

**GENDER, RELIGION AND RESISTANCE: WOMEN'S AGENCY IN
POST REVOLUTION IRAN**

BY

RAHA SABET SARVESTANY

SUBMITTED IN THE PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN WOMEN'S STUDIES CENTER

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF

DR. SWATI DYAHADROY

AT

KRANTIYOTI SAVITRIBAI PHULE UNIVERSITY OF PUNE

WOMEN'S STUDIES CENTER

PUNE, INDIA

December 2016

By Way of Conclusion

I would conclude this research by reflecting on my understanding, interpretation, discussion and findings based on each chapter. I began this research by reviewing the emergence of Baha'i faith and its principles and administration to elucidate the nature of Baha'i faith. For this research understanding Baha'i teachings, philosophy and administration is important because it could help to comprehend why Baha'i faith has been opposed and rejected so strongly from clergies in Iran since its emergence, and how the resistance and agency of Baha'is in Iran has rooted in their religious belief.

Through feminist discourse in Middle East I compared Bahai writings with feminist discourse, to illuminate that Baha'i women regardless of their background started one step further than other women at the time. I argued Baha'i women, who were empowered from Baha'i religious teachings and principles, didn't need to challenge and reform Baha'i writings, and didn't need nationalist and modernist ideology to support and demonstrate their demands in the society and state. Through narratives of Bahai women I argued that Baha'i women after Islamic revolution displayed a different female identity which had been in contrast with Islamic law.

Baha'i women were not passive members of the community or of the situation. The life stories suggested that the Baha'is resistance has been through non-violence. Life stories made it clear that they did not support any kind of physical or verbal violence but also their thoughts and attitudes toward the policy of the Islamic government has been free of any aggression and violence based on Baha'i principles. I suggest that Baha'i women's resistance has been about how they cooperated with other members of Baha'i community to bring changes in social relation of power that dominate the whole community.

I concluded this research by taking stock of my journey as a Baha'i woman researcher to understand and interpret the socio-political structure of Iranian state and agency and resistance of Baha'i community against the persecutions and violation of human rights in the framework of debates over structure and agency both at the theoretical and empirical level. In the final stage I argued how the structure and agency of religious state has

brought and in somehow consolidated different people from different ideological, thoughts and social backgrounds together in resisting oppressive system.

In chapter one through first and second section which focused on emergence and history of persecution of Baha'is before revolution, I discussed that Baha'i teachings and philosophy has created a different intellectual discourse in Iranian society which had been the bastion of shiiat clergies for a long time. In this regard encountering Baha'i and Islamic intellectual discourses could be seen as the main reason of opposition and rejection of Babi /Baha'i doctrine and persecution of Babi / Baha'is from the beginning. The consequence of this rejection had a deep impact on the structure of Iranian society. Indeed the subsequent policies that clergies have employed to control and eliminate Baha'is till now are rooted in theoretical disputes with Baha'i doctrine.

I argued that religion as an ideological institution has a strong structure that could create and reform social and political structures and legitimize the power relations, therefore religious authorities would resist any kind of ideology which brings changes in and reduces their authority. In case of opposition to Baha'i faith by clergies in Iran, I discussed that not only the philosophy of Babi/ Baha'i Faith had vast influence on grass root but also its followers, who were mostly among Islamic learned and Iranian elites, therefore Baha'i ideology emerged as the most serious threat for Shiiat religious authority (clergies). Clergies were in fear of Babi/ Baha'i teachings rejected to have any open discussion with the believers of this new religion because they were not sure about the consequence of the discussion.

Evidences in this research showed that clergies in their first attempt tried to eradicate this new ideology through army. Three major massacres by army which killed thousands of Bab'is at the time of Qajar was obviously a kind of message to Iranians and particularly Muslims who had tendency toward this new ideology. Clergies also by calling Bab'is infidels, heretic and enemies of Islam created hatred and suspicions among Iranians. Although the former persecution silenced the new ideology and Baha'is tried to hide their commitment to the Baha'i faith to avoid problems, but persecution of Baha'is took new forms: they were looted, executed, beaten up, driven from their homes and expelled time to time.

