



## Role of Cinema in Identity Construction in India and Pakistan after Partition 1947

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
<p><b>History</b>  <i>Revised format: 30 June 2019</i>  <i>Available Online: 31 July 2019</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>Keywords</b>  <i>Legitimization, Narrative, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>JEL Classification:</b>  <i>Z1, I3</i></p>	<p>This paper reflects only part of a broader research project in which narratives between India and Pakistan have been analyzed as propagated through the medium of film. Existing literature highlights that events from 1947 partition between India and Pakistan, have been used methodically by establishments on both side to recontextualize the realities of partition and violence associated with that, blaming each other for being the cause, suppressing much of what actually transpired, evading any clear position, while promoting triumphant discourses of nation, sacrifice and socio-economic insinuations. The focus of this paper is to examine how visual modality as explained by Machin and Mayr (2012), plays a part in shaping opinions and narrating events. Employing Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) to analyze the discourses realized by a partition based movie, this paper highlights that the way ‘other’ is depicted to experience partition, and has been represented to suit the ‘self’s’ account. The representation is a vital part of the legitimization of one particular discourse of partition, used to marginalize other likely discourses in both countries. The study has implications for understanding post-colonial and post-separation socio-cultural development in Pakistan and India. The outcomes of the study can be utilized to identify the ways both countries can use media and narratives to enhance socio-cultural ties and policies; thereby welfare of people on both sides.</p>

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**Recommended citation:** Malik, A. S. and Akhtar, R. N. (2019). Role of Cinema in Identity Construction in India and Pakistan After Partition 1947. *Review of Economics and Development Studies*, 5 (3), 521-530

**DOI:** 10.26710/reads.v5i3.660

### 1. Introduction

This paper explores how modality is pivotal in carving opinions and narrating events (Machin, D. and Mayr, A., 2012). The presupposition that ‘nonverbal semiotic phenomenon’ (Hodge and Kress, 1988) is marked by modality system including ‘realistic’ and ‘nonrealistic’ type of representations, contributes towards narrating a version of history that suits the ‘self’s version of the events in the Indian movie Pinjar (2003) which is based on partition. Discourses of conflict and separation are circulated and legitimized not only through verbal and written texts, but also through visual semiotic resources.

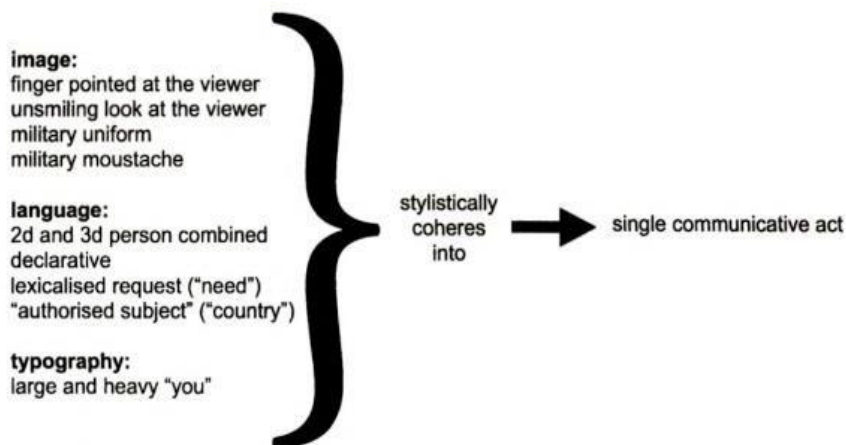
This paper highlights the way ‘other’ is portrayed to experience partition, employing Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). The representation in this context is pivotal for the legitimization of one particular discourse of partition, while marginalizing other possible discourses in both countries. This paper analyses visual modality in the movie Pinjar. The examination employs Machin and Mayr (2012) model. The analysis revealed that the visual modality markers contribute towards the overall meaning potential and are significant in exposing the underlying structures and ideologies within a text.

