

## Investigating the social harms of children in the Qajar era in Iran with an approach in the philosophy of history

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### Abstract

Qajar Era is one of the most important social and economic evolution epochs of Iran's history and it has drawn the attentions of the historians and researchers in the area of the social studies for the formation of numerous social changes. Based thereon, the investigation of the childhood and the children's status in the historical ground can delineate a vivid image of the situations governing the children as one of the most vulnerable classes of the society. Therefore, the present article tries to investigate the status of the children in Qajar Era as one of the most important epochs of Iran's history and simultaneously find an answer to this important question as to what situation has been governing the children in this historical period? It will be also seen that what social harms have been threatening the children's lives?

This article also intends to precisely investigate the children's social harms by focusing on such indicators as the children's sanitation and mortality, children's working, early marriage, education and upbringing and their situation under harsh social conditions, including famines; efforts will be also made to present a vivid image of the children's status through library research and use of well-substantiated documents and evidence.

**Keywords:** child, Qajar, economic situation, social situation, people, community

### Introduction

Undoubtedly, the important position of the children and their role in the life of Iranian families is not hidden to anyone. The family institution has been interlaced in Iran with children upbringing and child birth and children fostering since long ago. In between, historians have been dealing with the functions of the women and men and their roles and stances more than paying attention to the children's importance and their role in the social history of Iran. Thus, it is necessary to adopt a novel approach to the lifestyle of the children in the past thereby to, meanwhile familiarizing and recognizing a historical narration, the children's social conditions can be explored and the lifestyles between the today's and the past children can be compared, if necessary. However, the sure thing is that the childhood is a concept currently largely different from what was thought in the past due to the different approaches adopted towards the children. In the today's modern world, this concept means "children as children" and childhood is a period different from adulthood and, of course, it is of a high value in its own place. But, unfortunately, the children were small adults in the past and they had experiences similar to the adults in terms of their food and clothing and social spaces they attended. Attentions were first directed to this issue by the western researchers and scholars amongst whom Phillip Aries has offered one of the most serious notions in a controversial book during early 1970s. The book "childhood centuries" deals with interesting philosophical questions regarding the living method of the children within the framework of a different and relatively new domain under the title of "childhood philosophy" and presents ideas about the cognitive and ethical growth of them within the format of comparative studies in different cultures; it can be realized as the initiator of the emergence and appearance of the supporting and opposing ideas regarding the childhood history. In his book, Aries directs the public thoughts to the issue that childhood has undergone changes as an independent concept in the course of history. In other words, the real concept of the child depends on the historical and cultural conditions. Based on this approach, it is awareness of the special nature of the childhood concept that make it distinct from the adulthood but the quality of this concept's change is enumerated amongst the topics highly debated by the thinkers. In between, Aries uses the documents related to the exhibition of the children in the medieval artworks to claim that the children were simply envisioned as small adults at that time and the

childhood in its modern sense has never been intended until 20<sup>th</sup> century and childhood had been somehow digested in the society of adults in practice. According to Phillip Aries in the book “childhood centuries”, the children were viewed as belonging to the society of adults as soon as they could live without the permanent care of their mothers or nannies. The confirmation of this claim was essentially laid on the foundation of the medieval art but the children are generally missing from the medieval paintings and their images, if any, are more miniatures of the adults. Aries believed that the initial writings about the ethics and instruction have been transformed into a ground for expanding the child psychology and the wonderful effect on the childhood concepts and children upbringing in the contemporary periods. Thus, Aries points to the course expressive of the progress from the absence of a concept named “childhood” to a period wherein the children are considered important and treated kindly thence to the emergence of the ethics-orientation period in which time childhood is envisioned as a time of preparing the children and rendering them disciplined for adulthood. In Iran, there are independent studies performed for investigating the children’s situation during the recent years because the attentions have been essentially paid to the social history of Iran during the recent decade. In a book called “history of childhood in Iran”, Zahra Hatami endeavored to depict parts of the children’s situation during the formation of the modern history in Iran but this article intends to explore the children’s status in the history of Qajar Era and find an answer to this primary question as to in what situation have the children been in social terms during Qajar Era? It will be also seen what harms have been threatening them in the then period of time? The assumption predicted for these questions is that the children’s life has been influenced in Qajar Era by social, economic and political evolutions and an unfavorable situation has been governing their life conditions and that they have been exposed to such constant threats as parentlessness, bad parents, early marriage, poverty and so forth.

Moreover, since there are many articles written regarding the children’s education and efforts made for revitalizing the modern education in Iran, the present article tries to solely pay attention to the social harms to which the children have been supposedly exposed during Qajar Era so that the challenges can be investigated and evaluated. It is worth mentioning that use has been made in authoring the present article of the archive documents and evidence as well as letters and memories and biographies along with first-hand resources.

### **Children’s Social Harms during Qajar Era:**

Due to the emergence of the political conditions and their effects on the social and economic structure in this era, the children have been exposed to many threats and harms as the vulnerable class of the society. The forthcoming part deals with some of them:

#### **1. Prevalence of Contagious Diseases Amongst Children:**

One of the most important ominous events in the Qajar Era has been the outbreak of contagious diseases that harmed the children more than all others. Some of the reports remained in this regard signify the shocking high mortality of the children and although exact statistics are unavailable, the estimations are indicative of the death of 50% of the children annually (Flore, 2008, p.5). In a report that had been presented in 1910 about the mortality statistics in Tehran for a period of 25 days, 173 out of the 343 dead persons were children (website of the Qajar Era Women’s World, 1909, document no.15158C4). In other words, children accounted for 50% of the mortalities in Tehran and this per se confirms what has been stated by Flore. Furthermore, amongst the important measures taken during Qajar Era has been vaccination which had become common since winter 1810 by the surgeons from English Embassy; the pox vaccine was imported from Istanbul and about 300 children were vaccinated in Tehran (Ghasemipouya, 1998, p.30). The most substantial diseases that dragged the children in this period to death were diphtheria, pertussis, measles and rubella, scarlet fever, pox and cholera (Hatami, 2016, p.100).

