



RESEARCH PAPER

Language as a Discursive Entity: A Foucauldian Analysis of the Selected Two Bollywood Movies

¹Nargis Saleem*, ²Tahir Ghafoor Malik and ³Rana Muhammad Faraz

1. Lecturer, Riphah Institute of Language and Literature (RILL), Riphah International University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Riphah Institute of Language and Literature (RILL), Riphah International University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Lecturer, Riphah Institute of Language and Literature (RILL), Riphah International University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

***Corresponding Author** Nargis.saleem@riphah.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This research is aimed at investigating the selected Bollywood movies i.e. Rohit Shetty's movie *Sooryavanshi* (2021) and Rakesh Sawant's *Mudda* (2019) from Foucauldian perspective. Both these movies depict Islamist Kashmiri fighters as terrorists who rape women and kill innocent people with support from Pakistani establishment. Foucault's theory views language as a discursive entity which helps the powerful elite in subverting truth and reality. Similar situations prevail in both these movies in which language of characters' dialogues serves the purpose of powerful Indian elite. The dialogues of Kashmiri fighters depict them as vulgar, voluptuous and inhuman creatures who deserve no sympathy whatsoever. On the contrary, the protagonists in the given movies express decency, civility and character, supporting political agenda of the Indian government. In all, language in both the films falls in line with Foucauldian perspective of discursive entity. Choice of lexical items makes Indian Army as hero and Kashmiris and Pakistanis as villains. This research suggests the readers to keep in mind the discursive side of language in movies.

Keywords: Bollywood, Foucault, Language, Power, *Sooryavanshi*, *Mudda*

Introduction

The present research is aimed at analyzing selected bollywood movies such as Rohit Shetty's *Sooryavanshi* (2021) and Rakesh Sawant's *Mudda* (2019) from Michel Foucault's theory of discourse analysis. Foucault's theory of discourse analysis revolves around the idea of power behind use of language in written or visual arts. It is based on the idea that use of language always favours the powerful elite.

Similar ideology of language prevails in both movies under current discussion. As both these movies are filmed on militancy in Indian held Kashmir, the characters, the setting, theme and language are suited to the benefit of Indian narrative. *Mudda* is entirely related to life of Kashmir Hindu pundits who are forced by the local jihadists to flee Kashmir, leaving their homes, property and orchards. Likewise, *Sooryavanshi* is also about Kashmiri and Pakistani Muslim freedom fighters who attempt to operate bombings in Bombay. Their irrational discourse is countered by sensible Indian military and political leadership who are portrayed as saviors of human life and property. Local Jihadists' dialogues are specifically developed so that negative image of Pakistani military may be developed. Similarly, Jihadists are portrayed as illiterate and lusty individuals who have no concept of right or wrong. Clerics, too, are devoid of sensible talk except propaganda.

In all, both these movies under present analysis are highly political for their use of such language which tempers the reality in Kashmir. The film writers have attempted to present bleak picture of Pakistani establishment along with Kashmiri fighters. Both these

movies have been directed in such a way as to support popular Indian narrative. Keeping in view the relationship between the works and theory, this research enjoys much importance. It surely counters the political narrative of Indian film writers who have been biased towards Kashmiris and Kashmir valley. This research has strong political influences as it digs reality behind language used in both these movies.

Literature Review

Review of literature plays an important role to judge the present research work in the light of previous attempts taken in this regard. It builds up foundation of the given research process as it establishes the importance of this attempt. By comparing this work with the previous ones, it builds up research gap, a key feature of literature review.

In an article titled as *A Foucauldian Reading of Morrison's Novels*, Sima Farshid and Jalal Sokhanvar attempt to explore presence of freedom in the works of Morrison who attempts to take African narrative out of its being marginal. The current article explores the fact Morrison's work takes African works out of forgotten and ignored world. She has strived hard to counter Euro American hegemony in favour of African narrative. Her work can be interpreted from post-modernistic approaches. The best way to interpret her work is to analyze them through Foucault's theory of discourse analysis. Being aware of power mechanism, she highlights political approach in American writings which consist unconscious use of such language as may suit the Western ideology.

