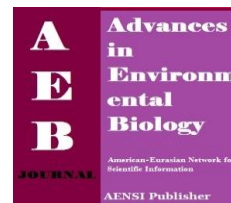




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### Studying the Educational and Cultural Condition of Bahrain Shiites (1961-2011)

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#### ABSTRACT

Educational system of Bahrain is similar to the educational system of England. However, its content is weaker. In 1939, high school education became common in Bahrain and in 1961 a three stage law including primary, guidance and secondary stages were generalized in schools which is totally 12 years while two stage educational plans at primary and secondary levels was common before. The academic year started from the middle of September to the middle of June and Arabic language is taught but Latin is also taught in guidance school and then as the second language. It should be mentioned that before independence, Persian language in Bahrain was one of the local language and was taught in schools and now it is common among the Iranian habitants of Bahrain but teaching it is forbidden in Iranian schools. The present article tries to study the educational and cultural conditions of Bahrain Shiites.

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### INTRODUCTION

#### *Educational Background in Bahrain:*

Teaching and education in Bahrain has a short background. When Bahrain was a part of Iran, such as other parts, had cultural advancements and was one of the most important centers of Shia. This condition in Bahrain was so important that the clergymen of Iran went to Bahrain for obtaining the Shiites science.

Iranian people of Bahrain from the beginning of new schools establishment did modern educational development. At the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Persian speakers of Bahrain established some schools such as Ahmadi and National Unity schools. These educational centers, were first managed by the Saadat Committee in Bushehr and teachers were sent from Bushehr to Bahrain.

Then, some Arab schools were established in this country and teachers of Arabic countries such as Iraq and Egypt were hired. These steps were taken in Bahrain at the time when there was no education all over the Persian Gulf coasts [9].

A short time after, Bahrain changed into an important educational center in Persian Gulf. The mental effect of this educational advance was so deep on the society of Bahrain that people of Bahrain considered themselves more advanced than the Arabs of other parts and the government of Bahrain also considered it much advanced to participate in the English plan of forming the Arabic Emirates federation [7].

Now, government is paying a lot to build schools. Bahrain asks other Arab countries and UNESCO for help in developing the new educational plans [2].

#### *Educational level of Shiites:*

Since education in Bahrain is more experienced than other newly independent countries on the coast of Persian Gulf, the percent of educated people is more in Bahrain. In 1974, government approved the law of fighting with illiteracy and established places all over the country for cooperation in reading, writing over the media that included teaching how to read, write, learning English and teaching housing skills [8].

Then this office declared that the amount of illiteracy among the adults of Bahrain was 6 percent and so it had the least amount of illiteracy among the Arab countries. According to the statistics in 2007, the number of educated people in Bahrain from 15 and more is 86.5 percent (88.6 percent of men and 83.6 percent of women) (Political Studies, p. 45).

Bahrain Shiites have good educational levels and have the ranks higher than high school but in high education they are limited by the bias of Al-khalifa and stopped from attending universities. In spite of the

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attempts by the Shiites in obtaining high scientific ranks and success in this field they encounter limitations and so most of them are unemployed.

#### *Shiites Position in Educational System of Bahrain:*

Although the Shiites are trying hard for education and have higher scientific ranks but they are omitted in receiving the fellowship and are replaced by the people related to official families. Saieed Shahabi stated that:

“Shiites were stopped to be assigned in official positions and if they have been applied, they would receive less income compared to English and Europeans. So, a number of educated people left the country and immigrated to foreign countries [4]”.

Documents should unimaginable cruelty against the Bahrain Shiites and even compared to Jewish people have less access to job and employment. For example if a Bahrain Shiite wants to open a shop, he will encounter some problems but such a problem does not exist for a Jewish and a 13-year-old young can open the shop immediately and Jewish are supported by the Sheikhs of Bahrain and they were mostly seen in the shops of Jewish (Political studies and researches, 1962).

#### *Cultural and educational limitation of the Shiites:*

Bahrain has been the focus of scientific gatherings of Shiites and so high educational level is seen there and a lot of religious scientists and experts have been from Bahrain. Having the last name of “Bahrani” for most of the great scholars shows the increased number of scholars from Shiite. Now, despite the opposition of the minority groups, about 9 scientific regions are active in Bahrain and train the religious scholars.

