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Discourse on gender, religion, and culture in Pakistani films: A narrative analysis of contemporary independent films from Pakistan

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DISCOURSE ON GENDER, RELIGION, AND CULTURE IN PAKISTANI

FILMS:

A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY INDEPENDENT FILMS

FROM PAKISTAN

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the discourse about gender, religion, and culture in four independent films produced in Pakistan between 2000 and 2013 to advocate for women's empowerment: *Silent Water* and *Good Morning Karachi* from female director Sabiha Sumar*,* and *In the Name of God* and *Speak* from male director Shoaib Mansoor. I analyzed plot, characterization, dialogues, and visual images to discuss how the filmmakers represented the dynamics of women's oppression, struggle against oppressive agents, and options or solutions for women's empowerment. Further, this project explored the ideological implications of the narratives constructed in the films within the Pakistani society in the post 9/11 context. This historical context is of interest to this

study because during this period Pakistanis have engaged a series of debates and national policies that address women's rights, religious extremism, and media liberalization in Pakistan. This narrative analysis suggests that the dominant discourse in the films centers on a critique of patriarchy and Islamic fundamentalism as the main overlapping structures of domination affecting women's status and options. More specifically, the filmmakers construct a representation of women as oppressed primarily by their male relatives (fathers, husbands, sons, cousins). The films advance a critique of patriarchy that intersects with a critical view of religion—as male relatives are represented as agents who, motivated by religious beliefs, repress women—and in particular of certain practices linked to Islamic fundamentalism and other cultural practices, such as forced marriage and honor killings, as inseparable forces. The discourse represents women as active agents struggling against patriarchal culture and religious fundamentalism to end their oppression within their family and society. The options for empowerment privileged in the films are women's education, to speak out and report to media and the courts the injustices done to them, and to search for their rights within Islam. Filmmaker Mansoor created a discourse that encourages women to seek their rights within Islam and the Pakistani legal system, as his films suggest that the problem is that Islam is misinterpreted by men for the domination of women. Sumar, in contrast, created a discourse that represents women as the victims of men, with little or no choice within the patriarchal culture and conservative society of Pakistan. The ideological implications of these films are divergent. Mansoor's films have idealistic endings that open room to the possibility of empowerment of women within existing national legal and economic

reforms like the ones undertaken in the post 9/11 context. Sumar's films have more realistic endings, where women end up victimized, to suggest that there is little space for empowerment within the existing structures and institutions.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the past two decades, Pakistani society and media have gone through a series of ideological transformations that have shifted public discourse on the relationship between nation, culture, religion, and social relations, particularly gender relations. The current study advances a narrative analysis of four recent Pakistani independent films that address social injustice in gender relations and advocate for women's empowerment. The purpose of this study is to elucidate how these films are contributing to the public discourse about gender in the 21st century. The early years of 21st century were coincided with 9/11 attacks in the United States which placed the public debate about the intersection of gender, religion, and culture in Islamic societies on the center stage of national and global politics. In this study, I analyzed four films produced after 2000 that have represented women's problems and struggles in Pakistani society. The four films under analysis are *Khuda Kay Liye (In the Name of God), Bol (Speak), Khamosh Pani (Silent Water),* and *Good Morning Karachi*. I studied: (a) how these films construct a repertoire of discourses of gender, culture, and religion to frame the status of women, their struggles for empowerment, and the options available to them; (b) what are the ideological implications of such discourses in contemporary Pakistani society.

Elucidating how these films and filmmakers represent contemporary conflicts involving intersecting gender, religious, and cultural ideologies in Pakistan, and their proposed options for change and empowerment, is important because it allows us to reflect on the power of popular media to shape public discourses that influence people's identities, socialization, and life choices. Popular media have not only commodified culture by constructing images and representations driven by the logics of market expansion, but they have also had a strong effect on how people consume such representations (Trier-Bieniek, 2015). The films analyzed here are part of the popular media and frame the discourse around women's status, religion, and Pakistani culture at a time of critical national and international debates on issues of gender in Islamic societies.

There are several reasons for selecting films released in the time period after 2000. First is the ideological change driven by the neo-liberal social reforms of the then president Pervez Musharraf. Second, Pakistan's alliance with the United States in the "war on terror," starting in 2001, changed the discourse about jihad and religious intolerance, acceptance of Western values, and enactment of laws in favor of women. Third, the establishment of new satellite channels and cable television in Pakistan opened new venues of information and entertainment. Fourth, technology flourished in the 21st century whereby VHS tapes were replaced with compact disks and the Internet became faster with the Digital Subscribers Line and even cheaper and more accessible.

This research is intended to contribute to the existing literature on third world women and further extends the critique from scholarly text to popular media. The

research extends Mohanty's (1988) argument about representation of third world women by Western scholars in post-colonial fashion to the representation of third world women by filmmakers. This study adds to the existing literature about third world scholars' representation of third world women (Afkhami, 2001) and extends the analysis to third world filmmakers' representation of third world women, culture, and religion. This research also aims to fill gaps in the scholarly literature on Pakistani film and media studies in the context of the 21st century.

Historical Background: Pakistan since Independence

To grasp the significance of this study, it is important to understand the political history of Pakistan and the impact of geopolitics on the country's policies and society. After almost a century of British colonial rule—1858-1947—an independent Pakistani nation was founded in 1947 on the premise that shared Islamic cultural identity was the unifying ideology of the nation. The Muslims' demand of their separate country from Indian Hindus in 1947 was based on the idea that the culture and religion of Hindus and Muslims were deemed different enough to make it hard for them to live together in a single country—India ("The ideology of Pakistan," n.d.).

In the 1950s, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Liaqat Ali Khan, allied the country with United States against communist Soviet Union (Balouch, 2015). In the 1960s, military dictator General Ayub Khan took over the country and brought the progressive or liberal reforms in the constitution, education, and social spheres (Ansari, 2011). He was also inclined towards the West and Pakistan enjoyed healthy relations with

the United States. Ansari (2011) has stated that Ayub used to consume alcohol and rejected any Islamic influence in policymaking. He had to resign in 1969 due to political pressure and public resentment against him. In 1970, first general election was held in Pakistan, which caused a political clash between two political parties, Awami League of East Pakistan and Pakistan People's Party of West Pakistan, and the situation led toward the separation of East Pakistan or Bengal or Bangladesh from West or current day Pakistan as a result of war between India and Pakistan in 1971 (Rizwan, 2014; Hoodbhoy & Nayyar, 1985). Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the president and then prime minister of Pakistan as a result of the 1970 election. Under Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's regime between 1971 and 1977, Pakistani policies turned more nationalistic and secular in terms of economic policies, and politically, they shifted more toward socialism. Bhutto nationalized all banks and ten different industries in Pakistan ("About Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto," n.d.). As a leftist, Bhutto believed in social equality and emphasized uprooting capitalism from the country. Although, Bhutto is well-known for his liberal and secular policies, in 1974 he declared Ahmadis—a minority Islamic sect—as non-Muslims and banned alcohol consumption in Pakistan in 1977, whereas he himself was consuming alcohol (Coleman, 2013; Zafar, 2014; Kalasha, 2012). In 1979, he was executed by Lahore High Court for the murder of a political worker, Nawab Mohammad Ahmad Khan (Aziz, 2015).

By the early 1980s, a significant shift in national ideology came about when President Zia-ul-Haq came to power by imposing martial law in the country in 1977. He

"Islamized" the country by engaging the army as well as people in Jihad against the U.S.S.R in Afghanistan (Kennedy, 1990). He also introduced media censorship to the country by censoring some political debates and public nudity of females on TV screens, cinema screens, and in visual art (Aziz, 2015). For example, political artworks of some artists were banned from state-sponsored exhibitions as those artworks were addressing the issues of military dictatorship, political oppression, religious fundamentalism, and suppression of women (Mirza, 2009). Mirza further described the notion of morality encoded in censorship laws, whereby the definition of nudity was not limited to complete nakedness but extended to women wearing wet clothes, visible cleavage, and displaying legs and arms. Love scenes that depicted acts such as kissing were also banned in the media.

The Pakistani state continued to promote an Islamized political climate for more than 20 years even though the government changed to become a democracy from 1988 to 1999. In 1999, an army General and military dictator, Pervez Musharraf, imposed martial law in the country and ousted the democratic government. Musharraf assumed the presidency in 2001, and his government adopted progressive policies in terms of promoting women's empowerment, minimizing the influence of religion on politics, freedom of expression, and access to information (Zaidi, 2007). Besides the change in political climate, private media ownership also proliferated during the Musharraf regime, and the contents of commercial media became subjected to less censorship due to Musharraf's neo-liberal economic policies (Naqvi, 2010). But the year 2001 coincided

with the attacks of September 11 in the United States and this event, arguably, set the stage for new geopolitical priorities and global anti-terrorist policies that changed the political and cultural climate in Pakistan (Fair, 2004). Following the September 11 attacks and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan later that year, Musharraf established close ties with the U.S. government in an effort to combat Islamic extremist groups in Pakistan. In this new climate, the Pakistani media became open in criticizing Islamic militancy, and the rhetoric of jihad changed from a "holy war of 1980s against U.S.S.R." to "terrorism."

Musharraf also changed the country's legal system to empower women, introducing a "Protection of Women Act" that had provisions that protect rape victims. He also increased the quota of reserved seats for women in the Parliament (Weiss, 2012). According to Central Intelligence Agency's (2016) World Factbook 2015 estimate, women constitute about 48 percent of Pakistan population, with a literacy rate of around 46 percent. Women constitute about 22 percent of the labor force in Pakistan.

The effects of Musharraf's reforms became visible in the world of cinema, where some issues became more open to criticism. The targets of criticism include, but are not limited to, religious intolerance, the government and elected officials, and certain customs that are considered out of line with widely accepted international standards. For example, the issues of underage and forced marriages as depicted in the 2014 film *Dukhtar*, religious extremism and forced marriage as portrayed in the 2007 film *Khuda Kay Liye*, and the corrupt political and feudal system as depicted in the 2013 film

Chambaili, show how Pakistani cinema became critical of the customs, religious practices, and social structure of Pakistan.

Films like these and those analyzed in this study were produced during the time of a conflict between two different ideological sectors that divide the Pakistani society, liberal or secular—those who supported Western culture and values (and find Islamic culture and values as outdated)—and conservatives or religious—those who supported Islamic culture and values (and see Western culture as cultural imperialism and a threat to the survival of Islam). These two conflicting ideologies still exist in Pakistani society. They become visible, for instance, in the conflicting ways in which legal reforms to benefit women clash with the values of a religious sector of society who oppose them. For instance, more than 30 religious groups have threatened to protest, demanding the withdrawal of the recent "The Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2015," a bill meant to reduce women's abuse (Khan, 2016). The bill was moved in Punjab Assembly as a result of the 2016 Oscar award winning documentary *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness* by a Pakistani journalist and filmmaker, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy (Haider, 2016). The documentary is about the honor killing of women by religiously motivated male members of their family.

The 21st Century's Independent Films

This study looks at significant Pakistani films that were produced in the socio-cultural and political climate of Pakistan in the 21st century—at a time when Pakistani culture was struggling with change, both politically and socially. For instance, after 9/11,

the school curriculum in Pakistan remained in the spotlight of the U.S. Department of State, which asked Pakistan to review those contents from textbooks that incite violence, glorify war, and discriminate women (Khan, 2005). As a result, the curriculum was reviewed several times from 2002 to 2007, by replacing some Islamic histories and culture with modern American prominent culture and history (Zia, 2014). Discourse of "jihad," which was developed during the Soviet war in the 1980s, remained a topic of debate among the secular and religious political parties and has been reviewed more broadly (Spencer, 2015).

In this context, in 2003, *Khamosh Pani* (*Silent Water*), the first independent drama film of female director Sabiha Sumar, was produced in Pakistan but distributed mostly outside the country (Khamosh Pani, n.d). It was screened in the Kara Film Festival in Pakistan, but Sumar also exhibited the film in 41 small towns in Pakistan by arranging small mobile cinemas ("Interview with Sabiha Sumar," 2005). The non-profit Kara Film Festival aims to promote and exhibit independent films in Pakistan (Imran, 2013). *Silent Water* addressed abductions of women, honor killings, and former President Zia's Islamization of Pakistan. Honor killing is common in countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, where women are killed mostly for infidelity, adultery, dowry issues, and other family matters (Mayell, 2012). In 2013, Sumar released her second film, *Good Morning Karachi*, which is based on the story of a woman and her struggle to pursue a career in fashion modeling.

In 2007, another independent Pakistani film, *Khuda Kay Liye* (*In the Name of God*), by male independent director, Shoaib Mansoor, addressed the issues of forced marriage and Islamic extremism in Pakistan. *In the Name of God* not only addressed the events surrounding 9/11, but also a woman's struggle in contemporary Pakistani society against religious radicalism and patriarchal culture. In 2011, Mansoor directed another film, *Bol* (*Speak*), which was based on women's struggles against patriarchy. This film featured a daughter's struggle to challenge her father's conventional culture and rigid religious attitudes toward his family.

Two people directed these four films—Shoaib Mansoor and Sabiha Sumar. Two films each by Mansoor and Sumar are the focus of this study. It is important to note that Sumar did not produce her films. A German filmmaker Helge Albers and a French film producer Philippe Avril produced *Silent Water* while a Sri Lankan director Sachithanandam Sathananthan produced *Good Morning Karachi*. Mansoor produced and directed both of his films with the help of some line producers. However, both Mansoor and Sumar are the writers of their films, along with some co-writers and screenplay writers. To understand the directors' imprint, their roles as directors will also be analyzed. This study investigates the discourses on women, culture, and religion constructed in these films, as all four films involve women's struggles against cultural and religious norms and center the conflict on the intersections of gender, religious, and cultural ideologies.

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I presented the problem statement, relevant historical background of Pakistan since independence, and a brief introduction to the films under analysis in this study. The second chapter discusses the theoretical and methodological framework of this study and relevant literature about third world women, the multicultural complexities of Pakistani society, Pakistani media, and a brief account of the production histories of the directors of this study. The third chapter is about the methods of analysis and research questions. Chapter four discusses the analysis and findings of the study and answers the research questions posited in chapter three. The fifth and final chapter offers a discussion of the findings and a conclusion to the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Concepts and Theories

This study examines the discourses of gender, religion, and culture constructed in the four aforementioned films, as well as provides insight into the directorship and other contextual factors that influenced the films. A central assumption in this research is that all media discourses are the products of ideologies—the system of beliefs and ideas (Stokes, 2012). To understand the ideological underpinning of media discourse, I draw on discourse and narrative theories. In addition, auteur theory is used to examine the authorship of the films by comparing the directors' approaches toward a problem of similar nature. Auteur theory provides a framework to analyze the discourse in a film in terms of its director as its primary creator (Allen & Lincoln, 2004).

Before elaborating on the theoretical framework of this study, it is important to understand some key concepts that are used frequently is this study and explicate their relationship with each other: ideology, discourse, and narrative.

Ideologies, according to Van Dijk (2006), are the basic beliefs of a group and its members that serve as the basis of their social representation. He defined ideology as "a form of social cognition and more specifically as the basic beliefs that underlie the social representations of a social group" (p. 16). Ideologies, according to Van Dijk, are

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symbolized in social memory in a way to define the groups' identities. Thus, ideology is the representation of self and others through summarization of the collective beliefs, and set some criteria for identification of group members. Ideology not only controls what we speak or write about, but also the way we do.

Discourse, as Van Dijk (1997) explained, relates to the social practices that directly express and convey ideologies through language use. Language use through text, talk, verbal interaction, and communication are some of the discursive practices that convey ideology. In his work, Van Dijk explained the influence of ideologies on our routine texts and talks, how to understand ideological discourse, and the role a discourse plays in reproduction of ideology in society. Van Dijk suggested the importance of taking into account the discursive dimensions of ideologies in order to understand how ideologies are expressed or obscured in discourse and reproduced in society.

Discourse and ideology can be articulated through particular narratives. Narrative is a story and according to Genette (1983), "*narrative* refers to the narrative statement, the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events" (p. 25). Further, according to Genette, "Narrative refers to the succession of events, real or fictitious, that are the subjects of this discourse, and to their several relations of linking, opposition, repetition, etc." (Genette, 1983, p. 25). Narrative analysis is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Discourse theory. Discourse, according to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), is "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)"

(p. 1). They explained the relationship between discourse and society in this way: "social phenomena are never finished or total. Meaning can never be ultimately fixed and this opens up the way for constant social struggles about definitions of society and identity, with resulting social effects" (p. 24). Such social struggles for definition of society and identity take place through the process of discourse. Jørgensen and Phillips argued, citing Laclau and Moeffe's discourse theory, that meaning is produced through discursivity. This view of discourse is based on poststructuralist theories of language, which hold that meaning cannot be permanently fixed within the structures of language but that signs are positioned in relation to one another to create different meanings within specific historical contexts. The temporary fixing of meanings operates through the use of language conventions, negotiations, and conflict situated in particular social contexts. Discourse, the authors argue, is a way of attempting to fix these meanings by reducing polysemy—the multiple meanings of a text. This fixing of meanings through discourse sometimes becomes so conventionalized that specific meanings may seem to be natural and thus play its ideological role. Jorgensen and Phillip have applied the concept of polysemy to verbal and visual texts. The signs, according to Jørgensen and Phillips, are positioned in a way to modify their identities through the process of articulation. They refer to floating signifiers to describe the signs or elements in a text that are open to different meanings. These signs activate different discourses and enable them to assign different meanings to a text.

