

51. İslami kimliklere Müslümanların yaklaşımı ve belirleyici nedenleri: Endonezya, Pakistan, diaspora Müslümanları realitesi üzerine film incelemesi

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Öz

Müslüman toplum, hem dini hem de etnik ve kültürel kimlik özelliklerine sahip, genellikle Ümmet olarak adlandırılan büyük bir küresel topluluktur. Topluğun dünyadaki en büyük yoğunluklarından ikisi; Endonezya, Malezya, Brunei, Singapur ve Filipinler'den oluşan ve topluca Nusantara olarak bilinen Güneydoğu Asya'da bulunmaktadır. İkinci yoğun grup ise; Pakistan, Hindistan ve Bangladeş ülkelerinden oluşan Güney Asya grubudur. Endonezya ve Pakistan, dünyanın sırasıyla birinci ve ikinci en büyük Müslüman nüfusuna sahip ülkeleridir. Çalışmamızda, Müslüman Güneydoğu Asyalılar ve Müslüman Güney Asyalılar ile ilgili filmlerde Müslüman yaşam tarzlarının davranışsal ve sosyal tezahürleri ve buna karşılık gelen temsiller; seçilen iki filmin içerik analiziyle incelenerek çözümlenmiştir. Filmlerdeki farklı anlatılar ve alta yatan nedenler, metodolojik olarak parametrik *Semiotic Square* yardımıyla serimlenmektedir. Araştırma makalemizin bir diğer amacı da ticari filmlerin ortaya çıkış koşullarının, odaklandıkları toplumların yansımaları olarak gözden geçirilmesi ve anlatsal izleğinde çözümlenmesidir. Bu amaçla çalışmamızda, senaryosu diasporadaki Müslüman topluluklara odaklanan Endonezya yapımı *Ayat Ayat Cinta* (2008) ve Birleşik Krallık yapımı *A Fond Kiss* (2004) adlı iki film incelenmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Müslüman kimlik, Müslüman temsil, Pakistan, Endonezya, Müslüman Diaspora

Muslim approach to Islamic identity and underlying causes: A film critique on Indonesia, Pakistan, diaspora Muslims reality

Abstract

The Muslim community is a large global community, often referred to as the Ummah, with both religious, as well as ethnic and cultural identity traits. Two of the biggest concentrations of the community in the world happen to be Southeast Asia made up of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, and the Philippines collectively known as Nusantara; and South Asia comprising of the nations of Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. Indonesia and Pakistan form the nations with the world's first and second largest Muslim populations respectively. The behavioral and social manifestations of Muslim lifestyles and corresponding representation in movies related to Muslim Southeast Asians, and Muslim South Asians are analyzed by content analysis of two selected movies. The differing narratives and underlying causes are comprehended with Semiotic Square's assistance in terms of

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methodology. The research article has a further objective of overviewing and establishing commercial films as being reflections of the societies they focus on. To this end, two movies are analyzed: *Ayat* *Ayat Cinta* (2008) from Indonesia, and *A Fond Kiss* (2004) from the United Kingdom with scripts focused on diaspora Muslim communities.

Keywords: Muslim Identity, Muslim Representation, Pakistan, Indonesia, Muslim Diaspora

Introduction

Films and movies have always known to have been reflections of societies they are based on. Though most are works of fiction, but it is a known fact that such fiction is inspired by real-life events (Jenkins, 2023). The following research article is an analytical study highlighting the Muslim identity aspects and manifestations in Indonesian, and Pakistani communities respectively that include their diaspora members as well.

While the term Muslim appears homogenous to Western audiences and masses, the fact remains that the Muslim community is diverse in terms of ethnicity and cultural heritage spreading from the green rolling hills of the Balkans in the West to the Malay Archipelago in the East, passing through arid deserts of Arabia and Sub-Saharan Africa, the mountainous Central Asia and the Caucasus. While some Muslim nations apparently seem more Islamic or conservative (often branded fundamentalist), others appear more liberalized, indigenous cultural-leaning and even Westernized. A thorough detailed analysis of each nationality comprising the *Ummah* will be beyond the scope of any academic paper, and hence two nationalities or groups of people, with visible influences on Muslim culture and the reel world will be taken into account: Indonesia, famous for its Halal tourism (Skirka, 2020) and world-famous cuisine such as *Nasi Goreng* and *Rendang* (CNN, 2017), along with Islamic-themed movies (Imanjaya, 2023); and Pakistan with its famous dishes such as the Biryani, Chicken *Karahi* (YeniŞafak, 2020) and Bhangra music (Bhangra Music - Punjabi Bhangra Music - OCR - GCSE Music Revision - OCR - BBC Bitesize, n.d.). Apart from being countries with the first and second largest Muslim populations in the world (World Population Review, n.d.), the two nations are pretty famous in the Muslim world with one having a Sharia-run province named Aceh (CNA Insider, 2018), and the other being the sole Muslim nation on the face of the Earth with military nuclear capabilities (Khan, 1998). Two films are chosen for the purpose of study, and the ways and manners in which Muslims live Islam in essence, and practice the religion in their day-to-day lives as well as a society are decoded and analyzed.

