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Article:	**The Art and Craft of Screenwriting: Practice and Prospects of Screenwriting in Pakistani Film**
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Pakistani feature films are on decline for last three decades. In filmmaking, screenplay plays the pivotal part, without which the idea of making film is absurd indeed. The academic learning of art and craft of screenwriting has actually been taken for granted in Pakistan. This overlooking serves one of the reasons owing to which Pakistani Cinema could not get along with its contemporaries. This qualitative study throws light on the significance of screenplay in the whole process of filmmaking and nudges to the pedagogical needs of screenplay writing to be met in Pakistan. For the purpose, in-depth interviews of academician and practitioners of film and communication studies in Lahore have been conducted by the researcher.

Keywords: Screenplay, Mise en scene, Storytelling, Pedagogy

Introduction

During its primes, Pakistani feature film industry had been in competition with its contemporary cinema in the world. Despite the deficiency of means and apparatus after the Partition in 1947, Pakistani film industry grew into distinction and the span stretched on sixties and seventies is considered as the best era of Pakistan film industry (Niazi & Syed, 2017).

Lahore had been the center of filmmaking, prior to the partition of India. After independence, most of the industry moved to Mumbai. But still, Lahore had been the abode of a substantial number of actors, directors and film financers, and some of the Muslim gems of the film industry shifted from Mumbai to Lahore as well (Zafar, 2020).

In the chief cities of Pakistan, practically every new release would fetch a large number of spectators to the cinema halls. Desolately, we couldn't cope with the heritage of the opulent culture of cinema going, and henceforth commenced the downfall (Ahmad, 2016).

The Pakistani cinema in 21st century offers its audience some of the best music scores, moving instances of acting, adroitly done editing, captivating locations and locales, and eye-catching cinematography. Over the last couple of decades, the Pakistani cinema has seriously been attempted to be revived by making many films, but the restoration in the envisaged way is still a dream. In sum, Pakistani film could not draw viewers sufficient enough to pull it out of the quagmire of failure.

The decline of Pakistani film industry has always been traced in all possible factors that range from less budget, foreign films on Pakistani screens, immature and / or amateur directors, callously illiterate producers, worn out technical facilities, strictly imposed censorship (Khan, 2020), to dictatorships (Kordecki, 2017), etc.; but the explanations for the failure of the films have never scientifically and systematically been tried to be sought out with the screenplay and screen writers. The technique of writing a feature film is different from that of TV play, which has been taken up while writing feature films in Pakistan I the last couple of decades.

This qualitative study embarks on the debate that highlights the significance of the screenplay in the whole process of filmmaking and its need of institutionalized training of screenwriters with the aid of well-equipped infrastructure and specially tailored syllabi for the purpose in the departments of mass communications and media studies at the universities in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Storytelling through various characters and communicating various religious and socio-political themes through storytelling is millennia old practice as is known by a series of cave paintings found from Lascaux Caves, in Southern France dating back to circa 15000-13000 BC portraying sacramental presentations and hunting practices through the images of animals and a human being (Groeneveld, 2016). From ancient shadowy plays and puppetry; and huge theatrical performances to the invention of projector letting the making of feature films possible, the art, craft and purposes of storytelling have gone through various changes (Lehmann & Primavesi, 2015).

Film, as a matter of fact, is a visual art form. It can entertain without words but it cannot exist without pictures (Lawson, 1960). The order of pictures is actually the manifestation of events in terms of screenplay. Writing screenplay requires more than just literary skills; it involves the writer to think in images instead of words (Selbo, 2016). It is a sequence of visual impressions giving the delusion of entirety. In film and television, the visuals always move the action forward. In film the writer must think in pictures. Crafting a good script is a creative challenge for the novice as well as for the veteran writer (Karetnikova, 1990).

A screenplay or film script is a basic skeleton from which, eventually, a motion picture is made. One cannot produce a film without a screenplay just as a building cannot be constructed without architectural drafts and schemes (Norman, 2007). The screenwriter arranges for the prerequisites for making a film, and facilitates other stakeholders who will pour their skills, expertise and talents to the process (Dimaggio, 2007).

