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## **CHANGES IN THE IRANIAN FAMILIES DURING THE ACHAEMENID ERA**

### **Abstract:**

Since the ancient times, family has formed the oldest and the most fundamental column of the social pyramid in the society. In fact, when the primitive man passed the era of semi-savageness and the era of hunting animals for nutrition, family was formed. This small social pyramid started from father, children and close relatives and gradually covered uncles, cousins, aunts and grandchildren who all had the same customs, lived under the same roofs and always obeyed the elder and the leader of the family. In this era, the father had the right to take any form of action in the family. Father of the family had the absolute freedom and had the right to do whatever he wished. Even lives of all family members were in his hands; but gradually, this patriarchy with its absolute power disappeared and the coming to power of kingdom and the central government of the Achaemenids transformed these rules. By coming to power of this dynasty and appearance of concerns about strength of the society and on the other side, for the sake of more childbirth for great wars, tendency towards family became more apparent; so much so that the Achaemenid kings themselves encouraged formation of families and assigned gifts for families that gave birth to more sons. In this study, we first deal with the course of changes in the family system in this period. In the second part, marriage has been discussed. In the third part, we discussed incest marriage. In the fourth part, we have talked about divorce. In the fifth part, we have discussed the legal rights of family system in this period, and in the last part, by this implication that the Iranian family system in the Achaemenid era, considering the formation of different economic, social and political conditions, has experienced further changes and become more important and significant, we ended this study.

### **Keywords:**

Achaemenid, family, wedlock, incest marriage, divorce, juridical laws

## Introduction

Family or *dodak* meaning 'smoke', which referred to stove of the family, was the main unit of Iranian society; family was patriarchic, male-centered, polygamous, and vast; it was usually based on wedlock with relatives. Family members were connected to each other not only through relativity, but also through a series of common rights and responsibilities. Most significantly, through common worship around the family fire place, they had a common property. The same was true in economic activities. Brothers who lived together in a big family only had a namely share of the immovable property and production tools of the family. Old members of the family, in the framework of family hierarchy, could enjoy full legal power and authority, but women and children, like little kids who need to be taken care of, were obedient and subordinate. A bigger society of relatives i.e. the group which had tribal relativity consisted of the number of relatives, collected or individuals, whose ancestry as far as the oldest living authority of the family clearly remembered, reached a common ancestor. This group was connected regarding some common rights and responsibilities and the connectivity between them was tribal. Big tribes had representatives in the royal court. They usually were the imposed leaders over the tribes. Considering the fact that some of the general and royal positions as well as granting lands in the form of feudality had become hereditary, positions of people in the inbred groups had become hereditary too.

## The Course of Changes in the Iranian Families during the Achaemenid Era

Since very old times, truly before the Parthian and the Sasanid periods, i.e. in the Achaemenid era, the initial unit of Iranian society was family including both small and big families. Both forms were called with the terms *dotak* (literally 'smoke') and *katak* (house); these terms could be found in the combined words *katak-khotai* (supervisor of the family, the male supervisor of the family) and *katak-banok* (lady of the family, female supervisor of the family). Iranian family was made of a group of people with the same breed down to three or four generations. At the top of this group, there was the supervisor, and a precise and stable relationship connected members of this group to each other. Apart from family relationships, common rituals (especially around the family fireplace, and worshipping the spirits of ancestors), religious rights, common property of the family (brothers who lived together in a big family were the only shareholders and from a legal perspective, were partners or *barat hamba*) and common activities in production and consumption were the elements that connected family members to each other. (Yarshater, 28:2008).

Persians who probably had reached the present day Fars through north and settled there in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, in terms of social structure, had no differences with other Iranians. They were originated from a vast family called *veis* in *Avesta*. This term is an ancient Persian word as well. (Mahmood Abadi, 38:2009) We can say about formation of family

as the most significant and vital core and the unit of biological activity in Iran that it had a united, valid and holy form since the beginning of Iranians' presence. In fact, family is the most necessary; and regarding the age order, it is the most important collective unit and structure in the collective scale of phenomenology which is correspondent to the vaster and bigger forms of Iranian societies. In the history of Iran, the function of determining and identifying family gradually reached a level where it became one of the two major fundamentals of forming social classes. (Shabani, 95: 1990)

