

Amna Riaz* Sarah Umer**

**A Visual Library on The Contribution of Sultan Rahi
In Punjabi Film Industry**

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to recognize the contribution of a commendable Pakistani artist, who from a simple stunt man became the Sultan of the Lollywood industry and how and why he ruled the cinema of Pakistan for several decades. Thus, this visual study begins from his initial struggle and hard work in the industry, which later contributed to shape a culture in the Punjabi film industry (Gundasa Culture) within a short span of 40 years from 1956 to 1996. For this purpose, a visual library of this legend has been created through a series entitled "Lasting Impressions", which not only describes this legend's struggling journey in the film industry but also narrates his glory, for his name is listed in the Genies book of world records for acting in 800 films and winning 160 awards for his spectacular performance.

Keywords: *Gundasa culture; Lasting Impressions; Pakistani artist; Punjabi film industry; Sultan.*

1. Introduction

On the base of three reasons Cinema of Pakistan claims to differentiate itself; the number of songs sung by Madam Noor Jehan, the number of stories credited to writer Nasir Adib, and the number of movies in which Sultan Rahi performed. Throughout his 28 years elongated career circle, he performed in over 800 movies. He acted in almost 100 Urdu films, but his top-grossing films were all in Punjabi Language (Dunya EDU, 2015). He monopolized the Punjabi film with his fellow cohorts Anjuman and Mustafa Qureshi, who performed in approximately 80% of the Punjabi films, which were produced during that time. Rahi's life is an example of light for people, who belong to any walk of life as well as in the film fraternity, as is evident from the time-honored fact that one can always carve a way out with hard work (Zahid, 2012).

Rahi was born in Uttar Pradesh in an Arian tribe during the British Raj. After the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, he moved to Gujranwala Pakistan (Malik, 2015). He belonged to a Christian family and the name of his father was Michael. Although his father was extremely strict about his education, but Rahi was not concerned about studies. He said in an interview that "since childhood there was a secret hidden actor in him, so right from the school days he used to act during his normal life too" (Motion Picture of Archive of Pakistan, 2018).

When he was in his twenties, he changed his name from Sultan Michael Rahi to Sultan Rahi, though after he accepted Islam, the public identified him as Sultan Rahi (Wgill, 2013). Rahi started his career at the age of 17 by pushing the camera trolley (Raza, 2011). He commenced his movie walk of life in 1956 from film *Baghi* in which he acted as an extra actor and struggled for many following years (see Figure 1) (Zahid, 2012).

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Figure 1 Poster of film *Baghi*, (1956)
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0255821/>

He began his career as a stage actor in the early sixties and then entered films as a stunt actor with only a few supporting roles. While in the late 1960's he got some specific momentous roles as a supporting actor, villain, and character actor. But he kept on working hard without getting upset for a single moment (Saqib, 2017). He used to appear in extremely limited acts and was hardly noticed. He acted as a servant of a landholder in a Punjabi film '*Chacha Jee*' directed by a famous and talented director Waheed Dar in 1967, while he also played the role of the father of a hero in the same year. In 1968 he acted as a villain in film *Badla* directed by Haider Choudhry and his dialogue delivery was on high pitch. *Zindagi Ka Maley* was his first film as a hero in 1972, which was commercially supported by Hameed Choudhry. The turning point of his career also came in 1972, when his super hit film *Basheera* was released.

Rahi evolved into as an action icon of Punjabi film fans in 1975. *Maula Jatt* was his biggest launch in the year 1979 (see Figure 2).



Figure 2 *Maula Jatt*
<http://thehotspotcafe.net/blog/index.php/2017/02/02/maula-jat-1979/>

Maula Jatt is a film that still lives in the minds and hearts of Pakistani film viewers. Throughout the 1980s, when Punjabi films were dominating Pakistani cinema, there was no bigger female star in the firmament than Anjuman, along with leading men like Rahi and Mustafa. Rahi was the film world's sultan; his mark was an assurance of any film's success (Motion Picture of Archive of Pakistan, 2018). Rahi is legend in the film industry, while his two films *Maula Jatt* and *Sher Khan* celebrated diamond jubilees in Karachi in their second runs (Pakistan Film Magazine, 2006). Therefore, legends of such caliber should be remembered, as part of cultural history for keeping them alive for future generations.

