

## **Cinema as a form of Mimesis: A Purgation of Indo-Pak Relations in *Khamosh Pani***

**\*Vikash Kumar Choudhary**

Mimesis is a representation of human nature, circumstances and natural phenomenon with all its positive and negative aspects. In recent time, mimesis with the help of literature, paintings, sculpture, drama and theatre is a positive step towards change, thus cinema as a form of mimesis is capable of creating a significant impact on its viewers and it is a potential catalyst for meaningful societal change. Cinema's engagement with regional, national and international issues can play a vital role in understanding global tensions and offering palpable solutions.

Partition is the worst chaotic event or calamity suffered by the Indian sub-continent which fractured it into parts. Though we are now divided countries but we still share the same traditions, culture, language, and ancestral history of great civilizations from a glorious and undivided past. On both sides' creative geniuses and writers still represent the undivided norms, ethos, and elements of life-styles, love for motherhood, respect for each other, and present their reminiscence in positive images and inspiring narratives instead of mere destruction or loss. Through these writers' creative and artistic works we can still realize the brotherhood, familiarity, amiability, unity of thought and humanistic touch of sympathy and concern for each other. These positive elements present in both sides' literature continue to remind us that we are like Siamese twins, which may have been segregated by the surgical operation of Partition by the British, but we still share the same undivided brotherhood of mankind, motherhood, blood, race, religion, and the life-giving natural environment, though the powers that continue to keep us apart.

The Partition of India and its bloody riots inspired many creative minds in India and Pakistan to create literary and artistic re-vision of the exodus. Some works depicted the massacres during the mass migration, plight of refugee camps and rehabilitation of abducted women of both sides. Even today more than sixty years after the Partition, works of fiction narrate the event of Partition.

The research paper proposes to explore the tracks of peace in the mammoth tragedy of the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 by the British. The thrust of the research would be to examine and find-out the elements of unity, fraternity, amiable relations, and above all, the sympathy for each other. The study tries to analyze and trace how the creative writers' bridging the wide chasm of the colossal exodus of Partition by their stimulus, inspirational and mutual concern and thought provoking works of Art and Literature of all kind. A writer and director is a rebel in his own time and he always looks at the bright side of life and presents it as larger than life in a positive way. A writer is a symbol of forwardness, advancement and progressive life rather than the ruined or devastated life. The study aims at reviewing the historical event of Partition taking into consideration the other version of the event.

Though history is read for attaining historical facts and information that leads a better path and not to do those blunders again, which the ancestors have made and had faced a huge disaster. So reading history is fruitful for a better world but when read with a biased and analytical mind it can be a dangerous source of inspiration for the future, and in its totality, can create disaster. One has to be selective while using it for national reconstruction – whether in India or Pakistan. Hatred and violence are never good ingredients for nation building. But in modern time how many people read history? We try to make many interpretations and mold history according to our own means. Literature has also become a bridge between both countries; but do we read literature also? Then the third way of expression is cinema, which connect a huge number of its viewers more than the readers of history and literature can.

Cinema is an imitation of what is present in this universe and it tries to give a new face and form to what is not present. Cinema is a beautiful blending of fact and fiction, reality and imagination, natural and super-natural, original and artificial. Cinema is a new magical band which unites art and science, two separate ideologies into one and creates a third new dimensional way of expression in much popular accepting way.

Cinema is a multi-dimensional way of expression. There are many abstract ideas and its connotations which take the concrete shape in its viewers' mind with the help of it. Cinema is an integral part of modern man's life-style. Whatever we see on the wall of cinema or in reel, we try to imitate it in our real life. The new images of modern and modernity comes through the passage of cinema into common man's life. Cinema takes its raw material from past (history), imitates it in an acceptable present and prepares a promising path for forthcoming generation. Cinema blends past, present and future and creates ideal or inspirational idols for those who forget their path in this modern meandering world.

Few film directors have made the films on the theme of Partition, which highlights the secular '*Ganga-Jamuni Tahzeeb*' of India. *Khamosh Pani* is a Pakistani movie; and it is not a movie about partition, but partition refuses to be buried or forgotten. *Khamosh Pani* is a short but positive step towards Indo-Pak relations, and compels the spectators to think about this issue. *Khamosh Pani* tries to establish better relationships between both the nations. The film, a cross-border tries to utilize the medium of cinema to make smooth the relations and bridge a gap between two nations moving towards a realm of peace. This paper is an attempt to focus on bizarre relations of Indo-Pak with the help of binocular spectrum of cinema.

