

# The Effect of the Constitutional Revolution on Charitable Deeds in Tehran

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**ABSTRACT:** Vaqf or religious endowments are an Islamic tradition of long standing which continue to this day. It is a philanthropic act in the name of Islam for the benefit of the needy or religious scholarship or worship. In fact, it could be said that vaqf performed some of the duties which shoul have been performed by the government. With the onest of the Constitutional Revolution, attitudes changed. The government was expected ti take care of the poor and the orphans, to provide health care and education, as well as famine relief, etc. There was also a new sense of responsibility amongst the public. With the rise of nationalism and the modern trends modeled on western dociety, there was a new attitude to wards charitable endowments. Whereas the nature of Vaqf was religiously inspired, the new charitable acts were undertaken in the name of the homeland Vatan and for the sake of the hamvatan. This new feeling of responsibilty is disernable in the building and endowing of new schools,hospitals, dispensaries, orphaneges, etc. This paper examines for the first time the legal and social aspects of this development and ensuing results. The sources are deeds of endowment in the National Library and Archives Organisation of Iran and Endowments and Charity Affairs Organization of Iran, besides the articles and letters written to this effect in the newspapers.

**Key Words:** The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, Vaqf, Charitable Deeds, Tehran

## INTRODUCTION

This article aims to study The Effect of the Constitutional Revolution on Charitable Deeds in Tehran and hence I will attend to the issue of enlightenment and the start of relations with the West and even the trend of accomplishments of the Constitutional Revolution. Furthermore, the issue of charitable deeds will be examined within the same framework and not before this period although they have historical roots in Iran. Tehran is viewed as the capital city of the Qajar Dynasty and the hub of the social changes of the time. This paper consists of two sections:

- 1) *The effect of the Constitutional Revolution on charitable deeds by the government.*
- 2) *The effect of the Constitutional Revolution on charitable deeds by the people.*

Among the primary changes, which took place in wake of the establishment of the rule of law, one should refer to the organizational enhancment of charitable deeds, which traditionally speaking were previously prevalent in Iran in the form of endowments.

The *Ministry of Endowments*, which was previously among the nine state ministries, upon the ratification of the Majlis (parliament) in 1328 Hijra (1911), continued its activities within the framework of administrative laws under the name of the *Ministry of Culture, Endowment and Fine Arts*, as an affiliation of the Ministry of Sciences (Aqeli, 1995).

### **Establishing the majlis of Health**

Based on the social fact of that time, Iranian residents faced with natural disasters and epidemic disease such as plague, cholera and malaria because of continual famine, starvation and natural disasters.

Thus, the regulation of quarantine carried out in boundaries between Iran and other countries. In 1324AH/1911, majlis of heath ratified the regulation of quarantine in harbors and boarders (Sadri-Afshar, 1975). In 1324 AH/1911, Tehrans heath council, as one of the affiliations of the majlis, allocated a special budget for public heath, since the

governmental moves of the sort were aimed at ensuring public welfare (Elgud, 1992). They essentially overshadowed all deeds which afterwards were viewed as charitable.

### **Establishing of the Municipality**

After stabilization of the constitutional government, the municipality was established and chaired initially by Dr. Khalil Khan Alam al-Dole (Sa'afi) (Khamseh, 1989). Later Manochehr Mirza Emad al-Dole undertook the presidency of the Municipality. In 1325 HA/1917 a bill was ratified in 108 articles which never had any assurances to be implemented. At any rate, in 1339 HA/1921, based on a ratification, a new directorate was established called *Public Health and General Department of Tehran Municipality*.

In 1303 HA/1924, complementary laws were added to the previous ratification and one year after the comprehensive laws on Municipality in 70 articles were passed by the Majlis. Five years later, duties of Municipality were specified. During the early years of the establishment of the Municipality in which villagers swarmed to Tehran. A group of merchants and businessmen founded a commission for collecting donations to be distributed among the poor and needy.

The famine lasted for two years and the commission continued its activities in this time interval. After this, the government was requested to assign certain members of the commission at the *Gates of Tehran* to charge one qaran (the smallest denomination of the Iranian currency) on every commercial cargo that arrived in or left the city. Furthermore, it was determined that one shahi (a denomination of the Iranian national currency) be added to the price of all telegraph correspondences and transmissions. These sums of money were collected and allocated for charitable deeds.

Shortly afterwards, the government itself took over this task and paid about 5,099 qarans every month to the commission to take care of the orphans, poor and needy. After some time, the commission was dissociated. Consequently, Vossouq al-Doleh (prime minister of the time) officially appointed one person to run the "*Dar-al-Masakin*" (shelter for the poor and needy, which was later on transformed into an orphanage). Therefore, the *Charity Directorate of the Municipality* was established.