2. Research Methodology

In this study both primary and secondary research methodologies and practices in the field of fine arts were used. The research was carried out with the help of literature based on similar artworks worldwide. The researchers used both quantitative and qualitative methodology for this research. However, the mode of execution of this research is based on descriptive design and visuals. The purpose of descriptive case studies is to examine the sequence of interpersonal events after a certain amount of time has passed. Therefore, to complete this research for assistance different websites, blogs, and newspaper articles were consulted for reference. The researchers viewed the films again and again to identify and comprehend dialogues, scenes, and its context. The reason why this topic was selected is that no research has ever been conducted on this icon in visual form. So, this study will focus towards creating a visual documentation of his work, struggle, and success till his sudden demise. Rahi ruled

the Cinema of Pakistan for several decades. The created visuals fall under a series entitled, “Lasting Impressions”. After exploring several techniques, finally, Pop Art was selected to pay tribute to this artist’s legendary work. The purpose behind choosing Pop Art was that the use of bold colors and this technique was the demand of this subject that helped to interpret and capture Rahi’s loud and bold expressions in the movies especially his signature style of *Gundasa* (see Figure 3).



Figure 3 Poster of *Gundasa Culture* (1979) <http://www.pakshowbiz.com>

3. Discussion - Chronological History and Artworks of Sultan Rahi

3.1 From 1955 to 1966

The cinema industry of Pakistan had to rebuild itself after the partition of the Sub-Continent in 1947 and is known by the name *Lollywood*. After partition during the initial years Pakistani cinema struggled to find its way mainly because there was a lack of modern technology, specialists, and prepared on- screen characters (Imran, 2019).

However, in 1947 a film was shot in Lahore film studio, as after Bombay Lahore was considered as one of the most significant cultural centers in the Sub-Continent (Bilal, 2017). Hundreds of popular films were made every year by the Lahore-based film industry (Motion Pictures Archive of Pakistan, 2018). Sultan Rahi surrounded by his hidden desire of the army and acting had moved to Lahore to follow his desire. He came to Lahore with one pair of dress and big army boots with lots of dreams and high spirit. Rahi started his movie vocation by pushing the camera trolley (see Figure 4).

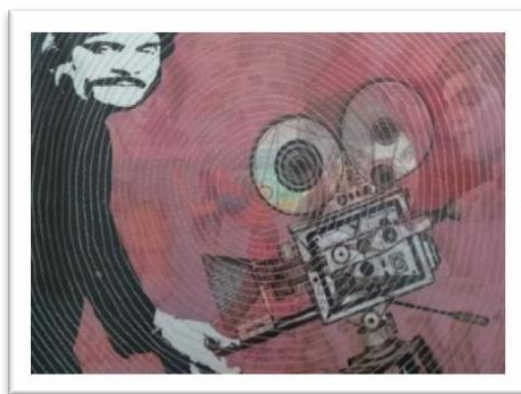


Figure 4 *Untitled 1* (Series of Lasting Impressions)

During his initial audition meetings with filmmaker, he was often asked a question which made him very irritated. The question was “*why do you want to become an actor and did not join some other profession*”? Rather than replying to the question, he would inquire the interviewer “*why did you become a journalist and did not join some other profession*”? He started his career as a stage actor during the early sixties, and then joined films as a fighter actor. During his struggling period, he met Qavi Khan and music executive Kamal Ahmed, who were also struggling to get some space in the film industry. Rahi and Kamal Ahmed became close friends and collectively started visiting different film directors for a chance at acting. On the reference of Qavi Khan, Rahi was able to get a small role in a stage drama *Shabnam Roti Hai*.

In 1956 he did another stage drama *Nadira Shah Durrani* and debuted in film *Baghi* as a guest actor (see Figure 5). He played a motionless and silent role, as was the demand of the film. When Allaudin forced

Yasmin to dance on the song “*Mout ko dil de do sada dil*” (Meaning give heart to death our heart) in front of the villagers, Rahi was standing amongst the crowd (Saqib, 2017).



Figure 5 Untitled 2 (Series of Lasting Impression)

Finally, in 1960, he delivered some dialogues in film *Saheli* directed by *S. M. Yousaf*, which was done under the banner of F and Y Movies. Rahi, while addressing the judge said,

“Your honor I first want to ask you and everyone present in the court room that what would each one of you must have done, had you all been in my position.”

He delivered these dialogs sensibly and thus this first performance of his gave him self-confidence that helped him to obtain other minor roles in films like *Gulfam*, *Qaidi*, *Ajnabi*, *Aulad*, *Maa Ka Piyar* and *BaghiSepahi*. However, he still struggled for a few years, as he was playing only supporting roles. His growth as an actor was slow but steady (Ibid).