When *Khamosh Pani* opens the division of the country is a thing of the past. The movie is set in the 1980s, more than thirty years later. People on the both sides of dividing line have come to terms with the tragedy, and the old affinities of culture, language and shared values are accepted, as the ebullient barber in the movie says '*Who te saade bhai hain*'(they are our brothers).

Ayesha, the main protagonist, is a middle aged woman, with a grown up son. He is a little spoilt and she herself acknowledges it. Her economic resources are limited to a small pension of her husband, and whatever else she can make by teaching the Quran to the village girls. Popular with her neighbors and villagers, she leads a normal and happy life, attending to daily chores. The only

thing she doesn't do is to fetch water from the village well, and has an arrangement with another woman who brings water for her from the well every day. This fact is underlined by the young daughter of this woman asking '*Ayesha Chachi, tu kue te kadi nahin jandi?*' (Aunty, you never go to the well?)

The early part of the movie depicts the day-to-day life of the villagers, particularly of Ayesha, her son Salim and Zubeida, the girl who loves him. This portrayal underlines the culture which is the shared heritage of all Punjabis. Salim loves Zubeida, who is very clear in her mind about her goals in life – education and a job. But Salim, wayward and shaky, is unsure of what he wants to do; he asserts he wants to do something big – '*Koi wadaa kam karna hai*' (I want to do something big), but he neither has the skills nor the confidence to attempt anything. He turns down the job his mother arranges for him as far too petty for his dignity.

The village, *Charkhi*, is close to a Sikh pilgrimage center Panja Sahib, and pilgrims start pouring in from India. The villagers greet them with hospitality as they have come after many years. Even the fundamentalists object to and call them 'our enemies', and 'violators of our women.' One of the villagers contradicts this by saying that they are our brothers, and whatever had happened is a thing of the past! Hatred, however, has its own reasons!

One of the pilgrims enquires about a girl, who had been left behind in 1947. His father had seen to it all the female members of the family jump into the well as the males were fleeing the village, but Veeran, or Ayesha as she is now known, refused to jump and had run away. She is rescued from the clutches of some men, who had wanted to violate her, by a young man, who marries her, and thus Veeran had become Ayesha. With the revelation of this fact, the preachers put pressure on the villagers to boycott her, as she is a Sikh! They also make it clear to Salim that his mother must come forward to assert that she is a Muslim and a Pakistani!

Ayesha's brother asks her to come with him as their father is on his death bed, and wants to see her before he dies. She retorts that for them she had died that day, she had refused to jump into the well; her present life is one of her own making. If he sees her alive and a Muslim at that, which heaven would he then go to after his death – Sikh or Muslim? Veeran's question is the eternal question – is man only a religious being or is his human identity higher than the religion; he inherits by the accident of birth?

Ayesha, abandoned by her son and boycotted by the villagers, sick in mind and body, ultimately jumps into the same well she refused to jump into, thirty- two years earlier. Salim packs up all her earthly belongings – bridal dress, her Quran, the Sikh Granth and the photographs of her husband into a battered trunk and immerses them into the river. Zubeida's epitaph is the most heartfelt – '*Veeran challi gayi aur Ayesha reh gayi. Par ki patta kaun gayee te kaun rah gayee?*' (Veeran has gone and Ayesha is left behind. But who knows who has gone and who stayed behind?)

Salim goes on to become a leading luminary of the fundamentalist organization – preaching hatred and violence against all non-believers! And Zubeida finishes her education and works in Rawalpindi. Perhaps this is the key for a meaningful change – education alone can create a rational human being.

*Khamosh Pani* is focused on the talibanisation of Pakistan and what it had done to Pakistani society, culture, and polity. The same can happen to any other society where a closed belief system is imposed on the people and which they are expected to accept blindly, as Salim does. He insists on blindly following the dictates of his fundamentalist leaders to the extent of giving up his love. He believes that by saying his prayers he can attain heaven irrespective of his other deeds. But Zubeida underlines what needs to be done when she says – '*Namaaz te mein vi padni haan; par eh daa eih matlab nahin ke mein sochdi nahin!*' (I also say my prayers, but this does not mean that I do not think!)

*Khamosh Pani* is a pointer to this. 'Well' round which the film is focused – is a symbol of that history which is best forgotten, still, silent, full of demons of past. Ayesha's story is the story of a woman who wants to live on her own terms – which are humanistic and secular. The assault on her by fundamentalist forces is a depiction of what is happening in the sub-continent, and also other parts of South Asian regions – and the attempt of obscurantist forces to demolish all this, in the name of what has happened in the past.

