

Slasher films in the pakistani cinema

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Pakistan is a developing country that has been struggling for decades in its many eras, ranging from business to the cinema. Despite the tussle, it has managed to develop its film and television industry rapidly. “Lollywood” is a term that was coined back in the day to glamorously describe the cinemacultureof Pakistan. Though, as we all know, in comparison to Bollywood and Hollywood, Lollywood, in majority has not been much popular. Nevertheless, upon profoundly observing the television industry of Pakistan, one learns that it is much more refined and efficacious in contrast to the film sector.

Particularly, in the present times, the drama or television industry, as you may call it, is flourishing not just locally but all around the globe, reaching out to many Pakistanis and providing them with twenty four hours of fruitful entertainment. Pakistani Cinema has touched upon a variety of genres which predominantly revolve around documentaries, dramas, thrillers, horror, romance and action. This paper will, however, depict and deliberate upon a subgenre of horror films; slasher films in Pakistan.

A slasher film is preeminently defined as a horror film which involves the use of an unearthly weapon such as an axe by a psychopathic slaughterer who mainly pertains to aggressively slaying a number of victims. These movies follow specific cinematic techniques where close-ups and special effects are used in a variety of ways, primarily representing women as sexual objects. The conception of showing the “Final Girl” rescuing herself is the foremost ideology a slasher film ordinarily focuses on.

Over the years, Lollywood has managed to accomplish the two most successful horror films using the true slasher and storyline techniques; Zinda
<https://assignbuster.com/slasher-films-in-the-pakistani-cinema/>

Laash (“ Dracula in Pakistan/The Living Corpse”) and Zibah Khana (“ Hell’s Ground”) produced in 1967 and 2007 respectively. It is interesting to know that the recent production; Hell’s Ground makes continuous relations with the thirty year old film; Zinda Laash. However, the two devour excessive amount of differences; in regard to the slasher film techniques and gender based critique which will be discussed in this essay. Dracula in Pakistan” was filmed in the late 60’s; however, when released, it sprang a cascade of fear amongst the Pakistanis. According to (The Indian Express, 2012), a woman from the audience was agonized by a heart attack. It was also the first movie produced in Pakistan to be categorized as “ X-rated” along with being screened at two international film festivals. (IMDB) Zinda Laash is considered as a plagiarized production; an elucidation of Hammer’s Classic “ Dracula. ” (The HotSpot Online) The plot begins with a scientist; Dr.

Tabani accomplishing his test experiment to gain immortality followed by the introduction of his assistant; a buxom woman who discovers the “ dead body” of the scientist and decides to store it in a coffin. To her astonishment, the corpse comes to life and she is his first victim. The story continues with a somnolent traveller, Dr. Aqil who does not consider the rumors of the existence of the immortals to be true, entering the mansion of the “ Khabees Rooh”. Though, he soon discovers the veracity and chooses to end the cycle of plague, but is evidently futile.

The film further revolves around a Dr. Aqil’s wife-to-be; Shabnam, who is also a victim of Dr. Tabani and how immortality fails her appallingly. As petrifying Zinda Laash might have been in the 60’s, it most certainly isn’t disturbing in relation to the modern day standards. One might find it rigorously

monotonous but humorous at the same time as it depicts alluring and peculiar dances by women. Zinda Laash strongly caters to the “ Male Gaze” throughout the hundred minutes of its run time; from the introduction to the climax and the conclusion.

Throughout the course, the audience experiences a range of dance numbers by either one or many women. The initial portrayal of the sexuality of women instigates when the assistant is lured by her “ dead” boss in the middle of the dark hours. The woman is dressed in a knee length night gown with revealed skin and cleavage; identifying her as a sex object. For being a Pakistani production of the 60’s era, the cinematic techniques capturing the body of the woman can definitely be labeled as “ obscene. The attack demonstrates sensuality in the facial expressions of the woman with the sluggish movement of closeness between the victim and the attacker pouring a sense of sexual tension amongst the audience. Followed by the frightening shrieks of the woman, violence against women is highlighted significantly; a woman is powerless in front of a man. Later, as the weary traveller arrives and adjusts comfortably at the mansion after a warm welcome by Dr. Tabani, one notices Dr. Aqil setting a photoframe of his beloved fiancée he truly misses. Dr.