Sidra Karamat, Muhammad Muzaffar, and AliShan Shah (2019) argue that the ‘politico-religious nationalism’ by “extremist” description deliberates “cultural or spiritual identity to be different from those of most, presumptively unfamiliar and cheating” and argue that it “led to the formation of a tiered perception of citizenship.” (Karamt, S.; Muzaffar, M.; Shan, A., 2019) in Pakistan; India is not very different from Pakistan. The construction of identity is therefore, vital for this research. The movie depicts both sides i.e. India and Pakistan, neutrally on the surface; however, a close analysis reveals the binaries between ‘self’ and ‘other’, created through the visual modality legitimizing the ‘self’s account and creating discourses which propagate the ‘self’s ideology, and signifying a specific identity of the ‘other’.

## 2. Visual Communication and Modality

Hodge and Kress (1988) distinguished between ‘reasonable’ and ‘unrealistic’ types of portrayal, as modality framework which is set apart by signs that can be moved to “nonverbal semiotic marvel”. It works as a “directing capacity for the recipients” provenance of exact portrayal (Pollak, A., 2008). Eight modality markers for static visual portrayals, have been listed by Kress and Leeuwen (1996) which incorporate, colour saturation, colour cadence, colour variation, brightness; ‘contextualization’ which is on the scale from a detailed one to a blank background; ‘portrayal’ on a scale from vague and abstractions to a detailed one; ‘depth’ is on a scale from maximum in-depth view to exclusion; and ‘lighting’ on a scale from high key lighting to no light.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) describe modality as reliability of the image, which is a critical part of Multimodal CDA. Modality is characterized by Kress and van Leeuwen as “the truth value or credibility of (linguistically realized) statements about the world” (1996). Regardless of the way that starting points of the word are linked with semantics, Kress and van Leeuwen explain modality (for example exactly how near a picture resembles the real) as an imperative element of visual communication. When the modality is high, a visual is viewed as real as well as genuine.



**Figure 1:** Coherence of image, language and Typography into single communicative act (Leeuwen, 2004)

Van Leeuwen (2004) gives ten reasons why visual communication should be given more significance by the linguists. One of the reasons that he gives is that a new name should be given to the speech acts, and they should be called ‘communicative acts’ which should be comprehended as “multimodal micro-events” where all existing symbols come together to define their ‘communicative intent’ (Leeuwen, 2004). He gives example of a Kitchener Recruitment Poster (1914) and explains in detail how image, language and typography, combine to create a single communicative act. (see Figure 1)

Modality described by Machin and Mayr (2012) via examination of a Cosmopolitan commercial highlights that via staged nature and the iconography of the visual, it can be identified by the analysts that whether or not, components have been put intentionally with the visual and to portray any specific identity, that stacks the picture with specific qualities instead of depicting the subtleties (p. 201).

Hodge and Kress (1979) explaining language argue that it is not the only tool through which modality can be articulated. Where language relies on modality markers such as 'will be', "is", and might be'; likewise, visual communication also contains modality markers. Modality markers, in visual communication, have been listed by Kress and Leeuwen (1996), to indicate various underlying structures embedded within a text. Machin and Mayr (2012) also prepared a list of five visual modality markers that are taken into consideration for this paper and are explained in the following paragraphs.

The degree of articulation of background by Machin and Mayr (2012) ranges between extremely sketchy or blurred to the highly defined and detailed background. They argue that the low modality in any image recontextualizes the visual and transfers them to a context where they indicate certain values and ideas (Machin, D. and Mayr, A., 2012); it is used as a tool and moves the 'text' towards abstraction away from real. The careful selection of the background and the details accompanying the foreground, signify certain ideologies while concealing others; however, the details are also given to make the image appear real and by doing so making the text producer's narrative plausible.

