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Abstract

The release of film PK in 2014 threw up several crucial religious social and political myths in question. Though superficially a comedy film, it turned around the most controversial film of the decade. The attacks on the wrong numbers in Indian society not only created laughter but also stimulated common man's conscience. The various rituals, beliefs, norms in society were looked at in different perspectives. The present paper peeks into the film as a text and rereads the notion of religiosity in current sociopolitical scenario through Rajkumar Hirani's film PK.

Keywords: Myths, Film, text, religiosity, beliefs, gurus, reread



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Research Methodology:

For the present study, emphasis is laid on a very close reading of primary and secondary sources. The analytical, interpretative, post-modern critical theories and film theories are used for the present study.

Introduction:

With the development of human civilization religion has become an inseparable part of it. The various sects and religious sources pose God as an inseparable identity. He becomes part and parcel of major human activity. Philosophers across the world either supported the existence of God or denied the concept of God. The religious practices became routine part of human life. Religiosity became vital in the understanding civilization. Today, affected or excessive devotion to religion means religiosity. *It includes experimental, ritualistic, ideological, intellectual, consequential, creedal, communal, doctrinal moral and cultural dimensions. (Hold craft 117).* The role of logic and rationale in developing the life remains at back while the practices become vital hence, present research focuses on re-reading the

traditional concept of religiosity which is challenged using logic and rationale by *PK*, the protagonist of the cinema.

Just as text (literature) has been the most important articulation in all ages, the film or cinema is considered the universal art form in current scenario. Nowadays, cinema or lens of camera is being used with pen. In other words, it can be said that, film is an art which unite with culture. Moreover, cultural studies considered human relations, notions, identities and films as text to interpret and investigate power relations in the political, social, religious and cultural context. In present context, film is one of the inevitable elements of literature. It has been accessed and studied with multiple intellectual purposes in recent time. In a recent book of Oxford University Press '*Elements of literature*' the editor, Michael Silverman has stated:

Film is an element of literature along with essay, fiction, poetry, and drama. Since film is a very recent phenomenon and it has borrowed a great deal from other forms of expression. Perhaps even more markedly than in discussion of prose or poetry. When people write or talks about films, they often use criteria and terminology originally developed with respect to painting or drama or the novel. There is nothing inherently wrong in this; such a tendency may even point to film as a medium combining way a great many characteristics which other forms can exhibit only a particular way but which film manages to do simultaneously.
(1451)

In brief, film reflects and in-turn influences society as no other medium of expression has done before in the history of our civilization. As far as *PK* is concerned, it represents the hypocritical religious traditions and changing concept of religiosity as well as raises existential questions and stimulate the viewers to think about it.

The director of the cinema has chosen an alien as a protagonist. This selection has its own importance. As *PK* (Amir Khan) speaks about religion, it is necessary that he must be neutral and without any religious identity attached to him. To fulfill this purpose director has chosen an alien protagonist. *PK* does not belong to earth and he does not have any idea about religion, caste, gender and other code of conducts (...) *It is just that like a baby is born without any pre-conceived motions and is made to follow a certain life style and perform certain rituals,*

we decided to have Aamir as an Alien which meant he too did not have any idea or notions about what religion is here on earth (...) (Bhushan 2015). PK's neutral perspective helps him realize the irrational acceptance of religions. He can question and demand logical answers and solutions.

Almost all religions agree that God is the creator of the world and omnipresent. In the film, PK raises question about the myth of God being omnipresent. Regarding this PK's conversation with a shopkeeper is important:

Shopkeeper : Yes. With my own hands.

PK : Has God created you? Or have you created him?

Shopkeeper : God has created all of us. I have just created his statues.

PK : Why do you do so?

Shopkeeper : To worship him. To communicate with him.

PK : Does it have any transmitter? How does he know?

Shopkeeper : God does not need any transmitter. He listens directly.

PK : If he listens directly what is the need of this statue?

Shopkeeper : Do you intend to ruin my business. (Whispers) ("PK" 00:54:11-44)

If the god is everywhere then why we need temples, mosques, churches, *gurudwaras* etc.? The very notion of God being omnipresent is questioned here by PK. A person follows the tradition, rituals handed over to him by his ancestors without contemplating the relevance of those rituals in current scenario. This film instigates to re think and re assess the various notions sticked to religion and its practices.

