

## The Improvement of Women's Rights in Turkey and its Effects on Social Change (1839-1938)

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**Abstract:** Turkish culture and social structure have changed significantly in its long historical process. Undoubtedly, this situation reflects improvement in many aspects. However, it is not possible to refer to any kind of continuity till modern times in terms of the improvement of women's rights. For as much as, some religious comments and environmental factors made the traditions occur which cause women being treated unjustly. This negativity has been prominent in westernization process and women's situations have been discussed. Especially, subjects like women's clothes, education, working life, civil rights in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century have been handled in literary works, newspapers and magazine articles. Women's rights have started to improve with some arrangements in this situation. However, an improvement suitable for the age has been possible in the Republic period. As a result of this success provided with Atatürk's revolutions, modern Turkish society has appeared.

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**Key words:** Atatürk's revolutions · Women's rights · Turkish society · Social change

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### INTRODUCTION

The improvement of women's rights in Turkey is an event which takes place under the effect of the west and at the same time it reflects social change. However, unlike the west, the change in Turkey has not occurred as a result of social mobility but by means of government effect and revolutions. In addition to this, it should not be concluded that the mentioned change does not have any kind of societal support. Because, it is clear that the restructuring process, which started with the declaration of the Administrative Reforms in 1839, paved the way for a social change and created an accumulation for the Republic Period which started in 1923. Yet, since there were not urbanization and industrialization in those years, this accumulation did not form any kind of social mobility. As for the revolutions realized in Atatürk's period; they quickened the social change process and provided equality of women and men including the right to elect and be elected with a very sophisticated implementation which could not be expected by the majority. With the economic improvement, this situation has been the most important factor that generalized social change and that provided the modern Turkish society be created.

**An Assessment Directed to Pre-Republic:** It is known that in old Turkish culture woman is valued, esteemed in the society and is equated with man apart from some exceptional cases and she rules the government with khan, even she undertakes the control herself when necessary. This resource-based information is supported by Turkish mythology and Turkish folk stories. However, Turks' homeland Central Asia is a difficult zone to live where in history there were always wars and struggle with the nature and where the economic life generally depended on animal breeding and because of all these a nomadic life style developed. Therefore, it is not so surprising for a culture providing cooperation between man and woman appear in this kind of structure. As a matter of fact, Kafesoğlu states that women and men were all ready for a fight as a necessity brought by the desert life, so like men women learned to ride horses, shoot arrows, wrestle, hunt and they acted in wars beside men when necessary [1]. Yet, the important point is, no matter how were the conditions women were honorable and there was law in family and society. It is undoubtedly a surprising situation for the improvement of law and culture giving women status and covering their basic rights and freedom in old times. Gökalp refers to magical

power belonging to women in Shamanism as an important factor in this respect [2]. While mentioning about the dignity and political rights of women in old Turkish law, Turan emphasizes the statement in Göktürk Epigraphs “Turkish God sent my father İl-teriş Khan and my mother İl-bilge Hatun lest Turkish community die” and accordingly emphasizes on beliefs [3]. In addition, it is inferred from the inspection of resources and folkloric studies that family is dignified together with woman. As a matter of fact, considering “adultery” as the most important element threatening family law, it is known that everybody who does this adultery act even though they are married, without exception of man-woman, are be punished with death. In this respect, famous Arabian traveler İbn Fazlan has interesting findings [4]. So it means that, adultery has not been restricted to chastity which is the common value of almost all communities. If it was so, divorce would be enough. However, it has been understood that the case has been examined in the context of public law by means of punishing with death. That is why there was no sexual discrimination in the punishment.

