

KALIYAN: PUPPETRY ON PAKISTAN TELEVISION (PTV)

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Abstract

Kaliyan; first broadcasted on Pakistan Television (PTV) in 1976, is one of the most famous children television program. It is mainly a puppet play executed with some of the most iconic puppet characters developed by veteran Farooq Qaiser. The production is minimal in style with basic mise en scene; set and props. Primarily the features of puppets derived from local faces with slight influence from glove puppets used in Sesame Street (1969). The names of characters are extracted from local slang, for example: Uncle Sargam, Rola, Shermeli, Haiga. The content is mostly humorous with a tinge of satire, and it covers a large range of subjects from children education to social issues and political discourse. An episode of Kaliyan normally combines live action, sketch comedy, music and puppetry, and tries to communicate with children in an indirect way of visual representation. This paper analyses the characters and content of one of the episodes of Kaliyan based on early childhood education: "Shermeli".

Keywords: Puppetry, Farooq Qaiser, Kaliyan, Child Education.

Introduction

Pakistan Television; since its inception, in 1964, has been creating versatile TV shows featuring knowledge-based content. These were generally designed as quiz sessions, documentaries, miming, musicals, dramas, skits and puppet shows. Such programs have always been the prime source of entertainment, information and education in Pakistan, through PTV; the only national network. The drive behind such purposively designed content was to spread awareness on various societal issues and encouraged significant role of education through adapted genres. In Pakistan, ideology of Faiz Ahmad Faiz was predominant behind the idea of delivering education through the art of puppetry, as in 1960's he became the secretary of Pakistan Arts Council (Nizami 2019). Faiz's both daughters: Salima Hashmi and Muneeza Hashmi had played noteworthy role to introduce puppetry on Pakistan Television. Indeed, the program of *Akar Bakar* (1970); created by Shoaib Hashmi and Salima Hashmi is regarded as the first educational show on PTV

having a segment of puppetry. It was designed to teach alphabets of Urdu language through puppet performances composed on many poems and song based stories. In 1970's, Salima Hashmi assigned Farooq Qaiser: one of her students, to design some puppets for *Akar Bakar*, and his first puppet was derived from the form of a duck (Qaiser 2019).

Farooq Qaiser who began his journey of puppetry from the program *Akar Bakar*, received acclamation through his very own puppet show *Kaliyan* (1976). In the same year, PTV started its colored transmission with upgraded technology (Nasir 2009). Initially, the on-air time of Pakistan Television was 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm, and the puppet show; *Kaliyan*, was broadcasted at the prime slot of children 6:30 pm. Meanwhile, PTV's timings extended to five hours a day on daily transmission (Qaiser 2019). The *Kaliyan* puppet series had gained immense popularity among all age groups in a short period. Whilst being considered as a children show; it attracted every member of a family residing in Pakistan. In the beginning, PTV did not have any particular area to build up its working space; hence, the team of *Kaliyan* had arranged its operational structure at Rawalpindi station and continuously broadcasted for four years from 1976 till 1980. The second spell of the show was broadcasted, after a gap of one year, in 1981, and continued for next four years till the year 1985. Originally, the *Kaliyan* program was developed for just thirteen episodes and broadcasted on Pakistan Television, approximately for five minutes. Later on, with the huge popularity of the program its time duration got increased by adding up more segments in it (Qaiser 2019). Farooq Qaiser introduced the popular genre of puppetry for the first time on Pakistan Television and played a dynamic role in the progression of puppetry on modern terms. Indeed, his style of puppetry has been followed even on the private television networks, developed after 2002 in Pakistan.

Format and Characters

The first puppet character designed and created by Farooq Qaiser for *Kaliyan* was, Professor *Sargam* (Figure No. 1). Major inspiration behind the puppet character of *Sargam* was his own Professor Molnar, who taught Qaiser at the University of Bucharest, Romania (Qaiser 2019). The puppet character of *Sargam* which was meant to be performed in just two or three episodes of *Kaliyan* was constructed in a simplest and modest way. It is pertinent to mention that Qaiser is not only the creator and operator of these puppets, but he has executed the show as a writer and director, in parallel manner. At first, he composed the story line in a minimal way, centered on children, as *Kaliyan* incorporated with the method of storytelling which used to articulate through the puppet performance of "Professor *Sargam*". Far ahead in 1980's, puppet: Professor *Sargam*'s name was transformed into Uncle *Sargam* probably after two or three episodes of *Kaliyan*. Along with this, the show's format was also altered from instructive aspect to recreational with the involvement of satirical and ironic approaches to broaden its horizon. *Kaliyan* show was one of the most popular TV shows, among all age groups and it has also been acknowledged in other countries like India and Germany. The show was recognized various platforms locally and internationally including Pre Genesis Award in 1978 from Germany (Qaiser 2019).

