

# RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND MASS MEDIA: THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN IRANIAN CINEMA FOLLOWING THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

Mehri Bahar <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Social Science Faculty, University of Tehran, Iran.  
Corresponding author: mbahar.ut@gmail.com

©Ontario International Development Agency ISSN: 1923-6654 (print)  
ISSN 1923-6662 (online). Available at <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-Journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>

**Abstract:** Mass media has had a significant role in today's Iranian society. The presence of active artists and their features is also very important in this era. Presently, the presence of women as actresses or film producers has been a significant factor in the Iranian cinema. Throughout the pre-revolution era, cinema had treated women more like an objects or commodities, and because of this, they disappeared from cinema during the few years following the revolution. The role of women before the revolution was very limited and unnoticeable and they merely played the role of a mother or wife. A comparison of their role back in those years with the roles that they play presently is quite worthy of mention.

The importance of women in Iranian cinema can be traced to various cultural and social circumstances, which are known also as: (a) The social, economical, political and developmental programs in Iran have enhanced the educational and didactic levels, and the public are more literate than before; hence, social knowledge has increased. This has been among the issues considered after the Islamic revolution (b) Because of the enhancement of the level of religious teachings following the revolution, women are now more able to participate in social affairs and fewer prohibitions are enforced on their presence in social arenas. This has made it easier for them to perform their roles as social actors in the religious cinema and films made on the Iran-Iraq war, commonly called the "Sacred Defense," and to face fewer negative reactions from their families. Thus, they have had an

equal chance as compared to their male counterparts to perform in these films. (c) The present article studies the position of women and the attitudinal changes that have occurred in Iranian cinema following the revolution (especially the cinema during war). The method used in this study is based on the competence of women's presence in Iranian films throughout time. For this purpose, the women presentation's level the level of presentations made of women, their roles, and the disputes and negotiations that have been made throughout time have been compared with mens. (since the Islamic Revolution) . This article has made a comparison among a fewtwo movies , with .The results have provedemonstrating that women have appeared emerged as active participants in this art form after a period of silence and estrangement from cinema and the Fajr (war) movies (war movies). This reproducing of role creation has transformed the religious cinema and movies on the sacred defense and also the political ones. In other words, Iranian women have had an opportunity to prove themselves in the religious and epic cinema as well as in the social and family centered cinema, where as in both the marginal and the central roles.

## INTRODUCTION

Today, mass media including cinema in Iran is a cultural arena which that attempts to reflect people's culture and life style. In this cultural arena the majority of people who are involved and are interested in the cinema are also influenced by it.

Regardless of their social status, men, women, youth, intellectuals and various other social groups, are presented in this new atmosphere. This cultural arena represents their problems, with a clearer view to each of the social groups and events.

As is known, improvements made in the Cinema cinema were not made on its their own. It has been transformed and enhanced to an improved position due to certain social, cultural, and economic changes. Although a lot of change have has taken place in the educational system across the world and numerous scientists have raised this significant issue, It has been transformed and enhanced to an improved position due to certain social, cultural, and economic changes (e.g. Eliot et al 1980 and UNESCO 1997). In the cultural arena as in the cinema and Television television the presence of the women during the last few decades reflects that women still play a great role in these areas.

The present article discusses the post- revolution role of women in cinema, particularly during the War in Iran. It shows that the situation of women has been gradually transformed in the society, inducing changes in their role in the cinema as well. They have now become more powerful in their new presence following the war and gradually they have been equalized with their male counterparts to even criticize men in the cinema through roles given to them and through the selection of dialogues between themselves and with male actors. In their new presence, women used cultural diplomacy through production of cultural and symbolic movies after the war and, thus, they have been able to show up strongly, after a few years of silence (from 1979-1980 1359-1360). In this article a few movies have been chosen and their contents have been studied, although not all of them can be analyzed. Since over a hundred movies are produced domestically each year, only a few have been chosen for purposes of this research, specifically two for each of the periods that have been covered in this study.

An examination of the The movies that were screened during the revolution period,, reflect that the marginal,inactive and semi-centralized presence of women that has always been marginal and inactive, has been due to the Islamic Revolution and the government has been due to the limitations. that the culture prevailing over the Islamic Revolution and the government have created for her. During this period, the ideological aspects of the government was were not able to accept the presence of women in the artistic atmosphere, where only the demonstrative aspect of women was reflected and she was treated as an object.

