

STATUS OF WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI SOCIETY

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DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled "**Status of Women in Contemporary Israeli Society**" submitted by **Seema Ahuja** for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy of the University. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university. We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiner for evaluation.

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**Humbleness and Consciousness
are two keys of success**

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The views expressed, facts stated herein and shortcomings, if any, however are my responsibility.

(Seema Ahuja)

Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation deals with the status of women in contemporary Israeli society. Jewish women have always played an important role in the community whether in Diaspora or in the state of Israel. To assess the "status" of women is really a difficult job because Jewish women are further divided into sub categories namely; *Ashkanzi* women (European origin) *Mizrachi* women (Asian and African origin) and ultra orthodox women. Arab, Christian and Druze women are also present in the Israeli Society. All the above-mentioned Jewish women have different ethnic origin. Their social behaviour is also different due to their different origin, yet at present the second generation is the main component of Israeli social fabric. They want to save their tradition, which they brought earlier with them during the time of their immigration. This dissertation does not deal with women's different sub categories. It deals with women as a single category and wherever it is necessary to talk about these differences, are given due emphasis.

To deal with the dissertation at first it is essential to understand the meaning of the term "status" which is the base of the whole dissertation and around which the whole dissertation revolves. According to Winston dictionary "status" means the social position or rank of a

person.¹ In simple sociological terms the social position, which a person occupies, is called "status".²

The concept "status of women" eludes precise definition and hence precise measurement. Status can be perceived in different ways, the extent of a woman's access to social and material resources within the family community and society. (Dixon 1978) In 1975 United Nations defined 'women status' as "the extent to which women have access to knowledge, economic resources and Political Power as well as the degree of autonomy they have in decision making and making personal choices at crucial points in their life cycle."³

Survey of Literature

A lot of work has been done over the Jewish women of Israel, by Israel and other developed world countries scholars. These works deal with their role and status in Pre State and after the birth of the Jewish State. After the Yom Kippur war (1973) several civilian movements came into existence and second wave of the feminist movement also started in Israel. During the *intifada* several feminist writers criticized the State's role for its treatment towards Palestinian Arab women and also threw light over the psychological trauma, which was faced by the Jewish women due to the myth of National Security.

¹ Winstons Dictionary, p.971.

² Anthony Giddens, *Contemporary Social Theory*, Macmillian Press, 1987, p.16.

³ D. Radha Devi, "Status of Women in India: a Comparison by State, *Asia Pacific Population Journal*, Vol.8, No.4, 1993, p.59.

Tamar Mayor's book (ed.) *Women and Israeli Occupation* which was published in 1994 deals with the women's movement during *intifada*. It also throws light over the true position of Jewish women in Israel and the trouble they faced when they came out of their homefront to use their political right of equality.

Israel is well known, for its equal treatment to its women citizens since the establishment of the State. Deborah S. Brenstein (ed.) *Pioneers and Homemakers: Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel*, published in 1992 throws light over Jewish women's role in pre-state Israel. It also discusses those problems, which *Sephradic* Women's faced due to their values and customs related to the oriental societies and domination by their male counterparts. One section of the book also talks about the role of Non Governmental Organizations in the enhancement of women's status.

Michael S. Chertoff, (ed.) *Israeli Social Structure and Change* Transition Books, New Jersey, (1973).

The present essay deals with social structure of Israel. It throws light over Israeli tradition. It tells us about the migrated Jewish women of Israel. Some of these women believe in tradition while others (European) do not. The essay deals with the discrimination, which are opted by Israeli state between men and women, and shows how rituals are always important for Jewish women. It also deals with traditional women who have a viable set of guide for them.

There are several articles, which talk about Jewish women's economic, political, and socio-cultural status in Israel.

Valerie Bryson's, "Women and Citizenship: Some Lessons from Israel" presents a picture of political, economic and socio-cultural status of Jewish women in Israel and also deals with those causes which come in the way of women's equality there.

Nitza Berkovitch, "Mother hood as a National Mission: The construction of womanhood in the legal discourse in Israel", *Women's Studies International Forum*. Vol. 20, No. 5/6, Jan - Feb 1997.

This article investigates how the state through legal mechanism and practices, construct the social category of women Motherhood is defined as a public role that carries National significance. And it is via this notion of "Motherhood as a National Mission" that women are interpreted into the state not through the universal characteristic of citizenship. There are several other studies, which deals with the Jewish women economic, political and socio-cultural status. But there is no secondary source, which deals this subject as a whole.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework of present work is "patriarchy". This term is also opted by feminists to criticize the state's role regarding women right in the state.

Juliet Mitchell's "*psychoanalysis and Feminism*" offers a good definition of patriarchy. To her patriarchy is the law of the father.

Patriarchy is inherited intergenerationally via the unconscious. It is synonymous with civilization itself.

To Kate Millet, in patriarchy male dominates female, elder male dominates younger male. Patriarchy means a set of attitudes learnt afresh by each child as it is socialized first by the family and later by a range of other patriarchal institutions.⁴

Israel is a family oriented society in which the home is the responsibility of women. According to the Jewish tradition and values the well being of the family members has been the responsibility of the wives and mothers. The precarious security position due to its Arab and Palestinian neighbours since the establishment of the state has also become the cause of militaristic society. Military is not only a patriarchal institution but also becomes the cause of women's secondary role in the Israeli society. Immigration from the Arab and African Jews also becomes the cause to sustain tradition in society.

As Nitza Berkovitch points out there are two main "gendering forces" that shape Israeli society. By gendering forces is meant ideologies and practices that construct male and female as two distinctive social beings with different social roles that consequently have differential patterns of participation in Israeli collective. These are militaristic culture and strong family positions.

⁴ Diana. H. Coole, *Women in Political Theory: from Ancient Misogyny to Contemporary Feminism*, pp.212-14.

The status of women is a very general and vast topic. The other feature which make this study distinguish from others is that it throws light how the traditional role of the women come in the way of their "Equal Status" in Israeli society despite the legal mechanism of the State of Israel. It also examines that improvement which is made by Israel after signing the Beijing Declaration of Women's Rights in 1995. The whole dissertation is divided into five parts namely; Introduction, Economic Status, Political Status, Socio-Cultural Status and Summary or Conclusion. The Introductory chapter deals with the short description of the above-mentioned chapters.

When Israel came into existence on the 14th of May 1948, it provided the right of equality to its entire citizens, irrespective of religion, races or sex. Israeli women had played an important role in the establishment of the Israeli State. They also played a significant role during the War of Independence (1948-49). These women fought side by side with their male counterparts in the ranks of the newly established Israeli Defense Force (IDF). According to Israeli law it is necessary for each Jewish citizen to serve in the IDF for a fixed period of time (for men the period is 3 years and for women this period is of 20 months)

To enhance women's role in each sphere of life the Israeli Government has enacted several laws. In 1950 Marriage Age Law set the legal minimum marriageable age for a girl at 17. In 1951 Women's Equal Right Law was passed which granted the same right for women as for

men. Later in 1965 The Succession Law was enacted. According to this law a spouse shall inherit from a person who dies intestate and if there are children, they shall receive half the inheritance equal divided among sons and daughters. In 1973 The Spouse (Property Relations) Law permitted a couple to draft a legal agreement regarding the division of their property during marriage and in the case of separation or divorce.⁵ But these laws do not provide them freedom related to personal spheres, which has been handed to the religious courts. Thus Israeli legal system reflects a basic conflict between commitment to equality and the religious Jewish character of the state.

Methodology

This dissertation is based on primary sources (version reports) secondary sources like books and periodicals. The other important sources of this dissertation are newspapers & Internet.

Economic Status of Women

Educated manpower is the backbone of any economy

Israeli state spends some 7 percent of its GNP on education. The equal right of men and women to education is anchored in law and gender equality from pre-school to university is part of all formal and informal educational programs. School attendance is mandatory from age 5 to 16. Education is free up to age 18 ensuring universal attendance at the secondary level. A large number of women students participate in

⁵ *Women in Israel*, Israeli Information Centre, 1996, p.34.

a wide network of post-secondary school which under the supervision of a government ministry. The numbers of women students in universities are steadily increasing at present. Some 74 percent women are in humanities, 60 percent in social science, 47 percent in law 71 percent in medicine, 44 percent in mathematics and sciences, 41 percent in agriculture and only 18 percent is in engineering and architecture.⁶

Israeli women are playing an important role in labour force as well. The status of working women in Israel is a complex blend of progressive labour legislation, conflicting social norms, overt and covert discrimination. Initial labour law provisions relating to women were founded on a conflicting combination of a belief that every one should be engaged in productive remunerative labour and a social commitment to development of the traditional family in which women carry a primary responsibility for the household and for child care.

A strong legal and social infrastructure was created to ensure that women would be able to integrate work and homemaking. The working women can avail a mandatory 2-months maternity leave, which is provided by the 1954 Employment of Women Laws. The other significant law related to women is the 1968 National Insurance Law, which grants all workers benefits such as unemployment insurance, disability payments, child allowances, old age pension etc. Women are present in each and every occupation, whether it is scientific and academic, skilled

⁶ Ibid.

and unskilled labour, yet their percentage varies. e.g., scientific and academic 41 percent, professional 62 percent, administration 19 percent, clerical jobs 69 percent, civil service 60 percent, skilled labour 11 percent and unskilled labour 24 percent.⁷

It is true women are present in each occupation but they are still facing discrimination e.g. in civil services about 60 percent are women but only 17.5 percent are managers. Of these 74 percent are concentrated in commerce and public services. Thus even at the managerial level women are segregated into low paying sector. In scientific and academic field only 5 percent women are professors, although women constitute 40 percent of the non-tenured faculty members.⁸

Israeli State has also adopted the legal mechanism to improve the status of its women capital in labour force. The State has passed several laws namely 1954 *Equal Pay Act*, and *Employment of Women Law*, which forbids dismissal of pregnant women or of women on maternity leave if they have worked at the same place for six months or more. Later the State adopted 1961 *Severance Pay Law*, 1968 *National Insurance Law*, 1981 *Equal Opportunity Law* and in 1987 *Employer And Employee* (equal retirement age) During last decade the State of Israel adopted important laws to enhance the socio-economic status of women. In 1990

⁷ Continued Progress National Report on the Status of Women in Israel, www.un.org/esa/gopher_data/conf/fwcw/netrep/NatActPlans/israel.txt.

⁸ Ibid.

Employment of Women Law Amendments, 1993 Amendment to Government Corporation Law and 1995 Amendment to Civil Service Law.

There is gap of wages in male and female labour despite legislation mandating equal pay for equal work, the wage gap between men and women for full time is, on the average, over 30 percent. Thus it can be clear, that women as human capital are not inferior to men, but still they are reaping relatively less monetary reward. In Israel the labour has a right to fight for their rights irrespective of their sex, but women labour are not alert about their rights. In fact, since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 less than fifty women have sought redressal of discrimination in the labor court. The second chapter will elaborate the things in detail.⁹

Political Status of Women

Israel is a democratic country of the West Asian region. As soon as the State of Israel was established it provided the Political rights to its women citizen. Women are using their voting rights after the establishment of the Israel and there is minimal difference in the percentage of those men and women who are eligible to use this right. At present not only voting right is sufficient to asses the political status of women in any society but it also deals with their presence in Political

⁹ Ibid.

Institutions of that country and their presence at the decision -making level.¹⁰

As mentioned above, Israeli women have been present in domestic politics since the establishment of the state, yet their percentage is very less. Since its existence only 8 women have served as cabinet ministers, the most prominent of them Golda Meir who was the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. The number of women in Israeli parliament (Knesset) ever since the first Knesset has remained relatively constant at around eight to ten members; most of them have leanings to center or left of center politics. For many years, women seats on Knesset Committee followed a predictable pattern and they mostly chaired domestic and socially oriented committees. In the 13th Knesset a woman chaired the Education Committee and Immigration Committee.¹¹

In Israel women have a right to participate in local politics also, but since the foundation of the state only four women have served as Mayors of municipalities. In the 1975 Reform Bill the local government designated the position of Mayor as the only directly elected Political Office, and this became the cause of their lesser participation in local politics. But their presence in local councils has increased systematically. In 1950 their percentage was 4.2 by 1978 5.5 and by

¹⁰ Noomi Chazan, *Women in Public Life*, Israeli Information Centre, 1998, p.8.

¹¹ Ibid.

