


***Farming Muslimness: A Critical Analysis of "The Kerala Story"***

 Sarah shamshad<sup>1</sup>, Hamna Ghazanfar<sup>2</sup>, Alesha Khan<sup>3</sup>
<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>Department of English, Bahaudin Zakariya University, Multan

**Article Info**

 \*Corresponding author: H. Ghazanfar  
[sarahpostcolonial@gmail.com](mailto:sarahpostcolonial@gmail.com)
**Keywords:**

 Muslims,  
 Representation,  
 Bollywood Film Industry,  
 The Kerala Stories,  
 Manipulative

**Abstract**

This study analyzes "The Kerala Story" (2023) to examine the representation of Muslims in the Bollywood film industry. This movie is selected as a case study through purposive sampling because of its depiction of Muslims in various scenes and dialogues. A critical approach was used to analyse this movie. Data was collected from online platforms such as YouTube, Google Chrome, and Movie Box used publicly. This study uses Fairclough's (2003) Critical Discourse Analysis theory and Stuart Hall's (1997) Representation Theory. The purpose of this study is to deconstruct the negative ideologies about Muslims and explore how different stereotypes and harmful misconceptions are perpetuated through this movie. The findings indicate the complex representation of Muslims in film, reflecting negative stereotypes, especially in the portrayal of manipulative figures of Muslims who forced non-Muslim Indian women to convert to Islam. This research contributes to our understanding of societal attitudes towards minority communities, specifically Muslims, that are shaped through popular cultures, highlighting the need for more balanced representation.

**Introduction**

The conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims in Pakistan and India was sparked by the separation of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, and this conflict is very longstanding. This conflict has presented in many forms, which include wars, territorial disputes, and social tensions. In shaping public perceptions of Muslims media has played a very important role, significantly Bollywood films, often perpetuating negative stereotypes and reinforcing wrong ideologies. This research paper investigates the ideological representation of Muslims in the 2023 Bollywood film "The Kerala Story". This study aims to raise awareness about the broader context through a critical analysis of the film's narrative, visual, and linguistic elements in which Muslims are negatively portrayed, and to deconstruct the dominant ideologies that make and represent Muslim identities. This analysis provides a critical perspective on the political portrayal of Muslims by examining the representation of characters, settings, and linguistic choices.

**Research Objectives**

1. To critically analyze the representation of Muslims in "The Kerala Stories".
2. To identify and examine the dominant narratives and stereotypes associated with Muslims in the film, and investigate how the film contributes to the construction of Muslim identity.

**Research Questions**

1. In what ways Indian movie "The Kerala Stories" represent Muslims?
2. How does the narrative of "The Kerala Stories" contribute to reinforcing stereotypes of Muslims as manipulative?

**Literature Review**

In today's world, the media plays a vital role in shaping our perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs. The media's influence is omnipresent, and its impact on our minds is profound. We are constantly bombarded with images, messages, and narratives that shape our understanding of the world. As Marshall McLuhan aptly put it, "The medium

