Chapter I

Introduction
Recent decades of pioneering work by feminist scholars in women's studies have made us aware of gender and its centrality in shaping social life. Gender is a complex phenomenon. The study of gender has performed the task of explaining differences between women and men and increasingly focused on the dynamics of masculinity and femininity. Gender typically refers to the social process of dividing up people and social practices along the lines of sexual identities (Beasley, 2005). It identifies a set of qualities and behaviors expected from females or males by society. The concept of gender was adopted in order to emphasize the social construction of masculinity and femininity and social ordering of relations between women and men.

Gender denotes a hierarchical division between men and women and is embedded in social institutions (Scott, 2002). Sociologists of the 1970s adopted the term gender to be able to discuss femininity and masculinity as socially produced ways of acting (Holmes, 2007) and sociological perspective has led to an understanding of the sex-gender system as a cultural construct that is itself constituted by social structure. By the mid 1980s the purview of the field had substantially shifted from women's studies to the study of gender, namely analysis of the ways in which all aspects of human society, culture and relationships are gendered (Kandiyoti, 1996).

Judith Lorber (1994) defines gender as an all pervasive social institution that establishes a pattern of expectations for individuals, orders the processes of everyday life, is built into the major social organizations of society such as the economy, ideology, the family and politics and is also an entity in and of itself. Ann Oakley (1985) in her analysis has made the distinction between sex and gender as a cultural approach, believing that sex is a biological matter whereas gender is culturally produced. According to Jackson (1998) gender as socially constructed masculinity and femininity is defined not by biology but by social, cultural and psychological attributes which are accrued through becoming a man or a woman in a particular society at a particular time.

The sociological view explores gender roles. Gender roles are the roles that society assigns to men and women based on their gender. They affect how people perceive and expect themselves and others to behave in masculine and feminine manner. These roles are learned through socialization and are culturally determined. Social norms and values are internalized by children as they learn their social roles and the produced view of gendered individuals (Scott, 2002). They especially
influence relationships between men and women. Gender is not simply about what we are as males or females but also what we are doing in our encounters with one another. It is constructed through performance and interaction between people.

Another concept of ‘doing gender’ was introduced by West and Zimmerman (1987). They conceptualized gender as an active, routine achievement through everyday interaction engaged with socially circulating ideas, which encourage women and men to look and act in certain ways that declare their sex category. Doing gender takes place in every interaction, situation and institution. Messerschmidt (in Kimmel, 2000) points out that gender is a situated accomplishment in which we produce forms of behavior seen by others in the same immediate situation as masculine or feminine.

**Media, Cinema and Gender**

The medium of cinema representing social and historical practice regarding gender approach is a crucial phenomenon in sociological studies. In concert with other cultural institution and practices, media are gendered as well and contribute to gendering our identities and influence how we think about people and events related to gender. Although media and specifically television and films are often considered as a social mirror, in fact they often deform social reality.

It can be said that media are crucial in the construction of gender ideologies and in gender socialization. Women’s position within media power structures and media representation of women are persistent concerns in every society. Products of media culture provide materials out of which we forge our identities, our sense of selfhood, our construction of ethnicity, race and nationality, of sexuality and of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Dines, 2003). As Peter Goldman and Graham Murdock (in Sakr, 2004) put it, media industries play a pivotal role in organizing the images and discourse through which people make sense of the world. Media are, thus, central to what ultimately comes to represent our social realities. Media cover gender issues through interacting with cultural images of gender and with individual identities in three ways. First, media **reflect** cultural values and ideals about gender; second, media **reproduce** cultural views of gender in individuals; and third, media are **gatekeepers** engaged in filtering information and images (Wood, 1999).
In the matter of images, Richard Dyer (1993) describes three main characteristics of contemporary media representation. Firstly, representation is *selective* as individuals in the media are often used to replace a group of people. One member of this group then represents the whole social group. Secondly, representation is *culture-specific* i.e., representations are presentations. The use of codes and conventions available in a culture shapes and restricts what can be said about any aspect of reality in a given place, in a given society at a given time. Thirdly, representation is subject to *interpretation*: although visual codes are restricted by cultural convention, they do not have “single determinate meanings”. To a certain degree, their meaning is a matter of interpretation.

Film and cinema are the most commonly used mass media to communicate with the public. The fact that cinema is a mediator of social realities and personal dreams, collective concerns and individual aspirations make it assume a seminal dimension as a humanistic discourse which has the potential to redirect the cultural and material fabric of our everyday lives (Jain, 2002).

**Portrayal of Women in Cinema**

It has often been pointed out that cinema depicts myths about women and femininity, as well as, about men and masculinity. Acting as the announcer of cultural values, media reinforce traditional stereotypes of women as dependent, decorative, passive and subservient and men as independent, powerful, active and superior (Wood, 1999). Gender inequalities have a crucial role in the constitution of social inequalities. Some researchers believe that gender inequalities should be analyzed with social class, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, identity and age (Bradley, 2007). The study of women-men subordination-domination and power relations is a main concern of feminist theory. Women’s position within media power structures and media representation of women are persistent concerns in every society, because negative stereotyping and lack of female input both reflect and reinforce wider gender inequalities.

Research on gender and cinema has emphasized the question about women’s identity. In fact, the study of the images of women in cinema were a central concern of the ‘second wave’ feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, criticizing women's image in film and women's roles in the film industry (Jackson, 1998). Feminist perspective on film focuses specifically on the problems of women in culture by representation on
the screen. It explores social and sexual roles of women’s lives on film in particular contexts. Social definitions of women are examined in contemporary societies by institutions such as the family, the economy and the state, as well as, institutionalized patterns of sexuality and norms of appropriately feminine behavior and social status. Film itself is asserted as an ideological practice of women, masking or reinforcing those definitions (Kaplan, 2000). Films, indeed in the most effective manner maintain the dominant patriarchal ideology and diffusion of traditional female gender roles, which women are depicted in culture and society.

Regarding the portrayal of women in films, Claire Johnston (1973) whose work demonstrated the usefulness of psychoanalysis, semiotics, auteur theory, Althusserian Marxism, and structural anthropology has asserted that there are a range of hidden meanings in films. She provided the groundwork for the feminist analysis of woman as a ‘sign’ signifying the myths of patriarchal discourse and she influentially diagnosed that woman as woman remains the unspoken absence of patriarchal culture (Chaudhuri, 2006). Feminist film theory raises questions about women's subjectivity and the representation of women in films because of their different accounts of the self, agency, identity, and the cultural surroundings of the subject. Any study of emancipation and empowerment of women emphasizes the relation of the social structure and women's agency and subjectivity. Through feminist studies, the sociological construction of marginalization of women by a patriarchal culture can be analyzed.

In this sense the role of structure and agency in human thought and behavior is one of the central issues in sociology. Sociologists have engaged with or been interested in structure/agency debate which seeks to explain how social action is always already structured by the embedded effects of patterns of behavior linked to norms, identity investments, ideologies, moralities and so on. For analyzing the position and representation of women within power and gender relations in a patriarchal society, we need to consider how social structure determines women actions in society and what is the role of agency in women's lives.

Contemporary Middle Eastern films indeed reveal powerful cross-currents producing complex and often contradictory effects, acting both to reinforce and to militate against the manifestations of male dominance in different narratives and
contexts. However, despite these complexities, gender asymmetry in society is produced, represented and reproduced through filmic texts (Atakav, 2010). In fact, feminist theory stresses how femininity constructed in a patriarchal society is shown by cinema and also discusses how women can bring about changes within the social structure. However, second-wave feminists have questioned the images put out by cinema that depict women as oppressed or as agent. Their central concern was its emphasis on women's constraint and complicity in their own subordination and also how women's victimization obscured the extent to which women made choices, resisted coercion, and exercised agency in their own lives.

After a brief overview on the issue of gender, media, cinema and women, in the following section the theoretical frameworks which have been used in this research are discussed.

**Theoretical Framework**

In the proposed study, certain fundamental theoretical approaches have been chosen to analyze the gender phenomenon in relation to media and cinema specifically. These are theories related to social structure and agency and feminist perspectives on media and films, also known as feminist film theory or feminist film criticism.

For analyzing the position and representation of women within power gender relations in patriarchal society we first need to consider the structural theory. In the next section it will be examined how social structure determines individual actions in society and what is the role of agency in individual's life. In the section after that, various feminist perspectives on media and films will be taken up for discussion.

**Structural Theory and Agency:**

Sociology is a discipline that studies human social behavior, society and the individual. Sociological analysis ranges from the study of behavior of the individual as a social actor to the structure of entire societies. As a result, the role of structure and agency in human thought and behavior is one of the central issues in sociology and other social sciences.

Some approaches have emphasized on gender as social structure. For instance, social constructionists in the discussion of gender believe that gender and sexuality
are mediated by historical and cultural factors. Gender as socially constructed through a society defines what it means to be masculine or feminine. Gender performance is based on culture in which people struggle over the meaning of social experience and social relations. Constructionists explain variations in how gender is ‘done’ in different cultures as a product of different socialization patterns and social institutions (Holmes, 2007). This approach is against biological determinism and has argued that difference does not adhere in the self/identity, is not an inherent essence, but is created by relations of power (Beasley, 2005).