Evidences in this research illustrated that Baha'is didn't have any intention or attempt to achieve political or religious power in their social services and economic or political involvement. For example Baha'is under the guidance of Abdul Baha (the successor after Bahaullah) withdrew from involving in the political process when the constitutional movement rapidly fell apart. Abdul Baha also warned against factionalism and disunity, and sent several letters to the Shah and constitutionalists and asked them to reconcile their differences and act together for the sake of the nation. Abdul Baha even warned them about the danger of invasion of foreign powers. It could be said that Baha'is looked for possibility to create unity for progressive social reform and nothing else but finally conservative clergies succeeded to pass a law in 1909 which prevented Baha'is from membership in the parliament which was not important less than a social massacre.

Overview on the historical opposition toward Baha'is before Islamic revolution showed that the exclusion of Baha'is from the political process misinterpreted by clergies and as a result conservatives called Baha'is as enemy of Islam and agents of western countries. Clergies poisoned the public opinion and even academia for years with their ideas about the nature of Baha'i Faith, activities and administration. They used also accusation of Baha'is as a mean to repress other secular demands for modernization and democracy. It could be said that opposition to Baha'is doesn't have just religious based reasons; indeed it is related to who has power to control over the people's thoughts, which is more important than physical power of politicians who are on the surface.

A glimpse on the events after Islamic revolution underlined that the situation of Baha'is in the first decade after revolution was complicated and ambiguous. It showed that the opposition to and persecution of Baha'is that was initiated since the emergence of this new ideology in Iran, firmly reformed when clergies obtained political power after Islamic revolution. It could be said that the same strategy to oppress Baha'is continued but with stronger spirit. Islamic authorities repeated unduly and false accusations such as 'enemies of Islam', 'corrupted on earth', 'foreign spies' which used to say it before revolution, and Khomeini in one of his Fatwa (Islamic Judgment) after revolution called Baha'is as 'whose blood deserves to be shed', in order to spread hatred and anger among Iranian about Baha'is. The Islamic government continued the same strategy for persecuting and harassing Baha'is like killing, beating, confiscating properties, and also

did more which was denying all the civil rights for Baha'is by disowning them as one of the religious minorities in new Iranian constitution. To me their strategy showed how a power structure could implement a kind of policy to support its legitimacy and capability to control over different groups that recognize them as 'others'.

I posit that there was a strong feeling of fear about Baha'i administration; in fact clergies had created such a misunderstanding for a long time that they and the collective memory of people accepted this inaccurate claim as a religious and social fact without any true investigation. for Islamic authorities, Baha'i administration represented establishing another state within the Islamic government which was threatening their power, also Baha'is' responsibilities in governmental jobs were another side of threatening for two main reasons; first, people who are in governmental jobs must have represented government's ideology and principles, thus in this context Baha'is should have been dismissed, and second, if Baha'is could access to the public sphere, they could introduce their Baha'i ideology and principles and symbolize their identity as different from Muslim community.

In the case of Islamic government of Iran, I suggested that these kinds of strategies from power structure are a way to support unsustainable structure which had been based on 'other' supporters. In another word Islamic government which came to power with the help of Western courtiers (Nahavandi, 2014), always has carried on the fear of 'others' who could get support from outsiders and conquer the Islamic government as the way Islamic government came to power. Baha'is in this sense were objective, because clergies always linked this religious minority to aliens and Western countries.

I argued Islamic government consciously has continued creating misunderstanding about the nature of Baha'i Faith thus in each and every event that Islamic government was attacked by outsider or insiders, have claimed that they found the trace of Baha'is in it. They have never shown any evidences but have continued distorting the historical memory and social conscious of Iranians that Baha'is have been the enemy of Islam, Shia and have been helping aliens to overthrow Islamic government. I suggested this false story has granted Islamic government the excuse to continue persecution of Baha'is and limited Baha'i activates.

Evidences in this research supported that Islamic government didn't do any visible changes in its strategies toward Baha'is; however there were lots of international efforts, since the first years after revolution, reports about the deterioration of Baha'i situation in Iran have been recorded and verified by local and international reporters from inside and outside of Iran. International organizations like UN and international Baha'i community have tried to tell Islamic government that although Baha'is are not recognized as one of the religious minorities in Iranian constitution, but their civil and human rights should be respected and they have to stop persecution.

International Baha'i community have made and submitted reports for three reasons; first giving voice to the religious minority, second for been correcting the misunderstandings and wrong information about Baha'is in Iran, and third for introducing Baha'i Faith and sharing its doctrine. International organizations in their efforts to stop Iranian government from persecuting Baha'is have been using different approaches. I argued that as international organizations influenced by global superpowers that their eco-political power in Middle East is more important than human rights commitments.