is the message" (McLuhan, 1964). The media's power to shape our reality is undeniable, and it is essential to critically examine the messages and representations perpetuated by the media. Bollywood films, in particular, have a massive impact on Indian society and culture. These films shape our perceptions of different communities, cultures, and identities. Unfortunately, the representation of Muslims in Bollywood films has been a subject of concern and controversy. Studies have shown that Muslims are often stereotyped and misrepresented in Bollywood films (Kumar, 2017; Kazmi, 2012). These stereotypes range from portraying Muslims as terrorists, villains, or fundamentalists to depicting them as exotic, mysterious, or oppressed (Ahmed, 2013). The representation of Muslims in Bollywood films can have a significant impact on societal attitudes and stereotypes. Negative representations can contribute to the marginalization and exclusion of Muslims, while positive representations can promote understanding, empathy, and inclusivity (Malik, 2019). It is essential to examine the representation of Muslims in Bollywood films critically and understand the implications of these representations on Muslim communities and society at large. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Representation Theory provide valuable frameworks for examining the representation of Muslims in Bollywood films. CDA helps analyze the linguistic features of texts, while Representation Theory examines how meaning is constructed through representation (Fairclough, 2003; Hall, 1997). The portrayal of Muslims in Bollywood films has been a subject of controversy and debate. A recent example of this is the movie "The Kerala Story" (2023), which has been criticized for its misrepresentation of Muslims and the issue of forced conversion. The film's narrative is based on exaggerated and false claims, including the alleged forced conversion of 32,000 non-Muslim women to Islam and being sent to ISIS who are now buried in the desert of Syria and Yemen. This narrative relies on the several propaganda techniques to convey its narrative. Specifically, the Big Lie, repetition, and the half-truth. The Big Lie technique, as described by Hitler (1925) in his book "Mein Kampf", involves speaking a falsehood so colossal that people will believe it to be true. This technique is evident in the film's claim that 32,000 non-Muslim women were forcibly converted to Islam. Another technique used in the film is repetition, which was advocated by Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda minister. Goebbels argued that "If you repeat a lie often enough, people will believe it" (Doob, 1950). The film also employs the half-truth technique, which involves adding an element of truth to a false narrative to make it more believable. This technique is designed to exploit people's tendency to believe that a statement must be true if it contains some truth (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2015). This misrepresentation is particularly concerning given the potential impact of such narratives on societal attitudes and stereotypes. Research has shown that negative representations of Muslims in media can contribute to increased Islamophobia and discrimination (Saeed, 2017). Despite the existing research on the representation of Muslims in Bollywood films, there are significant gaps in the literature. Few studies have examined the representation of Muslims in contemporary Bollywood films, and there is a need for more nuanced and contextualized analyses of representation (Shaikh, 2020). It is essential to critically examine the messages and representations perpetuated by the media. This study aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining the representation of Muslims in the Bollywood film "The Kerala Story" (2023) through a multimodal analysis approach.

### Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research design, using a critical discourse analysis approach to analyse the representation of Muslims in the Bollywood film "The Kerala Story" (2023). To make sure that analysis is focused and detailed, purposive sampling was done to selectively identify and extract specific scenes, and dialogues from "The Kerala Story" (2023) that has significant connection to research questions and research topic. "The Kerala Story" (2023) was selected based on the contemporary relevance, Depiction of Muslims, Commercial success and popularity and its Widespread recognition and discussion. The data was collected from the movie's narrative, dialogues, Online platforms (YouTube, Google Chrome, Movie Box), and from other secondary sources (articles, online resources). The main reasons for selecting "The Kerala Stories" (2023) for analysis were its controversial portrayal of Muslim, Commercial impact, Relevance to current societal attitudes, and Viewership.

### Discussion

Combining Fairclough's (2003) Critical Discourse Analysis theory and Stuart Hall's (1997) Representation theory, a critical discourse analysis approach was implied. This integrated approach allows extensive evaluation of the film's linguistic and narrative elements, revealing how Muslim characters are portrayed in the selected movie and how

these representations sustain negative stereotypes and reinforce harmful misconceptions. Two important theories are used in this study to understand how “The Kerala Story” represents Muslims: Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis and Stuart Hall’s Representation theory. Fairclough’s CDA theory (2003) examines the complex relationship between language, power, and ideology. This framework claims that language is not a neutral entity, but rather a reflection of the social and cultural contexts in which it is used. The linguistic features of texts, including vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, are diligently analyzed to uncover the underlying power dynamics and ideological assumptions that shape their meaning through CDA. This study influences Fairclough’s CDA theory to investigate how the language and narrative structures in “The Kerala Story” conserve stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslims. Along with that, Stuart Hall’s Representation Theory (1997) provides a foundational framework for understanding how meaning is constructed and arranged through representation. Hall argues that representation is an active process of meaning-making, facilitated through language and images, and inherently shaped by social and cultural contexts. Hall’s theory underscores the importance of considering the contexts in which representations are both produced and engrossed. This study engages Hall’s Representation Theory to examine how the representation of Muslims in “The Kerala Story” reflects and influences societal attitudes and stereotypes. By using Fairclough’s (2003) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory and Stuart Hall’s (1997) Representation theory, this research will find out the answers to the question of how the movie “The Kerala Stories” represents Muslims and how it reinforces the idea that Muslims are manipulative in nature through the dialogues of the characters.

#### Scene 1, Dialogue 3

“(Shalini (Fatima Ba): Sir, my daughter has been taken from me. And the people who took her are very dangerous.)”

