



RESEARCH PAPER

**Depiction of Religion in Hindi and Urdu Drama Serial:
A Comparative Analysis**

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ABSTRACT

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The study investigated Hindi and Urdu drama serials to demonstrate how the religion is being portrayed. The results of this study suggested that religion was never been a main theme in both Hindi and Urdu drama. The findings revealed that Indian dramas are more possessive about the religion and its importance in the human life. Through the content analysis by using the lens of social learning theory the finding concluded that in both the countries the religion is not being presented as main theme however Indian or Hindi dramas serial are found more tilted in depiction of their religion. The story revolves around the family matters by keeping the religion as an important element, but not the main element in the drama serials. Indian dramas are giving their religion (Hinduism) as a priority role in the main story, but we can't see this in Pakistani dramas.

Introduction

In today's world media has revolutionized everything. The entire globe is now becoming a global village. Distances are being shrunk and the world is becoming extra swift. There are no hard boundaries in the cultures (Berners-Lee 2007). Everyone knows each other even sitting in the opposite corner of the world. And it's all about the power and speed of media. Media has huge power; it affected the different people both negatively and positively. Television is one of the most commonly used medium. Most of Pakistani does use the television for entertainment purpose, especially Urdu drama. Urdu drama serial seems to be the one of the most watched program in Pakistan. These drama serial do play an important part in socialization, youngster do learn the social and religious rituals from these drama serials. Pakistani people are more likely to watch Indian

dramas/operas which are against their religious values, as the majority consists of Muslim society. Firstly there is a certain difference between the Indian and Pakistan dramas as far as the religion as priority is a concern. Thus this adds much more chances of influence of Hindu culture and tradition on Muslims. Secondly, the Pakistan entertainment channels are also trying to follow the path of Indian dramas which are against our values. It is very important to figure out the relationship between dramas and religion. The first question arises. Is there a relation between dramas/operas and religion? According to the history of dramas, the answer is "Yes". This means there is a relation between religion and dramas. For centuries people like to theater dramas for the purpose of entertainment. They like comedy, music and other forms of entertainment (Tanikawa, 2017). In fact, the history of theater can be traced back to 6th Century B.C. The ancient Greek and Roman dramas mostly consisted of religious ceremonials of the people. The main purpose of the drama was to deliver more effectively about religion (Redmond 1983). Dramas were the medium used for the purpose to deliver the religious teachings in the form of live performance. Where the people not only can see but also remember effectively the purpose of the teachings (Rafiq, 2018). Today the form of drama is a bit changed. The theater is still here but slightly different from the drama what we call in today's world. Information disseminated through these media is presented in so realistic way that makes almost impossible to get escape from the effects. According to well-known media scholar George Gerbner in his Theory of cultivation, "*the people who watch television more frequently, get more influenced by the messages of the television*" (Shanahan, 1999). Mean to say, the people who consume more time in watching television get more impact from the media messages. Their way of thinking and understanding can be influenced by the content he/she watched. Similarly it by applying this theory in Indian content, it can be said that people living in Pakistani society is getting influenced by the Indian society especially in the term of religion. As we already study that the original purpose of the drama was the religious perching in a more effective way. We can clearly see in Indian content, that how they reenact their religious anecdotes, in their dramas, cartoons, street plays, and animations. These are different elements that are causing influence on the mind of the people. And slowly making the behavior of the audience to think and act in a proper manner.

Both Pakistani and Indian drama are one of the important tolls in disseminating their cultural and social values including the religion also. This question is how religion is being depicted in both Pakistani and Indian drama serials. As people do learn their socialization from the media so it is highly needed to investigate to sort of that how media of both the countries is depicting their religion and religious values. We must need to have a comparative study of Pakistani and Indian dramas so that we can dig out the religious importance and its priority in both the drama industries. Ultimately this will provide us a though the process to look at the problem more effectively and how to counter the impact.

Literature Review

Very limited data is available regarding the Pakistani and Indian dramas in the perspective of religion. Pakistani and Indian dramas had been investigated in large number of studies but religion depiction in Urdu and Hindi dramas is lacking to great extent. (Biberman, 2016) work on the religious content in Pakistani television and what are their impact on people. They find that program presented on Pakistani television spread controversial information regarding women role and religion. Pakistani media actually providing a space “Live debate” for sharing anything which they want to share and listen, this is actually causing the trouble for liberals and their Islamic counterparts. The findings further elaborates that young people (youth) are not interested in religious programs, very few people follows the religious programs. Those who watch the religious programs thinks that its social responsibility to watch, not only for themselves for others to share.