Qaiser, in an interview for this paper, shares that Pakistan Television started its local children puppet show *Akar Bakar* for educational purposive on the pattern of

American show; *Sesame Street* (1969). He developed the concept further with the expansion of *Kaliyan* puppet show on PTV, and it's most essential part was to achieve effective puppetry (Qaiser 2019). *Sesame Street* was conceived in 1966 with a clear goal to create an educational show to engage children and prepare them for school. The show was launched after a thorough research of two years, on November 10th 1969 on public television stations USA, by Children's Television Workshop (CTW) with huge funding by various bodies. Indeed, *Sesame Street* is rated as most successful show for children and it was broadcasted in more than 140 countries, by its 40th anniversary in 2009 (Davis 2009). The show has celebrated its golden jubilee in 2019.

The format of *Sesame Street*, even in its pilot episode, has a strong visual style with fast-moving action, point of view shots, live action, humor, music, animation, and puppetry. The episode starts with street scenes, where two school going kids, a boy and a girl, were moving towards "Sesame Street", which is the set of the show (Old School Sesame Street 2017). Most of the action took place on the sets, with intercutting of character-driven interactions, curriculum-based segments, puppet sketches, short films, music and short animations pieces. The flexibility of the form; mixture of styles and segments, of the show allowed the creative team to control the pace of the show. Initially, long ongoing stories with episodes were not part of the show, because preliminary research indicated that children were having short attention spans. However, later research had revealed that children were capable of following a storyline, so the segments based on continuous stories were also included by the year 1988 (Morrow 2006).

In contrast, *Kaliyan* show is, more or less, designed, conceived, and run by a single person: Farooq Qaiser. The only commonality between *Kaliyan* and *Sesame Street* is the objective behind the show: Creation of an educational show to engage pre-school children. However, *Kaliyan* did not have big team of researchers, animators, writers and puppeteers. It's a one man army kind of a production to which, Qaiser has evolved his own style and method to design an educational based puppet show for PTV. Pilot episode of *Kaliyan* is on the theme of a music class with leading puppet character of Professor *Sargam* designed as a music teacher. Farooq Qaiser took the inspiration from his professor Molnar and named the puppet as Professor *Sargam*. In later episodes of *Kaliyan*, the name was changed to Uncle *Sargam* from Professor *Sargam* by Qaiser on required direction of PTV (Qaiser 2019). Along with the name, its context, costume and role had also been slightly differentiated, as the title of professor confined the versatility of character on limited themes.

"*Sargam*"; an abbreviated name of seven musical notes, is already an established term in eastern music and quite familiar to most of the audience. The episode further explains about the significance of word "*Sargam*", as it indicates a combination of seven basic notes of music: *Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni* (Gheli 2016). Qaiser has created seven glove puppets to locate them with seven musical notes. He constructed glove puppets through consuming socks of various colors, easily accessible material and collectively named these hand puppets as "*Saat Sur*". The clarity of the writer further revealed when he later made a puppet character; *Rola* (Noise) which is an exact opposite of music. Through these two simple words; *Sargam* and *Rola*, he communicated to his audience and society that if the music is prohibited then the society would only left with the noise and chaos.

The glove/hand puppets of *Uncle Sargam* were usually installed on top of a table for performance and articulated by two hands; one hand manipulates the mouth and second operates the left hand of puppet. Hence, name “*Uncle Sargam*” reflecting seven musical notes within it as seven glove puppets suggest a subtle approach, music grasps attention and harmonized the child learning performance. Music is one of the most effective tools in teaching moral, academic and technical skills to children, and Sesame Street has employed music as a main tool for learning such as 71% of its content is musical, with at least eight music fragments into each show: five to disseminate academic skills and three segments to teach social expertise (Wolfe and Stambaugh 1993).

