

## ISLAM'S RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION IN "MY NAME IS KHAN" MOVIE

Rais Syahrul Akbar<sup>1</sup> R. Myrna Nur Sakinah<sup>2</sup>

State Islamic University Sunan Gunung Djati<sup>1</sup> Al-Ghifari University<sup>2</sup>

raissakbar@gmail.com<sup>1</sup> myrnaasakinah@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The research used a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. The data were obtained by selecting scenes in the "My Name Is Khan" movie, an Indian drama movie. The movie brought up the tragedy of World Trade Centre bombing in 9/11, and argues that America has already been destroyed even long before somebody literary blew up the country. On this film, there are elements related to racism in Islamic society in America. Social and cultural problems that lead to discrimination against Muslim minority communities. In this movie, there are some symbols that give rise to the meaning and multiple interpretations. Khan's main theme of the poem is to spread the message that the terrorists aren't supposedly to be Muslim. Based on this film's analysis results, there are several issues such as 11 September 2001, cultural identity, discrimination, Islamophobia, gender issues and radicalism.

**Keywords :** *Islamophobia, Racism, and Social Discrimination*

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif dengan pendekatan kualitatif menggunakan analisis semiotik tanda Pierce. Data diperoleh melalui pemilihan adegan di film "My Name Is Khan" yang merupakan film drama dari India. Film ini mengangkat peristiwa pengeboman gedung WTC pada 9 September 2011 silam di Amerika Dalam film ini terdapat unsur-unsur yang berkaitan dengan rasisme dalam masyarakat islam di Bangladesh. Terdapat juga permasalahan sosial dan budaya sehingga menimbulkan diskriminasi terhadap masyarakat minoritas muslim. Dalam film ini terdapat beberapa simbol yang menimbulkan makna dan multitafsir. Film Khan pada akhirnya berusaha menyampaikan pesan bahwa menurutnya, teroris bukanlah kaum muslim yang dituduh sebagai pelaku peledakkan gedung WTC. Berdasarkan hasil analisis dalam film ini terdapat beberapa isu seperti 11 september 2001, identitas budaya, diskriminasi, islamofobia, isu gender dan radikalisme.

**Kata Kunci :** *Islamofobia, Rasisme, dan, Diskriminasi Sosial*

### INTRODUCTION

Movie is one of a literary work that combines audio and visuals that support the achievement of meaning for the audience. The most popular form of appreciation of

literary works today is movie because literary works can now be audio visual, and readers do not have too much difficulty interpreting movies. People are more enjoy

watch movie than another literary works. Movie delivered in visual and verbal language are no different from literary works in general, that is reflecting social reality. In terms of visual characteristics, movie also have other elements such as narrative, figurative language, and cinematic language. Unlike other literary works, films are not easy to learn because printed pages cannot analyse them. After all, a film is very dependent on visuals and other nonverbal elements that are not easily expressed in writing (Boggs & Petrie, 2008).

One example of literary work is *My Name Is Khan* movie, an Indian/Bollywood movie. The film was directed by Karan Johar and written by Shibani Bathija and Niranjan Iyengar. The main cast in this movie, Khan, was honoured at the San Francisco Film festival for his role in the film, seven years after the release of *My Name Is Khan*. The movie also won many awards.

This movie is mostly shot in America and tells the story of Khan, who originally came from India. Rizwan Khan is an autistic Muslim who grew up with his brother Zakir and his mother in a middle-class family in, Mumbai, India. Zakir leaves his family for a life in San Francisco after graduate from high school. After their mother's death, Zakir sponsors Rizwan to come and live with him. Zakir's wife Haseena diagnoses Rizwan as having Asperger's syndrome. Rizwan begins to work for his brother's company, and meets a Hindu woman Mandira Rathore and her young son Sameer "Sam" Rathore, that was born from a previous marriage. Despite Zakir's uncertainty, they marry and live in the fictional locality of Banville, where Mandira and Sam surname themselves with "Khan." They also live next door to the Garrick family, comprising Mark and his wife. Sam is close to their young son Reese.