1993 11; in 1993 73 percent of local councils included at least one-woman member.¹²

Women are also present in political parties, but their numbers tend not to be reflected in party leadership or on party list for elected office. Since the mid-90s both the major parties as well some of the smaller ones have developed internal guidelines for increasing women's participation. The Labor Party has adopted a clause requiring that women fill at least 30 percent of all leadership positions and in The Likud similarly the party gave at least 20 percent of all seats to women. The left of center Meretz adopted the highest standard currently in place requiring 40 percent seats to be given to women. The limited number of women in public life can be attributed, to a large extent, to the political structure itself. The system of proportional representation becomes a hindrance in their way. A great deal of power is granted to the political parties in which women tend to be under represented, particularly at the decision making levels. In Israeli political system major parties always need support to form coalition government from other parties. This tends to strengthen the role of small religious parties, which are generally opposed to the political participation of women.¹³

¹² "Implementation of the United Nations Conventions on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women" (CEDAW), State of Israel, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice, 1997.

¹³ Op.cit., Chazan.

Women of Israel make their presence in the field of politics via women's organizations. There are 90 NGOs in Israel, which are working for their benefit, Nammatt is a partisan women organization and related to Labor Party. It champions the cause of rights for women in Israel. Women International Zionist Organization (WIZO) is a non-party voluntary organization recognized by the United Nations (UN) as a NGO of ECOSOC and United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF). It aims to advance the status of women, defend their rights and achieve full gender equality in all fields. The Israel Women's Network is an advocacy group for women's rights; it is a unique non-partisan coalition of women who are united in their determination to improve the status of women in Israel.¹⁴

Socio - Cultural Status of Women

To assess overall status of women in any society it is necessary to examine their socio-cultural status. Women are treated as secondary sex in all societies whether it is related to developed or developing world Yet it is true substructure (economics) always helps to improve the status of any person in the Society, and Education also provide them knowledge of good and bad, but there are certain norms and values of the society which become the part of tradition and culture of that society.

Religion and tradition always come in the way of women's emancipation. The influence of traditional religious structures cannot be

¹⁴ Op.cit., Continued Progress National Report on the Status of Women.

underestimated in understanding the development of social attitude and norms regarding gender. Jewish religion does not provide an equal status for women and deprives them from several religious duties. In synagogue there is a separate prayer hall for women. Boys and girls in Israeli society are differently socialized. In the ultra orthodox community, many girls are denied the freedom to study and barred from community involvement. In Israeli culture women have a considerable role in the family and they still symbolize the essence of sacrificed motherhood to many.¹⁵ In Israel marriage and divorce are looked after by the religious courts. Recently the Labor Party has proposed to bring marriage and divorce under civil courts. Israeli State has initiated some legal measure to improve the status of women. In 1951, the Law of Equal Right for Women guaranteed equality between the two sexes. In 1965 the state had passed The Succession Law which provided women equal share in inheritance of property. Israeli State passed in 1975 The Spouse (Property Relations) Law, which permits a couple to draft a legal agreement regarding the division of their property at the time of divorce.¹⁶

Violence against women is still continuing, and the official rabbinical attitude towards domestic violence is one of absolute condemnation, Women advocates contend that in the current rabbinical interpretation of traditional Judaism an environment has been created in

¹⁵ Tamar El-OR, "Visibility and Possibilities : Ultraorthodox Jewish Women Between the Domestic and Public Spheres", *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.20, No.56, p.667.

¹⁶ *op.cit.*, See, *Women Status in Israel*.

which domestic violence may be tolerated. The Israeli Arms Law has also become a contributor to violence against women. Some Israeli men are using their guns in civil sphere against their female counterpart.

According to Lev Ari, the Nammatt President "The availability of gun in the house is a specific problem that lends a lethal edge to already volatile situation"¹⁷

To sum up, it is true that Israeli women are playing a significant role in each sphere of Israeli state and society. The Israeli State has also passed several laws to enhance their status in society but these laws are not implemented carefully. On the other hand, Israeli tradition and religious nature of the state also come in the way of women's. The Women continue to play secondary role in each sphere of society whether it is economic, political or socio-cultural. Many women organizations are fighting for women's equal status but they have got limited success. All the above-mentioned descriptions are discussed in detail in the chapters of this dissertation.

¹⁷ Sue Eishkoff, "The Status of Women in Israel : Myth vs. Reality", p.30.

Chapter - II

ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

Israel is a nation, which is poor in fertile soil, water, mineral and oil. Israel's main assets are its human resources. The form of economy of Israel is a mixture of government activity and state planning, along with free enterprise. Israel opted mixed economy in mid 1980, due to this change in occupation reflects the country's shift from the early emphasis on agriculture to diversify industrial economy and now turns towards service research and "high technology". The proportion of employed men working in agriculture dropped from 13 to 7 per cent. Labour in other sectors declined from 47 to 42 percent of male workforce.¹

In Israel women have always played a significant role in the economy whether it was *Yishu* period or after the creation of the Israeli State on 14th may 1948. At present Israeli population is 6 million out of it, 2.5 million are women.²

Women Presence in Labour Force During the Yishu Period

Israel is a nation of immigrants. Immigration started in 1882; women were also part of the Zionist movement and immigration. The largest wave of immigrants arrived in Palestinian land in mid 1920 and 1930's. Women were an integral part of this immigration. Women

¹ *Israel Today*, May/June 1996, Consulate General of Israel, Mumbai, p.12.

² *Women in Israel*, Israel Information Centre, Jerusalem 1996, p.2.

at that time began to participate in labour market, primarily in labour intensive industries of that time, such as textile, food manufacturing and cardboard making. They were also participated in clerical and semiskilled work. Pioneer women of Israel also took part in the country's defense predates during the establishment of the state of Israel. The early 20th century women did their share in guarding new Jewish settlements. During the British mandate in Palestine (1922-48) they actively participated in the struggle against the British restrictions on Jewish immigration and settlements. In Israel's. 1948-49 war of independence fought side by side with the men in the newly established Israeli Defense Force(IDF).³

Legal Mechanism and Women Labour Force

At present, women citizens of each and every State are an essential part of women workforce. The women of Israel are as mentioned above participated in labour force even before the birth of the State of Israel. After the establishment of the State, the Government of Israel has passed several laws to enhance the socio-economic status of women.

In 1954 Employment of Women Law was passed to promote women in labour force which *interalia* forbids the dismissal of pregnant women or of women on maternity leave, considers this period as employment for the purpose of accrual of seniority and pension rights: provides for allowances of 100 percent of their

³ Deborah. S. Bernstein, "On Rhetoric and Commitment: The Employment of Married Women during the Depression of 1936-39", *Women Studies International Forum*, Vol.20, No.5/6, p.595.

customary wage to be paid by National Insurance Institute;and grants employees an hours daily leave from work during the four months following maternity leave.⁴

The second significant law related to women economic rights also enacted in 1964 which is called, Equal Pay Act (1964) and according to it each worker of work force whether it is she or he get equal pay for equal work, Israel was the first country at that time in West Asian region, which passed this kind of law, but this law did not fulfil the ethos of equality. That is the prime cause why in 1996 this Act was replaced by a new law called The Equal Pay (Male And Female Employee). The basic aim of this law once again was to promote equality in between men and women in work force while earlier the law dealt only with "salaries". The new Law extends to "all other forms of compensation" including benefits, bonuses, grants, coverage of expense and overtime but in reality still women are not getting equal benefits for their work.⁵

In 1987 Employer and Employee (Equal Retirement Age) was adopted which increased the retirement age for women to 65, as it was for men; women may still retire at 60 if they desire so. It is once again the controversial law and against the ethos of equality because if Employer wants, he can misuse the latter term. ⁶

⁴ Report, implementation of the convention on the Elamination of all Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW), State of Israel, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice, 1997, p.12.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ op.cit., Women in Israel, p.35.

In 1988 the State of Israel enacted the Equal Employment Opportunities Law, which prohibits discrimination of women in the work place based on gender, sexual orientation, marital status, parenthood, race, age, religion, political and other orientation. According to this law either Government Employers or Private Employers with six or more employee may take the above classification into account in matters of hiring, promotion, termination of employment, training work or retirement conditions, except in special cases where the unique nature of the position makes those classifications irrelevant.⁷

To improve the number of women in Government Corporation, in 1993 an amendment was made in the Government Corporation Law. According to it the appropriate expression should be given to both genders on board of directors; until such time as this is achieved, ministers should appoint "directors" of the gender not suitably represented on the corporation's as far as possible. At present the number of women in these corporation is very less. This shows that the vertical segregation of sex in work place of Israel also continues.⁸

Thus it becomes clear by above mentioned data that the State of Israel has passed several laws to enhance women's status in workforce, but what the ground reality is despite this legal mechanism of the State can be examined only after the examination of women presence in labour force and their real position.

⁷ op.cit., CEDAW Report, p.12.

⁸ op.cit., Women in Israel, p.35.

Human Resource Development and Women

There is a saying educated manpower is the backbone of any economy. Primary resource of any economy is its human being. If an economy wants to grow, it needs skilled and healthy human beings who will work as healthy and skilled labour force. To achieve that goal education is the first mean of any economy. Israeli state spends some 7 per cent of its GNP on education.⁹

In Israel women are also getting education, the equal rights of men and women are anchored in law and gender equality from pre-school to university is a part of all formal and informal education program.

Jewish women of European origin started to get education during the Second World War. After its creation in 1948, Israel adopted Compulsory Educational Law 1949, and made it obligatory that all children must study between 5 and 15. Education is provided free of charge through the age of 17, and for 18 year olds who have not completed the 10th grade.

Participation in the primary and secondary education is nearly universal. The median age for the men and women have more or less identical (12.2 for men, 12.3 for women in 1993). Median age for the Arab women was 9.7 year and for the male it was 10.7 year in 1997.¹⁰

Secondary education in Israel is made up of different educational tasks. In the 8th or 9th grades students are placed on

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Report, "Continued Progress : National Report on the Status of Women in Israel", United Nation Organisation, 1997, p.12.

either a general or technological/vocational track and they proceed to different high schools accordingly. At this stage students select specific courses of study such as humanities and science, or a specific vocational field such as biotechnology and so on. As other nations, girls study on general track like social sciences and humanities, in 1985 the ratio of men and women on general track was 43.6 per cent for women and 27.7 per cent for boys.(total 100)

On the other hand within vocational tracks machinery and electronics are almost exclusively male "subjects." Fashion and nursing/ paramedical training are female dominated fields. This shows in Israel also women are still related to traditional field of study.¹¹

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Women are eligible for higher education. Here once again there number is great in humanities and social sciences due to their earlier decision for example, in higher education out of 100, 74 per cent join humanities, 47 per cent in science and mathematics, 41 per cent in agriculture, and only 18 per cent in architecture. One good feature of women education in Israel is that women university students tend to receive their bachelor degrees earlier than men (median age 26 compared to 27.6 of men); this difference in age is because of their less time bound duty in Israel Defense Force (2years). Another important fact about women's higher education is that it is greater than that of other developed countries.¹²

¹¹ op.cit., Report (CEDAW), p.11.

¹² op.cit., Women in Israel, p.8.

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**Table 1:
Percentage of Women in Higher Education in Developed Countries**

Name of the Country	Under-graduate (percent)	Post-graduate (percent)
Japan	28	15
Sweden	49	34
United Kingdom	48	41
France	56	42
United States	53	51
Israel	56	51

Source: Women in Israel.

Women and Health Services

The second important aspect of human resource development is the health of its human resource of any economy. It is also a silent feature of the development of any economy. Israel is a welfare democratic state which spends some 6 per cent on its health services.

In Israel longevity of women is greater than their male counterpart like other countries of world.¹³

Comparison of Men and Women Life Expectancy

**Table 2:
Israel: Men and Women Life Expectancy at Birth (Years)**

Year	1970	1992
Female	73	78
Male	70	75

Source: World Bank, World Development Report, 1994, p.219.

It is true life expectancy of women is greater than that of men but it is accompanied by various chronicle disease such as diabetes, hypertension, heartstrokes, breast cancer, osteoporosis and eating disorders. Infertility is another common disease in Israeli women.

¹³ op.cit., Continued Progress National Report on the Status of Women, p.14.

