

# Portrayal of muslims in indian cinema essay



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After the incident of 9/11, whole world look towards the Muslims as the icon of terrorism. It is extensively and noticeably around the world since that horrible incident and world politics represent it clearly. The sign of terrorism and the picture of Muslims as terrorist, invaded the world almost at the same instance. Following that, Muslims are now indicated as terrorists all over the world.

Ever since the partition of the sub-continent in 1947, when Britain took apart its Indian domain, India and Pakistan have been arch rivals. The animosity has its roots in religion and history, and is epitomized by the long-running conflict over the state of Jammu and Kashmir. This has recently escalated into a dangerous nuclear arms race too. From partition in 1947 till today India and Pakistan is arch rival which not just visible in wars but in sports and entertainment content as well. Film, normally, has massive impact on the general public. It presents new style, thoughts and way of life etc.

Khan and Bokhari (2009) say that “ Film, generally, has enormous impact on the societies. It gives new trends, ideas and traditions etc. Films not only make the opinion but also reshape the opinions. Films reshape old trends, customs and traditions. If one idea prevails strongly in a society then it can be transmitted from one society to another. ” Films not only build the opinion but also reform the opinions.

Films reshape old fashion, way of life and customs. If one initiative succeeds strongly in the general public then it can be transmitted to others too. Indian films took an advantage of the incident of 9/11 and they started to present Muslims as terrorists in their films. Movies were made on the subject of

terrorism and only Muslims were shown as terrorists who were nurturing terrorism not only in India but in the whole world.

The influence and strong impact of Indian films has increased and almost reached at hegemonic level. Indian films is presenting Muslims as terrorists and describing Islam negatively. World's view about Islam and Muslims is not as good as it should be. Indian films have played a prominent role in making this image stronger along with the western media especially after 9/11 incident. Yousfani (2012) says that “ Regrettably, most Indian movies happen to depict Muslims and Pakistanis through a predominantly negative lens. ” Bollywood is one of the famous and the strongest industry among the film industries around the world, even before the incident of 9/11 happened, it has portrayed Muslims as the threat and a bad guy, sign of no integrity and cruelty.

Kattarwala (2010) says that “ The Indian films, particularly the Hindi films popularly known as Bollywood films, portray a dichotomous context of Islam without being representative of its mystical connotations. The faith is often carried on the protagonist's shoulder as the faith of the believer who believes in the supreme reality and also reinforces eternal good or the faith of the quintessential “ outsider” whose patriotism is missing. ” In their patriotic movies like, Heena (1991), Roja (1992), Border (1997), Hindustan ki kasam (1999), Sarfarosh (1999), Mission Kashmir (2000), Fiza (2000), Gadar: Ek Prem Katha (2001), Pinjar (2003), LOC Kargil (2003), Black Friday (2004), Agnipankh (2004), Dus (2005), Yahan (2005), A Wednesday (2008), New York (2009), Kurbaan (2009), Once Upon a Time in Mumbai (2010), Ek tha tiger (2012), Agent Vinod (2012) and many more similar to these movies.

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Mujtaba (1999) In such movies, the villain is shown mouthing slogans against India, fighting for the cause of Kashmir and Islam, all the henchmen are gun totting bearded guys, wearing Shalwar-Kamiz with a scarf over the shoulders.

They are shown with blood shot eyes bursting at the seams with irrational anger. In contrast, the ' leader' is dressed in typical Molana clothing, a skullcap and a rosary in hand. He would first say some Arabic words and then demonstrates his mega plan to destroy India. As the result of 9/11 the word ' terrorists' was bonded to Muslims. Taking advantage of the situation, Bollywood took the opportunity of reproofing Muslims as terrorists. They illustrated the Muslims as terrorist nation of the time which is always ready to shatter blood.

A new opinion is trying to be made in the society by it. Many movies also depict that the troublesome Muslims of India, more or less, are supported by Pakistan. Pakistan is also showcased as the guardian of the militants of Kashmir. The attempt of Bollywood about portraying Muslims as villains is a serious matter. The issue was chosen for research because terrorism and Muslims are the burning issues particularly after 9/11. This research study aims to know the perception of Pakistanis on such Bollywood movies.

Literature Review: Gaston Roberge (1985) " Cinema is the great interpreter of the past and constantly programs the memory of its audience," Whitney (2006) explains that the media is a vital part of the state power-structure. In its practical application, it is more valuable than the military. There are definite drawbacks of using force; whereas, propaganda and public relations

tend to be less inconvenient to the normal flow of business. The media's prime objective is to shape public opinion, and reshape it again if needed. Jessop (2000) sheds light on the change of public opinion and subsequently change in the Indian society.

The author says that now it is creating differences between Indians on the sect's level. India has a big minority of Muslims who are living in India since thousands of years. But now the Hindus are not tolerating the Muslim presence in their homeland, and they look at Muslims as terrorists, traitors, and militants etc. even women and children are also included.

However, it is due to cinema because the cinema is portraying the Muslims like this. Plenty of movies are made in which Muslims are shown as bad people who are not faithful to their motherland and involved in fostering violence in Indian areas. The Hindu-Muslim hatred was increased after such films. Due to these films the society has cornered Muslims and brought them in a defending position. Mishra and Gho (2003) describe that terrorism and low intensity conflicts are not new in South Asia but the 9/11 incidents consequently gave the events a new direction.

From regional, terrorism acquired global concern and changed perspective. Kattarwala (2010) The Indian films, particularly the Hindi films popularly known as Bollywood films, portray a dichotomous context of Islam without being representative of its mystical connotations. The faith is often carried on the protagonist's shoulder as the faith of the believer who believes in the supreme reality and also reinforces eternal good or the faith of the quintessential "outsider" whose patriotism is missing. Kattarwala (2010)

says that “ Being the second largest faith in this part of the world, Islam has invoked many interpretations which have either led to public disharmony or the communal bonhomie. It is significant to note that these perspectives have shaped the lives of millions of people and have hugely impacted the understanding of Islam within the Indian cultural milieu. ” Yousfani (2012) On one hand, the Indian government pretends to be a true friend to Pakistan and wants to develop good trade relations with us, while on the other hand, Bollywood films have been continuously involved in deteriorating the image of Muslims and Pakistan in particular.

Mir (2009) Bollywood reflects India, and has subsequently become an inseparable part of people’s imagination, lived experiences and traditions and customs. Bollywood and its engagement with Muslim as a subject have encountered an imperative shift over a period of time. Biagi (2001). Movies mirror the society that creates them. Some movies offer an underlying political message. Other movies reflect changing social values.

Still other movies are just good entertainment Parsad (2004) say that the Indian film industry is the largest around the globe with regard to ticket sales and number of films produced annually (877 feature films and 1177 short films were released in the year 2003 alone). The industry is primarily supported by the huge cinema going Indian public. The Central Board of Films Certification of India mentions on its website that millions of Indian inhabitants visit cinema halls every month. Indian films are popular in various parts of world, especially in countries with significant Indian communities.