The Khan's perfect existence gets disrupted after the September 11 attacks. Mark goes to cover the war in

Afghanistan and dies there. The Khan family begins to experience post 9–11 prejudice and Reese begins to turn against Sam, who finds himself in a racist fight against older students. Reese tries to stop them beating Sam, but he is held back and forced to watch his friend being beaten to death. Shocked beyond belief, Mandira blames Rizwan, stating that Sam "died only because of his surname." She then declares an unofficial divorce, sarcastically saying that to be back together, he has to tell the people and President of the United States that his name is Khan and he is not a terrorist. Rizwan, being naïve, takes Mandira's jibe to heart and thus sets out on a road trip to first meet President George W. Bush and later President-elect Barack Obama.

In *My Name Is Khan* movie, an American commercial airplane crashes into the world trade center (WTC) in New York, United States, on September 11, 2001. This incident caused thousands of people to die and made America and London angry because the WTC was a symbol of the United States' economic supremacy. In (Suwardi, 2001) as a superpower, and after the collapse of the Soviet Union as a rival country, the United States became the only power that led the world. The George W. Bush administration greeted the anger of the American people. The President of the United States declares war on terrorists, including those behind terrorists. The President promised his people that his government would immediately crush terrorism. Bush has accused Osama bin Laden, born in Saudi Arabia, who was expelled from his country, of being a terrorist. After the events of September 11, 2001, There were so many discriminations against Muslims.

In "*My Name Is Khan*" movie, there are many scenes that show racism and discrimination to Muslim. According to Cox, racism originates in "a practical exploitative relationship"; racism is used to justify the exploitation of one group by

another. Cox links this to the development of capitalism (Cox, 1948). Furthermore, Discrimination is an act or negative treatment towards certain groups. This is due to a difference in a group or race, such as language, customs, religion, and nationality. Through this movie, so many aspects can be analyzed by using discrimination and racism issues.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research focuses on the representation of racism and discrimination to Muslim in the *My Name Is Khan*, taken from a cut of a picture or scene. According to (Meleong, 2007) qualitative research produces descriptive data where available data is obtained through written or spoken words from people and their behavior. Then, the results of the data are collected.

In this study, qualitative methods were used to describe which parts or scenes that show racism and discrimination to Muslim in *My Name Is Khan* movie. By using qualitative descriptive methods, researchers collect data, make analyzes, find results and make conclusions.

This research will dig a little bit deeper to the history of why Muslim are discriminated in The United States, which contains pretty much about: Racism and Social Discrimination. The director that positioned himself on Muslim side makes this a priority in order to learn about his movie.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

*My Name Is Khan's* movie showed icons, indexes, and symbols based on issues and events that occur in the film, such as incident 11 September, cultural identity, racism, discrimination, islamophobia, radicalism and islamic symbol. The collapse of the World Trade Center (WTC) building on September 11, 2001, was the culmination

of a dispute between Muslims and non-Muslims, all claims and blasphemies by the government non-Muslim communities justifying Islam as a terrorist state. Even the government instructs war as a form of hatred against Islam, which causes tensions to continue, such as tensions from a political, social, and economic perspective.

In the *My Name Is Khan* Movie, there was a scene about September 11, 2001. That scene became a main conflict on the movie. All the conflicts of the movie are caused from that incident. Here is a scene about September 11, 2001, in the film *My Name Is Khan*.

(01:03:51 – 01:04:25)



The scene tells about the attack on the twin tower, World Trade Center (WTC) in New York, which resulted in thousands of deaths. In the scene, there is also a sign consisting of icons, index, and symbols. The icon from the image above is the burning of the WTC building. Smoke as a sign of the burning of the WTC building in New York, which caused thousands of victims to die worldwide. The Destruction of the WTC building as a sign of war and hatred against Muslims.

According to (Taufikurrahman, 2019) the tragedy of 11 September 2011 is the starting point for the emergence of different West perceptions against Islam; Muslims are considered ruthless terrorists. This foundation of thinking creates fear and hatred against Muslims by removing Muslims from economic, social, and public life. Even after these events, many tragedies arise in response to Muslims.

In a modern society where globalization is deepening, continued

contact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds will lead to thinking about cultural identity. Cultural identity is the foundation of national identity. Social identity theory focuses on the relationship between cultural identity and self-esteem. A secure national identity greatly increases the level of individual self-esteem. Cultural adaptation theory emphasizes the development of cultural identities, such as integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization.