Breast cancer is a leading killer of women under the age of 55; three thousand new cases of cancer are diagnosed each year and 800 women die annually from this disease. Actually one of every nine women has breast cancer in their lifetime.¹⁴

Israeli government is spending a lots of money on Research and Development over women's diseases, but the health care policy lead to disproportionate allocations of resources to highly technological fertility service at the expense of health maintenance throughout the reproductive cycle; childbearing has cultural importance in Israel like third world countries.¹⁵

Women of Israel are using health services more frequently; they visit doctors and are hospitalized. Yet, the voice of women as consumers of health services is rarely heard. A male model traditionally guides medical research, training and practice and little attention given to gender difference associated with illness. Women are present in medical services, but they are dealing with "less prestigious", medical specialties such as family practice, psycharchy. A large number of women doctors are more or less equal to males but not even woman is the head of public hospital. This throws light over the vertical segregation of sex in occupational fields, which is a worldwide phenomenon¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid., p.15.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Women in Labour Force

Israeli economy is the mixture of government activity and state planning along with free enterprise. The government has strong control over policy making because of two other reasons; Israel is the country of immigrants, and due to security reason also government has strong control over the wage system.¹⁷

Israeli women are playing a significant role to enhance their "economic status". The government has passed several laws. However the status of working women in Israel is still a complex blend of progressive labour legislation, conflicting social norms, overt and covert discrimination after the 50 year of the establishment of Israel.

Initial labour law provision relating to women were founded on a conflicting combination of belief that every one should be engaged in productive, remunerative labour and a social commitment to development of the traditional family in which women carry a primary responsibility for the household and child care. Despite the universal necessity of two incomes, a woman's salary is frequently considered to a second income.¹⁸

Women are always the part of Israeli labour force; in 1980 they compressed 34 per cent of labour force, in 1988 their number was 42 pre cent. The increase of woman participation in labour force increased by 1 percent annually. Jewish women participation in

¹⁷ Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel : The Second Generation*, Revised edition, Chatham House Publisher inc., 1989, p.32.

¹⁸ Valerie Bryson, "Women and Citizenship: Some Lessons from Israel", *Political Studies*, vol.xliv, 1996, p.716.

labour force is higher than overall woman participation. It was 50.5 in 1995. The participation of Arab women in the workforce has increased from 13.9 percent in 1992 to 16.8 percent in 1994.¹⁹

Occupational Distribution

There are two characteristics of the labour market that lie at the root of women's economic disadvantage: wage gap whereby women are paid less than men in all industries and occupation for work that is recognizably equal and occupational segregation whereby women are segregated into certain 'female' occupations which are generally low paying. Almost everywhere women are paid less than men and almost everywhere the work place is segregated by sex, to assess women position it is necessary to examine this variable.²⁰

Women, as mentioned above participate in Israeli economy and their number is increasing, but occupational distribution will throw light whether women in Israel are still present in those jobs which are traditionally related to women or there is some improvement. Differences in employment between men and women are shown in the following table.

Table 3
Percentage of Men and Women by occupation.

Branch of Occupation	Male	Female
Unskilled Workers	8.4	8.2
Industrial Workers	83.8	5.6
Scientific Branch	12.2	13
Professional	10.5	-
Administration & Managers	8.7	3.5
Agricultural	2.9	0.6
Clerical	8.2	27.7
Sales workers	15.3	21.9

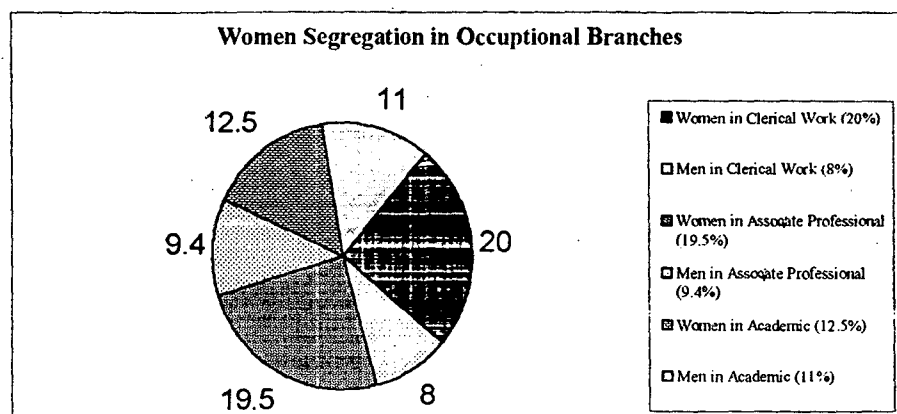
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, www.cbs.gov.il.

¹⁹ Dov Friedlander and Calvin Gold Scheider, "Israel's Population : The Challenge of Pluralism", *Population Bulletin*, Vol.39, No.2, April 1984, p.7.

²⁰ Rabeca Rajjman and Moshe Semynov, "Gender ethnicity and immigration", *Gender and Society*, vol.VII, No.1, February 1997, p.111.

Above mentioned Table shows women are still less in technical branches. Women's presence in health welfare, and social activities so-called feminine occupations is greater than their male counterpart.

Work segregation as mentioned above always come in the path of woman work force. In 1995, as shown below, close to 30 percent of employed women are clerical worker(a figure remained unchanged since 1980),compared to 8 percent of men; more than 20 percent of employed women are agents, sales workers or service worker compared to 14.4 percent of men. A higher proportion of women than men are in academic professionals (12.5 percent for women and 11 percent for men) and associate professionals and technicians, (19.5 percent women, 9.4 percent for men). However it should be noted that most women in these latter occupational categories are teachers, nurses, social services and the like primary Public services because in Israel Public services in broader term include teaching and health services. 38 percent of men worked in industry and other skilled labour, compared to only 7 percent of employed women.This represents the horizontal segregation of women in labour force.²¹



Source: www.cbs.gov.il.

²¹ op.cit., *Women in Israel*, p.16.

Women in Civil Services

In December 1995, 59.4 per cent of civil servants were women, but in Israeli context teaching and nursing were also included in it. Women are under-represented in senior positions: in December 1995, only 10.5 percent of senior staff (the top three grades in the four main managerial classifications) were women. At the same time, women made up 62.4 per cent of civil service employees in the lowest ranks (grade 8 and below). The main cause of women's under-representation on senior position is that women enter these services by written examination or any other position, but after that institutional barrier come in their way to get higher position in civil services. In 1993 after the adoption of civil service code, the participation of women in internal job tenders in civil service has been increasing. In the four years between 1993 and 1996, the percentage of woman candidates in such tenders has more than doubled (from 23.2 percent in 1994 to 51.9 per cent in 1996), and the percentage of women appointed in such tenders has also more than doubled (from 26.1 per cent to 55.7 per cent over the same period); in 1998, 35,000 were employed in civil services out of which 15,000 were in health services. In 1989 a governmental commission also concluded that discrimination is the main cause of their lower status in the services.²²

²² op.cit., Rebecca Rajjman.

The Glass Ceiling and Israeli Women

The glass ceiling is the term, which has at first used by Wall Street Journal in 1986. The term means whether women are easily accessible to decision making position or not. Glass ceiling exists not only in the third world countries, but also in the first world countries at minor scale.²³ In Israel also glass-ceiling comes in the way of women when someone talks about the level of decision-making position. In 1995 only 2.2 percent of working women were managers, out of which this managerial work force 17.5 percent is in service branch. Of these 74 percent are concentrated in commerce and public services, thus it can be said even at managerial level women are segregated into low paying sector. In scientific and academic field also only 5 percent women are professors although women constitute 40 percent of the non-tenured faculty members.²⁴

Women in Kibbutz

Kibbutzism presents socialist ethos of the Israeli State. Some 6 percent of women make their home in kibbutz. This institution came into existence in the early 20th century. Women have been present in the country's unique cooperative rural community, the kibbutz since the establishment of the organization. In line with kibbutz ideology, women are equal partners in community labour forces. All branches of work are open to them, but in reality women have also been working in the traditional economic field like education and service

²³ The United Nations and the Advancement of Women (1995-1996), Vol.VI, Revised Edition, The United Nations, Bluebook Services, 1996, p.45.

²⁴ op.cit., Report (CEDAW), p.20.

branches; less women work in agriculture, industry and administration.²⁵ In reality it is difficult to change the on-going culture of any society and yet kibbutz is a socialist organization, and is not excluded from the cultural hegemony of the economic field.

Women in Labour Union

Histardut (labour organization) was formed in 1920 by the socialist parties to further the economic, social, and cultural interest of the Jewish labour in Eretz Israel.²⁶ Women have also been present in this organization since its establishment. After the establishment of the state, Histardut has been playing a prime actor role in Israeli economy. In this organization till mid 1990 women were not present at leadership level. In mid 90s Histardut added a provision to its articles of associations, requiring 30 percent female membership at the leadership level in every labour union under its auspices. In 1998 women headed only 10 percent of all workers committees, yet they comprise 70 per cent of their membership.²⁷

Women, as mentioned above, are a part of labour councils, but they are not aware about their rights. In fact since the establishment of the state, less than fifty women have sought redressal of their discrimination in the labour court.

Wage Structure and Women

Israeli government has always been a prime actor in the economy of the State of Israel due to immigration and security

²⁵ op.cit., Valerie Bryson, p. 705.

²⁶ op.cit., Asher Arian, p.32.

²⁷ Naomi Chazan, "Women in Public Life, Israeli information Centre," 1998, p.4.

problem. A former civil servant, commissioner, Avraham Friedmen, estimates that the government wage policy directly effected 4,30,000 of country's workers in 1981; in other words, a third of the national employed people worked in jobs for which the government has controlled either directly or indirectly, including the armed forces, teachers, employees of municipal authorities and workers of the government corporations. Histadrut also a prime actor of state economy decides its wage policy with the help of the government.²⁸ It is estimated that the Private Sector accounts for about 40 percent of economy in the country, Histadrut 20 percent and the Government 40 percent.

Women are a part of State labour force, but these women are getting relatively less reward for their work than their male counterparts. There is a gap of wages in male and female labour force despite the legislation, which talks about the equal pay for equal work, and the government has direct control over wage policy. The radical fact is that this gap actually has grown since 1980. Women comprise nearly 70 percent of those who earn less than the average wage and whose salaries must therefore supplemented by the National Insurance Institute.

²⁸ Yontan Reshef, "Political exchange in Israel: Histadrut-State Relations", *Industrial Relations*, Vol.25, No.3, 1986, p.311.

Women of Israel earn 30 percent less than men, the average hourly wage for women is approximately \$6.25 as opposed to \$7.75 for men.²⁹

Table 4
Monthly and Hourly Wages of Women and Men 1993 and 1996. In New Israeli Shakels, 1997 price.

	Year	Sex	Earning in Shakel 1
Per month	1996	Men's	5,987
	1996	Women's	3,608
Per month	1993	Men's	5,427
	1993	Women's	3,154
Per hour	1996	Men's	31
	1996	Women's	25
	1993	Men's	29
	1993	Women's	23

Source: A social report, 1998 by Dr. Shlomo Swirslon Yaron.

The other cause for wage gap is that benefit added to salaries such as overtime, transportation cost etc are often granted to men and women unequally. Many women are paid below the minimum wage the salary is so low that they are not subject to income tax.³⁰

Elie Aloni, Chairman of Nammat (Women Organization) of the Department of Status of women stated

“The boss says that I will not give you a company car because you stay home in the evening with your children anyway. He gives the car to a male employee and that translate dollar into the pocket”.³¹

²⁹ Sije EISHKOFÉ, "The Status of Women in Israel : Myth vs Reality", Nammat Magazine www.nammat.org/magazine/myth.htm.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Immigrant Women in Labour Force

Israel is the country of immigrants, those Jewish women who have come from other countries and become the part of Israel's labour force are particularly in a vulnerable position. Immigrant women of Asia and Africa who come from traditional societies to a country of modern western practice are less able to adjust and compete in the Israeli labour market, especially during the first year of their arrival. These women operate in a small number of female type occupations; they are denied access to many high status female dominated occupations (i.e., clerks, sales women, and teachers). The second constraint these women face is associated with women's greater commitment to traditional family roles.³² The other variable is lack of social network, which provide the necessary day care for family, which restrict the job search of these women and labour force activity to avoid conflict with familial roles.

Last decade there was a large immigration of Russian and Ethiopian people took place in Israel. These women, especially Ethiopian are in a vulnerable position, these women are over represented in developmental towns, where labour is intensive below, where labour market is intensively low and semi skilled factory work (such as food production and textile) are the only jobs available. For them wages are very low and unemployment is the central threat. This

³² op.cit., Rebeca Rajjman, p.117.

is also one variable, which becomes the cause women's segregation in traditional workforce.³³

Conclusion

Women in Israeli labour market are present in each and every occupation of its economy. The State has also adopted the legal mechanism to improve women's status in the economic sphere of the society. And it is also true, women in Israel are in a better position than their other West Asian sisters but women are still working in traditional fields of economy.

