

# An Analysis of Marine Navigation and Safety of Sea Transportation by Iranian Women as Officer and Master Mariner

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**ABSTRACT:** The author attempts to describe the safety factors which should be considered for the sea transportation through coastal waters and the International waterways. First segment of this paper is designated to investigate the role of females as crew and officer on board ships. Based on STCW95 Convention and from the professional point of view the author believes that the Iranian females can be able to take responsibility on board ship as officer or even master mariner. Boys and girls can learn the required theories at the college when they are Cadet and improve their skill on board ship; therefore, operation of the advanced equipment on board ship can be done by both sides easily. A section of this paper is devoted to elucidate the various aspects of Iranian culture for the sea jobs which are going to be carried out by Iranian women on board ships. Some technical suggestions will be described in this paper in order to be taken into account the cultural factors by the IMO representative and finally the Parliament of Islamic Republic of Iran. The existence of women especially Iranian women or the mixture of men and women officers on board Iranian ships in order to improve the safety factors of sea transportation will be discussed in depth.

## 1 THE HISTORY OF JOINING WOMEN ON BOARD SHIP AS STEWARDESS AND OFFICER

One radio operator met a female radio operator while being briefed on communications procedures during a convoy conference in Port Said, Egypt in 1944. She was the only operator on board the Norwegian flag tanker. As the operator stated that "*We were both headed for the Persian Gulf...we, with a load of Russian bound materiel, and her, to load oil.*" Women have bravely served the U.S. Navy for nearly a century, but they have only been allowed in positions aboard non-hospital ships for the last 25 years. In October 1978, in the wake of a court ruling that overturned statutes that forbade women from serving at sea, the Navy launched their Women in Naval Ships program and announced that they would assign 55 women officers and 375 female enlisted personnel to 21 ships during the next year. Women were finally allowed to serve as surface warfare officers and in numerous enlisted ratings (below the rank of officer) on such auxiliary vessels as submarine and destroyer tenders and oceanographic research ships. In 1977, the first woman cadet in Irish shipping Ltd. was Ms. Ann Parry. Irish Shipping Ltd. (1941-84) had a number of women crew members including the first women officer on an Irish ship Marilyn Stockwell from Tuam, Co. Galway.

Marilyn sailed on the Irish Maple in 1973 as the junior radio officer. In 1974 the first women deckhand on Irish Shipping Ltd. Miss Rosemary Dalton joined the Irish Oak. During Fiscal Year 1979, 55 officers and 375 enlisted women will be assigned to 21 US. On November 1 1978, naval ships in both the Atlantic and Pacific fleets, with the first officers reporting aboard their respective ships. The first enlisted women will report in December. Mrs. Linda Hayes (Linda Purdy) of the Irish ferries vessel M.V. *Ulysses*. She was in 1987, along with Ms. Rosemary Docherty the first woman purser in the 150 year history of the B+I Line. Also in 1987 the first women officer on a B+I ship Ms. Caroline Meaney, joined the M.V. *Tipperary*. In 1987, women started to work at sea as purser and stewardess which lead the management team on the Irish ferries and passenger ships. Nowadays, there are more women on board ships as Radio, Deck and even Engine officers in shipping companies belong to European, American, Australia and Far East countries. During the eighteenth century, the British Admiralty did not allow women to be on board, but records show that captains often let the wives of officers join the ship and share their husbands' cabins or hammocks and food rations in the British navy. As a result of technological improvement in shipping in the last couple of years; the new ships are designed and equipped with the computerized systems. The author has to draw

your attention to the safety factors which should be considered for the sea transportation through coastal waters and the International waterways in this article. Although, US women were interested in joining on board warships even during wartime, nevertheless the US government limited their contribution on board naval ships. When passenger ships were taken over by the government after the U.S. entered World War II, many women who had served as stewardesses, hairdressers, etc. lost their jobs. They were required to leave after their ships returned to port after December 7, 1941. One of these women, Betty Jackson, wrote to President Roosevelt: "*We are not afraid of the dangers and we are willing to put up with any inconvenience as long as we can be reinstated and go back to sea.*" Admiral Land, head of the U.S. Maritime Commission replied that there were no provisions on wartime ships for women crewmembers.