The practice of screenplay writing in Pakistani, as a matter of fact, starts with cinema in Lahore. "Raja Harish Chandra", the first full length feature film in subcontinent, produced by Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, known as Dadasaheb Phalke, was released on 13-05-1913 in Mumbai (Raman, 2017). Lahore, being one of the one of the significant cultural hubs of sub-continent since millennia, became the next film producing city. In 1928 "Daughters of Today" (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1998) was made in this great city by a pack of film practitioners that included G.K. Mehta as writer cum producer, Shankardev Arya as director, Abdul Rashid Kardar as assistant director and Walait Begum, Hiralal, and M. Ismail as lead actors (Daughters of Today, n.d.). In 1933, one and a half year after "*Alam Ara*" came the first Urdu talkie titled *"Heer Ranjha"* that was directed by A. R. Kardar and produced by Hakim Ram Parshad in his newly-built studio Play-Art Photo Tone in Lahore (Gazdar, 2019).

This was how filmmaking took a start in Pakistan. The most of the film related literature in shape of books, newspaper articles, and some of the research papers written in Pakistan remained limited to the acting, music, or direction. Very less quantity of published literature is found produced about screenplay writers or screenplay writing. Validating Auteur Theory in real sense, consciously or unconsciously, couple of books that have been written by Yasin Goreja and Mushtaq Gazdar titled "Pakistan Millennium Film Directory 2003" and "Pakistan Cinema: 1947-1997" respectively offer only the names of the directors, actors, music composers and somewhat of singers and lyricists, but no any names of film writers. The only signs and clues of the screenwriters, restricted to names only, the researcher could find is on the website Pakistan Film Magazine. From this state of the affairs one can well ascertain the significance of a screenwriter near Pakistani filmmakers and film historians. The early screenwriters for films were either novelists or playwrights (Donnelly, 2015). So was in subcontinent and afterwards in Pakistan. Amongst eminent playwrights whose works lent nascent Pakistani film industry the initial written food were Hakim Ahmed Shuja (1893 - 1969), Agha Hashar Kashmiri (1879 - 1935), Agha Hasan Amanat (1815 - 1858), Saadat Hasan Manto (1912 - 1955), Sibtain Fazli (1914 - 85), Nazim Panipati (1920 -1998), and Imtiaz Ali Taj (1900 - 1970). These prolific writers provided a strong pedestal to the film writers who were supposed to carry forward the legacy.

Pakistani film theatres witnessed platinum jubilee, diamond jubilee, golden jubilee, and silver jubilee films in 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s. Screenplay writers like Arsh Lakhnavi (Akhri Nishan, 1958), Parwaiz Malik and Masroor Anwar (Armaan, 1966), Safdar Masud (Anjuman, 1970), Ahmed Rahi (Heer Ranjha, 1970), and Jamil Dehlvi (The Blood of Hussain, 1981) had been well versed in the art and craft of screenwriting by virtue of keen penchant for the task, strong observation of society and the work of the seniors, and having been well conversant with the fiction (novel/short story) writing. The dexterity, art, convention and culture of storytelling through novels and stage plays helped the writers cope with the technical requisites of screenwriting. The art and craft of screenwriting, however, in coming decades, got more and more complex and demanding in terms of the construction and presentation of mise en scene, diegesis, non diegesis, mimesis, and anti-mimesis. The introduction of film studies and screenwriting hence, in educational institutes was not much later than the advent of the filmmaking in the world (O'Conor, 2017).

Soon after the birth of <u>motion pictures</u> were started the discussions about this new way of storytelling as an expertise, a societal sensation, a political implement, an ethical peril, and an arty endeavour (Bergan, 1997). The initial debates and dialogues though did not