In general, the greater the difference between the two cultures, the more difficulty adapting to individual cultures will be. As told in the movie, Khan is a man who comes from a village in India, has brown skin and he is a Muslim. This is a stark contrast to America's indigenous people, so that often there is discrimination because of these cultural and racial differences. In this film, it is told that *My Name Is Khan* is a multicultural area because many residents have differences in race, culture, and religion with indigenous people. Below is a scene about the cultural identity in the film *My Name Is Khan*.

(00:05:05 – 00:08:00)



The scene tells when Rizvan Khan is in the Airport in the United States. He wants to go to Washington D.C to meet the President. But, people nearby him feel uncomfortable because they realize that Rizvan Khan is a Muslim. It is because Rizvan is doing 'dzikir'. Then the Airport officer realize also that Rizvan Khan is a Muslim. It makes him have to interrogated to make sure that Rizvan Khan is not a terrorist. Of course, this is one of the discrimination behaviors to Muslim.

The scene tells that there are differences in race and color between indigenous people and Rizvan, a minority originating from India. In the scene, there is also a sign consisting of icons, index, and symbols. In the picture above is a sign that Rizvan Khan feels different from the natives because of their different races and skins. Skin color in the image above as a marker of social identity differences. According to (Hidayat, 2014) social identity includes gender identity, namely social identity, which refers to how certain cultures differentiate feminine and masculine social roles.

Relates to personal and other images expected of a man and a woman. Culture influences the beauty of gender and how things are displayed across cultures. Furthermore, age identity, namely social identity, occurs based on age groupings— racial and ethnic identity, built because of certain racial and ethnic factors. Religious identity is built because of religious factors. Class identity is built because it takes into account social class, which can encourage socio-cultural construction. Meanwhile, individual identity or personal identity consists of characteristics that make a person different from other people in the group.

Identity is an abstract thing, a multi-faceted concept that plays an important role in intercultural interactions. The birth of globalization, intercultural marriages, and immigration patterns add to cultural identity complexity. Identity is a complex and dynamic abstract concept. Therefore, identity cannot be interpreted, so there are many pictures provided by communication scientists. Identity is the definition of a person as a separate and distinct individual, including behavior, beliefs, and attitudes.

Identity is a key element of subjective reality, which relates dialectically to society. Identity is formed by social processes that are determined by social structures. Then the identity is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social

relations. On the other hand, the identities generated by the interaction between organisms, individual consciousness, and social structures react with the given structures, maintain, modify, or even reshape them.

( 00:11:45 – 00:12:00 )



Besides the discrimination in America, in India, Muslim had been violated by the majority of the citizen, Hindustan. According to the movie, in 1983, there was a conflict between Hindu and Muslim people. But, most of the victim in this tragedy are Muslim. This accident was called 'Hindu-Muslim Riots 1983'. It happened when Rizvan Khan was child. He heard his neighbors which is Muslim talking with anger about the tragedy. They said that many numbers of Muslim were killed, even women. It shows when Muslim become a minority, they will be victim of racism and discrimination.

Another example of Discrimination in the *My Name Is Khan* movie is a scene after the September 11 incident, where local/indigenous people insult and expel Muslims from their places of residence because they consider Muslims to be terrorists. Below is another example of the discrimination in the *My Name Is Khan* movie.

( 00.53.00 - 00.54.00 )



When Khan visited a Motel, that place suddenly attacked by people who driving a car. They broke the glass of the Motel. The owner of the Motel was angry and try to attack back the attacker. He held a gun and shot them, but they could easily escape. In this scene, there are two discrimination behavior. First, the attacker who attack the Motel. Second, the owner of the Motel itself. After the incident, with anger feeling, he said loudly that the 9/11 tragedy was caused by Muslim people. He clearly said that Muslim are the terrorist, because of them he also became a victim of discrimination because other people thought that he is a Muslim too. Even he said he will put a board 'Muslim is not allowed to come' to his Motel.

According to (Nasir, 2019) the Muslim community in many countries after the September 9 incident experienced a lot of discrimination, including the feeling of being accused of being an intolerant group and agreeing with acts of terrorism. The phenomenon of terrorism, which is used as the basis for the debate, is an empirical reality in the mass media. The discussion that develops around describing this phenomenon can be seen in terms of conceptual (cognitive) and practical actions. Besides discrimination, there is another term that came out specifically to express the hatred and scare to Muslim, that is Islamophobia.

