



Post 9/11 Pakistani Occidentalism: A Case Study of "Khuda Ke Liye" and "021"

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the post 9/11 representation of the West in Pakistani cinema with special reference to two feature films "Khuda Ke Liye" and "021" by qualitative method of research. After reviewing the tradition of Occidentalism and historical background of Pakistani Cinema, the researcher analyzed the depiction of the West in "Khuda Ke Liye" and "021" by employing narrative analysis and contextual analysis techniques in the light of Huntington's clash of civilizations theory and Dallmyr's dialogue among civilizations perspective.

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1. Introduction

The portrayal of the East is investigated under orientalist discourse; whereas the depiction of the West is analyzed under Occidental discourse. Major Orientalist thinkers like Said (2003) and Shaheen (2003) suggest that the West has been constructing the East since long and it used its colonial experience and technological expertise to undermine the image of the East by depicting it as violent, uncivilized and orthodox. Occidental discourse is based on two contradictory standpoints. Carrier (1995) outlines Occidentalism as the artificial images of the West. He believes that such images are very substantial as they have potential to carry and pass many socio-political & socio-economic inferences. He takes it as a romantic and reactionary phenomenon. Hanafi (2006), on the other hand, has a different opinion in this regard. He delineates Occidentalism as a self-defense against the savagery and assertiveness of Orientalism. He describes it as a science which tends to study the West, while scrubbing out Western norms infiltrating the Eastern values. He believes Occidentalism is an academic discipline formulated by the East so as to complete the process of decolonization. We are living in a Uni-polar world since the end of cold war and fall of Soviet Union. Huntington (2004) acknowledged seven or eight major civilizations that structured the post-Cold War era. He deliberates that clashes will keep on arising among different groups of above civilizations. Osborn (2005) suggests that the Huntington's "clash of civilizations" provides the best possible interpretation of contemporary world. He points out the ethnic struggles in the former Yugoslavia and Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan to assert that orthodox and the Muslim civilization in the Baltic region and Hindu and Muslim civilizations in South Asia are at continuous collision. He also mentions Afghanistan and Iraq in support of his take by asserting that the West is confronting Islam, and this confrontation has entered into an altogether new dimension after the terrorist attacks of 11 September, 2001.

Haynes (2013) in his article "Twenty Years after Huntington's Clash of Civilizations" authenticates Huntington's perspective as a clear way of seeing the contemporary world. According to him, hopes and fears conveyed by "Clash of Civilizations" are more clearly visible

after two decades of its origin. He is of the view that most of the contemporary conflicts have arisen in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. Dallmayr (2002) in his famous book "Dialogue among Civilizations: Some Exemplary Voices" elucidates that post 9/11 scenario including war in Afghanistan has severely injured the mutual perceptions between the West and the Muslim World, which has invigorated the conflict & hampered the dialogue; however, it has also amplified the role of NGO'S & the civil society both in the West and in the Muslim World to limit this confrontation and enmity by engaging both parties in an informal dialogue. September 11 attack on twin towers in United States of America is deliberated among the most conspicuous happenings of 21st century. It followed two decades long "War against Terror" by America and its allies and a blunt wave of Islamophobia across the globe. Especially, the Muslim diaspora in the West had to bear with prejudiced behaviors of state machineries and unfavorable representation in Media. Pakistan was no exception. The intention of this study is to determine how the Pakistani Cinema responded to aftermath of 9/11 attack. Given the fact, two Pakistani movies namely *Khuda Ke Liye* (2007) and *021*(2014) revolving around the consequences of 9/11 are selected to study the representation of the West in Pakistani Cinema. The researcher is of the view that this study will be pivotal in understanding various dimensions of post 9/11 Pakistani Occidentalism.

