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Recent Quest for Distinctive Identity in Pakistani Cinema

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Abstract

Pakistan film industry (Lollywood) has been searching for its distinctive cultural identity, since its inception in 1947. Pakistan and India have been sharing a common cultural history; hence, the basic form of film is also similar, known as masala. Indian films have been considered as one of the biggest threats to the local industry due to the similar language and their high budget. The ban on Indian films in the 1950s has helped the local industry, and more than 100 films per year have been producing in the 1970s and 80s. In 2007, Indian films have been allowed officially to be screened in Pakistan. This has further damaged the traditional masala cinema of Pakistan; however, it also has reactivated the quest for the distinctive cultural identity. Films like Khuda Kay Liay (2007) and Bol (2011) by Shoab Mansoor has worked as a source of inspiration for the new generation of moviemakers, and a new style of cinema has been evolving in Pakistan which is consciously experimenting with various genres. This paper has named it 'emergent cinema'. The data emerged from the semi-structured interviews with the top practitioners of the Pakistan's film industry, Syed Noor, Shoab Mansoor, and Bilal Lashari, has disclosed that the emergence of new and convergent media, socio-political actions and globalization have been influencing the path of Pakistani cinema and its search for distinctive cultural identity.

Keywords: Established cinema, Emergent cinema, Identity, New media, Pakista

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Introduction

Pakistan's film industry has a long history. Lahore, the cultural hub of Pakistan, once enjoyed the status of the second most important film city of the sub-continent after Bombay (Ahmed 2012). Pakistan and India has a common history of cinema and culture, the initial inspirations were also similar; therefore, the language, subjects and established form of film is also similar, and that is '*Masala*'. This kind of filmmaking is marked by mixing up cinematic elements (spices) to give a certain experience of entertainment to its audiences. Between the 1970s and 1980s, film production was prolific, and in the peak year of 1970 some 124 films were produced and the number of cinema houses was around 1300 (Iqbal 2015). Despite the productive past, the national cinema has been facing a decline, as number of films has been continuously reducing in last couple of decades, and not even a single film was released in 2012.

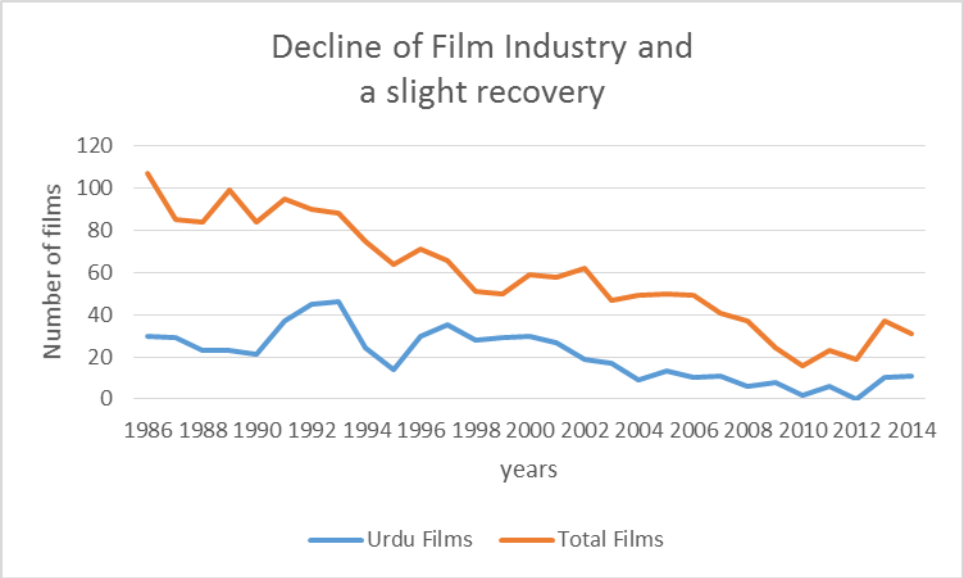

Figure: 1

A shift in the trends has been observed in the last decade, as, on the one hand, the established cinema has been facing decline and, on the other hand, some of the films, which cannot be categorized as *masala*, has achieved box-office success. *Khuda Kay Liye*/*In the Name of God* (2007), by Shoab Mansoor, has seen success in Pakistani as well as Indian circuit, as it has also opened the doors of the Indian market after a break of more than four decades (Arpana 2008). It did not follow the set pattern and cannot be considered as formula film by any

