UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN CHARACTER BEHIND THE FAKE BADAL GUPTA IN BADLA

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Abstract

Badla (Revenge) is a Bollywood crime mystery thriller movie starred by Amitabh Bachchan as a fake Badal Gupta (attorney) and Taapsee Pannu as Naina Sethi (businesswoman). The story is based on an interview between Badal Gupta and Naina Sethi who claimed that she was framed to be the one who is responsible for the murder of her lover. The objective of this study was to find out the clues given by the fake Badal Gupta to who he really is and the motive for his disguise. A content analysis was performed to analyse Badal Gupta’s words as clues to reveal the real character behind Badal Gupta and the motive for the disguise. The writer finds out that the person behind Badal Gupta was Nirmal, the father of Sunny, who was drowned killed by Naina and the motive was revenge. This crime mystery movie conveyed the messages that in the end, the truth will prevail.

Keywords: Badla, mystery movie, content analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Badla (Khan, 2019), a Hindi language movie, is an official adaptation of a Spanish film, The Invisible Guest (Gamero, 2017). The differences between Badla and The Invisible Guest, other than the language used, was the character exchange, where in The Invisible Guest, the story is based on an interview between a female lawyer and a businessman, while in Badla, it was between a male lawyer and a businesswoman. The movie, Badla, was released on International Women’s Day, 8 March 2019.

Badla is a crime mystery movie where Badal Gupta, a lawyer who never loses a case and currently decided to retire, is hired by Naina Sethi, a businesswoman, to release her from the prosecution of murdering her lover in a hotel room. The interesting plot of the movie is not only how clever the lawyer is in revealing the real murderer of Naina’s lover but also on how the audiences were made surprised, even shocked, by the ending of the story where it reveals the real person behind the mask of Badal Gupta. As a mystery story, this film directed its audiences by giving clues along with the storyline on who is the real person disguised as Badal Gupta.

This paper intends to analyse the English subtitle of the movie, Badla focusing on analysing the fake Badal Gupta’s dialogues as clues to uncover the real character in disguise as Badal Gupta and the motive for the disguise.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Content Analysis

Content analysis is used by a researcher to analyse the meaning of words within texts and to relate the words with a certain situation where the words are uttered. The next step is where the researcher interprets the meaning within the specified context. The text can be found in any form such as book, interview, speech, informal dialogues, etc. (An Introduction to Content Analysis, n.d.). There are three approaches that can be used to analyse the meaning derived from the content of text data. First is a conventional content analysis where the data is coded directly from the text data. Second is a directed approach where test is categorised as deductive in application. In this approach, the researcher has a theory in mind or relevant research findings and focuses on the text data to answer the research question.
The last one is summative content analysis where the researcher interprets the underlying context from the content (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

**Mystery Movie**

A mystery movie presents its audiences with characters, suspects, along with clues and details. As the audience engage with the storyline, unconsciously, the audience act as the detective to solve the mystery provided, and that is the very interesting part of a mystery movie. As Pollock (2003) claimed, a mystery writer provides his/her readers with clues to help the readers solve the puzzle around the mystery. To write a good mystery story, the writer has to follow several rules such as: 1. the writer has to provide the readers with clues to solve the mystery; 2. The detective in the story must never turn out to be the culprit; 3. The culprit must be defined by logical deductions; 4. The detective in the story must be able to solve the mystery or the crime at the conclusion based on the clues and details provided throughout the story-line; 5. There has to be a corpse in a detective story; 6. The method of the murder and the way to solve the crime must be done in a rational and logical way; 7. The story only provides one detective and one main culprit; 8. The culprit must be familiar to the readers and take turn a more or less prominent part in the story; 9. A crime in a detective story is a planned, and not something that happened because it is an accident or a suicide; and 10. The motives for all crimes have to be personal (Jones, 2016).

**Summary of Badla Movie**

The movie begins with a view of an old man with a suitcase heading to an apartment while trying to hide his nervousness. A nut seller in front of the apartment shouts, “Nuts! Nuts!” to the people who cross by. The old man who passes the nut seller says to himself, “I must be”. Arriving at the intended apartment, a young woman, Naina Sethi, who is having breakfast, quickly opens the door. The old man introduces himself as Badal Gupta, the prestigious defense attorney who was contacted by Naina’s lawyer. Naina is a bit surprised because Badal came earlier than she expected. Badal convinces Naina that the reason why he is earlier than she should is that he found out that the prosecutor has a new witness who is likely to testify against Naina and she could be arrested that night.

