TABLE OF CONTENTS – CHAPTER 3
THE CINEMATIC NARRATIVES AND THE HERO SHAH RUKH KHAN:
SOCIAL HISTORY OF POST-LIBERALIZATION INDIA

3.1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 173
3.2 EARLY FILMS OF VIOLENCE: SHAH RUKH PLAYING THE PSYCHOPATHIC (ANTI-)HERO: DARR, BAAZIGAR AND ANJAAM ................................................................. 174
   3.2.1 Darr: A Violent Story (Fear, 1993, directed by Yash Chopra) ......................... 175
   3.2.2 Baazigar (The Challenger/Gambler, 1993, directed by Abbas Mustan)........... 176
   3.2.3 Anjaam (Consequence, 1994, directed by: Rahul Rawail) ............................... 177
3.3 CINEMA OF THE MIDDLE CLASS PROTAGONIST SHAH RUKH KHAN 190
   3.3.1 Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman (RBGG) (Raju Became A Gentleman, 1992, directed byAziz Mirza) .............................................................................................................. 192
   3.3.2 Yes Boss (1997, directed by Aziz Mirza) ............................................................ 194
   3.3.3 Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani /PBDHH (But The Heart Is Still Indian, 2000, directed by Aziz Mirza) .............................................................................................................. 195
   3.3.4 Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi/RNBDJ(A Match Made By God, 2008, directed by Aditya Chopra) .............................................................................................................. 197
3.4 DIASPORIC THEMES, FAMILY AND ROMANCE: IN FILMS OF SHAH RUKH KHAN .................................................................................................................. 200
3.5 THE FIRST ROW OF DIASPORA FILMS ..................................................................... 209
   3.5.1 Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge/DDLJ (The Braveheart Will Take The Bride Away, 1995, directed by Aditya Chopra) ............................................................... 209
   3.5.2 Pardes (1997, directed by Subhas Ghai) ............................................................. 215
3.6 THE SECOND ROW OF DIASPORA FILMS .................................................................. 223
   3.6.1 Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham/K3G (Sometimes Happiness, Sometimes Sadness, 2001, directed by Karan Johar) ................................................................. 223
   3.6.2 Kal Ho Na Ho/KHNH (Tomorrow May Never Come, 2003, directed by Nikhil Advani) .............................................................................................................. 226
   3.6.3 Kabhi Alvida Na Kahna/KANK( Never Say GoodBye, 2006, directed by Karan Johar) .............................................................................................................. 227
3.7 NON-DIASPORIC FILMS YET DIASPORIC FILMS .................................................. 231
3.8 DIASPORISATION OF THE STAR AND OTHER ISSUES .............................. 232
3.9 FILM OF NATION BUILDING BY SHAH –RUKH KHAN - SWADES ....... 242
3.10 SECULAR NATION IMAGINED IN FILMS OF SHAH RUKH KHAN: MAIN HOON NAA, VEER ZAARA CHAK DE INDIA, MY NAME IS KHAN AND ASHOKA .......................................................... 253

3.10.1 The Backdrop – Crisis of Secularism and Experience of the Obverse of Globalization .................................................................................................................. 253
3.10.2 Secular Ideology and Self Image of the Indian Nation- State ............ 255
3.10.3 The Political Economy of Films and The Ascendancy of Right Wing Politics and its Influence on Jingoistic Patriotism in Popular Hindi Films ........................................... 261
3.10.4 Othering of Muslims as As a Cultural Practice ................................ 267

3.11 SECULAR FILMS OF SHAH RUKH KHAN-POPULAR INTERVENTIONS AT RE-SECULARIZATION OF CINEMATIC TEXTS .................................................. 270

3.11.1 Chak De! India (2007, directed by:Shimit Amin) ............................... 270
3.11.2 My Name Is Khan/MNIK(2010, directed by:Karan Johar) ................. 277
3.11.3 Veer-Zaara/VZ (Veer and Zaara, 2004, directed by Yash Chopra) ....... 285
3.11.4 Main Hoon Naa/MHN(‘I am there’,2004,directed by Farha Khan) ....... 298
3.11.5 Ashoka (2001, directed by Santosh Siwan) ......................................... 305

3.12 HERO AND THE NATION ............................................................................. 307
3.12.1 Decline of Feudal Authority vis-à-vis The Hero–Patriarchal power bases... 314
3.12.2 Issue of Citizenship ............................................................................... 315
3.12.3 The Dynamics and Coalescing of Star Identity, The Actor and the Nation’s Hero .................................................................................................................. 321
3.12.4 Hero as the trope of the Nation............................................................... 323
3.12.5 Popularity of the Star and His Construction Within the Hegemonic Discourse of the Nation within Cinematic Narratives ......................................................... 325

3.13 SHAH RUKH KHAN’S STAR IDENTITY AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION: WHAT EMERGES ACROSS HIS FILMOGRAPHIC TRAJECTORY ................... 328

3.14 CONCLUSION ............................................................................................... 344
CHAPTER 3
THE CINEMATIC NARRATIVES AND THE HERO SHAH RUKH KHAN:
SOCIAL HISTORY OF POST-LIBERALIZATION INDIA

3.1 INTRODUCTION
Hindi popular films as a public format of address, inhabiting a fictional space, functioning in the realm of mass-popular are an alternative public realm. The construction of popular stars and their cinematic subjectivities in this melodramatic format allow people to grapple with transitional moments of spatio-temporal realities. The star-phenomena as represented through SRK is of chronotropic relevance and a study of his films and his mediation of the same bring to fore a personified replication of the times of the nation and its discourse.
Stars are often not just built on personal aura, they are also product of their times. His image has fitted in perfectly with the times. It’s as though SRK was waiting to happen. In the liberalized India of the ‘90s the Angry Young Man had to make way for the romantic family hero. Many see SRK embodying through the ‘Raj’s and ‘Rahul’s he has played, the spirit of post-liberalization, feel-good, ambitious, assertive India – just as Big B’s Angry Young Man represented the angst-ridden India of the ‘70s and ‘80s. However, this persona took a while to shape. SRK started out on an unassuming note in 1991 with Deewana in which he played a young man who falls in love with and marries a widow. His famous early roles were those of anti-heroes, like the avenger in the garb of a lover in Baazigar (1993)… It was followed by two films in which he played the obsessive, violent, psycho-lover: Darr (1993) and Anjam (1994). SRK eventually metamorphosed into the perfect yuppie-lover boy, and in the process here-defined on screen love for a brand new India. The crucial film that led him to his avatar was Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge (1995), arguably one of the biggest grosser ever in Bollywood… SRK’s subsequent romantic films… have built on the DDLJ foundation. The star’s resume reveals an interesting spectrum of films beside being cast recurrently in diasporic/urban films, and the star’s biography, both film and biographical, interestingly intersect with the rise of the new middle class and the nations’ journey into the global regime. This relation becomes particularly evident in his early violent films, re-invents anger of the angry young man of the 1970s through excess as the psychopathic anti-hero articulating the fear and anxiety of the middle class also growing obsessively desirous and insecure reflects the deeper ruptures in the nation’s discourse. In the second type of films of middle class subjectivities he plays mostly comical re-visiting the Raj Kapoor heroic type through its tryst with the fatal attraction of the new market, its allure of consumption and promise of good life and living. These films fraught with moral-departures, ethical dilemmas, and predicaments of the middle class hero make him a signifier of times.
The chapter also deals with two other broad themes both of which represents two faces of globalization discourse of the nation, viz. diaspora films where the hero represents the transnationalized, de-territorialized imaginings of the nation as a hybrid, cosmopolitan subject negotiating global sensibilities with nation’s moral and cultural belonging. The second is
secular films that seek to re-claim the secular discourse of the nation at the popular realm in critical response to the re-ethnicization, cultural nationalism, identity politics, fundamentalism etc. that have risen as counter-currents of obverse consequences of the global following the declining control of the civic nation over its ethnic components and crisis of its authority and failure of state-led developmental programmes. The chapter also looks into the revised agenda of nation-building through the civic initiatives of individuals in a lone film, also part of the larger globalization, post-national discourse as an alternative to state’s agency.

3.2 EARLY FILMS OF VIOLENCE: SHAH RUKH PLAYING THE PSYCHOPATHIC (ANTI-)HERO: DARR, BAAZIGAR AND ANJAAM

The policy of reforms initially faced opposition from certain quarters. Besides there was also a deep faith in Nehru’s mixed economy and Rao’s government failed to translate reforms and liberal measures into an understandable political language. There was initially a crisis faced by reforms itself and a reticent and ambivalent mood prevailed. Despite a broad consensus over the desirability of reforms, as the legacy was not undone by successive governments, the debate over its implementation took a central position. The scepticism vis-à-vis reforms prevailed along with populist political pressures that continued to seek protectionism of state policies. The transformation of a closed, centrally planned economy into a market driven one was difficult due to populist electoral considerations. In addition the reforms themselves was moving at a retarded pace Seen mostly as ‘soft reform’ introduced stealthily they were justified yet evaded being confrontational. Interest groups were gingerly skirted and reforms were incrementally introduced (Das, 2002).

In such times of anxiety of the nation facing the new directions of changes, Shah Rukh appeared in Psychopathic Roles/ articulating Madness reflective of deeper malaise and crisis. Shah Rukh the newcomer hero constructed as nation’s “Other” nevertheless gained sympathy. The thin line separating the villain and the social construction of the psychopath suggests that given the contingent right (or wrong) circumstances most individuals have the potential to become villains. There is a spectrum of psychopathic or antisocial behaviour that demonises such individuals and their deeds. The difference between the poles of the spectrum is based on the purpose and the end gain. Audience sympathy is therefore claimed to be contingent upon an understanding of the underlying cause that vindicates the protagonist. In other words it is essentially linked with the individual protagonists and viewer’s perceptions of the acts and the morality underlying them. Notwithstanding this psychopathic deprecation of Shah Rukh Khan ( unlike Amitabh who was understandably identified with for his social rhetoric and collective address in his angry young man image) there was a discernible audience empathy for even what was an individualized vengeance. The middle class anxious at the spectre of the unknown could sense an uncannily, unstable self in this psychopathic alterity projected as the other. He is both disavowed and the uncanny.
3.2.1 Darr: A Violent Story (Fear, 1993, directed by Yash Chopra)

A psychological thriller it is a story of an obsessed lover Rahul played by the new comer hero Shah Rukh Khan. Shah Rukh desires a girl Kiran who is in love with a navy officer Sunil and the two are about to marry. Rahul fails to accept this and starts stalking her and harassing her over the phone as her mysterious lover. Rahul a shy and introverted boy of Sunil’s higher officer for long remains an acquaintance to both Kiran and Sunil. Rahul continue to be the mysterious stalker but intelligently keeps on evading all plans aimed to trap him. The story also reveals Rahul’s psychopathic nature, who talks to his dead mother on phone. Trying to get Kiran, Rahul swears vengeance on Sunil, whom he regarded his obstacle to reach Kiran and even tries to kill him. The couple flees to Switzerland, and Rahul who by then had falsely fabricated the death of one of old college friend appear as a suicide by Kiran’s ‘unknown lover’ and unsuspectingly follows the couple. Through twists of the narrative Sunil grows suspicious of Rahul and finally entraps him. Following a gory encounter, Sunil finally kills Rahul. Before dying he asks for forgiveness from Kiran.

Rahul’s obsessive nature and deranged state of mind is made clear in the sequences of looks in the film. He acts as a voyeur secretly obsessed and as a stalker and moves unobserved, often strayed into private space of the family or incognito in disguise on a Holi(a day of traditional festivity of playing with colours) day smeared red in colour. These instances show the ‘film’s dangerous attractions’. The performance of Shah Rukh was both disturbing and dangerous and although he is a psychotic stalker, the audience sides with him at the time of his confrontation with the hero. Yash Chopra, recounts and says: ‘There is no vamp or villain. The villain is your weakness. Love may be the weakness and the villain. The hero is one who does something right. Darr has no villain. [Rahul is a ] positive character he’s a man who is obsessed with a girl, he doesn’t rape, he doesn’t kill. The only crime is that he loved someone who doesn’t belong to him. The villain harms people, morally or emotionally. He poor fellow, died. Every sympathy was with him’ (Dwyer, 2002 p 180). It may be added that: ‘Rahul in many ways comes across as the star of the film. It is rumoured that Sunny Deol was furious when he saw the film and realised that this was the case. ‘There is no doubt that the audience preferred the deranged Rahul to the alternative masculinity offered by Sunil’ (ibid).

Darr sees Shah Rukh Khan plays the role of a psychopathic stalker, an obsessive lover and verging on psychotic syndrome he delivers a strange state of mind. He sings for his love and is later discovered as the stalker. Unobserved he enters the private estate and thus the public space and private space distinction appear to get blurred and it is clearer in this film than in reality. This is true of modern urban India. Dwyer, as cited, observes that Darr uses little outdoor space in India, except as a place of fear. But the idyllic Switzerland is also “invaded” by the villain, even in outdoor space. The control of these spaces by the obsessive lover is possessive and frightening by itself (Bhugra p 203). Yash Chopra highlighted the fact that he was making the film which fed on people’s fears, especially in the context of excessive and obsessive love (Dwyer 2002 p. 150) This fear that was the haunting fear of the ‘uncanny’ which was either the
terrorist ‘other’ as seen in Khilnayak or the desirous middle class alterity represented by SRK in his three films.

Bollywood, especially in Yash Raj films seems to flag mark its global market via its film Darr which was made at a time when India’s cultural-political conditions were being completely transformed, and the film appears like a premonition. It anticipated the market. As Mukherjee argue ‘Moreover, and more significantly, this global journey appears to predate and coincide with the history of cultural an economic globalization’. (Mukherjee 2012, p.36).

3.2.2 Baazigar (The Challenger/Gambler, 1993, directed by Abbas Mustan)

Ajay Sharma (Shah Rukh Khan) seeks revenge for his father Vishwanath Sharma, once owner of a great business empire, was defrauded by Madan Chopra, a trusted employee in Vishwanath’s company. The Sharma family is ousted from their company and loses everything they once owned. In penury soon, Ajay’s father and younger sister die as they were unable to treat themselves. The mother in duress of destitution loses her memory and begun to suffer from mental illness. Destitution drives Ajay to an obsession for vengeance. He decides to kill Chopra, the usurper and destroy his family. He secretly starts seeing Chopra’s elder daughter. Impersonating as Vicky Malhotra, he manipulates a kart-race event to draw him close to Chopra’s younger daughter. Masqueradingly, he simultaneously starts romancing both the sisters. Ajay beguiles Seema, the elder daughter to write a suicide note and makes use of it when he throws her from high roof top. When Priya seeks to investigate the mysterious death of her sister, Vicky serially starts killing all those who appear to be potential threats towards his incrimination. Meanwhile, in Chopra’s absence whose trust he had gained Ajay assumes all rights and legal claims. Incidentally Priya comes to learn about the truth of Ajay’s fake identity following the encounter with the real Vicky whose identity Ajay borrowed. Priya visits the man and learns the truth. When Chopra returns he realises that Ajay has seized his property and Ajay reveals his true identity who has come back seeking vengeance. Priya visits Ajay’s real house and meets his mother and later joined by Ajay who tells him the history of the two families. Following an attack led by Madan’s men and Ajay’s countering of the same, at the end both Madan and Ajay die.

In an inter textual invocation from Zanjeer (1973) where the dream text of Zanjeer containing ‘the horse and rider frame the villain as father substitute and castration threat in general symbology of the phallic horse in Indian culture’ Baazigar connects the symbolism in a similar vein. The film Zanjeer tried to conjoin the power of horse and its symbolism with the hero. This conjunction of the actor and the symbolic horse renders Amitabh into a “complex text” legitimated by mythological significance and this symbolism was thus suitably empowered to deliver the star-hero as a rebel for the cause of the slum-dwelling classes, the restive Indian lower middle classes (the targeted constituency of the film industry as a whole) and a rising patriotism after 1971 Indo-Pak war.

Baazigar also has a dream sequence similar to Zanjeer. The film also transposes the power of the horse (as an absent referent) seen to race to the risk-loving hero or the challenger (baazigar). The name ‘Baazigar’ symbolic of the hero’s courage to pursue a well planned, cold blooded
scheme of revenge and retributive justice. This journey begins from the race course, where he defeats the villain in a speculative move—thereby forestalling the castration threat from the villain enframed as the symbolic father figure and himself assumes its phallic power.

The kart racer hero, the challenger, his plunges to take risks contrasts to the risk-averse character of urban middle class who sought refuge in the certitudes of earlier securities and stabilities provided by the paternalistic state. The kart-racing scene serves as a foreboding for a nation that relinquished a past of planning to embrace the uncertainties of speculative financing and open market.

3.2.3 Anjaam (Consequence, 1994, directed by: Rahul Rawail)

Vijay Agnihotri (Shah Rukh Khan) comes from a rich family and is an unrestrained youth. He meets Shivani (Madhuri Dixit) in airplane who is a flight attendant with whom he instantly falls in love but she shows no interest in him. This does not deter her from relentlessly pursuing him, only to be continually rejected by him. When Vijay’s mother after being told by her son is about to approach Shivani’s family that they witness Shivani getting married to another man named Ashok. Vijay is heartbroken. Shivani and Ashok migrate to the U.S. Even after four years, Vijay cannot forget Shivani and refuses to marry, turning down his mother’s proposals repeatedly. He again comes across Shivani and Ashok who now have a daughter, Pinky. The desperate Vijay obsessed with Shivani wreaks havoc in her life by killing her husband and daughter and even imprisoning her under false allegations. Shivani goes through several trials and tribulations and seeking vengeance against Vijay, for whom she lost her family, she traces Vijay, who was then in a hospital in Bangalore in a paralyzed state after suffering a car accident. She takes up the job of a nurse and volunteers to rehabilitate Vijay. When Vijay is cured and regains his full self, Shivani beguiles him to an embrace and stabs him. Eventually they both fall off a cliff and die.

Shah Rukh won the film Fare Award, for the best villain for his role in ‘Anjaam’. It was then reported in April, 1995 that ‘Khan created history of sorts—he’s the first Hindi film hero to win in the villain category’ (Chopra, 2011, p.86) and this by beating two powerful actors Nasseeruddin Shah and Paresh Rawal. ‘...Shah Rukh as a beginner grabbed the offer of psychopathic roles in both Darr and Bazigar both rejected by Salman Khan and Aamir Khan respectively, and ‘re-invented the Hindi film hero’ (ibid, p.87) This hero articulated the crises and ambivalence of his times.

The avenging woman genre that emerged in the previous decade prior to the coming of Shah Rukh, enmeshed in sad masochistic pleasure are often read within cinematic commentaries as ruptures within the myth of unified nation (Virdi, 2003 ibid.p.11) and anticipated these psychopathic ‘others’ of the early nineties who pose to interrupt cohesive narration of the nation. The avenging woman as masquerading womanliness, as a male ergo atypical female, who without a phallus can beat up a male (Gopalan as cited) and Bhugra agrees with Gopalan to extend this to both masculine and feminine subjects and says that ‘If this masquerade is then turned to the mad, the other, the deviant, it becomes apparent that the portrayal of genuineness of the individual and their madness provokes the viewer into a false sense of security’. (Bhugra ibid. p 200) This is seen in a statement of Yash Chopra to Dwyer: ‘Selective stammering was
part of Rahul’s [Shah Rukh Khan] characterisation. Rahul is a normal boy but gets hysterical only when he mentioned Kiran’s name....The audience applauds Sunny Deol for killing Shah Rukh Khan....in a strange inexplicable way they are also attracted to the villain and mourn his death’.(as cited in Bhugra 2006,ibid,p.576) He is both disavowed and he is also the masquerading mad who comforted our insecurity and assuaged our fears. Popular films touching a major nerve in the nation’s body politic, address common anxieties and social tensions and articulate vexed problems that are ultimately resolved by preventing mythical solutions to restore an utopian world (Virdi 2003 p 9). The construction of Shah Rukh in the early row of films as thePsychotic “Other” allaying middle classs anxiety in times of politico-economic crisis was a hegemonising resolve of the nation’s discourse.

If middle class anxiety gave birth to the psychotic, it also the villainous hero, the mafia/terrorist that emanated almost as the parallel ‘other’to the nation The prototypical other of the second type may be represented through Sanjay Dutt playing ‘Khalnayak’.Shah Rukh’s negative roles parallels this Subhas Ghai blockbuster of the same time ‘Khalnayak’(1993)played by the already well known hero Sanjay Dutt, an already established star. Khalnayak is the director’s (Subhas Ghai) paen to the wayward youth of the 1990s. Born to an idealist family of freedom fighters Ballu (the protagonist) suffering a deprived childhood joins a local mafia gang. He is cynical about established institutions and prefers crime to poverty. This redemption lies in his surrender to state authority. The construction of this (anti)hero, also the other to the nation was informed by the disturbed polity in the 1980s and 1990 marked by terrorism, separatist insurgency, inter state conflicts, rise of fundamentalist politics. (Bhugra,2006 ibid.p. 192-193)

‘In his anger and irreverence, Khalnayak (the villain) takes over from the angry young man. It spoke of terror and decadence.(ibid.p.193)

Construction of the villain, as the “other” or enemy of the nation and ensuring his/her annihilation often allow for assuaging anxieties and fear. If “Gabbar” in Sholay defined a villainous prototype in a period of political; crisis, then the psychopath stalker and vengeance seeking killer of Shah Rukh’s early films is the projected “other” of a nation that anxiously embraced the global. This loss of earlier certitude, no matter how discredited, opened up a fear of the uncanny, who was not as brazenly violent and masculine hero as the angry young man, Amitabh Bachchan, nor a brooding idealist hero as Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, Guru Dutt, neither expresser of romanticism of Dev Anand or libidinous jouissance of Shammi Kapoor . Endowed with a frail physiognomy and marked by ordinariness, his arrival almost rendered obsolete prevalent heroic archetypes. In the role of a ruthless hero he was neither a villain inhabiting the reclusive quarters like the ravines as did Gabbar in Sholay, nor remote island like Shaakal in Shaan, or a palace like Mocambo in Mr. India. He made appear previous discourse on heroic and villainous prototypes appear almost anachronistic. A masquerading villain, with a conniving mind and seething aggression was new to popular Hindi films. It is to be asked as to why popular Hindi films chose to explore the interiority of a villainous self and thus personify the “spectre of the unknown and the uncanny”. This perhaps was secured beyond the narrative in an extra-textual consideration with Shah Rukh himself being a
new comer to the films who was therefore convincingly appeared as the other. However textually as well theoretically understanding the construction of the lurking, uncanny other can read through Jameson’s idea of the “political unconscious.”

The reading of a contested ideology of state as the political unconscious of the three texts, viz. the three early violent films of SRK, I proposed to analyse can allow it to be sutured along with Homi Bhabha’s illustrious post-colonial understanding of the Janus – faced ambivalence and the paradoxical nature of the discourse of the nation (Bhabha, 1990). Bhabha reviews how the post-colonial modes of knowing the nation is complicit with the colonial discourse and the anxiety of the colonizer continues to haunt the modernist post-colonial state, leading to an effort to stabilize the pedagogical narrative of the nation. However, Bhabha contends that ‘In the production of the nation as a narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of writing the nation’ (Bhabha, 1994:209). The double narrative movement between the pedagogic and performative leads to slippages in the narrative strategy of the nation. Aimed at producing a stable identity and metaphorical nationalism this doubling leads to a displacement and generates a metonymic ambivalence – an excess over and above what we are. ‘Counter – narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries –both actual and conceptual– disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which ‘imagined communities’ are given essentialist identities’ (ibid :213) I am keen to locate such performative moments of the nation in the construction of those villains or heroes who ruptures the dominant narrative of the nation that is otherwise aimed to secure a stability.

The concept of a stable, secure, unified and mythified nation have dominated the narrative fantasy of classical Hindi cinema (Virdi 2003) and this pattern continues to remain. Popular Hindi films have constructed its heroes as its metaphors or impersonating tropes articulating the hegemonic discourse and conversely constructed its villains– the marginalized ‘other’ via various narrative strategies. The heroes fought the enemies to re-affirm the mythic unity of the nation where the family played as a trope of (ibid). But the relegation of the family feudal romance to a subordinate position, as Prasad had argued, ushered a new trend since 1970s whereby the marginalized, disenfranchised characters[ for example the bandit Gabbar or the various sub-altern messianic role of a dispossessed or destitute hero as played by Amitabh Bachchan in many of his films cast in the mould of an angry young man] became significant by the virtue of their centrality within the narrative and alerted the state to redeem its challenged position. In this context I would like to add to my position that with the nation building euphoria waning by this time and the failure of a developmental and modernist state such marginalized other either a hero or a villain acquiring an eminence is an elaboration of the unleashing of a counter-narrative tradition or destabilizing performative textual instances within Hindi cinema that produced characters– prototype of which are like Vijay played by Bachchan in Deewar [1975], who was not an archetypal virtuous hero or Gabbar in Sholay,
the near psychopath villain. These characters rose from the margins of class at a time of
depoliticization of the state. (Bhugra, 2006)
The hegemonic impulse of the text despite such destabilisations remained affirmed as in earlier
Don as well Sholay. In earlier Don, the state restores order, first by excising the real Don and
second by gaining an access to the otherwise fortified criminal domain through the
impersonating Don. The death of D’Silva and the disbelief generated speaks of an anxious state
which as in like Sholay that had hired two crooks to regain its control in Don in an almost
intertextual instance is planted as appendages of the state. The anxious state looks to its
margins, viz. the crooks in Sholay and the street performer in Don .The ambivalence of the
state towards these ‘other’[s] remaining and ignored for a greater threat. This bid can also be
read as a hegemonic ploy to harness the urban lumpen class, the working class audience from
being alienated and disillusioned and state thrusts a responsibility upon them to realize the
benefits of an orderly state.
Quiet uncannily after many years the marginalized 'other' removed from family utopia was
resurrected from the darkness of interiority in the form of the schizophrenic 'other' personified
by Shah Rukh Khan in Baazigar (1993) and psychopath stalker in Darr (1993) or even likewise
in Anjaam(1994) (Bhugra, 2006) The trend that consolidated itself around the seventies
remained and found a pronounced articulation in these negative roles of Shah Rukh Khan in the
early nineties. The psychotic hero is ‘an instance of intertextuality, inviting an allegorical
reading of its own construction’. (Mazumdar, 2000,p.239) and is to be seen as a reproduction of
the angry young man ‘in current constellation’ and ‘allow for the articulation of new modes of
production’ [ibid: 238]. The body as the register of pain for the angry young man is relayed
to the psychotic/schizophrenic where the body is a site for an anxious interiority Male body, more
precisely here the ‘other’ male’s body via intertextual loops across temporal disjunctures
emerge as a site ‘to negotiate with history and the nation, with self and the trauma of identity.’
Ranjini Mazumdar’s position on intertextual construction of the marginalized male other can
allow for a further relay to culminate in the construction of the male other imagined as the Don
in 2006 and 2011.
These images of the other conjured in popular cinematic texts, as I seek to argue, parallels or is
analogous to Bhabha’s idea of ‘uncanny’- the irreducible, disavowed, repressed and recursive
alterity that have haunted the colonizer is also a part of post- colonial anxiety and disjunction.
The uncanny erupting from the margins of the nation challenges the narrative unity of the
nation itself and as Bhabha explains ‘…disrupts the signification of the people as
homogenous……. We are confronted with the nation split within itself, articulating the
heterogeneity of its population. The barred Nation ItSelf, alienated from its eternal self-
generation, becomes a liminal signifying space that is internally marked by the discourses of
minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense
locations of cultural difference.’ (Bhabha, 1994 ibid: 212)
The psychopathic hero was not abrupt as there was an anticipation of psychopath-Set against
back drop of a decade of terror, Subhash Ghai’s 1986 film ‘Karma’ unequivocally targets the
mindless terrorist as the new enemy who strikes at the roots of an unified nation (Virdi, 2003, p 110). In Karma, the issue of secessionist politics is entirely side stepped by presenting terrorism as a sign of mental derangement in the firm of Dr. Dang. The political motivation for Dang’s anti national feeling is merely a personal and psychological matter in contrast to his father’s idealism who was killed in freedom struggle (ibid. p 112). As a portentous signal it might be speculated if it was a sign of collective dementia taking form of terror also in Khalnayak and in psychopath killers like SRK’s films.

Representing times and ethos the image of Khalnayak that strikes the state directly unlike the characters played by SRK in his early row of violent films does provides interesting parallels to the psychopathic roles of SRK. Khalnayak ie Ballu seeks redemption by admitting his villainy and submitting his weapons to the police. Although there is a sense of reconciliation, the stark images of the police torturing the hero/villain and his mother are revealing. It has classical parallel with Mother India, where the mother shoots the errant son (Bhugra, 2006, ibid p 193). In his anger and irreverence, Khalnayak tales over from the angry young man. This villain is more extreme, overturning the existing concepts of good and evil. The hero and anti hero respond to personal social injustice through glamorized violence, the aim is destruction, not redemption. He likes materialistic things and hates pseudo pride of poverty, unemployment and hopelessness. He discards abstraction like family live age, past heritage, and honour for the sake of basic needs, upward mobility, and economic betterment. He is not ashamed of being a villain; it is his choice. He represents an alienated generation which has taken action on its behalf.

Such construction of an anti hero ‘is acceptable because society deserves such an “anti-hero” hero. He deserves to be applauded because he takes position rather than be simply pushed around by poverty and his circumstances. This almost western view of egocentric self and hero as rebel indicates the influence the west was able to spread’ (Bhugra, ibid. p. 194). Ballu rejects Gandhian philosophy and cannot see any reason as to why he should not have what he wants to have when everyone around is doing the same. This criminality is discussed at a press conference to reflect the alien of nation’s youth. Ballu believes in unlawful actions and feels that idealism of his forefathers idealism (his grandfather as a freedom fighter) did not pay to meet their needs of rent or his college education or his sister’s job the feels ....for reward and questions the values of the nation (ibid. p. 195). Ballu’s cynicism and criminality while more confrontational and is a brazen repudiation of middle class idealism, the more latent and the obverse interiorized malaise resides within the psychopathic hero. While Khalnayak attacks the state, the public sphere, the psychopath played by SRK wreaks havoc within the safe haven of the private. Both display a male masochism, and a an attending sheer desperation (of believing in his own end).

Obsession as male masochism according to: Krutnik manifest a desire to escape from the regimentation of masculine (cultural) identity affected through the oedipal complex. Hence the relations between the hero and the woman in his life are either over involved or alienated; there is no mid point. The relationship with girl friend, sister, mother or maternal figures are coloured
by self doubts regarding his own masculinity. The dread implicit in throwing away the pattern rule or law and masochism in it and yet the dread of emasculation makes these masquerades intriguing, yet problematic. The lesson is ‘[This] dramatic is articulated, and elaborated and results in various way but these are all unified by what can be seen as an obsession with the non correspondence between the desires of the individual male subject and the cultural regime of masculine identification on’ (Krutnik, as cited in Bhugra ibid. p.196).

The construction of the psychopathic hero during transitional moments of globalization is understandable as Krutnik goes on to postulate that masculine paranoia, psychosis, homosexuality, various firms of “corruptive” sexuality are some of the principal ways in which a crisis of confidence in the possibilities of masculine identity is articulated within the culturally conventional parameters of masculine identity (ibid). Therefore masochism demonstrating a crisis of confidence seen in males of a transient society becomes visible when he direct this insecurity towards an obsession for his desired object viz the woman. Shah Rukh’s films Darr and Anjaam are tales of male obsession for a woman which otherwise reflects a deeper crisis and insecurity of the middle class. Bazigar a vengeance tale sees the hero obsessively pursuing his vendetta. The masochistic male hero made self-inflictive ‘Self Harm’ look plausible in the given social context. Another possible explanation that can be put forward is that the definition of self in deliberate self harm varies across culture. The socio centric self involves others, in which case the act of deliberate self harm (see R. Majumdar on graphic violence initiated on the body by Shah Rukh in these films) is also meant to hurt others around the individual rather than the individual himself /herself. Under these circumstances the act takes on much broader significance. The introjections of the anger can lead to depression and one way of dealing with it is to externalize the anger by self hurting as did the psychopathic, masochistic hero played by SRK. (see Bhugra, 2006 ibid. p.210).

Posing as the atypical hero of 90’s who is also seen as villainous in Anjaam, Darr, and Baazigar are Shah Rukh Khan’s three key films dealing with the hero’s obsession. Along with these three films, he also appeared in Deewana, which had a similar theme of obsessive love. With 1990 therefore emerged a hero who cannot accept refusal from the woman be loves. The preoccupation with lust and possession reaches a climax through these early films of Shah Rukh Khan, who epitomised the crazed, obsessive, possessive lover. The characters portrayed are ruthless and remorse less. This behaviour on part of the anti hero stands out in stark contrast to the additional hero’s messianic roles (ibid).

The conventional villains eventually balked or redeemed themselves, often by public apology. In the 1990s this change became evident. Villainy that began to change its shape from 1970s reached an apotheosis in the 1990s when the crazed lover typified by Shah Rukh—who was almost psychotic with no regrets and no redemption in sight—emerged and continued to hold sway. This new hero who turns almost villainous is an expression of his times—he is an egocentric individual. The development of an egocentric individual who paints himself as above everyone, unable to understand why the heroine rejects him, is far removed from the conventional sociocentric or kinship/family oriented individual. These demarcations between
good and bad were blurred in the cinema of the anti-hero. In Anjamm, Baazigar and Darr the hero moves a virtue of the obsessive passion or love, and validates his pursuit by removing all obstacles by resorting to means, most reprehensible otherwise i.e. even by killing them. The psychopathic hero and his personal gratification become important purely for personal gains such that no societal opprobrium fails to deter (ibid. p. 197) (See Yash Chopra’s quotes)

The obsession for romantic love or desired object so far latent was made manifest as it was sanctified by culture of fulfilment under the incipient influence of global consumerism that was making steady inroads into the urban middle class markets by the early 90s following liberalization of the market. It was therefore conceded that this scary irrational phenomeon of the psychopathic lover marks a thin line between love and obsession; men being extroverts, are more expressive compared with introverted woman who do not show what they feel. Despite this gross generalization and caricature, there is a kernel of truth in them. Although this obsessive love had existed and had even been portrayed earlier in Hindi films, it is only in recent times that it has ‘become violent, controlling, and vicious. The invasions of personal space and altered materialistic possessive values have made it acceptable’ (Bhugra,2006,ibid p 210).In other words one can read this romantic obsession as a metaphorical expression of the larger materialistic obsession of the consuming middle class.

The hero in these films is an amoral subjectIn Anjaam, Darr and Baazigar it is the villain who is also the hero and in an egoistic manner he mediates an apathy for social norms and morals. He is interested in gratification and he lacks guilt in his fervent desire to posses either materiality or the woman, a metaphorical ploy symbolising his desirous self.His romance is tainted by lust, voyeuristic gaze and obsessive sense of possession and such an obsession is made both public and open (ibid.). Unlike the villains of 1950s and 1960s of romantic films who also lusted for the heroine were far more restrained. Unlike these conventional villain, these anti heroes are portrayals of a lust to kill ‘for their own ego, self esteem and possession’(ibid. p 211)


The ‘Function of Madness’ and the (anti) hero as the psychotic “Other” as an embodiment or a personification of etexteriorised/interiorised threat in face of the nation’s transitional crisis is extremely pertinent to illustrate how the nation’s middle-class seeks to reprise itself through the ‘othering’ of madness. Melodrama allows the hero/heroine to reach a level of functioning where he or she can define his or her self and place and place this social self in the context of family and kinship. However, if the psychosis splits this self, it would mean that the social self is rendered vulnerable, especially because of the stresses of love and loss. The two view points
viz. The directorial and spectatorial allow spectators to modify their own view of the self and their identity. Thus, “the other” seen on screen may become the “other” in the psyche, thereby making it impossible for them to accept the psychotic individual because that the viewer as voyeur viewing madness, derives a sense of relief. “Thank goodness it is not me”. (Bhugra ibid, 2006.p 17).

Shah Rukh in his early roles of madness represented the anxiety of the social self that was assuaged in “othering”. The mad as the other of social self was exteriorised on screen from linking fear within. This “other” at times found an expression in faces of terror, as in Roja (1994). Khalnayak (1993) and at times in psychotic villains. Existing discourse on mental illness informed the authorial construction of mental illness or its representation in films. These representations in turn influence the existing concepts, attitudes and prevalent social attribution. But more often than not mental illness is mostly a metaphor for the portrayal of “the Other” in cinema-laden with negative meaning if the prevalent social attribution see mental illness as divisive. In the wake of liberalization, the spectre of uncertainty loomed large, with a retreatist state. The fear and anxiety haunting the social self of the middle class deployed mental illness as counterpoint in the narrative and thereby allowing screen images of violent, bizarre and contradictory behaviour to take precedence. It is the exteriorized fear of a ‘personality disorder that is markedly different from expectations of the individual’s culture’ (ibid 53)

Notwithstanding the negative associations, ‘the concept of the mad, get confused with the sad, as both are seen to be suffering, not always because of their own doing, but owing to an external set of circumstances’ ( ibid.) This explains why Shah Rukh’s early ventures in negative roles, did not alienate him from audience empathy. The “Other” was awry that haunted the closely held social self (Zizek,2002 )

Second to the anxious social self is the Hindu fundamentalism of the 1990s that was symptomatic of an authorized silence or repression located at the very heart of national culture. The object of such fundamentalism is to express a whole set of political, social, economic and religious conditions (Mishra,2002, ibid.p.203). This can be attributed to several factors including the Iranian revolution. The Iranian fatwa on Salman Rushdie giving more power to “Muslims” at the surface on one hand and the rise of Rama as an avatar appropriated to a temple cult was significant in the rise of Hindu fundamentalism. Gandhi’s assassination had brought it to public gaze. The trauma of partition on the other hand became the modern demonic for North Indians to overcode their Muslim “other”. People in the midst of this anxiety forgot what went on. The search for identity meant that the difficult and unpalatable had to be hidden away deep into one’s unconscious. In the late 1980s and 1990s this agony of partition and its “encrypting” took a slightly different and politically dangerous form via the redefinition of the concept of Hindutva. ( ibid. p.210- 211 )

This othering by the majoritarian forces of political Hinduism as seen in Shah Rukh’s role of the psychopathic other (and also that of Khalnayak) is a response to socio political events. The film is not about the spectator’s attraction to the figure of anti hero but the demon to be within of both spectator and nation ( see,Mishra 2002 p. 227). It is this encrypting of collective trauma
within us at the spectre of fundamentalist politics than is to be seen also in the psychopathic role of Shah Rukh.

Explaining the violence of Shah Rukh’s performativity in his early films can be sufficiently explained in terms of the popular. The audience brings to the film, as we known a very real fund of dissatisfaction and boredom. This is precisely the defensive but peremptory insistence that they seek entertainment which the cinematic spectacle admittedly acknowledges.

The violence of revenge of Bachchan in the 70s and the obsessive psychopathic violence of both revenge and desire of Shah Rukh speaks of a certain dissatisfaction that is mobilised by their films as a combination of both cynicism and sentimentality. In the cynicism of films with violence the spectator recognises the negative experiences, the failures and disappointments of his everyday life; a hostile impulse is allowed to avenge itself on a hated and incomprehensible world. On the other hand, the sentimentality enshrines and reinstates those feelings and hopes and wish fulfilling dreams whose impossibility and failure the cynicism confirms. This is itself a vacuous circle that gives pleasure because it validates the spectator’s personal experiences (see, Elsaesser, 1976 p 195).

The political decadence and instability of the 70’s giving rise to cynicism towards the legitimacy of established institutions and that was further generated at the uncertainties generated by a retreatist state at the wake of liberalization yet to fulfil its unfinished developmental agenda and modernisation in the early 90’s. This cynicism combines with the helpless sentimentality of the protagonist who recourses to violence seeking revenge on to what he holds thwarts his wish-fulfilment. For an anxious nation caught in the throes of an anxiety of crisis this resonated well and was popularly re-claimed as validation of their personal experience in the anguish, strife and pain of the subjectivities played by the hero in the early part of his career.

The accents of tragic pathos often seen in the death of the hero (Deewar as a classic type and in all of SRK’s early films with negative roles) affirmed a ‘spectatorial self pity’ – a compensatory relation between affirmation and negation. Shah Rukh in repeated performance of negative and violent roles in close succession reactivated every time, this ‘soft-core’ of pessimism every time, (ibid. p. 195). This came to codify a ‘substratum of exasperated longing for being cheated’ in their wish-fulfilment as was seen in the unconsummated desire of the hero running as common across the three films of SRK. The revenge films of Amitabh Bachchan in the mid-70’s against the backdrop of an ‘authoritarian democracy’ and Shah Rukh’s films in response to anxiety generated by the deep economic crisis, through graphic violence came to exploit the ‘nihilism of its audience’. It confirmed a life of frustration, despair and discontent.

Notwithstanding what disparages popular culture as being contrary to ‘realism’, one can argue that this realism (of violence) found in popular cinema is a negative one, ‘.....is in fact an emotionally coded protest against life as it is lived, and therein lies in its potential for liberation and its manipulative power’ (ibid p. 196). The hero provides the route to mediate popular protest, and can be seen as moments of sado-masochistic bind. However one can locate with these texts the overt confrontation of the political and controversial material, as was seen in
Amitabh’s overt violence in a nation caught in state of suspended democracy and civil rights during Emergency. Nevertheless as true to popular text the language of violence is effectively depoliticized by harking back to a rhetoric of emotion and sentimental, which at the level of formal elaboration shapes and sustains an ambiguity and whimsical paradox (ibid.p. 197) as it may be argued in a bid to obfuscate the counter hegemonic sub-text mediated by violence. The “status quo” is maintained (as the hero is redeemed through death) and this ‘corresponds to a dense ideological smokescreen’. What was the need for this emption of violence, and one can seek an answer to it an explanation that argues that the function of this exercise is to provide an emotional grid where frustration is allowed to surface and to be accommodated in fictional narrative only to be more efficiently displaced into areas where the real contradictitious resolve themselves in witty incongruities and ironic parallels (ibidp. 197)

Violence appear to be a shorthand or an emotional form of reasoning which for its emphatic nature brooks little argument, eliminates nuances, and excludes middle term and progress towards sharp opposition and confrontation, medicated hereby the hero. As a rhetorical device his violence expressed in the form of physical psychopathic rage of revenge and obsessive desire ‘acts as a means of displacement-here into the realm of psychic’ ( ibid.p 193). It is emotionally provocative and through his ‘interiorized struggle’ mobilize ‘ his unconscious’ i.e. the spectator. It gives this ‘objectness’ to mobilize the unconscious of the spectator and is ‘designed to get under the spectator’s skin…..This objectness because of its intense psychic component, is an actually estranged subjectivity and mirrors the situation of the fetishist; the film thus makes the spectator experience himself as voyeur, an omnipresent, distanced master of the spectacles experience himself as voyeur, an omnipresent, distanced master of the spectacle, seeing but not seen, although in his own position of privilege and apparent power he is the spectator of his own victimization, to which he consents by allowing …..to become the agent of his own alienation’ ( ibid p 198).

Shah Rukh is therefore not the other, but the ‘othered us’ – whom we alienate to be held in distance as we enjoy the distance though live our own unconscious and anxious self through this ‘othered’ psychotic hero.. But this only self-defeating as this othered psychotic hero. Himself a middle class subject is the middle class’s own alterity through whom they ironically seek to exonerate themselves.

This other can also be read a reminder of what is “the double movement of containment and resistance, which is always inevitably inside it” (Hall cited in Fiske,1989,p.29). It re-enacts and performatively brings out the power of resistance and evasion. The “bothering” and his subsequent annihilation is ‘a strategy of containment’ (Fiske ibid.p. 29). While maintaining the relative autonomy of the cultural economy from the financial opens up cultural commodities to resistant or evasive uses : attempts to chose the gap to decrease the autonomy are further strategies of containment or incorporation (ibid 29). If the rebellions hero – the angry young man was a strategic containment, of rage as a deliberate hegemonic ploy, in the 1970s, alternatively the psychotic hero can be seen as the containment of neurotic. impulses of an anxious nation.
The early films of Shah Rukh may be described as belonging to his what may be called as his ‘Not-Yet Consumerist Star Image’ is caught within middle class dilemmas and represents an ‘unstable self’. Laden with ambiguities, anxieties, ambivalence that revolves around the question of desire and the traditionally held moral imperative of restrain the subject reveals an anomalous inner self. A study of Indian characters therefore often reveals a fragmented, uninterested and even contradictory nature. These features give rise to compartmentalization so that the psyche can cope with the paradoxical and confusing elements. The schism between the ideal and the actual often represent a tussle between lust for materialism and pursuit of spirituality. The desire for material possession contradicts the idealism and cultural preferences focusing on spirituality. The individuals hankering do not much correspond with what he ideally should do. Such a paradox feeds into a feeling of dissonance in wanting to be materially comfortable but expecting to be an ascetic. These contradictory feelings generate frustration and are considered highly threatening to be consciously allowed to surface. When unleashed their expression is chaotic and leads to utter loss of control. In Hindi cinema these emotions and feelings have been consciously projected onto the villain on screen, who represents the extremes of evils with which audience can identify, ‘without getting their hands dirty’ (Bhugra, 2006 96-97).