Christiansen regards formation of families as one of the fundamental pillars of Iranian existence since oldest times and believes that along with it, other bases i.e. villages, tribes and countries were formed. (Christiansen, 424: 1991) Iranian families were made up of big tribes which were under the command of a leader around the fireplace of family. Although women in these families did not have rights compared to men, still they were considered as the ladies of the families and were respected by the family members; and marriage in these families was intergroup i.e. within the relatives. (Rasekh, 121-122)

At first, Iranians were divided into clans which gradually became the initiative for forming families and tribes. Approximately in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, the center of family group was home, and father of the group (clan) had the absolute authority and was leader of the group; the sense of patriarchy was dominant in him and his authority had no limits; so much so that he had the right to sell women and children or even kill them. Father of the clan was like a god for the group members. In those days, family included father, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, brides and grooms, cousins and other relatives who were all under the rule of the clan leader. Gradually, father of the family became father of the clan and gained absolute domination over the society, a position inherited from his predecessors. (Asefi, 22: 2010) This group with the same breed, in its simplest form, included several patriarchal families in which all fathers were children of a same paternal ancestor and had the same forefathers three or more generations before them. Members of such a society with the same breed were relatives to each other and their relativity had a precise order and discipline; because every living leader of the family was able, like a child or a youngster, not only to recognize his grandfather and paternal ancestors, but also to identify their brothers and consequently all children and grandchildren. Of course, it was possible that the relativity memory could cover even more generations. (Yarshater, 28: 2009).

By spread of the power of kingdom and formation of countries, the authority of patriarchy faded away and on the contrary, the dominated members by the father of the family became stronger. In this way, woman at the center of the family became more associated with the husband, and paternal children who were under autarchy were freed. On the other side, due to lack of cash money, it was not possible to divide the family's property which was land; the family lived in the village and was dependent on the heritage of ancestors. Because of this, the ability and preparation to be divided into small, less

populated and urbanized families was less likely. (Asefi, 22: 2010) This ancient group once was passing another decisive stage when the Achaemenid kingdom rose and along with that, for the first time, money and economic wealth appeared. Along with appearance of money and economic wealth, it became possible to divide the inheritance and divide big families into several smaller families. (Mazaher, 4) In other words, as long as the wealth of Iranians was herds and lands, the family inheritance was undividable. But as soon as money and transferable property appeared, individual property overthrew group possession and although dividing of all properties was not accepted, at least division of some part of the property which was cash was accepted. Naturally, family in such a system got divided and got multiplied, and the bulky group got divided into smaller families. (ibid, 11)

Walter Hints claims that Persians had a lot of interest in family; although woman was absolutely subordinate to man, as a mother, she had a lot of respect. When Alexander went to visit *Shahbanu Chisgambish*, Darius III's mother, who had been captivated, he went to her glorious pavilion and said:

I know that in the Persian culture, son does not have the right to sit in presence of mother without her permission. Also Persians do not sit with their wives and do not dance, but they do so only with their informal wives. (Hintes, 390)

Herodotus writes about the authority that family leader imposed on children:

Persians say it is never possible that someone kills his father or mother; they believe that if such a thing happens, definitely it will be realized that he has either been a stepchild or an illegitimate child; because according to their beliefs, it is impossible that a son can kill his own father and mother who have been his true creators.

In this period, the authority of family leader is openly compared with the authority of the king; the king does not have the right to order someone's execution because of a sin, or no Persian has the right to irrecoverably punish his servants or subjects because of committing a sin. In other words, it seems that the family leader had the authority over life and death of the members who were dependant on him including sons, relatives and servants. Perhaps we can understand the relationships between Xerxes and Setaspe in this framework. (Bryan, 557:1391)

We can claim that in this period, if man was considered as the leader or chief of the family, woman also was the lady of the family and had freedom of ideas. Responsibility of woman was not confined to housework and family's economy; but her responsibility was much wider. It contributed to development of social behaviors and values as well as forming of people's personalities. The proof for this claim is what Plutarch says:

Even the great kings of Persia respected the mother *Shahbanu*, and at the table, the highest seat belonged to her; so much so that Ardashir II sat lower than his mother and his wife, Istatira, sat lower than the king. (Plutarch, 484:1990)