There is a general view that Turks have changed their lifestyles considerably and women-men relations have been restricted with the acceptance of Islam since the middle of 10<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, this change process should be analyzed with more data. It is clear that the change is not the same in each area and it progresses slowly. As a matter of fact, it is stated in Seljuk research that women were active in social life and they joined in wars as it was before Islam. What is more interesting is that, there was a women’s organization called Bacıyan-ı Rum that passed from Anatolian Seljuks to Ottoman stated by Aşık Paşazade [5]. The women belonging to Bacıyan-ı Rum, took charge in military areas beside economic and social activities. Consequently, the change in Turkish social life should not only be handled with religion but with the development of urban life. Moreover, religious factor offers differences between periods. For instance, views telling that after the pass of caliphate into Ottoman, a religious sense based on Arabian interpretation grew are important in this respect. It is clear that studies which will be done with multi-disciplined point of view will be informative. Yet, an example would be enough in order to make comparison between periods: while famous Arabian traveler ibn Batuta who traveled many Turkish habitations including Anatolia in the middle of 14<sup>th</sup> century, was surprised at Turkish men’s respect and concern to their wives in North Black Sea Region [6]; in 16<sup>th</sup> century that Ottoman parents cannot visit their daughter without their

son-in-law’s allowance has been a matter of fatwa [7]. This situation is interesting and the Arabian influence should be examined. Surely, there are elements of the Pre-Islamic Arabic culture which go on leaving after Islam. We know that, in ancient Arabians women were despised and looked down on. Wealthy men could marry as many women as they wanted. On the other hand, women could not be considered as real wives if they could not give birth to boys. Such that, if a woman died before giving birth to a boy, people did not use to condole with her husband [8].

It is necessary to state here; the point is not that in Ottoman women were under pressure. The change Turkish society has passed through has been examined taking account of the features of the era. In this respect, the problem is that woman is wanted to be got out of the social life and raised only as “a good mother, good wife”. Therefore, the possibility to have education, culture, status and fortune is taken from her. Also, it is a fact that this situation progressed as a social process rather than a legal arrangement. For, in Ottoman Empire women had the possibility to marry, divorce, right to have real property, have heritage, work in agriculture, animal breeding and textile, sell what she produces and seek their redress in court when they suffer wrong. Ottoman law protected women’s these basic rights. In addition to this, there are examples of some unfair acts towards women which have become legitimized and been customs in the eye of the society. For instance, making daughters marry without their allowance as soon as they get out of childhood is done very commonly. Even though it is not frequently seen we learn from the şer’iyye records that girls are married off at very young age [9]. That girls are partly or completely deprived of heritage is a case. If the girl was married, her heritage became her husband’s property and this was considered as normal. Women’s suing their husbands was not something usual therefore coming across with records of this kind of cases is difficult. Yet, in this respect it is a fact that we have precious data of verbal history.

**Change in the West:** The west civilization, improving technologically arising from knowledge, learning and its practice, has naturally influenced human relations and social structures deeply. With the spread of technological equipments in all areas, people’s life styles and perceptions of life and have changed. This situation started the modern times period which goes till the change of production and property relations in time. It can be said that, woman’s place with men and status in the society

have changed in this way. In other words, the rising process of the west civilization reflects the improvement in women's rights at the same time.

The history of the discussions and demands directed to women's rights is not so old. We know that men dominated cultures and religious dominations interpreted by men are dominant in almost all eras. However, as a result of the accumulation provided by Renaissance, different views have developed in the west and criticisms against the dogmas and authorities limiting the human lives and thoughts at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century appeared. In this respect, Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Bayle and many other philosophers have become the pioneers of enlightenment and critical thinking. These names are followed by some elite philosophers like Rousseau and Condorcet in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A new direct improvement related to women appeared as the result of principles of human rights and thoughts spread after the French Revolution.

Mary Wollstonecraft, who was influenced by this movement in England and who faced with all the negativity of sex discrimination in her childhood, published a work called *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792. Wollstonecraft stated that girls are brought up with the thinking that they are the slaves of men and then this slave situation is perceived as the "nature of woman" and from this point of view she tried to shake the dominant view that "woman is created for man" [10]. These ideas attracted many supporters at a time when a new civilization was taking form and revolution process was going on. When it came to 19<sup>th</sup> century, woman's place was discussed more and women came a step forward with her ideas. In this way, as a concept, "women's rights" gained importance in many countries including America and Australia. What is more, it was always expressed that women should not only be equal in economic or social areas but also be equal in politics. Wollstonecraft said in her mentioned work "that half of the human race does not make the other half join in ruling the government is an impossible political case to be explained when looked from the abstract principles' view human race" [10].