However, I would argue that one needs to expand the frame to include a desirous subject who desires not only for materiality but also love. And in the early films of Shah Rukh we see ambivalence that also attended him in films like Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman (1993), Yess Boss (1997), Maya Memsaab (1992), Deewana (1992), Chamatkar (1994) and so on. The desires were transposed on to the protagonist himself. The inhibitions surrounding desire was overcome by the middle class and they no longer needed a villain who would be lustful. However, it also needs to stated that repressed desire and passivity of earlier years and the idealism of sacrifice had its cathartic release in these set of films where desire led to an unstable psychopathic behaviour in the individual (hero).

Hall argued that it is necessary to look at the semantic field within which any particular ideological claim signifies. Marx’s sayings, Hall reminds, holds that the ideas of past weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living. The moment of historical formation is critical for any semantic field. These semantic zones take shape at particular historical periods; for e.g. the formation of bourgeois individualism in the 17th and 18th centuries in England. They leave the traces of their connections, long after the social relations to which they referred have disappeared. These traces can be re-activated at a later stage, even when the discourses have fragmented as coherent or organic ideologies. In this context, Hall argues, that we can locate the possibility for ideological struggle. A particular ideological chain becomes a site of struggle, not only when people try to displace, rupture or contest it by supplanting it with some wholly new alternative set of terms, but also when they interrupt the ideological field and try to transform its meaning by changing or rearticulating its associations for e.g. from negative to positive. Often, ideological struggle consists over actually consists of attempting to win over
some new concepts of meanings for an existing term or category of disarticulating it from its place in a signifying structure (Hall 1996 p.30).

The advent of the global came to stage an ideological struggle within the intra-discursive semantic field of the Indian Society and how this society bound by articulation of plural discourse of post colonial nation-hood, caste, religion, gender, secularism was interrupted by the incipient discourse of globalization. The rupture and fragmentation had its anxious moments in popular text and the psychopath other is one of its earliest registers.

Indian democratic state facing a serious crisis of accumulation of capital and its prescription of global integration has not helped in the resolution of basic crisis of developing capitalism in India. While the Indian state has not been able to resolve its basic economy crisis in spite of its ‘opening’ to advanced capitalist countries, the autonomy of India state vis-a-vis global capitalism has been eroded. Indian democratic state standing at cross road because the logic of global capitalism was allowed to operate wherein all principles enshrined in the liberal democratic constitution of India have been abandoned under the weight of superior state systems of advanced capitalism. The agenda to further democracy is in opposition to its policy of liberal reforms that has led to abandoning of distributional agenda of the state-required by the teeming million living below the poverty line. The compulsions to cater to the agenda of a more inclusive and protective democracy contrivances the targets of capital accumulation (Bhambri, 2005 ibid.p.128-130)

These uncertainties and the plunge taken without resolving the basic problems was perhaps seen in the schizophrenic-a guilt reaction of the nation, that be traded the distributive role, the role of the planner and allocator armed at equitable justice and gave up its much vaunted socialist rhetoric. It needs to be speculated if this schizophrenic/psychopathic hero obsessed with private desires and inner strife and anguish the shy-faced nation-state trying to move away from the large pale of Indian masses who are/were real victims of serious economic crisis of the country (see, ibid p 182)

What runs common to all the heroes in Shah Rukh’s films is a Narcissistic Anxiety within the hero and a conspicuous absence of the maternal figure in a meaningful sense. In Darr, the mother was dead to whom the hero spoke, in Baazigar she was a schizophrenic who was hostage to a tormented past and was barely there in Anjaam. In a psycho-social sense, the world of Indian childhood widens suddenly from the intimate cocoon of maternal protection to the unfamiliar masculine network woven by the demands and tensions of men of the family. For the male child, this abrupt entry into the society and the maternal separation can have psychological consequences and this marks a critical shift, in a psycho-social dimension, it is one of the emotional frontiers of the inner world of experience. The ‘Indian boy’s’ loss of the relationship of symbiotic intimacy with his mother accounts to a narcissistic injury of first magnitude. The consequences of the ‘second birth’ in identity development of India men are several: heightened narcissistic vulnerability, an unconscious tendency to ‘submit’ to an idealized omnipotent figure, both in the inner world of fantasy and in the outside world of making a living’ (Kakar, 1996 p 126-128).
In his early films like Baazigar, Darr and Anjan, Shah Rukh displays a narcissistic anxiety of an adolescent like man – exposing a vulnerability due to separation from mother/absent mother as in Darr and a readiness to identify with an object of sexual desire—an obsession to recover the loss of maternal separation as in Darr and Anjam.

The fascination of passionate love lies in its promise to resolve the inner paradoxes of two compelling and at times opposing erotic quests: the longing for oneness with the beloved, and desire for sensual excitement, sexual possession and orgasmic release. Kakar says that this is embodied in its first firm of quest and its term in Majnun as he seeks merger and suffers an elemental separation. (Kakar 1996 p 63). One can see this passional erotic quest to sexually possess the woman of desire in Shah Rukh’s early films, as a result this leads to psychopathic behavioural expressions in Darr and Anjaam.

Kakar explains that this madness captures what is perhaps the greatest threat to love more than any external danger, more than death. ‘Wrenched from self possession defenses of everyday life which have served well enough now weakened, the lover is once again vulnerable to the most primordial of anxieties, to what Freud called the mental helplessness encountered in the face of maternal loss’ (ibid. p 66). In both Darr and Anjaam, the vulnerability parallels Majnun madness and has its roots in ‘maternal loss’ as the hero is without a mother.

Like Majnun’s longing for union that is so compelling in Shah Rukh’s role in both Darr and Anjam, this longing is expression of erotic desire, as seen in his voyeuristic gaze as a stalker. Kakar explain it as a maleness with its express coir of phallic desire rooted in experience of loss and separation from mother and entry into male world. He sees this as ‘fantasized violence of sexual possession’ that ‘symbolizes the destructive violence of the masculine impulse’ as too seen in the various violent acts the hero engages in to sexually possess his desire woman in both the films Darr and Anjaam. (see, ibid p. 69).

Kakar argues that ‘aggression in the service of self gratification is no doubt an essential in ingredient of the paradoxes of which passion is composed. Sexual violence is an expression of a ‘raw er’ form of ‘instinctual desire’. ‘Phylogenitically it harkens back to the procreative and territorial prerogatives which the male animal asserts when it lays claim to a female-base motives from socio biology.......’ This possessive fantasy as seen in the hero’s violence, the wish to terrorise and harm the desired object is a kind of sadism, hostility of the lover (ibid.p 197-198).

This is a characteristic of melodrama to present the “loss” melodramatically and not tragically and even morality is sought to be sentimentalized. Reflecting this convention, the melodramatic hero of popular Bombay cinema is given an ‘appropriate baccarat discourse before the loss is represented’. The moments of heroic sacrifice of Dilip Kumar is Ganga Jamuna. Sunil Dutt’s in Mother India, Amitabh Bachchan in Sholay and Deewar are captured within registers of a melodramatic frame. These films centred on themes of heroes being virtuous of ‘social misfortune’—the individual as an ethical subject (with humane, democratic values) either loses out completely or is integrated back into the system and stands for it’. (Mishra, ibid.p 17). However in the case of early films Shah Rukh a psychotic is certainly unqualified for the
‘becara complex’ or syndrome of his earlier predecessors His death is not the cause of any social misfortune and neither does it harness him back to the ethical order. The moral order instead choses to penalize his transgression with death without the subject’s realization of his mistakes.

3.3 CINEMA OF THE MIDDLE CLASS PROTAGONIST SHAH RUKH KHAN

Anthropologist Victor Turner argues that sociology has been too concerned with the study of structure and has paid too little attention to spontaneous and loosely situations. In order to understand these lose structured moments, Turner was inspired by Arnold Van Genep who had identified a liminal phase in rites of passage. During this period the person involved in status transition was outside of society and had an ambiguous status. The term liminal comes from limen, the Latin world for “Threshold”, i.e. quality of being in a boundary position. The threshold itself is neither inside nor outside. The liminal person is ‘betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial’ (Turner 1977 as cited in Smith, 2001). Turner builds on van Gennep and highlights the corrective aspects of liminality as well its links to individual life course. During lininal periods collectivity will experience breakdown of established social classifications and cultural codes.

Taking cue from Turner’s understanding of liminal period, this section seeks to explore popular films that capture the moral trepidations of the middle class—their dilemmas, their moments of anxiety, and their share of predicaments, at a transitional or liminal phase of post-liberalization India. These films though are separated from each other by a hiatus of a number of years are bound to the same thematic concern, viz. the middle class subject. These films bring to fore the role-conflicts in which the individual subjects are involved. Their ambition takes them to situations where they are performing roles as a performative engagement to secure their desired goal or desired end, which is materialistic and pecuniary in the first three films discussed and conjugal bliss in the fourth. Goffman’s understanding of dramaturgy privileges an insight into the various ways by which the middle class subject seeks to present himself in a manner that does not come but spontaneously. The presentation involves him in actions that are opposed to his inner self and necessitates conscious orchestration, display, and impression management in various interactional situations to do what appears expedient from his vantage point. (Goffman 1959.)

In Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman and Yes Boss the hero seeks to please his unscrupulous employers while in Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani he breaches professional ethics of being a neutral journalist and initially balks before marketing media imperatives to present concocted news versions. In Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi he is the simpleton middle class man who masquerades as an uninhibited, flamboyant, hybrid, Westernized youth—a persona that stands antithetical to the typical, post-colonial coy, sober, educated, bespectacled, clerical, gentleman like middle class variety.

The characters represent the schism between the socially constructed and conditioned identities of the middle class subject and the situational/interactional identities he reproduces for self fulfilling ends and which also provide leads to tendentious changes towards altered middle
class identities. Middle class identities and values defining the hero’s role in social terms presupposes that he is situated in a position or his belongingness to the category of middle class enjoins him to an identity in social terms, to certain shared meanings and values and also certain social expectations (that can be transposed upon the assumed audience or the national spectatorship). The hero’s belonging to this category allow narrative to give certain self-conceptions and intra-psychic structures as an embodiment of middle class identity. The meanings of identity while drawing upon socio-cultural constructs enduringly associated to positions within social structures from which identity types derive are nevertheless subject to active re-creations and modifications in response to changing context. The fact that identities are both reflections of socially structured sets of relations and are also emergent and negotiable by actors serve to be shown in how the hero embodies in the films an emergent identity of the middle class that recreates, negotiates and even alters middle class value-orientations in view of a changing socio-economic and political context. These transformations borne in the middle class subjectivities in the form of certain moral compromises or infringement of ethical codes appear both emergent as well interactional since the alterations suggested at the level of the hero’s value-position is not allowed to endure and are reinforced as convenient interational strategies or enactments to only to overcome a given expedient situation, such as to make a successful professional career, of an engineer in Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman, of a self-run advertising agency in Yes Boss, of a media/television journalist in Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani while upholding certain ethical codes that are otherwise the defining hallmark of middle class value-position. The hero is not allowed to be maligned by what has come to defined as the acquisitive, consumerist, gratifying traits of the new middle class as in all the films a redemptive device is deployed as a hegemonic resolution to hark back the middle class to its avowed idealism and respectability. (see Vyran et al, 2003, Savaala, 2010 ibid; Varma, 2004 ibid) A counter-hegemonic reading, despite these redemptions offered to the middle class subject by re-locating his middle class propriety within the referential matrix of middle class value-position at denouement, offers broad indications towards changing values of the middle class in terms of their redefined priorities and desires. This does problematize the easy correspondence between middle class identity conventionally upheld and their present behavior and dispositions because sociologically identities are sets of meanings attached to the self or serve as references and standards that influence behavior. (Burke, 1991) Interestingly the middle class identity played by the star negotiates and even intersects with his biography especially in the first few films of this kind when the star himself was struggling to gain a foothold in the film industry. His recollections in his biographical accounts talks about his struggling days and how he coped with them on the strength of the middle class values and ideals he imbibed from his erudite freedom fighter father and well educated magistrate mother. (see, Sheikh, 2009 Ghosh , Chopra, )
3.3.1 Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman (RBGG) (Raju Became A Gentleman, 1992, directed by Aziz Mirza)

The category of middle class films where the star, SRK, acts as a middle class subject has a strong intertextual relation to legendary films and its heroes like Shri 420 by Raj Kapoor and C.I.D. of Dev Anand. In this category SRK makes his early appearances in the beginning of his film career and has an uncanny biographical resemblance. This was also the time when the nation was beginning to embark on a policy of liberalization and the period was replete with challenges, prospects, predicaments and promises. The situation was similar to the ambivalence of the post-colonial nation in the early years of independence as embraced a rational modern policy of scientific, planned development, planning and industrialization and tried to grapple with the attendant transformation and modernist changes it entailed. Middle class films of the star re-visit the anxiety and the ambivalence that characterized films of 1950s and 1960s.

Middle Class Subject and the City is one of the repeated themes in this genre and it may be argued that one of the early films of SRK ‘Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman’ (1993)/ RBGG is an intertextual relay of meanings that revolve around the ethical/moral dilemmas of a migrant to the city of Bombay at a transitional juncture when ‘making wealth’in the new environs of post-market reforms India was gaining greater sanctification.

The film is replete with reminiscences of Raj Kapoor’s Shri 420,a quintessential 1950’s film about hero’s journey and his quest for truth, accompanied by his sobering inward looking reflection that slowly turns into a critique of the daunting pressures on the young nation, comes to be recast in the context of the nation’s global regime and economic liberalization. The narrative, in Kapoor’s characteristic style around Raj, the protagonist whose innocence lost is finally regained is repeated in the new Raj, the ambitious engineer who comes to the city of Mumbai with dreams of being successful. Kapoor’s journey from small town Allahabad, to the big bad city of Bombay, sees him gradually succumbs to its trappings of wealth, glitter and latent treachery. Toward the end a redemption is offered as he recovers his lost ‘’imaan (integrity/honour) and in the end leaves the city with Vidya (Nargis) his paramour to a nowhere land. The moment of revelation, the truth about the enemy of the nation, occurs when he discovers that corruption is the root of postcolonial nation’s enervation; it also exalt the value of integrity. (see, Virdi, 2003 p.93)The hero SRK is seen to repeat the same cycle of idealism, degeneration and regained scruples on realization. The film Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman contains a paradoxical element that is significant within the inter-textual domain of Hindi popular films in the sense that the earlier film by Kapoor made in the context of socialist idealism was embedded in populist commentary embraced by Hindi cinema under Nehruvian influence. Nehru’s vision robust and vital at the time, held the promise among the literate. This is also true of Shah Rukh who comes to the city of Bombay at a time that was epochal and marked a departure from the earlier Nehruvian socialist regime that had generated lot of optimism by Kapoor. Raju like Raj, loses his innocence though regains it against extreme temptations. The middle class hero disillusioned at the corruption. The screen play for Shri 420 becomes the ‘master narrative for many films to come’ (ibid) and is therefore worth attending.
in this context as the one that served to re-envision the moral crisis of the idealist middle class educated hero played by SRK after several decades at another moment of nation’s transition. Nehruvian socialism had a typical idealism vested in the figures of the happy peasant, honest laborer, idealistic school teacher, (and) the philanthropic doctor in IPTA (Indian People’s Theatre Association) productions. Where these narratives typically located these protagonists in the city a microcosm of the nation; and placed them in conflicting situations, and end with resolutions that idealize the traditional against the modern even as protagonists retreat to a nonexistent space to nowhere, a space that films do not indurate visually at any point in the narrative. Hindi cinema narrated the nation’s problems which the early middle class hero single handedly solves by displaying physical and moral courage. In Shri 420 Raj Kapoor an unemployed youth, arrives in Bombay in search of a job but fails in his efforts to make an honest living. However as a Casino trickster and a close aide of a dubious businessman he turns wealthy. He floats several fraudulent schemes to make money. At last his conscience prevents him from defrauding his former homeless friends. He recants and gives his business associates to the police. The same theme sees SRK in RBGG.

The story of Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman is the story of Raj Mathur, played by SRK, a young engineering graduate from Darjeeling who comes to Bombay nurturing similar dreams like the earlier Raj (in Shri 420) to be a successful man. He comes to stay in a lower middle-class area in search of a distant relative only to discover that he has left long back but it is where he befriends some men who stand by him. He meets a philosophical streetside performer (Nana Patekar), who becomes a close friend to him and gives him a place to stay. With no connections in the large city, he faces difficulties in finding a job till a beautiful girl Renu (Juhi Chawla) whom he later romances in the film finds him a job in the construction company as a trainee where she too works as secretary to the owner, Chabbria (Navin Nischol). Raj and Renu eventually fall in love with each other As Raj becomes successful; he attracts the attention of the proprietor’s daughter Sapna, (Amrita Singh) also meaning dreams is a figurative expression of holding the key to all that Raj aspired for himself, and starts spending time with him and this sees the middle class ambitious boy enticed to the lavish and glamorous lives of the rich people. Renu is heartbroken as she realizes the changes in the moral probity of Raj and his growing lust for wealth. Meanwhile Raj’s rivals in the company conspire to discredit him and sabotage a constructed bridge which was under Raj’s supervision. Facing allegations, he realizes that what he pursued is chimerical and illusive that made him drifts from his true self, he decided to leave and was re-united with Renu, the signifier of his conscience.

Presenting the world in binary of good and bad, like Shri 420, the film contains no ambiguous grey areas, the characters represent principles and causes resolutely. The only character afforded any complexity, is Raj whose desperation, true of the emerging new middle class drives him to stray his scruples despite his innate goodness. Unlike the poverty of the earlier Raj who loses his integrity the new Raj belongs to a more ‘developed’ India where the problem of the middle class is not of bare minimum for survival but soaring ambition.
Scenes in the earlier film where the protagonist looks into and speaks to his or her image in the mirror are well known devices weighted with connotations of durability, the split between the real self and the image of the self or between the different selves inhabiting the same body, are not without its parallels in RBGG. In this instance, what appears in the mirror the image is purported to be the real self while the real self standing before the mirror is the ephemeral chimera. The shot allows for empathy with Raj’s feelings of emptiness and loss even when immersed in wealth. When Raj sees not a self reflection, but his older disheveled self he is surprised. Viewers are once again assured that this re-called Raj as SRK has only changed superficially that he still retains his earlier idealism and the child like innocence with which he first arrived to the city. (Virdi, ibid. p.95).

After recovering from reversals both heroes experience in the build up to the final climatic sequence, a sense of remorse that takes over. Raj Kapoor the earlier hero discloses the mafia’s fraudulent scheme. In an unusually long speech delivered to the crowd of homeless folks thronging Dharamchands promises he recounts the ills of the nation – poverty unemployment, homelessness and corruption by unscrupulous people. He talks how he came to Bombay with aspirations to be a rich man with his strength of education and integrity and hoped to have a home a family and raise children who can be meaningfully educated. But because of greed entered into a world of deceit and trickery and has lost everything. The regained consciousness has allowed him to learn that the way to solve the problem of unemployment and poverty is not greed but courage and hard work. The solution was in nation’s development and unity of people.

A trenchant but albeit populist critique, it is a last ditch attempt to reinstate the official rhetoric placated the hegemonic ideology, and pleaded against the grain of the entire film – for a truce with status quo. Speaking on behalf of a generation that faced the onerous task of nation building after inheriting a disfigured postcolonial legacy the film Shri 420 addresses the contradictions between commitment to the nation and the Herculean challenge posed by meeting the needs for food, shelter, clothing and education.

This film extends many intertextual moments to Shah Rukh’s Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman. The realization of the earlier protagonist in the context of an optimism towards nation building euphoria come to be replaced by middle class anxiety to fulfill material aspirations in a big, bad, city of Bombay- in the face of luring traps of corrupt practice for easier gratification. The city in times of transition emerges as an important space fraught with anxiety ambivalence and conflicts. However, unlike the earlier hero the post-globalization middle class hero was more inward facing and his proclamations was bereft of the socialist rhetoric and neither did it contain any social address. The new Raju proclaimed the arrival of the new middle class and their eroding values and some persistent dilemmas of earlier value-positions that still had some command over their middle class conscience.

3.3.2 Yes Boss (1997, directed by Aziz Mirza)

The film is about Rahul, played by the star,(Shah Rukh Khan) as a middle class man, reveling in a job with extra earnings made by helping his boss Siddharth(Aditya Pancholi) manage his
multiple extra-marital affairs, only because he is in desperate need to raise money for opening an independent business of his own and treating his ailing mother. His boss, a lustful man who has deviously trapped a rich woman (Kashmira Shah) and married her for her wealth starts to beguile another innocent, pretty and ambitious girl Seema, (Juhi Chawla), an ambitious young woman and an aspiring model who is also known to the hero. And while initially trying to trap Seema for his boss, he becomes fond of her and it is then that he tries to protect her against his boss’s wrong sexual advances towards her realizes that he has silently fallen in love with her. A helpless and ambitious Rahul complies to his boss’s wish as Seema appeared to be smitten by the rich and glamorous Siddharth. Rahul as per his boss’s instruction pretends to be married to Seema to fool his boss’s suspecting wife and her brother Bhushan (Gulshan Grover). Siddharth takes Seema abroad in a shooting schedule falsely to get close to her where Rahul too accompanying them scuttles the plan. Bhushan at home breaks the news of marriage of Rahul and Seema to Rahul’s mother (Reema Lagoo). Apprehending that the reality might shock his mother Rahul and Seema are forced to feign as a couple and Seema starts staying with Rahul. Seema initially duped by Siddharth’s overtures soon realized his pretense and also discovers the purity in Rahul. As the two fall in love and Rahul risks his job to dare his boss and relinquishes his dream and finally love triumphs. The film is about the impetuous and inwardly distraught middle class heroic subject seeking to fulfill his nurtured dreams as also someone who does not dither from moral transgressions. Acting as an accomplice to all of Siddharth’s misadventures and wrongly protecting him against exposure, his love for Seema, the prospective victim of his boss’s sexual lust makes him regain his moral pieties. The film while exploring the practical difficulties of a middle class subject in his entrepreneurial ventures, in a time which had otherwise unleashed many opportunities but kept valued resources beyond the access of the ordinary, middle class man showed the persistence of roadblocks even in the changed regime. The film shows the jeopardized moral position of the urban, educated middle class eager to fulfill his material ambition but recuperates his moral position through the twist of the tale. The film through Siddharth’s life brings to fore all that the protagonist craves for but cannot get. The high stakes of the middle class subject in face of the allurement and his penchant to obtain the comforts of life that the new regime upholds for him comes out well in scenes where both Rahul and Seema are seen fancying a luxury skyscraper of Bombay. The foreign visit that Siddharth arranges in the pretext to draw Seema closer, a plan that Rahul comically disrupts is a narrative means of bringing two ambitious subjects to foreign lands and allow them to indulge briefly in the pleasures offered by consumption.

3.3.3 Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani /PBDHH (But The Heart Is Still Indian, 2000, directed by Aziz Mirza)

The film centers around Ajay Bakshi, played by SRK, is an arrogant and successful reporter who works for a reputed private news channel. His father was a freedom fighter living on a meager pension. Ajay has no respect for his father’s cherished ideals and believed that these ideals and sacrifices have nothing to offer. The rival news channel has Ria Banerjee, played by Juhi Chawla who is a complete antithesis to Ajay and uses her feminine charm to get her work
done. The film through its narrative of complex unfolding of series of events explores issues like an unscrupulous tendency of the media to fabricate or sensationalize news, political machinations and manipulations by politicians, fear of terror and vested interests that create or aggravate it further, commercialization of news content and aggressive media marketing and so on. The film despite offering redemption to the middle class hero at denouement who had otherwise engaged in unethical manipulations for professional gains, conceding to aggressively amoral competitive principle of media management. The film is about how the two successful middle class journalist regain their conscience against corruption of media and politics, at a crucial moment when India was de-regulating the state control over media.

The film brings out the inter-generational ideological difference between the idealist middle class father and the son. The hegemonic discourse of the nation re-situates itself by a revised agenda of patriotism that moves from the plane of idealistically motivated freedom struggle towards a ‘pop’ patriotism mediated through the media. Deriving its name from one of the most famous songs sung by Raj Kapoor in the film Awaara, is a re-iterative spirit of patriotism that seeks to affirm itself despite the global influence as the title of the film suggests that the ‘Soul Remains Indian’

The common theme that binds the three above films is the new middle class’s desire for consumption. Departing from the austerity and frugality that defined the Nehruvian regime of socialism, had its resonance in popular cinematic texts that translated the change of economic regime through an appropriate visual idiom of consumerism. Consumption became a part of our visual culture especially with the advent of corporate advertising in India.(see, Jain, 2007)Such was the ubiquity of advertising that it tended to transform all communications into persuasion. Creating consuming subjects and inducing a psychology of demand within the consumption friendly middle class liberated from the reins of earlier policies(see Varma, ibid) the consumerist culture of global capitalism converted the ideal of salvation into one of material well-being, an objective indicator of happiness since happiness could now be converted into one of material well-being, an objective indicator of happiness since happiness could now be verified and measured only in terms of objects.(see, Barbero, 1993.p.141)Desires fuelled primarily by ads and the happiness promised by possession of the desired object had its expressions in popular films in two ways. First, that has already been discussed viz. the violent roles of SRK’s early films where there is a grotesque manifestation of an exteriorized obsessive desire and in middle class subjectivities found a less pronounced expression with roles of ambitious middle class man desirous to be successful materially.’The strong presence of the middle class symbols stamped the media with an individualism, an incessant search for gratification,…..The heroes of the new mythology represent , not the community which they incarnate…the compensating goal of life is upward mobility’(ibid,p.141)The description fits the desire-driven ambitious heroes of the middle class films and the territory of desire they inhabit.The most representative song in this category of films that encapsulates the soaring desires of the middle class hero occurs in the film ‘Yes Boss’. The lyrics ‘Chand itare…’ shows SRK in an open van with a piano playing the tune to the song whose lyrics say that : ‘I want the
I want to reign...I want a golden palace, a rainfall of pearls and diamonds and it is only this bit that I want and nothing more. Oh God this is all that I want, so please listen to my prayers...I don’t ask for more’ An unprecedented candid and unrestrained confession of desires of the middle class subject in Hindi cinema ‘s music serve as a representative cultural template for mostly all films of this genre.

3.3.4 Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi/RNBDJ(A Match Made By God, 2008, directed by Aditya Chopra)

This film sees the star re-visit the genre of middle class romance after a hiatus of several years and entailed a de-glamourization of the star with SRK playing the mild-mannered office worker of PunjabPower as Surinder Sahni. He meets the daughter of his former professor, the beautiful and vivacious Taani during the preparations of her wedding. A short while later a shocking news arrives that her fiancé along with the wedding entourage were killed in a road accident. Taani’s father suffers a heart attack at the news. Fearing his daughter’s loneliness he requests Surinder to marry his daughter. Surinder silently agrees as he liked her on the very first meeting and Taani tearfully accepts her father’s choice for her for his sake. Following an impromptu wedding, Suri takes Taani to his ancestral home in Amritsar. The good natured, shy Suri treats his wife with utmost care, respect and warmth but is also scared to lay his marital claims on her and also profess his love to her. Taani tells him that she will play the role of a good wife socially, respect him but can never love him. The kind-hearted Suri grateful with the gestures of Taani’s wifely affection proceeds to keep her happy without asking for his conjugal rights on her. He lets her indulge in small pleasures and realizing her boredom in the drudgery of her mundane household work allows her to fulfill her passion and permits her to join a dancing class with a troupe from Bombay, aimed to train local talent. During these evenings Suri realizing the strong masculine images that his wife admires decides to overhaul his image taking help from his long –time friend, Balwinder ‘Bobby’ Khosla. Bobby gives him a complete Western-style clothing and hair style. Taking up the new guise Suri now as ‘Raj Kapoor’ joins Taani as her dancing partner for evening classes.Taani slowly takes a liking to Raj and become friendly with him. Suri and Taani face an internal conflict. Suri tries to please her as his own self but fails and alienates her further. Taani realizing her love for Raj, runs to him. Raj offers to elope making plans on his terms to keep both Suri and his fabricated ‘alter ego’ alive. They set their plans of elopement to the next night and also the night of the final day, the day of the competition for the dance. Suri ready to end the charade in his own way, decides to transfer himself to Delhi and leave his property to her. On the following day Suri takes Taani to the Golden Temple to gain divine blessings for her performance in the dance competition and also for her love with(out)Raj. At the temple a divine realization dawned upon her when she realizes that her marriage to Suri was divinely inspired or ordained. Reflecting for the first time upon her husband Taani realizes the integrity and steadfastness of Suri’s character and as a man whom she can begin to love. Taani declines to elope and tells Raj about her love for her newly –discovered life-partner. She leaves him in what appears to be a state of shock with tears in her eyes. When time comes for th performance Taani is shocked to see Suri turning up on...
stage instead of Raj. During the performance Taani awakens to the fact that Raj is Suri. Backstage she confronts Suri and he admits his love for her and she tearfully in happiness reciprocates. The two having won the dancing competition head off to a honeymoon in Japan. A website review of the film says: ‘The film tells a story of an ordinary person and, most importantly, conveys a message that being ‘ordinary’ is cool. The filmmakers were confident that it would be able to strike a chord with millions because the film has ordinary people as its target audience.’ And quoting another review it says: “As middle class people, so many of us have a routine life. We wake up in the morning, get dressed, go to office, come back, sometimes for a change we buy things to take home, watch TV, eat dinner and go to sleep. And then we repeat this day after day, week after week. Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi talks about one such man who lives a routine life ….”

Extending Jim Collins (1989) revised understanding of Althusser of individuals answering multiple “calls” and thereby rendering the ‘always-already’ status of subject as problematic in his study of Perry Hanzel film ‘The harder They Come’ (1973) to RNBDJ allow us to see how the middle class hero represents the effects of conflictive interpellation on “concrete individuals, particularly as he is splitted self: a middle class clerk with aspirations for stable domesticity and happy conjugal and the masqueraded ‘hip-hop’ self who seeks to please his wife and enamor her with a disguised self. Identity is seen as both a construct of specific discourses and a kind of bricolage of his own devising. Both processes, viz, the discourse specific interpellation and its ad hoc arrangement by individuals reflect a profound lack of cultural orchestration and absence of an unified “dominant” that might eliminate such discrepancies (see, Collins, ibid p.39-40). RNBDJ is a classic instance of conflictive interpellation where unlike the “double role” motif commonly used in Hindi films, it is the same person masquerading in two radically different attire, depicting different world-views, gestures and most importantly two different personalities. This film contains intertextual allusions to Amitabh Bachchan’s role in the film “Shahenshah” (1989) where an apparently ordinary acquiescent police turns to a ruthless vigilante at night to kill the corrupt men who escape law. The middle class subject exposed to “semiotic glut” and the conflictive heterogeneous mixture of self-legitimating discursive ideologies is splitted. However, the split is resolved in favor of the dominant over subject construction whereby the character Raj is denied existence as Taani choses Suri over Raj.

The discussion on middle class films of the star is not complete without mentioning films that constitute part of his early career. These include Deewana (1992, Crazy or Passionate, directed by: Raj Kanwar) Kabhi Haan Kabhi Naa (1993, Sometimes Yes, Sometimes No directed by: Kundan Shah) and Maya Memsaab (1993, directed by: Ketan Mehta). These films unlike Raju Ban .., Yes Boss, Phir Bhi.. replaces the middle class desire for material attainments with a desire for the forbidden metaphorically represented through the illicit desire for the woman who is a widow in Deewana, fiancé/beloved of his friend in Kabhi Haan Kabhi Naa and is a married woman, wife of a doctor in Maya Memsaab. The incursions made into grey areas of illicit desires and moral deviation are changes in values mediated by the actor.
Dyer argues that the notion of the star’s image is related to contradictions within ideology – whether within the dominant ideology, or between it and other sub-oriented/revolutionary ideologies. The relation may be of displacement or suppression of one half of the contradiction and the foregrounding of the other or it may be that the star effects a magic reconciliation of the apparently incompatible terms. (Dyer, 1979, p.30)

The roles essayed by Shah Rukh in the middle class films sees the hero bridging narratives of desires through magical resolution of contradictions. Conventionally, Hindi film heroes when have been seen to pursue material gains have either been upholders of idealism, a prototype of which is Raj Kapoor, which even if compromised was later redeemed by regaining lost innocence and scruples, and the film Shri 420 being emblematic of Kapoor’s screen biography. The apparently held cultural contradiction between middle class pieties and ethical standards and the preferred value of non-materiality and idealism a hallmark of India values is seen in justifications sought by the star.

Shah Rukh’s early career coincides with a period of the middle class being exposed to the increased flow of global brands and an expanding consumerist culture unleashed by globalization and with a departure from socialist regime almost sealed, consumerism appeared sanctified and enticed desirous selves. The initial years, however were marked by a certain ambivalence anxiety and reluctance as was also seen in the early years of freedom vis-à-vis the question of modernity. Shah Rukh’s portrayal of middle class hero in his early years, that also coalesced with his real biography to produce an authentication of image served to provide a magical reconciliation of contradictory ideologies of desire (both material and libidinous) with middle class’ tenaciously held ideals of honesty, integrity etc. in films like Deewana, Maya Memsahaab, Yes Boss, Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman and so on.

The idea of the Middle Class Subject from a sociological perspective goes much beyond the economic ability as this ability is in conjunction with certain dispositions and aligns with lofty standards of typifying morality. Sulkunen, as cited argues that it is difficult to locate and define a Euro American new middle class because it is everywhere and because it consists of a plurality of groups. It is neither a single group of people nor way of life and Sulkunen describes it as ‘a mentality, as a cultural disposition or a moral temper’ (Savaala, 2010). Looking at new middle class as a temper is crucial to our understanding of the new heroic subjectivities, their priorities and preferences. However, as Savala warns that it is not sufficient to see them in light of their moral temper without an awareness of the socio-economic grounds on which it stands. Therefore she argues that Middle classes are not only a moral phenomenon, but a social phenomenon in which moral propriety is central. Even if a particular lifestyle and mentality has become pivotal for the new middle class phenomenon, it is still impossible to be considered as middle class without the required economic and/or social capital. (ibid) These conjunctions of a moral temper with requisite social and economic capital allow us to quality the heroic subjectivities as the new middle class of a globalizing India. New middle-class life in a definitional sense centres around notions of social value. People define themselves as middle class or not middle class on the basis of their ability to follow certain valued practices.
The rise of the new middle classes creates a situation where characteristics regarded as valuable have to undergo a process of redefinition. The endless race for more and more prestigious markers is part of transformations of status considerations. While the new middle class derives their status from economic means: it is not the only means to define their position as everything valued and held prestigious do not have a direct relation to monetary means. ‘What is typically middle class are the claims of high moral values combined with the monetary means to practice morally high standards’ ((ibid p 12).

The aim of this section has been to show the changing cultural and moral values of the middle class and how middle class-ness is not hostage to economic position or purchasing prowess but goes beyond it involving issues related to values. The heroic roles articulated the dual positioning of the hero in terms of his economic standing and most importantly his moral temper and how his middle-classness at the level of his value-position is negotiated within a changing socio-economic and cultural milieu.

3.4 DIASPORIC THEMES, FAMILY AND ROMANCE: IN FILMS OF SHAH RUKH KHAN

Sociologist, Shiv Vishwanathan, as cited by Mishra, observes that each hero of popular Hindi films have diverse appeal over differentiated constituencies of the populace and claims that while stars like Bobby Deol and Ajay Devgan are popular in the Northern states, Sanjay Dutt in Maharashtra, Shah Rukh Khan has been widely popular in the diaspora and one of the main reasons being the repeated casting of the star in diasporic roles. Although this casting might have been incidental, in due course the actor’s image or person attenuated via these accretions derived from diasporic performance.

As against the idealist theory of the diaspora as illustrative of late modernity and as an incipient critique of the homogenous definition of nation-state, in reality their lives are more complex than imagined. A diasporic imaginary of ‘homeland’ stems from a sense of alienation, marginalization and a sense of being rejected by ‘nation-states’. This creates a tension for the diaspora to integrate to the nation-state to their consciousness, as they being held to be the ‘unpresentable’. Echoing a sense of the Lacanian Real as per Slavoj Zizek’s understanding, Mishra argues that this failure to associate or connect to the nation-state inversely creates a ‘sublime of othernesses of the homeland which eludes substantialization. Notwithstanding this relative eluding homeland, it can be grasped under a ‘translatable’ sign,(Mishra 2002,ibid, p.236-237). Against an understanding of this diasporic production and reproduction it may be argued that the recurrent casting of the star in diasporic roles and his well known popularity amongst them allow us to see his positioning within diasporic narratives playing the diasporic character as this translatable sign-negotiating homeland and Diaspora while affirming the possibility of ‘Indian ness’ of the diasporic characters. According to sociologist Patricia Uberoi, as cited,,in the era of the global, marked by international migration, global flow of goods and labor, internationalized mass-media, internet communication, when, the demise of the nation appear as an impending crisis, the figure of the diasporic Indian subject in Hindi films acts as metonymic of the nation’s anxiety of the invasion of the West and the disappearance or erosion
of the Indian identity. This diasporic subject acts as convenient ploy, cleverly manipulated to re-imagine the nation in response to changing globalizing conditions. (Virdi, 2003 ibid, p.197)

Redeeming the diaspora has been of particular relevance both politically and economically for the Indian nation-state in view of its liberalization policy where the diaspora acts as the potential investor to be harked back to its roots. This NRI is Hindi cinema’s new aristocrat. Iconic of ‘new wealth’ the NRI sought to replace and even efface the erstwhile aristocrats-the residual feudal class elements like the Thakur, the Zamindar, the Kunwar sahibs, scions of princely states from earlier decades. The rise of new wealth links the burgeoning new middle class as well the NRI to the growing global economy and symbolically blurs their life through their common consumption, desires and tastes. (Virdi, 2003, ibid)

The casting of the star, the relative newcomer to the industry, with no familial support from the industry, uncannily brings him closer to the emerging new social categories or classes like the new middle class or the diaspora.

It is abundantly clear that Hindi cinema constantly seeks to narrow the gap between the public and the private by forcing connections between the private and the public by forcing connections between the family and the nation. Unlike the Euro-American melodramas in the post-war era which were held to be ‘dramatizing retreats into the private sphere in face of crisis in the public sphere’ in Hindi films the two spheres of the family and the nation coalesce in the film hero’s role within the narrative. (Virdi, 2003 ibid. p.87) Hence it is crucial to see how SRK’s role intersects with the question of nation mediated through his roles in the family romance dramas.

Conventionally, all conflicts arising from social hierarchy were usually located within family narratives. And as the perfect locus of melodrama it has been an important narrative device in popular films. Family has been a favoured trope to mobilize the idea of the nation in Hindi films as all issues related to the nation lie imbricated within these popular family narratives. Drawing parallels between the two, the same effect becomes transposed to the nation, according the two a common ‘genesis narrative’ (Virdi, 2003 ibid. p.11) Family, also a source of nurturance is central to Indian cultural and psychic life, and any prospect of severance from the same can cause inner distress and conflict. (Kakar, as cited in Gehlawat, 2010 ibid. p.8) Mannoni’s regressive colonialist characterization of Madagascan is the unflinching obligation towards parental authority and a perpetual bonding and dependency unlike their European counterpart can be useful to understand why family as upheld as an ideal to Indian-ness and identity. (see, Gehlawat, ibid) The post-colonial diasporic subject’s dependency upon the family in SRK played characters, with family also being the metaphor of the nation imaginatively draws the diaspora to the nation imaginatively on the popular terrain. Lending itself to the Madagascan symbol this bonding is seen to be mediated by the star in most of his early diasporic films like DilwaleDulhaniyaLeJayenge , Pardes, Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham, that allows him to be favorably endeared by the nostalgia-ridden diasporic homing desires

In the age of the globalization, as the state rolls back or retreats the nation anxiously re-invents itself almost de-coupling itself from statist territorial boundedness. This nation is imaginative
and discursive and it is this nation that seeks a popular re-invention in a family form viz. the
diasporic families, as it allows to negotiate with transnational flows and the transterritoriality of
the nation. The family, under siege in the face of rising robust bourgeois individualism seeks
to regain its prestige by re-inventing itself in relinquishing its absolutist moral control over
individual members quite unequivocally and often yielding to individual’s choice in negotiating
terms. Diasporic family romance films took up the unfinished task of mediating between
the family and the individual - a trend that began with Quayamat Se Quayamat Tak, Dil, Maine
Pyaar Kiya, Hum Aake Hain Kaun since late 1980s, but unlike the earlier films, the conflict
operated at two levels. First, the fraught relationship between the individual and the family at
one level which also attended earlier films and mostly staged the social contradictions and
conflict that be saddled the nation and was allegorically transposed onto the private terrain of
the family that the heroic subject sought to resolve. Second, the relationship between the nation
and the diaspora was metaphorically represented by the relation between the family and the
diasporic subject. The family (read, nation) seeks to re-claim and harness its non-citizen
subjects as it embarks on an agenda of transnationality. The diasporic subject was tied to the
nation via the family. The transformation in these diaspora films works to rehabilitate the
family while evading flagrant individualistic confrontation and also seeks to affirm the
significance of the conjugal bond within the folds of the family. This overturns or negates the
classical sociological understanding of the Indian extended or joint family. (see, Virdi, 2003
p.204; 208) The revised family relocates romance within its folds – with its panoramic interiors
trying to conjoin the individual’s romantic desires to the family’s expanded terrain. The re-
working of the family also allowed its filial, ritualistic celebration as the milieu for romance to
evolve as was in DDLJ, Pardes and so on.

The nation-state on the trajectory of passive revolution negotiating with residual feudal
enclaves to maintain a coalitional hegemony, mediated its power discourse as per Foucauldian
understanding, through a tacit as well explicit symbolic inter-changeability between itself and
the family and which was articulated through the feudal-family romance of popular filmic
narratives in various forms across several decades from the 1950s onwards. The feudal family
therefore stood as the ideological state apparatus in the Althusserian sense. The cult of the
angry young man was far removed from the family utopia and premised upon themes of
brooding cynicism or violence it combated the system in its own terms. The family excised
from the central narrative allowed the state led bodies, viz. the police, the courts, etc to confront
the dissenting subject. (see Prasad, 1998) The return of the neo-traditional family in the era of
the global – especially in Diaspora themes envisages an ideologically motivated cultural politics
of resurrecting the patriarchy in a revised scheme. The nation metaphorically reconfigured
through the family or its patriarchal figure is a resilient gesture of the nation in face of
globalizing forces. (see Bhattacharya-Mehta, 2011, p.8-9) The coming of the diasporic families
reoriented the intergenerational difference that developed around heterosexual romance. Unlike
feudal strictures associated with patriarchal familial vested interest around considerations of
caste, class, rules of endogamy etc. since these families were transnationalized (de-
territorialized and ‘unmoored’) deliberately to expose it to a relatively more liberal cosmopolitan habitat and culture and also to quell its control vis-à-vis the new hero/bourgeoisie subject in his pursuit of self-assertion mostly through romantic choice. Both family and patriarchy were differently resurrected in diasporic films starring SRK and unlike the feudal-family romance they had an altered narratological function.

The family, at one level, acting as a metaphor of the nation in diaspora films attempted to emotionally restore ties with its diaspora, the prospective investors of a liberalizing market and at another level represent the dilemmas of a transitional society especially those faced by the expanding new middle class. ‘Moral obligations, particularly towards kin, Indian nationalism and ideas of the West, are entangled in curious ways in the discourse of ‘middle-classness’(Savaala,2010,ibid p.61) The family genre is reflective of this middle class discourse. Savaala argues that the dichotomy of selfish ‘Western’ nonchalance and Indian social responsibility constitute an important part of people’s understanding, even though it is not always a ‘true’ representation of what actually happens. In the context of kinship, the West seems to embody selfishness, individuality and moral decadence, while its opposite is the Indian commitment to ethics of relational personhood. (Savaala ibid. p.61-62) The family stages the dilemmas and predicaments of what typifies middle class, ie its ‘relational kin based personhood’ and as predicaments are gaining salience in the lives of the new middle class due to the rising level of aspiration and desire to acquire status strategies(Savaala, ibid, p.87). The diasporic family films therefore have an appeal for the home audiences, especially the middle class. The family genre, even if diasporic, through its affirmation of filial and kinship loyalty serve to assuage the anxiety at the specter of Western modernity presupposed to be selfish and individualistic. Family acts as a trope to affirm the commitment to the ethics of relational personhood where despite cadences of modernity, familial bonds are asserted and embraced. The heroic subject acts as a vehicle to this end, of asserting the relevance of family and introducing it to liberal changes.

