

**A History of Women in Afghanistan: Lessons Learnt for the Future
Or
Yesterdays and Tomorrow: Women in Afghanistan**

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Abstract

In this paper, through the history of women in Afghanistan, I want to locate the position of women in the future by lessons learnt from the past. Given Afghanistan's current situation of poverty, political disenfranchisement and social disarray, I argue that these very deficiencies could be maneuvered to favor the empowerment of women by redefining her role in the family and the community. Afghanistan's social development can only be ensured through democracy and the reduction of poverty, the success of both being assured through full participation of women, especially in rural Afghanistan. In this paper I would like to trace the history of women in Afghanistan for three main reasons. One, to show that women in Afghanistan were not always oppressed by fundamentalism as occurred under the Mujahideen and the Taliban. Second, to go back into history and reflect on regimes and politicians to show that women's issues were an integral part of national construction agendas even as far back as the 1920s. Third, to highlight the power of tribal/community leaders in defining the role of women and in successfully resisting any modernization that would challenge their patriarchal authority.

Key Words: *Afghanistan, gender, history*

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