“*Shermeli*”: An Episode

“*Shermeli*”: one of the episodes of *Kaliyan*, is analyzed to understand the formation and content of PTV puppet show. The episode builds up on five characters in total; three are puppets; *Uncle Sargam*, *Shermeli*, *Haiga* and other two characters are not puppets, performed by Farooq Qaiser (Anchor) and Bushra Ansari (Singer). It is pertinent to note that Farooq Qaiser performed three roles, one; an anchor of the show, two; operating his glove puppet *Shermeli*, and three; delivering dialogues of *Uncle Sargam*. Similarly, Bushra Ansari has also executed the characters of *Bushra* and *Shermeli* as a background singer by transforming her voice notes accordingly.

Shermeli, a puppet character derived from a goat, reflects Qaiser motivation to engage local animals into his characters. This puppet is designed in minimal style; however, the fabrication of this glove puppet with fur has given it a naturalistic appearance. The writer creates humor by giving the name “*Shermeli*” (shy) to a puppet character who is an exact contrast of its name, as it is talkative who never feel shy to say anything and also has a shrilling voice. In local middle class culture, it’s a common norm people possess nick names which has nothing to do with their personalities; for instance a person with a dark complexion may have a name: *Chita* (white), or a fat man may have a nick name: *Teela* (straw). Qaiser pick that phenomenon in creating some of his puppet characters.

The episode begins in conversational style, by utterance of dialogues amongst two characters: Farooq Qaiser (Anchor) and *Shermeli* (puppet).

Anchor: *Ap naraz qun hain, akhair bat keya hai?*

Shermeli: *Bas main nae ap sy bolti. Mjhe kbhi bolaya bhi nahi hai ap ny apny program main. Ap sy milny aye thy toh kahty hain ap Shermeli mjhe bari yad atay ho aur waisy kbhi yad bhi nahi keya mjhe. Main ja rahy hun bas.*

Farooq Qaiser, playing the role of an anchor, inquiries from *Shermeli* about the cause of her anger. In response, *Shermeli* tells to anchor that she does not want to talk to him as she has not been invited to his program ever. She further complains about his hypocritical approach as he always welcomes her on her face; however, never requests her to join the show. On his insincere behavior, she feels upset and wants to leave the program. These dialogues indicate an open and honest relationship of *Shermeli* with anchor, and motivates the viewers to love the animals around them. *Shermeli* is angry and she, like a child, straightforwardly says it, as the writer wants to educate his audience to speak out

and share the grievances. However, the anchor, as a character, tries to manipulate and pacify the goat. This reveals that the puppeteer defines his non-human puppets to be blunt and direct, and places his human characters more aligned to the hypocritical setup in a postcolonial society. Indeed, Qaiser employs his puppets to say the prohibited, and the next dialogues further confirm it.

Anchor: Ap aik minute thehriye bat toh sunain puri tarhan. Bat yeh hai kay hamary program main Uncle Sargam, Haiga, Masi Musibtay aur bhi log atay hain toh kbhi kbhi ap bhi ajatein hain. Is main naraz hony ki kya bat hai?

Shermeli: Hay yeh Uncle Sargam vohi hain nah jin ki ankho main button hain aur in kay moun main magha hai.

Uncle Sargam: Haigay, Oye yeh kaha sy janwar pakar kar lay aya hai. Mjhe kah rahy hai meri ankhon main button hai aur sar main magha.

Haiga: Uncle masofa theek hi kah rahy hai. This is a magha no shak and that are the buttons. (It turns towards Shermeli character) Shermeli Shermeli, keya hal hai tumhara?

Shermeli: Theek thak da da da da. Acha, Uncle mjhe nahi pta main ab ja rahy hun.

It indicates here, Qaiser tries to calm down *Shermeli* by saying, “wait a minute and listen to my perspective”. Instead of saying this, the writer may have promoted a stereotype by uttering some dialogue like, “I am elder to you, so you must obey and listen to me”; however, he persuades on equality and imparts reasoning. His emphasis is on listening to other’s point of view, as it can resolve most of the issues. Further, he explains the format of the show, where the guests are invited on rotational basis, so *Shermeli* has to wait for her turn. Here, Qaiser wants to teach his audience to stay in the queue and keep waiting for their call, calmly.