Meanwhile, due to the dissociation of the donation commission of the Americans, the people who previously received donations from this commission now received donations from the Iranian government.

This led to the establishment of a second branch of charitable institutions called "*Dar-al-Sanayeh*" with a monthly budget of over 6,000 tomans. A document remaining from that period reveals that the government built mosques for sheltering the poor and needy, who increasingly sought shelter in these mosques in winters. Tehran Municipality was assigned the duty of fully protecting and maintaining the health of the poor and needy. Hence, the physicians of the *Public Health Directorate of the Municipality* visited patients based on the lists released by the mosques and examined and treated them in the most cost-effective manner (Archives of National Iranian Documents Organization. Doc. # 290/11/5802).

After Vossouq al-Doleh and during the primership of Mirza Nassrollah Khan Moshir al-Doleh, "*Dar-al-Aitam*" (orphanage) was no longer viewed as a state and social institution and was rather considered as one of the endowments. Some 650 children from different age and social group were also sheltered by "*Dar-al-Aitam*". This led to the release of the following report: "... It is obvious on the basis of sound reasoning that at any time more than half of the allocated budget has not been spent in reality" (Baladiyeh Magazine, 1962).

This referred to the monthly budget of 5,150 qarans of the center, which now that the center has been regarded as one of endowments could be a source of income for its custodians.

When Seyyed Zia al-Din Tabatabaei launched a coup d'etat in 1338 Hijra (1920), Tehran Municipality was dissociated and hence hopes were revived regarding reforms in the *municipal affairs* of Tehran and other cities of Iran.

Meanwhile, some developmental affairs were implemented by the government at *Toupkhaneh Square* and the former charity institution was relegated to the Municipality at the same time and continued its activities under the new name of *Charity Directorate*. The new directorate managed to establish three subgroupings called "*Dar-al-Aitam*" (orphanage), "*Dar-al-Masakin*" (shelter for the poor and needy) and *Municipal Plants* within a period of three months.

Each of these subgroupings had branches or departments as follows:

#### **1. Dar-al-Aitam**

Boys' boarding school and girls' boarding school. The boys' school was located at *Etemad Hozour Garden*, one of the famous state buildings of the time. Some 500 orphan boys were kept in this school. Some of the boys were taught by teachers employed for this specific purpose at the garden and some others were sent to a

school called " *Allameh* " Another group of boys were taught " *orsidoozi* " ( Shoe-making ), carpet-weaving and tailoring in a factory. The location for the girls' school was *Arshak Khan's Garden*. Some 300 poor girls were sheltered in this school. They were taught housekeeping, dressmaking and cooking.

## **2. Dar-al-Masakin**

This place was originally bought from a merchant, called *Haj Moaddel-al-Molk Rashti* and it sheltered the poor and needy under the supervision of the *Charity Directorate* as a legal responsibility of the government of the time (Mahboobi-Ardekani, 1975).

## **3. Municipal Plants**

The last department of the Charity Directorate was a plant or factory (industrial endeavors at the time were quite limited) called *Factory Number One*, which sheltered about 230 of the poor and needy. These people sewed shirts and pants or wove threads for the carpet-weaving factories of "*Dar-al-Aitam*" (Mahboobi-Ardekani, 1975). Thus, on the basis of independent modes of operation, Tehran charity affairs, the chief of which was *Abdullah Bahrani* at the beginning, abided by certain principles and laws and regulations, completely form political and religious establishment of the period.

## **Charitable deeds of women**

Beside changing the governmental framework of society, arising the variety of parties, opening the gates of modern thoughts constitutional movement profoundly changed the society of Iranian women as well meanwhile, women developed a tendency to reform the social place of women, improve health condition and literacy and demand their rights. The issue that was not followed by legal arguments. Following the political presence, women organized their movements and developed their tendencies to social affairs. *Zahra sultan Nezam-Mafi* in a letter to his brother Mohammad Ali, who was studying in Russia, reveals a series of social movements of women which shows their status in constitutional period.

After the first majlis of national council the assembly of *Mokhaderat e vatan* was one of the important assemblies which paved the way for further activities of women. the assembly established in 1329 hijra and chaired by Agha Baigom, daughter of *sheikh Hadi Najm Abadi*. It had 60 members.