Discourse theory, according to Jørgensen and Phillips, suggests that "we focus on the specific expressions in their capacity as articulations: what meanings do they establish by positioning elements in particular relationships with one other, and what meaning potentials do they exclude?" (p. 29). Laclau and Mouffe (1985) define "articulation" as the practice of establishing relationships among signs. Jørgensen and Phillips suggested that the articulation could be investigated by addressing the following questions: "What discourse or discourses does a specific articulation draw on, what discourse does it reproduce? Or, alternatively, does it challenge and transform an existing discourse by redefining some of its moments?" (p. 29). Jørgensen and Phillips further indicated how to answer these questions. They suggested, first, to identify the signs that have privileged status and how they are defined in relation to other signs within a particular discourse. Then identify how the same signs are defined in a different way in other discourses. That way we can identify what signs are the objects of struggle over meaning in competing discourses and which signs have fixed meanings. For example, religious identity is one of the signs that has a privileged status in the films of this study. Characters in the film are allocated progressive or fundamentalist religious identities based on their gender or ideology. Identification of the signs that struggle throughout the plot of the film to convey this identity, is important. Jørgensen and Phillips suggested the insertion of "order of discourse" in the theory of discourse, "which would then denote a social space in which different discourses partly cover the same terrain which they compete to fill with meaning each in their own particular way" (p. 56). For example, in the narrative of the

films, discourses such as religion and culture, are positioned around gender in such a way that create a specific meaning such as suppression of women by religion.

Narrative analysis. Chase (2007) defined narrative as a distinctive discourse that makes different meanings by modeling the social world in oral and written text. For Riessman (2005), text becomes narrative when it is selected purposefully, organized in a particular way, and connected together in a meaningful way in order to create meaning for the audience. Riessman explained narrative analysis in the context of the human sciences to underscore multiple approaches to different kinds of texts that can be structured as narratives. Narrative has been used and defined in different ways in different disciplines. For example, Riessman has noted that in anthropology and social history, narrative may refer to an entire life story based on the information collected through observations, interviews, or other documents. In sociolinguistics, Riessman explains, narrative may refer to a brief story around a character with some settings and plot.

Riessman (2005) proposed a narrative model composed of four comparatively different analytical approaches. The first approach is thematic analysis, which is focused on "what" is told in the narration than "how" it is told. This approach is used to theorize different cases whereby linguistics nuances and depth are not the part of investigation. The second approach is interactional analysis, which focuses on the dialogue process between listener and teller. This approach is mostly used for interviews or settings that involve communication between teller and listener. The third approach is performance

analysis. This approach also involves characters and identity association during performance and is interactional that involves audience response. The fourth approach is structural analysis that seeks to find the ways in which a story is told. It examines all the narrative devices that make a story. Language is investigated closely as a part of analysis. This method has been used to identify the abstract, orientation, action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. Riessman defined the abstract as a summary of the story; orientation as time, place, characters, and setting; action as sequence or plot including the turning points; evaluation as narrator's way of communicating emotions; resolution as an outcome; and coda as ending the story. My approach in this study is structural analysis as my purpose is to examine the way the story is told through its narrative devices such as plot, characterization, dialogues, and visuals.

Other concepts in narrative theory and analysis that are relevant to this research are plot, story, and characterization. Huisman, Murphet, and Dunn (2005) defined plot as "the higher-order art of selection, combination, exaggeration, distortion, omission, acceleration, retardation, implication and so on, whereby a basic story (or chain of events) is restructured to become interesting and compelling to a certain audience." (p. 53). They differentiate plot from story in terms of necessity and contingency. Story is about what is going to happen and such undisputable sequence of events identified in the narration. Plot, on the other hand, refers to the director's choice to organize the story material in a different presentation through a logic of causality. According to Margolin (1986), ""character" or "person" in narrative will be understood as designating a human

or human-like individual, existing in some possible world, and capable of fulfilling the argument position in the propositional form DO(X) - that is, a Narrative Agent (=NA), to whom inner states, mental properties (traits, features) or complexes of such properties (personality models) can be ascribed on the basis of textual data." (p. 205). He further noted that characterization may be the attribution of individual's mental attributes to a narrative agent.

Stokes (2012) argued that we also take the entire text as our object of analysis when examining the structure of a story. She proposed typological approaches derived from film studies. These methods include genre studies, star studies, and auteur studies. Genre study, according to Stokes, deals with the extent to which a film fits in a particular genre such as musical, romantic, or comedy. Star study looks into a particular celebrity performer in films. Auteur study deals with the director's role in the form, style, and meanings creation in the film. Auteur theory is one of the theoretical and methodological frameworks for this work.

Auteur theory of cinema. According to auteur theory, the director enjoys the privilege of being the primary creative agent in the production of a film; but some critics have noted that this theory has distinguished and privileged some directors over others (Allen & Lincoln, 2004). Staples (1966) explained what the auteur theory was intended to be and do. It started in France in 1954 with the publication of an article by Francois Truffaut in the monthly periodical *Cahiers du Cinema* and then flowed to England and

the United States. Truffaut's article, according to Staples, was a piece of writing against the commercial and traditional screen-writers of the French films with no intention of creating a framework of criticism. Staples further referred to Andre Bazin's April 1957 article *De La Politque des Auteurs* to discuss the origins of auteur theory in detail, citing how Bazin's work led toward the development of auteur theory and served as a pattern of critiquing the visuals and text of performing arts.

Sarris (2004) furthered auteur theory by arguing that bad directors, not always, but almost always, make bad films. Thus technical competence, according to Sarris, is the first premise of auteur theory. The second premise is "the distinguishable personality of the director as a criterion of value" (p. 562). The way the film goes should be related to the director's way of thinking and feeling (Giannetti, 2014). Sarris (2004) argued, for instance, that American directors are better than foreign directors because American directors express their personality in the visual treatment of the film rather than relying on more literary devices within films. The third premise of the theory, according to Sarris, is "concerned with interior meaning, the ultimate glory of the cinema as an art" (p. 562). Interior meaning is the director's signification of the event in film according to his/her own personality. Sarris visualized the three premises in three concentric circles, "The outer circle as technique; the middle circle, personal style; and the inner circle, interior meaning" (p. 563). The corresponding roles of the director, thus, is as a technician, stylist, and auteur. In this study, I incorporated the inner circle of auteur

theory to examine the directors' signification of the events according to their personalities.

Discourse about Third World Women

Since the focus of this investigation is on women and gender relations, it is relevant to review scholarly sources that have examined discourse and representation of third world women in literature and other cultural production. In her classic study, Mohanty (1988) analyzed feminist scholarly literature on women from non-Western cultures and from underdeveloped countries to argue that scholars had produced "third world women" as a singular monolithic subject. She called it a colonial discourse because U.S. and Western European scholars articulated most of these feminist approaches. She argued that in this writing about third world women, religion, legal structures, education, family kinship, political resistance, and sexual division of labor came to be accepted as the common signifiers of women's oppression. Mohanty extended her critique to some third world scholars who wrote about their own cultures using a similar colonizing discourse. She found that the focus of such discourses was primarily on finding a variety of cases in which women are powerless in order to prove that "women as a group" are powerless, rather than focusing on the material and ideological specificities that cause women's disempowerment and their empowerment in particular contexts.

Third world feminist issues have also been addressed through the lens of colonial discourse by those who consider the dominant feminist voice to be a manifestation of elitist Western ideology. Theorists like Spivak (1988), for instance, argued that Western

literature and intellectual production have mainly served the interests of Western economic powers. Mohanty (1988) argued that feminist analysis by the elites who have not experienced the problems of exploitation of women tend to reproduce rather uncomplicated views that reduce women to victims and focus on religion and patriarchal systems as the root cause of women's oppression in problematic ways. She underscores that the problem with the Western feminist or elitist view is that it looks at third world women's problems from an individualistic cultural perspective.

An alternative non-Western critique has been offered by Yin (2009) in her work on how Eurocentric discourse colonized the complex experience of non-Western women, particularly Asian women. She explored the different approaches of reconstructing Asian cultural traditions as a source of formulating and communicating feminist consciousness in Asia. These approaches, according to Yin, are to invoke and revitalize those cultural values that are concerned about the welfare of every member of society to eliminate patriarchy. Yin suggested the idea of communitarianism by engaging members of the society to build solidarity, which will turn people away from a preoccupation with the self toward concerns for a broader community identity. Western feminists assume non-Western culture is responsible for the oppression of women in non-Western cultures. Yin argued that Eurocentric feminists, through deconstruction of culture, are shedding the social identity from women and are making them biological objects. According to Yin, understanding oneself as part of a community is the social-relationship that gives a person a cultural identity and that this notion of responsibility is missing in Eurocentric

feminists' discourses. While separating women from their culture or (Arab) men is considered liberating by Eurocentric feminists, at the same time these Western feminists do not give up their class or racial privileges to address the needs and rights of oppressed groups. Gender equality, Yin argued, should be viewed in the context of Asian preferences for understanding collective rights.

Yin proposed a framework for theorizing and researching Asian women to address their suffering and work for their welfare. According to this framework:

(a) "Asiacentric feminist communication ought to commend the complementarity of gender" (p. 80). Highlighting the difference between genders will reinforce the existing dichotomy of values associated with different genders and such an emphasis will perpetuate the sense of otherness. Women have a significant role in Asian cultures, including a sense of household, motherhood, and leading all family members to acquire virtues and positive characters. Unlike Eurocentric feminism, Asiancentric feminists empower women by not replacing one kind of oppression with another; i.e. replacing housework with the opportunity to serve as economically less privileged maids.

(b) "Asiacentric feminist communication should embrace the harmony of the individual and the community" (p. 82). In Eurocentric feminism, social and gender roles are seen as a source of deprivation thrust upon women. Asiacentric feminists can "articulate and cultivate a consciousness that is rooted in genuine concern and care for women (indeed for all human beings) at personal and societal levels" (p. 83).

(c) "Asiacentric feminist communication should endorse the dialectics of rights and responsibilities" (p. 83). Rights without responsibility, according to Yin, divide individuals and groups, thus making it impossible to "envisage women's rights as social parity in addition to individual liberty" (p. 83).

Yin concluded that challenging gender oppression in non-Western countries should not lead to uncritical acceptance of Eurocentric feminism, which is rooted in the experiences of European and American women. She questioned whether a model based on the experiences of Western women would ever truly free non-Western women.

Writing about the Iranian context, Afkhami (2001) has similarly argued that elite feminist scholars and activists often misinterpret religion by presenting it as a powerful cultural force that keeps women in non-Western cultures in underprivileged conditions. Afkhami, an Iranian scholar, writer, and human rights activist, acknowledged that the patriarchal structure of society allows certain men to seek political power by using religion and culture in order to suppress women. But she pointed out that many Western scholars then focus on "personal freedom" as the individual's right to choose and the intervention of government or other regulatory bodies as a violation of this freedom as a key problem. According to Afkhami, Islam does not conceptualize individual rights outside the cultural norms defined by the designated experts of Islamic cultures. This view of individual rights of women (and for men as well) is considered an indication of the influence of Western ideology and cultural imperialism in Islamic society. Alternatively, Afkhami defined the notion of "right" as the "matter of individual space

within a social system and the ability of women to speak, move, work, and to choose freely" (p. 12), rather than as the relationship between government and individuals. She argued that all societies, including Muslim societies, have undergone transformation. For example, there was a time when women were burned alive for practicing witchcraft by Christians, and slavery was a norm in Western societies. But all these conditions have been changed. Women, according to Afkhami, are deprived of their rights neither by Islam nor by Muslim culture, but by the patriarchal structure of society that misinterprets religion and culture in order to keep women oppressed.

According to Afkhami, Muslims living in different parts of the world have different customs and laws, and they do not necessarily understand and practice Islam in the same way. If we extend Afkhami's argument about misinterpretation of religion to be the cause of women's suppression, then we need to consider women in all of the Muslim world, and whether they experience the same problems and/or distinct and particular problems according to their historical and social context to examine how misinterpretation of Islam supports patriarchy. We would need to compare, for instance, underprivileged Muslim women with similarly positioned underprivileged non-Muslim women to see common social problems and causes lead to their suppression. If religion reinforces patriarchy in Pakistan, then it might be instructive to compare it with the religious conditions of Hindu women, like *sati* in India—a subculture with a custom whereby a woman immolates herself for her deceased husband (Spivak, 1988).

For the purpose of this project, the critiques offered by scholars like Spivak, Yin, or Afkhami are relevant for the understanding of the ideological implications of narratives and discourses about gender constructed in films that relate to the unique context of Pakistani culture—a non-Western culture.

Pakistani Multicultural Complexities

Along these lines, Qureshi (2010) discussed some shared cultural values between Indian Hindus and Pakistani Muslims. His focus was the *Kanjar* community inhabiting the Hira Mandi of Lahore—a historical city of Pakistan. *Kanjar* is a pejorative term used for a particular group of professional dancers and singers, and *Kanjar*, according to Qureshi, have roots in the Hindu caste system that grouped people according to their inter-generational ritual purity and occupation. These are the ancestors of those people who devoted themselves to performing ritual dances at the temples and sold sex to raise money for the temples. The children of those people tended to adopt the same profession as their parents because, under the caste system, they were not accepted in other professions.

When Islam came to dominate this region, its customs fused with Indian social practices by adopting many values and elements from the Hindu caste system. Therefore, the Hindus who converted to Islam retained their own cultural values, including the caste system, even though Islam was not in accordance with the caste system. Islam was not compatible with the regional customs, like visiting saint's shrines, Sufi dances and songs, and other cultural practices of these people (Roy, 2004). Most of the girls and women,

according to Qureshi (2010), working in Lollywood—the Pakistani film industry—come from the old *Kanjar* community, as working in Lollywood is not perceived as a proper career in Pakistan for a woman of a noble family and caste. However, Qureshi also argued that actresses working in dramas enjoy a respectful life and most of these women appear in independent films. A possible reason for the privileged positioning of a drama actress over a Lollywood actress could be the fact that most of the girls and women working in dramas are well-educated and come from high social class families. A rich *Kanjar*, according to Qureshi, cannot get the privilege of respect equal to a poor noble person, which is similar to a Hindu caste system whereby wealth cannot change a person's social ranking.

Qureshi's study suggests that Pakistani society has adopted many customs from Hindu as well as Islamic societies. When examining women's issues from a religious perspective and patriarchy in Pakistan, it is important to include the historical context of Pakistani society and causes of women's suppression. Because Pakistan until 1947 remained a part of greater India, a country that had been ruled by Mughal emperors from 16th to 19th century and then British colonials from 19th to middle of 20th century, Pakistani culture has the influence from those invading cultures along with the existing Hindu culture and Arab cultural influence due to Islam.

Arab cultural influence on Pakistani culture can be seen in the form of language. In many societies, including Pakistani societies, language is taken as a part of religion which is otherwise a part of culture. For example, Arabic names are considered as

Muslim names while English names are considered as Christian or Jewish names. This suggests how Arabic culture is fused and accepted in Pakistani culture in the name of religion, whereby the Western cultural influence faces resistance by considering it anti-Islamic and cultural imperialism. Religion and culture is intertwined in many ways in Pakistani society (Weiss, 2012) as we can understand from the above discussion how language, religion, and culture are woven together in Pakistani society.

Another important dimension of Pakistani society is that most of the actions are not guided by Islam but they are explicitly linked to particular misinterpretations of Islam, as argued by Afkhami (2001). For instance, models on product-advertising billboards are vandalized more than characters on cinematic posters (Rizvi, 2014), possibly because of the fear of cultural imperialism from the West as models in advertising billboards are more westernized than most models in the movie posters. Rizvi (2014) argued that models in the movie posters are often more vulgar than models in the advertising billboards, suggesting that such acts of vandalism may not be driven so much by religious motives as by a sense of cultural protectionism from Western influence.

We can understand from the above discussion that Pakistani society interprets and practices Islam differently from most of the Arab world, based on its unique historical and cultural context, as argued by Afkhami (2001). Another argument of Afkhami, that misinterpretation of Islam is the key factor supporting patriarchy, is also central to the discussion of the films selected for this study.

Pakistani Media and the Socio-Political Situation of Pakistan from 1947 to 2014

Since this study focuses on representation of gender in films, this section offers an overview of the Pakistani media policymaking and its historical and cultural evolution. In particular, it is important to know how the changing political situation of Pakistan has affected the country's cinematic productions. Egan (2002) has argued that Pakistani cinema remained stable over time for the most part although political situations changed. Most Pakistani movies have adopted the same format of the Indian film industry, Bollywood—two and a half hours in duration, around six songs with dances, and a common theme of comedy, action, sex, and romance. However, in the 1960s, the Pakistani government first required the cinema to allocate 80 percent of playing time to local productions through the "Censorship of Film Act," and then banned Indian films from being played in Pakistani movie houses.

According to Egan, the separation of Bengal—the former East Pakistan—in the early 1970s did not affect cinema to a large extent. However, in the late 1970s, during the Zia-ul-Haq period of military rule, the themes of the movies changed from cultural heritage to violence and action (Egan, 2002). In addition, the production of regional films increased after the separation of Bengal. Egan further pointed out that the imposition of licensing and establishment of the National Film Development Corporation (NAFDEC) in 1973 weakened the cinema by squeezing money through licensing from an already sick film industry. By the late 1970s, the Censorship Act was revised to further restrict cinematic production to the Islamized model in order to address issues of morality. This made it much harder for Pakistani cinema to compete with Indian cinema, which was

becoming more liberal and sophisticated. Indeed, by the 1980s, Indian films on VHS cartridges, mostly brought into Pakistan by Pakistanis working in Gulf countries, were regularly sold on the black market of Pakistan.

By the late 1980s, Egan explained, Pakistan People's Party—a secular party—relieved cinema from certain anti-cinema policies by relaxing the censorship law. However, in the early 1990s, satellite dishes also enabled Indian programs to gain popularity with Pakistani audiences. This created budget issues for Pakistani cinema by increasing the production cost to compete in the globalized media market. The production cost increased for Pakistani filmmakers due to the competition with Indian films that were becoming more sophisticated and gaining popularity in Pakistan. In such a global media environment, where the local audiences of these filmmakers had multiple options for entertainment, it was hard to keep them engaged with low budget movies.

At the end of the twentieth century, satellite television channels entered the information and entertainment market of Pakistan. Naqvi (2010) discussed the entry of 35 Pakistani private satellite television channels in the late 1990s and their discourse around moderate Islam and secular contents. He has referred to the incident in which Geo TV—Pakistan's well-known TV channel—was stormed by Islamic activists for its secular and progressive approach. None of these 35 satellite channels of Pakistan, according to Naqvi, voice the religious rights of the people; rather the contents are packaged as consumer goods, not ideological instruments. Nevertheless, these channels, according to

Naqvi, were regarded as the major brokers of cultural, economic, and political freedom linked to globalization.