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means (Adarsh 2008). The elements of traditional *masala*: love story with songs, dance numbers, fight and chase sequences, is missing in the film. The film deals with the post 9/11 scenario and it highlights the sufferings of Pakistanis; hence, tries to tackle the real issues faced by the society. Indeed, *Khuda Kay Liye* (*KKL*) can be regarded as the first film that has triggered the new emergent cinema. The story line, production, and distribution have been differed from the existing trends. *Bol* (2011), the second film by Shaob Mansoor, has broken the record of *KKL* and grossed about 12, 00, 00,000 rupees/ 1.2 million dollars (Zaidi, 2013). This success has further set the ground and encouraged the new generation of moviemakers to begin their projects, for example *Waar* (2013), *Zinda Bhag* (2013), *Chambaili* (2013), *Josh* (2013), *Main Hoon Shahid Afridi* (2013), *Namaloom Afraad* (2014), *021* (2014), *The System* (2014), *Dukhtar* (2014), *Tammana* (2014) have been released. A new style of cinema is evolving in Pakistan, which has its roots from alternative modes of expression, like television-drama, pop-music and fashion industry. The success of *Waar* (2013) has become a culmination point with no traditional songs, or dance numbers, highly patriotic theme and a transformation of language from Urdu to English. This is a clear shift, which is linked with some serious happenings in the society. The aim of this paper is to observe the shift in the styles, and to approach this task, I have conducted semi-structured interviews with the top practitioners in Pakistan, like Syed Noor, Shahzad Rafique, S. Suleman, Agha Nasir, Amjad Islam Amjad, Samina Peerzada, Zoraiz Lashari, Bilal Lashari, and Shoab Mansoor. The data emerged have disclosed various socio-political actions, technological changes and film economics involved in this shift.

The success of *KKL* has been associated with technological shift, as celluloid has been transforming into digital, which has enabled the television practitioners to explore the field of film. *KKL* was edited in India and the film was cited in support of the argument that the major weakness of Pakistani cinema was low technological expertise and production values (Schifrin 2008).The growth of digital media is connected with the change in the policy, as the Media liberation Act[1] of 2002 has supported the idea of the expansion of media, for the first time in the history of Pakistan. The 2002 reforms have been instigated by the socio-political

[1] In 2002, Media Liberation Act has been passed that has led to a boom in Pakistani electronic media and paved the way to it gaining political clout. New liberal media laws broke the state's monopoly on electronic media and TV broadcasting and FM radio licenses were issued to private media outlets.

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actions; for instance, an ongoing media war with India since the Kargil[2] combat in 1999, and also by the demand of public for international channels (Yusuf & Schoemaker 2013). The Act of 2002, in Pakistan, has led to a boom in electronic media; thus the number of television channels increased from two or three state-run stations in 2000 to over 50 private channels in 6 years (Mezzera & Sial 2010). It has led to a relaxation of the censorship policy, particularly for entertainment. The removal of entertainment tax along with the import of films from India, in 2006-07, has helped in building up the infrastructure[3] (Z. Lashari 2012). The number of cinema houses and multiplexes has been increasing, as Shoab Mansoor (2012) mentions that *KKL* (2007) was released with only 12 prints, while the number of multiplex screens has been increased to 25 for *Bol* (2011) and further improved to 45 at the release of *Waar* (2013). The subject matter and form of *KKL* has also played a main role in its reception. The film deals with the post 9/11 scenario and highlights the sufferings of Pakistanis in America. It also highlights the impact of global War on Terror (WoT) on the north-western border, and discloses that WoT has aggravated the inherent issues of a postcolonial society. The shift in the content of the film is also linked with the Act of 2002, as this kind of edgy subject, to show the impact of global politics on a contemporary citizen, has not been showing in the established cinema.

