

Changing the Cultural Face of Iranian Films under the Influence of the Islamic Revolution in 1976

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Abstract: In today's multicultural world, Iranian cinema is undoubtedly one of the most important tools which its analysis and study can pave the way for different sociological and cultural research, in particular from the perspective of communication and cinema. In a comprehensive view on Iranian cinema from the Constitutional period to the post Islamic Revolution of Iran, in the other words, since cinema entered Iran and the techniques of this industry became popular among filmmakers and numerous audiences were attracted to the cinema's white screen, until the great happening of the Islamic Revolution of Iran that changed everything including cinema, this study will analyze the nature of cinema, especially in the field of morality and individual values which also shows its impact in the society. In this article, we will observe that before the revolution the body of cinema based on the box office and it was under the influence of the cinema with slangy and entertaining limited themes. With the emerge of the Islamic Revolution, under the influence of the surrounded social conditions, it shifts to the religious and ideological themes which tries to demonstrate the role of society and the government in creating a spiritual revolution in the form of cinema.

Keywords: Changing the Cultural Face, Cinema, Culture, Islamic revolution of Iran

1. Introduction

Media play an important role in forming cultural, social and moral system in today's world. They provoke lots of beliefs and also ignore some other issues. Today, media is considered one of the important tools of society for shaping and guiding the social and individual behaviour and manner. Hence, noting media products and analysing them from different aspects seem to be necessary. Evaluating media application of the cinema, across its artistic dimension, is inevitable. There is no doubt that art is a social phenomenon and cinema is the most social art.

It is more than one hundred years that cinema developed in Iran. Iranian cinema has experienced lots of ups and downs in this long period. Cinema, like any other social phenomenon, has been in interaction with its surrounding environment. It has both affected on and effected from its environment. Coming sections are based on this important note. Lots of film products represent their producers believes and morals. Furthermore, cinema has an important place in solving our social problems and can have an efficient role in solving normative and moral issues, including explanation of superiority of collective over individual morality or vice-versa and modelling and picturing beauty and ugliness of personal moral.

Because of the mentioned reasons, it can be said that in cinema which has the most number of audiences, studying the social representations of every age is excessively important. Therefore, the aim of the writer of this study is to evaluate sociological and social features of the cinema of Iran from Constitutional ages till the Islamic revolution, while investigating evolution of the Iranian cinema in the mentioned time era.

2. Cinema and human values

Ethics is a necessary issue in every society (4). Cinema, as a media that shows and effects ethical issues plays an important role. As ethics has a direct relation with human and society and also cinema is effecting and affecting from society and people, it cannot be isolated from ethics (5). Since our selection is based on box office, there is no bias on movie genres and hence this study explores different movies, e.g. King of the Hearts (drama) and Gheysar (social). The cinema before revolution doesn't restrict itself to special value and attempts to be only entertaining as Hollywood cinema. Iran cinema was mostly affected by Hollywood cinema in 30, 40s. Hollywood cinema had a major feature and it was giving importance to the taste of people. Iranian cinema before revolution was based on great film companies and their main issue was capital return. In this type of cinema, human values had no position. In some movies, critical, social and anthropological elements were found. The cinema before revolution was entertaining. After the revolution, the condition was changed. The revolution consists of new values as autonomy, freedom, Islam, justice and governance. These great ethical and human values were manifested in the cinema. The first movies of Abbas Kiarostami in 60s in though development centre of adolescents and children included some elements of humanity cinema. This cinema showed simple human concepts as friendship, love, death, sacrifice, etc. The best example is "where is the friend house? This movie brought fame to Abbas Kiarostami in 60s.

3. Ethical values in cinema

3.1. Trust

Trust has an extensive meaning and includes any materialistic and spiritual capital and any Muslim is required to avoid betrayal in trust whether the other party is Muslim or non-Muslim. All people are equal in this regard. Truth and trust are two major signs of faith and personality of human being and as they refer to faith, is much better than saying prayer (6).

3.2. Sacrifice

Harandi (2008) believes that in Arabic language, sacrifice is forgiveness. In Arabic language *الْأَنْزَهُ وَالْمَأْتَرَهُ* mean virtue (7). In Persian language, sacrifice means selection of other goals instead of our goals for benefits and avoiding loss (8). Sacrifice is beyond the duty, social, national, ethnical or worship duty. The worship that God doesn't need it but the slave is happy to be humble to him as if the worship is obligatory, it should be fulfilled and if the slave does the extra worship, this is sacrifice as there is no benefit for God but it is virtue for the slave (9).