### **Wedlock in the Achaemenid Era**

About marriage, its motifs, criteria of selecting a spouse, age of marriage, etc. in the pre-Islamic Iranian families, there is little information in the books. Most information on this regard is available about the lives and marriages of princes, princesses and the ruling class, and little information is available about the lives of ordinary people. Marriage of princes and princesses too, were with the objectives of marrying with someone with an equal rank, with the desire for affluent wealth and position, or winning tribal support. Stability of government, prevention of war, prevention of alliances against others and other political objectives were some other reasons. (Araabi, 2007, 17) Among the ordinary people, marriage had a holy place and since the early Arian civilization, it was considered as the most important event in the family and as a religious ritual. Initially, the wife and husband accepted each other and then, they held marriage ceremony with a specific ritual. Wedlock had a religious importance; because the common belief was that by means of marriage and reproducing the selected and righteous species, the individual helped Ahuramazda in fulfilling his responsibility as a god. On this basis, married life was necessary for everyone and living a single's life was not permitted. For them, breaking this rule was a crime which deserved hardest punishments. (Petrovski, 35: 2004)

Since it is mentioned in the Zoroastrian texts that a girl can marry in the age of 9 and a boy in the age of 15, it can be implied that in the Achaemenid era, there was such a custom. According to Zoroastrianism, there were different types of wedlock. The main wife of a man who had all rights of a woman was called *padikhshai* and had more rights than lots of other women. If the husband was sterile, he could temporarily lend his wife as a *chekarzan* to one of his closest relatives so that she could bring a son. This kind of marriage was usually with a close relative and was considered as a family issue. If a man died without having a son, it was compulsory for his daughter to be *estor* i.e. to marry a member of the family to give birth to a heir; so that in this way, the family line would not be cut. If a woman who had left a man to give birth to a child experienced any loss or hardships, she had the right to return to her previous husband. The term for this custom of heir-begetting by the daughter or the sister who had to admit this marriage was called *aikvin*. Nevertheless, the woman maintained the right to apply for divorce and the certificate of divorce was issued to her. Both man and woman maintained the right of divorce. (Shaki, 1974, 229) Warp and woof of Persian families' relativities was so expanded that it required a lot of wives; and their marriages also were inbreeding, but the family branches which experienced losses because of that avoided such marriages. (Herrenschmidt, 90: 2009)

In this era, wedlock was considered to be a holy relationship which did not end unless with the death of one side or both. This custom of relativity also had rules and regulations for further strengthening of connections. The man and woman who had married each other had cooperation and equal shares of property, works and other ordinary issues such as dowry. (Zanjani, 331: 2001) Life and wedlock of ordinary people, unlike that of the royal life and that of the upper classes, was based on monogamy. Middle class men could not afford having multiple wives. From the texts of the mud scriptures in which we can see different groups, it is implied that an ordinary Achaemenid official's family consisted of a mother, a father and some children. (Rajabi, 311: 2012)

There are almost precious documents about marriage in this period. 45 certificates of marriage were achieved in Babylonia. These certificates have been translated by Martha Ruth. These documents belonged to the period from kingdom of Kambojia to Ardashir II or III. The main part of documents related to marriage i.e. the agreement of suitor with the bride's family was before the marriage. This agreement started with description of husband's commitments to his wife and after that, there was the agreement of bride's father or brother with the commitments and conditions determined by the suitor. Some of these commitments and conditions were as follows: if the wife betrays the husband, he has the right to kill her, or if the husband wants to marry another wife, he has to pay a certain some of money, calculated by silver, to his first wife, and in this case, she has the right to leave home and go to her parents' home. (Brosius, 89: 2010)

It must be mentioned that marriage and making a family in the Achaemenid era, in addition to its social aspects, was important from the individual perspective as well. For making a family, wedlock was the most important duty of every Iranian, and because the Iranians were virtuous and had naive characteristics, they paid attention to marriage to avoid singleness and adultery. They also encouraged their children to do so, so much so that they considered marriage and wedlock as their religious duty. In the Iranian society, order, piety and votary were dominant, and those who prevented young girls from marriage were hated. As much as they upheld wedlock, the ancient Iranians opposed adultery and regarded it as one of the evil deeds. They regarded wedlock as a source of prosperity in the society and their greater objective was the interest in maintaining generations and having children. The girls had the right to choose their spouses. They regarded love and interest of the man as the basis of happiness. It was necessary to see the woman's face for selection (Bina, 2012, 8)