Most of the laws in the new government, especially in the cinema, theaters and to a lesser extent in

television, focused on the mandatory role of home making for women. Since 1982, fundamental changes took place in the cinematic system in Iran. New opportunities were provided for women and they were no longer confused about whether or not they were allowed to enter the cinematic arena. Whether or not she was allowed to perform her role in the cinema much the same way as she had before the revolution, was a question. The war and its impact had made sudden changes in the cinema for women that were unexpected by most. The war and events following it justified the presence of women by introducing new criteria that were filled with religious and political content. Movies of this period reflected women with roles such as the savior, a mother, a nurse, and a loyal wifewives. This Women,the innocent creature, now perceived received a different role defined for her as compared to the pre-revolution era. However at the same time she was to become the center of focus in the communications made by the new religious government (Tavassoli, 2005).

#### **THE CONCEPTUAL VIEW**

In terms of the social and cultural view which has been raised in the Islamic and Iranian culture, women have had enough power to participate in the society without any contradiction with the family or other cultural and religious issues. In this point of view, an educated woman was able to help the family and the society oin the macro level. It can thus be said that a positive relationship exists between the situation of women in the society and her method of social participation. If the situation of the women in society is improveds, the movie producer will certainly reflect the situation in the movie, because the mass media somehow represents the situation on gender issues and domestic struggles related to it. We can observe that the Iranian society has improved over time and over time so has the situation of women. The mMajority of them women are now able to enter universities and learn new ideas.sciences such as math.geometry,... Moreover, they spend some time to watching tTelevision, listening to music and to participatinge in religious ceremonies. Statistical data Experience reflects that women attend religious ceremonies held in mosques, and family or neighborhood gathering during these ceremonies (such as Ramadan and Moharram ), more than do men. Hence it is quite observable that movie producers are aware of changes that have taken place in the situation of women in Iran and are able to represent it in the movies.

A theoretical assumption is necessary to illustrate how women have been able to enter the cinema. It seems that because of their absence in political and social activities women have been more able to enter

the religious and family arenas through family activities such as looking after the children and taking hold of the affairs relating to their homes. On the other hand, they have had a positive impact on the social structure by accepting roles in the religious activities.

Her strong role in family activities and the support provided by the religious government which has governed over Iranian cinema since the 1990's re-established her strength in a new way. Women tried to present themselves in cinema after the first few years (1979-1980) by joining the epic and religious arenas, where these two cinemas helped them in discovering themselves and to hold stable positions in the cinema. The women have to respect the religious roles in media which have governed over media, like cinema especially after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Entering of women in religious and epics films during this period was the best result to be accepted first by the films' producers and then by the religious people. This was an ingenious method to realize their expectations and desires. In the content analysis two six movies are included (each to a separate period except two that belong to the first: these were made in 1979-1980, with no roles defined for women. Film producers in this period consisted mostly of men and none of the dialogues have been performed by women.

In the second period (after the 1980's,) women took on very small roles in the movies. At least two of the films are related to the post-war period. Movie producers in this period consisted mostly of women and the main idea of the movies centered around women as well.

One of the assumptions made in the present article is that the ideological system in Iran, consisting of the educational, religious and art system, has provided the grounds for women to be able to efficiently perform their social and religious activities as compared with the pre-revolution era. It is claimed in the present article that during a certain period (1980-1983), a relationship existed between policies set for ideological messages enforced by the government on the cinema with policies set for women (actresses). This means that although women suddenly disappeared from the cinema during 1980-1983 (the year of the revolution and post-revolution years), following a few reviews that were made on her role, women tried to move away from times when they were treated as an object and to enter the cinematic arena as a revolutionary woman with religious ideals, thus to hold on to their newly gained roles in cinema and its impact on the artistic arena.

If we focus a little on the situation of cinema in Iran, we shall realize the fact that the presence of women does not follow a stable pattern, but rather faces

numerous ups and downs. Following 1983, circumstances created by the Islamic Revolution and the crisis that resulted from the revolution, critical roles became more in focus. One of these forces was women, and hence the weak presence of women in cinema during the past decades which was due to the neglect of authorities in the society and also because of women's resistance to cultural policies, found a new direction. A result was the new approach of women towards the world of cinema. Because of the changes that were made across different levels of the society and its culture, women who had assumed that compliance with the religious and ideological system would be their ticket to success in cinema and entrance into it, attempted to change their approach to cinema in their new lifestyle.

The resistance of women Women's resistance towards cinema resulted into some kind of relationship and cooperation, since the only way to counteract the presence of men in Iran's cinema by women was to develop rivalry. This is how women finally managed to form a cultural resistance as compared with the pre-revolution era and yet develop a cultural and social cooperation with their male counterparts. The pattern shall be assessed and discussed in several stages and with due consideration towards the method and levels of role creations performed by women in the Iranian cinema.