As Goffman (1979) examined presentation of gendered selves in social situations, he claimed that expression of masculine and feminine behaviors are not instinctive but socially learned and socially patterned. Gender displays are not so much representations of underlying difference between males and females but indications of that actor's cultural competence. These display signals to others that the actor is claiming a particular kind of self with a set of associated traits, abilities, privileges and feelings. They express and reinforce power and stratification and through this display, the actor positions herself or himself in the social hierarchy (Howard, 1997).

Foucault (1978) has analyzed sexuality as a social construction by introducing the concept of discourse, power and social norms to link it to macro conceptions of society and social change. Foucault sees sex as an asset of institutionally rooted social practices constructed in relation with other discourses. He discusses how institutional discourses expressed through expert ‘regimes of truth’ come to construct subjectivity (Plummer, 2002). From this point of view it is necessary to understand how historically, sexual discourses have come to shape individual subjectivity and sexual and gender identity. Clearly according to all the above scholars we should consider social structure theory for better understanding of the role of social structures in individual social life.

Social structure is a term used as a fundamental concept in the social sciences to refer to relationships or bonds between groups of individuals. Social structure has been identified as the relationship of definite entities or groups to each other, as enduring patterns of behavior by participants in a social system in relation to each
other, and as institutionalized norms or cognitive frameworks that structure the actions of actors in the social system (Lopez, 2000). The concept of social structure expresses the constraints that lie in social practice which operate through a more complex interplay of powers and through an array of social institutions (Connell, 1987). In his influential work, Blau (in Risman, 2004) argued that structure internalizes norms and values inside an individual's head and should be conceptualized as a force opposing individual motivation. He states that the structural concepts must be external to the individual and independent of individual motivation.

While exploring the notion of social structure we can see its relations to human agency. There is a dualism between structure as constraint and action as choice. In this context "structure" refers to those factors such as social class, religion, gender, ethnicity, customs, etc. which seem to limit or influence the opportunities that individuals have while "agency" refers to the capacity of individual humans to act independently and to make their own free choices. Agency, thus, generally refers to micro level actors and to macro level collectives that act. In other words, any social being, whether an individual or a collective, can be considered to have agency. In a similar manner structure usually relates to macro level structures, and to micro level phenomena, such as human interaction (Ritzer, 2005).

Those who give more importance to structure believe that society shapes attitudes, goals and aspirations and personal preferences. Society affects individuals, groups and entire nations. The theoretical approaches which are associated with this view include structuralism, and some forms of functionalism and Marxism. They assert that social life is largely determined by social structure, and that individual activities can be explained mostly as an outcome of structure. From the other point of view socialized agents with a degree of autonomy take action in social systems on the one hand mediated by existing institutional structure and expectations, and on the other hand, influence or transform that institutional structure. Theories that emphasize the capacity of individual to construct and reconstruct their worlds include: methodological individualism, social phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology. Proponents of this view emphasize the need to provide explanations for social phenomena which reflect the views of the individuals they study.
Other approaches stress the complementarily of structure and agency. They hold that at the time that society is shaping the individual, the individual is shaping society. An important area of sociological studies is micro sociology which assumes human agency and social action as fundamental to social life in defining situations and in constructing actions. Micro sociology focuses on reciprocal relationships between self and society.

Sociologists engaging in or interested in structure/agency debates seek to explain how social action is always already structured by the embedded effects of patterns of behavior linked to norms, identity investments, ideologies, moralities and so on. Thus, structure and agency forms an enduring debate in social theory: "Do social structures determine an individual's behavior or does human agency?" In this context agency refers to the capacity of individuals to act independently and make free choices, whereas structure refers to factors which limit or affect the choices and actions of individuals.

Structure and agency have been influenced by the development of multidimensional theories. Talcott Parsons was the main theorist of action theory in sociology from the 1930s in the United States. Parsons established action theory in order to integrate the study of social order with the structural aspects of macro and micro factors. His works analyze social structure but in terms of voluntary action and through pattern of normative institutionalization by codifying its theoretical gestalt into a system-theoretical framework based on the idea of living systems and cybernetic hierarchy. For Parsons there is no "structure"-"agency" problem. It is a pseudo-problem.

Parsons in *Action Theory and the Human Condition*, published in 1978, refers to action theory in its title. It is, however, also clear that action theory was complemented by analytical functionalism and systems theory. In *The Social System* (1951), Parsons introduces three systems in order to analyze human action and its order: the social system composed of interactions, the personality system composed of need dispositions, and the cultural system composed of symbols with meaning (language, values, norms, expressive symbols, cognitions). The problem of order now occurs in three different forms: as double contingency of actions within social systems, as motivational problem in the relationship between social and personality.
systems, and as legitimation in the relationship between social and cultural systems (Ritzer, 2005). Parsons sees motives as part of our actions. Therefore, he thought that social science must consider ends, purposes and ideals when looking at actions.

The dualism between structure and action was developed further by Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens. Pierre Bourdieu presented his theory of practice on the understanding of the relation between agency and structure in his book *Outline of the Theory of Practice* (1977), where he presented the concept of habitus. He argued that social structure depends on the idea of social reproduction and emphasized on the unintended consequences of the strategies social actors pursue. The pursuit of individual or family strategies results in the reproduction of the social order. Bourdieu's work attempts to reconcile structure and agency, as external structures are internalized into the habitus while the actions of the agent externalize interactions between actors into the social relationships in the field. His theory, therefore, is a dialectics between "externalizing the internal", and "internalizing the external" (Connell, 1987).

Anthony Giddens gave shape to the structure and agency debate with his *Constitution of Society* (1986) in which he developed his theory of 'structuration'. The theory of structuration is an attempt to reconcile theoretical dichotomies of social systems such as agency/structure, subjective/objective, and micro/macro perspectives. The approach does not focus on the individual actor or societal totality but social practices ordered across space and time. Its proponents adopt this balanced position, attempting to treat influences of structure (which inherently includes culture) and agency equally.

Giddens emphasizes on recursive relationship between social structure and individuals. Social structures shape individuals and individuals shape the social structure. He focuses on transformative power of human actions and believes that social structures not only act on people, but people act on social structure as well (Risman, 2004). Simply put, the theory of structuration holds that all human action is performed within the context of a pre-existing social structure which is governed by a set of norms and/or laws which are distinct from those of other social structures. Therefore, all human action is at least partly predetermined based on the varying contextual rules under which it occurs. However, the structure and rules are not permanent and external, but sustained and modified by human action.
Structuration theory aims to avoid extremes of structural or agent determinism. The balancing of agency and structure is referred to as the *duality of structure*: social structures make social action possible, and at the same time social action creates those very structures. Thus agency can lead to both the reproduction and the transformation of society. Another way to explain this concept is by, what Giddens calls, the "reflexive monitoring of actions". Reflexive monitoring implies examination of the ability to look at actions to judge their effectiveness in achieving their objectives: if agents can reproduce structure through action, they can also transform it.

A social system can be understood by its structure, modality, and interaction. Structure is constituted by rules and resources governing and available to agents. The modality of a structural system is the means by which structures are translated into action. Interaction is the activity instantiated by the agent acting within the social system. Social systems have patterns of social relation that exist over time; the changing nature of space and time will determine the interaction of social relations and therefore structure.

Giddens also identifies three types of structures in social systems, those of signification, legitimation, and domination. These are analytical distinctions, rather than distinct ideal types, that mobilize and reinforce one another. Signification produces meaning through organized webs of language (semantic codes, interpretive schemes and discursive practices). Legitimation produces a moral order via naturalization in societal norms, values and standards. Domination produces (and is an exercise of) power, originating from the control of resources. To understand how they work together, consider how the signification of a concept (e.g., the use of the word "patriot" in political speech) borrows from and contributes to legitimation (e.g., nationalistic norms) and coordinates forms of domination (e.g., a police state), from which it in turn gains further force (Giddens, 1986).

*Cinema and the Feminist Film Theory*

It should be noted that research on gender and media, specifically women and cinema have come mainly from feminist frameworks. Feminism as a multidisciplinary approach to social analysis emphasizes gender as a major structuring component of power relations in society and argues media are crucial in the construction and
Feminism is a social movement which has had an enormous impact on film theory and criticism. Cinema is taken by feminists to be a cultural practice representing myths about women and femininity, as well as about men and masculinity. Issues of representation and spectatorship are central to feminist film theory and criticism. Feminist film theory is also known as feminist film criticism as it critiques gender hierarchies and patriarchal ideologies shown mainly in commercial narrative cinema. It defines the specificity of female spectatorship; i.e., forms of identification, understanding and pleasure that are appropriate to the psychology and cultural experience of women as opposed to men.

Early feminist criticism was directed at stereotypes of women, mostly in Hollywood films (Haskell, 1973). The development of feminist film theory was influenced by second wave feminism and the development of women's studies within the academy. Feminist scholars began applying the new theories arising from these movements to analyzing film. The study of images of women was crucial to the development of feminist film culture in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Feminist works were based on social theory and focused on the function of women characters in respect to particular film narratives or genres that reflected views of women in society.