In the year 1966, Rahi succeeded in obtaining a small role in Hamayun Mirza’s film *Aag Ka Dariya*. Rahi fascinated Mirza with his skill of acting in this film and thus Mirza promised him a significant role in his next film *Daku Ki Larki*. At this point in his career Rahi was simultaneously acting in stage dramas too, but finally decided to concentrate on movies, as he was now getting more supporting roles.

3.2 From 1967 to 1977

In 1967, while performing in a film ‘*Chachajee*’ which was directed by a very renowned film director Waheed Dar, he was not only able to mesmerize the audience but attracted the attention of other film executives. In this film he acted, as a servant of a landholder, who disguised as the landlord to save the landlord from rivals and in the process was killed by those, who had come to murder the landlord. Although, this sequence was brief but was beautifully written and filmed. His performance in this sequence was so extraordinary that he was well noticed, and this appearance is considered as the turning point of his acting career. In 1968 he finally got a chance to act a side villain role in Punjabi film *Jumma Janj Nal* (see Figure 6) (Motion Picture of Archive of Pakistan, 2018).



Figure 6 Untitled 3 (Series of Lasting Impression)

After performing as a side villain in film *Jumma Janj Nal*, in 1968 he appeared as a conservative villain in Haider Choudhry's film *Badla*. After the release of *Badla*, his dialogue delivery at remarkably high pitch, face expressions, and body movements proved him as a probable villain. At this point no one could imagine that this villain will reach every male actor on-screen, as no existing or new villain was able to give the same impression on the silver screen that he gave film after film. He had an unbelievable screen presence. After the release of *Badla* most filmmaker started to engage him in their films as a villain. As a villain, some of his popular films are *Ik Si Maa*, *Janab -e- Aali*, *Anwara*, *Att Khuda Da Veir*, *Duniya Matlab Di*, *Khan Chacha*, *Thah*, etc. The outrage and animosity he depicted on the silver screen was inimitable, as in specific arrangements, he looked and seemed like a spring of gushing lava. He achieved great success from film *Babul* in 1971, which was based on an emotional storyline and for the first-time acknowledged Rahi as an actor too (see Figure 7) (Ibid).

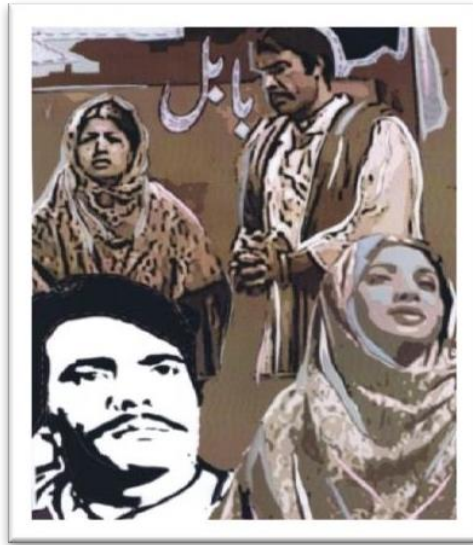


Figure 7 Untitled 4 (Series of Lasting Impressions)

Aslam Dar, who had begun his movie profession as cameraman was also trying to establish his credibility as a cinematographer, while looking from the camera lens. He was recommended by distributors to make an action film, thus in *Mr. 303*, Rahi performed the role of the heroin's brother (Ibid). It took Rahi sixteen years to transform from an extra to a contender after the release of Aslam Dar's film *Basheera* in the year 1972. It was a Diamond Jubilee achievement film for not only the Punjabi film industry but a passage to elevated filmdom for Rahi from where he became more famous each day till the day he died. In short Rahi's genuine story began after the success of this film. This film is also commonly identified as a film that kick-started the Gundas trend (Ibid). Moreover, this film also laid the foundation of blood shed films that continued for almost two decades (see Figure 8). After the release of film *Basheera* Rahi became a grantee of success for any film (IMDb, 2018).



Figure 8 Untitled 5 (Series of Lasting Impressions)

3.2.1 The Growth of the Popular Violence

During the early 1970's Pakistani cinema was the world's fourth biggest maker of feature films, and Lollywood touched the heights of the sky, as films of this era attracted large viewers (Motion Picture of Archive of Pakistan, 2019). The trends and themes of this era's films were in continuation of the 1960's theme of family and social dramas. Women were also depicted in similar roles like toys of joy at the hands of men, while the men were depicted as revengeful heroes with leading roles (Daudpoto, 2018). Family melodramas and sentimental love triangles were in trend until the late 1970s during the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq. When his government took absolute control of the media in a campaign to Islamize the country, the film industry received an irreparable blow. This was the period when the administration forcefully shut most of the cinemas in Lahore. Pakistani films before the 1970s were famous worldwide popular for their family-friendly love stories portraying high virtues. In 1973 famous movie director and author Nasir Abid directed his first film *Wehshi Jatt*, which was inspired by an Urdu play "Gundasa" written by Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, in which he displayed how to protect oneself against attack from a group of people with the help of a daang (staff). It was an epic film of its time and it was released in 1975. After the release of this film, violence became a trend, creating a brave man genre portrayed by Rahi, cutting men over in the name of honor, thus impersonating the character of Robin Hood (see Figure 9) (Kapadia, 2015).