Certain theories and methodologies are utilized for this purpose, while content analysis will form the backbone of the overall study to understand overall discourses and their related messages. This will be manifested in the form of narrative analysis.

Aims and objectives

The aim of this academic article is to ascertain the contrasts in the portrayal of the Muslim communities, in the movies in question, tagged as the world's largest Muslim populations: Indonesia and Pakistan concerning different facets of the Muslim way of life. The purpose will be to observe the dissimilarities, and understand them, along with the possible socio-religious undertones in the two nations. The objective will be to highlight as to how the two nations' socio-religious composition and even cinematic depictions are related to each other.

Methodology and theory

Content analysis will be utilized to scrutinize as well as comprehend aims, meanings as well as aims of the movies under consideration. It is a known research method that is used for determining ideas, vocabulary in a given text or a collection of texts. Researchers analyze and quantify the placement of props, meanings as well as the relations among words and ideas, and then consider inferences related to messages within texts, author(s), audiences, as well as the time and culture. In this context, ‘texts’ may broadly include speeches, formal and informal vocal sessions, movie sequences, or any manifestation of communicative vocabulary. Texts can also signify varying occurrences (*Content Analysis*, 2016).

Portrayals, as well as desired depictions meanwhile shall be deciphered via the theory of *representation*. The depiction of Muslims will be analyzed with help from Dudley Andrew’s *Concepts in Film Theory*, wherein depiction or narration is termed as being among the most essential theories. The author explains it as being a phenomenon of recipients comprehending scenes which they watch on the screen as being events or occurrences which they are already familiar with, events with which they can connect well (Andrew, 1984). The backdrop and ongoing social moods are viewed via the prism of representation. Indonesian commercial movies conveying Islamic topics will be scrutinized with this approach.

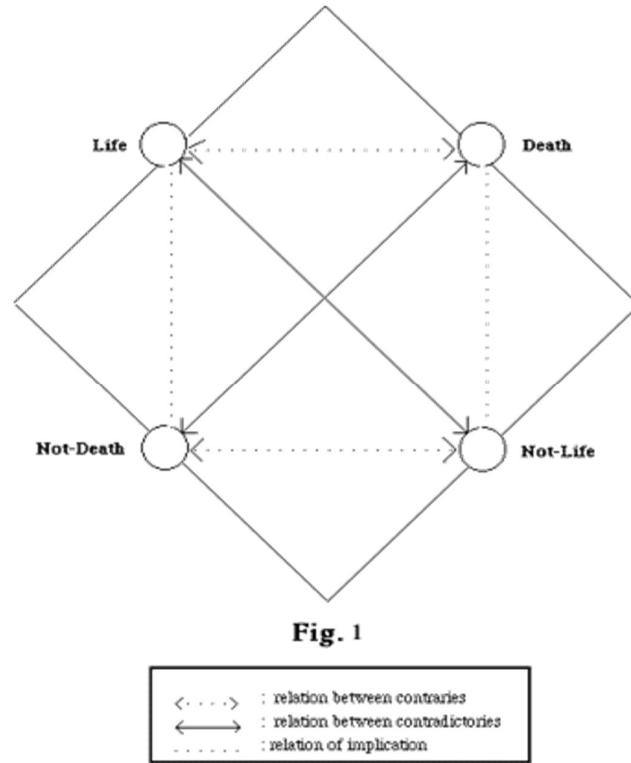


Figure 1. Semiotic Square as per Greimas (Courtesy: Felluga, Dino, <https://cla.purdue.edu/>)

The *methodology* utilized for comprehending the contrasting films as well as messages shall be *Paris School of Semiotics*. The term semiotics usually denotes examination of signs as mediums that allow

humans to depict the world, influence, convey particular details, and even trick as well as confuse. The differing tones of the movies' good as well as bad messages are better dealt via the *Semiotic Square* that pits one binary against another in order to comprehend individual uniqueness.

A. Analysis of the film: Ayat Ayat Cinta

The immensely popular and successful movie *Ayat Ayat Cinta* (directed by Hanung Bramantyo, released in 2008) resulted from years of Islamic awakening in the archipelago nation of Indonesia, during the post-Soeharto era, especially at university campuses (Van Heeren, 2012: 120). Gradual return to Islamic piety, after a long era of enforced Soeharto-era secularism (Van, H. K., 2012: 115), reflected the deep bond among masses for the Islamic doctrine that gradually made way into the Malay Archipelago (Nusantara) by means of trade, honesty, gentle persuasion and tolerance, to occasional intellectual competition with Hinduism and Christianity (Arnold, 1913).