The present article attempts to study a number of movies (religious and non-religious) and to categorize the presence of women in Iranian cinema using various periods. The following questions have been raised in this article: (a) what ideological messages were presented in movies that were made during the primary years of the revolution in which women were presented in weak roles complying with the prevailing regime? (b) Have women been successful and effective in reflecting the compliance? (c) What attempts have women made to comply with the system and to justify their presence in cinema? (d) What factors have been effective in the mentioned compliance process? (e) Has the compliance with the ideological system continued following the 1990's?

#### RESEARCH PROBLEMS OF THE RESEARCH

The present article attempts to study such changes during the period when women again, took part in movies among families, outside the family sphere, in war, even in the front line, in social activities, in politics, etc.

In terms of the conceptual view presented above, we can raise our research question. The main questions examined in this article are: How have women been able to cast away all the negative points of view on their presence in the cinema and the way they

have been treated as a western object and manage to take important parts in the cinema? How have women been able to achieve their new position in cultural spheres like the cinema?

The present article attempts to study such changes during the period when women again, took part in movies among families, outside the family sphere, in war, even in the front line, in social activities, in politics, etc.

There are three questions to be answered. (a) •What situations have provided the grounds for women to re-enter cinema? (b) Is the presence of women in cinema just the same as before the revolution?

It seems as if the Iranian cinema has gone through three periods following the revolution because of the presence of women: (a) The primary years following the revolution (1979-1980, ), (the revolution and the imposed war), with the presence of only men and no women. (b) The period immediately following and going back to the 1980's (1380-1390 2001-2009), covered events taking place during the war and after it, women being presented alongside men and families. (c) The last period dates back to the 1990's and the 2000's, in which movie producers were both men and women and the dialogues between men and women were mostly given to the female genre whereas in some films the women was the core of the film.e.g. "Sag Koshi"( Dog killing) by Bahram Beizaie and "Mim mesleh madar"( M like mother) by Rasool Mola gholipour.women were over viewed.

#### HISTORY OF RESEARCH LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, previous studies on women's issues in various media have been collected. Movies displayed in the media have been able to actively illustrate women's issues throughout numerous years. In Cinema cinema the impact of media on the personality of women and the discussion on women's issues, based on various researches in Iran, have resulted in successful and victorious conclusions and the presence of women in post- revolutionary Cinemacinema, considering the conditions and situation that call for women to stay at home and be isolated, provided incredible opportunities.

Leila Noohi (2007) has pointed, in her thesis paper, to the evaluations made of the conformity of women's capabilities and activities in cinema and has compared it with the recession in the early years following the revolution. This thesis highlights the personality of women as a powerful force in displaying her powers in the *تظلم* process of overcoming male dominancy and the present conditions. It is illustrated here that the more a woman is reflected as powerful, the more her personality craves equality vis-à-vis male dominators and vice versa.e.g "Shokaran" by Behrooz Afkhami.

Sulmaz Alipour (2007), develops the personality of women in the post- revolutionary cinema. She points out the numerous roles of women developed based on cultural-social and political and economic conditions and backgrounds, in various eras throughout history. She enumerates several eras to illustrate the presence of women in the post- revolution cinema. The role of women is reflected in the sixties as a traditional wife and mother and in the seventies as a modern one.e.g. "Biycot" by Mohsen Makhmalbaf in the sixties and "Az Karkheh ta Rein"( from Karkheh to Reine) by Ebrahim Hatamikia and "Nimeyeh Penhan"(The half covered) by Tahmineh Milani in the seventies. According to the researcher, cinema in the seventies has more characteristics of modernization as compared to the sixties. Movies and themes have addressed many social issues such as women's power, knowledge, and division of labor, complexities and her different characteristics. Noorian considers the social relationships of women in the sixties a traditional type and those in the seventies as modern. In the former decade firstly, traditional relationships were prevalent among women and secondly, the relationships were confined to the home and family while in the seventies because of the more open conditions of the society and the presidency of Khatami their social and economic relationships were represented more. She has compared the expertise of women in the sixties and seventies as political, social and cultural activists and as employees, teachers, doctors and lawyers. Thus she believes that the expertise of modern women in social backgrounds is related to her professional skills. Moreover in the sixties, the clothing used on women included mostly a chador and more coverage than in the seventies when more trench coats, makeup and hair exposure is demonstrated.