Tabani enters his room to ensure comfort and malignly admires the photo by calling it “ Khoobsurat. ” It is enigmatically bizarre how Dr. Tabani ignores to make Dr. Aqil his next victim who is right there and instead wishes to suck blood out of a woman. Malevolent thoughts instantly stutter through the attacker’s head about the woman; further enhancing the violence against women. As the night gets gloomy and murky, one notices Dr. Aqil being

effortlessly distracted by the giggles of a woman; the vampire bride. He gets up to follow the chuckles; his facial expressions visibly expose his urge for sexual desire.

Discovering the origin of the chortles, Dr. Aqil finds a mysterious female, dancing with “voluptuous sensuality” (The HotSpot Online) dressed in a lightly lined white dress to attract him towards her. There is undeniably a connotation attached to the actions of the woman in this scene; she uses her sexuality to fulfill her need to feed upon the man for survival. The man finally submits himself to her and is attacked by the vampire bride. This explains how the religion of Islam fears the power of female sexual attraction over men.

Imam Ghazali’s interpretation is also highlighted during this part of the film; female aggression is tuned outwards and she sexually entices men. Captivatingly, this occurrence is intermittent by Dr. Tabani; the vampire, who pushes the woman; once again showing the physical power of man over woman. Wretchedly, Dr. Aqil is masticated and is fated to earn immortality. Nonetheless, before fronting his destiny, he tries to put an end to the outrageous veracity by using a “knife” as the weapon of destruction, but fails terribly. Incongruously, a dance number is presented right after Dr.

Aqil becomes a casualty of immortality. This dance sequence is similar to the many others shown during the film at odd intervals. This particular sequence comprised of a woman dancing dressed in a half sleeve top and pants in front of a crowd of men in majority. Vulgarity strikes not only in her clothing this time, but in the movement of her physique in sync with the song lyrics which were chanted by a man as he made hand gestures pointing towards

the dancer; “ Udhar Jawani, Idhar Nasha. ” The lyrics clearly indicate the drunken men relishing the “ jawaani” of the female performing.

The theme of sexuality is reinforced with the entrance of Dr. Aqil’s brother as he is interrupted with another dance number, this time comprising of many women dancing for their own entertainment instead of one woman dancing to entertain a crowd. This dance comprises of Dr. Aqil’s fiancée, Shabnam dressed in shalwar kameez; the national dress of Pakistan, dancing with her friends. However, the fitting of the clothing catered to the male gaze once again. The shirts are of normal length but tremendously body-hugging from the hip, hence outlining her body shape. These women also wore perfectly winged eyeliners and hair done gracefully, further emphasizing the gender socialization of women; how they are required to dress up. The theme of men giving in for the sexuality of women is reversed when Shabnam desperately waits for Dr. Tabani to suck her blood. On his arrival, Shabnam lies down on her bed in an inviting posture outlining her curvaceous body and reveals her neck; women objectification. Once again, sexual tension is built as Dr. Tabani goes close to her neck and feeds on her.

The difference between the earlier attacks and this once is that Shabnam was willingly letting Dr. Tabani feed on her; she felt pleasure. The photograph below shows her exact position on the bed. (The HotSpot Online) There is also a female child in the narrative who Shabnam intends to feed on. The question here evolves as to why there was not a male child instead of a female child named “ Baby”? Baby constantly made relations with Shabnam throughout the course of the film, for example, she teased Shabnam by snatching Dr. Aqil’s photograph from her hand and ran away.

The film comes towards a climax where the family discovers the Dracula Shabnam who intended to trick Baby and suck her blood out. Shabnam's brother confronts her as she convinces him to hug her; she decides to feed on him. This plot comes to an end when Aqil's brother acts as the macho man and pushes Shabnam away and stabs her to death by a dagger. Patriarchy is promoted via this prospect as well. Nonetheless, a dance sequence is a must input at the pinnacle; this time a female wearing a sequin dress entertaining a group of men by dancing. Most importantly, we notice that the dupatta in many of these dance numbers is eliminated.