Ayat Ayat Cinta is a culmination of Islamic piety that is visibly evident among the populace of the Malay Archipelago which also happens to be the region with the world's largest Muslim population (*How Did Indonesia Gain the Largest Muslim Population on Earth?*, 2021a). A proper content analysis of the film's scenes, symbols, codes, and choice of characters reveal the average pious Muslim society of Southeast Asia (*1 In 3 Southeast Asian Muslims More Devout Than Parents: Report*, 202221) that any visitor to the region will be familiar with.



Figure 2: Poster of Film *Ayat Ayat Cinta* (Courtesy: MD Pictures)

The movie revolves around the protagonist Fahri, played by Fedi Nuril, who is a pious Muslim Indonesian student in Egypt, whose life is dedicated to academics, Islamic piety via his words and deeds, and gratitude towards his humble family back in Indonesia. His piety and humble generosity inadvertently attracts a lot of female attention unknowingly – all of whom are deeply and secretly in love with him, and want to marry him. Two such important female characters that go on to assume prominent

roles in the film are Maria (role played by Carissa Putri) – an Egyptian Coptic Christian girl – who happens to be the daughter of his landlady, and Aisha (role played by Rianti Cartwright) who enacts the role of a young and pious Turkish-German woman on a tour of Egypt. Fahri meets the latter by coincidence and marries her, much to the distress of the other young women admiring him.

Fate however takes an unexpected turn for Fahri when he is incarcerated on charges of outraging his young neighbor's modesty. It is in prison that Fahri discovers the true essence of patience and humility thanks to a fellow prisoner. However, owing to the severity of the charges, his wife Aisha embarks on a mission of locating Maria who is the sole witness of Fahri's innocence. It is at this stage that Aisha discovers that Maria is drowned in love for Fahri and has slipped into a deep coma owing to the shock of having witnessed Fahri marry someone else.

As Maria is the lifeline to proving Fahri's innocence in court, Aisha takes it upon herself to help Maria recover via Fahri. The story opens up to world of Islamic practices that are often considered controversial in the larger Muslim world apart from the non-Muslim world. Three such important instances include:

1. Polygyny

This extremely controversial Muslim practice of one man having multiple (upto four wives) is beautifully and logically exemplified in the movie. Besides circumstantial necessity, the extremely understanding and reflective nature of the two urban, outgoing and highly educated women deserve special mention. The point where Aisha realizes that the only way Fahri can be saved from a deadly slander is via polygyny, she actively encourages him to seek the path which is deemed legal in Islam. The other facet of Aisha's character that is worth noting is the fact that her humane-nature drives her to realize that Maria needs to recover from coma, and if a major part of the treatment encompasses polygyny, so be it. The symbolic scene of the trio hanging out together at a park, offering *Salah*³ serve as *representations* of the concept of polygyny that the Indonesian audiences, and the larger global Muslim audiences are already familiar with.

When analyzed from the *Semiotic Square perspective*, the movie's glorification of polygyny stands in stark contrast with contemporary films on the same subject in even predominantly Muslim nations such as Pakistan, where the practice is often demonized and a *narrative content analysis* reveals how narrations depict the practice with Orientalist tropes – often reminiscent of colonial days on what constitutes modern versus backward (Said, 1994) – of anti-women, backward, and even oppressive tags. A prime example of such a movie is famous Atif Aslam-starrer *Bol* (directed by Shoaib Mansoor, released in 2011), where a misogynistic father figure is deeply opposed to reason, constructive arguments, women's freedoms and favors everything 'backward' aka 'Islamic' including polygyny.

³ *Salah* (Arab.) or *Namaz* (Pers., Sansk.): Compulsory Muslim prayers performed five times a day, often in congregations.



Figure 3. Still from Film *Ayat Ayat Cinta* denoting a perfectly normal day in a polygynous household (Courtesy: MD Pictures)

2. Conversion to Islam

In the age of extreme liberalism, secularism and the glorification of Christianity, popular movies industries of the East and the West, aka Bollywood and Hollywood, where images of protagonists praying to the crucifix, or in the church –such as the Shahrukh Khan, Kajol-starrer 1995 Bollywood romantic hit *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (directed by Aditya Chopra)– had assumed *representational dimension of liberalism*, *Ayat Ayat Cinta* takes a break and represents the popular Islamic narrative of conversion to Islam as being something natural, and voluntary besides being extremely logical for those professing the Christian faith as the two religions have a lot in common. The exemplification of this smooth process of conversion is none other than the second female protagonist in the movie: Maria.

