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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Issue of *Self* and *Other*: The Identity Challenge of Victorian Women

(Case Study: CMS Women's Interaction with Women of Qajar Era)

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Abstract: At the beginning of the Victorian Era (1837-1901), although British women's activities were limited to housekeeping, their restriction in social activities and job choices, the increase in their population, were among the issues that led to the formation of new perspectives on women and their possibility of working outside the home. Meanwhile with the expansion of missionary activity in British colonies, Victorian women gained the opportunity to participate in missionary works beyond their homes. A significant number of them were attached with the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and came to Iran. They faced two challenges for proving their ability in creating a "new self and identity" versus "others": 1) in Victorian society as a social identity equal to men, 2) in Qajar society for introducing "themselves" as a preacher of "new social identity" to Iranian women. Focusing on the conceptual framework related to the issue of "self, other and identity", reviewing the surviving reports and documents, this article examines the causes and manner of the process that led to the formation of the "new identity" of these missionary women and their demarcation between "themselves" and the "other", *i.e.*, patriarchal structure of the Victorian society and the CMS. It also reviews the feedback from their interactions with Iranian women as "other" in shaping their "new self and identity". The achievements of this article show that the liberal and feminist actions of missionary women in creating a "new self and identity" in their homeland led to an open competition with missionary men in patriarchal structure of the CMS. Furthermore, following the interaction of the CMS women with different strata of Qajar women, their "missionary identity" faded and "their humanitarian self and identity" aspects replaced.

Keywords: Self/Other; Identity; Victorian Age; Church Missionary Society (CMS); Qajar Period; Iranian Women; Feminism.

Introduction

The Victorian era (1837-1901) is one of the most significant periods of British socio-cultural transformation. This era coincides with the expansion and consolidation of British power in colonies that stretched from Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the Indian subcontinent, South Africa to Canada. A considerable group of British agents and a well-equipped military and commercial fleet oversighted these colonies and their economic exploitation. These conditions followed the era of “Pax Britannica”, i.e., the era of British power and hegemony in a significant part of the world (Wolffe, 1997: 129-130). During this period, as the result of medical achievements, the level of health, longevity and consequently the population of England and Wales doubled (Jeffries, 2005: 3-4). Due to the presence of a significant number of men in the colonies, British society faced an increase in the number of women who according to traditional rules their activities were limited to housework and looking for an active social role beyond restrictive norms. Another feature of the Victorian era was the spread of the missionary motivation in British society, known as the “Evangelical” movement and its missionary societies in Europe, which their significant activity focused on education. Therefore, the number of public schools and the level of

public literacy increased. However, the missionary aspect of the evangelical movement was more important, and the activity of missionary societies focused on the evangelization of non-Christian communities throughout Britain’s colonies. A significant number of missionaries sent by these societies to the British colonies as well as to eastern lands, including Iran, were Victorian women from the “Church Missionary Society” (CMS) who due to aforementioned socio-cultural factors, including their population growth, education, and efforts to overcome their social constraints, turned to missionary works.

There are some books and articles about the socio-cultural status of women in Victorian era and the process of their participation in the church and missionary field, such as:

“The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860” by Barbara Welter (1966); “Women and Philanthropy in 19th Century England” by Frank Prochaska (1980); “Women in England 1870–1950, Sexual Divisions and Social Change” by Jane Lewis (1984), and “Liberation Feminism in Britain 1860-1910” by Stephen Davis (1987); “The Making of the Modern Church: Christianity in England Since 1800” by B. Worrall (1988); “The Women’s Movement in the Church of England, 1850-1930” by Brian Heeney (1988); “Women and

the Church of England: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present” by Sean Gill (1994); “Religion in Victorian Britain: Culture and Empire” By John Wolffe (1997), and “Society for Promoting the Employment of Women” by Peter Gordon and David Doughan (2001).

