

Feminist Trilogy in Lollywood: Exploring Female Transcendence In Blockbuster Pakistani Movies

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Abstract

Over years, cinema became a great pillar in the economic growth, in shaping culture and traditional norms of a country. Traditional cinema presented women as docile beings existing to present male counterpart as heroes but it changed with the arrival of modern cinema. A big name in revival of cinema is Shoaib Mansoor who made movies focusing on women, their issues in society and presented female characters that transcended the barriers created by patriarchal system to hold women down for strengthening male dominancy in society. This study focuses on Pakistani movie trilogy, that is Khuda Ke Liye (2007), Bol (2011) and Verna (2017), depicting women as strong beings, capable of much more than what men think of them. It's a qualitative study using critical discourse analysis (CDA). Results affirms that this movie trilogy makes contribution to Lollywood for women as it considers women to be its main audience and discusses issues faced by woman in a male dominant society. The females in these movies cross the patriarchal boundaries set by society to achieve their goals creating a way for women empowerment.

Keywords: Feminist trilogy, Lollywood, Patriarchal boundaries, Pakistani movies, Transcendence.

Introduction

Cinema has come to be one of the greatest pillars for economic growth around the globe. A report published in 2018 by the Theatrical and Home Entertainment Market Environment (THEME) states that the home entertainment and theatre combined make about \$96.8 billion that is after an increase of 9% from 2017 and 25% from 2013 (THEME report, 2018).

In America and India, movies are a major engine in the economic development and employment opportunities for people. In case of Pakistan, there has been a lack of art and literature in terms of economic development of the movie industry. However, a frequent visible thing is the surge in Multiplex and Cineplex, introduction and usage of the latest modern technology and equipment in filmmaking, use of foreign aesthetic locations for shoot and a growing collection of the box-office (Ali& Zulfiqar, 2020).

Khan and Ahmed (2016) list down the main reasons that, over the years, lead to the downfall of Pakistani film industry According to them, the repetition of concept, lack of

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modern technology, no innovative ideas, stale storylines and exposure to foreign movies have caused the Pakistani cinema to collapse.

Another important reason was the vulgarity and obscenity in Pakistani movies that made the audience stop going to cinemas. Women were seen as some objects only and they were sexualized in the movies, they had no identity of their own and were only present as the love interest of male leads. This presented a very weak image of women as they were treated as some fragile creature that can't think, make decisions and is not intelligent enough to speak her heart out.

The new era of the Pakistani cinema focused on the social and cultural roles of women in the society, their issues and problems. It highlighted the strength of women, their determination to stand for themselves, fight for their rights, their relations and their society. Shoaib Mansoor has portrayed female characters that have transcended boundaries of patriarchy and misogyny to challenge the male authority and male dominance. He changed the narrative of Pakistani cinema of presenting females as docile, timid creatures that need to be handled with care. He made movies concerning women addressing to audience as women also contributing to women's cinema. Mansoor's feminist trilogy is the best example of women empowerment that destabilizes the societal status quo (Sarwar, 2022).

From its emergence, the movie industry of Pakistan, called Lollywood, has very efficiently fortified the idea of women being weak. It has strengthened all the stereotypes and preset images forced movies to only focus on the patriarchal societal structure (Huda & Ali, 2015). These movies had built the narratives of women staying at home and not perusing careers or having an identity of their own. These movies propagated misogyny and patriarchy at the expense of growth and development of women in Pakistani society (Akhtar & Naheed, 2014). However, with the passage of time, the portrayal of women in Pakistani cinema has started to change, as a consequence of which, a strong, independent, fierce and assertive image of women has started to prevail in the public (Ali & Ayesha, 2015). The patriarchal practices in films were challenged by one of the famous director, writer, lyricist and content creator of Pakistan, Shoaib Mansoor. Mansoor is a household name and has given some massive hit dramas, sitcoms and musical programs like *Ankahi*, *Fifty Fifty*, *Alpha Bravo Charlie*, *Sunehrey Din*, and brought *Vital Signs* (a famous Pakistani musical band) to mainstream media and made the late Junaid Jamshed (a renowned singer) a household loved name with his hit song *Dil, Dil Pakistan* and *Aitebaar*.