pertain to educational perspective, social philosophers like Siegfried Kracauer, John Grierson, and André Bazin, and illustrious filmmakers such as Vsevolod Pudovkin, Sergei Eisenstein, Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein, and Louis Delluc, provided the theoretical and philosophical seedling and sprout for the academic film studies (Kracauer, 2009). Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography, Moscow was the institute that first introduced film studies and it was 1919 (Belodubrovskaya, 2016). While next couple of decades all over the world, especially in the countries who took lead in filmmaking set up film schools where besides other above mentioned aspects of filmmaking, art and craft of screenwriting was also initiated to be taught to the film students. The second to offer film education was the USC School of Cinematic Arts, USA (1929). By 70s, the need of teaching film techniques felt by the countries like UK, Germany, Japan, France, Australia, Ghana, South Africa, Portugal, Canada, Brazil, Chili, Columbia, India, Italy, France and many others either established independent film institutions or heavily equipped schools and departments in the already set up colleges and universities (Film Schools Directory, n.d.). In film schools, the art and craft of filmmaking were closed up to pixels and every discrete and complex pixel of filmmaking, such as cinematography, diegetic, mimetic, editing, set-designing, acting, directing, graphics, animations, and of course, screenplay writing, was studied in detail to be taught minutely. The pedagogical outlines, techniques and syllabi were tailored and designed so as to carve out professionalism and proficiency out of amateurs. 'What-to-say on screen' had been in abundance in the society, but the ways about 'how-to-say on screen' were to be sought out. Very soon it was conspicuous that all had a story to tell but not all actually knew how to tell it 'How-to-say' on screen is actually the art and craft of screenplay that can well be divided into two phases, which are research and the implementation (Field, 2005). These ways were explored by the theorists, academicians, and researchers in the institutes. This is indeed the continuous and vigorous toil of these institutes that made possible the making of films like Avatar (2009, USA), This is England (2006, UK), Raise the Red Lantern (1991, China), The Terminator (1991, USA), Late Spring (1949, Japan), Aliens (1986, USA), A Man Escaped (1956, France), Battle Royale (2000, Japan), Them! (1954, USA), Trace of Stones (1966, Germany), Farewell My Concubine (1993, China), The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (2008, USA), 3 Idiots (2009, India), Children of Paradise (1943, France), and many more.

Developing a screenplay for TV Drama, be it a telefilm, long play, single play, episodic play, or a soap, is different from the screenplay of a feature film in terms of narratology, presentation, scene, and story structure (Friedmann, 2010). The Film and TV play both are normally a three or four act assemblage of a beginning, middle, and an end (Lawson, 1960). A normal screenplay involves Act 1 that is about $1/4^{th}$, Act 2 that is about the 1/2 (divided into 2A and 2B at the midpoint), and Act 3 that is about the concluding 4th of the whole film (Fink., 2014). The sequence of the events, however, and the employment of props and camera, the selections of the locales and locations, the touches of diegetic and non-diegetic sounds, all are put together in a way that create a feel of a film even if it is seen on TV, tablet, or even on a smart phone. TV play, on the other hand, be it of hundreds of episodes, or of 80 or 90 minutes, is presented on smaller canvas (Cook M. , 2007), and remain a TV play even if is shown on silver screen.

Significance of the Study

The present study looks forward to initiating and instigating new scholarly discussions in the realm of mass communication regarding the technical aspects of screenplay that require exhaustive book-based as well as in-field research. The paper also signifies the importance of screenplay writers in deciding the fate of the film on box office and in critics' eyes without limiting the role of its director. The study will also single out the significance and need of institutionalized training of screenwriters by setting up a well-equipped

infrastructure and specially tailored syllabi for the purpose in the departments of mass communications and media studies at the universities in Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

This study aspires to find out the rapport between the screenplay of a film and its popularity in order to ascertain the role of an adroitly and artistically developed screenplay in the success of a film in terms of critics' as well as audience's applause. The study further aims at finding out how crucial it is to train our screenwriters in the film institutions so that they can systematically and scientifically equip themselves with the expertise and acumen of writing films.

Yet another objective of the paper is to highlight if our screenwriters know the difference between writing TV Drama and feature film.

The study also endeavours to sensitise the concerned state and government quarters regarding establishing film schools in the country and encouraging the interested connoisseurs and talented amateur, both, screenwriters by offering scholarships to the needy ones.

Research Questions

Besides these objectives the in-depth interviews of veteran writers, distinguished directors, writer- directors, screenwriters, and key practitioners would be conducted keeping in view the following vital questions:

RQ.1   What do Pakistani Film professionals, i.e.; directors/screenplay writers   understand by   Screenplay?

RQ.2   What research methods do the screenwriters employ for screenwriting?

RQ.3   How do directors and writers comment on the need of pedagogical learning of   art and   craft of screenwriting?

RQ.4   What is the difference between writing for TV Drama and Film?

