OPEN ACCESS

European Journal of Behavioral Sciences
ISSN 2538-807X

Un/Familiar Other: The Indian Muslim and Bollywood Filmscapes

Sanaa Riaz

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Metropolitan State University of Denver, Colorado, U.S

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Muslim caricatures,
Bollywood,
Other,
Muslim Orient

ABSTRACT

The construction of the Muslim as Other in commercial Hindi cinema (often referred to by its portmanteau Bollywood) reflects varying dominant discourses on Indianness, gender and family.
In this paper, I analyze visual representation, personality traits, dialogues, lyrics and the aura and ambience weaved around Muslim caricatures in Bollywood films using 5 representative films from the 1950s-70s, 6 from the 1980s-1990s and 14 from 2000s-2020s. I examine how Muslim Other caricatures in commercial Hindi movies from the positive, essentialized, hardworking minority of a united India portrayed through the 80s to the one displaying subaltern sexualities and needing redemption and patronization of the Hindu protagonists portrayed through the 1990s to the sinister and promiscuous one portrayed in the 21st century serve as antidotes to and thus assist in communicating dominant ideologies on gender supremacy, patriarchy, gender roles and Hinduness as Indianness to a rapidly urban audience at home and in diaspora.

1. Introduction

The strategy in commercial Hindi cinema (here onwards referred to by its portmanteau Bollywood) of familiarizing the Indian Muslim to recast him/her as the eccentric comical, evil Other, or exotic stranger, have been closely tied to the country's changing politico-ideological stance toward Indian nationhood. In this paper I focus on how the Indian Muslim has been constructed in contemporary Hindi cinema as a local Other, who is familiarized only to be re-exoticized and/or demonized and, in turn, minoritized.

While the Indian Muslim caricature from 1947 through the 1980s portrayed a positive essentialized minority working with other minorities and the Hindu majority to project a united India against evil landlords and industrial elites, the adoption of Hindutva ideology by the state in 1989, exemplified by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and affiliated Hindu religious organizations, constructed in Hindi cinema a denaturalized Indian Muslim. The caricature became more sinister in films produced post-9/11 to match Bollywood's appeal to western partners and a large Hindu diaspora. Against the backdrop of the country's ongoing enmity with neighboring Pakistan, historically portrayed as a nation formed by betrayal of the visions of a united India and more recently as a den of Muslim terrorists, Muslim caricatures have become more sinister, a threat to Indian society at large, in particular, innocent, Hindu girls. My effort in this paper is to deconstruct how the Otherization and minoritization of the Muslim

* Corresponding author E-mail address: sriaz1@msudenver.edu

Cite this article as:
Riaz, S. (2022). Un/Familiar Other: The Indian Muslim and Bollywood Filmscapes. *European Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 5*(4): 31-49. https://doi.org/10.33422/ejbs.v5i4.928

is a strategy to communicate dominant discourses on Hinduness as essential to the Indian identity, on gender supremacy, gender roles and patriarchy, and on the Indian citizenry in Bollywood.

2. Literature Review

Movies from 1947 through the 1970s portray stereotypical, essentialized yet positive images of Muslims. From the 1980s through the turn of the century, positive and negative portrayal follows this a priori framework, but the depictions become more elaborate in their excessiveness, a strategy that remarginalizes them. In commercial films from 2000-2020, a demonic excessivity is added to the framework. Below, I theorize the paradigms portrayed through Bollywood's Muslim caricatures and the ways in which they mediate the concepts of Indian nationhood, global forces and the Other in an indigenous Orient.

2.1. Conceptualization the Orient

Chadha and Kavoori (2008) note that post-colonial India projected itself as one whose unity and strength was in its diversity. Yet, the bloodshed and ruptures caused by the 1947 partition and the resultant disparate religious and linguistic minorities and the disenfranchised lower caste and outcaste Hindus it left did not let the country fit the definition of a nation-state. Post-colonial Bollywood addressed this missing component by representing an Indian nation inherently secular and united in its diversity across caste and creed with films like *Mother India* (Khan, 1957) being a trend-setter.

With the Hindu right-wing influence in state politics and the conservative supervision of Bollywood projects, Muslim portrayals moved from the quintessential minority to that of the aberrant Other. Sai'd's well-known notion of Orientalism (1978) highlights the exotic, violent, gullible, lazy and ignorant construction of the Oriental subject as serving the colonial mission to cast it outside literary, historical and economic scholarly debates such that it is never represented within the domain of normality. The Muslim portrayals post-1980s onwards through the second decade of the 21st century project a pan-Muslim Orient, one which is similar to the colonial Orient of the Oriental subject Said portrayed. This Muslim Orient, symbolized by the bygone customs of the Mughals, archaic Persian, literary Urdu (associated with Indian Muslims) and associated mannerisms, essentialized Muslim lifestyles and adornments, as well as visuals ranging from the Balkans to Morocco replaced the 19th century Western construction of the Indian Orient. These tropes familiarize the Muslim to reinscribe it as one not defining the modern Indian. The caricatures placed in sagas about family values and struggles of morality over evil amidst global forces direct viewers to the indigenous, Hindu archetype as much as they highlight the rejected features of Western Orientalism. They lay out for the audience the familiar ethno-religious legacies of the Muslim rule as exotic, yet decadent. An indigenous Orient is thus constructed, reinscribing the colonial Indian imagery— its violent, volatile, gullible and untrustworthy nature and subaltern sexualities-- on to a new Indian Muslim image rendering it a familiar Other. Jilani (2015) notes that the exaggerated attributes of the familiar Other over time become a paradigm itself. A Muslim caricature seen mediating its differentness in morality, sexuality, sociability and patriotism over time becomes the paradigm of difference itself thus rendering *Muslimness* "as a performative construct, as a self-effacing, malleable phenomenon that can be normalized if mimicked" (Jilani, 2015). Thus when examining Muslim caricatures and the pan-Muslim Orient depicted in the indigenous post-colonial India Orient, it is important to note that arabesque music in the background, dressing styles ranging from Afghani to Turkish to Russian, use of Urdu and/or Persian words

and others allegories are enough to evoke the difference paradigm and signal disseverment in the indigenous Orient schema.

Richard King (1999) notes that the conceptualization of Oriental India's religions and cultures is a synthesis of Christian Western notions of the Orient, and essentialized portrayals of Hinduism by the upper-caste Brahmin colonial collaborators. Thus, what constitutes the Hindu nation in the 1980s onwards Bollywood projects represents a two-pronged struggle: To re-inscribe an indigenous understanding of the Orient over the Western colonial understanding, and to construct an essentialized model, represented by the Hindu patriarchal heteronormativity which the patriarchal archetype of the familiar colonialist, Muslim, most commonly represented by the Mughal rule before British colonization, must not invade. Representations of the Muslim 'Other' exemplify Bollywood's reclamation of what constitutes the Oriental back from western Orientalists. Through these creations of the Muslim Orient, the legacy of the Mughal rule and India's final sell-out to the British is selectively erased from historical memory to redefine the colonial India Orient with Vedic history and values, modern and prepared to embrace global challenges.

2.2. Hindutva and the Disjuncture of Scapes

In 1989, the Bharatiya Janata Party/Indian's People's Party (BJP) in power adopted Hindutva, a movement for Hindu supremacy, as the state ideology (Dwyer, 2014). The opening up of satellite television in the 1990s launched India on the global stage. Appadurai notes that a global cultural economy is marked by several social, financial and ideological *scapes* (Appadurai, 1990) which are overlapping and inherently disjunctured from tensions to define them. The "ethnoscape," the migration of Indians in greater numbers to Arab Gulf States, the United Kingdom, North America, and elsewhere, and the migration of their wives with them, was coupled with "technoscapes" that constructed a larger-than-life observant Hindu family as the norm.