The degree of articulation detail, oscillating between "simplest to the sharpest and the most finely grained" visual (Machin, D. and Mayr, A., 2012). Machin and Mayr (2012) explain that lower modality or higher modality both have symbolic significance, through Cosmopolitan magazine where a model is shown in diffused light so as not highlight her 'flaws'; while a soldier is depicted in detail, to have an allusion of reality while the destruction is again shown in defused light to soften the chaos that is caused by the presence of the soldier.

The degree of articulation of tone ranges between the gradation of black and white to the 'greatest tonal degree' (Machin, D. and Mayr, A., 2012). Machin and Mayr (2012) contend that the level of tonal gradation symbolizes emotive dissipations, ambiguity and reality. They clarify through the case of western culture where diffused tone is identified with uncertainty, secretiveness and concealed, whereas highlighting signifies optimism and positivity (p. 205).

The degree of articulation of light and shadow is on the scale of maximum degrees of depth of shades to zero articulation (Machin, D. and Mayr, A., 2012). The use of unrealistic lights and shadows, move the visual away from real and towards abstraction. The idea is explained through the example of a soldier shown in realistic lighting; however, what has been covered is the violence that is linked with the soldier and war. This strategy helps legitimize the visual and what it represents by showing it as real through divert the attention from what appears on the surface to what is perceived. (Machin, D. and Mayr, A., 2012)

The degree of colour saturation ranges between maximum saturation to black and white (Machin, D. and Mayr, A., 2012). Modality would be low with higher shading immersion, likewise, less or no colour would mean low modality. The modality is considered high when it lies someplace in the mid on the scale. Machin and Mayr (2012) contend that saturation of colour signifies 'intensity of emotions whereas, reduced colours indicate calculated and elusive implications (p. 205).

Researchers can look at the visuals and study the modality through such signs and recognize where the images move from the real to the conceptual, this can assist the analysts to concentrate on the "sorts of personalities, qualities and arrangements that are being conveyed" (Machin, D. and Mayr, A., 2012, p. 206).

### **3. Methodology**

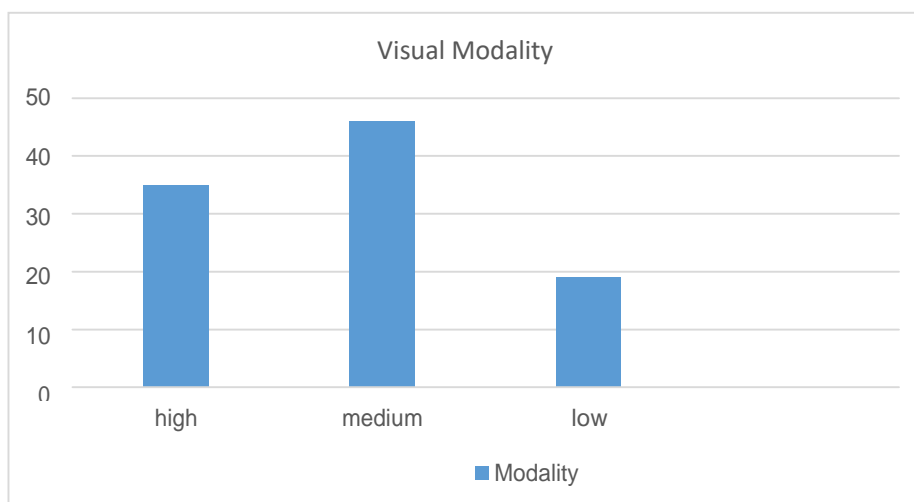
The methodological approach engaged in this paper is Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) given by Machin and Myer (2012). A multimodal analysis of any text allows researcher to do a semantic analysis of the visuals through describing structures and features of the images. Therefore, a multimodal analysis includes,

analysis of the text (including images, films, advertisements, TV shows, news etc.) and their meaning potential. However, visuals do not convey the entire meaning and in order to comprehend the complete context the analysts also have to take into account modality markers which accompanies the visuals. The movie analyzed in this paper includes the modality markers grounded in the categories given by Machin and Mayr (2012).