Sarah Hesami (2007), has researched the image of women in melodramatic cinema. She has analyzed a number of movies and believes that filmmakers should display the significant issues relating to women in an obvious and normal manner. Accordingly, if women are allowed to easily address their problems and opinions and able to state their preferences and desires while listening to the opinions of others, and moreover if the atmosphere is created to consider their opinions and initiate free forums for women, solutions for their problems could become.....and ideas proposed by others can also be amended in the process. She believes that in most movies women have not been allowed to express their opinions or given a right to chose and have been treated as illogical and irrational creatures but time and the conditions thereof have modified this view.

Malake Sadighi (2005) has also investigated social transitions and the role of women in the Iranian

cinema. According to this researcher political, social, economic and cultural circumstances of each period are factors significant and influential in the portrayal of women in cinema. This leads to her highlighting the three eras of war, construction and reform and that the image of women in cinema has changed according to each era. For example in the years 1988-1989 women were only portrayed in cinema stereotypically and in limited ways. In the years between 1991 and 2000, a different reflection of women was portrayed in several films made by Iranian filmmakers such as those by Rakhshan Bani-Etemad. In this cinema a new image of woman with different characteristics such as financial independence and diligence, in activities outside the household and multiple responsibilities such as being a mother, a private company or government employee has been reflected. Although in the seventies the presence of women is not very active and independent, however when comparing this era to the period before June 1997, it is clear that the circumstances of the society for the presence of women in cinema and other media considering their problems had not been possible.

Masoud Zandi (2003), has also researched the reflection of women in the cinema of Iran and the formation of women's cinema. He has studied the structural factors that affect women and her presence in the cinema and has focused on the analysis of the genre of women in cinema and the comparison of women's cinema in pre and post revolutionary periods. He has also delved into the era of reforms and the commission on scripts. He, like others points out that the prevailing circumstances following June 1997 created a relatively open political atmosphere where censorship was removed and an open cultural space and social transition in the situation of women and political criteria such as freedom of media and art was provided. Due to changes in the structures prevailing over our cinema we are witnessing the mass producing cinema in these movies. Most of the films that had been written about women but not been displayed until then, were allowed to go on screen. Therefore the context of women's cinema changed throughout these years. Mehdi Soltani (2004) did a study on the reflection of women and has researched the era of male dominance and compared the approach on women's cinema in several decades and their subjectivity and has analyzed men's abuse and misbehavior towards women. According to him the forties is the decade of traditional mentality and male dominance for women in cinema. In this era women did not have an independent personality and were subject to men. Characteristics such as dependency and attachment, and lack of power have been displayed. The fifties reflect male dominance while the themes and contents have become rather

modernized. Contrary to movies made in the forties in traditional locations such as the home and rural areas women are reflected as a sex object. The conditions prevailing over the society in the sixties were subject to war and thus women were temporarily eliminated from the cinema and men overtook the main roles. Women were only displayed as a kind and devoted spouse alongside men. The seventies however, laid significant responsibility on women. In movies throughout this decade women conflict with their husbands and Elham Jamdar (2004) has analyzed the image of women in post revolutionary cinema. She has examined the personality of women in social and familial television series and considers the most significant problem of women to be due to the damaged and molded image of women in society. According to her the stereotypical role attributes an emotional and irrational characteristic to women. She believes that structures are to be blamed for this because male dominant mentality forces them to transform ethical traits into non ethical ones and to develop negative characteristics such as pretense, hypocrisy, emotional attachment and violence.

#### **THE MAIN CONCEPTS**

In this paper, we have used the social and cultural framework which has been drawn from the modernization paradigm. The main concepts are: Gender, power, and dialogue. Hence, we need to compare the situation of men and women, their power and prestige, and the types of dialogue between them in the movies.

#### **Gender Dimension**

A comparison is made between the level that men and women are presented in the movies in terms of percentages. Their responsibilities at home and outside it (social activities), the types of dialogues and the role of women at home and towards their families have been studied. In the two movies "Haji Washington" made by Ali Hatami in 1981 and "Ansoye Atash" (Beyond Fire) made by Kiarash Ayyari in 1990, women are not presented at all, but after a while their presence in cinema was reflected in roles where women performed house work and acted as mother or nurse and were generally presented as silent women in marginal roles (in the film *Boycott* in 1980). Following this period they starred in movies in active roles, yet some of them were not screened because women starring in them did not have the proper covering (hejab).

The dominance of religious believers and ethical beliefs, led to the idea that women could be appropriately reflected as symbols of kind mothers, lovers of God, and in general full of goodness. In these movies, men were differentiated from women

using the distribution of work between them, specifically attributing house work to women and out of the home work to men.

