



Unmasking Belief Through Alien Eyes: A Deconstructive Analysis of *PK* Movie

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Abstract:

Art and language are filled with some meaning to be unmasked by the readers. So is the case with literature. With the change in time, gradually literature had also been adopted into movies, series, etc. So, the door of looking at the movies through any critical theory is also now open as it was for other literary works. This research paper is a deep study of *PK* movie through the perspective of the theory of deconstruction given basically by Jacques Derrida. The researcher studies in detail many dialogues, scenes and ideas which are being deconstructed in this movie by different characters. This paper contains the minute study of the scenes, dialogues, the thinking process and beliefs of various characters.

The process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of the ideas or the beliefs of characters are discussed deeply in this paper. Through the character of PK, an alien who is navigating Earth's religious and cultural complexities, the film critiques institutionalized religion, dogma, and social norms. It first challenges established norms and then deconstructs them. Using deconstruction, the researcher interrogates the binaries between belief and scepticism, faith and reason, and tradition versus modernity. The free plays of meanings and ideas come in film with the character of PK who thinks critically and with open mindedness, ready to accept multiple views.

Keywords: Deconstruction, critical thinking, meanings, *PK*, belief.



Introduction:

Background and the context of research paper:

Creation and destruction are the inevitable cycles of the world and thus of life. The thoughts and beliefs of humans are also created gradually by so many factors affecting the mind. In this way, via the creation of ideas and understanding, human intelligence and critical thinking nourishes. The stop or barrier in the development of knowledge occurs when these created ideas are stuck so rigidly or become so inflexible that any new perception cannot enter into the thinking. This is the time when those established beliefs, rules and regulations need to be modified or completely broken apart to create a new place for some new perspectives and ideas.

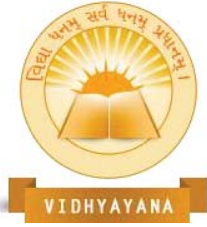
In literary criticism, the challenges raised against established meanings and accepted beliefs, breaking down of the binary oppositions and showing the fluidity of meaning is dealt with under the theory of deconstruction. As it is clearly depicted in “Deconstructionism in Literature” that, “The word "deconstruction" literally means to break something down into parts in order to better understand its meaning.” (*Deconstructionism in Literature | Definition & Examples - Lesson*, n.d.). In this paper the researcher is going to attempt a critical deconstructive study of a Hindi movie *PK* which was released in 2013.

Research Hypothesis -

The deconstructive analysis of *PK* movies is possible with the detailed and critical study of the film.

Significance of the Research -

This research will add to an example of the mixture of art with the digital or technical world by analysing a film in it, by showing us the power of digital India. The message of this film and this research both reflect the idea of “art as a medium for social change” and “Contemporary art practices”. This research will also add on to the area of multidisciplinary research by including literary theory or criticism and film studies together. These recent research trends will enhance the nature of research and will update the other researchers. With the enhancement in the cross-disciplinary approach of arts and technology, the research will



improve the ability to critical thinking and evaluative as well as analytical power of film criticism.

Overview of the Paper's Structure-

The research paper will start with an introduction to the movie and the theory of deconstruction. Following the concept of detailed study of movie through the deconstructive approach, the paper will talk about the scenes and points where deconstruction is done in the movie. The conclusion will talk about the results of the research along with further scopes for future researchers.

Literature Review:

Review of relevant and previous topics-

Innumerable researches have been done with deconstruction as an individual theory as well as the implication of this theory on other works. *PK* movie and this character of PK have also been studied by many researchers. The existential analysis of character of PK is done by Bintara Nanda Teguh in the thesis. The phenomenological study of this movie is also done by Turkeri. Other researchers are also done on this movie like the paralinguistic study of the work 'Achha', the study of digital media in *PK*, the study of Bollywood movie industry with the connection of this movie, and much more s studied.