It is important to understand the construction of the national narrative and the arrangement of troublesome minorities within it from the perspective of the re-articulation of state and cinema ties. Bollywood opened to overseas markets and in 1998 was granted "industry" status. This shift in state policy led to the reduction of duties and tariffs. Since 2000, only companies were awarded funds, as opposed to private loans on high interest rates from individuals that were the norm through the 1990s. With the rise of consumerism and the growing middle class at home, the desire to not lose investment and film markets to Non-returning Indians (NRIs), and the latter's desire to acculturate their foreign-born children in the parents' culture, Hindu rituals symbolized by Hindu male heterosexual archetypes and their families, in movies became more elaborate and the use of English in script and lyrics more frequent. A resurgent nationalism that coexisted with neoliberal market conditions and sought to obfuscate the actual erosion of borders required Bollywood's representations to function in an even more mythologized ways (the surge of animated Hindu mythology-based TV serials stand as a great example). BJP and its allies propagated their ideology through Bollywood and TV serials, as it became more important than ever to control the "scapes" that define for foreign cinema consumers, including Indians resident abroad, what India is. The desperation to reign in the diaspora population and the growing heterogeneity of Indian audiences was met with the repackaging of Hindu values as homogenized, which made the disjuncture of ethnoscape (the flow of people across boundaries) and ideoscape (the flow of ideas across boundaries) more blatantly visible on screen. The Muslim caricatures in post-Hindutva Bollywood moving from the clown, to the petty-crook, the immoral power-hungry, the sexually promiscuous, the social outcaste and to

the lurking devil among the moral, seem to be mediating the disjunctures of the global flow of *scapes*.

The difference between Hindu culture and Hindu religion in the post-Hindutva Bollywood projects became unrecognizable as the "ideoscape" of the forward thinking, enterprising, honest, liberal and generous upper-caste Hindu male began being constructed for the idealization of the have-nots and lower caste Hindus. As noted by Peter van der Veer (1993), in the new Indian Orient thus constructed, Brahmin/upper-caste practices were rendered as standard Hinduism and the Muslim caricatures began representing subordinate aliens in the schema of its own Orient. The Hindu Orientalism thus projected in Bollywood constructed a familiar Muslim Other so fantastic that it obscured a discussion of indigenous social debates.

The Muslim minoritization project in these cinematic representations where they simultaneously necessitate the creation of a quintessential Hindu ethos and patriarchal patronization through high-birth (upper-caste) Hindu protagonists also require representation in hardened gender binaries of the Hindu protagonists which are in turn contrasted with the sexual Otherness of the Muslim caricatures. The following section describes the nature of minoritization by way of sexually anomalous characters.

2.3. The Other as Sexual Anomaly

The otherization of the Muslim plays a unique role in the conceptualization of the Indian nation and of Indianness across the three phases analyzed in this paper. Chakravarty notes that "the 'nation' as an entity is always eclipsed in cinema and has to be reconstituted by viewers through its screen absence. It is the absence which marks the fullness of the nation. The fragment is therefore both the nation's source of fear and its object of desire, its threat and its Promise" (Chakravarty, p. 226). Muslim depictions in Bollywood, as they move from the exotic romantic in the 1950s-70s to the essentialized marginal in the 1980s and 1990s to the demonic in the 21st century, mediate the promise of the Indian nation and its threat for the viewers. They define the outlaw to accentuate the Hindu protagonist who belongs.

Belonging is not simply a political concept as nationhood is often deemed, but one in which paradigms of gendered morality are also defined. Kapur (2000) coined the term sexual subaltern for the "…disparate range of sexual minorities within post-colonial India…" marginalized due to their alternative sexual identities and experiences. An important otherization project in Bollywood is the casting of Muslim characters as the sexual subaltern. The sexual binary is presented by the larger-than-life Hindu heterosexual male protagonist's righteousness, physically might and aggression and the Hindu female protagonist's docility, weakness and helplessness. The cinematic Muslim Other represents sexual subaltern identities the politics of which represents a unique struggle in post-Hindutva India of using traditional religious and social values to harness globality. Being abandoned, orphaned, family less, unable to form a family of one's own implying sexual non-functionality, and desirous of marrying and consummating are ways in which the Muslim is depicted as the sexual sub-altern, a strategy that simultaneously clarifies that it is the progressive Hindu, heterosexual, high-caste male protagonist and his progeny that is presenting India on the global stage.

The sexual subaltern and the Muslim construct therein offer an important framework in the cinematic marginalization process. Films with *tawaif* (courtesan) as the protagonist placed in a romanticized precolonial Mughal setting have from the 1950s through the 1980s, enjoyed popularity with Indian Muslim audiences (Arora 1995). In the scheme of nationhood, the tawaif represents the Indian social outcast strung between India and Pakistan, longing to have a home and to become the Vedic pure woman ideal, with a focus on chastity, marriage, procreation with and service to an honorable Hindu patriarch. However, 1990s onwards the *tawaif* no

longer appears in her Mughal ambience, but as the erotic prostitute for the street chaps in item-numbers. Muslim women are often depicted as *tawaif* at *tawaif khana* (geisha house), implying the licentious legacy of the royal dignitaries under the Mughals (Kesavan 1994). While Muslim females are depicted as caught in the sexual promiscuity of their own community, Muslim royal history in India, through references to the moral degeneration of the Mughals during their last days in power before being ousted by the British, is evoked and subverted through Muslim male caricatures that appear as the sexual subaltern, promiscuous and unable to reproduce as implied in them being childless, abandoned or family-less or not heterosexual. The evocation of infertility with Muslim caricatures is an important subversive theme. As mentioned earlier with the hyper-eroticized Muslim female brothel image, Muslim women characters either provide erotic sensation or are seen suffering to come out of their communal fold and find safe haven with Hindu patriarchal families. Their duty towards creating a modern, enterprising Indian citizenry is in not letting the Muslim man win the demographic war.

The paper presents an analysis of films divided over three periods from the 1950s through the 2020s to highlight the themes of the exotic romantic, the terrorist, the pervert, the sexual subaltern, the erotic and the suppressed (female) in Bollywood Muslim representations.

3. Methodology

In order to the see the examine the ways in which Muslim caricatures in Bollywood movies reflect the dominant discourse on hegemonic heterosexual Hindu patriarchy, on women, nationhood and the role of minorities, I chose 5 movies from the 1950s-1970s to highlight the united India projects encouraged by the state's left-leaning policies, 6 from the 1980s-1990s to emphasize the greater screen time of Muslim caricatures juxtaposed with a right-leaning shift in state power, state sponsorship of the film industry and the minoritization of the Muslims and 14 films from 2000-2020 where the Sept.11 attacks (referred to as 9/11 here onwards) in the United States and resultant increased demonization of Muslims portray sinister and lost caricatures in Bollywood's projects and the patron state's desire to distance from the country's Muslim past. To capture the hyper-dangerous, hyper-erotic and sexually subalternized depictions of the Muslim in higher production rates since the 21st century, my sample of films from this period is larger. In addition, I will also take mega-hit item numbers, a term used for sexy cameo dances by stars who have carved their niche in provocative moves in 5 movies from this period to highlight how stand-alone dance numbers are where subtle Muslim Otherization occurs.

4. Analysis

Using visual representations, background settings and aesthetics and the personality types and dialogues of the Muslim caricatures, I will analyze the ways in which the dominant discourses on religion, citizenry and gender are communicated in Bollywood movies in three phases: 1950s-70s, 1980s-1990s and 2000s-2020s.

4.1. 1950s-1970s

Bollywood projects beginning in the 1950s represent efforts to steer away from the colonial imagery of the barbaric and divided Orient to present an India in which the pain of the country's partition in 1947 dislocation of its people, dishonoring of women, chaotic disruption of caste, religion, and class identities, and the creation of the Muslim enemy next door, Pakistan are reconciled. The state's initial left-leaning policies encouraged filmmakers to highlight proletarian themes such as social injustice, poverty, cruelty towards children, the mistreatment

of Hindu widows, and caste untouchability (Barnouw & Krishnaswamy 1981, 152-53; Bose 2006, 359). Films like *Sujata* (Roy, 1959), titled after the female protagonist's name, Sujata, depicting the romance between a high-caste Brahmin Hindu man and an untouchable/outcaste Hindu girl, raised the Gandhian message that outcastes can come close to and inter-marry Brahmins (Chakravarty, 2011; Barnouw & Krishnaswamy, 1981). On the other hand, films like *Pyaasa/Thirsty* (Dutt, 1957) and *Kaagaz Ke Phool/Paper flowers* (Dutt, 1959) explored the place of an artist in a hostile, materialistic post-independent state (Dwyer & Patel, 2002).