Resolutions about violation of human rights have been just a means to put pressure on Iran to control Iranian government in political, economic and social matters which help Western countries to have control over their interests in Eastern countries particularly Islamic countries. I suggested that accepting neutrality of international organizations in their efforts is as wrong as to say that they didn't have any interference to overthrow Shah and give power to Khomeini. It could be delusive if Baha'is or any other discriminated groups in all over the world hope that international organization could eradicate their afflictions and miseries.

Execution, social and economic deprivations, imprisonment, kidnapping, beating, insulting and other kinds of persecution have had serious effects on Baha'i community. Small numbers of Baha'is recanted their faith, large numbers of them left Iran, some of them became inactive and the rest stayed in Iran, but the Islamic government has learned that those strategies have not been successful to eradicate Baha'i faith in Iran. I suggested that governmental persecution under impunity put Baha'is in a dangerous situation.

Baha'is have to complain to the same authority that denied them from civil and human rights.

In chapter two I argued that Baha'i doctrine has shaped Baha'i women's activities and thoughts to contribute their concern and efforts in developing educational process for both gender with meticulous underline on women and girls in their societies. I made an attempt to describe Baha'i doctrine and feminist discourses as two parallel movements in Middle East with special focus in Iran. Although the progress of these two movements seemed to be different but the experience of engaging to understand these two ideologies, their similarities and differences, it has been a new method and fruitful research journey for me. This research assumed that Baha'i teachings and principles can enhance and support the limitation of feminist discourse.

In chapter two I argued that Baha'i women regardless of their background started one step further than other women at the time. This research also suggested some assumptions that could be suggested why two streams of thoughts (Bahai doctrine and feminist discourse) didn't meet to facilitate and develop each other.

There were fundamental disagreements between Baha'i discourse, and secular and Islamic feminist in Middle East that I delineated through three principles of Baha'i doctrine. First, based on Baha'i teachings messengers regularly appear to bring both a reassertion of eternal religious truths, and add a fresh measure of spiritualizing energy which enables humanity to progress further in God's eternal plan. Second, in Baha'i teachings religion and politics are clearly determined as two separate spheres of human activities and third, Baha'i teachings reject the notion that there is an inherent conflict between reason, science and religion.

I argued that Islamic feminists, who have tried to improve women's status and legitimize women's rights through re-reading Quran, couldn't support the rights of women who are recognized as 'other' in Islamic law, particularly when it comes to the rights of Baha'i women. Indeed secular feminist and Islamic feminist have failed to locate the rights of all women in their discourse. My engagement with these two streams of thoughts suggested that there are similarities in actions and goals but differences in epistemological landscape which granted these two streams of thoughts significant to understand their constructions.

Through the former debate between secular and Islamic feminists this research provided a general viewpoint on incompatibility between secular and faith-based feminist discourses, as well as incompatibility between Islamic and secular Muslim feminist discourses, on the issue of women's identity. Based on the debates, one tries to interpret and use religious texts to define and authorize women's identity and the other tries to avoid religious texts to legitimize women's identity. Going back to map the two Parallel streams of thoughts suggests that while there has been a controversial conversation within different feminist discourses, Baha'i doctrine illustrates women's identity through spiritual (non - material/physical) and social teachings of this latest religion.

I have argued that Women in Baha'i writings locate their identity through these principles: first, the concept of equality between men and women. Bahai writings clears that in some things women are better than men and in other things men are better than women and for many things difference of sex is not matter ("Women", 1975).

Second, the belief that men and women have basic and distinct qualities and equality doesn't mean that men should become women or women should become men. In fact qualities and functions of men and women complementary to each other ("Women", 1975). Third, education of children is the utmost importance for a mother. Based on Baha'i writings it is not just about her own children but also about the children of her community and society ("Women", 1975). Forth is women's responsibility towards society: Baha'i writings advise women to organize meetings for learning how to teach ("Women", 1975:29) girl children to learn various branches of knowledge, good behavior, and proper way of life. In Baha'i writings education of women is one step toward abolishing and stopping wars, woman who rear the child and educates the youth to maturity therefore they will refuse to give their sons for sacrifice in the wars ("Women", 1975).