Due to the bombing of London in World War II, a significant amount of documents about CMS women was destroyed. Nevertheless, some letters of the CMS headquarters were kept in Birmingham University Library. However, the works that specifically examined the activities the missionaries of the CMS are Safura Borumand’s MA thesis entitled “A Research on the Activities of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) during the Qajar period” (1996) which published in 2002. This book reviews the history of CMS based on books and Document available in Iran. “Religious Feminism in the Age of the Empire, Women Missionaries in Iran, 1869-1934” by Gulnar Eleanor Francis-Dehghani (2000) and her other article in “The Church Missionary Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999”, are important researches, which written with a religious approach.

The difference between this article and aforementioned works is its focusing on the challenge and process that led to the creation of “new self and identity” for CMS women in

Iran. Therefore, the conceptual framework of this article is based on the definitions about the issue of “identity” which defines by the meaning of “self and other”. As sociologists mention, through “identity”, people define “themselves” and defined by “others” (Deng, 1995: 1) “Identity” leads an individual or a group to the certain social position:

“It defines that one/group belongs to what, whom, when and where, while designates what is not. Through identity, people define themselves and defined by others based on race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture. Identity, therefore, is a concept, which combines the inner or personal world with collective space of cultural forms and social relationships” (Borumand, 2016: 75-76).

In other words, “all identities are constructed” (Castells, 2010: 7), and various causes and backgrounds are involved in constructing identity. Thus, the aim of this article is to answer the questions that what were the effects of the socio-cultural background in Victorian era and the feedback from interactions with Iranian women in shaping CMS women missionaries’ “new self and densities”?

Socio-Cultural Identity of Victorian Women

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, based on a popular view on “true femininity”,

a woman was evaluated by four virtues of piety, chastity, submission, and domestic life (Welter, 1966: 153). This view portrayed the activities of Victorian women based on their physical structure in doing light housekeeping and childcare. Therefore, British women did not have the opportunity to participate in politics, business or social activities. This stemmed from the structure of traditional British norms, which defined two “separate spheres” for the activities of men and women: the “private and domestic spheres of women” and the “public and political spheres of men” (Davis, 1987: 3; Ryle, 2012: 342). In this traditional definition, which was also common in the early decades of the Victorian era, the “home” described as a “proper sphere” for women. Thus, women’s social action focused on doing things such as caring for their husbands and children, housekeeping, doing art, teaching at home, and observing moral and religious principles. In the first half of the nineteenth century, except from some rural women as well as lower-class ones who, under certain circumstances and in the absence of a husband, held some of the duties of men outside their “proper sphere”, British urban society rejected the activity of women outside the “home”.

The issue of women’s restrictions on social activities, as well as job choices, and the

increase in the female population, were among the components that led to the formation of new perspectives on the description of women and their roles in British society. Accordingly, since the 1850s, in order to recognize the role of women in Victorian society, a number of women’s rights advocates in Britain, including Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, Lydia Becker, Helen Blackburn, Jessie Boucherett, Emily Faithful, Bessie Parkes and Emily Davis, held their meetings at Langham Place in London. According to the *Langham Police Circle*, as one of the pioneers of feminism in Britain, accepting women’s interests under the influence and the hegemony of the father or husband was a rejection of the character and a violation of a woman’s individual independence. They opposed the restriction of women’s jobs and specializations, and established the “Society for Promoting the Training of Women”, while educating them and paving the way for women to work outside the home (Gordon; Dounghan, 2001: 129-130; Davis, 1987: 3). Meanwhile, the spread of poverty and social unrest due to population growth and unemployment forced the church to present part of its activity in the form of religious groups focused on charitable work (Worrall, 1988: 37-39). At the same time, some programs proposed to strengthen the religious spirit of women and creating a new way of their

daily lives (Welter, 1966: 154). Many middle-class women, under the influence of the proponents of women's social activism, took up charity work (Prochaska, 1980: 223). Thus, the moderate approach of the mid-nineteenth-century feminist movement in Britain made its way to the Victorian Church (Gill, 1994: 83), leaving a significant portion of charitable work to women (Prochaska, 1980: 223). The presence of women in charitable activities was a prelude to community activism. Another influential factor in women's social activity was the increase of the number of women in Britain about 400,000 more than men, and because women had limited access to marriage, the issue of continuing their education and creating job opportunities was raised (Lewis, 1984: 95).