The theoretical approach of film studies has been greatly influenced by Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" which was published in the British journal Screen in which she tried to describe the concept of the gaze that could be identified as the power of the look. She believes that an active/passive heterosexual division of labor controls narrative structure. Mulvey argues that because of sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been divided between the active male as 'origin of look' and passive female as 'object of look'.

At this point feminist critics tried to understand the all-pervasive power of patriarchal imagery with the help of structuralist theoretical frameworks, such as, semiotics, Marxism and psychoanalysis. According to semiotics, film was a systematic network of binary oppositions organized metaphorically, like language. In this regard, Ferdinand de Saussure's view on binary opposition is notable. According to Saussure, binary oppositions can be defined as the means by which units of
language have value or meaning; each unit is defined against what it is not. For Saussure, binary oppositions occur naturally in the human mind, and these binary oppositions are constantly changing (Saussure, 1974). Binary oppositions are part of human nature. There are a number of binary oppositions in our world and these create the hierarchy of our society, for example, black and white, evil and good, male and female. Marxists, influenced by Louis Althusser's work stressed ideology as a function of representation and the function of film as an ideological medium which could be evaluated in terms of its forms of address to the spectator. Psychoanalytic critics, particularly those following the work of Freud and Jacques Lacan, insisted that the look and the structure of point of view was central in filmic identification as an imaginary coherence of the subject (Mayne, 1985). Overall, feminist film theory emerged under the influence of these most important theoretical approaches which have proved successful in analyzing the ways in which sexual difference is encoded in classical narrative.

It must be mentioned that feminist film theory was concerned with women’s portrayal and sexuality and its relation to the dominance of the male power structure within a patriarchal society, which examined femininity in a passive sense as a spectacle to be viewed while masculinity was given a more active role and viewed as a performer. Feminists paid attention to women's stereotyped images and focused on different film images of women as a reflection of their lives. Further, they believed that film could be used as an ideological tool which would counteract the stereotyped images of women presented by the male dominated media and raise women's awareness of their inferior position in patriarchal society, where women were generally relegated to a subservient and supportive roles rather than key decision making ones. As Johnston (1973) argues the female within patriarchy is seen as 'the other' and the feminists are represented as a threat to these narrow conceptions of gender (Nelmes, 2003).

The main concern was with media representations as the false image of women, stereotypes which damage women's self-perceptions and limit their social roles (Jackson, 1998). As Christine Gledhill's argued in her essay ‘Recent Development in Feminist Criticism’: “A crucial issue of feminist film criticism is the examination of the fact that women as women are not represented in the cinema, that
they do not have a voice, that the female point of view is not heard” (in Jain, 2002:87). Within this system, the figure of woman functions not as a representation of female subjectivity but as the object of male desire. Laura Mulvey (in Jackson, 1998) in her article entitled "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" analyzed patriarchal ideology as an effect of the form of the film text and has shown men as subjects identifying with agents who drive the film's narrative forward and women as objects for masculine desire and fetishistic gazing. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly. Mulvey assumed a general picture of cinema as a symbolic medium, which, like other aspects of mass culture, forms spectators as bourgeois subjects. She believes that the goal of feminist cinema is to destroy the forms of pleasure associated with classical cinema. Claire Johnston (1973) in her famous essay "Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema" showed how women have been stereotyped in films since the days of the silent cinema. In mainstream cinema woman is seen as an extension of a male vision and she criticizes the narrow role women are given in films. She argued that the union of signifier and signified in patriarchal and classic filmic discourse represses the feminine because it constitutes a denial of difference. The point being made is that feminist practice must work towards disclosing and restructuring the symbolic order in order to change the function in perception of sexual difference (Nelmes, 2003).

As was mentioned above, we could say that feminists claim that men and women are differentially positioned by cinema and focus on the objectification of woman in film. They analyze women's representation and portrayal in films in the social and cultural context. Feminist film analysis recognizes that film as a specific cultural product examines the way in which bourgeois and patriarchal ideology is inscribed by production of meaning in film and in this way depictions of reality are mediated by signifying mode with its own specific structures and determinations. It is analyzed in the process of construction of the text and social context which determines and is represented in that text (Jones, 2003). At this point feminists try to find out how women's emancipation is possible in construction of the subject in social structure and how social change occurs, specifically in cinematic representation and the signifying function of women within this system, how the representation of women is produced and in which social conditions it is situated.
Cinema, Gender, Social Structure and Agency

Along with the examination of the concepts of structure and agency in sociological theory, it is necessary to explore the relationship between cinema, gender, culture and society. Among the social institutions, media are crucial in the construction and dissemination of gender ideologies and gender socialization. According to this view, it is important to focus on the role of cinema in the construction of gender and structural system within its specific cultural context(s) of production and reception. As Richard Barsam (2003) points out, movies are a social phenomenon. Social history and culture have a profound effect on the movies, which in turn often influence society and culture. Because the movies reflect, make and influence history, they can be primary sources in the study of society.

Cinema reflects the central matters of sociology, such as, the relationship between structure and agency and the interactive coordination of action among social agents. At this point, on the one hand we can think about cinema as a medium and agency of cultural production and cultural consumption in the area of sociology. And on the other hand, through feminist studies, it can be analyzed as sociological construction of marginalization of women by a patriarchal culture. Feminist film theory raises questions about women's subjectivity and the portrayal of women in films because of their different accounts of the self, agency, identity, and the cultural surroundings of the subject. Hence, to discuss emancipation and empowerment of women this theory emphasizes the relation of the social structure and women's agency and subjectivity. Feminist film theory describes how femininity is constructed in a patriarchal society shown by cinema and how women can bring about some changes within social structure.

After discussing theoretical framework it is necessary to look at the themes selected to denote structure and agency which can be used as a basis of analyzing the selected movies in the following chapters. First of all it is necessary to elaborate the notion of social structure and human agency.

Social Structure

Social structure is a concept used by social scientists, particularly in the fields of sociology and social and cultural anthropology to refer to relationships or bonds between groups of individuals. The structure of society refers to the way society is
organized into different parts: institutions, social groups, statuses, and roles. The concept of social structure expresses the constraints that lie in social practice which operate through a more complex interplay of powers and through an array of social institutions (Connell, 1987).

It also refers to the observation that social life is not amorphous but is differentiated into groups, positions, and institutions that are interdependent, or functionally interrelated. These differentiated and interrelated characteristics of human groupings, although constituted by the social activities of individuals, are not a direct corollary of the wishes and intentions of these individuals; instead, individual choices are shaped and circumscribed by the social environment. The notion of social structure implies, in other words, that human beings are not completely free and autonomous in choosing their activities, but rather they are constrained by the social world they live in and the social relations they form with one another (Crothers, 1996).

Social structure presents an idea that society is grouped into structures with different functions, meanings or purposes. Family, religion, law, economy and class are all social structures. Closely related is the notion of social stratification, which refers to the idea that society is categorized into different strata, according to social distinctions such as a race, class and gender. Social treatment of persons within various social structures can be understood as being related to their placement within the various social strata. For example, some argue that men and women who have otherwise equal qualifications receive different treatment in the workplace because of their gender. Others note that individuals are sometimes viewed as having different essential qualities based on their race and ethnicity, regardless of their individual qualities. When examined, these social distinctions are often considered stereotypes based on prejudice. However, these social distinctions often go unexamined because they appear to be the result of social structures rather than prejudice.

Thus, there are noticeable social structural differences between men and women, these differences have some biological roots, and they are related to the distinct social functions and social relations which men and women perform. Men and women dress differently, develop different character traits, and express respect with different customs. In every known society there are substantial patterns which show
different roles of women and men in society. This phenomenon has been explained through various concepts such as sexual division of labor, complementary roles in the communal and domestic spheres, a form of female subordination to the male and cultural expression of gender differences between men and women (Clark, 1989). Hence, the fact of dominant position of men in societies and women's subordination and being relegated to the domestic sphere is an important issue of concern. The male dominated societies provide advantages to males and try to perpetuate the subordination of women. These kinds of issues can reduce women's agency because in this sense women have little choice or power in making decisions, because the choices available are constrained greatly by the institutions, values, and practices of the societies in which they live. On the one hand, women are faced with victimization and subordination and on the other hand agency, autonomy and empowerment are being restricted by the structure of society.

Human Agency

An important area of sociological studies is Micro Sociology which assumes human agency and social action as fundamental to social life in defining situations and in constructing actions. Sociologists call the power of individuals as agency. In the social sciences and humanities human agency is the power of persons, at the individual or collective levels, to develop and achieve creative goals, including socio-political, economic change, within their social and cultural environment. Agency is about making choices about how people conduct their lives. A dictionary-style definition of agency will point to an individual's or collective's ability to act and exert power. Agency can be many things and it should be interpreted within specific historical, cultural and social contexts.