Based on Baha'i doctrine every believer, men or women must engage in some form of occupation, like craft, trades and so on and "it is regarded as an act of worship" (Bahauallah quoted in "Women", 1975:55). Baha'i teachings suggest women to dedicate their energies and abilities toward the industrial and agricultural sciences to assist mankind in most needful areas, this is one way that women can demonstrate their

capability of equality in the social and economic equation (Abdul Baha, 1912). Baha'i writings identifies women more heart tender and susceptible, more moral courage and special gifts which enable them to govern in moments of danger and crisis than men, therefore women's superiority will be their service and efficiency in the establishment of international peace (Abdul Baha, 1912; "Women", 1975).

I am trying to establish that the above principles were revealed in response to the inferior situation of women globally. These principles bring to light the fundamental aspects of women's potentiality and responsibility in improving local and global issues. Baha'i women in West and East have tried to practice and perform these principles to symbolize a new and different female identity in their or other societies. Particularly Baha'i women contributions as constructors or implementers in educational process, has been a starting point to verify women's ability and competency. It suggested that compare to secular and faith-based feminist discourses and epistemology, women in Baha'i doctrine could practice solidarity and equality regardless of their race, religion, caste, class, color, ethnicity, educational /proficiency level and marriage status.

This research tried to demonstrate how Baha'i women, as members of an informal religious minority in religious structure of Iranian society after Islamic revolution display their female identity and resist exclusion, discrimination, opposition and persecution of power structure. I argued that the policy of Islamic government has been so strike that suppressed any voices which has been critical to Islamic government. It might be the cause that Iranian feminist focused their struggle mostly on Muslim women's situation and rights and not other women citizen.

Through my research I have tried to established that in contrast to the Iranian feminists who employed the combination of Western ideology and re- interpreting Islamic texts method to create a new feminist discourse, Baha'i doctrine did not employ either Western theories or re- reading any other religious texts method to legitimize its efficacy. Baha'i doctrine as a rationalist religious ideology, which practiced non-violent social rules , based on the principle of consultation has tried to develop a methodological process of learning, which help humanity to practice unity, equality, peace and justice among the all races and ethnicities of human kind. For example the principle of gender equality in

Baha'i doctrine not only calming that women have equal rights with men, and should enter into all branches of the administration of society. But also emphasize that the entry of women into all human departments is "certain, unquestionable and nothing can prevent it" (Abdul Baha, 1912:182-184).

Baha'i principles demonstrate a kind of universal attitude with some simple normative social methods which could recuperates human societies regardless of their diverse culture, tradition, religious belief, policy, historical experiences and intellectual discourses. In another word Western theories or Islamic ideology, which their principles are limited to the structural contexts that have emerged from them, perhaps couldn't be sufficient to employ in other social structures. It is assumed that the universal potentiality of Baha'i principles may reconcile an intellectual nexus which develop a learning attitude between Western and Eastern scholars and cultures.

In chapter three have tried to look at how Baha'i women after Islamic revolution displayed a different female identity which had been in contrast with Islamic law, therefore Baha'i women should have come under control by the Islamic state, probably for these explanations: First Baha'i women who were part of the administrative body of Baha'i faith represented women who were at the stage of self-discovery, freedom from the patriarchal system for decision making in public and private sphere, were not acceptable in the context of Islamic law. It could be said that for Islamic government Baha'i women and Baha'i administration, that gave opportunity to women to be present in the public sphere and practice their equality in the society, should have been controlled for the sake of Islamic state policy.

Evidence that shows an attempt to take Baha'i women under control were implemented through imprisoning, torturing and killing. Through these acts, authorities probably were giving message to the Baha'i community and Iranian society that nobody could question and resist Islamic commands, or act out of the Islamic framework that had been symbolized. Life story of Baha'i women showed that Islamic court always offered Baha'i women to recant their faith to get released. In life stories which were narrated by Baha'i women who one of their relatives were executed I found some commonalities which explain what has been the Baha'i women agency and how Baha'i women described their

agency and resistance through their faith such as; through life stories it became clear that most of the wives have accepted gracefully whatever happened to their beloved ones and interpreted their experiences as part of the history of human kind which would effect on the lives of many people who would hear and read about Baha'i community in Iran.

Baha'i women were not passive members to the situation they have been part of the struggle for community rights. The faith based resistance and agency of Baha'i women became clear when most of the wives narrated that they used to support each other emotionally and materially while their husbands were in prison, abducted or executed through visiting Islamic authorities or arranging devotional gathering for the families that had lost a dear one, to comfort them. Pray as a faith based tool is considerable in most of the life stories.