The culture of admitting girls to continue their education flourished in the 1850s, and arrangements made for their general education. Until two decades later, elementary and high schools established for girls. The presence of women in charitable activities and the possibility of training and specialization for girls and women paved the way for them to start other social activity. This activity took the form of joining Christian societies as a missionary. The activities of these women differed from those of the nuns of the Catholic Church who lived their lives in religious affairs

in the monastery. These activities of women as missionaries seen as playing a social role in society and was in line with the new programs and goals of the religious societies and missionary boards. In fact, social and religious theorists have turned their attention to "Maternal Duties", relying on the definition and role of Victorian women in charitable activities and increasing the number of women compared to men, and thus increasing the number of single women in British society. In their point of view, maternal duties created social roles and jobs for single women, which referred to as "Social Motherhood" or "Benevolent Materialism" (Lewis, 1984: 93; Heeney, 1988: 14). Accordingly, the middle class women could influence the lives of women with lower social status. Thus, women in the British lower classes and women in Eastern societies regarded as the target audience for single Victorian women seeking work and humanitarian activities.

Indeed, as socio-religious traditions and rituals restricted the male missionaries' field of activity in the Eastern and especially in Islamic world, a new position created for women in missionary work beyond the British borders. One of the leading missionary societies in Eastern countries was the "Church Missionary Society", i.e. CMS, which began its activities in Iran during the period in question. From the

beginning to the end of this mission's activity in Iran in 1980, the number of female missionaries was more than men (Francis-Dehqani, 2000: 52). These women, who sometimes lived in Iran for more than three decades, played an important role in educational and medical activities.

Church Missionary Society in Qajar Iran

The Qajar period coincided with a period of Christian missionaries' activity, especially Protestant missionaries, which in the Christian history literature referred to as the "Great Century" (Latourette, 1953: ix, 1063). This period led to the expansion of Protestant missions, including the "Church Missionary Society", i.e. CMS throughout the world. CMS was one of the first Protestant missions that established in Britain in the late eighteenth century under the influence of evangelical movements (Ward, 2000: 1). Henry Martin's trip to Iran in 1811 was the basis of this mission's attention to this country (Eardley, 1962). After Henry Martin, other Protestant freelancer missionaries traveled to Iran in next decades (Waterfield, 1977: 95-101). Until Robert Bruce, a missionary of CMS, while traveling India in 1869 settled in Iran in order to learn Persian. His temporary residence in Julfa led to the establishment of the first CMS mission in 1875 and thereafter in Isfahan (Ibid,

148-149). However, the preparations for the establishment of the next centers of this mission not made until about twenty-two years later, probably due to some problems such as lack of volunteers (Dehqani- Tafti, 1992: 70-71). In 1896, Robert Bruce sent a letter to the CMS in London, pointing to the need for new members to carry out missionary work in Iran (Ibid, 96). From then on, with the increase in the number of British, Irish and Australian missionaries, the delegations of the CMS established in Kerman, Yazd and Shiraz (Waterfield, 1977: 150-163; Borumand, 2002: 147-174).

The activities of CMS in these cities focused on educational, medical, and religious works, as well as the publication of various books in the field of Christian literature (Laster, 1973). A significant part of these activities, especially in the field of education and medicine, was the responsibility of women missionaries, whose participation process was a new activity in the field of women's affairs not only in Iran, but also in Britain. Because they found an opportunity to introduce their new "self and Identity" in Victorian society through acquiring social responsibility and taking initiative in the public sphere beyond the traditional norms of their homeland.

Challenges of CMS Women in Qajar Iran

Evidence suggests that most of the women who joined CMS were from the middle class in Britain, Ireland, Australia and Canada (Francis-Dehqani, 2000: 53). Most of them had the university education and were financially self-sufficient. Some of them also worked honorably and did not receive salaries. However, some received wages to train their colleagues. These socio-cultural characteristics show that these women did not choose this work for earning money or livelihood. Indeed, they had tried to create “new self and identity” contrary to the traditional norms that limited them in “home” as “private and proper sphere and doing housework”. Aiming for creating the new “self” through missionary work, they first studied at the private educational institution of *The Willows*, which established in 1888. Since the 1890s, as more women volunteered for missionary work, the number of such institutions has increased (Ibid). By realization of the importance of women’s missionary activities in the society, more attention paid to the membership of the graduates of these institutions in missions (Weitbrecht, 1913: 298-302). CMS also relied on charitable activities, Sunday school teaching, and the training of nursing or teaching professionals, which women were able to do well. For Victorian women, doing these activities was a