Summary of Theory and Gap in research-

Deconstruction can be used in literary and film critiques. Deconstructionists use this theory to interpret the representations of certain aspects in text or film. "... deconstruction is a flexible concept that can be applied to different forms of the information we consume." (Israel, 2016) The gap is that this theory is not applied in *PK* movie individually by any scholar till now.



Justification of Current Study based on Gaps-

Research has been done with this movie and also much work has been done with the theory of deconstruction. But I could not find the deconstructive analysis of this movie individually. So, this current research paper will try to bridge the gap by putting this movie with the close study and application of the theory of deconstruction in it.

Methodology:

Research Design-

The paper follows the qualitative method for textual analysis.

Data Collection Methods-

The data is collected in this research via textual analytical method.

Description of Data Analysis Techniques-

Thematic and contextual analysis of the movie is done by the researcher with the critical application of the literary theory of deconstruction.

Result:

Presentation of findings based on the data collected-

Based on the collection of the data, the researcher comes to the conclusion that a deconstructive point of view can be found in this movie at many places. This particular lens gives a new perspective, idea and consciousness to the movie.

Objective reporting of results without discussion-

The deconstructive analysis of *PK* movie is done successfully by the researcher in this research paper.

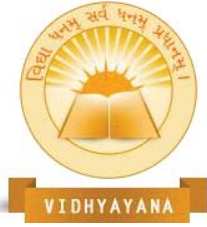


Discussion:

Interpretation of the result in relation with hypothesis-

In this movie, PK is the character played by Aamir Khan who is every time challenging the believed notion of reality with his unique and always a new point of view. It shows us that reality is never a fixed or rigid entity. It is a phenomenon which can be seen through many perspectives and unlimited points of view. Deconstruction also practically breaks the established belief or accepted idea of anything, concept or person. By deconstructing the already constructed notion, it makes place for something new to be constructed. Then gradually this newly constructed idea or thought will also be deconstructed with the development of thinking. Thus, this cycle of construction- deconstruction and- reconstruction will continue where reconstruction itself will become a construction to be deconstructed. As it is said in the glossary of literary terms by M. H. Abrams, “Typically, a deconstructive reading sets out to show that conflicting forces within the text itself serve to dissipate the seeming definiteness of its structure and meanings into an indefinite array of incompatible and undecidable possibilities.” (Abrams & Harpham, 2015, 80).

Even while associating the words with their meanings, this process of deconstruction takes place. As it is written by Abrams, “Derrida signifies what he also calls an “ultimate referent” a self-certifying and self-sufficient ground, or foundation, available to us totally out-side the play of language itself, that is directly present to our awareness and serves to “center” (that is, to anchor, organize, and guarantee) the structure of the linguistic system, and as a result suffices to fix the bounds, coherence, and determinate meanings of any spoken or written utterance within that system. (On Derrida’s “decentering” of structuralism, see poststructuralism.)” (Abrams & Harpham, 2015, 81) It is also important to mention that, “Derrida expresses his alternative conception, that the play of linguistic meanings is “undecidable,” in terms derived from Saussure’s view that in a sign system, both the signifiers (the material elements of a language, whether spoken or written) and the signified (their conceptual meanings) owe their seeming identities not to their own “positive” or inherent features but to their “differences” from other speech sounds, written marks, or conceptual significations.” (Abrams & Harpham, 2015, 81).



For opposing any meaning of a word, the medium also becomes the word because, “Derrida's theories on deconstruction were themselves influenced by the work of linguists such as Ferdinand de Saussure (whose writings on semiotics also became a cornerstone of structuralism in the mid-20th century) and literary theorists such as Roland Barthes (whose works were an investigation of the logical ends of structuralist thought). Derrida's views on deconstruction stood in opposition to the theories of structuralists ...” (*Deconstruction*, n.d.). Deconstruction is believed to have been started with the study of meanings of words as Patricia Waugh writes that, “For his against-the-grain verbal analyses Empson is sometimes claimed as a predecessor of deconstruction and notions of a free play of language, but there are in Empson's work no Derridean ludic treatments of etymology or other games with words. In Empson's accounts of ambiguity and multiple meanings there are interpretative limits...” (Waugh, 2006).