Simply put, agency refers to the capacity of individual humans to act independently and to make free choices, when socialized agents with a degree of autonomy take action in social systems on the one hand mediated by existing institutional structure and expectations, on the other hand, influence or transform that institutional structure. In particular, agency emphasizes the subject's capacity to challenge dominant concepts of identity and to act politically and socially responsible without claiming complete control over the effects of one's actions. Agency, namely, the ability to propel individual and collective change, resides precisely in the subject's instability and its tendency towards permanent transformation and critique.
In feminist theory, the focus on agency can be seen partly as an attempt to refine the rather one-sided language of patriarchal oppression that characterized first wave feminism. Concern with the idea of agency also forms part of an attempt to map the new forms of autonomy and dependence emerging from the restructuring of gender relations that is taking place in late-capitalist society. Much of this work on agency has been formulated in terms of conceptualizing gender identity as a durable but not immutable phenomenon. That is to say, analyzing the inherent instabilities of gender norms and the consequent possibilities that this throws up for resistance, subversion and the emancipator remodeling of identity (McNay, 2003).

In queer theory, post-structuralist philosopher Judith Butler (1990) has written about the importance of preserving space for individual and collective agency in theorizing about the social construction of gender identity. Butler develops her views on agency in the context of understanding how persons take on gender identities. Butler outlines her account of gender as performance in her book *Gender Trouble* (by contending that gender is performative, in the sense that it is not a stable or fixed point of agency, but rather is an identity category created and constituted through "a stylized repetition of acts". Its meaning is constituted dramatically and contingently through sustained social performances which take place in the context of the regulatory conventions and norms dominant in society (Butler, 1990).

The notion and practice of agency is intimately linked to that of autonomy. Agency and autonomy seem to go hand in hand. To be an agent, to exert power, is to claim autonomy. Another way to look at the issue is to see autonomy as the capability or capacity to act and agency as doing the acting. Practice of autonomy implies a sense of self-sufficiency independence and confidence, but also, it allows the possibility of choice.

A term closely related to agency is subjectivity. Subjectivity is a concept that refers to the cultural, social, political, and psychological processes that shape and determine who we think we are and how we situate ourselves in the world. More often, subjectivity occurs in conjunction with such concepts as, the self, the individual, and the human being. Subjectivity refers to an understanding of identity that has historically given precedence to the autonomy and self-consciousness of the human being and experience over the social and cultural situation in which human beings live and act.
It is interesting to mention that the terms ‘agency’, ‘subjectivity’, ‘autonomy’ and ‘identity’ are hotly debated in feminist theory today. Agency is construed here as conscious goal-driven activities by women that embrace the possibility of change. ‘Assertion’ and ‘resistance’ are twin aspects of women’s agency. Women’s will or volition to act in conscious forms to resist, stretch, or overturn structures of power is broadly defined as resistance. Assertion is defined as a form of resistance in which women use legitimized instruments of agitation that have the blessings of the state. It focuses on woman-centered issues but treats them as agents affecting socioeconomic and political processes within the society as a whole (Anagol, 2005).

The enactment of women’s agency, that is, the empowerment of women to make their own life choices and voice their own desires and protests has been the ideal of feminist thinkers and women activists. The nature of autonomy and agency and if and why women have lacked them, however, have been the source of significant contention and have been debated in varying forms across the fields of the social sciences. In the classic view of early Western feminists, women are oppressed by patriarchal structures, internalize their subordination and inferiority, and become incapable of functioning as rational agents. Their initial cultural subordination leads them to exhibit the negative traits for which women are despised: passivity, weakness, irrationality, indecisiveness and so on. They must be liberated from patriarchy so that they too can become rational, self-determining beings like men. The basic premise of the argument is that women as a group are often controlled and limited by oppressive social and ideological structures. Patriarchal social and cultural structures privilege traits defined as masculine and devalue those defined as feminine. However, there is a view that challenges the view that patriarchal society and cultures render women silent and passive, arguing that women find voice even where those structures are at their most oppressive.

Foucault’s conceptualization of the nature of power included the idea that wherever there is power, there is resistance. Hegemonic discourses are constantly subverted and destabilized from within and from without. This concept has encouraged women’s studies scholars to locate and champion examples of female resistance and agency from within patriarchal structures. This refocusing includes the identification of actions that directly resist hegemonic controls, and the reinterpretation of existing behaviors and actions to show that they are in some way (including morally, psychologically or emotionally) empowering for women (Amin, 2008).
After the above discussion on structure and agency let us now come to some important sub-themes of both concepts that will be considered in this study. The sub-themes related to structure are: patriarchy, social class, caste, socialization, gender stereotyping and violence while those related to agency include education, decision making, rebellion and empowerment.

**SUB-THEMES OF STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS**

*Patriarchy*

Patriarchy is a family or society dominated by men. Although feminist anthropologists and sociologists have challenged the analysis of social structures based on men as head of families, the ideal of a male-dominant society is being reinforced in the mass media. There are certainly male figures and male values that are being presented again and again in the media. For example, in many Indian films patriarchal values form an important area of depiction. The nature of patriarchy varies according to the issues at hand. It could be a patriarchy of the village elders, it could be the patriarchy of the family head or it could even be the male chauvinism that is shown in the various films in scenes relating to public institutions (Mukherjee, 2004).

Patriarchal ideology in gender relations is showed as segregation of gender and gender inequality. Showing patriarchal ideology maintains dominance in traditional gender role and power relationships of men with women. Mostly in films patriarchy has been portrayed as male dominance (superiority) and woman’s subordination (inferiority). Patriarchy comes across with men as the protagonists. Decisions making comes from the male family members like father, brother, or husband and women have always been portrayed as being subordinate to men. Masculine values control women’s lives. In Indian and Iranian films women have been presented as obedient daughters, self sacrificing mothers and faithful wives within patriarchal social structures.

Feminist film-makers, photographers and writers, have in many different ways invented new languages for exposing patriarchal structures in pre-existing texts. They believe films convey the patriarchal ideology underlying our social structures and this constructs women in very specific ways that reflect patriarchal needs, the patriarchal unconscious (Kaplan, 1983). Feminists interested in popular culture have looked for the contradiction within a text or film showing the foundational flaws of patriarchy.
However, feminist film theorists have analyzed films not only as products of the patriarchal unconscious, but as products of a patriarchal society that display male-centered codes and conventions. As Walby (1990) puts it, one should look at the concept of patriarchy not as universal phenomenon but as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. These can vary from culture to culture, and change with time as this leaves room for changes in cinema’s images of women.

**Structured Social Inequality: Class and Caste**

**Social class**

Class makes a significant contribution to structured social inequality in contemporary societies. In the social sciences, social class is often discussed in terms of 'social stratification'. All complex societies are characterized by some kind of structured social inequality (or stratification system). The most basic class distinction is between the powerful and the powerless. Various social and political theories propose that social classes with greater power attempt to cement their own ranking above the lower classes in the hierarchy to the detriment of the society overall. Broadly, three dimensions of class may be identified – economic, cultural, and political. The economic dimension has a focus on patterns and explanations of material inequality; the cultural dimension focuses on lifestyle, social behavior, and hierarchies of prestige; and the political dimension addresses the role of classes, and class action, in political, social, and economic change (Turner, 2006).

Films offer representations about social class divisions, gender, mobility, and other issues in social stratification. They address social issues and offer representations that support dominant ideologies. Although representations of class division on screen manifest general social concerns, yet issues of class disparity often tend to be threaded through examinations of gender. For example, mostly whenever interpersonal love relationships between a person of wealth and an average low class person is shown in films more often than not the former is a female while the latter is usually a man. Also, the women who are shown as wealthy are also depicted either as women dependent on their father or husband, or as spoilt brats who squander their father's wealth or sometimes as girls from rich families who fall in love with a poor man and face parental opposition. Thus, this intersection of gender and class goes on to show that class is male dominated, women are less than men and in all forms men belong to the higher category.
Caste

Caste is an important institution in Indian society. It is an elaborate and complex social system that combines elements of endogamy, occupation, culture, social class, tribal affiliation and political power. It is a system that divides the society hierarchically and typically a sense of highness and lowness or superiority and inferiority is associated with this gradation or ranking. Caste, thus, is a system of social classification, a mechanism by which people are divided into traditionally sanctioned categories based on certain accepted criteria. Under this scheme the status of an individual is determined by one’s birth and not by selection nor by accomplishments. Each caste has its own customs, traditions practices and rituals. It has its own informal rules, regulations and procedures. Although due to the process of modernization the caste system has been challenged by notions of equality, citizenship and democratic participation, yet it still continues to dominate the social set-up in India. The issue of caste intersects with other important social institutions and practices, one of these being gender (Gokulsing, 1998).

As befits any important social institution, many filmmakers have examined caste system as a social issue in the Indian society. Caste divisions have formed the background of many Indian films, both popular and artistic from the beginning of India's cinematic journey. Caste is shown as being male dominated in films. It is a fact that cinema highlights caste representation as male dominated institutions. For example we can see caste related things in practicing institutions such as hypergamy, hypogamy, patrilineage, patrilocality etc. which give men the power to maintain their social position and status.

Socialization and Gender Stereotyping

In sociology, the concept of socialization refers to the process whereby individuals learn the culture (for example, language, formal and informal rules of behavior and sets of knowledge) of the particular society they live in. Socialization refers more generally to various socio-cultural processes that provide individuals and groups with a sense of values and beliefs. Socialization is a two-fold process, requiring, on one hand, structures whose function is to shape social subjects and, on the other, citizens who are socially interpolated. Gender socialization occurs the moment a child is influenced by the social processes and cultural discourses that circumscribe male and
female behavior. While biological and anatomical differences appear foundational in
the processes of gendering, biology and anatomy are themselves constructed in
relation to language and discourse. Processes of gendering initially take place via
choice of names, the imposition of clothing, and the specific ways cultures address
children. It also takes place in complex alignments with skin color and ethnicity,
education, age, region, and cultural literacy (O'brien, 2009).