Their number in technical services is very low and they are still getting less reward for hard work, not only in private sector but also in public sector of the State Economy. All the above mentioned variables come in the way of women's equality. In a society status and social participation are closely linked to occupation and earning power. A job is the very special feature of any human-being social acceptance, involvement and respect. Therefore it can be said women of Israel are enjoying secondary status on the labour market as in the case of other developing countries.

³³ Ibid.

Chapter - III

POLITICAL STATUS OF WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

Israel was the first nation of the West Asian Region, which provided political rights to its women citizens. In the Israeli Declaration of Independence is stated that all citizens are equal in Israel irrespective of their religion, race or sex. This declaration also contains a clear commitment that Israel will be faithful to the Principles of the United Nations charter of human rights, which came into existence in 1948.

Jewish women took active part in those institutions, which worked for the establishment of the Jewish State. These women were active in Yishuu period. They also played an important role during the war of independence, when they fought side by side with their male counterparts in the ranks of newly established Israeli Defense Force. According to Israeli law it is essential for each Jewish citizen to serve in the IDF for a fixed period of time. For women this period is 2 years.¹

Constitutional Status of Women

Israel has no written Constitution. In the absence of a written Constitution, the country has developed the basic constitutional principles of its legal system by an accumulating series of basic laws. The Knesset adopts the Basic Laws in the same manner as other

¹ *Women in Israel*, Israeli Information Centre, 1996, p.4.

legislation. The number of total Basic Laws are namely; Basic Law of Knesset (1958); Basic Law of State Land (1960); Basic Law of State Economy (1975); Israeli Defense Force (1976); Basic Law of Jerusalem (1980); Basic law of Administrative Justice (1984); Basic law of State comptroller (1988); Basic law of Human Dignity and Liberty (1992); and Basic law of Freedom and Occupation (1992). The right of equality is not directly mentioned in any of these Basic laws and may be the prime cause of this exclusion resides primarily in democracy (Israel opted for the western model of democracy) and prerogative it has granted to religious laws in various areas of private and public life.²

Given the lack of written constitutional right of equality, the principal of gender equality has been given largely through specific legislation and case law. The first significant legislative effort to implement the principle of gender equality was the Women Equal Right Law 1951, which provided that one law shall apply to men and women any" legal act", and that any law that discriminates as such shall not be binding. It also deals with the rights of married women regarding the right of property ownership and the right of women as mothers, Moreover, it is an ordinary statute, which can be revoked or qualified with subsequent legislation.³

² Report; Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), State of Israel, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice, 1997, p.2.

³ Ibid., p.5.

Voting Rights

Israel opted for the western model of democracy, thus it has also obtained the right of full equality between men and women regarding the right of vote and to be elected in Section 5 of Basic Law. The Knesset specifically states that every Israeli citizen aged 18 or older is entitled to vote and Section 6 of the law states that every Israeli citizen aged 21 or older is entitled to run the election. In Israel there is no noticeable difference between men and women regarding participation in the act of voting.⁴

At present not only political rights are sufficient to measure the political status of women in any society, but whether women are equally participating in decision making level or not; it is also equally important and especially after the 1995 women's Beijing conference in China. Israel was also the member of this conference and signatory of improved version of women's right. To examine Israeli women's political status it is necessary to check all the aspects of their political life.

Presence of Women in Government

Israel is a parliamentary democracy, consisting of legislative executive and judicial branches. Its institutions are the presidency, the Knesset (Parliament) the Government (Cabinet) the Judiciary and the office of the comptroller.

⁴ Tamar Hermann and Gilakurtz, "Prospects for Democratising Foreign Policy Making: the Gradual Empowerment of Israeli Women," *Middle East Journal*, Vol.49, No.3, Summer 1995, p.449.

Since the establishment of Israel only eight women have served as Cabinet Ministers. Of these Women's the first was Prime Minister Golda Meir from the Labour Party. She was the only woman who held the Foreign Ministry. She headed the Government from 1969 to 1974 till 1969 there was not even one woman Cabinet Minister. She also served as head of Israel first Mission to Soviet Union after independence.⁵

The second woman Cabinet Minister, named Shashana Arbeli Almozlino (1977), also belonged to the Labour Party. She headed the portfolio of health ministry.⁶ Shalmoti Aloni was the third in this category (Labour Meretz) but did not have any particular portfolio. Sazah Doran was the first lady who kept place in Likud-headed government in 1977.⁷ Ora Namir, (Labour Party) became the Social Affairs Minister in 1992 Rabin's government. Limor Livnet was of Communication Minister in (1996) Netanyahu headed government.⁸ In 1999, Barak headed government two women served as cabinet ministers. Dalia Itzik was appointed as Minister of Environment who earlier served as a labour representative on the municipal council, and got onto the labour national ticket as a regional representative. Yull Tamir was the Minister of Absorption. She was a founder of peace now.⁹ In 2001, Ariel Sharon headed government Limor Livnat of (Likud) is the Education Minister.¹⁰

⁵ Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel : the Second Generation*, Pub; Chatham House, 1986, p.79.

⁶ Ibid., p.84.

⁷ Ibid., p.95.

⁸ Naomi Chazan, *Women in Public Life*, Israeli Information Centre, 1996, p.2.

⁹ <http://www.cjnew.com/pastissues/99/sep2-99/feature/feature1.htm>.

¹⁰ www.knesset.gov.il.

Table 5

Women Ministers since 2000

	Name	Party	Name of the Portfolio
1.	Golda Meir	(Labor)	Prime Minister, Labor, Foreign Affairs
2.	Shoshana Arbeli Almozlino	(Labor)	Health
3.	Shulamito Aloni	(Labor, Meretz)	Without Portfolio, Education, Communication, Arts and Sciences
4.	Sarah Doron	(Likud)	With Portfolio
5.	Ora Namir	(Labor)	Labor and Social Affairs
6.	Limor Livnat	(Likud)	Communications
7.	Dalia Itzik	(One Israel)	Environment
8.	Yull Tamir	(Labor)	Absorption
9.	Limor Livnat	(Likud)	Education

Source: Spotlight on Israel, Israel Information Centre.

<http://www.cjnew.com/pastissues/99/sep2-99/feature/feature1.htm>.

The Knesset

The Knesset (Parliament) of Israel is a unicameral body. The strength of this institution is 120. The Knesset is elected for four years. It is the house of representatives of the state of Israel. Its main function is to legislate. Knesset seats are assigned in proportion to each party's percentage of the total national votes. Earlier the threshold for a party to get entry in the Knesset was 1 per cent of total vote but in 1996 elections Israel adopted electoral reforms and now threshold for a party is 1.5 per cent of total votes.¹¹

¹¹ Pon Peretz and Gidden Doren, "Sectarian Politics and the Peace Process: The 1999 Israel Elections", *Middle East Journal*, Vol.54, No.2, Spring 2000, p.261.

Since the establishment of this political institution the number of women members of Knesset (MKs) has remained relatively constant at around eight to ten members, or even to nine percent of the 120 members house. Women MKs in Israeli Knesset proposed a high number of bills related to women equality during the decade of 1990 and for this they could several time give up their political and party bondage.

In Israeli Knesset no woman has served as a speaker; two women have served as Deputy Speakers. In the 14th Knesset Prof Naomichazan (Meretz Party Member) was the Deputy Speaker.¹²

In the 15th Knesset (1999) election the number of women members was 15; thus the ratio of women representation increased by 2 percent i.e., 12 percent. Another significant improvement is that Husniyya Jabara became the first Palestinian woman to be elected to the Knesset as the member of Meretz party.¹³

Table 6
Number and Percentage of Women in Each Knesset

YEAR	KNESSET	NUMBER OF WOMEN	PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN
1949	1	11	9.2
1951	2	11	9.2
1955	3	12	10.0
1959	4	9	7.5
1961	5	10	8.3
1965	6	9	7.5
1969	7	8	6.7
1973	8	10	8.3
1977	9	8	6.7
1981	10	8	6.7
1984	11	10	8.3
1988	12	7	5.8
1992	13	11	9.2
1996	14	9	7.5
1999	15	15	12

Source: Report to Beijing conference on Women
www.knesset.gov.il.

¹² op.cit., See, Chazan, p.4.

¹³ Jampalem Post Washington, No. 1995, 21 January, 1999, p.4.

Women members in Knesset is not great, but they serve also in Knesset committees. There also they are members of traditional or less significant committees. Until 1984, no woman has served on either the Foreign affairs and Security Committee or the Finance Committee, the two most powerful committees in Israeli context (due to Palestine problem and absorption of immigrants). In Knesset committees women tended to be assigned domestic and socially oriented committees.

The pattern changed a little bit when early 1990(13th Knesset, 1992), a woman chaired the Education Committee and women also sat on the House Committee, the Labour and Welfare Committee, the Immigration and Absorption Committee, the Interior and Environment Committee.¹⁴

In the fourteenth Knesset (1996), women chaired three committees, the Immigration and Absorption Committee, the Research and Development Committee and the Committee on the Status of Women, Which is a statutory on the status of women, and came into existence in mid 1990's. In 15th Knesset women served in the Immigration Committee, Research and Development Committee. But during Oslo Accord, the track second diplomacy did not include even one-woman member.¹⁵

¹⁴ op.cit., See, Chazan, p.5.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Table 7
Numbers of Women in Knesset Committees

Knesset	Number of Women in Knesset Committee
1	1(Education and Culture)
2	1(Education and Culture)
3	1(Education and Culture)
4	None
5	None
6	None
7	2(Labour and Civil Services)
8	2 (Labour and Civil Services)
9	1 (Education and Culture)
10	2 (Education and Culture; Interior and Environment)
11	2 (Immigration and Absorption; Labour and Welfare)
12	2 (Economy; Labour and Welfare)
13	2 (Women Status; Education)
14	3(Immigration and Absorption; the Research and Development Committee)

Source: Tamar Hermann from various Official and Non-Official Sources compiled Data

Women's Participation in Local Government

Israel adopted the unitary form of Government. Local councils and municipalities run the local administration in Israel. Since the founding of the state only three women have served as Mayors of Municipalities; one of the three was an Arab Christian.¹⁶

Miriam Feierberg was the first woman Mayor in Israeli History, (Likud Party) she won her election from Netanya, which is a major city of Israel.

¹⁶ Jerusalem Post, online edition, 16 April, 1998.

In 1975, a reform in local Government laws designated the position of the Mayor as the only directly elected political office. (Until 1995 the position of the Prime Minister also became subject to direct election). This is also one cause of less representation of women because the position of the mayor gained prestige, competition among male members and a fewer women are supported by the political parties. In 1989, 24 women ran for the mayoral slots, but only one was elected; 10 women ran in 1993; none was elected.¹⁷

Women presentation on the local council has also been quite limited. Women are present in local councils, but this number is very less. In 1950, 4.2 per cent of local representatives were women; by 1978 it was 5.5% and in 1993 11 per cent.

To increase women's role in local councils by 1993, 73 per cent of local council included at last one woman member. The other way to increase the number of women in local government is to encourage the council to delegate priority to women councilors. To this end, the center for local government has encouraged the establishment of working women's committees in all Jewish and Arab local councils.

Legislation has also been proposed to mandate that every local council includes a member of the women's council or an advisor to the

¹⁷ Continued Progress National Report on the Status of Women in Israel,

Mayor on the status of women, to be funded jointly by the local authority and the ministry of the Interior.¹⁸

Table 8
Women Representation in Local Council

Year	Percentage
1950	4.2
1978	5.2
1993	11

Women in Political Parties

Political parties of any country are institutions of political socialization and it is a primary institution to get entry in other political institutions of a democratic state. Israeli Parties historically occupies a central role in shaping the economic sphere, in the possession of culture, acceleration of immigrants. The parties have heavily penetrated the state bureaucracy. Parties have played a major role as providers of employment, housing, medical care, and social and recreational activities.¹⁹

In Israel women are involved in political parties before the existence of the state; but their number tends to be reflected very less in party leadership or on party lists for the elected office and this became the cause of under representation of women in public life.²⁰

In the early 1990 most parties on both sides of the political spectrum (right and Left) comprise a women's division that encourages

¹⁸ op.cit., See, Implementation of United Nations Convention (CEDAW).

¹⁹ Mourice Doverger, *Political Parties*, Pub; New York: Wiley, 1963, p.70.

²⁰ op.cit., See Chazan, p.5.

women to become politically active, provides means in support of their interest and promotes women's advancement within the party.