Shermeli, whilst having no answer to the Qaiser explanation, makes a pun on facial features of Uncle Sargam comparing eyes with snap fastener and his head like a water jar. It is to create humor, having roots in Punjabi *Bhand* theatre based on *Juggat*. This kind of theatre is similar to the tradition of slapstick comedy, where one of the common way to derive comedy is by making statement about someone features (Bilal 2018). *Shermeli*’s pun also describes the material of the puppet; *Sargam*, and discloses that this puppet is made with common objects. *Haiga*, another puppet, further reconfirms it by placing him on the side of *Shermeli*. It is to educate kids about the making of puppets and toys, as they could make it with simple objects.

The role of *Shermeli* is defining about the temperament of children on being ignored and neglected by someone close. Children get irritated easily when they could not be able to achieve something from their wish list. These kinds of situation mostly triggers out the feeling of anger in them. Anger is a normal state of emotion generally linked with social motives. Sometime, its extreme form alters this state into aggression and regular anger outburst. The trait of anger in children can be minimized by engaging them in creative patterns and to give them physical responsibilities according their capacity. It can also be

reduced to let them to make their own decisions while briefing expectations regarding to matter. Even, the close connection, appraisal verbal expression and tiny affectionate gesture help children to grow positively and learn creatively (lively 2020). Qaiser gives a fair explanation and treats *Shermeli* on equal basis, and guides the audience to behave in the similar fashion.

Anchor: *Aik minute thehro bat yeh hai kay Haiga aur Uncle Sargam yeh log ay hoy hain Bushra ka gana sunney key ley ap bhi gana sunti jayein.*

Shermeli: Acha usko bhi bulaya hwa hai. Mjhe nae pta main aj solo gana gao gi.

Anchor: *Nahi solo toh nahi ga skty aj toh Bushra ki bari hai. Ap agli bar ga laina.*

Shermeli: Mjhe nahi pta mainy aj hi gana hai bas.

Anchor: *Acha aisay karein ap Bushra kay sath ga lain.*

Anchor tries to convince *Shermeli* as Uncle *Sargam* and *Haiga* are also there for the song of Bushra. On reaching about singing performance of Bushra's song, *Shermeli* starts insisting on having a solo performance. Anchor stated to *Shermeli* that she cannot sing solo as this is Bushra's turn, and she has to wait till next time. Meanwhile, Bushra arrives asked about recent happenings at the show. Qaiser responds to Bushra:

Anchor: *Shermeli naraz hain Bushra ap sy.*

Bushra: *Ap naraz hain mjh sy?*

Shermeli: Main nahi ap sy bolti jab meri bari hoty hai ap gana gany ajatein hain.

Anchor: *Bat yeh hai Shermeli aj bari Bushra ke hai. Ap in kay sath mill kay ga lain.*

Bushra: *Han bhai hum dono dono gatay hain. Kbhi akhty bhi ga laina chaye nah.*

Anchor: *Bushra ap gayein yeh khudi gany lag jay g ap ky sath.*

Shermeli continued to express her anger and wants to have a solo performance without her turn. Anchor does not agree on it and he tries to convince *Shermeli* to sing with Bushra. This action speaks that it is essential to shape child's behavior by develop understanding with them. It is focusing on development of a child's learning skills and at the same time, concentrating on their pro-social interaction with individuals, in society as a whole. Farooq Qaiser, as writer of the show, keeps persuading with the concept of mutual respect and acceptability on differences. These attributes can develop flexibility in children's behavior in order to control their emotions and emotional well-being.

Bushra also insists *Shermeli* to sing with her saying, we had never sung song together before. Let's sing together.

Afterward, Bushra starts singing the song as:

Bushra: *Rothi Shermeli bas abh man jao nah. Choro yeh gusa mery sang gana gao nah.*

Shermeli: Mujh ko jhoti tasali sy behlao nah. Rothi raho gi main tum mujh ko manao nah.

Bushra: *Acha Shermeli zara yeh to batlana. Ghar kaha hai taira hai kon sa thekana. Kaha sy atay ho tum kaha ko jaty ho. Keya pehnty ho tum keya keya khaty ho. Ata pta batlao hamein kbhi ghar bulao nah.*

Haiga and Uncle Sargam: Rothi Shermeli bas abh man jao nah. Choro yeh gusa mery sang gana gao nah.