A *content analysis* of her interest in Islam primarily leads us to observe that her curiosity develops from her recce of Fahri's character and piety. The male protagonist's helpful nature; modesty, respect and truthfulness with women; and overall Islamic piety drives her to delve into the philosophy or concept that shapes such a man, namely Islam in this case. It is a clear representation of the manner in which different regions of the Malay Archipelago embraced Islam in medieval eras to even as late as the 19th century.

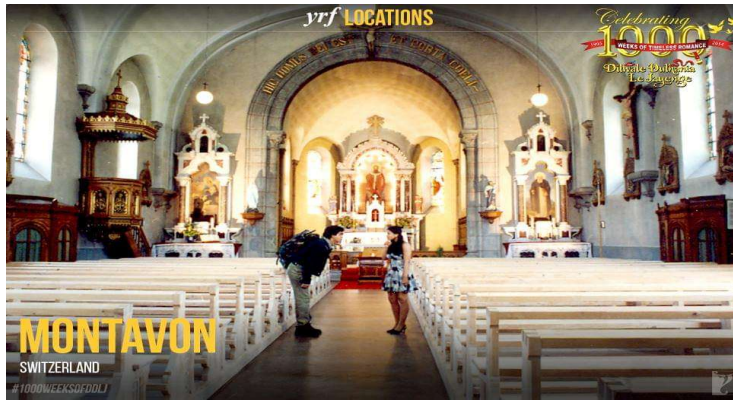


Figure 4. Still from the 1995 Bollywood Blockbuster Film *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* shot in a Swiss church (Courtesy: Yash Raj Films)

The secondary reason for her conversion is related to her desire for being united with the love of her life in the ultimate place of solace – Paradise. She describes her near death experience (NDE) of being in a beautiful resting place wherein the pre-requisite of entry is testifying to pure monotheism and acknowledging the Seal of the prophets. This scene and set of dialogues form a set of representations of Islamic mysticism and the Afterlife which is held dearly by Muslims all over the world.

In terms of *Semiotic Square*, the entire philosophy and process of conversion to Islam is represented as something extremely normal; unlike the glorification of religions such as Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Buddhism in Western and Bollywood movies with the prime villain being the Islamic doctrine. A clear differentiating factor of *Ayat Ayat Cinta* is the fact that the movie does not gain fame by othering or demonizing other religious or ethnic groups – a tendency quite common in Bollywood-Hollywood (Feminism in India, 2020; Küngerü, 2021).

3. The Hijab and Traditional Muslim Attire

The headscarf has been a controversial subject in the West, with many nations pressing ahead with official bans. Female Muslim protagonists were also rarely seen donning the traditional Muslim attire on screen. It is striking, going by the *Semiotic Square* of contrasts, to witness how *Ayat Ayat Cinta* normalizes the attire in the sense that almost all important female characters are *represented* donning it. A careful visual *content analysis* of the subject will remind viewers on how Aisha occasionally takes off the Hijab in front of her husband Fahri, in privacy. This depiction, though controversial in conservative circles which necessitate the Hijab in front of all unrelated males (viewers in this case), is a mere representation of the normal life of a Muslim girl or woman and seeks to put queries such as ‘Do they wear it all the time?’, ‘Do they sleep with it?’, ‘It is a sign of oppression’, etc. to rest. After all, the director Hanung Bramantyo’s aim has been to counter anti-Muslim narratives in the aftermath of 9/11 (Pathoni, 2008; Collins, 2009).



Figure 5. Still from *Ayat Ayat Cinta* depicting Muslim characters in traditional attire with positive connotation in a mosque. (Courtesy: MD Pictures)

The film even goes a step further and depicts the benign, educated and able Aisha in the *Niqab*⁴ and male characters with the traditional headgear and cap by choice, and them being perfectly normal and okay with their choices. This stands in contrast with a movie such as *Bol* whereby the female protagonist

⁴ *Niqab*: A face-covering for Muslim girls and women in addition to the headscarf, accompanied by loose robes to conceal figure.

is seen asking her sisters and mother to get rid of Muslim attire and seek 'freedom,' besides loads of other Pakistani movies wherein the proper Hijab or *Niqab* are not even depicted positively on screen.

B. Analysis of the film: A Fond Kiss

1. Multicultural Society and Muslim Community in United Kingdom

British social scientist Yunas Samad says *Multicultural coexistence* as the placement of differences is a global terminology that acquires different connotations as per policy and political factors. Multiculturalism in the United States of America (US) encompasses visible minority groups, women and homosexuals; while in France and Germany the term assumes the form of visible minorities solely. As for the United Kingdom (UK), multiculturalism comes with macro and micro interpretations. On the macro level, multiculturalism is politically assumed as the agglomeration of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. The term is comprehended as the political union of the aforementioned countries as the UK. It is also comprehended as the coexistence of established religions: Catholics, Jews, and Protestants and their legal as well as political recognition (Kaplan quoted from Samad, 2013: 216).