## 2 A SURVEY FROM THE ILO ABOUT WOMEN AT SEA

In an October 3 press release, the U.N. International Labour Organization (ILO) said a new study of women at sea "paints a grim picture of the struggle faced by women to gain employment and advancement but says women represent a potential resource for the industry." The study highlights a need for policies that address issues related to sexual harassment, menstruation, pregnancy, contraception, maternity, and sexual and general medical health, the release said. While some ship owners, managers and trainers of women are positive about their performance, women often still face intolerance and harassment, the release added. Researchers examined regional variations of women at sea such as the fact that in some Scandinavian countries women make up more than 10 percent of the seafaring workforce, while their numbers in other European countries "are negligible". As the ILO said that Countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) provide the largest proportion of women employed on cruise ships, 51.2 percent; followed by Eastern Europe, 23.6 percent; the Far East, 13.7 percent; Latin America and Africa, 9.8 percent; and South Asia and the Middle East 1.7 percent. The labour agency stated that only 7 percent of women seafarers are officers compared to 42 percent of their male counterparts. However, it said, women students at the World Maritime University (WMU) have risen to 21 percent of the university's population compared to 8 percent in 1995.

On a more positive note, the study reveals significant progress in training policies over recent years. By 2001 the total number of female students at the World Maritime University (WMU) had risen to 21

percent of the total university population in comparison to 8 percent in 1995. The ILO study is based on a survey commissioned by the ILO following the resolution concerning women seafarers adopted by the 29th Session of the ILO/IMO Joint Maritime Commission, 22-26 January 2001, in Geneva. The Resolution called for a more active role to be taken in promoting the integration of women in the industry. As a follow-up to the Resolution, the study identifies good practice and recommends measures that may further help the integration of women into shipboard communities.

Outside Europe figures also vary: women make up 1.1 percent Brazil's seafarers, and 5 percent of Indonesia's. According to Fairplay in 1998, India reported only three women out of 43,000 registered seafarers; by the end of 2002 there were twelve. In the Philippines, the largest supplier of seafarers to the world merchant fleet, only 225 women out of 230,000 seafarers appear on the international seafarers' register for 1983-90. The bulk of women seafarers are concentrated in the hotel personnel of cruise ships, and these are mostly in rating grades. Only 7 percent of women seafarers are officers and the rest (93 percent) are ratings. By comparison, 42 percent of male seafarers are officers and 58 percent are ratings. And there are further anomalies in seafarers' employment. Currently, OECD countries recruit the largest proportion of women employed on cruise ships (51.2 percent), followed by Eastern Europe (23.6 percent), the Far East (13.7 percent), Latin America and Africa (9.8 percent) and South Asia and the Middle East (1.7 percent). On the other hand, most male seafarers are recruited from the Far East (29.1 percent), followed by 23.3 percent from OECD countries, 17.8 percent from Latin America and Africa, 12.3 percent from Eastern Europe, 7.5 percent from South Asia and the Middle East.

## 3 IRANIAN WOMEN AS OFFICER AND MASTER MARINER ON BOARD SHIP

This segment of the paper is designated to investigate the role of Iranian females as officer and master mariner on board ships. Of course, the Iranian women can work on board coastal water craft as an officer or Captain at the Persian Gulf or even further routes. It is difficult to offer sea jobs to the Iranian women; it is because of the Iranian culture! Nevertheless, from the religious point of view, man and woman have equal right to live; therefore the only problem is the long voyages at sea for the Iranian females. It means that Iranian females can be able to take responsibility on board High Speed Craft or passenger ships as officer or master mariner in short voyages at the Persian Gulf. The other alternative to solve this problem is that the Iranian women can join

