

# A Comparative Analysis of Socio-cultural, Economic and Cinematic Content among the Two Renditions of Punjabi Cinema Cult Classic: ‘Maula Jatt’

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** Punjabi films hold an influence on Pakistani Cinema, particularly in the late 1970s to 1990s. This genre has been showcasing Punjab’s rich culture, artistic heritage, language, music and promoting local folklore. Maula Jatt was one of the gems from Pakistani Punjabi films. The rich, vibrant, loud and furious action-drama film Maula Jatt (1979) was the biggest box-office success of its times. This illustrious film not only marked its impact on cult classic Punjabi cinema in 1979 but its remake The Legend of Maula Jatt (2022) has created historical success internationally.

**Methodology:** This research paper discussed the competitive analysis of these two films from two different eras. Research focused on the comparative analysis of socio-cultural, economic and cinematic content of these films. The study also discussed the performances, economic drive and an impact of digitalization & technical excellence among both extraordinary depictions of Maula Jatt. To conduct this research content analysis method has been used. Moreover, this paper also highlights the collective and common factors of these films.

**Findings:** Although the classical old and lyrically latest version both generated huge revenue and boosted the national creative economy. Though, the similar title has different stories inside, but the intensity and colors of local Punjabi culture has made it unique and the art of storytelling in Punjabi language has its own flavor even after 40 years.

**Conclusion:** The research differentiate the soft power of cinema, social factors, performances, economic drive and an impact of digitalization & technical excellence among both extraordinary depictions of Maula Jatt.

**Keywords:** Punjabi, Culture, Cinema, Creative Economy, Maula Jatt.

## Introduction

The art of storytelling has been mesmerizing human race since ancient times. Through history of civilizations and Art; archaeologists suggests that the art of early settlements not just pictograms or symbolic cave paintings but it may combined with expressions, dance and oral renditions. Primitive man

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used natural materials (clay, stone, wood etc.) for this mode of visual communication for story telling; to convey information about their survival, hunting and life<sup>1</sup>. Early cultures and settlements reveals that storytelling is one of the most cherished tradition of early human race for the transmission of moral lessons, cultural norms and history. With the advancement of human culture this art form also flourished as cinema art and has been utilized to bridging gaps between different cultures, promote generational folklores and drawing global communities together (Dodia, 2012; Rauf & Kanwal, 2020; Safdar & Abbasi, 2023). From all the essential and fundamental elements of oral and performing storytelling to visual and digital advancements; the art of cinema came into being in late eighteen century and its influence become gigantic. The soft power of cinema and its profound impact on local and global culture and society is surly undeniable (Gladiator, 2000; Mishra, 2017). This medium of art with the blend of aesthetics and digitalization become a useful source to understand any cultural and societal norms. In contemporary times, Cinema and films are not only useful tool to entertaining tales but also provides comprehensive improvement in socio-economic, socio-cultural and political orientations. The beauty of storytelling through films are the most influential and effective art forms in modern world to explain everything human through this lens. Moreover, in recent times most of the films based on modern theories includes mimeses, pragmatic, formative and expressionist. By adding theoretical flavors; the art of cinema and film making become more subjective than entertainment (Johnstad, 2006; Dewey, 1925).

The purpose of this research paper is to assess how modern day Cinema and films plays a significance role in Pakistani society. Relevant literature about Pakistani cinema reveals that there is a notable connection between culture, society and cinema which makes it intact globally.

Pakistani films do not only address local folklores but also highlighting social concerns like gender equality, education and raising awareness about many critical issues to bring positive change within the society. Film medium not only creates social transformation; which mirrors our culture but also helps us to understand time capsule and transporting them into future perspective. Numerous artistic renditions of symbolism, expressionism and pragmatism in cinema art are not disconnected from their social context. By following Pragmatic theory<sup>2</sup>, number of Pakistani filmmakers create their art works more vibrantly in recent times.