Established Cinema of Pakistan

The established cinema of Pakistan had been facing a strong control, from the very beginning. Indeed, both, India and Pakistan, inherited the elitist attitude towards the local culture from their colonial masters; thus, the same censorship policy of restricting socialist political ideology and nationalistic themes have been continued even after the Independence (Pendakur 1996; Shoesmith 2009). In the words of McMillan (2007, p.71), "The focus of mass media systems during colonial regimes was on furthering administrative efficiency". The same policy and hegemonic control has been followed by India as well as Pakistan. Manjunath Pendakur (1996) has characterized the relationship between the film industry and

[2] In the Kargil war, between India and Pakistan, Indian satellite channels played a major role to influence the global perception against Pakistan's military forces.

[3] Geo News, a private television network, is a major player in import and export of films with Indian, as part of its Aman ki Asha initiative. Later on, ARY, another television network, has also initiated its film department

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policy-makers, in India, as a "patron-client relationship", that is the government supported film projects which were in favour of its policies, while it imposed a strict code of censorship on those who were trying to make films with balanced narratives. The political identity of Pakistan has been associated with the model of an Islamic state, opposite to the Indian identity of a Hindu state, rooted in the notion of Pakistan's formation as a homeland for Muslims (Egan 2002; Talbot 1998; Jalibi 1984). A desire to construct a distinctive cultural identity, of the newly formed Pakistan, from a combined past, had an inbuilt contradiction, as the state had rejected a portion of its history, art and culture on the basis of the division of the land (Jalibi 1984). Thus the basic elements of cinema, image, music, dance, had been considered Indian, and instead of defining a path for Pakistani cinema, it had been declared the work of 'infidels'. In 1949, the Minister of Industry stated: "In principle Muslims should not get involved in film-making. Being the work of lust and lure, it should be left to infidels" (Gazdar 1997, p.24).

Both the elements of political identity, religion as an ideology and India as an enemy, have been accepted by the filmmakers as natural and inevitable norms of the newly formed country. Films such as *Shaheed* (1962) or *Farangi* (1964), dealt with the anti-colonial struggle, or *Anarkali*, presented the Mughal era, were made to achieve a sense of cultural identity (Wille 2005). *Zarqa* (1969) also propagated Muslim nationhood. However, some of these films also presented ideas which were in conflict with the elements of cinema. For instance, in *Shaheed*, dance is associated with a non-Muslim girl. In *Zarqa*, female lead, being a Muslim girl, refuses to dance; however, she agrees to perform as a dancer only as part of her duty to save her country. The political ideology has become a hurdle to construct the cultural identity of Pakistan, as, on the one hand, the subjects, content and form of the film is similar to India: the enemy state. On the other hand, religion has its own implications about the art of film making. Agha Nasir (2012) verifies that film has been conceived as a "work of lust and lure" and religion has been exploited as a conflicting force against cinematography since Independence. In addition, Amjad Islam Amjad (2012) compares Indian and Pakistani society, as film has become an essential part of Indian society, while in Pakistan, it could never achieve the same position, due to religious limitations. Indeed, a few of the extremist groups declare film-making as being opposite to religion. Samina Peerzada (2012) states that the establishment has funded specific religious groups to maintain the power structures.

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According to these groups, cinema, with its elements of acting, music and dance, is prohibited in religion, which has restricted the cinema from deepening its roots in Pakistan. Syed Noor (2012) states that filmmaking, in Pakistan, has been considered as the 'work of *kanjars* (hustlers)' and for the revival of film industry, this perception needs to be changed. He elaborates that conventionally the general public like to watch films, meet actors and get their autographs, without wishing that their family, particularly daughters, be a part of film industry. It is a highly paradoxical state that the middle class like to watch films, while also considering filmmaking as a work of infidels.