The diaspora family romance genre is a two-pronged narrative strategy for the diaspora and also for the new middle class to negotiate with emergent modern individualism via assertion of romantic choice and this negotiation typically characterizes the middle–class consciousness. Savaala argues: ’Being simultaneously ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ appears to be one of the defining features of Indian new middle class self understanding’. (Savaala,2010 ibid, p.62)

What is sociologically interesting is to note that the anxiety against the cultural value of the West is not its material prosperity but its selfish, arrogant individualism. The discourse on true Indian identarian project and its bid to assert its authenticity and difference against the West makes it appropriate to use the cinematic trope of family/kinship/ marriage. The family also providing the site for pleasurable consumption, articulating the celebratory temper of nouveau-riche materialism otherwise largely inscribed by Western style of living, affirms its distinction against ‘Western form of individualism’. (ibid)

The relationship between Asian new middle–classes and their idea of the West has its greatest tension in the question of family and marriage. While simultaneously embracing market
capitalism, there has often been a tirade against the Western ‘moral decadence’ in the political discourse of several non-Western countries. In discussions of distinctiveness against the West, the Asian public discourse have upheld ‘Asian values’ built on the strength of institution of the ‘family’ as the source of Asian identity.(ibid) Family is therefore an important site to uphold the resilient demonstration of distinctiveness despite the strong influence of Western dominated and led market-capitalism. The other aspect is the acclaimed resilience of the joint family as part of middle class discourse. This is seen in family genre that seeks tri memorialize large, extended families living comfortably in palatial buildings happily. The re-invention of the joint family( in films like DDLJ, Pardes, Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham etc) as against the nuclearization of the couple in real life and more neolocal residences emerging with large scale migration and global flows of people is especially a relevant gesture in the domain of the popular Despite the changing economic situation and growing demands for spatial mobility in the new arrangements, extended family relations remain central for both middle-class and working class, urban and rural Indians. Beteille, as cited argues: ‘The family has been and continues to be one of the strongest institutions of the Indian society, in all regions, among all communities and in all social classes’ The trajectory of classical modernization theories, the transformation from a kin-based to a nucleated and individualized society does not fully apply to the Indian social reality. Still today, the notion of the joint family forms part of the middle – class discourse of nostalgia and lost glory, caught within the interstices of an exploitative colonial past and new global pressures.(ibid, p.65). Family romance genre re-instills the faith in the nation in the subterfuge of tradition, kinship, old values and culture. Bollywood through the family genre affirms and translates the nation-state’s most favorite child, the idealised (middle class) family as a ‘shining emblem’ for global consumption. Within this, nationalism and transnationalism come to share certain values and significatory strategies for identification.(Brosius, 2005. p.236) These films symbolically draws the domestic middle class and the diaspora together by the virtue of their socio-economic and political destinies bound to the globalizing regime and the prospects it upholds for them. Patricia Uberoi, as cited, argues ‘diasporic Indians in a context of internationalization of Indian identity in transnational locations.’ And can be seen as to how the globalizing nation conjoins its diaspora with its new middle class.(Kaur, 2005.p.307)

The entry of popular cinema from ethnic niche to a multicultural transnationalized domain also had its implications for the narrative form it acquired. Popular Hindi films came to be transparently linked to the economic and cultural maneuvers of multinational corporations and their drives to deploy hybrid and ethnic forms of a consumerist culture comprising fashion, music etc. to target the South Asian markets and its diaspora for their products. Such a visual culture also finds a suitable cinematic format that is consciously organized in its story telling, narrative vistas, interiors, musical items, mis-en-scene, interior settings to produce a globalized cultural habitat that can fluidly re-configure itself in terms of spatiality and cross-cultural and even transnational affinities of Indians across the world, be it diaspora or territorial nation. The family genre is a deliberately fashioned format to address Indians all over in a host of new
spaces across the world and in which romance acts as a narrative device to map out issues of social conflict within the nation. The melodramatic genre format has been particularly suited to address the transitional phase of globalization the nation-state is experiencing. The family format has been part of the commodity universe or the transformation of Hindi film’s cultural and political economy. The re-invention of the family format was not just to address the diapora but also the commoditization that was provided through its visual aesthetics.(Vasudevan,2010 ibid, p.339-340) Interestingly Shah Rukh’s extra-cinematic engagements such as his endorsements rendered his image to become an intertextual fluid signifier within the commodity universe.

The melodramatic framework as a public-fictional form, as a public mechanism of address deriving a recalibration of the relationship between the public and the private sphere, that is quintessential to its form emerges as a generic and almost an omnibus category that can suitably articulate the concerns of a transitional society and its transformative tendencies.. The revival of the family romance melodrama in an era of globalization allows these dramas to stage the constitution of subjectivities and dynamics of society wherein the private and the public is allowed to coalesce. The congenital quality of melodramatic format is to capture the negotiation of the subject with the authority mediated through the family and allow it to emerge as the public address par excellence. Melodrama’s public/private architecture is equally crucial in its engagement with reconfiguration of national imaginaries, analyzable in terms of its national variation. These emerge at crucial junctures or critical moments in the transformation of social, cultural and economic circumstances. Melodrama’s regression to the private/public domestic space not only provides a register of affective attachment, it also builds narratives to bring together home, nation, community, civil society and state. (Vasudevan 2010 ,ibid p.19-31 58-59) This narrative format and the star’s repeated performance in this genre privileges a certain filmic image that cumulatively grows out of these narrative modes. We can thereby derive a perspective of subject(read, heroic image) constitution and its relation to the larger public universe of the nation and also the bounded ness of this image construction within the discourse of the transforming nation-state and community. This allows us to argue how the hero’s performance in the melodramatic family drama is tied to the larger question of the nation.

Family is therefore one of the critical cultural frames of constructing the hero’s subjectivity and instead of being a privatized realm, it is an entangled with public authority. Tracing the changing trajectory in the relation of the hero to the familial authority becomes an important mode of understanding the relation of the hero to the state. As an important register of the public, and the political and as a site for primary affinities,family formats within the popular terrain of Hindi mainstream films serve as key cultural site for the personification of nationhood. The family –diaspora-romance genre of melodramatic films as a veritable canvas for the personification of nationhood via the trope of the hero,ie, Shah Rukh provides a melodramatic way of belonging to the nation. The hero SRK, attains a public ness, and as an embodiment of nationhood relays to the audience the political discourse of nation, state and the society. As a public mode of address, family romance melodrama provided the star a site for
constructing a subjectivity that is at once public and personalized within the diegetic frame. The ‘supra-individuated address’ is aimed at an audience beyond the fiction that is relayed through his public mode of performance.(see ibid, p.44)

Vasudevan calls Shah Rukh a ‘Sutradhar’ within this re-invented family format as someone mediating the form. The relevance of this form lies in its adaptability where it is not an archaic form but navigated globally with diasporisation of themes, subjectivities etc. Navigating the shift of the diasporic subject between spaces of nation and overseas locales, between traditional and modern values family melodrama films, this new format proposes an altered imagining of the nation and in negotiating the old and the new, the global and the nation, the modern and the tradition, this format finds a star – subject who is emblematic to this whole process. Vasudevan claims that this format achieves this articulation of the global and the nation, the modern and the traditional through the star-iconicity of Shah Rukh Khan. He is the vehicle of the melodramatic effect.(Vasudevan, ibid,p.301)

The narrative structure and the public mode of address of melodramatic form in popular films as seen in the wake of market reforms and liberalization was an obviated preference since family melodrama was most suited as a ‘durable lynchpin of the represented social world’ to represent the transition. Shah Rukh’s repeated casting in these films since DDLJ allowed the star to emerge within the encompassing public universe of the nation grappling with transformative process unleashed by the nation’s entry into the liberalizing regime. Family format had the potency to generate a field of narrative force that scatters families and individuals only to be brought back in a differently cadenced format, suited to global times, to suitably articulate the authority of the authority of superordinate public symbolic authority, viz. the state.(Vasudevan, ibid,p.48)

Melodrama as a narrative structure places great weight on public functions, including public expressivity in the co-ordination of action, speech, performative gestures.(ibid p.10) Here it needs to be mentioned that the star with a background in theatrical performance had a trait of it in his distinctive style of acting and allowed him to express this ‘excess’ in his style that proved to be incidentally suited to the melodramatic format of family romance genre in which he has been regularly cast The histrionics, the mannerisms and the typifying escalatory dimension of his acting style imparted his character, especially in family melodrama a certain dimension of publicness in his address (to the nation and the national spectatorship) through its soulful music, emotional sequences and excessive mise-en-scene.

The melodramatic format with its tales revolving around romance, family and diaspora was well suited to the moderate physiognomy of the super-star. The family melodrama became an answer to the violence that characterized other genres-notably the hyper-masculine genre of action films. While melodrama have always been the standardized and staple generic modality of Hindi cinema the narrative centrality of the family had become somewhat obscured in the ‘blood and gore’ of the decade of the 1980s.(Sen,2011, ibid. p.148) Revival of family melodrama, had a triumphant return and was especially purveyed successfully by the star, who
already enjoyed the familiarity with the urban, middle class family audience in his role in series of T.V. serials.

The family is often a convenient site and a commodity form to celebrate consumption, abundance and affluence. In contemporary films family serves as the neo-traditional institution providing a gloss, a sheen to ritualistic celebrations like weddings, religious ritals within the family. (Vasudevan, 2010 ibid. p.337) These family films that attempted at re-instating ‘family values’ that was believed to be declining was popularized by a Hindu revivalist ideological tradition. It was a neoconservative reaction against ‘Americanization’ and its evil influence and revival of the family was meant to reclaim the allegiance and filial loyalty of its individuating, modernizing and autonomy seeking members. This Hindu revivalist discourse was initiated by the film Hum Aapke Hain Kaun(1994) This marked the beginning of instituting family as a mediator of hegemonic cultural values and also a site for negotiating individual’s autonomy especially with respect to romance and choice of mate (see, Virdi, 2003 p.192) These diaspora/family/romance films especially DDLJ, Pardes and to some extent K3G while drawing out ‘Bollywood’ into the global realm, served to create a neo-traditionalist imaginary via the time-honored trope of marriage and family rituals. In other words the pro-Hindu revivalism peddled itself through a consumerist logic and commodity culture that allowed for a seamless conjoining of tradition bound proto Hindu culture and contemporary consumerist trends. Interestingly the star’s consumerist casting in these films in globally fashionable clothes yet retaining his Indian dispositions, value-orientations etc. make him a perfect heroic subject to negotiate tradition with modernity, global with the nation, and individuating drives with collectivistic(familial) imperatives.

The interiorized extravaganza of the Family films is rooted in the landscape of fear and anxiety. While fear is not a new phenomenon, its contemporary transformations linked to globalization, geographic mobility, the virtual takeover of the public realm, the shift to flexible accumulation, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, and the rise of information technology have accentuated the ‘fear factor’. This is evident in the increase in public surveillance. Distinguishing the modern fear against the postmodern fear, Nan Ellis, as cited says that while the former led to an understanding of cause and effecting order to ensure a safe future, post modern fear has ‘incited a series of closely related and overlapping responses including retribalization, nostalgia, escapism and spiritual (re)turn’. These scenic interiorization combines with the neotraditionalist nostalgia for family ‘values’, on one hand and a space for performance of rituals, celebrations of traditional events. Providing a space for the globalizing nation, family provides secured niches for consumption and protection against looming specter of global terror. The family’s interiorized space have emerged as the space for the ‘virtual city’ and also provides a ‘secured haven’ against the imminent threats that faces the ‘Risk Society’ in the form of global terror attacks etc. -it alleviates the fear of the affluent, the diaspora and the middle class by securing them a safe space to fulfill their dreams and enjoy the privacy of interiors. The fear syndrome that typify post-modernist conditions of living finds succour in the family genre since it is the family that provides a secured space to perform ‘Indian ness’ to the
diasporic hero and is a marker of cultural stability against the threat of globalization. (Majumdar, 2007 p.117 -118) It may be argued that anchorage to family and its space was crucial to guarantee a secured Indian identity to the diasporic subject, SRK, especially in films like DDLJ, Pardes, and so on.

These constructed spaces of opulence perform several functions through the heroic subject. First, these embellished interiors with a typical global urban look make the diasporic subject’s shift between global cities and homeland both within and across diasporic family films less stark-rendering them into seamless locations. Family’s interiors marked by affluence and consumerist desires and choices serve to bind nation and diasporic/global spaces and provides access to the subject who derives his identity from new notions of lifestyle that transcends space of nation and diaspora. The hero is enabled to straddle between fantasy of global lifestyle and tradition; and also display adherence to Indian values in interior family spaces that have escaped spatial inscriptions. Producing SRK, within the aestheticized visual surface of diaspora/family films reflected a significant removal of the hero from the larger realities of nation’s real physical spaces. These films try to posit the star only in the physical spaces of foreign lands. The representation of the nation is mostly via family spaces that can suture the chasm between the nation and the global. Embedding the hero in interior space contrasts his yester years predecessors like Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand, later, Amitabh Bachchan and several other who fought several struggles of life in village, streets of cities, railway stations, docks etc. all part of the ‘real nation’. Locating the hero within the safe confines of interiors or spectacular, scenic exotic foreign locales while seeks to remain oblivious to terror threats also unproblematically enjoins the hero to both diaspora and the middle class at home aspiring ‘good lives’.

The family films represents the communitarian ‘zeitgeist’ of the nation. Designated as ‘nostalgia films’ it provides a spectacular stage that traverses global locations to create a theatre of family and moral values. (Mazumdar, 2007, ibid, p.136) The classic joint family especially in films like DDLJ, Pardes, K3G seamlessly creates an imaginary cohesion of nation ness. Family as a marketing strategy deploys means to evoke nostalgia, patriotism, and homing desire for the diaspora. It also serves to link generations, bridge temporal gaps of past and presently and the spatial disjunction between the territorial nation and diaspora. Recuperating the past traditions it seeks to reconcile it to the it to the moments of globalization and global modernity (ibid, p.140). Recurrence of SRK ‘s roles sees how all these narratological functions of the family are performatively reproduced through his role.

The star with a biography of a middle class ness, his rise to stardom and the vulnerabilities that attends stardom, his stable ‘normal’ private family/conjugal life, and his early career that had already made incursion into the privatized domestic spheres of middle –class household lend his image to be an appropriate subject whose casting in family romance melodrama would serve to persistently displace all socio-cultural struggles into the domain of the family. Hindi cinema too: ‘projects the imagined nation on the terrain of the family, heterosexuality and community through contestations that throw into relief its social structure and realignments.'
The moment of the 1990s refurbishes this axiomatic formulation: the historical juncture was fundamentally novel, thus Bollywood fashioned a new family to articulate the nation’s contemporary vicissitudes’ (Sen, 2011: p.148-149). SRK emerged as the assuringly middle class hero who secured their dreams within the safe confines of the family. The 1980s had already seen a waning of interest in the cult of the angry young man and the arrival of the two significant predecessors of Shah Rukh Khan, viz. Aamir Khan and Salman Khan marked their entry through the revival of the romantic genre in two landmark films of popular films in recent past. SRK who consolidated his position as an anti-hero, made his entry into the romantic genre through the cult film of DDLJ and since then almost his recurrent casting in this genre has given his screen persona mostly a ‘romantic image’. To understand the success of the star in this genre of films we need to see how the social history of the nation, its socio-political and economic context is not only cinematically mediated at the level of narratives but how the generic conventions and codes typical to romantic films are ideologically manipulated to align with the hegemonic forces (of market capital) and how the cinematic text intersects with the star’s biography.

3.5 THE FIRST ROW OF DIASPORA FILMS

3.5.1 Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge/DDLJ (The Braveheart Will Take The Bride Away, 1995, directed by Aditya Chopra)

The story is about British born Indians named Raj Malhotra (played by the hero, Shah Rukh Khan) and Simran Singh (played by the heroine Simran Singh). Having brought up in the West, both Raj and Simran display their cultural allegiance to their Indian roots and value them though both have different parenting. Simran raised by a conservative patriarchal authoritarian father Baldev (Amrish Puri) whilst Raj’s father (Anupam Kher) is fairly liberal, doting and indulgent also. Simran has reveries of meeting her Prince Charming, believing him to be destiny to her. Her mother Ljjo (Farida Jalal) warns her against this by saying that her dreams shall remain unrealized. Baldev on receiving a letter from his childhood friend Ajit (Satish Shah) from India (Punjab) is reminded of the vow the two had taken to make Simran marry Kuleet, Ajit’s son. Simran is dismayed at the prospect of marrying someone whom she has never met. Meanwhile, the frivolous, flamboyant Raj failed his degree making his father surprisingly proud of him. Raj obtains his father’s consent to go on Eurail – a trip around Europe, but in the meanwhile in one of his playful moments enters Baldev’s departmental store and steals beer which infuriates Baldev, making him call Raj a disgrace to Indians. Simran is also invited by her friends for a travel on Eurail around the continent. Simran pleads before her father to let her go thinking it to be her last chance to see the world before she leaves for India to marry a complete stranger. Baldev after much persuasion allows her on condition that she does not betray his trust.

On Eurail, Raj and Simran meet by chance pulling up Simran who was late in catching the train. Raj constantly seeks to draw her attention that irks Simran. The two miss the train to Zurich and are separated from their individual group of friends and start to travel with each other.
and become friends in the process. When they both part ways their ways on return to London, they realize that they have fallen in love. Simran tells her mother about Raj-Baldev overhears the conversation and is infuriated by Simran. Baldev summarily leaves for India along with his family without waste of time. Raj too confides in his father about having fallen in love with Simran, who is about to be married and says that he believes that the girl too loves him. Raj’s father encourages his son to pursue her. Raj arrives at her house, only to find that she has left along with her family to India.

In India, Baldev is delighted to be re-united with his friend Ajit as well as with his mother and other relatives. Both Simran and her younger sister on meeting Kuljeet dislikes him instantly for his arrogance. Simran’s mother realizes how miserable her daughter feels for not being able to forget Raj and for having to marry the loathsome suitor. Her mother knowing Baldev would not accept it asks her to forget Raj. Baldev vows that Simran would regret if she does not forget Raj. The next morning on hearing a familiar tune played by Raj, Simran rushes to the mustard fields, in a famous scene that unites the two diasporic lovers on the Indian soil, in a film that became a cult film of the diaspora family-romance genre. She implores that the two elope, but Raj refuses saying that he would marry her only by winning over her father’s consent. Raj befriends Kuljeet and is soon embraced by both his and Simran’s family as Kuljeet’s new ‘vilayati yaar’ (friend from England/West), but the exception is Baldev who recognizes him who stole from his shop. Soon Raj’s father follows his son to India and befriends the two same families and starts staying with them along with Raj. Meanwhile Simran starts evading the pre-marriage rituals and secretly meets each other. Simran’s mother and sister discovers Raj’s real identity and starts encouraging the couple. Baldev in due course starts liking Raj who convinces him of his ‘Indian ness’. But Baldev discovers Raj’s real identity as the boy his daughter met in Europe by a chance discovery of a fleeting photograph of the two. He insults Raj and his father and asks them to leave. Raj arrives at the station where Kuljeet along with his group of friends start to attack Raj, leaving him unconscious. Raj’s father who comes to his son’s rescue is also attacked which motivates Raj to fight back (a violence and goriness of his image revived intertextually from his early violent movies as Vasudev says, (ibid) to protect his father.) Eventually both Simran, along with her mother and sister and Kuljeet’s family is at the station and stop Raj. Raj boards the train with his father. Simran tries to join Raj on the train but Baldev stops her. Simran begs him to let her go saying she cannot leave without him. Baldev realizes that no one can love his daughter more than Raj does and motivates her to join Raj. Simran happily runs to catch hold of Raj’s outstretched hands as the train chugs out and boards the train to be happily re-united with Raj.

The film opens with shots of London city’s Trafalgar Square and close in on Baldev Singh (Amrish Puri) feeding pigeons. These images dissolve into a reverie of images of Punjab, its lush fields and plentitude. It breaks into a monologue by Baldev followed by a play back music track articulating the nostalgia of the patriarch, his search for roots, the dilemmas and crisis attending migration. The film produced by Yash Chopra, reflects Yash Raj’s own nostalgia for pre-partition Punjab. His memories of the lost homeland produces a layered topography for
Punjab through recurrent images in several films (including Veer Zaara). DDLJ through Baldev’s character addresses the crisis of displacement, dislocation, migration, labor, profound sense of emotional loss etc. The shop or the store he owns reflects his work ethic and his ‘puja’ or religious offerings secures him a stereotypical quality of the diasporic man and his desire to return home. The feeding of the pigeons, acts as an extension of his own migratory status. Baldev’s home and shop are the two sanctified spaces, he maintains them against the vilifying foreign influences. His dreams to return back is unmitigated by his prolonged stay in the city of London. Disapproving of Western modernity he embodies an ethnic absolutism and claimed to carry ‘India’ within him. The West for him means livelihood and also a threat towards transgression of traditional codes. To prove his attachment to his roots the man is shown to return home, and wanting his daughter Simran (Kajol) to get married to his childhood friend. (Mukherjee, 2012; Mishra, 2002)

The character of Baldev, is an antithesis to the protagonist Raj, played by SRK. Raj, is the erratic boy who offends the patriarch yet is the same boy who restrains his libido when he resists the attraction of the drunk heroine, Simran, during their Europe tour during which they chanced to be together at night during their Europe tour. He proudly proclaims to be a Hindustani, a transcendental code for ‘Indian ness’ and therefore his ability to respect the modesty or ‘izzat’ of a Hindustani (Indian) woman. Raj is further contrasted against Kuldeep, Simran’s Indian suitor who is scheming, unethically disposed, unscrupulous with the ulterior motive to use Simran as his passport to the glamorous life of West. Raj, the diasporic boy, on the other hand is the proper ‘Indian’ – the chivalric,’dharmic’ lover boy. Despite, having the consent of Simran, he refuses to elope her as she faces the threat of being married off against her will. Raj asserts the need to seek ‘parental blessings’ for a proper marriage between the two. This honesty, brings the patriarch to relent, and admits that no one can love his daughter more than Raj. Raj, emerges as the approved suitor by the traditional patriarch despite his Westernized way of living and upbringing. (Mishra, 2002, p.253, 256, 236) What is significant is Raj’s allegiance and respect towards the family structure in the way he endears himself to the large joint family of Simran and her prospective in-laws. (Mukherjee, 2012, ibid p.41)

The significance of this film lies in setting the trend for depiction of a new form of identity in the global and national context. This film contained the narrative of ‘Return of the Nation’, where the nation comes back to re-assert itself in the age of post-global India as the overwhelming ‘now’. The nation, a Third-World entity, in this new world system seeks to re-configure itself and re-negotiates its commodity value for the diasporas as well abroad. India, otherwise held as the archetype non-Western nation-state articulates its strength in being a resilient force as an imaginable entity capable of re-claiming its diasporas and showing its ability to survive the influences of globalizing forces of change. The nation expresses its force as the emerging super-power of the global regime through its diasporas. It redeems the NRI, or the national self of the diasporic subject. DDLJ thus began to validate the diasporic subject, played by Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol, not just a possible Indian subject, but as worthy to display his/her worthiness to display their ‘Indian ness’. It is through this redeemed and re-
claimed national subject, viz, the diasporic subject that the nation vocally re-affirms its traditional values, customs, and institutions. While to this non-resident status of the heroic subject (or the heroine) in moments of global realities, the nation finds the ‘Indian’ self in him.(see, Bhattacharya –Mehta, 2011, p.1-2)

Redeeming of the NRI, as the ‘national subject’ also affirms the Indian male’s agency by casting him in the figure of the NRI, the prospective investor for the globalizing nation and also the true ‘custodian’ of the Indian woman’s sexual purity—the quintessential trope of Indian identity. The credibility of being an Indian proved, Raj, the NRI figure represents the temporary abeyance of the ‘Americanization’ of the Indian identity, under siege of globalization.(Virdi,2003 p.197). Raj seeks to assuage the fear of loss of identity by being swamped over by the strong Western forces the globalizing discourse.

One of the most significant aspects of DDLJ is the subject of travel and how the Indian diaspora travels back to India (both literally as well figuratively) to re-locate his ambivalent self.Raj, travels to India, in search of his root metaphors(see, Gupta,2000)As Simran reluctantly prepares for her wedding rituals, Raj following her reaches India, and surreptitiously meets her amidst her relatives feigning an apparent strangeness to her. Raj actively participates in the pre-wedding rituals demonstrating his Indian-ness, in a bid to impress Simran’s father Baldev and win over his consent to claim Simran’s hand in marriage. The narrative does not repeat the older Hindi film format of resolving the romantic plot with the couple’s elopement despite Simran’s mother encouraging so. Instead Raj resolves to stay back with the family and win over his bride.(Mukherjee,2012 ibid, p.40) Raj’s return to India, serves as a ritual assertion of his belonging to the ideal Indian community, to know his belonging, claim his roots and also seek approval of the sanctifying patriarchal order. In this film, Raj is seen to be largely complicit with the attempt to re-work and re-negotiate with the traditional, patriarchal moral scheme. DDLJ represents a remarkable reworking of this order.(Manas Ray,2012 p.232) This whole journey to India is to inscribe the nation corporally on the diaspora body, subject it to indigenous conditioning and sanctify his Indian ness –allowing him to emerge as the true national subject despite his transterritorial positioning and his returning back after having gained the patriarch’s consent as the ‘suitable Indianised suitor’ for the Indian bride. This journey to ‘desh’ or ‘watan’while sanitized the nationalistic subject and renewed the claims of the nation upon him, also affirmed the removal of stigma of being inferior to the West as the subject returns to this site, viz. the nation continues to be invested with moral sanctioning power.(see, Dwyer, 2002, p.188)

Within the diasporic subjectivities played by both Shah Rukh as Raj and Kajol as Simran, there is a dimension of inter-generational difference being played out. For the couple, the fantasy of the grand European tour in DDLJ, inserted within the diegetic scope of the film, is replete with promises of individuation and pleasure of the autonomous self beyond parental control It is a fantasy played out by two lovers for the diaspora as well the Indians, though vicariously The virgin, pastoral mountainous locales of Europe serves as the spatial backdrop to the blossoming romance. Informed by the colonized mind’s imagination it replays the fantasy but differently.
Unlike the standard romantic couple either in honeymoon or fantastic escapades, it was marked by a necessary narrative transition, and rather was more than part of cinematic mis-en-scene of popular Bombay films. In DDLJ, this travel marked by actual narrative shift to Europe by the unwed couple marks a definitive departure from Raj Kapoor’s films like Sangam (1964), Around The World In Eighty Days and others like Love in Tokyo (1966) An Evening In Paris(1967), and so on. The Europe tour and its pastoral semantics offering romance keeps the libido in restraint (Mishra, 2002 ibid p.253) Although foreign tours have been popularized across several Yash Raj films and was able to become popular in the global market, the global journey in DDLJ seemed to flag mark its market through its own narrative. This global journey appears to predate and coincide with India’s cultural and economic globalization. DDLJ, a landmark film appeared at a time when the nation’s history took the crucial global turn. Unlike all earlier films, marked by an ambivalence towards the West depicted as alluring, elusive, dangerous and exciting, and a lurking fear of unease and mystifying unknown ness, DDLJ, is marked by sexual exuberance surprises, permissiveness, pleasure, frolic, explorations, transgressions and a journey that appeared to be an Utopian quest for romance and savoring of consumerist pleasures. The journey appeared to be a hedonist pursuit of happiness by the subjects beyond state confines and the confidence of the diasporas to face the West more affirmatively in their quest for happiness.(see, Mukherjee 2012, ibid.p.36-39)

As geotelivisuality was always endemic to mainstream Hindi movies mostly via non-narratological travel or import of visual insignia of ‘foreign ness’, DDLJ heralded the intensification of transnational transports (Basu,2010) What is relevant here is the vectorization of star-bodies in foreign spaces without the sanctification of a dominant culturalist ethos. The priestly monitoring of the state was conspicuously present in earlier cinema both inside and outside the geopolitical nation. This is clearly seen in the classical post-war Indian cinematic narratives of the 1950s and 1960s, generically characterized by Madhav Prasad as “feudal family romance”. Travels within the nation in these narratives interiorized the nation into a grand domestic conversation of the nation with itself, by which the landness of the land moves from a geographical aesthetic into a political concept. Similarly, forays into foreign locales were made possible only after traditional rites of passage by which professional compulsions or touristic and libidinal desires were properly attached to the universal interest of the joint family. Travels to foreign locales and even within the territorial nation were filtered via priestly mediation of the state’s political discourse. This rootedness was starkly absent and even altered in DDLJ and introduced a transterritorialised idiom of the nation via the much less harnessed and inhibited diasporic star-subjects. Unlike, films like Sangam (1964) where the couple visits Europe only after marriage to enjoy exotic locales as sites of urban desires. Nevertheless, their bodies constantly being ‘incurred by stipulations of tradition: honeymooning twosome never kiss in public, white people in the background do’. This is comparable to pre-marital escapades and travels by the star-actor within the narratives in films that begun with DDLJ and continued in Pardes, Dil Se, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Dil to Pagal Hai and so on. (Basu ,2010 ibid, p.159)
These travels by the diasporic national—subject appears to be quite liberatory for the body, allowing him freedom from the statist gaze. What is important here, is that despite re-locating the national subject within transterritorial narratives or in remote scenic locales and the apparent erasure of the state, the nation does not lie betrayed by the subject (here the star) The affirmation of Indian values by the star’s heroic roles does not betray the nation and the nation does not fail to claim it as its subject, if not a political citizen of the state.

Counterpoising the diasporic lovers’ European pastoral is the patriarch’s imagination of the green fields of Punjab. The semantics and dynamics of these two pastoral sites are different. Punjab, as the idyllic homeland, is upheld as the site of return that beckons Baldev to return. Home for the patriarch is the green fields of Punjab, a counterpoint to European pastorals. (Mishra 2002, ibid) Raj, the true globalizing subject while enjoying his liberty in the West was more pliant to adapt to the demands of an Indian household and its traditional routine. This prolixity and malleability characterize him as the true national subject of the globalizing agenda

Interestingly Raj’s Indian ness is guaranteed first, through his conceding to patriarchal wish of returning back to London on being exposed without asking for Simran’s hand and second his allegiance to sexual mores and desisting from eloping with his lover and respecting her modesty in private. In either case he restrains and subjugates his desires which were not so in his naturalized self-presentation in the initial part of the film where he appears to be a frivolous, errant, indulgent youth. His character evolves across the film mostly through his interactions with the patriarch, Baldev Singh. Growing in a linear way, Raj’s character the émigré is seen to fail in examination, travel to Europe, meet the girl, fall in love, woo her, pursue her and finally win her as his bride. (Mukherjee, 2012 ibid p.41-43) This whole journey is the journey towards being a true Indian.

An important aspect of the star’s appearance in DDLJ is the performative style markedly lacking any of the conventional signs of interiority that was typical to his earlier avatar of the psychotic, obsessive lover. There is rather a playing of the hyperbolic surface histrionics that along with the frivolity, gives indeterminacy to the character’s viewpoint. The audience is denied signs of ‘plausible’ emotional drive, so that the declaration of the romantic intent and even the declaration of his identity is gestural and performatively displayed. The semiotics of this gestural performance serves the narrative function of the character. The character of Raj, son of a wealthy father as a callow youth is comically indifferent to any serious pursuit or worldly struggles. Unlike, Baldev Singh, they inhabit a more affluent metropolitan life. However, this indeterminacy and flippancy is overcome as the star emerges as the primary vehicle for demonstrating Indian values, and shows compliance in matters of morality and parental desires (Vasudevan, 2010.p.369) SRK’s indeterminacy, a sign of his liminality as a diaspora subject through display of moral attribute seeks anchorage to Indian ness especially in his restraint before the drunk Simran and his reluctance to elope despite Simran’s insistence and her mother’s tacit support.
3.5.2 Pardes (1997, directed by Subhas Ghai)

The story revolves around Arjun (Shah Rukh Khan) and Ganga (Mahima Chaudhary). Ganga, an Indian girl with formal modern English education is brought up within her conservative extended family, living in a village. Kishorilal (Amrish Puri) is a wealthy and successful businessman living in Los Angeles, in the United States of America, but is still deeply attached to his motherland India and adores the values and culture of India. On a visit to India, he meets his old friend Suraj Dev (Alok Nath) and stays at his house, and during his stay he gets to know his family and becomes very fond of the traditional, yet modern, vivacious Ganga. She epitomizes the Indian culture—the interface of its tradition with the modern. Kishorilal hopes to find an Indian girl for his westernized, Indian-American son Rajiv (Apoorva Agnihotri) and feels that Ganga is the right choice for Rajiv. He proposes marriage between Ganga and Rajiv; Dev’s family accepts but knowing that his son cannot be convinced with ease, who has never visited India, to marry an Indian girl, he devises a plan. He sends his foster son Arjun (SRK) to play cupid and convince Rajeev to meet Ganga in India. Arjun arrives at Dev’s house and arranges it to make it suitable for Rajiv. Then, Rajiv arrives and Arjun’s plan succeeds and the two start liking each other and agree to wedding. In the process Ganga and Arjun become good friends. After an engagement with Rajiv in India, Ganga excitedly leaves for the U.S. with her new family to be. In the alien surroundings Ganga’s only friend and confidant is Arjun, with whom he begins to form a special bond of the soul. As time passes, Ganga realizes that Rajiv is an imposter and goes through several culture shocks seeing his debauchery and several sexual involvements. She confronts Arjun for having lied to her about his brother and Arjun realizes that he has fallen in love with her. Rajiv’s family members watching the growing friendship between Arjun and Ganga warn Kishorilal. He asks Arjun to leave the city. Ganga goes on a trip to Las Vegas with Rajiv and though she inwardly misses Arjun tries to adjust to her fiancé’s companionship. One night in a drunken state Rajiv tries to rape Ganga; she manages to knock him unconscious and flees. Arjun finds that Ganga is missing and desperately seeks her and finds her in a railway station in a disheveled state, with torn clothes and she explains what happened to her. Arjun promises to protect her and help her to get back to her family in India. Meanwhile Suraj Dev is misinformed about the circumstances in which Arjun brought back Ganga to India. Believing that Arjun tried to elope with her daughter, Dev tries killing him, mistrusts Ganga and locks her in a room. Ganga realizes her love for Arjun. By this time Kishorilal comes to India with Rajiv, who is ready to kill Arjun. After a lengthy fight between Arjun and Rajiv, Ganga reveals to her family and Kishorilal what Rajiv tried to do to her. Shocked, both the families realizing their mistake accepts Arjun. Kishorilal in disgust disowns Rajiv and accepts Arjun as his real son. The families unite Arjun and Ganga and the two are finally married with a happy ending.

It is a modern day love story across the nation-state and cultural boundaries of India and the US that sought to bridge ‘American dreams’ of the heroine Ganga—contemplating the new horizons and the ‘Indian soul’ of the hero, Arjun, played by Shah Rukh, who although an Indian-American remains attached to his roots. The title and the publicity of the film suggests
sensibilities which constitute the diaspora subject and proved to be popular amongst the Indian Diaspora audiences, themselves undergoing social and cultural shifts in their attendant societies. The film is mediation on the union and the relationship between Indians in India and the Indians living in the urban centers of the West in contemporary period. The film acts as a general commentary on the South Asian cultural values and traditions and their translation within the Diasporas. Besides, operating at the level of values, the film at the level of imagery, of rural, idyllic Indian landscape posed against US metropolis with dazzling streets and skyscrapers, sets up a contrast between the East and the West. While, Ganga resides in her parental home in a village in India dotted with signs of technological change like the large wind–powered electricity generating fan and satellite communication dish, in the des ie, India, Arjun, played by the star is found in Pardes, ie, the foreign land amidst pounding sounds of automated machine-a contrasting world of fast paced mechanically energized life. Commensurate with the nostalgia ridden ideal diaspora subject, Arjun remains culturally affiliated and rooted to his traditions. (Dudrah, 2006 ibid, 69-72) The cultural distance between Des and Pardes, the subcontinental South Asians with those abroad seem to be bridged by the hero, Arjun. Unlike, Ganga’s prospective suitor, Rajeev, Kishori’s real son who is irreconcilably opposed to the Indian values and virtues upheld by the chaste and pristine Ganga, Arjun is respectful towards Indian values. The couple unites upon the Indian soil after a long struggle as Arjun successfully proved his Indian ‘credentials’ as the rightful claimant to Ganga’s hand, the feminine ideal of the nation. Arjun’s role succeeds in renewal and remaking of the the diaspora’s affiliations to their motherland as it is about proving his Indian ness. (Dudrah, 2006 ibid, p.75, 80-81) Counter posed against the Indophobic Rajeev of the Indian diaspora, the India-born Arjun, who now lives in the US showed how he retains his conventional pieties as he saves Ganga, from being defiled and vitiated by Western sexual decadence. (Mishra, 2002 ibid) Kishorilal is inter-textually bound to Baldev of DDLJ. A successful US settled businessman, he wants his son Rajeev to marry Ganga. He tells the girl’s father ‘In these trying times(in foreign land), we desperately need daughters like you Ganga’. He sings paens for his motherland in a mise-en-scene construction of pastoral India. (Mishra, 2002). This diasporic patriarch like Baldev in DDLJ, co-incidentally played by the same actor Amrish Puri, despite his long stay abroad proudly proclaims to be tied to his roots and talks of his repeated home-comings. (Dudrah, ibid, p.72) This character of the tradition abiding patriarch approving and embracing Arjun, at denouement seeks to hark back the later generation of the diaspora via the star.

The film can be seen to assert the retention of Indian-ness, the values of ‘des’ embodied within Arjun testifying to this. Pardes, declines to admit to the idea of a new found identity of the Indians abroad through Arjun who emerges as the true ‘Indian’. He refracts the relationship between homeland and the diaspora-providing flexible, polysemic understanding for both the diaspora and the mainland audience. Signifying the ideals of the nation, Arjun is constructed to mediate both an idealized diasporic sensibility and familial connections imagined by the national spectatorship both home and abroad. Through Arjun, the ‘myth of return to homeland’
is played out. The representation of his virtuosity to deservingly claim Ganga, who is the metaphor of the nation, despite his transterritorialised positioning profess in favour of fluid social possibilities about the diasporic conditions. The film considers the male diaspora protagonist as a response to the threats to Indian identity in an age of globalization wherein the nation is re-imagined through sympathetic attachment he has towards his homeland.(Dudrah 2006,p.81, 83)

Both DDLJ and Pardes, privileges male agency by casting the star-hero SRK in an economically mobile NRI(Non-Residential Indian) figure, as a guardian of woman’s sexual purity thus playing to the woman/nation conflation. Both these early diaspora films of the hero seek to challenge woman being transacted as exchange item without soliciting her consent, as the patriarch negotiates with the prospective suitor. Contravening this social tradition, the role of the star sees him as the new age man asserting the couple’s agency and romantic choice. The film can be seen to apply to the hegemonic resolve in which ‘all is well’, while the patriarchal family structure adhered to and conservatively gendered roles re-inforced. The character of Arjun complies to the moralistic and ideological agenda of the film and despite claiming autonomy over romantic choice negotiates with authority.(ibid). In either films the family domesticates romance, and this was a reversal of the trend that started in the late 80s and early 90s in films like Quayamat Se Quayamat Tak/QSQT(1989) and Dil(1990) where the couple seeks to elope and even in Maine Pyaar Kiya the hero leaves home in defiance to patriarchal resistance towards his romantic involvement. Interestingly these films were played by two young heroes who arrived on scene a little before SRK. The coming of SRK in romantic genre films re-instated the control over the couple by the family albeit through the volition of the hero who chooses to reconcile and negotiate instead of rebelling. The star hero precludes the chances of rupture within the family’s control. The family also provides the space for the romance to evolve surreptitiously in both DDLJ and Pardes- a trend that had already begun with Sooraj Barjatya’s conservatively constructed family-romance Maine Pyaar Kiya /MPK(1989) and Hum Aapke Hain Kaun/ HAHK(1994) under the influence of proto-Hindu cultural impulses.

The significance of these two early marked a clear shift in the positioning of the star within a shifting discourse of the nation. While his early films saw him as transgressing the ‘dharmic principle’, and also some films that saw him in desirous or anxious moments (Maya Memsahaab, Deewana, Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman) fraught with contradictions and dilemma. In contrast both DDLJ and Pardes saw how modernity and its idiom are adapted to dharma. The character of the star invited and endorsed a kind of cinematic specularity that was not simply a spectatorial identification with the modern but ‘the modern inscribed within dharmik registers that have a time immemorial force: the modern hero doubles up as the pre-modern hero from the nation’s epic past’ (Mishra,2002 ibid.p.16) This presencing of history and culture assumes an ideological form within the generic parameters of Bombay cinema and constituted a nationalist drive towards modernity. This was particularly relevant at a crucial juncture of globalization, to allay the threat of the Westernized form of modernity by assuring conservation
of tradition in the name of ‘dharma’ (that often in both the films meant protection of the woman’s honor, wherein the woman is the metaphor of the nation.)

The role of the father, in comparison to the mother (who is the metaphor of the nation, the community, the custodian of moral values and acts as the figure of ethical motivation) symbolizes the social order, the state order. Representing a horizontal authoritative figure of power within a melodrama the figure of the father, as the authoritative figure of power embeds the political within it. The symbolism of political economy and cultural forms come together, with the state’s withdrawal from the determination of cultural hierarchies and investments now mirrored in its abstinence within the fiction of the globalizing nation. The global frame is significant: as the contemporary family film is distinct from its earlier avatars in a bid to reconcile the schism between the East and the West such that a Western upbringing does not make the protagonist ineligible for the national project in a globalizing moment. Here, the father is more crucial than the mother, and acts as the arbiter of national belonging. In the process, the affective ties of community are decisively supplanted by social rules of exclusion and inclusion overseen by the baleful punitive presence of the father figures, most famously incarnated in both the two above films by actor Amrish Puri. While not the real father to the protagonist Shah Rukh in the narrative, he symbolically acquires the role of the father to the star in both DDLJ and Pardes. In both the films it is the paternal authority that symbolically sanctions the eligibility of the hero as a true national subject, custodian of Indian ethos, values, ideas, marking a rite de passage to his identity of an Indian in the real sense. (Vasudevan, 2010, p.366-367) The patriarch is framed as the ‘epitome of the darsanic figure, bestowing sanction within the orbit of his darshan’ (Manas Ray, 2012, p.233) Vasudevan sees it as the darsanic strategy of the heroic-subject played by Shah Rukh of remaining respectful as a devout towards the community elder in a bid to authenticate oneself and secure parental sanction of romance. And interestingly in both the films the star is provoked by the contending suitor to express graphic physical violence - invoking an avatar of his violent films - erupting in graphic aggression in body movements. These fight sequences were desperate attempts to persuade possibilities to re-affiliate to the nation in times of the global by protecting the honor of the father, the symbol of the state. The climax scenes of both DDLJ and Pardes are symbolic ploys to demonstrate respect and conformity to the patriarchal traditions, and in displaying primordial and visceral affiliation by defending honor of the family and the woman. The couple formation following consent of the patriarch also expanded the space of the nation, as the release of the daughter by the father is a discernible gesture of liberalizing nation to open up its market to the world. This can be linked to the protectionist economy allowing foreign firms and big multinationals to enter the domestic market. The gaining of patriarchal sanction suggests the acknowledging and integration of the ‘globalized generation’ as the legitimate successor of the nation. The globalised subject represented by the star proves his filial loyalty to the primordial claims of the nation and his Indian ness. Despite the exit of the diaspora from the territorial space of the nation he retains his identity unfailingly. (Vasudevan, 2010 ibid. p.369-372)
The ambiguous role of the father in Indian childhood is yet another factor that contributes to the narcissistic vulnerability of Indian men. For the narcissistic injury inherent in the abrupt dissolution of the mother-son relation can be tempered through the boy’s identification with his father. The father, as per both Erickson and Fromm’s views as emphasized, is not only counter player of little Oedipus, but the guardian and sponsor of the son’s separation from his mother at a time when his courage for such autonomous existence is brand new. The affirmation of the father’s guiding voice is central element to a man’s identity. The ambivalence of the relation around Oedipal complex and also its attendant hostility is outweighed by the alliance between the son and the father. (Kakar, 1996. p.131) This comes to be seen in the relation between the motherless boy SRK and his loving and friendly father who encourages the boy’s own efforts to grow up allowing to explore Europe in his vacation. As his generative responsibility is not to withdraw and Raj’s father not pre-occupied with authority as an ideal of aloof perfection let the boy pursue his love and allows him to follow Simran. This guardianship and balance of the father is significant as it facilitates as per Kakar a developmentally cogent masculine self and an autonomous identity. The doting father and forging of this Oedipal alliance that was conspicuously absent in his early films like Darr, Baazigar shows that the nation’s subject requires an emotional access in his early youth, corresponding to the nation’s early brush with the global. The support provided to the boy to bring back the bride, or the ‘Dulhaniya’ shows the nascency of the formation of subject which he overcomes through self assertion in later films. (see, Kakar, ibid.)