Sociologists are also interested in the social construction of gender, which
means looking at how the way that society is organized and shapes us into particular
kinds of women and men. For example, social institutions such as family, school and
the workplace teach us that girls should act in certain ways, such as being caring and
boys in different ways, such as being strong and independent. The concept of
socialization features in explanations of gender difference, where emphasis is given to
the process of how individuals learn to become masculine or feminine in their
identities, appearance, values and behavior For example, that women are emotional
and unpredictable, and men are rational and instrumental.

Values are fundamentally linked to ideology and politics, but they also
structure modes of behavior via media representations. In recent times, media,
including children’s literature, television, and video games are an increasingly
important agent of gender socialization. Parents are beginning to lean on the media
more and more to occupy their children and teach them essential values, lessons, and
skills. In addition, the media also help socialize children into their gender identities
through the portrayal of gender stereotyped behavior and attitudes (O'brien, 2009). As
we have often seen, girls and boys are dressed in different kinds of clothes, do
different school subjects, usually end up in different jobs and are portrayed differently
in everything from magazines to movies to television shows (Holmes, 2009). Films,
similarly, tend to be the source of gender socialization, thereby playing a major role in
creating and cementing gender stereotypes.

Stereotypes in general are organized, consensual beliefs and opinions about
the characteristics of women and men and about the purported qualities of masculinity
and femininity while a gender stereotype can be defined as a standardized and often
pejorative idea or image held about an individual on the basis of their gender. That is,
gender stereotypes are common beliefs formed in culture about how men and women
behave. The appearance of gender stereotypes is a result of the socio historical construction of a gender relations model in which gender differences were situated above other individual differences of personality between men and women. An adequate understanding of a stereotype must also include the idea that stereotypes are not only contained within an individual’s mind, but also exist at a collective level. This shared element of the content of stereotypes makes it possible to identify some easily recognized gender stereotypes. Incomplete and narrowly defined relative to race and social class, these stereotypes tend to reinforce social inequalities.

Stereotypes often contribute to the socialization of gender roles, which are a set of expected behavior patterns or norms for women and men. As sociological theories on stereotypes have shown, stereotypes are used as a form of maintaining social stratification by relegating individuals into negative classifications based on their personal identities (O’Brien, 2009). Research within the field of gender studies has examined the presence of gender stereotyping in key agencies of socialization, such as families, the education system and the media (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004). All forms of media communicate images of the sexes, many of which perpetuate unrealistic, stereotypical, and limiting perceptions. In general, media continue to present both women and men in stereotyped ways that limit our perceptions of human possibilities.

Because media pervade our lives, the ways they misrepresent genders may distort how we see ourselves and what we perceive as normal and desirable for men and women (Wood, 1993). Advertising, for instance, has long relied heavily on gender stereotypes. Similarly, films create perpetuate stereotypes through portrayals of the genders that perpetuate stereotypes. As Wood (1993) puts it, media messages are rarely exact reflections of social reality, and yet people often rely on these messages to construct their self-identities. Because people’s self-perceptions are reflexively constructed, the reflective power of films as a mirror is significant. Historically, gender roles portrayed in films reflected social patriarchy.

Gender stereotyping in films has been portrayed as the sexual division of labor. According to gender role stereotyping women should be obedient to, respectful of, and dependent on men. Females in the family should be sexually accessible, loyal,
and faithful to their male partners. In this regard women are considered in the traditional role of motherhood, i.e., as a child-rearer and housewife, i.e., as a homemaker and men are considered as authorized, powerful and dominant being. In most films heroine is portrayed as a sex object and hero is represented as physically strong, wealthy, sexually active, and having control on life and women. Thus, women’s roles continued to be contextualized through a masculine framework, a male gaze, often centering on relationships and emotional dilemmas (O’Brien, 2009).

Violence

The core meaning of violence is the deliberate infliction of bodily violation or harm on one individual human being by another. Thus, violence is distinguished from non-physical forms of social power, such as coercion or force, ideology, or social control. It is the most extreme expression of power, containing the ultimate potential of total power, the physical destruction of one social actor by another. Violence may be a spontaneous expression of power relations, or a planned, instrumental maximization of power (Turner, 2006). Violence can be emotional, psychological, verbal, or physical abuse.

Gender based violence is a manifestation of unequal power relations which have led to the domination of men over women and the practice of discrimination against them. It can take various forms like domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking (O’Brien, 2009). It affects all socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic categories. Women experience violence in their both private and public lives. In their private family life women experience violence in the form of battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, marital rape, bride-burning and other dowry related violence. It also includes threats of such acts of coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty in private or public life. In public life, the violence experienced by women includes rape, sexual abuse and sexual harassment at the work place or in educational institutions, trafficking, forced prostitution and violation of human rights of women in armed conflicts (Kaur, 2000).

Violence against women still happens in most cultures in different degrees and in different manners. Women in the Middle East are victims of forced marriage, required virginity, beatings, lack of freedom of choice, and veiling. In India they are
victims of rape, bride burning and honor killing. In the African continent they face the
horrors of sexual mutilation. Even in the so called developed nations women do not
escape domestic violence, sexual harassment at work place, date rape etc.

Violence against women in films can be depicted as being verbal and
physical and also emotional where female characters are manipulated by men. Men
have the power and the right to exploit women. Rape has been shown in most
Hollywood films and films made in India and women have been portrayed as victims
of sexual violence. In Iranian films also one can see portrayals of abusive husbands
who try to subjugate their women. Films everywhere, thus, highlight women's
suffering. Cultural values communicated to us by family, schools, media, and other
sources constantly encourage us to believe men are superior, men should dominate
women, male aggression is acceptable as a means of attaining what is wanted, women
are passive and should defer to men, and women are sex objects. In concert these
beliefs legitimize violence and aggression against women.

Three themes describe how films embody gender inequality. First, women are
underrepresented, which falsely implies that men are the cultural standard and women
are unimportant or invisible. Second, men and women are portrayed in stereotypical
ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender. Third and most
importantly, depictions of relationships between men and women emphasize
traditional roles and normalize violence against women. Films tend to positively
portray aggression in males and passivity in females, and it is important to ask
whether media messages contribute to abuse of and violence against women. Much of
the literature supports a connection between abuse of women in films and patriarchal
oppression (Wales, 2002). Since cinema deals with images on a movie screen,
physical abuse can be found, when it is seen, as an overt expression of physical force
that is against a woman’s will, using a weapon or not, and forcing someone to do
something against her will.

There is by now fairly convincing evidence in studies such as the one by
Hansen and Hansen (1988) that exposure to sexual violence through media is linked
to greater tolerance, or even approval of violence. Dieter (1989) found a strong
relationship between females’ viewing of sexually violent media images and their
acceptance of sexual violence as part of “normal” relationships. He reasoned that the
more they observe portrayals of sexual violence in films, the more likely women are to perceive this as natural in relationships with men and the less likely they are to object to violence or to defend themselves from it. In short, Dieter suggests that heavy exposure to violence shown in films within relationships tends to normalize it, so that abuse and violence are considered natural part (Wood, 1993).

**SUB-THEMES OF AGENCY**

*Education*

The educational status of women is one of the most important indicators of agency in any given society. Education is one of the foundations of individual awareness. It is a means of equality and empowerment. Women's education in different fields at different levels and subsequent career in a professional field enables them to rediscover themselves, to experience an independent identity, and its influence on their lives. Education has been regarded as the most significant instrument for changing women's subjugated position in the society. It not only develops the personality and rationality of individuals, but qualifies them to fulfill certain economic, political and cultural functions and thereby improves their socio-economic status. Inaccessibility to education has been the stumbling block keeping women from attaining equal status in society, separating them from their male counterparts. Education is a key part of strategies to improve individuals' well-being and societies' economic and social development. It is one of the important means to breaking the vicious circle of ignorance and exploitation and empowering women to improve their lives. The aim of education is to bring about all round development, which includes one’s personality, mental understanding and spiritual and moral values (Haq, 2000).

Education has been depicted in films as a strong tool in the emancipation and empowerment of women. With the help of education women can improve their status and get their rights in society. In films educated women have been portrayed as who have positive self esteem, self confidence and inner strength to face challenges in life in a positive and active manner. An educated woman can control over her life and can be independent.

*Decision Making*

Decision making is the study of identifying and choosing alternatives based on the values and preferences of the decision maker (Harris, 2009). Decision making is an
important indicator of gender equality and inequalities. Every individual, woman or man, has the right to participate in all public decisions. Women’s participation in decision making is minimal within the private and the public realms. Usually men grab all leadership positions within the domestic as well as the public spheres of life. Within the family women, married as well as unmarried, have little say in all decisions even those affecting their own lives. And in the public sphere the situation is even worse. Women for whom it is possible to express their feelings, preferences or disagreements, are very few.