3.3. Humility

The seventh advice of Loghman to his son is humility. He said to his son: «و لا تصغر خدك للناس...» my son, don't ignore people, it means to be humble. Humility is derived of the term "Vaza" in Arabic. Ethically, it means that human being should be lower before God and people. Humility to others is another type of humility with great ethical values (10).

3.4. Respecting parents

Respect means admiration. Human feelings and God recognition are adequate to have respect to the parents. Even in rational aspects, Islam is not silent and the required commands are given and parents respect is much emphasized.

4. The nature of cinema in Iran before and after the revolution

4.1. New wave in the cinema before Revolution

In the film farsi era, other artists attempted to create the works with human values showing the social behaviors. The years during 1960 with the capital globalization and freedom of oil revenue, there were challenging years for Iran. The political stability of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi requires the development of security systems (by the aid of CIA organization in US and Israel) and exact supervision of government on the cinema industry. The films dealing with social issues were the product of young directors in Europe and it encountered the disagreement of government. For example, the film "South of city" by Farokh Ghafari depicting the miserable life in the southern area of Tehran as realistically was stopped as it was said by the director. What was harmful for local cinema was the tendency of the regime to modernize Iran in western trend. Thus, global benefits were much important than local media. The American companies sold all products and services ranging from movies to TV shows. They not only sold their products but also their consumption ideologies. At the end of the decade, the regional effects were important in Iran cinema. The Egyptian, Indian and dance movies had received much attention by the audience. The Radio stations broadcasting the lyrics were the increasing culture of the common people as affected considerably by the western products (11). At the end of 1981, the local cinema industry producing low quality melodramas, comic movies were changed and this was called new wage.

4.2. Iranian cinema after the Islamic revolution to 2001

After the Islamic revolution, it was assumed that Islamic Republic was against cinema and cinema was eliminated from the art and culture of Iran but the leader admitted the film "cow" by Dariush Mehrjuji and the past assumption was eliminated. New attitudes were toward cinema but these theories were different from each other.

Islamic revolution was a reaction against modernization of Pahlavi era and the Iranian identity and tradition were destroyed. Also, the Iranian civilization and culture have been changed considerably after the revolution and these changes were observed in cultural values and social and individual identity of life styles. Based on the new religious and ethical world view, people could create new cinema styles and some of the cinema styles were not changed considerably.

In order to know the face of Iranian cinema before the Islamic Revolution and compare it with its face after the Revolution, four most popular films of each period is selected and considering the component of human values, their sociological analysis will be state briefly as follows:

- Film: *King of Hearts* in 1968

The *King of Hearts* is one of the famous movies in Iran cinema and it is one of the excellent examples of film Farsi. Setare and Saeed love each other but all people have planned to avoid their marriage. The story of the

movie is weak and only the fame of Fardin and the lyrics of the famous singers including Aref and Ahdie were the film attractions. This film is one of the important examples of the presence of child in the cinema on that year. Leila Foruhar as a small child acted well. Presence of Leila (child). This movie was turned into one of the melodrama movies using the child personality as a key role (12). This small girl plays an important role in the chain of events and it continues the movie. The presence of children in these melodrama movies has no relationship with the child cinema. In some other films of 40, 50s, some sweet children played in the commercial films. In these movies, the children were the small comedians who were used for increasing the audience (13).

- Film: *Gheisar* in 1969

This movie focuses on the contradiction between the good person and bad person and links the positive character to Iranian culture and the negative character to the destruction of this culture and tradition. Thus, retaliation in Jaheli genre to defend a relative woman is used to defend the Iranian nobility. In this film, Kimyayi applied some strategies as action style and selected the dramatic angles of the camera (e.g. bathroom scene) and exciting music and enhanced the genre tone of the movie (11). In this movie, Kimyayi shows a family with great stability by blood but the dependence of this family is based on what people say and their resistance rather than respecting the society. Thus, nobody should find about the reason of suicide of the daughter not because rape is a great injustice to a person but for the reason that the family nobility is eliminated (14)

- Film: *Cow* in 1969

Cow is made of a story of Azadran Bil story by Gholam-Hossein Sa'edi. When Mehrjuyi was in US, he recognized Saedi and selected this story: We worked on the design of *Cow* for 15 days in his office in Delgosha Street. We read and wrote and corrected to exchange our views. Finally, we produced the scenario of *Cow* (15).

- Film: *Mamal Amrikayi* in 1975

Mamal Amrikayi is one of the film Farsi using typical characters and *Mamal Amrikayi* is one of the common types of Film Farsi. The audience of film Farsi was not searching for meaning and he searched about the characters to empathy with them or see his social condition in them. Like other Film Farsi, *Mamal Amrikayi* had no story but some of social problems were shown.