Badal then begins to interview Naina and emphasises that they only have three hours before the new witness gives his/her testimony. Badal requests Naina to be honest with him and to describe every detail that she can remember and that it is the only way he can help her. Naina starts her story by saying that she and Arjun, her lover, were blackmailed by someone for their extramarital affair. They were asked to go to a hotel in a remote location and to take with them £100,000 to be given to the blackmailer in order for the blackmailer to keep their secret. Naina claims that she was attacked from behind and when she woke up she found Arjun already dead with the money. Soon she was arrested, but her lawyer managed to get her out of custody on bail. There is no evidence that anyone else was in the same room or breaking in.

Badal suspects that Naina tried to hide something from him. Therefore, to obtain more information, he asks Naina whether she knows a young man who disappeared near the hotel. Naina admits that she and Arjun were on the way back from their secret rendezvous area when she accidentally crashed into an oncoming car. The young man, Sunny, who drove the car was dead on the spot. Soon, Naina drove Sunny’s car with Sunny’s body in the trunk and dumped the car in a swamp.

Naina’s car could not be turned on after the collision and Arjun was in the car when Rani and Nirmal, a local couple, offered to help to repair his car. The car was towed to the couple’s house where Nirmal repairs the car for an hour. In the house, Rani made a call to Sunny whose phone was in Arjun’s pocket. Arjun claimed that he accidentally sat on it but Rani was unconvinced because Sunny never left home without his phone. Having his car already repaired by Nirmal, Arjun corrected the seat position before he started to drive. That time, Nirmal realised that the car was not Arjun’s car and there was another driver who drove the car.

Soon, Arjun and Naina decides to never meet again and get rid of all the evidences that directed to their secret relationship and which can connect them to Sunny’s death. However, Naina said that they were contacted by the blackmailer, leading to the present events.

Based on Naina’s story, Badal believes that Rani was the one who murdered Arjun and accused Naina to be the murder. It was possible for Rani to do that because Nirmal works at the hotel and have access to hotel rooms. Later, Naina, who at the time already trusted Badal, reveals a secret: Sunny was alive in the trunk. But it was already too late when she found out about it, all she had in mind was to protect herself and the only way was to dispose the car into the swamp.

Badal, who was shocked by Naina’s confessions, proposes an alternate sequence of events. This time, he suspects that Naina was the one who actually pressured Arjun into hiding the crime. In this version,
Arjun felt very guilty and admits the truth to Rani and Nirmal. He decided to meet them in the hotel room but he did not want to come empty-handed. Therefore, he asked Naina to take with her £100,000 and claimed that it was for the blackmailer, but the truth was, he wanted to hand the money to the couple. At the hotel room, while waiting for Rani and Nirmal to come, Arjun revealed his plan to Naina but she disagreed to reveal the truth to Rani and Nirmal. Because Naina was already trapped in Arjun’s plan, and no way out for her, Naina then killed Arjun, injured herself, and blame Rani for the crime. Naina denied Badal’s theory. But Badal said he refused to help Naina if she was not honest with him. Naina then made a confession, that she did murder Arjun, and Badal agreed to fight her case.

At the end of the interview, Badal said that there was actually no new witness who will testify against Naina. He made it up to push Naina to be honest with him. Badal excuses himself for a moment to stay outside for some fresh air and to make a call. Only a few moments later, Naina receives a call from her lawyer, Jimmy, and found out that Badal’s pen was interfering with the call. Curious, Naina disassembles the pen and found a wire in it as a recorder device. At the same time, the doorbell rang and Naina realises that the one who stood now in front of her was the real Badal Gupta. As she glances outside her window, she saw Badal and Rani in the apartment room across from hers. At the same time, she saw Badal takes off his disguise to reveal that the real face was Nirmal’s. Rani called the police to arrest Naina. The plot was in line as Nirmal quotes the Mahabharata, “Draupadi’s (Rani’s) revenge has been taken by Yudhishtira (Nirmal).