Ensieh Shabanirad & Mahtab Dadkhah in an article titled as *A Foucauldian Study of Space and Power in Two Novels by Nadine Gordimer*, investigates presence of space, power relation in novels of Nadine whose works portray characters and situations revolving around power struggle. The article concludes that Nadine's novels depict Foucault's theory of power which occupies central space in politically motivated works around the world. The given research work is about selected novels which show presence of certain characters who run after space in order to find some power. It shows space as means by which people attempt to have control over certain sectors.

Archika Khurana in a review which was published in *India Times*, showers praise for the blockbuster Bollywood movie, *Sooryavanshi*. The review is titled as: *Sooryavanshi Movie review: Sooryavanshi is high on style, show and action thrill*. This particular review expresses much praise for Rohit Shetty who is described as making best of his art through this movie. Its action, scenes, story and thrill have been given full credit. This movie has been compared with *Simmbha* and *Singham* that were favourite movies. Most of the review is about story and plot of the movie. It unfolds the entire episode how, why and where the story takes place. In all, the review does not shed any light on Foucauldian perspective of language and power relation.

Devika Girish in a review titled as *Sooryavanshi' Review: Cops on a Crusade (2021)*, compares this movie with previous blockbuster movies of Rohit Shetty and concludes that this film is best of all other such works. One of the best things about this movie is that it includes those stars who have worked in other movies such as *Singham*, *Singham Returns* and *Simmbha*. The reviewer points out some flaws in the movie in order to balance his arguments. The cuts are so sudden that viewers feel dizzy and bored. Acting is more than reality; it is exaggeration on the part of main star actor who is seen as fearless leader of anti terrorist squad.

Published in Times of India, Pallabi Dey Purkayastha gives the title to his review as: *Mudda 370 J&K Review: An Insipid Tale of Forbidden Love*. According to the reviewer, the story of the movie is set in 1980's in which tensions between the Hindus and the Muslim fighters escalate when militancy gets rise in Kashmir valley. Amidst communal violence two young brave hearts Suraj and Aasma fall in love. According to the reviewer, the current

movie is not without flaws. Most of the time, lead characters remain off screen. Hence, the movie does not represent the real situations in Kashmir.

A review by Movie Desk under the title *Mudda 370 J&K Movie review- A Compelling Film*, is all praise for the movie. The review is focused on love affair between a young Hindu Pandit and a Muslim girl and subsequent communal disharmony which leads to Pandits' migration. There is appreciation for music, scenery and storyline which appeal Movie Desk. It also applauds the characters for giving their best performance.

As far as both these movies are concerned, these have not been seen through the lens of Michel Foucault's theory of discourse analysis. Significant research gap is present there. The present research surely fulfills the research gap by investigating role of language from Foucauldian perspective. It gives new meanings to these movies under present research. Hence, it establishes an addition to existing body of knowledge.

Research Statement

Even a cursory glance at Rohit Shetty's *Sooryavanshi (2021)* and Rakesh Sawant's *Mudda* is enough to give a strong impression that both these movies can be investigated through Michel Foucault's theory of discourse analysis. It is because both these movies are about conflict between jihadists and Indian Army; presence of Foucauldian perspective is surely to prevail.

Material and Methods

The present research paper takes Gabriele Griffin's *Research Methods for Studies (2005)* as source of research work. It is a qualitative research which makes thematic investigation into the selected Bollywood movies as primary source of research process. The Movies are as under: Rohit Shetty's movie *Sooryavanshi (2021)* and Rakesh Sawant's *Mudda (2019)*. The main focus of the entire research is language as Foucauldian perspective. It also takes research articles, reviews and other research works as secondary source of data.

