

Minorities' Stereotypes in Pakistani Films

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Abstract

This project is largely concerned with the stereotype depiction and portraiture of minorities in feature films of Pakistan. This research is designed to explore the reasons behind such discrimination with minorities i.e.; Hindu, Christian, Sikh. The media provide distorted representation of women and minorities and exposure to these distorted images can have a negative effect on users' perception (Yi Mou & Wei Peng, 2009). Further the Christian and Hindus greatly suffer from discrimination and oppression at society level (Yousaf, 2006). The purpose of research is to explore the reasons to which minorities' discrimination is growing within different sectors of the society. A content analysis approach is adopted to analyze the data, the stereotype roles as part of master narrative in films produced in Pakistan for the purpose of entertainment. The feature films produced between the era from 1979-1988 are part of the study. This period deliberately imposed new laws; regulation for the production of feature films as Christian, Hindus were greatly represented as schedule cast. Findings suggest that 'Negative approach for minorities in our mind and the portrayal of such thinking via Pakistani films is one of the major factors of disgrace of minorities i.e.; Hindu, Christian, Sikh.

Keywords: Minorities, Pakistan Films, Gender roles, Stereotype, Misrepresentation.

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INTRODUCTION

The film was introduced in subcontinent in 1911 during the era of British Raj. In 1947, the subcontinent got divided in two independent countries India and Pakistan. In Pakistan, Dhaka, Karachi and Lahore were three big cities where film industry was working and many film companies were running. The newly found Pakistan had got independent in the name of Islam and about a million of people migrated from India to Pakistan. Right away following the division, the newly founded Pakistan faced a shortage of funds. Deficiency of filming equipments further paralyzed the nation's film industry. With much hardships faced, the new film industry was able to produce its first characteristic film, "Yaadon" 7 Aug, 1948, premiering at the Parbhat Theater in Lahore. In the following year "Evernew Studios" were founded which started to be recognized as the biggest film company of the time. For some of the years to come, films which were released had met ordinary success until the release of "Do Ansoo" on 7 April 1950. Dou Ansoo becomes the very first film to achieve a 35 week successful business and the first film to reach silver jubilee status.

Recovery was obvious with Noor Jehan's directorial debut "Chan-vey" releasing on 29 April 1951. This was the industry's first film to be directed by a female director. Syed Faqir Ahmad Shah produced his initial production in 1952. "Jagga Dakku" directed by Saqlain Rizvi, could not obtain much of positive response from the audiences due to the element of violence exposed in it. With the cinema viewership greater than before, "Sassi" released on June 1954 reached golden jubilee status because of staying on screens for 50 weeks. Famous playback singer Ahmed Rushdi started his career in April 1955 after singing his first song in Pakistan "Bander Road Se Kemari". Umar Marvi released in March 1956 became the first Pakistani film made in the Sindhi language. To celebrate the success of cinema with such big hits, film journalist Ilyas Rashidi launched an annual awards event named "Nigar Awards" on July, 1958. Since then, it has been considered Pakistan's premier awarding affair celebrating great performances in various categories of film making. Pakistan has not continuously as emerged as democratic country, unfortunately President Sikandar Mirza imposed First Martial law in Pakistan and appointed General Ayub Khan Chief Martial Law Administrator, field marshal General Ayub Khan got power in 1958, which was continued by his successor General Yahya Khan, in 1969 and was ended with fall of Dhaka in 1971.