The movie further progresses with the development of an aim to eradicate the immortals by Shabnam's brother and Dr. Aqil's brother. Zibah Khaana or Hell's Ground, on the other hand, follows a completely different narrative with underlining various subjects such as Gender Roles, Social Concerns and Pakistani Culture. It truly depicts the use of slasher film techniques like showing the world from the eyes of the attacker and use of the "Final Girl" notion. It is an Urdu-English slasher film directed by Omar Khan in only 30 days and has won many awards at Film Festivals around the Globe. Wikipedia) Zibah Khaana is a journey of five teenage friends who decide to take a short cut through a place known as "Dozakh Pur" to attend a rock concert. On their way, they face many difficulties such as the toxic water, zombies, a daunting hitchhiker, a witch and a man dressed in a burkha with an ancient spiky weapon which makes the movie a modern gore flick. The diversity in characters chosen makes the film even more exhilarating. The movie begins with a boy having an accident upon seeing a Burkha Man standing in the middle of the road with a medieval weapon.

However, the first victim is massacred with a spade, in comparison to *Zinda Laash*, where the first victim was a woman attacked by fangs. In the case of *Hell's Ground*, woman objectification is hardly given any attention. The film sets the surroundings of Pakistan by showing detailed shots about the culture of Pakistan; daily activities. Gender socialization is highlighted when Roxy, a modern American girl is introduced and specifically asks her maid for a “pink” colored shirt to wear as she has to spend the night at her friend “Ayesha's” house.

Pakistani culture is further laid stress upon when the maid reacts in astonishment to Roxy, being a girl and spending the night at a friend's house. Next, a low class Christian boy, Simon is presented with his parents; where the father uses abusive language to degrade his son. In relation to *Zinda Laash*, here we experience that the wife; Simon's mother screams back to her husband in support of her child. Patriarchy is not laid stress upon; it does exist but not to a critical extent in the modern day and this is what *Zibah Khaana* probably aimed to demonstrate.

As the introduction progresses, the audience meets the Final Girl, Ayesha. Her first appearance in a traditional shalwar kameez serving her mother tea immediately clicks; she is different from the previous two characters introduced. Once more, the Pakistani Culture and Gender Bias are tinted when Ayesha seeks permission from her mother to go on a “school trip” for the night. Receiving a hesitant reaction from her mother and commentary upon how her father would be against this act if he were alive, instantaneously converses with the Pakistani audience as to how girls should not be let out for the night.

It emphasizes upon traditional beliefs on gender socialization; girls should spend the night at their own house and not elsewhere. However, there are a lot of modern families in today's time who are also against girls spending the night elsewhere. In the Pakistani society, it is definitely considered as indecent. Inevitably, Ayesha lies to stay out for the night to go to a rock concert. However, her socialization restricts her from doing things that she has been taught are wrong; for example later in the film all her friends smoke hashish, but she doesn't.

Ayesha also wears an "Allah Hu Akbar" necklace throughout the course of the film. We also observe, upon exiting the house Ayesha gets rid of her books and grabs a pair of jeans and t-shirt to change later for the trip; Ayesha belongs to a local ordinary family. Later, when she changes her attire from a traditional one to modern, her friends are surprised. Roxy, Ayesha, Simon and another boy OJ meet at the ice cream parlor, "Hot Spot" and wait for the last character of the film; Vicky to arrive with transport. He brings a van with old fashioned Pakistani Horror Film Paintings, one of which consisted of a plump woman posing.

Pointing out the sexuality in the old times; OJ instantly reacts to the painting of the woman as "sexy." This shows that young boys are easily drawn towards sexuality with being open about their desires. The friends continue to head out and on their way are disturbed by a group of transgenders while waiting for the traffic signal to go green. An effective use of queer theory has been applied as the reaction of the teenagers is shown. Transgenders are a huge part of the Pakistani society and are treated with disgrace.

They are usually perceived as infuriating while they beg at the traffic signals; the reaction of Vicky and the body language of the transgenders have clearly been captured. As the transgenders approached and touched Vicky, his facial expressions stressed upon irritation and repulsion. Youth culture has been shown via sarcastic conversations amongst the five friends. Roxy is an American-Pakistani modern girl who did not hesitate to smoke hashish in comparison to the Final Girl, Ayesha who denies the offer and feels uncomfortable. Roxy and OJ have a conversation about the socio-economic situation of Pakistan.