The corporal image of the nation was transformed to a sacred female body, one that is naturally maternal, nurturing and ready to make sacrifices for the nation and fight corruption and immorality. The iconic film, *Mother India* (Khan, 1957), serves as a case in point. Known as the best Indian melodrama of its day, it tells the story of a single mother who took great pains to bring up her sons with dignity and honesty. Radha gave birth to socialist activism in the form of Birju, who stands on the right side of the nationalist agenda, but later becomes a bandit, highlighting the irony that "India herself abuses just those socialists who wish to free the ordinary people from an otherwise endless cycle of poverty and exploitation" (Hogan, 2008, 130). Radha displays the power of the mother and the common man, as she kills her son in the end to save India.

4.1.1. Analysis

I will analyze 5 movies from this period to highlight the ways in which essentialized Muslim caricatures convey the message of an independent, united Indian nation cherishing inclusivity and diversity under the moral leadership of a heterosexual, Hindu patriarch. While this Hindu male archetype played a central role in Bollywood's nationalist reconciliation, his patriotism, not religiosity, was part of the united India narrative. Parallel to that, Muslim, Sikh, and other minorities fulfilled the agenda of forgetting their partition grudges, in particular the horrific Muslim-Sikh communal riots, and building a stronger India. In *Chhalia/Trickster* (Desai, 1960), a Muslim Pathan, Abdulrehman Khan, arrives in a post-partition Delhi. The film is set against the backdrop of the agony of families facing the prospects of accepting home abandoned women after years, presuming that they have been dishonored. Abdulrehman Khan rescues the Hindu heroine, a married woman separated from her family a month after her marriage during communal violence, by telling her to observe purdah (face-veiling), fooling the Muslim rioters in Lahore. He gives her child a Muslim name and teaches him Quranic verses, all the while hoping that God will send a kind soul to his own lost sister abandoned on the Indian side. The Hindu girl equates him with Ram's brother, Lakshman, who protected Sita for Lord Ram in the *Ramayana*. Comic relief is provided by Raj Kapoor, dressed as a Charlie Chaplin-style tramp singing "My name is Chhalia, my salaam to all Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians." The film has a happy ending with the Muslim protagonist learning that his sister had been protected by a Sikh family in India, and men on both sides of the border accepting abandoned women back into their families.

The moralistic stance to show the unity and high values of the nation were displayed through nature versus nurture themes as well, such as in the case of the film, *Ganga Jamuna* (Kumar, 1961) carrying a title based on the names of the two rivers, Ganges and its tributary, Yamuna, considered holy in Hinduism. The film focusing on the theme of two brothers, separated in childhood, one nurtured by pious, peaceful, hardworking Indian parents or their trusted guardians, the other by dacoits, looters, and insensitive greedy men. The exaggerated depictions of religious minority caricatures represent the power of pluralistic Indian citizenry and the struggle of the working class against a common enemy viz a viz the bad Indian who follows the colonial legacy of perversion, greed, and immorality. Films like the 1977 release, *Immaan Dharam/Honesty and religion* (Mukherjee, 1977) projected greedy rapists, and

"black-money" dealers as post-colonial usurpers against an array of virtuous victims, such as a chaste, blind Hindu female protagonist, a hard-working Hindu mentor and internal migrant workers building a new cosmopolitan Mumbai in the background. It presents minorities in line with the mission to serve Mother India regardless of communal boundaries, such as a nurturing Muslim adopting the needy, a disabled Sikh veteran always ready to protect his countrymen, and a pure-hearted Christian single mother making a conscientious choice to raise her child away from the western legacy of shady night clubs.

In the harmony-in-diversity projects, the hegemonic masculinity of the heterosexual Hindu male strives to uphold morality in the face of corruption and sets an example for male protagonists of other faiths on how to lead the powerless and protect women's honor as found in the teachings of the Sikh Guru Nanak, the story of Jesus, and the teachings of Quran and Gita. The 1973 blockbuster, *Zanjeer/Shackles* (Mehra, 1973) highlights a Muslim Pathan named Sher Khan, who clashes with a newly-appointed and honest Hindu police officer adamant at shutting down his gambling dens. Sher Khan waltzes in and out of the police station wearing the stereotypical Muslim markers–-*shalwar kameez* (loose trousers and knee-length shirt), a short maroon velvet waistcoat with Pashtun style embroidery, and a tribal turban, in addition to the classic signs of a low-class goon—red hennaed hair, sideburns blended into a beard and a moustache. In a key scene, the two men fight to a draw in the villain's den. The Pathan acknowledges having battled another Sher (lion). The antagonists shake hands and Sher Khan, exhibiting the tribal honesty traditionally attributed to the Pathans, promises to close down his illicit businesses. He orders two cups of chai, while the *rubab*, the short-neck lute, closely associated with the Afghans and the Pathans, plays in the background.

By the same token, the national narrative sees the good Indian female, similar to the mother in Mother India as the best associate of the Indian male. She supports his missions by embracing and upholding docility, the desire for family, marriage, and protection of her honor by the patriarch and by protecting the moral values and purity of the nation regardless of communal considerations. The 1983 blockbuster, *Coolie* (Desai, 1983) represents a case where Hindu and Muslim religious imagery is fused, as the Indian woman protects chaste India against an alternate India symbolized by the nouveau riche. The villain, Zafar, is a rich Muslim, who attempts to abduct a married Muslim woman, Salma. She preserves her honor by threatening to set him on fire, symbolizing Hell. By the same token, her speech inverts the Hindu mythological story of Lord Rama's wife, Sita, who was protected by Indra, the god of fire, from Ravana, the demon who kidnapped her. Salma also alludes to the Muslim scarf as symbolically equivalent to the *mangalsutra* necklace that a Hindu man puts around a woman at the time of her marriage, and greater in value than any palace Zafar may have built with his illegal wealth. Ravana had managed to kidnap Sita by trickery and spirited her away in his magic, flying chariot. Similarly, Zafar renders Salma unconscious and abducts her in his personal helicopter. He then kills Salma's husband, but Salma's male protector spirit is personified in the falcon, Allah Rakha (He whom Allah keeps). With pan-*Arabian Nights* style music playing in the background, Allah Rakha bites Zafar and pokes out his accomplice's eye. The falcon's "Islamic" identity, enhanced by its association with Arabia, fuses with the symbolism of the *naga* serpent deity in Hinduism, which guards one's treasure and brings prosperity, but is malevolent to disrespectful humans. Allah Rakha remains the patriarchal guard that will protect Salma's son, Iqbal, every step of the way until he reaches Zafar's den to take his mother's revenge.

4.2. 1980s to 1990s

A shift toward right-wing politics beginning in the late 1980s, in conjunction with the opening up of satellite television in the 1990s launching India on the global stage, began to shift the indigenous Orient to one in which the Muslim began to represent the non-Indian colonial Other. In 1989, the State adopted Hindutva ideology (a movement for Hindu supremacy), which was exemplified by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and affiliated Hindu religious organizations. This added the pressure to assert Hindu nationalism on both locally and globally which in turn translated into the celebration of India's Vedic cultural history and tensions in acknowledging over four centuries of Muslim rule. Bollywood began promoting the essentialized image of the upwardly mobile, enterprising, honest, and generous upper-caste Hindu male archetype for the commercial consumption of the have-nots and lower castes, and of the non-Hindu minorities. With the migration of Indians in greater numbers to Arab Gulf States, the United Kingdom, and North America, Bollywood projects began a shift towards larger-than-life Hindu patriarchal family sagas depicting the Hindus success at maintaining continuity with Hindu values and western material comforts. The quintessential Indian image represented by a traditional family structure and gender values appealed to a growing urban middle class at home, who exhibited increased tolerance towards alternate sexualities, working women, neo-local post-marital residence, longer bachelor status, non-marital sexual life, and non-arranged marriages. In such films, whether set in the diaspora or in India, domestic houses turned into mansions with temple-like rooms for worship and deity figures everywhere to drive home a Hindu aesthetic and cultural ethos.

