

Meral Z.ahid

# parchayian

Challenging conventions and representation

FUTURE LENGTH FILM

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How does your product use or challenge conventions, and how does it represent social groups or issues?

Parchayian: An Idea to the screens

### Acknowledgements

To my talented team, without whom this film would never have been possible. Thank you.



**How does your product use or challenge conventions, and how does it represent social groups or issues?**

Our film conforms to the conventions of the period drama genre, featuring an authentic speech by a political figure (Zia Ul Haq) to ground it in reality and quickly identify the time in Pakistan's history in which the film is situated and the location by the use of imagery of the iconic monuments situated in old Lahore right in the opening montage. It uses elements of language, costume, and mise-en-scene to craft the scene to date back half a century.

Language was also an essential factor to choose from; having the script in English would have ensured the accessibility of the film to a broader audience, yet it would have compromised the identity of our characters as Pakistanis. Instead, we decided to give up on our profits from a more global market. Preserving our identity was ultimately more important since it would only seem more natural on the screen and allow the audience to see a more accurate representation. We have proudly represented the Pakistani community through the use of the Urdu language and the actresses donning traditional clothing.



## OPENING: VOLUME I

This conscious decision aligns with Pakistan's societal standards, fostering a sense of cultural pride and connection among our audience.

However, when, in film and media, women wear traditional clothing, they are portrayed as oppressed and naive, while those wearing Western clothing are shown as educated and intelligent. Yet, our characters defy this norm, as My co-writer Zahra Aslaam and I have meticulously crafted Zoya's character to shatter the stereotype of women being voiceless, mere extensions of their husbands or fathers. Parchayian was created to help dismantle the patriarchal structures that often limit women's representation in media to either weak, submissive characters or objects of pleasure for the male gaze, as noted by Laura Mulvey. Zoya, instead, defies societal norms by displaying a keen interest in politics, yearning for the right to vote in a country where the onset of a dictatorship has stripped her of this fundamental right. We see her express her political views through her art in a flash forward, showing that when the rule of Zia discouraged women from gaining education, she could express herself politically even through her art. Her resilience and determination are a beacon of inspiration, challenging the status quo and paving the way for a more progressive society.

The film serves as a poignant exploration of women's rights in Pakistan, inviting our audience to reflect on and engage with this crucial social issue. By highlighting these concerns, we aim to evoke a sense of urgency and a call to action, fostering a deeper understanding and empathy among our viewers.



**Does your product editing conform to the conventions of the genre?**

As the project's editor, I used a fresh colour palette that is not relatively conventional for a film carrying heavy themes of the oppression of women; this juxtaposition is paradoxical, yet it works- Oppenheimer (a little intertextual reference for you). The film derives its visual inspiration from Jojo Rabbit and Life of Pi for the colour palette.

The film may be categorised as postmodernist with its use of experimental editing. Even as the movie starts, the screen rolls into place by giving an old TV effect, hinting that it was set in the past—the dramatic title on the screen. Throughout the film's opening, we follow a non-linear narrative structure as the film opening goes back and forth with flashbacks to conversations and flashforwards to resistance headed by the characters.

Symbolic and enigma codes are followed through the colour red used for Zoya's paintings and outfits, giving an impression of her being bold. The opening is open-ended, with multiple interpretations for our viewers to decode.

## OPENING: VOLUME I

We have a flashforward; the enigma created to situate the period and what is happening on screen creates a subtle tension and makes the audience actively watch the film.

It also purposefully contains an intertextual reference to the nazm Hum Dekhenge ("We shall bear Witness") by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, written in 1979 as a response to Zia Ul Haqq's regime. It was then sung by Iqbal Bano in 1986, wearing a black sari as a protest when it was banned under the dictatorship of Zia. This name went on to become a chant against the oppression under Zia's rule. Thus, the two words hum dekhenge in the context of our film carry a heavy historical context.

*END OF PREVIEW CONTENT*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Meral Zahid is a Lahore-based director who has earned critical acclaim for her work on parchyian as the film's director and co-writer. She made the film during her senior year at Local high school for her media studies project. Since then, she has worked on numerous new projects with up-and-coming directors.

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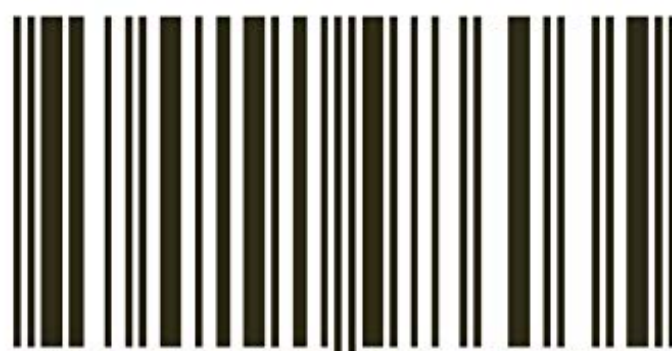


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