Colliver Rice writes the following words in part of the book named “Iranian women and their lifestyles”:

"The most common diseases in Iran are ordinary fever, ague, malaria, eastern diseases, scabies, itching and mange. A few people have not been inflicted with enteric fever and many are struggling with the affliction with typhus. Except in a few centers wherein vaccination has been conducted, pox is a disease the children's infliction with which may be ineluctable; whooping cough has also had many victims. Bone tuberculosis is common but pulmonary tuberculosis is less prevalent. The sexually transmitted diseases are in a high rate ... marriage in young age should be considered as the factor giving rise to many of the pains and sufferings and most of the life-lasting miseries caused under such a circumstance" (Colliver Rice, 2004, p.186).

Pollock portrays his observations of the children's sanitation status and mortality in 1850s in the following words: "Iranian children are found with autumn cholera when they become two years old, especially when they are weaned, and they die after a while with it making no difference if they had been inflicted with the disease acutely or alternatively. At least, one third of the urban kids are diagnosed with this disease, particularly during months of the autumn". (Pollock, 1989, p.139)

He writes elsewhere that "in the cities and out of six children, two can barely survive and all of them sometimes die. The women came to my house every day and wanted me to prescribe pregnancy drugs and, in an answer to my question that have they given birth to any children so far or not, most of them identically stated that they have given birth to five or six children but they all have died. Most of the kids die on the second year. In most of the cities, the birth statistics are lower than the death statistics ... a few brothers or sisters are seen from one mother. On average, few women are seen with more than one child" (Ibid, p.152). And/or Mirza Mahdi Khan Momtahan Al-Dawleh, a politician from the ministry of foreign affairs from Qajar Era, as well, states in an explanation of his own birth that he has been born after the death of thirteen children and he has survived (Shaqaqi, 1974, p.35).

The very high mortality rate of the children during their early life years reduced their importance in the family whether willingly or unwillingly. Lack of confidence about the sustainability of the children's life caused the parents to avoid too much attention and attachment to them and they were always ready to lose them. One reason for selling the children which will be dealt with might be this same mental preparedness of the parents for detachment from their children. In another sense, the parents used to compensate the death of their children by more births. In addition, in July, 1878, in Isfahan alone, 39 out of 117 deaths were children who had died as a result of diphtheria. This is while the children were inflicted with cholera in the next month following their first strike by diphtheria and 49 other children also died (Hatami, 2016, p.102). It had been stated in a report registered on 24<sup>th</sup> of March, 1918, in commissariat no.4 of Shiraz's constabulary that four out of the eight individuals who died on this day as a result of cholera were children. These same statistics were exactly repeated on the next day (Ettahadiyeh et al, 2013, p.716). Insufficient and improper food in the poor people's food basket caused the exacerbation of the children's state in these families in respect to the adults and this same issue forced the families sustain on fruits during summer and early fall hence the higher likelihood of infliction with diarrhea amongst the children (Hatami, 2016, p.103). In this period, the physicians were generally unable to treat the diseases and the people used the vernacular methods to treat them. As an example, there were curers known as "Ojaq" in the periphery of Ardabil and they used to treat children's diseases like diarrhea and vomit. These curers who were predominantly women heated a piece of iron in the stove and placed the hot iron on the patient's neck and subsequently rubbed the hot ashes of the stove on the patient's forehead and realized such a doing as the cause of the children's recovery of their diseases. In another example, the traditional physicians cured the children with measles or rubella by laxatives and defecation following which the children with chronic diarrhea and dysentery died (Hatami, 2016, p.105). In between, the people were looking for non-medical methods like prayers and talisman and magic to cure their diseases and, in some of the cases, they realized evil eye as the cause of the diseases' prevalence as also pointed out by Pollock in his itinerary (Pollock, 1989, pp.409-410). Such an action was advanced forward to the extent that some families used to put girl clothes on their boys to escape the lethal effects of the evil eyes or they avoided to take their handsome child to the bathroom for a long time (even for seven years) lest he dies as a result of evil eye (Colliver Rice, 2004, p.92). Or,

as some wealthy families used to put wretched outfits on their children and make them appear ridiculously so as to stay immune of the evil eyes' harm" (Hatami, 2016, p.108). But, neither armbands and numerous prayers that were tied to the arms and foreheads for repelling evil eyes nor the eyeliner that was drawn for the same purpose to the eyes could keep them immune of such calamities (Colliver Rice, 2004, p.92).

Besides the abovementioned superstitions, there were other issues for warning and frightening the children, especially when they were growing and becoming adults. They were constantly whispered in their ears that there are mean and devilish and harming spirits that may attack you at any moment. One of the first prayers the children were taught was for protection against the mean spirits (Ibid, p.93). A boy was occasionally forced to put on girl clothes for reducing the likelihood of being harmed by the evil eyes (Ibid, p.91). No child was admired and, particularly, glorified without the mentioning of such a phrase as "*Maa Shaa'a Allah*" [may it be what God wants]. The best expressions that were told were somewhat close to the followings: "what an ugly child you have?" and "what a yellow, sick and darn child!" (Ibid, p.178).

## **2. Children's Mortality:**

Besides the contagious diseases that dragged a number of children to the mouth of death, there were various other incidents that caused the death and morbidity of the children. Intentional or unintentional murder, dangerous child games, famine and death as a result of poverty and hunger are the other substantial causes of the children's death in this period. It is noteworthy that population statistics were not exact and reliable during Qajar era and the census was carried out by the states' rulers and, since they had to pay taxes to the government based on these statistics, they usually did not offer exact statistics of the population under their reign. On the other hand, the emergence of famines and contagious diseases sometimes destroyed a large number within a short period of time and altered the population compositions. Therefore, reference to the population statistics of this period is sometimes confusing. As an example, in a census held in 1868, "the number of the persons residing in the capital city of the caliphate has been reportedly 155736" out of which "8480 individuals have been in the army and 147256 have been peasants ..."; out of the foresaid number, "52305 have been children, 19269 have been adolescents and the rest have been adult men and women" (Sa'advandian, 2001, p.107). Corresponding to this census, the children's population accounted for about fifty percent of the peasants' class. However, this ratio has undergone an intensive decline in a census held fifteen years later, i.e. in 1883, and reached about 12% of the total population: "male: 164218 individuals; female: 158977 individuals and child: 37936 individuals" (Ibid, p.122).