The macro angle then has a say on subsequent narrative, particularly on the micro level that is concerned with the management of asylum seekers, immigrants, and refugees apart from visible minority groups. It is the overlapping and convergence of ethnic and racial minorities, prominent differences, with different religions to a Caucasian population and Christianity which the contemporary multiculturalism narrative in the UK concentrates on. Implicitly it also overlaps cultural values of ethnic minorities, working classes with rural backgrounds against Caucasian middle class social norms. When it comes to the intimate level, people have multiple identification levels with some being implicit and others remaining explicit. Ethnic minorities can be internally diverse while an official policy may implicitly club them as homogenous constructs based on region, country of origin, and religion. There is a racial categorical hierarchy that can portray the same race. The Asian category, that includes South Asians as a whole, happens to be at the apex and is usually applicable for middle class Indians but also includes successful individuals from Pakistan. The category termed as 'Pakistani' is an intermediate categorization with strong working (labor) class connotations. It happens to be a construct like Indian and Bangladeshi with citizenship of countries of origin to ascertain ethnicity. Though Pakistanis who share certain cultural features via citizenship happen to be an internally diverse population from different geographical sections of Pakistan, that includes both rural and urban, thereby exhibiting different cultural traits, and social hierarchical origins. Nevertheless, in the UK, this diverse stock of people are clubbed into a homogenous category with traits of the local majority i.e. those from Kashmir, being attributed to everyone Pakistani. The lowest category as far as the hierarchical order is the Muslim, assumed connected to riots and terrorism. It is often depicted as the example of a dysfunctional society. It is also a tag that is gaining momentum among younger generations who seek a unique and different identity from their parents by claiming a stake to British identity as per their understanding. Most Caucasian British look at British identity as a residual category that is usually implicit and only assumes explicit nature in situations where "The Other" is comprehended in terms of other nationalities. When it comes to the UK, no Scot would refer to himself/herself as British and would probably be agitated with the English tag. Scottish continues to dominate allegiances, while the language is English, with Scottish withering, but with heavy tints of local accents. Once again such identities are based on class owing to greater convergence among middle classes of the various countries comprising the Union (Kaplan quoted from Samad, 2013: 216-217).

Members of different ethnic groups, particularly Asians, Muslims and the Caribbean, suffer from material and social deprivation and victimization compared to Caucasians, even though most of them were born in Britain. The biggest differences between ethnic groups emerge in the form of 'family structures' and 'belief practices.' Today, cultural practices such as 'food, music and belief rituals' are a result of the tendency of people from different cultural traditions to maintain their culture. However, it is often seen that these differences deepen and return to their roots as a reaction to inequalities (Abercrombie & Warde, 2007:6-9).

Until the 1980s, sociologists and politicians looked at Muslims only as immigrants. In the 1950s and 1960s, Muslim labor migration began and Muslims began to settle in Europe as guest workers. In the 1970s, the number of Muslim societies began to increase as a result of the reunification of families. Orientalism, as Edward Said uses it, is essentially about the East and Islam. Orientalism is the 'other' that contributes to the construction of modernity. Today, however, Muslims have strong networks as ethnic and religious communities. At the same time, it is seen that immigrants and Muslims are concentrated in temporary and precarious jobs. Unemployment rates of immigrants are higher compared to the citizens of their country of residence. In general, young Muslims in Europe are the children of migrant workers. And their education levels and professional qualifications are insufficient. On the other hand, it is observed that South Asian Muslim youth display a different image. With the good education and motivation they have received, they have the same expectations as other middle class members. Anti-Muslim sentiments (or Islamophobia), on the other hand, takes its historical heritage from orientalism. It emerges as variants of anti-Islamic Christian European thought. Huntington's views are: It is the revival of orientalist discourses in the post-cold war new world order. What is important for minorities; the possibility of access to the labor market, the introduction of legal sanctions and supervision against discrimination. It is important for these societies that Muslims have a place in Europe and contribute to British culture (Samad, 2007: 1-22).