It is often pointed out that if we give opportunity to develop their capabilities within the family, private and the public spheres of life, women can become able and successful leaders and decision makers. If more and more women are associated in the decision making processes at the different levels, it will definitely affect public policy and make it more sensitive to gender issues. Recently in many women centered films we can see the portrayal of women’s decision making in both personal and social dimensions. In this regard women are represented as agents and empowered beings. Women are being progressively shown as being more aware and powerful to make decisions and to make some changes in their lives.

**Participation**

Participation in social science refers to different mechanisms for the public to express opinions and ideally exert influence regarding political, economic, management or other social decisions in any sphere be it economic, political, management, cultural, or familial. According to Human Development Report (1993), participation means that people are closely involved in the economic, social, cultural and political process that affects their lives.

The strengthening of women’s participation in all spheres of life has become a major issue in the development discourse. Therefore, participation is considered as an essentially first step in order to empower women. Women’s equal participation in all aspects of life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women’s perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.
In terms of participation there is the concept of sisterhood which is used among feminists to express the connection of women who are not biologically related but are bonded in solidarity. The sisterhood of women often refers to their feminism, their participation in the women’s movement, their support of other women or their recognition of female qualities that are unique to women’s nature (Napikoski, 2011). According to the ideology of women’s liberation, the solidarity of those joined in sisterhood guarantee the ability and obtainment of their goal of equal economic, political, and social rights for women. In a patriarchal and male dominated society, a single woman in isolation is one with lack of personal and political power. Without shared identities, the women’s movement is easily broken along lines of ideology, class, race, etc., and its political strength is lessened (Hinkle and Brown, 1990). Underlining the importance of sisterhood Barbara Epstein (1996) has pointed out that one of the reasons why women’s liberation failed was the inability to create an identity of “sisterhood.” In this sense men had to be defined as the enemy. In order to adopt this identity women were required to reject half of their lives and turn their own husbands and sons into the enemy. Among women leading diversified lifestyles it is impossible to attain a uniformity of identity and purpose.

In many women centric films women's participation and sisterhood has been represented in women's community where women come together and rebel powerfully against domination and change the situation as per their will. By showing these kinds of portrayals the films highlight the dimension of women's agency.

**Rebellion**

Rebellion, or uprising, is a refusal of obedience or order. Wherever there is oppression there is resistance. It occurs when a group of people are against a rule of law and refuse to follow it. Resistance refers to defiance of any authority, control or tradition. It is merely an opposition to somebody or something, or a refusal to comply or cooperate. It may, therefore, be seen as encompassing a range of behaviors aimed at destroying or replacing an established authority, like a government, a head of state or even an ideology, such as patriarchy. On the one hand, the forms of rebellious behavior can include non-violent resistance; on the other hand, it can manifest itself as extreme violence. There are two kinds of resistance; individual, which implies efforts by one individual to fight against oppression and group, which implies collective actions by more than one individual to fight against oppression.

28
Women's rebellion in films has been portrayed many times. Usually women who are being oppressed and abused are shown to develop a realization of the unfairness of their situation and their potential as empowered beings. As a consequence they are shown to develop a sense of self-reliance which helps to build their capacities and remove structural obstacles. Women are portrayed as being transformed into agents and active resisters who rebel against male dominated society and patriarchal system.

**Empowerment**

Empowerment means gaining autonomy and control over one’s own life. It also implies the building or acquiring the capacity to accomplish certain tasks and attain specific goals. Empowerment is the creation of an enabling environment where individuals can fully use their capabilities to make change in their lives. In other words, it represents a person’s capacity to produce change. It is the creation of an enabling environment where individuals can fully use their capabilities to make changes in their lives. Once a person is empowered, she or he becomes the agent of her/his own development, is in a position to exercise choices and set her/his own agenda.

Empowerment of women means rearranging gender relations within the family and in the society. It refers to giving decision-making power to women in social, economic and political sphere of life. It is a process of making women aware of socio-psycho cultural and political injustice that is prevailing in the society against women. Women empowerment is a prerequisite to gender equality and development. Women get empowerment when they participate in development and have control over their own lives. Empowerment of women gives them the capability of challenging and changing their subordinate position in society (Kaur, 2000).

Generally the portrayal of women across all media tends to focus on the elements of beauty, physique, sexuality, emotional (as opposed to intellectual) dealings and relationships (as opposed to independence/freedom). However, times have changed and so have women's roles in society and accordingly their representation in the media. For example, we can see women becoming more assertive and they have been shown as possessing agency, i.e., as liberated, self dependent and educated individuals. Feminist movement in the 1970s made women
aware of their need for liberation from male oppression and brought about a kind of new vision in films. Women filmmakers became interested in women’s issues and issues of identity, class differences, and male dominance of public and private spaces. It has been pointed out by many scholars (Sakr, 2004; Byerly, 2006; Thornham, 1997) that mass media play significant role in women’s development and empowerment. They add further that women have a crucial role to play in all spheres of life, whether for controlling population growth, spread of literacy or improving quality of life for vast masses. In this context, media has an important role to play for awakening women to achieve their potential as the prime movers of change in society (Ray, 2000).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Considering the subjects of gender, cinema and society is important. It is surprising to find that there is relatively less literature on the said topics. Also notably whatever material is available is primarily from USA and very little work has been done in India and even lesser in Iran on the topic of gender in films. Some of these writings focus on research studies from different perspective of women’s representation in cinema, in various countries. However, we would like to discuss the writings specifically in the context of the American film industry or Hollywood (since it has had great impact on world cinema), the Hindi film industry popularly known as Bollywood and Iranian cinema.

Laura Mulvey, using a psycho-analytical approach in her article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", published in 1975 has analyzed Hollywood cinema as having a patriarchal viewpoint that has structured and demonstrated the influence of patriarchal society on films. She believed that the women as icons are displayed for enjoyment of men. The male gaze projects the men’s fantasy about the female figure and gains pleasure out of it. In her opinion, ‘the look’ in cinema is controlled by males making the concept of pleasure to be understood in terms of the active male and passive female. She mentioned that women play erotic roles in films at two levels: firstly, as an erotic object for the male characters in the film and second, as an erotic object for the spectator watching the film. Mulvey has specially examined Alfred Hitchcock’s films because she felt that in his films the audience gains a voyeuristic pleasure by watching the film and his films additionally, showed voyeurism and fetishistic fascination (Thornham, 1999).
Claire Johnston (1973) in her article "Women's Cinema as Counter Cinema" showed how women have been stereotyped in films and went on to evaluate cinematic image of women in terms of distortion. Johnston was among the first feminist critics to offer a sustained critique of stereotypes from a semiotic point of view. She believed that film as ideology defined a representational system where the woman sign is represented within a sexist or patriarchal ideology and structure. She put the view that classical cinema constructs the ideological image of woman. She investigated the myth of 'woman' in classical cinema and believed that the sign 'woman' can be analyzed as a structure, a code or convention. Cinema represents the ideological meaning that 'woman' has for men while the 'woman-as woman' is absent from the text of the film. The important theoretical shift here is from an understanding of cinema as reflecting reality, to a view of cinema as constructing a particular, ideological, view of reality. Thus, classical film narrative has presented the constructed images of 'woman' as natural, realistic and attractive. This is the illusionism of classical cinema. In reality, stereotypes of women in film should not be compared with the reality of women's lives (Johnston, 1973).

Sharon Smith (1972), in her essay "Image of Women in Film" explored the limited range of women's images due to sex role stereotyping and according to the fantasies and fears of their male creators. She emphasized the power of cinematic representations to influence the social context and suggested that women should be shown as active not passive and should have variety of strong roles (Smith, 1972).

Molly Haskell’s *From Reverence to Rape* published in 1973 chronicled women's images in film. She pointed out that film reflects society through ideological and social construction of women. This book looks at sex and sexism in the movies based on culture. Haskell pointed out that the treatment of women in the movies is more than a question of art or entertainment. If films have flattered and amused us, reflecting our most cherished beliefs, they have also distorted truth and reinforced delusions, perpetuating stereotypes and molding values. She analyzed issues such as how the women are portrayed in films related to the broader historical context, the stereotypes depicted, the extent to which the women were shown as active or passive, and the amount of screen time given to women (Haskell, 1973).
In "The woman at the keyhole: women's cinema and feminist criticism", Judith Mayne (1981) has analyzed women's cinema as having two definitions. The first would be those films made by women and the second refers to female audience in Hollywood products. She focused on the issue of the relationship between the inauthentic and the authentic portrayals of female experience as also on women's relationship traditionally and historically as filmmakers and as film consumers. She worked mostly on classical Hollywood films throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, especially on the works of women directors like Dorothy Arzner and Ida Lupino. She found that women function as objects of spectacle and projection of male fantasies in classical cinema. She focused on the public and private spheres of women's life, the public including cinema as a field of business and industrial production along with the social institutions related to them, and the private containing home, family and personal life of the character. Using the feminist theory she explored how women interact within the private and public realms (Mayne, 1981).