Thus, the birth rates have been less than the death rates in most of the cities with numerous factors having been involved in its occurrence in such a way that more than eight hundred children died as a result of cholera during spring, 1859, only in Isfahan. In such a situation, there were many women without children (Sa'advandian, 2001, p.122). The upcoming sections point to the important reasons of the children's mortalities:

## **3. Intentional and Unintentional Murder:**

Intentional and unintentional murder was amongst the most common and abrupt incidents during Qajar Era with children having been one of these unwanted accidents' victims. As an example, in 1910, the death of a one-month infant has been mentioned; it has been stated that the infant who had been embraced by his or her mother fell down following a quarrel and beating and died (website of the Qajar Era Women's World, 1910, document no.15158A47). Some of the deaths, as well, signify the tyranny of the governing class; the wife of Lotfollah punched the maid in her eye for her breaking of a glass and the poor girl died subsequently (Ibid, document no.15158F129). Some murders, as well, are rooted in the sexual abuses with the abuser killing the victim after raping so as not to be recognized; in a report on 28<sup>th</sup> of May, 1894, a seven-year-old girl was raped at night and murdered and her body had been hidden in a cellar and the government never could capture the murderer (Saeedi Sirjani, 1982, p.458). Some of the intentional murders, as well, have been due to the existence of children as serious barrier

for the marriage of one of the parents; the children were killed by their parents so that the way could be paved for their remarriage. As an example, in 1910, a murder has been mentioned by a man who had two wives; he had a three-year-old daughter from his first wife and she was a serious barrier for the divorcing of the first wife and the father kills his daughter to achieve his goal (website of the Qajar Era Women's World, 1910, document no.15158F99). In, 1909, as well, a murder has been reported with the same content; a man in complicity with the sister of his first wife kills a child he had from his second late wife by throwing her into a well. Due to the confession by the murderer's sister-in-law, the court sentenced the man to death through being thrown from a high ground (Ibid, 1909, document no.15158F74).

Some of the murders also had romantic nature; a report registered in 1896 shows that "the son of Haji Sayed Hasan Firuzabadi had fallen in love with a girl who was working as a maid in their house"; the girl refrained from accepting any relationship and responding to his love and this same matter made "the son to kill the girl using a gun" (Saeedi Sirjani, 1982, p.525).

Children's punishment, as well, leads to the emergence of unpleasant accidents. An example of a school mistress's unluckiness occurred when punishing a pupil: "a mistress had several girl students; she locks one of them in a basement for punishment; the poor girl shouts out from inside the basement that the cat is going to eat me. The mistress thinks she is lying. She goes there after an hour and finds out that an animal like a cat has eaten that girl in whole. As it was stated publicly, that animal has been a serpent" (Ibid, p.603).

Dying as a result of suffocation and drowning has also been amongst the other factors of the children's mortalities with their reports being presented daily to Tehran's constabulary during Naseri Period. These reports are full of the news about the children's death as a result of suffocation due to falling in the houses' ponds:

"The nine-year-old son of a man called Mirza Shafi'e has been playing on the edge of the pond and he falls into the pond all of a sudden; nobody except a woman has been in the house but she was asleep and the child drowned".

In another report:

"Yesterday, the five-year-old child of Mashhadi Haidar, the draper, fell into the pond when he was not home; he nearly perished but one of the neighbors happened to go there and bring him out without any damage" (Sheikh Reza'ei and Azari, 1998, p.471).

It has also been mentioned somewhere else that "the pond of the royal artillery square that had not been cleaned for seven or eight years was being cleaned and more than seventy five centimeters of sludge was in the bottom thereof. When they were bringing out the sludge, a head of a grown man and a head of a young man, about 12 years old, along with bones of hands and legs were found. They might have been four or five years in the pond because their bodies are so disintegrated. The investigation office is doing research on this case" (Ibid, p.477).

In Iran Newspaper, as well, in July, 1877, the news about a child who had died as a result of falling into a pond of water and suffocation could be seen (Iran Newspaper, 1877, 2). In September, 1887, the news of a child's death by drowning in a river in Khuzestan had been inserted (Ibid, 1877, 3).

#### **4. Children's Dangerous Games:**

It is well evident according to the studies and researchers that a low percentage of the children from Qajar Era had toys and most of them played in the alleys and streets with their peers. The children from the lower social classes of the society spent a large part of their leisure time outside the house and used the instruments and facilities existent in the periphery for playing and amusement due to various reasons such as the low economy level of the family that did not allow purchasing of the imported toys or due to the lack of conditions for going on trips or getting involved in the other recreations and, in the

meantime, could not also play inside the house due to the smallness of their houses (Hatami, 2016, p.161).

The most substantial games played by the children during Qajar Era were playing with stones, riding on cane, flying pigeons, playing with knucklebone, playing with walnut and playing the roles of king and minister (Hatami, 2016, p.160). This is while the aristocrat and royal families did not allow their children's presence in the alleys and streets except on special days like during the holy month of Muharram and so forth and that along with their special servants like their nannies, their male servants or a member of the family or they bought toys for them, took them to the garden and their summer farm and provided them with favorable conditions for spending their leisure time inside the house (Ibid).

Not all the children were so lucky to educate and they did not have also enough free time to play games; they only engaged in such games as "leapfrog" and "tagging game" during New Year celebrations (Nowruz Holidays). They used to make toys in the form of pannier through the use of wood and they used mud to make statues in the form of human being, animals and birds which were very loose and broke down fast. Most of the girls played with dolls they themselves made using fabric and scrapes at home; they sometimes appeared completely real and they even had nails (Colliver Rice, 2004, p.95).

Taj Al-Saltaneh has repeatedly pointed in her memories to the possession of many toys: "I had been provided with toys of any kind in large number but I was strangely interested in music and I liked to only play with piano and barrel organ; I was busy playing all day long and, in the evenings, I attended the presence of his highness the crown-holder, my great father, as usual" (Ettehadiyeh and Sa'advandian, 1974, p.12).