An article on the analysis of the movie *PK* reflects the themes of it such as stubborn faith, deep prejudice, need of critical thinking, power of media, etc. These lines of article, “Therefore, it is necessary to have a scientific temper. We must learn to reason. Believing in anything is only going to lead us to a deeper hole of exploitation. Only through the power of reasoning can we help in creating a perfectly harmonious society.” (Akshay, 2021) are also similar to the ignition of critical thinking as deconstruction also asks for the need of breaking the stereotypical thoughts and need of flourishing the new ideas.

The character of PK is portrayed as an extra ordinary one which is out of the general inception and understanding of people. He is described as, “A socially awkward and 'different' young man who walks and talks in a strange, enthusiastic childlike manner observes the system, questions it, asks you to look at the many ludicrous things that inform it, and eventually brings about a minor revolution....” (*PK (Film)* - *Wikipedia*, n.d.).

There are some spirits of the character which gives the inspiration to the researcher for doing a deconstructive study of this movie. The very first thing is the questioning spirit of the character PK. The process of understanding the instability of meaning gets started with a question as can be found many times as a dialogue by PK, “Hamra ikko saval hai.” (Hirani, 2014). All the questions and logics given by PK ignites a critical thinking in our mind that this is the time when we need to change our perception as per current time and current situations.



It makes one rethink about our choice of thinking and accepting some particular things and rejecting some.

The film challenges the blind religious authority of some characters like Jaggu's father and also Jaggu (In case of Sarfraz). The movie deconstructs the blind faith of people upon religious rituals without using their logic, thoughts and critical power. At last, the characters of this movie get over from the blind religious authority of Tapasviji who was stopping their reasoning and was deciding the ideas of true or false for them. The movie also deconstructs the ideas of faith when it comes to superstition at a point in the film. The concept of true or false is challenged and deconstructed to a certain extent in this movie as is also done in the theory of deconstruction. It shows that there is no art which is universally true or false by its nature from the time of its creation. These ideas of true or false, good or bad, nice or ugly are culturally constructed by some humans themselves. As they are the things constructed by someone, someone else has the full right to critically think about it in her/ his time and to deconstruct that once constructed an authority, rule or idea.

The various religious practices being performed by PK shows in the film that all these practices are fluid. Their meaning gets change with difference in time, pace, people, situations and many other aspects. The movie also shows that media, journalists or such people who are connected with the act of critical thinking and challenging the already established thoughts in society are the one who have very responsibility to deconstruct them. For this one has to keep the mind unprejudiced and open for every acceptance as we can see with the characters of PK and Cherry.

The concept of cultural relativism in the religions can be found in the movie when we see that the ways of ritual is constructed in PK's mind to perform pooja in a temple. But those concepts to worship God get deconstructed when he goes to a church. It again gets devastated when he visits the church. This shows that no particular religion and its practices is the only reality of the world. The ideas of complete reality or the absolute truth don't exist at all because once believed reality or truth can be deconstructed at any time, by anyone. Thus, we can also find the subversion of the religious symbols and beliefs in this film. The concept of God is deconstructed when some girls are stopped from going to school and we see the statement in



film, “Itna chhota nahi ho sakta hamara khuda, ki inn bachchiyo ke padhne likhane pe use aitraz ho.” (Hirani, 2014, 1.45.18) The incidents where deconstruction of established beliefs takes place are the caste of tribals being changed in Christians, the gold creating miracle of a saint being challenged by a man when he says, “... agar aap hawa me sona nikal sakte hai babaji to desh ki garibi kyo nahi mita dete baba... hum logo se chanda kyo lete ho babaji?” (Hirani, 2014,1.44.10), the incident of getting a job by feeding grass to the cow, reading a particular shloka to get the baby boy, etc. all these concepts are deconstructed firmly.