Bushra starts singing the song for *Shermeli* to make her feel good and special. Along with Bushra, both Uncle *Sargam* and *Haiga* are also singing for *Shermeli* to cheer her up. The character of Uncle *Sargam* and *Haiga* sings: “leave anger behind and let’s sing with us”.

Shermeli: Dur jungle main mera piyara sa aik ghar hai. TV jahan nah koi nah koi theatre hai. Pehnty ooni kapry hun aur phal khaty hun. Khush rahty hun main aur ganay gaty hun. Bato hi bato main mujh ko yun manao nah. Rothi raho gi main tum mujh ko manao nah.

Uncle Sargam, Haiga: Choro yeh gusa mery sang gana gao nah.

Shermeli: Rothi Shermeli.

The basic concept of the episode is to share the characteristics of a goat and also not to get angry on trivial matters, illustrated through poetry rendered in a song which was performed by Bushra Ansari. Poem persuaded in purposive style, grounded on child learning and education development. Farooq Qasier scripted the composition of verses in an inquisitive manner to make it more understandable for children. In which, *Shermeli* is being referred to teach children about characteristic of animal specifically a goat. Simple words have been used as from where *Shermeli*; the goat, comes from, how far do she lives, what do she likes to eat and wear. Poem composed rhythmically with easiest but impactful words for better consideration to children. In which, music is playing a significant role to disseminate knowledge more than sixty percent content formation has been based on melodious style of poem. Further, basic subject matter revolves around the character of *Shermeli*, representing a character of furry goat to describe children about its specifications more precisely.

In which, every minute detailing has been illustrated in inquisitive manner for child’s better understanding with respect to its identification. The learning process is carried out through hearing, seeing and verbal directions. The lyrics are synchronized well briefly by Farooq Qaiser, elaborating each characteristic of a lamb/goat. Supportive role of Bushra and *Shermeli* exchanged phrases about natural adaptation of a goat from its life setup to eating habit. This way is keeping it easier for a child to remember about an animal with

an inanimate puppet appearance. Every query that could come into the mind of a child is being answered by using simple words. Parallel to this, *Kaliyan* serves as a learning tool in understanding the alphabets, counting, as well as awareness on informative topics related to cultural and social aspects.

It is determined that a child's behavioral attitude towards everyday life can be shaped up well with 'fun while learning' approach. This puppet series is directly associated as an effective medium of education for children with the approach of learning through entertainment. It not just encourages the learning habit of a child but also enhance its capacity of gaining of knowledge.

Conclusion

The research explores that the PTV's *Kaliyan* show has effectively used medium of puppetry for early childhood education. The puppet series was developed to encourage the foundation phase of learning in allover the Pakistan through television transmission. Puppetry has played a significant role through its visual presentation of characters which directly stimulates the child's imagination.

The analysis of the episode: *Shermeli*, discloses that Qaiser, with his puppet goat, wants to communicate some basic ideas and morals to the children and also to the society, and presents the basic pre-school knowledge about how and where goats are living. He wants to encourage youth to love animals, and live harmoniously on the planet. He also addresses some basic personality traits and propagate moral values to build a balanced personality of his young viewer. The language is simple and the mostly based on music so that the information can easily be communicated to the children and average adult audience. The style of the show is comedy and satire, which is a popular genre to attract larger audiences and it aims to create a better society.

Main informative section is based on musical improvisation and most of its phrases are developed in inquisitive way. This method nurtures the natural abilities of children and helps them to resort their abstract thoughts. In this way, the perceived sound of different words directly aids the process of speech learning in early childhood. The voices are toned more local and entertaining to delight children grapping their attention to main concept. Backdrop set of this episode designed on conceptualizing the scene of jungle to develop child understanding visually. Even, appearance of puppet matters a lot to a child, as their affiliation concerns directly with characteristic of an intimate object. The exploratory habit of children permits them to observe and reconnect their imaginative thoughts with knowledge. They have the ability to perceive, imitate and recognized visual information more keenly and it gives a positive impact to build child's memory strong. The main idea of this episode has drawn naturalistically to engage children in direct learning method of education.

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