She is referring to the Muslims by using the word “dangerous”; she is calling them threatening and vicious and even heartless, who took the little innocent child away from her mother. This dialogue by the protagonist of the movie is creating a wrong and negative narrative of Muslims in the audience.

#### Dialogue 7

“(Shalini (Fatima Ba): And sir, I was trapped, I was brainwashed... sir”

She is accusing Muslims of manipulating and brainwashing non-Muslims. The words like “Trapped” and “Brainwashed” strengthen negative stereotypes about Muslims, portraying them as manipulative and brainwasher conveying the message that they use coercive techniques to convert non-Muslims to Islam. But this representation is problematic, as it relies on misinformation about Islam and Muslims. In reality, Islam emphasizes the importance of free will and personal preference in matters of faith. By deconstructing this dialogue, it becomes clear that “The Kerala Stories” solidify a dominant discourse of Islamophobia, supporting negative attitudes and stereotypes about Muslims.

#### Scene 4, Dialogue 4

“(To serve the Caliph. To fight the infidels. Ishaq was to become a mujahideen, and I had to embrace sunnah.)

The words like mujahiddin refer to Islamic fighters or Jihadists who are going to fight with *كافر* amplify the extremist ideologies that they are submissive to their “Kaliph” and the overall dialogue is advocating violence against non-Muslims.”

#### Scene 5

##### “Song lines

- (1. She mistook the prison for the flight.
4. Who corrupted this innocence.
7. No blessing was found, God was nowhere to be seen
8. The crazy bird was imprisoned.)”

The song’s lyrics used to convey a narrative of confinement and manipulation depicts prison, while describes non-Muslims as innocent or naive. The word suggests Muslims are the ones who deceived or misled them. They never found God after converting to Islam. metaphorically describes the protagonist, (Fatima Ba) Shalini, as a trapped bird, emphasizing her confinement.

#### Scene 6 Dialogue 2

“(Shalini explained that:

(I did leave India of my own will and yes I did a lot of preparation before leaving . But what I thought what I wanted it was all fed into my brain like programming. I had lost control over myself it was as if an invisible remote was controlling me. I'm not alone in this game there are thousands of girls like me. Who have fled their homes only to be buried in this desert.)"

The protagonist claims she left India on her own and prepared herself for it too because her thoughts and actions were programmed (admitting I lost control over myself). She describes her situation as a play a game of manipulation in which she was a pawn. She is saying that she's not alone, stating (I am not alone), revealing that there are numerous girls who had fallen victim to the same manipulation game and are now dead, exaggerating the situation by highlighting the large number of victims so, that people will believe it to be true (Hitler, 1925).

### Scene 9 Dialogue 2

"Shalini (Fatima Ba): Don't you consider things like music and song haram?"

### Dialogue 3

بم

Muslim Lady: While we have accepted the path and grab of Islam still didn't quit playing the rabab.

When Shalini inquires if Muslim ladies consider music to be forbidden or sinful. The ladies' response is misleading, as they were followers of Islam but still engaging with music, telling about playing the رباب (a musical instrument) as an example, which shows inaccurate information about Islam, suggesting that music is permissible but in fact, many interpretations of Islam consider it. This contributes to a fake representation of Islam.

### Scene 10 dialogue 1

"(Ishaq: I would sacrifice my life for jihad)"

The movie promotes a deceptive ideology, portraying as a violent act, where Muslims are willing to sacrifice their lives to take the lives of others having a lack of empathy and insensitivity. But, in reality, jihad is selfless act driven by a desire for justice.

### Dialogue 4

"Muslim driver: They know that the Taliban people are savages."

In this dialogue, the speaker utters derogatory stereotypes, labeling the entire Muslim community as جابل (ignorant/savage) that Muslims are restrictive, uninformed, and stuck in the past, unable to adapt or progress. He even took the names of Muslim organizations like Al-Qaeda, Haqqani, Taliban, and Mujahideen, associating them with violence and danger advising them to beware of them that reinforces Islamophobia and misinformation.

### Scene 14

### Dialogue 7

"(Asifa Ba): You can enjoy the excitement and not miss your home. My home is very close we can visit anytime."