### **Dialogue Dimension**

The new female dialogues started with the critique of the lack of women's presence in the cinema. In the movie of "Talagh be sabkeh Irani" (Divorce in Iranian Style) by Ziba Mirhosseini which has a critical point of view towards divorce and women's rights and men and women dialogue and "Basho – The Little Stranger" (Basho, Gharibeye Koochak) by Beyzai in 1991, produced during the peak years of the imposed war between Iran and Iraq, dialogues excluding men extended between actors and actresses. The issue examined in the movies was to determine the gender that decided about housing, marriage and jobs?

### **CLAIMS**

Nowadays, cinema as a high and modern art in Iran is closely related with social fields (Strinaty: 1380:121). Thus, cinema could be considered a mirror, reflecting day to day events and illustrating the social situation and various relationships existing in it. Cinema could therefore be regarded as a media tool for reflecting many social beliefs.

It has only presented the idea that women have become more empowered due to their newly discovered prestige and a new sense of identity. This modern identity contains various different aspects: religious, national (Iranian) and modernity. It is presented somehow in the movies in the cinema, and contains a long history, starting with a low status and silent prestige to a main and effective one.

A comparison of these silent periods with the low participation or none at all during the primary years of the revolution, to equal participation opportunities forms an assumption about men in the new era. During the pre-revolution era, there was less cultural and religious support for the participation of women in the movies. It is even observable that there were certain secular women who performed their roles without any cultural and religious support. On the other hand, women who acted in movies in secular roles were not allowed to raise their social problems and issues due to the Iranian society and the dominant atmosphere during those times (Sadr 2001:244). The themes selected for movies during the last years of the Pahlavi regime (1942-1979) contained elements that required the close interaction of men with women. One of the main subjects of the movies then, was to compare two types of women, such that these different types of women and their different dialogues (traditional and modern types of dialogues) were presented in the movie. These stereotyping of women dominated the movies and

producers attempted to draw attention to them. It has therefore been deemed necessary for the present article to examine these concepts and to analyze the situation of women in cinema using these ideas.

The role of women in cinema and changes that have occurred in this context results in the following two conclusions: (a) The study of women in cinema after the revolution and changes influencing them is a subject of interest for numerous researchers (Rahmati 1383, Sadr 1381, and Abdollayian 1383). (b) Changes that have occurred during the presence of women in cinema in different periods are closely related to the cultural changes in the post-war cinema. In other words the presence of women in the cinema has had cultural and social justifications.

This accounts for the changes that movie producers (male or female) have been able to induce in the beliefs about women as traditional objects in the cinema. The media and popular cultural movie producers had primarily ignored women as cultural models and reflected them merely as sex objects (Bashiriyeh, 2000). During this era, most movies were made by male producers and therefore women had no role even alongside their family and or as a mother. And even if a woman was present in the movie as wife or mother, she was dominated by men and had a lower social status. Following this period, women were gradually empowered and performed social and cultural roles in the movies, mostly because the Islamic government supported women and requested producers to copy the lifestyle of "Hazrat Fatemeh" and "Hazrat ZaynabZeinab" as the two main and sacred female figures in Islam. Therefore, we can see that Muslim women have been the focus of issues that were raised on women in the movies and that the main concern has been criticizing the secular roles previously reflected for women. Now, Muslim female producers who were legally allowed to present themselves in the cinematic arena attempted to offer new ideas and concepts such as Hijab and Islamic issues.

### **THE SITUATION OF WOMEN OVER TIME IN IRANIAN CINEMA**

It would now be appropriate to have an overview of the situation of Iranian Women in various movies over time. The presence of women in Iranian cinema and the role attributed to them has gone through four periods as shall be indicated. In each period, the situation of women as actresses and producers of movies, and also names of the main movies presenting the situation of women, shall be mentioned. These films are selected by the presence of women, mostly in the period of revolution and made by men and women actors. In these films mostly men had main roles and women the marginal positions. These can be seen in table 1.

**Table 1:** The Post-Revolution Roles of Iranian Women in the Movies

Date Produced	Producers by Gender	Social and political period	The role of women in the film	Name of the film
1357-59 (1979-1981)	Mostly Male	The Revolution era: Banie Sader and Razaei's times	Women alongside men are involved in the war, but are less active in social and political issues	Dastforoush, Tobeye Nasouh, and Baycot
1360-1367 (1982-1990)	Half-Half	War between Iran and Iraq: The Khamenei period	Women very active in the family, community, and at the national level	Hamoun, Apartment and so on.
1367-1384 (1990-1997)	Men and Women alongside each other	The period of social upgrading, The Hashemi Period	Women are very active in the society, and attempt to criticize the men's status, initiation of feminist movements	Ajanse Shisheyi (The Glass Agency)
1376-1384 (1997-2005)	Women very active and independent	Reform period: The Khatami period		Ghermez (Red), Sag Khoshi (Killing Dogs), Do Zan (Two Women), Gilaneh, and ...

