

## Cultural Changes of Iranian Music after Islamic Revolution

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**Abstract.** After Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1978, the situation of music like other cultural-artistic fields became very different compared previous. Portrait of the Persian music was completely changed and different aspects like absence of women's voice, emphasis on religious music, increasing of ordered governmental music, imitation of L.A Persian pop artists, omitting dance, and many other ones appeared in it. The paper will consider the situation of today music of Iran and cultural changes of it.

**Keywords:** Iranian Music, Persian Music, Islamic Revolution of Iran, Culture, Cultural Changes, Iran,

### 1. Introduction

*“History of Persian music is as ancient as Persian art” (khaleghi ii) but the researcher of this article only chose the very small part of this big history of music with focus on cultural changes of post-revolutionary of Iranian music.*

After every revolution this is obvious that many things are changed. When the revolution is the religious one, the number of these changes can be more cultural. While Iran's revolutionary was Islamic one and while music is one of the most challenging issues in Islam, cultural changes of Persian post-revolutionary music were big and highly worthy to be considered. The researcher of this paper tried to have a short entry to Persian music before revolution and then discusses on the most important aspects of cultural changes in Persian post-revolutionary music. The author didn't feel that it is necessary to refer to the word of “culture” or “cultural change” in every line or paragraph of the paper, because it seems that every change which was occurred in the music of the society during years will be counted as “cultural change”.

It will be better if this article be presented with the audio samples. Also most of materials of this paper are based on personal studies and findings of the author.

### 2. Persian Music before Islamic Revolution

For whom who has even little information about situation of music in Iran before Islamic revolutionary, it is obvious that it was more free than now. Maybe there were cheaper bar music that post revolutionary ones, but all the genres had right to be performed. In the time of Shah Iranian women could sing, dance and have videos. Bar or cabaret music was one of the most popular music in that age. Also Iranian traditional and classic music were active as other music bands too. Beside of them, pop singers were so popular and active. They perform concerts and recorded videos. Their photos were always on the top page and covers of the magazines. International classical music orchestras had also activities and concerts. “Court of Shah supported musicians, especially pop singers and cabaret ones. However, the situation of Tehran Symphonic Orchestras, different national and traditional orchestras were high and worthy too” (Kiann).

### 3. Persian Music after Islamic Revolution

As soon as Islamic Revolution of Iran was happened in 1978, the position and face of music was changed completely. Most of Iranian pop music starts immigrated to other countries especially the U.S. some other musicians like film music composers or even traditional music player or composers immigrated too

because according to the Islamic rules, music which cause joy and excitements is forbidden .Then after, the main question of music after revolutionary rose as “is Music Halal or Haram? Forbidden or Allowed?” the question which is still discussed after more than 30 years of revolutionary. As every piece of music or music work needs a “legal ground”. This is not important that the singer is a famous one or the band is authentic and work under the rules of Islamic republic of Iran, they have to take justification whenever want to perform music or release a piece of music.

Persian post-revolutionary music can be considered from various point -of -views but in this research only ten of the most important aspects of it will be discussed.

### **3.1. Absence of Women**

Because the Iran’s revolutionary was Islamic, at the moment it was occurred, women were omitted from Persian music singing and dancing(Mir-Hosseini); in a better word all of Iranian women singers immigrated to other countries to be able to continue their art. If they stayed, they actually chose to be inactive because their work was not allowed or legal by the government. “Traditional music singers like Hengameh Akhavan or Sima Bina who were very active before Islamic revolution, were completely faded. Also pop stars like Faegheh Atashin(Gogoosh) who stayed in Iran couldn’t sing for more than 20 years and then she could immigrate to the US and continued her art” (Mojarad 342-371). Other Iranian women singers or dancers who stayed in Iran, only allowed singing for women in highly covered halls, but it was very frequent. Another way that they could be active was collaborating in a group of men as a singer, because of that the voice of women must not be listened solo. On the contrary, masculinity in the Persian post-revolutionary music reached to its climax that it can be a subject of a separated article on gender study of the Persian post-revolutionary music.

### **3.2. Traditional Music as the Main Genre**

Traditional music became the main music genre after Islamic revolutionary of Iran. That was happened because of many reasons. The first one is that it was completely a health music; it wasn’t bar music or cabaret one. Also it was based on the poems of ancient poets of Iran such as Hafiz, Sa’adi, Khayyam, Ferdowsi and...these kinds of poets were not composed during the time of revolutionary; so they didn’t included as any opposition. Another reason was the presence of the most popular traditional singers of Iran in this music such as Mohammad Reza Shajarian and Shahram Nazeri, who attracted people- especially youth- to the Persian traditional classic music. Although the picture of traditional music of Iran in recent years was changing because traditional singers chose modern poetries for their song which some of the, were not allowed by the government or they were composed in the regime of Shah and they were illegal there, but now they became useful another time for the opposed singers like Shajarian.