The name of Rahi in this film is *Maula Jatt*, he is the youngest of the Jatt clan, and is only interested in the finer things of life and wrestling. When his father is killed by Ranga of the Malik clan, Maula (Rahi) swears revenge at all costs. One famous dialogue delivered by Rahi in the film is, "*The murders will start only now, I will murder even those who are yet to be born and who will become our enemies.*" (Kapadia, 2017).

Moreover, in *Wehshi Jatt*, when a woman dynamically rejects the immorality of the hero, he slaps her so hard that she rolls and falls, then turns and unexpectedly thanks him for breaking her arrogance and kindly admitting her endless love for him. On another occasion, our heroine falls in love with the *Jatt* without even meeting him not because she hears he is a (honest), but because he slashes a bunch of villagers, stabbing one to death (Motion Picture Archive of Pakistan, 2019).



Figure 9 Untitled 6 (Series Lasting Impressions)

This film was a turning point for Rahi in Punjabi films, as it carved out a new subject matter which has continued to gain popularity over the years and was a force to be reckoned with, as the new millennium began. *Wehshi Jatt* is the film that began the legend of *Maula Jatt* and is thus one of the most powerful films ever produced in the history of Lollywood. Through this film Rahi became the Pakistani action icon imitating Chuck Norris, Bruce Lee, Sylvester Stallone, or James Bond all rolled into one with a Punjabi touch (Kapadia, 2015).

This character of his became so popular among the audience that for the rest of his life Rahi kept on circling around it, thus giving birth to the Gundasa culture (Malik, 2018). It was this culture that symbolized the people of Punjab, as brutal, savage and bloodthirsty (Cineplot.com, 2009). Rahi's fame started from this period onwards and reached its zenith in the 80s when his face was noticeable on nearly every movie poster in nearly every town. Rahi also made quite an impression in director M. A. Rasheed's mainstream Urdu film, '*Rastay Ka Pathar*' in the year 1976 with fellow artists Waheed Murad and Nisho (Motion Pictures Archive of Pakistan, 2018).

After the repetitive disappointment of Urdu films, film director Aslam Pervaiz made an action Punjabi film. He expressed the idea of *Basheera* in the film *Khan Chacha* and thus this film was well received by the public (Swamiji, 2017).

In 1976 *Andata* was one of his famous film, which was directed by Iqbal Yusuf. It was Lollywood's action-packed retro-chic version of God father (see Figure 10). The film starred actors like Sudhir, Rahi, Mumtaz and Mustafa Qureshi (MultaniGuy, 2018).



Figure 10 *Untitled 7* (Series of

Lasting Impressions)

3.3 From 1977 to 1987

During this period, although Punjabi cinema was dominating the market, but the rest of cinema industry faced many hurdles. The foremost hurdle amongst all was when General Zia ul Haq took over the country in 1979 and imposed the strict policy of Islamization. Pakistani cinema declined during his regime, as he began to Islamize the country. Thus, one of the first victims of this sociopolitical change was Pakistani cinema. Other factors such as VCRs and film privacy policy also had a bad influence on the development of the film industry. Moreover, new tax was declared and imposed which further decreased cinema attendance. The film industry was almost on the edge of collapse as people began turning away from the cinema. Therefore, with these developments the evergreen social, romantic, and musical movies came to an end, as censors were strict on sex and bareness. However very liberal on violence due to which the Punjabi cinema dominated mainly through a hero with the iconic revenge-seeking peasant-warrior face (Kapadia, 2017). This was also a time when comedy gradually disappeared from Pakistani films.

The year 1979 was also the year that changed Rahi's image from an awful parcel; he became a hero in the film *Maula Jatt*. *Maula Jatt* was the biggest launch of 1979; it was a Punjabi language movie produced by Sarwar Bhatti. This movie hit the theaters in Punjab with a bang. The story revolves around Maula, who is an idealist orphan fighting to bring righteousness to his hometown; a fearless vigilante blocking Noori, threatening him, charming him (Rabe, 2019). And how can one forget his famous dialogue in the movie (Maula cannot be killed without the consent of Maula). The performance of all actors in this movie made this film a legend (see Figure 11). Rahi's *Maula Jatt* character could have been more different: roughly, dressed in a lungi- kurta dressed like a Punjabi peasant, a trained horse rider as well as the master of the *Gundasa*.