2. Background of the Study

Pakistan owes a dynamic film industry since its early days of inception. Numerous film studies and companies are operating here, the most of which are sited in its two major cities, Karachi and Lahore. It is a matter of fact that the role of Pakistani film industry has been significant in dissemination and formulation of Pakistani culture (Gazder, 2012). Historically speaking, Pakistani cinema became operational in 1948 with release of its first movie "Teri Yad". History of Pakistani Cinema is the history of continuous rise and fall. After dramatic rise in 60's and 70's and drastic fall in 80's and 90's, Pakistani cinema is thriving again with its head quarter shifting from Lahore to Karachi (Khan, 2016). Pakistan's Cinema has witnessed many transitional periods since its beginning. Lately, there has been persistent emphasis on constructing the positive image of Pakistan through cinema. Given the fact, some new institutions were established to promote the performing arts, which is a ray of hope for otherwise a fragile industry (Egan, 2002). Neocolonial discourse made its entry in Pakistani cinema in 1990's. International Guirellay (1990) is assumed to be first movie in this context but it failed to cast its impact due to its over-simplified storyline and childish twists. Few good movies in the neocolonial discourse were made in the first decade of 21st century. *Khuda Ke Liye* (2007) was the leading contribution in this domain(Ragmoun & Alwehabie, 2020; Ragmoun & Ben-Salha, 2024). Dasgupta (2008) has examined the film "*Khuda Kay Liye*" for its discourse about controversial themes like beards, jihad, music, and forced marriages(Ahmed, Azhar, & Mohammad; Mohammad, 2015). She suggests that the film successfully conveyed its message about religious extremism and American neocolonialism simultaneously, which was a difficult task to accomplish. The author concludes that the movie tried to balance out the combating ideas of religious extremism and liberalism by not detaching religion from sociocultural elements of a common Pakistanis' lives. Referring to representation of west in six non-western movies, Al-Rawi (2014) elucidates that "*Khuda Kay Liye*" deals with cultural differences between Pakistan and the West in an endeavor to demonstrate the inadequacies of some cultural practices in Pakistan and the injustice committed by the west towards innocent people that followed the war on terror campaign in America. He is of the view that above film is a fine example to understand the phenomenon of Occidentalism in Pakistani cinema, whereby the filmmaker has tried to represent the both sides in a neutral manner, in spite of relying on stereotypes, over-sentimentalism and reactionary slogans.

3. Methodology

A couple of qualitative research techniques are employed in this study. According to Brennen (2012) a qualitative research usually tends to interpret, appreciate, infer and construe diverse phenomena. Moreover, it is inclined to produce the knowledge of the grander and loftier domains while striving to understand and address the deeper shades of human relations and communications. The research design of this study comprises of narrative and contextual analysis which are eminent qualitative research techniques in the discipline of film and portrayal studies. Bordwell (2019) describes narrative analysis as the investigation of different aspects of a storyline such as plot structure, character motives and theme. They believe that dramatic structure of a film is similar to dramatic structure of a novel because both require exposition, rising action, climax, declining action and resolution. According to them, narrative analysis allows the researcher to get a close view into how different concepts are presented through a novel or

a film. Minervini (2020) suggests that Contextual analysis is analysis of the film as part of a broader context. It questions the culture, time, and place of the film's creation along with the social and political concerns of that time period. The authors are of the view if textual analysis is an attempt to examine the text, contextual analysis aspires to examine the surrounding of such text. The reason for combining the narrative analysis with contextual analysis is that this combination will enable the researcher to couple his finding with the socio-political and socio-cultural background which led to the creation of selected movies. In other words, the narrative analysis will equip the researcher in understanding the internal system of a movie whereas the contextual analyses will equip him in identifying the surroundings which overlie that particular system. The outcome will be a holistic picture and the deeper insight into the subject matter.