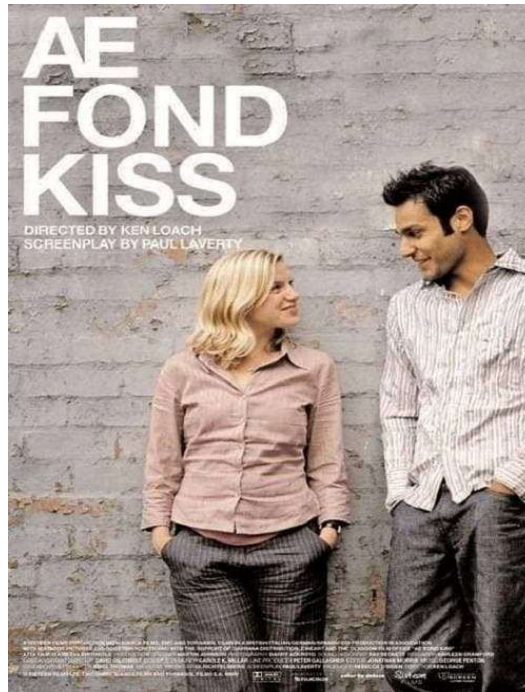


Figure 6. Poster of film *A Fond Kiss*. (Courtesy: Icon Productions)

2. Content analysis in terms of identity issue

In the award-winning movie, *A Fond Kiss* (directed by Ken Loach, released in 2004), *identities* are portrayed as a pattern of nested group identities: partly explicit and partly implicit. Implicitly the movie revolves around the Glaswegian working class denomination portrayed linguistically by the various actors. It happens to be the common denomination that consolidates every other identity and provides a following context for the story. As part of this, religious identities, Catholic as well as Protestant, are present besides other more combative loyalties revolving around Celtic and Rangers soccer clubs. The movie portrays Glasgow as a pattern of group identities into which visible minority groups are placed. Local identity-related nuances influence minority groups settled there. In the movie, a Muslim Pakistani community is depicted as a sub-group among Glaswegian Catholics; i.e. a minority within a minority. Nevertheless, the facts are more complex as the Pakistani community hail from Punjab province in Pakistan, speak a certain regional language, belong to a certain locality, and usually from the same clan. The issue is further complicated as identity construction seems dynamic and fluid in diasporic settings across generations. Thus Tahara (role played by Shabana Akhtar Baksh), Casim's sister identifies as Muslim Scot, but then asserts her deep loyalty for the Celtics soccer club, usually supported by the Catholic population of Glasgow (Kaplan quoted from Samad, 2013: 217-218).

The role of religious tradition in shaping social life declined among the British and remains as a symbol. But most Muslims and Indians living in Britain are strongly connected to their religious traditions. They regularly continue their religious practices. Religious belief for these groups; is also an important source of ethnic identity and social participation (Rojek, 2007: 37-38).

The movie's portrayal of love and affection between Casim (role played by Atta Yaqub) and Roisin (role played by Eva Birthisle), a Catholic Irish, highlights the subject of group identification transgression. Protestant-Catholic romantic relationships are perceived as provocative challenges to faith-based identities and are denounced, leading to social pressure. As a result of this tension between group identity, personal desire and longing is a common theme contextualizing daily life in the particular Glasgow locality. The fact that the lovers are Muslim and Catholic is nearly incidental. In a city divided along religious lines, love across group boundaries are perceived as threatening group loyalty. Therefore, opposition to the romantic bond was intertwined with the Glaswegian context. Highlighted by the repeated opposition from the Catholic Church as well as the family to the particular inter-ethnic and inter-religious relationship, the lovers had to flee to London where such relationships are not considered threatening. The two group identities bothering the lovers are the Catholic Church, as well as the clan. While the Church is ready to accept the relationship if the couple allow the children to have a Catholic upbringing; the clan's view is that if Casim seeks a relationship, it is fine, but a soulmate has to be from within the community. Solely by such means, the greater community would respect as well as support him besides providing necessary assistance, while an inter-ethnic relationship is perceived to be a threat for the community as a whole.

Subjects related to gender are interspersed in the discourse. Casim's aspirations of being a disk jockey, owning a nightclub is a blasphemous aim for a Muslim. The absurdity of the situation becomes more prominent as he does not perceive such a venue as being fit for a visit by his younger sister and her friends. This contradiction of family life, the outside world is a subject which runs through the movie. Young Muslim Punjabi males enjoy the sensuous delights of the city's nightlife but return home as obedient children. Casim is allowed to have a fling with Roisin, but marriage would be a serious proposition between two families.

Undoubtedly this hypocrisy was a man's privilege while women and girls are expected to conform to family line. Eventually, Tahara's attempt to replicate her brother was met with hostility from Casim as well as the family, and even her idea of taking up an offer to study at the prestigious Edinburgh University was perceived as a possible stain on her character and virtue. The fact, of her being honored by Edinburgh University's offer, misses the family because they are more worried about clan reaction to her venturing outdoors.