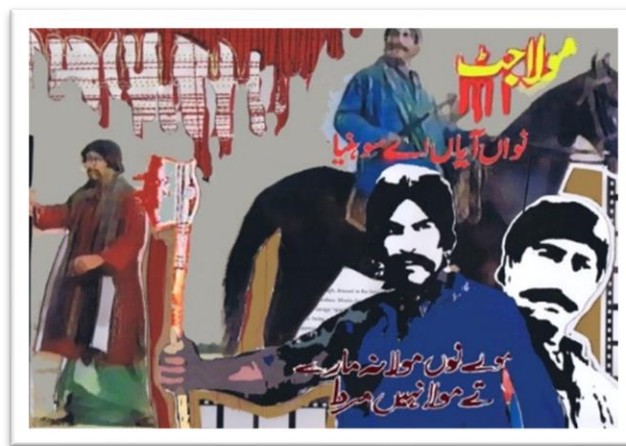


Figure 11 *Untitled 8* (Series of Lasting Impressions)

Maula Jatt also marks the start of the culmination of the Urdu family film culture, which had completely ruled the industry after 1947. The biggest beneficiary of the film *Maula Jatt* and its ever-growing phenomenon was its leading man Rahi. Though, he hailed from an Urdu speaking family and had been a middling star of both Urdu and Punjabi films since the early 60s, yet it was his performance as *Maula Jatt* that reformed him into the Sultan of Punjabi and Pakistani film industry. For the next two decades, his name tag and image remained identical in Lollywood, although he aspired for more serious achievements and often spoke about it in his interviews about his unease related to his status as "Mr. Action" *Maula Jatt* (Paracha, 2014).

Beyond any doubt by the late 1980s the achievement of *Maula Jatt* and the recipe that it presented in the long run transformed the industry, as many Punjabi films after this release turned into close to disposable self-spoofs to such an extent that to this day, this equation and view of Punjabi film is completely parodied, taunted and scorned.

Unfortunately, the terrible stuff that followed in the wake of *Maula Jatt* somewhat erased some important and rather noble aspects of classic cinema, while on the other hand, it actually saved the Pakistani film industry from suffering a complete collapse, and consequently, keeping hundreds of men and women linked with the local film industry employed. Moreover, the truth is that *Maula Jatt* was nothing like the loud, cynical, and meaningless cinematic Punjabi culture, as it ironically inspired the 1980s. On the contrary, it is an intelligent exercise in commercial filmmaking, studded with some excellent performances, thoughtful plotting, imaginative direction, and sharp dialogue delivery (Khan, 2013). Thus, it struck gold by becoming a huge success, as its box-office triumph even sprinted past Urdu cinema's biggest hit of 1977 *Aina*. Sarwar Bhatti once said,

“Film *Maula Jatt* transformed Lollywood forever. Sultan Rahi got a very unique and significant place. During a time of vulgarity, we changed the parameters of Lollywood for good by making films like *Maula Jatt*.” (Cineplot.com, 2009).

During this time, the Pakistani cinema lost its romantic, soft touch, thus fewer were attracted to the prospect of going to cinemas. But, the sudden entry of Afghan refugees kept the Punjabi industry alive and rolling, as the 1980's are actually marked by the rise of the gun-toting, law-defying, Sultan Rahi Phenomenon in Punjabi films (Rabe, 2018).

Throughout the 1980s, Punjabi films truly ruled Pakistani cinema, there was no greater female star in the firmament than Anjuman, along with leading men Rahi and Mustafa Qureshi and the silver-toned singer, Noor Jehan. Anjuman was part of the golden formula that made Punjabi action movies so lucrative. This triangle had that mysterious thing called “Star power” and of course, no one came close to the presence of Noor Jehan, when it came to playback singing (Kapadia, 2015).

