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Abstract

Human being is a rational animal. He thinks about his life, meaning of life and purpose of life. Human asks himself what it means to exist as a human being. The philosophy about this question known as 'existentialism'. It is concerned with a search for self and the meaning of life through responsibility. According to the existentialism, human beings as an isolated existent who is cast into an alien universe; to conceive the human world as possessing no inherent truth, value or meaning. In the context of present research PK's story becomes the story of modern man who is always in search of something or identity and finds himself lonely and rootless. This is a satirical take on various sensitive issues like political beliefs, religion and superstitions which have been deeply rooted in the Indian minds.

Keywords: Existentialism, identity, alienation, film, text, conscience.



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Introduction:

Rajkumar Hirani's film, *PK* is a stirring movie which creates number of questions in audience's mind. Amir Khan plays a nude alien from other planet who visits earth and immediately falls victim of human avaricious greed. About the alien characters Madhavi Reddi points out that:

Today, aliens no longer serve as a metaphor for external threats but rather as a metaphor of hope. They are not associated with any country, but are from a completely different planet, unrepresentative of anyone on Earth. Hindi science fiction film of today suggests that it takes someone not from another country, but from another planet to show the way forward, awakening self-realization and peaceful coexistence. (2018:37-38)

In *PK*, remote control of an alien which is the only device that take him to his own planet get stolen. In search of his stolen remote, he visits people. During his visits he understands that only God can help him to find out his device. As a result, he visits every religious place of different religion and follows religious leaders, agents and learns about the ugly face of human greed and the misuse of religion for one's advantages. PK's story becomes the story of modern man who is always in search of something unknown or identity and finds himself lonely and rootless.

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 are used for the present study. Present study is an attempt to understand the reception of the existentialism in recent cinema. Hence some consideration of the term existentialism is necessary for the present study. Against such background certain conclusions are drawn.

Discussion:

Existentialism is a philosophical and literary movement in Europe and America in 19th and 20th century. This paper makes a comprehensive statement on the existentialism depicted in the selected film. The analysis of the selected source will be made on the basis of thematic aspects of the existentialism.

The term "existentialism," was coined by the French Catholic philosopher Gabriel Marcel in the mid-1940s (Cooper 01). Existentialism is a philosophical movement that views human existence, having a set of underlying themes and characteristics, such as anxiety, dread, freedom, awareness of death, and consciousness of existence. Humans through their consciousness create their own values and determine a meaning for their life because the human being does not possess any inherent identity or value. That identity and value must be created by the individual. As Camus said in the *Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), *In a universe is suddenly deprived of illusion and of light, man feels a stranger. His is in irremediable exile... This is divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity. (01)* The socio-cultural scenario of the contemporary society has the broad appeal of the movement. It reflects the spiritual crisis of the society. Alienation, the loss of sustaining religious beliefs, decreasing faith in God, the sense of anxiety, guilt and the absurd are the aspects of the movement.

The study of man cannot be complete unless it includes the study of his religion for it is a very important and outstanding feature of human life. The religious faiths and practices are intimately connected with human nature and life in general, because of this present research has chosen PK which instead of just narrating reality through an imaginative realm of any art form invokes a revisionist attitude towards past as well as present forms.

It is very important to understand the relation between film and text or film as a text on theoretical level. As literary text has been a crucial mode of articulation in all ages, the film is considered the universal art form in present world. Actually, film is interrelated with culture. Under the umbrella term of cultural studies, we can nowadays study a film as a text to interpret and investigate various aspects of human society. Film has become inevitable element of literature. It has been accessed and studied with multiple intellectual purposes in recent time. Actually, films have not been accepted as a genre of literature in earlier times but just an element.

In brief, film reflects and in-turn influences society as no other medium has done before in the history of our civilization. *In the same way that literature was the artistic expression that had a grate repression in the ninetieth and twentieth centuries, the cinema stands out today as the most unifying of the arts, one that unite the biggest number of stakeholders (Bernardet 34).* The critics of modern and postmodern phase have placed film as one of the important genres, which deals with the image rather than the words. Film and literature also examine the lively and symbolic relation between written words and cinematic images. Thus, in present research film PK has been selected as a text.