The focus on MCDA is not to give a final interpretation for meaning but to examine meaning potential and its function in a specific context. MCDA contends that images convey meaning not only through exclusion and manipulation of the representation of various signs or features and these have to be understood not just representations also shaping, creating, reproducing sustaining and legitimizing hegemonic social practices and ideologies. MCDA is employed for this research to explore a partition movie Pinjar (Indian) which is widely acclaimed as a story of female's suffering during partition in 1947, depicted neutrally. Significant scenes were methodically analyzed for connotations of visual semeiotic choices, focusing mainly on modality markers, on five levels outlined by Machin and Mayr (2012).

#### 4. Results and Analysis

In the movie visual modality plays a significant role. It decides how closer to or removed from real, are the representations of the characters and events. The examination of the data highlights that the scenes have been shot with extreme care so that they become plausible for real. The strategy serves well in authenticating the 'self's' version of the events and aids in legitimizing the fundamental philosophies, narratives and ideas. Keeping this argument in mind, and to make inferences, visual modality markers have been examined.



**Figure 2: Modality Markers**

Careful examination of the movie reveals that the events are depicted in, close to real, settings as well as the portrayal of characters which appear real except for the minute details which indicate a covert endeavor for presenting things as realistic and by doing so, legitimizing a conflicting ideology that may otherwise shock and evoke an opposing response from the audience and challenge the reliability.

Examination of visual expression shown in figure 2, assists in defining what is shown and what is being communicated through visuals. The visual modality, is high in the selected scenes. The text maker has covertly attempted to validate an ideology that otherwise with low modality would have chances to be challenged and the ideology represented is in a realistic manner through performance of the actors, and depiction of the events. In spite of the fact, that the Indian cinema commonly uses low modality as it generally uses diffused lighting and colour saturation for the rich music, dances and sparkly attires in the films; however, the movie uses high modality for depiction of the events close to reality. The modality of the film articulates "identities, values and sequences" which are voiced through the visuals, and in turn create a world view for the viewers by conveying only the self's' version of the 'other' in a realistic manner helps extract agreement from the viewers.

The 'other' in the movie is depicted in realistic settings for example riots and migration scenes; which is a strategy used by the text makers to legitimize the 'self's' version of what actually happened during partition. The visual modality shows stereotyping and labelling of the 'other' as brutal murderer, who mercilessly kills women and children thus showing the 'other' as fixed in his ideas. Demonization is done through representing the 'other' as the 'self's' version of the 'other' and is legitimized by portraying it close to the reality.

Several modality markers depict the 'self' superior than the 'other'. The movie displays the 'self' in the mellow lights which makes the 'degree of articulation of detail' low. The degree is considered 'high' when the 'other' is presented via the intricacies of attires and location in a way as they would be in real; indicates that the 'other' represents a type/group through their attires, facial-expressions, headdresses and actions, having specific notions and morals. The visual modality is high for example in degree of articulation of detail to show the other as real through the details of attire, arms, facial expressions and actions, while the self is also shown with such details but as a 'victim' to seek emotional support. Riot and migration scenes where people are being killed, the victim and the assassin are presented with high modality to create panic and urgency in the audience which evokes hatred for the 'other and empathy for 'self'.

The details of the poses of the 'other' are shown to be antagonistic with vicious facial expressions except for the one of the central characters Rasheed who abducts 'self' (represented by Puro); has opposing views and becomes the 'other' of the 'other'. Over all the 'other' is hostile, conceited, having a condescending behaviour indicating an arrogant identity and shaping a particular persona for the audience which in turn shapes their views about the 'other'; stereotypical and potentially damaging.