on board ocean going vessels as officers accompany with their husband in peace of mind. As result of that they can stay on board ship more than usual period and their efficiency for doing the job will be improved greatly. It should be noted that Iranian females can be officer and finally master mariner on board coastal and ocean going vessels, because the situation on merchant ships has been changed and great number of Iranian women are interested in travelling by passenger ships; therefore, it is necessary to have women officers on board Iranian ships in order to look after the female passengers especially in emergency situation. Nowadays, as a result of the technological improvement in shipping and increasing the price of airplane ticket, etc; use of ferries, high speed craft and passenger ships became more common for short voyages at the Persian Gulf. It should be noted that Iranian passengers are interested in using ships for pilgrim journeys in order to go to Saudi Arabia and Syria. Iranian shipping companies allow the wives of officers join the merchant ships and share their husbands' cabins, food, etc; although the life at sea is awful, nevertheless majority of Iranian women are interested in joining the ocean going ships as officer in order to be with their husband. One of the problems of joining the Iranian females on board ships can be related to their uniform which should be Islamic dressing with a cap and scarf or even a useful cap similar to the Iranian Airline uniform.

#### 4 CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN AS STEWARDESS ON BOARD WARSHIPS

Why would a woman leave home to travel by a ship of war? Of course, many had no home or money while their husbands were at sea. The ship provided a home and a chance to share life, however harsh, with their husbands. The wives worked on the ship, mending or cleaning clothes or serving as captains' maids. In battle, they attended the wounded or carried gunpowder; a few were wounded themselves. Childbirth at sea was not uncommon, and sometimes a ship's guns were fired to speed up a difficult birth—a practice that gave rise to the saying, "a son of a gun."

Women played only a small role in the Canadian merchant navy, there were some pioneers working as stewardesses, and a few Canadian women were radio officers on ships of the Norwegian merchant navy (the only Allied merchant fleet at that time that permitted women to serve aboard ships as wireless operators). Hannah Baird was the first Canadian female who casualty of the Second World War. Just hours after Britain declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939, the passenger liner Baird was working aboard was torpedoed by a German subma-

rine. You won't find Stewardess Hannah Baird's name in the history books, or the names of the other seven Canadian women who died while serving in merchant ships during both World Wars. Maude Elizabeth Steane, a ship's radio operator during World War II, had to leave Canada to find a ship because women were not allowed to join any ship in Canada. Just ten weeks after leaving home, Maude Steane was killed. It is often reported that she died by enemy gunfire while her ship was docked in Naples, Italy.

Clara Gordon Main, a stewardess on the SS President Harrison was among the first American Prisoners of War. The ship was captured by the Japanese on December 7, 1941, while rescuing U.S. Marines from China. The vessel was first bombed and then captured by the Japanese who ordered all hands to abandon ship. In so doing the Chief Steward suffered several broken ribs. Mrs. Main, the only woman member of the large crew, conducted herself in such a cool and collected manner that she had a decidedly steadying influence on the seamen. She also had the foresight to take with her, as she left the ship in the last boat, certain medicinal restoratives and first aid material, which proved invaluable. During six weeks subsequent treatment, she nursed the Chief Steward so effectively that she undoubtedly saved his life.

#### 5 CONTRIBUTION OF IRANIAN WOMEN IN SPORTS AND DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES

In the last couple of decades, the Iranian women contributed in different field of sports that could get medal and good score at the international games. Climbing a mountain is a good, safe and interesting sport for Iranian females, especially for those who are living near mountainous areas. Iranian female football team with Islamic dressing plays well; the team could get the highest grade in Asia ranking teams. Boatwomen is an exciting group sport which is quite interesting by Iranian females; it is because of their convenient for dressing and team work activities.

Iranian women working as police officers at the main cities of Iran, those who like such activity should be brave and energetic in order to show their capabilities which are more or less similar to the police men. In fact, contribution of Iranian females as fire fighter teams proves that they are brave to perform such hard and dangerous activities. It should be noted that the job of fire fighter in comparison to the seafarers' career is more hazardous, because they should be as quick as possible.

