

“You comprehend my pain but can’t feel it”: A Critique of Rational Suicide in Abbas Kiarostami’s *Taste of Cherry*

Md. Faizan Moquim

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia (New Delhi)
(faizanmoquim@gmail.com)

Abstract

The paper explores two interrelated problematics in Abbas Kiarostami’s *Taste of Cherry* (1997). It argues that the film represents two kinds of opacity in human existence—inter-subjective opacity (self and Other) and within self. The film foregrounds the inner state of Mr. Badii, the protagonist, as an opaque world disclosed to none, not even to himself fully. The Cartesian assumption that human subject is always epistemologically self-transparent is problematised in the film with a view to reveal how the protagonist in the crucial moments of deliberating suicide finds himself confronting a kind of opacity in knowing his motivation and action. To tease out this aspect in cinematic terms, the paper critically reads one key scene in particular as symptomatic of Kiarostami’s handling of such epistemological opacity. Connected with this, the paper argues that in presenting the existential drama of Mr. Badii’s inner turmoil over the question of suicide, Kiarostami problematizes the logic of rationality vis-à-vis suicide. Drawing upon Heidegger and Camus, it seeks to show that suicide is seen as a rational tool with which a rational mind like Mr. Badii’s tries to appropriate religious injunctions and legitimize the act. Whereas the film points to a critique of rational suicide by affirming life through the character of Mr. Bagheri, the taxidermist.

Keywords: Suicide, rationality, opacity, human existence, freedom