While Muslim presence and "screen time" increased overall, the caricatures exceedingly began to represent the antidote to that which is Indian (Chadha & Kavoori 2008, 140). The tension of erasing India's Muslim past and present began being mediated by a variety of otherizing strategies, such as the funny, childish, servile, devoid of family and partnerships, and/or unable to make friends Muslim caricatures.

4.2.1. Analysis

I will now present an analysis of the essentialized Muslim portrayals set against a pan-Muslim Orient providing comic relief in 6 romantic comedies from the 1980s-1990s. In *Wajood/Existence* (Chandra, 1998), a poor typist falls for a rich girl who is in love with a police officer. As the plot gets thicker and sadder, comic relief is provided by the officer's Muslim assistant, Inspector Raheem Khan, who joins him on a murder investigation. The serial killer leaves as evidence the potion he used to drug his victims. Raheem Khan mistakenly drinks it and under the effect of the drug insults his partner and bemoans how his father forced him into the police academy rather than allowing him to follow his true passion as a Sufi devotional singer. The comic effect is punctuated by his repeated invocations of God's (Khuda/Allah) name.

To take another example, the 1994 blockbuster, *Hum Aapke Hein Koun..!/Who am I to you* (Barjatya, 1994), which initiated a resurgence in theater-going amidst forecasts of the decline of the Hindi film industry due to the VCR revolution, piracy and, soon after, satellite cable channels, presents an elaborate Hindu wedding of an affluent and a lower-middle class educated Hindu family with many songs and dance numbers (Ganti, 2012). The affluent family's house is open to Muslim friends, a childless couple representing the pan-Muslim world in their attire and mannerism. It is important to note here that in the rare instances of Muslim caricatures shown in a familial context, they are childless, symbolizing the strengthening of the Hindu patriarchal heteronormativity through the defeat of the Muslim in the demographic war. The Muslim male caricature in the film wears a Russian fur hat and is always seen eating paan/betel leaf and narrating poetry in Urdu, a language associated with

Muslims and the lingua franca of Pakistan. His wife does not wear the Indian dress, sari, but the loose scarf, full-sleeve shirt, and wide-legged pants, gharara, emblematic of Muslims from Lucknow or shalwar kameez /full-sleeve shirt, loose trousers, and a scarf, seen as caricatures of Muslims and of the neighboring, enemy country, Pakistanis.

Positive Muslim caricatures also become a vehicle to compensate for social deficiencies. When one has no family, one has a Muslim friend, albeit a lonely one. In *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai/Something happens* (Johar, 1998) one of the biggest hits in Bollywood cinema, the heroine, Anjali, is best friend with the hero, Rahul. She plays basketball with him and generally acts like a boy, highlighting that she has not embraced her femininity. Enter the spoiler, the "foreign" daughter of the school principal who represents the idealized diaspora. Despite her western upbringing, she can recite the Hindu bhajan (hymn), "Om jai jagdesh hare." Thus, she is the one Rahul chooses breaking Anjali's heart. Her world crushed, Anjali's only friend is the Muslim hostel warden, who is unmarried, family-less, but with a soft corner for her.

In the comic essentialized portrayals, the Muslim character is shady, but with the patronization of Hindu protagonists, he can be rendered loyal. In the 1998 action comedy *Bade Mian Chote Mian/Big Mister and Little Mister* (Dhawan, 1998), two train robbers bring their take to Sharafat Ali, a chubby, happy Muslim who specializes in reselling stolen merchandise. Dressed in a woolen Russian hat tilted to the side, a sign of classlessness and promiscuity, he relates his story, swearing frequently in the name of Allah. Because he likes the two robbers he shows them the value of his friendship, treating them to expensive foreign liquor at a Western nightclub with dozens of women in short skirts.

It is important to examine how hyper sexualized and sexual subaltern Muslim portrayals against a pan-Muslim Orient backdrop become instruments through which Bollywood films express the post-Hindutva Muslim minoritization. In the 1997 blockbuster *Ishq/Love* (Kumar, 1997), a Nawab Sahab named Nadi Dinna Changezi provides comic relief. Changezi, of Changez, evokes descendent of the Mongolian king, Genghis Khan. He wears a conical qawwali (Muslim devotional singing) chorus cap, which further identifies him as Muslim, along with a pink silk warrior outfit with golden laces and sash and an ornamental knife. With his colorful extravaganza, Changezi cross-dresses and implies the intersex paradigm of Bollywood comic sexual stirring, the *hijra* (Waugh 2017). His head wobbles to a classic Indian music beat, *na dhin dhinna* (thus Nadi Dinna) in the nature of the Mughal courtesan dance, further highlighting his ambiguous gender and shady origin. Nadi Dinna converses in the Hindustani dialect associated with Mughal rule in North India and poets tied to the Mughal courts. He wears beads, lipstick and diamond earrings, and carries a red rose that he frequently smells, implying promiscuity. Such caricatures are frequently queer, yet often indistinguishable from the image of a pimp, reminiscent of the mediators for (Muslim) nautch girls, the most frequent Mughal legacy portrayed in films. The Nawab Sahab, reminiscent of the lost Mughal elite, is an admirer of high art. Another minority character, a Parsi (Zoroastrian) merchant lures him with a female nude statue, which the hero broke and repaired to place the hips in the front. While the Parsi cringes, the Nawab Sahab is fascinated, "Mashallah, subhanallah! This artist just changed Khuda's own course altogether!" Recalling that Shah Jahan cut off the hands of the men who built the Taj Mahal so that they could not recreate the monument, he calls a dark, colossal man (the standard look for villain's executors, often meant to connote a pan-African image) wearing human bones around his neck. He orders him to cut off the Parsi's hands and bring them to Agra along with the sculpture, and walks away, his head wobbling.

In the positive portrayals, Sikh (always portrayed as an ethnic Punjabi) and Muslim (always portrayed as an ethnic Pathan) gullible and essentialized minority caricatures are often seem redeemed by association with Hindu male protagonist. In *Aa Ab Laut Chalen/Come, let's go*

back (Kapoor, 1999) the Hindu hero arrives in America and hails a Pathan Muslim driver, Sardar Khan, from Pakistan (the distinction between an Indian and a Pakistani Muslim is often vague). He wears a shimmering waistcoat over kameez shalwar in the country's dark green flag colors, an Arab keffiyeh over his shoulder, and hangs tasbih (prayer beads) from his car mirror. Speaking Urdu (connoting Muslim, as opposed to Hindi connoting Hindu) with a thick Pathan accent and making classic gender errors, the driver tells the hero that he is charmed by his mannerism. When the hero's friend, Ranjeet (implying a Sikh) abandons him, the Pakistani driver invokes a well-known proverb: "He who has no one has God with him". He then offers to introduce the Indian newcomer to "Hindustan," the flat he shares with a Sikh friend (this one a good Sikh). The duo keeps broken TVs as their trophies of having fought over India-Pakistan cricket matches and the Sikh's ritual of taking his turban off every Sunday to comb his long hair reminds Sardar Khan of his wife back home.

4.3. 2000s-2020s

Chadha and Kavoori (2008) provide various examples of the Muslim Other male portrayal in Bollywood. In essence, dangerous, comic, mafia leader, petty-crook, power-hungry politician, and similar volatile and marginal caricatures are depicted as Muslim. 9/11 fanned the flames of the Hindutva movement and increased the urgency to further disassociate the Indian prototype from the Muslim, who came in the way of projecting a harmonious narrative about the modern, upward mobile, Hindu India, one marked by visuals of baseball hats, ripped jeans, skimpily clad women, foreign locations, Goa beaches, and large suburban houses in foreign lands. To project the marketable Hindu male and appeal to a high-caste, Hindutva-sympathetic diaspora with money, it became necessary to erase the Muslim past and create a Muslim caricature as unscrupulous and licentious in grossly obvious ways.