Along with subjects and form the language of Pakistani and Indian films was also similar. Hindi-Urdu were accepted as The language of main stream cinema even before partition in 1947 (Gazdar 1997). The Urdu progressive writers of sub-continent, by the end of the First World War, had been experiencing imperialist exploitation, and had also been inspired from socialist and communist political parties in the sub-continent (Zeno 1994; Malik 1967). The critical realism with the blend of socialist ideology was a basic element of Urdu writing (Ahmad 1987). The progressive movement of Urdu writers also influenced film subjects; however, the censorship has never allowed socialist subjects from the very beginning; for example, *Roohi* (1954) was the first film to be banned due to its socialist content (Gazdar 1997). The control had diverted the film from critical realism towards melodramatic social themes. Films with social themes present the problems of the society, while social realism talks about the issues created by the society and system itself (Hallam & Marshment 2000). Consequently the films with social themes, instead of social criticism, were acceptable to the authorities, as criticism on the system cannot be allowed. The filmmakers were willing to invest in an acceptable version of the social melodramatic narrative blended with songs and comedy sequences for the sake of entertainment alone, as this formula was commercially successful. This seems contrary to the ideology of progressive writers that is to produce purposeful art, rather than to create art for the sake of art (Malik 1967). R. Williams (2002) explains that those who have access to technology implement their formula, with all its compromises and low points , to determine the cultural path. In his words:

> Certainly it was the formula that was used by those whose money gave them access to the new communication techniques; the lowness of taste and habit, which human beings assign very easily to other human beings, was assumed, as

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> a bridge. The new culture was built on this formula, and if I reject the formula, if I insist that this lowness is not inherent in ordinary people, you can brush my insistence aside, but I shall go on holding to it. A different formula, I know from experience, gets a radically different response.
>
> (R. Williams 2002)

Pakistani cinema tried to play safe, and the majority of successful old films, like *Dupatta* (1952) or *Naukar* (1955), were based on domestic issues (Peerzada 2012). According to Shahzad Rafique (2012), a positive message which can arouse sentiment is a basic ingredient of good entertainment. Budget is also a limitation, particularly in comparison to India, as Peerzada (2012) states that Pakistan's cinema always concentrates on powerful emotional stories which can be managed on a modest financial plan. Indeed, the success of the melodramatic formula of social films motivated others to follow the same formula; hence, the inward criticism of Urdu tradition, apart from a few film projects, was well controlled by the policymakers. The cinema has not been treated as an industry; thus, formal education of film has not been available, copyright protection has been unaddressed, and the overall environment did not facilitate experimentation. As a result, Pakistani cinema was unable to achieve a distinctive style. Indian movies were always remained the biggest threat to the smaller film industry of Pakistan. Initially Indian films were taxed, in the 1950s, to support the local industry, and later, in 1960s, they were banned for commercial and political reasons (Egan 2002; Gazdar 1997). The effort to achieve distinctive cultural identity had been diminished with the exclusion of Indian films. S. Suleman (2012) one of the senior most practitioners, favour the ban on Indian films, as it was financially beneficial for the local industry; however, they also mention that it facilitated plagiarism. According to Mansoor (2012) banning of Indian films had caused the downfall of national cinema, as it had weakened the competition.

The Indian films were banned on big screens and watching them was a crime; however, with the availability of videocassette recorders (VCRs), in the late 1980s, these were available by illegal means; video tapes[4] (Z. Lashari 2012). During the martial law of General Muhammad

[4] Indian movies were not allowed to display in cinema houses, during Zia's regime (1977-1988), but video tapes were not restricted.

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Zia-ul-Haq, 1977 to 1988, the country became a frontline ally of US to conclude the Cold-War. Society had been infected with weapons and extreme forms of fundamentalist religious preaching to fulfil the political motives. In this period, violence-based regional cinema dominated the family-based melodrama of national cinema. Consequently, the cinema had lost it family audience, and downfall of national cinema has become more evident in the late 1990s. The film trade with India was reopened officially, with *Khuda kay Liye* (2007), after a break of more than four decades (Arpana 2008; Rao 2009). Bollywood, after achieving official "industry" status in 1998, has expanded into a more global, professional, and corporate industry (Magdalena & Bravo 2014). The screening of Indian films has further damaged the business of the established cinema of Pakistan. The screening of Indian films has never been appreciated by most of the established practitioners. Sara Faruqi (2010) indicates that the old school Lollywood lobby wants to ban Indian films, as they have captured their market. The traditional political ideology of the country has placed India as an enemy, which has been disturbed with the open trade of films with India. Moreover, the development and training of the established cinema of Pakistan, with various controls and self-censorship, has reduced its scope of screening in India. On the other hand, the screening of Indian films have been successful to draw Pakistani audience back to cinema houses, which has helped the local businessmen to build the new cinema houses (Mansoor 2012; Z. Lashari 2012).