### The First Era

The first era discusses mostly ideological and religious beliefs. In this period, women were identified as corrupted creatures and sexually abused because of opinions held on, so in this period women had an obscured and marginal role and an unknown identity.

The question remained to be answered is: Why did Iranian cinema ignore women's role after the revolution? And why weren't women placed at the focus of the dialogues?

Obviously this goes back to the social and cultural situation before the revolution and the different views held on women's presence in the cinema after the revolution. A few noted such as below: (a) Iranian society is a religious society. Opinions held on women were mostly religious and cultural and artistic

activities were also based on religion. The Presence of women in non personal arenas like families, cinema, and television, and their political and cultural participation, without the confirmation of religion, was considered unacceptable. At the beginning of the Islamic government, women had a marginal role and disappeared from the cinema suddenly. The dominated atmosphere directly or indirectly put women under pressure, such that they could merely carry out their activities in a religiously governed area and to conduct only religious dialogues for purposes of being able to continue their activities in the society. (b) The atmosphere dominant over movie producers and stars after the war was mostly governed by aged men. (Like Davood Rashidi and Ezatollah Entezami). In the absence of women the producers stayed quiet and silent for a while but the new social situation and a new demand for women to

take part in cinema caused this marginal creature to reenter at the center of adventures in the cinema. (c) The presence of women in the Iranian cinema had been accepted by the film makers and cinema governours-and could not be ignorant to the different new events happening in the movie industry and the world of art, so they turned back o overview their own personality. (d) What caused the absence of women in cinema was the dominancy of the western culture in the movie industry before the revolution, the advancement of secularism, dominancy of patriarchy, domination of men in the cinema and of course the weak roles of women in art and education .

### **The Second Era**

Women entered art and cinema carefully with the roles given to them by movie producers, the social situation and the dominant ideology. In this period they controlled the household, took care of the children, entered discussions with men and finally dealt with their husbands, helped men in the household and gradually forgot their social role and started living in the margin of the family. In this period most movie producers were men and naturally did not communicate much about women and their problems. In other words, movies were produced only for the entertainment of the family. In the war movies, women were expected to play a holy role alongside men and soldiers, where women in these years get involved in politics; therefore women have Hijab (covers) in these years. Throughout this period attempts were made to eliminate women from the cinema, therefore women turned to roles of a kind mother and a loyal sister and wife. But they were still merely listeners or silent spectators without being shown too much (like Dastforoosh). The silence of women throughout 1978-1980 could be explained because of changes that were taking place in the situation of women as compared to the pre-revolution era.

After the revolution power was held by religious authorities where women without Hijab and with improper clothing had no place. Because of this, women were absent from the cinema until the end of the 1980's in an extremist manner and even when present they had a complimentary role alongside men. All these resulted in the elimination of women from cinema. Movie producers and the prevailing ideology attempted to reflect that there was no need for the presence of women and their acting and only her voice or shadow was enough. The government also had a pretext that women did not have the appropriate Hijab. In some of the movies, especially the mute or non-visual ones, women were used in the manner described above (Haji Washington, and Dastforoosh in the period of Rafsanjani).

### **The Third Period**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> period is a period where women were present but in quite a strange way. Women criticized men and the fight between men and women began. In this period woman is at the core of the problems (e.g. during the period of Khatami, the movie "Do zan" or "Two Women"). Women entered cinema in roles such as nurses and doctors and in religious contexts. Women, who were less educated and had never been abroad, were now more capable of going abroad and receiving adequate education. Female movie producers introduced the female personality and their complaints about her rights, which were previously ignored.

Women now possessed a personality with which they tried to achieve their freedom, ignored men's dialogues, did not sacrifice themselves towards their values, traditions and families, women became modernized and disobedient, civilized women attempted to achieve their freedom, possess cellular phones, drive around with her own cars, have a job and no children to take care of, and they became strictly attracted to fashion (Sadr : Movies during 1995-2000).

