

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

“If you’re going to see a movie based on a book you think is worth reading, read the first book. You can never read the book with the same imaginative responsiveness to the author once you have seen the movie” (Kael 165). According to that statement, watching a movie can give some imagination which deals with fiction. In addition, a movie is one of the genres that embodies various elements including those of extrinsic elements in fiction. In *The American Heritage Dictionary*, a movie is described as follows: “A sequence of photographs projected onto a screen with sufficient rapidity as to create the illusion of motion and continuity” (Mifflin 216). There are many kinds of movies which contain the culture in each country and one of them is *My Name Is Khan*. This film is very interesting to discuss because the actors and actresses mostly are Indian but the producer decided to set the plot in America.

The story is about Rizvan Khan an Indian Muslim, who was raised by his mother to look outside of dividing religions and nationalities. He suffers from Asperger’s syndrome. His youth is seen in a flashback, but most of the storylines are unfolded in America, in which adult Rizvan Khan (Shahrukh Khan) is joining his brother, a businessman, in San Francisco. Selling beauty products to a hair salon, she met Mandira (Kajol), a Hindu Indian who had been abandoned by her

husband and had been adapting to live as a single mother with one son, Sam, in America. Then, they were married and lived with Mandira's son. It was made explicit in the second act of the film, which took *My Name is Khan* to the dark theme, which was revealed after the events of 9 / 11. As a Moslem in America, Khan and his family faced racial problems and harassment. When Sam (Khan's son) died, Khan's family has broken and Mandira blames Khan for their dead son because since they were married, their surname changes become Mandira Khan and Sameer Khan and at the time of tragedy 9/11 there are a lot of issues that Moslem people who caused the incident occurred. Then Mandira chases away Khan and requests that Khan must tell to the President that his name is Khan and he is not a terrorist. Khan takes Mandira's request seriously, and he goes from one US state to another with many experiences. Finally, he meets the U.S President. He tells the President that he is Khan and he is not a terrorist and the President announces that Khan and Moslems are not terrorists because Khan has shown to all people in the world about his religion, Islam. This religion is not racist in helping everybody who has different religion.

India is a republic of South Asia occupying the greater part of the Indian subcontinent. It is a land of great diversity. Although its unique civilization has been a unifying factor and the intermixture of its peoples has produced a degree of uniformity, many differences originating in the distant past still exist. Stanley Wolpert argues that:

On the basis of characteristic physical, genetic, cultural and linguistic features, the people of one region can be distinguished from those of another. Northern Indians have similarities that

generally set them off from Southern Indians; likewise, people of the Eastern and western region can be contrasted. In several parts of the country, tribal peoples form separate and distinct elements in the population (Wolpert 866).

On the other hand, America possesses Western culture. America has a culture which is more modern than India. American culture is always changing whereas Indian culture goes slowly compared to America. Because there are no strict rules in American culture, then this condition makes the American people can do whatever they want to do. American people have the tendency to always claim that whatever done by them is the best. Edward C. Stewart and Milton J. Bennet say: "From an early age, American children are encouraged to believe that they themselves are the best judges of what they want and what they should do" (Stewart and Bennet 63). This stereotype can make Americans more advanced or more modern than the other. "Americans are very modern people, of course" (Stewart and Bennet 100).

From the explanation above, it could be concluded that Indian culture is so different from and contrast to the American culture. Therefore, this difference and contrasts could become an interesting phenomenon although the main character (Rizvan Khan) in this movie is an Indian, but he lives and stays in the United States.

In this study the writer deals with the character of Khan as one of the main characters who has an interesting side to discuss. His full name is Rizvan Khan but he is always called Khan by his family. He is a Moslem because he was born in the Moslem family. After marrying Mandira, he decided to stay in the United States. Living in a different culture since he was born in India and decided to stay in

America, he tries to search for his cultural identity. Two different cultures are not easy to be united because there is one culture that becomes a dominant culture and the other become less dominant. In this case a dominant culture seems to be equal with being a colonizer and the less dominant is equal with the colonized.

To analyze Khan's experiences, post colonial theory is used because there are some parts of this film which are more dominant for Khan's life. Khan's experiences, thoughts, beliefs, lifestyle and behavior can be described from a post colonial perspective. With that theory the writer expects to find which culture will give more influence to Khan's life later on. This is why the writer chooses the character Khan as an object of the study and gives the title "The Indian-American Khan's Search for a cultural identity in *My Name is Khan's* Movie" for the thesis.

1.2 Field of the Study

Film studies with the form on literary and cultural aspect, namely search for a cultural identity is the field of study.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The paper will only be focused on one of the main characters, Khan and his experiences that have a connection with his struggle as a Moslem Indian living in the United States. In this study, his experiences will be analyzed by using post colonial theory.

1.4 Problem Formulation

The problem formulations of this study are formulated as follows:

1. Why does Khan search for his cultural identity?
2. How does the Post Colonial theory explain what Khan actually experiences?

1.5 Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explain the reason why Khan search his cultural identity.
2. To explain what Khan's experiences from a Post Colonial theory.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study can give different view points to readers about the dominant culture which happens between India and America. Besides that, this paper can also give a chance for scholars such as students of Faculty of Letters to analyze this movie using Post-Colonialism approach.

1.7 Definition of Terms

There are some terms throughout the study which must be known firstly to understand more about the issues that will be discussed in this paper, such as:

- a. **Cultural identity** is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation (Hall 392).
- b. **The Orient** is an integral part of European material civilization and culture (Said 2).
- c. **Colonialism** is the organization of the domination of a nation after military conquest (Fanon 81).
- d. **Races:** biological subdivisions of our species that share a cluster of genetic traits that distinguish them from other such human groups (Crapo 86).
- e. **Stereotype:** a fixed, commonly held notion or image of a person or group, based on an oversimplification of some observed or imagined trait of behavior or appearances (Bamber 561).
- f. **Hybridity:** the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonisation (Aschroft, Gareth, and Helen 118)

g. **Differences:** differentiations between colonizer and colonized which poses an immanent threat to both normalized knowledges and disciplinary powers. (Bhabha 86)

h. **Asperger's syndrome:** a pervasive development disorder that is characterized by an inability to understand how to interact socially. (Definition of Asperger Syndrome, par.2)