This dialogue could be seen as a genuine offer of friendship by the antagonist of the film Asifa Na who is a Muslim. But writer portrays it as Asifa (Muslim Character) is using a manipulative tactic by using kindness and sugarcoating her words. As the only Muslim in the room, Asifa targets the non-Muslim girls, attempting to gain their trust. This is the initial stage of manipulation, where she is using her words to create a false sense of comfort and security, ultimately aiming to exploit the trust of her roommates for her own purposes. As Cialdini discusses that kindness and reciprocity is a way of persuading others (Cialdini, 1984).

### Scene 15 Dialogue 1

"(Madam (National Nursing College) All the paintings and slogans you see on the walls of our campus these are not the ideals the college stands by I'd doesn't represent us. This is just the work of some outsiders who along with some of our students want to show chaos.)"

The principal's statements reveal a troubling pattern of stereotyping and othering of Muslims. The presence of paintings and slogans like "Free Kashmir", "Allah", "Muhammad" "Rasool" , "Islam is the only revolution" , "War", "picture of guns" and images of Muslim figures like Osama bin Laden on the college walls is related to Muslims and serves to perpetuate negative stereotypes about Muslims. She distances the college from these ideologies, conveying message that they are not representative of the institution. She uses the phrase to describe the external students, labeling them as "outsiders" that reinforces the notion that Muslims are not part of the mainstream

Indian community. They are “others”(Said, 1978). Furthermore, the principal's use of the word further give the idea that Muslims are responsible for creating chaos and disruption.

### Scene 17 Dialogue 2

“Investigator: Shalini doesn’t exist.”

### Dialogue 3

“Shalini: A robotic slave, Fatima, and see, sir, they are successful.”

By stating that Shalini doesn't exist, the investigator is unveiling that Shalini's Hindu name has been replaced by a Muslim name, Fatima Ba, after her conversion to Islam, which perpetuates the stereotype that Muslims erase the identities of converts. In response, Shalini even called her a "robotic slave" of Muslims, that she is a puppet. When she told the investigator that "look they are successful" she referred to the agenda of Muslims that conversion to Islam as a form of cultural annihilation (Said, 1978) This experience can be seen through the lens of postcolonial theory, where the dominant culture (in this case, the Muslim community) exercises power over the subordinate culture (Shalini's Hindu) (Fanon, 1963.) In this movie Indian is being pictured as naive, innocent and vulnerable of Muslims dominance, manipulation and violation.

### Dialogue 5

“Shalini: How they turn a simple nursing student into a suicide bomber.”

By stating this, movie is creating a narrative that through power Muslim are forcefully converting them into "Suicide Bomber" against their will and she is so simple, innocent, weak and vulnerable in front of them. They are using "Play a Sucker to Catch a Sucker" 21st law in "The 48 Laws of Power"(Greene. R, 1998). This law suggests that people are more likely to trust someone who appears vulnerable, weak, or naive. The idea is to deliberately play the role of a "sucker" to gain trust of the audience.

### Scene 20 dialogue 6

“Ishaq: And the enemy traitors will find our location.”

This clearly shows hatred towards non-Muslims, particularly Hindus. The use of the term kafir to refer to Hindus is a derogatory term that implies they are infidels or unbelievers. This language reinforces a binary opposition between Muslims and non-Muslims, creating a sense of "us versus them" (Said, 1978). That shows the negative aspect that Muslims are the one who always ready to go against Hindus.

### Dialogue 7

“Ishaq: Know your right objective, Fatima. To walk the road to jihad, we must first sacrifice the ones we love the most. Anyway according to ISIS, in the Sharia law, women are not allowed to keep phones.”

Ishaq is shown as a manipulative figure, who continuously talk about their objective to Shalini to do .. جهاد and the dialogue “In Islam, women are not allowed to have mobile phones”, sustains a patriarchal ideology that restricts women's. This is a clear misrepresentation of Islamic teachings, Islam Doesn't prohibit women from using mobile phones. In fact, Islamic scholars emphasize the importance of education and knowledge for both men and women (Badawi, 1995). There is difference between "cultural Islam" and "scriptural Islam" (Mernissi, 1991, p. 15). Cultural Islam refers to the cultural and societal practices that are often mistakenly attributed to Islamic teachings. Ishaq's statement perpetuates both patriarchal and Islamophobic stereotypes, contributing to the marginalization of Muslim women.

### Scene 25 dialogue 6

“Ishaq: Not keeping your husband happy is a crime in Islam.”

