, causing sorrow and despair, and unluck to their lives. Such a woman misses the joy and benefits of the time the marriage offers. Finally she becomes the poison of kindness due to the lack of education and knowledge."

In Sami's opinion, if the woman is cultured and educated, all along with milk she gives to her children education, that child will grow with the mother's courtesy. He thought, the child gets education from his/her mother as he/she is fed with fresh air and with mother's milk. A child who has the good fortune to be the child of such a mother, he/she would lose it never after he/she has reached the age of eight, simply, he/she would keep beautiful manners the whole of life, Sami said. A son of an erudite mother, instead of listening immoral tales, which would disrupt his behavior in terms

of knowledge and education, he would be hearing sweet voices, helpful advice which would develop the child's mind, and in a way they would soften his/her heart.

Instead of filling the brain with some idle data that would darken his/her mind, he/she would learn reading and writing. On the other side, he/she would grasp elementary knowledge through play that would entertain him/her and would raise the love to study.

Children since early childhood start paying attention to events of various natural phenomena that surround them. Their curiosity is too great. Questions which they submit an uneducated mother could not answer. The curiosity is too great. Questions which they submit to an illiterate mother she could not answer.

Sami this illustrates in the following way: "(Child) sees a moon, and then asks her mother about its size and distance; then he/she sees stars and his/her question might be, why they can't be seen during the day, it means the child wants to know something about astronomy. It might see an animal, and then being curious, he /she would ask about animal's strength, and the way it feeds itself, how it sleeps and if it attacks human being, and which animal is superior among all. So, there is a good lesson for a child given by his/her mother. He/she becomes curious to know when it rains, and from where do come the rain drops; listening storm, he she would ask from where it comes; through this he/she gets some knowledge about the atmosphere; "he/she sees a book, and is willing to read it; and then he/she sees a white paper end and a pen, he would take them and write something. In case the child does not get a convincible answer from mother, he/she would abandon studying latter, and then he/she would merge into the sea of ignorance, simply he/she would not have any ambition to study. The child would feel the need again to study, and he would go back to the uncompleted answer of the mother he/she got in early childhood (Dedja, B. (1974) p. 133)."

Conclusions

It's been a long period of time when some distinguished intellectuals committed to sensitize public opinion on the role which had the woman's education to an overall development of a society. In our society, major changes have been made in this regard, especially on the second half of the XX century and onwards. These changes have been made especially in the area of women's political rights, legal rights, in education, employment etc.

Today the Albanian women can even perform more skilled jobs in all kinds of specialties. They are deputy ministers, artist, scientist, professor and researcher. But still we cannot conclude that the woman is free and equal to men. She is still subdued and not equal with men. The problem of women continues to be a problem that requires a solution, firstly by women themselves and then from the whole society.

In the end we must say that every creature can be useful if it uses mental abilities, so the fight for the emancipation of women was and remains a reasonable demand and necessity for the progress of society. A truly civilized society, would not allow women to live worse than men. Human efforts are successful only when every member of society regardless of religion, gender and race has its clear mission and has equal

chances to fulfill the mission. Created circumstances of life require the woman to live free and to be led by his mind and will.

Today, although the situation has changed in this context, the role of education remains the key factor, not only for women's position in society, but also for social welfare in general.

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