The magnificent activity of Iranian female has been done by Mrs. Anoush Ansari. She was the first

private space explorer women who travelled around the earth up to the International Space Station. She also earned a place in history as the fourth private explorer September 18, 2006; Anousheh Ansari captured headlines to visit space as the first Iranian astronaut. On 5<sup>th</sup> January 2008, Guardian Newspaper announced the list of 50 persons who could save the earth from the environmental hazardous; as result of that name of Mrs. Dr. Masomeh Ebtekar, Iranian environmental minister, as Survivor of the earth environment was in the list.

## 6 SAFETY OF NAVIGATION BY JOINING IRANIAN WOMEN ON BOARD SHIPS

Iranian women seafarers can join on board the ships according to their speciality; it seems that the shipping company can employ them as officer for catering, radio and deck department of a ship. Ship voyage at the Persian Gulf is short; therefore the female officers may take only one sea watch during the voyage. By referring to the previous experiences of so many shipping companies in all over the world, 3 out of 54 percentages of women were deck officers. It means that as first experience, it is better that the Iranian female join on board the ship as stewardesses, cooks, assistant doctor, chief stewards, radio officer, etc. after that as deck officer in order to become a ship Captain. So, this process should be started in short voyages at the Persian Gulf.

The following pie chart has been acquired through a survey from Iranian women who work at marine organizations in Chabahar port and some of the students from Chabahar Maritime University. Although those who contributed to answer the questioner of this survey, knew that work at sea is hard, nevertheless half of them selected "Good" point and the minority of them selected "Bad" point. This survey shows that majority of the Iranian student girls from the University like to be at sea and are keen to join on board the ship as officer.

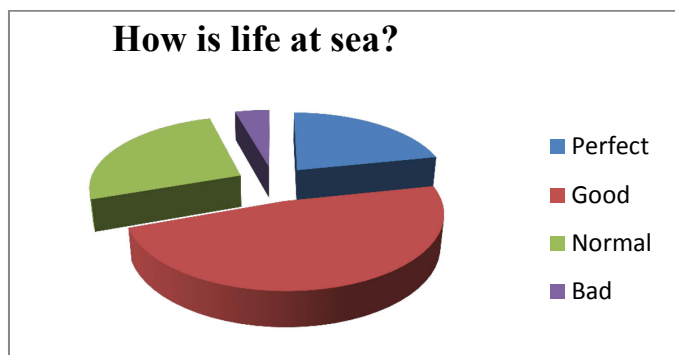


Fig.1. Sea life survey from Iranian women

A student girl in oceanography should travel by research ship at the Persian Gulf for about a couple of days in order to do the specific research about aquatic, sea animals, wave height, etc. Therefore, referring to the Iranian culture it is more safe and convenient for the girl to travel and to collect data by the female crew on board the ship. Ship manoeuvring and the safety of navigation at the Persian Gulf are not depend on the sex (female or male) of the seafarers; it is related to a qualify officer who should comply with the IMO regulations. Since the required training based on STCW95 Convention and the written and oral examination of the Certificate of Competency have been passed out by the candidate (boy or girl); after that he/she will be qualify to run a ship. All watch keepers shall be qualified and hold certification prescribed for navigational watch to the standards prescribed in A-II/4 of STCW 95 according to the duties they are required to perform. As consequence of the above explanation, the main issue is the knowledge and skill of the seafarer to support the safety of life at sea; so, bridge safety equipment can be operated either by man or woman officer and both are safe and sound.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Iranian peoples are interested in travelling by ship for leisure and pilgrim journeys, because they are quite cheap, comfortable and safe for short journey at the Persian Gulf and even long voyage up to Saudi Arabia and Syria. By increasing number of passenger ships in Iran and the establishment of passenger terminals in South and North ports of Iran, therefore the existence of Iranian women crew on board ship in order to look after the female passengers is necessary and essential. Referring to the STCW95, the important factors for improving the safety of sea transportation are skill and qualification of the seafarers and are not related to the sex of the ship officers.

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