### **The Fourth period**

The role of women has changed. Now women are the centre of attention and have stabilized themselves in the cinema. Therefore, women's personal problems, loneliness and their future desires, living alone, deciding on their own, and not undertaking the principles have become the main issues addressed in the movies. Women's problems change in the movies and each woman adapts herself with her new problems. Following these years, movie producers started making movies about women and their problems and women started acting as professors, artists, politicians, judges, and criticsers of the society and men.

### ***Changes in Women's Roles in the Cinema as Reflected in Several Movies***

The pattern of changes of movies in which women have played in, starting with the revolution and until now, reflect the way women have presented themselves in the movie industry since then. Several movies shall be considered to further examine the changes in the movies during this period.

The movie "Last Flight" (Akharin Parvaz) made by Ahmad Reza Darvish is a story about the anti-revolutionary groups who have taken the family of a pilot as hostage. The producer attempts to establish a relationship between these groups and the Iraqi regime. The women in this movie play the role of the main who captures the prisoners and have quite a marginal and inactive role. In these types of movies



that were mostly produced during the first years of the revolution (1983-1986), artistic obligations in movies were divided into male and female duties. The duty of men was to participate in the war while women had to take care of children and the household.

In the movies "Migrant" (Mohajer) and "Unity of Good Men" (Vasle Nikan) produced by Hatami Kia (a producer of war movies and movies on the holy defense, as the war was called), women have not starred at all but in later movies by the same producer, women were at first given minor roles in such a way that they were considered absolutely inactive creatures that were not able to defend themselves. Hatami Kia has changed his views on women in his other movies. In the movie "M like Mother" and "In the Name of the Father" women have stronger roles. In these two movies, a new image of women has been presented where they attempt to introduce their problems. Although movies that were made in the beginning years of the revolution had been in compliance and according to the modules ordered by the organizations, institutions and special producers with the objective of following stable agreements made on religious cinema, but the newly changed presence of women due to the atmosphere created and the new lifestyle throughout recent years has to be closely inspected.

"Children of Divorce" produced by Tahmine Milani in 1989 is another example of these type of movies. Although Milani addresses only the primary problems of women, yet in her other movies women are presented with a specific social and cultural status, a traditional woman who tries to reach modernism. The movie "Two Women" produced in 1998 attempts to inform women about their social status and legal rights, and for instance in the movie "The Hidden Half", 2000, Milani has presented the political and social features of women.

"The Fifth Reaction", 2001, is a female reaction against male dominant social laws, in which women show their reactions toward male dominancy. Tahmine Milani uses her tools to defend women's rights and at the same time to present her own feminist ideas and points of views. In this movie, women directly enter cinema to defend their rights and thus would like to have their own say, the new dialogues of women, women with women and with men, start with the justification of women having been neglected of their rights. In fact women's rights are thus reflected in writing and images through these movies. Dialogues are limited so women move further beyond and search for their ideal man in the movies. This is an excuse for her to illustrate men as the reason for their suppression, backward views and exploitations of women. In the movies produced by

Milani from 1996 onwards, she tries to illustrate a new image of women, namely one that should speak up for her rights. This is a new image of open minded women, beyond household chores and equal with men. To show her indifference to family, she is often shown as a single or childless woman. This would be the representative of social and cultural women. In short, the entrance of women into cinema and the content of their dialogues can be classified into three stages.

#### *A Past and Future Review Era*

The 1980-1983 era, cinematic policies were designed according to religious and political contexts across all cinemas throughout the country. This was mainly due to the revolution in Iran which had a religious content. At the same time there was no interest in the presence of women in the arts, while women were considering re-entering cinema and the movies.

#### *The Marginal and Inactive Presence Era*

The 1983-1996 era, where in because of the war movies women were somewhat presented in certain movies in generalized political and social roles. New opportunities were now formed for female producers to re-enter the cinematic arena and to compile and produce movies alongside their male counterparts.

#### *The Resistance to Stay in the Picture*

The period following 2001, in which women are considered equal to men in all their activities. Serious questions were addressed among producers who held a marginal and inactive role towards women. A careful inspection on the cinematic system in Iran following the revolution removes all doubt that the system had all intentions of presenting women with specific religious beliefs. Maybe it could be correctly presumed that the policy making structures of the cinema in Iran and subsequently producers would have attempted to present a figure of the Muslim Woman. Despite all changes that have impacted the cinema, this has always been the focus of all subjects raised by the religious government. However, cinema entered a new stage of the arts with a different image of women and their problems.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Based on all discussions, it can easily be illustrated that the revolution has had a great impact in the primary entrance of women into cinema, moving away from their families and entering the world outside. Not only women from the elite class but also common women were able to take part in the activities. Housewives who never participated in issues further than their household boundaries, were now entering the social arena. E.g. films like "two women" made by Tahmineh Millani.