Islamophobia is a new term from a word or phrase that refers to prejudice or discrimination against Islam or Muslims. The term Islamophobia has been known since the 1980s but has become a term that is often used, especially after September 11, 2001. The tragedy was the starting point for the emergence of different perceptions in western circles about Islam; Muslims are considered ruthless terrorists. This creates fear and hatred towards Muslims by marginalizing Muslims from economic, social, and public life. Even after this incident, there have been many tragedies that have emerged in response to Muslims.

The fear of unfounded hatred towards Islam is motivated by the view that people from other ethnicities (religions) will be seen as different because of their physical characteristics, the language used, and the actions that are expressions of their culture. In the relationship between ethnic groups, knowledge about other ethnicities will be based on stereotypes or knowledge that their existence is believed to be. Still, objectively it is not necessarily true that they are used as references in dealing with those belonging to other ethnic groups (other religions). These stereotypes and prejudices are one of the main factors that limit or separate two or more ethnic groups (religions) who live simultaneously in an administrative area.

Islamophobia has a significant impact on Muslims in America; even Islam is considered false teaching, a teaching that deviates from the Shari'a, which produces a human being. The impact of this perception is very detrimental to many people. This gap also occurs in religious discussion forums. 9/11 was a series of attacks by terrorists against the symbol of American power, namely the world trade center or twin towers and the Pentagon's symbol of military power using America airlines. While one other target, namely the white house, was missed because the plane used to destroy it fell before reaching its destination

According to (Taufikurrahman, 2019) Since the incident collapsed the World Trade Center (WTC) building and damaged the pentagon building on Tuesday 11 September 2001 in New York and Washington DC, the US, at the same time, Muslims faced even more serious problems. They face discrimination from some non-Muslim residents in the US because Islam is identified with terrorism.

Based on the data that has been researched, there are hundreds of incidents, ranging from humiliation, harassment, criminal acts to the murder of people who have Islamic characteristics. This directly or indirectly affects the attitudes and views of

the non-Muslim community towards the Muslims there. It also affects the ongoing social integration process. Below is a scene where Islamophobia occurs in the *My Name Is Khan* movie.

( 01: 06: 00 )



When Khan and Mandira pray for the victims of the 9/11 tragedy with many people, Khan pray in Arabic which is Al-Fatihah Surah. Certainly, every people around him who heard him praying feel uncomfortable and move away from him. It indicates that after 9/11 tragedy, every people have Islamophobia.

Furthermore, there is another one issue that appear in this movie, that is Gender issue or discrimination to Muslim women. Gender prejudice is defined as a negative or positive attitude that comes from stereotypes about men and women that make people of a certain gender unequal and impact discriminatory behavior against them. According to Nelson (Siregar & Rochani, 2010) prejudice and stereotypes against women come from many sources. One of them is through social learning. Social learning theory explains that children are taught how to be a man and a woman in society from a very young age. Since the beginning, boys and girls have experienced different socialization.

For example, men are expected to be more active, violent, and aggressive. They are also praised when they act according to these expectations. On the other hand, women were punished or reprimanded for being too aggressive and praised for being polite and submissive. Consequently, men and women grow up manifesting different behaviors. According to social learning

theory, the socialization of psychological characteristics and behaviors that are considered appropriate based on gender is related to gender stereotypes and prejudices in children.

Gender issues become an interesting phenomenon because the target of prejudice is that there are more women than men. Even though the number is far greater than that of men, various cultures still treat women as a minority group in reality. They are separated from economic and political power, are subject to negative stereotypes, and experience discrimination in various life areas, such as the world of work, higher education, and government.

According to (Hasanah, 2016) gender discrimination is sex discrimination. Basically, gender discrimination is any distinction, denial, or limitation that is always attached by society in general to gender reasons, resulting in rejection of violations of their human rights to equality of men and women in all aspects of life.

Below is a scene where there is a gender issue in the *My Name Is Khan* movie.

(01:09:16)



Hasina, Zakir's wife, has a bad experience after 9/11 tragedy. Someone pulls her veil and push her until she fall down. This incident makes Zakir ask Hasina to take off her veil until the condition in America better. He said that Allah will understand and people could not. In the next day, Hasina do not wear the hijab anymore, because she and her husband think that their safety must be considered. The case like that oftentimes happen in real life. In some country, even the Government makes a rule

that women are not allowed to wear veil or hijab.