The state control of film and TV was institutionalized when General Ayub Khan came to power (Gazdar 1997:73-74). The strategy of using documentary film making for government propaganda was enforced. The first major project was *Nai Kiran* (A New Ray of Light), an hour-long feature film. *Nai Kiran* had the well-defined objective of dismissing politicians and politics as corrupt and projecting Ayub as savior of the country. Through martial law orders, it was made mandatory for every cinema house to run this film free of cost for a week. During the 1960s, over fifty films were produced defaming politics and politicians, creating antagonism towards democracy, and hailing the imposition of martial law (Ibid). The first ever people elected government of Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came into power in 1972, which prepared first ever constitution of Pakistan approved unanimously by the National Assembly on 10th April 1973. Where in censorship policy was reviewed and a new policy was approved for production and release of films in Pakistan. Bhutto's government, realizing the deteriorating condition of the film industry, established the National Film

Development Corporation (NAFDEC). Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government ended by a military coup of General Zia-ul-Haq on 5th July 1977, he suspended 1973 constitution of Pakistan and issued emergency act. Zia regime struck a crushing blow to the film industry. In 1979, all Pakistani films produced in the preceding three years were banned causing a void badly affecting the progress of film making. A new film policy was formulated and the Motion Pictures Ordinance 1979 was promulgated. The ordinance was so restrictive that it became virtually impossible to express new ideas through form, content or artistry in a film. While Bhutto's government had not allowed the demolition of cinema houses, Zia facilitated it by relaxing the rules; hence hundreds of cinema houses were converted into shopping malls. But the emerging contemporary cinema has introduced a new innovative generation of directors and filmmakers like Shoaib Mansoor, Jamshed Mahmood and Bilal Lashari giving our industry a hope for future and an idea of better stories, screenings and an upgraded level of cinematography.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is a critical and in-depth evaluation of previous research. It is a summary and synopsis of a particular area of research, allowing anybody reading the paper to establish why you are pursuing this particular research program.

Regardless of practicing beliefs, it has been noticed that a cluster of people sharing a common religion, language and cultural pattern, are always keen on displaying and maintaining unity. This is a characteristic of those states containing ethnic and religious minorities, having the citizenship of their respective states (Conode, 1999, pp. 89-90). According to International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Minority can be defined as a race, sharing linguistic and religious affinity, which thinks of itself different from a majority and respectively that majority thinks it to be different from them to the point of stigma. Modern sociologists propound that since these minorities lack political or general power, they face specific discrimination, and disparity. (International Encyclopedia of Social Science.1968, p.365). Oxford Dictionary describes minority a small group in a society, state etc, having different religious beliefs, language and culture. (Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary. 1992, p. 570). Jalal U Din in his study defines that for an effective functioning of a society it is essential that all members of the society contribute, and minorities form an integral part of that society. (Jalal U Din, 2011). Further Ahmed in his findings define that Pakistani minorities are not only treated with equality but most of them also enjoy employment in the fields of Pakistan civil service, judiciary, journalism, army and business. They contribute to the country's development and prosperity. They are supportive of the Muslims of the state in every situation. So it can be assumed that the white in the Pakistani flag represents these minorities, since they also played a pivotal role in the Pakistani movement, hence, justifying their importance. (Ahmad, 2002, p.2).

We are living in the age of digital and technological advancements, it cannot be denied that media is one powerful tool that is effectively influential in image building and inspiring various certain behaviors. It is a medium of communicating and projecting the image of the world. Media is instrumental in creating public opinions especially for minorities, for whom researchers and practitioners endeavor to make media conscientious. In his book Public Opinion by Walter Lippman, he says

stereotyping has become a defense mechanism, firstly being an offshoot of tradition of stereotyping, Walter Lippmann writes that stereotypes are created from “the pictures in our heads.” Irion explains that the world is much too large for people to come into contact with each other. Because of these limitations, mass communication relies on stereotypes to provide depth and background to information about others (LaViolette & Silvert, 1951, p. 528) Stereotypes are formed by social interaction or the lack thereof between people, in this reference Greenberg (1972) sought to discover the extent that Film is a primary source of information about another race, specifically for Caucasian and African American children, and some of film’s influences upon African American children.(Greenberg, 1972).