Religion and Alien:

The director has chosen an alien as a protagonist. This selection has its own importance. In human society every person belongs to a certain religion or certain group. It is not the point of argument whether that person accepts or declines this religious identity. Humans are claimed to be of certain religion by the very moment they are born. A child is raised under the influence of a religion. Consciously and unconsciously the child develops his mind with this influence. With this influenced mind he is not able to look at things neutrally. If he or she does have an insight beyond religion they are accused of not being neutral as they do belong to certain religion. As PK speaks about religion, it is necessary that he must be neutral. To have a complete neutral insight the film needed a protagonist who does not have any religious identity. To fulfill this purpose director has chosen his protagonist who is an alien. PK does not belong

to earth and he does not have any idea about religion. (...) ***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 15).***

PK is a blank slate. He does not have an influenced mind. This makes PK's questions and arguments neutral. His perception of various religious things is completely different. The way he looks at this world is not possible for a human. We have movies like *Oh My God*, *Dharam Sankat Mein* where protagonist raises questions regarding religious practices and religious identity but it is not supposed as effective as *PK*. The reason behind it can be the protagonists of these films do have religious identity and PK does not have it. For PK there is no difference between two religions and their concepts of pure and impure. He comments on the rituals of all religions. PK at various situations get into trouble due to his confusion with various codes, symbols and practices followed by Hindus, Muslims, Christians or Sikhs. ***Only PK as a complete outsider is able to see through the absurdity of it all. (Reddy 47)***

PK's neutral perspective helps him realize the irrational acceptance of religions. He can question and demand logical answers and solutions. He understands the shallow and false behaviors of religious *Babas* and *Gurus*. He gives a clear picture of the business of fear.

PK's Remote Control:

The movie is woven around the search of a 'remote control' of an alien to return to his planet. PK, the alien lands on the earth and his 'remote control' (the only device to communicate with the people on his planet), of the spaceship is stolen and his journey to get back this 'remote' starts. This search introduces him to life on earth. We see our earth, our society through PK's eyes. First thing he notices on earth is 'clothes' clothes that cover our body we find that it also covers our conscience too. We try to hide behind the veil. Our true emotions, feelings, wishes, need everything is covered in it. Our clothes make us 'cultured' and form a structure where everyone should fit in. The feelings, needs, emotions that do not fit in this 'cultured structure' are labeled savage, bad, sin, immoral, abnormal. These clothes become symbol of class-caste discrimination. Our clothes decide our identity. PK is able to read minds. He says 'None on his planet lie as they all can read minds'. There is a transparency in communication on PK's planet which lacks in our communication system. We all use various languages to communicate with each other to express ourselves and to understand others. Our language is not transparent as it does not convey the exact feeling and emotion. Our language

is a 'filtered language'. We do not utter everything we think about or feel. Our mind does a long procedure before it utters a word. We speak what fits in our social structure the things which are not censored by our 'ethical mind' goes deep down and are buried. Our language too differentiates us in gender – class – caste – religion - nationality and so on.

We find PK raising various issues which actually concerns our individual as well as social conscience. PK attacks openly and representatively at our blind religious beliefs. We follow and practice various things which we do not know thoroughly. We act as robots. We do not bother to who it for a minute and think over what we are told. We do not question any statement or ritual. We do not try to find some logic in whatever we do in the name of God and religion. We find being religious means being submissive. Our religiosity makes us Robot who acts as told but don't have power to think. Religiosity kills conscience of a person.

PK's search of remote control is in real the search of conscience of human beings, the godmen, *babas*, *gurus*, priests, *maulavies* are the representatives of religion who have stolen the conscience of humanity. The movie is a search of this conscience. PK's remote control represents conscience of a person. After the long battle with zealots PK is successful to find his remote control and shows us path to find our conscience with the help of logical and rationale search of the truth wrapped under religiosity.

Conclusion:

PK tells the story of an alien who lands in India and ends up questioning religious dogma and tradition. It is a religion based modern movie that is concerned with the meaning of human's existence. PK faced dilemma, which is compound of noble ignoble pulses, warming within him, an image of you yet a child of original sin; an immortal soul yet quintessence of dust. The very nature of his existence is a burden upon him, which like a mystery is woven into fabric of tension, fear and anxiety which questions about man, self, God, his supremacy, his existence, religion, religiosity and frame of society.

The central argument of PK is the individual man and deals with the theme of tragic alienation. PK's journey displays the predicament of modern man whose life is hopelessly tragic, lonely alienated and full of despair and anxiety which arises from his loss of self and loss of his world. Hirani depicts PK as a stranger to this world. His life becomes purposeless, meaningless and he suffers from emptiness within. It is a search of completeness of man where PK's search of remote control is in real the search of conscience of human beings. The representatives of the religion have stolen the conscience of humanity. The search creates a

crisis of situations which makes the characters worse hit and miserable in their sufferings. It becomes the story of modern man who is always in search of identity and finds himself lonely and rootless.

In sum, Hirani employs various techniques, rational events, social euphemism, continual self – depiction, imaginative cruelty and treat to comment on religiosity. This leads up to an effective undermining of all rational structures of human intercourse. In the movie, PK faces an existential crisis when his remote control is stolen, the only device to communicate with the people on his planet. So, he feels alienated and estranged both from his planet and self. When he visits to the various temples, holy places, *godmen*, *churches*, *mosques* and *dargaha* for help, he got frustrated. He could not get any proper solution and wandered everywhere for the solutions.

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