departure from the traditional role of women and entering the realm of social activity, which were also useful in improving the situation of working-class women (Francis-Dehqani, 2000: 52). The need for the presence of women missionaries in Eastern societies also came to the fore after CMS received reports from the first expeditionary volunteers. In these reports, the “home” considered as the center and foundation of Eastern social life and women were the center of the “home”, and accordingly, the presence of women missionaries in homes and their interaction with Eastern women was an effective factor in the successful propagation of Christianity (Burton, 1990: 295-308; Webb, 1993: 3). Therefore, CMS women missionaries become interested in the role of Eastern women and eager to learn about their characteristics and identities.

Robert Bruce, the first CMS missionary in Iran, also stressed the need for female missionaries to have easier access to Iranian women in their homes. However, since CMS had not yet licensed female missionaries, Isabella Read whom was the member of “Association for the Promotion of Female Education in the East”, came to Iran accompanied Robert Bruce and his wife in their second trip in 1882 and entered Julfa. She was the first missionary woman from the

Church of England and Protestant sect in central and southern Iran. Therefore, she had to challenge her “self and identity” in completely “other” society of Qajar era which limited urban and especially single women activity in “home”. Isabella Read, although not well educated in missionary work, took charge of the *Julfa Girls’ School*; she married Joseph Aydiniantz, an Armenian teacher of *CMS Boys’ School*, and lived in Iran for 37 years, until the end of her life in 1919. Her activity focused on the Armenian community of Julfa (Fig. 1.). During the two years of her activity, the number of students in *Julfa Girls’ School* increased to two hundred (Francis-Dehqani, 2000: 120).



Fig.1. Isabella Read and Armenian Girls from *Julfa School*

About nine years after Isabella Read has arrived in Julfa, two trained single CMS women missionaries came to Iran. One of them was Mary Bird, a purposeful missionary (Rice,

1916: 9) who, in addition to teaching at the Armenian Girl’s School in Julfa, sought to meet Iranian women; she succeeded to entered homes, interacted with women, and sometimes had religious conversations. She believed that women play the most important role in “evangelization of Persia” (Ibid, 64-66). On Bruce’s recommendation, Bird turned to medicine by reading the medical books available in mission to increase the impact of her missionary work by teaching women about health and hygienic (Powell, 1949: 42). Thus, she became a pioneer woman missionary in CMS medical affairs (Rice, 1916: 113). This can be assumed as another step for creation of construction of her “new self and identity” in Qajar society as she had to experience the presence in Iran as an “other” society and be known “herself: as “other” instead in this society. Soon the women of Julfa came to her for treatment and she was nicknamed *Khanum Maryam* or *Hakim Maryam*, which was indicated the reduction of the social boundaries of Iranian women as “others” with her. Bird’s medical activities continued in Isfahan and Kerman. It is noteworthy that to enter Isfahan, she first choose to wear *Chador*. However, after learning that the townspeople had accused her of changing appearance to enter their homes, she chose to wear an English cloak and veil (Francis-Dehqani, 2000: 98) which reveal

“her true external self” (Fig.2.). This situation shows that in order to communicate with Qajar women, she choose to change her “external identity” and cloth like them, i.e. “other”. Nevertheless, Iranians society did not approve of this apparent change because they suspected her “inner identity”. Despite these challenges, Bird was active in Kerman Hospital until her death in 1914. The work of Isabella Read and Mary Bird provided a model for the work of CMS Women. Henceforth, those who came to Iran, at first study Persian and learned how to communicate with Iranian women through trial and error or the guidance of their predecessors.