According to Naqvi (2010), Pervez Musharraf—the then President (2001-08) and military dictator—deregulated the TV stations by removing most of the censoring policies and permitting them greater freedom of speech. However, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) was established to monitor the cultural, educational, and entertainment values of these channels. Naqvi argued that during Musharraf's regime, media were liberated for the most part and the government bodies and political figures became more open to criticism. In addition, school curriculums were revised and schoolbooks revised the hardcore Jihad related material while the pictures of celebrities, prominent political figures, and contents of social awareness such as traffic rules were added in the curriculum.

Although Lahore remained a center for Pakistani film industry of Urdu and Punjabi films since the independence, the private commercial film industry had no official name until 1989, after which it was called Lollywood (Sulehria, 2013). Lollywood is a private collection of large and small studios that produce films in Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, and other local languages. According to Sulehria, since the 1980s, Lollywood was highly affected by Islamic fundamentalists, who threatened and bombed different cinemas around the country as retaliation for what they called the "obscene" contents of films they showed. As a result, according to Sulehria, Lollywood's film production decreased from 115 films in 1974 to five films in 2012. Note that there is no

legal or formal definition of "obscenity" in Pakistan; however, PEMRA describes as obscene contents that are not appropriate to be viewed with family (Aziz, 2012). However, this definition is still vague as families in Pakistan may differ in their religious attitudes, conservatism or liberalism, and cultural practices.

Independent filmmaking become popular in Pakistan during the early years of the 21st century with the release of Sabiha Sumar's film *Silent Water*, although some directors, such as female director Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy, consider 2013 to be the new wave and rebirth of Pakistani cinema as Pakistan released more than 20 films that year (Shah, 2014). Chinoy received an Oscar for her 2012 documentary, *Saving Face,* which about women who are the victims of acid attacks. These independent filmmakers are not the part of the Lollywood system; rather they produce their films with their own financial resources, public and private sponsors, television channels, and foreign funding.

Besides reforms in media policymaking, other political reforms after 2001 and relevant to this research are those pertaining to Pakistani women. In November 2006, Musharraf signed the "Protection of Women Act," which replaced the 30-year old "Hudood Ordinance" of Zia's Islamization reforms (Weiss, 2012). This bill reduced the conditions and penalty of adultery as compared to Hudood Ordinance. Under the Hudood Ordinance, a rape victim had to present four male witnesses to corroborate her claim, otherwise, she would be found guilty of adultery. The Protection of Women Act also reduced punishment for adultery from the death penalty to five years of imprisonment and a fine of ten thousand Pakistani rupees. Under this Act, the accuser has to present

four witnesses to testify that they have seen the penetration by themselves, and if the accusation is proved false, the accuser is sentenced to up to 10 years in jail. Musharraf also increased the number of seats reserved for women from 20 to 60 in the National Assembly out of a total 342 seats and reserved 22 percent seats for women in the Provincial Assembly.

According to an estimate, 70 to 90 percent women in Pakistan are subjected to domestic violence, including physical, mental, and emotional abuse (Ali & Gavino, 2008). According to Ali and Gavino, honor killings and spousal abuse are the most common forms of domestic violence, although marital rape, acid attacks, and burning alive are also common. Ali and Gavino further state that spousal abuse is considered the least serious crime against women, possibly because it is considered a private family matter.

Women in Pakistani Media

The critique of dominant discourses about women and others' cultures and ideologies has included the analysis of how mass media participate in the ideological process. For example, Hall (1977) called the mass media responsible for providing the basis for creating the images, lives, meanings, practices, and values of other groups. Media, according to Hall (1977), tend to provide a simplified monolithic picture of the fragmented social totality by selectively suppressing difference and representing societies or groups as unified under a single or totalizing image or idea.

In the context of Pakistani cinema and society, Rizvi (2014) analyzed the representation of women in Pakistani cinema before and after the Motion Picture Ordinance of 1979, the pre- and post-Islamization of Zia. The Motion Picture Ordinance imposed censorship on the contents of a film and its exhibition in cinemas. Rizvi argued that Pakistani films during both eras reinforce patriarchy by emphasizing the common pattern of representing women as an object of viewing in general. Before 1979, according to Rizvi, films were promoting the norms of civilized elites of Delhi and Lucknow; these norms were replaced by vulgar Punjabi comedy, dances, and violence after 1979—the regime exploited by martial law and Islamization to gain control over the people and strengthen patriarchy by mixing religion, education, and entertainment in the media.

Rizvi further argued that such Islamization privileged Arab and Iranian values and replaced indigenous norms. The local dress code of *dupatta* (shawl) was replaced with Arabic/Iranian hijab or burka (veil) in women, and beards and the *kifafa*—an Arabic head covering—became popular among men. It was made mandatory, according to Rizvi, for announcers and anchorwomen to cover their heads with *dupattas* while appearing on television. Zia also banned the cultural and traditional dance, the *Kathak*. However, dancers in cinema became more vulgar or sexually explicit than they used to be before Zia Islamization and also, more patriarchal, as the woman used to dance around the man to seduce him. According to Rizvi, both elite and conservative people of society condemn these dancers as vulgar, but they are the desired objects of the gaze of a common man. Pakistani filmmakers, according to Rizvi, justified the morality of prostitutes by

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correcting their misunderstood image and justifying the bad behavior of club-dancers and smoking young women by representing them to be driven by the unjust society. Rizvi found that since Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization of 1979, women characters in the films became more open and free than in earlier films. In contrast, women in society became more conservative since Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization in comparison to women in earlier decades. This may suggest how Zia's Islamization affected Pakistani people's personal lives either through self-censorship or suppression of women through patriarchy and religion.

In another study of Pakistani movies, Kirk (2014) found that films have depicted their own culture to be less civilized than Western culture. Kirk analyzed *Zibakhana* (Slaughterhouse)—a 2007 Pakistani horror film—for its engagement of religion and social class. He found that the movie represented one of the serial killers in burka (an Afghani style veil) and affiliated it with Sufism—a mystical dimension of Islam. Such burka is a religious and cultural identity of Afghani women or Pashtun women of Pakistani living in the area bordering Afghanistan. The zombies in the film, according to Kirk, were represented in a Pakistani traditional dress, the *Salwar-Kamiz*, while the victims were in the Western dress of jeans and shirts. Kirk also argued that the zombies—who were also the attackers—were villagers and shown to be from lower or lower middle class. *Zibakhana* is a slasher film, a genre that has little or no link with reality, while documentaries are a form whose realism is arguably based on real life events but also call for critical analysis.

Documentaries about the status of women in Pakistan have also been the subject of scholarly research. Documentaries have been produced primarily by independent filmmakers. For example, Imran (2013) critically examined the award-winning feminist documentaries of the female Pakistani producer analyzed in this thesis, Sabiha Sumar, to explore how her films addressed the impact of fundamentalist Islam on women. She explored the significance of Sumar's documentaries as a feminist tool of activism, resistance, and raising cross-cultural consciousness and her struggle against "politically motivated religion-based socio-political and gender-discriminatory practices and interpretation of Islamic doctrine" (p. 120). Imran analyzed three of Sumar's documentaries, *Who Will Cast the First Stone* (1988), *Don't Ask Why* (1999), and *For a Place Under the Heavens* (2003).

Imran noted that Sumar's documentaries are foreign funded, whereby she not only promoted the elitist neo-colonial agenda that can undermine the real issues of Pakistani women, but also lost control over the contents of her films due to the fact of Western funding. This gives rise to the questions about the audience of the film, distributors of the film, and the effects of the film. For example, Imran argued that Sumar's documentaries circulated largely among U.S. and European universities, human rights organizations, Amnesty International, and other humanitarian organizations for creating awareness about religious fundamentalism. This demonstrated that the intended audience of her films were Western Institutes, rather than Pakistani public. In fact, Sumar herself is a Western-educated, middle-class liberal woman from an urban background, which sheds

doubt on her ability to fully understand the problems of underprivileged and marginalized Muslim women in Pakistan. Sumar's work, according to Imran, can be viewed as a change agent that challenges patriarchy and dominant forces. Among fundamentalists, Imran argued, Sumar's work may be criticized for using foreign funding for her own fame by compromising her national and religious identity by representing her nation as barbaric, backward, and exploiting her religion. Imran concluded that Sumar's work, regardless of her funding sources, is a cinematic jihad by a woman against religious fundamentalism, social injustice, and human oppression. Imran used the word "fundamentalist" for those who criticized Sumar's documentaries which suggests the Western style discourse of Imran—a third world scholar who is studying in a Canadian university.

Directors in this Study, their Films, and Awards

To understand the discourse—Western or non-Western—in the Pakistani films selected for this study, it is important to review the existing research on the films. In line with auteur theory, the review will be complemented by the literature that has examined the public lives and production histories of these directors in order to understand the auteurs' reflections on these films. To contextualize the two directors featured in my analysis, Shoaib Mansoor and Sabiha Sumar, it is important to know the professional and production histories of these directors in order to understand how their public and professional backgrounds influence their films.

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Shoaib Mansoor is a Pakistani independent filmmaker, producer, writer, lyricist, and music composer. He started his career in the 1980s with "Vital Sign," a famous music band in Pakistan, and wrote the well-known song and anthem, *"Dil Dil Pakistan."* His productions and direction include a hit action and thriller drama, *Alpha, Bravo, Charlie,* produced by Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) and directed by Mansoor; and *Sunehray Din,* a drama centered on the routine lives of the Pakistan army ("Shoaib Mansoor," 2011). ISPR is the media and public relations office of the Pakistan army. While technically independent, filmmakers such as Mansoor seek funding from various institutes in the public and private sectors both within and outside the country.

Khuda Kay Liye (*In the Name of God*) and *Bol* (*Speak*) are Mansoor's two recent independent films. The audiences for his films, according to Mansoor, are Muslims in Pakistan and India ("Shoaib Mansoor's Interview," 2008). He reports he received death threats from Muslim clerics for perceived blasphemy in the film. On the other hand, Mansoor said that he had a hard time finding an American actor for an FBI torture scene because of the controversial script. Mansoor considers terrorism as a political issue rather than a religious one. His film was supported by the then-President of Pakistan, Pervez Musarraf, who granted special permission for screening of the film.

The plots of both films, *Speak* and *In the Name of God*, center on religious extremism, patriarchy, and the detention of Pakistanis by the U.S. FBI ("In the Name of God," n.d.; "Bol," n.d.). Mansoor won a "lifetime achievement award" from Pakistan Television—a state owned television service, Sitara-e-Imtiaz—a star of excellence

awarded to the people with the highest degree of service to the state or international diplomacy, and a Pride of Performance award from the government of Pakistan ("Shoaib Mansoor," 2011). His film *In the Name of God* received a Silver Pyramid Award at the Cairo International Film Festival, and best film award from Roberto Rossellini. Mansoor's *Speak* won the Best Hindi Film Award at the IRDS Film Festival, Best Film Award at the Lux Style and the London Asian Film Festival, and was nominated for Best Feature Film at the Asia Pacific Screen ("Shoaib Mansoor," 2011).

Sabiha Sumar, born in 1961 in Karachi, Pakistan, is an independent filmmaker and founder of Vidhi Film, an independent, private filmmaking company. Her father was in business as well as politics (Ahmad & Anjum, 2014). She studied filmmaking and political science at Sarah Lawrence College in New York, and then History and Political Thought at Cambridge University. She produced some documentaries mostly centered on the issues of religious fundamentalism and women's suppression ("Sabiha Sumar," n.d.). Her first documentary, *Who Will Cast the First Stone,* was about three women imprisoned under the Islamic law of Pakistan, and that documentary won a Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco Film Festival in 1998. Her other documentaries include *Don't Ask Why* (1999), *For a Place under the Heaven* (2003), *On the Roof of Delhi* (2007), and *Dinner with the President* (2007). *Khamosh Pani* (*Silent Water*) was her first feature film, released in 2003, and won the Golden Leopard Award at the Locarno International Film Festival that same year.

When sharing her views with Ahmad and Anjum (2014), Sabiha Sumar said that she started the film *Khamosh Pani* (*Silent Water*) as a documentary as a part of one of her funded research projects about women's abductions during the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. However, she decided to make a film that was not limited to historical events, but also discussed current forms of violence and religious intolerance. In her interview with Ahmad and Anjum, Sumar also mentioned that most of the crew members who helped make *Silent Water* were foreigners from countries like Germany, France, and England. She linked the abduction of women during partition of India in 1947 with Zia's Islamization of 1979 and Pervez Musharraf's presidency referendum of 2002. According to Sumar, Zia's Islamization policies not only affected TV and cinema, but also self-censorship of people in their homes and society. According to Sumar, she herself experienced the change in Pakistani society from liberal and secular to conservative and religious during Zia's regime ("Interview with Sabiha," 2005). She claimed that her audience for the *Silent Water* was mainly Pakistani.

Silent Water, which is part of the analysis of this study, centered on the discourse of culture, gender, and religion. Rahman (2011) analyzed *Silent Water* not only for its eco-cosmopolitan aspects, but also for the feminist aspects of the film. *Silent Water*, according to Rahman, discusses the history of partition of the British India in 1947, the Islamization policies of General Zia-ul-Haq in 1979, and the way these events affected the lives of people in general and women in particular. Rahman argued that the films presented a feminist critique of patriarchy held by both the Sikh and Muslim

communities by showing how the character of Ayesha (played by actor Kirron Kher) resisted the domination of her father in 1947 and then her son in 1979. Ayesha was asked by her Sikh father to commit suicide along with her sister and mother during the partition because it would be dishonorable for him if his women were abducted and raped by Muslims during riots. Ayesha escaped from her father but was abducted by local Muslims, converted to Islam, and forced to marry a Muslim man. Rahman further argued that in the film, Ayesha's son Salim (played by Aamir Ali Malik), a character inspired by the Zia Islamization, started making her life miserable. Eventually she committed suicide in the same well where her sister and mother committed suicide during the partition. Rahman also observed that in this film, local Islam was infused with global Islam—the Arab or universal version of Islam. Local Islam is more like Sufism, which is more compatible with local culture, while global Islam is the Arabic version of Islam which is against many local cultural norms of Pakistan and local Islamic rituals such as visiting Sufi shrines. For example, local Islamic practice is represented as more open to gender equity as women are seen praying at a local saint's shrine. The narrative of the film constructs global Islam as patriarchal and fundamentalist where men in the mosque are loudly chanting slogans.

Sundar (2010) analyzed the soundtracks of *Silent Water* and found that the film used silence, sounds, and music as the devices of protest by the women. Khan (2009) argued that *Silent Water* fortified the prevailing stereotype about Muslim men by representing them as ferocious and backward. Daiya (2011) argued that *Silent Water*

"articulates a postcolonial feminist critique of the intimate terror of religious revival and the subalternity of the female body. In the process, it raises questions about the transformative reinvention of religious/ethnic identities and the destruction of the female Partition survivor-citizen in postcolonial Pakistan – a critique that is relevant to the resurgence of Hindu nationalism in India as well." (p. 590).

Dasgupta (2008) analyzed the film *Khuda Kay Liye* (*In the Name of God*), directed and produced by Shoaib Mansoor, for its vocalization of controversial ideological debates and how the movie offered a solution to the complex ideological question of religious and cultural identity. She examined the movie for its discourse about elements such as beards, jihad, music, and forced marriages. She found that the movie effectively delivered its message about both religious extremism and American neocolonialism. The film, according to Dasgupta, balanced the competing ideologies of religious extremism and liberalism/secularism by not dissociating religion from socio-cultural elements of Pakistanis' lives.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Questions and Method of Analysis

The deregulation of Pakistani media in the early 21st century and Pakistan's support of the U.S. "war on terror" after the terrorist attacks in the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, made Pakistani media freer and more open to criticize government officials and politicians, and raise cultural voices for women's rights. The films selected for analysis were prominent among those that addressed the issues of women's rights and justice in a local and global context in which debates on Islamic practices and women's oppression took center stage in the ideological war against terrorism.

Shoaib Mansoor's *Khuda Kay Liye* (*In the Name of God*) released in 2007 and *Bol* (*Speak*) from 2011, and Sabiha Sumar's *Khamosh Pani* (*Silent Water*) released in 2003 and *Good Morning Karachi* from 2013 constitute the textual data for analysis in this study. The films are readily available on compact discs. All four films engage women's problems, cultural norms and customs, and religious extremism. When referring to religious extremism, I do not restrict its general connotation of terrorism, but include all religious intolerant behaviors. I decided to examine the work of a male and a female director to balance and compare their perspectives toward gender, cultural, and religious ideologies.

There are several reasons for selecting the time period of after 2000 as a relevant context for the research. First are the ideological changes taking place in this period. By ideological change, I mean the neo-liberal economic and political reforms of the then president Pervez Musharraf, as discussed earlier in the literature review, that affected the media policy making and the public discourse on women. Second are the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States and Pakistan's alliance with America in the "war on terror." The 9/11 context includes other significant events, such as the changing of the school's curriculum to remove or change the meaning of jihad, and the addition of literature about civic sense and social awareness (Jamil, 2009). Pakistan's alliance with the United States in the war on terror changed the discourse within Pakistan about jihad and religious intolerance, acceptance of Western values, and the passing of the laws in favor of women. In effect, the political situation and priorities changed with the country's alliance to the United States in the war against terror. Third, the establishment of new satellite channels and cable television in Pakistan opened new venues of information and entertainment, making easier the dissemination of a wider range of contents. Fourth, the technology that flourished in the twenty-first century, whereby VHS tapes were replaced with compact disks and the Internet, became faster with the Digital Subscribers Line and made access to content even easier and cheaper. Keeping such a socio-political landscape of Pakistan in mind, it is important to know how the filmmakers contributed to these reforms through the discourses constructed in their films.

The research questions in this study are:

RQ 1: How do the narratives of *Silent Water*, *In the Name of God*, *Speak*, and *Good Morning Karachi* construct particular discourses about gender, religion, and culture through their framing of the status of women, their struggles, and options available to them?