Director Shoaib Mansoor has repeatedly been described as the “flagbearer” and dominant force behind this new wave of local cinema (Ahmad, 2014), receiving considerable praise from both the industry and the press for having “rattled the Pakistani film industry out of its somnambulism” (The Times of India, 2016). Mansoor's three movies, *Khuda Kay Liye* (2007), *Bol* (2011), and *Verna* (2017), have garnered unprecedented media attention and critical acclaim from Pakistan and the world. In addition to seven Lux Style Awards, his movies have won prestigious international prizes at the London Asian Film Festival, Fukuoka International Film Festival in Japan, the Cairo International Film Festival, and the Pingyao International Film Festival in China. Apart from Pakistan, his movies have been released in India, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates and Australia to much acclaim. Furthermore, his work has had tremendous financial success, with his first and second features becoming among the highest-grossing Pakistani movies of all time. Mansoor, in 2007, made a movie named *Khuda Ke Liye* (In The Name of God) that changed the outlook of Pakistani cinema and was considered as a revival of Lollywood. The movie was a massive hit not only in Pakistan but internationally. The movie's main theme was the issue of religious extremism and misery of Muslims in America after 9/11 however, it had many underlying feminist approaches that made it so loveable and praiseworthy by the audience. *Khuda Kay Liye* (2007) has received high praise for its diatribe on fundamentalism and terrorism (The Times of India,

2016) and for showcasing the shortcomings of some of the cultural practices in Pakistan (Ahmed Al-Rawi, 2014). In 2011, Mansoor came with his second film titled *Bol* (Speak) that was the most anticipated movie of the year. People already accepted something big from Shoaib Mansoor and he fulfilled all the expectations. The movie directly dealt with many issues faced by women of our society along with highlighting the problem of overpopulation, transgender and religious bigotry. *Bol* was described as holding up a mirror, highlighting the regressive attitude of a male-dominated society that offers no liberty to women in choosing a life-partner, refusing reproduction, gaining education or working independently (Malani, 2011). This movie again won many accolades and awards from the audience as well as the critiques.

After a wait of 6 years, in 2017, Mansoor released his third film named *Verna* that dealt with the issue of rape, political misuse and power abuse. It also highlighted the plague of victim blaming, domestic violence and family honour that resides on the shoulders of women according to the society. *Verna* has been described as a bold condemnation of the way Pakistani society victimizes women (Waheed, 2018). All the three movies had strong female characters and it not only discussed the problems faced by women in society but also presented their solutions. This feminist trilogy of Shoaib Mansoor is highly praised by feminists and serves as a model for Pakistani cinema on female representation in films. This paper focuses on three movies made by Shoaib Mansoor that highlighted women, their problems, showed their strength and determination. It analyzes the characterization of female leads and the empowerment oriented narratives shown in the movies. These movies are *Khuda Ke Liye* (2007), *Bol* (2011), and *Verna* (2017).

Problem Statement

Pakistani society is male dominated and stereotypical for women even in cinema. This paper aims to change the narrative by exploring the movie trilogy of Shoaib Mansoor. This study highlights the patriarchal norms of Pakistani society, and the ways these movies challenge them.

Rationale of the Study

This study explores the hardships faced by women in their daily life in Pakistani society, the major concerns to explore how these movies giving awareness of empowering women, problems of forced marriages, domestic abuse, right to education and career for women, rights of women for having knowledge of reproductive health, birth control, sexual abuse and victim blaming.

Objectives of the Study

- a. To explore are the movies (selected) talk about empowering women in our society
- b. To find are the movies (selected) challenge patriarchy prominent in our society

Literature Review

The term empowerment can be explained in different ways like controlling one's own life with being able to make decisions for oneself (Dawoodani, 2013) and it can also be explained with changing the power balance between the powerful and non-powerful classes (Batliwala, 1993). Stewart (1994) lists the factors that contribute to empowerment and they are higher participation, more control and transformative action. If we talk about empowerment from gendered perspective than it is very popular around the globe as women have been greatly challenging the gendered injustices since the start of history (Rahman, 2013).