5.2. After revolution cinema

5.2.1. The *Tenants* in 1987.

This movie is written by Mehrjuyi but its narration is similar to a literal work. This film shows the social, economic relationship of living on that period by different characters. In this film, there is no definite boundary between the good and evil. In the initial part of the film, Mehrjuyi shows the city form us and defines the environment. This city has architecture without any identity and its shape defines the movie for us. The great towers in the city are inconsistent with the general view of the city. There are various symbols showing the attack of the modern world to the traditional world. The society is contradictory and cannot accept new changes and the contradictions are increasing continuously. This is a comic movie and it is acceptable for all but according to Mehrjuyi, I thought that I was working on an absurd project with UNESCO theme and we destroy all the good things instead of building it (15).

5.2.2. Film: *Kolah Ghermezi and Pesarkhale* in 1994

Kolah Ghermezi and Pesarkhale are based on the space, story and characters in a TV show and it is one of the most famous TV shows among the children and the adults. In 1994, the group attempted to make a film and all cinema authorities predicted that the film is sold out. The daily sale of *Kolah Ghermezi* was a new record in Iranian cinema and the total sale showed that potential capacity of Tehran cinemas. *Kolah Ghermezi and Pesarkhale* movie was shown on November 1994 in Tehran and other towns in Iran and it continued to the end of year. This film was sold out in 1994 in Tehran and towns (16).

5.2.3. Film: *The Red* in 1999

Jeyrani selects the name of the movie based on the psychotic love of a man to a woman. *The red* depicts the style of film as love, blood and insanity and it also shows the behavior of Naser Malek, the hero of the story (17). Talking about the love of a man to a woman or vice versa is with some limitations in our society. The love in *The Red* is a real love. According to Jeyrani, it is rooted in the reality and it refers to the event in Iran. Suspicion and hate make this love as complex. The distance between love and hate is considered in this film.

5.2.4. Film: *Killing the Wild Dogs* in 2001

Golrokh Kamali returns to Tehran after one year to be with her husband, Naser Moaser. She finds that the partner of his spouse, Javad Moghadam has deceived Naser to escape with 700 million Toman and Naser will be imprisoned. Golrokh calls the creditors and attempts to persuade them. She tolerates the different propositions, disguise, threats and the terrible events and finally she is successful. But, finally Javad Moghadam comes to her to explain a story. Golrokh finds that Naser tries to escape with his secretary, Fereshte with the money and she and others were only puppets. Golrokh confronts Naser, Fereshte with Javad Moghadam and other creditors. This movie is based on misuse based on economic benefits. Golrokh Kamali with her own personality features is encountered with the people who only love economic benefits. These characters are distinguished in the movie of Beizayi based on the language and speech and shows wild people surrounding the innocent Golrokh (18).

5.2.5. Ethical elements of movies after revolution: The behavior in apartment life with neighbors, Work ethic, Collaboration, Forgiveness, understanding and speaking, Hospitality, Brotherhood, family, Honesty, Helping others, Affection, love, Honor, Justice, The attempt to keep the marital life, Stability and patience, Sacrifice, Innocence and honesty of Golrokh Kamali, Loyalty to family, Telling the truth, Confidentiality, Friendship, Trust, Ethics.

6. Conclusion:

It is difficult to observe and distinguish human values among the vulgarity and superficiality of the films which were produced before the revolution.

In the cinema before revolution, ethical values have little position and they are distinguished hardly among other bad behaviours. Ethical values have minor position in these films and they are used positively to finish the film. The majority of these films were based on the western models to provide a rich image of life style for the poor people in the society.

In Mohammad Reza Shah's time, especially in 40th and 50th (Persian calendar), we face a cinema in which its main directors, artists and producers try to create an entertainment industry through mass production. In this cinema, human values were in second degree of importance, yet there were movies with accurate cinematic technics, creative actors, dramatic screenplays and skilful casts. But most of the movies in those two decades, except new wave films, were vulgar and shallow.

After revolution, the space was changed namely after the war of Iran and Iraq, our independent cinema was ignored and only the movies defending the ideals of revolution and war were defended and respected. In 60s, some movies were made with sociological approach. For example, the comedy movie of the tenants was made in 60s.

From sociological aspects, this film was sold out and this didn't show the lack of a formal ideology of government and it showed the attention of people to comedy in the era in which the entire country was encountered with the war with Saddam Hossein in Iraq. The movie "The tenants of Mehrjuyi" with its comedy theme was not an absurd film. However, most of the comedy movies in 80s, 90s were absurd. Symbolically, it was shown that all who want to live with each other are a lot but there are some proud and ambitious people who prevent this friendship.

The change in the face and nature of films can be seen by looking at the movement process of Iranian cinema after the Islamic Revolution by the formation of moral values that depend on the upward developing society.

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