The disturbing scene of marital rape and Ishaq's justification of it saying "if you don't make your husband happy, it's a sin," is a gross misinterpretation of Islamic teachings. In Islam, marriage is considered a sacred bond based on mutual love, respect, and consent (Quran, 30:21). The Quran emphasizes the importance of treating spouses with kindness and compassion (Quran, 4:19).

His behavior is a form of domestic violence, which is condemned in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized the importance of treating women with kindness and respect, saying, "The best of you are those who are best to their women" (Tirmidhi)

### 7 Dialogue

“Fatima Ba: Ishaq, this is rape. Islam doesn’t allow for rape.”

Shalini, a convert to Islam, is portrayed as the voice of reason and morality, while Ishaq, a born Muslim, is portrayed as ignorant and oppressive, who is justifying his action in light of Islam, reinforces the stereotype that Muslims are inherently flawed and that Islam is a backward and oppressive religion.

#### **Dialogue 11**

“Ishaq: Rape? When a husband does this. It isn’t rape.”

This dialogue again perpetuating the wrong narrative that Muslims are rapist and involved in “Marital Rape” but deny the fact by saying that if you a husband does this, it is permissible.

#### **Dialogue 13**

“Ishaq: Be grateful a woman just needs to cook and sleep with her husband. You don’t have to take bullet like mujahdeen.”

Ishaq's mentioning the role of women that is just limited to domestic duties and men are expected to engage in violent acts as clearly making Muslims patriarchal and misogynistic. The use of the word *گولی* to describe bullet fire shows violent nature of the Muslims.

This dialogue highlights the objectification of women and the normalization of violence against them (Bartky, 1990) He is adopting extremist ideology of patriarchy and misogyny to justify violence and oppression (Abu-Lughod, 2013)

#### **Scene 31 dialogue 5**

“Asifa Ba: You guys Don’t pray before eating food ?”

Asifa's Statement can be seen as a form of proselytization, where she is trying to influence the non-Muslim's behavior and beliefs (Hackett, 2016). By highlighting her own religious practices, Her question can be seen as a form of subtle manipulation, where she is trying to guilt trip the non-Muslim into adopting her religious practices (Cialdini, 2009)

#### **Dialogue 9**

“Asifa Ba: Eating without prayer is a sin.”

Asifa is judging those who don't pray before meals. This kind of moral policing can come across as rigid and imposing (Goffman, 1959). She as an Muslim doing judgment to persuade non-Muslims is likely to be shown as a tactic of manipulation that further reinforce negative stereotype.

#### **Scenes 33 dialogue 4**

“Asifa Ba: So if we don’t thank Allah his wrath can take us to hell fire.”

Asifa introduced the concept of Hellfire so that her Non- Muslims friends take interest in her religion in this she is depicted using a subtle way of encouraging them to adopt her faith.

#### **Dialogue 20**

“Asifa Ba: You are the non believer you’ll surely go to the dozakh(hell)”

By saying that her Non-Muslims friend will go to *دوزخ* Asifa continually trying to make the non-Muslims feel that they are on the Wrong path, so, they have to change their religion. Preaching of Islam is allowed in Islam but the way this movie is portraying Muslims way of preaching by manipulation and using a lot of wrong ways is creating a strong awful representation of Muslims in Indian Cinema.

#### **Scene 51**

#### **Dialogue 7**

“Shalini(Fatima Ba): why did they cut that ladies hand off?”

#### **Dialogue 8**

“Shazia: Because she was wearing lipstick.”

This Conversation uncover the brutal violence against individuals who don't conform to rigid rules. The fact that a woman hand is being cut for wearing lipstick, and her husband is also punished for allowing it, suggests a toxic ideology, making it explicit that Muslims are inhumane, violent, oppressive and heartless that reinforce damaging misconceptions about Muslims.

#### **Scenes 52 dialogue 1**

“Shalini(Fatima Ba) : It started to haunt me.”

This statement is like pouring a fuel on fire that solidify negative attitude toward Muslims.



Her experiences with Muslims are portrayed as "Haunting" setting the idea that she had a disturbing impact on her Psyche. Just one word "Haunt" is creating anti-Muslim sentiments. This phenomena is reminiscent of the "moral panic" theory, where exaggerated fear about a particular group lead to widespread anxiety and hostility (Cohen, 1972).