4. Analysis, Interpretation and Commentary

The researcher watched every movie 4 times with interval of one month so as to minimize the biases. This helped the researcher to consider multiple possibilities about every visualized fact. The Analysis and interpretation of "Khuda Ke Liye" and "021" and commentary over it is as under:

a. Narrative and Contextual Analysis of "Khuda Ke Liye"

Khuda k Liye (2007) is a Pakistani Urdu movie directed by Shoaib Mansoor as his debut cinematic work after successfully delivering for around two and half decades in television and music industry. The film narrates the story of two siblings: Mansoor and Sarmad in the backdrop of 9/11 & war against terror. This movie has brought two separate, rather opposite themes like religious extremism and western imperialism simultaneously in quite a balanced manner. Given the fact, it is considered among the only few Pakistani movies of modern age, which gained critical acclaim worldwide for its serious themes and mature production design. Story opens up with Mansoor & Sarmad, living merrily in Lahore and doing music. Meanwhile, Sarmad is influenced by an extremist cleric to surrender his love for music. This is a big shock for his elder brother Mansoor, who despite his efforts can't persuade Sarmad to withdraw his decision. A parallel storyline is set in England where Mary, a westernized British Pakistani young lady, falls in love with Dave, a British guy, which disheartens her father despite the fact, he himself is living in an open relationship with an English lady. Thus, the stage is set for confrontation right from the beginning. Creative use of Irony and subversion is boldly employed to mark the contradictions of characters.

Mary is forcibly sent to Pakistan, where her father ties her in the knot of marriage with his nephew, Sarmad without her consent. Sarmad, who is with Taliban now, as an active Mujahid, accepts this proposal for the service of Islam. Mary once tries to escape, but is caught, and raped by Sarmad as the punishment. Meanwhile, she becomes pregnant and gives birth to a female child, which restricts his further possibility to escape. All the while, in a parallel storyline Mansoor goes to a music school in Chicago, where he encounters with Janie, a fellow music student. They fall in love for each other, and Janie quits drinking liquor for him. They ultimately wed. Nonetheless, soon after the event of 9/11, Mansoor is captured by the FBI because of his Islamic foundation and is kept in custody and tormented for a year in Guantanamo Bay confinement camp. At this stage tension is at its highest level in both storylines. A Pakistani male character that fell into love with a western woman is in confinement of Western imperialists for the crime he didn't commit, and a British Pakistani lady who loved a western male is in confinement of a Muslim extremist group. Finally, she is rescued by Army on the instigation of his paternal uncle, the father of Sarmad & Mansoor. She lodges a case against her father and Sarmad for getting her into a forced marriage. From here onwards the transformation of Sarmad starts and goes on. In the conclusion of this storyline, Mary is seen educating young girls in Afghanistan.

In the meantime, Mansoor is undergoing severe physical and psychological torture in the custody of FBI until one day he gets serious brain injury. After a failed recovery attempt, he is deported to Pakistan, where he starts to recover in the care and custody of his family. Khuda Kay Liye tends to address cultural differences between Pakistan and the West. It is a bold attempt to highlight the way how extremist interpretation of religion may turn innocent people into fanatics in Pakistan and the way gender discrimination is part of the society. At the same time, this movie also describes the themes like Islamophobia and prejudice towards innocent Muslims in the wake of war against terror. This movie is a critique over religious extremism and Islamophobia simultaneously. American neocolonialism and Taliban militancy both extremes are

rejected by this movie. *Khuda Kay Liye* is a fine example of how the stereotyping may be avoided. It is done by representing the both sides in a neutral manner. This film has aspired to balance out the combating ideas by crafting various character and events in such a way that against every narrative, there is a counter- narrative. We have two siblings Mansoor and Sarmad. Both are singers. Mansoor goes to America in order to study and practice music; Sarmad becomes a Taliban and moves to Afghanistan so as to fight against the forces of USA and NATO. We have a father and a daughter residing in England. Both are in relation with White people. Father takes it justified for him and wrong for his daughter. We have two Muslim religious scholars. One is of the view that music is forbidden in religion and female are bound to obey whatever is decided for them. Other is of the view that music is allowed and female owes free will like males. We have a British Pakistani woman in the possession of Talibans, who underwent forced marriage.