Some of the wives or daughters of the Baha'is, who were executed, were out of Iran at that time. Life stories brought to the light that they did some activities out of Iran related to the persecution and events that had happened to the Baha'i community. These women used to write the experiences or translated the letters of their dear one who was executed and spread it through national and international Medias. They did many interviews with newspapers, magazines, TVs, and described about the violation of human rights and persecution of Baha'is in Iran. In this way they increased the awareness of the world to the events in Iran. They described that those activities freed them from their pain and losing of their dear ones.

The life stories made clear that Baha'i women came from diverse back ground; they were from different economic class, education level, religious ideology and region. Some of the wives were Muslim and some of the Baha'is who were executed were Muslim in their early life but later had become Baha'i and devoted themselves to serve the faith.

Most of the women reported that Baha'i prisoners were tortured mentally and physically by the Islamic government in different cruel ways and some of them were killed in most inhuman ways. Some of these women saw the tortured and lifeless bodies of their dear ones and described what they saw. Most of the Baha'i women interested to emphasis that how the behavior of Baha'i prisoners had strong effect on their cellmates, especially when

other inmates saw the degree of Baha'i prisoners' steadfastness at the time of torturing and when they were taken to the hanging place.

Most of the Baha'i prisoners, women and men, narrated that while they were in prison some of the Muslims fundamentalist used to visit them and argue with them about the reality of Baha'i faith. Their aim was to convince Baha'is to become Muslim. Most of the women and men who were executed or jailed by the Islamic government were educated people and from middle class families and some of them were born in non-Baha'i families. Some of them also was born in Baha'i family but got married to a non-Baha'i. Life stories said that all the children who were born in these families accepted Baha'i faith as their religion.

Some of the families in this study had left Iran sooner or later after getting a temporary break from the difficulties and troubles that the Islamic government had made for them. In fact most of them were forced by the government to leave their country because their properties were confiscated and they and their kids were threatened to get abducted, arrested or killed if they remained in Iran. Islamic government directly and indirectly would want to exert pressure upon Baha'i individual, families, and community to reach to the purpose of converting Baha'is to Islam. Islamic government was so adamant about its plan that even in prison at the time of execution; forced other Baha'is to watch how Baha'is were executed, in a hope to recant their faith.

The life stories suggests that the way Baha'is resisted has been through a non-violence resistance. Life stories clear Baha'is not only didn't concern any kind of physical or verbal violence but also their thoughts and attitudes toward the policy of the Islamic government has been free of any aggression and violence based on Baha'i principles. It could be suggested that Baha'is have formed a unique history of a non-violence resistance which has not been for any political, economic or religious interests. The life stories witnessed that their resistance and agency aimed to serve humanity, therefore in any situation even in prison the attempt of Baha'is have been creating awareness and a peaceful and caring situation for everyone.

In most of the life stories, Baha'i women narrated some experiences that show non Baha'is were really touched by the faith, steadfastness and non-violence resistance of

Baha'is. It suggests that the Islamic government and Iranian people had two different approaches toward Baha'is. The state considered Baha'is as a political party which is the enemy of Islam and against the Islamic government, while Iranians considered Baha'is as their brothers and sisters. However the policy of Islamic government couldn't allow non-Baha'is to support publicly Baha'is but there are stories which show non Baha'is admired and praised Baha'i's resistance in private

Life stories which narrated by Baha'i men helped this research to compare the resistance and agency of Baha'i women and men in difficult situations. Life stories clear that there has not been any differences in strategy of Islamic government for torturing, insulting, humiliating, interrogating and forcing Baha'is to recant their faith, between Baha'i men and women.

Narratives from Baha'i men and women who were in prison suggested that both of them attempted to make it clear to the Islamic government that what has been the nature of Baha'i Faith and administration; explained that Baha'is have not been the agent or spy of any foreign countries; tried to prove that Baha'is have not been the opponent of Islam or a political party who aimed to withdraw the Islamic government; and confirmed that although Baha'is didn't have any interest in political affairs but have been interested for developing Iranian society and would participate and cooperate in any activity that bring unity, prosperity and progress for Iranian.

Both of them inspired from Baha'i doctrine in their resistance and discourses with Islamic authorities. As Baha'i women tried to help their Baha'i and non-Baha'i inmates and make a peaceful and caring environment in prison, Baha'i men also tried to be at the service of their inmates. The resistance of both Baha'i men and women inspired non Baha'is who were in prison with them. I suggested that Baha'i women's resistance is about how they cooperate with other members of Baha'i community to bring changes in social relation of power that dominate the whole community. In fact Baha'i women and men hand in hand have learned how to recognize strategies and structure of dominating power to react in a way that could respond to their individual and collective needs and also requirements of wider community.