I define gender as positions of identity that are not rooted exclusively in biological differences between the sexes but that result also from a socially, culturally, and psychologically constructed sense of self and social expectations (Holtzman & Sharpe, 2014). When discussing gender ideologies in this study, other important concepts used are "patriarchy" and "misogyny." Hartmann (1982) defined patriarchy as "a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men, and solidarity among them, which enable them to control women. Patriarchy is thus the system of male oppression of women" (p. 138). Misogyny is the "unreasonable fear or hatred of women that that takes on some palpable form in any given society" (Gilmore, 2010, p. 9). Gilmore further argued that misogyny is a sexual prejudice and hostility of men towards women and considering them a substandard part of society.

Culture has diverse meanings, defined differently by different intercultural scholars. Bennett and Bennett (1993) explained culture in terms of objectivity and subjectivity. Objective culture, according to Bennett and Bennett, denotes the "institutional aspects of culture such as political and economic systems, and to the

products of culture, such as art, music, cuisine, and so on" (p. 150). They argued that objective culture may help in understanding the cultural creations of others, but not help to understand intercultural competence.

Bennett and Bennett described subjective culture as "the experience of the social reality formed by a society's institutions—in other word, the worldview of a society's people" (p. 150). It is informally learned and unconsciously shared. Subjective culture is more like a process that defines groups of people, their behavior, and interaction patterns, while objective culture is more like contents that identify different cultural symbols. Both objective and subjective culture together identify a group through symbols and the way those symbols are communicated—attitude and behavior. Merriam-Webster defines culture as, "the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group." In this study, I used both the objective and subjective cultures to identify the ethnicity of the people.

I define religion, following the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, as "an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship a god or a group of gods" and "a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices." In this study I referred to three versions of Islam: global Islam, Sufism, and local Islam. Global Islam is termed "global" because it is the most common practice of Islam throughout the world. This version mainly originated from Arab countries, the land of origin of Prophet Muhammad. This version is derived from Koran, Hadiths—the words of Prophet Muhammad, Sunnah—the acts of Prophet Muhammad, and Islamic scholarly

books (Manger, 1999). There are many small sects within global Islam, but two main sects are Sunni and Shiite. The main difference between these two sects is their disagreement over the successor of Prophet Muhammad after his death. (Blanchard, 2005). According to Blanchard, the majority of the Muslim population, including the citizens of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, follow Sunni tenets while 10-15 percent of Muslims around the world follow Shiite belief system (Shiite tenets are followed mainly in Iran and some Arab countries). The Sufi version of Islam is more spiritual and mystical, and may be followed by both Sunni and Shiite Muslims. It is spiritual because it teaches its adherents to purify the inner-self. It is mystical because those Sufis are believed to have direct communication with God (Arberry, 1950).

Some scholars use "local Islam," to refer to the periphery of global Islam or syncretism (Manger, 1999). Syncretism in Pakistani society can be the blend of Hindu religion and customs with Islam, which can also be seen in the rituals at Sufi shrines such as music and dances. Such syncretism makes it local Islam. I also refer in this thesis to extreme, moderate, and secular for different religious characters. There is no hardline among those categories since one might be extremely religious spiritually but may be liberal socially. Also, in contemporary society, the connotation of "extreme religious" is taken for militancy. I use "extremely religious" to refer to those who are religious conservatives and overly engage religion in every day's social interactions. I used "radical" for Islamic militants and jihadists. Moderate Muslims are those that practice

some basic level of Islam, but do not engage it in every day's social interaction. Secular are those who are socially liberal and are not involved in any kind of religious practices.

To answer RQ1 (How do the narratives of *Silent Water*, *In the Name of God*, *Speak*, and *Good Morning Karachi* construct particular discourses about gender, religion, and culture through their framing of the status of women, their struggles, and options available to them?), I used the structural approach to narrative analysis to examine the films. I focused on the narrative devices of plot and characterization. Plot is not only the directors' structuring different elements of the film, but it also conveys their point of view (Giannetti, 2014). Plot helped me to understand the narrative of the film and to understand the order of discourse—the positioning of the discourses of gender, religion, and culture. Characterization identified what different identities are allocated to different groups and the ideological underpinnings of such identities. I analyzed the plots and characterizations in each film through the analysis of dialogue and visuals. That helped me to understand the articulation—meaning creation—in the film, that is, how different elements in the films are positioned in a particular relationship to create a particular meaning.

My own religious and cultural identity and experience helped me to identify and codify textual elements into different ideological categories within the spaces of gender, religion, and culture. Not every visual or speech element in each film was coded, except for those that were relevant to my research goals and research questions. Therefore, I

looked into the following aspects of the characters in terms of their gender, religion, and culture:

Role of character. Protagonist, antagonist, hero, villain, victim, influence, modification, conservation, or passive.

Gender role attributed to the character in the story. Father, mother, son, daughter, sister, brother, cousin, uncle, etc.

Religious beliefs attributed to the character. Christian, Muslim (Sunni, Shiite, Sufi), Jew, Sikh, Hindu, or any other religion.

Religious practices attributed to the character. Extremist, moderate, or secular.

Cultural identity or ethnicity of the character. Western, Pakistani (Pashtun, Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi), Indian, Arabic, or any other culture.

Major change in the character throughout the story. Changes, their cause, and effect on women's situation or condition.

These categories and attributes were expected to intersect gender with religious and cultural identities. Through this coding, I identified gender identities and roles, religious inclinations, cultural identities, and how all these positions of identity were positioned in particular relations of power. Since I selected those films on the basis of their themes—status and empowerment of women—both female and male characters were central focus of the analysis. The reason for choosing films produced after 9/11 is

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because this period marked a political and ideological shift in Pakistan in which the three spheres, religion, culture, and gender, became more deeply interrelated in contemporary debates about national and global relations (Fair, 2004). For example, patriarchy, which is considered to be one of the causes of women's oppression by many scholars and feminist activists, is supported by culture and religion. In the case of Pakistan, its culture incorporates a rich blend of elements from Arab culture, particularly in the form of religion, and most of the things recognized as Arab culture in Pakistan are also associated with religion. The naming system is just one example, whereby Arabic names are considered to be Islamic and English or names in any other language are considered un-Islamic.

Hence, when I examine gender ideologies I refer to the conventional role of gender in Pakistani social structure. However, I understand that gender is intersected by religious ideologies in that, for instance, the Islamic belief system and values that direct Muslims shape the way men and women behave even in non-religious settings or situations. Likewise, when examining culture—that is, values, norms, and customs (outside religion) that are widely practiced and accepted in society, I also assume that these will be interrelated as well.

RQ2: What are the differences and similarities between Mansoor's and Sumar's construction of the discourses about gender, religion, and culture in their films?

After the analysis of plot and characterization of individual films, I compared Mansoor's and Sumar's films in terms of their ideological differences and similarities in construction of the discourse about gender, religion, and culture. This means that I compared how the issues of women are addressed by Mansoor, a male director and artist, and Sumar, a female director and activist. Sumar is Western educated while Mansoor is Pakistani educated. Most of Sumar's documentaries and films, including *Silent Water*, are foreign funded while Mansoor's films are funded by himself as well as some Pakistani sponsors such as Geo Films, a private media group in Pakistan. Sumar's films and documentaries are circulated mostly in foreign institutes and humanitarian organizations while Mansoor's films and other productions are circulated mostly in Pakistan. Sumar received most of her awards from foreign sources while Mansoor received awards and appreciations mostly within Pakistan, from state officials and dominant institutions in the country such as Pakistan Army. Both of them started their careers in media production in the early 1980s. Sumar's contribution to the film production is important, because she is a female producer from Pakistan who has raised the voice for her fellow women.

As I discussed earlier in the section on auteur theory, the internal meanings that emerged during analysis helped me to answer this question. I made a comparison of the style and internal meanings of these two directors. Shoaib Mansoor, who is a male director, wrote about a variety of themes and genres, and produced two films *Bol* (Speak) and *Khuda Kay Liye* (In the Name of God) to exemplify the struggles of women and the suffering they are facing due to patriarchy and religious fundamentalism. Sabiha Sumar is

a female director whose focus is also on religious fundamentalism, patriarchy, and women's oppression. She had produced several documentaries on the themes of religious fundamentalism and women's oppression prior to directing the two fictional films under analysis in the present study, *Khamosh Pani* (*Silent Water*) and *Good Morning Karachi,* films that focus on the social injustice against women, religious fundamentalism, and patriarchy. My interest is in comparing how the discourses of these directors related to efforts to help empower Pakistani women to eradicate or minimize their oppression and sufferings. Exploring this question led me to develop my third research question, which is:

RQ3: What are the ideological implications of these films in the contemporary society of Pakistan?

After finding the answers to RQ1 and RQ2, I then developed a critique of how the directors framed women's issues in respect to religion and culture. The answer to this question includes how different fragments of discourses of gender, religion, and cultural norms intersect to support a particular ideology in the film and its implication for audience's understanding of social conditions in Pakistan.

In addition, my own experience and knowledge about Pakistani culture and society helped me to compare how representations in the films related to the different ideological positioning of different sectors of society in Pakistan. For example, sometimes things that are considered significant or positive by the West are seen differently in Pakistan. For instance, a Nobel prize winning teen girl of Pakistan, Malala

Yousafzai, is celebrated in the West but is not appreciated by all sectors of society in her own country – not even by many people in her own town, where she is seen as suspicious and criticized for spoiling Pakistan's name in the international scene in order to advance her personal interests (Zahra-Malik, 2013).

Being born and raised in a middle class religious family in Pakistan, my familiarity with Pakistani culture helped me to identify the religious and cultural markers in the films. My life experience helped me to critique the women's issues addressed in these films. There are, in fact, a lot of problems that are common for both males and females in Pakistan. These problems result when individuals are either not following the cultural norms and religious teachings, or are misinterpreting those cultural and religious values. For example, forced marriage is a problem not only for a woman, but also for the man who goes through the same process. Even though Islam teaches to seek the consent of both male and female before marriage, forced marriages are not guided by their people's beliefs. Another example is that although Islam gives the inheritance rights to women and the Pakistan legal system endorses it, many men deprive women of that right, which indicates a failure to follow the law as well as Islamic teachings.

Methods of Analysis

Four films, *In the Name of God, Speak, Silent Water*, and *Good Morning Karachi,* are the sample of this study that are analyzed individually. The data is readily available on compact discs.

I used the discourse theory of Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) to examine the articulation of the discourses of gender, religion, and culture. This also includes how different identities are allocated to different characters in order to make them different on the basis of gender, ethnic, religious, or cultural ideology.

Analysis of text was done by analyzing the dialogues and visuals using narrative analysis of Riessman (2005). The comparison of directors' discourse about the women helped me to understand the directors' reflection in the films—a part of auteur theory. I conducted narrative analysis by using structural approach of narrative that engage plot and characterization. Giannetti (2014) explained plot as the "storyteller's method of superimposing the structural pattern over the story" (p. 332). He argued that plot is the author's point of view as well as the author's structuring of the movie into an aesthetic pattern. Characterization is the fictional character assigned to an individual in a casting process of film. I analyzed the plot by examining how the story of the film begins, how it proceeds along with different characters, the climax, and the end. Characterizations were analyzed by examining their role (antagonist or protagonist), gender identity and role, and religious and cultural identity. Dialogues are the oral text and were analyzed for their ideological dimensions of identity creation.

During the auteur analysis of my study, I compared the discourse structured by these directors in terms of the interior meanings (Sarris, 2004). Interior meanings were examined in the films by looking into the directors' signification of the events in their films. This is done through the analysis of plots and characterization as according to

Giannetti (2014), plot is a storyteller's method of telling a story. Since my study is about the ideological aspects of the film, I did not examine the style and technical aspects of auteur.

Chapter 4

Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of four Pakistani independent films produced in 21st century: *Silent Water* (2003)*, In the Name of God* (2007), *Speak* (2011)*, and *Good Morning Karachi* (2013). The first part of the chapter analyzes each film for its discourse of gender, religion, and culture to find how these films framed the status of women, their struggles for empowerment, and options available to them. The second part of the chapter discusses the broader ideological implications of the discourses constructed in the films. The third part of the chapter highlights ideological differences and similarities between Mansoor's and Sumar's constructions of these discourse. It is important to note that the languages spoken by the characters in these films are Urdu and Punjabi. I translated the scripts and dialogues into English.

Discourse on Gender, Religion, and Culture

Silent Water.

Silent Water, also known as *Khamosh Pani* (a literal Urdu translation of "silent water"), is a 2003 independent drama film of Pakistan, directed by Sabiha Sumar, an independent female filmmaker. In 1997, Sabiha Sumar planned to make *Silent Water* as a documentary on the 50th anniversary of Pakistan's independence, to engage the issue of abductions of women during the partition of India in 1947 (Ahmad & Anjum, 2014).

Later, in the year 2000, she decided to link the abduction of women in 1947 with the contemporary waves of violence and religious intolerance, by making a fictional film instead of a documentary.

Silent Water is a story of a Sikh woman, Veero (played by Suhair Fariha Khan), who escaped her family during partition of India in 1947, as her Sikh father tried to throw her in a well along with her mother and sister. Sikh or Sikhism is a monolithic religion originated during 15th century in Punjab, South Asia (Singh, 1951). During partition, according to this film, a lot of women were killed for honor by the male members of their families, as they were worried that their women would be abducted by people of another religion. Veero is abducted by some Muslim men, who convert her to Islam, change her name to a Muslim name, Ayesha (played by Kirron Kher), and make her marry a Muslim man. She is taken to the small village of Charkhi in Punjab, Pakistan, with her son Saleem, and becomes settled in a local neighborhood, where very few people know about her religious past. The film then shows Ayesha's life in 1979, when the then-President and military dictator of Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq, Islamized the country to advance his political aim of engaging the people in "jihad" against the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.) in Afghanistan. Ayesha's son, Saleem (played by Aamir Ali Malik), is radicalized by a jihadist group. The time coincides with the occasion of Sikh pilgrimage, during which one of the pilgrims is Ayesha's brother, Jaswant (played by Navtej Singh Johar), who meets Ayesha and asks her to see their father for the last time. That exposes Ayesha's Sikh background to the village, and the radical Islamic group asks Saleem to make her

mother proclaim her Islamic beliefs in public, and renounce her Sikh beliefs. Ayesha gets frustrated with her son and eventually commits suicide by jumping in the well.

Patriarchy and global Islam as determining the status of women. The narrative of the film constructs religion as a main suppressor of women. Men are represented as using the religion to exercise their patriarchal role and control in society. Such oppression is constructed in the film through Muslim and Sikh male characters. Through a male character's dialogue, we also learn that Sikh women also participated and asked to be victimized by Sikh men.

The Sikh religion is portrayed as patriarchal in the film, whereby Sikh men killed their women for honor due to the fear of abduction of their women by Muslim men during partition of India in 1947. Those Sikh men also refused to accept the abducted women when the women managed to escape the abduction of Muslims. Some of those Sikhs share their story of killing their women proudly with other Sikh men during their arrival to Charkhi, Pakistan, for pilgrimage:

> Sikh Pilgrim 1: No women left alive. Women themselves came to my uncle and asked him to shoot them. He kept shooting, and shooting, and shooting. There were 22 women in the village. We didn't lose our honor. We killed our women but did not let Muslims get hands on them.
>
> Sikh Pilgrim 2: Some were abducted. They were coming back after years. No one was accepting them back. Some must have left here. They might be still here.

It is important to note that only male pilgrim characters can be seen in the film to perform pilgrimage—a religious ritual, though in actual Sikh practice, women are also allowed to perform pilgrimage.

Two forms of Islam can be seen in the film: 1) Global Islam, 2) Sufism or local Islam. The film shows Sufism as more women-friendly, as women can be seen attending the shrines of Sufi saints for the fulfilling of their wishes. Global Islam is shown as more patriarchal and men-friendly, as more men can be seen in the mosque. When Saleem adopts global Islamic values in the company of global Islamic missionaries, Rashid (played by Sarfaraz Ansari) and Mazhar (played by Adnan Shah), he turns ruder toward his girlfriend, Zubaida (Shilpa Shukla), and his mother, Ayesha. His friend Zubair (played by Shazim Ashraf) helps him to date Zubaida, but after adopting global Islamic values, he stops Saleem from pursuing love-marriage or from buying gifts for her, as these things are against their patriarchal society. Saleem's friendly attitude with his mother, Ayesha, becomes rude after adaptation of global Islam. He suspects her religious beliefs and asks her to testify to her Islamic beliefs in public, when he discovers that his mother used to be a Sikh before marrying his father. His behavior with his mother changes altogether, whereby he looks at her impolitely and speaks with her in louder tone. He feels insecure about Zubaida's education plan as this might make her dominant over him, ironically calling himself a slave of Zubaida

Local ethnic cultural relations as a friendlier space for oppressed women. The film shows the Pakistani Punjabi culture of Charkhi, a small village in Punjab. Everyone

speaks Punjabi language and wears the *salwar-kamiz*—traditional dress of Pakistan. Even Sikh pilgrims speak Punjabi. The discourse of gender is framed within a single culture of Punjab, and represents the village life of Punjabi ethnic people. The film shows Punjabi culture as socially liberal; for example, women and men dance together at a wedding party. Although the film did not criticize overtly the cultural aspects of women's suppression, the in-depth analysis of plot of the film reveals some gender biases. First, women are shown to be engaged in house labor and are happy with that labor. For instance, when Ayesha cooks, cleans, or does other housework, she smiles and has friendly chats with her son, Saleem, or her friend, Shano (played by Quartul Ain). She even tells Saleem smilingly that Zubaida, after marrying Saleem, will be her assistant and will help her in household work. None of the women is shown as working outside the home. The protagonist Ayesha is shown to be cooking food and buying vegetables. She wants her daughter-in-law to help her in housework.