4.3.1. Analysis

Examining 14 Bollywood projects, I analyze below the ways in which comic, sexually-subaltern and sinister Muslim male and victimized and/or erotically-charged Muslim female portrayals mediate Muslim Otherization.

Bollywood's new Indian in this phase is represented through a Hindu patriarch who embraced Vedic values, modernity, globality, hard work and progress and its antidote was now represented by the conservative, anti-modern, violent, volatile, gullible and untrustworthy Muslim adhering to the bygone customs of the Mughals in turn symbolized by the use of archaic Persian, literary Urdu, and courtly mannerism. While the male Hindu protagonist represents the hegemonic heterosexuality often in protective family patriarchal roles, the Muslim caricature is hyper sexualized or portrayed as the sexual subaltern. The character is shown as family-less, a social anomaly, violent, volatile, gullible and/or untrustworthy.

I will begin with the comic and sexually-subaltern Muslim male depictions that serve as relief roles in romances, family melodramas and thrillers. They showcase eccentricities and child-like obsessions and are contextualized as family-less either because of being orphans, being abandoned or as sexual subalterns who cannot marry or bear children. *My Name is Khan* (Johar, 2010), often taken as a breath of fresh air for making a Muslim male the central protagonist caught in people taking him to be a terrorist. However, the subaltern Muslim theme is continued in him being mentally challenged and therefore not on good terms with his family. With the *kh* sound not common to Hindi speakers, but present in the Urdu language associated with South Asian Muslims, Khan reacts strongly to the human touch and is seen throughout the movie telling people to pronounce his name from the epiglottis.

In *Love Ke Liye Kuch Bhi Karega/Will do anything for love* (Nivas, 2001), a romantic comedy of three couples, Aslam Bhai is a mafia lord, who loans money to people and chops their heads off if they do not repay him in time. People start shutting down their stores as he approaches to collect his share. As horrific as his personality is, he has just one weakness, which the protagonists abuse to gain a few more days on repayment, his desire to become a Bollywood hero. The 2014 Bollywood blockbuster, *It's Entertainment* (Sajid-Farhan, 2014), includes an Indian Muslim character named Habibullah (Allah's Beloved), the caretaker for a dog to whom a rich Hindu bequeathed his property. Habibullah is friendly, but his seemingly hard to pronounce name precludes any bonding, thus turning his name when combined with Allah into a variety of curses, providing comic relief.

I will now analyze the post-9/11 films depicting the sinister Muslim male who is a danger to India's Hindu Vedic values and the sanctity of the Hindu female. The prototypical sinister Muslim Indian in post-9/11 Bollywood projects is depicted as a Pashtun, Afghan or an Arab and is often indistinguishable from the Pakistani Muslim enemy across the border.

In *Asambhav/Impossible* (Rai, 2004) the hero is Captain Adit Arya, special agent of the Indian army. The plot focuses on the kidnapping of the Indian President by Youssan Baksh, leader of a fictitious Muslim terrorist group, Al-Amaz. His allies, "bhai jaans" (brethren in fancy Urdu), are Muslim infiltrators disguised as Indian army officers. One, who is bearded, holds secret meetings with bearded mujahideen wearing red and white-checkered keffiyeh, skullcaps, Pakistani style shalwar kameez, and holding Kalashinkov rifles. The army officers and terrorists speak Hindi with Pathan accents as they plot a coup in Kashmir and look forward to dismantling the foundations of India. When Muslim characters appear, music on the rubab begins to play in the background. After kidnapping the President, Youssan Baksh assumes the office and forces everyone to greet him with the Muslim "Salaam." When the kidnapped president challenges him that Pathan secessionists on the Pakistan side after 1947 did not raise the Kashmir issue, he replies that under the mentorship of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), he will take down America, which is slowly dominating the Muslim world. Eventually, the good Hindu captain, Arya (a classic secular Hindu name that here connotes "real" India), incites the Muslims kill each other and return the President to India.

In more contextualized depictions, the Muslim represents a Bombay mafia lord, a global jihadist who wants to wrest Kashmir from Indian control, or a white-collar urban terrorist looking to fool a trusting, liberal Hindu family. In the 2001 hit, *Bas Itna sa Khaab Hay/It's just a small dream* (Behl, 2001), the hero, Suraj, a simple village boy who sings about the river goddess Ganga, comes to Mumbai to go to college. He blindly falls under the influence of Naved Ali, a shrewd Muslim media baron. Hoping to impress his mentor, Suraj grows more corrupt with every passing day. Pooja, a traditional Hindu girl, tries to make him see the light, but it is only when Suraj has lost all his innocence that he realizes that he was just a pawn in Naved Ali's secret motives to become the Prime Minister of India.

Since this Othering seeks to create the Hindu patriarch as ideal, it is important to also analyze the ways in which the association of the Muslim with violence and terror in the post-9/11 projects was portrayed through the mentor roles of the Hindu female protagonist and the portrayal of Muslim female characters as victims of the Muslim male and of their Muslim values. Portrayed as a damsel in distress saved by the Hindu patriarch, the ultra-objectified and passive Hindu female protagonist only assumes a strong role when she can tame a Muslim man. A Hindu woman falling for a Muslim man, is a sign of shame in the patriarchal scheme of things. However, she can conduct herself as chaste and be a positive influence on the Muslim man, while maintaining her honor.

I will now analyze movies in which the sinister depiction of the Muslim male has transformed the passive Hindu female protagonist's role to that of the righteous mentor. *Jazbaa/Passion* (Gupta, 2015) presents a case in point with a Hindu female protagonist, Anuradha Verma being a slick lawyer as demonstrated by her successfully setting free her client, Abbas Abdul Razaq, a Muslim with a jail record for assault, kidnapping and theft back in court facing extortion charges. Verma is a powerful lawyer, but she has morals as presented by the lawyer-client exchange. Bearded, dressed in a waistcoat and shalwar kameez, and wearing flashy earrings and big stone rings, all connoting a pan-Muslim identity, Razaq guilefully approaches to shake her hand, but she coldly looks the other way. Instead, her assistant gives him a gift, the evidence that would have imprisoned him were it not for her hiding it. She then looks Razaq up and down and tells him that if he believes in prayers, he should pray they never meet again. Razaq works for a corrupt minister who later employs his gang of criminals to set the lawyer and her house on fire. Verma escapes and appears in court to fight a case against the minister. This convinces Razaq that Verma is indeed a force to be reckoned with and honest to her profession. With a change of heart, Razaq furnishes evidence to return her earlier favor and help her win her case against the minister. Thanks to the tolerance, graciousness and sincerity of the Hindu female protagonist, the Muslim man is transformed and tamed.

The urban Muslim may look as modern and professionally motivated as his Hindu counterparts, but his loyalties are not with India. In *Kurbaan/Sacrificed* (D'Silva, 2009), the female protagonist, a Hindu Delhi University professor falls in love with a Muslim man she thinks is a fellow professor. However, he has ulterior motives: to marry her and accompany her to the United States in order to carry out a series of train bombings. When the heroine finds out, she tells him that she is pregnant, a fact that leads to a change of heart after which he abandons the mission, saves her and kills himself.

The 21st century Muslim female roles appear in sharp contrast to the strong and chaste depictions of the 1950s-80s. Hindu heroine rarely has a Muslim girlfriend. There are two exceptions to the rule. The first is when the Muslim friend herself needs to be saved from a Muslim male protagonist. Let us see an example. In *Aaja Nachle/Come, let's dance* (Mehta, 2007) Dia, the Hindu heroine returns home after many years to revive the dance troupe of her late master. Her Muslim friend Najma, who had delivered Dia's farewell note to her parents when she had eloped with an American, refuses to recognize her. Now married to a domineering Muslim husband, she is intimidated. Her husband pressures her to attend parties dressed provocatively in order to woo potential clients and calls her a loose woman. One day, Najma risks her marriage to join Dia at a rehearsal, asking her to "Teach me how to live again." The show is based on the Arab *Laila and Majnun* (Romeo and Juliet). The husband, watching from the audience, is moved and has a change of heart. He admits that his eyes have been opened and the girl he had had nikah (Islamic marriage) with was a gift from Khuda (Allah). Such depictions highlight how a Hindu woman's morals can tame the Muslim man.