One of the important issues in wedlock was selection of an appropriate spouse. For selection of a spouse, prior to the person's freedom and father's interference, there were rules that limited the youths' right of selection. Getting married to pagans and those who did not have physical health and spiritual balance was forbidden. On the other side, spouse selection had to happen in the framework of social class. Ignoring these rules caused problems. On this basis, everyone had to choose his wife from among the girls of

his own class. In this way, in the time of the Achaemenids, the young man looked for his future partner in a family which had the same class and profession; and for instance, if a princess selected a shepherd's son as a partner, she had to lose the right of her father's inheritance and her class was lowered in the society. Some people believe that the reason for this ban was to maintain the purity of race and species. (Segalen, 2005: 24)

There have also been a lot of discussion over freedom of the girls to choose their husbands, and different opinions have been expressed; according to some researchers, consent of parents was one of the conditions of marriage in those periods. In this way that, without the consent of parents, the girls did not have the right to choose husbands, but compared to them, boys had more freedom in this regard, and had the control over their wives. Another group has said that the young girls had the right to choose husbands without parents' permission, but in case they had done so, their positions would have become lower than the girls who gained parents' permission. From the collection of discussions in this regard, we can understand that parents showed their favorite grooms to their daughters and the girls had the right to choose or refuse them. In the neighboring countries of Iran, the girls still did not have this right; in Babylonia, the girls had to accept the grooms selected by their fathers, and on the other side of Iranian plateau, Hindu girls were sold, without questions, to the men who offered more property than the others, just like goods. (Mazaaheri, 2009, 7)

Another one of the considerable customs and rituals about marriage in this era was the wedding sermon. One of the considerable points was the advice given to the bride and groom in the time of reading the wedding sermon, and it is said that it took a long time (about 45 minutes). These advices included encouraging for piety and virtuousness, avoiding sins, observing daily prayers and annual ceremonies, insistent invitation to remember the dead, obedience to parents and grandparents, following the advices of the Persians, etc. When recitation of advices finished, in reply to the orders of the preacher, the groom accepted that even after the wedding, the girl's father would remain her guardian and representative and maintain the right to give good advices and the husband, with his own consent and that of his father's, take responsibility of taking care of his wife and fulfilling all her needs. (Wishoofer, 2011: 36)

It is said that giving dowry was common in the Achaemenid era and this tradition continued in the time of the Sasanids as well. In return for the affluent and expensive dowries of daughters of royal and high ranked families, according to the custom of *shirbaha* (milk-money), the groom's family had to pay a lot. In the proposal and during the talks about wedlock, they determined the amount of dowry as well. There are no records available about the exact amount of dowry, but according to the guesses of some researchers, it depended on the wealth and position of the couple's families, and some believe that its amount was variable in accordance with the social and economic position of the girl's family. (Moaderi, 2013, 41)

According to the sources, it can be believed that from the very beginning, specially from the time of Darius I, the Achaemenid kings followed the policy of polygamy, or in other words, having multiple wives, in order to meet their political objectives with other important Persian tribes; but gradually, this became so common that it led to entrance of so many maidens and wives to the royal court which later, in a way, led to decline of this great kingdom. Plutarch write: 'other than their legal wives, the Persians take strict care of the women they bought, and their wives live behind the walls of houses, away from the sight of others; and they sit inside totally covered chariots.' Of course, he writes somewhere else that *shahbanu* Astatira, Ardashir II's wife, always opened the curtains of her chariot while travelling and all women could see the *shahbanu* and talk to her; and because of this, she had a lot of popularity, (Plutarch, 1990, 483)

Polygamy was one of the features of the Achaemenid dynasty. The children who appeared through these marriages were inheritors of the kingdom and thus had to take the responsibility of serving the empire and the court, and as potential candidates for marriage, they had shares in creating connections and unity in the tribes. (Wishoofer, 1998, 112) In other words, it can be said that the intention of the Achaemenid kings by polygamy was to bring more children so that they didn't have to worry about successors. (Brosius, 2009, 67) Of course, since the time of Xerxes, there was a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children of the king. Out of the second group, only Darius II succeeded to the throne. (Koke, 2011: 242)