Second, women are shown as a source of entertainment for a village chief, Chaudhary (played by Abid Ali), who pays a professional dancer to sing and dance in his son's wedding and entertain his guests. Chaudhary himself is shown throwing money at a dancer. But such exploitation of women is not criticized by any character at any stage of the film. Chaudhary is not portrayed as a bad person, rather Ayesha tells Saleem that she can't upset Chaudhary when Saleem refuses Chaudhary's job offering. Dance and music parties are shown as part of the socially liberal lifestyle of Charkhi, which is evident from the participation in the party of all the villagers except for Rashid. Rashid refuses to

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participate, not because of his religious beliefs about women's dancing or women's exploitation, but because he is not happy with Chaudhary's hospitality.

Women's struggles for empowerment start at home. The film represents women in struggles against their male counterparts for their survival. These males were mainly from their close blood relations such as father, husband, and son. Ayesha escaped from her father in 1947 to avoid her honor killing. Her mother and sister were already killed for honor by her father to avoid their abduction by Muslims. Ayesha was then abducted by Muslims, converted to Islam, and made to marry a Muslim man. After the death of her husband, she worked hard to raise her son, Saleem. When Saleem inclines towards global Islamic beliefs, he makes Ayesha's life miserable. Saleem's irritating and misogynist behavior makes her commit suicide.

Ayesha's character also shows that a woman has to struggle against intolerant religious behavior of men of her own family. Likewise, Zubaida is dreaming about continuing her education to get a good job, but she has to go to another city for higher education. Then she loses her boyfriend, Saleem, because of his patriarchal attitude that is justified on the basis of religion.

Women have no option but silence. The film does not give many options to the women who are victims of socially and religiously conservative father or son. For instance, Ayesha had no option but to escape her father to avoid honor killing. But this option leads to her abduction by the Muslim men. When her son's attitude became rude and misogynistic, she had no option but to commit suicide.

However, Zubaida has an option to choose education over submission to Saleem's conservative misogynist attitude. She frequently talks about her education plans and her independence in the film. The narrative of the film does not say whether she gave practical shape to her education plans or not, but at the end of the film, she lives alone in an apartment with television set and VCR, which is something she was dreaming about. This suggests that she might have completed her higher education and found a job for which she was planning.

In the Name of God.

In the Name of God, also known as *Khuda Kay Liye*, is a 2007 Urdu-language drama film, directed and produced by Shoaib Mansoor, an independent male filmmaker (Ghosh, 2010). The film is about Islamic fundamentalism, women's suppression, and the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation's detention of innocent Pakistanis after the 9/11 attacks.

The film tells a story of two brothers, Mansoor (played by Shaan Shahid) and Sarmad (played by Fawad Khan), who sing together in a band in Lahore, Pakistan. Mansoor goes to Chicago for a music course, while Sarmad joins an Islamic radical group and quits music. Mansoor is detained by the FBI in Chicago, for his alleged connection with Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. He is tortured to the extent that he becomes paralyzed and is deported to Pakistan. Sarmad joins a Taliban group in Pakistan near the border of Afghanistan. Mary (played by Iman Ali), a U.K. born Pakistani woman, is a cousin of Mansoor and Sarmad, and lives in London with her father Hussain

(played by Humayun Kazmi). Hussain forces Mary to marry her cousin, Sarmad, against her will while Mary loves her British classmate, Dave (played by Alex Edward), and wants to marry him. Through the characters' conflicts, the director highlights a series of conflicting interpretations of Islam regarding its teachings about forced marriages and marriage outside Islam. The film ends with the traumatic return of Mansoor to Pakistan, Sarmad's return to moderate Islam, Hussain's remorse over his harsh behavior toward Mary, Mary's liberation by the Pakistani army from Sarmad's abduction and forced marriage and volunteering to teach tribal girls in Pakistan.

Women's status is set by patriarchal culture first and then by religion. The narrative of the film suggests that women's oppression is not caused by Islam but mainly by Muslim misinterpretation of Islamic teachings. It engages religion to create a discourse about gender oppression but also suggests that religious moderation can lead to the breakdown of forced marriages and that cultural differences lead towards social conservatism as much as religious differences.

The conservative or misogynist attitudes are represented to be guided mainly by Pakistani patriarchal culture first and then by religious extremists. This is evident in the characters of Sarmad, Mansoor, and Hussain. Sarmad is a practicing moderate Muslim, but he is radicalized for jihad by Maulana Tahiri (played by Rashid Naz), who asks him to quit music and join jihad against Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Mansoor, the brother of Sarmad, is also a practicing moderate Muslim, but is more liberal in his religious beliefs. He sings songs, wears Western dress, buys alcohol for his American

girlfriend even though he does not drink himself, and thinks logically rather conservatively over the haram or halal in Islam. Their uncle, Hussian, lives in London with his girlfriend and his daughter, Mary. Mary lives a British lifestyle, wearing jeans and t-shirts, has a British boyfriend, and speaks English most of the time. Her lifestyle, words, and actions do not reflect her Islamic identity. Even, Maulana Wali (played by Naseeruddin Shah) calls her Christian because of her name, her friends, and her family environment. Hussain also lives a Western lifestyle and is not portrayed as having overt religious tendencies or practices. However, Hussain does not want Mary to marry a white Christian man, because of their religious difference. He uses religious bases to stop this marriage and asks Mansoor to marry Mary. Mansoor, after discovering that Mary likes Dave, refuses to propose to Mary. Hussain then asks Sarmad to marry Mary, who marries her by force, in the name of Islam.

In contrast, Mansoor meets a Christian American woman, Janie, and falls in love with her. Janie thinks that Mansoor is reluctant to marry her because of his religious beliefs that Christians and Jews cannot be friends to Muslims. She shows Mansoor a pamphlet which reads that Christians and Jews cannot be friends to Muslims and asks him whether he is hesitant to marry her because she is a Christian. However, Mansoor clarifies such misunderstanding by telling her that he is reluctant to marry her because of their cultural differences. However, they end up getting married after all.

The discourse thus constructs three kinds of Muslim religious orientations among men: extreme religious fundamentalism in Sarmad, a moderate religious practice in

Mansoor, and a non-practicing Muslim in Hussain. Sarmad goes to mosque, gives *adhan*—prayer call—joins jihad, grows a beard, wears a turban and *salwar-kamiz*, considers music haram, and asks his mother for purdah—seclusion. Mansoor sings songs (mostly Sufi ones), wears Western dress of jeans and t-shirts, does not drink but buys alcohol for his girlfriend, and marries a Christian woman. Hussain lives with his Christian girlfriend and his lifestyle does not reflect anything about religion, as his brother tells him that Hussain has no association with Islam. The extremely religious Sarmad, and the non-practicing Muslim, Hussain, share a misogynist ideology that suppresses women's free choice to choose a partner.

In contrast, the moderate practicing Muslim is depicted as opposing the tradition of arranged marriages and respecting women's and men's choice of partners. As a sign of the patriarchal structures in which the men live, Hussain is ridiculed by his fellow Pakistanis for not conforming to cultural and religious values by allowing his daughter to date a Christian British man while Sarmad is ridiculed for not showing aggressive masculinity when he refuses to have physical contact with Mary. The film, by constructing an image of moderate Muslim men as respectful of women's, will suggests that misogynist behavior is due to gender norms and Islamic conservatism, with radical Islam as the most conservative version of Islam.

Since Sarmad's attitude turns misogynist after he becomes devoted to Islam and his exploitation by radical people, radical Islam is underscored as a main oppressor of women in the film. Also of note is that all radical Islamic people are depicted as male

characters while female characters are portrayed as religiously moderate to secular. For instance, women in court who represented women's rights activist groups chant "shame shame" to Maulana Tahiri while men, mostly religious, chant "slogan of greatness… Allah is great," and support the men.

Pashtun men are the main oppressors of women. The narrative of the film portrays Punjabi and Pashtun culture inside Pakistan while portraying British and American culture outside Pakistan. Sarmad, Mansoor, and their parents are Punjabi ethnic people from Lahore, Pakistan. Maulana Tahiri, Sher Shah, and their followers, who are also portrayed as militants or jihadists, are of Pashtun ethnicity from tribal areas of Pakistan. Hussain comes from Lahore, but he and his daughter live in London in a British lifestyle. Hussain's girlfriend and Mary's boyfriend are also from London. Janie, girlfriend of Mansoor, is a white U.S. American Christian woman.

The narrative of the film represents Pashtuns as not only jihadist or religious extremists but also misogynists. Maulana Tahiri tells Sarmad that forced marriage with Mary is not possible in Lahore, but is possible in Pashtun tribal areas. This suggests that Pashtun tribal areas are safe for illegal activities, while Lahore is a law-abiding city. Although Sarmad forcefully marries Mary, he does not touch Mary without her consent until he is convinced to do so by Tahiri. Pashtuns are also shown to suppress their women by requiring them to wear Afghani style burkas, killing their women for honor, considering them inferior to men, and depriving them of the right of consent during the marriage. For instance, when Mary tries to escape, Sarmad and Sher Shah chase her. Sher

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Shah wants to kill her, but Sarmad stops him. At another instance, Tahiri tells Sarmad that he should not worry about the age difference between Sarmad and Mary, as a woman cannot be equal to man, even if she is older than man. Shah's father stops Mary from teaching his daughters as he fears that education will make his daughters immodest. The film suggests that it is the Pashtuns that are the main source of both religious extremism and women's oppression in Pakistan. They are portrayed as anti-American as well. At the end of the film, Hussain and Sarmad feel sorry and apologize for what they did to Mary, but none of the Pashtun characters are shown to be changed from a bad person to a good one.

In contrast to Sarmad, who becomes misogynist after being radicalized by Tahiri, his brother Mansoor is shown to be quite nice to Janie, a U.S. white Christian woman. He tells her that he is hesitant about marriage because of their cultural differences, and that he does not want Janie to change herself for Mansoor. He does not convert Janie to Islam, but celebrates their marriage in both religious ways—Christian and Muslim—and in both American and Pakistani customs. This shows that a Punjabi man can represent his country in a positive way, and respects women.

Hussain is portrayed to be socially liberal for himself, but conservative for his daughter, Mary. He himself lives with his British white Christian girlfriend, but does not want Mary to marry Dave, a British Christian white man, because of their religious differences. Hussain's British girlfriend and Mary's boyfriend, Dave, are portrayed to rescue Mary from Sarmad's abduction. This represents British people in a heroic role,

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helping a British-born Pakistani woman within her own country, Pakistan. Mary, after receiving justice by getting divorced and winning legal custody of her child through the legal system, returns to a tribal village to teach its girls, suggesting that a British woman uses her education to help people in Pakistan.

Women's struggles against their family for empowerment. In the film, Mary fights for her right to marry a man she loves. She suffers the treachery of her father who takes her to Pakistan and forces her to marry Sarmad. She is abducted and raped by Sarmad. She struggles for her release and sends a letter to her boyfriend, Dave. She tries to escape Sarmad's abduction but fails. She fights for her rights in a court of justice and within Islam. When Mary gets her justice and feels empowered, she gives up Dave and decides to go back to a tribal village to serve the educational needs of its girls.

The narrative of the film portrays Pakistani tribal women as oppressed. They are deprived of education, because educating girls is considered a sin by tribal males. Mary is constructed as a heroine who sacrifices her luxurious life and individual interests and love life in London in order to educate and empower tribal girls.

Options available to women: women should fight for their rights rather than submitting to injustice. The film suggests women should fight for their rights in a legal forum. Laws are made to protect women against honor killing, battering, forced marriage, and other offenses. They need to seek justice if any of their rights are violated, the film suggests, rather than remaining silent. Mary finds justice when she reports her abduction to Dave. Dave uses diplomatic ways to motivate Pakistan's security forces to release

Mary. Mary gets freedom from forced marriage and wins the custody of her child through court. This suggests that rather than submitting to injustice, women should fight for their rights through the legal channels available through the national government. It instills the view that secular and national institutions are an option in the protection of women.

Mary is also seen asking Maulana Wali for his opinion about a woman's right of consent to her marriage and about marrying someone outside Islam. Wali appears in court and proves with hadiths—a narrative record of Prophet Muhammad's sayings—that women have the rights to make their marriage decision by themselves and that marriage within Abrahamic religions is allowed in Islam. This suggests that patriarchal men misuse Islam to bolster or justify their domination of women. Many Muslim men in the West marry non-Muslim women, but they do not allow their women to marry non-Muslim men because of the religious differences.

The film also suggests that educated women should devote a part of their time to educate other women who otherwise do not have access to education. For instance, Mary decides not to go back to London, rather she stays in Pakistan to educate tribal girls. She wears an Afghani burka while going to teach the girls. Paradoxically, when she exercises her power to control her destiny, the character ends up making a very traditional turn as she negates herself in service of others in a profession that has been traditionally associated with women and is non-threatening to men.

Speak.

Speak, also known as *Bol*, is a 2011 Urdu-language independent film directed and produced by Shoaib Mansoor. The film tells the story of Zainab (played by Humaima Malick), who struggles on behalf of her siblings against the rigid patriarchal attitude of her father, Hakim Shafatullah Khan (played by Manzar Sehbai), toward her family. Hakim has five daughters and is obsessed with a desire to have a son. Hakim kills his sixth child, Saifee (played by Amr Kashmiri), for honor. Saifee is a transgender person, who was given a male identity by his sisters, who addressed him with a masculine name and made him wear men's clothes. He is abducted and raped by a truck driver, and then left tied up in bushes. He is saved by another transgender person, who is a professional dancer. Hakim thinks that Saifee is stripping and selling sex by appearing as a cross-dresser on the streets. He kills Saifee for honor, for which he is arrested by a police officer, who demands a bribe from Hakim to dismiss the case. Hakim, who is also a treasurer of a mosque committee, pays the bribe from the mosque's fund.

He then borrows some money from a *kanjar*—professional singer and dancer—Chaudhary Isaac (played by Shafqat Cheema), to pay back the mosque's fund. Isaac, who runs a prostitution ring, makes a deal with Hakim and asks him to father a baby-girl with Isaac's granddaughter Mina (played by Iman Ali), as payment for the debts. When Mina gives birth to a baby girl, Hakim asks Mina to hand over the girl to him, as he changes his mind as it would be against his honor if his daughter would be a prostitute in future. Mina goes to Hakim's house and gives him the baby without the knowledge of Isaac. Isaac goes to Hakim's house to take back the girl. Hakim tries to kill the girl for honor, rather

than handing her over to Isaac. Zainab and her family try to stop Hakim, and during the ensuing turmoil, Zainab kills Hakim but saves the baby.

Zainab is hanged to death by the court for killing her father. The film ends with an elimination of antagonist Hakim, heroic sacrifice of life by protagonist Zainab for her mother and sisters, and her family lives a happy life by opening a small food stall, which turns into a big restaurant.

Religion oppresses women. The film is critical of how some men misinterpret Islam in ways that are misogynistic. The antagonist Hakim is portrayed as a patriarchal and misogynist, a man who batters his women (wife and five daughters) and verbally abuses them. Hakim is portrayed as a religious person (identified as Sunni), who attends mosque regularly for *Salah*—prayer—refers to hadiths, and has a religious outlook.

The narrative of the film suggests that Hakim's interpretation of Islam is an orthodox practice that rejects the idea of family planning and birth control. Hakim believes that family planning is anti-Islamic and that God has made a promise to feed all his creatures. Hakim keeps having more children, believing that Prophet Muhammad encouraged the big family size. The protagonist, his oldest daughter Zainab, challenges Hakim's orthodox views by arguing that the bigger family size will result in more mouths to feed, whereas Hakim's income is shrinking. Another orthodox belief about Islam can be seen in the film, when Hakim orders his daughters to pray for the victory of the Pakistani cricket team in a match against India. When Pakistan loses the match, Hakim blames his daughters for not praying with heart. Zainab argues with Hakim that prayers

cannot make the Pakistani team win, rather it is about playing well. Hakim also deprives his daughters of an education by not sending them to school, even though the school is adjacent to Hakim's home. Such attitude not only shows his orthodox beliefs, but also men's control and suppression of women through such beliefs.

The film depicts the burka as a symbol of oppression of women. For instance, before being executed under death penalty, Zainab pulls the burkas—veils—off of her sister and asks her to take them off and make their own lives by themselves. This suggests that burkas are the main obstacle in women's empowerment or at least, a very visible symbol of women's disempowerment. After Zainab's death, her sisters open a restaurant by delivering and serving the food to their customers without wearing burkas.

Sunni Muslims are depicted as engaging in forced marriages and resisting marriages outside their own sect. For instance, Sunni Hakim tells the matrimonial officer that he is looking for Sunni Sayyad Muslim grooms for his daughters. Sayyad are the ancestors of Prophet Muhammad. On the other hand, Master (played by Irfan Khoosat) is a Shiite man who is socially liberal. He sends his son and daughter to college for education. He is willing to let his Shiite son, Mustafa (played by Atif Aslam), marry Hakim's Sunni daughter, Ayesha (played by Mahira Khan). Ayesha and Mustafa love each other. Their love is rejected by Hakim, a Sunni Muslim, who even is ready to kill Ayesha rather than allowing her to marry a Shiite man while a Shiite Muslim, Master, helps them marry.

Another instance of the intersection of patriarchy and Islam is the practice and justification of honor killings of women and transgender people. Hakim tells his wife to kill his transgender baby, as he believes that his transgender child will cause him disrespect after growing up. The mother does not kill the child but Hakim kills him eventually (as an adult) for honor. Another instance of honor killing of Hakim is his intention to kill the baby girl he fathered with Mina. He tries to kill the baby, as Isaac will sell or employ her for prostitution when she grows up. Hakim also wants to kill his daughter, Ayesha, rather than letting her marry Mustafa, a Shiite man.

Culture and the status of women. The film suggests certain associations between people of Punjabi and Indian ethnicity within the Pakistani nation. Hakim, an Indian ethnic man, is a misogynist and socially conservative person who restricts his daughters inside his home and does not let them go to school or work. Master, a Punjabi ethnic man, is socially liberal and sends both his children, a son and daughter, to college. Punjabi ethnic Master speaks softly with his children while Indian ethnic Hakim is rude towards his family. Another contrast between the Indian's conservativeness and the Punjabi's liberalism in the film is that Master allows his Shiite son to marry Indian ethnic Hakim's Sunni daughter. This suggests that Punjabis are religiously liberal while Indians are conservative.