#### 4.1 The Articulation of Background

Investigation shows that the movie has higher degree of articulation of the background. Portrayal of the migration of the Hindus to India, the convoy being attacked by Muslims and the homes of both Hindus and Muslims are mostly represented in realistic settings with quite limited studio settings. Another significant observation was that although the degree of articulation of the background is higher; yet, the realistic setting is a move in the direction of abstraction. Though the conflict among the two communities and the resulting violence is recontextualized/reenacted; yet, depicted in a realistic manner.

The background shows Congress flags, when a speaker addressing a congregation aligning the Congress's agenda of unity among Hindus and Muslims with that of a Muslim character addressing a gathering where all ethnicities are represented. This representation is also through the characters' attires. The minarets of a mosque are also shown clearly in the background with the Congress flags helps balance the attention given to both sides and the unity between the two communities. However, this closer to reality depiction, clarity and details in the background create/constructs a version of reality which is 'self's', while excluding the 'other's' version completely.



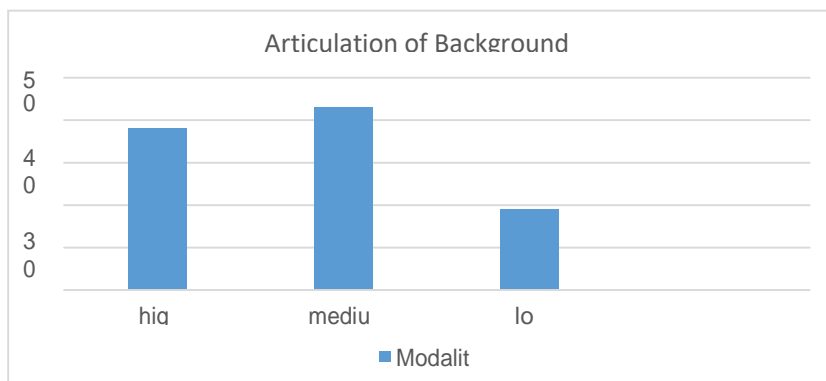
**Figure 3:** Burqa-clad Females and Jinnah's picture. Shot no. 2:32:39

The movie shows posters on the walls with Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s picture in Pakistan after partition in the background throughout. Nevertheless, the visual modality is low as the image appears more like a blurred distortion instead of a photograph. The number of occurrence of this picture is 11 and has “Pakistan Zindabaad” (Long-live Pakistan) in Roman Urdu while ‘Long-live Jinnah’ in English. The presence in the background accentuates for the ‘other’ a specific identity and highlights the ideology through recurrence of the image it in the background, though blurred but imminent presence. The low modality of the image shows how the ‘other’ is treated insignificantly.

A framed picture of Vladimir Lenin is displayed in the background behind Tirllok (Puro’s Brother) (1:24:40/3:08:50), is an indication of the philosophy of the “self” that signposts the humanitarian ideology, in contrast to the ‘other’s’ philosophy. The frame is placed strategically in the background and contains certain implications. It appears to implicitly connect, Congress’s and Gandhi’s philosophy of democratic social order, which transcends religious conflicts. The ‘self’ in the foreground, aligns the ideology of the ‘self’ with that of Lenin. The book Tirllok is reading and the frame hint at the ideology that the ‘self’ holds, represents the ‘self’ as a scholarly group who has more democratic ideas vis-a-vis the ‘other’ highlights the binary that shows the ‘other’ as the opposite.



