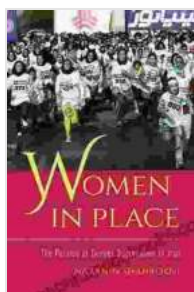


# The Politics of Gender Segregation in Iran: Unraveling a Complex System

In the heart of the Islamic Republic of Iran, gender segregation stands as a defining and controversial feature of the country's social and political landscape. This strict separation of men and women extends to various spheres of life, from public spaces and housing to education and the workforce.



## Women in Place: The Politics of Gender Segregation in

**Iran** by George Tsebelis

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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## Historical Roots and Religious Foundations

The roots of gender segregation in Iran can be traced back to ancient Persian traditions and customs. However, it was during the Islamic Revolution of 1979 that the concept of gender separation took on a profound religious dimension. The new regime, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, invoked Islamic principles to justify the implementation of strict gender segregation laws.

According to Islamic law (Sharia), men and women are seen as having different roles and responsibilities in society. Women are primarily responsible for domestic duties and child-rearing, while men are seen as the breadwinners and protectors. This traditional view of gender roles underpins the justification for gender segregation in Iran.

## **Social Control and Political Power**

Beyond religious beliefs, gender segregation in Iran also serves as a tool of social control and political power. By strictly separating men and women, the regime aims to maintain traditional gender roles and prevent any potential threats to its authority. Gender segregation reinforces the notion that women should be under the control of men, either their fathers, husbands, or the state.

The enforcement of gender segregation laws is often carried out by government officials known as the morality police (Gasht-e Ershad). These officials patrol public spaces, enforcing dress codes and ensuring compliance with gender segregation regulations. Violations can result in punishment, ranging from fines to imprisonment.

## **Enforcement in Various Domains**

Gender segregation in Iran is enforced in multiple aspects of daily life:

- **Housing:** In many Iranian cities, residential buildings are designed with separate entrances and staircases for men and women.
- **Education:** From primary school to university, boys and girls are educated in separate classes and often in different schools altogether.

- **Public Spaces:** Parks, libraries, and public transportation have designated sections for men and women.
- **Workforce:** Some occupations, particularly in the public sector, are restricted to men or women only.

## **Challenges and Controversies**

Gender segregation in Iran has been the subject of ongoing debate and controversy. Critics argue that it violates basic human rights, limits women's opportunities, and perpetuates gender inequality. Supporters, on the other hand, view it as a necessary measure for preserving traditional values and protecting women's dignity.

Over the years, there have been several attempts to challenge gender segregation in Iran. In 2005, a group of women's rights activists launched the "One Million Signatures Campaign" petitioning for the abolition of discriminatory laws against women, including gender segregation. However, the campaign faced strong opposition from conservative elements within the regime.

## **Women's Agency and Resistance**

Despite the strict enforcement of gender segregation laws, many Iranian women find ways to resist and negotiate the limitations imposed upon them. They engage in civil disobedience, challenge gender norms, and push for greater freedoms.

Examples of women's resistance include attending co-ed gatherings, participating in mixed-gender sports, and pursuing higher education in non-

traditional fields. These acts of defiance demonstrate the resilience and determination of Iranian women to break down gender barriers.

## Hope for Reform and Transformation

While gender segregation remains deeply ingrained in Iranian society, there is a growing recognition of the need for reform. A younger generation of Iranians is increasingly questioning traditional gender roles and advocating for greater equality.

Recent social and political developments, such as the rise of social media and the growing influence of the international human rights community, are also putting pressure on the Iranian government to address gender inequality and dismantle the system of gender segregation.

The politics of gender segregation in Iran is a complex and multifaceted issue that reflects the country's unique history, religious beliefs, and social dynamics. It is a system that has been used to control women and maintain traditional gender roles. However, it is also a system that is facing increasing challenges from within Iranian society and from the international community.

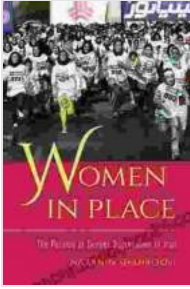
As Iran continues to evolve, the future of gender segregation remains uncertain. However, the growing voices of dissent and the determination of Iranian women to break down gender barriers offer hope for a more just and equitable future.

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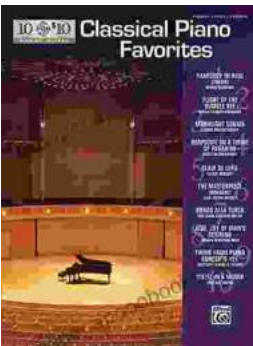
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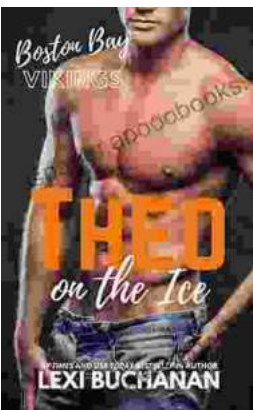


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