The children did not refrain in their childish games from performing childhood trick and these childish wickedness and capers were sometimes followed by negative consequences. In the book of Momtahn Al-Dawleh's memories, there are seen tricks played by the children in their childhood and he points to his own dangerous caper in the school:

"It was Friday and we were getting close to the New Year's arrival; it was the 9<sup>th</sup> of February that the fireworks were being sold in the alley. I bought some gunpowder and a little burning fuse with the money I had stored in the corner of my old socks and attended the classrooms on the Saturday morning one hour before the teacher's entry into the school; I made a hole underneath the teacher's mattress and I connected the burning fuse to gunpowder. The teacher used to sit near the window and I used to sit in front of him next to the window that provided me a view of the yard; so, I put the head of the burning fuse from outside the room in my pocket. Then, I sat at a corner and began preparing my lessons. The sheikh entered the room and when he saw me busy with the lessons, he started signing that "O' Mr. Mirza Mahdi Khan, the cows and donkeys do not follow the command unless they are hit by the wet stock; see, if you had not been hit, you were not preparing the lessons instead of playing with sparrows"; in his response, I said "yes, Mr. Haji Akhond, your highness is right". In my heart, I said I will burn your father within the next minute. The Mr. Akhond got involved in scratching his body and capturing the animals of his shirt and ordered me to prepare him his Hookah. When starting the fire in Hookah, I throw burning coal on the shelf of the window next to my seat. Mr. Akhond was busy with his own task and I lit the burning fuse. Mr. Akhond along with his mattress hit the ceiling and fell down. He broke his hand and uproar began" (Shaqaqi, 1974, p.38).

Elsewhere, Momtahn Al-Dowleh writes about the tricks he played on his stepmother and his hard avenging of her: "my father's wife used to decorate herself with my mother's clothes and this action by my father's beloved was very disgusting for me especially when she put on my mother's golden garment which had been sewed for a price of thirty Tomans per every fifty centimeters at that time; if you want to sew it now, it will cost you three hundred Tomans per every fifty centimeters. She was also wearing my mother's blouse which was called "Chap Kan" at that time and it had four rows of golden buttons as big as almond. She occasionally gave me a humiliating look and kept on telling me what to do and what not to do. She had stirred me. It was the first time in that year that match had been brought from Europe to Iran and a person named "Ismail Atashi" had match boxes in his hands and shouted "I make fire by

fire” and sold every box for five Shahi. When my father’s wife was ornamenting herself and moved in the porch while looking down at me, I was thinking about the match box I had in my hands and I was looking for the right time. The lady started moving towards the pond to wash her hands. As soon as she bent down, I immediately lit the match and held it underneath the golden garment and the flames of fire captured the lady; instead of extinguishing her, I was pulling the golden buttons from the blouse and throwing them into the toilet. The maids came upon hearing the lady’s voice and, since they could not put off the fire, they throw the lady into the water pond. Anyway, the lady could not use those clothes anymore and my father’s supervisor sold those half-burnt outfits to the Jews for twenty five Tomans” (Ibid, p.41).

Abdullah Mostowfi also speaks of annoying the sparrows, donkeys and cats in his memoirs (Mostawfi, 1963, v.3, pp.260 and 309-310) and Mahdi Qoli Khan Hedayat, as well, speaks of setting the beehive on fire (Hedayat, 2006, p.3). Fred Richards also recalls pulling the butterflies’ wings off as a game played by boy children in his itinerary (Richards, 2000, p.106).

The dangerous games and tricks resulted in death in some of the cases. As a specimen, a Gilani child lost his life when playing with gunpowder (Iran Newspaper, 1926, p.3). Another child was killed when his friend was playing with a gun and targeted him (Ibid, 1874, p.2). A child from Kerman burnt when playing with match and subsequently died (Ibid).

##### **5. Death as a Result of Famine and Hunger:**

To the same extent that Iran’s famines during the Qajar Era were the effects of the natural and geographical conditions, they were caused by historical and social factors. Alongside water shortage and drought, factors like the occurrence of wars, governors’ mismanagement and the hoarders’ profit-seeking conspiracies, distrusts and absence of trust amongst the people had a lot of effects on the occurrence of famines. When the famine and hunger emerged, struggles and fights were made by the people for survival; it was an effort made in a short period of time through competition and endeavors for preempting others in survival and it is well-evident that the children have been the first losers of this competition and contest due to their physical weakness and low abilities; thus, the children’s mortalities have been very high during famines. The observations of a foreign observer bearing witness to a famine in 1875 in Gha’enat Region of Khorasan signify that all the children had died (Sayf, 1994, p.260) and it has been due to the same reason that a child more than two or three years of age could be rarely found (Ibid). This high mortality following famine practically disordered the population composition and brought about severe reduction in the children’s number to the extent that, as reported by this same foreign observer, the ratio of the adults to the others has been one fourth in Kalat Region (Ibid).

In part of his itinerary, Pollock points to famine periods: “during the years of expensiveness, many of the people die of hunger. The hoarders shut their shops or raise the prices colossally and even the king seizes the opportunity to obtain more profits in this distressed market; resultantly, flag of uprising is held up in various spots. Hungry women carrying children that are nothing more than skin on bones throw themselves in front of the king’s horse and shout out cries and curses. The king becomes afraid of his fate and sacrifices several persons and the storehouses’ gates are opened. In the next year which is the year of the affluence of the blessings and gifts, all these calamities are forgotten again because everyone is thinking about his today and ignoring his tomorrow” (Pollock, 1989, p.102).

And, another report has a sorrowful perspective towards the Iranian people’s status during famine:

“I swear to the God I saw it with my own eyes that the people were dying of hunger on the passageways; then, the others gathered and put bread into their mouths. Some were complaining that it is more than a day that we have no bread”. (Sa’advandian and Etehadiyeh, 1989, p.8)

White’s report incorporates a lot of information about famine and military issues. He describes the famine in the following words: “along the whole length of the road, bare children that were nothing more than skin and bone could be seen. The sizes of their legs’ periphery were no more than three inches. They had pale faces with sunken eyes; their skins were shrunk like eighty-year-old men; poverty had

spread everywhere and the people were incumbently forced to eat alfalfa and grass and/or found wheat grains inside the load-carrying animals' manure on the roads and made bread with them. In Hamadan, many individuals had been forced to eat human meat and it was not uncommon to see children and dogs fighting over the carcass of the animals or taking possession of a piece of garbage on the streets" (Majd, 2008, p.49).

Caldol states the following about the conditions of the famine-stricken people during spring, 1918: "despite the great job by the relief and supply committees for thousands of famine-stricken people, there are also thousands of other people who cannot be helped. Everyone has died as a result of famine and disease, especially in Tehran, Mashhad and Hamadan. Authentic information shows that poverty and hunger has been so drastic that hundreds of the people have eaten grass, carcass of the dead animals and, in some cases, even the human meat to stay alive" (Ibid, p.48).