**Figure 4:** Vladimir Lenin's frame. Shot no. 1:24:40/3:08:50



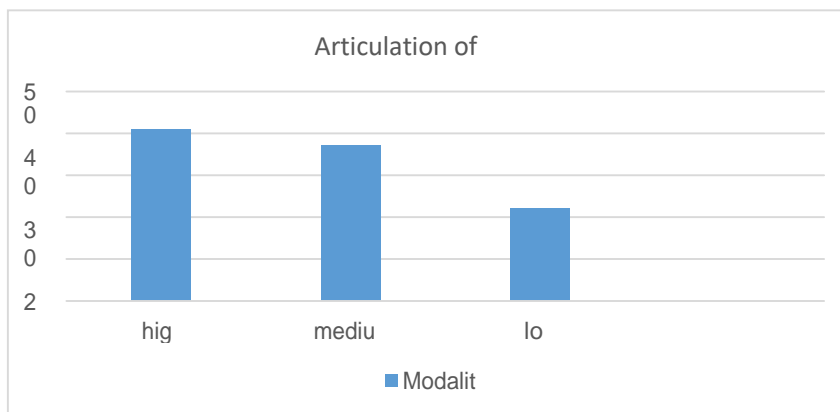
**Figure 5:** Articulation of Background

Overall, the movie displays realistic settings and backgrounds with a few exceptions where studio settings have been used. The realistic setting makes the events more real and contextualized. The riot scenes are picturized in realistic settings and backgrounds which helps endorse a constructed narrative but is presented as true depiction of the real. Therefore, the modality becomes low, despite being high in the portrayal of the real-like events; hence, the over-all argument of legitimizing the self’s narrative that sanctions the ideology through realistic portrayal, fails.

#### 4.2 Degree of Articulation of Detail

The degree of articulation of details, with emphasis on the specific attires of the ‘other’ and the ‘self’, signifies the difference between the two through dissimilarity in their clothes, the facial expressions, postures and headdresses presented in detail almost near realistic modality. A specific identity is indicated through deliberate features e.g. Muslims wearing shalwar qameez, gharara, turbans, and amulet. The strategy represents a group of people following that life style. The movie shapes a specific image for the audience through such elements. Nevertheless, it overlooks the regional diversity existing amid Muslims of the region which in turn brings the degree of articulation of details lower.

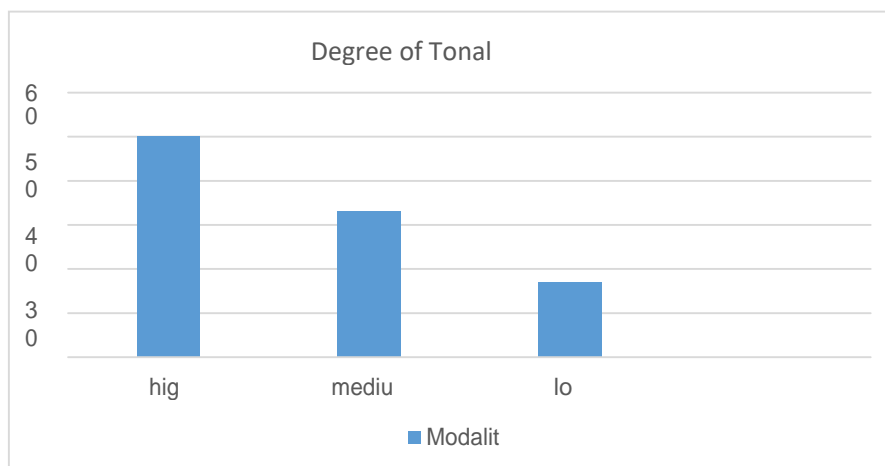
The ‘self’ is also presented through a particular headgear and the tilak on his forehead however, the ‘self’ has a general agreeable temperament presented in detail. Outlining the particulars of the attires, households, and facial expressions etc. ensures the ideological effort and creates for the audience, a specific identity of the ‘self’, in contrast to the ‘other’. The details given, are tools used to create real; however, close investigation reveals that it is a strategy to legitimize the ‘self’s’ version.



**Figure 6:** Articulation of Detail

#### 4.3 Degrees of Tonal Articulation

Realistic, balanced and high tones have been used to depict an image closer to reality which ensures that the reality which is presented throughout in the movie, plausible as truth. The overall analysis shows that the tonal modality is high. It signifies that it has been used as a tool to validate the ‘self’s’ version of reality so that the audience would not challenge its truth. Throughout the movie natural light has been used and the tonal variations are carefully done to do a certain ideological work via portrayal of the narrative closer to the real.