PK deconstructs the beloved division of people in various casts. He clearly states to Tapasvi that “Kaun Hindu kaun Musalaman, dhabba kidhar hai? Dikhao! E farak bhagwan nahi, tum log banaya hai, aur e hi e gola ka sabse danger wrong number hai.” (Hirani, 2014, 2.10.05). The movie also deconstructs the concept of God. During the last debate between PK and Tapasvi, PK says that “lekin hamara ikoo saval hai. Kaun se bhagwan pe bishvas kre? Aap loh bolta hai ek bhagwan hai, hum bolta hai nahi, dui bhagwan hai. Ek jaun hum sab ka banaya, aur ek jeka tum log banaya. Jaun hum sab ka banaya uke bare me hum kuchho nahi janta lekin jeka tum log banaya u bilkul tumre jaisa hai. Jutha, ghush leta hai, juthe wade krta hai, amiro ko jaldi milta hai, garibo ko len me khada karta hai. Tarif se khush hota hai, baat bat pe daraata hai. Hamra right number bahote hi simple hai. Jaun bhagwan hum sab ka banaya u pe biswas kro aur je ka tum log banaye ho, u duplicate gad ko hatai ho.” (Hirani, 2014, 2.07.54). The God was shown as an idol by Tapasvi which is being deconstructed by PK. PK shows God as that energy and power who was by beyond the idol, the creator of the whole universe. PK deconstructs not just religious dogma but also language, cultural relativism, and power structures in contemporary society.

In the same interview the concept of “Sarafraz dhokha dega, Musalaman dhokha deta hai.” (Hirani, 2014, 2.10.30) was also deconstructed by PK via a phone call and the clarification about the wedding situations between Jaggu and Sarfraz. PK was unable to communicate with the use of language. Then also he was able to communicate directly via transferring the information through the body touch. This deconstruct our generally believed notion that the only way to transfer the information and ideas, whether it be the verbal or the non-verbal is communication only. PK, as an alien outsider, plays the role of “the Other” in Derridean terms.



His presence forces humans to confront their established norms and beliefs, while his unfamiliarity with human customs serves as a tool to dismantle dominant cultural structures. This perspective enables a deconstructive critique of religion from an entirely unbiased standpoint.

The other miscellaneous examples of the ideas being deconstructed in the movie are, the regularity of animals being nude while humans being clothed, which challenges the idea of regularity or common acceptance itself. The clothes and its connection related with the fashion, incidents, gender, the marital or nonmarital status in various religions, the type of clothes as per their design, style, structure and the person wearing them all are step by step being deconstructed in this movie. The concept of one photo on the paper working as money, but the same photo on the other types of papers not working as money deconstructs the idea that not that photo or that person but that thing called money is more important to survive. Usually, people take the fallen or lost things of others, this is the belief. But when it happened with someone's fallen condom in the movie, the idea that everyone refused taking it, along with the person who was actual owner of that packet also refused. So, the idea that people accept their own things, as well as people taking others' things if they find them, are deconstructed. The same discussion lead towards the deconstruction of the very sensitive topic that sex is not the private thing of people every time because in marriage, people indirectly declare about it.

How humans' literary meanings of their words or syntax meaning can deconstruct their discourse meaning is also presented in the movie. PK describes that when someone says that one loves chicken or fish, he/she doesn't love that animal, but that dish. It completely deconstructs the literal meaning of those words. The movie also quickly deconstructs the meaning of 'love' at the ending of the film. Generally, we believe that love is about keeping your loved one near and with you. But the dialogue of Jaggu for PK that, "He loved me enough, to let me go." (Hirani, 2014) completely challenges the believed idea and makes us think about true notion of love.