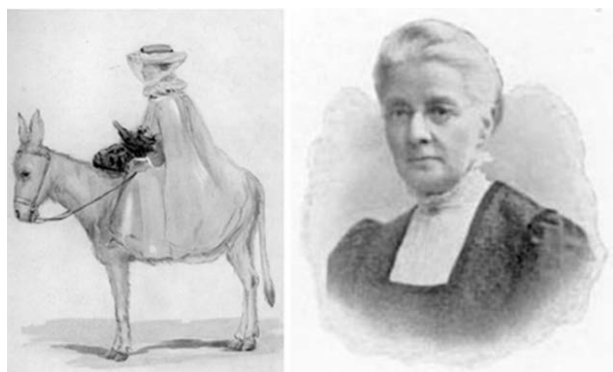


Fig. 2. Mary Bird

CMS women in Iran divided into two groups: 1- Wives of missionary men and 2- Single missionary women. Little is known about the situation of the missionary wives, who were more or less involved in some mission work. Because according to the policy of CMS, since 1903, the wives and daughters of the missionaries, which some of them lived in Iran

for about three decades or born in this country were not included in CMS statistics. In fact, their presence in mission influenced by the patriarchal hierarchy of CMS even beyond the British borders. The prevailing opinion in CMS was that the wives of the missionaries did not have sufficient motivation and conditions for missionary activities. Some reports also indicate that the missionaries' wives were unmotivated. Among them, there are report related to Robert Bruce's wife about her negative impact on his attitude towards the people and also report about Mrs. Blackett's inability to communicate with indigenous women (Ibid, 57). Some of these wives viewed the public as lower class and “other”, which contradicted their husbands' missionary approach (Wright, 1977: 119).

The reluctance of some missionary wives to serve in the mission added to the need for single missionary women. The available statistics show that from the arrival of the first single women to the CMS mission in Iran (1891) until their departure (1980), the number of single women was more than men. In addition, from the beginning of the arrival of single women until the end of the Qajar period, i.e. about 34 years, 52 women missionaries came to Iran. Some of these women considered missionary activity in Iran as the blessing of God (Francis-Dehqani, 2000: 79). They

devoted their lives to missionary work without hindrance from their husband or child. Traveling alone far from home in a “new other” society and culture which had its limitation for single women, was another step in shaping of the “new self and identity” for these women missionaries. However, if single women married their co-workers, they had to resign or, if they continued to work, their pensions would cut off and their names removed from the reports (Ibid, 57). Single women who got married in the first two or three years of their mission had to pay for their education and travel. Thus, the patriarchal structure of CMS continued to cast a shadow over Victorian missionary women seeking social independence far from the restriction of their homeland. Women members of CMS in Iran were not formally involved in decision or policy-making. However, it was not possible to carry out the programs of the mission without the presence of women, especially single missionaries whose activities revolved around medical, educational, and religious field.

The presence of women in CMS dispensaries, clinics or hospitals in Isfahan, Kerman, Yazd, and Shiraz was significant, and their interaction with female patients provided the basis for Iranian women’ views on Western women or Western culture. Of course, Iranian women were unaware of difficulties and

limitations that these Victorian women were facing in their countries. In these medical centers, treatment performed in new methods using modern medical equipment. These included advanced surgery, the use of X-rays, and surgery to treat cataracts (Hume-Griffith, 1909: 152-153) (Fig.3.). Most CMS women works in these medical centers were among the first British women medical graduates. The first of these women was Emmeline Stuart, a general surgeon who came to Julfa in the spring of 1897 at the age of thirty. Her stay as CMS physician and surgeon in Isfahan, Shiraz and among the Bakhtiari tribes lasted thirty-seven years. During this time, fifteen other female doctors joined her (Francis-Dehqani, 2000: 152, 157). One of their most prominent activities was the treatment of Kermani carpet weaver girls who, due to unfavorable working conditions and continuous sitting on the back of carpet loom, suffered acute physical problems and deformed leg bones since childhood (Rice, 1916: 110, 122-126; Linton, 1923: 116; Borumand, 2002: 221-223) (Fig. 4.).