The policy of the Achaemenid kings' wedlock was initially to marry girls from aristocrat, highly ranked families and then to connect their offspring with the family of the founder of the kingdom. This policy changed in the time of Darius's successors. Now the struggle was to secure the throne by having marriages only in the royal family. Marriages with the high ranked aristocrat families were to secure their loyalty, and were rewards for their loyalty and services. Incest marriages, especially marriages between brother, sister, father and daughter had engaged the minds of the Greeks a lot. (Wishoofer, 1998: 110) In fact, the main responsibility of women in the royal family was to establish comfort and security in the royal family. If one member of that family was in trouble, they punished the one who had caused the problem with equal severity. If there was a conflict between the king and one of the Persian court members which would lead to punishment of that member, the king's mother and wife, interfered on behalf of that noble and asked for remission of his punishment. (Brosius, 2009, 69)

## **Incest Marriage**

Incest marriage is one of the issues seen a lot in the pre-Islamic sources, but there are different ideas about it; some people have denied it and believe that it was untrue. On the contrary, some believe that this kind of marriage was common in those periods.



The word *khoidodeh* (incest marriage) has created most crucial arguments between the European and Zoroastrian researchers. The documents of the Achaemenid era show that this type of marriage was popular in the royal family, but about its popularity among the common people, there are fewer documents. It is probable that the source of this marriage was not Zoroastrian but Ilamite and the Achaemenids adopted it to keep the purity of the royal family's breed. Later, this custom became holy. Along with its religious importance, this custom made the wealth of the family remain untouched, unlike the marriages of girls to boys from different families which caused some part of the family's wealth go out of the family. Therefore, this type of wedlock not only maintained the family and its wealth untouched and secure, but religiously too, it maintained the religious connection. (Daryaei, 2004, 178)

In this period, there was only one sample of this type of marriage that has been recorded in history. Kambojia initially married to his immediate sister, Atusa, and then to his younger sister. Herodotus insists that before Kambojia, the Iranians did not marry their sisters. Of course, according to the sources, it is difficult to discuss this claim. Herodotus writes:

They say it was the beginning (his brother's murder) and the crime Kambojia later committed was to murder his sister with whom he had gone to Egypt. This woman was both his immediate sister and also his wife; although, prior to that, it wasn't popular among Persians that a sister and brother get married to each other. Kambojia solved this problem in this way: he was in love with one of his sisters and was about to take this illegitimate step and marry her. He invited the royal judges and asked them if there was a rule in the country that would let a man marry his sister if he wanted... When they faced Kambojia's question, they tried to find an answer which neither would be telling the untruth nor put their lives at risk. Therefore, they replied that although there was no rule that would allow a sister and brother, marry each other, there certainly was a rule that would allow the king to do whatever he wished... It was in this way that Kambojia married his sister with whom he was in love; soon after, he married to his other sister as well. (Herodotus, 1960: 134-135)

It is clear that Herodotus here means to place Kambojia's marriage to his sister along with his other crimes, crimes which do not have historical aspects. We should also be careful about his sister's death and concluding about Kambojia's problems. His marriages to his sisters, one of whom was called Ruksana who died later, and the other one called Atusa, were because his marriage to Faidumeh, daughter of Otans, apparently brought him no children or no son and this could lead to transference of kingdom to his brother, Bardia and his children, and only this type of wedlock was permitted among the Achaemenids and that also in case the person had not been married to far relatives or tribe members.

Marriage of Ardashir II with his daughter Atusa as well, which Plutarch angrily calls as incest marriage and condemns, can only be understood by studying the conditions. If truly such an event has happened and if Atusa has not pretended to be the king's wife, then the reason for this marriage has been the king's desire to have a trustable queen after death of Prushtat and consequently to guarantee position of the prince. (Wishoofer, 2007: 11)