Emergent Cinema of Pakistan

Although cultural identity has always been an issue throughout the history of Pakistan, the recent quest is due to the realisation to compete within the ambit of the global film industry, where Hollywood and Bollywood are already present. The emergent cinema, neither tries to follow or compete with Indian model, nor does it attempt to follow Pakistan's established cinema. Bilal Lashari (2012) emphasises on making something different from Bollywood: 'Our Own Genre'. Lashari's 'own genre' clearly indicates that the new emergent cinema seems to strive for a distinctive cultural identity of Pakistan; an identity that can separate them from India, Iran, China or Afghanistan. Humayun Saeed, producer of *Main Hoon Shahid Afridi* (2013), stresses that "… this is just Pakistan's first sports film" (Khalid, 2012). The name of the film *Namaloom Afraad* (2014)/*Unidentified Persons* make complete sense

only in the context of Pakistani society. The new emergent cinema wants to distinguish itself from the rest, so it derives its inspiration from the parallel or oppositional elements. The study of established cinema, suggests that censorship was implemented to impede specific ideologies; thus, critical realism of Urdu literature was not encouraged on the big screen. Alternative expression, to some extent, was allowed on parallel platforms; for example, realism in the guise of melodrama was experimented on television. In a society based on class structure, some of the cultural values remain "oppositional to the dominant elements"; these "oppositional" elements emerge, mostly unevenly, as a result of "the formation of a new class, the coming to consciousness of a new class" (Williams 1977, p.124). The 'emergent cinema' of Pakistan is still evolving and its inspirations vary from the melodrama of Pakistan television (PTV) to the visceral realism of Hollywood action thrillers and war movies.

Khuda Kay Liye/In the Name of God (2007)

Khuda Kay Liey (KKL) is about the impact of 9/11 on the lives of Pakistanis living in America who have become the 'Other'; the enemy, of American society after 9/11. According to Dr. Cara Cilano (2009), an American professor of postcolonial literature, the film highlights the transformation of American society from a democratic to an authoritarian one, after 9/11. On the other hand, the film also highlights the aggravation of the inherent issues of a postcolonial society, by the WoT on Pakistan's North-western border. *KKL* is a story of two brothers who are passionate about music. Mansoor, the elder brother, played by Shaan Shahid, moves to the USA for a professional education in music. Sarmad, the younger brother, played by Fawad Khan, quits his career as a musician under the influence of a religious campaign against music, art and culture by a fundamentalist preacher: Mullah Tahiri, performed by Rasheed Naz. Both music and religion are controversial topics and impossible to discuss on Pakistani cinema screens. *KKL* borrows the melodramatic realism of the PTV serials of the 1970s and the 1980s to explore basic conflicts between the liberal and radical religious beliefs. *KKL* builds a certain irony by raising questions about the legality of music through Sarmad, and by providing answers through the linear preaching of the Mullah Tahiri. The melodramatic style of these characters permits the discussion of forbidden topics,

music and religion, and helps to understand the social and political dimensions of the issue. The discussion ends with the statement of Mullah Tahiri that his religious faith is a matter of blind love and not of rational thinking. A similar kind of irrationality is shown in the US interrogation officer, who seems to be the US version of Mullah Tahiri, as he arrested Mansoor under the suspicion of being a terrorist, after 9/11, and examines his belongings without perceiving their context and thus reaches a false conclusion. Both Mullah Tahiri and US interrogation officer remind the viewers of the one-dimensional make-believe characters of soap operas, who always remain opinionated, as the moviemaker wants to educate the audience about the ills of one sided analysis, through them. The melodrama with its didactic approach is used to share a certain discourse about rationality and irrationality.

KKL discusses another controversial issue of forced marriages, and forced sex, due to the personal desires along with irrational religious preaching. Mary/Mariam, played by Iman Ali, a British-born cousin of Sarmad and Mansoor, is living in the UK and in love with her university colleague. Her father wants to restrain her from marrying the British boyfriend, so he takes her to Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where he forcibly weds her to Sarmad. Mary's father, Sarmad and his fundamentalist friends misinterpret religious ideologies to fulfil their desires, which are disproved by a moderate religious scholar in the windup sequence of the film. The film clearly depicts two different approaches, radical and moderate, in religion. The radical approach disconnects Sarmad from his passion, family and later from the rest of the world; however, the moderate approach, presented in the windup, enables to analyse issues within their context to find logical answers and opens various debates, which can make sense within the modernist global context. The film has successfully initiated discussions even in the religious talk shows (Rauf 2009).