**The Effect of the West:** While the Western world was going through a changeover about women's rights, Ottoman Empire was trying to keep its existence in front of the west. Therefore, it was becoming westernized with a paradox like approach. However, this process had not started with realizing the big change in west, but started with the aim of strengthening the defense after the

continuous beats. In addition to this, it was important to improve the contacts with the west. As the result of these contacts, it was easy to accept the west thinking and to adapt the western values which became universal. As a matter of fact, some new legal arrangements about women have been done. Egalitarian arrangements aimed at removing sex discrimination related to family, heritage and real property law started in II. Mahmud's period and continued spreading with the Administrative Reforms. On the other hand, slave-trade was forbidden and concubinage was abolished.

As it is clear, these reforms reflecting the western effect urged Ottoman society to change radically. It is so that, closed community structure based on religion and communions lost its sameness as a result of legal arrangements directly affecting life styles and improvements in education. In this way, the collective conscience of the communities started to turn into nationality consciousness. It should be accepted that, in this condition it has become inevitable to improve individualist feelings and to discuss women's rights along with it. As a matter of fact, it is not a coincidence that women subject is emphasized first in the literary works in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century then in media. Şinasi, Namık Kemal, Ahmet Mithat Efendi, Şemseddin Sami, Sami Paşazade Sezai and Fatma Aliye Hanım were the pioneers in this respect. These famous writers generally emphasized on common problems like the marriage of young people who do not know each other, polygamy and women's being beaten by their husbands. Apart from this, they discussed women's being insulated from economic and social life in cities, the situations of slave women, girls' being deprived of education and being separate from men. The woman subject took its place on the agenda after the criticism of the dressing style of women including black chador, yashmac, robe and veil that became dressing habits afterwards. Therefore, a significant accumulation of ideas related to women's rights has been provided. Since the society was accustomed to new ideas, newspaper and magazines directly aimed at women were broadcasted in 1880s. Some of them were; *Humanity, Women, Family, 'üküfzar* and *Newspaper for Women*.

Considering these changes, it can be understood that the westernization process, which started with the help of government effect, has been reflected on social structure and therefore the change improved with civil initiative. However, since Ottoman society included many different languages, religions and communities and therefore it was not homogenous, it is not possible to make a

generalization. After all, the rural population was high, and there was not a transportation network which connected villages to cities and cities to neighboring cities. In this respect, it is known that the change kept in limited environment. In the mean time, it is extremely important for a process giving the possibility to improve women's rights to continue without break.

During the years of second Constitutional, woman's problem was discussed more with its many aspects. New woman newspapers and magazines were published. Then, an atmosphere of freedom in which all ideas could be discussed was formed. According to Safa, Turkish society and press benefited from this situation. There were no ideas or claims which threaten people after it is brought forward [11]. And Turhan, says that there are no accepted elements today on which people did not talk about, wrote or discussed at that time [12]. By all manner of means, this situation is related to both change of regime and to the speed societal change has gained.

The most enthusiastic side of the discussions was the spread of the western woman clothing. Then, this situation was changing the aspect of the streets. Among the reactions, there were the warning announcements of Shaykh al-Islam and İstanbul Guardianship [13]. In contrast with this, *İçtihad* (Judicial Opinion) magazine which is the media organ of the westernizers went on defending that being covered in veils should be removed. What is interesting is; the core of the dressing case brought on agenda by Fatma Aliye Hanım first in 1893 was that Muslim women could be modernized in religious style at that time [14]. However, that women fastly started to adapt European clothing and fashion style by getting far from being veiled was the most evident and problematic side of the change that came with westernization process.