METHODS

This study applied content analysis (Mayring, 2014) and the primary source of data was relevant dialogues from the English subtitle provided. In analysing the dialogue, there were three stages involved: preparation, organising and reporting (Elo & Kyngas, 2008, p. 109). The preparation step was done by watching the movie with the English subtitle. Next, the researcher searched for the English subtitle full script of the movie from the internet source (Badla (2019) Movie Script, n.d.). Then the organising stage was started by sorting the dialogues which directed the researcher for the clues that reveal the real character behind Badal Gupta and the motive for the disguise. The researcher also confirmed her understanding of the plot of the movie by watching the movie in its original version, the Spanish version, under the title The Invisible Guest, and paying more attention to the dialogues (English subtitle provided) to grasp the clues needed to answer the research questions. The last step was reporting the finding in the form of a conference paper.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Clues to the Fake Badal Gupta and The Motive for The Disguise**

There were several clues revealed from the dialogues of the fake Badal Gupta on who he really is. From the summary of the story, it was Sunny’s father, Nirmal, who disguised as Badal Gupta, the attorney hired by Naina Sethi, to release her from the murder charge. The clues are elaborated in the following.

**The Nervousness of Fake Badal Gupta**

The fake Badal or Nirmal, nervously heading to Naina’s apartment and he passes a nut seller in front of the apartment who was shouting, “Nuts! Nuts!” to the people who cross by. Badal responded the shouting by saying to himself “I must be”. This means that Nirmal thought that he must be nuts, or crazy, to act as Badal, a very well known attorney who never missed a case in his 40 years career.

**Naina’s Surprise and Badal’s Reason**

Naina looked surprised because Badal came earlier than she expected as Naina said when she opened the door, “Actually, I was expecting you a little later”. However, Badal reasoned that there was a new witness who would testify against Naina that evening, “The prosecution has found a new witness against you—I don’t know who or what, but that person has some evidence...which can completely change our case. That’s why I changed my time to come here. The new witness will testify...at the police station in three hours”. Therefore, Badal needed to work fast to collect clues and details to avoid from Naina being jailed that night. But in fact, it was Nirmal who came before the real Badal Gupta arrived.

**Badal’s Keyword “Homework”**

Naina insisted that she was innocent and that she was framed by the real murderer to be the one who is responsible for murdering Arjun. She was sure that the police and the prosecutor would not find any evidence against her. It can be illustrated by the following extract of script:
Naina : Because I haven’t done anything.
Badal : But sometimes you get punished for doing nothing.
Naina : How?
Badal : Homework. In school? You get punished for not doing your homework.

What Badal said implied that Sunny, his son, was punished for doing nothing. He was drowned only because his car was collided with Naina’s car and therefore, Naina had to remove the car and Sunny, the driver. It could also imply that his wife, Rani, who was doing nothing, could be framed as the one who killed Arjun for the revenge motive. The last implication, it was Nirmal’s homework to find the murderer of his son.

Dhritarashtra and Sanjay

Further, Badal analogised himself as Dhritarashtra, a blind king in the Hindu epic Mahabharata, and Naina as Sanjay. In the epic, Sanjay was the visionary narrator for Dhritarashtra who listened to Sanjay who related the events of the battle between the Kaurava and the Pandava.

“Whatever it is that you saw...you must make me see. Like how it was...for Sanjay and Dhritarashtra.”

“Naina, listen. Like justice, Dhritarashtra was also blind and Sanjay was his eyes. Whatever Sanjay told him...became the truth for him. Now, you are my eyes. Whatever you tell me, will become the truth for me. So, try to see everything clearly in your mind...and then tell me. Every little detail.”

The excuses given by Badla implied that Nirmal did not know the exact incident but Naina knows. Therefore, Naina has to visualise the detail of the situation to Badal or Nirmal, including the exact location where Sunny was drowned.

