

## Why is Bollywood film PK controversial?

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BBC Monitoring

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**Bollywood is famous for its dance routines, dramatic visuals and songs across the world.**

But India's most popular movie industry also produces films that initiate social debates on issues that matter to the country.

Aamir Khan's PK is one such movie.

It questions superstitions in a country where religion is deeply rooted in social consciousness of the people.

Khan plays an alien in the film who comes to visit the earth and almost immediately falls victim to human greed.

His "remote control" - a device without which he cannot go back to his planet - gets stolen.

From that moment, he embarks on a journey to discover the world. He meets people, "both good and bad", visits places and learns the language.

He painstakingly discovers that many people believe that only god can help him find his remote control.

He visits remote temples, mosques and churches. He follows advices given by priests and religious leaders to convince the god of every faith.

But Khan's character slowly finds out some self-styled gurus or "godmen" use superstitions and "fraud" to "cheat" people.

## Thought-provoking drama

PK is not the first movie that has taken a controversial but critical look at religious practices in India.

But then why is the film generating strong reactions?

The answer lies in the movie's simple narrative. It doesn't reach any conclusion on the existence of religion, but simply questions superstitions.

In one of the scenes, a priest tells a man to take an arduous journey to a temple in the Himalayas to ensure that one of his sick family members gets well.

PK jumps into the conversation and asks the priest if it's true that god considers all humans as his sons and daughters.

Yes, says the priest.

PK follows up with another question: "Which father would send an already troubled son on an arduous journey?".

Such simple but important questions have made the movie a thought-provoking drama.

I remember many moist eyes in the theatre after a particular scene in which PK recounts his efforts in convincing "the almighty" to return his remote control.

The sequence shows PK bathing in holy rivers, trekking to reach holy temples and painfully beating himself in mourning.

He later discovers that such advice doesn't mean much and most "godmen" use religions to do business and make profits.

The rest of the movie is all about PK's debate with one such powerful "godman" who is in possession of his remote control.

In the end, he proves the guru wrong, falls in love with a female journalist who helps him, and returns to his planet.

## Critical timing

The movie has received mixed reviews from critics, but most have praised Khan and director Rajkumar Hirani for showing courage to take on a deeply sensitive subject.

Film analyst Namrata Joshi says the duo deserve credit for bringing such a sensitive topic in a mainstream commercial film.

"Aamir is a superstar and that is why this movie has reached millions. It has made people think. Religion has been debated in many regional language films and earlier Bollywood films, but Aamir's presence has made the difference this time," she says.

Many say the film's timing has also been critical.

It has come at a time when **issues like religious conversion are being debated in parliament and prominent gurus have been arrested** on charges like murder and rape.

It is hard to know that how many people actually agree with the movie's message. But Joshi says many are watching the film and it shows that people want to discuss and debate even sensitive issues like religious practices.

But not everybody agrees.

Many have criticised the film for "maligning Hinduism" and other religions in the films.

A hashtah called #boycottPK started trending almost immediately after the movie was released.

TWITTER

But many also praised the film and started a rival hashtag called #IsupportPK.

TWITTER

## TWITTER

Joshi says Twitter cannot be taken as an indicator of how people are reacting to the film.

But the hashtags prove that people are willing to discuss the issue.

Aamir Khan recently defended the film, saying it is not against any particular religion.

When I walked out of the theatre, most of my fellow moviegoers seemed interested in repeating this key line from the film.

"Believe in the god who created you, not the one you created."

And there were others who seemed offended.

But as Joshi says, the movie ensures that the issue of religious superstition is being debated in the country of 1.2 billion people and many religions.

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