

**LOCATING A DOCUMENTARY CINEMA
OF ACCOUNTABILITY: THE EMERGENCE
OF ACTIVIST FILM PRACTICES AS
A SOCIO-POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN
CONTEMPORARY PAKISTAN**

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Abstract: Maintaining trends of resistance movements, activist agendas, and advocacy campaigns initiated in opposition to the Islamization period and the dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988), contemporary expressions of resistance in Pakistan have also begun to include ‘activist documentary’ film practices. As issues of religious fundamentalism and extremism, gendered violence, violation of human rights, impact of Islamization and rigid *Sharia* laws, particularly on women and minorities, besides the violent socio-cultural and tribal practices such as stove-burning, acid-attacks, honour-killing, honour-rape, and *swara* continue to haunt the civil society, a new generation of creative activists are using documentary film as their activist vehicle of communication, resistance and consciousness-raising. This thesis will focus on independent documentary

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filmmakers, productions, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), as well as a government body, that have contributed to the emergence of an activist documentary film movement in contemporary Pakistan since the Islamization period. It will discuss their contribution and significance to the growth and progress of this emerging film category in the country, and argue for an investigative filmic body of work that can be identified as a critical documentary ‘cinema of accountability’ from within a Muslim society that seeks to provoke debate on crucial issues, stress legislative reforms, and promote social change.

Keywords: Documentary film, Pakistan, Islamization, human rights, activism, resistance and accountability, violence against women, Islam, *Sharia* laws, religious fundamentalism, terrorism, tribalism, honour.

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