Both of the major parties namely Labour and Likud as well as some of the smaller ones have developed internal guidelines to increase woman participation. The Labour party has adopted a clause requiring that women fill at least 30 per cent of all leadership positions. In the Likud at least 20 per cent must be women. The left of the center Meretz recently adopted the highest standard with 40 per cent quota.²¹

While these guidelines suggest a commitment to change, the reality both with the parties and on the floor of the Knesset is quite different, because these guidelines have not to yet been applied to parties, list for Knesset elections. The number of woman Knesset members in 1996 15th Knesset Election, (nine per cent), as two of Likud Party(six per cent) of the nine Meretz MKs two were women (22 per cent); the seven Mks of Yisrael Bealiya (Russian Migrant Party); one woman (14 per cent) and Hadash had one woman among its five Mks(20 per cent). The three religious parties with 23 Knesset members have no woman members.²²

Recently, legislation had been proposed to obligate parties to open their ranks to women, by curtailing government support to parties with less than 25 per cent women candidates.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Women in Judiciary

Israel has hierarchical structure of judiciary. The two major systems are the civil courts and the religious courts; in addition there are special courts for military, labour traffic, municipal and juvenile matters. The civil court system has three levels: Magistrate, District and Supreme Court. The percentage of women in judiciary is satisfactory in civil courts.²³

In 1996 all the different civil courts combined, had 146 female judges and 229 men judges, that means 40 per cent of the civil judiciary in Israel composed of women.²⁴

In 1993 the first woman Attorney General was appointed by the state and in 1998 her predecessor once again a woman held this office. In the District Attorney's offices, there are 207 women lawyers as against 126 men.²⁵

In the Supreme Court of Israel which is headed by 10-12 justices and the highest appellate court has at least one woman. On the other hand in religious bodies women were totally absent. The Jewish millet is divided into two separate communities. There is a Supreme Rabbanical councils composed of 12 rabbis but headed by two chief rabbis, one each for the *Sephradic* and *Ashakanzi* communities. The chief Rabbinate Supervise eight regional rabbanical courts with 65 religious judges

²³ op.cit., Implementation of the United Nations Convention (CEDAW).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

(*dayanim*) and a rabbanical court of appeal headed by two chief rabbis. It is charged with interpreting Jewish law, which has binding legal and administrative force. Decision of chief Rabbinate are legally bounding on entire Jewish population. These decision are applied over of notably, on the matters of personal status, immigrations and citizenship.²⁶

Over the last decade, however, there have been certain important developments in the representation of women in other religious bodies in 1988 Civil Court of Israel made two landmark decisions, women were granted the right to participate in municipal religious Council. In the 1988 Shiekdel became the fist woman who would serve as the head of the religious council, after facing strong opposition from the religious parties of Israel.²⁷ The number of women serving on religious council is still very small. But that judgment cannot force the orthodox rabbis to attend a council that include a woman. In fact, opposition from local rabbis prevented women elected to religious council in Netanya, Erfat, Jerusalem and Haifa from actual sitting on these councils. Out of 139 such councils, only 12 include a woman member. Even in the signing of the UN women rights document, it left the paragraph selected to women participation in the Religious-Councils.

²⁶ *Meri Report Israel*, Pub. Middle East Research Institute, University of Penisylvian, 1985, p.6.

²⁷ Sue Eishkoff, 'The Státus of Women in Israel: Myth vs Reality, Nammát Magazine, <http://www.nammát.org/magazine/myth.html>.

Religious - Courts have the highest status in Israeli society and all matters related to marriage and divorce comes under it.²⁸

Women in Politics (Via Indirect Channels)

Israel is a democratic country, and in a democratic civil society, citizens can express their concerns through voluntary Non-Govt Organizations. Woman organizations in Israel are rooted in from the early 20th century and they took part in the social and political movement of that time. These organizations namely Nammatt, Wizo Emunah and Israeli Women Network of Israel, which are always involved to improve women status in Israel, and also help women to improve their social-political status.²⁹

Nammatt

Nammatt is the largest women's organization of Israel. It is a partisan organization. It is associated with the Labour Party and has 400,000 members. Nammatt has opened 43 legal offices throughout the country to offer help to women facing job discrimination, and it also makes women aware of their legal rights. This organization has power to impact government policy making also, during 1997 budget talks in Israel, Nammatt demonstrated its ability to impact the legislative process, when it spearheaded efforts to block government acts in financial

²⁸ Continued Progress National Report on the Status of Women in ECOSOC.

²⁹ Israel Philanthropic Report, Women Equality in Israel the Rise and Fall of Utopia, www.Schusterman.org/women/20%20Israel.htm.

benefits for working women with children. This organization is also working closely with the Knesset committee on the Status of Women.³⁰

Women International Zionist Organization (WIZO)

Wizo is the second largest women's organization in Israel, with the Israeli membership of 100,000 operating on a volunteer basis. It was established in 1920s as an international Women's Zionist Organization. WIZO was associated with Israel's Liberal Party, which merged, with the Likud in 1970's. This organization raises funds from outside to support women in Israel. It has four information centers for women's rights,, thirty legal advice centers, three centers for treating family violence, single parent support group. It also supported pro-women bill by lobbying and demonstration.³¹

Emunah

Emunah, the Hebrew word for "faith", is a Zionist women's organization whose members identify with Orthodox Judaism. Emunah seeks specifically to address the needs to explore the complex issues that orthodox women face. Women's equality is not its concerned goal, but it concerns with the rights of workingwomen, the advancement of laws protecting women, the prevention of family violence and similar issues. When it feels that the matter is related to women's rights, Emunah takes part in coalition efforts with the other major organizations.³²

³⁰ Sue Eishloff, "The Status of Women in Israel : Myth vs Reality", *Nammat Magazine*, 1998, pp.13-14.

³¹ *Op.cit.*, See, *Women Equality in Israel: the Rise and Fall of Utopia*.

³² *Ibid*.

Emunah has also addressed the subject of international adoptions, including conversion to Judaism and registration of the children of Jews in the Interior Ministry; their effort takes the form of negotiating with the authorities, rather than trying to change government policy or legislation.³³

The Israel Women's Network (IWN)

The Israel Women's network (IWN) was founded as a non-partisan advocacy group promoting women's rights, activities, training seminars, consciousness raising groups and public education. It has a proven track record on legislative initiative, although enforcement of the law has been more difficult to guarantee. The IWN is one of the oldest of "New" women's organization of the last 15 years and has gained national and international prominence and acceptance; it is associated with United Nations also.³⁴

IWN's main focus has been to push for the societal change of a macro level. It is smaller than the other major national women's organizations and is composed of women from the academic and political communities.

IWN has broad members from all the major political parties, it has been able to build broad coalitions and promote the general interest of

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Israeli Women Network, <http://www.iwn.org>.

women. Many women organization are a resource on legal issue and a partner in coalition issues.

Women's Role in Peace Process

By Peace meant the absence of violence in any given society internal and external, direct and indirect. The further meaning of the nonviolent result of equality of rights by which every member of the society through nonviolent means participates equally in decisional power.³⁵

The most delicate problem of Israel is its security. It has fought five wars with its Arab neighbours due to security, and Palestine Problem. Israeli citizens till the Yom Kippur War (1973) did not take any initiative against the state, and about their civil rights. After this war several citizen groups came into existence which death with civil rights and protected against the government policies. Women groups also came into existence during *intifadah*(1987) and talked about Peace matters. The descriptions of most prominent woman groups are given below.

Women in Black

Women in Black has been perhaps the most prominent source of women's peace activism in Israeli history. It was founded in Jerusalem in 1988. This group came into existence to raise awareness of the

³⁵ Tamar Mayor (ed.), *Women and Israeli Occupation*, Pub; Routledge, London, 1994, p.30.

situation in the occupied territories (West Bank, Gaza Strip, which were occupied by Israeli Government after 1967 war).³⁶

Women of this group subsequently launched a protest vigil at one of the busiest intersections in Tel Aviv during Friday. The outset adopted three principles to ensure that vigil was entirely female, to dress in black to symbolize mourning for the victims of the violence and to protest under one slogan "End of Occupation". This protest continued till 1993. In 1993 Israel and Palestine signed Oslo Peace Accord, after this outfit dissolved itself because its primary concern was related to peace process.³⁷

The Peace Quilt Movement

The Peace Quilt movement was another initiative by the Israeli women's Peace Movement. This movement has over 5,000 Jewish and Arab women who wanted to promote peace. The Quilt was used as the center of piece for a demonstration outside the Knesset on the 21st anniversary of the six-Day War. This group promoted the following aim "We women call on government of Israel to put an immediate end to the occupation and to initiate immediate negotiations with the chosen representatives of the Palestinian People in order to find a just solution to the present problem (Palestinian Problem)." This group is unique in

³⁶ Edy Kaufmen, "The Intifada and the Peace Camp in Israel: A Critical Introspective", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.17, No.4, 1988, p.74.

³⁷ Ibid.

the sense because women of both communities came together by breaking the chains of religion and nationality.³⁸

Four Mothers Groups

Another women's group, which came into existence during the Lebanon war (1982) is called the Four Mother's Movement. This group was formed by the parents of those children doing their army service in Lebanon, has demanded that Israel withdrew unilaterally from Lebanon. A mother whose son was killed in that war walked through the country's market to raise awareness to this cause started this movement. It was the first initiative of distinguishes kind in Israeli Peace history where women went against the State Security Concern.³⁹

Women For Women Political Prisoners

Women for Women Political Prisoner (WFWPP) is another group of Jewish women, which came into existence in May 1988 in Telaviv by about 40 Jewish Israel women to provide moral and material support to Palestinian women who were prosecuted as a result of their social and political activities against the occupation. A similar group later developed in Jerusalem. The members of this group visited the detention centers in Jerusalem and Telaviv to monitor the cases of Palestinian women Prisoners. They campaigned against sexual harassment during interrogation and the deprivation of visitation rights. Many women

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

joined the group because they were concerned with the protection of civil rights of the Palestinians. This group also attends the court hearing whenever possible, to ensure that the correct proceedings were observed and maintain with released prisoner. The group also offered assistance to the families of prisoners.⁴⁰

Women in Green

It is established by those women's who are related to right wing parties in Israel. This movement adopted the paradigm of Women in Black. It was established during early 1990s. These women are against any peace process with Palestinians. They also opposed the Oslo-Peace agreement in between Israel and Palestine. These women are also against to stop occupation of land in West Bank and Gaza. These women show their resistance via making human-chains in front of Knesset. This movement is still continue.⁴¹

Conclusion

Summing up it can be said due to their political rights, women participates in political institutions of their country, but their number in these institutions is very less. Women in Israel participate in these institutions via the traditional means (Women's organization) one peculiar feature related to women in that country is that they and their Palestinians sisters demand the withdrawal of Israeli government form

⁴⁰ Haleh Afshar (ed.), *Women in the Middle East: Preceptions, Realities and Struggle for Liberation*, 1993, p.179.

⁴¹ www.womeningreen.org.

the occupied territories, yet their role is marginal. And they are not able to get success; till then they will not have any significant role in decision-making. To examine why their role is marginal in decision making it is necessary to know about their socio-cultural status in Israeli society, which is described in the next chapter.

Chapter - IV

SOCIO-CULTURAL STATUS OF WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

The term culture has been used in contemporary sociological research to describe everything from elite artistic activities to the values, styles and ideology of day to day contact. Culture is the central concept of social sciences. To Richard Peterson "culture tends to be used as two ways in research: "as a code of conduct embedded in or constitutive of social life", and "as the symbolic products of group activities".¹ Certain areas of social practice such as the arts and religion are more overtly symbolic than others such as work and economy. In short this term is used to explain behavior and social structure from a distinct and powerful prospective.²

Socio-cultural status of women in a society is decided by several variables like the status in the religion, arts and social agencies of that state and the legal measure adopted by the political sovereign of that society to improve their status and their implementation.³

The status of women in Israeli society is affected by the composed diversity of its population of different communities like; Jewish, Arabs, (Moslem) and Christian. In Israeli social fabric the main components are

¹ Edgar F. Borgotta (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Pub; MacMillan Publishing Company, 1992, p.527.

² *Ibid.*, p.525.

³ Tony Bilton, *Introductory Sociology*, Pub; MacMillan Press Limited, 1987, p.148.