Radicalism is a movement that is related to or caused by other facts. In the view of the social facts, three assumptions underlie the whole way of thinking: there is regularity, or there is a social order (social order), there are changes at once, and there are no facts that stand-alone unless there are facts of the cause. The roots of radicalism can be traced from several causes: first, there is political pressure from the authorities against its existence.

According to (Abdullah, 2016) there are at least two major problems that concern this group. First, they reject Western society's secularism, which separates religion and politics, churches and mosques from the State. The West's success in secularizing is considered something dangerous because it can threaten Islam as a religion that deals with the afterlife and worldly matters.

Second, many Muslims want their society to be governed according to the Koran and Islamic syari'at as state regulations. Therefore, today it is not surprising that underground movements have emerged that aspire to build an Islamic caliphate by carrying out the themes of God's sovereignty, jihad, Islamic revolution, social justice, and so on. These themes are oriented towards the past, especially the early generations of Islam as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Because they consider that today's Muslim community is experiencing a setback because they no longer carry out their religious teachings purely. Therefore, the agenda above must be done to fight Western hegemony while imagining past romanticism so that Islam's glory can be created in this modern era.

The emergence of political issues regarding Islamic radicalism is a new challenge for Muslims to answer. The issue of Islamic radicalism has actually long been on the surface of international discourse.

Islamic radicalism as a historical-sociological phenomenon is a problem that is widely discussed in political discourse and global civilization due to the media's power, which has great potential in creating perceptions of the world community. There are many labels given by Western Europeans and the United States to refer to this radical Islamic movement, ranging from the designation of hardline groups, extremists, militants, right Islam, fundamentalism, to terrorism. Below is a scene of radicalism in the *My Name Is Khan* movie.



The scene shows when Khan went to Mosque, there are a group of people in the Mosque that discuss about something. Khan was listening to them, and he realized that they talk about something radical. The one who influences the is Dr. Faisal Rahman. He talked that Muslim must doing Jihad and revenge the Non-Muslim who have been discriminated them. Of course, Khan was not agreed with him, because there are no lesson or doctrine about that in Islam. Even Khan said that Dr. Faisal is a Satan.

The development of Islamic radicalism is getting stronger after the WTC tragedy on September 11, 2001. The paradigm of radicalism continues to be developed into terrorism to destroy Islam, which has been claimed to be a serious threat to them.

The issue of terrorism accused by the US and its allies is getting tighter after the ISIS group openly opposes them, so that the human tragedy on the grounds of fundamentalism, terrorism, or radicalism is increasingly global, especially in the Islamic

world such as in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Palestine, Somalia and so on.

According to (Abdullah, 2016) fundamentalist Islam's characteristics are: first, spiritualism, which is a literal belief in the holy book, which is the word of God and is considered to contain no errors. Second, rejection of hermeneutics. In this group's view, the texts of the Al-Qur'an must be understood literally as they sound or are written. The reason is incapable of providing a correct interpretation of texts, even against texts that contradict one another. Third, rejection of pluralism and relativism, which are considered to undermine the sanctity of the text. Fourth, the rejection of sociological historical developments considered to have taken humans further away from the literal doctrine of scripture. Fifth, the monopoly of truth on religious interpretation. Radical fundamentalists tend to think of themselves as the most legitimate and legitimate interpreters, so they tend to look misguidedly to other groups who are not unfriendly.

Islam has never justified using violence in spreading religion, religious understanding, and political understanding. However, it cannot be denied that certain Islamic groups used violence to achieve political goals or maintain their religious understanding rigidly in a language in the course of its history. Global civilization is often called Islamic radicalism.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that

1. Whereas in the "*My Name Is Khan*" movie there are scenes that contain elements related to racism in Islamic society in India and America.
2. There are also social and cultural problems that lead to discrimination against muslim minority



- communities in India and America, but mostly it occurred in America.
3. While recalling the events, at last, Khan's main theme of the poem is to spread the message that the terrorists aren't supposedly to be Muslim, or the accused Osama Bin Laden, instead, he says that terrorists are those who stay in power, who lives superior towards others, who destroy humanities by their selfishness, those who create the law, not the ones breaking them.
  4. Based on the analysis results in this film, there are several issues such as 11 September 2001, cultural identity, discrimination, Islamophobia, gender issues and radicalism

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