We have a Pakistani man in the prison of American, who is guilty of a false charge. We have American state which captures and tortures innocent people. We have religious Militants who believe in forced marriage, rape and murder of common citizen. Every character and theme of this movie seems to be placed in a binary opposition but one thing is common and that is hope for a better future. We have common people, both in Pakistan and the west, who can interact and live peacefully with each other, who can love and marry while still keeping their cultural identities intact. *Khuda Kay Liye* is a brilliant example of how meaningful dialogue may be initiated among civilizations even in the days of conflict and war. In the backdrop of war among Muslim extremist groups and American imperialism after 9/11 attacks, Mansoor and Mary, the two protagonists of the movie tend to make the world a better place by Music and education: Mansoor before his arrest from American security agencies and Mary after her release from the clutches of Talibans. It is noteworthy that "Bandiya", a duet song by Mansoor and Jennie, is a bold metaphor of cultural harmony as it indicates that two separate civilizations can interact and fuse by the power of Music and Art, while maintaining their own separate identities. This song depicts that Pakistani self and Pakistani other can be harmonious to each other through the universal language of art and culture.

b. Narrative and Contextual Analysis of "O21"

O21 or Operation O21(2014) is a bilingual Pakistani spy thriller film directed by Jami & Summer Nicks. Its style and content is far different from a typical Pakistani movie. The genre experimentation is also evident in this movie. It failed to cast any significant mark on the box office; however, its critical reception was mixed to good. The story opens up with an Afghani citizen Abdullah, annoyed at 30 years of war in Afghanistan, needs to save his country from an additional 50 years of corporate fighting. He works with his Pakistani partner Kashif Siddiqui to save the two adjoining nations from additional strife through an arrangement that could hazard the existences of them and their families; an arrangement that has 21 hours to be completed. Without proper introduction and exposition, we are dropped steadily into the action which is difficult to follow at first as four distinct perspectives are compared with one another. The different accounts of an Afghani government official Dost, revolutionary Abdullah, CIA operative Nathan and Kashif Siddique eventually combine. Basically, O21 is about those people who wind up between the twin debasements of corporate agendas and underhanded governmental issues focused around Afghan mineral deposits that are accessed through Pakistan. O21 is a Pakistani film, yet its locale and major focus is Afghanistan. The battle is for the reserves of Lithium in Afghanistan with a self-ensuring CIA and a voracious mining corporation with good and bad Afghanistan and Pakistani characters as depicted in the film. Pakistan is portrayed as a facilitating country for the greater intermediary game that is being played in the Afghan locale. O21 is certainly not a simple movie. Rather it is a grievous, beautifully acknowledged story of devotions and faithfulness that grapples with inquiries of honesty, equity, and nationalism.

O21 is a different film in my ways. It claims to be first ever spy action thriller of Pakistan. Despite being too loud or melodramatic like almost all Pakistani and the most of Indian movies, this film goes slow, subtle and fluent. It is so loyal to its theme and storyline; it didn't even bother to include a single song, which is again a unique thing to do in local cinema, where audience can't imagine a movie without songs. Movie is political to its core. It is told from Afghani and Pakistani mutual nationalistic perspective. Movie brings forth a neocolonial discourse, exposing American capitalism and its urge to earn the capitals on the cost of Afghani and Pakistani citizens by continuing war till 5 next decades so as to extract minerals of worth trillions dollar. The portrayal of West in terms of its characters and political ideology is absolutely negative in this movie. C.I.A, Western corporate sector and American political government are portrayed