Every time mother makes a new start to please her peevish and petulant child, but all in vain. Once Ayesha's friend tells her that you are pining for him that's why he behaves in such a rude way, but Ayesha says that, I know, but she can't stop herself because – after all he is the only hope of my life and an integral part of my body. It's near to impossible for a mother to terminate all her relations with her child. Ayesha, the mother as India tries her best to make her child in cheerful a way, but Salim always as Pakistan demolishes all actions in a harsh way.

When pilgrims from India comes to *Panja Sahib* for their worship; and for their hospitality the whole village do their best, so Ayesha also sends two earthen jars each one full of *Pinni* (sweets) and pickle. The two edible things also suggests the condition of Indo-Pak relations as sweet-sour as *Pinni* or pickle.

The Zubeida-Salim's relation is also a symbol of unfulfilled love-story. Both are madly in love when the movie opens. But due to Salim's doubtful and dubious behavior this story does not end in a happy married couple as the relation of the two nations. Zubeida is a good, educated and pensive girl, but at the time of engagement flees away. In the climax scene both Zubeida and Salim get success in their ambitions, Zubeida becomes a teacher while Salim becomes a powerful politician; but still both are separate not united. But in the last scene in Rawalpindi Zubeida sees an interview of Salim and also listens to his moderate views on Indo-Pak relations in place of zealous or adamant as a stereotype Salim. On that moment Zubeida forgives him for his wrongs and goes away without listen to his speech entirely with a sweet smile on her face. The last smile on Zubeida's face and Salim's metamorphosis from an ardent fundamentalist to a liberal politician is a positive step towards both nations' relation.

'Well', a common and recurrent image in the story. The water of the 'well' is one of the life-giving element of human-beings; but the same 'well' is also a *Karbala* (graveyard) for Ayesha's family women at the time of Partition. The water of 'well' remains solitary and static so has become both countries' relations. The movable or flowing water of a river never becomes dirty and always

remains fresh and pious, because its condition does not remain static at a place. Similarly, after Partition both countries' relation became static as the water of 'well'. So there is no positive progress in them, rather than in course of time both country faced three drastic wars – that deteriorate the condition due to fixity in place of moving ahead in a cordial bonding.

The village name '*Charkhi*' is also symbolical. The spinning tool blends two different rough chords into a new harmonious texture – cloth. But in Indo-Pak relations this harmony is still absent. The powerful weapon of Gandhi; with the help of it Gandhi gave the gift of freedom and nationality to both the nations; also remains powerless to make a smooth and synchronized harmonious relation into two Siamese nations.

The name of protagonist is also an irony. The Sikh name '*Veeran*' is similar as brother-sister or '*Veer-Veera*' relation in Sikh society. After Partition when Veeran remains in Pakistan and changed her name as Ayesha after her marriage to a Muslim man. The Muslim name '*Ayesha*' is a similar means in Hindi as '*Asha*' – which means a ray of hope. But in the movie the suicide of Ayesha is a great stroke on viewers' mind that is there remains no hope in both nations' relation to solve this issue in a cordial or judicious way? Or they remain always in same untangled way? It's a major challenging question in front of both countries. It is an ardent requirement of time to establish peaceful relations in both nations, though difficult but not impossible.

For almost last seven decades, Indo-Pak relations have become a burning problem or a world-level controversial topic, and one of the major thought-provoking issues for citizens of the world. The bizarre relations also destroy the image of both nations in front of world panorama and become a major challenge in path of world-peace. The political leaders and army of both nations are also looking incompatible to solve this problem. They try to quench this problem and establish harmony; but they seem unsuccessful. Now there is a last hope. Can intelligentsia or geniuses of both sides not make a bridge and try to ignite the flame of brotherhood which goes in the sub-conscious? Can the middle strata of society not make a new start according to their own way? The writers and directors of both sides start their campaign, and they have got success in some- way. Now we all common people make a new thought towards the brothers, who live across-border. The water of five rivers and the gusts of wind do not make differences, then why do we mortal human beings create our own cells and live there as dumb, deaf and without heart.

I conclude my research paper with a couplet: -

*“Ye Aanshu bhi Kambakht ajeeb Paresaani hain, Khushi or gam dono ki Nishani hain;  
Samajhne walo ke liye Anmol hain ye, nhi to sirf do bund Khamosh Pani hain.”*

*\*Department of English  
S.S. Jain Subodh P.G. College, Jaipur*

#### References:

1. Khamosh Pani, a film by Sabina Samar, had been made with German and French Collaboration.