Thus, the theory provides well-grounded understanding of artist, writers, producers and directors' contribution and art produced through film making. Therefore, Pakistani cinema has deep influence on social, political and ethical behavior in both positive and negative ways. With the advancement of digitalization and technicalities; pragmatic approach in Pakistani film industry are witnessed from past few years and the best example of this shift is *The legend of Maula Jatt*. This film does not only contribute in creative economy which surpasses 120 crores at Pakistani box office but also shine bright and showcase the country's local traditions, diversity and variety of old ethos to global audience. Pakistani Punjabi action-drama film; *The Legend of Maula Jatt* is modern illustration of the 1979 cult classic *Maula Jatt*. Though, the remake of this classic film after forty years is itself a big challenge but the taste of raw Punjabi folklore through camera's lens and modern cinematography has made this film more iconic.

### ***Study Objectives***

This study aims to:

- To examine the comparative analysis of old *Maula Jatt* with *The legend of Muala Jatt* on the Pakistani film industry.
- To investigate the impact of this film on Pakistani creative economy and global audience
- To recommend strategies for promoting local content that reflects Pakistani culture

## Literature Review

Pakistani media and cinema has a huge impact of modern and postmodern theories in their art works. Many contemporary directors, writers and artists has created numerous master pieces through Pragmatic approach; to address multiple socio-economic and cultural issues. *The legend of Maula Jatt*, is the reflection of universal battle between good and evil and the revival of old *Maula Jatt* with a different story line. The theoretical dialogue of good and evil in metaverse age has different narrative in third world country. The biggest challenge of director, producer and actors are to address their great aesthetic power with great responsibility and they really did it well through 'Pragmatic' approach.

C.S. Pierce, John Dewey and William James are renowned philosopher with Pragmatic approach, emphasized on practical functionality of knowledge, individual vs society and their role.

Pragmatic deals with the meaning and effects which come from the use of particular situations/mediums. John Dewey, American philosopher and educator (born October 20, 1859, U.S. - died June 1, 1952, New York, America), cofounder of the movement. Dewey held that this philosophy of nature was drastically impoverished.

"Human experiences are the outcome of range of interacting processes and are thus worldly events. The challenge to human life, therefore, is to determine how to live well processes of change, not somehow to transcend them" He explains in his book "experience and nature."<sup>3</sup>

In *Age of Anger: A history of the present*, Pankaj Mishra, discusses the thought of postmodern theories and their impact on modern times.<sup>4</sup>

Historically and currently multiple Pakistani films has earned global fame to portray intellectual, emotional, national and social adaptations. From *Teri Yaad*, *Garnata*, *Zarqa*, *Anarkali*, *Maula Jatt*, *Bulandi*, *Chorian* to *Jinnah*, *Khuda ke liye*, *Waar*, *Bol*, *Mah-e Meer*, *Manto*, *Zindagi Tamasha*, *Ramchand Pakistani*, *Dukhtar*, *Maalik* and *The Legend of Maula Jatt*; Pakistani cinema has gracefully and significantly plays it role in difficult circumstances, dormant times and even in limited resources.

## Methodology

This research paper discussed the competitive analysis of these two films from two different eras. Research focused on the comparative analysis of socio-cultural, economic and cinematic content of these films. The study also discussed the performances, economic drive and an impact of digitalization & technical excellence among both extraordinary depictions of *Maula Jatt*. To conduct this research content analysis method has been used. Moreover, this paper also highlights the collective and common factors of these films.

## Discussion

### *The Roar of Cult Classic- The Legend of Maula Jatt*

*The Legend of Maula Jatt*, (12 October, 2022), directed by Bilal Lashari, produced by Ammara Hikmat and Dr. Asad Jamil and written by Nasir Adeeb and Bilal Lashari's Pakistani Punjabi action drama film, is a revival of cult classic *Maula Jatt*; under the production umbrella of Encyclomedia<sup>5</sup>. This film is an adaptation and modern interpretation of old cult classic *Maula Jatt*, 1979, with the blend of modern cinematography reflecting similar era and ideology. The story line of modern version is slightly different from the old one but the loudness of characters; which includes dialogues from 1979 *Maula Jatt*, richness of Punjabi culture, reminiscent of Punjabi raw and dominance of male protagonists of 70's era could be seen in remake too.