With regards to the star’s positioning vis-à-vis the patriarch, it may be said that in most films from DDLJ onwards, Pardes, Mohabbatein(2001), Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham(2003) and even to some extent Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna(2005), SRK as a romantic hero faced the patriarch as the only figure of opposition. As it is the state facing economic crisis that gave in to globalizing mandate and recounting the anxiety of the state, the father is the figure who gives concrete shape to the ‘faceless authority of the state‘ The citizen subject’s relationship with the state and the nation is modeled on filial affinities and by implication the state is cast as the idealized parental authority. In effect the family and state is fused(Virdi,2003 ibidp.42) This also explains why in the in the early row of diaspora films the hero, i.e., SRK’s love did not have to face the contradictions that normally impedes assertion of bourgeoisie subject’s assertion of individualism like class, caste, urban-rural, law-outlaw binary divides. Love as a potent individualistic force that mobilizes the action of a romantic hero conventionally countered these binaries representing the various ills and contradictions of the nation. On the contrary, SRK’s romance mostly had to face the symbolic father, the conservative state that seeks to re-position its hegemonic control in face of global onslaughts and concedes to neo-liberal forces via a negotiating rhetoric.

The paternalist frame in the initial years of liberalization with its expansive ambit have allowed for diaporization of narratives where family as a metaphor of the imagined nation includes diaspora subjects and their affinities with their nation. In both DDLJ, Pardes SRK was shown to have true affiliation towards the values and tradition of Indian society that in denouement
helped him win the approbation of the elderly patriarch or the symbolic father. Such reassurances, however was needed to win the faith of the nation by the diasporic subject. Interestingly the diasporic character of SRK in both these films cease to express himself either in the feisty, irreverant and defiant temper of lovers represented by Aamir and Salman in QSQT, Dil and MPK or the subversive angry young man of the seventies represented by Bachchan. Shah Rukh desists from being outrageous or audacious in the first two films and expressed the most cherished ideal of the traditional hierarchical society, viz. his deferential disposition towards family elders. The intergenerational discord that was central to narratives of the late 1980s and early 1990s was erased via the diasporic role of SRK. In DDLJ a doting and indulgent father of the hero—also smart, liberal and open-minded, played by Anupam Kher prodded his son to pursue his love interest. While the hero successfully won the consent of the unrelentingly obdurate patriarchs in both the films DDLJ and Pardes.

In both the narratives the paradigm of modernity and tradition remain peacefully intertwined, even though it is based on tradition’s alleged superiority and its capacity to assimilate, or tame modernity rather than vice versa. Thus even the notion of romantic love seeks patriarchal blessings with the star acting as an important vehicle of negotiating between the old traditional patriarchal forces and liberal spirit of individual choice in consonance with the free liberal market forces: and this negotiation comes closer to what Patricia Uberoi, as cited, points out as an instance of ‘arranged love marriage’ (Brosius, 2005, p.217).

However there is basic difference in this moral conditioning of the diaspora in the two films and Patricia Uberoi, as cited observes’…where DDLJ proposes that Indian identity can survive translocation, albeit requiring renewal and replenishment through periodic returns to the homeland, Pardes discloses a deep ambivalence with respect to diaspora—glamourising its material benefits and enabling possibilities, while condemning its moral consequences’ (Kaur, 2005, p.310).

One cannot but ignore the sociological relevance of arranged marriages in both the films. It is observed: that a dimension on non-territorial communities ‘… is the phenomenon of arranged marriages’, like the South Asians where there is ‘exchange of brides’ between different diasporic communities as well as between the diaspora and the homeland. This acts as a powerful device to continue the intimate links and inclusionary construction of boundaries of the imagined community of the nation. Such arrangements cut across the boundaries of the different geographical territories and the political boundaries of different states in which members of these diasporic communities are citizens. (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p.65-66). The idea of marriage between the diaspora and mainland subject is thus not bereft of socio-economic and political ramifications in an age of the globalizing regime of the nation-state.

While the star acts as an agent of negotiating between the conservative patriarchal forces tacitly insinuated by right-wing conservatism and the liberal spirit that also informed changes initiated within state policies. What is striking in this negotiated form of arranged-love marriages is the ostensible removal of class conflict. Heterosexual romance in popular film narratives have been subjected to parental disapproval or resistance from family mostly on account of class and this
even continued in the two landmark films of the star’s contemporaries, viz. Aamir Khan in Dil and Salman Khan in MPK Romance in popular texts have mostly been a trope of transgression meant to challenge caste/class divisions since the Nehruvian era. Romance upheld utopian possibilities of inverting social hierarchies and thus individual’s supremacy; and also advocated in favor of disinterestedness, irrationality and indifference towards wealth. Thus class barriers were commonly transgressed in romantic genre and the couple’s union stood to transform the social hierarchy mostly. (Virdi, 2003 ibid, p.200) Shah Rukh’s entry was significantly marked by romantic narratives that revolved around protagonists of the same class background. With class differences purged out, perhaps a sign of a post-scarcity society or an upwardly mobile middle class complacence, the source of dramatic tension and conflict was internalized and gravitated towards individual’s desires and the filial duty towards the family. The plot manifestation of this conflict, in both the early row of diasporic films, either involved a love triangle or strict parents who eventually yield towards the protagonist’s choice of partner. In both the narratives DDLJ and Pardes, SRK, the star protagonist is counterpoised vis-à-vis the prospective suitor of the heroine whom she is obliged to marry. The presence of SRK is the source of dilemma for the tradition bound woman. Reconciliation to the hero and his negotiating acumen that wins their priestly consent appear to be cinematically analogous to the relenting statist authority to overcome its protectionist policies and embrace the new liberal economic reforms. In sharp contrast to the rebellious lovers when young lovers ran away together from their families SRK’s entry into the romantic genre departed from the popular norm of youthful rebellion and emerged as a more tactful, compliant lover who are even ready to sacrifice in the name of family honour. Harmony, and the hero’s relative passivity and obeisance to patriarchal norms illustrate the strength of conservative hegemonic forces in securing conformity even of the hybrid, cosmopolitan transnational diasporic subject. (Ganti, 2004 ibid, p.41) In contrast to his contemporaries who confronted conservative patriarchs like Aamir in QSQT or Salman in MPK , Shah Rukh ‘s revised method of negotiating or trying to befriend the patriarch allowed at one level a re-affirmation of the neoconservative ness of the Right wing tradition on one hand and work towards a reconciliatory gesture of introducing modernity that was transformatively negotiated. This also reflects the anxiety of the nation which seeks to re-assert its eminence even with the advent of the global.

The roles of the star in his early diaspora films re-assuringly pays obeisance to the cherished traditional ideals and deference towards the patriarchy. Such tradition affirming facets of the hero brought to fore the ‘sacred centre’ (Shils, 1975, as cited) as locus of Indian collective identity. Notwithstanding his transnationalization, the diaspora is shown to contain and uphold his ‘sacred centre’ that was not so much geographical, but meant core values, symbols, beliefs in a society, as its’ultimat and irreducible’ and to ‘partake of the nature of sacred’. The centre was the ream that Shils called as the ‘central value system’ which linked a society and its members to something which ‘transcends and transfigures their concrete existence’ (Shils cited
The diaspora transcending his concrete existence proves his allegiance to the core value system that allowed him to be reclaimed by the territorial nation and its audience. An interesting aspect is that the star, already a popular face in television serials before embarking a career in films, was already endeared to the middle class audience with his acting style and the roles that were ordinary, vulnerable, and emotional and did not claim any super-heroic virtues. Besides his mediocrity in terms of his background, his biographical inputs in public circulation that posited him as an educated middle class boy, with a background of a close knit family, parental ties and a stable conjugal life were the various extra-cinematic aspects that allowed him to be successfully located within the ‘moral economy of the family films where the relations of paternal authority, maternal nurture, of filial respect, duty, and emotional bonding were crucial reference points that besides structuring the narrative inscribed upon the star certain ‘dramatis personae’ suited to the family audience. (see Vasudevan, 2010, ibid. p.48)

The salience of the family along with its ostentatious celebrations and display in these two narratives, and was also repeated in Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham, making it almost a visual spectacularized site of ritual observance and celebration under the supposed aegis of the benevolent patriarchy serves certain important narrative functions. First, these celebrations is the centerpiece and foundation of family based narratives as these ritualized occasions reassuringly allow the diaspora and the homeland’s new middle class to conserve their faith in the institution of family (the metaphor of the nation), the crucible or a cultural repository of Indian values that accords distinctiveness to Indian identity. The family resiliently allows its tradition bound functions to emerge as moments for collective consumption and pleasure and the revelry and mirth involved in the celebrations allow the romancing subjects to savor pleasure and indulge while hoodwinking the elders. The obsessive underscoring and the fetishization of the (Hindu) families in these narratives also echoed a parallel ideological phenomena, to the of articulation of a more brazen rhetoric of Hindu cultural nationalism and jingoistic nationalist sentiments that characterized war and anti-terrorist films, as they were inspired by the same political and cultural philosophy of what constituted a dyadic alliance between neo-liberal economic policy and Hindu right-wing ideology. In other words these families and their celebratory surface aesthetics was the cultural obverse of Hindutva and under the subterfuge of gloss and glamour of consumerist visual idiom that marked family settings and romantic sequences, the neo-traditional ideology found to a marketing style. The patriotic diaspora, the happy prosperous family removed from all financial difficulties, embellished interiors along with anti-(Muslim) terror constituted part of neo-liberal resurgent nationalism complicit with free market ideology. (Bhattacharya-Meheta, 2011, p.2-3)

In a parallel drawn from a traditional developing nation like Turkey where Islamic identity have integrated with consumerist culture as a secular identity (Ozbudun, et al 2002,) one can cite how Hindu nationalism positioning itself within family romance narratives in the guise of extravaganza and consumerist gloss, secularize itself and seeks a sanctification in the popular Hindi films. This insidiously re-vitalizes the hegemonic Hindu narrative. The star biography of
Muslim heroes like Shah Rukh Khan and others also, like Aamir Khan, Salman Khan and Saif Ali Khan conveniently serves this agenda of cultural politics. Shah Rukh’s roles in the early row of diaspora-family-romance films see him lend his biography of Muslim identity to produce an apparent ‘secularization’ of the protean Hindu hegemonic impulse.

3.6 THE SECOND ROW OF DIASPORA FILMS

3.6.1 Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham/K3G (Sometimes Happiness, Sometimes Sadness, 2001, directed by Karan Johar)

Yashvardhan Raichand (Amitabh Bachchan) is a wealthy businessman, with his wife Nandini (Jaya Bachchan) lives in India with their two sons Rahul and Rohan. Rahul the elder son was adopted by the couple when he was born. As the age of eight he learns this and feels obliged to them. But this truth is known to everyone in the Raichand household except Rohan. Years later, a grown-up Rahul (Shah Rukh Khan) comes across the beautiful Anjali Sharma (Kajol). The two become friends and eventually fall in love knowing well that their class difference stands to oppose their future. Yash and Nandini meanwhile send Rohan to a boarding school. Yash also announces his desire to for Rahul to marry Naina (Rani Mukherji), the daughter of his closest friend. Naina however learns that Rahul is in love with Anjali, and encourages him to follow his heart's desire. When Yash comes to know of Rahul’s love for Anjali he is infuriated and deeply hurt. Rahul vows before his father that he will not marry Anjali, a modest grocer’s daughter. Rahul with a heavy heart goes to tell her that he cannot marry her, when he is shocked to discover that Anjali’s father (Alok Nath) has passed away leaving his two daughters in a lurch. Seeing Anjali whom he truly loves, in pain, he decides to marry her despite Yash Raichand’s hostility. The marriage makes the latter disown Rahul as his son. Nandini and Rahul share a tearful goodbye. Nandini sends Sayeeda (Farida Jalal), Rahul and Rohan’s nanny, to take care of her son so that he never feel apart from motherly affection. Rahul visits Rohan in his boarding to tell him that he is leaving home forever. He asks Rohan to never ask where he went or why he left and also take care of their mother. Ten years later, Rohan, a grown up man (Hritik Roshan) returns home from boarding school. He learns from his grandmothers that Rahul was adopted, and also the reason why Rahul left home. Rahul visits Rohan in his boarding to tell him that he is leaving home forever. He asks Rohan to never ask where he went or why he left and also take care of their mother. Ten years later, Rohan, a grown up man (Hritik Roshan) returns home from boarding school. He learns from his grandparents that Rahul was adopted, and also the reason why Rahul left home. Rahul visits Rohan in his boarding to tell him that he is leaving home forever. He asks Rohan to never ask where he went or why he left and also take care of their mother. Ten years later, Rohan, a grown up man (Hritik Roshan) returns home from boarding school. He learns from his grandparents that Rahul was adopted, and also the reason why Rahul left home. Rahul visits Rohan in his boarding to tell him that he is leaving home forever. He asks Rohan to never ask where he went or why he left and also take care of their mother. Ten years later, Rohan, a grown up man (Hritik Roshan) returns home from boarding school. He learns from his grandparents that Rahul was adopted, and also the reason why Rahul left home. Rahul visits Rohan in his boarding to tell him that he is leaving home forever. He asks Rohan to never ask where he went or why he left and also take care of their mother. Ten years later, Rohan, a grown up man (Hritik Roshan) returns home from boarding school. He learns from his grandparents that Rahul was adopted, and also the reason why Rahul left home. Rahul visits Rohan in his boarding to tell him that he is leaving home forever. He asks Rohan to never ask where he went or why he left and also take care of their mother. Ten years later, Rohan, a grown up man (Hritik Roshan) returns home from boarding school. He learns from his grandparents that Rahul was adopted, and also the reason why Rahul left home. Rahul visits Rohan in his boarding to tell him that he is leaving home forever. He asks Rohan to never ask where he went or why he left and also take care of their mother. Ten years later, Rohan, a grown up man (Hritik Roshan) returns home from boarding school. He learns from his grandparents that Rahul was adopted, and also the reason why Rahul left home. Rahul visits Rohan in his boarding to tell him that he is leaving home forever. After some persuasion, Rahul agrees to Pooja’s request and allows Rahul to stay. Rohan keeps hinting about the family and the past to let Rahul know who he is and finally in a dramatic event Rahul realizes who Rohan is. Rohan implores but Rahul refuses to come back home, knowing that his father will not accept him. Pooja convinces Rohan to invite his parents to London and have them meet their son Rahul, hoping it would lead to a
rapproachment. While the mother and the son (Rahul) are overjoyed to see one another, the latter refuses to talk to his father. Yah learning Rohan’s true intentions of bringing back home Rahul enrages him. Soon Yah receives a phone call and learns that his mother is on her death bed; and her last wish being that Yash, Rahul and Rohan light her funeral pyre together. Although Yash does not want this, all the family attend the funeral together. Nandini, so far playing a submissive wife to the authoritarian patriarch Yash, mustersthe strength to tell that Yash was being unkind to Rahul by disowning him whom he has brought up with such affection. Rohan and Pooja convinces Rahul to speak to Yash and Yash realizing his mistakes allows a Rahul and Anjali to come back home and the family re-unites. Pooja and Rohan get married and the family also had belated celebration of Rahul and Anjali’s wedding.

In this film, the hero confronts a typical authoritarian father of Indian family that is also marked by a certain psycho-social diffusion as ‘the strength and the cohesion of the extended family depend upon certain psycho-social diffusion; it is essential that nuclear cells do not build up within the family, or at the very least, that these cells do not involve intense emotional loyalties that potentially exclude other family members and their interests. Thus, these principles of Indian family life demand that a father be restrained in the presence of his own son and divide his interest and support equally among his own and brother’s sons. The culturally prescribed pattern of restraint between the fathers and sons is widespread in India, sufficiently so to constitute a societal norm’ (Kakar, 1996. p.131). The film reflects this neutral, aloof father, restraining his emotions who forsakes his son for betraying his trust by a romantic choice which he did not approve of. In Kakar’s words ‘requisite façade of aloofness and impartiality’ is maintained by the father while struggling to hide his love for his son, yet did not succumb to his emotions and stop him from leaving home. In psychological terms there is ‘a bewildering contradictory messages of simultaneous love and restraint, emanating from his father’s behavior’ (Kakar, ibid. p132).

The father in this film is Hindu patriarch and arrives at a time of Bollywood’s renewed investments in Hindutva and cultural nationalism. This father is not to be subsumed under the general category of patriarchy as it fails to take note of the complexities involved. Drawing on the discourse of the new ‘Hindutva’ in plural ways at the level of the plot his claim to the film’s moral / ethical centers is generally inflected by his religious affinity or values. His role steeped within a deeply masculinist discourse that is both espoused and disseminated by a Hindu right. The father is an important carrier of ‘tradition’ but also emerges as a powerful repository of ‘modernity’ which in this context refers to the multitude of ‘meanings’ that inform popular notions of how globalization and neo-liberalism translates itself to us. This new Hindu patriarch provides an important register of contemporary India’s ideological and cultural discourse. The positioning of SRK versus Amitabh Bachchan as the Hindu ‘father’ has ideological implications. SRK, already established as a star of liberalizing India, popular in diasporic roles, an emissary of the nation’s globalizing moment represents the individual subject/citizen and the consumer bourgeois citizen subject with attendant affinities towards consumer choices. The 1990s had witnessed the triumph of liberalization with euphoria about the enthusiastic
consumer citizen. This also saw the emergence of a general perception of the individual’s right to exercise choice as a politicized extension of free, rational economic consumer’s choice. Choice has a wider locus of meaning and here means a broader cultural logic of the free-market economy, a system that empowers a subject to chose from the multiple commodities also governs other areas of his actions and decision-making. The logic of consumption as an overarching principle and the idea of choice came to subsume the world view of the new man—the heroic character played by the star. He was counterpoised against Hindu patriarchal father who embodies a discourse that seeks to de-limit choices. The new patriarch in a way tries to render the freedom of choice as foreclosed. These choices take the form of romantic/sexual choices by the hero, the independent citizen/subject. The Hindu patriarchal father also representative of the Phallic state authority with the state then led by the BJP is also a bearer of the nation’s political discourse. The patriarch is also aligned to the nation-state’s larger investment in the fundamentally masculinist historical moment. The discourses that dominated the Indian public spheres in the 1990s were tethered to constitute the phallic patriarchal figure. The strain of an aggressive Hindutva resonates in him, along with a certain militant aggression of a pro-Hindu crusader, a figure of a ‘hard state’, postured in a tough military stance against Pakistan. Also inflections of the prospects of the nation as a nuclear power, its enormous potential for drawing enormous financial investments, a belligerent posturing against minorities and illegal immigration inscribe upon the figure and constitute significant components of an overarching phallic regime. The masculinity of the Hindu patriarch is to be located within the context of the larger political economic context.(see, Sen, 2011.p.149-150)

The posing of the hero, representing the free liberal rhetoric of the capital driven market economy against the right wing orthodox, cultural nationalist force is further explicated as the son is transterritorialized and the father, the obdurate state awaits his coming back that acts as an analogous replay of India’s slow and reticent response to liberal changes and its later reconciliation. This also represents the two faces of the nation viz., the Hindutva ideology represented by the father and the hero representing the globalizing discourse of the nation. The return and the reunion of the hero with the family consolidates the dyadic articulation of the two right wing ideological ideological forces of the nation. Alternatively it may privilege a differentiated reading where the chasm between the father and the son persists, and sees it as an ascendant triumph of the son, the personified market, over the phallic state i.e., the father. At the narrative level, the hero returns after many years, as the family binds back the son into its space, securing him from the perils of the outside world, filling up the social void by bringing him back to its folds, securing his rights to an inheritance and his social status. This however is the transformed family where the hero displaces the stern patriarchal authority and restores him to his position. However his diasporic status can be assumed to problematize his complete union which is also attenuated further by genealogical unrelated ness to the family and that they are only his foster parents. This leaves open a space that is liminal and is suited for the hero’s hyphenated identity.(Vasudevan, 2010 , ibid. p.89-91)
3.6.2 Kal Ho Na Ho/KHNH (Tomorrow May Never Come, 2003, directed by Nikhil Advani)

Naina Ctherine Kapoor (Preity Zinta) is a distraught young girl living in New York City. Her father had committed suicide when she was young, leaving her mother Jennifer Kapur (Jaya Bachchan) alone with her and her two other younger children Shiv and Gia. The restaurant that Jennifer operates is also financially faltering. Furthermore, Naina’s paternal grandmother, Ljjo (Sushma Seth), blames Jennifer for the suicide and refuses to accept Gia (who was adopted by Jennifer) as her daughter, blaming her for bringing bad luck to the family. The only happiness in Naina’s life is her MBA Course classmate Rohit Patel. (Saif Ali Khan).

Meanwhile, Aman Mathur (Shah Rukh Khan) shifts to Naina’s neighbourhood. Noticing the sadness of his neighbours, he intervenes, and his well-meaning interference in their activities like extending friendly assistance to revive their financial condition, his optimistic conversations improve their lives from the state of gloom and despair. Although Naina is initially reluctant to enjoy Aman’s presence, she grows to like him and eventually falls in love with him. Also, Rohit, who has been in love with Naina is too shaky to reveal his feelings to her. Aman and Rohit become friends and on Aman’s encouragement, he invites Naina for lunch where she reveals to him her love for Aman. Heartbroken, Rohit tells Aman about this.

To save Rohit’s love Aman lies to Naina that he is married to a woman named Priya (Sonali Bendre). It is later revealed that Aman is dying of a severe illness that is progressively deteriorating his heart. And Priya is not his wife but his doctor. Knowing that his lifespan is limited he sacrifices his love for Naina and plays a matchmaker between Naina and Rohit. The tension within Naina’s family is also resolved by Aman when after accidentally intercepting a personal letter addressed to Jennifer that revealed that Gia, is Naina’s half-sister through their father’s extra-marital affair. Jennifer’s acceptance of her husband’s infidelity led to his suicide. Lajjo finally accepts Gia, and now the united family, with all due credit to Aman’s doings starts preparing for Rohit and Naina’s wedding. Meanwhile, Aman’s health worsens and Naina in a chance encounter meets Priya and learns the truth about Aman’s health condition. When she approaches and accuses Aman, he convinces her to get married to Rohit, as he knew that Rohit had lived her. She accepts and gets married to Rohit. After attending the wedding, Aman passes away. Twenty years later, an older Naina relates the story of Aman’s love to the grown-up Gia and how she has, and always loved him.

In this film Khan reverses the performance style and narrative function that was ascribed to his character in DDLJ. Darsanic codes, visceral actions and globalizing semantics had ensured the emergence of the symbolic father within the narrative. In KHNH there is both continuity and transmutation. It revives the certitudes of Indian identity parameters by complicating the definition of Indian identity in several ways. The film signals a symbolic shift in the structure of the diaspora family movie, and unlike DDLJ, Pardes, Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham, it unsettles the apex position in the family structure. The paternal authority otherwise invested with authority is rendered dark and suicidal. Aman, the character played by Shah Rukh offers a psychotherapeutic release of this suppressed narrative, speaking truth in front of the assembled
family holding relations in covert guilt and ridden with the anxiety that awaited revelation of the truth about the ‘absent father’. Unlike his reverence towards the father-figure in earlier films like DDLJ and Pardes, Shah Rukh’s role demands him to assume the role of a parallel father in a family lacking it (Vasudevan,, 2010. p376, 378-379)

3.6.3 Kabhi Alvida Na Kahna/KANK( Never Say GoodBye, 2006, directed by Karan Johar)
The film is mostly shot in New York City is a romantic drama which explores the theme of adultery and extra-marital affairs. Dev Saran(Shah Rukh Khan) is a successful football player in the United States. He lives in New York with his wife Rhea(Preity Zinta) who is a fashion designer and both have a son named Arjun. Dev’s mother Kamaljeet(Kirron Kher) also stays with Dev. Maya(Rani Mukherji) is an orphan whom is to marry her closest childhood friend Rishi Talwar(Abhishek Bachchan). The two have been dotingly raised by Rishi’s jovial father Samarjit, also Sam(Amitabh Bachchan). Dev encounters Maya in a park, moments before a perplexed Maya was about to marry Rishi. Coincidentally it is Dev and Rhea’s fifth wedding anniversary. Although Dev and Maya are strangers, they strike an instant chord. The two part ways and when Dev bids goodbye to Maya she says that they should never say goodbye because they may meet again. Moments after they part, Dev is hit by a car accident and injures his leg, and as a result is no longer able to play football.

Four years pass after Dev and Maya again get to meet each other. Dev is now extremely bitter-firstly because of his inability to play football and secondly because his wife has risen to heights of success in her independent career, making Dev look inferior to her. Maya in a similar situation, find that she is infertile and has grown an apathetic coldness towards her husband Rishi whom she believes to be selfish. The two couples meet and instantly become friends. Both Dev and Maya realizing that each other’s marriages failing miserably vow to help each other and save their individual marriages. They meet everyday for coffee and discuss their faults along with their spouses faults as well. Eventually both Dev and Maya decide to take a break from saving their marriages and resolve to spend time in each other’s company and find themselves being drawn to each other. On the day of their wedding anniversaries, they decide to organise a meal for their partners. After the meals, both couples have an argument. Dev is livid thinking that Rhea accepted a promotion to shift to London (in fact she was about to tell him that she has declined the offer). Rishi gets angry with Maya when she accuses of being selfish and not understanding her needs. Maya arrives at the station and finds Dev there and after an emotional argument Dev eventually admits that he has fallen in love with Maya. Meanwhile Kamaljeet and Sam seeing that both Dev and Maya being difficult in their relationships decide to make Rishi and Rhea talk to one another. Both Rhea and Rishi realize that they love their partners dearly despite their flaws and felt the need to re-unite. For some time both the marriages start to work. Both Dev and Maya believes that they are denying their true feelings and deluding their spouse with pretense. In a clandestine privacy of a hotel room the two sexually unite. Sam invites the Sarans to his house for dinner. Dev’s innuendo makes Sam realize Dev’s love for Maya, and the very
same evening Dev and Maya were caught embracing the two by Sam and Kamaljit. Sam suffers a heart attack and on his death bed asks Maya to leave Rishi as none would be happy in the marriage. Dev and Maya decide to end their relationship and go back to their individual partners and confide in them about their extra-marital relationship. Dismayed by this both Rishi and Rhea divorce their individual spouses. But both Dev and Maya, on the phone lie to each other believing that the other has adjusted to his/her partner that they have reconciled to their partners and believing that they shall never meet each other bids goodbye.

Three years pass Dev and Maya have not met each other. At Rishi’s re-marriage ceremony Maya and Rhea invited discover about each other. that Rishi and Maya and Dev and Rhea have divorced. Rishi and Rhea encourages Maya to leave fast as Dev was at the station and leaving for Toronto by train. Maya arrives at the station and Dev believing her to be still married to Rishi avoids her. They see each other as the train leaves, Dev seeks an emergency disembarking and arrives back at the station to speak to Maya. Learning that she too has been divorced decide to start a new life together.

Kabhi Alvida Na Kahna/Kank is a bold film where the hero, breaks all norms of moralistic inhibitions and consciously decides to sexually consummate the extra-marital relationship between him and Maya, the unhappily married woman in whom he finds solace from his own stained conjugal relationship drove them close. In KANK, the hero exercises the deliberate choice that acts “off-limits” from the cultural protocols of Indian society. In earlier films where the hero and the heroine caught in acts of sexual intimacy, mostly pre-marital romance had the pretext of being incidentally led towards each other, in this film the hero is allowed to transgress and this belies the idea of shame faced voyeurism true to darsanic traditions of Indian cinematic viewership. (Gehlawat, 2010. p.14) The diasporic hero’s actions privileges a voyeuristic gaze into a private and amorous scene in a hotel room in New York. The transterritorialization of this scene seeks to exonerate the hero from the moralist cadences of fidelity. Johar’s choice of New York allow Dev to conduct his love affair unhindered and unobserved in public spaces and a sexual scene in a hotel room—all that an Indian locale would moralistically prohibit. The New York milieu, was dictated by Johar’s ‘pedagogic project of bringing the adulterous couple out in open so that he could explore the vicissitudes of this relationship—something unexplorable in India. (Gopal, 2011, p.27) The scene seeks to risk the hero’s image within a stable bourgeois family discourse through this act that seeks to challenge the disciplinary control of the family over its subjects. Madhav Prasad’s on the textual procedures of the cinematic form to constrain voyeur into couple’s privacy, secured by the state procedure of censorship appear to be more liberal. The family that provided the symbolic limit and the disciplinary frame under the aegis of state censorship rules absolves this diasporic hero. Ironically this was the same diasporic star who in DDLJ had been restaintful with the girl he began to love and in a situation that was more of a chance than in KANK where the hero seeks intimacy knowingly and in sheer infraction from familial rules and norms of fidelity.
The story of Radha and Krishna whatever its basis as a mystical allegory is plainly an adulterous tale of an illicit romance between Radha, another man’s wife. Adulterous and illicit relationships have a mythical foundation in Indian culture.(Kakar,1996 p.81;92) The film, KANK re-explores the amorous tension, and like the Radha-Krishna myth, whose major fantasies are largely unconscious is a ‘theme of forbidden crossing of boundaries’(ibid, p.91). Like the myth the film is formed by the ‘pervasive presence of an adulterous narrative’ with ‘an illicit transgression of moral limits’ as both Dev and Maya betray their spouse. Dev, like the passionate lover Krishna strives to entertain the erotic feelings and sensations of Maya. He proceeds to ‘violate his primal sexual demarcation as a male’ (ibid,p.91) by courting a physical relationship. This sexual transgression ‘is both preserved and brought to pitch by the stealth and secrecy in which the crossing of such bounds take place’ as seen how Raj in a clandestine manner takes Maya to the private confines of a hotel room. Despite the mythical parallel, where the Radha –Krishna tale allegorizes passionate desire for the God as the lover and adultery exalted as a symbol of the ‘sacred’ transcending the profanity of everyday convention, the romanticization and even a tacit legitimization of the extra-marital relationship and finally their re-union after breaking from their respective spouses is an obviation of several factors. Firstly, it berays the sexual anxiety of a failed man is shown as vulnerable, mentally feeble, envious of a more successful spouse and so on. This rendering of the hero as ‘fallible’ is therefore pardoned in view of his ordinariness-with no heroic quality of exalted level of values. The diasporisation of Dev and his extra-marital relationship exposes the inhibited desires of the ‘middle class’ that found a vent. Such liberty given to middle class diasporic subject represents not only a more liberal attitude of the popular nation but also a readiness of the nation to grant uninhibited freedom, a ‘jouissance. This adulterous relationship allegorized a larger promise of expansiveness and freedom.

The rupture of two families and finally the re-union of Dev and Maya, and their coming together problematises the relationship of the hero to the nation. The authority of the family, as the metonym of the nation also appear to be problematic. The authority inscribed within the family represents the concatenation of power to which individuals become accustomed. The conjugal stress in both the families, of Dev and Maya, the declining authority of single widowed parents living with their married child respectively and the tendency of both the protagonist to step outside the confines of their family space, in the open public spaces of the city to find respite from the stressful environs of their household, reduce the emotional control of the family (also the nation) over these subjects. In KANK, the mythic line of the ‘Lakshman Rekha’ transgressed(see, Virdi 2003,ibid,p.126) and ruptured beyond the gaze of the nation-state’s guardianship, emboldens the hero vis-à-vis in his libidinous desires which earlier was irreconcilable within conservative discourse of the nation. In 1998, a film named Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam(Beloved, I have already given my heart, directed by: Sanjay Leela Bhansali), the woman shows restraint and the man quits his beloved under resistence from her family, and later the woman reconciles to her husband despite her husband trying to re-unite her with her former lover. KANK depicts the assertion of individual’s...
uncontrollable desires against social sanctions’and challenges moral middle class codes. Sacrifice looks anachronistic and the only legitimacy is sought through the willful choice of their individual betrayed partner to divorce them, these betrayed partners finding their new found matches before Dev is allowed to reclaim his desired woman Maya. Unlike the magical tourist gaze that informed early films like DDLJ and Pardes, in films like KHNH, K3G, KANK, ie SRK’s second row of diaspora films can be said to represent a renewed project of diasporic films, as these films positions the subject in apparently familiar locales, more habitable and part of everyday life. Unlike the exhilaratingly spectacularized Las Vegas in Pardes or Europe in DDLJ, in KHNH and KANK the city is captured from more mundane corners and there is a greater engagement with familiar spaces at the visual level, such as the street life, crowded pedestrian movement, inside public transport and various other iconic features of everyday life. These films appear to make new space for the migrant to facilitate his easy habitation. He is no longer the nostalgia ridden migrant but integral to the multi-cultural design of the city. Arguably this suggests that how the multi cultural articulations in the city space have drawn the protagonist closer. There is within these films a suggestion of a newly confident situation for the diaspora community abroad. (Vasudevan 2010, ibid, p.380)

The family type shown in the second row of diaspora films is different from DDLJ or its later variants. In films like KHNH, KANK the family type is not extended. In KANK, SRK is the disabled eldest male guardian, with a widowed mother and a strained conjugal relation. The film KHNH unsettles the more restrictive identarian logic of possibility of a family structure and rendering it ethnically fluid. The film takes a liberal stance in presentation of problems rising out of identity conflicts. The hero, mediating a liberal view seeks to resolve the inner problems of the heroine’s family. The star here comes of age, and there is no paternal authority who wields moral authority over the protagonist. The hero does not return to India to prove his nationalist belonging and credentials. (ibid) These families in the second row of films also do not make it essential to travel back to India. Living abroad is more ‘naturalized’ and ceases to be cast in nostalgia mood. It may be asked if the hero’s relative independence from the sanctioning control of the patriarch signifies the hero’s, passage to manhood, where manhood is symbolically interchangeable with the idea of nationhood. In other words, the diasporic subject no longer requires the sanctification and with the nation-state reconciling to the global, the hero is autonomous from paternal control. (see, ibid.)

Chandra T. Mohanty, as cited argues that understanding and defining the home is profoundly a political exercise. To posit India as the authentic homeland from which all other ‘homes’ are ‘inauthentic’ is also a problematic assertion. ‘Dressing up the homeland with intoxicating imagery of peasants dancing in lush fields does not camouflage the fact that this too is a political, and for some, a contentious point of reference. The multiplicity of locations - literally and metaphorically- and the fluidity of positionalities are totally thrown out of the window in the Hindi film. The upshot is that notable films produced elsewhere, outside of India representing diasporic Asians…..became marginalized as too hybrid and inauthentic’ (Kaur, 2005, p.323-324)
What is sociologically significant is the conspicuous lack of vicarious diasporic space and unlike the earlier recalling of the hero to the territorial nation, the hero in films like KHNK, KANK continues to stay within urban, cosmopolitan, living space of global metropolis. A space is called vicarious, when in diasporic settings it recalls ‘This is how we do things at home.’ It involves a space which is authenticated ritually. Though diasporas are far removed from the land of their origin, they imagine a set of cultural interactions that continue to take place in what used to be their home, and the recall of this space has little to do with what is actually happening in the old country meanwhile and has much to do with what is imagined to be happening. The imagined stolidity of such space acts as an effective reference point for diaspora struggling in unsettled conditions in distant sites. It is its creation which authenticates cultural enactments and practices when taken out of original setting, and act as complementary or surrogate spaces for cultural enactments (Gupta, 2000, p. 41). The second row of films does not make it essential for the hero to relive his nation-ness through his positioning within such recreated spaces. This acts to confirm the gradual.

3.7 NON-DIASPORIC FILMS YET DIASPORIC FILMS

Spectatorial investments in diasporic consciousness and inscription of the diasporic gaze (Mishra 2002, ibid., p.) allow us to see how without being diaspora themed films, films like Dil To Pagal Hai/DTPH (Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (1998, Something, Something happens. Directed by: Karan Johar)The semiotics of these films completed the India/West circuit by not venturing to go abroad at all, instead it creates a ‘virtual West’ within bounds of India in terms of mise-en-scene, wherein the film internalizes the West within it without even announcing that it is aesthetically West. (Ray, 2012, p. 232) These films addressed what ‘is clearly middle class and aspiring to be both cosmopolitan and diasporic, displaying a range of strangely de-localised series of styles, dress and style of dialogue and interaction that draws heavily on Hollywood teenage movies’ (Hansen, 2005, p. 241). With images of the modern city, an universe of utopian world of pleasure, leisure and consumption the protagonists displayed ‘Westernised habits and bodily gestures’ that ‘can be reconciled with romantic notions of India, and thus domesticated as acceptable ways of being Indian’ (ibid, p. 251). While providing a fantasy films both these films provided a fantasy space, viz. India ‘fitted within a Western frame’ where the hybrid, cosmopolitan, consumerist hero enjoyed a secured stabilization of his diasporic image even without being a nonm-diaspora subject. The hero in the film KKH aswell DTPH perhaps expressed a greater anxiety to display his sporting of global life-style, for example the famous ‘GAP’ shirt of the hero, his movement in Euro-American landscape during songs even though they bore no specificity to the place. These global locations becoming extensions of India , indicates the dexterity with which Hindi films assimilates with its representational codes and practices landscape which are unfamiliar to homeland and familiar to the diaspora. The hero’s positioning within such locations draws his diasporic image almost trans-textually. (see Mishra 2002, ibid., p. 260). The urbanized, globalized, basketball playing hero Shah Rukh, wearing
base ball cap and Gap shirt in KKHH re-inforces his diasporic, global, hybrid image across films.

The diasporic hero facilitates in conjuring up an image that Robertson describes as globalization of spatial compression. The discourse of globalization suggests that this process is ubiquitous that is to say that “London” is in “South Africa” as well as vice versa. Producing an image of a de-centred, multipled, determined world, Appadurai, as cited, observes that configurations of cultural forms are fundamentally fractal, and there are no Euclidian boundaries or structures. Boundaries though persist are insufficient to contain or explain culture as flows of people, images, technologies, ideologies and capital spill over traditional political boundaries and create novel “uncertain landscapes” through their complex interaction. Jameson too as cited, observes the boundary troubling attributes of globalization to the expansive dynamic of capitalism alone, which through neo-colonialism had interconnected the world in such a way that the truth of (subjective) experience no longer coincides with the place in which it takes place. The expansive and intensive thrust of capital not only fractures subjective experiences as it penetrates into more and more areas of every day life, but it undermines the quintessential spatial forms of modernity in the process’ (Bartolovich, 2000, p.149-150)

3.8 DIASPORISATION OF THE STAR AND OTHER ISSUES

The diasporization of films that has sought to transnationalize and de-territorialize the national self (as mediated by the hero) is the result of complex disjunctures arising from transnational flw of global culture. Arjun Appadurai argues: ‘The complexity of the current global economy deals with certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics. To explore such disjunctures between economy, culture and politics. To explore such disjunctures is to look at the relation between five dimensions of global culture flow which can be termed: (a) ethnostaspe; (b) mediascape; (c) technoscape; (d) finscape and (e) ideoscapes… they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected very much by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities as well as subnational groupings and movements… and even intimate face-to-face groups such as village, neighbourhoods and families… These landscapes thus, are building blocks of what, extending Benedict Anderson, is the ‘imagined worlds’, that is, the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons, and groups spread around the globe…’ The critical point is that global relation between ethnostaspe, technoscape, finscape is deeply disjunctive and profoundly unpredictable, since each of these landscapes is subject to its own constraints and incentives… Even an elementary model of global political economy must take into account the shifting relation between perspectives on human movement, technological flow, and financial transfer which can accommodate their deeply disjunctive relation with one another. Built upon these disjunctures are what the author call as “mediascapes” and “ideoscapes”. “Mediascapes” refer to both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, film production studios etc.), which are now available to a growing number of public and private
interests throughout the world; and to the images of the world created by these media. What is important about these mediascapes is that they provide (especially in their television, film and cassette forms) a large and complex repertoire of images, narratives and “ethnoscapes” to viewers throughout the world. What this means is that many audiences throughout the world experience the media themselves as a complicated and interconnected repertoire of print, celluloid, electronic screens and billboards. The line between the “realistic” and fictional landscapes they see are blurred, so that the further away these audiences are from the direct experiences of metropolitan life, the more likely they are to construct “imagined worlds” which are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects, particularly if assessed by the criteria of some other perspective, some other “imagined world”. “Mediascapes” whether produced by private or state interests, tend to be image-centred, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform is a series of elements (such as characters, plots and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places…” (Appadurai, 2003, p.252-255).

Appadurai’s understanding lends itself most appropriately to understand the imagined worlds of the diaspora world and the diasporic subject (the hero in textual forms, as narrative based accounts that produces a spectatoria address that mediates an imagined nation and its belongingness to the diasporic audience through the diasporic subject. Bollywood caught in the disjuncture of global flows, acts as a mediascape, wherein nationalist belonging is de-territorialized through the hero. Nationalist imaginings is secured through diasporisation of theme and subjectivities.

Diaspora films have a distinct and privileged place in a star’s image. Following the success of DDLJ, Shah Rukh inspired diaspora themed films that were written expressly around him and built around his star-image. These films can therefore qualify as ‘Vehicle Films’ (Dyer, 1979, p.70). These vehicle films might provide a character of the type associated with the star, for example SRK’s youthful romantic cosmopolitan look was repeatedly utilized in these films. The generic context, settings and situations of these films came to be associated with star, SRK’s role as a diasporic subject. The star’s imaging, the ‘continuities in his iconography, like his style of dressing, performances, mannerisms, histrionics, excess of style corresponded to the diasporic hero imagined by the popular realm of the nation. It needs to be stated that since all films are not vehicle films, the films in the filmography of the star that do not fit this mould of the vehicle film constitute either inflections, exceptions or subversions to the vehicle pattern and star-image (see, ibid, p. 70-71). However, these diasporic roles is only a particular way amongst many other ways of expressing and locating ‘Indian ness’ amongst the transnational Indians. (Dwyer, 2002, p.216).

The characterization of the diasporic youth hero, SRK lends itself most suitably to the postcolonial approach and its most noted exponent Homi Bhabha’s deconstructive method. Bhabha suggests that ambivalence is at the heart of nation’s discourse. Following Derridean theories of writing, he suggests that nation sets out to define or ‘narrate’ itself and its boundaries; though it can never be fully comprehensive and will always be producing.
uncertainty, contradiction and ambivalence. In the ‘irreducible excess of the syntactic over semantic’, what emerges as an effect of such ‘incomplete signification’ is a turning of boundaries and limits into the in-between spaces through which is explicable the ambivalence of the in-between groups that emerge and inhabit the spaces and contradictions within a national discourse. The liminality and hybridity illustrated by the postcolonial migrant exposes the inconsistent, contingent character of nation’s discourse. Hybridity, claims Bhabha, resides at the borderlines and intersections of the national narratives. Such people inhabiting the interstices can destabilize traditional dichotomously exclusive categories of the binary of East and West since they are simultaneously both. (Bhabha, 1990) The arrival of a diasporic, hybrid hero at the wake of India’s liberalization is perhaps not coincidental. The migrant hero exhibits a liminality that typifies the nation’s discourse; he is both modern (in the Western sense) and traditional (in the Indian sense). Straddling the two worlds, he seeks to negotiate and territorialize the spirit and culture of the nation. Shah Rukh in his several performances as a diasporic, urban, cosmopolitan youth is a heroic prototype of globalizing nation India, albeit in the popular realm. The hybridity of identity displayed disembeds and destabilizes ideas of fixed, unified national identity. The arrival of such a hero corresponds to what Rojek describes as ‘the moment of global/post-essentialism’ wherein identity is denied attribution of any essentialist understanding and is discursively constructed. (Rojek, 2007, p.56-57)

The flamboyant, urbane, Westernised diasporic youth and the tradition abiding-Indian, the non-resident Indian and the patriotic affinities to the land of origin across several roles of the ‘hybrid’ hero destabilizes fixed, stable and essentializing notions of identity. ‘The proposition of fixed, exclusive identity in nationalism, culture, politics, personal life and everything else besides has been displaced by the proposition that identity is always and already hybrid and intrinsically mobile. At its simplest, hybridity means the mixing of cultural, ethnic and racial elements….With…the development of globalization and the rise of multicultural society has exposed native cultures to new racial and cultural influences. Cultural mixing has occurred between native and migrant cultures. Western forms of diet, music,…cultural values and much else have been revised in the process…But so are the rise of multicultural communities…This way of thinking exploits and develops Derridean notion that presence always involves absence. It implies that we should abandon essentialist ideas of identity and replace them with what is sometimes called ‘hyphenated identity’….Identity therefore is always conceptualized as hybrid and sliding…In the most radical versions of the Globalization/Post-Essentialist moment, all meaning is regarded as prone to slippage, and nothing is recognized as outside discourse. The focus of political action in the moment of globalization/Post Essentialism is on disrupting the logic of capitalism and exposing the limits of fixed identity thinking’ (ibid, p.58-59)

The hero SRK in his diasporic avatar poses to be one of the most conspicuous marker of this hybridity in the realm of the popular. The actors bodily gestures, mannerisms, mimicry, mannerisms, idiosyncracies constitute a performative repertoire of his hybridity, as performative extensions of the hybrid Indian self. His posturing as a diaspora hero is inscribed by what was otherwise seen in diasporic Indian population in real life, viz. ‘a quest for the re-
marking of bodies, territories and social practices in cultural terms’ (Hansen, 2005, p.258) The star body promotes such a drive for re-ethnicizing it in terms of its gestures, costumes, value-orientations, social and cultural dispositions etc. Body, persona and characterization of the star therefore emerges as a key vehicles for mediating at the global moment an Indian identity that represents hybridity. This whole principle of hybridity comes as a blow to conservative philosophies that sought to legitimize essentialization of national identities, supportive of conflation of cultural notion and political state unquestioningly. Political identity and citizenship coalescing with cultural identity allegedly constituted essentialized identity which supports unified nation-state model, and which duly excludes those who fail to conform to it culturally. Furthermore, political allegiance is secured through an appeal to almost a primordial sense of shared cultural allegiance to a historically grounded tradition. (O’Byrne, 2001, p.14)

The idea of the hybrid heroic type as personified by SRK in his repeated performances seeks to de-stabilize conservative notions of the national identity as territorialized via citizenship. Diasporization allow cultural identity to be freed from being hostage to the territoriality of nation-state’ political identity. The decoupling of nation’s cultural identity, and relocating or de-territorialization of Indian ness is significant. The hero ceases to be an anchored political citizen of the Indian nation-state and a trend may be delineated from DDLJ, Pardes, Swades (discussed under a separate sub-head, though), ie from the first row of diaspora films to second row of diasporic films where the narrative does not necessitate the return of the diasporic subject to the territorial nation, and displays a lesser anxiety towards displaying a covert and pronounced adherence to traditional Indian values and norms. The heroic subject’s distanciation from familial set ups and transgression of fidelity in KANK or playful digressions from strict heterosexual codes in KHNH opens up the hybridity to inflections by further liberty and openness. While this does not disavow his relation or cultural affinities to the imagined nation, it opens up the characterization to greater reflexivity of choices and value-positions.