Another feature of the revolution besides of its Islamic attributes, is to enable women to take part in religious activities such as religious leisures and programmings for religious trips). Thus one of the abilities of men was passed along to women as well (1380:23 Namazi).

The religious cinema in Iran after 1978 started working without paying any attention to the western believers which had ruled the cinematic world in the past. During these years a popular cinema was made neglecting the religious believers (254 : ), mainly because of ideological disturbance purposes (pre-1983 era). During the first years of the revolution these questions remained to be answered.

'Which cinema belongs to religious and Muslim movie producers'? And which people can deal with these movies? Therefore what happened in the cinema of the 1980's was mainly about events which happened in the first years after the revolution and after the war.

That is one reason why women' problems were considered less important. The cinema policies in those years were to encourage people to join the war and obviously women were encouraged as well (e.g.: "We are Standing" by Akbar Hariri in 1363). This movie is about a person who joins the war with-out consulting his wife and after he is wounded, he suddenly finds his wife in the battlefield also. In these years, the cinema experiments having women involved and obviously has a reason and an explanation for them to join in the war (the images are illustrated in the war movies as mentioned), for her to perform her moral obligations and religious responsibility. Women stayed suppressed for a short while following the war because of the Hijab that was considered a religious duty. But after two years of conflicts women accepted that they had to have the Hijab and that they were really different from women in the last decade. This caused the entrance of women into cinema during the next periods and the reason why women's participation in cinema was slowly marginalizing due to religious reasons. From the second half of the 80's, female movie producers of the Iranian cinema entered women into cinema in a more serious manner, and following the 90's women stood against men in a criticizing manner, to achieve the identity that was to them in the past. Women in the household and family changed into women that could fight against men's harshness. These attitudes could not be generated by a housewife but rather they were possible from educated women. Their views were critical toward their rights and they tried their best to win back their lost rights. From the 90's onwards, women's appearance changed in the cinema. Women were trying to achieve more freedom (the Khatami period) and to get a chance to compete with

men and even get ahead of him. She no longer insisted on keeping her traditional role because now she was a modern woman, with her own cellular phone and her own car (e.g. in the movies produced by Tahmineh Milani during the years 1989,1990,1991,1994,1998,2001 and2002 and also by Bani E'temad). The third period was a continuation of the two previous periods, a period of stableness of women in the cinema and communicating her personal problems, relying on the future, living alone, dealing alone, challenging previous traditions and tearing apart family and social bonds. Problems kept on changing and impacting women. Thus cinema became a scene of day--to--day events (the movie " by Bani E'temad) and of the modern life and social realities showing women not as religious, kind and innocent women but rather as a creature equal to men .

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Abot, Kamla and Valas Keler. **The Sociology of Women**, Translated by Maneijeh Najm-Eraghi. Nay Publisher, 1380 (2001).
- [2] Ayyari K in the movie of **An soye Atash** "Beyond Fire", 1990.
- [3] Bahar, Mehri. "Zan dar Maraseme Azadari (The role of the Women in Rituals)". **Pajohesh Zanan**, the Center for Women Studies. 1380, N 2.
- [4] Beyzaii B in the film of **Basho Gharibehe Kouchak**, "**Basho the Little Stranger**" 2001 The Center for Developing the Participation of Women in Higher Education Systems. "The Roles of Women in Higher Education". 1380 (2001).
- [5] Eliot ,et al 1980,INST 1985 Kelly 1991: Bradley,2000
- [6] Elizabeth, M. Kinge. **Neghshe Zanan dar To see Egtesadi (the Roles of the Women in the Economic Development)**. Translated by Gholamreza Azad, Sahab Publisher, 1376 (1997).
- [7] Hatami A, in the movie "**Haji Washington**", 1982.
- [8] Kazemi, Abdolhamid. **Bavarha va Raftarhaye Mazhabi dar Iran: 1353-1357 (The Religious Behaviours and Attitudes in Iran: 1971-1975)**. The Ministry of Culture, 1382 (2003).
- [9] Namazi, Tajrobeh Zane Irany (The experience of Iranian Women). **Middle East studies, Taslanmeh Motaleate Kavarmiyaneh**. N3, Eight Years, Summer 1380(2001).
- [10] Sadr H R **An introduction to the political history of Iranian cinema (1900- 2001)** Tehran Nashre Nay 2001. Rahmat
- [11] UNESCO ,1997,ASHRAT ,FATEMI 1997.