This was amusing to observe as women in the earlier day were not included in such conversations, and today we see a positive change in the role of women. In Roxy's imaginary world, she " can't wait to get out of this sticky shithole. " Use of abusive language by both the genders has been highlighted, which serves as a change in the norm of our society as all such instances are censored by the censor board of Pakistan. Hell's Ground, was however, successful in mirroring the reality. From zombies, a freaky hitchhiker and a witch to the serial killer in a burkha, Zibah Khana covers it all.

Generally, older women are always associated with darkness, magic and evil. Hell's ground uses the same ideology and uses an unusual strange woman in the story who is involved in the village killings. The hitchhiker and the main psychopathic killer Burkhaman which the teenagers come across are the old woman's children. Earlier in the film, the teenagers have managed to escape from the creepy hitchhiker by throwing him out of the van and crushing him in the process. Motherly instincts are shown when the mother finds her

injured son and commands the Burkhaman to cut them up into “ botis. The old woman also continuously addressed the Burkhaman as her daughter; further highlighting the use of queer theory. The Burkhaman is in reality a man, but is continuously referred as a female; this is because the old woman always wanted a daughter but never had one. I believe, the use of such a dogma is an indirect reference to the LGBT community in Pakistan. Throughout the film, the serial killer being the main lead remains silent. According to my analogy, it has been done purposely to lay stress upon the fact that society wants the LGBT community to remain silent and act as the underdog of the society.

Being a slasher film, the plot revolves around The Final Girl throughout. Before the zombie attacks, she senses incongruity but chooses to ignore and stays determined. This is the most ideal strategy used in the production of slasher films. Her psychological turmoil is continuously tested till the very end where she saves herself. In completion, Ayesha is the only individual left who has not been successfully victimized. Slasher films intend to show women in terror, and Zibah Khana explicitly follows this rule. It shows both the women, Roxy and Ayesha, in terror, running for their lives and screaming.

The only difference is that Ayesha is the final girl and remains determined to save herself. Another stratagem used in Zibah Khana is the eradication of all the irrelevant characters one by one leaving the Final Girl as the last victim. This is to build tension amongst the audience to experience the reversal of gender roles. When Ayesha faces the Burkhaman, she fights back for herself and saves herself by getting hold of a spade and a stone, and smashes the

head of the man dressed in a Burkha. There is no man to rescue her; she is her own hero. A hidden side of the innocent girl is shown; she makes sure to kill the attacker.

Typically, in slasher films, the Final Girl is given intense strength and masculinity all of a sudden with the urge to protect her rather than being dependent upon a man to save the day. There are many differences we observe between the two films. Firstly, we notice that the first victim in Zinda Laash is a woman where she is shown as a sexual object. However, in Zibah Khana, the first victim is a boy; OJ. Secondly, Zibah Khana adopts the technique of showing the world from the attacker's eyes to its fullest whereas Zinda Laash hardly makes use of it.

Thirdly, another distinctive feature of a slasher film is to show women in terror; building the tension and finally reaching the climax. Zibah Khana renders this trepidation to a great extent in comparison to Zinda Laash, where the women feeling fear is shown minimally in comparison to Zibah Khana. Lastly, the concept of Final Girl is completely ignored in Zinda Laash, assuming that Shabnam was the main girl who was expected to save herself and not enter the realm of death; that too by being stabbed by a man. Zibah Khana, on the other hand, stresses all the attention on the Final Girl, Ayesha.

In the end she is the only survivor. Horror film is a genre which has come a long way in the Pakistani Cinema. It started off with showing women as sex objects to the girl becoming the main lead and surviving on her own terms.

To conclude, I absolutely agree with Omar Khan, the director of Zibah Khana as he claims, " Horror is at its most effective when it taps into real fears. Our real fears are connected to things that are sensitive politically and difficult to

discuss. " (Telegraph, UK, 2007) 3286 Words Bibliography (n. d.). Retrieved November 27, 2012, from IMDB: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0360232/trivia>

Telegraph, UK. (2007, August 11). Retrieved December 4, 2012, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/starsandstories/3667146/Zibahkhana-Beware-zombies-wearing-saris.html>

The Indian Express. (2012, July 2). Retrieved December 4, 2012, from The Indian Express: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/be-scared-very-scared/969038/0>

The HotSpot Online. (n. d.). Retrieved December 4, 2012, from <http://www.thehotspotonline.com/moviespot/bolly/reviews/xyz/zindalaash.htm>

Wikipedia. (n. d.). Retrieved December 4, 2012, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zibahkhana>