Attitudes toward the income generated by women is another aspect that differentiates Punjabi from Indian ethnics. For instance, Punjabi ethnic Isaac depends on the women's income by making them dance, sing, and sell sex. On the other hand, Indian

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ethnic Hakim is even not willing to let his daughters work in an office. He wishes to have a son, who can support him financially in his old age.

The film thus criticizes Indian ethnic Hakim for women's oppression inside the family structure as the central drama of oppression, but does not entirely overlook the exploitation of women for business by a Punjabi ethnic pimp, Isaac, who makes women dance, sing, and sell sex. Isaac uses women as an investment that earns him millions for several generations. He considers women to be commodities who merely run his business. While the Indian ethnic Hakim blames women for determining the gender of baby, a Punjabi ethnic Isaac is depicted as more educated when he corrects Hakim that gender is determined by men. Hakim's wife and daughters' ethnic identity is not very visible in the film. However, being the family of Hakim, they might have the same Indian ethnicity.

The film suggests that Punjabis are more socially and religiously liberal and women friendly as compared to Indians. That creates an ethnic bias towards an Indian ethnicity, by profiling them as socially and religiously conservatives, and as women's oppressors.

Women's struggles against patriarchy and religious conservatism for empowerment. The narrative of the film shows women struggle against orthodox Islamic beliefs, particularly through the character of Zainab. Hakim keeps fathering children in hopes of having a male child. His income is very low, and he finds it hard to feed his big family. He believes birth control is a sin and interference with God's will. Zainab resists

this belief and takes action for empowerment when she takes her mother to a doctor for sterilization in order to stop adding children to the household population. Such sterilization suggests the empowerment of women by having control over their bodies.

Zainab struggles against the forced marriage of her sister, Ayesha. Zainab takes a bold step and makes Ayesha marry Mustafa, without the consent of her father. She is a judicious woman, who believes that the marriage will make her father angry for the time being but will allow Ayesha spend a happy life.

Zainab also struggles against the honor killing of women by men. She kills Hakim when he tries to kill his baby girl. Hakim tries to kill the girl he fathered with Mina for Isaac to save his honor as the girl may grow up to be a prostitute. Zainab accidentally kills Hakim while saving the baby.

Zainab not only sacrifices her life to empower other women in her own family, but also others who have big families and a low income by telling her story to the media. Paradoxically, she does not speak in court in her defense, but speaks to the media by sharing her story and giving a message about large family size and legality of kids:

Zainab: Why make babies, when you can't feed them?

Zainab: If making bastards is a crime, then why is making legal children and then making their lives miserable, not a crime?

After killing her father and after her own death, her family now headed by women opens up their own home-based food stall, which turns into a big restaurant with the passage of time. The family raises and educates the baby girl that Mina left in their house.

Here, financial independence and education are seen once again, as the ultimate form of empowerment.

Options available for women: speak, break the silence, and make your own fate. The central theme of the film is to encourage women to speak for their rights. The title of the film, "Speak," itself serves its purpose. Zainab is executed because she does not speak in her own defense. The narrative of the film suggests that women's suffering is due to their silence over the injustice done to them and not reporting their victimization to law enforcement agencies, especially if the perpetrator is her husband, father, or brother.

The film encourages women to take initiatives for their own empowerment and against the injustice done to them. It represents burkas as symbols of oppression and suggests to throw them off to break women's dependency on men. Zainab asks her sisters to throw away the burkas and make their own lives by themselves. When her sisters open the restaurant, they do not wear any burkas, which suggests that removing burkas—signs of religious oppression—is the first step in the empowerment of women.

Zainab takes steps to stop the forced marriage of Ayesha with an older man and affirms free choice and marriage based on love as the preferred option for happiness. This suggests that rather than being submissive, women should take initiative about their own fate.

Zainab also affirms that sterilization is an option for women who want to improve the living conditions of themselves and their families. She worries about the worsening health condition of her mother, and the burden caused by the increasing number of her

family members. Her mother is a submissive woman who did not resist the dominant attitude of her husband. She even worries about her daughters' well-being if Hakim were to end up in jail, suggesting the dependency of women on men.

Another option for women, the film suggests, is to get rid of the misogynist man by leaving him or killing him. One night, Zainab decides to leave the house the next morning, along with her siblings, due to the rude and abusive behavior of her father. But before morning, she kills her father by accident in the middle of chaos. Killing her father, on the one hand, leads to her own death sentence, but on the other hand, liberates her family from Hakim's suppression. This suggests that men are the main obstacle in the empowerment of women.

Good Morning Karachi.

Good Morning Karachi is a 2013 English and Urdu language Pakistani film directed by Sabiha Sumar. The film tells the story of Rafina (played by Amna Ilyas), a lower-middle class woman, who struggles for her modeling career against the social conservatism of her culture.

Rafina, the protagonist, enters her modeling career through Radiance, a beauty salon and modeling agency in Karachi. Her boyfriend, Arif (played by Yasir Aqueel), who later becomes her fiancé, is a worker in the secular Pakistan People's Party. Arif feels insecure about Rafina's modeling career. He sees the modeling or showbiz world as different from the world he and Rafina live in. Rafina becomes a successful model, and appears on an advertisement billboard for tea, her ultimate dream. Her billboards are

vandalized by religious conservatives, who believe advertising billboards are obscene and anti-Islamic. Arif keeps working for his political party, but does not secure a higher position in his party. As Arif does not feel happy with Rafina's modeling career while Rafina does not want to give up her dream of being a successful model, both Rafina and Arif choose to follow their own separate careers rather than staying together.

Status of women by religion: Islam is a threat to women's empowerment. The narrative of the film shows Islam to be hostile towards modeling women by vandalizing their posters and billboards. Islamic clerics are framed as fanatics, who threaten people for participating in a mixed marathon—long running race—of women and men. Islamic clerics are portrayed as social conservatives who call women's pictures on advertising billboards "obscene and anti-Islamic."

The film relates women's oppression with Islam, although the antagonist character has no religious affiliation. For instance, Rafina is stopped by her fiancé, Arif, who works for a secular political party. Arif has no religious tendencies and his actions are not shown to be guided by religion. However, the film shows that conservative religious clerics and laypeople are against women appearing in public through advertising. They burn the posters of Rafina while chanting "slogan of greatness… Allah is great."

Social conservatism isolates working women. The narrative of the film represents Karachi, a metropolitan city and the economic hub of Pakistan, as socially conservative, where women are the victims of men on the streets. Such conservatism can be seen in the

film when a man on the street stares at Rafina and her aunt, Rosie (played by Beo Raana Zafar), and spits in front of them. Also, Rafina's fiancé, Arif, asks Rafina not to work as a fashion model, as men in the fashion industry exploit women. He wants Rafina to be a simple housewife. He breaks up with Rafina due to her modeling career.

The social conservatism of Karachi people can also be seen in the female members of Rafina's family. Rafina's aunt, Rosie, tells Arif that she will take Rafina home as she thinks that a young woman should be watched very carefully. Rafina's mother wants Rafina to marry a gentle policeman and raise children. She is against Rafina's work and believes that Rafina will be rejected by society due to her scandals with men, and will be divorced immediately after marriage. Rafina's mother taunts Rafina for her argumentative behavior:

Rafina's mother: What? What's going on in your mind? I've told Rosie that work will spoil you. You think of yourself as better than us?

In comparison to Karachi's culture in general, Radiance, a beauty salon and modeling agency, is represented as socially liberal, where women can go out freely around men. Radiance is a Western-style salon, where everyone talks in English and wears Western dress of jeans, coats, pants, and other outerwear. However, such liberal representations have certain aspects of women's exploitation, which are not depicted as threatening as Islamic suppression or social conservatism, but are still represented. For example, in Radiance the manager of Radiance calls Rafina a hot commodity. This dialogue is followed by a scene of a grocery store where people are buying groceries.

This links the literal meaning of "commodity" with its abstract meaning used in modeling business. Second, Radiance treats women as a source of entertainment for men. For example, men, holding margaritas, dance with women at a party. Jamal (played by Atta Yaqub), a fashion models' recruiter, is dating different models and when dropping Rafina home, they look at each other romantically as if they are going to kiss each other. Rafina's fiancé, Arif, asks her whether she kissed Jamal. The film treats this interaction between Jamal and Rafina as quite normal, ignoring the fact that Rafina is Arif's fiancée, and Jamal is harassing her at the job. Third, Jamal wants to strengthen his business network by introducing Rafina to his client, Fahad (played by Farhan Ally Agha). Fourth, Radiance defines the modeling profession as one only for beautiful single women and one that does not suit married women, as men are possessive about their wives:

Fahad: (about a modeling women) She is not too off the mark, but the amount of trouble her husband causes on shoots for my ad agency, she isn't just worth it.

Murad: Excuse me.

Fahad: Personally, I don't think married women should model anyway. I mean, our culture is so insecure about women. They want to own them and possess them. And now, they also want to show them off to their friends. Manhood versus economics.

Jamal: Economics until six in the evening and then its manhood all the way.

The above conversation among the modeling and advertising business people inside Radiance suggests that modeling women have to sacrifice their family for a

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modeling career. Fahad's views about the men showing their wives to their friends reflects Fahad's conservative views. A man, introducing his wife to his friends, might reflect that he trusts his wife. Trust does not mean that such men allow their wives to go out with men from modeling agencies, dance with them, and kiss them. Such extra-marital relations are objectionable for both men and women, and not justifiable in any culture.

Women's struggles for empowerment. The film suggests a woman must struggle against social barriers for her career and independence. This is evident in the protagonist character of Rafina, who convinces her mother to allow her to be a model. Her mother is concerned about the conservative minds of society and the challenges Rafina will face in such society. Rafina then sacrifices her love with Arif, and chooses her modeling career over marrying him. He is possessive about Rafina and believes that Rafina will be spoiled by men in Radiance. Arif asks Rafina not to pursue a modeling career and when Rafina refuses his request, he breaks up with her.

Rafina is threatened by Islamic conservatives, who believe she is instigating something. She replies to such threats by featuring Rosie on a billboard, unveiling her face from a burka. Rafina also struggles to improve her English, which helps her to adjust in Radiance's environment. She struggles against the initial rude behavior of Radiance's staff and clients. For instance, a manager in Radiance ironically asks her to make a "real tea," instead of the "milk tea" that Rafina and people like her drink. Rafina is also told by Radiance's manager to serve the tea without spilling it in someone's lap. One client in

Radiance taunts Rafina for her virginity. Rafina faces all those challenges quietly and proves herself to be a successful model.

Women may break social barriers in their path to empowerment. The film suggests that women should (or can) break through all the social barriers that block their way toward empowerment. Such barriers include marriage, love, parents, limiting oneself to have personal relations with only one man, lacking familiarity with Western values and English language, and Islamic conservatism.

Those barriers are broken by Rafina in the film. She prefers her modeling career over marrying Arif and keeping their love relationship. She is passionate about her career. She argues with her mother and goes against her mother's wish of her marrying Arif or some simple gentleman and raising children. She dances and goes out with Jamal, Fahad, and other men at a party for her career growth. She lacks the knowledge of most of the Western values in the beginning, and keeps quiet when taunted by Westernized women for her virginity, lifestyle, and language. She works hard on her English, and adopts Western attire, lifestyle, and views. She stands against the Islamic conservatism by not only speaking openly against it, but making a billboard featuring Rosie unveiling her face from a burka. Still Rafina's sacrifices and professional success lead at the end of the story to social isolation and loneliness.

Ideological Implications of the Discourse of Films

Silent Water. The film was produced in 2003 during a time when a military dictator, General Pervez Musharraf, was the president of Pakistan. That was a time when

Musharraf aligned Pakistan with United States in the "war on terror" to fight against militancy. The narrative of the film represents the time period of 1947, the time of partition of India into current India and Pakistan, and compares it with the time of 1979, the time of Zia-ul-Haq's Islamization of the country. In 1947, women were abducted on both sides of India and Pakistan by Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus. To avoid such abductions, men killed their women for honor. In 1979, Zia-ul-Haq introduced the Hudood Ordinance, according to which punishments, such as stoning to death, were devised for adultery. Women were supposed to provide witnesses of their rape to prove their innocence, otherwise, they were considered guilty of adultery. That resulted in thousands of women ending up in jail. The film ends with the then president and military dictator, Pervez Musharraf's referendum in the country. The slogans of referendum on the banners are pretty much same as those of Zia's Islamization. For instance, one of the banners of Zia reads, "(Zia…) for the survival of Pakistan and Islam" while Musharraf's banner reads, "Musharraf is necessary for the survival of Pakistan."

The director, Sumar, said in an interview that her film, *Silent Water*, linked the abduction of women in 1947 with the current wave of violence (Ahmad & Anjum, 2014). Since the film is based on Islamic fundamentalism and violence against women, she encompassed Zia's Islamization of 1979 and extended it to Pervez Musharraf's presidential referendum of 2002. This despite the fact that compared to Zia-ul-Haq's conservative policies, Pervez Musharraf's policies were socially liberal. Zia-ul-Haq created Taliban and Islamic militants in the name of jihad against the U.S.S.R. in the

1980s while Musharraf fought against those militants and their terrorism (Shah, 2002) in 2001. Zia-ul-Haq suppressed women through the Hudood Ordinance while Musharraf empowered women by changing Hudood Ordinance into "Women's Protection Bill" in 2006 (Rahat, 2013; Weiss, 2012). This bill reduced the punishment of women for adultery and made it comparatively easy for women to prove their innocence. Musharraf also increased the reserved seats for women in National and Provincial Assembly, and women's quota in government jobs (Graff, 2003). The film's linking of Zia's conservative polices of 1970s with Musharraf's liberal policies (from 2000 to 2008), suggests that despite the difference in the political ideologies of the two military rulers, the condition of women in Pakistan has not improved.

The film highly criticized Islam, especially global Islam, by presenting it as a political ideology and comparing it with the local version of Islam. The people of Charkhi are shown to say their *Salah* and read Koran, and are friendlier towards each other, including women, before the global Islamic preachers came to the village. The global version of Islam is represented to be brought by some politically motivated preachers, whose purpose was to serve the Zia-ul-Haq's political agenda of Islamizing the country. Also, the film linked global Islam with anti-women and anti-social behaviors such as bullying, guns, and racism.

The narrative of the film suggests that Islam is misinterpreted conveniently for purposes of patriarchy by political Islamists while overlooking the fact that Islam supports patriarchy (Jejeebhoy and Sathar, 2001). The film depicted the patriarchal nature

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of Islam as politically manipulated rather than an innocent misinterpretation of Islam. However, the patriarchal nature of Pakistani society is not only guided by Islam, but also by a patriarchal culture, a culture lived by both Indian Muslims and Hindus (Malik, 2006; Niaz, 2003; Qureshi, 2010). We can see such patriarchy even among Indian Hindu in the form of the *sati* funeral custom, where a widow immolates herself in front of her husband's pyre (Gilmartin, 1997). Many people in Pakistan practice patriarchy regardless of their degree of religious leanings.

In the Name of God. The film was produced and screened in 2007, a time when Pakistan was facing the internal challenges of security threats. However, the film portrays Pakistan as a threat to the external world, by showing Pakistani militants fighting in Afghanistan against Northern Alliance. Pakistan's army is shown in the film to negotiate with the militants to release Mary, rather than taking any action against those militants for abduction or militancy. The film was criticized by radical Muslims for its controversial contents about Islam ("Shoaib Mansoor's interview," 2008). For instance, Abdul Rashid Ghazi, a deputed mullah of Lal Masjid, Islamabad, declared it blasphemous and demanded its ban in Pakistani cinema ("Khuda Kay Liye is Blasphemous," 2007). Ghazi waged war against the Pakistani government, demanding the imposition of *sharia* law in Pakistan. He was killed in Operation Sunrise, conducted by the Pakistan army in 2007, for destruction of property, clash with security forces, arson, and kidnapping. Soon after Operation Sunrise, the Pakistani army conducted an operation in tribal areas of Pakistan against safe havens of militant groups. The film

reflected the socio-cultural situation of Pakistan in 2007, but rather than addressing the militants as an internal threat, they are presented as a legal entity in Pakistan, whereby Maulana Tahiri, who recruits militants, runs a mosque in Lahore. Also, Pakistan army personnel meet elders of Zakakhel, a tribal village, to negotiate the release of Mary. This suggests that the Pakistan army is not taking any action against those militants.

The film tried to prove that music is not haram—forbidden—in Islam. Since Mansoor is also a music composer and lyricist, in an interview, he expressed his disappointment with one of his protégés, Junaid Jamshed, who was defining music as haram in Islam after becoming an Islamic cleric ("Spotlight: Shoaib Mansoor," n.d.). Jamshed was a famous pop singer of Pakistan introduced into the music industry by Shoaib Mansoor in the 1980s. He later grew a beard and turned toward the practice of Islamic religion.

The film pits women against men within their own family. For instance, Mary becomes a victim of her father, Hussain, who forces her to marry Sarmad, her cousin. This suggests that the woman is a victim of her father and cousin. Other aspects of the struggle of women against men can be seen in the courtroom, when a women's rights group supports Mary while men, mostly religious ones, support Sarmad. Another instance of women against men is presented in the form of tribal women. Women in Sher Shah's house help Mary to escape. This suggests that women have soft hearts for other women regardless of their blood relations while their blood relative men are those women's main oppressors. For instance, women in Sher Shah's home, the girlfriend of Hussain, and

women from civil society have no blood relations with the protagonist character of Mary, but they still help her. On the other hand, the antagonist character of Sarmad, his uncle Hussain, and all his supporters are males. Such discourse portrays exceptional cases of women, where they are weak or suppressed.

The narrative of the film represents women as religiously moderate to secular while men are religiously moderate to extremists. This suggests that religion is something masculine and oppressive, used by men to reinforce their patriarchy, and suppress women.

Speak. This film was produced in 2011 and represents a family under the guardianship of a misogynist man. The film does not portray a particular political situation or event in Pakistan, rather it represents patriarchy and misogyny, whereby some people use their gender role, such as fatherhood, to control women relatives. Such people use both cultural norms and Islamic teachings to reinforce their masculine domination.