Further George Gerbner and his colleagues conducted several quantitative research studies of minorities representation on U.S Film in late 1960s through the 1990s, through these studies they concluded that the quantity wise representation was improved on the other hand quality is still the same. (Gerbner & Signorielli, 1979; Gerbner, et al., 1993; Gerbner, et al., 1998). Greenberg, brand later research, also confirmed it. In several quantitative research studies conducted by George Gerbner and his colleagues, on representation of minorities in US films from late 1960s to 1990s, it was observed that although quantitative representation had improved, the quality was still the same. This fact was confirmed by a research conducted later by Greenberg.

In the research, “Between radicalization and democratization in an unfolding conflict: Media in Pakistan” conducted by International Media Support (2009), it is stated that Pakistani media enjoys quite an independence regardless of the turbulent politics and bans on behalf of the state. This unique attribute contributes to the vibrant media landscape of Pakistan. The film sector received a media boom after it was liberalized in 2002. Ali states in his research, “Media and Minorities: Exclusion, Distortion and Stereotype” that minorities are often classified as fanatics and fundamentalists, and acts committed by some people of that community are assumed to be approved by the entire community (Ali 1999). In *The Christian Minorities in Pakistan Issues and Option*, Gregory (2008) says that it goes without saying that Pakistani Christians are treated as second class citizens, not legally but in function. They face violence, oppression, coercion and they do not have any power whatsoever, to thwart these pressures and improve their living conditions. According to the research; *Pakistan: the Situation of Religious minorities* by Gregory. R. Shaun and Simon R. Valentine, minorities in Pakistan are susceptible to differentiation and oppression in the form of religious intimidation, sexual assaults, violence, murders etc, by the Muslim members of their society. This is especially prevalent where law enforcement bodies are ineffective or worse, indifferent. This is partially the result of long held tradition of directing antagonism towards religious minorities, which are further intensified in schools’ curricula that festers stereotyping attitudes of inferiority of non Muslims by the belief of superiority of the Islamic faith.

Anita Kim in his research article “Sikh Roles, representations and revenge, in the media” The researcher has found in north America Sikhs are greatly underrepresented in the media as professionals, anchors, actors and middle class families. A research conducted by Massoud Ansari entitled “Minorities in Pakistan” the researcher has presented the critical analysis about Ahmadi community. The researcher has also given the example of column added in the application forms for Pakistani passport

and national identity cards whereby all citizens have to declare whether they are Muslims or non Muslims (Ansari, 2006). M. Ali Yousaf in his case study found Ahmadis and Christians has regularly documented of discrimination and oppression both at official and society levels. Hindus also suffer stigmatization and discrimination (Yousaf, 2006). In his research, Hindu Minority in Pakistan, Mesti (2011) has stated that Pakistan inculcates stereotypical image of the Hindu minority in its curricula. In the research, Rights of Christian Minority and Blasphemy Law in Pakistan, Nazeer has claimed that discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation of minorities has been institutionalized. In his research, Munir claims that religious groups capture that national interest agenda and one way or another, promote their nationalistic beliefs and agendas. The very same phenomenon is supported by Rehman and Zia (2010) in their study reports regarding the dominance of the majority. In the research article, Representation of Cultural Diversity in Urdu Newspapers in Pakistan, by Syed (2006), it has been evidenced that ethnic or religious sub identities are generally, negatively perceived, and likewise, they are underrepresented.

The second historical strand informing the status of Christians in Pakistan is that which arises from the caste structure, widespread across the Pakistani subcontinent. Many, and according to some sources the majority of, contemporary Pakistani Christians are the descendents of “untouchables” who during the era of colonial rule converted *en masse* to Christianity in the hope of securing a better dispensation from their colonial rulers.

In Pakistan, only print media research has been conducted regarding the issue of minority, it is to be agreed with Graves (1999) when she states that TV is capable of creating, maintaining and modifying stereotyping and prejudice in a society. With the aid of this research, a researcher is able to explain acts of stereotyping and misrepresentation of minorities that reinforce their prior status portrayed by the media, such as not giving them major roles, and acting out roles that are stereotypical, since the history of film and TV programs. This only serves to influence the viewers’ perceptions of such minorities and minorities’ perceptions of themselves in front of the public.