All the members sought to establish orphanage, girls school, adults school and to boycott Russian goods. In order to settle the affairs of orphanages hospitals and schools, assembly of women were collecting the donations and charities of people. Meanwhile they had political activities as well. *Maryam Mozayyan al Saltaneh*, president of the Iranian charitable assembly of women affiliated to department of health, demanded the investigation of women's status. Besides fundamental and basic activities, establishing recreative, social and art centers was among the plan of the heads of the women's assemblies.

One of these invitation letters reads: ' All feudal lords are hereby invited for charitable purposes such as building orphanages, hospitals and schools for girls according to the program of the Ministry of the Science, conference parliament and cinema tograph. Their excellencies the *National Commander Sattar Khan* and the *National Chieftain Baqer Khan* will also be present (Ettahadiyeh, 1998).

Among the other moves of these brave women in wake of the favorable conditions created due to the *Constitutional Revolution* was sheltering and teaching poor children and orphans.

They established school such as ' *Pardagian* ' and ' *Mostourat* ' each of which sheltered and educated over 40 poor orphan girls (Iran-e Nou Newspaper, 1909). who were descendants of Prophet Mohammad ( P.B.U.H ), free of charge.

When the Majlis was bombarded and various sections of the print media were closed down, it became difficult to disseminate news and information on the conditions of girls' schools. Nevertheless, in 1332 AH/1914 or, the headmaster of ' *Heshmat-al-Madares* ' reported: ' Some 120 students, who are mostly orphans with unknown parents study here free of charge. *Wife of Sardar Ased* and *Sardar Bahador* ( among the Bakhtiari Tribe's chieftains ) have visited the school after examination given a donation of 10 shahi to each students, 50 tomans to the headmaster, 2 golden 5 thousands to the teachers and 5000 to each servants.

## **Charitable Activities of the MPs**

In this situation and considering people's reaction, not only each women were accused, but also the government could not support them in pursuit of the constitutional government goals. Since experienced men in culture era and building schools such as Roshdiye were not also immune from aliens' accusation. Though natural

passing of time and vents mad the government to enage itself and endeavore to establish schools for girls upon receipt of lisenct from Ministry of Science.

After words, with increasing in schools in 1332 HA (25 schools), 890 girls engaged in education, 192 of which studied free of charge (Ettahadiyeh, 1998). Eventually womens attempt lead to their knowledge development.

Perhaps this action like the others was halted after constitutional revolution, but women could propose their problems through newspapers in a vast level and made the government to attempt the heath and education issues of women.

### **1. Ettihad-e Vatan (National Unity) Charity School**

Upon a ratification by the Second Majlis in 1329 HA or 1911, it was decided the sums of money be provided to one of the famous merchants of the time. *Haj Mirza Reza Khan Tabrizi*, till the start of the activities of the Third Majlis so that a charity school (Ettihad-e Vatan) would be built for orphans (Oshidari and Yaddashtha-ye Keykhosrow, 1976). Consequently, the Majlis allocated a special budget for this task in 1332 HA/1914 and some other orphanages were also built in the process (Oshidari and Yaddashtha-ye Keykhosrow, 1976).

### **2. Helping the People Looted in Various Wars**

In 1330 HA/1912, the Third Majlis ratified that a charity organization be established in Tehran in order to attend to the conditions of the people looted in various wars and sums of money be collected in order to help people of brojerd in the form of donations. Therefore, the legislators of the previous parliaments also took part in this endeavor and about 3,955 qarans were collected and made available to the Majlis Supervisorship Directorate to be spent accordingly.

### **3. Parvaresh Charity Organization**

Due to the attention paid to charity institutions aimed at improving the living standards and health conditions of the public by the Majlis, a charity institution called 'Parvaresh' was established. The parliamentarians had donated money for establishing this organization. Reports by *Arbab (Master) Keykhosrow Shahrokh*, one of the parliamentary administrators of time, show that *Seyyed Hassan Modarres*, who during his entire tenure as parliamentarian had refrained to receive any salary, had donated 9,559.5 qarans to 'Parvaresh' through Mirza Mohammad Sadeq Tabatabaei and Haj Amin-al-Zarb (Oshidari and Yaddashtha-ye Keykhosrow, 1976).

### **4. Ahmadiyeh Charity School**

After the establishment of the charity commission, upon the follow-ups of Arbab Keykhosrow Shahrokh, Amin-al-Molk Park was purchased in order to build a charity school called 'Ahmadiyeh' in the name of *Ahmad Shah* (the last monarch of the Qajar Dynasty) in order to nurture poor children and orphans (Oshidari and Yaddashtha-ye Keykhosrow, 1976). he received a bedge of science in this regard. By the Ministry of Science.