Laure Sharage (1990) in her article "Feminist film aesthetic: A contextual approach" focused on psychoanalytic and semiotic theoretical framework in feminist film criticism. She analyzed the interaction of film texts with viewers by contextual approach. Contextual film criticism explores the interaction of film texts with socially ingrained principles of cinematic viewing (such as historical and cultural). She examined how the authority of these principles varies in relation to gender, race, sexual orientation etc. She analyzed a movie Christopher Strong made in 1933 and discussed how in this film, cultural meaning and myths formed women's desire for marriage and how the female character challenges the institution of marriage. She states that there is no space for expressing female desire and active female thought in patriarchal logic. She further holds that the passivity of the female gaze is not the product of a global patriarchy; rather it is a local variation in the viewing of Euro-American audiences and in certain films (Sharage, 1990).

Jill Nelmes (1996) in her work on gender and films studied representative portrayal of culture in masculinity and femininity and understanding of gender, sexuality and society. She has examined representation of women specifically in films by using feminist, psychoanalytic and cultural studies theories. She analyzed "The Piano" (1993) made by a female director Jane Campion as a case study in this perspective. She explores that in this film female character becomes a fetish object of
a man’s desire, who tries to control and contain her. She points out that in films one can see representation of gender role and female sexuality through clothing and the lack of voice of female characters is a symbol of their withdrawal from patriarchal society. Thus, in her view films like ‘The Piano’ are an exploration of female sexuality, and in some scenes, although in some scenes the director does try to portray woman as subject rather than object (Nelmes, 1996).

A study by Ella Shohat (1990) called "Gender in Hollywood's Orient" analyzes “oriental” films, which either are stories about the orient, stories located in the orient or at least have some oriental characters in them. Such movies provide us with Hollywood's view of the orient, especially the view of gender (woman) as a product of the western male gaze. Such kind of films show veiled women as a metaphor for their land, which is ripe for western domination, because east is characterized as the Other and west as Ego. For instance, in Hollywood films like *Ishtar* (1987) and *Lawrence of Arabia*, oriental women characters are under the power of western men. Similarly, colonized women are under the protection of the colonial patriarchal figure and they are an object of spectacle for the western voyeuristic gaze. The sexual hierarchy shown in these films additionally indicates a western racial view, which occupies the centre of the narrative by white women and men. The white woman is desired by the male protagonist and the darker marginalized women appear as sexually subordinated. It should be noted that in these oriental films the traditional sexual role and gender hierarchies are marked by the domination of the western men.

Similar views are presented by the researchers who have worked on the Hindi cinema. Sangeeta Datta (2000) penned "Globalization and Representations of Women in Indian Cinema" in which she examined the concept of cultural identity and personalized nationality with implications on gender through media and film. The main question in her study was about how larger ideological forces and market forces impact process of gender presentation in Indian cinema. She mentioned that in the 1980s with the coming of satellite television, the worldview changed. Narrative cinema was inundated by the overriding image of women as being dominated by masculine ideals of representation such as muscular body and physical aggression and it also presented conservative ideology in valorizing the male and objectifying the female. At the end of the twentieth century globalization has represented the interests of the free market for all the people. This transition and using of nation as a family
paradigm has located women in subordinate positions, confined to domestic and motherly roles. The process of globalization simplifies image making from a historical or social context. But she believed that women's movement and struggle for an egalitarian society brought women from the margins to the centre of their texts and focused on female subjectivity. Some filmmakers such as Aparna Sen, Vijaya Mehta and Aruna Raje have shown portraits of protagonist women highlighting their social and sexual identity.

Urvashi Butalia in "Women in Indian Cinema" (1984) stated that the most powerful medium of communication in Indian society is commercial Indian cinema. Many directors have produced films about women's social issues and paid attention to some important women's issues such as marriage, widowhood, dowry and rape. This has shown that the role of women has become more visible on the screen. But it should be noted that in spite of films concerning women's issues being made, we can see only one film in every 100 that shows women as human beings in their own right. Most commercial films continue to portray women as sex objects and as unequal partners. She suggested that Indian cinema should focus more on balancing women's image and avoid the same stereotypes.

Anu Celly (in Jain, 2002) has analyzed aspects of women's representation in "Indian popular cinema". Using semiotic and psychoanalytical approaches she pointed that the image of women is not the reality in their life. On the contrary, women's functions are factors of myth, custom and ritual. She also believes that the victimization syndrome is a component of women's image and life history and usually gazes of the male protagonist control and limit women's subjectivity and sexuality in to an object. For instance even a film like Satyajit Ray's "Devi" which is seen as a kind of revolutionary and pioneering attempt to show women's image as a protagonist, there is a use of myth as a normative paradigm for the ideal construct of womanhood.

Shoma A. Chatterji (1998) has written a book entitled Subject: Cinema Object: Woman: A Study of the Portrayal of Women in Indian Cinema. This book is perhaps, the first attempt by an Indian film critic within the framework of Indian popular cinema and was the result of three years of intensive research, through films, books and documentation consisting of archival material on Indian cinema. The idea was rooted in a consistent thrashing of ideas and concepts attacking the patriarchal
dominance in Hindi popular cinema through articles written in Indian publications and papers presented at seminars on cinema over the past two decades. It is an emotional response to the portrayal of women in Indian cinema based on psychoanalysis, semiology and structuralism. It has sought to place Indian popular cinema in perspective along sociological lines where the subjects of mythology, marriage, adultery, prostitution, rape, suicide and male masquerade have been analyzed through the glasses of an Indian woman addicted to cinema and to women.

Supriya Agarwal (in Jain and Rai, 2009) has provided an analysis of the Muslim women's identity in films. She argued that in Hindi cinema between in the 1970s to 1990s the portrayal of woman was projected through stereotypes and the women's point of view was never included in her role. This also holds true for the projection of Muslim women as members of a minority community marginalized in society. They are placed in stereotypes and with little choice in their own lives. In her study she analyzed four Muslim women centered films – Pakeezah (1971), Nikaah (1982), Bazaar (1982) and Umrao Jaan (1982). In these films we can see that a secondary position is imposed on women by strong environmental forces of society and they are shown to be oppressed by various societal pressures. In fact, women are presented from the male point of view in that they cannot have a respectable or independent identity without being under the protection and control of men. Men are portrayed as strong, powerful and authorized. On the contrary, women are depicted as weak and powerless and have to submit to male authority. She suggested that by formatting a counter hegemonic feminist discourse, all these problems need to be challenged and discussed (in Rai, 2002).

Patricia Uberoi (1990) in a research paper entitled "Feminine identity and national ethos in Indian calendar art" analyses representation of women in Indian popular art. She has mentioned in her study that women's representation has two processes. The first is the commoditization of women and second is the tropising of the feminine within an overall cultural context that is both homogenizing and hegemonic. She noted that in many genres of presentation in social and cultural activities, women are prominent objects of male desire and potential possessions. She analyzed two main reasons for their invisibility both in society and in media. On the one hand, because of marginalization of women in patriarchal discourse, they have
never been allowed to make their full and proper contribution to society and on the other hand society's legitimating myths and authority have been controlled by males, while women have been possessed and exchanged in the social relations among men. She showed different aspects of modification/objectification of women and women's bodies in related media such as advertising, film and etc. She believed that the Indian culture and stereotypes have affected women's role in society. The national culture and modern period has seen 'womanliness' subjected to process of hegemonization and homogenization of its identity. The mass media catering to the demands of the market mechanism have been the active instrument of this transformation.

When we look at literature from Iran on the subject of gender and cinema, we find very few works. Hamid Reza Sadr (2006) an Iranian film critic and writer, has written a book entitled *Iranian Cinema*. This book reveals the history of Iran through its cinema and has shown shifting of political, economic and social situation from pre-revolutionary to post-revolutionary era. He has analyzed some key films made by well-known directors to describe their themes, tropes and characterizations, which reveal the political and ideological contexts that express Iranian society. Parviz Ejali (2005), a professor of university and social researcher has published a book entitled *Social Change and Films in Iranian Cinema* in which he examines Iranian cinema since 1930 till 1978 (before revolution) and analyzes the structure and content of all Iranian films of that time. He has studied the Iranian films in the changing times and stresses the stability of Iranian culture and society. He emphasized that films can reflect some social meaning and culture for audience in a particular time with specific functions. In this book he has considered cultural factors and social mobility. He tried to analyze the content of those films focusing on social, economic and cultural reality of Iranian society.

In "Iranian cinema under the Islamic republic", Hamid Naficy (1995) examined Iranian film industry in post revolution period since 1978. He mentioned that Iranian cinema has been influenced by Islamic values. He argued that two kinds of cinema have been emerging in this era – the first one is the populist cinema which describes post revolutionary values at the level of plot, theme, characterization, human relationships and portrayal of women and the second one is the quality cinema, which engages with those values and tends to critique the social conditions under the
Islamic government. He analyzed and criticized some Iranian films falling in the war, historical and family drama genres. He believes that since the mid 1980s, women's representation has included more and more dominant characters on the screen and the number of active women behind the cameras as a filmmaker has increased.

Norma Claire Moruzzi (1999) also has studied Iranian women in films. She has explored Iranian women's lives after revolution in terms of how they have been shaped by political and social/cultural factors. She discusses their lives and how their expectation about education, work and family have changed due to political revolution, economic decline and national cultural shifts. She focuses on representation of Islamic women in Iranian cinema and investigates the relationship between the political and the personal in Iranian women's lives. She analyses representation of women by two Iranian films. The subject of the two films is domestic abuse and women's resistance. Both films contain female characters that are controlled by possessive and abusive husbands.