Kabeer (1999) explains the concept of empowerment as the increase in the ability of people to make choices about their lives in such a context where they were denied this

ability previously (p. 437). She further elaborates the ability to exercise power as an interchange between the resources, the agency and the outcomes. This lets the researchers situate the female characters in films in relation to their ability for acting and challenging the status quo. Gender stereotypes are used in daily life and have become very simplified and overemphasized (Marshall, 1998). These gender stereotypes are instilled due to socialization in individuals and can be a consequence of one's observations or influence from others including family, friends and media (Wolska, 2011).

Aronson (1972) asserts that stereotyping imposes the same characteristics and traits to every individual of a particular group without considering their existing differences. Media plays an integral part in reinforcing these gender stereotypes. In almost all storylines women are portrayed as weak, homemakers, dependent on their counterparts and only concerned about their beauty while the males are masculine, athletic, breadwinners, independent, successful arrogant and somewhat rude to the female lead (Mathews, 2007).

In a study by Shohat and Stam (1994), they concluded that the females are limited to only two social roles that are being housewives and mothers. They are shown to be devalued and dependent both economically and emotionally on their male counterparts (Parvez & Roshan, 2010). Women are portrayed as weak, submissive, petite, dependent and often illiterate. It was also concluded that women aren't shown as the main leads or "heroes" more often as compared to men (Butt, 2012). These representations reinforce the women portrayal as fragile, scared, dependent and gullible (Porter, 2013).

Opposite to female roles, the male characters are always shown to be powerful, influential and successful (Lippa, 2015). They are authoritative and decision makers of the family (Khan & Moin, 2013). These gender roles are reinforced by media as there are numerous studies on influence of media on the perceptions and thoughts of people (Carilli & Campbell, 2012).

Films also play a very important role in shaping these gender stereotypes (Alcolea-Banegas, 2009; Moghadam, 2007). Pakistani films have also played their role in this regard and have received massive criticism for such male dominant narratives (Kalsoom, 2015). Pakistani films strongly adhere to the patriarchal mindset of its society (Byerly & Ross, 2006). These films have shown men to be strong, dominant and authoritative while women are shown as weak, inferior and passive (Ali et al., 2014). The female characters were shown to be subordinate to the heroes, only shown to be the love interest of the hero in the whole story, with no independent existence or storyline (Khan & Ahmed, 2016). These stereotypical portrayals lead to the reinforcement of negative perceptions of women in society (Narayan, 2002).

However, with time, the image of women in Pakistani films has been strong and affirmative yet the subjugation is still there (Ali & Ayesha, 2015) and the stereotypes still prevail (Asif, 2013). Women portrayal in Pakistani films isn't altogether positive but filmmakers are trying to bring change in the practices and make these representations good (Malik & Kiani, 2012). The change can start from the households if women are empowered to make decisions in homes, about education and career (Sathar & Kazi, 2000) and women can be given realistic approach as being independent, affirmative, strong and determined (Bushra & Wajiha, 2013). According to a study by Awan (2012) the male audience has more patriarchal mindsets and they tend to view more films that coincide with their mindsets and portray stereotypical images of females.

A study was conducted by Skeggs (1977) about feminism that went on for 11 years and concluded that working women don't take feminism as their identity but their performance. They also include glamour, dressing and self-grooming in feminism. The concept of feminism was further discussed and talked frequently by researchers. Lauretis (1987) writes that it was perceived as only sexual difference in society but it is a very broad term and should be dealt accordingly. Steeves and Smith (1987) state that there is a

lot of women representation in media but the socialist feminist argue that this representation only discusses the gender and class issues.