For minority groups with a Glasgow upbringing, the movie also highlights the process of social identification transformation across generation. Casim is seen embracing a secular and cosmopolitan lifestyle, while his younger sister Tahara identifies as Muslim and both are at loggerheads with conservative expectations of their family simultaneously. Their cosmopolitan diaspora identity clashes with family identity construction, particularly focused around the clan. The clan identity, reinforced via endogamous marital alliances and undisputed affinity to its patriarchal head, is countered by ideas and values from the society and educational institutions. Nevertheless, the clan identity enacted in the film as a by-product of patriarchal domination tends to be an over simplification because individuals are socialised into group identification with force being the exception rather than law. The clash between Casim, Tahara and their father is portrayed in a monochromatic manner via the role of the patriarch. The monochrome in the movie surfaces as the father asserts his authority and tries to get his children to do as per his desires and wishes particularly Casim's marriage, restricting the educational scope of his daughter. Meanwhile the role of the clan head is a double-edged sword, and those aspiring to maintain gender authority are also supposed to respond to clan expectations. The father is driven and molded by others' expectations and this is evident via the betrothal. Marital bond seeking is primarily a role of household women with the mother and sisters assuming lead roles. The marriage proposal happens to be an arrangement whereby the mother is the primary agent without much social faux pas compared to the father. Therefore, the elder sister trying to persuade and entreat Roisin to forget her brother is not a manifestation of subservience to her father, but rather a desire to protect her family from what she perceives to be an impending grief. A reaction owing to the fact that she is socialized within the clan she wants to preserve, not owing to patriarchal authoritarian reasons. The failure of clan hierarchy upon Casim's persistence on heading for London with his lover offers the opportunity for Tahra to leave Glasgow for the university. The movie prioritizes personal *loyalties* above collective loyalties, while portraying the latter as oppression and the former being liberating. However, it is never clear if the Catholic-Muslim relationship withstands and if the brother-sister duo reconcile with the family. At the end of the day, even group loyalties evolve as well as adjust and can include newer members, even from a different ethnicity, to sustain family ties, without which disintegration leading to alienated individuals is the outcome (Kaplan quoted from Samad, 2013: 218-221).

This movie is not just a love story, it is also a story with a political content. The film, by bringing together two people representing different cultural identities (Pakistani-Muslim, Irish-Catholic-Christian), seeks the possibilities of living together in tolerance in Britain. At the end of the story, Casim, the main character of the movie, left his family for love 'by making his own choice.' This choice may not seem logical but director Loach emphasizes in the movie, 'Our differences should not prevent us from producing shared values and feelings.' This film discusses the appearance of multiculturalism in Britain and the concept itself. Director Loach draws attention to the discrimination between societies belonging to different cultures in United Kingdom with his film *A Fond Kiss* with the example being, Muslim-Christian, and Catholic-Protestant. In addition, with this film, Loach opposes Western prejudice and politics that perceive Muslims as potential terrorists. In the film, Casim's sister Tahara rejects the Western definition of terrorist during a class at school (Kaplan, 2013: 183-198).

Analyzing the film via the *Semiotic Square* of contrasts, one can vividly observe the South Asian – represented by the Pakistani diaspora – community’s double standards when dealing with men by allowing them and accepting their outdoor lifestyles while forbidding the same for their womenfolk; and peculiar norms for women both from within their community by forbidding university education for a young Muslim woman, as well as outside the community when the community suggests a casual fling being acceptable with a young non-Muslim woman rather than accepting her into their own ranks via marriage as Islam prescribes. A proper *content analysis* of the movie dissects the identity structure of the Muslim South Asian community residing in the United Kingdom, and the greater Muslim South Asian communities based in the Subcontinent nations of Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. It is worth noting that Muslim identity represented in the movie is more superficial and related to clan, preventing intermingling of races citing a threat to the Muslim social fabric in line with the caste system (Patel, 2020), and curtailing women’s freedom in violation of basic Islamic commandments of racial equality, justice and importance of education beautifully highlighted by *Ayat Ayat Cinta* from Indonesia.

Conclusion

The movie *Ayat Ayat Cinta* (2008) is a reflection of the Indonesia – with more than a thousand different ethnicities, and foreigners (Yuniarni, 2016) – of unity in diversity bonded by Islam as the narrative analysis reveals the Indonesian diaspora upholding their Islamic identity nearly and dearly whether it be in Egypt, or in Germany, so much so that even non-Muslims are deeply and positively influenced by the Islamic way of life both in deed as well as in practice, characterized by the protagonist Fahri who is extremely humble, kind, accepting of foreigners and non-Muslims, and even a devoted husband whose all-in-one character, influenced by Muslim medieval heroes, spreads optimism and attraction for Islam and Muslims wherever he goes. Noteworthy is the fact that the supporting characters as well tow the more-or-less same Islamic line, very much reflective of the Indonesian society famed for its adherence to Islam whether be it observance of the daily five times prayers and overall Islamic adherence (Iswara, 2020) or being the most charitable nation in the world (Indonesia Ranked ‘Most Generous’ Country in the World, n.d.).

