Term Paper - Movie Analysis

Introduction to History, Monsoon 2020

**Selected Movie: PK (2014)**

The movie PK criticizes the society that we live in in a pretty unique way. It highlights issues in societies that we hail as modern or ideal. From the very first scene, the movie points out the standards set by the bourgeois society and the proletariats struggling to meet those standards, even through immoral means and losing their identity in the process.

The movie begins by introducing the protagonist, PK played by Amir Khan, who is an alien on an extraterrestrial mission to search for life on other planets. He lands on Earth and sends his spaceship away. At [5:32] we see PK staring hard with curiosity at the first-ever life form he saw on earth. The man, in traditional Rajasthani attire (implying that he is a man from a poor or simple financial background), snatches the remote control from PK and runs away. This is a reflection of the struggling proletariat who wishes to break free from the struggles and identify himself as a bourgeois even if that would mean compromising his morals.

Moving ahead to [8:09], we see Jagat Janani/Jaggu and Sarfaraz Yousuf being introduced to the movie. The scene shows a man selling a ticket to a program by Amitabh Bachchan and Harivansh Ray Bachchan in black. The man standing in line for 6 hours to buy extra tickets at 40 euros and selling it to others at 100 euros shows the impact that capitalism has had on society. People are looking for easy ways to earn money without actually having to work hard for it. A society that externally looks ideal with the superstructures built to perfection, but lacking a base is beautifully depicted here. [8:53] shows Jagat and Sarfaraz reaching a mutual consensus and deciding to split the one ticket that’s on sale. They together pool 96 euros for the 100 euro ticket and the ticket seller refuses to let go of the ticket for anything less than 100 euros. This portrays the unforgiving and unrelenting bourgeois culture that society has adopted. Another significant point to note in this scene is how the ticket seller, despite being nothing more than a proletariat himself, does not sympathize with Jagat and Sarfaraz. [9:08] shows a desperate Jaggu asking an old man to loan her 4 euros for the ticket. [9:40], the old man goes straight to the seller, pays 100 euros, and gets the ticket for himself. The movie here depicts how the bourgeois gets what he wants with his money and the proletariat are not able to do so even by pooling their resources together.

[12:07] Sarfaraz tells Jaggu that he works part-time at the Pakistani embassy. A visibly confused Jaggu asks why he works there. Jaggu is unable to hide the disappointment on her face when Sarfaraz tells her that he is a Pakistani. An Indian being unable to accept a Pakistani as a friend shows the modern state system setting the proletariats against each other.

[17:15] - [18:25] Jaggu’s father goes to Tapaswiji, a godman who he worships to seek advice when Jaggu tells him that she is in love with Sarfaraz who is a Pakistani Muslim. Tapaswiji is the face of modern capitalism here where he exploits the emotions and beliefs of the proletariats to run a business empire masked as a religious society. The references to online poojas, courier prasad, and the lavish, castle-like meditation center where Tapaswiji resides, with pictures of himself hanging on the walls, affirms the point. Tapaswiji is also always seen to reside in big, beautiful, castle-like buildings and is also seen to be giving out words of wisdom standing on elevated platforms, which subtly highlights how he is an upper class in the society who despite never having had to come down to the level of the worker class, gives out advices to them. [18:54] shows the bourgeois Tapaswiji instilling doubt in Jaggu’s mind by saying that Sarfaraz would cheat her, use her for her body, refuse to marry her, and leave her. He, later on, starts instilling hate against Muslims by asking her what have Muslims and Pakistanis ever done other than cheat on others. The capitalist here is defining the borders in society and dividing the society on the basis of their religion and nationality. The capitalists know that as long as the proletariats remain divided, they will not rise against them.

At [22:30], Jaggu asks PK why he is distributing leaflets with images of Hindu deities on them and a contact number. PK tells her that there are some cases of his pending with them and that he couldn’t find them. This points to the question of the existence of God and the supernatural. Just like PK, proletariats seek guidance and solution to their problems from God. But God or his actions are never seen when they are needed the most. Jaggu expresses her desire to take up a story on PK to run on a channel where she works in [25: 20]. Her boss declines her request and narrates how followers of Tapaswiji attacked him for speaking against Tapaswiji. The movie wishes to portray how the bourgeois has successfully made religion an “opium of the common people”. Religion, which is supposed to be a protest of the proletariats against their poor economic backgrounds, are now tools of the bourgeois to exploit and stupify the proletariats.

[27:42] the pandit from a temple where Jaggu meets PK again opens the temple bank on her request. The huge amount of money falling out of the bank shows how the capitalists have been successful in exploiting the poor, robbing them of their hard-earned money. Religion has become the easiest way for the rich to exploit the poor. [28:08] PK says, “I was taking my refund. They took my money but won’t do my job.” - This points to how the bourgeois society has managed to make God and religion a business transaction. The proletariats have been made to believe that offering money makes God happy.