According to Zoonen (1992) there exists a concept that males and females should be dealt differently technologically. The critics' state that males are strong and rational while females are emotional and sentimental so both should be dealt differently and for that there should be realism in the cinema. Zoonen (1997) analyzed that gender is dealt as a complete mechanism by the feminism concept. The communication scholars didn't take interest in studying women before the seventeenth century as females were considered inferior and for male gratification alone. This led to the strong protest against the domination of men by women in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). After this incident, some attention was given to the feminist approaches and it gained space majorly in cultural studies. A study about feminism and gendered discrimination was conducted by Rosell and Hartmen (2001) that found out males are more open and expressive regarding these concepts. Nelmes (2003) has explored many dimensions of feminist theory and has applied it to films. He elaborates that women and men aren't equal as in the existing social setup, women are weak in economic power and status in comparison to men. He says that women complain and raise voice against media representation of women as passive and as an object of desire. They also state that the speed of change is extremely slow. The cinema loudly claims that the real world out there is a man's world and the women representation in films is not reality Flanagan (2007). It was explained by Mendes & Carter (2008) that the feminist studies are different from gender studies and that the feminist studies not only have textual methodologies but also viewers and production based ones. They also state that the concept of feminist studies was promoted through media by using magazines, advertising, TV, films, radio and internet.

American feminist films are criticized by Fischer (2011) stating that, there exists a social and historical background for the second wave of feminism in the world. The first wave highlighted women rights for property, marriage, study etc. while second wave emerged as a consequence of the movement that was started in the first wave. Lutgendorf (2012) focuses on the reason for the massive success of movies in Indian cinema and states that sticking to their customs and traditions is the top reason of the massive success of these films.

In order to examine the way in which films depict the patriarchal ideologies, Scheufele (2004) expresses that the representation of women in films should be interceded especially when they abstain them to portray reality. Analyzing the films focusing on the issues of women in Pakistan are integral for understanding the gendered presentation of the concepts of empowerment and subjugation.

Theoretical Framework

This study focuses on how the movies by Shoaib Mansoor have presented strong female characters to persuade women of our society to be strong and break stereotypes. In this regard, the most suitable theories for this research are 'Media Framing' and 'Feminist Film Theory'. The framing theory states that filmmakers use different frames to construct their message that gets to audience and then it structures the thinking process of the audience. This supports the two most important points of this research.

1. Media Framing Theory

Framing is the theory of mass communication, which refers to the way media packages information and presents it to the public. Anthropologist Gregor Bateson is said to have first proposed the theory in 1972 however detailed explanation of the theory is provided by Goffman and Antmen. According to them, this theory assumes that the audience interprets the information through their frame. Baran and Davis (2011) have defined the

framing theory as the main idea that is used by people to perceive the social world around them and this is done with the help of media which frames these beliefs. The perspective of framing theory aids in the understanding of the formation of these roles (Reese et al., 2001)

This theory is best suited for this paper as it establishes the fact that the female protagonists shown as dainty and an object of desire in movies is the reason for the stereotypical image of women that the society. This theory also advocates for the change of these portrayals and its impact. If the female representation is changed in cinema and the society is given a strong, independent, resilient female protagonist, the stereotypes could be broken and women could get a chance to live a life they want and deserve.

2. Feminist Film Theory

Feminist film theory doesn't have a specific inventor but the names of Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Lauretis and Barbara Creed are very prominent in this regard. In the 1970s Feminist film theory was presented that is highly influential on film theory and criticism, it investigates how mostly women/femininity and also men/masculinity are represented. It has started to be influential in the early 1970s with the aim of revealing the passivity of women in the screen. It discusses sign and image of woman that is highly stereotyped, also its' main topics are female spectatorship, male gaze and possibilities of feminist counter cinema.

This theory is best suitable for this research because the movies (Khuda Ke Liye, Bol and Verna) can be termed as feminist movies. They are based on the principles of feministic film theory about giving center spot to female characters and forming the story around her. The movies presents strong females who break stereotypes and transcends the boundaries set by the society.

Methodology

This study uses qualitative approach of research for an in-depth analysis of the content. This type of research is based on data collected by first hand observation of the researchers. So this research used qualitative method of analysis and for that purpose the researcher applied critical discourse analysis to critically analyze the three movies, Khuda Ke Liye, Bol and Verna.