Hybridity within the post colonial discourse have often been seen as counter-hegemonic, that disrupt and disturb the authoritative gaze of the colonizer. As globalization is in continuity with imperialistic project of modernity, in contemporary culture one can conceptualize hybridity as a form of emergence of a third space, a space of transgression, subversion and transformation (Venn, 1999, p.262). The characterization of the hybrid hero may be seen as a counter-hegemonic response of Thirdworld’s translatable and transformative modernity. Capturing the anxiety of transition of the nation at the globalizing moment, in psychoanalytic sense it is a refuge of in-between ness that provides psychological security to the nation (and the national subject). ‘...the subject at first wants to belong to neither one another, neither the ‘West’ nor the ‘non-West’ but to both.’ Hybridity as unhomey, uncanny, as an indefinite temporary state, a different place of belonging, a temporization waiting to come to its own terms in its own space (ibid, p.263) is extendable to understand the anxiety of the nation’s (heroic subject) at a globalizing juncture to belong, to commensurately root itself as a strategic, contingent, positional and ‘conjunctural’ identity (ibid) and best articulated via border and
translational identities like that of refugee, diaspora, effects of colonialism and its continuity within globalization. (ibid)

The hybridity of the star in diasporic roles can also be seen as a translational /alternative modernity. Such an assertion of hybridity lead to an interrogation within the real of the popular of modernist discourse and its colonization by the Western hegemony. Liminality and mobile signification disengages modernity from a dichotomous conception of othering. The syncretism of hybridity as a new sense of belonging to both the nation and the global/Western modernity pluralizes the discourse of modernity. (see ibid p.264) While hybridity have been mediated by all post-colonial masculine personas of film heroes, its mediation via the diasporization of the hero is novel to post liberalization Hindi films. It is a more conscious and deliberative popular device to articulate the fractures, pluralities, aporias, transfigurations of globalization and the migrant as a reminder of the nation’s colonial past, bring to fore the genealogical relation of the colonial past to its present tryst with global capitalism. The diasporic hero comes as a haunting reminder of colonialism and the history of migration and serves to suture two historical questions or events, viz. colonialism and global capitalism.

The framing of the star as the diasporic subject and his location within global cities like London (in DDLJ), Las Vegas (in Pardes), New York (in Kal Ho Na Ho and Kabhi Alvida Na Kahna) is significant to his construction within the discourse of globality. The global grid is constituted by a new economic geography of centrality, that transcends North-South divide and signals the rise of a parallel cartography of space of transnationality based on the formation of new claims by global capital. (Sassen, 2000, p.70) Within popular films it seem to be diegetically acknowledged in view of global circulation of films and also an urbanity that connects metropolitan centers of the West with Indian middle-class urbanity. The positioning of the star in these cities offers the vicarious pleasure of being integrated into the larger stream of global metropolitan culture, albeit via the star. Satellite T.V., increasingly affordable foreign tours, diasporic relatives have brought in global cities closer to middle class and hence forge easy identification. The increasing portrayals of global cities in diasporic films ‘raise questions about their articulation with their nation states’ and despite their spatial and temporal embeddedness they are rendered as ‘strategic sites’ in global economy tend to become disconnected from their region, and even their nation. (ibid, p.71) Locating films and stars in global cities help to negotiate national identities with transnational locations and practices. Besides, it also implies a certain declining statist control over subjects, their movements and nationalist imaginings. Deregulation and a retreatist state has proved to be a crucial mechanism to juxtapose the global and the national and in the age of free markets and under these conditions the semantics of global cities, as de-nationalized spaces are of extreme importance in the construction of the star within the global discourse. Global cities illustrates the ‘materialization of national territory’ wherein the space economy extends beyond the ‘national realm’, and in popular filmic narratives are sites attracting travels, romance and escapades beyond the regulating mediation of the state as sites of freedom and liberty from state boundedness. Concomitant to these de-nationalized global spaces or cities, is also the privileging of the star’s role or identity as
transnationalized. De-stabilising the traditional sources of identity and ontological bases viz. nation or the town or the village, diasporisation of narratives locates the diasporic protagonists like the star SRK, in transnational spaces of global cities. This ‘unmooring’ of the star, across several diaspora films liberates identity formation from statist boundings, and also leads to ‘new notions of’ community, membership and of entitlement’ (ibid, p. 75)

Sassen argues that the presence of co-existence of plural culture along with the dominant in these Western metropolis represent the slippages of the dominant culture which eludes it and resides within its interstices. (ibid, p. 74). Popular representations of immigrant culture caught in global spaces represent a certain globality that is otherwise not recognized. Diasporisation of themes and the positioning of popular star-actors like SRK can serve as a popular shorthand to show how immigration and ethnicity otherwise ‘constituted as otherness’ are post-colonial forms weighing on the central discourse of capitalism and internationalization. Unlike the earlier representation of foreign lands and its exotic places as backdrop to brief romantic interludes the post1990s diasporic films recognized immigration, the desire for homeland, their nostalgic memories. These films also reconciled to the cosmopolitanism of the diasporic subjects adjusting to the demands of transterritorial positioning, and also reflects how the nation is re-territorialised in private spaces of the migrant through their habits, customs, practices and even celebrations.

These cities de-centres the relation between the West and the non-West. The movements of the diaspora, as per Anthony King as cited tie these cities materially to many nations and act as cultural sites of multiple inscriptions and creolization or hybridity. (Bartolovich, 2000, ibid, p. 137) In the film DDLJ, London became the site for the star’s hybrid enactment. His casting across diaspora themed films has shown his hybrid, cosmopolitan selves to re-territorialize the nation within his transterritorial positioning performatively. Allowing to performatively and discursively re-produce and re-iterate the nation only through behavioral inflections derived from the cultural repertoire, the star’s presence in these physical spaces overrides their ties to any individual nation. (ibid, p. 138) These global cities destabilize the tidy map of nation-states. The star in these alternative cartographies leads us to de-couple the nation from its territorial trappings. This allows the star to be the negotiating tool between the global cities and the imagined nation. The hero figuratively and performatively traversing the cityscapes of London, New York and the familial spaces, often removed from its territorial markings, or his travels back to India in films like DDLJ, Pardes, K3G seek to overcome the spatial divides between the Indian ness at home and abroad and binds the nation and its imaginative belonging to a larger globality. The star emerges as a visual marker across spaces, who lends himself to be a simulated sign who mediates desire for the hypermodern globalizing nation and invokes nostalgia for tradition at the same time. (see, Mazumdar 2007, p. 135; 140)

The diasporic hero as a fluid signifier often ruptures the continuity in the hermetic universe of the narrative in his fleeting movement across national and transnational spaces. Both within the narrative scope and in songs the hero is shown through a ‘hyper-real shifting’ from one locale
to another, problematizing the subject relation to spatial co-ordinates of territorial nation, where ‘the national is no longer naturalizable’ (Bhabha cited in Gehlawat, 2010). The fleeting diasporic (anti-) hero in films like Farhan Akhtar’s Don (2006) and Don 2 (2011) darts from one locale to another that create ‘ambiguous temporalities of the nation state’, generating only cinematic snapshots of spaces the hero traverses, the territory no longer precedes the map, but the other way. The shifting visualities of the mobile hero engage in a splitting of the image as a subject of stable identification. SRK’s fleeting positioning amidst a semantics of the hyper real make his nationalist claims to cultural mastery or authenticity appear untenable while affirming his fluidity and positioning within liminal spaces and cultural boundaries.

The fast moving hero in Don, Don 2, Ra. One, MNIK interrupts as well subverts the solidity of space, straddling spaces of multiple nation-states in Don. The hyper-real transplantation of his body from one realm to another fractures and fragments spatio-temporal correlates. These hyper-real cinematic strategies and simulations within a transnational, postmodern frame allow for the formation of a transcultural cinematic fantasy-scape representing disjunctures in global cultural flows. The seamless suturing of the fleeting hero’s journey across a pastiche of spaces and visualities, in a series of simulations of images, sequences and actions visually characterizes the hero as a hybrid, non-essentialist, fractured, fragmented subject territorially disembodied from nation’s statist limits. He is affirmed as post modernist Indian reconfigured across multiple transterritorial spaces. The Janus-faced ambivalence of nation produces the diasporic hero within a fluid trajectory of seamlessly combined spaces that he fleetingly traverses, as a simulacra of the nation beyond its borders. The hero redraws the nation in transnational narrative journeys. (see, Gehlawat, 2010 ibid)

The diaspora or the NRI subject is extremely important in the imaginative world of Hindi films, which seeks to attract the overseas audience market by providing a sense of national belonging through regular diasporisation of themes and central roles like the hero. The task of the NRI hero, is twofold. First, he represents the nation and the nation is imaginatively refigured through the hero in the transnational space marked by global flows and global forces. The discourse of the national within the transnational is best represented via the diasporised heroic subject as he enacts roles that serve to negotiate the homeland nation and the global. (see, Virdi, 2003 ibid, p.202-203)

An important issue is the interesting trajectory of the hero’s relation to the paternal authority where the hero’s stance towards the father/patriarch changes from what came to be known as ‘romance with the patriarchy’ (an expression used by Moinak Biswas as cited in Gopal 2011, ibid, p.20) that is a deferential disposition, willful negotiation and reconciliatory gestures towards some kind of a dissidence and dissonance within the relationship as seen in films like Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham (where the hero leaves home over his differences with his rich industrialist foster father following his romance and marriage to a girl of a lower middle class background); in Mohabbatein (where he defies the disciplinary strictures of the academy headed by the symbolic father, the Principal of the same and as an intransigent subject romances his daughter, whose death, due to the unbridgeable rift between the hero and
patriarch provokes his intrepidity to come back to the academy as a teacher-reformist to denounce the regimentation imposed by the patriarchal father by introducing liberal codes encouraging heterosexual romance among the students otherwise proscribed by the institutional codes); in Kal Ho Naa Ho (where in the absence of the father figure in a diasporic family of Naina, the girl of the hero’s unexpressed love –interest, the hero acts as a surrogate father to the family) and in films like Kabhi Alvida Na Kahna( the hero quiet impudently romances a married woman and displays a sheer effrontery to take her away not only from her husband but a doting, protective, and affectionate father-in-law) The dissenting hero vis-a-vis the patriarch signifies the heroic subject’s rite to passage to ‘manhood’ and proclaims his relative autonomy in a more easier reckoning with the liberal spirit of free-market economy and a diminishing guardian-like state, as symbolized in the role of the patriarch. The waning centralizing authority of the state is reflected upon these narratives as ‘There is no disproportion between the life of the family and the life of the nation’ (Fanon, cited in Virdi 2003, ibid. p.89) Subjectivity (heroic) constructed within the family and the relation with the father parallels the subject’s positioning within the state and relation with the father. The contest with the patriarch and his defeat are also produced by changing discourse on notions of masculinity, human freedom and changing power relations within asymmetrical and hierarchical familial power structure. Greater democratization of the polity, changes within the familial economy, allowed for wresting of power concentrated in the hands of the ageing patriarch. This is a momentous transfer of power that replays itself in several films of SRK settles the issue unequivocally in favour of the heroic subject who asserts himself again and again. The narrative reinforces a shift in power-depicting patriarchy’s ‘regeneration’ through the new generation representative the star-hero. The baton symbolically thus passes from father to the son-from the state to the transterritorialised, re-invented nation. It is also transfer of the phallic state power represented by the orthodox, conservative, paternal figure to the more fluid signifier of the nation, ie, the diasporic hero. (See, Vasudevan, 2010; Virdi, 2003) The role of the father is crucial in its symbolic significance in the autonomous self-development of man. Sons tend to internalize their fathers as representation of true manhood, as the man who wields moral power over them and is punitive towards their alleged failings. The father is also the protector, the omnipotent law maker who wields the rod of punishment. In psychoanalytic terms he is the symbolic Phallic authority and the breaker of mother-son dyad, the castrator and the abjector, “the transcendental signifier” of the law, culture and language. The power of the father is the authority of the patriarchy, the symbol of the state, with all its suggestion of mastery and masculine control. He is the ideal whom boys wish to emulate. (Barker, 2002p.125; Statton, 1996) Within the post-liberalization narratives the positioning of the star, also the heroic subject vis-à-vis the father follows an interesting trajectory from an initial effort to idealize the father as the role model. For instance in DDLJ, SRK follows Baldev to the fields in a traditional attire that he could barely manage, to feed the pigeons and in an imitative performance tried to match up to the patriarchal model of masculinity with some kind of an emotional. In contrast to this attempt to follow and mollify
the masculine ideal, the father, in the subsequent films, the identification with the symbolic real, the father or the state is figuratively is problematized.

An important development was the journey of the heroic subject from his earnest effort towards conservatively incorporate his romantic choice within the governing ideology of the family and the guardianship of the patriarch towards couple formation in defiance of familial codes as seen in Mohabbatein, K3G, KANK and so on. The family gradually disappears or appears marginalized in films of Mani Ratnam (Roja, 1992; Bombay, 1995; Dil Se, 1998; the latter incidentally played by SRK), Ram Gopal Varma (who revived gangster in Satya, Sarkar, or made thrillers), Farhan Akhtar who specialized in buddy films like Dil Chahata Hai 2001; Rock On 2008, Asutosh Gowarikar who revived historicals like Jodha Akbar 2009, made historical myths like Lagaan, 2001 or non family based NRI films like Swades played by SRK. Increasing shift towards narratives where the couple is either hyper-nucleated in absence of a well defined family has had its influence in the second row of diasporic films. The control of the family over couple formation was subverted in K3G, KANK and patriarch defied in Mohabbatein. While the ideology of undivided family in diaspora films and the centrality of the family was crucial to draw the new audience base of diaspora, in later row of films the hero was seen to circumvent family’s authority. The reason for this can be seen in two plausible reasons. First it may be argued that defeat of the BJP led coalition in the 2004 Parliament elections and the re-ascendancy of secular forces to central position of governance had reasonably weakened the Hindu right wing forces. This can possibly be cited as a reason for the decline of conservative patriarchal forces under whose ideological influence the family romance formula was revived. Second, the nation that sought to neutralize the challenges of the unknown ushered through globalizing changes by re-inventing tradition and in the re-assuring familial moorings was getting slowly adjusted to globality. Couple formation sans family approval enunciated greater liberty of the individual /heroic subject vis-à-vis the state/nation as a community.

The relation between the between the protagonist/hero and the familial authority represented mostly by the patriarchal head/the Symbolic father when traced from the family feudal romance of the 1950s and 1960s to its revised post-liberalization avatar, for which the star became emblematically associated, allow us to delineate a parallel and analogous relationship between the state and the film industry. Prasad had linked the aesthetic dominance of this heteronomous form to a social totality where the feudal family retains power and the modern, sovereign individual (who is also a citizen) is yet to emerge. Though the political power was vested in the hands of the post-colonial state the feudal family as an alternative locus of power and hegemonic coalition partner to the power bloc maintained by the state subordinated the individual. The guardianship was seen in the absolutist gaze maintained via censorship. The attitude of ambivalence of the state towards cinema, and its decision to with hold legitimate industry status, impose punitive taxation, denial of institutional finance censorship etc., all acted to serve the vested interests of the feudal power and their favored format of feudal family melodrama. Globalization and changes in the political economy of film production and the changing attitude of the state towards the film industry had its resonance in the film format. The
transitional format of a revised family romance is not the same as before as the ‘new family’ abrogates its power and is only deemed as a ‘transmitter of Indian values’. The power it wields is more affective than legal or economic. These films tend to valorize the father’s love than his authority. There is an odd reversal of generational priorities and the old do not oppose the desires of the young but facilitate them. This is seen in DDLJ as to how the indulgent father of the hero encourages him to pursue his love, in the early row of films there is a negotiation with the elderly and how they yield to the protagonist’s choice. In the second row of films like the grandmother in K3G initiates a chain of events that help reconcile the hero, SRK to his authoritarian father (played by Bachchan) who had earlier disowned him. In KANK, the adulterous Maya’s father in-law upon discovering her affair with Dev, (the hero played by SRK) urges that she leaves his son, Rishi so that all concerned might move on and make new lives for themselves. Dev’s mother Kamaljit opts to stay with her daughter-in-law Rhea when Dev separates from his wife. The film shows how the two elderly on learning about Dev and Maya keep it to themselves. It is the adulterous couple who first take the decision to confide before their respective spouses and take a joint decision to break off an impossible marital bond. Parents with the exception of the patriarch in K3G, Amitabh as Yash are hardly irascible authoritarian figures of earlier feudal romance and they often encourage/support their children’s romantic choice. This signals weakening of the family as an alternative locus of fiscal or ideological power over the individual subject/the hero. It also that family not wielding enough power by succumbing to the hero’s choice seek to authorize these transformations in a bid to retain a semblance of formal authority over the subject. Filial hierarchies in these newly revised families are supported affectively than via fiscal or ideological control. The hero, Shah Rukh, enjoined to this liberatory family adumbrates the the greater liberty of the citizen vis-à-vis the state. The sovereign value of the hero is seen in the liberty he gains over his romantic choice as the family turns to more of an affective site for self-actualization of the subject in the second row of family romance films. This is an important cultural and political index of change. The emergence of the new subject, a politico-cultural project, cannot be suitably placed in the larger polity without a large-scale transformation. As there has been disjuncture in globalizing transformation (Appadurai, 2003 ibid) it may be argued that the subject formation is relatively schwed. The preparedness for this change is confined to certain enclaves where globalization has been a significant force of change. This emergent subject needs to be located within a more liberal location. To avoid a mismatch between the emergent subject and recessive milieu, when the state is retreating and the nation stands de-territorialized it is the family that provides the right site for both being and belonging and also for realizing subject-formation. (Gopal, 2011 ibid.p.27;29)

In the second row the heroic subject emerges more independent which also marks the emergence of more nuclearized couple formation and the relative displacement of the star from familial narratives. This sovereign heroic subject interestingly appears in the films of film makers who were otherwise known to make family melodramas, and cast SRK in typically urban/cosmopolitan/diasporic roles, like Karan Johar’s ‘My Name Is Khan’ (2010), or Yash
Chopra’s ‘Jab Tak Hain Jaan’(2012) saw the star being increasingly shifted to a more sovereign position and enabling him further in matters of independent choice of couple formation. The change however begun with Shah Rukh’s casting in Ashutosh Gowariker’s Swades(2005) where SRK as a diasporic subject was dislocated from his family and was seen as fully formed subject/citizen.

3.9 FILM OF NATION BUILDING BY SHAH – RUKH KHAN - SWADES
Swades (Own Country, 2005 directed by: Ashutosh Gowariker)

After twelve years in the United States,Mohan Bhargava (Shahrukh Khan) an NRI (Non Residential Indian) working at the United States prestigious NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) as a scientist, decides to return to India his Swades [own country] to find his nanny, Kaveri Amma (Kishori Balal), here a metaphorical ploy with mother-figure as the nation, with whom he has completely lost touch.

While Mohan soon adapts himself to life in the village, also a trope of the nation and endears himself to its people, he also encounters some of its stark realities that continues to plague their lives. Among them are poverty, caste discrimination, child marriage, illiteracy, a general disregard for education and an apathy to change. He tries in his own way to initiate some changes, even succeeding to the point of dissuading the village elders from moving the local school to smaller and far-away premises. In doing this, he earns the respect of Gita (Gayatri Joshi), a childhood acquaintance who lives with Kaveri Amma and runs the local school.

One day Kaveri Amma sends away Mohan to another village called Kodi to collect dues from a farmer named Haridas who has rented their land. Along the journey a deeply ponderous, Mohan realizes that the problems he had seen in the village mirror those faced by almost every other villages in the country. Haridas, the farmer who owes rent has no money to feed his own family, leave alone pay rent, mainly because the villagers wouldn't support his attempts at a change of occupation from weaving to farming. Mohan returns empty handed, but is full of a new sensitivity and perspective towards the harsh realities of rural India. On the way back, his transition from a mineral-water-only NRI gentleman to a grounded human being occurs when he buys and drinks water from a little child at a small railway station. This journey to Kodi and back proves to be decisive and also the turning point in Mohan's life as he comes back with a resolve to take more interest in improving the quality of life of the villagers.

He garners the support of a few hundred men and mobilizes them through the building of a reservoir beneath a perennial water spring on a nearby hill. Buying turbines and other equipment with his own money, he sets up a small hydro-electric power plant that would redress the problem of irregular electricity and make the village self-sufficient.

By then, it's time for him to leave as his project at NASA is near its final stage. Kaveri Amma, whom he had intended to take along with him, refuses to come citing the difficulty of adapting to a new culture at such a late stage in her life. Gita, whom he had fallen in love with, also
refuses to come with him, wanting to remain in the country and continue running the school that her parents had founded. He returns alone but feels a growing sense of responsibility towards his country and guilt for not being able to do much for the welfare of its people. He, nevertheless, stays to finish his project at NASA before resigning and returning to India.

When the film was being made Shan Rukh an already established star, his image associated with global consumerism, allowed for a reconciliation of principle of swadesi and western ethos. The title of the film is perhaps a reflection on the conservative dilemma of the Hindi right groups, in particular the RSS with its much upheld ideology of “Swadesi” and resistance to western values and consumerism. ‘A growing middle class which may potentially support Hindutva, but may equally succumb to consumer fetishism and individual choice. With a strategically designed rhetoric on ‘alternative modernity’, while accepting the marvels of Western consumerism and technology, the RSS readjusted its ideal of puritan lifestyles and selflessness. An ideal citizenry as held was to be desirably subscribing to the precepts of swadeshi while attacking itself to consumerism and is prepared to step back from personal interests in times of national emergency’ (Brosius,2007.p.197). As we see how, Mohan Bhargava, the NASA scientist uses his Western training in ingenuously crafting a “Swades(i)” dam and relinquishing his career for the sake of his village, his surrogate mother and the woman he loved, the triad as metaphorical composite for the nation.

The film is woven around another set of triad also viz. the Nation, Modernity and Technology. Modernity as a product of technology – with its expressions in railways, irrigation, electricity and telecommunications makes it an important character within the national saga; named, celebrated, ferried across, and invited into the frame. (see Rajadhyaksha, 2009) This was seen in the character of the hydro-electricity in this film Revival of modernity in a revised mode through the heroic agency is crucial to the film narrative of Swades.Modernity is a double-edged phenomena. While its core values have a liberating potential, its concrete practices may cause arrogance and violence. The arrogance of western modernity has in its claim to be rational, modern and enlightened. ‘It is a project that is terribly proud of itself. This sense of pride lies in its immense achievements and promises. To be part of the modernizing process, one is often led to believe is like celebrating a new world, something that is radically different from all that happened earlier’ (Pathak,2006 ibid.p.26). Its claim to ensemble the perfect design for a rational order is filled with the hope of freedom, prosperity and comfort(ibid.p.26-27). In the film Swades one see how the NASA returned scientist tries to ‘utilize the techno-industrial culture’ that modernity brings and deploy the science of controlling and tapping national resources and also utilize science instrumentally to produce material well being of the little village. It is the rational utilitarian science that is employed to liberate man from necessities and allow them to ‘enter the domain of freedom’. Because science is power and technology promise to rescue man from routinized and time consuming manual labour it does thing with efficiency and speed.However the hero the agent of Western modernity with humility and compassion seeks to apply his capital to humane ends. Borrowing Partha Chatterjee’s idea of
the inner domain of the national culture where the nation re-inscribes modernity within a nationalist framing, enables one to see how the film re-launches nationalism in the age of the global by a significant project of ‘modern national culture’, where the nation is sustained in its true and essential domain. (Chatterjee, 1995 p.6)

While acknowledging the distinctive projects of modernity, there are certain values which constitute the critical minimum of modernity shared by all civilization, viz. freedom, criticality, democratization, openness and optimism for the future as shared ideals or guidelines for the entire mankind. Modernity is not specific to a certain historical juncture or geographical locality and notwithstanding the relevance of European Enlightenment agenda and subsequent politico-economic changes that helped to consolidate the roots of modernity, it is that the core values of modernity are not necessarily Euro-centric. India has demonstrated a divergent and complex response to modernity through its encounter with colonialism and experience of Western ideas. As modernity seeks to universalize itself and no society is insulated from its core values and achievements, it remains that India’s route towards modernity has its own trajectory. (Pathak 2006, ibid. p 23-25; 47)

One of the important component of the modernizing agenda has been the nation-building enterprise of India that found expression in ‘consolidation of huge modern structures in India: the speedy growth of techno-industrial infrastructure in which Nehru was fond of regarding as ‘temples’ of new India, proliferation of scientific/professional institutions and universities, massive network of transportation and communication….and above all emergence of a new social class trained in modern knowledge systems, and having a progressive orientation to the world. Indeed, the emergent bourgeoisie, the professional middle class and the powerful state celebrating science as the language of development further legitimated modernity as a cherished ideal….was seen as a promise, an emancipatory quest for a new world free from traditional /hierarchical structures….Modernity entailing reason, science and development was seen as an ideal to be incorporated in order to embrace the new age. Nehru the architect of modern India, not surprisingly strongly advocated in favor of modernist project. He strongly affirmed his faith in rationality, scientific spirit and its developmental ethos…He had an optimistic vision of the new age, and encouraged the ethos of reason, scientificity, spirit of science and critical temper of scientific enquiry.’ (ibid.p.48)

The film revisits the Nehruvian agenda through the scientifically trained, rational minded diasporic-national subject, a scientist who seeks to make a backward Indian village indigenously re-adapt the values of modernity. The hero’s conversation with the village heads on the regressive caste practices and other social evils that plagues their village community and his endeavor to enlighten the village through electricity (and also figuratively) sees him as an agent of modernization and change in the village. The narrative caught in the constant interplay of tradition and modernity, allow the protagonist who is also deeply respectful towards his roots and the civilizational tradition and its rich heritage to propel a modernist agenda that is harmoniously assimilative into the village life. This syncretism involved in modernization of non-Western society is informed by its ‘attempt to
become modern without becoming Western… attempt to reconcile this modernity with their traditional culture and values’ (Huntington, 2000 p.33)

Despite Gandhi’s hesitation modernity was embraced by the post colonial independent nation. Modernity was embraced into official discourse and developmental policies and enshrined in constitutional values under the aegis of the chief modernizer Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India. (Das 2002, ibid. p.293-297)

The political crisis in the 1970s and the failure of developmental policies to large extent had created skepticism around state-led policies of development and the equity, justice and benefit it delivered. The faith of the middle class in modernity had characterized the early years of independence. The making of Swades, that sought to empower the diasporic subject as the agent of change seeks to recuperate middle-class faith in modernity (and hence, secularism) almost in a bid to counter the resurgence of Hindu cultural nationalism and its influence among the middle class.

A variant of this formulation was incarnation of technology encountering with the legacy of the tradition as the entity to carry forward the civilizational process, like the dam water that fertilizes the land throwing them blood of slain son in “Mother India. Swades is intertextually woven with Mother India, where technology continue to be the routed through modernity.

Mother within the Indian culture is of semiotic significance across popular films of all times. Mother India is transcendental signifier, asserting a hegemonic privilege and presence. It is a term around which has accrued may references and meanings and is replete with significance associated with Hindi bharat mata, the softer poetic Urdu madre Hind, the more autochthonous Sanskrit compound matribhumi (mother earth) as well as Bankim Chandra’s famous nationalist song Bande Mataram (I bow to you, Mother) : Through another transformation one can posit a link between matribhumi, mother earth with sita, the mythic /prototype of Mother India who is said to have emanated from furrowing of the earth, the suggesting her autochthonous origin (Mishra, 2002 ibid. p.68-69)

The mother motif of highly iconic often acts as metaphor for the nation in popular Hindi film. The NASA scientist returns to his surrogate mother who missed him in his childhood in her village, the village as a site for the nation. He returns to be united with the mother/nation. In “Mother India”, the mother who emerged as the “Mother of the village” acquires agency to open the new dam just constructed in post colonial India, appropriately in 1957, ten years after independence (Mishra, ibid. p 77) The secular epic, almost collapsed the sign and the referent, the actor as Mother India. Almost a propagandist film, endorsing the Nehruvian agenda of national building where dams were the celebrated as the “temples of modern India.. The film upheld the universal moral principle transcending religious and caste difference by deploying star biography of Muslim actress Nargis” (ibid. 77) Revisiting a similar theme of village development in “Swades”, the hero is seen to drama intertextually from Mother India of ushering development to the village through his return to the ‘Mother India’ and using his expertise – as the son of Mother India to lighten the village by constructing a hydro-electric dam The metaphor of the hero’s return to his motherland forges inter textual loops with another
film Purab Aur Paschim...In Purab Aur Pashim, one of the earliest films made on the diaspora, the hero Bharat returns, so does the hero in the film Swades. His return to ‘Swades’ restores glory to mother India and seeks reunion with the nation.

The film attempts a post-modernist narrative gesture in what is called a: ‘Delegitimises the Dominant’ (Collins, 1989 ibid.p.37) Apparently on the surface there is no perceptible challenge to the dominant hegemonic political discourse, but like what Collins mentions as Hollywood women’s film of the 30s to 50’s at a deeper level it re-works this order within the terms of its discursive ideology and involves a profound value shift from the concern and attention directed towards the globalizing metropolitan centres of the nation to its rural hinterland - that are yet to receive their basic minimum of education, electricity, development and so on. The film acknowledges a state, but renders it delegitimated (as it has failed to take its much avowed developmental policies to its remote corners which remain as large enclaves of poverty and backwardness) – making it appear almost as the “de-legitimated dominant” - on the face of a self-legitimating discourse initiated through the patriotic /nation-building endeavour of the diasporic heroic subject that has far more widespread popular appeal and brings a trenchant critical effect on the dominant statist culture than does any explicitly radical oppositional alternative. While oppositional discourse resists, the self-legitimating discourse (as endowed in the hero’s enterprise of micro-development) invades and disperses the centrality and coherence of the “dominant culture” (represented by the state). Interrogating the centrality and coherence of the dominant discourse of the state that has failed to provide and protect, the nation-building discourse of the hero attempted at a micro-level questions its legitimacy for carrying forward a skewed globalization. A significant factor in the decentering and recentering of contemporary postmodern culture is the accumulation of delegitimated images of the ‘dominant by self legitimating discourses’, like Swades that offer themselves as a privileged alternative of conscientious initiatives and spearheading of development and reform at a level that parallels state, and thereby leading to the intensified conflictive nature of semiotic environment (see, Collin ibid.p 37) In a global era the film hero seeks to re-examine rural India – a site of incomplete nationalist project of modernization and development. The return of this scientifically educated nostalgic and activist Indian poses several questions at a global juncture before the nation. Interestingly what appears to be individuated heroic attempts of nation – building as a parallel/popular effort while discretely interrogating state’s failure to carry development to its remotest corners seeks to revive Nehruvian ideals that inspired initial attempts of the state. The film can also be alternatively read to de-centre the dominant globalizing agenda of the nation and re-direct its attention towards its forsaken socialist ideals of nation building through the heroic attempts.

Starting from the premise that heroes represent values of nation an analogy though cross cultural may be drawn to see how the hero’s actions has certain old values of the nation rendered “Revised”. In ‘Image maker: Will Rogers and the American Dream’ Brown shows how Rogers embodied the four strands of the American Dream (the dignity of common individual, democracy as guarantee of freedom and quality, the gospel of hard work and the
belief in material progress) at a time when dream was becoming increasingly hard to believe in. Thus the dignity of the common individual stand of the Dream was linked in Roger’s image with that of the ‘sturdy yeoman’ at time when farmers were suffering from a decline in their purchasing power as compared to other groups in the economy and from their gradual incorporation into a vast market economy. In the face of this experience, Brown argues that Rogers reaffirmed the reality and validity of the sturdy yeoman and similarly other values of the American dream. One can say that a time when the American value system might have been redirected, the old goals appearing inadequate, Rogers came to reaffirm that there was still life in the traditional values and attitudes. (see, Dyer, 1979, ibid.p.28-29)

The film saw hope in both Gandhian philosophy of self-sufficiency at the village level of economy and Nehruvian dream of a modern nation to be built on the premise of planned development. In the film Swades Shah Rukh came to reaffirm the values of nation building from the elementary grass root level. The film saw the star being differentially re-casted within the discourse of the nation. Popular cinematic narratives since the advent of the global came to be embedded in a consumerist visual aesthetics, propagating a certain kind of hedonist culture via romance and family extravaganza in family romance melodrama. Concurring such a discourse in his performance quite recurrently, Shah Rukh Khan in Swades cam to rekindle faith in Gandhian idea of rural empowerment, at a time when metropolitan consumerist dreams were central to popular filmic narratives. A nation that departed from Nehruvian socialism by adopting a globalizing agenda, came to be redirected towards its old ideals to affirm that there was still life in traditional sites and abandoned philosophies. The film unlike the diasporic films made differentially deploys a hyphenated identification with both the individualistic wage earning drives of economic migration and the need to contribute with actions to alleviate rural poverty and translate skills and capital gained abroad to nation-building ends. The film is an attempt to recontextualize Nehruvian ideology in an era of globalization. In an interview of Gowariker cited from the Amen Budha notes that the young director’s interview to the media confirm a hypothesis that support in favour of a patriotic return of the migrant to serve the nation with his acquired skills. Gowariker said ‘If you have the opportunity you must go abroad, study, work and make your money. But after a substantial amount of time, look back at what you’ve left behind and see if you can contribute in any way’. Swades argues in favour of benefits of the Nehruvian ideological state apparatus, suggesting a clearly defined programme of rural development through motifs of modernity, application of science and technology and self sufficiency, the latter a part of Gandhian vision of rural India. Circumventing the contemporary trend of jingoistic films replete with anti Pak rhetoric Swades intelligently deployed the diasporic/secular image of the star to a new reflexive and patriotic cinema of a globalizing nation. Transporting the role of technology from the Nehruvian discourse of socialism to a global discourse on development, the film seeks to re-adapt the Nehruvian ideology to a globalizing age. It extols a process of self-identification of the protagonist, Mohan Bhargava, a NASA scientist with rural hinter land of India. His experiences faces him to confront the bleakness of life there. Having spent a materially and intellectually rewarding life
in the West, he decides to relinquish it to stay and help his people. In his interactions with village residents he realizes that solutions to their problems reside in empowerment through self sufficiency. Mohan demonstrates that prosperity is attainable by scientific and engineering interventions, which provides the village water and electricity. (Buddha, 2008, p.16-17)

The film Swades intertextually bound to the genre of patriotic films like Upkar, stylistically well-crafted and its appeal lies in the powerful signifiers it uses to imagine the nation. While Upkar used the symbols like dharti (land), mitti (soil), dharti maata (mother earth), khoon (blood), paseena (sweat), hul (plough), tiranga jhanda (tricolour flag), Swades seeks to combine these autochthonous elements with more contemporary ones congruent with the times. It deploys signifiers like the secularized Ram-Leela of Dussera, the luxury van in which Mohan stays (a signifier of urban/metropolitan world), videsh (foreign land), school/pathshala (foundational to nation building), bijli/light (figuratively aimed at Enlightenment). These symbols strung together in semiotic chain to revoke powerful patriotic sentiments. The peasant and soldier of earlier films as strategically honored subject citizens here in Swades, is replaced by the NRI scientist whose sacrifices to forsake a promising career and come home to serve the nation (Swades, his own country) is virtually equal a sacred act.

If protecting the land is the dharma of the kisaan and jawaan in films of the earlier era, as it was their duty exhorted the prototypical patriotic hero Bharat in the film Upkaar, in Swades, it is the pledge never to turn away from land, as the hero returns to his own land and the act becomes valorized. The mix of metaphors here is deliberate where the scientist’s intellect, his capital is invested in the betterment of the village, the village acting as the microcosm of the larger nation. Service to nation is seen as service to mother India, naturalizing it like the family or as a trope of nation. (see Virdi 2003, ibid, p.38)

The film Swades is worth special mention where the star-hero who is repeatedly cast in blockbuster family romance melodrama is seen to be cast in reflexive cinema that engages the diaspora differently with the nation than otherwise seen in diasporic roles by the star. The film while bringing back the diaspora home, takes him beyond lavish interiors and exotic foreign lands of melodramas to real locations of rural India. The film most importantly takes the hero beyond mainstream formulaic plots. Though big production houses like Yashraj Films, Mukta Arts and Dharma in contrast to low budget filmmakers, have for long allowed their blockbusters to remain hostage to the ‘iron grid’ of ideological reproduction and hence failed to recognize the value of realist themes there have been new directors who are responding to the ‘new unfolding reality’ among the audience and started exploring realist themes. While the security of assured success via formulaic palliating productions of action, romance, emotion and comedy is cited as the reason for continued stranglehold of tested formulas in recent times films with narratives of reflexivity by some new young directors have promoted an alternative aesthetics (Buddha, 2008, ibid, p.13)

A key factor behind these incipient tendencies and emerging cracks in tested formula of Hindi film is the entry of multiplex operators in the exhibition sector, which allows producers to make urban specific films. The rise of multiplex exhibition provided exhibitions and distributors
opportunities to tap into segmented urban audiences and thereby explore newer aesthetic possibilities (Ibid 14) Portions of such films constitute mainly the niche urban audience (Bose 2006) These alternative reflexive cinema have opened up a new space- a cinematic parallel of the urban civil society-reflecting their consciousness and sensibilities vis-a-vis realist themes. Successful stars like Amir Khan for long have chosen to be limited to such Bollywood avant-garde films –thereby casting his image as a mere cerebral actor than an archetype superstar. Others like Salman have remained distanced from such films. But it is Shah Rukh the only as I claim of the three leading film stars of the industry who have explored this terrain without compromising his superstar status more commonly exploited in the economy of big budget productions of blockbuster films. This inter discursive or trans-discursive instability of the superstar exploring the reflexive alternative genre speaks of a different kind of negotiation attempted by the star text. As the market for the more discerning urban, middleclass audience is unfolding it is being seen that this middleclass market is emerging as the space where filmmakers seek to profit from this demand with low budget experimental films – exploiting niche-exhibition.

The heroic subject is not a citizen as participant in transactional relation yet he is a nation builder. A nation is made up of citizens and there is nothing called universal citizenships. Nations draw the line on who can be citizens, also the limit to which participational boundary can extend or stretch. The nation claims that it is exclusively based on participatory citizenship. Nation essentialising itself on practices of statecraft, is often not an ethical solidarity, but is one end of transactional relation – counterposed vis-a-vis the other end represented by citizen. As a result, all those who are willing to be participants to nationhood cannot be citizen. ‘Only those with whom the nation has the obligation to transact will be considered’ (Samaddar 2001, p.211). However, in Swades, the transactional relation between nation and citizenship based on utilitarian categories became differently imagined in the role of the NRI protagonist, who plays a participatory role without being citizen and without having any transactional relation with the state.

The ‘Spirit of Reform’ that informs the film ‘Swades’ once again bound it intertextually to several classics of Hindi films. Film of V. Shantaram are classic illustrations of this reformist phenomenon. Dahej, Padosi, Do Aankhen Baara Haath, are the three of his most popular films, and were strongly reformist and didactic in nature. So too, classic films from Bombay Talkies like Achut Kanya (1936). The amalgam of social reform and stylized entertainment proved to be particularly heady in the 1930s and 1940s. A film dealing obliquely with rural immigration, Street Singer is notable. In ‘Mela’ set in rural India, we saw the side of the legendary actor-Dilip Kumar who consciously espoused the personage of rural India. Right up to the mid-1950 in B R Chopra’s Naya Daur, Dilip Kumar was not only the most popular (and acclaimed) star of Hindi film but was also the protagonist of rural India in an increasingly urbanized world order. Right through the 1960 from the 1930s cinema’s concern with social problems continued to be .expressed in a handful of a very significant films. Mehboob Khan’s Aurat and Mother India, K.A Abbas’s Dharti Ke Lal and a number of Bimal Roy films including Do Bigha Zamin
and Sujata. Along with Raj Kapoor’s films that highlighted the conflicts between the rich and the poor, were Dilip Kumar’s Ganga Jamuna and Sunil Dutt’s Mijhe Jeene Do that focused on socio-economic roots of very Indian social problems (Saari, 2009, ibid. p.105-106). The film Swades revives the spirit of reform through the mainstream hero, a super-star in what appear to add a new dimension to his stardom.

The film renewed epistemological masculinity through the scientist reformist hero. The scientific rational improver, SRK the hero re-envisions modernity for the backward enclaves of the nation. The filmic hero’s identity is here strongly linked to the nationalist economic development philosophy reified in the formulation and implementation of the Nehruvian agenda of socialist planning or the famously Five Year Plans. The male hero of the post Independence film era referred to as the Five Year Plan (FYP) hero (Srivastava, 2006) appear to be revised and contemporaneously revisited or re-embodied through Shah Rukh in Swades.

The iconic presence of the FYP hero gained its legitimacy as expressed through the formulation of the statist planning regime. This hero stood for government intervention and delayed gratification through the reinvestment of savings for the ‘national’ good. The FYP hero broadly represented a certain articulation of Indian masculinity where manliness comes to attach not to bodily representations, gestures or aggressive corporality but instead to a temper of being scientific and rational. In the Indian case, economic development under the state auspices, especially in the guise of the Soviet inspired Five Year Plan traced a particular lineage or affinity to the world of science. This post colonial man was represented via operation of very specific spatial strategies that involved iconic use of roads and highways in films of 1950s and 1960s.

The reformist, improver hero Shah Rukh in Swades like the FYP hero is spatially linked to the metropolis, the site of modern rationality but this is no longer the Indian metropolis as he is transnationalised and like the FYP hero was also seen critiquing affiliations and affinities of caste and other parochial links ties as ostensibly typified by the cinematic village. However the metropolis that is home to the modern male unlike many FYP heroes is foreseen: the reformist and the improver hero abandons his metropolitan home and prospects as the film uses spatial strategies as representational tools.

The male FYP hero – the wayfares of Indian films had modern knowledge – scientific knowledge – as his most fundamental attitude, and this knowledge becomes mark of post colonized middle class masculinity. (Srivastava, 2006, ibid p.143) Indeed the filmic hero of that era was typically, potrayed as an engineer (building roads of dams), a doctor, a scientist, or a bureaucrat (143). The heterosexual hero quite easily characterized as camp persona represented a nationalist ideology that identified post-Independence manliness as aligned to the new knowledge of science and rationality which, it held, would transform the irrational native into modern citizen. This represented an epistemological masculinity distinct from the corporal with latter arising out of specific historical circumstances of post colonial life in which nationalist discourses on gender and modernity engaged with colonial representations of the effeminate native. Thus the FYP hero became the post Independence masculinist ideal homo scientific and
homo economics rolled into one. It is at this point that the relationship between the Indian metropolitan and provincial culture and their different histories come into play (ibid p 144). The frugal rational scientific persona of the FYP hero had a task that was normally positioned vis-à-vis the countryside: he acted to bring enlightenment to Indis’s villages; a theme borrowed from orientalist and development theory oriented discourses about the irrational peasants and their recalcitrance in accepting the logic of modernity (ibid p.146).