On the other hand, Islamists in divergence stated that Islam secured women's basic rights and freedom but it was compulsory to be veiled. As for Turkish defenders (of the superiority of the Turkish race and tradition), they want women join in social lives and they set examples by providing this unity in their own activities. Westernizers focused on making dressing free and forbidding polygamy by stating that there was no need for being veiled. The magazines in which these ideas were discussed, Islamists' *Sebilürre'ad*, Turkish defenders' *Turkish Land* and Westernizers' *İçtihad* (Judicial Opinion), were the magazines which were read the most in those years.

Another feature of the Second Constitutionalist Period was that a large number of women's associations

were founded. Majority of these associations were aid organizations and were important in terms of women's ability to improve civil initiative. *Müdafaa-i Hukuk-ı Nisvan* Community which was founded directly to protect women's rights became the most famous woman association of the Constitutionalist Period [13]. A little thing should be added; the foundation of women associations and increase of the women related publications is not a situation which only reflects the freedom atmosphere of the period. Union and Progress Competence ought to have a special effort to improve women's rights to that effect. As a matter of fact, at a time when was going on, on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1917, Family Law (*Hukuk-u Aile*) Decree was legislated. This decree did not bring a radical innovation, but enabled women have rights against divorce and polygamy mentioned as *taaddüd-ü zevcat* [15]. Again during the same time, it is attracting that women's obligation to take permission from their husbands to have passports was abolished and "public courses" were opened to women at *Darülfünun* Faculty of Arts [13].

There is another point to be stressed, women had to join in military acts during the years of First World War and War of Independence and they had to do undertake many things which were done by men previously. It is clear that this situation was effective in changing the viewpoint related to sex discrimination. As a result, all of these implementations and accumulation of ideas which occurred after the Administrative Reforms reduced the barriers of the change and paved the way for the revolutions done in the Republic Period.

**Women's Education:** We know that education directed to children was given in all neighborhoods and all villages in Ottoman period. In this first education phase also generally known as Ottoman Elementary Primary School, basic religious information was given and Holy Koran was thought in parts. However, till the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when first schools started to develop as enterprises there was not an aim or program for teaching children mathematics and making them literate people. Moreover, most of the teachers lecturing in the local schools of villages and small cities were not even qualified enough to carry out such a program. It is because, the teachers to be at the Ottoman Elementary Primary Schools did not go through a special training [16]. However, girls also went to these schools and they mostly had coeducation. Yet, it was not thought that girls should continue their education after elementary school. There were not any religious or legal barriers and an

arrangement for this was not done. Because, neither government nor the society did not feel a need in this respect. Actually, at a time when the majority of the population lived in rural, agricultural activities were completely done according to family needs and transportation means were extremely limited and primitive, there was not a situation which neither required that girls should be literate nor they should continue with secondary school education. As for the cities, only wealthy, cultured and families mostly belonging to administrative classes tried to fill this gap by making their daughters have private education.

The situation started to change in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Like the western countries, education turned into public service and government policy. It was first announced that elementary education was compulsory with II. Mahmud's edict [17]. This edict was not even completely applied in Istanbul since there were not enough schools and teachers. However, it started a new process. In the Administrative Reforms period in which the process of government's reformation and modernization speeded, the opportunity for girls to continue secondary schools appeared. The door to this was opened with the Girls High School which was opened in Istanbul in 1859. Also, Darülmüallimat (Women teachers' training college) was opened in 1870 as per the General Education Regulations [17], with the purpose of training women teachers for these schools. On the other hand, occupational and technical training directed to girls was started with the Girls Industry School which was founded in 1869 [17]. In this way, even though they were less in number women started to take charge in public as teachers and technical staff.

20<sup>th</sup> century started with this important improvement. Those who defend women's education gained strength and their impact areas widened. Especially, this subject widened with the II. Constitutional. Along with her articles published in many newspapers and magazines, Halide Edip (Adıvar) focused on educated women's value and social role in many of her novels especially in *Handan* and *Yeni Turan*. Again in this period, girls gained the opportunity of continuing higher education with *İdadi* (preparatory school) and *Sultani* (secondary school) Schools that were the new degrees in secondary education. However, since coeducation could not be passed to and the number of girls' schools was not enough, the number of the students could not be increased much.