METHODOLOGY

The study has adopted quantitative and qualitative methodology, to achieve the goals and to examine the impact and the portrayal of minorities in Pakistani films. Both, the primary and secondary sources are used to gather the data. Research has collected information and data to analyze the mainstream Pakistani films. The research is very much significant as it intends to reveal the underlying meanings of the stories presented by Pakistani cinema in the name of culture. Beneath the sugar-coated message, there is an enormous amount of negativity for Non-Muslims and as well as for future of Pakistan. The identity of Non-Muslims is regularly and repeatedly challenged.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

A content analysis approach is adopted to analyze the data, the stereotype roles as part of master narrative in films produced in Pakistan for the purpose of entertainment.

The aim of analysis with respect to its content, stereotyped roles of the minority religious communities is the main subject of this study. In order to conduct the content analysis, the 10 category are made and are under the unit of analysis.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

The selection of films, that are centered around characters of minority religions, or any film that deal with minority religions that famous for religious abuse, minority distortion or de-moralization of minority.

SAMPLING

Researcher has used Purposive sampling to verify this hypothesis. The focus was on the movies that take up the issues related to Non-Muslims. The sample includes only Pakistani movies and thus this analysis, by and large, reflects the perception about Non-Muslims. In order to confirm reliability, selected scenes were visualized twice. To elaborate the portrayal of Non-Muslims in an understandable manner, the overall impression of selected films from the sample has been given as précis.

CATEGORIES

All the samples were categorized in three types: Positive, Negative and Mixed films. Positive films are those which contain truthful portrayal of Non-Muslims and their social conditions in Pakistan. Instead of using negative stereotypes, these movies present Non-Muslims as real characters with positive frame. They can have positive qualities such as love for peace, respect for universal ethics and patriotism. They have got an urge to stand for humanity and betterment of mankind. In negative films, which Non-Muslim characters are painted black and their image is distorted. They are usually presented as criminals, slum dogs, Traitors, Muslim Enemy, Mean and danger for Pakistan. The movies which expound nearly equal proportion of negative and positive Non-Muslim characters fall in the category of mix movies. For example, a movie charge as well as a positive such character would be known as the mix movie. In other cases, the negativity of a character is rationalized by explaining the circumstances and the character is not portrayed as inherently evil

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are following:

- To study how minorities are represented in Pakistani films.
- To examine how pictures depict minorities in Pakistani films.

HYPOTHESIS

After conducting pilot study of Pakistani movies, the following hypothesis has been developed and tested: The proportion of negative portrayal of Non-Muslim characters would be greater as compared to the ratio of positive image of Non-Muslims in Pakistani movies, so Pakistani Film reflect the positive/distorted image of Minorities in Pakistan, and Pakistani films are free from bias and prejudices toward minorities or not?

RESEARCH QUESTION

The research is based on following research questions.

1. Either Pakistani film is giving positive or negative portray to a minority?
2. Does the representation of minorities in Pakistani film coincide with the accurate political and social position of minorities in Pakistani society?
3. Is there any prejudice in Pakistani films while representing on screen?

LIMITATION:

This study belongs to the visual portray of minorities in Pakistani film, therefore it is not extended to other parts of film production, the study will have limited focus upon the theory of demoralization of minorities by majority population, with reference to practices , ritual, language, cast, creed and body language etc.