The second exception is when the Muslim woman becomes Mother India and protector from Muslim males who pose a danger to India and its Indian/Hindu values. The film *Fiza*, titled after the female protagonist's name, (Mohammed, 2000) presents a strong case of redemption through Muslim women. The story revolves around a Muslim girl, Fiza in search of her brother Amaan who has become a jihadist. She delivers two messages in the film. She tells an extremist Muslim politician that peace will come only if green stays part of India's flag. And in the climax, when she confronts Amaan, she challenges his vision of jihad and asserts their identity as Indians. He asks her for a dignified death and Fiza, evoking *Mother India* (as his apa/elder sister, she is equivalent to his dead mother) shoots him. He dies reciting the Kalma, testifying to his belief in Allah and his prophet, Mohammad. *Fanaa/Annihilation* (Kohli, 2006) brings visibility to the Muslim by portraying both hero and heroine in Muslim roles. However, once

again, the Muslim heroine can only be redeemed if she saves herself and the nation from her own. The two meet in Delhi, where the hero poses as a tourist guide (he specializes in Mughal architecture), but is actually part of a terrorist group. The chaste Hindu woman who trusts him is blind. He impregnates her and leaves. Meanwhile, she literally regains her sight. The symbolism of trusting a Muslim when blind and seeing the real him in the day of light is hardly a coincidence. When a chance encounter brings him to her house, he finds her taking care of his child and wants to stay. However, the terrorists demand information from him so that they can target sites in Kashmir. The Mother India in her is awakened; in tears, she shoots him to death as he turns his back to her to deliver the lethal weapon, again saving India.

The Muslim female caricatures are depicted as victims of the weak morality and values of their men and community and longing for the love and generosity of Hindu protagonists, a state that is often presented as erotic or comic relief in family dramas. These depictions are set against a pan-Muslim Orient backdrop and aesthetics that evoke a shameful Muslim past. Evocations of the moral degeneration of the Mughals during their last days in power before being ousted by the British, is important to creating this ambience.

The 2010 blockbuster romantic-comedy, *Housefull* (Khan, 2010) stands as a case in point. As the Hindu male protagonist sorts out his love tangle, comic relief is provided by Zulekha Bano, a sexually-charged widow possessing three hats, each for the three *crorepatis* (millionaires, implying pre-partition Muslim nobility) she married, but who died on the wedding night before consummating the marriage. Thus Bano's erotic appeal as a Muslim virgin awaiting marital bliss displaying a lust for all men and a weakness for men with money. She personifies a Mughal relic who never changes her shalwar kameez in a huge London (read Mughal) mansion. She comes down the stairs with Indian classical music (reminiscent of the Mughal geisha house entertainment) ringing in the background and walks the mansion with her head covered in the fashion of a chaste Muslim woman staring at the frames of her wedding night pictures, including the one with the third husband wearing an oxygen mask and head tilted to the side, implying that he was already dead when the bridal picture was taken. The multiplicity of husbands implies male-female hyper-erotica, as unlike Hindu women, Muslim widows can remarry. Extensions of the erotic Muslim female portrayals can also be seen in caricatures of the forlorn Mughal courtesan longing for a life of chastity and family (Arora, 1995) similar to the Hindu protagonists and more recently, in the wanton seductress in an item-number. The erotic Muslim woman, the shady Mughal/Muslim past and the pan-Muslim Orient will be further discussed in the section on item numbers.

In the post 9/11 films, tensions between the Sikh and Muslim minorities serves as proxy for the social inequalities and frictions faced by a growing urban population and Indian diaspora/non-returning Indians (NRIs). The pan-Hindu Indian principal identity is defined by reference to Muslims and Sikhs, with whom Hindus are tied in a web of conflicting historical, social and symbolic relations. It is only through their knotted constructed identities and relationships that the principle identity maintains its hegemony. In the post-9/11 Bollywood projects, a selective telling of the Sikh-Muslim rivalry from partition era constructs the Hindu patriarchal identity as strong-willed, forgiving and free of conflicts and minority religious identities as struggling to become part of a peaceful Hindu moral fabric. In the 2001 blockbuster, *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha/Rebellion: A love story* (Sharma, 2001), set in the aftermath of the 1947 partition of India into India and Pakistan, a Sikh man falls in love with a Muslim girl who he has saved from a gang of rapists. They get married and have a child, but her father tricks her into returning to her family in Lahore, as Muslim women cannot marry non-Muslim men. When her orthodox family plans to marry her off to a Muslim man the hero is forced to convert to Islam. In the end, disaster is averted following another attempted gang rape, when the father acknowledges the hero as his son-in-law. This treatment of inter-caste

marriage through familiar Muslim-Sikh rival subjectivities makes the subject matter more palatable.

In line with patriarchal norms, the subservient female is depicted as a Muslim whose family and community are her biggest enemies. The fact that Muslim law prohibits a Muslim woman from marrying a non-Muslim man (a Muslim man can marry other monotheists) is precisely the social reality Bollywood inverses. Patriarchal values and machismo are bolstered as the Muslim woman, similar to Hollywood portrayals of pure and sensuous women in Middle Eastern harems, are saved by non-Muslim men. While the non-Muslim is typically a Hindu man, the manner in which minority identities are reconciled in this master nationalistic narrative is based on the historical and social hierarchy of the minorities themselves. Thus, Christians first and then Sikhs are shown sorting any differences with the Hindu characters before the movie ends and/or becoming the torchbearers of Indian values of peace and progress. Let's consider two examples.

In the 2013 hit, *Ranjhanaa/Beloved one* (Rai, 2013), the Hindu hero, Kundan, falls for a Muslim girl, Zoya, from an orthodox family, who is sent away to college. At university she falls in love with a Sikh student youth leader, Jasjeet Singh Shergill. Zoya convinces him to portray himself as a Muslim, Akram Zaidi, so they can marry. When Kundan discovers the truth, he informs the family and they attack Jasjeet. Before he dies in hospital the Sikh forgives Kundan and decries how women entice men into killing each other. After a period of spiritual retreat Kundan follows Zoya to university and, although not enrolled, becomes involved in student politics and eventually attains the stature that Jasjeet once had. Enraged, still blaming Kundan for her Sikh lover's death, Zoya conspires with a corrupt politician to have him murdered. Aware of the plot but willing to be sacrificed, Kundan lets it unfold. When Zoya learns this, she runs to him. The Hindu hero from the Hindu holy site of Varanasi and a devotee of the Hindu Lord, Shiva dies in her arms musing about being reborn and falling in love with her again.

Such films, hailed as inter-caste advocacy projects, present an interesting intersection of minority status and gender inferiority. Inter-caste translates not as Hindu-Hindu, but inter-religious. *Veer-Zara* (Chopra, 2004), based on the names of the male protagonist, Veer from India and the female protagonist, Zara from Pakistan, stands as an example of a positive Muslim portrayal, a damsel in distress Muslim girl saved by Veer, another minority. Zara Hayat Khan, a Punjabi Pakistani Muslim girl (with an ethnic Pathan/Muslim name) must fulfill the wishes of her Sikh governess, who wants her ashes to be immersed in the Indus river tributary, Sutlej in Indian Punjab by the Sikh holy site. Squadron Leader Veer Pratap Singh, an Indian Punjabi Sikh, assists her. They fall in love, but Zara's orthodox Muslim family would not agree with the marriage as it would dishonor them. The Sikh nanny intervenes to bring Veer to Pakistan, but the ploys of Zara's family and the corrupt police in Pakistan lead to Veer being imprisoned for life in a Pakistani jail. However, the time Zara spent with Veer in India is shown as having transformed Zara forever. She breaks her marriage in Pakistan to migrate to India to fulfill the dreams of Veer's parents leaving her wicked family to die in Pakistan thus erasing the family legacy that her family so viciously protected through her marriage. While Veer and Zara remain apart for decades, when finally united, Veer crosses Pakistan's border with India at Wagah, looks towards India and says to Zara, "Come, let's return home". Such films present interesting glimpses into Hindu inter-caste marriage conflict being avoided with out-of-religion romances occurring between the Sikh and Muslim minorities and the continuation of the patriarchal patronage with the male protagonist always being a non-Muslim and the female protagonist under his protection always being a Muslim girl. The theme of the Muslim girl being saved from her own religious community is highlighted by Zara's suppression by her father and other Muslim males who mistreat and jail Veer and separate the lovebirds and their

counterpart in India presented by the liberal-thinking parents of Veer in the village who believe in marriage by choice and education for all. Such cinematic projects also present a case of a diverse, tolerant Indian patriotism in the face of the enemy next door, Pakistan, while simultaneously obscuring the distinction between Muslim and Pakistani.