Findings and Discussion

1. Khuda Ke Liye Movie

Shoaib Mansoor is the director of the Pakistani movie that was released in 2007, under the title 'Khuda Kay Liye'. This film is an important addition to Pakistani cinema since it tackles a wide variety of topics and problems that provoke deep thought, as well as societal concerns. The idea of religious fanaticism plays a significant role over the course of the movie (Liye, 2018).

The investigation of one's cultural identity is yet another significant topic that is covered in the movie 'Khuda Kay Liye'. The movie depicts the hardships that people go through when they are torn between their traditional history and the influence of modernity. Mansoor investigates the tension that arises between Pakistani society's traditional beliefs and the influence of Western culture on that society. This theme encourages viewers to ponder the difficulties of negotiating cultural mores and the struggles of striking a balance between long-held customs and rapidly advancing technology (Mehdi, 2019).

Themes of the Movie

The movie 'Khuda Kay Liye' addresses a variety of topics highlighting societal challenges that are prominent in both the Pakistani context and the worldwide environment. It offers a nuanced and multi-dimensional portrayal of the challenges that individuals face in a world that is rapidly changing through its exploration of thought-provoking topics such as religious extremism, cultural identity, women's rights, Islamophobia, interfaith relationships, music, freedom of expression, and patriotism (Gershon, 2021). The movie directed by Shoaib Mansoor is a powerful medium that encourages audiences to ponder on these significant problems and examine their own ideas. It serves as a medium to create debate and promote understanding.

The most important themes that are extracted from the movie are as follows:

1. Depiction of Women in the Movie

This research focuses on how women are depicted in the movie and what circumstances they face while living in a conservative society.

2. No Freedom of Choice

The women are not given freedom of choice in any matter of their life, may it be education or dressing or something as big and important as marriage

3. Discrimination against Women

The discrimination against women and the double standards of male members of the society are also highlighted in the movie.

4. The Cycle of Silence

The movie also sheds light on the 'cycle of silence' among women. It shows how women who have been abused and manhandled all their life are most of the times found to be silent on the atrocities committed against other women as they think this abuse is normal and women have to bear it for their own good.

5. Forced Marriages

Forced marriages of women is also an important theme that is highlighted very clearly in the movie as the female protagonist Maryam is married off to her long lost cousin Sarmad without her will.

6. Forced Sexual Relations in a Marriage

Forced sexual relations in a marriage are also discussed in the movie in order to aware the public about the consequences of this act. The non-consensual sexual relation, even between a husband and wife is considered rape in many parts of the world and the accused can be sentenced by the law.

7. Journey of Becoming a 'Hero'

The protagonists of the movie go through a journey of hardships to grow in themselves and appear as the hero in their own life and of those around them.

8. Identity

The theme of 'Identity' is also very prominent where the female protagonist embarks on a journey to find her own self and to learn what her soul means and what it seeks. This includes the problems that the protagonists face with self-discovery, self-acceptance, and the pursuit of their actual selves

9. Love

The concept of 'love' is also discussed in the movie in different light. The love for God is the main theme but then it also covers the love between friends, the love of parents for

their child, the love of a person for his brother and the love that enters the territory of romance.

10. Friendship

Friendships are also highlighted in the movie. It explores the intense emotional bonds that exist between friends, highlighting the strength of friendship to offer consolation, inspiration, and shared experiences.

11. Loss and Grief

Another interesting theme of the movie is ‘loss and grief’ faced by the characters. This theme explores the grieving, healing, and meaning-finding processes that occur in the wake of catastrophe. It depicts the real feelings, suffering, and difficulties characters go through during their grieving process, including denial, rage, bargaining, sadness, and acceptance

12. Redemption

Redemption is another topic that is discussed in the movie. It focuses on how characters make mistakes, go through personal challenges and then seek forgiveness, atonement, or personal progress.

