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SHOIB MANSOOR'S BOL, VOICES OF SILENT SUFFERERS AND SAGA OF OPPRESSED : A FEMINIST APPROACH



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ABSTRACT

Bol is a Pakistani movie released in 2011, directed by Shoib Mansoor that depicts the plight of young girl under the imposition of her father in particular and male dominated society in general. The film starts by showing the protagonist, Zainab about to be hanged she tells her story to media right before this happens. She grows up with six sisters, her mother and a father. The father always wanted a son so that the son could help him with the financial issues of the family. Father doesn't believe in women being gainfully employed. They have a transgender child named Syed Saifullah Khan or Saifi. The father doesn't like Saifi since he is transgender.

Saifi is deeply loved by the rest of her family. Zainab is married to a guy who keeps harassing her for not giving birth. Hence she comes back to her father's house. Zainab's mom keeps having babies that are born dead. Zainab arranges a tubal ligation for her. When Hakim finds out he becomes very angry.

KEYWORDS

Shoib Mansoor, voices, feminism, domination, suffering



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Bol is a Pakistani movie released in 2011, directed by Shoib Mansoor that depicts the plight of young girl under the imposition of her father in particular and male dominated society in general. The film starts by showing the protagonist, Zainab about to be hanged she tells her story to media right before this happens. She grows up with six sisters, her mother and a father. The father always wanted a son so that the son could help him with the financial issues of the family. Father doesn't believe in women being gainfully employed. They have a transgender child named Syed Saifullah Khan or Saifi. The father doesn't like Saifi since he is transgender. Saifi is deeply loved by the rest of her family. Zainab is married to a guy who keeps harassing her for not giving birth. Hence she comes back to her father's house. Zainab's mom keeps having babies that are born dead. Zainab arranges a tubal ligation for her. When Hakim finds out he becomes very angry.

One day, Zainab sees Saifi dressed in women's clothes and gets very disturbed. Hakim owns a small traditional pharmacy and is approached by a man who asks him to teach The Quran to children, since Hakim is a very religious man who has bonds with the Mosque. Hakim initially refuses because the man Saqi is running brothel. Meanwhile the mosque gives him some money to keep, since they believe him to be trustworthy. Mustafa a neighbor gets Saifi a job at a place where they paint trucks. There Saifi is harassed because others discriminate against her identification.

One day Saifi is raped another transgender person finds her and takes her home. Hakim overhears Saifi telling her mother and Zainab what happened with her, when everyone is asleep Hakim suffocates Saifi to death with plastic bag. He must bribe the police officer to keep it a secret with two lakhs. Hakim is forced to take money out of the Musjid funds. The musjid asks

for the funds and Hakim doesn't have enough money. He is forced to go to the Saqa's house to get it.

Teaching children The Quran isn't giving him enough money, so Saqa gives him another option; Hakim must marry and have a baby girl with Meena [Iman Ali] who is one of the prostitutes and is Saqa's [Shafqat Cheema] oldest daughter. Hakim keeps having girls, and Saqa tells him that it is the men who create the gender. Meanwhile, Zainab gets Ayesha [Mahira Khan] and Mustafa married since Hakim found another man at the masjid and wanted to get Ayesha married to that man. Simultaneously, Hakim marries Meena. When Hakim finds out about Ayesha's marriage, he is furious but can't do anything about it. Hakim begs Meena to give him the baby so that child doesn't have to force a horrible future. Saqa overhears and kicks Hakim out.

Later on Meena comes to give Hakim's family the baby when Hakim's wife asks who that woman was he takes the baby and tells her that he married her. She screams at him, and he beats her up. The mother tells the kids what happened and Zainab insists they all leave the house and move somewhere else to start a new life.

Saqa comes at night to take Meena's daughter, since Meena was not supposed to give it to hakim. Hakim tries to kill the daughter to keep her from a horrible future. He is killed by Zainab with a fatal knock on the head. They hide the baby. Zainab tells Saqa that Hakim called the baby and threw her out somewhere she tells him that she killed Hakim, that's why she is being given the death penalty.