To examine another case, in *Ishaqzaade/Lover* (Faisal, 2012), a Muslim and a Hindu Punjabi family are staunch rivals in local politics. The female protagonist, Zoya, daughter of the Muslim family, is aggressive with a foul mouth, which attracts the male protagonist, Parma, the son of the Hindu family. Parma confesses he is in love with Zoya, but she will only let him touch her after marriage and insists he must convert to Islam. Parma converts, marries Zoya and defiles her right after on a train to tell her he only married her to ruin her family honor. However, the film is a romance and the hero's actions are disregarded. When Zoya comes to Parma's house to kill him in fury, his mother intervenes and instructs him to be loyal to Zoya. Right after, the mother is killed by Zoya's family showing up at their house to seek revenge. To honor his mother, Parma runs away with Zoya and finds refuge at his female friend's, a Muslim woman who runs a brothel. Impressed by his love for his Muslim wife, the friend offers them utmost hospitality and arranges to marry them off in a proper (Hindu) ceremony not involving religious conversion. The couple rediscover true love for each other, but are not left in peace by their communities. In the climax marked by a gun battle with their communities, Parma and Zoya agree to kill each other. Projects like this shed light on the impossibility of making outside caste marriage statement in popular box office concoctions as well as the persistence of staging the Hindu patriarch as hegemonic and his religious values as protection for the female Muslim.

Bollywood's older female Muslim depictions, often mirror those of the happy, loyal servants in Hollywood's depictions of slavery days finding redemption and social relevance through the generosity of affluent, high-caste Hindu families of the protagonists. In the 2001 family saga and global hit, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham/Sometimes happiness, Sometimes sadness* (Johar, 2001), the elite Hindu urbanites surround themselves with Western trappings. At a lavish birthday celebration for the patriarch, he dances with scores of skimpily dressed younger white women (reinforcing a standard narrative of Hindu male conquest). They are an observant, yet benevolent Hindu family, and have a Muslim governess for their sons, the film's heroes. She has a Muslim high-caste name, Sayeeda (those considered the direct descendants of Prophet Mohammad), keeps her head covered and only wears white shalwar kameez. When the patriarch disowns his older, adopted son, his wife sends Sayeeda along with the son to take care of him. Years later the biological son travels to London to re-connect with his adopted brother and persuade him to meet the father. However, his older brother does not recognize him. It is Sayeeda who recalls that he cannot tie his own shoes and initiates, first, the brothers' recognition of each other and then family reconciliation. As the family reunites, Sayeeda becomes the invisible governess again.

4.3.2. Analysis of the Post-9/11 Pan-Muslim Orient

Item numbers with provocative dances are a regular feature of commercial Bollywood movies and are seldom related to the plot. Thus, where the movie may not have a single Muslim character, an erotic female set against a pan-Muslim Orient constructs an escape interval into immorality and promiscuity. Compared to the 1980s and 1990s, the pan-Muslim Orient in these post-9/11 item numbers is often set against lyrics that point to the moral degeneration of the Mughals during their last days before being ousted by the British, an important marginalization strategy. Such item numbers are devoid of Hindu religious imagery and set against a pan-Muslim Orient with an eroticized Mughal courtesan culture.

I will analyze the pan-Muslim Orient created through item numbers in 5 movies during the 2000s-2020s. In this fictitious story first recounted by British travelers in the early 15th century, Anarkali, courtesan at the court of Akbar (1542-1605), the third Mughal Emperor, made the mistake of falling in love with the crown prince Shehzada Salim, who later became Emperor Jahangir. The story was told in the 1960s blockbuster *Mughal-e-Azam/The Great Mughal* (Asif, 1960), with semi-classical court dances, romantic escapades between protagonists and a tragic ending with Emperor Akbar's order to bury Anarkali alive between two walls. In the post-9/11 Bollywood Muslim projects, the fictional tale is recounted by Anarkali singing an item number in the romantic drama, *Housefull 2* (Khan, 2012). Wearing traditional jewelry and the Muslim, kurta pajama dress, Anarkali dances provocatively with a group of Indian male and Anglo girl dancers wearing similar outfits as the four heroes and supporting cast walk into a nightclub. She sings, "*Chorh charh ke apne Salim ki gali, Anarkali disco chali*" (leaving behind her beloved Salim's lane, Anarkali takes herself to disco). Anarkali tells the men that she can no longer bear to be between two walls and craves to learn hip hop, be in a trance, and take one more chance to swing.

Muslim erotic portrayals in Bollywood's 21st century pan-Muslim Orient are underscored by Arabica music and Urdu, Persian and Arabic mixed lyrics. Item number "*Assalamu Ishqum/Love greeting to you"* with the title itself a novel Persianized Arabic construction for the song meaning, Love Salaam/Arabic greeting to you in *Gunday/Outlaws* (Zafar, 2014) stands as a case in point. The item girl and her team entertain the hero-duo in black hot pants and fishnet leggings while they are at a gambling club, starting with one of the most famous couplets of Ghalib, the 19th century Urdu and Persian poet.

In another blockbuster item number titled "*Afghan Jalebi*" with over 270 million views on YouTube from the 2015 release, *Phantom* (Khan, 2015), the patriotic protagonist finds herself in a den of Afghan jihadists who are shown wearing their warm shawls over Pakistani shalwar kameez with waistcoats. On their heads they wear a mix of Pashtun hats and skullcaps. Several wear wooden prayer beads as necklaces and colorful bracelets in the style of Islamic Sufi mendicants. As they sing in traditional Pashtun music, the item girl/protagonist they call the Afghan jalebi (South Asian deep-fried sweet), is seen fading in and out of the dance floor. The men swing their Kalashnikovs in the air and sing in high-brow Urdu, "Afghan jalebi, what great farebi (cheat)…Come, let me tickle you." Their womenfolk either belly dance or swirl around like porcelain dolls in traditional Arab clothing accompanied by an East Asian inspired hairdo with a rose to the side. They are as white as snow, a racial identity for which Russian and other East European dance troupes are very often hired. Be it people's dress, hairstyle or pigmentation, the idea is to represent a pan-oriental identity that is strikingly Islamic and yet Eastern enough to remain familiar.

In another ultra-orientalist item number titled "*Mashallah*" (Arabic, to show appreciation and joy for a person) from the 2012 blockbuster, *Ek Tha Tiger* (Khan, 2012), a busy pan-Arab *suq* (marketplace) is depicted. The scene can at best be pinned down to somewhere in Morocco, where men sit around smoking hookah wearing fez caps and sunglasses (for the strong desert sun) and camels are being walked as white cats sneak across booths, and "available" African women wear short jackets with puff shoulders over sari blouses (half sleeve sports bras) with bandanas tied around their heads. Amidst this color, the hero enters and heads straight for the hidden quarters, where women wearing laced hijabs turn around to behold his splendor. Even though he cannot see their faces, he chooses to pull open the right hijab to reveal Katrina Kaif in belly dancing outfit. The song ensues, "*Mashallah*, the face is *mashallah*," followed by praise in Arabic. The item and hero-duo keep gesturing *adab*, a greeting style representative of high Muslim, Urdu-speaking culture of Lucknow, to each other.