Jewish women because Israel is a Jewish state. The 78 per cent population of Israel is Jewish. These people established their state after 1800 years on the 14th May 1948, earlier they were spending their life as emigrants in different nations. Immigration, started in mandated Palestine and later in Israel has been considerably influenced by the conditions under which Jews were living in the other parts of the world. The first wave of emigrants fostered to Israel by early Zionist enthusiasm in 1892. Later in 1933, Hitler's advent to power and Jewish persecution became the cause of immigration. At that time women had central role in family and they were protected by their male counterparts. Women in Jewish tradition were always respected as mothers and their role in public sphere was restricted. During World War II Jewish women in Europe had started to get education, and they also established women network during the holocaust. But Jewish tradition always propagated their prime role as mothers. ⁴

Contemporary Status of Women

To provide equal status to its all citizens the State of Israel adopted the declaration of independence which stated Israel will treat all its citizens with equality irrespective of their caste sex or religion.⁵ Israel also became the first country in the Middle Eastern region, which provided the political rights to its women citizen. The controversial factor

⁴ *The Middle East; A Political Economic Survey*, (Second Edition), Pub; Royal institute, 1954, p.249.

⁵ Tamar Hermann and Gila Kurtz, "Prospects For Democratizing Foreign Policy Making: The of Gradual empowerment of Israeli; women", *Middle East Journal*, vol.44, No.3, January 1995, p.451.

about Israeli state is that it is not a secular democratic country Religion (Jewish) is the main base of the formation of the state.⁶ At present also state is patronizing the religion. Religious Schools are run by the state. Actually religious parties in Israel are always an essential part of the coalition government and it provides them the chance to do bargaining. The power of these parties is steadily increasing in Israel in 14th the Knesset these parties won 18 seats.

Women in Jewish Religion

The Jewish religion is a theocentric religion. Abraham is called the father of the people despite the fact that it was Moses who founded the Jewish religion. Judaism demands more than the acceptance of theocentrism. It demands that believers demonstrate this acceptance by practicing daily religious role for the conduct of ordinary life, Jewish people have 613 religious rules, which conduct their daily life.⁷

Judaism also demands the common belief of its believers the communal nature of Judaism demonstrated by the fact that many prayers require a quorum of 10 men (minyan) to become valid. Judaism exempted women from several religious duties, it provided women "equal status" in private sphere (homefront) but not public sphere. Jewish tradition yet accord respect for both sexes; it clearly define and delegates the public sphere to women. The influence of this tradition is still valid

⁶ Central Bureau of Statistics Survey, 1996.

⁷ Sue Jackson, 'God of our Fathers : Feminism and Judaism - A Contradiction in terms', *Womens Studies International Forum*, vol.20, Nos.5/6, Jan-Feb., 1997, p.132.

and it spreads well beyond the religiosity observant community to general society. Women are exempted from mitzvot (613 commandments of Jewish religion). A woman is the property of her husband after marriage and this the prime cause of their exemption of these time bound duties.

To please their husband and care for the children is the first duty of women. The most important rule of the Jewish life is the study of *torah* (popularly taken to mean five books of Moses and also include, the other two sections of Hebrew Bible and prophet writings) Traditionally women are not allowed to read *torah*; these books of learning are denied to women.⁸

An Israeli fiction writer, Anzia Yeziarska in her novel *Bread Givers* shows how the *torah* is constantly called upon by men to illustrate their importance to women and over them: it says in Torah, "only through a man a woman has an existence and only through a man a woman can enter heaven".⁹

According to the Jewish religion if a man dies leaving his wife childless, his widow (the *yevanah*) remains his property, she can not marry until her husband's brother (or latest male relative) has had a chance to claim her. Women do not have right to pray together in synagogue; there should be a partition (*Mehitza*) in between men and

⁸ Ibid., p.133.

⁹ Ibid., p.133.

women in the prayer hall. At present, in Israel the orthodox community uses a wooden wall with the holes to separate their prayer hall and for secular community there is a curtain, which separates women and men prayer hall.¹⁰

Girl child does not get an equal status in Jewish religion as in Hinduism and Islamism. According to a Hebrew saying "a girl child is a symbol of many sons". The birth of a male child is always significant and a occasion of celebration. Girls do not have any share in their father's property and after marriage also their property is related to their husband. Yet, after the creation of the state Isareli government enacted, The Succession Law 1965 which provides that a spouse shall inherit from a person who dies intestate, and if there are children, they shall receive half the inheritance, equally divided among sons and daughters.¹¹ On the other hand it is also true that the child mortality rate is very low in Israel. The overall mortality rate is 8 percent per 1000 births and the difference between female and male mortality is minimal. It is 0.6 for female (age 1-4, per 100) and for male it is 0.5 (age 1-4, per 100).¹²

Marriage, Divorce and Women

The indicator of social equality of women includes equality in divorce rights in family law, economic equality reflected in right to own,

¹⁰ Tamar El-or, visibility and possibilities : Ultraorthodox Jewish Women Between the Domestic and Public Sphere, *Women Studies International Forum*, vol.20, No.5/6, Jan-Feb., 1947, p.668.

¹¹ op.cit., Women in Israel, p.32.

¹² *World's Women*, Pub; United Nations, 1996, p.70.

manage and inherit real property, and political and legal equality reflected in legal protection against sex discrimination and political rights such as representation in political offices.¹³

Israel has adopted the judicial system, which was popular during the British mandate. Thus it has two types of courts; religious courts and civil courts. The matter of marriage and divorce in Israel comes under religious courts.¹⁴ In Jewish religious courts elected rabbis perform the duties related to rituals and women have no right to sit in these courts. Arab and Druze community of Israel have their own courts to resolve their personal matters. For marriage and divorce people of different communities go to their religious courts. The rabbis of the Jewish religious courts are related to orthodox community of Israel, which caters to 6 per cent of Israeli population.¹⁵ In Israeli tradition if a person is studying Torah and having marriage, it is the duty of girl father to provide him a house, and later it is the duty of his wife to earn and take care of her husband and not to disturb him in his religious study. This practice was popular at a large scale during the mid 60s but now it exist at a minor scale.¹⁶

¹³ Yasmeen Mohiuddin, Research Paper, Country Rankings by the Status of Women Index, Sponsor, The University of the South, Sewanee, USA, 1996, p.10.

¹⁴ S.N. Eisenstadt, "*Israeli Society*," Basic Books in C. Publisher New York, 1969, p.212.

¹⁵ Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elamination of all forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), State of Israel, p.14.

¹⁶ Jerusalem Post, 19 Oct., 2000.

According to the Jewish law (*halach*) it is fundamentally unfair woman to demand for divorce. In the Jewish tradition marriage is a contract which is called *ketuba*. It is an integral part of marriage. A woman can become the property of her husband after her marriage, tied to him till the end of her life. If a man disappears and there is no evidence that he has died the wife become *agunah* "anchored", a forsaken wife and cannot remarry because she is still her husband property. In the case of *agunah*, however, the rabbis agreed to look as far as possible for proof, accepting testimony from women, slaves, minors and non Jews (none of whom are normally allowed to give evidence in a court of law). However, if evidence is found, enabling the woman to remarry, and her husband subsequently reappears, she is divorced from both men, any children of her husband are declared bastards. The woman has no financial claim on either man.¹⁷ At present the number of *agunah* in Israel, according to Non-governmental organizations it is 16000.¹⁸ Ordinarily too getting a divorce is a difficult job for a Jewish woman and till the that time she is not to get the divorce certificate, she is not eligible for her claim on property .According to the religious law, however for a man it is easy to get divorce if he wants to do so. This throws light upon the significant role of rabbinical courts. According to the authorities there are about 800 women's who are

¹⁷ Sitje Elshkoff, "The Status of Women in Israel: Myth Vs. Reality", *Nammat Women Magazine*, 1998, p.5.

¹⁸ Ibid.

seeking divorce. But according to several women organizations survey the number of women who are seeking for divorce 8,000.¹⁹

The unequal status of men and women under Jewish Law effects property division. Although only rabbanic courts may grant a divorce, issues of property division may be handled by either the rabbanic or the civil courts. The rabbanic courts apply Jewish law, which holds that most property belongs to husband.²⁰ At present, issues of personal status among Israel's Jewish population are dealt by orthodox rabbis and they perform wedding, funerals, conversion or officiate at divorce; women as mentioned earlier have not right to perform in religious councils, and this also become the cause of restriction of women participation in ritual life.²¹

Women and Social Agencies

Socialization is the process by which a person acquire the culture of its society in which that person born. The process by which she/he acquire her/ his social characteristics and learn the ways of thought and behavior considered appropriate in that society. Family, schools, peers groups are main components of socialization ,but in Israeli context, Israeli Defense Force is also one institution of socialization.²²

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p.12.

²¹ op.cit, implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elamination of all terms of Discrimination Against Women" (CEDAW), p.

²² Tony Bilton, *Introductory Sociology* (Second Edition), Pub; MacMillan, 1986, p.12.

Family is the first social agency of any society and in Israeli families male and female children are differently socialized. Mothers pass their tradition to their daughters. A boy is welcomed in the Jewish community when he completes his 13, bar mitzvoth (a son of the commandments) he is free to do work according to his own choice and he is not responsible to answer for this to his mother, grandmother and sister.²³ In Israel the Jewish community has a strong bond with family life, women are always projected as mothers. Home is the repository of the Jewish traditions and values. The well being of the family members traditionally has been the responsibility of wives and mothers.²⁴ Jewish demography also becomes the cause to propagate mother's role in society. According to the Zionist ideology Israel is the state of the Jewish people and it is necessary for women to produce more children. The father of Israeli state BEN GRUION also projected women as mothers and raised the issue of women fertility to the level of national duty, arguing that:

“increasing the birth rate is the vital need for the existence of Israel, and a Jewish woman who does not bring at least four children is defrauding the Jewish mission”.²⁵

²³ op.cit., Sue Jackson, p.538.

²⁴ Yael Yishai and Aaron Cohen, "(un)representative Bureaucracy : Women in the Israeli Civil Service", *Administration and Society*, vol.28, no.4, February 1997, p.459.

²⁵ Nitza Berkovitch, "Motherhood As National Mission: The Construction of Womenhood in The Legal Discourse in Israeli", *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol.20, No.5/6, Jan-Feb., 1997, p.607.

According to the legal point of view, women were provided equal rights to their male counterpart in 1951 by passing the EQUAL RIGHT LAW, but during the debate over the bill related to women rights he propagated women as mother and not as equal citizen he declared.

“I will talk about my mother, but refer to all mothers. Mother is the most precious person to everybody.... My mother died when I was ten...but still I know her as the symbol of purity, devotion and nobility. And there is nothing more desecrating and more offensive than thinking that my mother is not equal to me. I can not accept that my mother, our mothers, my sister who is also a mother, and my daughter who will also become a mother one day will be inferior to anyone else.”

This statement throw lights how the state is propagates this role of the mother.²⁶

National Security and Women

Israel has been involved in security conflict with its neighbouring state ever since the foundation of the state. It has also become a variable of women secondary status in Israeli society.

Zionist ideology made “national security” a top priority, designed to secure the survival not only of the country but of the Jewish people at large. This doctrine has been used to justify Israeli militaristic and expansionist policies and political practice also to neutralize and thus to legitimate and reinforce existing inequalities among Israeli citizens along

²⁶ Ibid., p.608.

lines of gender, ethnicity, class and political affiliation. Due to the security aspect military has always a prominent place in Israel, and becomes another cause of the secondary status of women.²⁷

Israeli society is a warrior society where a male who plays the role of a protector always obtains the primary status. Israel has faced 5 consecutive wars with its Arab neighbours (1948, war of independence, 1956 Sinai war, 1967 war, 1973 Yomkippur war, 1982 Lebanon war). And in all these wars Israeli male played an important role to save the lives of citizens except the Gulf war in 1991 when the Americans took the charge of their security. Due to the security problem it is a contra in a state of war by necessity or custom, values; the male may be called upon to make ultimate sacrifice, and this custom or value provide a special status to the male citizen of that society. These sacrifices have also become a scene of selfworth and pride in boys and young men. Male's important role in military also help them to be "parachuted" into senior position in administration, political parties and government.²⁸

Israeli Defense Force is a major institution of socialization. It is also a cause of different way of socialization for male and female child. In schools selection committee of IDF encourages boys to join the force. The irony is that in 1949 when Israeli Defense Force bill was passed it provided women the right to serve in IDF and decided the time for

²⁷ Tamar Mayor, (ed.) *Women and Israeli Occupation*, Pub; Routledge, London, 1994, p.75.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.113.

necessary national duties for men and women, but the period for women to serve in IDF is 20 months whereas for men it is three years. Those women who are married after 16 years are exempted from this duty. The other factor which shows gender differentiation is that women are also free from reserve duties; however, at the legislative level women age for reserve duty is 32 year and for men it is 60.²⁹

Women of course, are part of IDF, but they are performing traditional roles (secretaries, teachers, nurses etc.) yet it is always a controversial issue whether women served in combat units of armies or not and the popular view is that women be exempted from it, but at present in 12 countries women are serving in combat units namely; Canada, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Venezuela, and Zambia in other words in the Scandivian countries.³⁰

In Israel women are not yet present in combat units, but there is a great debate over it recently. The chief rabbis of the state are not willing to do so. Religious men of the orthodox community also find themselves unable to serve with women. Rabbi Elizer Sadan, the head of pre military *yeshiva*, said placing women in combat units violate their nature. "Women have wonderful qualities", he said, "it is their nature to nurture and produce life. The army is ugly and powerful, and war is painful. We

²⁹ Galia Golan, "Militarization and Gender: The Israeli Experience", *Women International Forum*, vol.20, No.5/6, Feb.1997, p.578.