The hero in Swades revises the FYP hero. While retaining the epistemological masculinity, the star is seen to be using his cerebral capacity rather than his physical prowess. This hero seeks to revive this middle class idealism of earlier days that appears to be waning in contemporary drives of self-gratifying pursuit (see, Savaala, 2010 Varma, 2004 ibid) after a hiatus of several years. But unlike the FYP hero, the nation-builder, reformist patriot shows no cognizance of the state and seeks to initiate change as an alternative to the state efforts.

Vasudevan in his study of star as the secular transcendental addresses two such moments and across two registers. Just, how star persona is governed by consistent iconography, one which may extend its foundational thematic into new territories of exploration without compromising the original codification. Vasudevan takes the case of Raj Kapoor who bears the logic of plebian secularization. The character habitually uses the city as an experimental space to undermine the feudal certitudes of birth and lineage. The second one is how, instead of working through a consistent logic and extension of the persona into different fields, there emerges a logic of performative destabilization and play, where screen persona render the possibility, and imponderability of rupturing the continuum of the image. Vasudevan takes the career trajectory of actor Nana Patekar (Vasudevan, 2010 ibid. p 136). In this case, I would like to position Shah Rukh is both the models of transcendental star delineated by Vasudevan and reflect on two significant films of his career to explore both the formulation. The dimensions of Shah Rukh’s imaginary biography is seen to address the representation of Shah Rukh in both consistent logic and at moments of its receptures and extension of this continuum almost to establish his credentials as a post modernist transcendence.

Raj Kapoor’s biography from Awara through Shri 420 is strongly associated with bitter tale of social dispossession and marginality the rootless and homeless caught in the performative dimension associated with the street and its stronghold helpless association with illicit dimensions of the city also marked by pleasurable dexterity of body and comic gestures accords a certain stable iconization of a tramp figure in the field of social justice. But even here one sees how some unstable momens are offered as he puts and takes off persona via abruptly shifting locales and sartorial. Thus the Kapoor protagonist shifts registers from his highwaisted, loose-fitting pants and coat and displayed gait to take on the persona of a suave gentleman attired in evening lounge suit who easily inhabits the precincts of the night club (ibid. p 152).

The unanchored personality dispensing with a consistency of psychological characterization, facilitates the transcendental drive. This development becomes important in the trajectory of the 1950s, suggestively with the orbit of intercommunity representation. In the film Chhalia (1960),
the tramp figure with a performativity over character integrity is shifted from the field of social justice narratives into those of inter community tolerance and renewal (ibid 158).

The Kapoor persona is critical to the architecture of the narrative the carries with him, from Awara through Shree 420, the imagery of the uprooted, the déclassé, the criminal and in terms of spatial resonance, the semantics of the street and the field of popular. It is the very lack of legitimacy which offers him the possibility of interrogating social hierarchy and the ritual boundaries of birth and descent, which undergounds this hierarchy. The virtual biography of the star as screen persona a persona who resides on the internal screen of the spectator’s cinematic memory – can then be mobilized, with a sense of thematic consistency into a new focus by addressing and resolving the possible tainting of community boundaries raised by the figure of the abducted woman. The thematic has not really changed, it still has to do with question of birth and descent, but it is now refocused as an issue of community rather than class. Critically the arena of resolution is not the state and the state only creates the possibility of resolution. It is rather a negative coding of the state with the common problematizing constraints of community thus remains however within discourse of nation state ( ibidp 157).

Shah Rukh offers a transcendent mediation almost as parallel to Kapoor’s role in Chhalia, in the film Swades . Khan since his appearance as a diasporic urban cosmopolitan hybrid subject in the film Dilwala Dulhaniya Le Jayenge had allowed his on screen biography to be consistently associated with romance, consumption, family melodrama and a performative dimension associated with transnational space. His consistent performance in similar roles in films like Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge, Pardes Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Kabhie Khushie Kabhie Gham, Kal Ho Naa Ho offered himself within a consumerist cosmopolitan cultural repertoire of family romance narrative, with his body inscribed by a tale of affluence plentitude and pleasure. He shifts his registers like Kapoor within this ambit of stabilization as a diasporic subject between a romancing hero or a good tradition affirming kin negotiating skillfully with filial demands and duties and expressing his faith in Indian tradition and family, serving as metaphors of the nation. In the variant of a diasporic subject in the film Swades carrying with him the imagery of an urban, affluent, diasporic subject, with spatial resonance of transnationality and semantics of exotics locales and music scene of panoramic interiors. This virtual biography as part of spectator’s memory is mobilized with a sense of thematic consistency that repeatedly affirmed his familial affinities and adherance to traditional ethos, to be extended further and in a refocussed is thus mode achieved. The question of family is now replaced by village also hero acting as metaphor of the nation. This hybrid self that allowed to imagine the nation transterritorially, now transposes it onto the village. The imaginatively secured nation is now re-territorialized as a village and mediated via the trope of a diasporic hero, to be united by a vision of secular ethos transcending the deep caste divisions and developmental initiatives introduced by the hero’s technological skills.

The diasporic selves in their consumerist vocabulary had etched in favour of a secular identity wherein the linerunality of his positioning and his cultural habitat almost obfuscated. The star who had faceliated an earlier imagination of the nation from his…position, alternates his
position in a journey back home from metropolitan urban India, to village India to be drawn into the larger cartographies of global imaginings of the nation. Shah Rukh appears as transcendental mobile, signifier and provide an instance of a consistent iconography of a secular nation imagined on the interstices of the local (village) and global.

The hero in Swades, is not only a nation-builder, but unlike all his earlier diasporic avatars pays obeisance to the socialist ideals. His return to India forsaking a life of success, affluence and prestige as a NASA scientist to serve the remote Indian village seeks to appeal to the middle class consciousness that appeared oblivious about the departed ideals of socialism that for long guided state policies and practices. Liberalization and the consumerist dreams peddled have turned the middle class largely insular and apathetic towards the ocean of poverty that surrounds them. The hero in Swades appear to discard the self-obsessed insensitivity of the upwardly mobile, consumerist middle class subject. Abrogating the insular goal of self–fulfilment, the hero revives in his actions the socialist rhetoric. (see Varma, 2004 p.89-91)

3.10 SECULAR NATION IMAGINED IN FILMS OF SHAH RUKH KHAN: MAIN HOON NAA, VEER ZAARA CHAK DE INDIA, MY NAME IS KHAN AND ASHOKA

3.10.1 The Backdrop – Crisis of Secularism and Experience of the Obverse of Globalization

The globalization of the nation has not been without its discontents and ambivalence. One being the greatest assault to its post-colonial modernist agenda of its statist discourse of secularism, that was unleashed by fundamentalist attacks. Religious fundamentalism, resurgence of particularistic identities, ethnic revivalism opposed to unified national secular identity has been an obverse of globalization. ‘...the modern global-human condition has four major “components”: national societies, individuals, the system of societies and “mankind”. The first two constitute a particularizing thrust in the modern world. There is thus a heavy constraint in the modern global-human circumstances to produce theories and for movements to arise in respect of conceptions of humanity which, at one extreme, overcome the problems of particularism and relativism and at the other, celebrate the virtues of one brand of particularism. The situation is ripe, in other words for fundamentalism–which can combine either extreme particularism or extreme universalism with “deflated”images of the allegedly “real” factors which are at work in the making of the dangerous single place which is the modern world’ (Robertson, 1992 p.92). Robertson, as cited elsewhere claims that the ‘Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft theme has itself been globalized- first with respect to images of how societies should be patterned; second, with respect to how the world-as-a-whole should be structured’ Robertson suggests two types each of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. Robertson sees politico-religious fundamentalism as an instance of the first Gemeinschaft image that sees the world order as consisting of an agglomerate of closed societal communities, each with its own inherent and more or less incommunicable identity. This conception is akin to an anti-global image. (Beyer, 2003p.170). As per Robertson’s understanding, it may be argued that the Indian situation illustrates a perfect socio-political and cultural example where the state’s adoption of
globalization at the institutionalized level in the year 1991, uncannily coincided with the time of resurgence of right wing Hindu politics its culmination was witnessed in what came to be seen as one of the greatest attacks inflicted upon the much vaunted secular state policy came in through the attack on the Babri Masjid, in 1992 when the nationalist secular party Congress was in power.

One of the greatest crises of Indian secularism is said to have arrived in the wake of the communal carnage following the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya. Several reasons were cited for accounting the failure of a statist policy and constitutional Secularism that remained mostly a statist strategy. If solution lies in religious tolerance to recover the jeopardized secularism, then this inter religious understanding can be vulnerable to politicization. Secularism and promotion of tolerance without deeper contextualisation within social folds, fail to become an ethical choice and is seen more as a strategy, a governing method, a false poser Nationand its contingency is thus maintained by politics. In terms of the agenda of political modernity, communalism remains a concomitant problem and not simply a remainder of feudalism and semi-feudalism. (Samaddar, 2001 p.137) Therefore ‘defining the secular becomes a perennial task of the nation. Secularism/communalism becomes sign of existence of the nation, the signifier of the manifold dilemma of nationhood….Yet it is a false signifier, and therefore, the true sign: a false signifier of the manifold dilemmas of the nation and, therefore, the true sign of nation’s existence. As an overriding theme it effaces all other themes of strategic relations – the relations between inter national capital and the nation, between agrarian reforms and development, between democracy and authoritarianism, and the like – which together form a complex. However, nation perched precariously on a complex of these strategic relations, deals with the resultant dilemmas with a parallel strategy of effacement.

Secularism/communalism is, therefore, a ‘happy auxillary’. It regulates exchanges between social and political options between nation and the community, between democracy and authoritarianism, between swadeshi and the world, between singularity and plurality and finally between prehistory and history of the nation. In regulation of these exchanges, the protagonist is in Derridean words the dangerous supplement and that is why secularism/communalism is both a sign and signifier – a sign of nation in existence, a signifier of the strategies by which nation achieves effacement of an entire range of relations issues, themes, options and problems. The significance of this binary paradigm does not belong to symbolism, nor even to the range of relations maintained above. Its significance is in its undecidability, in making every other affair of the nation undecideable and unsettling, in its contradictory capacity to lend multiplicity to the nationalist core as well as to reduce nation to a single option. It creates a system of correspondences and, thereby ‘re-marks’ every other issue (foreign aid, identity formation, agrarian reform, decentralization of polity, relations with neighbours in the region, democratisation of polity and the like). (ibid. p.137-138)

Ironically, democracy produces the monster of communalism, and the ‘nationalist core’ becomes multiple. But the effect of binary paradigm does not stop here. By remarking every other issue with the question of secularism/communalism, it reprents the polysemic present
in the nation from being realisable. Intrinsic to this subsuming re-marking is an imposition of unity, creation of a totality, the gathering of all meanings into one. The nation comes to rely on this image of totality to explain all inconsistencies and paradoxes. This image is part of every ‘other text of the nation’ (ibid. p 139). Everyday information, history knowledge philosophy the science of improving material life and so for the – anything affiliated with the nation is subjected to a normalized system of reference to the binary paradigm. In other words, the binary paradigm is the normal register today. It is this grotesque normalcy that is source of nations anxiety as every other thing is reduced to this grand option forcing every other thing to be registered in the binary format. The nation appear to be subsumed by this binary paradigm despite its need of a horizon of polysemy. The nation feels jeopardised and feels need for re legitimation.

In the popular film texts, one can see how films made in post Ayodhya crisis came to be remarked by the same binary paradigm. As popular texts of nation some of the films had discernible traits of communalism, majoritarian culture and political ideology. In this case, one can cite recurrent films made under the ideological influence of political Hinduism that both overtly and covertly was aimed at Muslim othering. In this section, I shall discuss some ‘secular’ films that through failing to escape the binary, reclaims the secular but differently unlike statist discourse and strategy of containment rapprochement or reconciliation in negotiating with religions communities at a formal levelation. The secular spirit that informs the four films to be discussed are more capable at the level of popular to recoup its polysemic meanings through deployment of the star-text of Shah Rukh Khan.

Before discussing the films it needs to be clarified what secularism means at the level of statist policy, its anomalies as a policy, the failure of state to preclude challenges brought against the ideological hegemony of secularism and so on.

3.10.2 Secular Ideology and Self Image of the Indian Nation- State

The Indian nation-state has maintained the hegemonic idea of a self identity around a fictive unity of a nation. As a nation, Indian has traditionally sought to define its post colonial identity in secular multi ethnic terms characterizing itself as a country where diverse faiths, languages and cultures co-exist peacefully within boundaries of a single state. And, even though the country was formed out of partition marked by bloody communal violence in 1947, India’s self definition has typically been one of tolerant even syncretic society that has assimilated and absorbed significant cultural and religious differences. In this particular characterization of the country. India is a melting pot whose distinctive strength lies in ‘its ability to transform invasion into accommodation, rupture into continuity, division into diversity’. (Khilani as cited in Chadha et al, 2008ibid.p.131)

Despite the frequently articulated belief in the notion that India exemplifies an unique example of unity in diversity in reality the nature of India’s selfhood has been far more contested that ritually celebratory accounts of Indian nation building would concede. As Khilani writes on the irreconcilable differences and diversities of the post-colonial nation-state formed..
The truncated colonial territories inherited by the Indian state after 1947 still left it in control of a population of incomparable differences, a multitude of Hindu castes and outcastes, Muslims, Sikhs, Christrans, Buddhists, Jains and tribes, speakers of more than a dozen major languages (and thousand of dialects); myriad ethnic and cultural communities. This discordant material was not the stuff of which the nation states are made; it suggests no common identity or basis of unity that could be reconciled within a modern state’ (ibid.).

Although in the initial decades after independence the state appeared to have manged to hold together these disparate groups based on an amorphous sense of Indianness over time this conception has been increasingly eroded by a variety of conflicts that have developed across the Indian landscape. While these conflicts have taken multiple forms ranging from ethnic and linguistic to the caste based, particularly significant among these have been the frequent eruptions of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims.

According to a report issued by the National Integration Council in 2005, the number of instances where tension was generated between the majority and minority communities has increased over the years, indicating declining level of tolerance between them. In fact between 2000 and 2005 India witnessed an annual average of 800 communal incidents of varying intensity that ran the gamut from relatively small scale local skirmishes to full blown riots that occurred in Gujarat in 2002 resulting in massive carnage and widespread displacement of Muslim communities through the process of ethnic cleansing.

Unsurprisingly, such incidents reflect how the struggle of maintaining India’s unified identity have significantly undermined the carefully constructed conceptions of pluralism and secularism that informed the post colonial state under Nehru. (ibid.p 132). This brings us to the anomalies, contradictions involved in India’s modernist adaptation of secularism at the level of state policy. Secularism in India suffers from contradictions arising out of two meaning of the term. Secularism in India also has a kind of Indianism, that has not yet found its place in English dictionaries. The most well known understanding of secularism is based on devaluing of religion in public and by freeing politics from religion. Secularism here means that religion should not contaminate politics and allow for the mentality and tolerance of the state. Here the meaning of secular is opposed to sacred.

The second meaning of secularism that developed in India is not opposite of sacred but of ethnocentrism, xenophobia and fantacism. That is one could be secular either by being equally disrespectful towards all religions or by being equally respectful towards them. And true secularism the second meaning insists, must opt for respect . It is this non modern meaning of secularism that the anticolonial Indian elite stressed, given the need for broad based mobilization in a deeply religious society. The leaders of freedom movement was quick to sense that the European meaning of secularism would hold little sense to the average Indian rooted in a religious world view and not exposed to the kinds of debate and the church state divide produced in premodern Europe. The Indian meaning acknowledges that even when a state is tolerant of religions it need not lead to religious tolerance in a society. Tolerance by state cannot guarantee a tolerant society and in short run can only ensure the survival of a
certain political community in the long run this community must give it a deeper social content. The secularization of Indian society as Nandy observes has seen a delimited role of the state as an impartial arbiter between various religious communities. The local or the second meaning of secularism gaining ground in democratic process and acting as an alternative choice over the first. Also there are limits on the state to secularize society in the real sense of the term free of its Indian connotations. Awareness of these issues has created problems for the contemporary Indian concept of the state. From about 17th century modern western ideology of the state has required the state to be secular, by separating religion from politics. India borrowed this ideology in the 1830s and since then has dominated modern Indian consciousness. And this has also caught the imagination of Hindu nationalism who tried to marginalize minorities by pushing the logic of a secular state to its limits and emphasising a from of absolute secularism by a tacit majoratarian strategy. However a significant section of the population besides many Indians are increasingly becoming suspicious of western notion of secularism and becoming more receptive to non-secular ideas of religions and cultural tolerance. Nandy argues this tolerance is based on an assumed cultural interdependency that encourages tolerance of others because that tolerance represents tolerance of less acceptable aspects of one’s own self. The modern nation state uphold an idealized domain of public life where culture is not allowed to intervene in state craft and even hierarchizes it citizens on the basic for their religions affinies and their conduct in rigidly separated public and private sphere (Nandy2003, p.34-36).

Nandy shows how this official secularism based on modern nation state ideology also provides the basis of the Indian state’s claim to a monopoly on religions and ethnic tolerance. Paradoxically, the hierarchy of citizens an ordering on the basis of modernist secular idiom of politics that is definitionally prerogative of western education persists despite the official and unofficial veneration of Gandhi as the father of the Indian nation. Gandhi, who rejected secularism in its pristine form in bringing the right kind of religion and the right kind of politics together. The concept of secularism in India, borrowed from western history as a concept with a clear normative component it tried to divorce religion and ethnicity from public sphere and mark out an area in politics where rationality, contractual social relationships and realpolitik would reign. But within this sanitized modernist normative frame religion remained as basic for popular support and mobilization. An ambivalence to religion therefore cuts across nearly all state centric ideologies in the Indian polity. This area of secularized sanity that was to be ideally maintained in the Indian polity was supported by post independent nation’s consensus that sought to contain community based nepotism, and create legitimacy for the new political institutions and create an impartial state keeping force. Much of this as informed by political wisdom derived from partition. This consensus and strategy of a modernist official discourse is not without its limitations and have gone as far they could have. But it is now seen breakdown (ibid.p.36-p 40).

Democratization and political participation has set limits on secularization of Indian politics. Religion is now gaining grounds as a legitimate instrument of political mobilization and political expression. In addition to this the older concept of secularism is losing its shine since
late 1960s in countries that were ahead of India in road to secularization and nation building. Positivist, science centred ideologies of nationality are coming under attack. (ibid p 41). Formal, western style secularization has often demonstrated the incapacity to keep pace with politicization in this part of the world. Ethnicity has demonstrated its resilient ability in delimited way as an outcome of which the pathologies of religions and ethnicities have found political articulations ( ibid.p 43). The official tolerance supported by modernized sector has proved to be fragile in a situation of expanding political participation ( ibid.p 50).

Nandy broadly delineates these broad world view a ideological spectrum tht captures political position vis-à-vis culture and religion. Just is the modernist worldview tht seek to legitimize western ideals of secular statecraft. The other is the zealot or aggressive fanatic, a Muslim or Sikh fundamentalist or Hindi revivalist nor nationalist .Onlya variation of secular political man of post Enlightenment Europe, he is a political rather than a civilizational self affirmation and demonstrates allegiance to classical version of religion and culture. The numerically preponderant is the body of peripheral believers eking out their lives in backwaters of South Asia, who has the sensitivity for battle for survival experience of neighbourlinees and co survival. It is this non modern peripheral ethic with a longer deeper memory and consciousness that Gandhi turned to for giving a political basis to his concept of religions and ethnic tolerance . The covert affinity between peripheral Hindus and Muslims is not accessible to modern Indian and scholastic discourse. It is where faith is more lived out than articulated and tolerance or forgiveness is given expression in the actualities of living, not in ideological or even theological prospositions, positions or briefings . This tolerance is based on principle of co-survival unlike the official tolerance of modernized sector.(ibid.p.45-47)

The concept of secularism has served within a small but expanding modern sector in India as an important public value and an indicator of commitment to protection of minorities. This concept is however on decline. By the most imaginable criteria, institutionalized secularism has failed. Communalism has grown manifold time within perimeters of modern and semi modern India. In the meanwhile, modern and secular discourse constituting predominantly the ruling culture of India, losing its credibility and access to the traditional social and psychological cheeks against communal violence.. Introduced into South Asian public life by a section of social reference intellectuals and public figures, secularism subverted and discredited the traditional ideas of inter religious understanding and tolerance. The tradition of co-survival by thousands of communities living in the subcontinent. This co-survival was not perfect, neither painless (p 68) and were often marked by violent clashes. But they evolved resolutions as part of their lived culture, sustained by interreligions understanding and tolerance. This was supplanted by secularism as an institutionalized, modernized, official ideology and as a principle of rationality in an otherwise irrational society. Enjoying disproportionate access to state power secularism is reportedly free from ethnic /religions prejudices and marks out a class that speaks the language of the state, either in conformity or dissent. Secularism acts as principle of exclusion that demands compliance to this ideology as a criteria for citizenship( ibid.p.67-p 70).
The relevance of secularism lies in its usage as an administrative ploy of nation to maintain it and tackle communalism. The sense of a jeopardized nation does not seem to end with the only evil of casteism but the evil of communalism also poses a challenge to the governing power of the nation, and to its administrative strategy. While the notion of a secularisation of the public political space as a self consciously articulated theory is relatively recent., its existence as a strategy can be easily traced to the rise of the nation and its need for legitimation as the supreme community. Nation therefore seeks to legitimize all communities in order to buttress its own claim as the supreme community. It is naive to assume that individual citizen was the main constituent of the state rather it is the communities which have the mainstay in relation to the state. The nation (and also the state) transacts with communities more than it does with the citizen. Thus the modern state in this country secularized the question of communities, and with the move, the question of communalism/secularism became a matter pertaining to the strategy of nation-making, particularly in the post-colonial era. Secularism came to mean two very specific things: a non-discriminatory state,and pluralism in Indian Life. It was by deploying this strategy that the nation coped with the evil of communalism – in reality a problem born out of the mutual encounter between the nation and communities. Secularism was therefore, an administrative solution to the problem – a solution contingent on the historically specific way in which the question had been posed before our nationhood. Seen in this perspective, tolerance or secularism is a problema poser, because secular policies of governing the nation are geared mainly towards promoting tolerance among communities. This policy not only links secularism with majoritarian practices, but also more fundamentally, reduces the promotion of tolerance to an administrative solution. (Samaddar, 2001,ibid. p 136).

The ideology of secularism has a statist language removed from Indian tradition and traditional codes of religions tolerance that constitute an alternative vantage ground for political intervention in a democratic polity. The ideology of secularism not merely fits the culture of the Indian state, it also invites the state to use its coercive right to actualize the model of social engineering the ideology. Nandy argues that secularism and statism in India have gone hand in hand – perhaps the main reason why Hindu nationalism, statist to its core, has not given up the language of secularism (Nandy, 2003 ibid p 72). Secularism in its pristine modernist plea is on decline and as an ideology is readjusting itself. As an ideology it can thrive only in a society that is predominantly non-secular. Once a society gets secularized, or once people begin to feel that their society is getting cleansed of religion and ideas of transcendence – the political status of secularism changes. People anxious of living in a desacralized, start searching for faiths to give meaning to their life and retain illusion of being part of a traditional community. As faiths decline, they begin to search for ideologies linked to faiths in an effort to return to forms of a traditional moral community that would negate or defy the world in which they live. The enthusiasm of some states to impose secularism on people can sharpen these fears of deracination. Already sensitive about...of faith many citizens are provoked by secularizing agenda imposed from above as it carries a contempt for believers. When Indian public life was overwhelmingly nonmodern secularism as an ideology had a chance. The area of sacred looked
intact and safe and secularism looked like a balancing principle and a form of legitimate dissent. Even believing citizens described themselves a secular to keep up with the times and because secularism sounded like something vaguely good. Secularization of Indian polity has gone far scope of secularism as a creed has declined. Signs of secularization are now everywhere and one does not have to make a case for it. Instead there has grown a fear that secularization that has gone too far and led to decline in public morality for declining religions sensibilities. Several distorted or perverted versions of religions circulating in modern or semi modern India owe their origins to this perception of the triumph of secularization than persistence of traditions.(ibid.p.62)

As part of same process many non secular ideologies and movements have acquired secular style and content. Their religions look is to appeal for their constituency but they pursue political power in secularized polity only via secular politics, secular planning and secular organizations. Deploying religion instrumentally they affirm it in a secular style in response to the democratic secular culture of the polity. The instrumental use of secularism is now a means of monitoring attach of traditional secularists and justify majoritarian politics. Religion is now part of secular political cost calculation. As political expediency, they are motivated by political ideology and this ideology is a secularized version of faith or arbitrarily chosen elements of faith packaged as political ideology.

The secularism is different from self definition of genuine secularists for whom world is entirely secular. Religion is used instrumentally dispassionately and rationally and no intrinsic sanctity is granted to faith or even followers. Today secularism has little to contribute to Indian public life. But this was informed by different political realities. As ethnic and religious violence is becoming impersonal organized calculate, rational it comes to show the pathology of irrationality. Ideology of secularism has now turned ethnocidal and dependent on mercies of those controlling or hoping to control state. Today secularism is chronically susceptible to being coopted nor hijacked by the politically ambitions. Simultaneously, religion as cultural foundation for existence of South Asian communities has increasingly become marker of weak and rustic. Modern India, that sets the tone for culture of Indian state now fears religion. Fear of religion is part of fear of people and democracy (which empowers majority of Indians who are believers). For this .majority who are feared religion continues to have intrinsic legitimacy. They see it as a moral force. And when religion is derived a normal place in society, it finds distorted expression infundamentalism revealism and xenophobia taking at ground level, the character of satyagraha, drama yuddha or jihad. As secularism in early years did contribute to Indian public life, in later years it is now seen how democracy and political participation outstrips legitimacy of state. Role of secularism is now creative, ethnocidal and statist. Secularism has ceded to organized faith and religion. It is being used as political technology to package versions of faith.

In India, true secularism is not literally realizable nor its connotative meaning derived from separation of state from church as in post medieval Europe, as in open polity choices for majority matters. Modern secularists speak of glorious syncretic past without realizing that this
primitive pre-modern proto secularism did not have any ideological support of secularism. These secularists are also oblivious that mass politics in an open polity demands accessible political idiom even when it is an idiom crude and unbecoming of dignity of modern state. Secularism has a limited role as at the ground level where survival is at stake, traditional codes of tolerance are invoked.

Secularism as way to ensure tolerance, as counterpoint to religions chauvinism in a country where religion has a stronghold as foundation of social life as for weak, poor and rural. Secularism as statecraft suffers from ideological limitations. That is why in South Asia, secularism can mostly be the faith of – and be of use to the culturally disposed and the politically rootless. In favourable circumstances it can make sense even to the massified in the growing metropolitan slums but never to the majority living its life with rather tenorous links with culture of the nation – state true, when such a concept of secularism is made profitable by the state and the elite – that is if lip service to the concept pays rich enough dividends – many begin to use it, not in its pristine sense but as an easy non controversial synonym for religions tolerance. Secularism thus helps to manage fear of religion and religions. In this sense secularism readjusts itself in new political conditions. Modernist state have failed to translate this statecraft and ideology deeper, but in compromised form use it to forge a culture of tolerance.

However, the majority impervions to the charms of official ideology of secularism has now some access to political power. And with inerasing politicization in this part of world and large scale democratic efforts to empower newer sections of people by parties and movements of various kinds. This access is likely to increase. Contradictions therefore surfaced between ideology of secularism and democratization and this is likely to sharpen in future. To be implemented. Secularist project need to depend more on coercive state power. Secularists have an invariable statist link in West, also in South Asia, especially India. As legitimacy of state as moral presence is in decline, the state connection is producing new stress within the ideology of secularism (ibid p.73-78).

3.10.3 The Political Economy of Films and The Ascendancy of Right Wing Politics and its Influence on Jingoistic Patriotism in Popular Hindi Films

A study of popular Hindi films with respect to Indo-Pak relation can trace a discourse of silence about Pakistan in early years and the gradual escalation of animosity. After gaining of independence the immediate national imperative was the painstaking erection of the edifice of the new nations; cinema inevitably came to be commanded for the purpose. Indian cinema, in its earliest stages, mouthed the lofty ideals of nation building in patriotic and venerating reference to nation builders of modern India. It is significant to note that while these references were abundant, allusions to Pakistan was conspicuously marked by their absence. All references to the other nation were assiduously evaded. This nebulous beginning nevertheless was extremely vocal and evocative in its silence. The trajectory of Indo Pak relationship and its representations in films privileges a valuable insight crucial to the understanding of the evolving identities of the two nations. This initial silence was followed by a discourse of
animosity and cultural antagonism that had its manifestations in cinematic text ‘from cultural shadow boxing to open Pakitan bashing’ One of the earliest films in Hindi, making direct reference to Pakistan was Upkar (1965). However, the theme of Indo Pak relationship functioned as an adjunct to the larger concern for patriotism, nationalism and nation building of an emergent nation.

Set against the backdrop of Indo Pak War of 1971, the film Hindustan Ki Kasam (1973) took the theme further ahead in terms of escalated hostility. By clear identification of Pakistan as the enemy, it marked the trend of articulating a strong anti-Pakistan sentiment in the ongoing task of forging and discovering a strong Indian national identity. Following this, several films, both good and bad, hits and flops, followed with Pakitan as the theme or central point of reference. ( Bharat et al 2008 p.x).

The study of national cinemas in an age of globalization is considered an imperative to examine perceived threats of assimilation within larger transnational framework of media, culture, entertainment and economic flows. It has been asserted that economic deregulation, instituted in the early nineties, has influenced the media industries that has led to certain historical disruptions. Much opposed to this understanding, a discursive analysis of film industry's political economy, ideology, aesthetic and culture reveal historical continuities in cinema’s relationship with dominant socio cultural formations and ideology that thwarted late capital’s inability to formally subsume cinema (Kishore Budha 2008.p 3-4) in several years following liberalization.

Film studies experts argue that a disaggregated Hindi film industry in caused by the fragmented ideological nature of the Indian state the mercantile nature of capital in the film industry; the role of state in regulating cinema through the apparatus of censorship, and the elite nature of film criticism in favour of verisimilitude. The optimism shared was that late capital would formally enable subsumption of the production and thereby rationalize the film form.

In this context, it is asserted that film production awaits rationalization as genre forms. Genres defied by the industry and accepted by the industry as a reaffirmation of values at the level of collective and individual has genres are seen to negotiate in specific relationship of production system and the audience. The lack of managerial and professional control in the way of conceiving and production of films hindered genere stabilization and foreclosed new aesthetic possibilities for long despite market reforms.

Cinema in India fails to be seen as a larger part of deregulation for long and also Indian industry’s inevitable assimilation into global consumption unrealizable on . However, the embeddedness of industry in nationalist ideology and a disaggregated production economy of mercantile capital pre-empted possibilities for a cinema based on a global aesthetic of realism.

Against this argument of late capital’s thwarted and delayed entity to deregularise the industry to control production and genre formation one can explain the vulnerability to rightwing appropriations and co-options of films till mid 2000. Without stable genre crystallization out of a negotiation between industry’s production practices and audience reception, different interest
group with competing agenda a political commercial propagandist motives of ringwing politics continued to produce jingoistic films well till 2004 (ibid p5).

Right wing mass media propagating in favour of conservative ideas of nationalism and patriotism have shown alacrity in using media effects and soft power of Hindi cinema to create sustain and build imagery myths and legends of about the nation (ibid pp 6). The film ‘Border’ began trend of hawkish nationalism to name the Enemy/Pak. Release of border in 1997 created a significant difference from earlier films in depicting external threats to the nation, where by film makers came to explicitly name Pakistan as the enemy and instigator of India’s troubles. Prior to this film even war films were not able to name an enemy or opponent because the censor guidelines stated that ‘friendly relations with foreign States are not strained’ (Ministry of Information and Broadcating 1992) was invoked to make film makers excise any references to specific countries. Border, which is about a specific Indo Pak war during the 1971 was the first war movie that was able able to make explicit reference to Pakistan rather than the oblique references used in the past ‘over there’ or ‘the enemy’. While censor guidelines remained the same, the political climate has with the more aggressively nationalist and hawkish (toward Pakistan) Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) growing in power encouraged an ideological strand of cultural nationalism to influence popular contemporary films. The director’s argument that his film was based on historical events and not being able to name the enemy would compromise the authenticity of his war film was accepted and paved the way for plethora of films valorizing the military and their campaigns to protect the nation. (Ganti,2004 ibid.p 42).

The BJP’s media policy published in 1998, clearly explicates a normative function position: ‘The BJP believes that, a healthy policy and democracy cannot survive without the support of an extra-political moral order which the democratic political order cannot itself impose upon its citizens. This belief is also the emerging belief of more advanced democracies that are experiencing a steep slide in morality which is endangering the very idea of orderly society’ (BJP 1998). Film makers such as JP Dutta echoed an allegiance to such an argument and reminded the industry of its patriotic duty and obligations towards the nation’s martyr.

“I don’t care about the industry..They would rather have me shoot..films in Switzerland. I only care for the mother of the dead war hero who rings me up and blesses me. (JP Dutta in Unnithan 2003 cited in Budha, ibid p 7).

Dutta’s willingness and readiness to be appropriated by the BJP discourse was largely due to the production assistance he received from the Indian Army, while the making of the war film L.O.C. Kargil (2003) and also by the proximity to politicians who found his affinities useful to further their own rightist goals. Key ministers from the BJP government cabinet including Prime Minister A B Vajpayee and Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani attended the premiere of L.O.C. Kargil. J P Dutta’s patriotic championing helped him to gain publicity for his films. News reports observed that promotional events proceeding the release of the film played up political posturing. Legitimacy for not only a film like L.O.C. Kargil but a spate of films like Border (1997), 16 December – All Forces Alert (2002). Ab Tumhare Hawale Watan Sathiyo (2004). Deewar (2004), Dev (2004), Earth 1947 (1998), Fiza (2000), Gadar:Ek Prem Katha
(2004),The Hero Love Story of a spy (2003) and so on, all articulating jingoism and right wing 
sentiments was provided by the political environment that prevailed with the rise of Hindutva 
politics in early 1990s and further bolstered by BJP’s electoral victory in 1998.(ibid.p.8) The 
increasing focus on Pakistan as a source of terrorism and threat to internal unrest reaches its 
peak in the years of electoral turbulence in India especially in the years between 1995 and 1999. 
The cinematic texts evolving as a continuum on Pakistan centric discourse are Border (1997), 
Sarfarosh (1999) and so on. But what is also strikingly noteable in this cinematic discourse is a 
minoritisation of the Muslim and the role of Indian state as coercive and repressive state. 
and Fanaa (2006) reflect on the repressive role of state in .terror and also that which 
excacerbates the marginalization of Muslim citizens as well as internal violence experienced 
(Singh,2008 114-115). 

A right wing rhetoric of Pakistan and India were used as gendered metaphors to create image 
of Indian nation’s vulnerability necessitating an extreme caution, military empowerment and 
normalizing of violence against a Muslim Pakistan by avenging the wrongs of past atrocities 
among a Hindu nation. At the height of BJP’s rise, the spectre of atrocities against Indian 
women was invoked to justify the nuclear bomb. The naming of the external Muslim envying 
also functions to indirectly remind India of the internal manifestation of that enemy, the 
Muslim citizen. Emboldened by the US declaration of the war on terror, the BJP raised the 
stakes of the game by talking of swift victory against Pakistan to teach it a lesson. At the same 
time the party was busy fanning the nationalist sentiment created by the crisis with Pakistan in 
the hope that it would benefit the party in crucial state elections later in 2002. Shiv Sena an 
important right wing ally of the BJP engaged in lumpen activities such as digging up of cricket 
pitches before India Pakistan cricket matches or issuing threats to film actors who engaged in 
any activity with Pakitan (Budha,2008 ,ibid p 8).

These political developments created a suitable climate for the film and television industries to 
be convinced about the presence of a market for ‘content centred on jingoistic patriotism’. In 
the period marked by BJP’s rule i.e. from 1994 to 2004, many films were made with attitudes 
and storylines articulating the conservative ideological stance of the party, reaffirming family 
values (as seen in films like Hum Aapke Hain Kaun 1994, Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge 1995 
starring Shah Rukh Khan, Kabhi Kushi Kabhi Gham also starring SRK and so on) and religious 
patriotism or cultural nationalism.. 

I seek to argue that a retreatist stte policy under the influence of liberalization, the rise of 
Hindutva forces coupled with the Ram Janma Bhoomi movement and demolition of Babri 
mosque, the defeat of congress discrediting secular ideology’s legitimacy to integrate the nation, 
encouraged cultural nationalism to articulate itself broadly in two block buster currents. While 
one with liberalization and consumerist forces to produce film narratives revolving around a
revived Hindu joint family and diasporic, the other articulated a popular patriotism premised on jingoistic sentiments giving birth to films as said.

The dependable on repetition of such a formula and the support for such films came from the BJP led state establishment. Evidence testifies that filmmakers have historically reconciled to hegemonic governmental control over what can be shown or cannot be shown. Cinema instead of being an independent critical intellectual or moral force or vanguard of independent realist views often reflects the political ideology of the state. Given the powers of the Central Board of Film Certification, the film industry is often acquiescent to the dominant political ideology. The chair of the board often prone to partisanship was alleged of being occupied by friends and psychophants of political establishment in this period by eminent publications. It was further reflected in the arguments of the chair, between 2003 and 2004, Anupam Kher who favoured films reflecting in a way to benefit political realities. This kind of a pervasive influence of a rightwing political ideology favoured by state establishment found advantageous the existing political economy of the film industry. Despite the advent market reforms as early as 1991., the industry’s embeddedness in backward capital delayed the industry from being subjected to advanced capitalist conditions of production, distribution and exchange. Instead of producers and managers and a well deferred genre system, production agenda was determined by influential independent filmmakers and politicized members of the industry (ibid p. 10, 12).

However, the industry failed to sustain commodified nationalism as most of the patriotic films began to fail at the box office. In contrast to interest shown by media industries to benefit from the anti Pak belligerent rhetoric unleashed by the extensive media coverage of the Kargil war, the decline of Indo-Pak tensions by 2004 led to a drastic turnaround. The changes in political economy of film industry by then had come to relative fruition. The Indian film industry today is no longer considered an unorganized sector funded managed and organized by mercantile capitalists. The recognition of industry status by the govt in 2001 and the entry of institutional capital albeit in a limited form has led to certain changes (ibid. p.9)

The reason for this, of course, is also the ostensible easing of the political tension between two countries. The thaw in the relations led to a relative dissolution of barriers separating them for increased diplomatic exchange also cultural and academic. The atmosphere was conducive for Pakistan friendly films in a bid to foster positive diplomatic ties. The change is seen in the new state policy of the country (Pakistan) that has allowed screening of Hindi films in Pakistani cinema halls. Cultural exchange also seen in collaborative acting ventures with actors on either sides engaged in cross border projects.(Bharat et al 2008,ibid.p.x-xi)

The declined aggressive posturing and anti Pak rhetoric, expanded economic opportunities for producers in a large Pakistani market for third films. This shift in discourse allow for such opportunities. (Budha, 2008 ibid9). With political discourse becoming amiable to relations between the two countries, as I argue with the Congress regaining ground and coming to power, cinematic narratives began to explore alternative cinematic discourse. Changes in this direction producers engaged in cross borders camaraderie scripts (Ansari quoted in Buddha). That year, Times of India reported that Nitin Manmohan’s Vande Mataram (Salute to the
Motherland (2004) on the 1971 war was stalled, Sarbad Paar (2006) a war film was adapted to the prevailing amiable temper. Anil Sharma’s two earlier brazenly belligerent films Gadar – Ek Prem Katha and the Hero riding on jingoistic wave, appeared to amend the tone of his subsequent film Ab Tumhare Hamare Watan Saathiyo. Film makers like Mahesh Bhatt, astutely opposed to propagandist narratives under pale of right wing politics, dubbed as this mellowing as ‘hibernating patriotism’. He considered the anti Pak rhetoric of Hindutva forces as a temporary political trend that is bound to wane.

Sensing this change in relations between India and Pakistan film makers distanced from position earlier hailed. This tactical change largely informed by the political environment, combined with extensive media coverage of the Indian cricket tour of Pakistan, which viewed Pakistan in good light. It also led to some film makers revising shooting of their film to de-escalate the anti-Pakistan rhetoric. (Budha, 2008 ibid pp11)

The rise of Hindutva in the late 1980s exacerbated hostility towards othering of an Islamic state of Pakistan. And by mid 2000 although rabidly Pakistan films continued to be made, an alternative direction opened up and significantly enough this departure marked by two most films in this direction. Veer Zaara (2005) and Main Hoo Naa (2004) starred Shah Rukh Khan, which I shall discuss subsequently. (Bharat et al, 2008 ibid.p.x)

This changed temper had its most bold expressions in the two said blockbusters by two film makers well known for their secular credentials- the veteran Punjabi director Yash Chopra and the well-known choreographer turned debutant director Farha Khan in a film co-produced by the star Shah Rukh Khan himself who shared a similar vision of diplomacy based on good will and camara. These newer narratives continued to be hostage to politics of the nation state and socio political formation, only in a different direction. The point which I argue is most significant is how this rapprochement was mediated by Shah Rukh who was perhaps one of the few leading star who had failed to be or consciously evaded being cast in jingoistic films unlike his notable contemporaries like Aamir Khan, Sunny Deol, Hritik Roshan, Ajay Devgan and even the veteran super-star Amitabh Bachchan. The film producers’ guild of India, a significant industry body has been emboldened by developments to openly acknowledge opportunities offered by the Pakistani exhibition market. Komal Nahata a trade analyst claimed that leading producers could benefit from an excess revenue of neatly 50 million from Pakistani exhibition. Comparison via a vis contemporaries Shah Rukh’s contemporaries either avenges Muslim terror or lends to be constructed as Muslim marginalized youth as terrorist. Amir in Sarfarosh as a Hindu IPS (Indian Police Service) officer agencies avenges Pak/Islamic terror and in Fanaa Aamir is a Muslim terrorist agent. Hritik Roshan in Fiza and Mission Kashmir is the marginalized Muslim terrorist suspect, in Dev the Muslim youth Fardeen Khan suffers state repression and violence, In Khakee, Akshay is a state agent combats terror while in The Hero Love Story of a spy, Sunny Deol the Hindu heroic subject as in Gadar emerges as hyper patriot.
In comparison, the mood of rapprochement and negotiation articulated in Veer Zaara and Main Hoon Naa, the avoidance of othering strategies made Shah Rukh uninflected by such narrative themes. 

3.10.4 Othering of Muslims as A Cultural Practice

Roland Bathes in his discussions of myth and his re-rendering of Sanssare and Levi Strauss seeks to elucidate contemporary French culture in terms of fundamental, mythic structures. In particular, Barthes seek to elucidate the ideological foundations of contemporary myths, arguing that particular narrative are so frequently repeated in culture that they are essentialized or naturalized as absolute or as absolute common sense truths. In a manner that anticipates his later works, Barthes emphasize the process of signification, arguing that meanings continue to accumulate over signs through what he calls connotation. That is a sign in sight have its literal, primary or denotative meaning, but through the operations of signification further layers of meaning are attached as connotations of the original. Words are literal, but their operation in context produces meanings that may be psychologically, emotionally or ideologically charged. The word ‘black’ for example has a literal meaning, but further meanings are connoted by the words deployment in specific cultural, social and political contexts. Barthes refer to these as secondary level of meaning. While these meanings may be unstable over time, at any given moment they will be attached to specific systems of social knowledge and socially constructed truths. When the word black is attached to a person from a particular ethnic, racial and social background, it may be connoted in terms of crime, vilification, prejudice or hatred.

For Barthes, these accretions of meanings constitute cultural myths. These myths or second order semiological systems may also be understood as ideology that is those prevailing ideas, narratives and representations which support dominant socio-cultural structures. For Barthes, contemporary cultural myths form a fabric of belief upon which politics are built. Barthes observes how the mythology of blackness is meant to support a dominant ideology a set of myths and narratives which identity whiteness as norm or standard for the developed, advanced world (Lewis, 2008, p. 114-115, 175).

Under the influence of Hindutva ideology popular Hindi cinema have given birth to cultural myths that vilified Muslim as the ‘other’ to the Hindu nation, as the potential terrorist or traitor against Hindu identity, which is identified as the standard norm for a Hindutva nation. Reethinicization is a part of failure of developmental crisis of globalization. Speaking about the underlying causes of these crisis in Third World developing nations Larsen argues that these are clearly enough economic as well as political in nature. The various attempts of developing nations to industrialize without sacrificing national economy have succumbed to a new reality of globalization a reality in which the sheer scope of market space and activity exceeds efforts of even the wealthiest and most powerful nation states to contain or control it. The dominance of powerful nations in the world market has destroyed nationalized economics.