### Scene 58 dialogue 3

"Fatima Ba: But think about it yourself there were so many other girls in the market you were the only three not wearing a hijab, right? Girls who wear hijabs are never raped nor are they ever molested. Because Allah always protects us."

Through this dialogue Fatima Ba manipulating non-Muslim girls by brainwashing that when they don't wear حجاب they will be molested. Only Muslim women are safe in this world because Allah always protects us. But after converting to Islam and wearing Hijab they are still shown to be raped by the Muslims further solidify harsh misconception about the Muslims and their Religion.

### Dialogue 4

"Shalini: Are you trying to say only Allah protects others gods don't protect?"

By stating this dialogue of Shalini movie makers are showing that this character is subjected to the manipulation of the Muslims. After her traumatic experience and continuously listening about the Islam practices and negative views on Hinduism and Christianity by a Muslim character Asifa Ba, Shalini became curious and started asking further question showing interest in the Islam. This is clearly revealing that Muslims are succeed in their manipulation.

### Scene 73 dialogue 1

"Rameez: Do you know what I really like about you and geetu k hindu ho k b na TM logon n hijab phna h."

After trapping her now Muslim man Rameez is shown to be impressed by the Hindu girls wearing hijab and taking the name of geetanjali as geetu giving her a nickname showing the affection so that he can completely change their ideologies.

Do you know what I really like about you and geetu that you wear the hijab Even though you are hindus

### Dialogue 2

"Shalini: It makes me feel very safe."

It clearly showcase that Shalini is totally brainwashed and manipulated by the man who trapped by his fake love and affection. That she even started speaking his words. He was a Hindu who consider wearing hijab and burqa a confinement and limitation for the women but now feeling safe in it.

### Dialogue 3

"Rameez: He would not notice a body inside the burqa but a beautiful soul."

Rameez is using vague language to manipulate the girls. Apparently he is conveying his simple messages but by doing this he is trying to make them think that they will be more prettier not just their bodies even their soul will be beautiful if they start wearing برقعہ

### Dialogue 8

"Rameez: But if two people decide to commit a relationship for their whole lives what is wrong with them being intimate?"

Rameez by saying such words is trying to manipulate shalini and geetanjali. His plan is to spread wrong ideology against Islam and by doing so to get close to shalini and he is trying to convince shalini to get intimate with her. This shows the wrong and manipulative image of Muslims.

### Scene 87

### Dialogue 8

"Ishaq: Without me forget the city you can't even leave the neighborhood."

### Dialogue 10

"Ishaq: One look at a solitary woman and these people will sell you off for shoot you."

In Dialogue 8 and 10 of the Scene 87 of the movie Ishaq's conversation with his wife Fatima Ba is depicting that Muslims are so restrictive and oppressive. They don't even allow their women to go alone anywhere without their husband and if they do so they will be killed at the spot if spotted.

#### **Scene 97**

##### **Dialogue 1**

"Moulvi Sahb: Islam is not complex like other religions."

A Muslim Scholar in the movie saying that Islam is not a complex religion like others is depicting that Muslims are the one who criticize other religions, religious beliefs and call them superior. But this is definitely a wrong narrative constructed in the movie "The Kerala Stories".

#### **Scene 109**

##### **Dialogue 3**

"Anisha (geetanjali) My parents make no difference to me. They don't believe in Allah. Whoever doesn't believe Allah is an infidel."

Anisha is saying these words because she is in control of Asifa ba in the movie, who is Muslim and is manipulating Anisha and converting her to Islam.

She put such things in Anisha's mind to create a huge void amount Anisha and her parents.

Asifa ba convince Anisha that if she is a Muslim so she is on right path and her parents are wrong and bad people so she has to do bad to her parents to prove that she is Muslim and her parents are kafir.

#### **Scene 129**

##### **Dialogue 5**

"Moulvi Sahb: Your sins will not be forgiven in this country."

This dialogue perpetuates a damaging stereotype that Muslims harbor hatred towards India, that this country is that much bad you will not be forgiven here. The statement also contradicts the fundamental Islamic belief that God is omnipresent and merciful, willing to forgive the ones who seek His repentance anytime and anywhere. Furthermore, the film's use of Muslim countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria as settings for illicit activities and uses names of a lot of Muslim countries like Iraq, Turkey and name of the cities like Quetta, Balochistan, Kabul that reinforces negative associations, which kind of gives the impression that these places are naturally linked to misdeeds. This portrayal ends up layering a biased, one-sided image of Muslims that, definitely calls for a closer look.