Methodology

This is a qualitative study. In-depth Interviews of the respondents, picked up from veteran screenwriters, distinguished directors, prolific film journalists/critics and media and communication academician was conducted going along with an 'Interview Guide' and the 'Purposive Sampling' or criterion - based selection, under the type of 'Nonprobability Sampling.' Nonprobability sampling is a method in qualitative research in which researchers employ their acumen to pick out a sample (Given, Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods, 2008). As the present study does not aim at generalizing the results to the population but gathering exploratory data to design the measurement instrument, that is in-depth interview in the present study, the researcher has gone for Purposive Sampling that uses the judgment of an expert who selects cases with a specific purpose in mind, or to select members of a hard-to-access, specific population, such as all the doctors or engineers of a country (Neuman, 2014). As the population of this study comprises all the screenwriters, directors, media journalists, and media and communication academician in Pakistan, who all cannot be reached at or contacted, purposive sampling has been opted for. Since the researcher is based in Lahore, it was convenient for him to take up respondents from this city. Besides, Lahore has been a hub of filmmaking since 1928 as has been mentioned and cited, the substantial possibility of the sample of the population in Lahore was certain. The researcher, under the light of his acumen shaped and tailored by extensive knowledge owing to watching films in cinema halls as well as on DVDs since childhood till date, reading relative material, and meeting film critics and mavens in person, chose 15 veteran and novice both, film writers, directors, journalists, and media and communication professors of ace universities in Lahore for having unstructured, in-depth interviews. The respondents were categorized under five heads, i.e.; screenwriters, directors, screenwriter/directors, film critics/journalists and, media and communication educators. In-depth, or personal, or one-on-one interviews are interviews in which respondents are inspired and urged to get into a tête-à-

tête about the theme to be explored exhaustively whereas the researcher has not to go for fixed, focused, short-answer questions (Merriam, 2009). Instead of having a far-reaching list of questions, the researcher only has to be cognizant of the chief realms of experience likely to be conversed by the participant and can ascertain how these questions relate to the matter under enquiry (Given, 2008). In an unstructured interview, broad questions are asked that allow interviewer's freedom to determine what further questions to be asked to obtain the required information (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The interviews, steered by an all-encompassing interview guide, were conducted in conducive, congenial, and candid atmosphere at the places agreed upon by the respondents. An interview guide is used to make sure that no theme, topic or area to be explored is overlooked, left out, or ignored (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016).

A 'Thematic Analysis' on the responses of the respondents was conducted to draw conclusions and recommendations. Thematic analysis is a data reduction and analysis approach by which qualitative data are split, grouped, précised, and reassembled in a way that covers the significant and central notions and thoughts in the data set (Given, 2008). Thematic analysis is mainly an expressive scheme that enables the search for designs of experience in a qualitative data set; the outcome of a thematic analysis is a depiction of those designs and the all-embracing scheme that weds them (O'Leary, 2004).

Findings

The in-depth interviews of the respondents revealed that most of the screenwriters in Pakistan have a meager comprehension of the screenplay. One of the renowned film writer cum director who has quite a pretty number of Urdu and Punjabi hit films on his credit as screenwriter and director, when asked what screenplay is, he came up with, "The activity that opens a scene is screenplay. For instance, when starts a scene, the Main Character is dusting the room, or sewing a cloth, or standing near a picture, or whatever. Then enters the other character in the frame and they start exchanging the dialogues. This is screenplay." By and large, all the respondents from writer and director category held the same concepts about the nature and structure of screenplay. On the other hand, volumes and volumes of the literature produced and the lectures delivered by the world's best screenplay writers and academician, all that that goes on on screen is screenplay that includes every activity and every action performed by all the actors performing their respective characters. In other words ACTION (obviously performed by actors) + INTERACTION (displayed by actors) + REACTION (exhibited by actors) = SCREENPLAY (Drouyn, 1994). It is quite clear that screenplay, as a matter of fact, is the operationalization and execution of a story that is expressed as a one liner. How to tell this story on screen with the aid of characters, props, sets, lights, cameras, etc.; is all that builds up and integrates a screenplay. To put this complex concept in even simpler manner, all the turns, twists, and vicissitudes appear on screen in whatever order depending upon the creativity, aesthetics and craftsmanship of the screenwriter, with obviously the comfortability level of the producer and the director, is screenplay.