Stroile describes the scene of a piece of hot pebble-baked bread: "the herd of the hungry watchers darts towards a boy and the congestion is so increased that the boy nearly dies under the hands and legs of the hungry persons" (Ibid, p.47).

Ra'ad Newspaper writes the followings on 28<sup>th</sup> of November, 1918, about the effects of famine in various provinces in Iran: "Isfahan's governor sends a telegraph to the minister of interior and writes that most of the bakery shops are closed and many individuals are dying out of hunger; and also that most of the bakery shops are closed in Tehran. Bread is rarely found and the men and women and children are crying on the streets" (Ibid, p.42).

Ra'ad Newspaper writes the following words on 11<sup>th</sup> of January, 1918 about the persons who lost their lives during a famine in Tehran: "according to a report by constabulary, last week 51 individuals died on the streets in Tehran as a result of hunger and cold" (Ibid, p.43).

Having previously joined England's army, Danahu, a famous war correspondent, had been commissioned as an intelligence officer in January, 1918, to serve Hush Hush Force, Dunsterforce. He entered Iran on 5<sup>th</sup> of April, 1918. He explains his first observations in the following words: "... in Qasr-e-Shirin where I stopped for a short while, I was surrounded rapidly by a group of hungry people. A poor woman with a child on her bosom begged us to save her child ..." (Ibid, p.53).

In an article called "the status of Iran's northeast" that had been sent with a little delay on 28<sup>th</sup> of November, 1917, Caldol speaks as presented below about the status of the people and their infants in Mashhad during a famine: "...the poor people receive the same wage they were given in the past. They are buying bread four times more expensive than it is usually worth; they have generally put away other things like tea and sugar and fruits and so on because they are beyond their pockets' capacity. Thousands of them have not even tasted meat for months. They spend all their money for only bread and many of them cannot even sufficiently procure only bread. I have heard it from an authentic source that they leave their infants on the road so that they might be fostered and taken care of by others. Twenty five of these foundlings have been taken to Imam Reza (PBUH)'s infirmary ... [authenticity] the following words explain the authenticity of my sayings: the carcass of an animal had been thrown outside the city gates in open space (people never trouble themselves for carrying the dead animals' carcasses to outside the city; they often leave the dead animals' bodies on the streets or any other open spaces and the street dogs do the rest of the job). As soon as a carcass was thrown out, the people dashed towards it and began cutting and taking parts of the animal's meat while dogs were standing around and waving their tails boldly and waiting for their turn to come to finish what might be left ..." (Ibid, p.71).

There are reports in some cases signifying that there have been relief groups not providing so much help to the children. In a letter from E. A. Douglas from an American hospital in Tehran to Caldol on 15<sup>th</sup> of January, 1918, it is written: "Dr. J. D. Frame reports on 9<sup>th</sup> of January from Rasht that there are still many problems and entanglements in the city but the Jungle Brotherhood (a new political party) that has calmly taken the control of the city's government recently is paying the costs and taking care of the



rest of issues; they have taken and organized the best relief measures I have ever seen here for a large part of the refugees; not so much work is done for the patients or providing proper care to the children (infants) ...” (Ibid, p.140).

On 14<sup>th</sup> of February, 1918, Dr. Samuel Jordan, head of the American college, writes the following in a telegraph: “there are forty thousand beggars only in Tehran. The people eat the dead animals’ meat and the women leave their infants on the roads” (Ibid, p.45).

Denstrol delineates the reaction of Hamadan’s people to the corpses of the dead who had lost their lives as a result of this horrible famine in the following words: “on the city’s main street, I passed by the corpse of a nearly nine-year-old boy who seemed to have died on the same day. His face had been hidden between mud and slush and the people passed by him as if nothing has happened and as if he was an ordinary barrier on the road” (Ibid).

## **6. Children’s Parentlessness and Bad Parents:**

The term “parentless children” refers to those who are deprived for a reason or another from the support, protection and effective care of family and have no possibility of living inside the family environment. In between, the children with bad parents is the expression referring to those raised by irresponsible parents or by parents one of whom has economic and social problems hence not qualified for rearing them (Hamidi et al, 2018, no.1, p.14). In the history of Qajar Era, there are many cases of bad parenting and parentlessness of the children and exploration of the resources helps illumination of these two issues.

One of the most important reasons for the children’s bad parenting is the internal dispute between the parents and the family’s disintegration; a woman named Fatima Beygom complains about her annoyance by her husband in a letter she writes to Ayatollah Mirza Muhammad Hussein Najafi and tells him about her husband’s throwing of her and her children out of the house and points out that she has sent back the children to their father due to her inability of supplying them with their expenditures but that the father has also withdrawn from accepting them (website of Qajar Era Women’s World, document no. 16179A1).

The death of the family’s head is also considered as another factor of the children’s parentlessness and, because the mothers cannot supply children with their sustenance, they asked various institutions for assistance. This is the same thing that has objectively happened to the family of Sheikh Fazlollah Noori after his death. Sheikh Fazlollah’s wife had the responsibility of raising four children after his death. She explains it in a letter to the parliament and the justice department that she has spent all she has had for her children and that she does not practically have anything for continuing life. She helplessly demands specifying an amount of subsidy by the government so that she can save them from death due to hunger (Ibid, 1910, document no.1018D26).

Some of the bad parentings and parentlessnesses stem from the family head’s irresponsibility and desertion of the house forever. In a document that has been obtained from 1919, it is demonstrated that a man named Fat-h Al-Dawleh who had been at the service of English marries to a woman during the time he has been doing some jobs as the agent of English government in Hamadan and becomes the father of some children. After finishing his mission in Hamadan, he leaves them without even worrying a little about deserting his wife and his children and even without determining their statuses (Ibid, 1919, document no.13118C5).

On the other hand, the father’s death and the mother’s remarriage may result in bad parenting and parentlessness of the children willingly or unwillingly, especially when it comes to taking control of the properties left from a father for the children which becomes another factor for the worsening of the situation; this happening has been registered in 1917 in a complaint regarding the annulment of Laqa’a Khanom’s custodianship of her children and invalidation of her control of her children’s possessions. After the death of her husband, Laqa’a Khanom marries to another man but her custodianship is

annulled and a new custodian is temporarily appointed and the destiny of her children becomes unclear (Ibid, 1917, document no.13118C13).