Qadri and Mufti (2016) had worked on the religion in films particularly in Indian film industry popularly known as Bollywood. They analyze the impact of Amir Khan’s hit “PK” on the people of India. Qualitative method of study was used for findings. They find the film grab unusual attention of the audience because the film was all based on religion. India is Hindu majority state; as a result there was a huge aggression from Hindus. Posters were set to fire and protest was recorded as an impact of film. Poster of the film was another reason of controversy even before the release of the film. They found that people of the India are less tolerant especially when we talk about religion, which is very alarming (Zurcher, Webb, & Robinson, 2018).

Zia (2007) had worked on the “effects of the cable television on the women of Lahore”. More than 400 women were chosen as the part of study and a designed questionnaire was circulated among them. Findings revealed that the people who are heavy viewer mean to say that spent more time on watching television get more affected with the content as compared to light views (the people who don’t watch television for longer time).

Yorulmaz and Blazek (2014) designed a study that described the history of Turkish cinema from its origins in 1896 until the present focusing upon how Islam and religious Muslims are depicted in the movies. Islam and religious Muslims have often been depicted for historical, political and cultural reasons in a negative light, although Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country. They showed that Turkish cinema present day recommends more electric array of movies showing Islamic practices in daily life and in favorable light.

Ali, Khalid et al (2014) conducted a survey by using questionnaire for investigating the Impact of Indian Dramas on Language and Dressing of Females belonging the Sahiwal village of district Sialkot by targeting 100 women of 16-30 years age viewing cable television for a minimum two years. They recorded the respondent’s consumption patterns, level of viewing, favorite watching time and control over remote in their study and checked the above factors with the age group

and marital status with demographic characteristics of the respondents. The results showed that Indian media trying to cultivate their culture in our society, females even in the village area like Indian dresses and use Hindi words Intentionally or unintentionally but there is the slight changes occur in Interaction pattern

One study examined the representations and portrayal of Islam and Muslims in American Popular Culture especially Hollywood movie productions (MenchawiFawal 2013). His findings indicated that Islam and Muslims received negative coverage. A consistent stereotyped association with violence, terrorism, fundamentalism and extremism marks the representations of Islam and Muslims in Hollywood movies. The study also attempted to examine the role of education in demystifying the negative representations of Islam and Arab Muslims in Popular Culture. Furthermore, he demonstrated that the critical study of these misrepresentations in the American popular culture may contribute towards establishing a more democratic, peaceful, and just world.

Maestro and Greenberg (2000) constructed a one week sample of prime time television (8-11 p.m.) for ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC to represent broadcast entertainment programming for 1996. They documented the frequencies and attributes of ethnic minority and majority characters in a systematic content analysis with particular attention to Latinos and their interactions with other TV characters. Their study's findings updated the current status of minority portrayals and identified prevalent attributes of minority portrayals that may impact viewer perceptions. A case study had been conducted on the youth of Multan to check out the media imperialism and its impacts on the Pakistani culture; this study was conducted by (Khan and Arif 2009). The purpose of the study was to check out the impact of the international entertainment industry on Pakistani youth especially in Multan. They used both content analysis and survey research as a methodology. The finding revealed that foreign entertainment industry has a huge impact on the mind of youth, the programs were infecting the youth of Multan in so many ways in daily life.

Pakistani society has its own culture and values. Correspondingly, Indian society is different from Pakistani society. There is a huge viewership of Indian dramas in Pakistan. Thus making this impression much stronger to have an impact of these serials on Pakistani society. A case study was conducted by (Azeez, 2014), in which sample 120 people were selected from Layyah city. Multistage sampling technique was used for the study. The finding showed that there is a heavy impact of Indian dramas/ operas on the people of Layyah. People are under a direct influence which is mainly provided through cable or dish.