to be allies in extraction of Afghani minerals. Ideology behind war against terror is depicted as just eyewash to safeguard vested interest of big conglomerates, which are all having piece of pie according to their size. In its deeper layer, the film shifts the responsibility of 9/11 attacks to American security agencies by providing a solid motif for their reason to stay in Afghanistan. Joe Town is the major antagonist of the movie. He is a C.I.A agent deputed in Afghanistan. He tries his level best to retrieve the SIM containing classified sensitive information and finally killed by Kashif before the resolution of movie. Joe is represented as cunning and resourceful character that lacks noble human values like compassion, empathy, sympathy and love. He can do anything to achieve his goals which are ugly by all means and lead towards the continuity of a war which has killed millions of people. Town has always something to offer. He believes in purchasing the loyalties of people to accomplish his personal and official tasks. This film does not intend to create any dialogue among civilizations. Rather its thematic structure is built on various conspiracy theories, some of which comes under the ambit of victim blaming. This movie not only hints a bigger clash of civilizations but also tends to expand this clash. However, according to it, the reason for clash is neither cultural nor religious. The sole reason for this clash is financial gain.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

9/11 is probably the significant most event of 21st century till date. It led to global war against terror, which affected a large number of people across the world. Muslim diaspora in the West was among the leading victims as they had to face Islamophobia since then. 9/11 and its aftermath captured the interest of filmmakers worldwide. Various Pakistani movies have also been made in this regards; however, *Khuda Kay Liye* (2007) and *021* (2014) are considered among the most significant contribution in this domain. *Khuda Kay Liye* is an attempt to describe the miseries and discriminations offered by the West to a common Pakistani Muslim on the basis of his religious and national identity. It outrageously rejects the stereotyping by which the word "Terrorist" has been assigned to the Muslim identity at the West. It also suggests that most of the Muslim and the Americans are good and peace loving individuals; however, there are also bad people among the both and majority face the consequences of their acts. On the other hand, *021* blame the West for using 9/11 as an excuse to create and craft modern day colonies in Afghanistan, Iraq and other Muslim countries. The movie deliberates that the Muslim are not terrorist, real terrorist are corporate industry of the West and its security agencies, who plot against the innocent people for their vested interest, wage war and sabotage peace to mint more and more money for them. *Khuda Kay Liye* does not impose any such accusation; however, it has also blamed the Western security organizations for creation of terrorists because of its ruthless and prejudiced attitude towards the Muslim.

Keeping in with the above findings, the portrayal of the West in context of 9/11 attacks and its aftermath may be divided into two categories. First category deals with the portrayal of a common man from the West. Whereas, second category deals with the representation of power elite which entails Politicians, security agencies and conglomerates. First kind of portrayal is favorable by all means in both films under study; whereas, its second kind is generally negative as far as selected movies are concerned. Both films depict a visible clash among Western and the Muslim civilization; however, *Khuda Ke Liye* tends to initiate a meaningful dialogue among civilizations; whereas, *021* does not seem to make any such attempt. Wang (1997), a famous Occidentalizer thinker may be consulted to have better grasp of this idea. He is of the view that there are two different brands of Occidentalism namely Western & Non-Western. He further breaks non-Western Occidentalism into two types: Occidentalism in Middle East, which is identified by its anger and bitterness directed towards the Western hegemony besides its understanding of America as the epitome of exploitation; whereas, its second type is found in the past colonies of the British Empire, which criticizes the West for its hegemonic and imperialistic tendencies, but don't forget to appreciate it as a good model for socio-economic development. While applying Ning, we find an interesting equation according to which *Khuda Ke Liye* comes into line with second type of non-Western Occidentalism which simultaneously acknowledges the socio-economic development of the West and rejects its hegemonic and imperialistic tendencies; whereas, *021* is more close to Middle Eastern brand of Occidentalism keeping in with its more visible bitterness towards America. This phenomenon may be better understood by another study. The eminent Occidentalizer, El-Enany (2006) has classified Occidentalism into three groups: first group which is relatively pro-Western in its approach, second group which is anti-Western by all means, and the third one which recognizes the materialistic advancement of the West, but throwaways its morality. Keeping in with the

deliberations of El-Enany, 021 may be placed under second category; whereas, Khuda Kay Liye prefers to stand with third category, which acknowledges the material advancement of the West, however instead of straightforwardly throwing away its morality, it tends to draw a line between the morality of a common man and the morality of state machinery, and only rejects the later.

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