In the sub-imperial economics of China India, Mexico Brazil etc…the rapid selling off of state controlled industries i.e. of the legacy of Branding and really existing socialism – is supposed to free up capital for more productions utilization The general truth that arguably emerge from
these particularities of crisis is that the third world national bourgeoisie have failed almost without exception, as agents of a national modernization. Thus the economic social failure of bourgeois led national liberation in the third world can only be morally condemned if it is first laid at the doorstep of the current beneficiaries and mammoth process of globalization in its guise as the neoliberal panacea now waved in the faces of immiserated third world labour. Frant & Famon, as cited waved against the incapacity of the national middle class to rationalize popular action – as a consequence of this class’s fundamental incapacity as an agent of development and accumulation which lead to a kind of retrogression, where a retrabilization is preferred over state. In political economic tenure, the failure of neonational attempts to complete the phase of primitive accumulation are foiled by global capitalism’s own history of expansionary accumulation.

It is not precisely this retrogression this failure of national to transform itself into social consciousness, that now unfolds from the Islamic and Hindu demagogues in Western and Southern Asia to the interethnic hyper bourgeois wears but also to be seen in conjunction with Janon’s argument. The transeuropean nation as a social, political ideal is now becoming in the course of globalization: an institutional/ideological entity that precisely because it has been rendered inoperative as a site for the accumulation and control of capital, seeks to compensate for this in under going a radical reparticularization veiging in the most extreme cases (eg. Afghan Serbia) on a desenlarization (Larsen 2000, p 41-43).

While Muslim ethos and prominence of Muslim artists in Hindi cinema and the industry is undeniable what remains obscured is the significant issue of representive of Muslims within narratives of Hindu cinema. Ironically, Muslim character have been absent from the master narrative of Hindi cinema in a manner that typically parallels the representation of minority in Hollywood films. And though it is claimed as Ganti cited that Hindi film may indeed be one of the few sites in India where Muslims are not marginal and even enjoy some success, the portrayal of the community itself has remained deeply problematic, with Muslims being othered in a sustained fashion in Hindi cinema. There are films which are rare instances of cinematic representation of Muslims that deviate from this naturalized norm, films such as Garam Hawa, Gaman, Bazaar, Salim Lange Pe Mat Ro, Anjuman and Mammo. These films are mostly non commercial films and are more often than not produced by non commercially oriented filmmakers, operating outside conceptual and aesthetic framework of popular Bombay based film industry.

Within mainstream Hindi films the cinematic othering of Muslims has occurred via a variety of strategies of representation. It ranged broadly across three types temporally from exoticization as the earliest incarnation of this trend, whereby Muslims were shower in their Nawabiy/courtly quasi historical traditions mostly in historical genres spatially culturally and linguistically distinct stylized and removed from normal mainstream. And although the construction of Muslims as exotic others constituted the dominant mode of representation of the community during the 1950s and 1960s, this pattern underwent a significant shift, primarily due to the gradual diaappearance of the Muslim social from the screen. Thus even through the early 1980s
saw release of some films that could be considered typical of this genre both in terms of themes and representational strategies, these films seemed to take their cues from the 1950s. In fact there emerged a new mode of representation that was deployed in relation to the Muslim community. And this is the second mode of representation chronologically speaking and it is marginalization. The hallmark of this mode was the casting of Muslim characters in limited roles, always subordinate to the leading players who were almost exclusively portrayed as Hindu within the cinematic narrative. In other words while the Muslim protagonists were present in the narrative and not entirely erased they only appeared in their margins, with their appearance conforming to an implicit representational code, and mostly typically represented as stereotyped. Mostly seen as adjuncts to Hindu protagonists these roles departed from distant aristocrats. Marked by certain outward signifiers or what Umberto Eco called explicit codes such as names, appearance, mannerisms as well as religions practices constituted the basic for construction of their Muslim identity within the context of Hindi films.

While Hindi films from 1970s onwards included Muslim characters in their general storyliners a development frequently cited as evidence of industry’s embrace of secular ideals, like Muslim socials that preceded them, they revealed little about the ethos of Muslim community in India, its interval etc. Consequently, despite their pressure within mainstream films and a shift from their portrayal as exotic others, the systematic othering of Muslim continued apace, this time through marginalization whereby they had a token presence but never integral to the narrative.

For our purpose what is relevant is the significant departure by 1990s which consolidated itself by early 2000 in an altered representation, unlike the earlier decades when their presence had been marginal but being, Muslim protagonists now begin to increasingly appear in a variety of negative characters whether as criminals (Farz and Angaar), small time crooks (Love Ke Liye Kuch Bhi Karega), power hungry politicians (Bas Itna Sa Khwab Hai), corrupt police officials (Shool), and as Pakistanis aggressively fighting valiant Indian military forces in films such as Border, Sarfarosh (as already noted) In keeping with this trend towards the demonization of Muslim characters within Hindi cinema is their frequent representation as terrorists engaged in acts of violence against the Indian nation. Indeed such portrayals marks perceptible shift in films through turbulent 1990s and where aggressions is deployed as a defining trait of the Muslim community, mostly in villainous roles. Obsessed by theme of terrorism, it was invariably Islamic type that stood villified. These negative portrayals constituted the leitmotif of a series of recent films. Emblematic of this emergent genre of cine-patriotic films are simplistic binary of good versus evil plots, in which Muslim protagonists are typically defined as violent, evil, driven by visceral hatred of India and single desire to destroy it and unleash terror upon it, in films like Quayama: City under threat, Jaal, Hero, Maa Tujhe Salaam. Yeh Dil Hai Ashiqana..Most of these films focussed on terrorism show no substantive attempt to portray the complexities of the political situation in Kashmir, or manipulation on either sides or show factors that underpin militancy in the region. Instead these narratives identify terrorism most exclusively as result of evil machinations of India’s neighbor and arch rival Pakistan, carried
out by infiltrators or misguided terror recruits. Kashmir militants are typically represented as Muslim terrorists fighting Indian security forces and their linkage moves further in a linear direction to identify with Pakistan and Taliban. Shown as typical fundamentalist Jihadi terrorists shown to conspire against India, the Muslim Talibanis Pakistanis and Kashmiri are conflated in these portrayals of demonized subjects.

While identifying Pakistan as evil nation responsible for perpetuating terrorism and militancy on Indian soil, the implications of these films for Muslim community within India are very clear. By their conflation of Islam with acts of violence against the Indian nation, these films indicate that Muslims staying in India are either agents or supporters of Pakistan and that the Muslims have to prove their loyalty to the nation state. (Chadha et al 2008, p.138-142)

3.11 SECULAR FILMS OF SHAH RUKH KHAN-POPULAR INTERVENTIONS AT RE-SECULARIZATION OF CINEMATIC TEXTS

It is interesting to note how the filmographic biography of the star provides an illustrative instance of upholding a counter-current to the cultural nationalism, de-secularization, re-ethnicization, jingoism that had cast its imprints on popular films since early 1990s-corresponding to the nation’s tryst with the liberal regime. These films offer popular re-assertion of re-secularization almost as a rebuttal to the above –said impulses within cinematic texts.

3.11.1 Chak De! India (2007, directed by: Shimit Amin)

The film stars Shah Rukh Khan as Kabir Khan, (a name suggestively derived from one of India’s famous saint Kabir, who has been a popular secular Bhakti saint) the former captain of the Indian hockey team. When Khan as a captain of his team faces the Pakistani hockey team he is fouled, and elects to take the penalty stroke himself, but his strike fails and India suffers a crushing defeat in hands of the Pakistani team. In the plot after this disastrous defeat to the Pakistan hockey team, Khan is ostracized from the sport As soon after the match news circulated in the media based on a photograph of Khan accepting a handshake from the Pakistan team captain. This action leads to a nation-wide smear-campaign which alleged Khan as the traitor, who is a Muslim and therefore might have deliberately acted to favour Pakistan’s win over India. He and his mother (Joyshree Arora) are forced to quit their ancestral house, facing opprobrious and acrimonious attacks by his neighbours, based on religious prejudice and cultural “othering”, calling him a “Gaddar” meaning a traitor. Seven years later, Mr. Tripathy (Anjan Srivastav), the head of the Indian Hockey Association, meets Khan’s friend and hockey advocate Uttamji (Mohit Chauhan), to discuss the Indian women’s hockey team. Tripathi argues that the team has no future, since the ‘basic role’ of women lies in domesticity. Uttamji, however inform him that Kabir Khan, whom no one has seen for seven years wants to coach the team. Though initially skeptical, Tripathy conceded. Seven years later in an effort to redeem and exculpate himself, Khan becomes the coach for the Indianan women’s hockey team, internally rife with squabbles, with the aim to unite its sixteen contentious players and lead the team to world championship. Khan finds himself in charge of a fractious group of women players representing the diverse nation (the different states), divided
by their competitive nature, individualist ambition, egoistic motives. Khan instills nationalist consciousness, sense of common mission, and above all unified the national team. Overcoming initial problems of disciplining the team, and obstacles of participation in the competition held at Australia, the “World Championship of Women’s Hockey”, Khan leads the team to play the match after a stiff negotiation with the team management that was hesitant to send the team they considered as ‘under-performing’ in its ability. The team in their courageous performance under the marshalling guidance of coach Kabir Khan overcomes their differences, and emerge victorious. Khan’s reputation restored for bringing laurels to the country, he returns home with his mother, welcomed by the same neighbours, applauding him as their hero.

The film most importantly addresses the issue of secular Indian Nationality. Nationality comprises three interconnected propositions. The first concerns personal identity and claims that it may properly be part of someone’s identity, that they belong to this or that national grouping. The second proposition is ethical and claims that nations are ethical communities. They are contour lines in the ethical landscape. The duties we owe to our fellow nationals are different from and more extensive than, the duties we owe to humans beings as such. The third proposition is political and states that people who form a national community in a particular territory have a good claim to political self determination, there ought to be put in place an institutional structure that enables them to decide collectively matters that concern primarily their own community (Miller, 2000, p 27).

The film Chak De involves the question of nationality, where an internally discordant sporting team is mobilized on the strength of an overriding national identity in a competitive bid against other nationalities. The personal identity anchored to thus enables the team to be forged – bound to the duty of upholding national pride through the mobilization of the coach, the hero who marshals the team, a plural unit – a microcosm of this nation.

National communities are constituted by belief: a nationality exists when its members believe that it does. Overriding the question of people sharing some attribute like language or race, it is shared belief and a shared wish to continue their life in common that assert national community is forged and national identity shared (ibid p 28).

There is assertion of national community and sense of collective identity around through mobilising agency of the star hero. And it is related to the question of ‘active identity’ of Indian ness aroused by the hero, playing the coach who brings the tea to triumph. Resolving squabbles, ironing out differences, the diverse team with representative of different states of a diverse nation transcends its differences and an active identity of the nation is invigorated.

Kabir Khan’s strategy and game-plan envisages the spirit of an unified nation that believes in collective strength and action to achieve its goals. His motivational role helps to co-ordinate the best sporting moves from among the diverse team members, a community of the sporting nation. ‘Nations are communities that do things together take decisions achieve results and so forth. Of course this cannot be literally so: we rely on proxies who are seen as embodying the national will: statesmen, soldiers, sportmen etc…’ (ibid) In the film it is the coach (the hero) aligned extra-textually to his secular star-imaget and his successful biographical ascendency.
that lends to the film an embodiment of nationalist pride of success in the game of hockey, albeit fictive.

The principle of nationalism espoused by Gellner on nationalism is the aim to make national and political units congruent. Majority nationalists ‘seek to expand the boundaries of their community until it kisses the boundaries of the state in which they already form a majority’ (Wayne, 2006, p. 24). Popular Hindi films under the ideological pale of majoritarian Hindu nationalism have expressed discrete exclusionary rhetoric, especially under the Hindutva influence since the early 1990s that coincide with the rise and resurgence of political Hinduism. SRK’s film Chak De de-escalates the brazenness of Hindu hegemony and introduces a revised rhetoric that seeks to assimilate the alienated Muslim—the ‘othered minority’. This kind of an assimilative tenor can give credence to what is ‘…in more progressive ways that invite individuals from minority communities to integrate into cultural mainstream, perhaps by modifying or thinning out the majority identity in ways that make it possible for all citizens of the state to feel a part of the national community.’ (ibid., p. 24).

In this project of (popular) cultural politics the nation expands its secular borders and nationalism in a bid to disalienate the marginalized Muslim ‘other’. International sporting events that stir up nationalist sentiments and emotions and can be sites to bolster the national self-image (ibid., p. 25) is a narrative ploy in the film for the globalizing nation to imaginatively reproduce a competitive self-image in sporting arena under the guise of secularism, albeit an assimilative hegemonic gesture of majoritarian cultural forces.

The film in stark contrast to themes of marginalization of Muslims in their vindicated stereotypical construction as potential terrorist and threat to an otherwise repressive state, we see how in face of suspicion the minority’s role is delinked from memories of partition and of suspected ties to Pakistan (Singh, 2008, 121). Kabir Khan fights a battle of recrimination suspicion or even accusation of transnational religion loyalties and of being a traitor. As a representative of the Indian Muslim, Kabir takes or claims the centre stage in narrative of national identity building. Pakistan is finally marginalized and even excised from the picture. (ibid).

The film brought to fore the majoritarian Hindu cultural politics that tend to hold the Muslim Minorities as suspect of terror or treachery and thus critically focuses upon the failure of
nation’s secular discourse as a delimited strategy. Under the able leadership of the Muslim Hockey coach, Kabir Khan, earlier under aspersions of being a suspected traitor for having lost a match to Pakistan, in which he was the captain, had to prove his national allegiance through the victory of the woman’s hockey team he led. He was instrumental in producing a sense of nationhood and unity within a team otherwise heterogenous and diverse with women players from different parts of the country. The mobilization and motivation by the coach served to unify the team, a metaphor of the pluralized, diverse nation. Thus it can be said that: ‘People who previously thought of themselves as having various sorts of identities—including religious, linguistic and regional—have to be convinced … that their primary identity is as member of this particular nation. And that the project of building and shaping an identity is an aspect of nationalism’ (Wayne, 2006, p. 25-26).

Kabir Khan’s secular credentials and his nationalist loyalty besides being proved, iconizes his role as a leader who seeks to ‘reprioritize national identity’ over other fissiparous tendencies. The primary focus of patriotism shifts the unified energy of the hockey team towards upholding nation’s sporting prowess. Supplanting the minority stigma, Khan emerges triumphant in his role as an agent directed towards a goal for nation-building and in even ‘sentimentalizing the national identity’. Such a popular nation building project in a popular text is different from earlier patriotic films on militarism and belligerence. Instead of a nationalistic aggression on the battlefield or border, an established popular genre in Hindi cinema, here nationalism, nation building and national identity is allowed to be popularly re-configured alternatively in the domain of sporting field. Re-visiting the post-colonial pride of defeating the ‘White team’, Kabir and his led Indian women’s hockey team team figuratively ‘de-colonized’ the game of hockey. Shot in Australia, showing an applauding diasporic audience, the film engaged in addressing the national community beyond its territorial bundaries.

Despite deliberate political state supported methods, appointed political actors and state institutions aimed at nation-building projects, there can also be private, popular and commercial activities that can produce similar impact on people’s sense of national identity. ‘I am thinking of the myriad activities by individuals and corporations ranging from the speech and writings of politicians… to the work of novelists, singers, film makers, sitcom writers, sporting heroes, advertisers and so on’ (Wayne, 2006 ibid, p. 68). The film and its hero stands out as a secular nation-builder. His role demanded him to keep an ethnically plural and diverse Indian women’s hockey team cohere around the spirit of nationalist unity, overriding the diverse ethnic composition of the team, and to produce ‘a civic sense of nationalism’ as per Gellner’s views (ibid). The star biography strongly rooted to his secular positioning through his inter-religious marriage to Hindu lady Gauri Chibba, his observance of Hindu festivals like Deewali, his children, son Aryaan and daughter Suhaana, exposed to liberty or choice of religion as practitioners of major Indian faiths (see, biographical accounts of the star as in Sheikh, 2009, Chopra, 2007.) strengthened him as a purveyor of such a sense of national identity.

One of the problems confronted by nation is that communalism and its permanent division of the nation into majorities and minorities. In order to tackle its own ‘reason of existence’, how
the nation tried to maintain itself without being divided into majorities and minorities – a division that had paradoxically brought the nation itself into existence is an intriguing and complex issue. (Samaddar, 2001, p. 141). The nation displayed a strange ambivalence as it could never concede to this reality as it had to ‘deny permanent divisions’ (ibid, 141). Nation as the supreme community entered into various reconciliatory accords with different minority communities so that they could be subsumed under the supreme solidarity of itself i.e. the nation. The nation was to be solution. Therefore, and understandably, so, the Indian Constitution does not define a minority. The secular Constitutional provisions must permit freedom to all religions in all spheres of life, and ensure equal rights and privileges. It safeguards and protect the minority rights their institutions and guarantees their right to carve out their niche. In order to be a nation, bargain must be struck. The constitution shows how the nation stoops to conquer. In other words, we shall have majorities and minorities ensured by the nation, yet these majority and minorities will also ensure that there remains a nation above them, a referee, who for the justification of its own soul, will go on creating the categories (ibid, p 141).

After independence, partition continued to cast its shadow on the minority question. The minorities – chiefly meaning Muslims – formed a ghetto. Their loyalty was suspect and the nation had to strike a bargain with them. Minority protection was the deal and secularism was the political face of the deal. ‘The nation was, thus to remain forever a half nation, destiny to remain perched precariously on the uncertain concept of a secularism which would allow pogroms army brutalities and strategic isolation of communities on the margins (of the core) of the nation’.(ibid, p.142) Secular thus became a political strategy to protect the nationalist core and protecting minorities at margins.

The discourse of majorities and minorities and its history is an ‘eternal see saw battle of secularism and communalism – both upholding the nation, guaranting that thus battle will continue as long as there is this post-colonial nation which is forever trying to be a nation’ (ibid).

Chak De exposes the cracks in nation’s moral and political discourse of secularism, first by being to light the inability of state to protect the minority as a suspect. Despite its overwhelming moral authoritarian presence, constitutional protection and legal guarantees, secular remains confined to formal rhetoric and fails to percolate deeper into the psyche of the nationalist core.

Sport is an organized spectacle and staged events to generate a monetary sense of unity…We live in the culture of the image. The right image can revitalize cities, galvanize nationalism (Rojek, 2007. p.108). The full game of hockey played out on screen in the film Chak De creates what Baudrillard, as cited in Rojek, says is not staging, cultural confusion between reality and illusion, but a question of disappearance itself. In contemporary culture, the notion of shared reality is so entangled with images manufactured and circulated or exchanged through media that one can no longer distinguish it from fantasy. Like the real sporting event televised or
broadcast, the game of hockey in the film is a constructed image a fantasy and cannot be conversely speaking disentangled from the reality of other moments of national triumph.

For Bandrillard, the Gulf War was played out as a ‘media spectacle’ – a point of view that reinforces the proposition that contemporary culture has reached a stage in which fantasy and reality can no longer be disentangled. On this account, Gulf war is a highly dramatic example of how electronic images produced by society have taken over from traditional idea of reality. Zizek as cited, too holds that situated in a culture of image distinction between reality and illusion is often shallow, and where cultural artefacts have unprecedented force to establish shared notions of symbolic order. Imaginary illusion of the ‘exciting’ and patriotically played hockey match broadly supports Baudrillard’s argument that cultural illusion has converged with cultural reality making it impossible to unravel the two from each other. At the heart of this is the proposition that cultural form has replaced traditional notions of external, constraining reality. The images produced by electronic media of reproduction recognize no constraints. They support and extend the symbolic order in which on location practice plays out. So far so Baudrillardian.

It is this that sees that reality if spectacularized can have a propensity with a culture to allowing fantasy to coalesce with reality. If Gulf War can look as spectacle, then the game of a fictional situation can propose to be as real. Fantasy can occupy the space of real on strength of its spectacularization. The game of hockey spectacularized blurs the distinction between the real and the simulacra. It can be asked if Chak De that poses as spectacularized as reality appears in today’s context, is a simulcra that nevertheless plays fiction of an unified nation under the guardianship of the an able patriotic Muslim coach.

Contemporary culture is shaped in relation to pre eminent forms. The meanings and meaning making processes which determine, and are determined by culture are always formed in relation to audiences and their everyday life worlds and social practices. Of course meanings are also shaped in relation to other significant communicational nodes, including other media (print, aural) social institutions (government, law, education, family) friendship and community groups, and the imaginary of an individual’s personal history. ‘All of those interactions take place within a more generalized and collective history, in which particular memories are privileged and perceived in text, and are thus available for meaning making in present’ (de Certau cited in Jeff Lewis 2008 p 10).

Chak De reinvolves the collective memory of India’s victory in 1983 at Lords in the cricket world cup, thus a triumphant assertion of national victory in colonial sports as part of the collective memories that comes to inform the text and its unconscious. Shah Rukh as an agent to the victory in the film rekindles this preserved memory in a global moment of nation’s competitiveness and seeks to re-claim the unflinching integrity of the Muslim subject/citizen. Ironically Chak De despite an affirmation of secular values counters this Demonization or othering only by falling prey to what Anil Rai, as cited has called claiming and performing their allegiance to the Indian nation. This is normally done by expression of loyalty or devotion to India in Patriotic speeches where the Muslim protagonist protesting religions discrimination...
which translates into an assertion of inclusion in the national family as shown in Fiza, Sarfarosh, Mission Kashmir and so on. Here Muslim protagonists resist attempts to question their loyalty to the nation based on their religious identity. And most dramatically, they prove their patriotism by making supreme sacrifice for the country as in films like Indian Maa Tujhe Salaam (see Chadha et al. 2008, ibid. p. 142). The film Chak De too sees how Kabir Khan allegedly a traitor in the game of hockey (wherein sports represents a battlefield for national competition) was required to prove his loyalty and patriotism.

Vasudevan in his study of star as the secular transcendental addresses two significant moments across two star registers. The one that is relevant for comparison here is his second model based on star biography of Nana Patekar. How, instead of working through a consistent logic and extension of the persona into different fields, there emerges a logic of performative destabilization and play, where screen persona render the possibility, and imponderability of rupturing the continuum of the image. Vasudevan takes the career trajectory of actor Nana Patekar (Vasudevan 2010, p136).

In this case, I would like to position Shah Rukh in either models of transcendental star delineated by Vasudevan and reflect on two significant films of his career to explore both the formulation. The dimensions of Shah Rukh’s imaginary biography is seen to address the representation of Shah Rukh in both consistent logic and at moments of its ruptures and extension of this. While the first model and the implication of Shah Rukh is reserved for a separate head (in the film Swades), in the film Chak De India, SRK’s role sees him in the second model of secular-transcendence. The consistent logic of casting in a certain type is ruptured through the logic of performative destabilization and also a rupturing of the continuum almost to establish his credentials as a secular star of postmodernist transcendence.

In his role in Ghulam e Mustafa (1998) as a Muslim character a gangster hero – a rupture for which the audience was never prepared and was quite at variance with those which have been most highlighted in his oeuvre. This particular break in the virtual biography of his screen persona in playing the other who remains a marginalized criminal and meets death inevitably as a redemptive strategy we see how such deconstruction emerge from the history of previous narratives and of the function of the star’s screen persona here. It poses a question of reconciling the narrative world and screen personality of Ghulam e Mustafa with his master narrative of the star personality. This is dealt in terms of a performative strategy of a Hindu

---

276 Page
symbolic authority to assume the guise of the other in order to transform itself. Here, as Vasudevan argues is invoked a series of accounts of the desired transformation of Hinduism in the modern era, especially from the time of colonial period. This stresses on forming up of Hinduism, its acquiring a more disciplined theological cast, and a more strictured set of protocols through which integrate and orient its following that parallels drives of Hindu nationalists like Bankim Chanda Chattapadhyay and Savarkar (Vasudevan, 2010 p 160). Patekar secures the Hindu hegemony and its symbolic authority by performing the Muslim other for the Hindu self that now need to be recast to entrench its hegemony. This reconciliation to his master narrative of a Hindu subject and these fissures affords us with possibilities of a transcendence of community boundaries, through the register of performance, play, and imagination – the imagining if not the other then of the limits of the self. Spectatore invest in this fissure in the virtual persona of the star – as it opens to produces a crack a glimmer of light, where we may insert our own subjectivity for a secular transcendence. (ibid., p 162).

Taking cue from Vasudevan’s argument that this fissure does not traffic in any way with Patekar’s biographical character and motivations, I seek to see how in the film Chak De, there is a strange case of performative detabilisation, that while fissuring the screen biography of an upper caste, class affluent and middle class North Indian hero brings out the Muslim other – who refuses to be marginalized. In an affirmative performance of a secular citizen dispelling charges of treachery against the (Hindu) nation, Shah Rukh articulates a bold rhetoric opposed to the cultural and political othering of Muslim(a motif recurrently seen in Hindi films since early 90s). Unlike the case of Patekar, this fissures open up space that lend itself to be held in conjunction with Shah Rukh’s own real biographical character, as a Muslim star with proclaimed secular credentials.

3.11.2 My Name Is Khan/MNIK (2010, directed by: Karan Johar)

Rizwan Khan (Shah Rukh Khan) as a Muslim child grew up with his brother Zakir (Jimmy Shergill) and lived with their mother Razia Khan (Zarina Wahab) in a middle class family in the Borivali area of Mumbai. Rizwan as a growing up child was distinct from the rest of the neighbourhood children. He was gifted with certain innate skills, a special ability to repair mechanical things. His difference leads to special tutoring from a reclusive scholar and special attention from his mother, both of which lead to a heightened jealousy from his brother Zakir, who eventually leaves his family for life in the United States. Despite this resentment, as an adult Zakir sponsors Rizwan to come and live with him in San Francisco after their mother passes away. It is at this time that Zakir’s wife, Haseena (Sonya Jehan) diagnoses Rizwan with Asperger syndrome. Rizwan also begins to work for Zakir and in the process meets a hairdresser, a Hindu woman named Mandira (Kajol) and her young son Sameer or Sam (Yuvan Makaar), from a previous marriage. Despite Zakir’s disapproval the two marry and settle down in Banville (a fictional town). Mandira and Sameer take Rizwan’s last name (his surname Khan as their own) They are neighbours to the Garrick family. Mark Garrick is a reporter and Sameer is a close friend of their young son Reese, while his mother Sarah, is a friend of Mandira.
The September terror attack upon the twin–tower in New York, disrupts the perfect existence of the Khans. Mark goes to cover the war in Afghanistan and is killed there leaving the family in utter despair. Meanwhile the Khan family starts experiencing the post-9/11 prejudice against the Muslims as terror suspects. Reese begins to turn against Sam as well. One afternoon, an argument between the two turns into a racially motivated schoolyard fight between Sameer and a gang of older students. Reese, acting on behalf of Sameer, tries to stop the fight, but is held back. Sam is hit in the stomach, knocking him unconscious. The gang then silences Reese threatening to beat him up if he tells the school authorities about the incident. Sam dies of a ruptured spleen in the hospital. A shattered Mandira blames Rizwan for Sam’s death, stating that Sam “died only because his last name was Khan”. She tells Rizwan that she no longer wants to be with him. When he asks her what he has to do to be together with Mandira, she sarcastically tells him that he has to tell people of the United States and the President that his name is Khan and he is not a terrorist. Rizwan takes Mandira’s words seriously and sets out on a journey by road, that takes him from one U.S. state to the other, to meet the president George W. Bush and later the new President elect Barak Obama. During this quest, he travels to Wilhemina, Georgia and befriends a Black woman Mama Jenny and her son Joel. Later, in Los Angeles, he prays in a mosque and overhears violent fundamentalist rhetoric from Faizal Rahman (Arif Zakaria). Opposed to fundamentalist extremism Khan reports the matter to the F.B.I. (Federal Bureau of Investigation) but there was no response at the moment. Later, while waiting in a crowd to meet President Bush and repeating several times, “My name is Khan and I am not a terrorist”. Rizwan gets arrested and gets placed in a prison by the U.S. Police who misinterprets his statement thinking that he was a terrorist. While inside the prison he is interrogated as a terrorist–suspect and meets psychiatrist Radha (Sheetal Menon) who believes that he is innocent. He is later released after a media campaign by Indian student reporters Raj and Komal and Bobby Huja, who prove his innocence by unearthing his attempts to inform the F.B.I. about the fundamentalist leader Faizal Rahman. After his acquittal, he returns to the hurricane-hit Wilhemina to help Mama Jenny and her son. His efforts to rescue the people from the calamity hit area catches media attention and numerous Muslims come forward to help as well. At the same time a remorseful Reese confesses to Mandira and reveals the identity of the gang that who killed Sam. Mandira informs the detective who has been assisting her on the case, and arrests the gang. Mandira receives a call from Sarah to forgive Rizwan, she tells her “I’ve lost my husband; don’t lose him”. Mandira realizing her mistake, joins Rizwan and their love rekindles. However, at the moment she arrives, Rizwan is stabbed by one of Faizal Rahman’s followers, who accuses him of being a traitor to Islam, and Rizwan is rushed to the hospital. With Mandira’s help, Rizwan survives and meets the new President – elect who tells him “Your name is Khan and you are not a terrorist”. The film closes with Rizwan and Mandira going back home.

In post 9/11 scenario, the terrorist threat goes global and so did country’s ability to mobilize resources to transitionally to act against the threat. Within this cinematic armature, the street Kabir Khan travels affords the function of a narrative shifter. It offers him the possibility of
encounters with strangers, and the dynamics of estrangement offered to this diasporic subject is a parallel that may be drawn with the heroes of 50’s social whose location in the streets of Bombay/city served as a crucial signifier for transformation and mode of experience of the urban and the modern. The estrangement experienced for Kabir, translocated to America is at once simultaneously traumatic and liberating, registering the hurt of social anonymity and ignominy as a stranger, as a Muslim, as a suspect of terror, but it also embraced the exhilarating (p 150) possibilities of escape from social hierarchy. The city, emerge as a field of social fluidity. It offers to be a transcendent location, to emerge as a secular crusader affording a release from hierarchy and deferred identity inscribed on his migrant body. This release is complemented by a performative transcendence (see, Vasudevan 2010p. 151).

The al-Qaida attacks on Washington and New York represents a pivotal moment in American and world history. These attacks not only ‘created a void in New York skyline’ but also constituted a ‘rupture in the meaning of America and the American people’s faith in their nation’s global primacy and inviolability’. In particular the attack challenged many of the assumptions that had been inscribed over American culture, identity and sense of historical destiny. Not surprisingly, the social status quo with most to lose from this vulnerability rushed forward in order to fill the void, to restive meaning to the condition and status of America (Lewis, 2008 p 26).

This anxiety vis-à-vis terror is expressed in MNIK and also and suitably assuaged by SRK’s role. Journalists and politicians invoked the discourses of nationalism and the deep past – as a common strategy to cope with national crisis and instability. The aim of the strategy was to provide greater sense of stability and destiny by grounding the modern state in a sense of origin and purpose. The then Unite States President George Bush sought to fill the semiotic with a highly integrated and homogenizing ideology of the nation, action and vengeance in a bid to truncate the possibility of fragmentation and emergency of alternative (perhaps revolutionary) meanings. The war against terror was part of Bush’s call for a mission of retribution The war of terror became a cultural trope which sought to inscribe itself on the imagings of all audience meaning makers and this respective reading of this domain of globalizing culture.(ibid. Lewis ibid.p.27-28)

The film MNIK establishes the transcendental valience of, what Vasudevan identifies as, secular star image to meaningfully coalesce with the heroic role in the film that serves to mobilize two important political concepts. Enjoined to the hero’s display of ‘public virtue’(Miller,2000 ibid.p.82) in his services extended to the fellow American citizens(the Black families of a village) the hero enunciates within the film the idea of activist citizen member of the national community.’.Going beyond the exclusive focus on rights and obligationsthe ‘republican view of citizenship involves more than these.It involves being willing to take active steps to defend the rights of other members of the political community, and more generally to promote its common interests. The citizen is one who gives to the aid of a fellow citizen….Finally…the citizen is someone who is ready to volunteer for public service when need arises’(ibid.p.83)
Secondly, David Held’s concept of cosmopolitan democracy can be adapted to see within the film, MNiK, how an Indian migrant to the United States, one of the leading guardians of democratic principles, champions the cause of secularism and democracy and carries out a crusade against the anti-democratic persecution of ethnic minorities. Khan’s character emerges as a popular signifier of ‘Democracy’ that has changed its geographical and institutional focus over time. Democracy confined to the city state, then to nation state now has become a concept that is acknowledged to have a global character (Hoffman, 2004 p 37). As local national regional and global structures and processes overlap democracy assumes a cosmopolitan form and from democratic, national citizenship it shifts to a world citizenship. Held’s notion of cosmopolitan democracy without undermining state as a permanent actor, argues it to stretch across borders. His notion entails that people would enjoy a multiple citizenship as they are members of diverse political communities. As a multiple or multilayered concept does not mean that state will disappear or wither away but the state would no longer be regarded as sole centre of the legitimate power within their own borders but would be relocated to and articulated within an overarching global democratic law. Citizenship from losing statist would be simultaneously suprastatist and sub statist. (ibid p 39). Khan’s character in the film is a popular rendition of cosmopolitan democracy that addresses citizenship rights, democratic rights and human rights which are transposed to a larger field of globality. He represents the voice of the persecuted, marginalized, ethnic minority and emerges as a lone transcendental crusader who seeks justice against state excesses. The character stands at the intersecting axes of multiple citizenship, as the narrative is nebulous about it, and it can be assumed that Khan claims territorial, transterritorial and transreligious affinities that criss-cross the categories of religion, ethnicity, the nation, and the diaspora. However his claim for larger justice makes him surpass defining limits of parochialism of ethnic politics and its conspiracy and renders him to articulate a popular notion of secularism on a global terrain.

MNIK serves as a popular version of what can be termed as counterhistory through the crusade of the hero as it exposes the discrimination and internal colonialism of the United States, a globally acclaimed and celebrated seat of democratic principles. Despite a constant disavowal and selective amnesia as conjoined strategies through which the US strongly accomplishes a denial of imperialism, one can discern internal and external colonialism were maintained. Throughout most of its history, the US participated in the world system. The disparity between the United State’s imperial policies and refusal to acknowledge them bears powerful witness to the power of the doctrine of US exceptionalism which authorized the refusal. The US exceptionalism as a political doctrine functions as a regulatory ideal assigned task of defining, supporting and transmitting US national identity. The power of the doctrine to solicit belief is discernible in the clause set in apposition to US imperialism. The idea of global dominance without colonies exposes discrepancy in its policy administration. What the doctrine of exceptionalism declared exceptional in the US political economy referred to European institutions – associated with European colonial history like feudalism, monarchical rule, colonial territories- eminently absent from US history. However, while the state was constituted
in opposition to monarchical rule and was resolute in its rejection of feudalism, its relation to colonialism was far too complex. The complications arose not from the historical fact that such colonies existed but arose from state’s representation of their political states as exceptions and how exceptionalism was used to sustain and legitimize the condition. The psychological process of disavowal and forgetting that exceptionalism facilitated was an exclusion of ‘historical facts’ based on ‘structures of denial’ that might disconfirm that belief.

The authority of the doctrine is discernible in its power actively to the state’s exceptions. It supplied its adherence with the necessary historical absences needed to maintain foundational beliefs of us identity and ethos. The doctrine as a composite construction had support of institutional bulwark that involved broad ranging network of discourses correlating at all levels of US foreign and domestic policies, official history academicians, economists journalists, literary critis, economical writer, theologists, pragmatists, sociologists etc. The doctrine is supported by codified institutionalized academic discourse and is linked to historical narratives, regulates how US citizens represent themselves and their history and has the state link this web of representations to its domestic and foreign policies. Exponents of exceptionality have variously described the nation’s world historical role to emphasize through these normations viz nation of nation leader for free world conquerer of world markets but the exceptional place for the country is derivable from conviction that colonialism was absent from US history.

The power of the state’s exceptions is evident in what the discourse is compelled to disavow, that is those that has been described to be missing from national history. This exceptionalism produced by state’s sovereign power is foundation to the US. In adding to the polity the colonial condition that its governing rules had described the nation as constitutively backing, the state has positioned itself as an exception to the norms through which it governed. The state banned certain categories of people and constituted them as exceptionalist norms slaves, migrant labourers, involuntary migrants – were part of this space of exdeption. They were inside the state but treated as if outside its condition of belonging (Pease, 2000 p.203-205)

The disavowal that was crucial to the production of these exceptions discloses the way how US misrepresented its history. Ironically while disavowing the very historical realities of European imperialism, viz imported slave labour, overseas colonialism, economic exploitation of refugees in differentiating the US government’s domestic policies the same categories were deployed in constituting hierarchical social ranking on the basis of racialist and ethnic divisions within US. These ranking informing US immigration laws have developed out of a residual colonial discourse, while the US foreign policy has not only violated democratic ideals, its new democratic exclusionary policy have led to many marginalized groups like the Asians, Hispanics Amerindian to claim for equal rights and these anomalies in its ideals are effaced. The professed democratic ideals and the imperialist practices contradicted the role of US as a global leader and champion of democracy.

‘State historians have grounded the narrative through which they have ignored the contradiction between the nation’s democratic ideals and subsequent imperialist practices in the discourse of exceptionalism… historical events never in fact coincided with the credo’s
idealized image of the US as a democracy founded in defiance of imperial norms. In accomplishing a position of dominance in the hierarchy of nations, the US practiced imperialism that it disavowed in principle’(ibid.p.206.).

Official historical narrative and its amnesia has misremembered US imperisl history and permitted construction of counterhistories and strategic historical revisionism . Counterhistories have gone beyond official representation to express neo colonial moorings of exploitation and imperial aggression. Effective revisionist histories have often been composed by representatives of the communities whose pasts were displaced from within. official historical narrative. In refusing the cultural stereotypes and conventions through which the official historical narrative had represented them, their alternative narrations have materialized the experiences – of imperial aggression and neo colonialist exploitation – that US exceptionalism had denied referentiality. Paradoxically, while disassociating from European colonizing project, the US postcolony continued British colonial practices in their relations with native populations of neighbouring territories and with migrants from other European colonies. In addition the state’s anticolonial colonialism remained indebted to the imperial model for the construction of its rule of law. The US constitution revealing lingering effects of British imperial law in excluding the non-indegenous population that was transported to the colony as slaves from the imagined national community. Despite acquiring of US citizenship, African Americans were identified as racial distinct group and deprived of their civil and political rights thoughout US history. A kind internal colonialism prevailed that effaced history of state oppression and subordinated certain persons and groups. Ironically claiming exception from colonial norms the state practiced it. (ibid.p.206-210)

The role of the hero acts as a popular personification of the counter-historical discourse emanating from the post-colonial, post-global Bollywood films. The post-colonial, post-global hero rises from the margins to strike back at the very conscience of the neo-colonial empire. The discrimination of the Muslims and the wretched state of the Blacks, the insecurities of the diaspora are complex issues that the hero rises to question.

The construction of the heroic role in the film parallels and complements the re-constitution of the Indian nation-state at the global level. It seeks to transport the migrant to a larger plane of global concerns and issues and conjoins the culturally Indian secular self with the larger geopolitical situation. The film is a revisionary discourse that reproduces the nation at a socio-political level in order to affiliate the Indian nation-state in relation to the wider sphere of global politics and the flow of global capital ( Basu-Thakur,2011,p.89) and seeks to forge an alliance against the ‘othering ‘ of Muslims in a post 9/11 United States of America, through a textually (as well extra-textually) secular hero.

The dynamic of globalization of non-Western societies point towards the emergence of new local identifications that imagine communities beyond nation-state or explore non-Western social, cultural and religious forms as alternatives in struggle to define a parallel modern identity without becoming totally “Westernized”, claims Betina David .(David, 2010 p.195)Projections of such explorations have found its articulations in the character of SRK in
MNIK, and his appeal to non-Western audience, gave him a trans-nation (even a trans-Islamic) voice to carry forth a popular-secular tirade against animosity of the global North particularly the U.S. against the Muslim as suspects of terror and to expose how the U.S through its discriminatory culture has subverted its professed ideals of democracy and liberalism and renegade from its role as a champion of civil rights and its protection. Articulating in favour of a more inclusive civilian culture informed by humanitarian principles and compassion, Khan’s role emerges as a popular espousal of a secular-universalizing mandate and a humanistic discourse of globalization and a cosmopolitan living beyond its materialistic trappings.

Both the films, Chak De/MNIK appear to be sharp rebuttal in response to othering of Muslims as enemies of the nation. As sharp response to several films since 1990s under the influence of Hindu cultural nationalism or the Hindutva ideological brigade and the widespread psychosis of terror generated following the 9/11 twin tower attack in America and fear against the demonized Muslim, Shah Rukh’s film Chak De and My Name Is Khan are extremely relevant in the filmographic trajectory of the star.

If a consumerist culture have secured its hegemony over his star image for long barring his early films in negative characters when he exposed contradictions of ideology in his psychopathic roles, in the two said films there is a staging of an emphatic exposure or embodiment of an alternative or oppositional ideological position (itself usually contradictory) to dominant ideology. The subversiveness of these stars can be seen in terms of radical intervention (not necessarily conscious) on part of themselves or others who have used the potential meanings of their images – as representations would clearly suggest them as interventionists (Dyer, 1979 ibid. 38).

Shah Rukh’s popularity as a star across a cross section of audience his well accepted polysemic image, his biography as a secular hero allowed this image potential to be used and be read subsequently as interventionist alternative and even oppositional in these two films. While ‘Chak De’ saw him interrogating the aspersious of treachery and suspicion as a Muslim citizen suggesting hockey as an alternative sport against hegemony of cricket and opposing male dominance in sport by suggesting a woman’s national team as champions of nation’s pride, in the film ‘My Nation Is Khan’ Shah Rukh questions the anti-terror dominant discourse of the American state to expose the contradictions of its otherwise much vaunted principles of secularism, liberty, and democracy in face of terror attacks and systematic stereotyped anti-Muslim coding.

The role of a Khan in MNIK, as conscientious citizen embraces the implied ideals of secularism through his liberal, inclusivist, non-parochial, non-sectarian open-mindedness. It stands tall for political good will and humanitarian values. Khan represents himself as a true secular, global citizenry that seeks to escape the narrow inclusivist statist limits and stands for mankind and civic, secular and philanthropic ideals. Citizenship traditionally defined in statist terms (Hoffman, 2004, ibid p.18) and finds a popular articulation in the cosmopolitan, egalitarian, universalist potential of the character that rises above fundamentalist politics, decries statist excess and discriminatory persecution of the Muslims, commits himself to serve
citizens (Blacks of an American village) in distress during a flood and rescues them. The citizenship that Khan’s role allows us to imagine deepens it qualitatively, challenges its statist boundedness or the ‘statist policy of closure’ (ibid.). Such a citizenship, in its post-statist, form involves membership of a series of communities: local, ethnic, nationa, state, trans-state, as an inclusive concept that is shareable and serves to contest the link between the state and citizenship. (see, ibid. p.17-19, 50)

Both the films as a discourse labours to intensify those differences as a way of ‘clearing a space’ for itself within a conflictive semiotic environment seeking to establish themselves as privileged discourse within a field of competing discourses and heterogenous audiences – against what is an imagined dominant. Like the detective fiction that rearticulates concepts of law justice and order within diegesis and discursively demonstrate they are not the sole possessors of any kind of official culture, a parallel discursive attempt is seen in both these films as these two texts ‘does not depoliticize socio-economic relations as much as it seeks to repoliticizes them according to its own discursive ideology’ (Collins, 1989, ibid.p. 35).

While Chak De – repoliticizes the ‘official secular policy of the state’ and its inherent tendentious inclinations to dub the failure of a Muslim as treachery and its disbelief in the Muslim’s loyalty – that needs to be disproved only through proof of trustworthiness, it also repoliticizes the question of male dominance in sporting activity and disbelief in woman’s ability to win nation its laurels, and also the bias popular that favours cricket over other sports in the subcontinent. My Name Is Khan discursively espouses an ideal of a true democracy liberty and secularism in one of the celebrated citadels of the world– United States of America, known to be champions of these ethos and principles.

Barthes does point to the polysemic nature of signs and the exceptions to these mythified narrative standards, constitute polysemy of the concept (see, Lewis, 2008 ibidp 115). This polysemy to the idea of Muslim is explored in MNIK and Chak De through the Muslim identity of the hero(protagonist) where the hero and his Muslim identity in its polysemic significance exposes the ruptures in the myth of the demonized other while bringing to fore the marginalization and discrimination suffered.

Biography of the star has been interestingly mobilized in both the films: Chak De and MNIK with a Muslim as hero of the secular Nation. A parallel may be drawn from Salman Rushdie’s reading of the film Mother India (1957) appropriately in ‘Until Indira Mater’ supplanted her referring to the ways in which the former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi interpellated her own political self through a figure that had become a central symbol of the Indian popular imaginary: Nargis as Mother India.