The agency and resistance of Baha'i women who never experienced prison, but one of their family member were in prison or were executed or abducted and never came back till now, indicates that these women had a very crucial role in their family reunion, Baha'i community solidarity, and symbolizing nonviolence resistance and sacrificing. I argued that if these Baha'i women recant their faith or became passive in difficult situation; not only their children and close family but also Baha'i community were affected. It seems that the aim of executing, imprisonment and confiscating the properties had been to eradicate Baha'i faith from Islamic society, but the agency and resistance of these women who were at the edge of tolerating most of the pressures not only have protected the spirit of faith in their family but also has been the engine of further activities for new generations

Interviews suggested that Islamic government as before still have charged Baha'is as the spy of foreign countries and have been concerned if Baha'is are involved in any social activities. Islamic government still asks Baha'is to recant their faith and suggests if Baha'is are interested for continuing their higher education and enjoying civil rightist, it is better for them to recant from Baha'i faith; Islamic government in some cases also suggested Baha'is to live Iran if they don't want to recant their faith.

I used narrative studies as a mean to represent the life experience, resistance and agency of Baha'i women in post revolution Iran; to illustrate the impact of religion/faith in resistance and agency, and to open space and seal the gap in the main stream feminist discourse about representation of Baha'i women's experience.

Finally in chapter four I have tried to take stock of my journey as a Baha'i woman researcher to understand and interpret the socio –political structure of Iranian state and agency and resistance of Baha'i community against the persecutions and violation of human rights in the framework of debates over structure and agency both at the theoretical and empirical level. In this chapter I highlighted the contribution and efforts of international Baha'i community, which by delving on the Iranian Baha'i community puts forth the plight of Baha'is in Iran. I argued that one form of resistance and agency of Baha'i community and individual has been responding to the accusations that Islamic authorities spread through media, their speeches, Islamic court or interrogations. For

example Baha'i community of Iran for the first time, in 1983, in response to Seyed Husain Musavi Tabrizi (the Attorney General of Iran, 1983) who in an interview denied any persecution against the Baha'is in Iran and clearly mentioned that no one would get persecuted by the Islamic law because of his/her religious belief, in a letter addressed issues which he had pointed out and copies of this letter were sent to various Islamic authorities and elites in Iran (Sanasarian, 2004). This form of agency was showed few times after revolution but each time political religious structure did not stop their discriminatory policy toward Baha'is.

Based on evidences I suggested that Baha'i individuals and community have never been the victims of circumstances, but they have been as social actors who are capable of determining and interpreting their own actions and meanings which have roots in their religious beliefs. Baha'i community has resisted inferior situation that dominated structure have imposed, in fact they have struggled to reclaim whatsoever rights that have been denied to them during years after revolution. Regarding life stories I argued that Baha'i community has tried to not limit to the world that Islamic government image of them, nor are Baha'is experiences acted upon by Islamic exploitation. The resistance and agency of Baha'i community and individual have been able to build their own free choice to act, which has affected by their cognitive belief structure.

I argued although it is clear that Islamic government systematically aimed to eradicate Bahai community and culture from the Iranian society but it may say that the structure and agency of Islamic government has produced social effects not only on Bahai community but also on Iranian society. indeed under oppressive system of Islamic government different people from different background, thoughts, religions, education level, political parties, economic classes, gender and so on inside and outside of prison became emotionally, mentally closer and try to understand each other opinion, believe, requirement, pain and struggle. The structure itself has forced people to listen, see and help "others" although it is oppressive and would punish people who will have contact with "others".

This research has been an attempt to identify Baha'i women's agency and bringing Baha'i ideology to intellectual attention, but still there are lots of possibilities for further

research. In this regard I would like to nurture my research in future by studying and collecting the life experience of Baha'i women who have been in prison recently for few years, comparing the life experience of Baha'i women and non- Baha'i women who had faced the same discrimination under Islamic revolution, the life experiences of Baha'i women and men who have struggled for Baha'i higher education (BIHE), achievements of Baha'i community after Islamic revolution under pressures, and finally about the life experience of Baha'is who left Iran as refuge to other countries.