Material and Methods

Content analysis is used as the research method for conducting the study. For the sampling, all primetime programs (Dramas/operas) showing on the big entertainment channels of both the countries from 2009-2019. From Pakistan, we choose Hum TV, and from India, we choose Star-plus as the sampled channel. A sample of hundred episodes was selected randomly from both Pakistani and Indian dramas that mean each of two categories has 50 episodes. From selected 10 dramas each drama will comprise 5 episodes. Both the dramas will be analyzed from different perspectives according to the coding sheet. Unit of analysis will be every character acting accordingly including speaking body language, use of the words, situations, etc. Content analysis is chosen as a methodology for this study. The study is actually a comparative study between Pakistani and Indian dramas. List of hundred episodes from both Pakistani and Indian dramas had been selected.

Theoretical Perspective

In his study Social Learning theory, by Albert Bandura, can be applied which says that people learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modeling. Because it is a social learning process that negatively influences that mind of the Muslims members of the society. Media itself is getting influence with the European and Indian culture by introducing the new trends, like the boyfriend, girlfriend, shot unsuitable dresses, etc. Similarly, by watching Indian dramas, people in our society are using the Hindi language especially children are greatly getting affected with it. They are using the words "Patti Patni" for Husband and wife, "Puja" for religious practice and other so many things.

Result and Discussion

A systematic sample of hundred episodes was taken from both Indian and Pakistani drama serials. Each of the categories comprises 50 episodes.. Almost both the industries have strong religious affiliation, the entire story; including environment, culture etc. were based on their own religious values.

Slang Expressions

Slang expression nominates the speaking behavior of the character. It includes words that expresses the emotional situation in the form of different slangs or words. For example "Oh Allah", "Hey Bhagwan" etc. In the study the about 7.6% of the slang expression was used in the Indian dramas, whereas the percentage for Pakistani dramas was 3% which is less than Indian dramas.

Table 1
Slang Expressions in Pakistani and Indian Dramas

		Slang Expression							Total
		Khuda	Allah	Rab	Bhagwan	Devi	Operwaly	None	
Drama	Hindi	0	1	3	28	3	3	12	50
	Urdu	3	9	1	0	0	2	35	50
Total		3	10	4	28	3	5	47	100

Overall Indian dramas used more slang expressions as compared to Pakistani dramas. In Indian dramas the expression "*Bhagwan*" was used the most about "28" time, the word *Allah* is used "1" time, *Rab*, *Devi* and *Operwala* has been used "3" time each in 50 episodes. Similarly in Pakistani dramas the numbers of the slang expression was less, the most used expression in Pakistani dramas was "*Allah*" about "9" times. The word "*Khuda*" was used 3 times, and "*Operwala*" was used 2 times. The word "*Rab*" is only used single time.

Live Works Environment and Religious Practice

This category of the study includes the live work environment, religious practice and belief on evil and devil worship. In Indian dramas the live, work environment and religious practice occurred 41 times which is about 8.2% in 500 scenes (50 episodes).

Table 2
Live Work Environment

		Live Work Environment				Total
		Work Environment	Religious practice	Talk about Religious Practice	None	
Drama	Hindi	8	23	10	9	50
	Urdu	2	4	4	40	50
Total		10	27	14	49	100

The belief on evil and devil worship was less occurred in both the categories of the dramas. In Pakistani dramas it happens only 3 and in Indian dramas only 6 times scene occurred from 500 scenes as shown in the Table.

Table3
Belife on Evil

		Belief_On_eEvil		Total
		Yes	No	
Drama	Urdu	3	47	50
	Hindi	6	44	50

Total	8	91	100
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Belief in God and Power of God

This grouping includes the Belief in God and Power of God means God is responsible for causing something. From 100 episodes of both the dramas expression related to the power of God occurs total 43 times. Indian dramas again in this group is leading one, total 27 occurrence has been noted from 50 episodes while in Pakistani dramas it occurs only 16 times as shown in the table 5. It is also became clear from the table that belief in God or God is responsible for causing something occurs 21 time, which includes 13 time from Indian dramas and 8 times from Pakistani dramas.