A reporter keeps trying to prove that she is innocent but is unable to do anything. Zainab ends by asking that why is only killing a sin? Why isn't giving birth, without any family planning, a sin? Then she is hanged. The president sees the reporter's newscast as the same as the question and schedules a meeting with the topic open up a restaurant called Zainab's café, which becomes very successful. They also raise their new half sister, Meensa's daughter. The entire story unveils in the flashback mode as Zainab narrates her history to the media, minutes before being sentenced to death; Born in a conservative Muslim family, Zainab is the oldest amongst half a dozen daughters of Hakim saab. The father's quest for male successor in his family is thwarted when a son is born but with effeminate traits. As the son Saiffee [Amr Kashmiri] grows up amidst sisters, the father almost disregards his presence in the family.

Director Shoaib Mansoor uses this family as a paradigm to address almost every concern correlated with the community. The film primarily objects to the idea of reproducing human beings into this world blinded by faith and self-centered without taking complete responsibility of their existence. Concurrently it also highlights the regressive attitude of a male dominated society that offers no liberty to woman in choosing life partner, refusing reproduction, gaining education or working independently. And the concerns are very much contemporary with the film set in modern day Lahore. At the same time the film never stereotypes the state or its citizens but attempts to represent the intellectual illiteracy of a vast majority who haven't upgraded with times.

Shoaib has brought into focus almost all issues by the conformist characterization of the father figure. And with the outlook of the film focused only domestic issues, the director refrains from giving any political overtones to Hakim's characterization and attributes his extremism to his orthodox upbringing and bigoted beliefs. His fanatic philosophy makes him, renounce his earnings.

At several instances, the narrative smartly underscore the irony of life while we love often witnessed woman getting in to the flesh trade for survival here the male species falls

prey of the situation the fact that all his offspring were only girls, which had always been his biggest weakness turn Hakim's strength when he gets money to impregnate a courtesan (Iman ali) with a girl child the boy next door (Atif Aslam) on the other hand the father surreptitiously ties the knot with the courtesan.

Like *khuda kay liye* Shoib Mansoor takes on the subject is comprehensive and despite the long runtime the narrative never gets tedious the writing is riveting and the dialogues in particular are crisp, clear and caustic despite the serious demeanor of the film the director infuses sporadic moments of unusual humor like in the scene when the siblings are fighting over an India-Pakistan match and the father believes that the sincerity of their prayers would be solely responsible for their countries victory or defeat even when the sissy brother is physically abused the film never gets in to titillation mode and remain refined there are portion in the narrative that the director never touches beyond a menial like Zainab's failed marriage but there is so much and more that the film explore that you never about the omitted chunks.

A rock-concert number by Atif Aslam seems somewhat out of place in this film, also the entire media circus and bureaucratic drama surrounding Zainab's death sentences could have been avoided. Nevertheless while the film could have easily started and ended as Zainab's story the director intentionally take it to legislative level to make a strong statement on national level the film ends with an epilogue which despite being a little too optimistic shows a ray of hope.

Conclusion

Shoib Mansoor throws light on almost all the evil facts of society by depicting issues like illiteracy, prostitution, transgender sufferings, greed for male child, sufferings, pains and agonies of women, enforced motherhood etc. He not only represented the typical Pakistani mentality but also made us aware about universal male attitude towards a woman.

Bol is blessed with superlative performance by seasoned actor Manzar Zehbai undoubtedly is the scene stealer in his fanatic father characterization he remains in his character of a stern angry and frustrated personality. Humaima Malik is absolutely brilliant in her author-backed rebellious character. Beside the strong characterization and cinematography the movie appeals the society at large leaving viewers to reflect on the decimation and domination done by the men onto the women.

Humaima Malik is not only a bold character in the film but also a role model to women who are tortured and humiliated. Every time she stands for the truth and rebels against orthodox mentality of her father. She opposed patriarchal dominance with full strength and struggles for women's rights. Her tragic end is not only the end but it is a call to awakening of the tortured women, and lesson to the silent sufferers. Shoib Mansoor pointed out the very harsh reality of conventional society where rules are different for men and women.