The controversial part of the film is the objection to hadiths and commandments of God. The protagonist character of Zainab, in the film, argues about the different interpretations of Islam. However, the misuse of Islamic teachings and hadiths by the antagonist Hakim makes Zainab challenge his Islamic justification for his social conservatism. The narrative of the film shows that Hakim uses Islamic teachings to justify his anti-social behavior. When Zainab makes him speechless with valid arguments, he abuses his fatherhood position by using physical force to win his

argument. Such objection of Zainab to hadiths may upset some orthodox Muslims but misusing Islam is a social stigma for most Pakistanis who take a moderate stance regarding the power of the male figure in the family and society.

The film's ending constructs an ideal scenario if one takes into account the social conservatism of Pakistani society, where women without a male member of a family face a lot of challenges. For instance, the film shows that after the death of Hakim and Zainab, Zainab's sisters serve food to the people on the street in front of their house. Men are shown to be eating gently and politely in the company of women, where the real society of Pakistan is not that socially liberal. For instance, in 2002, 587 cases of gang rapes and sexual assaults were reported in Pakistan, among which 400 cases were reported from Punjab; within Punjab, 23 cases were from Lahore (Niaz, 2003), the city this film represented. Niaz further argues that most of the cases of sexual assault are encouraged by the societal subordination of women to men and are conducted even in public places. Also, the film shows the food stall to be grown into a high standard restaurant without enough capital investment, which is an idealistic situation.

Women in the film are portrayed to be religiously moderate to secular while men are highly religious. Such division suggests that religion is a weapon used by men for the suppression of women. For instance, the antagonist character of Hakim recites Koran and goes to mosque for prayer. However, he batters and verbally abuses his women. Similarly, Isaac, who asks Hakim to teach his children the Koran, also has moderate religious inclinations. He also exploits women by pimping them for prostitution.

The film shows that the protagonist Zainab helps her antagonist father Hakim by finding out ways to avoid jail after killing his child. When Hakim kills his transgender child, Saifee, rather than reporting it to the police, Zainab gives him the suggestion about how to bribe the police to avoid jail. One of the reasons for doing this is because such women depend on their male family members for financial survival. For instance, Hakim's wife requests Hakim to pay the bribe to avoid jail as it would be hard for her to take care of her daughters without a man. But saving Hakim means doing injustice to Saifee. This suggests that women under such patriarchal family structure have no option other than to support their male relatives. Such discourse addresses important issues related to the problems of low- or non-reporting of domestic violence crimes and the extreme level of dependency of women on their male members of the family. Such dependency makes women help their male family members as going against family members will cause isolation from their family.

The film pays little attention to the exploitation of women by Isaac Chaudhary (also known as Saqa Kanjar in the film) and the plot does not incorporate options to empower the prostitutes. For instance, Isaac earns money by making women dance, sing, and sell sex. He wants more women so that he can make more money. Although Mina's baby girl gets in the hands of Zainab's sisters, who put her in school, Mina is not shown to be empowered and free from exploitation. Since those *kanjars* have roots in Hindu religion and are considered haram in Islam, the film might have marginalized the exploitation of these group of women. paid little attention to their exploitation of women.

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This means that the discourse of the film is just about oppression of women by Islam, not by any other religious or social factors.

The film created a discourse of ethnic and sectarian bias. The film portrays Hakim, an Indian immigrant, as conservative, patriarchal, and misogynist while Punjabi ethnic Master is socially liberal. Hakim's other identity is his religious sect. Sunni Muslim Hakim is portrayed as sectarian, patriarchal, a killer, and an oppressor of women while Shiite Muslim Master is shown as women-friendly, socially liberal, and non-sectarian. Such profiling of a particular sect or ethnicity is bias towards a particular sect and ethnic group.

Good Morning Karachi. The film was produced in 2013, after that year's general election, which marked the end of the tenure of the secular Pakistan People's Party. The film encompasses the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 2007. The film addressed little or no significant timely events of 2013 but offers a strong critique of social conservatism of Pakistani society.

The film shows mullahs—religious clerics—opposed to fashion modeling, by representing them chanting slogans and vandalizing advertising billboards featuring women models, calling those billboards obscene and anti-Islamic, and threatening people who participated in men-women mixed marathon—long distance running race. Such demonstrations and vandalism are portrayed as being carried out after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. The film glosses over the facts of the actual damage caused by Bhutto's own supporters to public and private properties of people. Those Bhutto supporters killed

at least nine people during the violent demonstration, smashed glass windows, and stoned cars after assassination of Bhutto ("Bhutto Assassination," 2007). Around 200,000 people were booked for being involved in just two districts of Sindh on the charges of looting and arson of public and private properties, and around $20,000 was recovered by the police from those rioters ("Violent reaction to Benazir's," 2008). People's private property, such as shops, and public property, such as banks, were broken, burned, and looted.

Another problematic aspect of the film is the representation of the main threatening agent of Karachi as Islamic extremism towards modeling business, fashion industry, or advertising agencies. However, experts have argued that murders of political workers, extortions, ransom, and foreign agents were the main criminal challenges of Karachi in 2013 ("Karachi's problems," 2013).

The narrative of the film represents Karachi as a hub of extremism, giving an impression that Karachi is a highly insecure place of Pakistan while ignoring the metropolitan and multicultural facets of the city. This is evident in the film when a newscaster announces news about mullahs' remarks about billboards, modeling women, and having women and men run together in a mixed marathon.

The film shows an individualistic woman, Rafina, who rejects her family values, cultural norms, and societal virtues. This gives Rafina her individual freedom at the expense of her family, culture, and society. However, Pakistani society is typically described as a collectivist society, whereby people irrespective of their gender, follow

certain religious, cultural, and social norms (Islam, 2004). The film shows Rafina to be alone at the end of the film, which suggests the condemnation by social conservatives in Pakistani society as the cause of social isolation of a woman who chose fashion modeling as a career.

The film represents the fashion industry as the prime target of terrorists. The newscaster in the film announces news of bomb blast with the same tone as the news about the fashion week. He even relates the story of the bomb blast with fashion week by representing the fashion week to be a sensitive event:

Newscaster: The city is struggling to get back to some kind of normalcy after yesterday's bomb blast, but I know you will Karachi, I know you will. Coming up very shortly, news from Karachi Fashion Week. Due to security concerns, the location of the event in Karachi has not been disclosed.

Fashion shows are common in Karachi and Lahore. There has been no terrorist attack reported in those fashion shows so far in Pakistan. Also, there are very few incidents where fashion models are attacked by terrorists. However, these models have received threats from criminal people including terrorists, politicians, extortionists, and people having personal and professional clashes with them. In fact, almost every high profile person has threats from others, including civil rights workers, regardless of gender. For instance, an official letter of the Deputy Inspector General of Police in Karachi reports 14 people receiving potential threats from terrorists, including five male fashion designers, one male civil rights activist, six male show business persons, one

female singer, and one female model (Zain, 2015). This suggests that more male show business persons are the targets of terrorists than females, whereby the narrative of the film shows only female models to receive threats from terrorists.

The film is focused on the case of women who are threatened by a conservative Islamic society and isolated by the social conservative forces. The film excludes the cases where men fashion models are the targets of those threats. Also, the film excludes the level of respect and fame a modeling woman receives in Pakistani society, by portraying such society as socially and religiously conservative.

Ideological Differences and Similarities between Sumar's and Mansoor's Discourses about Women

Ideological differences. Shoaib Mansoor's films suggest women's suppression to be caused by misinterpretation of Islam while Sabiha Sumar's films suggest such suppression to be caused by religion itself. For instance, in Mansoor's *In the Name of God*, two religious clerics have different interpretations of Islam about music, photos, beards, forced marriages, and marriages outside Islam. In the film *Speak*, Hakim and his daughter, Zainab, have different interpretations and understandings of Islam. Mansoor's films suggest that the misinterpretation of Islam is the main problem of women's suppression.

Sumar, by contrast, represented Islam or religion more broadly as the main suppressor of women without providing her nuances in the alternative interpretations of Islam. For instance, in her film *Silent Water*, she presented global Islam as political and a

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direct cause of women's oppression. In her other film, *Good Morning Karachi*, she portrayed mullahs as conservatives, who vandalize billboards and consider them obscene.

Another difference between Sumar and Mansoor is that Mansoor addressed more women-specific problems common among wider sectors of the female population while Sumar addressed both gender-specific and gender-neutral issues and exceptional cases that are not as common for most women. For instance, in his film *In the Name of God,* Mansoor addressed the issue of forced marriages by exposing that a general stigma of conservative society is to ignore the consent of women for marriages. Since such marriages result in domestic violence due to the lack of understanding between both partners, such a problem is indispensable in addressing domestic violence against women (Yefet, 2009). In his other film, *Speak*, Mansoor addressed misogyny and birth control, two issues that affect most women directly. where both the issues are directly related to women. Many low educated people in Pakistan believe that family planning is a sin, and resultantly have large family size and lack of sufficient resources.

Sumar, on the other hand, addressed some issues that are gender-specific as well as other issues that are gender-neutral and/or less common for the majority of women. For instance, in her film *Silent Water*, she addressed the issue of proclamation of a woman's Islamic beliefs. Such proclamation of religious beliefs is not a gender-specific problem, and can be applied to both men and women. In fact, men can be more exposed for such confirmation as they interact with more people in society. Also, proclamation of Islamic faith is not a general problem, but an exceptional case, as being born and raised

as Muslim, I have never experienced such thing in my life, nor have I seen or heard about anyone asking others to proclaim their religious beliefs. However, Sumar also addressed the issue of honor killing of women, when Ayesha's sister and mother were killed by Ayesha's father for honor during the partition of India in 1947. In her other film, *Good Morning Karachi*, Sumar addressed the threats to a female model from Islamic extremists. This case is rarer and far more exceptional, as I discussed earlier, as more men are threatened, according to a recent letter from the police department of Sindh. The threats were called "potential threats," not very serious, as there are very few reports that such models are targeted by those extremists. Sumar's discourse in the film suggests that social conservatism and religious extremism is a threat to women only, though the same problems can be applied to men as well.

Mansoor suggests that social conservatism and misogyny are rooted more in ethnic culture than in religion. In his film *In the Name of God* he portrayed all Pashtuns as misogynist, conservative, patriarchal, and radical. They radicalized Sarmad too, who, at the end, felt sorry for his radical and misogynist behavior. His uncle, Hussain, also felt sorry for forcing his daughter to marry Sarmad. But Pashtuns remained misogynist and radical until the end. Hussain's and Mansoor's characters in the film dispel the confusion between cultural and religious motives. Mansoor, a moderate religious man, tells Janie that he is reluctant about marrying her, not because of their religious difference, but because of their cultural differences. Hussain is not a religious person, but he is a misogynist, which suggests that religion has no connection with misogyny. In his other

film, *Speak*, Mansoor shows a misogynist attitude is linked with Indian ethnic Hakim. In contrast, Master and Isaac are Punjabi ethnic people and are socially liberal and women-friendly. However, Master and Isaac are Shiite Muslims while Hakim is Sunni Muslim. This also suggests that Mansoor considers Sunni Islam as more patriarchal and misogynist.

Sumar linked patriarchy and misogyny with religion rather than complicating with culture or ethnicity. In both of her films, all characters are shown to be from the same ethnicity. For instance, in *Silent Water*, the ethnicity is Punjabi, whereby some people are radicalized and have a patriarchal attitude due to their inclination toward global Islam, which she believes is political Islam. In her other film, *Good Morning Karachi*, all the characters are from Karachi with no particular ethnic indicator, where middle or lower-middle class people are shown as socially conservative while the elite class is Westernized and socially liberal.

Mansoor's films' ideological implications are idealistic. Both of his films have idealistic endings. For instance, in *In the Name of God*, the antagonist Sarmad and his uncle Hussain feel sorry for their behavior and change their attitude. The protagonist Mary decides not to go back to London and, rather, to stay in a tribal village of Pakistan to educate its girls. In his other film, *Speak*, after the death of Zainab and her father, her sisters open their own small food stall which grows into a big high standard restaurant without any capital investment. Also her sisters serve food to their clients on the street, overlooking the conservative nature of society, who harass such young women on streets.

Another example of Mansoor's idealistic approach is his interpretation of Islam as a women-friendly religion. Mansoor has no religious education or scholastic degree to interpret Islam and may have overlooked the Islamic teachings about women such as purdah or seclusion. Although he represented the burka as a symbol of women's oppressor, he did not say anything about its religious dimensions.

Sumar addressed problems specific to women and the ideological implications of her discourse are more in tune with current sociocultural practices in Pakistan. In her film, *Silent Water*, the protagonist grows exhausted with the conservative outlook of her son and commits suicide while the antagonist character has no or little remorse for his actions. The antagonist is shown to become a religious politician and get a position of General Secretary in his party. In *Good Morning Karachi*, both the antagonist, Arif, and the protagonist, Rafina, choose their own career paths and break up their relationship. Rafina is shown to be alone in her career world after she broke all the social barriers for her career. Most of the women in the showbiz world of Pakistan have the same common story, where their conservative parents oppose their ideas of modeling, acting, or singing, and they have to opt for their career path at the expense of their families and society. Arif is shown as working for his political party and is not shown to achieve any higher position in his party. Sumar offers her interpretation of Islam as oppressive, with no attention to nuances and internal differences among sects. She portrays the current version of Islam as political and patriarchal by focusing on its oppressive character without admitting internal differences determined by Pakistani culture and society.

In terms of codes of representation of women, Mansoor's films are more conservative in terms of presenting little or no physical contact between men and women. Here I refer to the level of nudity, acts of physical contact between two genders, and the use of offensive language. In *In the Name of God*, Mansoor depicts the character of Mansoor and Janie as girlfriend and boyfriend, but they do not have any physical contact except for a hug when Mansoor proposes marriage. Likewise, in the same film, Mary and Dave are boyfriend and girlfriend, but they do not have any physical contact between them. There is no partial or full nudity in the film, nor do they use any offensive language in the film, except for using words like "fat-ass bitch" during the interrogation of Mansoor by the F.B.I. By partial nudity, I mean cleavage, bared legs, or bared belly. In Mansoor's film *Speak*, Ayesha and Mustafa are boyfriend and girlfriend, but they do not have any physical contact or partial or full nudity. Another moral standard is the use of alcohol. None of Mansoor's film shows the consumption of alcohol, and characters actually refuse to drink alcohol.

Sumar's films are less conservative in comparison. In *Silent Water*, Saleem and Zubaida hug, kiss, and caress each other. In the film, people are consuming alcohol during the wedding party of Chaudhary. In *Good Morning Karachi*, Rafina and Arif do the same hugging, caressing, and kissing each other. Rafina wears clothes with bared arms, legs, and visible cleavage. In the film, offensive words like "fuck" and "fart" are used. Also, characters are shown drinking margaritas in Radiance after the fashion-show party.

There are some general differences between Sumar and Mansoor's discourse in the films. Mansoor shows music in both of his films, perhaps since Mansoor himself was a lyricist and music composer. In his film *In the Name of God*, he tries to prove that music is legal in Islam, as he was upset by his singer-turned-cleric protégé, Junaid Jamshed, who called music haram after leaning toward Islam. In his other film, *Speak*, he again engages music, whereby one of the protagonist's supporting characters, Mustafa, is represented as a singer. Mustafa, whose real name is Atif Aslam, is also a real-life famous pop singer in Pakistan.

Sumar, on the other hand, engages politics in both of her films. For instance, in her film, *Silent Water*, she addresses the political history of Pakistan in 1947, the partition of India. She then relates 1947's incidents with 1979's by engaging Zia's Islamization reforms and Independence Day of Pakistan. At the end of the film, she shows 2002, the time of referendum by a military dictator, General Pervez Musharraf. In her other film, *Good Morning Karachi*, she engages a former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, her election campaign and assassination in 2007, and her political party, Pakistan People's Party. For instance, the newscaster on the radio (in the film) frequently reports about the public gathering of Benazir Bhutto and then her assassination. Arif works for Bhutto's party and posts her posters on different public places.

Ideological similarities. There are some similarities between Mansoor's and Sumar's discourses about women in Pakistan. First, both Mansoor and Sumar portray men as antagonists and perpetrators while women are protagonists and victims. Also,

their men are motivated by religion and are the immediate relatives of women such as husband, father, son, or cousin. For instance, Sumar's *Silent Water* shows that Ayesha's mother and sister were killed for honor by her Sikh father, suggesting that women are the victims of their husbands and fathers. Ayesha herself becomes the victim of her son, Saleem, who makes her life miserable enough after his inclination towards global Islam, to make her commit suicide. Sumar's other film, *Good Morning Karachi*, represents women as oppressed by their fiancés or husbands, who stop them from their career growth. This is evident in the film, when Arif asks Rafina not to pursue a modeling career. Also, Fahad, an advertising agent, believes that married women should not do modeling as their husbands feel insecure about their wives. However, in this case, women are the victims of conservative Muslims who vandalize their billboards for obscenity.

Mansoor offers a similar discourse about women's suppression. His films suggest that women are suppressed by their immediate relatives, men who are motivated by religion. His film, *In the Name of God*, presents Mary as a victim of her father, Hussain, who forces her to marry Sarmad. Although Hussain is not religious, he justifies his acts through Islam. Sarmad, a cousin of Mary, forcefully marries her, and rapes her after his inclination towards Islam. In his other film, *Speak*, women are presented to be the victims of their father. For instance, Hakim, a misogynist religious man, batters and verbally abuses his wife and daughters.

Sumar and Mansoor share the same symbols of oppression. Burkas remain the symbol of oppression in at least three films. Mansoor refers to burkas in both of his films.

For instance, in his film *In the Name of God*, Sarmad asks his mother to wear a burka after his inclination towards radical Islam. Mary is shown to be wearing an Afghani burka while escaping Sarmad's abduction. In *Speak*, Zainab asks her sisters to throw away their burkas and make their own fate. At the end of the film, when her sisters are running a successful restaurant, none are wearing burkas. Even Mina is shown as wearing a burka when she goes to Hakim's home to hand over the baby. But when she goes to Zainab's restaurant, she is wearing just a *dupatta*—shawl.