Fig. 3. Emmeline Stuart operating on a small girl, 1907

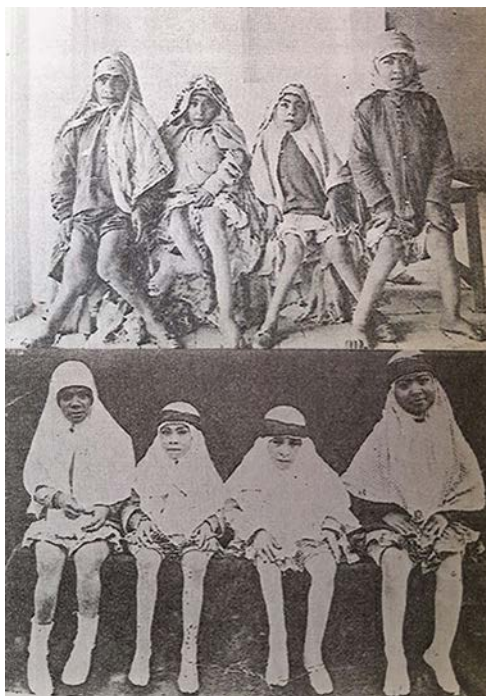


Fig. 4. Girls suffered from leg curvature due to carpet weaving before and after operation

In the field of education, the establishment of girls' schools, boarding schools, orphanages, and Sunday classes were among the main activities of the CMS women. The schools for

Armenian and Muslim girls were “Behesht Āyeen” (Paradise Religion) in Isfahan; “Īzād Peymān” (God’s Covenant) in Yazd and “Mehr Āyeen” (Religion of Love) in Shiraz. Features of these educational centers included teaching English, French and Latin (Bird, 1891: I/250-251; Landor, 1903: 388). They taught girls sewing, knitting, needlework, and embroidery (Bird, 1891: I/251; Rice, 1923: 221-222), and at the institute named “CMS Garden of Arts in Isfahan”, they provided indigenous and local old pottery and rugs patterns to students or women who came to the mission for making handicrafts. The products of their artworks presented to different cities of Iran and Britain and was a bestseller (Rice, 1923: 221-222). Educational and medical affairs considered as the “golden key to enter the hearts of Muslims” and CMS missionaries used these as a tool for religious activity (Hume-Griffith, 1909: 140). The Persian language taught in schools so that some female students could introduce the Bible to other Iranian women. Reading the Bible in classrooms or organizing meetings for this purpose (Arnold, 1877: 320), talking to religious minorities (Ibid, 318), missionary trips to villages and nomadic settlements (Rice, 1916: 135), reading the Bible in the hospital (Ibid, 127) and giving copies of this book to patients after treatment (Dr. Donald Carr,

1952: 10), were among their religious activities. Mary Bird writes in a note that in response to patients' requests from the villages for treatment, she reminded them that missionaries should bring the Bible with them (Francis-Dehqani, 2000: 81).

CMS women missionaries settled in major cities of central and southern Iran in the second half of the nineteenth century and established contacts with various people, especially the urban population, villagers and nomads. Long stay and their relationship with different groups, especially women, created a kind of social interaction in the structure of Iranian society in the Qajar period, whose role in the study of socio-cultural relations between Iran and Britain is undeniable. In examining the social status and identity of these women in Qajar Iran, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that in some cases, upon entering these areas, they were among the first foreign nationals or representatives of the British government (Malcolm, 1908: 54-55). They appeared in schools, hospitals and on the streets in the guise of Victorian women and faced oppositions. These women sometimes traveled alone on the roads and rarely accompanied by guards (Fig.5.). They introduced a new lifestyle for Iranian women that somehow was a new way of life for themselves too. During their visits with

women, they answered questions from Iranian women about how they dress and live which were parts of their identities, and learned about Iranian lifestyles and health patterns (Rice, 1923: 64) (Fig.6.).