If the Lydian Cosantus says that *moghs* married to their own sisters, daughters and mothers, this makes us think that for Persians, what is nowadays called incest marriage was not forbidden; although this is not still for sure. We should remember that Herodotus says that for this occasion, Kambojia invited the royal judges as if he wanted to do something abnormal, and asks them if there was a rule that permits marriage to one's own sister? The judges replied that they found no rule permitting a brother to marry his sister, but they have found some other rule permitting the king to do whatever he wished. We must consider that in fact, the royal judges reply that there is an escape from the Iranian rules. It means that there was no rule to permit marriage of a brother and a sister, nor was there a rule to forbid it. Hence, this shows that incest marriage was not yet common in Iran, especially marriage of brother and sister was not considered as holy. Naturally, the king's marriage, as well, was like that of the other Iranians', as it is also implied from the text of Herodotus, because Kambojia had married Faidomeh, Otans's daughter, without asking the royal judges; therefore, he had followed the common customs. (Hern Eshmit, 2009, 92) Buis believes that the existence of widespread inbreeding wedlock is proved in the ancient societies. He adds that it is probable that the Zoroastrian society as well, in the early days of its formation when it spread wedlock among the believers because of the low number of its members, has allowed marriages within families; and the clerics came to believe that such intimate connections were practically serving the religion. Hence, *khoidodeh* is praised not only in the Pahlavi books, but practically in the literature, documents and historical records as well, it is approved as a popular custom among princes, clerics and *mobeds* since the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. (Buis, 2002: 81)

### **Divorce in the Achaemenid Era**

There are different and sometimes contrary opinions about divorce in the ancient Iran. Some believe that divorce was much easier than wedlock and the couple could refer to courts, present their reasons and get separated with consent; it means that any one of the two sides could apply for divorce, but getting the consent of the other side was a necessity.

Anyhow, if the husband did not present any shortage or deficiency in the woman or a reliable proof, the law defended unity of the family and prevented their breakup. In this case, even if it was the heartfelt desire of the woman to get separated, she had to continue her married life. According to another belief, because wedding among the Iranians

(Mazdaees) was regarded as a holy connection, divorce was an unappealing issue and was not to make happen. According to that, divorce was not possible unless in four cases: the first one was because of adultery and wife's or husband's betrayal. The second reason was when the woman hid her menstruation time from her husband. The third reason was when the woman did magic. The fourth reason was when the woman remained sterile. In this last case, the husband had to fulfill his wife's desires and let her marry again in case she wanted. The man also could find another wife; because this recent divorce was not possible unless the couple had expressed their consents in full freedom. Except for these four cases, divorce was not allowed by the law. A person who sometimes broke the wedlock connection had to die, because this was considered as one of the major sins. (Bartlmeh, 2011, 56)

### **Juridical Laws of Family**

One of the major issues in the laws of family was education of family members. Children were brought up by their mothers until the age of 5 and after this age, their education was turned over to teachers. In the age between 5 and 20, they taught the child three things: riding, shooting and telling the truth. They regarded telling lies as the most hated vice. Polygamy and having different maidens was permitted; because in the society which depended on number of military forces for its survival, it was necessary to have a lot of children. Families, in this period, were the holiest of social organizations. There are no images of women in the scriptures and sculptures, and women were mostly housewives and brought up children. (Zanjani, 2001, 135)

In this period, family was based on patriarchy; in the meantime, women too, had considerable rights. They had the right of free commute and could transfer their own properties and wealth with free will. One of the duties of women in the family and the society was to bring different children and especially male children. Families with a lot of children often received rewards and aids from the king. Abortion was considered as one of the major sins. Children spent the early five years of their lives under their mothers' upbringing, and after that, they came under father's education. (Nozari, 2001: 19) One of the rules passed by the Achaemenid kings to respect women's rights and support families was that according to Persian laws, only married men were exempted from armed guarding around buildings. (Gezenphone, 1<sup>st</sup> book, 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter) Because of this, Persians, in their law and society, paid attention to the rights and freedom of this class as much as possible, and women had considerable values and positions in the smallest social units i.e. families. (Malek Zadeh, 1968: 95)

While discussing big families among Persians, Herodotus mentions that their judgment about every man was initially based on his valor in war and secondly, on the number of his sons; men who had more sons, got rewards from the king's hand every year. Reasons for this were clear; the Persians needed a big population for maintaining their military and political power all over the kingdom, a population made up of skilled riders that was also

a source of educating officers and administrators for the country's affairs, as well as training aristocrat youths who were summoned for the service of the king so that their characteristics could be shaped with the royal education. (Herodotus, 1960, vol.1, part 138: 1960; Brian, 2012: 559) As a result of this, we find out that its objective was to help the Iranian army and its outcomes were probably explosion of population in the higher levels of society. (Koke, 2011: 241)