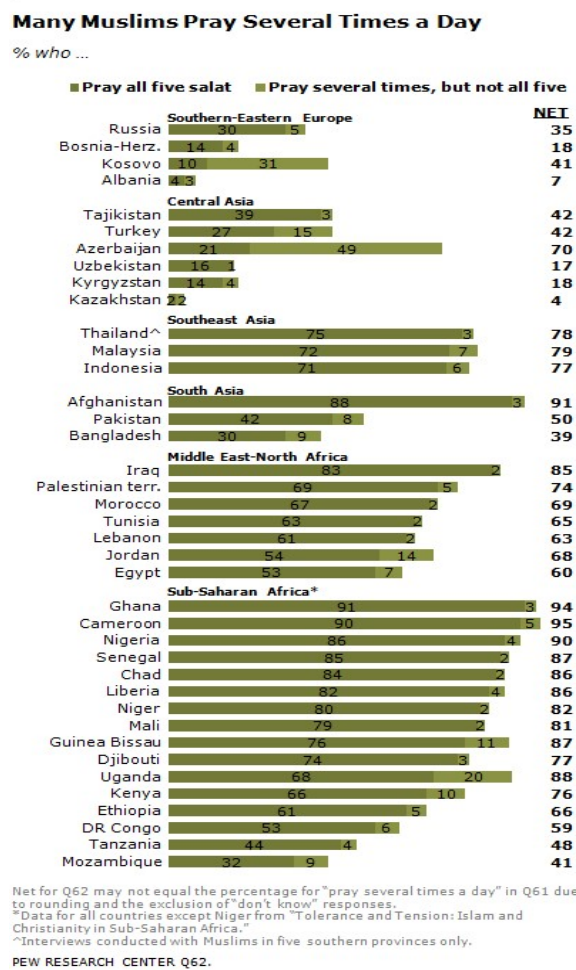


Figure 7. Percentage of Global Muslim Prayer Adherence (Courtesy: Pew Research (2012))

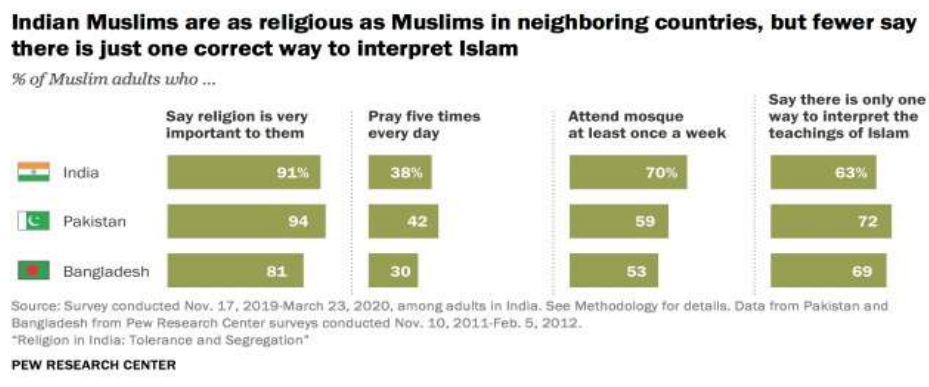


Figure 8. Percentage of Islamic Adherence in South Asia (Courtesy: Pew Research (2021))

A Fond Kiss (2004) on the other hand relays the 'Islamic' identity as understood and practiced by mostly Muslim South Asian communities hailing from Pakistan, where marrying a foreigner (even with the

prospect of conversion to Islam) is considered taboo even though Islamic jurisprudence places no such restrictions (Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid & Islam Q&A, 2010) and the tacit approval of illicit relationships which is a punishable crime in Islam (Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid & Islam Q&A, 2002). The Muslim identity is largely superficial without the actual essence of involving both genders in terms of congregational prayers, the observance of Hijab, and other community efforts, while discrimination quite similar to (and often at times overtly the same as) the caste-system practiced across the border among the majority religious community in India is rife. The social standards based on genders are often hypocritical. Such insincere norms, stemming from sluggish observances of the basic tenets of Islam as a society, seem to be leading to not only negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims among non-Muslims, but even within many Muslims in Pakistan or diaspora Pakistani communities leading to apostasy or the emergence of the ex-Muslim community, many of the prominent ones being Pakistanis (Amos, 2017) owing to cultural upbringings and restrictions being packaged as Islam.

The two movies, in word and in deed, are reflective of the societies they relate to, are based upon. A simple placement of the two movies as binaries on the Semiotic Square will highlight the contrasts, when their narratives and content are analyzed, being based on identity, and representation among Muslim Southeast Asians, and Muslim South Asians. Therefore, it would be safe to conclude with Shohreh Aghdashloo's famous words, Cinema is a reflection of its own society.

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