Fig. 5. CMS Missionary woman travelling on a mule, c. 1910



Fig. 6. Emmeline Stuart in Bakhtiari Cloths, 1907

Some visits with educated women turned into religious debates, eventually leading to socio-cultural interaction. Teaching English in the schools of mission followed the familiarity of the new generation in Qajar society with this language. A number of students from these

schools traveled to India, Java and Europe after learning English (Bishop, 1891: I/248). Some female students also traveled to the Britain, India, and the United States to learn about modern methods of Gynecology (Rice, 1923: 278). Some Iranian physicians also worked as assistants at mission's Hospital in Isfahan to complete their information and medical skills (Linton, 1923: 80). In some cases, the Iranian government even paid for the mission's hospitals in Yazd and Isfahan (Hume-Griffith, 1909: 164-165; Waterfield, 1977: 162). Nevertheless, according to sources in Iran, the religious activity of the missionaries was not as effective as they had hoped. In various ways, Muslims and religious minorities seldom responded positively to the CMS missionaries (Waterfield, 1977: 165) and expressed their dissatisfaction in various ways. An opposition against Mary Bird's effort for establishing a dispensary in the bazaar of Isfahan is an example of this confrontation with the activities of CMS women and (Rice, 1916: 71-76) the challenges they faced as single educated foreigner woman in Qajar Society.

The flourishing of the missionaries' medical activity provided the intention for the establishment of indigenous health and medical centers. Haj Āghā Noorullah Isfahanī, the clergyman who opposed the CMS missionary activities, wrote in this regard in the

book "Mokālema-t-e Moqim va Mosāfer" (Resident and Traveler's Conversation):

"The constitution says that hospitals should be opened in all cities so that the poor and the weak who cannot afford to pay for their illnesses go to the hospital with free food and nursing and do not need the poor Muslims to go to foreign hospital where at first, be invited to Christianity and thereafter treat them, and Muslim women should not need to go to a foreign hospital" (Zargari Nezhad, 1995: 441).

Nevertheless, the result of the activities of CMS women in Qajar Iran was to provide educational and medical facilities for Iranian women and they did not succeed in preaching Christianity. However, CMS mission in Isfahan constituted a fully independent diocese of the Anglican Church in 1913. As noted by Robin Waterfield, author of *Christians in Persia*, this choice was "more an act of faith than a response to a felt need" (Waterfield, 1977: 162). With the outbreak of First World War in 1914, a significant part of CMS activities ceased and a number of members sent to India and the Middle East. CMS missions in Iran, in the years after the First World War until the fall of the Qajar dynasty, also faced problems such as lack of volunteers due to the 1926 economic recession in Britain (Ibid). However, women still made up the

majority of CMS members in Iran. This was while since their presence in Iran, educational and medical affairs took precedence over their religious activities. Mary Bird, one of the most purposeful women missionaries in Iran, expressed her satisfaction with the children reciting the Qur'an and performing Muslim Catechism (Taziyeh) at school (Francis-Dehqani, 2000: 73). In addition, when women missionaries returned to Britain for leave or retirement, they expressed their nostalgia for Iran and the Iranian community (Ibid). This stemmed from a socio-cultural relationship far removed from the missionary motive between Victorian women missionaries and Qajar-era Iranian women.¹

Conclusion

The Victorian era marked by the expansion of the British colonies administered by bureaucrats and military agents. During this period, medical advances led to an increase in population, and in the absence of a large number of men who had gone to the colonies, the issue of employment of a considerable number of British women raised. Now women

that their duties according to British traditional norm were limited to housekeeping, sought to gain new "self and identity" beyond contractual constraints in a socio-cultural movement. The flourishing of missionary societies in the form of charities to reduce poverty provided the ground for women to work outside the home and their specified "proper sphere", as well as the need to educate them to the level of university education. Entering the field of missionary work in British society, as well as beyond national borders, and especially in the Eastern countries, marked a new definition of British women and their social and cultural abilities. Victorian women who joined the Church Missionary Society (CMS) took advantage of the duties and space provided by the missionary work as a means of social "self and Identity" expression. By choosing travel to Iran, they tested their abilities, and the continuation of their travels indicated their motivation for proving "new social identity". After arriving in Iran, they found "themselves" in the face of a society with feminine standards that was more or less similar to the traditional norms of women's

¹It is worth nothing that Victorian women missionaries in India experienced more or less different conditions. The British colonial presence in India was an obstacle to the two-way communication between these missionaries and Indian women. Some missionary women viewed Indian women from above, and in return, Indian women avoided contact with them, who were the cultural representatives of their colonial government. In such a

situation, women missionaries needed to change their supremacist attitude towards Indians and redouble their efforts to be accepted by the Indian women's community. For more information, see: Haggis, Jane (1991). *Professional Ladies & Working Wives: Female Missionaries in the London Missionary Society & Its South Travancore District, South India in the 19th Century*. University of Manchester: PhD. Thesis.