From the above review of literature we can see that most of the studies have concentrated on women's cinematic representation in terms of patriarchal ideology. The researchers have found that women are usually portrayed as passive, erotic objects, marginalized and stereotyped in different contexts of cinema although there are some instances of depiction of women as independent and autonomous individuals too. It is thus evident that mostly women in cinema have been analyzed through psychoanalytic and semiotic approaches. In the proposed study we have tried to analyze women's portrayal in Iranian and Indian cinema by applying both the feminist film criticism perspective and the sociological approach that focuses on the debate on the primacy of structure and agency.

After examining the review of literature let us look at the research questions and objectives of the study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Mainly this study attempts to answer the following questions:

- How is society depicted in cinema in Iran and India?
- Does cinema reinforce structures by showing the social reality in films or does cinema break down the boundaries and portray women as agents and as empowered beings?
• How do films show the domination and stereotyping of women in both societies?
• How do films represent agency aspects of women's lives?
• How does Indian and Iranian cinema integrate and interpret women's agency and subjectivity in films?
• How are women's issues portrayed through the gazes of women and men directors?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general purpose of this study was to investigate the interrelation of gender, women and cinema in the context of Iranian and Indian films. Specifically, the proposed study attempted to analyze the following issues:

• To analyze the portrayal of women in cinema in relation to the private and public spheres of women's lives by reflecting on the depiction of patriarchal values in films from both countries. Here the focus was on the structural aspect.
• To focus on the shift towards portraying women's resistance, personal autonomy and empowerment thereby highlighting the notion of agency.
• To analyze women's empowerment as depicted through the change in their portrayals in films.
• To examine and compare the approaches of female and male filmmakers to the portrayal of problems of women in their respective societies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Any analysis of texts requires qualitative research method. Qualitative research is concerned with societal and cultural phenomena, individual behaviors, decision-making and thought processes. This type of research is concerned with qualitative phenomena, i.e., phenomena relating to or involving quality or kind. Some of the key defining qualities highlighted are discussed by Denzin and Lincoln (2005). They define qualitative research as a naturalistic, interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena (actions, decisions, beliefs, values etc.) within their social worlds. In this regard certain data collection
methods have also been identified with qualitative research, such as, observational methods, in-depth interviewing, group discussions, narratives, and the analysis of documentary evidence (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

With the purpose of data collection in the qualitative research we have chosen the narrative method for analyzing the selected films. Narrative theory is reshaping qualitative inquiry in virtually every human science discipline and practicing profession. Narrative methods are suited to analysis of oral, written and visual stories of experience and social representation processes such as feelings, images, and time. They offer the potential to address ambiguity, complexity, and dynamism of individual, group, and organizational phenomena.

In the last few years, there has been a growing interest among sociologists in narratives, narrative analysis, stories, and storytelling. Narrative is an interpretive approach in the social sciences involving storytelling methodology. The story becomes an object of study, focusing on how individuals or groups make sense of events and actions in their lives. A narrative can be understood to organize a sequence of events into a whole so that the significance of each event can be understood through its relation to that whole. In this way narrative conveys the meaning of events. Hinchman (in Elliott, 2005) asserted a useful definition of narrative by stating that narratives (stories) in the human sciences should be defined provisionally as discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and or people's experiences of it. There are three approaches to the study of narrative; first, Structural analysis which focuses on story grammar that includes the setting and events in a story; second, ‘Sociology of stories’ approach which focuses on cultural, historical and political context in which particular stories are (or can be) told by whom and to whom; and third, ‘Functional approach’ which focuses on what roles characters perform in a story (Griffin, 2009). Clearly our method is the second one where we have also tried to study the four stories in certain cultural and social contexts.

Narrative is important within sociology for three reasons; first, it exhibits the importance of the interrelation between individual lives and social contexts. Second, it performs the function of highlighting the importance of an attempt to understand the
meaning of behavior and experience from the perspective of the individuals involved. Third, sociological research is clearly carried out within a social context. For sociologists narratives reveal much about social life or culture, as culture speaks through a story. By seeing how people talk, act and behave, researchers can analyze how culturally contingent and historically contingent the terms, beliefs and issues narrator address are (Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992). Storytelling sociology views lived experience as constructed, at least in part, by the stories people tell about it. Stories are not merely ways of telling others about ourselves but of constructing our identities, of finding purpose and meaning in our lives. Storytelling sociology encourages writing that experiments with different forms of representation and that seek engagement with the world beyond academe. The measure of "truth" in this project is not judged by conventional positivist standards of validity and reliability but by the power of stories to evoke the vividness of lived experience (Berger, 2008).

Thus the analysis of texts through narrative method is a powerful and useful way to explore media texts. The texts most frequently subject to narrative analysis are films. Narrative terms such as plot, repetition, events, characters and characterization are important in film even though the form of presentation and the way in which these concepts are actualized may vary (Lothe, 2000). In narrative analysis we take as our object of analysis the entire text, focusing on the structure of the story or narrative. Narrative is a component of just about every media and cultural form to a greater or lesser extent. Narrative also conveys the ideology of a culture and it is one of the means by which values and ideals are represented culturally. Thus narrative analysis is often used to unpack the ideological intent of a piece of work.

Stokes (2003) has offered certain suggestions for narrative analysis which are as follows:

- **Careful selection of the text**: Narrative analysis involves very close reading and is best done on a limited number of texts to begin with.

- **Familiarity with the text**: The researcher should become very familiar with the text and think about the explicit themes of the text.

- **Defining the research questions**: The research questions should be defined which are related to whatever one wants to say about the text.

40
Sketching out the plot: Writing out the skeleton of the story line as it happens in the text, paying attention to the characters and the order of events as they are told and using the plot outline and writing down the story as it happens chronologically.

Characterization: Describe the characters according to their function in the plot.

Selection of Iranian and Indian Films for the Study

This study focuses upon four films (two from India and two from Iran) as case studies in terms of their text, which have been made by Indian and Iranian women and men filmmakers. The names of the Iranian films are Do Zan (Two Women, 1999) by Tahmineh Milani and Sag Koshi (Killing of Mad Dogs, 2001) by Bahram Beyzai and the names of Indian films are Daman (Domination, 2001) by Kalpana Lajmi and Mrityudand (Death Penalty, 1997) by Prakash Jha.

The choice of the films was based on the fact that all these four films are comparable to each other having some similar issues to study. All four films belong to art house cinema and they are nationally and internationally acclaimed. The films are women-centered and mostly have concentrated on women’s issues in different situations, especially in the gender relations context. They have explored the pressures over women from social structures and the everyday life of middle class women and have shown the situations as realistically as possible. They examine women’s negotiation of their spaces in their personal and social spheres in patriarchal and men-centric societies. In these films we can see various aspects of women’s lives, and the challenges which they have to face in Indian and Iranian social contexts. These films also show how women can break the social and the cultural boundaries which they were constrained by. Through the analysis of the films we have tried to examine how women are depicted as being subordinated in the patriarchal societies and yet they can and do emerge in some way as agents who could change the structure of society.

Usually male film makers are accused of portraying and justifying the patriarchal set up while women film makers are lauded for trying to focus on the empowerment of women in their films. Intriguingly, in all these films both male and female film makers have depicted women both as oppressed beings, as also the emergence of women as empowered individuals. It was interesting to compare how male and female film makers in Iran and India have tackled these themes.
Tentative Chapter Scheme

The study is divided into five chapters. The current chapter (Chapter One) can broadly be seen as being divided into four sections. In the first section we have dealt with the key concepts of gender, media, cinema, and representation of women in cinema. This is followed by a discussion on the theoretical foundation of the study which includes the structure and agency approach as well as cinema and the feminist film theory. In the second section we have described the sub-themes of structure and agency. The third section has focused on the review of literature. Finally, in the fourth section we have made an attempt to examine the research questions, objectives and the method of study.

The second chapter starts with the discussion of the position of women in Iranian society and examines the Iranian cinema with special attention to the emergence of women's directors and representation of women on screen in Iran. This chapter focuses on the cinematic works of two Iranian directors – one female and one male – with special attention to the plot of their films namely, Two Women and Killing Rabid Dogs. The last part of the chapter analyzes the portrayal of women in the selected Iranian films through certain themes of structural analysis (patriarchy, gender stereotyping, class system and violence) and themes falling under agency (education, decision making and participation, empowerment and rebellion). In the third chapter we review the position of women in Indian society and study the Indian cinema focused on the emergence of women's directors and representation of women on screen in India. This is followed by discussing the cinematic works of two Indian directors (once again one female and the other male) and the plot outline of their films, namely, Daman and Mrityudand. The final section of this chapter discusses the portrayal of women in the selected Indian films through the particular structure and agency themes as mentioned earlier. In the fourth chapter we have made an effort to analyze and compare and contrast the Iranian and Indian films in terms of how directors in both countries have dealt with the issue of presentation of women in their films. Finally, the fifth chapter sums up the discussion in the earlier chapters and offers some concluding remarks.