Theoretical Framework

Language is a tool by which individuals and groups construct their own view of the world and related happenings. It is not a mere medium of getting and sharing information from one source to another. Instead, language plays a key role in constructing a particular view of the world. Thus, not only does language impart information, but also does it depict the desired image of the social world. As a social construction, language becomes violent whenever it is in the hands of institutionalized forces. The same linguistic violence brings about dent in the identity of the less privileged groups, classes and communities.

According to Foucault, language is only a mode of communication, but also a medium of power. It is source of manipulating the others who are less fortunate have equal standing in society. The powerful repress the identity and viewpoint of the marginalized groups and communities via language. This type of discourse is articulated via verbal texts which build up epistemology in such a way as to subvert the ideals of non privileged classes.

Language is reflexive of people's internal world which is depicted through use of specific vocabulary suited to the purpose of the speakers or the writers. Their words, phrases, clauses and sentences are political in nature. Sometimes, it happens that one has to get into pragmatic meanings in order to interpret the textual structure of words. Hence, the words in a discourse mean for some intended ideology which is promulgated via catchy words.

From discourse analysis, one gets an idea that truth presented in written or visual arts is invariably relative, meaning something political in nature. Basically, it is persuasion which is rooted in linguistic forms, making out specific and desired image of the world in discourse. Being persuasive, such a discourse is always in need of verbal forms which not only persuade but also create a particular image in the mind of the readers, viewers and audience alike. It is strategic, applying various linguistic forms from man a figure of speech.

Such discourse as depends on linguistic forms is, in no way, neutral or impartial. On the contrary, it consists in power constituting elements which have discursive impact on the marginalized groups. It is a social production which imparts strong impact on the viewers and audience. Foucault's theory questions the authenticity of truth presented in various forms of art. It challenges all forms of truth and asks readers to think who benefits from such truth, reality or ideology. Foucault is of the view that the entire power structure is manipulated through political use of language. In all, language is used by the powerful to construct their own version of reality. It is aimed at giving advantage to the privileged classes.

In order to detect discursive nature of the given discourse, it is binding on the readers to give attention to textual interpretation of specific linguistic forms. It needs great care to go for the detailed analysis of assumptions depicted in particular verbal or visual art. One has to be rigorous while reading texts. Formal procedures need to be sacrificed in favour of formal ones. These assumptions express the discursive power of language which is utilized as power to give desired turn to reality. Here, language thus used is aimed at deciding what is true, real or natural.

As far as productive power of language is concerned, it is institutionally located. It means a particular discourse is rooted in institutionalized ideology about the world. Griffin quotes as, 'Foucault, for all his reluctance to ascribe unidirectional causality, insisted on the need to locate the social site from which particular statements are made, and to position the speaker of a statement in terms of his or her social authority.' (Griffin,2005,p.84). The given words indicate constant relationship between discourse and the societal set up from which it arises.

According to Foucault, 'Thus a statement coming from a source endowed with authority is likely to be more productive than one coming from a marginalized social position.' (Griffin,2005,p.84). It means that those statements which come from authorities are far more piercing than those coming from powerless speakers. As per the aforementioned quotes, Foucauldian discourse digs deep into the presence or absence of power in the given discourse. This endeavour is to find power thus through verbal or oral statements. 'Thus, the social position of a discourse's production is important to consider in relation to inclusion of the desired effects.' (Griffin,2005,p.84).

