The Persian people of the 19th Century are somewhat different than they are today, but some key features still remain. One of these is the veiling of women. For women in 19th Century Iran was far more restricted than one might think. Abdul Baha, speaking once to a Western audience tried to explain how extensive this practice was in the Iran of his day. He said: “All women in Persia are enveloped in veils in public. So completely covered are they that even the hand is not visible. This rigid veiling is unspeakable...So excessive and compulsory veiling is in the East that the people of the West have no idea of the excitement and indignation produced by the appearance of an unveiled woman....”

Yet this restriction in 19th Century Iran meet with resistance that would change the world of women throughout the world. At the very same time that women in America and Europe were beginning to demand change that that would give them equal rights to men, a lone woman in 19th Century Iran braved a social and religious firestorm that would throw off centuries of outdated customs and beliefs regarding the role of women in society.

This woman, known throughout the world as Tahirih, would help begin a spiritual revolution for her daring to challenge the social hierarchy of male leadership in 19th Century Iran consisting in religious clerics, including the political, social and cultural leaders of the time. Today, she is mostly known for her poetry which is also known for its audacity and fearlessness in asserting a new day in which women would have equal rights alongside men. Translations of her poetry exists in English--some even done during her lifetime by British historian Edward Granville Browne.

Today this history is suppressed and almost forgotten in the land of its birth, as members of the Baha’i community still suffer from discrimination, harassment and even prison time simply for their beliefs.

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