1.	Kartar Singh	(Punjabi - B/W)	1959
2.	Shaheed	(Urdu - B/W)	1962
3.	Baji	(Urdu - B/W)	1963
4.	Malangi	(Punjabi - B/W)	1965
5.	Mujahid	(Urdu - B/W)	1965
6.	Jag Utha Insan		1966
7.	Zarqa	(Urdu - Color)	1969
8.	Yeh Aman	(Urdu - Color)	1971
9.	Gharnata	(Urdu - Color)	1971
10.	Khak aur Khoon		1971
11.	Chann Veryam	(Punjabi - Color)	1981
12.	Ahat	(Urdu - Color)	1982
13.	Muthi Bhar Chawal		1982
14.	Ghulami		1985
15.	Jarnail Singh		1987
16.	Barood Ki Chhaon Mein	(Urdu - Color)	1989
17.	International Gorilay		1990
18.	Jeeva (1995 film)		1995
19.	Gabbar Singh		1995
20.	Uqabon Ka Nasheman	(Urdu - Color)	1997
21.	Tere Pyar Mein		2000
22.	Soldier		2001
23.	Moosa Khan		2001
24.	Muslaman		2001
25.	Gazi Alam Din		2002
26.	Larki Punjaban		2003
27.	Laaj	(Urdu - Color)	2003
28.	Aik Aur Ghazi		2011
29.	War		2013

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The research is quantitative as well as qualitative in its nature. Over all 30 films were analyzed on the basis of 5 categories with classified incline. Distribution of incline in these 30 movies is 3(12%) **Positive**, 23(75.6%) **Negative** and 4(12.4%) Neutral (See Table No.1). The data clearly shows that the portrayal of Non-Muslims in Pakistani films is mostly negative. Table 1 describes the survey that the number of negative films (75.60%) is far greater than the number of positive films (12%). Through this analysis, we can easily discern the paucity of positive attitude and reverence for Non-Muslims in Pakistani cinema. The survey confirms the hypothesis that the proportion of negative portrayal of Non-Muslim characters would be greater as compared to the ratio of positive image of Non-Muslims in Pakistani movies.

Table 1: Categories of Pakistani movies as per portrayal of non-Muslim characters

Total numbers of Films	Positive Films	Negative Films	Mixed Films
30	3(12%)	23(75.60%)	4(12.40%)
Total Percentage	12%	75%	13

The list of all the movies included in sample is given in Annexure-1

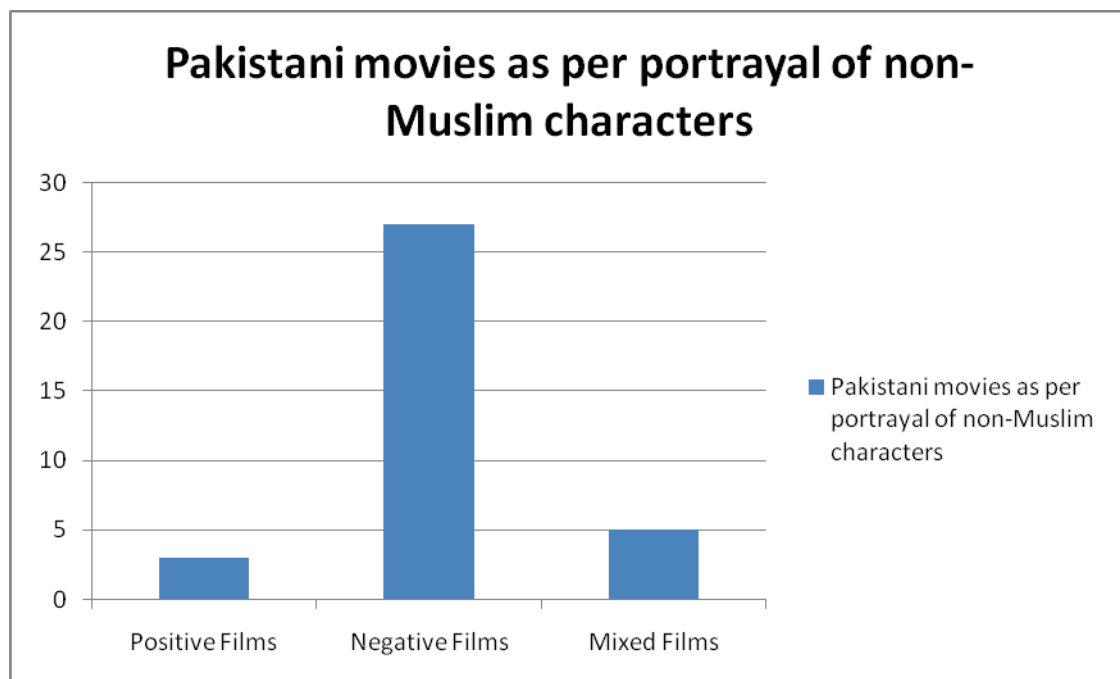


Figure 1: Categories of Pakistani movies as per portrayal of non-Muslim characters