Table 4
Belief on Power of God

Numbers	Power of God	Belief on God	Total Episodes
Hindi	27	13	50
Urdu	16	8	50
Total	43	21	100

Prayer

There were total 23 of prayer occurrence in total 100 episodes. The majority of personal prayer was shown by Indian dramas about 4.2 %, the ratio in Pakistani dramas was 0.4%. Overall prayer behavior shown in Indian serials/ Operas was more frequent and effective. Total there were 4 sign indication, 21 personal prayer offering, 4 invitations for prayer, 1 telling a religious story and 2 reading Holy book in Indian dramas showing the prayer behavior. In Pakistani dramas total the occurrence of the personal behavior was 2, 1 sign indication, 2 prayer invitation and 1 reading Holy book. Overall Indian dramas containing more personal prayer and religious mind set. The summary of the prayer behavior is shown in the table.

Table 5
Prayer Behavior

Drama	Sign	Offering Prayer	Inviting for prayer	Telling a Religious Story	Reading Holy Book	None	Total
Hindi	4	21	4	1	2	18	50
Urdu	1	2	2	0	1	44	50
Total	5	23	6	1	3	62	100

Valance, Salience and Context

Valence tells about the representation of religion, either the religion is portrayed in positive, negative or neutral way. Total 1000 scenes were studied for accurate findings, it can be said that both the Pakistani and Indian dramas represents positive valance, about 98% the valence is positive. This time Pakistani

dramas are also showing the same results but with minor decrease, about 94% of Pakistani dramas were showing the positive valence as indicated in the table. According to the results shown in the table we can say both the dramas were portraying more positive about the religious as compared to negative and neutral.

Table 6
Valence

		Valence		Total
		Positive	Neutral	
Drama	Hindi	49	1	50
	Urdu	47	3	50
Total		96	4	100

Saliency is the indication about the importance of "religion" in overall story. It actually tells the position of the main variable, where it actually rely. Saliency included three main levels that were main theme, Central and marginal. According to the results religion was not the main theme of the drama in any of the category. In Indian dramas 56% of the dramas contain religion as central theme in drama and 42% as the marginal theme. In Pakistani dramas 12% of the entire dramas were having the central theme, whereas the 88% was at marginal theme as shown in the following table.

Table 7
Saliency

		Main Theme	Central	Marginal	Total
Drama	Hindi	1	28	21	50
	Urdu	0	6	44	50
Total		1	34	65	100

Conclusion

The results of this study suggested that religion was never been a main theme in both Hindi and Urdu drama. The findings revealed that Indian dramas are more possessive about the religion and its importance in the human life. In contrast with the Indian dramas industry Pakistani dramas are not giving the importance to the religion. In fact religion is the totally a side or marginal element in the Pakistani dramas. It is very important to clear that the drama industries are representing their own religion, i.e. Islam is being represented in Pakistani dramas and Hinduism is being represented in Indian dramas. Both the dramas industries have strong religious affiliation, which can be judged by their lifestyle described in the dramas. One of another common point in both the dramas were they both have strong belief on the God. Overall in the collection of 100 episodes, there were only two dramas that are having the representation of different religions. In Pakistani drama (Dastan) there was a Hindu character, living and sharing her lifestyle among Muslims. In

Indian drama (Naamkaran) a character, that were praying (Namaz) which represents a Muslim in Hindu based drama.

Generally Indian dramas are more connected with the religion, during the study it is found that the initial scenes of starting episodes are from Mander or showing some religious practice. Such depiction increases the religious importance in the minds of the audience. Almost every episode is showing the central intentions to show some religious teachings, practice and environment. They always keep the religion as the important part of their daily life routine. It was observed that the story of Indian dramas is more unrealistic than Pakistani dramas. The story revolves around the family matters by keeping the religion as an important element. They slang expression added much more importance to the religion because they showed the religious importance to the audience and to have a strong impact on the minds of the people. In contrast to the Indian dramas, Pakistani dramas are not showing the religion as priority. As far as the story is concerned, the drama stories are based on reality and are not promoting the fake picture of the society. In Pakistani dramas religious activity are usually not shown except a typical scene of an accident where everyone stands outside of the hospital and some lady is praying for his/her life.

Overall it can be said that both the drama industries have different aims of showing drama. Indian dramas are promoting the religion in more effectively. Thus these dramas are having a strong impact on the mind of people in Pakistani society. Children in Pakistani society have more knowledge about the Hindu religion as compared to their own. No doubt Pakistani dramas are popular in India but they are not promoting the religion importance in the people life as compared to the Indian dramas. We must need to adapt policies to counter the effect, to show the religion as an important element

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