

# Women in Ancient Persia



The study of women's status in ancient Persia, as mentioned in Zoroastrian texts such as the Avesta, shows that at a time when many women in the world were deprived of their basic rights, women enjoyed social and legal freedom and were treated with great respect.

According to Pressv, Avesta texts ask both genders to share responsibility and take decisions together. They are equally praised for their good deeds rather than their gender, wealth or power.

In ancient Persia, women could take the throne in case the king passed away and the crown prince was still a minor. One such woman was Pourandokht, the first Persian queen regent in Ctesiphon. Ancient scriptures describe her as a wise, just and good-natured woman who did her best to revive the Sassanid sovereignty.

Avestan texts address the issue of leadership and tell us that a ruler may be a woman as well as a man.

## > Equal Responsibility

Zoroastrian texts advise parents to encourage their offspring to tread the path of knowledge and explain that women have an equal responsibility in the dissemination of knowledge and science.

"Whatever a man or a woman knows that is good and right, not only should they practice, but inform others to perform accordingly". (Yasna 41/2)

Female members of the ancient Persian society were allowed to participate in religious ceremonies and sometimes even head the event as the priest.

Persian women were free to choose their spouse and Zoroaster urged them to make their decision based on wisdom.

Regarding young couples, they are advised to remain faithful, share their joy and sorrow, to adhere to the principles of love and to try to surpass one another in truth and righteousness.



## > Social Role

Reference has also been found on the role of Persian women in society. According to Greek historian and biographer Plutarch, Persian women were active members of their society and good fighters.

There were numerous female fighters among the ranks of the Sassanid army. They have been described as excellent and competent soldiers.

According to Pahlavi texts such as the Dinkard, women could manage their property, represent their husbands at court, chair courtrooms and perform religious ceremonies.

Ancient documents found at Persepolis, Susa and other Mesopotamian cities show that both noble and common women enjoyed economic independence in Persia.

They owned property, were involved in managing their assets, had employment opportunities and earned wages.

Although noble Persian women had to act within a defined framework set by the king, they also enjoyed economic independence and

had control over their wealth.

Women were allowed to visit their estates and administer their assets individually or with the help of their husbands.

Ancient documents mention common women by the title bestowed upon them due to the nature of their work. The level of skill determined a female manager's title.

The highest-ranking female workers were known as Arashshara (great chief). They managed female and male workers, and received the highest salary among their peers.

Historical documents show that male and female workers received equal pay and there were an equal number of workers from both genders.

## Darband Park a Haven for Nature Lovers

The natural park known as 'Darband' in the village of Alvaneq, East Azarbaijan province, is one of the most beautiful natural attractions of northwestern Iran which has preserved its God-given beauties despite this year's drought.

Every year, a large number of the people of province visit this majestic park to spend a few hours of leisure time enjoying Mother Nature.

At the entrance of the park, which is away from the noise and bustle of city life, there is a magnificent spring that has pure and clean water. Near the spring, colorful plants and flowers grow, creating an amazing sight which all tourists cherish when they visit the area.

This picturesque site is host to a large number of tourists in spring and summer. Despite the drought of this year, the park's plants and flowers are amazingly pretty, catching the eyes of all tourists.

The village of Alvaneq is some 32 kilometers from Azarshahr. Some 750 people live in the unique village.



## In Case You Missed

### Foreign Paleontologists

#### Studying Maragheh Fossils

A team of eleven paleontologists from France, Finland, China, and Japan are conducting research at the Maragheh fossil site of East Azarbaijan province.

"For the second time over the past six months, the team is conducting excavations at the Maragheh fossil site. The team members are quite skilled and also self-confident," Finnish paleontologist Michael Fortelius told IRNA.



He noted that paleontological studies at the site containing intact fossils can enhance our knowledge of the climatic conditions in the distant past.

An paleontology training workshop is also underway in the city of Maragheh. The workshop, attended by 11 international researchers and 22 experts from Iran's Department of Environment, will continue its work until May 27.

Located near the city of Maragheh, the fossil-rich site covers an area of 40,000 hectares. Currently 1,026 hectares of the site are protected as a natural area.

The fossil vertebrate site of Maragheh is a classic late Miocene locality and one of the most renowned localities of its kind in Eurasia.

Some of the fossils discovered at the site are preserved at museums in France, Austria and the US.

Iranian paleontologists unearthed some parts of a dinosaur gigantium at the fossil-rich site in 2004.

The city of Maragheh is situated 147 kilometers south of Tabriz, the capital city of East Azarbaijan province.

## Googad Citadel

### Relic of the Past

Googad Citadel which is located near the city of Golpayegan (in Isfahan province) dates back to about four centuries.

The only written document that has been left from the citadel belongs to about 130 years ago.

This document indicates that half of the citadel was built by a person named Ali Khan who gave his share of the citadel to his wife as dowry.



According to K.domaindix webstie, Googad Citadel and the city of Golpayegan was located on route Silk Road. This is why the citadel was called Alikhani Citadel for some time. Golpayegan has a minaret which is about 18 meters high and it was used as a guide for passengers in the past.

The citadel was used as a caravansary for businessmen during peace time.

Aqa Mohammad Khan, the Qajar king, has also spent several days in the citadel while he was returning from one of his wars.

The citadel is currently used as a luxury hotel nowadays.

A room currently used as a special suite was designated for kings.

Doves acted as an alarm system for of the citadel so that special openings were considered for the doves to settle in the citadel's wall and whenever they heard strange sound they also began to make noise.