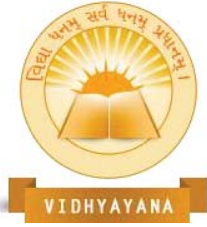
The concept of wrong number is also first challenged and then deconstructed in the movie. Generally, the wrong number means the combination of wrong digits because of which you cannot talk to the person whom you are willing to talk or call. In the movie, wrong numbers



are said as the wrong ideas, beliefs, concepts, emotions and doubts being fed in the mind of people which stops them from a free, critical and clear-thinking process.

The last song given at the end of the movie is about the description of PK whom Jaggu found as her friend just like a strange person. But as the song goes on, this strangeness fades away gradually and the ideas are deconstructing the previous ideas as, “kabhi lagta hai joker he wo, kabhi lagata loafer.” (Hirani, 2014, 2.29.10) and “Ek boond bhi usne n pi, pr PK won kehlaya hai” (Hirani, 2014, 2.31.31) and so many identities given and broken about PK. It also shows as it is said in this theory that nothing is outside the text, here also nothing or no role is outside the character of PK.

When the first glance of Aamir Khan’s character PK comes in front of other characters, especially Jaggu, she feels that he is a man just like other normal humans. But her this idea gets deconstructed when she comes to know that he is an alien who has come from a different planet. When in the beginning of the movie, PK learns from the people around, that there is an authority named God (the created) on the Earth and he can solve PK’s problem. But when he comes to know at the end that Tapsviji was lying and he is not having any contact with the actual maker, God the Creator, PK’s belief about God the Created gets deconstructed. The movie also deconstructs the very common and almost accepted idea of beggar. There is a scene in the movie where a blind and bony man stands on a bridge with the stick in one hand and the bowl containing little money in the other hand. Usually it is generally accepted that such a person is standing to ask for money and to take people’s money. PK deconstructs this idea but interpreting that he is such a noble man that he is standing on that bridge to give the money with needy and to help others financially. PK’s name literally means the person who is drunk. By hearing this name, anyone would think that he is a person who is completely drunk. But this idea is deconstructed when we come to know that he is actually a person who is a total teetotaler. In the beginning of the movie, Jaggu is not an obedient follower of Tapasviji while her family was. This is the deconstruction of faith done by Jaggu. Her belief of not accepting Tapasviji’s words is broken when she feels that Sarafranz did not come to marry her. Again, her belief is deconstructed and she starts believing that Tapasviji was a liar and she has no more faith in his words again.



Limitation of this study and further scopes for future-

This study analyses only one movie from the perception of deconstruction. Further researchers can add more movies for critical analysis. In the future, there is also an opportunity for others to do the study of the same movie via different literary and critical theories other than deconstruction. Scholars can also add on their findings and detailed analysis on the same topic to this research.

Conclusion:

Summary of Findings-

After going through the whole critical study of *PK* with the perception of the deconstructive lens, the researcher comes to the conclusion that the deconstructing is a part of a major idea or theme of the movie. By deconstructing the believed norms, critical insight and independent thinking is advised in this movie. This study shows that the movie has so many constructions already available inside itself that anyone can not be stated as the only supreme construction. For the higher and developed thoughts, one must continually question the reality and the already existing structures.

Importance of Findings in broader context-

The findings will show how a literary theory can be equally applicable to the movie of any language. It will also prompt the cross- disciplinary or multidisciplinary researcher in future. The researcher gives an insight that no belief, rule or idea is so rigidly true or correct that it cannot be unmasked.

Suggestions for practical applications-

This paper puts an example that literature, criticism or literary theories are no alien areas for today's popular culture of movies, series or OTTs. The scholarship areas and discipline of research is not limited to the books and pages only. One can study the current trends with theoretical ideas and in this way the knowledge can be added in a broader sense.



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Conflict of Interest:

The author declares no competing interests related to this paper 'Unmasking Belief Through Alien Eyes: A Deconstructive Analysis of *PK* Movie'.



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