*Maula Jatt*, film has star studded cast in past and present as well. The old version includes Sultan Rahi as *Maula Jatt*, Mustafa Qureshi as Noori Nath, Aasia, Kaifi, Aliya Begum, illyas Kashmiri and Adeeb. Whereas new cast involves Fawad Khan as *Maula Jatt*, Mahira Khan as Mukhoo Jatti, Hamza Ali Abbasi as Noori Nath, Gohar Rasheed as Makha Nath, Humaima Malik as Daro Nathni, Faris Shafi as Mooda.

Ali Azmat, Shafqat Cheema, Nayyer Ejaz, Zia Khan, Raheela Agha among others. *The legend of Maula Jatt* has another perk of having internationally renowned Pakistani celebrities in their franchise; which is beneficial for film global marketing. Though the story, characters and most of the dialogues emulate same message and old customs yet the direction and latest cinematography has made it parallel to Hollywood movie. Human intensity of revelry, battles for power and greed are the serious issues to be address through the latest version. This film depicting the story of power game between two clans which had changed the course of destiny in no time.

The story of Punjab Village with no defined specific area, time and space, reflects ultimate masculine dominance but, in *The Legend of Maula Jatt* the twists floats when *Noori Nath* not only saved *Daro* from female infanticide once but later in story he puts his father's turban on his sister's head, as next *sardar*, leader of *Nath* Clan after assassinating his own father in revenge. The latest story has some solid colors of feminism in the character of *Daro Nathni*, the blend of violently beautiful but ruthless, seductive arrogant women. The story revolves around an innocent orphan boy *Maula Jatt*, whose family was brutally murdered by *Nath* family. The boy then adopted by poor village woman where he met his foster brother *Mooda*. The quite yet raging character of *Maula Jatt* always fighting to bring justice at any cost wherever he goes and legendary dialogue "*Maulay nu Maula na maray, tay Maula naee marda.*" *Maula won't die unless Maula Himself kills Maula*, still source of great fascination for the audience even after 40 years of timespan. Though the story of both old and new versions of *Maula Jatt* has an immense revelry and violence but comparatively, in new version the story glorifies Punjabi family's unity and the flavor of sibling love in form of *Noori's Nath* unconditional love for his sister *Daro Nathni* and *Mooda's* love towards his foster brother *Maula Jatt*. Amplifying the message of unmatched hate and revenge, *The legend of Maula Jatt* touches its emotional peaks and extremism. The unfortunate depiction of story is still a reality in many Punjabi families till date in some rural areas. The never ending power game, lust, ignorance and enmity has faded many generations. Both versions of *Maula Jatt* undoubtedly highlighted male dominance hence; the female characters specifically *Makhoo Jatti* in old genre were lustered with Punjabi feminine beauty, loudness and charm. Whereas, in new version the overall impact of *Maula Jatts* love interest *Makhoo Jatti* has unable to capture hype of Punjabi charisma or sentimental magnetism. With a very little appearance *Makhoo Jatti*, the only one mind-blowing romantic mojo is poetry sings by heroin *Makhoo jatti* "*Chunn peechay lukki hui raat rah jani ae; duniya te apni kahani rah jani ae*" has not only lasting impact but also mesmerized ordinance with captivating cinematography and sound effects. The whole scene is aesthetically romantic and pleasing; the midnight, moon and darkness; describing its theme beyond time and space which has added more beauty and duality to viewers; as all the main characters of the film has chanted these lines to reflect their own inner stories.