As, *Maula Jatt* was a successful idea of that time, therefore in the 1980s a number of sequels of this film were produced, making it the first ever successful informal franchise for industry (Lollywood) title (Motion Picture of Archive of Pakistan, 2018). The word *Jatt* was tagged on to the title of every Punjabi film, thus following are some of the names of the violent vengeful films that followed this phenomenal success, *Jatt da Kharaak*, *Ziddi Jatt*, *Jatt Bahadur*, *Jatt Soorma* (1979), *Jatt da Vair*, *Maula Jatt te Nuri Nath*, *Maula Jatt in London* (1981), *Mirza Jatt* (1982), *Jatt te Doggar*, *Jatt Gujjar te Nath*, *Shagird Maula Jatt da* (1983), *Uchcha Shumla Jatt da* (1984), *Jatt Qanoon da* and *Dushmani Jatt di* (1986). Later all these films fell under the phenomenon, which is better known as the Gundasa (Axe) Culture today (Kapadia, 2015). The Gundasa sort is primarily informed by its environmental setting, namely the rural plains of central Punjab.

Maula Jatt's success paved way for its sequel *Maula Jatt tey Noorie Nut*, as well as *Maula Jatt in London* which promoted this popular culture (Tripti, 2019). *Maula Jatt in London* is the biggest example of Gundasa culture released in 1981 (see Figure 12). It was the “Official” sequel to *Maula Jatt*, as it shares the same cast as the original as well as the director (Swamiji, 2016).



Figure 12 Untitled 9 (Series of Lasting Impressions)

Acting was Rahi's passion, even during his peakdays, when one of his old friends Rangeela of struggling days asked him to perform for his film *Aurat Raj* in a female getup, he agreed. Rahi not only acknowledged the task but also gave his suggestions and best performance in this film. Here it is especially important to citing that *Maula Jatt* and *Aurat Raj* were released at the same time, hence what a variation in act (Kordecki, 2017).

Mustafa Qureshi, with his typically restrained, but baritone delivery, replied, (meaning your father) and the audience just laughed their hearts out! (Mag the Weekly, 2018). But the one that takes the cake with Rahi was his habitual exclamation in most films. Mostly, when faced with a villain, or one of the associates, who dared to talk curtly to Rahi, he shot back with, (meaning listen and speak slowly) (see Figure 13). It never ceased to amaze me that throughout the film, Rahi was the one, who gave vent to his emotions in full blast, but he was angrily asking the other fellow to lower his speech and temperature! The irony cannot be lost on the audience.

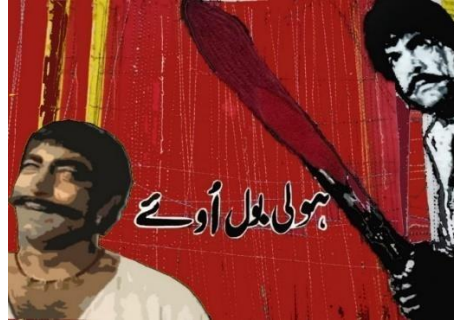


Figure 13 Untitled 10 (Series of Lasting Impressions)

Rahi also acted in 1980's, *Hitler* with Mustafa Qureshi, Anjuman, Bahar Begum, and Zamarrud. The idea of director Idrees Khan's incredibly cheap film was that Hitler never died but escaped to the Punjab heartland with an astonishingly dashing Titan like Rahi, who seemed promising to battle against the forces of unfairness and violence that Hitler's son's command perpetuated. Some sparks flew in the grueling scenes between Mustafa Qureshi and Rahi but the film flopped (Cineplot.com, 2009).

In this era from 1980 to 1990 the film industry was working on the same trends; the bulky heroin was on the floor and the hero show casing full violence, while Rahi during this period was a one-man film industry powerhouse (Daudpoto, 2018).

In 1981 Rahi worked in film *Sher Khan*. It was a Pakistani action and musical film. This film was directed by talented Younis Malik. (see Figure 14) *Sher Khan* created a new record for Punjabi cinema. When released, it was the highest-grossing film in the history of Pakistani film industry. It ran for 5 years in cinemas (Ibid).



Figure 14 Untitled 11 (Series of Lasting Impressions)

On August 2, 1981, Pakistani action film *Chan Varyam* was released. The film was produced by Mohammad Sarwar Bhatti and directed by Jahangir Qaisar. The film starred Rahi, Mustafa Qureshi, Anjuman, Iqbal Hassan, Afzaal Ahmed, Iqbal Hassan, Humayun Qureshi and Mehboob Alam (Ibid). After the film *Sher Khan* Anjuman was able to secure a major role in *Chan Varyam* (see Figure 15). Anjuman - Rahi period was at its top during this and they appeared in a record number of 117 films together. She also worked with every hero of her time but with Rahi she ruled the Punjabi cinema for more than a decade (Motion Picture of Archive of Pakistan, 2018). This film is also among Rahi's biggest movies hit list. The song of this film (meaning Oh gold bangle trade is equal) by melody queen Noor Jahan was extremely popular among the audience of that time.