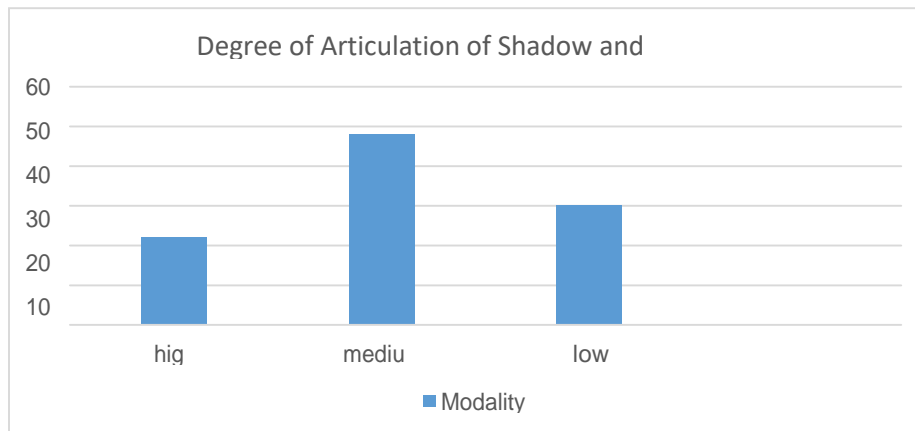


**Figure 7:** Degree of Tonal Articulation

#### 4.4 Degree of Articulation of Light and Shadow

In the movie a vital role is played by the degree of articulation of light and darkness which forms abstraction and depicts, through realistic lighting an image of real. The film uses sunlight as lighting which sets the background in real environment and gives an impression of the real e.g. the migrating scene and the attack by the Muslim rioters and chaos that they create. Employing natural light indicates the strategic maneuvering of the text to move the focus from the ‘obvious’ to the ‘perceived’ in such a way that it validates the visual and presents it as real. In the movie though the use of natural light authenticates the actual narration of the events that transpired; the migration and riots scenes, filmed in outdoor, using natural lighting, represent closer to real modality which authenticates their being plausible for the real depiction of the events of partition. The modality may be closer to real, which portrays the events as real; however, the exclusion of the ‘other’s’ version of reality makes the arguments weak.

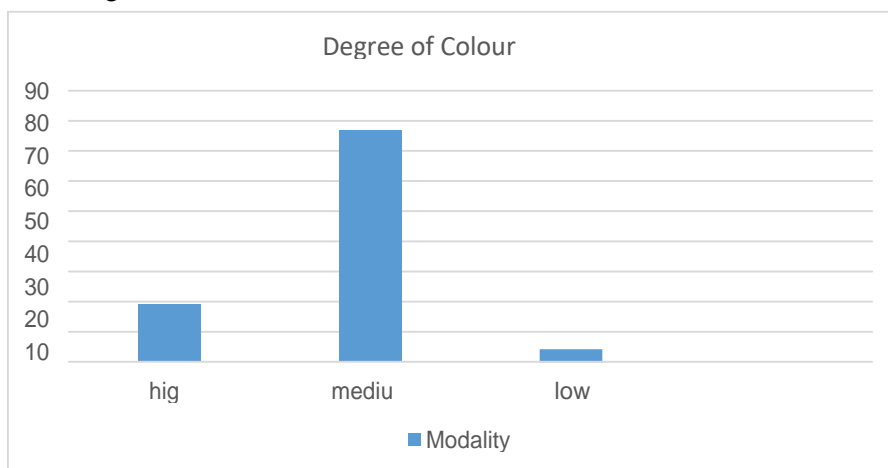
**Figure 8.** Degree of Articulation of Light and Shadow



#### 4.5 Degree of Colour Saturation

The modality in the middle is considered high while it is low towards maximum saturation and black and white. Colour maximization or absence shifts the scene away from real and the modality becomes low. Visual modality, tilts towards higher side as the scale leans towards the medium saturation. This modality marker has been used as a tool to depict the events as real and naturalistic except for the picturization of the musical ballads. The scenes mostly are filmed in a way that they appear in real e.g. migration and riot scenes; which is a contrast with the songs with maximum colour saturation. It is not only used as a marketing strategy but also to intensify the emotional impact on the audience legitimizing the narrative of the ‘self’.