Though lyrically new version has no musical entertainment for audiences except one dance performance. The old Version of *Maula Jatt* fueled with Punjabi songs; sung by Malika e Taranumm, Madam Noor Jahan and seductively performed by Aasia. In modern version; only one dance performed by Saima Baloch as *Raju*, she was dancing in trans; in another state of being in front of *Nath* clan, as nothing left in her life after the murder of her beloved and she is in lifetime possession of *Makha Nath*. The glorification of pain and her rhythmic dance for death is truly reflects the concept of sublime<sup>6</sup>; metaphor of pain and pleasure. The entertaining new version also gives us some glimpses of *Gladiator*<sup>7</sup> and *300*<sup>8</sup> as many frames of the films is inspired by these Hollywood movies. Moreover, the *Rohtas Fort*<sup>9</sup> has beautifully embellished for film location yet sets and interiors are greatly influenced by western aesthetics as one of the finest example is the portrait of *Makha Nath* in new version vaguely reminiscent of Romanesque era.

*The legend of Maula Jatt* is more stylistic rich and majestic as compare to the old one. The costumes are more refined though they truly promising rural Punjab culture yet these are sophisticated. The *Lacha* and *Kurta's* combination with the blend of raw hair styles and artistic make overs; make the characters much more developed and adjacent lifestyle. But the hair stylist needs more detailed work for adaptation of pure Punjabi culture. *The legend of Muala Jatt* is roller coaster of emotions and drama, pain and laughter and good and evil as each character's detailing and performance is worth praise and award winning. Pakistani

film industry must hold its head high as *The legend of Maula jatt* surpasses 120 crores milestones at domestic box office and internationally this masterpiece has huge potential to compete any film globally. The film has become one of the emerging engine of creative and economic growth for Pakistani film industry.

## **Impact of the Film**

### ***Culture and Folklore***

The new version of *Maula Jatt* captivate audiences worldwide and helps them to understand local culture and its diversity. Over the span of 40 years this film has showcased country's rich tradition and values to international audience through its grasping direction.

### ***Economic and social Factor***

This film generates a huge revenue locally and globally till date through its marketing strategies and boost national creative economy. It has a soft power to communicate with diverse audience throughout the world and raising awareness for social change, gender equality and impact of generational revelry. Moreover, by highlighting cultural sites like *Rohtas Fort* and utilizing an immense treasure trove of Pakistani folklore, film represents country's rich artistic heritage which is not only promoting tourism but also reviving rich artistic culture for new generation.

### ***Technical Supremacy***

*The legend of Muala Jatt* has unmatched cinematography, sound design and visual effects in Pakistani cinema's history. The directors excellency has shown even in the minute detail of weapons to attires. High production values has made this film competitive even on global stage. By creating quality content, diversity, cultural preservation, technical expertise and government support this film has become an 'Epic' in Pakistani cinema history. It has not only achieved greater success but also educate, empower and engage audience about richness of local Punjabi culture.

## **Conclusion**

Cinema has undoubtedly has an immense influence and power to transport humans to different worlds, shaping *societal* values and inspire our creativity and imagination. This medium of art fascinate audiences with captivating narratives and not only challenging ingrained ideologies but also contributes betterment in society.

The research stream that the influence of film on audience and findings is based on value laden Pragmatic research, as director, producer, writer, artists and entire team try to play their role for society and research prospect is narrow as they addressed nomothetic format. It suggested us to raise more awareness about culture, tradition and its huge impact on human society through film medium with the amalgamation of modern technology.

Secondly, the research is heavily contextualized in the era of two time spans more than 40 years, along with its reflection of cultural dispositions with different time frame. "The principle of Contextualization" suggests research to be embedded in context. It asserts that the historic and social background of research settings should be acknowledged so the audience can relate to its context. Globally the situation regarding creative economy of cinema defined with the axis of employment opportunities, box office returns and cultural awareness. The filmmaker of *The legend of Muala Jatt* undoubtedly justified his art as a skillful director with great responsibility.

Thus, this research paper may provide contextual work of art of film making, its economic factors and research to addressed penalties of revelry, therefore, it suggests that humanity needs peaceful solutions for peaceful world.

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