³⁰ Caroline Kennedy - Pipe, "Women and the Military", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.23, No.4, Dec. 2000, pp.30-31.

must protect women from army".³¹ The irony is that Jewish women served in combat units during the war of independence and earlier during the period of the British mandate.

This for example shows how religious leader control over this institution of socialization and how women are kept out from the combat units. At present the number of women in combat unit of Israel is two working as airbase combat navigators; two are serving as Naval Commando and some in aircraft rescue and recover units.³²

Violence against Women

The other major problem, which comes in gender equality, is the violence against women. It is an international phenomenon. It can be divided into two ways; domestic violence and social violence against women.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is the term used to describe a variety of actions that occur in family relationship. According to the United Nations the term is used narrowly to cover incidents of physical attacks. It may take the form of physical and sexual violations such as punching, stabbing, scolding and burning with water and acid. It also includes psychological or mental violence.³³

³¹ Jerusalem Post, Oct.8, 2000.

³² Ibid.

³³ Felicial Oylekinami, *Men Women and Violence*, Pub; Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2000, p.27.

The domestic violence against women continues in Israeli society. It affects every community of Israel. According to the figures compiled by women organisations and accepted by the government bodies, there are approximately 200,000 battered women in Israel. That means one of every seven women is battered. However, it is accepted by Israeli police that only about 20 per cent of these are brought their attention. More than 125 women were murdered in last 4 years by a close relative.³⁴

In Jewish community violence against women is getting encouragement due to official rabbinical attitude. Womens advocate also contend that in the current rabbinical interpretation of traditional Judaism has created an environment in which domestic violence should be tolerated. On the other hand "honour killing" in Arab community of Israel still continues in which a woman is killed if believed to be guilty of adultery. The other factor which encourages domestic violence is arms law of Israel. Some Israeli men are using them against their female counterpart. According to LEV ARI, the Nammatt president "the availability of gun in the house is a specific problem that lends to lethal edge to already violent situation." In 1991, the Knesset passed the prevention of Family Violence. An abused woman may use law to have her husband or partner removed from their house for up to six month, while her claims is investigated.³⁵

³⁴ op.cit., Sue Fish Koff, p.

³⁵ Ibid.

Violence in Social Sphere

The violence against women in the social sphere is also a part of Israeli society and the several cases came into existence during *intifada* not only against Palestinian women who were taking part in their national struggle but also against Jewish women. During this period, several women groups of women (combined groups of Jewish and Palestinian women) came into existence to show their resistance against Israeli occupation in West Bank and Gaza. They give up their nationalities, as a basis for co-existence, which indicates a growing recognition of mutual interest.³⁶

Women in Black which was founded in 1988, during *intifada*, these women make their weekly vigil in Jerusalem. The prime cause of violence on the social sphere is related to the security issue, and it shows how these women are treated badly by their male counterpart. During their weekly vigilance these women wear black dresses which symbolize the grief, due to *intifada*. These women were cursed by mob, most of which reflected the national gender element inherent in the event. Most of the curser was men and a few women. These cursers used violent, crude penetrative verbal behavior, using such phrases as : "whores for Arabs" and "Arab fluckers". This shows how aggressive the male community was when they found women standing up to use their rights. These women's were also threatened by male followers of the ultra right wing rabbin Meir

³⁶ Alan Dowty, "Women's Peace Movement: Alternative Participation", Research Paper, Nov. 1997, p.4.

Khanna.³⁷ This shows the reality of ethos of gender equality in Israel. It was the first time when women came outside from their house to voiced their opinions on issue of peace and security as citizens of equal standing, not as the mother or wife of a soldiers.

Women who are helping to their Palestinian sisters also faced act of violence during the interrogation if they are caught by Israeli forces on the charges related to security issue and this trend also became popular after the break of *intifada*. These women are detained by GSS (General Security Service) a branch of Israeli Defense Force. These detainees face trial under the Israeli military law in special military courts. During the interrogation officer of GSS abuse women physically and sexually to make confession; if there is a Jewish woman under trial she is also abused but the method, is little bit different. She faces mental torture by not getting permission to meet her children and other members of the family.³⁸

Immigration and Gender Equality

The immigration to promised land started in 1892. There were total seven *aliyot* (waves of immigration) which went on till 1948. Women have always been the part of this immigration. These Jews who migrated

³⁷ Ibid., p.5.

³⁸ Haleh Afsher (ed.), *Women in the middle East; Preception, Realities and Struggle for Liberation*, Pub; MacMillian Press, 1993, p.178.

from different countries also brought the traditions of their previous societies with them.³⁹

Today Israeli society considers itself a western society but in reality 30 per cent of Jews are of European or American origin, the rest 70 per cent of the population is oriental Jews and native born. These Jews still believed over those male dominated cultures, which they brought with them earlier. On the other hand, Sebras (Jews born in Israel) are also traditional minded. They still pay too much importance to Judaic rituals. In recent years when women's movements came into existence whether women in black or women of wall. The men who opposed them during their demonstration they related them to *ashkanzi* (means European origin) and offered them a different 'feminine ideal embodied by sephardic women' who are willing to sacrifice the lives of their sons for collective.⁴⁰

Last decade the Russian and Ethiopian women who had entered the country via migration also became the cause of the secondary status of women. Ethiopian women who are find themselves unable to cope with the technically advanced economy of Israel have not only lower economic status because they are working as manual labour but are also in a vulnerable position in society. These women are also facing domestic

³⁹ Prakash C. Jain, "Population and Society in Israel", *Encounter*, vol.2, No.3, 1999, p.57.

⁴⁰ Sara Helman and Tamar Rapport, "Women in Black : Challenging gender and Socio-Political orders," *British Journal of Sociology*, vol.28, no.4, December 1997, p.683.

violence. Women NGO's survey shows that 30 per cent battered women of Jerusalem are related to newly immigrants.⁴¹

Legal Mechanism and Socio-Cultural Status of Women

In 1948 the State of Israel was established and after that it has passed several laws to improve women's status. To get the real picture of women's socio-cultural status it is necessary to examine the implementation of these laws.

In 1951 EQUAL RIGHT ACT had been passed by Israeli government to provide equal status to women in each sphere related to public life. Later in 1965 Succession Law also came into existence, but in reality there is hindrance in women's way. If they want to fight for their rights. Marriage and divorce come under the rabbinical court. If a woman wants to get property share from her husband's property she will go to religious courts and civil courts but mostly husbands at first register the case related to property in rabbinical court.⁴² On the other hand the method of divorce is also controversial because the divorce of a Jewish couple must involve in the granting or receiving of a get, or written divorce document handed by the husband to wife in the presence of an authoritative witness. Without get any future children they bear will be

⁴¹ op.cit., Nammatt Magazine, p.10.

⁴² op.cit., See, implementation of United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination.

bastard, barred from inheriting or marrying under the Jewish law. This shows the impotency of Equal Right Law.⁴³

One other fact which shows the uselessness of Equal Right Law is that Israeli government passed later in 1954 the EQUAL PAY LAW. The impotence of this law is assessed by this fact that Israeli women who are working as labour force whether in public or private companies get 30 per cent less pay than their male counterpart.

In 1992 the government also enacted Prevention of Family Violence Law but due to control of religious authority on personal sphere it is also in vain. According to this law an abused woman may use that law to have her husband or partner removed from her home up to 6 months, while her claim for divorce would be examined.⁴⁴

Role of Non-Governmental Organizations

Women's organizations always play an important role to enhance women socio-cultural status. In the Israeli context also these women groups have been playing significant role. In Israel there are 90 women organizations which are working for the benefit of women. Some of these groups are associated with political parties. The name of these women groups are Nammat (associated with Labour party), Women International Zionist organization (WIZO associated with Likud party), Emmunah (related to religious party), and Israeli Women Network (IWN, affiliated to

⁴³ op.cit., Report, Status of Women in Israel.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

United Nation as an observer). To make improvement in women status these women groups do lobbying and work as pressure group over the government to pass any legislation in Knesset, due to lobbying of these women groups several law have been passed by Israeli government related to women issues. In 1992 "Prevention of family violence", and in 1995 "Sexual Harassment Law" also came into existence. In 1996 Alice Miller has become the first woman who served in Israeli Air Force. The short description about these womens groups is given below, Women movement in Israel as Elie Aloni puts, "In Israel, we have the leadership, but I am not sure we have grass root level."⁴⁵

Nammat

It is the largest women's organisation of Israel with 400,000 members. It is operating 30 chapters in the country. It works for the advancement of women, provides them public education and legal assistance, it also runs special training programmes for women; earlier it was associated with only traditional kind of jobs, but now it is operating computer education and other technical education related programmes. This organisation also runs 220 daycare center for working women throughout the Israel for 25,000 children of these women. It also oprates 21 centres for battered women. It also operates 14 vocational high schools, 2 boarding schools, and 30 special vocational classes in Arab

⁴⁵ op.cit., Nammat Magazine.

Sector and also sponsors a scholarship for women pursuing higher studies.⁴⁶

Women International Zionist Organisation

It is the second largest organisation which operates 107 chapters throughout the country. This organisation also focuses on helping the individual woman. It also runs health classes for women after childbirth and support groups for single women. In Israel the percentage of these women is very low because the divorce rate is low and those women who are single are mostly widows of defense personnel. It is not a feminist organisation because assistance rather than equality is its focus. Although such programming could generate effective and innovative activities at a wider scale, but its ability to impress nationwide women is limited.⁴⁷

Emmumah

It is a Hebrew word and the literal meaning of this word is "faith". It is a women's organisation for orthodox community women. It runs a school for the girls of this community and it is also struggling with modern issues of family and couple relations as it seeks to provide guidance that is in contact with religious belief. The important fact about this group is that it supports the traditional women's role of bringing children into the world and building a home for them to grow up in. Hence women's

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Report, Women's Equality in Israel, The Rise and Fall of Utopia, www.schustermanorg/women%20in%20Israel.htm.

equality is not a declared goal Emunah is concerned with the rights of working women, the advancement of laws protecting women, the prevention of family violence.⁴⁸

Israeli Women Network

This women group came in to existence (before 18 year ago). It is a non- partisan group founded by women members of al political parties and academicians. It believes in macro level societal change. It has no strong grassroot level. This group also provides help to other women's groups for collaborating on legal issues. IWN has board members from the major political parties, and it is able to build broad coalitions and to promote general interests of women.⁴⁹

Conclusion

To make assessment of socio-cultural status of women in any society it is necessary to observe their status in the religion of that society. In Jewish religion women have a secondary status. Israeli state also propagated the religious control of women because there is no civil marriage and divorce in Israel. Women still not participated in religious courts. All the rituals related to religion still come under the control of orthodox rabbis. In 1988 when Shikadel was elected as the first woman to serve the in religious court the religious ministry of Israel had rejected her appointment; yet later civil court interfered and gave the verdict that

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

it is against the right of equality but this failed to help improve the number of women in these courts.

State provides help to religious section of society to run their own schools. Whereas men study *torah* as student and do the interpretation of *halacha*, women have no right to do so. It is true that as a democratic state Israel provided political rights to its women citizens, but these are not constitutional rights and not even one basic law clearly interprets the citizen rights in Israel. The number of women in work force is increasing but the also they are not treated equally due to their absence in decision making and this shows their secondary status. To sum up, it can be said Israel also like other patriarchal state treats their women citizen as secondary citizen of the society.