Figure 15 Untitled 12 (Series of Lasting Impressions)

During the recording of songs especially the romantic songs, Rahi looked uneasy on the sets, as for him it was an annoying situation, while the heroine used to be comfortable. Finally, he found a solution to this situation and afterward in almost every song track he adopted a distinctive body movement along with a long staff facing towards the camera with a cute expression instead of looking at the heroin and holding her and making awkward moves (Pakistan Film Magazine, 2018). In 1984 Rahi acted in *Sholay*, which was a musical plus action film. The release date of the film was Friday May 11th, 1984. It was a Box office super hit. The song of this movie (**Meaning If I were a charm of gold**) was extremely popular among the audience of that time(see Figure 16) (Wikipedia, 2018).



Figure 16 Untitled 13 (Series of Lasting Impressions)

After the success of *Sholay* in 1985 he worked in film *Ghulami*, which was also a major hit of its time. It was a Pakistani Punjabi-language British drama film with a mix of an upbeat Lollywood musical, an action movie with spiritual overtones (see Figure 17). It was directed by Hasnain and was produced by Sarwar Malik under the Al Mehran Films banner. The star cast of this film is based on Sultan Rahi, Mustafa Qureshi, Mohammad Ali, Yousuf Khan and Adeeb - Afzal Ahmed (Wikipedia, 2018).



Figure 17 Untitled 14 (Series of Lasting Impressions)

In 1985 he played a main role in *Khuddar* too, which was a "Family Drama" Pakistani Punjabi language film directed and produced by M. Akram. The film star cast was based on Rahi as the lead along with Anjuman and Mustafa Qureshi, while Talish is playing the role of a Grandfather (see Figure 18) (Wikipedia, 2018)

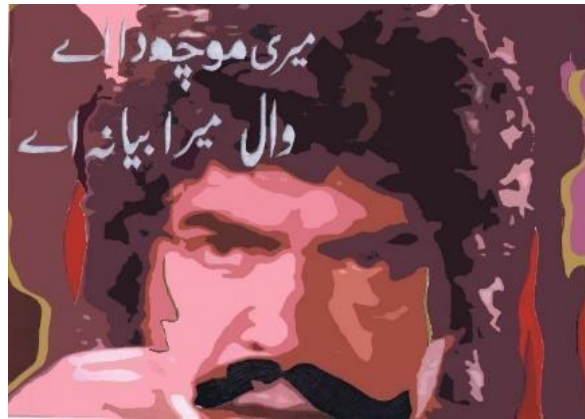


Figure 18 *Untitled 15* (Series of Lasting Impressions)

In 1986 he worked in *Malanga*, which was a Pakistani, Punjabi Lollywood action film. This movie was directed by Rasheed Dogar and produced by M. Hussain Dogar starring Rahi, Anjuman, Mustafa Qureshi and Ilyas Kashmiri (Shehzad's Blog, 2019).

3.4 From 1987 to 1997

Although, during the decade of 90's the film industry of Pakistan went through various ups and downs which reflects its dependence on state funding and inducements. There were no good new directors making good films, as the filmmakers of that time generally did not try to explore new themes. The 90s decade of Pakistani film industry was also under the influence of extreme violence. In 1991 Rahi worked in film *Gundasa*. The narrative of this film is based on violence. *Gundasa* became a box office hit after the blockbuster film *Maula Jatt* (see Figure 19) (Lolly Pops, 2018). To date *Gundasa* remains his most popular film and increase to the "Gundasa Culture" in the Pakistani film industry. These films were usually set in the villages of Punjab and involved a lot of bloodshed, clannish revenge, and sentimental references to the land of the five rivers (Wikipedia, 2018).



Figure 19 *Untitled 16* (Series of Lasting Impressions)

Another film that he worked in 1991 was *Lahori Badmash*. It was a game-changing film and after its release, many Punjabi filmmakers adopted the similar style of making. Sultan Rahi and Gori performed as main characters in this film; while actors like Babara Sharif, Izhar Qazi, Javed Sheikh, and Abid Ali were also part of the cast. In 1993 film *Toofan* was released, which was directed by Hassan Askari. Rahi's excellent acting in the film was an example of his acting abilities and the potential he possessed. In 1994 he worked in film *Gunda Raj*. It was a Pakistani action film that was directed by Saeed Rana and produced by Syed Mehmood Shah. In this film Rahi was depicting the role as Sher Ali (Awan, 2019). Film *Lahoria* was his last movie, which was released in 1997 after his demise.