2. Bol Movie

The portrayal of gender dynamics and cultural norms in movie has long been criticized. Language and its ideology are key to understanding cinematic depictions of women and feminist debate. This study examines these concerns through the Pakistani film *Bol*, directed and produced by Shoaib Mansoor. This study deconstructs *Bol* conversation to reveal underlying ideologies and illuminate the complex relationship between cinematic representation, language, and feminist debate. We analyze the movie's language to discover how it portrays women and how it affects society. We created categories to help us analyze *Bol* movie's portrayal of women. Male chauvinism, self-realization, patriarchy, patriarchal ideas, and reproductive rights are examples. Each area provides a framework for assessing speech and examining the film's portrayal of women's messages, views, and power relations (Khan, 2020).

The study defines male chauvinism as perceiving women as inferior and deserving of uneven treatment. However, self-realization involves exploring and fulfilling one's potential and abilities, which empowers and grows one. Patriarchy, a term used to characterize male dominance in society, refers to the father's authority over family and social systems (Sarwar, 2021).

Because it is based on a wide variety of societal themes, the movie “*Bol*” is quite impactful, and it offers a significant amount of room for further investigation. Although the movie also received a great deal of criticism, the level of admiration is far larger than the level of criticism. This is due to the fact that the movie shattered all of the previous records at the box office (www.pakium.com) by making more than 62.792 million rupees in the first six days of its release (www.geotv.com). As was said before, the movie “*Bol*” is founded on many different societal difficulties, such as corruption, the concept of prostitution, a lack of education, the patriarchal status of women, and so on, and then justifies these issues with references to religious texts (Anjum, 2021).

Themes of the Movie

The purpose of the study is to shed light on the complicated issues regarding the representation of women, the decoding of language, and the feminist discourse that are depicted in the movie “*Bol*” by applying these categories in order to do so (Shahzadi, 2015).

1. Male chauvinism

Male chauvinism is the act of patronizing, denigrating, or disparaging females, based on the conviction that they are inferior to males and, as a result, deserving of unequal treatment or benefits. Male chauvinism is often referred to as the belief that males are superior to females.

2. Realization of Self

The term 'realization of self' refers to the process through which an individual makes full use of his or her own capabilities and potential.

3. Patriarchal System of Society

The idea of patriarchy, in common language, refers to male dominance, while the term "patriarchy" refers to the dominance of the father as an authoritative figure in the family structure. To put it simply, it is used to reflect male domination over the family, the children, the servants, the men who are submissive to the dominant male figure, and all of the women who are subordinate to the dominating male figure.

4. Education and Women Empowerment

Education and women empowerment is one of the themes of the movie. Women are given the same weight as men in society because women have the ability to affect legislative change, to take action, to play non-traditional roles, to enter other professions, and even to acquire masculine characteristics in order to advance their careers.

5. Reproductive Rights

The movie talks about the reproductive rights of women and all the legally recognized liberties related with reproduction.

3. Verna Movie

'Verna' is a Pakistani movie that was released in 2017, and was directed by Shoaib Mansoor. The film examines significant societal issues that are widespread in Pakistani society, such as rape, corruption, and the abuse of power, and it does so through the lens of the film. As the story progresses, Verna goes deeper and deeper into the intricate workings of Pakistani society, shedding light on the deeply rooted problems of power imbalance and social inequity in the process. It challenges the pervasive taboos that are in place and shines a light on the problems that are encountered by victims of sexual assault, while also addressing the institutional impediments that they face when attempting to seek justice. Verna is a compelling investigation of the resiliency and strength of women, encouraging viewers to confront hard facts and push for change through its captivating narrative and social criticism. Verna serves as a remarkable exploration of the resilience and strength of women. Verna is an enthralling and unforgettable cinematic experience that leaves an indelible mark thanks to the brilliant directing of Shoaib Mansoor and the outstanding performances of the cast. Please take into consideration that the following introduction is merely a fictitious synopsis of the film Verna, constructed using common knowledge and the overall setting of the movie. It is highly advised that you watch the movie all through in order to get information that is true and detailed.