Chapter - V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Women in Israel as mentioned in earlier chapters are participating in each and every sphere of life whether its economic or political institutions of the state. Israel is the first country of West Asian region which has provided the political rights to its women citizens. Jewish women of Israel have been participating in the institutions of pre-state Israel also. After the establishment of the Israel it has passed several laws to enhance the status of women in the society. Israel was the first country, which passed the Equal Pay Act in 1954 to increase the participation of its women citizen in labour force

Despite the image of Israel as a gender egalitarian society, reality is considerably more complex. A number of historical and cultural trends have shaped the status of Israeli women are among the socio-political forces which characterize Israeli society and have strong impact upon the status of women. A young population with a high reproductive rate, a high proportion of women in the workforce; a varied ethnic population including large numbers of immigrants, a strong emphasis on traditional family values and a complicated relationship between state and religion.¹

¹ Continued Progress National Report on the Status of Women in Israel, http://www.un.org/esa/gopher_data/conf/fwcw/natrep/NatActPlans/israel.txt.

Granting the Political and Legal rights are not sufficient for gender equality it is also necessary to examine whether these rights are effectively implemented by the state. The state of Israel adopted the legal mechanism to improve the status of women after its foundation in 1948. But the legal safeguards are not sufficient to improve women status in any society the important thing is knowledge about these rights. A major obstacle comes in the development of women is the tradition of that particular society. *Dejure* equality constitute only the first step towards *defacto* equality, but in reality, the *defacto* as well as *dejure* equality contribute and visible in the political and economic commitment of the state. The other major problem in the way of *dejure* equality is most women and men are not aware about the equal right of women.² In Israel despite, the equal pay law women receive lesser pay compared to their male counterparts.

The other major obstacle in women Equal Status is that Israel has multiple legal system (civil courts and religious courts are separate), which always came in the path of women's equal status. There is a marked absence of the provision of civil marriage and divorce. According to the *halcha*, women are not allowed to ask for a divorce. State gives patronage to the orthodox religious community.

² From Nairobi to Beijing: Second Review and Appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi: Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women; Pub; United Nations, New York, 1995, p.235.

In late, 1970 the first Israeli Women movement took birth. After the first *intifada* in 1987 second wave of feminism entered Israeli society, raised consciousness about women's rights. Due to the second wave of feminism gender studies become part of university curriculum (Second wave of feminism talks about equality on political, economic and socio-cultural spheres) at Post graduation level but not at graduate level. Lack of gender awareness is mainly because these programs do not get proper funding from the state. The only source of income for gender study program is the fund, raised by some Jewish women organizations of the United States. The grassroots level, support base is very weak for these organizations.

Women in Israel have been participating in the labour force of the country before the foundation of Israel or in *yishu* period. Participation of women in the labour force has been increasing horizontally after the establishment of Israel. In 1998 the percentage of women in labour force was 45 percent, but their number is great only in feminine type of job like teaching, nursing and clerical workers. The number of women in the field of technology is negligible. But after the signing of Beijing Declaration of Women's Rights (1995) the Israeli government adopted several measures to improve the status of women in the labour force. It established a statutory committee to evaluate and comment on issues related to women. In 1996 then Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu headed the committee. One important fallout of the statutory committee

was the establishment of a committee which would ensure the appointment of at least one-woman member at the decision making level of public entrepreneurs.

The non-representation of women at decision-making level is also become the cause of vertical segregation of sex. Retired army personnel of IDF invariably monopolize these posts. These IDF personnel always have an upper hand in each field of Israeli society whether it is public entrepreneurs upper-post or political institutions. The personnel are always males. One other variable of women secondary position in labour force is that they are mostly working as part time worker and once again there is competition in feminine type of jobs due to this factor once again they get less pay for their work. Women in Israel like other states participates in jobs namely; teaching, nursing and clerical jobs. These women also accept part time jobs due to the non availability of the full time jobs which also come under the above mentioned jobs. Due to this competition for feminine type jobs they once again get less financial benefit for their work.

Israel is a welfare nation where working mothers are exempted from income tax and state supported to them the crèche and other childcare facilities, but in reality financial contribution of state to these institution is minimal. The other controversial thing is that state makes arrangement for its Jewish women employees to go back earlier to make preparation for *Shabbat* not only in public services but other services

means private sector of economy. This is against the ethos of Israeli freedom declaration which talks about the equality of all citizens irrespective of their religion, race or sex. These arrangements are not made for the other community women who also participates in the work force. (Arab women during Ramdan).

Women participation in Political System of state has also been going on before the establishment of the State. In its Declaration of Freedom it is stated that the Israeli state provide the equal treatment to all its citizens irrespective of their religion race or sex. Women got the right to vote after the foundation of the state. In 1969 Golda Meir became the first woman Prime Minister of Israel. Her example is cited till date to prove the point of gender equality. However, the rise of one individual woman does not reflect the achievements of all the women in the particular society. The fact that women have been the head of states in Israel, India, Srilanka and other third world countries, does not mean that these countries also have the lowest maternal mortality rate or the highest the less female education ratio, or female infanticide. The individual success speaks more about the glaring class distinction, rather than the bridges of social stratification. The Beijing Declaration is also counted the total percentage of women in Political Institutions of the state and whether they are occupying any important position in these institutions or not. It is found that in Israel in last 50 years only five women has served as ambassadors in other countries. And the

percentage of women MKs in Israel Knesset is remained relatively constant at 10-12 percent. Only 8 women's have served as cabinet minister and except Golda Meir not only one woman has served as Foreign Minister of the nation. There is not even one woman Defense Minister in Israel, but here it is also true that no country where the position of Defense Minister is occupied by a woman and it is also true in the context of United State of America which also consider it-self an egalitarian state and not a patriarchal state.

The existence of limited number of women in public life can be attributed to a large extent to the particularly political structure itself, the system of proportional representation. In proportional representation individuals do not compete, and each political party submits a list of as many candidates as are to be elected from a particular constituency and each voters votes not to individuals as candidates but to the list. In Israeli culture women are not allowed to participate in public life, thus parties give preference to male candidates over female.³

The absence of majority parties necessitates the establishment of the coalitions with smaller parties to form the government. This tend to strengthen the role of small religious parties, which are generally opposed to the participation of women in public life as Naomi Chazan

³ Douglas, Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws*, Pub; New-Heave: Yale University Press, 1967.

put it "40 members of religious community are present in Knesset but not only one women from this community."⁴ In Political Institutions a great deal of power is granted to the political parties in which women tend to be under represented, particularly at the decision making level. Thus the number of women at important political posts automatically declines.

To assess the overall status of women it is necessary to check out the socio-cultural status of women in the particular society or observe their traditional status and how state institutions propagates the superiority of their male citizen in a patriarchal state. Judaism is a patriarchal religion and Israeli State is still providing patronage to the tradition, which are always an important part of religion and propagated by the religious institutes. In Israel still the marriage and divorce come under the religious courts of the existing community (Arab, Druze, Christian, and Jewish).

In 1975 Israel passed a law to prohibit polygamy in Israeli state but due to above mentioned fact it is really difficult to implement this law in the Arab Muslim community of Israel. During the mid 1999 the Ehud Barak government tried to discuss the issue of civil marriage but the proposal was rejected by the religious parties of Israel. Jewish women still do not have the right to approach for divorce because

⁴ Naomi Chazan, "Women in Public Life"; *Israeli Information Centre*, 1998, p.2.

traditions do not allow for it, and the orthodox rabbis who do not want to lose their control over society oppose it.

Ministry of Religious Affairs provides money to the members of religious community who want to do the study of *torah*, and another controversial fact is that the men and women of this community are exempted from the national service of Defense Force. On the other hand those women who married before the 18 years of age they are also exempted from this national duty. But at the same time, it is also true, that whenever the state needs the services of its women citizens, it can call on them.

The above discussion throws light on the patriarchal character of the Israeli state, which has adopted legal mechanism to improve the status of its women citizens, but cannot guarantee the equality. Due to the coalition of church and state in Israel, women are facing troubles like their counterparts in other third world countries on the personal sphere where still they do not get freedom.

Despite technological advancement in any society the mental perception of their male counterpart about them becomes the cause of the secondary status of women's at each and every level whether it is the field of politics, economics, education etc.⁵ According to sociological point of view the changes in a society takes a long time and other

⁵ Indira Malani and Urmila Phadnis, (ed.), *Women of the World: Illusion and reality*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971, p.220.

essential fact about change in any society is the support of the intelligentsia of that society. In Israel where the military is the main institution of socialization due to necessary military service always come in the way of women equality in that society. As Galia Golan an activist of Peace Quilt movement puts it "Due to security problem in Israel military is the main quintessence of patriarchal Institution, reinforcing and perpetuating the stero-typical role of women as a subordinate".⁶

After signing the Beijing Declaration of Women Rights 1995 Israel adopted several measures to improve the status of women. It adopted the measurement to bring changes on structural level. Formal mechanisms for the advancement of women have been established at the highest level of government. Both the Prime Minister and Knesset developed measurements to systematically improve the status of women. There is an advisor to the Prime Minister on the status of women is not mentioned by law, and its appointment is at Prime Minister direction. On the Knesset level a statutory committee has been established to enhance the status of women. There are several women members in this committee who tried to pass the bill related to beneficial of women status.

⁶ Galic Golan, "Militarization and Gender : The Israeli experience", *Women International Forum*, Vol.20, No.5/6, Feb. 1997, p.580.

To sum up it can be said that in Israel though the state has adopted several steps to provide equal status to their women citizens. Israel has upper hand in the West Asian region where women can't even get political rights as in the case of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. On the personal level however, women of Israel are also suffering from the same helplessness, which is faced by their Arab Sisters in West Asia. The most significant fact about the 'status' of women is that at the present age of science and technology their male-counterparts have to realize that they also have potential, and only due to their cooperation women in any society get equal status.

The major cause of sustenance of tradition in Israeli society is the security concern of the state yet Israeli feminist called it the misogyny of Israeli State. Army as an institution represents brute male force, and the compulsory conscription in Israel, facilitates the re-assertion of the physical superiority of men. Thus, though the women are trained to be fighters, they are proven to be inferior when compared to their male counterparts. The militaristic nature of society denies a woman a lots of human rights, for example the right to re-marry divorce etc. In Israel women are recognized as the mother, sister and wife. The maintenance of this status quo is important for the morale of the army.

Conclusion

Finally, it can be said that women in Israel participate in each sphere and have got equal status on the terms of *dejure* equality. However, in reality they are still getting less pay for their work and their income is still considered as secondary income. The "ideal woman" is still one who has a home and well-cared for children but does not necessarily work outside the home. Women's employment seems to be but understood in the norms of Jewish tradition where women are lauded to contributing to the well being of the family, but there is little support for a woman's career if it comes at the expense of her family.

Women's (MKs) number in 14th & 15th kneset has increased and at present their number is 15. Women's participation in cabinet has not increased and only two women have been appointed in the Ehud Barak headed government. Their number in the high ranks of political parties is also very less.

On the socio-cultural sphere the women of Israel are not free. They donot have right to talk about divorce according to Jewish tradition. During mid 1999 when due to pressure of women organizations, the Ehud Barak headed government present civil marriage act in the kneset it was rejected by the religious parties of the state.

Judges of religious courts are orthodox community men. Women earlier did not have the right to contest for municipalities but in 1988 due to civil courts decision Shiekdel became the first woman to serve in the municipality. But, in reality still men of religious community still refuse to sit with a woman in their offices. Later in 1993, Alice Miller became the first woman combat fighter in the Air Force of Israel.

In reality Jewish women in Israel have achieved many policy changes. These gains may be partly attributable to a socialist tradition which acknowledge women's right to employment. On the other hand, the politics of nationalism and militarism always marginalize women, whose prime role becomes that of producing and nurturing citizens. Thus, it can difficult to say that Israeli women have got *defacto* equality in their society. The Israeli state is not able to secure peace with its neighbours due to the Palestine Problem. Absence of peace, and militaristic culture of Israeli society always come in the way of *defacto* equality.

In sum, it seems that overall change in women's roles and status in Israel has been limited. It is true that they participate in each and every institution of state whether it is political, economic or any other. The dramatic changes in women's employment have still been fit into the pattern of the traditional "women of valor", who does whatever is

needed to contribute to the economic well-being of her family but not for her own self actualization. The attitudinal changes which always play a significant role to improve women status in a society have still not been achieved in Israeli society, particularly among the orthodox and oriental Jews; and this limits the changes the whole population want to make. In other words, culture and traditions also come in way of equal status of women in Israel, as in other societies.

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