### **5. Ahmadiyeh Charity Hospital**

Dr.Amir Khan Amir Alam, who is among the charitable people educated in France at the time, pursued numerous charitable and philanthropic deeds, including endowing his income for restoring *Dar-al-Shafa Hospital* (Astan-e-Qods-e Mashhad), which was on the verge of destruction.

He also built a Military Hospital with 500 beds in Tehran called *Ahmadiyeh Charity Hospital* through the collaboration of his brother (Hashemian, 2000).

The hospital was run through public donationsa and was called Ahmadih in the honor of Ahmad shah. He himself donated 2,500 qarans for construction of the hospital (Oshidari and Yaddashtha-ye Keykhosrow, 1976). Some additional money was further allocated for this purpose in wake of negotiations at the Majlis in 1333 HA/ 1915. The hospital was later on called 'Sepah'.

### **6. Nesvan Hospital**

Another charitable deed of Dr. Alam was constructing a special hospital for women. He built the hospital in the lot of land that had been given to him as a gift by the government. Dr.Alam also made operational a clinic, a pharmacy and various other departments. Furthermore, since men were not allowed to examin women he employed a French midwife, Madam Damsen and assigned the management of the hospital to her for a few years.Upon the passage of time, he decided that in addition to charitable deeds and helping the needy women who visited this hospital he should found two independent departments to both treat women and children and establish the first midwifery institution of Iran, which trained seekers of knowledge free of charge. The hospital was later named 'Amir Alam' in honor of Dr. Alam's invaluable services. It is currently active and has the same name.

### **7. Charitable Sums of Money of the Post Office**

Following negotiations, MPs in their first round of talks reached the conclusion in 1332 HA/1914 that the sums of money which were found in envelopes, which could not be delivered for any reason, or the articles which remained at the *Post Office* and which for any reason could not be delivered to their owners could be used as donations to orphan schools or for charitable deeds. Ultimately, in a speech by *seyyed Hassan* it was decided that the post office make available the money to the State Treasury and also a portion of the lawmakers' monthly salaries be allocated for charitable deeds.

### **8. Children's Hospital**

In 1335 HA/1917, the first children's hospital was established through collecting public donations under the supervision of the government. Meanwhile, a special charity hospital was built for people who suffered from tuberculosis (Sadri-Afshar, 1975).

### **Establishing charitable school of orphans**

Mirza Mohammad khorasani established a charity school for orphans which some of children and needy orphans were gathered there. since the effects of famine were remained. the children were under training for years (Yaghmaei, 1996).

## **CONCLUSION**

Different social strata, be it the merchants and well-to-do, women who had gained more sociopolitical maturity compared to the pre-Constitutional Revolution era and the MPs who as the executive arms of implementing the rule of law and dispensing justice among the people, affected the charitable deeds which took place in Tehran from 1324 HA/1906. These people were indeed themselves influenced by the fundamental changes in the country and the modern Western paradigms. Religious teaching acquired by the old families and the merchant class, which had familiarized them with the issue of endowment, the link between merchants and the Western world, which had made possible social changes and public welfare and above all the spirit of respect for fellow human beings led to the situation in where Iranians engaged in charitable deeds within a new and more intense framework. Traditional moved such as building mosques, Tekkies (places for Imam Hussein's (PBUH) mourning ceremonies and rituals) and Husseinies (places for Shiite religious ceremonies) as well as holding mourning ceremonies for Imam Hussein (PBUH) were replaced with building free schools for nurturing orphans and poor children and also building hospitals and orphanages.

As mentioned in this paper, the government was also involved in all these deeds both in terms of the original laws of the Constitutional Revolution and the bills passed by the Majlis. Meanwhile, the MPs were the trailblazers in charitable deeds and constituted an effective force in establishing charitable institutions. And the last word is that charitable institutions can be categorized into two divisions: intermittent and sustainable.

In the first form, charitable deeds in a specific period of time and for specific purposes united some people and after the end of the period these people separated from each other. This class of charitable deeds is more common in the pre-Constitutional Revolution era. In the second form, systematic groups engaged in charitable deeds and had specific planning schemes. The specified objective of the boards of trustees and the special criteria designated for charitable activities led to people establishing extensive charity centers in an effective and lawful manner and/or pursue more reliable methods in resolving the problems of the poor and needy.

This new form of charitable deeds gradually expanded and evolved in the course of time and led to the establishment of hospitals and various charity organizations, which continued their activities during the Pahlavi era in a more lawful mode of operation. Charitable and philanthropic deeds still continue in Iran in light of religious teachings and national considerations.

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