KKL has demonstrated a space for national identity in the transnational environment and has also added a political dimension to Pakistani cinema. For instance, a scene from the film in which Mansoor, a music student from Pakistan, first interacts with his American class mate, Janie:-

Janie: So where is your country on the globe?

Mansoor: Pakistan is my country's name.

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Janie: Right Pakistan. Where is Pakistan on the globe?

Mansoor: Well let's see. I will just show it to you. Ok (by placing french-fries side by side), this is Iran, that's Afghanistan, that's China and that's India and Pakistan is in the centre.

Janie: Wow! So you are India's neighbour. I know India. They have the great Taj Mahal. I love that story.

Mansoor: Well thank you. We made that …

The scene reflects that Pakistan was almost unknown to the average American before 9/11. In contrast, Pakistanis believe that every US citizen is well aware of Pakistan, as it was fighting an American war with Russia, in the 1980s, and recently the WoT. Mansoor, like any pro-nationalist, places Pakistan in the centre; however, the response from Janie about India suggests a change in the established narrative: India as the enemy. Janie mentions the Taj Mahal; a symbol of the common history of India and Pakistan. So Mansoor introduces Pakistan with reference to the Taj Mahal and India, which is rare on Pakistani screens. *KKL* presents the idea of coexistence, a changed stance on nationalism under the influence of globalisation. Shoab Mansoor (2012) states that, in a society where basic issues about sects and political beliefs have not been resolved, debate about film policy, rules and regulations becomes irrelevant. He insists that nationalism should be redefined as the nationalist ideology should lead the nation towards improvement: for instance, instead of highlighting the India-Pakistan dispute or making films to create hatred, presenting the '*Shia Sunni*[5] conflict' to resolve the basic issues should be considered as nationalist. His next film *Bol* (2011) further defines his nationalist approach to identify the place of national cinema within the international context.

Bol/Speak (2011)

Bol (2011) focuses on the domestic life to discuss the taboos of Pakistani society. The style of the film is more melodramatic than *KKL*. The narrative is rooted in the social realist tradition of the television serials of the 1980s and 90s, and places the real characters in melodramatic circumstances to highlight the issues created by the society. Kothari (2005) states that

[5] Islamic sects

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Pakistani serials take their inspiration and evidence from the real world and push these facts to the level of metaphoric representation. The film narrates a personal vendetta of a female, Zainab: Humaima Malik, who is convicted with a death sentence for killing her father, Hakim Sahib: Manzar Sehbai. Hakim has fathered fourteen daughters, in the quest for a boy. Melancholy increases with the birth of a genderless child. The father wants to get rid of him; however, the mother protects the kid by promising that she will hide him and never allow him to go out. The kid remains inside the house and reaches his teenage years, with no education and no exposure to the outer world. He has a natural ability to draw objects, so a neighbour's boy offers him a job of painter at a nearby place. A few of his fellow workers notice his sexual inability and innocence and they sexually assault him. The father holds the kid responsible for the sinful act of the society and ultimately kills him. Instead of being arrested, Hakim is forced by the police officer to give the officer a bribe. Therefore, Hakim, an orthodox Muslim, has to be a victim of the flesh trade for survival, as he is offered money to impregnate a courtesan with a girl child. He, later, realises that this girl child will be engaged in sinful acts, so he wants to murder her. Thus, the conflict, between Hakim and Zainab, reaches its climax and she has to kill her father to save the girl child.