**Figure 9.** Degree of Colour Saturation





## 5. Socio-Economic Implications

Creativity is pivotal for a successful economy, and also has policy insinuations (see, Pratt 1997, and Scott 2000). Anderson (1983) explaining cultural policy talks about, 'creative' fields like art, film and music have always been used as a vehicle through which specific national identities are propagated by the institutions. Films are considered expression of the cultural norms and values; films also reflect how a certain regime views and presents itself as well as the nation and in turn how a nation sees itself (see Grossberg 1997) in its socio-cultural and economic perspective. The importance of commercial benefit of cultural productions like films and advertisements has caught the attention of the institutions/governments through which certain ideologies and ideas can be instilled in the mind of the viewers which is termed as 'cultural economy'. The analysis shows that the subject movie in creating a world view for the audience succeeds with its agenda and also has socio-economic implications.

The 'communicative acts' in the movie work with a purposeful 'communicative intent' (Leeuwen, 2004), and highlight "multimodal micro-events" having broader socio-economic implications. Moreover, semiotics stresses that a text has dynamic interpretations and no 'universal' meaning of sign exists. Though, no definite meaning can be ascribed to a text; yet, it also does not imply that a text would always be interpreted in different ways. A text may also create controversy with its meaning and new meanings may emerge in a different context. Semiotics of the present 'text' exposed a myriad of interpretations through analysis of the visual modality. Most human expressions are commodified products of industry with corporate objectives, and a commercial scope. The 'text' was found to be a rich blend of national, socio-economic and politico-military norms propagated through the medium of film.

Conflict between the two countries is linked with the insecurities on both sides. Self-glorification and demonization of the 'other', along with the depiction of the events as reality, have socio-economic insinuations. Trade, backdoor diplomacy and other economic factors get effected by propagation of such narratives; for example, South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) agreement in 2004, at SAARC Summit in Islamabad, which was established to promote trade and economic development of the member countries; however, did not prove to be helpful for the advocacy of socio-economic agenda. The underlying issue is embedded in the animosity between India and Pakistan. The movie subtly highlights the narrative which effects the socio-economic ties between the two nations. Such narratives not only legitimize the economic policies and sanctions made against each other but also work for the benefit of the third party which seizes the opportunity and manipulates the situation for economic gains; as the continuing animosity would lead to the war between the countries which in turn would open door for weapon industry and economic gains for the powerful. The propagation of such narratives through the medium of films, legitimizes actions taken against the 'other'.

## 6. Conclusion

Machin and Mayr's (2012) Visual modality comprising of five degrees, tilts towards higher side in the movie; even the middle ranges also overlap towards the high, which is near-real. Visual modality is considered a valuable tool in shifting the focus of the audience towards the meaning potential of the numerous features of the images along with linguistic modality, support the examination of the underlying edifices and making inferences from those, which was the focus of this research paper.

Higher modality of the background, details, and realistic lighting in the movie, are employed as a tactic to highlight that the depiction of the events as factual and real. The movie artfully employs such modality markers to portray a version of history and events that suits the 'self's' version and glorifies the image. On the other hand, closer to reality scenes, portraying the 'other' as a ferocious and evil, also serves the purpose of 'self-glorification' through creating contrasts between the 'moral self' and an 'evil other'. Modality markers are skillfully used to shape an opinion about the 'other' and create a narrative which highlights the 'self's' ideologies and legitimizes the 'self's' account, also has socio-economic implications and gains for the powerful.

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