As Yuval Noah Harari puts it, *religion is a system of human norms and values that is founded on a belief in a superhuman order* (Harari 234). Every religion has its set of rules which a person has to follow blindly. The rules were the product of social and geographical conditions of human being then. However, after many thousand years the social and geographical conditions have changed but the rules and norms of religion remain the same very rigid. The film *PK* counters the continuity of these rules alias rituals and traditions. *PK* makes people to stop and rethink the practices and traditions done in the name of God and religion. He demands rationality instead of blind faith. In a scene he asks Jaggu a friend of PK:

*I couldn't understand why God gives weird solutions of my problems. Why does he want me to torture myself?
How can he be pleased with my suffering? We all are his*

children, right? How a father can be happy with his child's pain? (01:26:50-10)

He does not find any logic in torturing ways of religious practices to please God. PK raises questions about the need of all this and audience is obligated to rethink about the religious practices which are given immense importance by them. Another issue put forward by PK is the religious identity of a person.

PK: Tapaswiji, your god wanted to know my religion. Ask him about these people's religion.

Tapaswi: I don't need to ask God about it as I, myself, can tell it. This one is a Hindu and he is a Christian. He is a Sikh, he a jain and the girl is of your religion i.e., a Muslim. [PK asks the people to tell their names which reveals their different religious identity.]

PK: confused? I have mixed their clothes. Religious identity depends on clothing style. It changes with the dressing fashion. If read god had created religion, he would have given some stamp to denote a person's religious identity (01:37:55-39:04)

This scene questions the very existence of religions. The symbols like clothes, languages, colors and names are major symbols of religious identity. PK's argument that a person's religion changes with his attire is very acute as a person's religion is guessed by his attire, name, language and colors reveal a person's religious identity.

Humans in the early stage of evolution neither had clothes nor language. After the cognitive revolution, the languages came into existence. Similarly, the culture of clothing is also a recent phenomenon. At the time of creation of human being, these religious symbols did not exist then how can they become basis of religious identity? This very important question is raised regarding religious identification and existence of religion.

Another very important issue raised in this film is of *gurudom*. There is no religion which does not have *gurus*, *babas*, clergies or representatives. Earlier, it was that the *guru* spent many years mastering philosophical knowledge because his role was that of a medium between individuals and divine. Today, they have become divine authority on earth itself. *Tapswiji* in film *PK* is representation of such peoples. Every single word of these *gurus* is command for their followers.

When the 'spiritual' leader of the infamous 'Swadheen Bharat Subhas Sena', Jai Gurudev, died in 2012, he reportedly left property and land worth Rs 12,000 crore, a school, a petrol pump, a temple that secured him immortality, aashrams, assets and luxury cars. (Chandhoke 2016). This is irony of Indian society. Men of God are expected to be renouncers

but new-age *gurus* dress in flashy appeared, travel in luxury as private planes, host celebrations attended by pomp and splendor, and endeavor to arouse shock and awe among devotees. Yet “common man” refuses to identify lusty, greedy face of gurudom which is drowned in commodification of religion.

In sum, every aspect of human life is somehow attached to religion and religious practices. Rituals and religious practices are deeply rooted in human psyche which need to be questioned. The films like PK, Dharam Sankat Mein, Oh My God, Global Baba, Mohalla Assi etc. raise various issues regarding religious practices in Indian society which initiates multiple debates and discussions that help to re-read crucial concepts like religiosity with logic and rationale in contemporary Indian society.

Conclusion:

PK has emerged as one of the most talked about films and criticized religious practices. It pointedly questioned superstitions and various religious practices. Hirani has used various techniques, rational events, continual self – depiction, imaginative cruelty and humor to comment on religiosity. This leads up to an effective understanding of all rational structures of human existence. The movie not only questions religious irrational practices but unveils the godmen who use faith as a tool to fool their followers. With PK’s comic behavior and questions, he unveils the *gurus* and *Babas* who creates false standards of ‘true’ believers and worshipers. The film instigates people to re assess the rituals and practices they were observing for generations. Change is a natural phenomenon which should be applied to religion and its practices. The film asserts the same and puts forward logic and rationale to understand the need of rereading of religiosity in present Indian context.

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