[40:15] shows PK being hit by a tractor. The owner rushes him to the hospital where the doctor says that PK has lost all his memory. The owner now had an option to leave PK behind and leave. But he rather chose to take PK back to his home in the village until the time he fully recovers his memory. The vehicle owner is a true proletariat, a working-class man who toils hard to earn his bread. His culture hasn’t seen a lot of capitalist influence. The humanitarian morals clearly still exist in this village and in the people.

[51:35] PK gets introduced to the concept of Bhagwan or God. PK goes around asking people in Delhi if they have seen his remote control. People, listening to his absurd story and explanation tells him “I don’t know, god might know” or “Only God can help you here” or “I am a human, not god”. This tells us how god is nothing more than a concept created by man and society. PK is new to the planet and is not familiar with the idea of God. When he starts hearing people talk about god, the idea of a god that he gets is that of someone who knows everything, who has an answer to everyone’s problem, and who is kind enough to help anyone and a bunch of other quality that man wishes to see in an ideal human being.

[52:40] PK, who is being introduced to human society, finds it easier to see what religion truly is the way the bourgeois society has modeled it. PK goes to a shop and asks for “a god”. The shopkeeper says that god is available from prices ranging from 20 to 500. Then at [53:52] PK, when he finds that God wouldn’t give him his remote, goes to the shopkeeper asking if God was out of battery or if there is a manufacturing defect. The scene beautifully depicts the capitalist agenda in religion by highlighting the similarities in devotion or prayer and a business transaction or a market purchase. [55:27] shows hundreds of ordinary people waiting in lines with a coconut and some money to meet God and tell him his problems so that he could help them out. And in [56:20] we can see PK asking the pandit from the temple for a receipt for his payment so that he can show it to the person who would deliver the remote control to him.

[58:00] to [1:01:30] shows a series of events where a clearly confused PK takes coconut to a church where he is kicked out from. On realizing that Christians see wine as holy, he saves money to buy wine and takes it to a Masjid where alcohol is not permitted. An angry mob chases PK and he is seen running for his life. The above events show the societal divides that the concept of religion has brought upon humanity. The bourgeois find it important to keep the proletariats divided so that they can be exploited. And for the bourgeois, religion is one of the keys to achieving this division.

[1:02:52] In PK’s words, “After getting beaten up multiple times I got to know that there were multiple gods on this planet. And each god had different rules. Each one of them had opened their own company which the common man called religion. There was a separate manager for each religion as well. And each person on this planet was a part of one of these companies and they followed only the god from that particular company and not the others. Now I did not know which company I belonged to. And to get my remote back, it was very important to know that.” This self-explanatory monologue from the film is an analysis of this society in its own.

[1:17:20] shows a very serious turning point in the movie. PK breaks free of the concept of religion. He breaks the religious beads and decorations he wore on his body. This shows how after a prolonged period of suppression and neglect by the bourgeois, the proletariats would come to their senses and decide to break free from this oppression. PK prepares himself to fight back.

An old man holds PK’s hands at [1:19:27] and asks him for 500 rupees. He says that his wife is in the hospital and is dying and he is short of 500 rupees without which the hospital won’t start treatment. It is later on learnt in [1:21:35] that it was a lie and the amount was used by the man to take his wife to a 5-start restaurant for the first time in her life on the occasion of her birthday. There is a two-fold understanding here. One that money has become the basis of this society where a hospital refuses to treat a dying woman without paying the entire fee. The basis of any society needs to be its labour force and this society, with money as its base, is set to crumble any time. Then comes the fact that the man lies to get money just to take his wife to a fancy restaurant. This shows the illusionary standards of happiness set by the bourgeois and the proletariats struggling to meet those standards and losing their morals in the process.

The movie then goes on to describe how a proletariat Jaggu uses PK, another proletariat to bring down the religious bourgeois empire built by Tapaswiji. [1:44:00] shows how the common man has realised that godmen from all religion are just exploiting them and they start raising their voice against the bourgeois. [1:54:00] shows how the movement by the proletariats has resulted in people questioning Tapaswiji and how his multiple businesses have started to collapse. [2:01:57] an explosion in a train kills PK’s bhaiyya. The scene clearly portrays how the divisions created by the bourgeois themselves is the seed to the destruction of the bourgeois society. The base of the bourgeois society is built on money and power rather than labour and hardwork. The base is weak and it is only a matter of time before the apparently beautiful superstructure of the society would start coming down. PK and Jaggu eventually expose Tapaswiji for who he really is showing that no matter how hard the bourgeois try, when the proletariats would rise against them, they would be defeated, and the ever supreme communist society would bring great times to all the people irrespective of their class.

Sources

Link to movie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-Srp4fkoZU>