Sumar also uses burkas as a symbol of oppression of women. For instance, in her film *Silent Water*, in his religious-political speech, the professor preaches to (male) listeners to protect their women from obscenity, as they are wandering in the streets bareheaded. Although it is not clear whether he referred to burka or something else, he was referring to purdah or seclusion, which could be represented by a burka in this case. In *Good Morning Karachi*, Rafina makes a billboard, featuring Rosie unveiling her face from a burka with the caption "unveil the glow."

Another similarity between Sumar's and Mansoor's discourses in their films are indicators of destruction and chaos. Religious slogans of "slogan of greatness… Allah is great," mosque, and beard are linked with destruction and chaos in all four films. For instance, in Mansoor's *In the Name of God*, a mob chanting "slogan of greatness… Allah is great," vandalizes a New Year's billboard. Sarmad is radicalized in the film in a mosque, and grows a beard. All the radical characters have beards in the film. Similarly,

in his other film, *Speak*, the antagonist character of Hakim has a beard and goes to mosque. However, the film does not have any mob to chant slogans.

Sumar has the same discourse about slogans, mosque, and beards. In *Silent Water*, all the radical characters chant "slogan of greatness… Allah is great," and talk about jihad or demonstrate against Sikhs. All those antagonist characters have beards or grow beards after their inclination toward global Islam. Most of those jihadi speeches are delivered in mosques. In her other film, *Good Morning Karachi*, people chant "slogan of greatness… Allah is great," when vandalizing the billboards. However, the film does not involve mosques or beards, as the film is not showing any religious group in particular.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

This study critically analyzed four recent independent Pakistani films, *Silent Water*, *In the Name of God*, *Speak*, and *Good Morning Karachi*, for their discourses about gender, religion, and culture in framing the status of women, their struggles for empowerment, and options available to them. The study identified discursive differences and similarities among the films of two directors in framing the status of women.

Discourse on status of women, their struggle for empowerment, and options available to them. Research Question 1 asked how the narratives of these four films construct discourses about gender, religion, and culture through their framing of the status of women, their struggles, and the options available to them.

These films primarily addressed women's issues in Pakistani society. First, these films propose that women are oppressed primarily by men in their own families who, are motivated by religious misinterpretations and patriarchal norms in the culture of Pakistan. Such men are depicted as immediate relatives of women, such as their husbands, fathers, sons, or cousins rather than strangers, oppressive governments, or Islamic radicals from outside the nation. Such immediate relatives are shown as allowing strangers or outsiders

to oppress their women. However, men who are moderate Muslims and less patriarchal, are portrayed as more respectful to women.

Second, religion is presented as either directly involved in the suppression of women, or it is framed as misinterpreted by certain men seeking to reinforce their control over women and self-image or financial interests in society. The films related the anti-social behaviors of men within both religious and social structures. Thus, in the case of Mansoor's films, misogynist and radical behaviors are linked not only to religion but also with certain ethnic group cultures, such as Indians or Pashtuns.

Third, all the women in the films are found to be religiously moderate to secular while men are portrayed to be moderate to extremely religious. For instance, in Sumar's *Silent Water* Ayesha reads Koran and says her *Salah* or prayer, but does not commit any extreme religious act such as wearing burka, seclusion, or any religion or social conservatism. Other than that, Ayesha and Zubaida attend the shrine of a Sufi saint. Ayesha also sends food to a Sikh shrine, which suggests her religious tolerance and respect for other religions. No other woman in the film is shown to be involved in religious practices, particularly global Islamic practices. On the other hand, men are radicalized for religious extremism including antagonist Saleem, his friend Zubair, and religious preachers. They talk about jihad, patriarchy, and threaten people from other religions. Likewise, in Sumar's *Good Morning Karachi,* neither Rafina nor the other women are shown to be involved in any religious practice or refer to any Islamic teachings, except for the funeral customs of Rosie, when women read Koran for the

forgiveness of Rosie's sins. Men in the same film are presented as chanting religious slogans, vandalizing billboards, threatening model women, and disrespectful to women.

Similarly, in Mansoor's *In the Name of God,* no woman is shown to be involved in any religious practice, except for Mansoor's mother, who once read Koran, when she prays for the recovery of Mansoor from trauma. In the same film, men are presented to be involved in religious extremism, jihad, forced marriages, abductions, and honor killings. Likewise, in Mansoor's other film, *Speak,* no woman is engaged in any religious practice by herself, rather Hakim makes them pray. Men are shown to go to mosque and be regularly involved in religious practices in the same film.

Fourth, these films center on female protagonists who represent women's struggles against their male counterparts. The films' narratives focus on the women's fight for their empowerment against patriarchy, misogyny, honor killing, forced marriages, career barriers, and religious oppression. The films suggest that women remain the victims of honor killing by men. For instance, in *Silent Water,* women are shown to be killed by their Sikh male relatives to save the honor of husbands and fathers and to avoid their abduction by Muslims during partition of India in1947. Similarly, women's lack of choice and control over the selection of a partner and husband is represented as something that signals that women are inferior to men and can be forced into non-consensual marriage, as depicted in three of the films. *Speak*, for example, represents the misogynist and rude behavior of a man, who batters and verbally abuses his wife and daughters and wants a baby boy from his wife. Father also deprives his

daughter of her marriage consent and forces her to marry a man older than her age. Women are depicted as deprived by men but fighting to attain education, career growth, as *Good Morning Karachi*, and financial independence as in *Speak* whereby the film represents social conservatism and religious extremism as threats to women's empowerment.

Fifth, these films suggest that women can and should empower themselves by obtaining education, standing against patriarchy by not keeping silent, breaking the social barriers in their career and economic paths, exercising free choice in their selection of partners, consent in family planning, and standing against the conservative norms of society that leads to their oppression. For instance, *Speak* suggests women speak for their rights and report the violence they face. It also encourages them to break the social barriers and minimize their dependency on men by starting their own small home-based business by utilizing their limited resources, use their free will to decide about motherhood, and make their marriage decisions by themselves. *In the Name of God* suggests women fight for their rights by reporting their injustice to concerned authorities, rather than keeping quiet and accepting their fate. The film also assumes the institutions of the state are to be trusted in being fair to women. *Silent Water* is more about the victimization of women than their paths toward empowerment by situating women only as victims without suggesting their options for empowerment. For instance, the film ends with the suicide of the protagonist woman and the successful political career of the

antagonist man. *Good Morning Karachi* suggests women stand against social and religious barriers to achieve their career goals.

Differences and similarities between Mansoor's and Sumar's discourses. In response to Research Question 2, my analysis found that filmmakers Mansoor and Sumar have some ideological differences and similarities in the creation of discourse about women. Sumar addressed exceptional cases where women are oppressed and the cases that are not exclusive to women while Mansoor addressed women-specific issues. For instance, Sumar addressed the issue of proclamation of Islamic beliefs in her film, *Silent Water*. Such proclamation is not common and not specific to gender, whereas men can also be asked to testify to their religious beliefs by socially conservative people in Pakistan. Sumar addressed the issues of social and religious barriers to a modeling career, although such barriers are not the basic problems of the majority of women in Pakistan. Also, achieving a career goal can be challenging for both men and women. The director used objections to modeling as an example of a social barrier for women, although modeling may actually be resisted by conservative forces of society due to models' Western lifestyle (Qureshi, 2010) while other careers pursued by women might be acceptable to conservative people.

Mansoor addressed the issue of forced marriages in his film *In the Name of God*, an issue that is more common and specific to women in Pakistani society. In his other film, *Speak*, he addressed the issue of domestic violence and family planning. These issues are seen as specific to women who suffer them in Pakistani conservative societies.

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In such societies, women are blamed for bearing female children, are susceptible to domestic violence, and receives inferior treatment than men.

While Sumar seems to blame religion in general and Islam in particular (as a general category without nuanced differences in sectarian and philosophical differences within Islam) for women's oppression, Mansoor seems to blame the misinterpretation of Islam by particular ethnic groups—Pashtuns and Indians—to be responsible for women's oppression. In both of her films, Sumar presented people from two different ideologies within the same culture and avoided ethnic specificity. In *Silent Water*, she showed Punjabi ethnic people; in this film, some people were radicalized by other Punjabis with religious and political motives while other remained in their same faith. In *Good Morning Karachi*, she presented people of Karachi, without making ethnic markers visible on the film, and made the main distinction be that some were socially conservative while others are socially liberal and westernized. The conservative Islamic people who vandalized the billboards were not shown to be from any particular ethnicity of Pakistan.

Mansoor suggests the misinterpretation of Islam by certain ethnic groups to be responsible for women's oppression. For instance, in his film, *In the Name of God*, a socially conservative cleric, Maulana Tahiri, and his followers are shown to be Pashtuns who interpret Islam for their own patriarchal and political interests, while a Punjabi ethnic cleric, Maulana Wali, is portrayed as religiously and socially liberal. Similarly, in his other film, *Speak*, the conservative misogynist, Hakim, is a religious Indian ethnic man, while his neighbor, Master, is a liberal and secular Punjabi ethnic man.

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However, Sumar and Mansoor share certain common ground in depicting women's oppression in their films. Both represent burkas to be the symbol of oppression while religious slogans, beards, and mosques are associated with destructions or chaos. For instance, in *Speak*, Zainab asks her sisters to throw off the burkas and make their own fate. When they do, they make their choice to control their fate by opening a small food stall, which grows into a big restaurant. Zainab's father, the antagonist character, has a beard and goes to mosque regularly. Similarly, the burka is visible in the Pashtun tribal village in *In the Name of God*. The crowd chanting "slogan of greatness… Allah is great" is associated with men doing something destructive such as political jihad, vandalism, or injustice. Such men have beards and go to mosques in the film. The narrative of *Good Morning Karachi* shows the act of a woman unveiling her face from a burka to be related to her empowerment. "Slogan of greatness… Allah is great" is chanted by men while vandalizing the billboard. *Silent Water* has no explicit discourse about burkas. However, beard, mosque and religious slogans are associated in the film with demonstration, hatred, and jihad.

Ideological implications of the films. In response to Research Question 3, I would argue that differences in the plots and the endings of the films suggest different ideological implications. There are some differences between Sumar and Mansoor's discourse in reference to the ending of their films, whereby Sumar's approach is in line with Pakistan sociocultural practices while Mansoor's approach is idealistic, suggesting an ideal social situation. Sumar ends her film *Silent Water* by representing the protagonist

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character as committing suicide while the antagonist character becomes a successful politician. She also blames Islam for women's suppression by calling it political as a jihadi-based Arab version of Islam was used for political jihad during the Afghan war against the U.S.S.R. in the 1980s. Her other film, *Good Morning Karachi*, ends with both antagonist and protagonist characters choosing their career paths and ending their romantic relationship. Also the modeling woman is portrayed in the film as isolated by the society as she broke the social barriers and therefore judged to be unfit in the conservative society of Pakistan.

Mansoor's discourse about women in the films is more optimistic in that he asserts the idea that government institutions work for the protection of women. His films suggest that women have opportunities like education and opening their own small businesses even with limited resources. His film *In the Name of God* ends up with the remorse of the people that are directly involved in Mary's abduction and forced marriages. Religion is suggested in the film to be wrongly understood and interpreted by radical Islamic clerics. His other film *Speak*, ends up in the death of protagonist and antagonist, but the family is shown to start a small food stall that grows into a big restaurant. Such differences reflect the optimistic and pessimistic view of Mansoor and Sumar about the future of women in their country: Mansoor has a hope in the legal institutions of the country while Sumar seems to have little to no hope of betterment of women.

On moral grounds, Sumar's films are arguably controversial for religious and social conservative Pakistani audiences due to issues of obscenity—offensive language and clothes. Obscenity here refers to the partial or full nudity and physical contact between men and women, and use of offensive language. Sumar's films contain offensive words such as "fuck" and "fart." Women wear short dresses with large visible cleavage, bared bellies, backs, legs, and arms. Men and women are presented to have physical contact such as kissing, hugging, and caressing. Such dress and language are not acceptable to the majority of the Pakistani population and such films are considered as inappropriate to watch with family members in Pakistan. Mansoor, on the other hand, took heed of the moral standards or appropriateness of contents for Pakistani audiences by using acceptable language and clothes. Boyfriend and girlfriend were not shown to be engaged in any physical contact. The only physical contact was a hugging of Janie by Mansoor in *In the Name of God* after proposing marriage, and the only offensive words were "bullshit" and "fat ass bitch," which the character of Mansoor used during an FBI interrogation. Such moral grounds may question the appropriateness of these films to be watched with family in a conservative society. Also, Western values might suggest that Sumar is instigating cultural imperialism by promoting Western values in Pakistan through her film.

The films offer contemporary audiences with interpretations of historical events from a distance and not-so-distant past. For example, Sumar's *Silent Water* was produced in 2003 but addressed the abduction of women during the partition of India in 1947, Zia's

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Islamization of 1979, and Musharraf's referendum of 2002. Mansoor's *In the Name of God* was produced in 2007, the time when jihadists were an internal security threat to Pakistan, but the film presented those jihadists to be legal entities in Pakistan that were fighting against the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. The film addressed some relevant current issues such as music and jihadi recruitment, but related such recruitment with the scenario of 2001's incidents such as 9/11 attacks and jihad against Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, a six-year-old event. However, Mansoor's *Speak* was produced in 2011 and addressed the general social stigma of misogyny and misinterpretation of Islam. Sumar's *Good Morning Karachi* was produced in 2013, but addressed the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in 2007, a six-year-old event. However, the film also addressed some social and religious conservatism in Karachi in 2013, but extortions and target killings were more serious threats to Karachi than religious conservatism.

Another ideological implication of the discourse is how it presents a critique of the family as a structure. These films portrayed women as being against religion and patriarchy, whereby patriarchy is linked with misogyny in the films. Such misogynist men are shown to be the women's husbands, fathers, or sons. Such discourse can help women by suggesting them to report their problems and not to submit to injustice. However, the image of father is portrayed in a way that suggest that in Pakistani family, father is the main oppressor of daughter. This may build a sense of mistrust between a father and daughter.

As analyzed in light of the scholarly literature about third world women's representation, the films seem to support Mohanty (1988) argument that in Western discourse, religion and family kinship are the common grounds for women's oppression. The same oppressing grounds can be seen in these films, whereby women are shown to be oppressed by Islam and patriarchal culture. Family members of women (particularly male relatives) are shown to be the main oppressors of women. Another of Mohanty's arguments is that the elite feminists reduce women to victims by focusing on the religion and patriarchy as the root cause of women's oppression. Mohanty's argument can be extended to the films of this study, where Sumar reduced women to victims and focused on the religion and patriarchal culture to be the cause of such victimization. These films (particularly *Good Morning Karachi*) has presented religion as a strong force that keeps women in unprivileged position as argued by Afkhami (2001).

Conclusion

Mass media provide the basis for creating the lives, images, meanings, practices, and values of other groups, by providing the fragmented pieces of a social totality and representing them as unitary whole to convey particular ideas. My critical analysis of four Pakistani films, *Silent Water*, *In the Name of God*, *Speak*, and *Good Morning Karachi,* argues that discourse about women centers on the intersections of religion, family kinship, ethnicity, and sexual division of labor as common grounds to present a discourse on women's oppression.

In particular, these films suggest that an extreme version of Islam is a powerful force that influences different aspects of Pakistani people's everyday life and results in women's suppression. These films represented men as endorsing an extreme Islamic ideology as part of general social structure of Pakistan, whereas the society is more fragmented and the power of this sector is more limited than the narratives of the films would suggest. The film *Good Morning Karachi* takes into account the cultural identity of a woman by rejecting her role as a wife and mother and presenting her as biological object of the fashion industry. With only a few exceptions, the patriarchal culture of Pakistan is represented as misogynist in these films, where men reinforce their domination over women through religion and physical force. In the two cases where men were depicted as respecting women, education and religious moderation were the key factors behind such respectful attitude. Since the ethnic identity of such men were Punjabi, we can also conclude that Punjabi ethnic men are represented as more respectful to women as compared to Pashtun or Indian ethnic men (who were portrayed as misogynists).

These films presented women mainly as the victims of men in their own families. The empowerment of women is suggested in the form of liberation of those women from the men of their families. After rejecting the men's domination, these women are represented as empowered by having free will of getting education or doing business. Religion in general, and Islam in particular, are associated with men in the film, in that all antagonist characters are male and they are motivated by religion. This suggests that

religion is a tool of men who use it to subordinate their women. Mansoor created a discourse within the norms of Pakistani culture and state institutions and encouraged women to seek justice within those institutions while Sumar reduced women to victims and did not suggest any particular option for empowerment within the existing social structures.

These films addressed some basic issues of women in Pakistan, such as forced marriages, physical and verbal abuse, and honor killings. However, they lack the complementarity of gender, as suggested by Yin (2009), by maintaining the sense of otherness and reinforcing the existing clash of values associated with gender segregation. Instead of privileging complementarity and reciprocity, the films suggested that to end oppression it is best to replace domestic labor with wage employment or business ownership by women, by shifting the social role of women from a housewife to an economic source.

This focus on patriarchy obscures the fact that both men and women have to take on many challenging responsibilities to perform their gender roles in such a culture. In this sense, the idea of complementarity, as Yin (2009) suggested, which is a more egalitarian approach to gender relations and that could be emphasized in a film, is lost in the films analyzed. The focus on patriarchy and oppression also marginalizes the voices and images of the empowered women in Pakistan such as sportswomen, political figures, and women serving in armed and police forces.

This study adds to the existing knowledge of discourse about women, especially third world women, third world media's framing women's problems, and new knowledge of discourse about women in post 9/11 historical context of Pakistan. I looked into the discourse about women in the films through at least two lenses, religious and cultural. However, other future studies could use multiple lenses such as social class, women's exploitation by other social forces, and a politics. Future research can address discourse on women's issues in these films through these lenses. There are more films in Pakistan produced in 21st century that address the social conditions and problems in Pakistani society. I hope this thesis provides material and analysis that future researchers can use to make comparative studies of films that represent issues associated with genders, religion, and culture.

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