#### **Improvement of Women's Rights in the Republic Period:**

The foundation philosophy of New Turkey is based on being national and modernized. Therefore, a radical change was foreseen and the cultural structure was reformed with the radical revolutions done consecutively. The core and the result of this development was secularism and its beginning was the change of the authority law. Because, instead of the government model based on the autarchy of the dynasty, the foundation of the Republic based on popular sovereignty directly affected human relations and life styles. Before all else, the "vassal" culture was taken over by "citizen" culture and in this way, a new social structure in which any civil service did not pass by heredity, right to elect and be elected was formed and therefore every individual was important was formed. As for the other revolutions, they were increased on this basis.

**Revolutions about Women's Rights:** Atatürk evaluated the improvement of women's rights as the requirement of modernization and thus he made radical quality revolutions. It is clear that he handled modernization as the enlightenment and development problem. In the speech he directed to women before the proclamation of the Republic, he said that they had a long way to go and they had to "make Turkish woman equal in working life, carry on our lives with her, and make woman man's partner, friend, helper and protector in scientific, moral, social and economic lives" [18]. In the speech he gave short time after the proclamation of the Republic, he said "in any case, country will be contemporary, civilized and innovator", "this is a matter of life for us" [18] (İbid.-III:94). In the speech he made on the occasion of the second anniversary of the triumph of Dumlupınar when Greeks were sorely defeated, he focused on the same matter; "nations lacking the ability to form contemporary works are condemned to be isolated from their freedom and independence" [18].

Atatürk's approach is clear. According to him, modernization is first the problem of enlightenment and development. As long as the women's rights do not improve, women cannot sufficiently join in economic and social life. In this situation, enlightenment and development cannot occur. At a place where there is no enlightenment or development, modernization cannot be mentioned. In case of the realization of modernization, it is not possible to protect freedom and independence.

According to Atatürk, the problem is urgent. Because, woman's population during the first years of the Republic was 8% higher than man. There had been many losses of lives and man population had reduced because of the long-lasting wars. In almost all houses there were widows and a few orphans. Moreover, approximately 76% percent of the Turkish population lived in villages and the rate of literate people was about 10% in Turkey. In some villages there was not even one literate person.

On the other hand, famine and poverty was exorbitant [16]. Economic life was like paralyzed because of the invasion, wars, immigrations and epidemic diseases. It had become much harder to be a woman under these circumstances. As a matter of fact, Atatürk said "nowhere in the world and not in a nation there is not the possibility to mention about women's work that is as perfect as Anatolian village women and not a woman of any nation cannot tell "I worked more than an Anatolian woman, I helped and worked harder than Anatolian women to take my country to liberation and triumph" [18].

Atatürk wanted people to take lessons from the things lived and to look at the future with a new horizon. He knew that in order to do this, it was necessary to improve educational and industrial investments, connect all habitation places to each other by highways and railways, and therefore create economic and social mobility. On the other hand, he had the aim of creating a contemporary government with its law and regime and a contemporary nation with its culture and welfare level on the basis that was going to be formed by revolutions. Doubtlessly, this change could not be formed by excluding women who constituted more than half of the population. On the contrary, this unity was needed. Women should have been able to act in politics as well as economic and social lives.

The change was extremely fast. Four months after the proclamation of the Republic, on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1924, three revolution laws were adopted TBMM Kavanin Magazine[19]. With these laws that closed theological schools and removed caliphate and Shaykh al-islam, the active role of the religious functionary people in government structure and its operation came to an end. The government was rearranged according to the secular bases. It can be said that, as a result of this radical change the social and cultural bases of the sex discrimination weakened gradually. As a matter of fact, that sitting in separate groups in tramway and steamships was removed and removing the curtain that separated two groups did not cause any indignation. However, a constructive