In order to analysis of a discourse, readers as should immerse themselves in the given sources so that they may be well aware of the themes and assumptions present in there. In every discourse, there is inclusion of the desired ingredients at the cost of sacrificing the undesired ones. It is part and parcel of discourse analysis to keep in mind what is included or excluded. It is game of visible and invisible. Linguistic power, in order to promulgate certain ideology, makes some items visible

'It addresses the question of power as they are articulated through visual images themselves.' (Griffin,2005,p.84). Foucault's discourse analysis is based on the idea that power is transferred through articulation in the form of visual images in

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an attempt to investigate the selected Bollywood movies in the light of Michel Foucault's theory of discourse analysis as a theoretical framework. The entire data analysis a comprehensive discussion to investigate the movies under present research in the light of as many as two research objectives discussed earlier. In other words, data analysis is answer to the two research questions mentioned earlier. In order to bring about logical bond between the theory and the primary source of data, several quotes/extracts from the movies have been quotes. These quotes provide authenticity and validity to the present research attempt. The data is as follows:

Both the movies selected for the present research are highly important in order to be investigated through the lens of Foucauldian perspective. Both these movies are set in Indian held Kashmiri sounding where conflict between Indian security personnel and local Jihadists suits the purpose of Indian establishment. The theme, the characters, the setting, the scenes, the language and the characterization are aimed at invoking propaganda like narrative against Pakistani establishment who have been portrayed as supporting infiltration and subsequent terrorism in Kashmir as well Indian cities. Indian Armed forces as well as Hindus have been depicted as heroic characters; whereas Pakistanis and Kashmiri Muslims are portrayed as villains, having no moral or social values at all. Use of dialogues is quite political. The Kashmiri fighters are seen planning and supporting terrorist activities whereas People from armed forces have been shown philanthropic and patriotic individuals and groups. Thus, the works under current study make themselves as sources of Foucauldian narrative.

The *Mudda* opens with Burhan Waani who has been shown as filthy, fat, loudmouthed lustful jihadist, ready to pounce upon girls as his legitimate prey. After poking vulgar remarks, he rapes Noor Jehan in brutal way. The lexical items by which he expresses his lust surely support narrative of powerful Indian mainstream narrative. 'Then I was only Burhan, Noor Jehan, a Kashmiri unemployed youth. Now, I am a Jehadi commander, BurhanWaani.' Again, he says, 'Then a God's pious man showed me way to Jihad. And the way on which a *Pari* like you is in my grip, after martyrdom, *Hoors* of Jannat will stick to my chest.' BurhanVani's dialogues depict him as if he were a spokesman of Indian establishment. Apparently, he is anti-Indian, but as per Foucault's theory, language has been used a weapon to prove real life Burhan as villain who uses Islam for his lust on an innocent girl, raping her mercilessly. BurhanVani is shows as say, 'Do you know no girl can live after refusing to accept a Jehadi's offer?' The language thus used here is an attempt to support the interest of those who have ruled Kashmir valley by force for years. Likewise, it is language which enables the movie's director to prove Burhan's close associates as weak, timid and coward groups. One of his allies says, 'We should surrender before army men.' Contrarily, no such cowardly statements are associated with Indian soldiers.

Similar narrative flows in *Sooryavansi* in which some Muslim militant chiefs such as Tiger, Bilal Ahmed, Riaz Hafeez and Qadir Usmani are shown as planning wide scale 600 kilos RDS bombings in various sectors of Bombay. They have also been narrated as bombing Bombay at 12 different places in 1993. As many as forty sleepers work in Bombay to accomplish the task of blasting Bombay. Akshy Kumar is seen saying: 'All proofs say that Qadir Usmani is in the wrong.' Akshay says again, 'You people might not know but under the preaching of this Qadir Usmani, three children of your area joined ISIS after leaving their house, their country.' Thus, as per Foucault's theory of discourse analysis, these dialogues sabotage the narrative of Kashmiri freedom fighters. Contrarily, these pave the way for Indian mainstream ideology which proves the Muslim clerics as terrorists, financed by Pakistani military establishment.

Riaz Hafeez's words speak volumes about political use of language as: This is a very great war, Vidya. And in war, innocent also die. "We have no enmity with you. But by leaving you alive, we cannot risk such grand mission of ours.' Soon, he kills the girl. These dialogues by Bilal Hafeez support Indian narrative, holding Kashmiri Muslims as terrorists. They have

been shown as inhuman, merciless murderers who give no value to human life if it be an innocent man, a woman or children. Here, language comes into force, condemning Kashmiri Muslims as the worst terrorists.