This study has evaluated the films character representing the Religious Minorities in Pakistani; In this regard researcher has analyzed and explored the films that were already been selected. Researcher observed that films have tremendous power to influence public opinion and even has power to resolve various issues related to minorities due to film's immense capacity. Researcher has examined the coverage of

Religious Minorities in terms of film items, characters, social roles and characterization of these minorities. An overwhelming emphasis on Pakistan's Islamic identity was witnessed in the Pakistani film's analysis, Islam and Islamic identity seemed to be served as a broad melting pot within which other forms of identity such as racial/ethnic or regional identities remain widely invisible. The other parameter used for content analysis was the element of social status assigned to characters from religious minority. It was found that mostly minority's characters been shown as belonging to upper state of the society and associated with British Raj. Mostly, they were been portrayed as someone who existed on the always on scheme and divide Muslims to rule and had no major contribution to make to the society on the whole, and furthermore minority's characters were portrayed as "homeless", "modernity" and portrayed as characters that lacked a sense of belonging for this country they have been living in for years.

Most alarming situation is that the representation of minority as always been rendering, scheming conspiracy against country, these aforementioned stereotypes is particularly harmful because they are nowhere close to facts, and hence drift from the ethical responsibility of accurate representation of minorities. Researcher also understood that occasional use of stereotypes in Cinema is not only inevitable but also essential as a film-making tool, filmmakers should be cautious and more careful while indulging in stereotypical representations as a part of their social responsibility, that is totally missing and they became bias in representation of social realities and facts.

Researcher find only film Ramchand Pakistani that deal with minority social issues, the study of the characters, their dialogues and actions conclude that Dalit Hindus in Pakistan are living a poor life where the feudal lords and most of the Muslims consider them un-touchable and worst kind of people. As it was first time in Pakistani Film Industry that a lead role was presented as a child role plus a minority in any Pakistani film, so the first impression of any Hindu Dalit would be similar to Ramchand and Champa. They were presented as innocent and loveable people who follow their religion and culture. But on the same time they are living such a low life that there reach to basic human rights is not heard on any level. Film Ahat was also one of the film that portray the christen family with soft and social image. Film TerePyar Main and Jeeva was a product of subjects affected by the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh clashing relations in the Subcontinent and the time prior to the War of Independence of 1857 and recently, the Kargil War of 1999, which inadvertently made portrayal of Hindus in movies as negative. On the other hand Sikh characters were shown with soft image; the stereotypical characterizations in the form of apparel, role and characterization were done for the purpose of Sikh identification. Due to the racial theme of the movie, the role of Sikhs was positive and influential.

Investigating the first research question "Is Pakistani cinema presenting a negative image of Religious minority?" After analyzing the available data, researcher got the findings that proved this research question correct. In Pakistani movies, Majorly Minority is being presented negatively. The phenomenon of conspiracy is associated with Minority.

Exploring the second research question: Does the representation of minorities in Pakistani film coincide with the accurate political and social position of minorities in Pakistani society, and is Pakistani films prejudice while representing them screen? All

in all, it can be deduce from the analysis that among the productions that touch upon the issues related with Muslims and Pakistan, the number of the movies which depict and render the Non-Muslims as brutal and rogue is greater than the number of the movies which present and portray Non-Muslims in positive frame of mind. Their presentation of Non-Muslim character as negative and reprobate increased. The images used to represent the Non-Muslims are a reflection of the prejudices prevalent in Pakistan against Non-Muslims.