In between, some of the benevolent and generous persons shouldered the responsibility of supplying the parentless children and families with their primary needs; as an example, it is stated in a report offered by the assistant charitable contributions committee that two children, one girl and one boy, were born in two poor families. The family that had the girl child could not buy clothes for covering her due to extreme indigence and the family that had the boy child could not supply him with his primary needs due to the murdering of the father by the villains. Thus, "both of the children and their mothers were provided with proper food and, as ordered by the commander, the daughter was named Shams Al-Foqara'a and the boy was named Faqirollah" (Ibid, no date, document no. 1016A34).

Therefore, the children were entangled with problems due to the society's social conditions and grounds set in the families and their consequences and outcomes considerably influenced their psyches and minds. Children were afflicted with serious damages due to bad parenting and parentlessness part of which was rooted in the social issues and another part in economic matters that will be dealt with below.

#### 7. Early Marriage of the Children:

One of the most important common phenomena amongst the families during Qajar Era was early marriage of the immature girls and boys who were still traveling in their childhood and suddenly found themselves married to one another or to others in a large age gap from them as a result of the enforcement of part of the micro-cultures governing the society; they exited the childhood space all of a sudden and entered the marital life space about which they did not have any insight and discretion. In other words, early marriages were rooted as a social phenomenon in the Iranians' culture and traditional belief and jeopardized the fate of many of the girls. Moreover, the marriages of the girls and boys in their childhood had adverse effects on their psyches and physiques and additionally imposed many social damages in future on them because the children who had not yet reached proper intellectual maturity and appropriate perception and perfect insight of the life conditions had to unwisely shoulder the hefty burden of the problems in their lives; amongst the most important of these problems were lack of interest in one another, early divorcement, emotional divorcement, the husband's inclination towards another wife and women's escape. This way, there was not so large a gap between the childhood and the marriage of the girls in the Qajar Era's society. The girls often married when in an age range from seven to thirteen and they entered the familial life in practice as an independent pillar and factors like achievement of economic independence, relatively fast growth of the girls during that time and lowness of the life expectancy due to the prevalence of various diseases and non-observance of the hygiene principles were effective in the increase of these early marriages. Thus, in line with familiarizing the children with the canonical obligations and fulfillment of the religious commands and performance of the worships and preservation of cleanliness and chastity and enhancement of honor veneration and deterring perpetration of such prohibitions as drinking wine, gambling and adultery, the goal of upbringing in the family was generally protecting the children and adolescents against ethical decline, as well, and it was due to the same reason that the fathers and mothers forced their boys to get married as soon as they reached maturity and physical growth and they also allowed the marriage of their daughters from their age of nine on based on canonical traditions (Shamim, 2005, p.370). This that whether the girls were satisfied with early marriage or not is a question the answer to which has been given by Taj Al-Saltaneh in her memoirs. She realizes marriage in young age as a type of harm and damage that leads to misunderstanding and misconception and eventually divorcement. She was also forced to early marriage despite her belief in early marriage's heinousness. It is only sufficient in this regard to present the readers with the following excerpt of her talks about her youngness when getting married: "They took us to the groom's house in huge commotion and with a lot of respect. I was so small and young that I could not get off the carriage and my father-in-law hugged me and carried me to the yard and handed me over there to my relatives and went away and I did not know I should be ashamed or I should not look around at all" (Ettehadiyeh and Sa'advandian, 1983, p.74).

Elsewhere, she says: "... I was also a young girl, a child that still needed to be cared, a child who was still to learn about lifestyle and a child that could be deceived" (Ibid, p.80).

Or, she remembers that "... (on the wedding night) they sat me on a golden chair. It was all very preposterous and funny for my feet were 25 centimeters above the ground and I was so small that they picked me up and took me up the stairs" (Sa'advandian and Ettehadiyeh, 1974, p.29).

Her perspective is also ponderable about her young husband: "... my dear husband is a haughty and boring child ... my husband was playing a game ... he became once a king and another time a minister ... he made paper monsters ... these were his childish games" (Ibid, p.76).

Amongst the other examples of early marriage, the marriage contract between the five-year-old daughter of Mirza Aqa Sayed and the young son of Moshir Al-Molk can be pointed out (Sa'eidi Sirjani, 1982, p.287).

Also, Clara Colliver Rice has pointed to this important issue in the book "Iran's women and their lifestyles": "one day in the evening, I was invited to attend a wedding ceremony that was being held in our neighborhood ... the bride was a child not older than ten years of age though they said she is twelve years old. The bride was shouting in objection that 'I do not want to get married; I want to go to school; I do not want to become a bride'". According to her, nobody cared for what she was saying ... the groom sat in front of her at the side of a mirror; he was so old that he could have been the groom's grandfather" (Colliver Rice, 2004, pp.103 and 105).

In the culture of the Qajar Era's people, this issue has been well institutionalized that the girls should be reared in such a way that they forget their own personalities in respect to their husbands' upon going to their houses and realize reproduction and raising of the children as their own natural and canonical duty (Shamim, 2005, p.370). Furthermore, the conditions of holding wedding and bonding ceremonies were different amongst the aristocrats and the indigents; it was customary amongst the poor classes that the bride goes to the husband's house right on the second night after wedding ceremony while the wealthy and rich classes allowed the bride to go to the husband's house seven or eight nights after the wedding ceremony and the interval, as mentioned above, was filled with feasting, playing music, lighting and also firing a cannon in the case of traditional marriages and the husband did not have the right to ask the companionship of his wife or even see her as long as this feasting and banquet was being held (Sa'advandian and Ettehadiyeh, 1974, p.23).

Pollock, as well, has dealt with this important issue in his itinerary and presents a detailed account of the marriages between girls and boys in the poor and wealthy families: "most of the children are nominated for marriage to one another when still in the cradle and this most predominantly holds true for the case of cousins. The marriage of the family members with one another is considered as a tradition and axiom. If a female cousin happens not to get married to her male cousin for a reason or another, a lot of hostilities and sufferings would follow for a long time". (Pollock, 1989, p.142)

In this way, a beautiful girl was envisioned as a capital by her father and mother because he who wishes to marry this girl should pay a high bride price in exchange and become committed to the bringing of dowry, as well (Ibid, p.143).