change which directly affected women was done on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1926 with the acceptance of Turkish Civil Code. This code had been prepared by quoting Swiss Civil Code and it had commands based on women-men equality in family life. For instance, marriage process was under records, divorcing was concluded by court decision and man's polygamy was forbidden. Woman's deprivation in the family property control and sharing the properties after death was prevented, and it was provided that girls and boys got equal parts from the heritage. Yet, it was paid attention to protect traditional Turkish family type by accepting man as the "head of the family" [20]. It is necessary to state that, Swiss Civil Code was preferred because it was the latest civil code accepted in the west, had clear and understandable style, was based on logic and science, was easy to apply, had a flexible structure that gave judges discretion and it opened the way to jurisprudence that was going to ease adaptation into Turkish society structure [21, 22].

It is clear that women's rights improved quickly and even gained a speed of historical quality after the Civil Code came into effect. It is known that, this process effected political life, led to new legal arrangements and amendments in constitution. In this respect, first the 1924 constitution was secularized. In the second clause, it was stated that "the religion of the government is Islam". This decree was removed with the change done in 1928 and religious expressions in the 16, 26 and 38<sup>th</sup> clauses were taken off. Thereby, controversy opinions related to woman's witness, judgeship, right to elect and be elected and presidency which continue for centuries in Islamic world were gone beyond. Following that, women gained the right to elect and be elected in municipality elections by Municipality Code accepted in 1930 [23] and in village headman elections by amending the Village Code [24] in 1933. However, constitutional amendment was needed for general elections. This amendment was realized in 1934. Women-men, every Turkish citizen, gained this right by the deletion of the "man" condition in the 10 and 11<sup>th</sup> clauses which assigns the right to elect and be elected as deputies.

It should be accepted that, this revolution act is not only attracting for Turkey but also for the recent world history. Because, in those years, women even in France and Switzerland did not have the right to elect and be elected. Therefore, this revolution act reflected the change in mentality as well as a legal, political and social change in Turkey. As a matter of fact, in the speech he made in the assembly, President İsmet İnönü drew attention to

Atatürk's leadership in women's rights subject and said "we do not consider that we gave this right to woman as a favor, our belief is that this is their real right" [25].

On the other hand, government and Republican People's Party which constitutes the government made efforts to make women join in politics. In the notice he sent to the organization, Secretary General of the Party, Recep Peker, stated that as many women as possible should be members of the party and said "we did not take this step for giving woman a so-called right to be elected, we took it to make Turkish women, who are higher than men, join in government as men" [25]. As a matter of fact, as the result of these efforts, 18 women deputy got into the parliament in the 1935 elections. Hereupon, Atatürk stated "Turkey's visage has changed as the result of the things succeeded in cultural and social areas; modern Turkish society, in which women and men were equal in all rights, appeared" [18].

**Providing Women-Men Equality in Education:** Atatürk knew that education was not only a tool for making people good citizens; it also led to enlightenment and development. On the other hand, as suitable for the features of the era, he wanted to generalize education by taking it out of being belonged to elite class and being unreachable. With this purpose, he gave priority to arrangements which would provide each citizen to take place in education process without making any women-men and peasant-townsman discrimination.

With the Unification of Education Code accepted on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1924, education was centralized and it became a public service completely directed and controlled by the government. Following that, it was included in the constitution that education was free and compulsory for every girl and boy (1924 Constitution clause 87). On the other hand, it was emphasized that each citizen was equal in all aspects of civil rights with Turkish Civil Code. With the Revolution of Letters done in 1928, Arabian alphabet was removed and new Turkish alphabet which is easier to learn was accepted [26]. In respect with this, with National Schools [26], it was worked to make each citizen, both men and women, literate. As a matter of fact, the literacy rate which was about 10% got up to 24.5% in total population of 6 and over years of age in 1940. Accordingly, 36.2% of men and 12.9% of women were illiterate [27]. However, the main problem was making children at school age meet with schools and teachers. Extraordinary effort was made under this purpose. However, majority of the population lived in villages and schools and teachers could be found in nearly 10% of 40 thousand villages. Village Educators

Code was made as a practical solution until training enough number of teachers. The code foresaw educators to act as guides to peasants in order for the agriculture to be done professionally as well as education and teaching [28]. Successful young people of villages, who are literate and who know arithmetic, were employed as village educators as the result of courses that took an education year. This implementation that started in 1937 continued till 1947 [29].