### **3.3. War and Revolutionary Hymns**

Only less that a year after Islamic revolutionary of Iran, the war between Iran and Iraq was started in 1981 and it lasted for next eight years. Iranian soldiers need such songs which motivated them to go the fronts and fight with Iraqis. Also that was a good time for entering a new genre to the Iranian music which was completely in the way of governmental requests. War music and revolutionary hymns was the blank that they found on the music of Iran and started to fill it during eight years of war. The main theme of those hymns was going to the fronts, enthusiasm to be martyr and running to meet god. Those songs were combination of religious music and war music.

### **3.4. Religious Music**

In the history of Iranian music from hundred years ago until now, there were different forms of religious music like Ta’ziye, Nouheh, Maddahi, Rozeh and....all of these kinds of music are performed by the public; so in the regime of shah they were forbidden because when they wanted to be perform, they needed large number of people to do it. Shah feared of gathering people because most of them were protests of him. But after Islamic revolutionary, this kind of music started to release more than anytime in the history of Iranian music. That was the exact kind of music that the Islamic government wanted to have. Most of Persian religious music was sad ones although young generation needed happier one.

### **3.5. Pop Music; Imitation of L.A Musicians**

As it was mentioned before, most of Iranian singers who were active and very popular in the time of Shah immigrated to Los Angeles. After the Islamic revolutionary, even listening to the music of those singers became illegal. With developing of TV channels, videos and also new wave of Iranian immigration to other countries, in the second decade of revolutionary, government managers found that they young generation need a kind of music which is similar to the past one. They announced pop music as the legal one. Then after, the first generation of pop music singers after the Islamic revolutionary was those who were good imitators. They imitated the voice of those singers were popular in the time of Shah and now they were active in L.A. after several years, the personality of pop music in Iran was formed independently and changed to the mainstream of Iranian music because the 70% of Iran's population were youth.

### **3.6. Underground Music and Bands as the Voice of Protest**

As every kind of music needed to have "legal ground" from government, in the late of second decade of Islamic revolutionary and beginning the third decade, gradually underground bands were appeared. Their style was rap, rock, metal, heavy metal, and those genres which government didn't like and didn't give them legal letter. While the music budget was in the hands of government, they had to work independent. The main theme of their poems was opposed and protest songs. Therefore, most of the time, these kinds of bands were arrested in their homes or at their poor hidden stages. However, from the underground music of Iran, new genres became to birth such as "Rap-e Farsi" (Persian Rap) which was something between rap and pop but the main theme of their song was not as opposed as underground rap bands had.

### **3.7. Forbidding Dance**

In some of Islamic rules or Fatwa, dancing of women for women or men for men is not allowed so this is obvious that dancing of women for men is completely forbidden. After Islamic revolution of Iran, every kind of dancing was forbidden even the folklore ones. Exceptionally some men bands were allowed to perform folklore dance in some ceremonies. Dance is a forgotten buried issue during past 30 years of Iran after Islamic revolutionary.

### **3.8. Falling of Classical Music**

Classical music in Iran is a kind of task which is completely depended to Europe. After Islamic revolution most of foreign teachers, masters pr conductors who came to Iran for the music work, cut their relationship with Iran. So, Iranian musicians stayed with themselves. They had to work and keep alive their orchestras. They started to work in the first decade of revolution but lack of specialists who could conduct them was felt. Also their instruments were old but because of different international sanctions against Iran, they couldn't change them. Gradually, international classical music was changed to a music which performed and taught rarely. However, during recent years, Tehran symphonic orchestra as the only symphonic orchestra of Iran was active and some of its instruments were changed.

### **3.9. Ordered Governmental Symphonies**

Government which had the budget of music in his hands, found that it is needed to have some heavy aristocrat music which focus on the main principles of Islamic revolutionary and can be performed in different governmental ceremonies with big symphonic orchestra. Therefore, they started to order some symphonies such as "War Symphony", "Martyrdom Symphony", "Revolutionary Symphony", and many others which had been ordered during last years. They are not popular ones but they were big budget symphonies with specified targets.

### **3.10. Folklore Music as Fun Music**

Traditional music of Iran is a thoughtful one which is based on ancient poetries of Iranian poets. Pop music sometimes is not as simple as everyone in every age wanted to listen to them and enjoy. Dance or real happy and joyful songs are forbidden but there is still a window of hope; folklore music which is full of happy songs. During recent years that government found that Iranian people need to be happy and at least have mask of smile of their face, give legal ground to folklore bands for performing their music. Most of the times, these groups choose the happiest and funniest songs which they have, so Iranian people go to concert

halls, sit on their chairs and clap with these happy songs! Maybe in a folk concert a sad folk song is performed but most of songs are chosen from happy ones.

#### 4. Conclusion

After 1978 Islamic revolutionary of Iran, there were many cultural changes. Persian music was one of the most obvious changes (Farehat). The most important question which was in front of music was “is it forbidden or allowed?” With omitting women from music scenes, burring dance, and focusing on the religious and war music, the portrait of Iranian music after Islamic revolutionary was totally changed. This paper tried to consider some of those main aspects of this cultural change in Persian post-revolutionary music.

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