On January 9, 1996, the sudden demise of Rahi sent shockwaves throughout the Pakistani film industry. His death was as dramatic as his character after his rise to stardom and fame. His unpredicted departure dispensed an awful blow to the Pakistani film Industry, and it was a big loss from which the industry never fully recovered (Awan, 2017 and Beena, 2019) (see Figure 20).



Figure 20 Untitled 17 (Series of Lasting Impressions)

Rahi at the age of 58 at the time of his demise was a phenomenon in Pakistani films and the lead actor in nearly 70 percent of the Punjabi-language films that were shaken out by the flourishing industry based in Lahore (see Figure 21) (Welcome To My World, 2010). Since the past many years, the Punjabi industry is trying to regain its glory and perhaps needs another Rahi. Many other actors have come and gone but none of them could ever take Rahi’s place in the industry because of his persona.

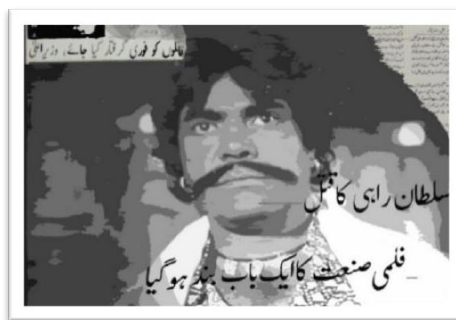


Figure 21 Untitled 18 (Series of Lasting Impressions)

He played the main role in total of 535 Pakistani films and starred in nearly 800 Punjabi and 100 Urdu films. Rahi was an action hero but almost two dozen songs were shot on him. Almost 90% of the songs were sung by Masood Rana, who was a top male vocalist of that time and in the history of Punjabi film industry. He also sang a song for himself in film *Sadhu Aur Sheitan*, “Behna, Bhayya ki pyari Behna, yehi dua hai Susral mein ja ke sada khush tum rehna”. Other singers, who also sung for him were Akhlaq Ahmad, Mehdi Hassan, Rajab Ali, Hussain Bhatti, A. Nayyar, Inayat, Shoukat Ali, and of course himself.

Until now he is the single performing actor in Pakistani film industry, who celebrated diamond jubilee films as both hero and villain. Rahi was the Sultan of the film world; his tag was an assurance for the success of any film during the seventies, eighties and mid - nineties. The best thing about Sultan Rahi was his enormous obligation towards acting and his pleasing behavior, when dealing with the less rewarded production house (Motion Picture of Archive of Pakistan, 2018).

This artwork is based on the different phases of Pakistani Cinema. I have treated this artwork in a contemporary way (see Figure 22). I have used embroidery to create circles on the digital print. I have used golden color to show the golden period of the film industry, red color to show the Gundasa Culture and black period to show the dark period of Pakistani Cinema.



Figure 22 Untitled 19 (Series of Lasting Impressions)

4. Conclusion

By the end of this study one can easily analyze the enormous contribution that Rahi made to the Pakistani film industry especially the Punjabi film industry. Many artists from around the world have worked and produced a lot of work on the stars of their respective countries through the theme Pop culture. However, unfortunately, in Pakistan the number of such artists is scarce.

Therefore, to pay tribute to this legend and to keep him alive for our future generations this study is a humble contribution, so that even after his demise he can remain alive through his work. To relive his time in the industry his work was divided into decades to maintain the chronological order of his birth, struggle, and zenith in the industry. Thus, the selection of films is also based on this order to fully understand his time in the industry, as fame did not come to him overnight but was a result of endless rejection, struggle, and hard work.

It is clear from his work that after attaining fame through films like *Basheera* and *Maula Jutt*, which were both trendsetter, violence was introduced in the Pakistani film industry as never before and his films also eventually changed the choice of film viewers and gave rise to violence-oriented films. Thus, dragging the film industry from romantic stories to Gundasa culture.

This trend was so illuminating that filmmakers of that time generally did not try to explore new themes, as they did not want to face failure. From 1970 to 1996 Rahi ruled the industry, as he portrayed every possible role from a violent villain to a romantic hero. In short, during the years that he was working, he had no parallel artist matching his film stature and today even after his demise over a decade ago it will not be wrong to say that perhaps there will never be a parallel.

The medium and mode selected to pay tribute to this great artist through artworks was based on his versatile work and keeping the boldness and loudness of his expression and the film industry under consideration. These artworks can be displayed in any contemporary museum, like the National Museum in Lahore, which already has a section on Pakistani Cinema to keep this legend alive for future generations.

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