

“Shadows” of Macedonia on Aamir Khan’s “Talaash”?

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REEMA KAGTI’S *TALAASH* BEARS CERTAIN SIMILARITIES WITH 2007 MACEDONIAN FILM *SHADOWS*

[T]he recently released *Talaash* directed by Reema Kagti, starring Aamir Kahan, Rani Mukerji and Kareena Kapoor will long be remembered as a good movie where glamorous superstars of our time are seen playing convincing character roles. Apart from its refreshing theme of presenting crime from an unorthodox angle, *Talaash* is a movie that explores a fresh treatment of the supernatural genre. Though both the writers—Reema Kagti and Zoya Akhtar—have said that *Talaash* was based on a real-life incident that took place near Haji Ali Road in Mumbai; it is interesting to note that the film bears certain similarities with a 2007 Macedonian film *Shadows* (Macedonian: *Сенки*, Transliteration: *Senki*) directed, produced and written by [Milčo Mančevski](#).

“Shadows” by Milčo Mančevski.

Like *Talaash*, *Shadows* is about a crime, committed in the past and lost in collective consciousness, resurfacing with the involvement of the supernatural. While the crime in *Talaash* is committed against an individual; *Shadows* deals with genocide.

The victim, Rosie or Simran (Kareena Kapoor) in *Talaash* laments before inspector Surjan Singh Shekhawat (Aamir Khan) about the public indifference towards a prostitute who went missing three years ago. In *Shadows*, an old woman with a tattooed cross on forehead, Kalina (Ratka Radmanovic) tells Dr. Lazar Perkov (Borce Nacev) “Return what’s not yours. Have respect” in an ancient Aegean dialect not in use in modern day Macedonia.

Talaash is about the tragic death of Rosie or Simran at the hands of some ruthless rich people, whereas *Shadows* deals with a series of historical genocides committed by the Greeks against the Aegean Macedonians between 1913 to 1973—both long forgotten waiting to be unearthed by supernatural intervention.

Inspector Surjan Singh Shekhawat has an almost broken marriage with his wife Roshni (Rani Mukerji) after accidental death of their son. Unable to cope with the personal loss and guilt, Surjan loses sleep and regularly meets a hooker named Rosie in order to investigate a car

crash. Rosie provides him valuable information about the car accident which killed a film star. It is revealed in the end that Rosie was indeed Simran, a prostitute picked up by the film star and his two friends from a hotel three years ago. She died that very night after falling from their speeding car. She was buried by a pimp named Shashi near the sea under a white plumeria tree.

Surjan has a neighbour Frenny (Shernaz Patel), a psychic who speaks with spirits. His wife visits her to communicate with their dead son. Surjan refuses to believe in the supernatural until he realizes that Rosie whom he meets every night had died three years ago.

In *Shadows*, Dr. Lazar Perkov, an orthopedic surgeon, brought up under the heavy influence of his successful orthopedic professor mother, has also an estranged relationship with his wife. He often stays with another woman who has a young son. After recovering from an almost fatal car accident, Lazar returns to their city apartment only to find an old lady Kalina, in black headscarf with a dog. She tries to tell him something but the language seems hard to decipher. To translate the message, recorded in his cell phone, Lazar looks for a linguist but finds Menka (Vesna Stanojevska), his research assistant's wife in his place. The enigmatic and sensuous Menka, with bruise marks on her necks, seduces Lazar and takes him to a small house outside the city by a railway track. There Lazar finds a framed photograph with two ladies of the olden time—one of which is Menka. Menka talks about her childhood and her child plays with glow-worms in a wooden two-storied house in the countryside, down south Macedonia off the Aegean Sea.

Lazar is also visited by a man Gerasim (Salaetin Bilal), called a refugee with an anabaptist baby in his arms. Gerasim has spikes on his heels and blood oozes out from it. Both Kalina and Gerasim try to convey to Lazar to perform the religious rites for their bodies that remained dumped outside the cemetery until dug out for anatomy classes by his mother in 1973. Lazar fights with his mother to take possession of the bones and skeletons kept in a cardboard box and heads off to his mother's home village of Gluvovo. He digs a grave and puts the bones inside where Kalina and Gerasim with the infant appear. To his surprise, Menka also appears. It is then only Lazar realises that Menka, with whom he had had so many intimate moments, is a dead person. A dramatic turn takes place as Menka, under her obsession for the love of Lazar, tries to drag him inside the grave but Lazar manages to save himself. Lazar recovers with a huge scream and finds himself afresh on a sunny mountainous highway with his mother's SUV after crossing a long and dark tunnel.

In *Shadows*, where Dr. Lazar is first hinted by an old Aegean woman Kalina about the unsettled spirits of the dead; it is Frenny, the Parsi lady who does this in *Talaash*. Surjan's nocturnal dates with Rosie/Simran are like those between Dr. Lazar and Menka. In one scene, very much like Lazar-succumbing to a provocative Menka, Surjan too follows Rosie/Simran to a hotel room for a night but only to be lulled into deep slumber.

In the final scene of *Shadows*, Lazar digs a grave and puts the skeletal remains of the bodies belonging to Menka, Kalina, Gerasim and the infant and ritually buries them, Surjan too exhumes the skeletal remains of Rosie/Simran and performs the last rites according to Hindu tradition.

In the case of imagery and cinematography, *Shadows* uses reflections on glass—on door panels, bus windows etc throughout the movie to create a shadowy impression of the stated theme. *Talaash* draws upon aquatic imagery—drowning, seashore and showers that adds to the theme.

Creative arts represent a universalism and it is an interesting coincidence that Reema Kagti's *Talaash* rides on similar metaphors as seen in the Macedonian film.

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