Themes of the Movie

The movie Verna delves into a number of significant topics, each of which sheds light on a different facet of the societal problems that are pervasive in Pakistani society. The following is a list of some of the most important issues that are explored in the movie:

1. Sexual Violence

The documentary educates viewers on the harrowing ordeals that victims must go through and the obstacles they must overcome in their pursuit of justice. This underscores the

necessity for societal shifts as well as the empowerment of women in order to interrupt the cycle of abusive behavior toward women (Anjum, 2021).

2. Abuse of Power and Corruption

The play *Verna* reveals the abusive and dishonest nature of both the political system as a whole as well as people who hold positions of authority. It demonstrates how powerful people can manipulate the system in order to protect themselves while also silencing the voices of those who are oppressed (Ray, 2012). The movie takes issue with the widespread culture of corruption and argues for increased accountability and openness.

3. Inequality in Society and Oppression

The film addresses the subject of inequality in society as well as the power dynamics that help to maintain oppression. It illustrates the enormous discrepancies that exist in society, where powerful individuals are shielded while groups on the margins are forced to endure hardship. The movie *Verna* underscores the significance of equitable treatment for all people and social justice.

4. Advocacy for Women's Rights

The movie promotes the cause of women's rights as well as the necessity of achieving gender equality. It inspires women to speak up against injustice, to question the conventions of society, and to fight for the rights to which they are entitled. The movie, *Verna* has an emphasis on the emancipation of women as a vehicle for societal transformation. The movie focuses a lot on the idea of bouncing back from adversity and maintaining one's determination throughout. It shows how strong and determined the protagonist, Sara, is as she battles against injustice and makes her way through challenging situations. The movie, *Verna* demonstrates the strength that comes from persevering in the face of adversity and the capacity to bring about positive change.

The importance of speaking up against injustice is emphasized in the movie, and its title, "The Power of Voice," reflects this theme. It inspires people to use their voices to question the norms of society, bring to light wrongdoing, and demand accountability from those responsible. The play *Verna* highlights the transforming potential of speaking one's mind and standing up for what one believes in.

Conclusion

This study examines how Shoaib Mansoor's audacious and unconventional female protagonists challenge conventional notions of femininity, particularly those associated with otherness, division, and the perpetuation of traditional gender roles. By challenging patriarchal boundaries and male authority, these transgressive heroines assert their autonomy and seek transcendence for personal fulfillment. In doing so, they challenge the prevalent herd mentality and subvert the oppressive aspects of patriarchal society.

The study explores the evolution of women's portrayal in Pakistani film, documenting the shift from submissive and passive depictions to the emergence of strong female protagonists. It is argued that Mansoor's feminist trilogy contributes significantly to this change by proactively involving viewers, particularly women, and addressing their issues. By highlighting transgressive heroines, Mansoor portrays women as active members of society capable of disrupting existing discourses, achieving transcendence, and carving out spaces of empowerment.

It also emphasizes the impact of Mansoor's films in depicting women as multidimensional characters with agency and the capacity for transformative actions. When viewed as a counter-narrative, the feminist trilogy portrays women as dynamic and influential individuals who challenge and transform societal norms. Through their adventures, these heroines inspire and empower women, providing a glimpse of a world in which women's

perspectives are heard and their actions have the potential to bring about profound change.

The analysis of the movies reveals that the scripts' foundation is liberal feminist philosophy and patriarchal concerns. The movement that advocates for women's rights is liberal feminism, for example. These rights cover a variety of areas, such as political rights, reproductive rights, fundamental human rights, economic rights, and self-realization. The analysis demonstrates the symbolic role of women in the imagery used in movies, and the examination of a few particular films reveals how powerfully liberal feminism and patriarchal concerns are shown through the female characters.

In addition, this research emphasizes the impact of Mansoor's movies in depicting women as multidimensional characters with agency and the capacity for transformative actions. When viewed as a counter-narrative, the feminist trilogy portrays women as dynamic and influential individuals who challenge and transform societal norms. Through their adventures, these heroines inspire and empower women, providing a glimpse of a world in which women's perspectives are heard and their actions have the potential to bring about profound change

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