As for the marriage of the boy children, it has to be stated that although they become mature when reaching the age of 14, their marriage age was also variable in such a way that the boys from the well-known families were sometimes nominated for marriage to the girls selected by their parents when they were about sixteen or seventeen and sometimes ten (Ibid, p.147).

Amongst the other cultures governing the Qajar Era's society was the prevalence of compulsory marriage amongst the people. In such marriages, both or one of the couples did not have any role in the selection of his or her life partner and they entered permanent or temporary marriage to one another without even having seen each other. Cultural poorness and observance of the old traditions were amongst the reasons for the emergence of such a style of marriage. Pollock clearly affirms this issue by stating that the men did not have the right to see their future wives before first getting married to

them and the girls did not have the right to see their husbands rather it was the chieftains who decided about the future of the girls (Ibid, p.145).

The opposition to the marriage of the young girls can be seen for the first time in some memoirs and poetical books written in the seclusion and privacy of some women like Taj Al-Saltaneh and Jaleh Gha'em Maghami (Sa'advandian and Ettehadiyeh, 1974, pp.40-41).

Taj Al-Saltaneh states that "miserable was me who was sold like a prisoner and bondswoman with apparent jewelry and decorations while having not seen the husband even once and being not accustomed to his temperaments; instead, I fancifully accepted this companion and associate of mine forever and fostered only the name of the husband in my mind. It is one of the greatest miseries of the human beings who should marry as their fathers and mothers will" (Ibid, p.28).

Furthermore, in an article published in the newspaper "Language of Women" under the title of "marriage at five", Seddiqeh Dowlatabadi recounts early marriage as one of the greatest miseries of the society and demands marriage at higher ages parallel to the upbringing of an able and strong generation (Dowlatabadi, 1983, pp.198-199).

It is worth mentioning that the selection of the second wife by the men also caused dissatisfaction and bad temperaments in the interrelationships of the children from the first wife and those of the stepmother: "the wife of a man called Haji Ya'aghoub has died now for two years. He has a 12-year-old boy and he has married to a new woman. As usual, the boy does not come to term with the new wife of his father. Last night, a quarrel was started between the woman and the boy and she hit him and the boy ran away and went to the house of his uncle who is an artillery man. He brought his uncle to the house to support him. A fight was about to begin between Haji Ya'aghoub and the artillery man that the police elements came and made them quiet and reconciled (Sheikh Reza'ei and Azari, 1998, v.2, p.483).

## **8. Child Abuse:**

Any sort of physical or psychological harm and sexual misuse or exploitation and falling short of taking care of the needs of individuals below the age of 18 by the other individuals is termed child abuse in such a way that this term includes a vast spectrum of damaging behaviors like non-satisfaction of the children's primary needs, negligence of the sanitation cares, absence of sufficient growth, punishment and physical misbehavior, sexual misuse and psychological annoyance (Musavi Bojnourdi, 2008, no.3, pp.7-8). Based thereon, child abuse can be categorized into several sets:

- A) Physical child abuse
- B) Sexual child abuse
- C) Emotional child abuse
- D) Child abuse stemming from negligence and compromise

These will be briefly explained beneath:

### **A) Physical Child Abuse:**

This type of child abuse includes physical assault to the child in such a way that it causes pain, cut, bruise, breaking of bone and other injuries and even death of a child (Ibid, p.9). Based on this same definition, numerous cases of this type of child abuse can be pointed out during Qajar Era in which the children were extremely subjected to physical annoyance. In a letter that a servant child has written to his master, the explanations can be seen about physical annoyance in the best possible state:

"I was so fiercely bumped that I did not have any vigor left ... today, my index finger has been cut and I cannot write this petition properly" (website of Qajar Era Women's World, no date, document no.13104A82).

Based thereon, hitting with stick, bastinado and caning of the feet, keeping a person in a standing position for a long time, sitting on the ice and snow and/or keeping one with bare feet, forcing to hold a heavy weight in hands, locking in dark places, placing sand particles underneath the ear tulips, putting pencil in between the fingers or demanding a person to stand on one foot and keep hands up are amongst the punishments in this period of time. Abdullah Bahrami has the following words in his memoir regarding his time's punishments: "the sticks from cherry tree that were kept in the school's pond of water before the students' eyes for keeping them soft and fresh and/or were in the teacher's hands or in the teacher's vicinity along with bastinado and caning or locking the children in the dark and humid cellars were the most common methods of children's punishment in this period. The schoolmasters used to repeatedly hit the children and/or tie them to bastinado and begin caning their feet with the smallest negligence or the lightest movement of the pupils or with the tiniest mistake in reading and also with the smallest smile or conversation" (Hatami, 2016, p.72).

In some of the cases, as well, when noises were made on one corner of the room and the children played tricks and the teacher could not find the guilty and blameful student, all of the children on that side of the class were punished collectively; the teacher either hit them with stick or ordered another person to tie them to the bastinado to be caned (Ghasemi Pooya, 1998, pp.78-79).

But, the notable point in this period was the parents' reaction to the physical punishment of their children in the school. They not only did not condemn such an action but they, instigated by this old saying that 'the teacher's oppression is better than the father's love' also encouraged it for correcting of their children. It had been customary in Ardabil that when the parents of a child sent him or her to the school, they uttered this sentence to Akhond Baji (male or female teacher) that "his meat is yours and his bones are mine"; this signifies that the parents were happy even if the teachers hit their children so furiously that all their flesh fell down (Safari, 1983, v.3, p.165).

## **B) Sexual Child Abuse:**

Sexual abuse is also getting the children engaged in activities that lead to the sexual satisfaction of the adults. Based thereon, the national center of the child abuse realizes sexual misuse as the contact or interaction between a child and an adult who uses the child for sexual stimulation (Musavi Bojnourdi, 2008, no.3, p.9). There are many cases of sexual abuses in the works and reports from Qajar Era and they indicate the extent to which the then society has been faced with this important challenge. The abuse of an Ottoman citizen to a girl in Langarud in 1904 (website of Qajar Era Women's World, 1904, document no. 13118A19) or the raping of a ten-year-old girl in 1898 (Saeedi Sirjani, 1982, p.582), abuse to a four-year-old boy in 1899 (Ibid, p.609), abuse to a Jewish girl in 1898 and abuse to a boy by the special force soldiers in Shiraz in the same year (Ibid, p.602) are but a few of the reports recorded in this period.