Nirmal Works at Glen Mohr Hotel

The next clue was when Naina remembered that Arjun had ever told her that Nirmal works at Glen Mohr Hotel, “Nirmal Singh Toor. Sunny’s father. Arjun told me he works at a hotel...Glen Mohr Hotel”. That was the hotel where Arjun asked Naina to meet him by taking with her £100,000. Arjun said the blackmailer wanted the money but in fact Arjun wanted to give the money to Rani and Nirmal as a compensation. As Badal theorized, “Arjun wanted to confess everything to Sunny’s parents. And as a way of compensating them...he got you to bring the money”.

Rani and Nirmal Met in a Theatre Club

When Arjun was in Nirmal’s car, heading to Nirmal’s house, Rani told Arjun that she and Nirmal met in a theatre club, they both love acting.

Rani : That’s how I met him. We both were in a theater group. But I am a much better actor than him.
Nirmal : Rubbish!
Rani : Oh, really? Who won the Best Actor Award for Twelve Angry Men?
Nirmal : I did.
Rani : Okay, fine! But the audience clapped on my entry.

The dialogues above clearly showed that the couple were professional actors and made it possible for Nirmal to disguise as Badal Gupta.

Badal’s Riddle

Badal directed Naina to solve the puzzle of finding the real murderer by giving Naina a riddle.

Badal : If A=E, B=F, C=G, D=H...then E=?
Naina : -I?
Badal : Sure? I say, A.

This implied that after having a long interview and it seemed that it was Rani, the one who murdered Arjun and framed Naina as the murderer, while in fact, it was Naina herself who is the murderer and creates a false story to defend herself. As Badal said, “Oh, back to where we started. Like how we go all over
searching for a particular answer but the answer, in fact, is always right in front of us”. In the dialogue, Badal subtly wants Naina to admit that she was the one who did the crime, to Sunny and to Arjun.

6 or 9?

Badal then asks Naina to pay attention to details, “Concentrate on the details. You are too busy looking for the “6.” While the “9” is always right in front of you”. Even though it seemed that Badal wanted Naina to focus on details to find out the real person who murdered Arjun, but it could imply that if Naina concentrates on the interview which was happening between her and Badla, she could realise that the one who sits in front of her was not Badla Gupta, but Nirmal.

Badal’s Statement

Later, Badal claimed that “Nobody knows Rani better than I do”. This sentence is actually a crystal clear clue that the one who interviewed Naina was Nirmal, not Badal Gupta. However, Badal soon said that Rani was following him, and therefore, he was curious to find out who Rani was.

Badal’s Trick

At the end of the interview, Naina admits that she is the one who killed Arjun. Badal looked satisfied and he says that he would do his best at the trial to help Naina. Badal also admitted that there was no new witness, it was only his trick to make Naina tell the truth.

Badal’s Pen

Later, Badal Gupta excuses himself to go outside for some fresh air and to call his wife when Jimmy, Naina’s lawyer called her. While Naina talked to Jimmy on the phone, Badal’s pen was interfering with the call.

At that time Naina realised that Badal was recording the whole interview by using the pen.

The Arrival of the Real Badal Gupta

At the same time, there was a knock on the door. It was the real Badal Gupta who just arrived.

Badal Uncover His Mask

In her confusion, Naina pushes aside the window curtain only to see that Badal was in the same room with Rani in the apartment across the road. Badal slowly removed the mask from his face and to Naina’s shock, it was Nirmal’s face. There was nothing Naina can do now as she saw Rani called the police.

It is clear based on the clues presented above that Nirmal’s motive for the disguise is revenge. He wants to find out the location of his son’s dead body. Nirmal also wants Naina to admit her crimes to Arjun and Sunny. By having the recording of the interview, Nirmal and Rani have enough evidence to call the police to arrest Naina.
CONCLUSION

Badla, or revenge in English, is a mystery movie which taught us how a lie directs to another lie and the liar would do anything to cover the lies. In this story, Nirmal, the father of Sunny, made use of his ability in acting to pretend as Badal Gupta, a well-known attorney hired by Naina Sethi to release her from the alleged murder of her secret lover. The motive for his disguise was because Nirmal wanted the truth from Naina on who was the killer of his son, Sunny, and the location of Sunny’s dead body. There were 13 clues found in the movie which helped the audiences to guess that it was Nirmal who disguised as Badal Gupta. All in all, this story tells its audience that in the end, the truth will prevail.

REFERENCES