duties in Britain. Hence, they identified “themselves” with Iranian women. In particular, despite their departure from British social constraints and the fact that in most cases women missionaries played a key role in managing the affairs of CMS, they were still unable to participate in CMS decision-making in Iran because this mission was still under the influence of the patriarchal structure of the Anglican Church and Victorian norms. In fact, in the men missionary point of view, these women missionaries considered as “other”, even though their duties were the same as those of their male counterparts and included an even

wider, more important, and more influential field. Thus, even far from home, these women missionaries were not immune to the influence of Victorian society norms that restricted women’s activities in the household. This led most of the women missionaries of CMS to work for improvement of their “self and identity” through educational and medical activities for Iranian women. Under these circumstances, religious goals in the CMS women’s sphere of activity faded in the shadow of humanitarian affairs and again a “new social self” emerged.

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مسئله «خود» و «دیگری»: چالش هویت زنان ویکتوریایی (مطالعه موردی: تعامل زنان «انجمن تبلیغی کلیسا» با زنان عصر قاجار)



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چکیده: در آغاز عصر ویکتوریا (۱۹۰۱-۱۸۳۷ م)، اگرچه فعالیت زنان بریتانیایی به خانه‌داری محدود می‌شد، محدودیت آنها در فعالیت‌های اجتماعی و انتخاب شغل و نیز افزایش جمعیت از جمله مواردی بود که به شکل‌گیری دیدگاه‌های جدید نسبت به زنان و امکان کار در خارج از خانه منجر شد. در این دوران، با گسترش فعالیت‌های تبلیغی در مستعمرات بریتانیا، این فرصت برای زنان عصر ویکتوریا فراهم شد تا در امور تبلیغی فراتر از سرزمین خود شرکت کنند. تعداد قابل توجهی از آنها مبلغان وابسته به «انجمن تبلیغی کلیسا» (CMS) بودند که به ایران آمدند. بنابراین، آنها برای اثبات توانایی در خلق «خود و هویت» جدید در برابر «دیگران» با دو چالش مواجه بودند: (۱) در جامعه ویکتوریایی به‌عنوان هویت اجتماعی برابر با مردان، (۲) در جامعه قاجار برای معرفی «خود» به‌عنوان مبشر «هویت اجتماعی جدید» برای زنان ایرانی. با تمرکز بر چارچوب مفهومی «خود، دیگری و هویت»، این مقاله با مروری بر گزارش‌ها و اسناد به‌جامانده، علل و چگونگی روندی را بررسی می‌کند که به شکل‌گیری «هویت جدید» این زنان مبلغ و مرزبندی آنها میان «خود» و «دیگری» یعنی ساختار مرد سالارانه جامعه ویکتوریایی و «انجمن تبلیغی کلیسا» منجر شد. این مقاله، همچنین بازخورد حاصل از تعامل آنها با زنان ایرانی به‌عنوان «دیگری» در شکل‌گیری «خود و هویت» جدیدشان را بررسی می‌کند. دستاوردهای این مقاله نشان می‌دهد که اقدام آزادی‌خواهانه و فمینیستی زنان مبلغ در ایجاد «خود و هویت جدید» در موطنشان به رقابت آشکار با مردان مبلغ در ساختار مرد سالار «انجمن تبلیغی کلیسا» منجر شد. علاوه‌براین، به دنبال تعامل زنان این انجمن با اقشار مختلف زنان عصر قاجار، «هویت تبلیغی» آنها رنگ باخت و جنبه‌های «خود و هویت بشر دوستانه‌شان» جایگزین شد و بار دیگر «خود اجتماعی جدید» پدیدار شد.

واژه‌های کلیدی: خود/دیگری؛ هویت؛ عصر ویکتوریا؛ انجمن تبلیغی کلیسا (CMS)؛ دوره قاجار؛ زنان ایرانی؛ فمینیسم.