The name, *Bol*, is derived from the metaphoric poetry "*Bol Kay Lab Azad Hain Tery*" (Speak, for your two lips are free) by progressive Urdu poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz. The poem itself highlights the right of expression, as in the words of Faiz:

> If the message of the progressive writers does not reach the uneducated workers at least it reaches the middle classes. The war between the capitalist and the proletariat is not the exclusive war of the proletariat; it is a battle challenging all of us.
>
> (Malik 1967)

The film presents an in-depth analysis of the state of the different genders in the society, and successfully generates discussions regarding gender issues, and overpopulation, at various platforms. The patriarchal society places Hakim, an orthodox Muslim, as the head of family, in a society which, on the one side, is a symbol of a degenerated attitude towards a woman, where she cannot marry with her own choice, she cannot refuse reproduction, and she is not allowed to have education or a job. On the other side, it does not offer any fair opportunity to

the father to upgrade himself or to increase his income. Hakim's character has its roots in the critical realism of Urdu literature as he is hated due to his bigotry and backward approach towards the education and employment of his daughters, and simultaneously he is sympathised with whilst fulfilling the demands of the pimp, performed by Shafqat Cheema. The moviemaker attributes the father's extremism and failures to his conventional education and dogmatic beliefs and his death provides the solution.

Waar/To Strike (2013)

Waar, an action and war thriller, is based on the WoT at the north-western border of Pakistan. The form, instead of *masala*, is inspired by the modern Hollywood action and war genre. It is not widely received and applauded for its physical realism, which is the critical realism of Urdu literature, nor it is related to the realist melodrama of television, rather it provides an authentic visual document of the attack at the Manawan police academy in Lahore, in 2009. *Waar* shows the influence of global trends on the Pakistani cinema, as in the last three to four decades, the "violence-prone" genres: action, adventure and science fiction, have been occupying the space of the benign genres: dramas and musicals, due to their acceptability in the foreign market (Lu & Waterman 2005). Moreover, the film provides an opening for the Pakistani cinema to the rest of the world. Bilal Lashari (2012), wants to achieve Pakistan's 'Own Genre'. However, in this process the film has diluted its link with the local traditions, and can also be regarded as a deviancy in the path of emergent cinema. Indeed, *Waar* has had an impact on the drive of emergent cinema, and the future cinema of Pakistan will further disclose its influences.

Waar follows the standardised format and formula of an American action and war movie, which normally serves to build a national emblem and to support the action policy of the government. The plot is based on the mission of a hero against terror, for the survival of his state. Major Mujtaba, a damaged, one-man-army kind of a character, played by Shaan Shahid, who is living the life of a retired person, is called back to active duty to save the country from a huge terrorist attack. The attack is masterminded by a reprehensible bad guy: Ramal, played by Shamoon Abbasi. The subplot shows an ongoing counter-terrorism operation at the north-western border and the tribal area of Pakistan, which is led by police officer Ehtesham: Hamza Ali Abbasi, and coordinated by an intelligence officer Javeria:

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Ayesha Khan. The operation is in harmony with the formula of most of the war films in Hollywood, a group of heroic men have to accomplish a mission in circumstances which are beyond their control (Pollard 2002). The narrative content tends to be modified according to the local requirements and produced with local actors, idioms and storyline. Indeed, *Waar* reflects the process of the indigenisation of an imported genre to satisfy the cultural tastes and concerns of the local audience, which is called "glocalization" by Roland Robertson (1995). In the case of Hollywood, war films are part of a process to establish a sense of the "good war": war for a noble cause, to end all wars, that might validate the expansion and involvement of American armed forces within the New World Order (Pollard 2002). This role was further extended after 11 September 2001, as these films have been making sense of 9/11 and of American interventions (Carter & McCormack 2006). Therefore, these films are regarded as "geopolitician"; making sense of geopolitics and positioning global agendas (Crampton & Power 2005). *Waar* highlights the efforts of Pakistani forces in the WoT and fulfils the traditional role of the 'geopolitician' objectively by showing their sacrifices.

Firstly, this role of the 'geopolitician' demands believability and authenticity; physical realism, which is achieved by arranging the shoots during the actual military action or practice sessions, with the latest RED One camera, appropriate lenses, aerial shots, along with action stunts, blood spatters, more than 300 special effects, and digital intermediate process by Technicolor. Indeed, *Waar* is a complete cinematic experience, with a quality background score, which had never been seen before in a Pakistani film. Bilal Lashari states that his actors prepared themselves with military training and his crew waited for days, for the real action to happen, to reduce the cost and to enhance authenticity, particularly in the final battle sequence (Shah 2013). The special effects are only used to further enhance the originality and aesthetic value. The moviemaker seeks experiential objectivity and evidence of Pakistan's engagement in the WoT. Much debate about *Waar*'s authenticity is centred on the attack at the police academy, in 2009 and the film provides a sense to the audience of how brisk and well-planned that attack was. Terrorists, females and a male, in the guise of a middle class family, seek help at the gate of the academy, as one of the females pretends to be in ill health. The main security guards are engaged with the family, and in the meantime, another team of terrorists, who are playing cricket in the guise of local youngsters near the boundary wall of the academy, start their sharp action. *Waar* attempts to provide the first-