##### **Dialogues 7**

"Moulvi Sahb: By going to Syria with your husband then Allah would forgive not one but a thousand sins."

In movie Moulvi Shb is saying this dialogue to Shalini that she has committed lots of sins so in order to be a pure and good Muslim she has to get marry and go to Syria with her husband. Only this can save her from hell and by going to Syria Allah will forgive her all sins. Actually this a trap by Moulvi Shb to send Shalini to Syria for some other purposes on the name of Allah.

##### **153 Dialogue 3**

"Through brainwashing, indoctrination and inducing hallucination they wanted us to leave India anyhow.... Sir yeh dawai kha kar k li b insan kuch b dangerous kam krny k liye ready hjata h."

(Through brainwashing, indoctrination and inducing hallucination they wanted us to leave India anyhow...you don't know how dangerous that medicine is. Sir these medicine make any person ready to take up dangerous tasks.)

This particular dialogue of Shalini in the movie shows such image, that Muslims are very dangerous people. Through manipulation, brainwashing and hallucination they trap Indian girls and convert them into Islam (Muslims) and then by specific planing they send these girls to Syria and want them to leave India as soon as possible. In the process of trapping, Muslims also use some kind of drugs which are very harmful. These drugs make them addicted and dangerous and also compelled them to do any thing, they can even kill people after using these drugs.

##### **Scene 173 Dialogue 1**

"Shalini(Fatima Ba) : Nimah was raped. And geetanjali committed suicide Nimah refused to accept Allah and geetanjali left Islam to become a Hindu again maybe they both paid for their sins."



When fatima Ba ex Hindu Shalini revealed the situation of her friend Nima being raped who was Christian and the other friend Geetanjali who committed suicide to her Muslim husband Ishaq while crying she admitted that Nima who was a Christian never accepted Islam and the other friend Geetanjali who become the Hindu again is the reason behind their tragedy. By using this dialogue the movie aims to show that Shalini was brainwashed that much that she was even considering the whole scenario *پاپوں کی سزا* that is constructing a negative image of the Muslims.

### Scene 213 dialogue 2

“Slave: These people don’t kill us but they kill our souls every day. We are their slaves, so they abuse us for free. Here if husbands die in battle their wives either have to become full-time sex slaves or strap on bombs and jump on infidels yelling “God is great”. Other than that, a woman here has no third choice.”

A slave woman, who was a non-Muslim converted to Islam, expresses her feelings to Shalini(Fatima Ba) about their condition under Muslim rule. She claims that Muslims kill their souls by using a Hindi word, but not their bodies. This dialogue is showing the emotional and psychological torture done by the Muslims to the confined women. Moreover, she blames Muslims for making them sex-slaves after their husband died in the war and forcing them to become suicide bombers by saying *ہاں* that reinforces negative stereotypes and misinformation about Muslims and their treatment of women.

### Conclusion

This study critically examined the representation of Muslims in the controversial movie "The Kerala Story". There is a gross exaggeration of facts in the selected movie. Despite the producer's claim that the movie is based on a true story after the years of research, a police officer from Kerala, speaking on the condition of anonymity, revealed that the actual number of women who converted to Islam and left the India now present in Afghan jails was not more than 10 to 15 that is significantly lower than the 32,000 claimed in the movie. This controversy raises serious questions about the movie's credibility and authenticity. And it is further fueled by the fact that the Kerala High Court refused to release the movie, but the film makers decide to remove the teaser, which claimed there were 32,000 women, and agreed to change the description on YouTube to "The compilation of the true stories of the three young girls from the different parts of Kerala" to address the misinformation. So it is confirmed that they were manipulating the fact. has been criticized by many opposition politicians in India, with some calling it propaganda and an attempt to destroy religious harmony. But it got support from leaders of the governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who praised it (Sebastian, 2023). By considering the context and history of Hindu and Muslims back in 1947 at the time of partition, and after that, we can easily call this movie a political agenda against Muslims.