As the result of the measurements taken, primary education improved significantly and an important part of the school age children were met with schools and teachers. The number of the primary school students was 341.941 in 1923-24, the first education year of the Republic Period, and it increased to 813.636 in 1938-39, the end of Atatürk's period [27]. However, this time the problem of continuing secondary education got bigger because the population was going to schools. Because, in 1923 there were 72 secondary schools, 23 high schools and 64 occupational and technical schools in Turkey. The number of secondary schools increased to 228, high schools to 75 and occupational and technical schools increased to 81 till the end of Atatürk's period [27]. In spite of this, there were not any girls' secondary or high school in many cities and counties. This situation led to reactions. Especially, civil servants assigned from big cities to small cities were looking for assigning to other cities because they could not send their daughters to schools. Minister of Education Mustafa Necati, started the "coeducation" implementation, in which girls and boys took education, in order to solve this problem and widen modern life style. This system existed only in primary schools in Ottoman period and limited permission was given for some of the higher education parts only in the last years of the empire. Thus, it was the first implementation in secondary education. It was tried at 25 secondary schools in 1927-28 education year. Yet, contrary to expectations, since in some schools there was a decrease in the number of girl students coeducation was removed in these schools. In addition to this, it was provided to spread gradually and it was implemented in 85 secondary and 19 high schools in 1935-36 education year. These mentioned high schools were the only ones in their cities and thus girls could continue these schools. H.A. Yücel gives the places and yearly numbers of these schools in his work Secondary Education in Turkey [30].

On the other hand, in order for girls to be informed about family life and to be trained qualitatively enough to contribute in family economy with the handicrafts she learned, Girls Art Institutes and Girls Art Schools were

founded. Also, Boarding Girls Art Institute in Ankara and Istanbul and Evening Girls Art Schools were founded in many cities. In order to meet the teacher needs of these schools, Girls Technical Teachers' School was founded in Ankara in 1934.

With all these arrangements done in the first years of the Republic, women-men equality in education was provided. Thus, from primary school to college girls took their places in all steps of education as boys. It is clear that, with graduations this situation has reflected on working life and been effective in social change.

### CONCLUSION

Matters like women's rights and woman's status have been matters of discussion in almost all communities in history. Because, apart from her place to be in economic and social life as a human; woman's place in family and society have mostly been ignored as a wife and a mother. Even though, Turkish society is the one in which this problem is faced the least, it is not possible to tell that it completely stays out. It is clear that in some implementations it reflects the features of the era. Also, as a result of the effect of different perspectives resulting from religious commentaries and effect of foreign cultures like Arabic and Persian resulting from belonging to the same religion, it is true that there are applications that lead to women's deprivation.

Doubtlessly, the improvement of women's rights in Turkey should be viewed in the westernization process. Especially in 1839, in the period starting with the announcement of the Administrative Reforms, reforming of the government and therefore society's entrance into modernization process have improved women's place in economic and social lives. With the beginning of the Second Constitutional in 1908, intellectual discussions in these areas have been intense and the traditional view towards woman started to change. As in the years of First World War and Independence War, women had to keep more active in many areas. In addition to housework, they acted in military activities and took care of country matters. In this way, social change continued in an unforeseen form.

In conclusion, intellectual accumulation and sample implementations taken over by Republic, improved quickly with Atatürk's revolutions. Apart from agriculture and animal breeding, women were provided to act in education, art, politics and therefore administration also act in different work branches coming with science and technology. Thus, woman gained status by having equal

rights with man in almost all areas from family life to political, economic and social life. It should be noted that the improvements in women's rights have gradually been the most effective means of the social change.

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