In order to preserve security of the society, the government attempted to sentence the child abuse cases justified through authentic proofs to the maximum punishment. As an example, a black 15-year-old bondsman rapes a four-year-old boy: "the relatives of the child plead to the government's sheriff. He captures the black bondsman, hits him and cuts off his ear and harnesses him and drags him around in the bazar". But, this was not the end of the punishment; it was ordered that this punishment is not sufficient for the bondsman; a sentence was issued that his four fingers have to be cut and his master was sentenced to pecuniary punishment for fifty Tomans" (Ibid, p.638).

It is stated in another report recorded in 1902 that "a person had sexually abused a child no more than six to seven years old; the relatives of the child brought a petition to the state's governor. The governor sentenced the person to beating by stick and cutting his wrist off. The abuser has allegedly died" (Ibid, p.714).

In some of the cases, as well, the government also sentenced the individuals who had had child abuse intentions but did not succeed in doing so to extreme punishments so that it might be a lesson to the others. Amongst these cases, the cutting of ears and fingers can be pointed out (Ibid, p.218).

### **C) Emotional Child Abuse:**

Emotional child abuse includes any improper behavior adversely influencing the behavioral, cognitive and affective performance of the children. Verbal abuses, scolding or humiliation, insulting, frightening the children of hard physical punishment and mocking are amongst the cases that can be mentioned as but some examples (Musavi Bojnourdi, 2008, no.3, p.10).

One of the places wherein the children could be emotionally subjected to annoyance and disturbance was school houses. The teachers used physical punishment to correct the children and simultaneously they used bad words and uncommon language to insult and humiliate the children.

“In some of the school houses, the ethical punishment was commonly practiced depending on the teacher’s taste; it means that the entire pupils shouted altogether such words as “alas”, “woe” and so forth for mocking a guilty person; they also made similar sounds and interjections and uttered similar words to do so” (Ghasemi Pooya, 1998, pp.77-78).

Taj Al-Saltaneh, as well, speaks of the shortage of affectionate relationship with her mother: “why should not a mother milk her own child; why should she not rear him or her in her bosom? Why should a mother drive her child away from herself and give him or her to the hands of the others? ... The same holds true also for the miserable me who was deprived in the beginning of childhood from the flaming love of a mother”. (Ettehadiyeh and Sa’advandian, 1974, p.10)

It is worth mentioning that paying attention to the emotional needs of the children has also been important to the parents in some of the works; Gholam Hussein Ameri Sardar Mojallal writes a letter to his wife and wants her after greeting and expressing that he misses her to take care of Khanom Kuchak, their daughter, so that she might not feel loneliness and nostalgia; he also passionately speaks of their another child that was going to be born (website of Qajar Era Women’s World, no date, document no. 17201A33).

In a book named “social, political and economic thoughts in the works published in Qajar Era”, Homa Nateq, as well, reminds of a letter written by Aqa Reza Gholi Khan who expresses therein his utmost attention and fatherly love for his recently born son and mentions the way he has to be kept and taken care of (Nateq, 1977, pp.562-577).

### **D) Child Abuse Stemming from Negligence and Compromise:**

Negligence and inability of the parents in preparing the food, clothing, housing, sanitary and medical needs of the children fall in the category of child abuse as a result of compromise.

One of the most important incidents of the Qajar Era’s history is purchasing and selling children, especially the girls, in such a way that they were bought as sheep and sold (Nateq, 2006, p.15). A search in the resources for finding the cases of child sale in the periods of pervasive poverty and famine would lead to the discovery of countless cases. However, amongst all these cases, the story of the selling of girls from Ghuchan to Turkman horse-riders in the years coinciding with constitutionalism is more well-known than all the similar cases. In this period and in spite of the famine and drought and locusts’ attack to the farms of the people from Ghuchan, the local governor, Shoja’a Al-Dowleh, not only did not take any measures for helping the people but he also increased strictness in levying taxes from them.

He seminally dispatched his agents to the periphery for collecting taxes and they took it hard on the poor peasants whose crops had been eaten by locusts for two consecutive years and hand not smelled the scent of wheat; the peasants asked for a respite and they did so? Yes! They shot fifty or sixty persons by their guns and several others threw themselves into the wells and aqueducts and ruins in the fear of being shot. They gave up their lives in the remorse for bread. The rest were scattered and migrated to the land of Akhal and sold 250 of their dear daughters to the Turkmans till that time for a price from 15 to 40 Tomans so as to acquire money to pay their taxes to his highness Shoja’a Al-Dowleh” (Najm Abadi, 2002, p.46).

Beggary by children with the encouragement and supervision of the parents was used as an instrument for winning the commiseration of the passersby and travelers is amongst the other cases of this set of child abuse. Children's beggary was carried out sometimes along with family and occasionally alone and the children who engaged in beggary were less exposed to damages.

In addition, numerous articles published in Shokufeh Journal criticized the mothers' ignorance of the children's hygiene and particularly realized their ideas regarding the ineffectiveness and unfruitfulness of vaccination of infants and children against pox as being the result of their unawareness and indifference of and towards their children's health (Bagheri and Khajeh, 2014, no.20, p.73).

### **Conclusion:**

It can be concluded according to the performed studies that the children have been one of the most vulnerable social classes during Qajar Era and a large number of them at least did not have sanitary facilities and proper nourishment to survive. While childhood has to be full of tranquility and happiness, most of the children who were living in the Qajar Era did not have proper life conditions. The intellectual grounds governing the society, class gaps, economic pressure and unstable policies of the Qajar government and their attentions solely to political and military matters caused the children not to have so much favorable conditions. In between, the inappropriate healthcare situation and children's mortality as a result of the outbreak of contagious diseases always exposed the families to the loss of their children and if a family's child happened to survive the diseases, the upcoming improper conditions like wars, economic poverty, hunger and famine perished them. In between, the government, as well, had a lot of political concerns and was struck with a lot of crisis hence failed in devising solutions to the children's problems.

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