The research query, "What research methods do the screenwriters employ for screenwriting?" aimed at knowing the procedure the screenwriters follow while developing story, characters, plot, and/or dialogues; and further how long normally a screenwriter takes to complete a full-length (150-180 minutes) film's screenplay. It is surprising to know that most of the writers for the craft of their scripts, do not do any research to collect factual, habitual, psychological, socio-cultural, and economic details of stories, locales, and characters. One of the screenwriters, who actually moved from writing TV dramas to writing feature films, went like this, "What do you mean by how long? I always write on the set. What a big deal in scratching on paper what an actor will do when opens the camera? I rather write even dialogues on the set just an hour before the director clamours 'action'." Jason Hellerman, an american, graduated from Penn State University in Film Production & English,

MFA in Screenwriting & Film Theory, Boston University, and the writer of Octopus, Shovel Buddies, and My So Called Death replies to the question, ".... 12 weeks for the handing over the first draft. I generally try to finish the draft and save a month for refining", (Hellerman, 2019). John August, an American screenwriter, known for having written Go, Big Fish, Titan A.E., Charlie's Angels, and Charlie's Angels, got a degree in journalism from Drake University, Iowa and an MFA in film from the Peter Stark program at the University of Southern California, responds the question as, "The agreement normally permits for a 12-week writing period for the first draft. Succeeding amendments and refinements are given shorter time period, anywhere from eight weeks to two weeks" (August, 2008).

"In Pakistan, the state of the affairs regarding worse filmmaking", as went one of the respondents who is a university professor of media and communication studies, "owes to many of the reasons ranging from scanty tangible resources such as budget, technical facilities, sophisticated labs, comfortable cinema theaters, etc., to inept expertise such as wet-behind-the-ear directors, amateur producers, and the screenplay writers who have the faintest idea, at first place, of what filmmaking and screenplay is, and secondly, how making/directing/writing a film for cinema is different from making/directing/writing a play for TV." One of the interviewees who form academicians' category put stress on the institutionalised training of the script writers, "We must encourage our fiction writer to turn to screenwriting and let them learn the craft of the task. Our teachers must be sent abroad to learn the techniques of developing the courses. To a film journalist, filmmaking techniques and screenwriting could not be taken as seriously as it has been taken in other parts of the world where cinema industry grew larger with every passing year. Another senior interviewee who has retired from directing films and on whose credit some of really good movies in70s and 80s are studded, got nostalgic and melancholic while responding, "Gone are the days when films were made in Pakistan. What if the colors of the film on screen were tainted, celluloid used was substandard, actors were loud, but they were films. Since TV directors and writers have got into the profession, what we are making in the name of film is neither film, nor drama."

"Government my dear, government." Another respondent expressed his thoughts, "Government did not own us, nor did it support the industry. And we were like the falling autumnal leaves on the mercy of the winds." One of the respondents from directors' category held his generation responsible for the decline of the film industry, "Our generation did the maximum but we could not pass on the heritage the way we should have or could have done. Nor did our youth adapt themselves to the changing realities."

Conclusion and Recommendations

Film is one of the powerful mass medium of entertainment, propaganda, persuasion and social change. With the advent of internet already shrunk world has gone even smaller in the recent years. The social media has strengthened concept of global village as people now more opportunities to interact with each other though virtually but instantly. The sharing out of ideas, issues, and even possible solutions to those problems has made the generation more sober and more mature. Post modernism has lead the expertise and experts to more narrow downed specifications and specialization. Pluralism, on the other hand, not only has taught people from heterogeneous backgrounds how to coexist together, but also has generated stronger possibilities for competitions amongst nations, countries, and races. Amidst such circumstances, film is one of the most influential modes to let the nations say their say and communicate with each other. Realising the significance of filmmaking, the filmmakers in the rest of the world have equipped themselves with modern ways of storytelling. From technical apparatus like cameras, trollies, gibs, editing and sound recording gadgets, etc., to the human skills like directors, actors, editors, cameramen, screenwriters, etc., everything has gone under technical and creative change. Talent is God gifted but academies, institutions,

schools and trainings are the places where innate talents are organised, streamlined, polished and enhanced. Capacity building measures are taken up to furnish the talent so that they can cope with the competitors.

Under the light of this study it is therefore recommended that faculty of Media and Mass Communication be provided with the opportunities to go abroad for having specialized education of screenplay writing. This trained faculty will be capable enough to design and tailor syllabi and courses to train the students. It is further suggested that government take the initiative to set up film schools in main cities of the country. The graduates of these schools must be given easy loan facility for filmmaking so that they may produce quality films.

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