#### *Forbiddance of Teaching Shiite Principles:*

Based on the plans of the education ministry in Bahrain, religious teaching in this country is based on one of the four religions especially Shafeii religion since it is similar to the Jafari religion. However, no cooperation has happened and teaching their principles has become forbidden [6].

Lack of Shiites authority over the state and private institutions especially in the light of tens of teacher centers which were established by Shiites, in spite of more Shiites students compared to others and their acceptance in higher education, they are prevented to participate in academic gatherings.

Sending the premier non-Shiite students in form of scientific groups to American and European countries by the authorities and the share of the Shiite students is little and does not suppress the lower professions while Shiites compose 80 percent of the population [7].

#### *Impossibility of holding the religious ceremonies:*

Mosques have a special place and position in teachings of Islam and building mosques is suggested in Quran and the first action of Holy Prophet was to establish a mosque in Madina. Different religious ceremonies of Imams' birthday and death ceremonies are among the most common religious customs of Shiites. So, during the 1400 years history, mosque was one of the most important places for forming the religious movements and uprisings and so reviving the mosques in Bahrain is not possible except by official allowance who are mostly against Shiites (ibid, p. 80).

In Hamad city for 21 mosques built for Sunnis and even a mosque is not built for Shiites. In Alrefah region, the habitats can have whatever they want and Shiites have no right to own anything and this is the law approved by the Prince and the present King which is applied unofficially (ibid, Mazloun, p. 230).

The city of Yerboua has more than 15 thousands population and the authorities do not let the Shiites to build a mosque here and 24 mosques of Sunnis are supported by government while 4 mosques of Shiite which are built by people's help are not supported by government.

Jesus city: Jesus city is one of the oldest cities which is built by a new plan. From a total 24 mosques and a Great mosque, only 4 of them devoted to the Shiites and Shiite do not even have a place for praying in the city while most of the population are Shiites. Erad village and the nearby parts have 22 mosques and only 6 of them are for Shiites and they are not allowed to build a mosque.

The governors of Al-Khalife prevent Shiites to build mosques and do not let them to rebuild the religious places. A number of mosques are built and revived. Morshed mosque, Alkhafif, Sheykh Madan, Meysam, Khafir, mzar and Sasae Ibn Souhan are some examples.

A number of mosques were destroyed by the government and Shiites are not allowed to rebuild them including Maqbare, 300-year-old mosque of Almari, Sheykh Sharaf, Ibrahim Ibn Malek Ashtar, Favare, Jabale Bijan and Kukibat mosque (Mazlum, p. 84). Limitations and discriminations have different shapes including:

1. Preventing the Shiite clergymen to have informing speeches
2. Preventing promotion and informing by political Shiite clergymen
3. Preventing the religious activities of the mosques and religious places
4. Minorities prevent supporting the orators and clergymen of Shiites

5. No comprehensive institute where Shiites can gather there and have free speech while Al-khalife support people who are against the Shiite and claim the leadership of Bahrain Shiites but Shiite clergymen are not allowed to participate in Islamic affairs and are prevented to act toward their goals.

Despite all the limitations which were mentioned above, continuous and cultural fights of Shiites worried the Bahraini's government to prevent the growth of cultural and political movements. So, the plan of establishing the council by government was suggested to prevent the movements of Shiites. In 1996, according to the suggested plan, the king ordered to hold the council of Islamic rules. This plan was for controlling the Shiites and took the control of religious advertisement and opposes the Shiites thought. After providing the minute the king's order was published and under the third order, it is stated that : the Islamic rules' council should study the background of the Imam Jomas and approve or reject them. Members of the council are determined by the government and supervising the Imams is the task of this council. He goal of establishing the council was to destroy the independence of Shiites and complete control of its collections including mosques and religious places and what is related to religion since most of the political movements are organized by Shiites scholars and clergymen. Another goal was to prevent the entrance of the clergymen that government cannot control their actions and are improper elements according to government [5].

#### *Conclusion:*

Based on the documents and existed evidence, the Shiites of Bahrain had a long experience in the field of religious and modern knowledge and the scientists had a special place in the world of Islam but unfortunately they had lost their positions and have no proper place in educational system of Bahrain. Continuing this process leads to increased immigration of Shiites scholars and creating a cultural gap. Lack of justice and freedom for different religious branches challenges the social and cultural position of Shiites and increases the challenge every day. So, a more justly educational system can solve most of the problems in Bahrain society.

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