This representation does not coincide with the accurate political and social ground reality that is minority communities of Pakistan have played an important role in the socio-cultural development of the country, creative contributions of Joshua Fazluddin, Nasreen Anjum Bhatti, Nazeer Qaisar, Bapsi Sidhwa, Sobho Gian Chandani, Vali Ram Vallabh, Raja Tiridev Roy, Dr. Sabir Afaqi and Professor Pritam Singh, Justice Cornelius, F.C. Chaudhary, Cecil Chaudhary, Wallis Mathias are few prominent names in different fields. In this reference, Lollywood cinema does not actually represent the social reality at least in the case of Non-Muslim identity and its expressions. Rather, it creates its own allusions and nostalgia of the past.

Hypothesis depicts that portrayal of image of Non-Muslims in Pakistani movies will be more negative than positive. Results of this study supported the hypothesis Table 1 describing the survey that the number of negative films (75.60%) is far greater than the number of positive films (12.20%). Through this analysis, we can easily discern the paucity of positive attitude and reverence for Non-Muslims in Pakistani cinema.

DISCUSSION

The data reveals that the issues related to diversity and subcultures in Pakistani society remain generally ignored or downplayed. The paper has demonstrated that Islam is the predominant discourse in Pakistan, which serves as the overwhelming melting pot of any sub-cultures including ethnic and religious identities. The narrator seems to present and perpetuate the discourses in which any identity other than the Islam or Pakistan is treated as undesirable or less valued. Issues of ethnic minorities though highlighted at macro-political level lack thorough understanding and information. For instance, no presentation is presented in terms of minority achievement, their social issue as unemployment, indigenous cultural practices and their protection, local environment, etc. Their perspectives remain hidden, issues and challenges largely misunderstood. In the Pakistani Films, routinely carry a verse from the Qur'an, while the teachings or beliefs of other religions are not displayed at all. Some of the films played a responsible role while representing on plural issues, but communal elements popularize anti-minority myths, especially presenting an Islamic narrative. The data analyzed confirmed that there isn't any effort on organized effort to raise awareness of other religions or of the need for pluralism. The lack of a proper educational system and a holistic syllabus that takes Pakistan's plural traditions into account has only added to a great sense of loss.

CONCLUSION

This study has been conducted with the aim of study how minorities are represented in Pakistani films and to examine how pictures depict minorities in Pakistani films, Consequently, the is giving positive or negative portray to minority, minorities social

roles in reality and media is also discussed, analyzed and concluded. Film is form of popular culture and produced by cultural industry, motion films is metamorphosis of written, oral medium and ultimately thought. Historian define films as a force that can shape your future, in fact, know civilization depends upon how they used it, we live in today; media has come to take the place of primary agents of communication.

While depicting the actual characterization of non-Muslims., Pakistani films have to come out of its engagement both with past nostalgia and the image of the non-Muslim other as a villain, terrorists, and these stereotypes should be resisted both inside and outside the film industry by the secular democratic and politically conscious people. The imaging of non-Muslim characters in negative terms should be replaced with a positive tendency. The image constructions in the form of iconography and in term and presupposed notions, is largely formed by the general public, with distorted facts, wrong information, ignorance and subversive truth disseminated in the mass psyche manufactured by the Pakistani cinema. Without having a dialogue, without knowing anyone in person, people carve out an image of a particular community in their minds in black and white terms. In this respect, Pakistani films have played an enormously key role in producing the myths and stereotypes of Non-Muslims. Still Pakistani cinema shown very little about the non-Muslim secular character, in our research for a more optimistic portrayal of the non-Muslim social, devoid of mythical characterization, and to challenge the hegemony of the dominant stereotype of the non-Muslim other, we need to produce more Non-Muslim protagonist films. Sameena Imtiaz of Pead Foundation said "The media has the power to change the narrative and must play a role in promoting religious harmony and tolerance and representatives from minority communities for acceptance".

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