

Transcending Borders: Identity and Self in Majid Majidi's *Baran*

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Abstract

Majidi's *Baran* (2001) is a never-never love story between an Iranian boy and an Afghan girl. With a sublime lyrical vision and visual artistry, the protagonist's personal journey towards his final act of self-denial is framed in the much broader context of the Afghan refugee crisis in Iran. While achieving a fine balance between the romantic sentimentality and a stark realism, *Baran* takes us into the microcosmic setting of the Afghan migrant workers in the Northern Iran. The relationship between two irreconcilable enemies is played out on the microcosmic level of Lateef's exchanges with Baran and other Afghan coworkers. He gradually probes deeper into the miserable existence of the Afghan refugees and gradually comes out of the kernel of his singular Iranian self. Thus, recurrently, the film addresses the possibilities that differences should not necessarily be antagonised but can be accommodative in perpetuating a broader humanism. His leaps are his attempts to evade boundaries between two antagonistic identities. And by the end of the film, he succeeds in rising beyond any imposed identity as he achieves transcendence. Love evades all borders as Lateef's identity no more remains a local one in embracing the global. The film is all about this journey (having a spiritual overtone, given to Majidi's inclination towards Sufism; but this paper does not go into discussing that). This paper attempts to focus on the themes of identity and identification and the issue of self and other, chiefly highlighting on the journey of the central character.

Keywords: Afghan Refugee Crisis, Identity, Self-denial, Transcendence, Allegories.