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hand experience to the viewer, to intensify responses, and to allow audiences to feel and experience the sense of horror and uncertainty.

Secondly, the role of the 'geoplotician' is accomplished at the level of script and characterisation, as *Waar* describes the Pakistani side of the WoT. Zaid Hamid, a Pakistani political commentator, in a talk show, insists that *Waar* has destroyed the narrative of the enemies of Pakistan, and exposes the role of foreign intelligence agencies in the destabilisation of Pakistan (Habib 2013). The script establishes a terrorist networking; from India to Afghanistan, to interlink the recent WoT with the previous wars with India to achieve a sense of a "good war"; that is, a war for a noble cause, to end all wars (Pollard 2002). Indeed, the film provides a narrative which is aligned with the inherent policy of the state; Pakistan's Islamic identity with India as the biggest enemy. The film carefully constructs the characters of the extremists as 'different': soulless, heartless and mindless non-state actors with money as their sole motivation, in contrast to the youthful and innocent Pakistani soldiers who are passionate only about their nation. The characterisation is linked with the ISPR's definition of the war against terrorism; an ideologically motivated conflict with political objectives between "State Actors (SAs)" and "Non-State Actors (NSAs)" and it is fought in the public arena; hence, it can only be won with public support (Raza 2014). The attire of soldiers, choice of language, English instead of Urdu, and iconography is inspired from Hollywood flicks, to communicate their command on the latest technology and commitment towards the WoT to the opinion makers; political elites, and foreign market. The militants communicate in the Urdu language and their verbal confrontation and style of holding the weapons, with no excellence at all, matches the villains of the traditional violence cinema of Pakistan, to transmit their negativity to the locals. Indeed, the logic behind *Waar* is to provide a sense for the war, and to justify the role of Pakistan in the US WoT, to the local and global audience. Although it does not show any American characters, the US demand of jingoism and 'do more' from Pakistan's forces has been working as the motivating force behind its punch line:

'Pakistani is a Nation! Whose death does not matter to anyone, and now does not matter even to them.'

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The study of the established cinema of Pakistan has disclosed that the governmental control have defined the path of Pakistani cinema. The Act of 2002 was also an effort to control the media discourse (Yusuf & Schoemaker 2013). However, later the expansion of media, and digital revolution has helped to develop human resources, and also provided them access to the film production. Thus, the emergent cinema has been experimenting with various possibilities. *KKL* challenges the stereotypical approach in the society, tries to redefine the national identity of the country. *Bol* further defines the path of Pakistani film towards the social realism of PTV. It has traces of the critical realism of Urdu literature, as it criticises the self as well as the system. The film is appreciated by the emergent and established filmmakers, as it has shown a path to the national cinema (Rafique 2012; Suleman 2012; Amjad 2012). However, the increasing polarisation in the society is limiting the space of the national cinema. The issue of over-population, discussed in the film, is opposed by a religious group and a *Fatwa*[6] has been raised against the film (Tariq 2011). Later, the film was banned by the court (Pakistan Today 2011). The path of emergent cinema has been deviated with *Waar*, as on the one side it can be classified as A. Williams (2002, pp.17-18) "global" film: a big budget production following the path of Hollywood cinema, and on the other side, it is aligned to the established political ideology of the state and can initiate a wave of nationalism. National cinema can be exploited as a mechanism to promote state sponsored nationalism, and to downgrade other values, which can be more directly observed in propaganda films (A. Williams 2002, p.8). Certainly, cinema works as a hub for cultural, social and political elements, and plays a role in building up the national identity.

[6] the legitimate judgment regarding the subjects of religion by a mufti (trained scholar)

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