Bilal Hafeez's last words depict him as inhuman character: 'You cannot harm us. For last thirteen years, we have been living here and killing your people.' The film writer as well as director attempt to rapture the reality by painting negative image of rebellious fighters in Kashmir. People such as Bilal Hafeez have been portrayed as lusty barbarians, ready to pounce upon innocent people as their legitimate prey.

Both the movies under this study bring about discursive formation of facts and figures about Kashmir related issues. The writers and the directors of both these movies have chosen Kashmiri militants versus Indian military as major actors on the film screens. As usually, these movies are intended to show bleak face of Jihadists and their supporters i.e. Pakistani establishment. The opening scenes in *Mudda* grip the viewers by language which manifests presence of language as a tool to depict specific view of reality as wished by the Indian government.

Like other forms of art, movies do also have language which is molded in such a way so as to preach certain ideology. Similarly, both these movies preach ideology of Indian goodness. Hence, these movies are basically political since these are about Kashmir conflict. Even the presence of Indian army is enough to indicate an impression that the both these movies are aimed at painting dark side of Indian jihadists. Consequently, they have been portrayed as illiterate and lusty wanderers whose main aim is to harm human kind. Likewise, they have been seen raping girls and women under various pretexts. They have been depicted as enemy to human life and property. Having no sense of right or wrong, people such as Bilal Hafeez are bent upon killing as many people as possible.

With a few exceptions, nearly all Muslims depicted in the movie are shown as negative individuals. Mostly, they are jealous of the Hindus whom they keep on blackmailing through various means. One of the Jihadists says, 'My eye is on the biggest orchards of this Umar Nagri. If God wills, it will be in my custody in a few days soon.' These words uttered by a Jihadist are aimed at proving them to be devoid of sympathy and support. Absence of sanity in Jihadists brings about discursive formation of reality. As per Foucault's theory of discourse analysis, the language of these works shows biased and partial side of the situation. 'In the last month of the year, six more terrorists have have decreased. And in three years three hundred jihadist have met hours.'

Conclusion

Conclusion is basically short summary of the entire data analysis. It is a gist of two research questions discussed in data analysis. This study confirms the findings that *Mudda* and *Sooryavanshi* consist of several situations and dialogues which fall in line with Foucault's theory of discourse analysis. In both these movies under current research, language is biased and political in nature. It supports the narrative of popular Indian elite, occupying Jammu and Kashmir against the will and wish of the Muslim majority. Indians soldiers and Pandits have been depicted as heroic figures. Contrarily, the Muslim jihadists have been given negative role to play. The language shows its power by painting different faces of Indian and Kashmiri Jihadists. Sanity, wisdom and decency prevail in Indian characters; whereas the jihadists are depicted as lusty barbarians who keep on misusing Islam for their vested interest. It is use of language by which reality in Kashmir is entirely distorted. The directors of both these movies have shown discursive formation of reality by means of language as tool of propaganda.

Reference

- Butler, J. (2007). *Bodies and power revisited*. In D. Taylor & K. Vintges (Eds.), *Feminism and the final Foucault* (pp. 183-194). University of Illinois Press.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980). Two lectures. In C. Gordon (Ed.), *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. Pantheon Books. (Original work published 1976)
- Foucault, M. (1982). *The subject and power*. *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), 777-795.
- Foucault, M. (1988). *Power Knowledge*. Random House.
- Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Vintage Books. (Original work published 1975)
- Foucault, M. (1998). *The will to knowledge: The history of sexuality vol. 1*. Penguin Books. (Original work published 1976)
- Foucault, M., Burchell, G., Gordon, C., & Miller, P. (1991). *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality*. University of Chicago Press.
- Griffin, G. (2013). *Research methods for English studies: An introduction*. In *Research methods for English studies* (pp. 17). Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/978-0748683444-002>