The song from the 2013 blockbuster, *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani/This youth is crazy* (Mukerjee, 2013), depicts the Hindu Holi color festival celebrated middle-class Indian youth style. The girl wonders why she feels doubly drunk, and whether it is the bhang/cannabis in the air. The boy points to how her see-through shirt is now all red with color and has rendered her gait like that of a nawab, an honorific title for a Mughal governor. As the song continues, the hero asks the heroine why she has "no vacancy" written all over her when the room in her heart is unoccupied. The girl mischievously retorts that he is a donkey, he pretends to sing bhajan (Hindu spiritual prayer), meaning just flirt, but his intent is qawwali (Islamic spiritual music), which here connotes the pan-Muslim Orient ethos and implies lust of the flesh, or that he wants to "go all the way" with her. Such visibility awarded to language, visuals, and symbols historically associated with the Muslims in lyrics and jokes, allows Bollywood to equate promiscuity with all things Muslim. Simultaneously, "non-veg" (non-vegetarian) is increasingly being used in youth films to interchangeably allude to Muslims, promiscuity, and scandal.

5. Conclusion: Muslim Appropriated

Benedict Anderson noted that communities "are to be distinguished not by their falsity or genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (2006, 49). In this paper, I highlighted the appropriation of the Muslim in Bollywood movie plots and item numbers and their transformation from the 1950s to the 2020s to examine the ways in which hegemonic discourses on Indianness and gender ideologies are communicated.

Disenchanted and torn from its own Indian roots, the Muslim caricature from the 1950s-1970s represented an Indian nostalgia, a desire to reunite after evicting the British colonialist and a desire to build a united India with strength in diversity and enmity towards moral corruption. The essentialized portrayals became elaborate providing comic relief and a desire to be blended into the Hindu patriarchal familial order in the 1980s and 1990s. With the adoption of the Hindutva ideology by the BJP government in 1989, the state's desire to become a more direct part of the Bollywood "industry," and the opening up of Bollywood to NRIs and foreign cineastes, the Indian male archetype became more closely defined as upper-caste, affluent, forward-thinking, and enterprising Hindu and the Muslim male began being depicted as a conservative and volatile challenge to that archetype. Here onwards, a pan-Muslim Orient expanding from Russia to Morocco began to represent an inglorious and promiscuous Muslim history, symbolized by the continuation of shady courtesan and nautch cultures, the subalternization of the Muslim male sexuality, the erotica of the Muslim woman, her victimization by her community and her desire to be embraced by Hindu patriarchal figures. On the other hand, in the post-9/11 dramas of global migration and overseas employment catered towards the Indian diaspora, the sinister depictions of the Muslim male seem to have transformed the damsel in distress caricature of the Hindu female in the 1980s and 1990s into one who dares to tame the beast in the Muslim male. Muslim cinematic representations underscore how Bollywood's filmscapes, familiarize a local Muslim Other to re-exotify and minoritize it to convey dominant discourses on patriarchy, gender, family and religious values and Indianness.

References

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.

Arora, P. (1995). Sanctioned and Proscribed Narratives in India Cinema: a Bicultural Reading of Courtesan Film. In K. Myrsiades, & J. McGuire (Eds.), *Order and Partialities: Theory, Pedagogy, and the "Postcolonial"*, 59-85.

Asif, K. (Director). (1960). *Mughal-e-Azam* [Film]. K. Asif.

Barjatya, Sooraj. (Director). (1994). *Hum Aapke Hein Koun..!* [Film]. Barjatya.

Barnouw, E., & Krishnaswamy, S. (1981). *Indian Film*. Oxford University Press.

Behl, Goldie. (Director). (2001). *Bas Itna sa Khaab Hay* [Film]. Madhu Ramesh Behl.

Bose, M. (2006). *Bollywood: A History*. Tempus.

Chadha, K., & Kavoori, A. P. (2008). Exoticized, Marginalized, Demonized: The Muslim 'Other' in Indian Cinema. In A. P. Kavoori, & A. Punathambekar (Eds.), *Global Bollywood*, 131-145.

Chakravarty, S. S. (2011). *National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema, 1947-1987*. University of Texas Press.

Chandra, N. (Director). (1998). Wajood [Film]. N. Chandra.

Chopra, Yash. (2004). *Veer-Zara* [Film]. Yash Chopra, Aditya Chopra.

Desai, Manmohan. (Director). (1960). *Chhalia* [Film]. Subhash Desai.

Desai, Manmohan. (Director). (1983). Coolie [Film]. Ketan Desai.

Dhawan, David. (Director). (1998). *Bade Mian Chote Mian* [Film]. Vashu Bhagnani.

D'Silva, Rensil. (Director). (2009). *Kurbaan* [Film]. Dharma Productions.

Dutt, Guru. (Director). (1957). *Pyaasa* [Film]. Guru Dutt.

Dutt, Guru. (Director). (1959). *Kaagaz Ke Phool* [Film]. Guru Dutt.

Dwyer, R. & Patel, D. (2002). *Cinema India: The Visual Culture of Hindi Film*. Rutgers University Press.

Faisal, Habib. (Director). *Ishaqzaade* (2012). Aditya Chopra.

Ganti, T. (2012). *Producing Bollywood*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822395225

Gupta, Sanjay. (Director). (2015). *Jazbaa* [Film]. Ajay Yadav (Executive).

Hogan, P. C. (2009). *Understanding Indian Movies: Culture, Cognition, and Cinematic Imagination*. University of Texas Press. https://doi.org/10.7560/717862

Johar, Karan. (Director). (2001). *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* [Film]. Yash Johar.

Johar, Karan. (Director). (1994). *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* [Film]. Dharma Productions.

Johar, Karan. (Director). (2010). *My Name is Khan* [Film]. Dharma Productions, Red Chillies Entertainment.

Kumar, Indra. (Director). (1997). *Ishq* [Film]. Gordhan Tanwani.

Kapoor, Rishi. (Director). (1999). *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* [Film]. R. K. Films.

Kohli, Kunal. (Director). (2006). *Fanaa* [Film]. Yash Raj Films.

Khan, Mehboob. (Director). (1957). *Mother India* [Film]. Mehboob Productions.

Khan, Sajid. (Director). (2010). *Housefull* [Film]. Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment.

Khan, Sajid. (Director). (2012). *Housefull 2* [Film]. Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment.

Khan, Kabir. (Director). (2015). *Phantom* [Film]. Sajid Nadiadwala, Siddharth Roy Kapur.

Khan, Kabir. (Director). (2012). *Ek Tha Tiger* [Film]. Aditya Chopra.

Kumar, Dilip. (Director). (1961). *Ganga Jamuna* [Film]. Dilip Kumar.

Mehra, Prakash. (Director). (1973). *Zanjeer* [Film]. Prakash Mehra Productions.

Mehta, Anil. (Director). (2007). *Aaja Nachle* [Film]. Aditya Chopra.

Mohammed, Khalid. (Director). (2000). *Fiza* [Film]. Pradeep Guha.

Mukerji, Ayan. (Director). (2013). *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani* [Film]. Karan Johar.

Mukherjee, Desh. (Director). (1977). *Immaan Dharam* [Film]. Premji.

Nivas, Eeshwar. (Director). (2001). *Love Ke Liye Kuch Bhi Karega* [Film]. Ram Gopal Varma, Nitin Manmohan.

Rai, Rajiv. (Director). (2004). *Asambhav* [Film]. Gulshan Rai (Trimurti Films).

Rai, Aanand L. (Director). (2013). *Ranjhanaa* [Film]. Eros International.

Roy, Bimal. (Director). (1959). *Sujata* [Film]. Bimal Roy.

Sajid-Farhan. (Director duo). (2014). *It's Entertainment* [Film]. Tips Industries Limited.

Sharma, Anil. (Director). (2001). *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* [Film]. Nittin Keni, Bhanwar Singh, Bhaumik Gondaliya.

Waugh, T. (2017). Queer Bollywood: Same-sex Sexuality, Gender Transgression and 'Otherness' in Indian Popular Cinema of the 1990s. In D. Dimitrova (Ed.), *The Other in South Asian Religion, Literature and Film: Perspectives on Otherism and Otherness*, 119-137.

Zafar, Ali Abbas. (Director). (2014). *Gunday* [Film]. Aditya Chopra.