Rights of sons and daughters were equal at their father's home and had no differences. Women had the right of owning their own property and if there was no other legally restricting obstacle, they could manage their own property. Women could give testimony and also could serve as judges. Women gained rule and royalty. They had high positions and went to public with full freedom and open faces. (Bakhturtash, 1995:422) Of course, this must also be mentioned that in addition to working outside, women had the responsibility of housework as well. So, they were exempted from outside work for a while when they gave birth to a child. In the time of maternity leave, the income reached its lowest amount which was, of course, enough to make a living. (Kokh, 2006: 270)

Of course, some historians believe that women in the Achaemenid era either received no education at all or their education was very little; and they were generally treated as inferior citizens. This was to some extent due to the popularity of polygamy. A lot of men from upper classes had informal wives in addition to their different wives. Despite the social gap between them, the Persian men and women sometimes fell in love with each other and stated their love. As the famous love story of Abradat and Pantea is well-known. (Nardu, 2000: 70) Herodotus writes: 'what, in the opinion of the Persians, makes men qualified after valor in battle, is the ability to bring children.' He also talks about authority of family leader over his children:

Persians emphasize that no one has ever killed his/her parents and in all cases that it seems such crimes have happened, if it is surveyed, it will naturally be clarified that the child had been illegitimate or had not belonged to that couple; because they say that it is unacceptable that parents get killed by their own children. (Herodotus, 1960: Book I, Part 137)

It seems that at least about the punishments related to violating the customs related to family, the family leader had the authority over the life and death of his relatives including sons of relatives and also over the servants. (Brian, 1999: vol.1, 529)

The principle of family's unity has been reflected in the juridical system. In the time of rebellion, usually the rebel makes all members of the family accompany him; the principle of family's unity easily justifies this behavior, because at the end of the events, they all are assumed guilty and are sentenced to death because of that. Another issue in this field was equality of rights of men and women which had no differences. Women had the right to own property; and if there was no other obstacle that legally confined them, they could

manage their own property. Woman could give testimony and could also be judges. (Durant, 1958: 552)

## Conclusion

By coming to power of the Achaemenid Empire and appearance of changes in the economic system, foundations of families, and more specifically, division of duties in the families also changed. The economic affairs also transformed and agricultural lands, herds and other properties, which were *zento* feudality, became tradable and were transferred to people according to their professions. The family names of fathers were added to the names of people and the number of group members, which was very high, reduced to the members of family. Wife and husband became equal and wives gained the right to own property, the right of inheritance and the right to comment about family affairs and also about political and social issues. The family group which was previously dependent on land, and jointly lived by the use of tools, gradually lost this dependence and every member's share became clear and the member had the right to sell his/her own share of land and other property. By studying the Greek documents and texts, we can find out that in this period, big families that had risen from the tribes and dynasties were considered as the main cores of society and were at its center. In such families, not only were the tribal customs preserved as customs and rituals, but also foundations of these families' economy were based on indivisibility of property and all property belonged to the whole family.

We have to admit that in the Achaemenid era, family and its foundation was based on patriarchy and marriages often were within the social groups. Inbreeding marriage that means marrying close relatives like sister with brother or father with daughter, known as *khoidodeh*, was also common only in the noble classes in order to keep the family species pure. It seems that popularity of such marriages in the upper classes, apart from the family's blood purity, was also related to limitedness of wife selection. Polygamy was also popular in this era and most aristocrats and especially the Achaemenid kings had different wives. It must be mentioned that the role of families in this period was greatly important because of creating the bases for economic, political, religious and cultural activities. This became so much popular that the Achaemenid kings themselves encouraged families and rewarded those with more sons; although this family-loving policy of the Achaemenid kings was mainly for the military purposes, it also must be considered that it helped formation of families and society's population. It can be claimed that back in those times, Iranian families were under the influence and domination of men and in other words, under domination of families. The power of family's father was limitless, but it also has to be approved that still their daughters had the right to marry and choose their favorite husbands, and in cases like divorce, inheritance and property they had the right of ownership. It is dominantly believed according to the records and mud scriptures, that women in the families of this period had freedom and professions; so much so that by

referring to these scriptures and the amount of wages assigned for women, we can find out that women in those days were not limited in the houses; but apart from the family issues, they were active in the social affairs as well. By this deduction, we can find out that the system of Iranian family in this period, regarding the formation of different economic, social and political conditions, experienced changes and transformations; therefore, it received more importance and prominence.

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