The interview of the real women who converted to Islam and left India to join ISIS can be seen as happy and satisfied, which further clarifies that this movie aims to create a misconception about Muslims. (StratNewsGlobal, 2020)

So, the depth analysis revealed a negative portrayal of Muslims, directing harmful stereotypes and reinforcing damaging prejudices. This study found that the movie depicted Muslims as manipulative, brainwashing, merciless, heartless, oppressive, brutal, greedy, violent, and in various scenes and dialogues, it is shown that they are engaged in multiple criminal activities such as drug dealing, killing, bombing, terrorism, blackmailing, and rape. Furthermore, the movie perpetuated patriarchal and extremist stereotypes, portraying Muslims as savages, spies, and brutal criminals.

### References

- Abu-Lughod, L. (2015). *Do Muslim women need saving?* (Vol. 15, No. 5, pp. 759-777). Sage UK: London, England: Sage Publications.
- Ahmad, J., Ullah, K., & Nawab, H. U. (2024). Unveiling femininity: Exploring women’s representation in selected Khowar language proverbs from District Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq*, 7(2), 401-416.
- Ahmad, R., Ullah, K., & Nawab, H. U. (2024). Cultural reflections: Exploring themes of grief and resilience in the selected Khowar folk poetry. *International Journal of Social Science Archives (IJSSA)*, 7(3).

- Ahmed, S. (2013). Representing Muslims in Indian cinema: A critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 33(3), 347-363.
- Badawi, J. A. (1995). *Gender equity in Islam* (Vol. 2, pp. 427-428). by IDM Publications.
- Bartky, S. L. (2015). *Femininity and domination: Studies in the phenomenology of oppression*. Routledge.
- Cialdini, R. B. (2007). *Influence the psychology of persuasion*. Harpercollins publishers
- Cialdini, R. B. (2009). *Influence: Science and practice* (Vol. 4, pp. 51-96). Boston: Pearson education.
- Cohen, S. (2011). *Folk devils and moral panics*. Routledge.
- Doob, L. W. (1950). Goebbels' principles of propaganda. *Public opinion quarterly*, 14(3), 419-442.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). Analyzing discourse: Textual analysis for social research. Routledge.
- Fanon, F., Sartre, J. P., & Farrington, C. (1963). *The wretched of the earth* (Vol. 36, pp. 3-317). New York: Grove press.
- Goffman, E. (2023). The presentation of self in everyday life. In *Social theory re-wired* (pp. 450-459). Routledge.
- Greene, R. (2000). *The 48 laws of power*. Penguin.
- Hackett, R. I. J. (2016). Proselytization revisited. *International Journal for the Study of Religions*, 7(2), 123-144.
- Haleem, M. A. (2018). The role of context in interpreting and translating the Qur'an. *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 20(1), 47-66.
- Hall, S. (1997). Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices. *SAGE Publications in association with The Open University*.
- Hitler, A. (2016). *Mein Kampf: 1923*. Kontre kulture.
- Jamil, S., Ullah, K., & Nawab, H. (2024). Language, Politics, and Power: Unveiling Putin's Annexation Narrative through Fairclough's Model. *Politics, and Power: Unveiling Putin's Annexation Narrative through Fairclough's Model (March 31, 2024)*.
- Kazmi, N. (2012). Muslim representation in Bollywood cinema: A study of stereotypes and their impact. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 4(3), 55-65.
- Kumar, R. (2017). Bollywood and the Muslim question: A critical examination of representation and identity. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 40(2), 251-265.
- Malik, S. (2019). Representation of Muslims in Indian media: A study of stereotypes and their impact on society. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 39(1), 33-47.
- McLuhan, M. (1994). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. MIT press.
- Mernissi, F. (1991). *The veil and the male elite: A feminist interpretation of women's rights in Islam* (p. 116). Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.
- O'Donnell, V., & Jowett, G. S. (1992). *Propaganda and persuasion* (p. 116). Sage.
- Saeed, A. (2017). *Freedom of religion, apostasy and Islam*. Routledge.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Vintage Books.
- Sebastian, M. (2023). The Kerala Story: Why an Indian Film on Islamic State Is so Controversial. *BBC News*.
- Shan, A. (2023). Portrayal of Pakistan and Muslims Characters in the Bollywood (Indian) Film Industry.
- StratNewsGlobal. (2020, March 15). Khorasan Files: The journey of Indian "Islamic State" widows [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9s1hRVFR0t0>



@ 2024 by the author. Licensee University of Chitral, Journal of Linguistics & Literature, Pakistan. This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).