The piece of Hindu myth making directed by a Muslim director K A Abbas within a culturally syncretic environment of the film industry with hyphenated Hindi Muslim nature of production practices allowed a ‘post Mother- India Nargis’, so far marketed as a glamorous star upon which male voyeuristic desire could easily be projected to undergo a kind of a deconstruction. Never before constructed in terms of her Muslimness prior to her role in Mother India, Nargis’s status as a star post Mother India in complex ways reconfigured her. Her Muslimness, argues
Parama Roy as cited in Mishra entered into a general process of her construction as an iconic actor. As Roy asks, cites Mishra, “how does the other (marked by an inescapable Muslimness) become an icon that represents (Indian) nationness? (Mishra 2002 pp 62-63). It is Nargis’s Muslimness that facilitates a construction of an icon – representing the new syncretic woman (ibid pp 64).

Against this I would argue how in films like Chak De and My Name Is Khan, in a similar vein a Muslimness can be mobilized to articulate the image of a secular India, but this time as a neutral or generic figure as ‘an allegory of the Muslim difference and of a becoming Hindu’ (Parama Roy 168 as cited in Mishra) Shah Rukh’s biographical credentials gets well inscribed to assert the particularity of his Muslim identity – almost avowing the difference of being an Other yet part of the larger family of the nation.

This is sharp contrast to the significant contemporary Muslim male stars like Amir Khan who in Sarfarosh played a Hindu Rajput police officer (waging a vengeance against cross border Muslim terror) or in Fanaa played a Muslim terrorist and thus allowing to erase his particularity in favour of a majoritarian Hindu hegemony (Sarfarosh) ironically fall prey to othering strategies of Hindu nationalism by being identified as a Muslim terrorist in the film. In recent films like Bodyguard. Wanted, Bodyguard, that brought a row of success for Salman Khan, the characters he enacts are Hindu heroes fighting terror and corruption.

3.11.3 Veer-Zaara/VZ (Veer and Zaara, 2004, directed by Yash Chopra)

The story is revealed as a flashback from the prison cell of Veer Pratap Singh, in Pakistan. The narrative begins by showing Zaara Hayaat Khan (Preity Khan), an independent, carefree, spirited young Pakistani girl traveling to India with the ashes of her Sikh governess Bebe (Zohra Sehgal). Before dying Bebe had asked Zaara to fulfill her final wish to take her ashes to India, to the holy Sikh city of Kiratpur, and scatter them in the Sutlej river, among her ancestors. Zaara decides to carry out Bebe’s dying wish. Upon reaching India Zaara’s bus meets with an accident causing it to overturn. An Indian Air Force Pilot, Squadron Leader Veer Pratap Singh (Shah Rukh Khan) comes to her rescue and with his help Zaara completes Bebe’s final rites. Veer requests Zaara to visit his village, as he returns for a brief holiday, to spend a day together. Zaara agrees and Veer takes her on a tour of Punjab. They visit Veer’s home village on the day of the Lohri festival and meet his foster parents, (Amitabh Bachchan and Hema Malini). Veer falls in love with Zaara. Taking her to catch the train to Lahore, when Veer is about to tell her about his feelings, that they meet Raza (Manoj Bajpai), Zaara’s fiancé, belonging to a politically influential family in Pakistan, who has come looking for Zaara. When Zaara is about to board the train that Veer confesses his love to her and then watches her as she sadly boards the train that takes her back to Pakistan.

On reaching Pakistan, Zaara realizes that she has deep love for Veer, but it is also her duty to keep her family’s honour and marry Raaza, a wedding meant to be a political alliance to further the prospects of her high-profile Pakistani politician – cum – statesman, Jahangir Hayaat Khan (Boman Irani). But Zaara starts seeing Veer’s images all around and confides in her mother about having fallen in love with Veer, the Indian Hindu boy. Zaara’s maid and intimate
friend Shabbo calls Veer and tells him how miserable Zaara feels without him, and that she dares him to come and take her away. Veer who had told Zaara that he would give up his life for her, quits his prestigious state job with the Indian Air Force for the sake of uniting with her and goes to Pakistan to bring her back with him to India. Zaara’s mother Mariam Hayaat Khan (Kirron Kher), however implores before Veer to forget Zaara, as knowing that his daughter is in love with an Indian would ruin Zaara’s father and this would also jeopardize the father’s reputation and health. Veer respects this request and decides to leave for India but Raza, who is outraged by the shame Zaara has brought him fabricates charges of espionage against Veer and imprisons him as an Indian spy. Veer silently accepts in fear that formally battling the case would bring publicity to the matter and be a cause of dishonour for Zaara and her family.

After, 22 years a woman lawyer Saamiya Siddiqui (Rani Mukherji), who is an idealistic Pakistani Lawyer, whose mission in life is to pave the path for womens’empowerment in her country takes up the case. The Pakistan government has decided to review the cases of some Indian prisoners in Pakistani jail. Siddiqui took it up as a challenging assignment as the case was considered difficult as the man (Veer) languishing in prison has not spoken to anyone for the last 22 years, and also the prosecution was led by the public/state prosecutor, the ace lawyer, Zakir Khan (Anupam Kher), her former senior, who has never lost a case. On long persuasion Veer starts confiding on condition that she does not mention Zaara and her family as Veer believed that Zaara by then was happily reconciled to her marital life with Raza with children too. The number borne by Veer (786), as a prisoner, is considered to be holy number in Islam; this convinces Saamiya that God has chosen Veer for some special purpose, and becomes more determined to exonerate him, restore his name and identity and repatriated him. After the prosecution presents its case, Saamiya realizes that she must cross the border to find someone in Veer’s village who can testify Veer’s real identity. To Saamiya’s surprise she meets Zaara, who had fled to India and has taken over running the girls’ school after Veer’s parents died. She thought that Veer died on his bike that ran off a cliff, killing everyone on its way to India. Saamiya takes back Zaara back to Pakistan to tell the court about the truth of Veer’s identity. The judge releases Veer from prison and apologizes on behalf of Pakistan. After Veer is finally released, Saamiya offers sindoor to Veer which he applies on Zaara’s forehead. Veer-Zaara bid goodbye to Saamiya at the Wagah border of India-Pakistan and returned to their village in the Indian side of Punjab.

In the film Veer Zaara, Shah Rukh Khan the hero takes away the bride – as if to reclaim the loss of partition (see, Mishra ibid.) when women and their bodies became the site of violence, contest and conflict between the two nations. Playing the acquisitive male role in most films as in Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, he wins over Zaara and bring him back to the nation. Here the film is discursively inter-referential with two other films- Henna and Refuge (2000) by Raj Kapoor and J.P. Dutta respectively – implicated within a narrative tapestry of cross border romance. The initial reason for a young free spirited Pakitan girl to leave her homeland and venture into India was to fulfil the dying wishes of her nanny, Bebe a Sikh. The exact reason for Bebe being in Pakistan are unclear, with brief dialogues revealing that Bebe was brought
over to Pakitan by Zaara’s grand father and Bebe had chosen to be with this family ever since. Whether it was abduction during partition or love with Zaara’s grandfather or volition is unexplained, but she remained a practicing pious Sikh. Here one can raise the question of a retributive male agency of the Indian nation, who as a rebuttal to Bebe’s repatriation, acts alternatively to claim Zaara. Here male agency (of the nation-state) embodied in the hero deciding transference of women appear to be a parallel sign of liminality and contestation is brought into play. (Dudrah, 2008, p.49) Zaara’s story is thus palimpsestic to its encoding by the prior history of another older woman who was taken to Pakitan presumably during partition. Later Zaara too as an older woman chose India as her home despite being born in Pakistan a reverse image of her nanny (Bhattacharya, 2011, p 142).

Zaara demonstrates affective assimilation with Punjabi India when she meets Veer’s family and Veer’s foster father a very Punjabi ex-mega hero Amitabh Bachchan – affectionately tells her that she is a true repository of Hindu traditions. Thus Zaara’s assimilation is to be contrasted with relative non-assimilation of another translated woman her Nanny. Zaara emerge as the figure of liminality/site of contest claimed by the Indian secular hero, a Muslim hero playing a Hindu self.

Zaara’s crossing of the border in the first place is in legal conformity with the Indian state but disobeying the wishes of her family and community (also nation). Zaara’s passage to India is politically and legally unmarked and unremarkable until almost as intervention Raza appears at the other end of the trajectory, but the Nanny’s passage possibly catachystic was more unmarked. Zaara appears to be a site a contest on one end is anarchrostatically Islamic Raza re-abducting her at the station and the more secular looking, valiant Veer, the Indian trying to reabsorb her into the lost Indian sides of her Punjabi self via Veer Singh and his Punjabi relations who immediately identify her as returning bride a sort of returned object of abduction, but the Nanny’s near life long existence and exile in Pakistan is a story of rupture and mysterious surrogacy, in suturing which Zaara’s life enter simultaneously into rapture and rupture of hostile state relations. Zaara is transferred from Veer to Raza at the station, the two men almost vying for her. It is a story of the liminality of the woman asserted while Veer and Raza are enframed withinstabilized caches of citizenship and territorial belonging.

At the moment of Veer’s confession of love for Zaara almost before Raazaa, Zaara’s fiancé, we see how negotiation takes places with the woman as site of transaction – almost reminiscent of pre-partition deals over territoriality. The heroine is subjugated by male authority on either side, Veer representing the Indian side, who suffers only to emerge triumphant in uniting with Zaara. Zaara represents the pre-partition, secular soul of the nation, and unlike the two men she is not bound to statist trappings and she is to be won over by Veer the Indian hero championing the ideal of secular nation counterposed via-a-vis an Islamic Pakitan. (Dudrah, 2008, ibid., p.49-52)

The use of the border under control of state apparatus occurs only twice in comparison to greater occasions or moments of transgressions – not a aggressive military gestures or display of prowess but as emotional sojourns. Here border crossing allows the border to manifest itself
throughout the film as a discursive thing and implicit reference is the diegetic world of the film where the possibilities and pleasures of border crossing are more paramount than the border itself. This is not to offer a reading of Veer Zaara in terms that the Indo Pak border does not matter as a line of control and divisive entity rather, the reading put forward here proposes to account for the pleasure the film aims to encourage around the idea of Indo-Pak border. 

(Dudrah, 2008,ibid . p 48). Veer Zaara does not preclude the reality of the border as a divisive entity and means of othering but apply a transcendental negotiation that overcomes otherwise belligerent rhetoric and jingoistic sentiments. Borders are physical constructs and borderlands are contested spaces of, and around or between borders which are rendered negotiable. The film text produces a cinematic alternative to borderland spaces – a popular intervention mediated Bollywood lenses – as if to escape territorial bickerings. The cinematic borderland allows for a potentially radical act by the hero ( ibid.p 53) at border crossing. In this radical gesture the hero can be seen to engage in an attempt ‘to overcome the limitations imposed by the hegemonic and dominant forces that construct and maintain socially congealed difference’ (Kalra and Punewal quoted in Dudrah,ibid.p.54). Border crossing, though appear to shift boundaries, but does not result in its removal. Keeping it intact, allow the hero to emerge as a vehicle to offer in the climax a preferred ideological mediation of the nation state. The border crossing of national subject or appropriately citizen subjects on either side allow for cinematic liberty that avoids formalities of the statist procedure. Border crossing as imaginative and transcending act is given more credence.(ibid)

Zaara’s decision to quit her family and engagement in Pakistan and to come to India to run the school for school for girls set up by Veer’s uncle is a hegemonic attempt of the film maker to accept independent sexuality albeit in a domesticated manner and close to the ideal of Indian womanhood – the adarsh bhartiya naari – repeatedly reinforced in the film. Her engements in ritual enable her to establish herself as the daughter in law despite her Pakistan identity. This subservience of the heroine compensates for the incarceration of the Indian hero in Pakistani jail. On his return, he applies ‘sindoor’(vermillion) on Zaara’s forehead that marks the conquest of feminine Muslim/Pakistan identity by the Indian/Hindu male protagonist. With that her Hinduisation or appropriation by the subsuming Indian religion is complete. The conquest of Pakitani sexuality has been accomplished by her Lohhri(a harvest ritual of Punjab) participation and reinforced by her acceptance of sindoor in her hair. In Veer Zaara, Zaara’s coming to India and her eventual marriage with Veer, the sexual overtones of a political conquest are unmistakable. Like Zaara Pakistan had to be assimilated and conquered. This may well be the reason that the film was so well accepted in North India (Nirmal Kumar 2008 p 136-137). The underlying discourse is the masculine Indian male appropriating the Pakistani Muslim female sexuality and resonates India’s military victory over Pakitan in every military confrontation.

Despite several secular motifs and registers, there is a betrayal by a Hindu assimilationist meta text. The closing border sequence is the representation of Veer’s return back to home land after two decades of jail in Pakitan, now with Zaara as his partner. Accompanying them to the
Pakistani side of the border is their solicitor friend Saamiya. The latter presents a small box of sindoor inviting Veer to make Zaara his forever. In a predominantly Hindu ritual Zaara’s forehead is marked. Veer invites Zaara to go back home i.e. India. Veer pays bowed obeisance to the land of India as the tricolor (Indian national flag) proudly adorns a border gate. Both walk over into India, a line of border guardsman. They wave back to Saamiya, who wipes her tears and smiles and walks out of the frame into Pakitan.

A dominant reading of this scene is replete with ideological resolve that goes against the original tenor of the fluid pleasures of border crossing and the creation of eclectic borderland spaces, elsewhere picturised in the film and discussed too. A gesture of Hindiising Zaara, Veer’s elderly bride— they return to the territorial boundedness of the Indian nation-state and claims it to be their own. Almost in negation of earlier secular transcendence it reasserts the nation as Hindu and Veer assimilates Zaara to its fold. It serves as a dominant hegemonic ideological resolution to reinforce the territoriality of a Hindu nation. Although the length of this Hindu hegenomic play is a brief one compared to the three and a half hours of border crossings, it can be said as Dudrah argues: ‘The intended dominant Hindu Indian inscription imposed upon the resolution of the film is at odds with the eclectic cultural, social and aesthetic exchanges that have been presented earlier in the film. Thus, the ending is as new and perhaps not the most remembered or exemplary scene of the film… Nonetheless what is possible is the speculative conclusion that the episodic nature of many popular Hindi films, Veer Zaara… whose pleasures and possibilities are not simply curtailed by endings that betray the accumulative effects and affects that have been set into motion over the duration of the filmic text’ (Dudrah, 2008, ibid. p.52-54).

The hero’s role as an Indian state air force official forsaken and his later imprisonment in the jail of Pakistan brings to critical light the role of the discipline bound, dispassioned state authorities and how its regimentation denies border transcendence. The humane sacrifice of the hero by not divulging any detail lest it brings dishonour to Zaara and her kins for this assumedly illicit cross-border relation, goes unnoticed, unacclaimed by the state authorities in either sides of the border. The initial obstacle for a romantic union is the identity ascribed by the state and the presence of state patrol of border. The romantic union is deemed to be a ‘threat’ to the state’s security maintained. But in the closing scenes the real Wagah border give credibility to separation by man made and state maintained political boundaries. (Dudrah, 2008 ibid. p.52) The hero as state agent is perhaps penalized for straying from his impersonal duty of security force in the from of his incarceration in Pakistan. The hero, borrowing Foucauldian understanding, is subject to the power and discipline of statist incarceration. (see, Foucault, 1977- ‘Discipline and Punish’) Within the merciless, brutal, patriarchal, coercive statist discourse, emerges the agency of a woman— representing the humane and compassionate face of Pakitani nation to release Veer from jail of Pakistan. Failure of state to understand human passion and emotion conversely witnesses the triumph of the nation and its people on either sides.
A significant portion of Veer Zaara has been shot in Pakistan jail and precincts of the law court, both spaces are arms of the Pakistan state – inscribed with its coercive presence. Unlike the classic fore runner, Henna primarily filmed in open landsaces, Veer Zaara, shoots in closed spaces mostly to reflect constructed barriers. The open fields of Pak occupied Kashmir in Henna, with people unencumbered by state presence in Henna is starkly different from official urbane, educated, professional characters of Veer Zaara. The hero’s release in Henna circumnavigates legal procedures, while Veer’s release is nured in discourse of rules, constitutional and human rights and the complex relations between the two states. While the extra-legal escape in Henna is not without dangers, in Veer Zaara the protracted legal battle is finally won to favour Veer’s release (Kumar, 2008 ibid p 133).

In Veer Zaara there is no space beyond state beyond state surveillance to obtain release, transgression is subjected to a statist discourse in Veer Zaara. By the time of its production in 2004, India and Pakistan were nuclear enabled powers, had fought three full scale wars and a minor one in Kargil sector (ibid). The urban classes of either states had reconciled to the political reality and mutual stance of two sovereign nations vis-à-vis each other as did the two protagonist and their family. The film explored the middle class urbans values of state, the political power play and the legal manipulation. State intervention is highly visible in Veer Zaara in the shape of police officers who arrest Veer the hero, the Pakistani jail, lawyers and the courts. What is note worthy is the role of Zakir, a senior advocate played by Anupam Kher who a state loyalist defends the constitution and advocates in favour of rights of the Pakistani state. The jail officer who had earlier testified in favour of Veer Pratap Singh and pleaded for his release on hunitarian grounds, later supported Zakir in contending that Pakistan rights are supreme. Interestingly, Zakir finally concedes defeat as he in his admission articulates a significant departure from earlier rigid posturing and says: ‘But now I understand that the future of these countries is in the hands of youngsters like you, who do not measure humans as big and small, man or woman, Hindu or Muslim, who do not rake up bitter memories of the wars of 1947, 1965 and 1999 at every pretext, who wish to address the future with the truth and only the truth. And there is no stopping a country where truth prevails’ (ibid.p 134).

These words allow viewing Pakistan in a more introspective mood in a more congenial light, in sharp contrast to the systematic and recurrent vilification in popular cinematic texts. The year 2004, was significant with Congress regaining power and defeat of right wing force, we also see how the two countries were trying to erase bitter memories of war and forget the trauma of partition, Kargil notwithstanding. This is reflected in Veer Zaara. The film in its candid admission of antagonistic political reality of the two nations (ibid, p.131) seeks to reopen a dialogic phase of negotiations.

The words of Zakir are a direct condemnation of the political process on both sides. The state and all its statist discourse drawn up in formalities of law courts and advocates have failed to deliver. The film talks of rapprochement and need to build bridges, with the younger generation taking charge, represented by young woman lawyer. Saamiya, played by Rani Mukherjee. The onus off bridging the gulf and usher changing is invesdt on post-partition generation, who is
willing to forget and forgive the trauma of partition and ravages of subsequent wars. Here the hero, Shah Rukh Khan stands in stark contrast to his contemporaries who playing either an agent of a hegemonic repressive majoritarian state or a marginalized minority terrorist animate bitterness. Shah Rukh as a matured protagonist represents an evolved view of the nation state whose developmental concerns precedes its hawkish belligerness. He represents a new diplomatic paradigm of goodwill and rapproachments for whom the past history of partition and conflict is only a historical fact and not to be avenged.

Moreover despite being an air force officer of the Indian Air Force, the hero, Veer Pratap Singh (Shah Rukh Khan) does not talk of war and conflict, he carries no weapons and does not express any usual anti-Pak rhetoric (ibid.p 132). Steered clearly from any hate filled situations, Pakistan is seen as an accepted legal entity.

In the film Chopra relegates the Partition and attendant bitterness to the sideline and ignores animosity generated by two decades of violence in Kashmir. The protagonist betrays no bitterness or hatred for Zaara’s origin and articulates a political maturity in ungrudging acceptance of Pakitan as separate entity and in embracing Zaara as his love (ibid p 133).

What is significant as seen in the responsible and mature characters of Veer and Saamiya and also in Zakir’s confession, is the failure of the state to deliver peace and initiate good will. Veer Pratap is forced to engage in a legal battle against the verdict of the state to prove his identity and integrity and not to counter the allegations of espionage, as Saamiya declares. ‘Therein , lies the crunch the political states of the two sides have failed to deliver. The people who are culturally one, feel cheated by their states. The feeling is echoed in no uncertain terms by Veer Pratap Singh...’(ibid. p 134).

Shah Rukh is allowed to emerge as a popular transnational hero capable of affirming the oneness of shared cultural association across the statist borders of the subcontinent. He once again exceeds the statist discourse of control and repression, to voice the popular stirrings of a peopled nation.

But in the narrative of Veer Zaara, the Indian nation is represented by Shah Rukh Khan who represents a kind of non violent, non aggressive Gandhian creed of tolerance against the excesses of Pakistani state directed at him. His ordeal of imprisonment is fought on grounds of principles of an evolved ethos of a democratic civil society based on human rights, liberty, goodwill and freedom of choice. He rises above statist bargaining as face of the people as hero of the nation amidst court room debates about discourse on patriotism and nationalism. The film reveals good faith in dispensing of justice by the Pakitan state and finally the victim Veer is released, with ‘the Pakistani court which dispenses justice to the victim, Veer, actually apologizing to Veer on behalf of the Pakistan state’. (ibid.p.138).

Backed by love, tolerance and political amnesia, Shah Rukh representeds a new paradigm – mediating a ‘third track of Indo Pak diplomacy – love between Indian and Pakistani youth – Avoiding divisive memories of partition, terrorism and the many wars between the two separated and bitter nation..’(ibid p 138-139).Veer serves to heal the wounds of past with promise of peace.
The subplot of the film is based on regional nationalism. While Henna was about ‘Kashmiiriya’t, Veer Zaara about ‘Punjabiyat – an unique regional cultural discourse about a shared historical – cultural complex. These cultural communities not coterminus with state’s political boundaries often obfuscate agonizing historical memories. Forging such cultural kinship with transpolitical loyalties help to evolve cultural linearity. The artificial line of control that partitioned India and Pakitan at the national level and the irrational partition of contiguous cultural territories or communities of Kashmir and Punjab, are transcended by regrouping of the community as one across two independent sovereign political formations. The line of control is refocused from being a conflictual and contested zone to a romantic site ( ibid.p 137).

The subtextual subnationalism counterposed against the meta narrative of a hegemonic nation state is an incursion of the ethnic in an age of the global. Although both Henna and Veer Zaara reinforce Indian nationalism, one cannot deny the subtle subnationalism. In this context , I would argue that the popularity of Shah Rukh amongst South. Asian diaspora and his ancestral roots (in Punjab area of Pakitan) allow his image to create a borderless community of suffering, love and shared historicity. He lends himself to be fulcrum for sub national regional moorings – transcending political divides and enabling an identification of divided people to his star self.

Zaara’s spiritual and personal guide Bebe, takes her to the gurudwara and bows down to pray before the Guru Granth Sahib afterwards they eat ice cream together and giggle like two young isters or close friends only as a mark fof bonding..The interfaith aspect of Zaara’s religious openness are referenced and elaborated on throughout the film, through references to the different mystic saints in both Sikh and Islamic traditions of faith, either pictorially through images, through song lyrics and through Sufi shrines that are flagged up at key moments in the plot development. From the very outset, the introduction of Zaara’s relationship with Bebe and Zaara’s commitment to come to India to deliver Bebe’s ashes, privileges an audiovisual style of openness to be established and refuses to be exclusively pigeonholed within binaries as India/n and Pakitan/I rather it reaches across bordres and creates a transcendental diegetic world of fluid flows of audio-visuality. It alludes to the secular subcontinental tradition, a site of synergetic confluence of many faiths that ultimately seeks its consummate union in the romance of the hero Veer with Zaara.(Dudrah, ibid.p.49-51)

The film reviews the other as cross border romance in Veer Zaara departs from ‘convoluted interstices of communal subjectivity’ in the Indian subcontinent and blurr the constructed polarities of the Other engendered in expressions of popular culture. It takes up an alternative viewing position unlike films like Roja, Gadar, Sarfarosh. It is not dichotomous but tempered (Banaji , 2008 p 168).

After 1971 war. India Pakitan relationship worsened like never before. The war widened the chasm and created unprecendented anti Pak sentiments in India. It was easy to carry a trade against Pakitan in films while riding on this animosity. Producing a Pakitan positive film with a tone of rapprochement had a commercial risk especially in North India where partition trauma continued to be part of collective memory. Despite universal appeal for love story, such a theme long awaited being made into a film. ‘It took the great film maker Raj Kapoor to muster
the courage and to combine it with commercial vision and cinematic excellence, to think of Henna, which was finally made by his son 1991. (Kumar, 2008 ibid. p.129)

Henna (1991) is one of among the first popular films to openly acknowledge the birth of two nation from one. On August 15, 1947, the Indian subcontinent was declared independent of its two hundred years of British rule. Two nations India and Pakitan, came into being with Hindu and Muslim majorities respectively. Large scale violence erupted as migrants crossed the new border in either direction. Literature from the 1950s is filled with despair about the senseless partition, but open mention of it in popular culture is more or less completely repressed. More than forty years later, Henna harks back to the originary moment of the Indian nation, arbitrarily divided by and contained with in imaginary politicised ‘boundary’ lines. In lieu of veiled reference to the enemy across the border film the candidly refers to the twin ntion, Pakistan. The film is an appeal for unity and Hindu /Muslim amity within the nation. It is ostensibly an antiwar film, promoting peace between India and Pakistan. Yet the text’s rhetoric and narrative strategy reveals an uneasy fit between the two levels of appeal pointing to a fault line in the imagined nation (Virdi, 2003 ibid. p.34-35).

In Punjabi dominated film industry any subject with Pakistan as theme becomes instantly popular. But making a film soft on enemy state Pakistan was a risk laden proposition in 1991, with inter state relations at its low. However, Kapoor had sensed a thaw and his political wisdom convinced him to talk of love and dialogue in the given situation. After many years Yash Chopra also a Punjabi, envisioned a similar thaw that ultimately inspired the making of Veer Zaara and thus departing from a militant belligerence, a mood also seen in Main Hoon Naa, Veer Zaara thus drew from Henna, its classic forcrunner (Kumar 2008, ibid, p 130-131). This gambit that was initiated by Kapoor was followed years later by Yash Chopra who made Veer Zaara (2004). Interestingly, the gamble paid off both times and set the cash registers ringing’ (ibid.p 129). The same spirit of nostalgia finds its repercussions in VZ revoking pre-partition unison and antiwar unity. Yash Raj’s own nostalgia for his pre-Partition homeland produces an imaginary and a layered topography for Punjab through recurring images in many fof his films including Veer Zaara (2004) in an extremely significant way. (Mukherjee 2012 p.40).

In the context of the above sense of nostalgia driven film production it may be said that who we are seems to belong to the past, ie, our sense of self seems grounded in our roots. Memory seems to be at the core of our identity and it connects who we are to who we once were. It is so that our autobiographical accounts are primarily sustained by our ‘memory’. (Storey, 2003. p.81) It is this sense of memory and nostalgia about their ‘roots’ that drove both the two Punjabi directors(with ancestral roots in West Pakistan’s Punjab province of undivided India), Raj Kapoor and Yash Chopra to make films on border-romance. The films though focus on the present appeals to the “collective memory” of pre-partition India. The films centering on the difficulties faced by lovers on either side of the Indo-Pak border obliquely relates to memories of partition. Applying French sociologist Maurice Halbwach’s idea of “collective memory” it can be suggested that both Kapoor and Chopra(and in a different tenor
though, another Punjabi director also a partition victim, J.P. Dutta in films like Border (1997) and Refugee (2000) appeals to the rememberance of national audience to corroborate, supplement their own views of the event and wishes to repeat it by relocating it within a contemporary plot. As Halbwach viewed, these two tales did not seek to resurrect a 'pure' past but a rehearsal, a production of the past and how it can speak and elaborate in the context of present. (as cited in Smith, 2001)

During the time of Kargil war anti-Pak militant patriotic films were being made that made some producers reap popular sentiments, and the film VZ arrived at a time when the top brass leaders of the two nations were expressing their intention to begin peace-talks that anti-Pak films began to fail that urged the Punjabi, nostalgia ridden veteran director to make a film. Sharing a close bond with the culture of undivided Punjab (as their family was residents of Lahore). The nostalgia and indelible memories influenced his film making. Chopra in his interview to his biographer and film scholar Rachel Dwyer recounted: “Veer-Zaara is less a political film and more a film on the cultural landscape of Punjab. The main spirit of which is love and humane values”. Capturing the spirit of peace and goodwill, the film was meant to celebrate the golden moment of Indo-Pak harmony in 2004. It was his tribute to ‘Punjabiyyat’- the cultural zone. The film did not have any professed intention that was either political or diplomatic, and was bereft of militancy and aggression of war. Based on pure human emotion and cultural bonds, it was a tribute of the auteur to his birthplace- the undivided Punjab- his birthplace, his loved land. The romance of the two protagonists sought to narrate the tale of spiritual (read, cultural) union of the two countries that now stand divided. The love of two transcending political boundaries and religious divides was a truly secular theme that harped on a deeper continental unity. (Anandalok, 12/10/2004, p.6-9, a report on the film)

While Europe speaks of a union one is provoked to see South Asia to return in its history and geography as if like to return home, revoking a common cultural space or historic space. However this space is inextricably crossed by trauma and memories of partition and irrevocable without registering this epoch. (Samaddar, 2001, ibid p 27). The film Veer Zaara reopens this shared cultural and historical space, subtly enquiring the partitioned regionalized territory of Punjab and rediscovers ‘old fault lines’ (ibid) to reveal fanatic religiosity, shared memories, cultural affinities, and so on. This regionalization of South Asia, can be seen to revoke unity, desire to return home amidst new political economic and security arrangements (ibid p 28). It allows to imagine a core of the region while mapping out the cultural region of Punjab, where obliquely partition is the reference point. The romantic union between Veer and Zaara perhaps fulfills the agenda of finding back home as inviolable while recognizing the validity of partition in proving sanctity of borders. (see, Samaddar, 2001, ibid)

Sociologist, Dipankar Gupta’s understanding of cultural space, root metaphors and regnant set of meanings enlivens the issue of Punjabiyyat – a sociology of cultural space transcending political divides, where the biography of the hero (Shah Rukh’s identity as a Muslim with ancestral roots in undivided Punjab province) and the auteur (director Yash Chopra, the Hindu Punjabi migrant to India, who suffered Partition) is instrumental. When geography contiguously places different
root metaphors with cross cutting memberships then it is hard to discern cultural lineaments. Cultural boundaries are never easy to draw but what is being said in addition is that these boundaries are impossible to draw in the abstract, i.e., outside of space where interactions take place. The difficulty with demarcating cultural boundaries is because no community is rooted to one root metaphor alone. Cultural space are subject to great degree of cross cutting and overlapping membership on account of intersection of cultural spaces. In balance, cultural memberships are strongest when there is greater concentration of root metaphors and their regnant sets of meanings and weakest when there is a few distant metaphors (Gupta, 2000, p 102).

In this context, Gupta draws the example of the Partition of India, and how prior to this divide in 1947, Hindu and Muslims Punjabis and Bengali had many root metaphors in common. Their social practice gave evidence of the fact that they were aware of the regnant set of meanings these root metaphors possessed among those with whom they interacted. The relationship between Hindus and Muslims was not always of amity before the Partition. Yet they belonged to the same cultural space in spite of religions difference. This is because they either shared, or as is more likely were aware of, the root metaphors and their regnant meanings that each valued. It was on the basis of such awareness that social interactions took place across religions divide. It can therefore be concluded that the two religions groups can live in the same cultural space even if there are divergence in their respective root metaphors. To live by root metaphors willingly or unwillingly signifies the presence of cultural space.

After Partition, there was the clear political demarcation of two countries. In addition, thus division was also marked by deep hostilities on either side. Actual interactions between people thus became physically impossible. Without this interaction, and as time wore on there was little practical need to know the regnant set of meanings given across the border to root metaphors which as Punjabis or Bengalis, Hindus and Muslim might still hold in common. Gradually, even root metaphors that were held in common because of sheer pressure of interacting constantly may fall into disuse and atrophy. When spatial divide like territorial frontiers, separates communities, that were earlier in interaction, the root metaphors they held in common in the past, or the operative awareness of other root metaphors, are bound to become distant memories, without any vivacity or depth (Gupta, 2000ibid.p 103-104).

The film seeks to revive the root metaphors atrophy and can be seen how the film maker, director Yash Chopra, a partition refugee allow his nostalgia to recall a vicarious space that is actually cultural space. This recall may be highly stylized, as in the film. This recall geography as deployed in the film ‘serves as a mnemonic device to revive in memory an interactive situation in which meaning is provided by root metaphors. The vicarious space remembered or recreated is dependent on experienced cultural space and cannot exist without it’ (ibid p 104).

Cultural space here, argue Gupta is common to Henri Lefebvre’s (see, Lefebvre, 1971) understanding of ‘experienced space’. The representation of space as in geography, is only expressed incidentally related to experienced space. When vicarious space are recalled as Gupta argues, it is not geography but ‘the density of social interaction’ that is recalled (ibid). When
location becomes a culturalised space, geography is peripheral and in Veer Zaara it is this ‘cultural space’ of Punjab that is remembered and old cultural space is renewed. The Muslim hero, with a biography of ancestral roots in undivided Punjab, a secular credential (having married a Hindu woman and observing religious neutrality in everyday life) and a pan-South Asian popularity was (incidentally albeit) an appropriate vehicle to mobilize the spirit of pre-partition cultural belonging and Indian(nation)-ness transcending the post-partition territorial divides. The hero and his romantic union re-imagines a cultural scape of nostalgic belonging that eludes state borders. In the end, the release of the hero from jail and his return to India a nation that has accepted the Muslim Pakistani bride Zaara re-asserts the nation-state’s secular tradition.

Veer Zaara sees how the alien Zaara is owned and claimed by Veer, the Indian citizen. Citizenship is incomplete without its other – the alien as nation attains completeness only with its two subjects – the citizen and the alien. The alien is like an ever pursuing shadow and the nation meets the alien in its moment of engagement with the citizen. This alien argues Samadar, is most often the immigrant from near abroad – a product of the transborder flow of population, a subject of anthropologists in search of special categories, politically an embarrassment to be managed with silence (Samaddar, 2001, ibid.p 210).

Nation is not fixed entity but fraught with problematic implications that involve border, territoriality, ethnicity, diaspora, racism, globalization and other related questions linked to post colonial nationhood. The dynamics of nationhood is not solely understandable via a magic key of genealogical mode (ibid) rather nation is a continuously redefined configuration, not the least through self defining its core incessantly buffeted by forces of population flow, flexibilisation of borders, the redefining of the political region, in short by the forces of population flow, flexibilisation of borders, the redefining of the political region, in short by the forces of that janus-faced phenomenon called globalization which now predicates citizenship (ibid p 210).

All that challenges the inviolability of the border viz immigration, migration, cease to be problem of the external but are internal problems that of the interior i.e. a problem related to citizenship – the marker of nationhood. In determining state responses to the demands of the subject population, the alien problem influences the practices of statecraft. (ibid.p.210-211) In films under the influence of a resurgent cultural nationalism since early nineties and its eventual consolidation saw, how in popular realm of cinema a belligerent nation came to define alienness in the figure of othered (Muslim) terrorists and saw how a military statecraft came to protect the boundaries against terror and transgressions – and also allowed for a more exclusivist paradigm to define its citizen subject. Alienness as Samaddar observes sees nation as a fixed unit of sovereign space as if the domestic/international dichotomy is not problematic and state is naturally ‘spatial container of society’ that guarantees the boundaries of the nation (ibid.p 211). Satecraft is however, not unproblematic rather thrive on ambiguity. Immigration marks one of these ambiguous spaces located at the margins of the nation state precariously perched between the flowing and the contained legality and illegality, political community and the
transplanted networks, natural and the deliberate, nation and the region, and finally the inside and the outside (ibid). In the film Veer Zaara, it is this alien female protagonist, Zaara, who brings these ambiguities of nationhood to fore and contests the border through a straying; and her engagement romantically with the citizen hero, the insignia of nationhood, interrogates the tenuous boundaries of the two nations, the idea of nation as an exclusive community, the history of partition and the regional implications. In the post partition state system in South Asia ‘Others’ exist not outside the states’s geographical boundaries, migration sees to it that borders move inwards and others are produced internally. An account of transborder migration in South Asia is thus also an account of borders, spaces and nations, the account of how a nation faces its other the ‘alien’. Zaara in a post partition nation represents the internally produced other as borders move inwards in gestures of border transcendence(by the hero’s action) and transborder migration. It is a narrative of the national-subject, the citizen hero, overcoming all hurdles to accept this alien other otherwise denied by a self contained nation and rendering borders and space into fluid passages.

Zaara as female alien assuages the hero’s cartographic anxiety. In post 1990s in tandem with renewed ethnic violence, gender oppression, and state sponsored anti-minority sentiment, cinema erupted with imaginary of recuperation of unidentified or lost female citizen/other whose sexuality becomes psyclic border between India and Pakistan, fratricidal foes. In both the film in post 2000 era viz Gadar: Ek Prem Katha and Veer Zaara 2004 the itinerant defamilialized female citizen – a Muslim in Hindu dominated nation emerge as cipher for liminality of citizenship (Bhattacharya, 2011, p 132).

The presence of the nation’s subject in two forms, the citizen and alien points to a deeper issue of representation – the cartographic representation of the nation in South Asia, how the body politic is to be mapped, how to retain its iviolability in other words, cartographic anxiety. Cartographic representation achieves effacement of alternative identities and then replacement by one based on modern sovereign nation states that of the citizen. Politics of migrants and refugees prevent this effacement completely but turns citizenship itself another alternative identity. Thus, the migrant/refugee while adhering to his/her social identity also clamour for the political identity of a citizen too. The production fof national identity is therefore accontested process and the struggle to produce and reproduce pure citizens out of recalcitrant people accounts for what happened at bordrs along borderlines fof state cartographic representation is therefore crucial in the production of nationality. The inside and outside along the borders are incessantly produced – they reveal the physical and also the psychological and epistemic violence that accompany the enterprise of nation building. The encounters between the state and the people alongborders sis suggestive of this contestation and if comes to represent a certain post colonial anxiety of a society foreve suspended in the space between the former colony and the not yet nation (Samaddar,2001,ibid p 218).

This cartographic anxiety is met with belligerent aggression in films since nineties and the resurfacing of this post colonial anxiety exposes the liminality and gap that entraps the former
colony, rife with partition trauma and memory. For Veer Zaara, this anxiety is partially assuage via romantic engagements with a female alien Zaara.

Shah Rukh’s screen biography as transnational immigrant subject is also opposed to cartographic representation of nation’s space via territoriality. This allows the immigrant to contest citizenship, as an alternative identity, contesting pure essentialising notions of nationality. The hybrid character and liminal positioning problematises the production of national identity as territoriallymarked..This screen-image in VZ ruptures an intertextual continuity with his transnational, diasporic liminality as Veer replays the post colonial cartographic anxiety as a corporeal signifier of nationhood.

3.11.4 Main Hoon Naa/MHN(‘I am there’,2004,directed by Farha Khan)

Main Hoon Na is the story of Major Ram Prasad Sharma (Shah Rukh Khan), an army officer and his efforts to foil the terrorist Raghav Datta (Suneil Shetty). Ram is simultaneously attempting to mend relations with his father's estranged first wife and his half-brother Lakshman.Raghav is a former army officer court-martialed for executing eleven illiterate Pakistani civilians who accidentally crossed the border in search of water and now hides his identity under the name of Raghavan. He wants to sabotage Project Milaap (Unity), a first step towards friendship and diplomatic alliance between India and Pakistan.First, Raghavan tries to kill General Amar Singh Bakshi (Kabir Bedi), the Commander-in-chief of the Indian Army, during a television interview. This fails due to Major Ram's intervention, although Raghavan does succeed in killing Brigadier Shekhar Sharma (Naseeruddin Shah), Major Sharma's father, who had ordered his decommission. He also threatens Bakshi's daughter Sanjana (Amrita Rao). As the elder Sharma dies, he tells Ram about his step mother Madhu (Kirron Kher) and half-brother Lakshman (Zayed Khan) and begs Ram to re-establish relations with them; Madhu had left Brigadier Sharma after discovering that he had a mistress who bore Major Ram.

General Bakshi, later asks Major Sharma, to go undercover as a student at the college to protect Sanjana. This creates the opportunity for Ram to look for Lakshman at the same time, since he lives in the same town. Ram takes the guise as an older returning student.

Raghvan is frustrated with Major Ram's actions and decides to go undercover as a teacher at the college. He later takes the entire school hostage and asks for Khan to be released, for Major Ram brought to him by a helicopter, and for Project Milaap to be stopped, or everyone will be executed. Ram and Khan arrive in a hall where all the frightened and worried students and teachers are being held. Khan has been convinced by Ram that Raghvan is wrong and helps him to free the students. Khan pretends to have ultra-hawkish opinions and shoots Ram dead in front of the school community, ostensibly against Raghvan's orders. However, Ram is wearing a bullet-proof vest and Khan takes his "body" away and releases him to start the fight against Raghvan. Khan is found out to be helping Ram, and murdered by Raghvan.

Meanwhile Pakistan has decided to release prisoners as well. In the climax, Raghvan battles Ram in a deserted part of the school, while Lucky gets onto an army helicopter to help rescue
Ram. After the fight, Ram blows up Raghvan and jumps onto the helicopter just as the entire building goes up in flames.

On the border, the Pakistani and Indian prisoners are released and returned to their families. Ram and Lucky later empty their father’s ashes into the Ganges River with their mother watching sadly. The movie ends with Lucky finally graduating from college (along with Ram), and then the credits appear as a music video.

Main Hoon Naa (henceforth MHN) was highly successful both in India and abroad. The film stages a public debate in urban India through a live studio programme of Jan Manch (People’s Voice) that stands in for a certain section of the population. Here, the inception of Project Milaap is being discussed as a peace initiative to release Pakistani captives in Indian jails, many of whom have been in jail since 1971. India is seen initiate the steps towards diplomatic friendship, via the release of captured Pakistani and later with Pakitan reciprocating. What is of significance here is the implicit ideals given to a version of Indian democracy. It recognizes a civil society—a peopled nation with its human concerns beyond statist discourse. It calls upon the image of active citizenry and the agency of urbanity/metropolitan people to debate, discuss and intervene.

In the studio, the well dressed cosmopolitan members in western attires—signifiers of modern and urban Indian setting are juxtaposed with the images and attire of the Pakistani prisoners in Indian jails and captives in white cotton tunics and everyday basic village clothing. A polarization set up in terms of class and access to power—the relatively power and powerless village inabiliting the border of India and Pakistan and the urban middle class citizenry endowed with cultural autonomy and intellectual capital to debate, discuss and generate ideas as active public citizenry through the live television programme. Paradoxically, it is urban metropolises of India far removed from the ground realities of borders and its people where fate of the borders and its people get discussed (Dudrah, 2008, 44-45). The schism of the two realms seeks to question post-partition and post colonial developmental anomalies and contradictions with the world’s largest democracy, the still unattained ideals of nation building. It leaves open the space for Ram’s arrival as the ‘preferred ideological mediation of the possibility of an enhanced peace process between India and Pakistan’ (ibid, p 44). Ram i.e. the hero is seen to be a mediator of peace who is also ironically an urban educated army officer, an agent of the state, who masquerades only to be amongst civilians for saving the project. The state garbs itself in the face of the popular Shah Rukh hyphenates both the realms of state and urban, civil society. The hero, an agent of the state fight a dual battle, one to save the Project Milaap peace initiative and on a personal front his family which also serving as metaphor of the disunited nation seeks integration realized in the hero’s actions. The trials of the hero as a personal battle that literally becomes a battle for the sake of national honour and better prospects with neighbouring Pakistan. The reuniting of Ram and Lucky (nicknamed from Lakshman) as brothers (their names inspired by Ramayana, the epic holding the ideal of fraternal bonding between the two brothers Ram and Lakshman) and the coming together of families of India and Pakitan families both
offer an ideologically preferred solution for the two bickering nations of India and Pakistan to resolve their differences through diplomacy. Unlike the contemporary cinematic texts on border narrative of war and conflict offers an alternative resolution mediation by the hero, Shah Rukh Khan. ‘This possibility is a cause worth fighting for as exemplified in the personal, physical and political trials of our hero Ram. The border, then, is a physical and man made construction that can be mediated for means other than the abuse of power and mindless violence that has been seen in the capturing of innocent Indo Pak civilians and Raghavan’s murder of Pakistani villages’ (ibid.p 47). The hero, a state agent transforms to a face of the peopled nation savior of a school/family acting as metaphor of an unified, imagined nation and his mediation for fulfillment of a diplomatic mission allow him to transcend the territorial delimitations of post-partition India, only to claim an enlargement of his star influence as an emissary of South Asian peace at a global moment.

Shah Rukh’s role in Main Hoon Naa follows his trajectory as a mediating signifier especially one that shifts between the homeland and the diaspora. In his previous films that have been popular with diaspora audience we see him cast invariably as mediating relationships and social disputes of sorts across nation state boundaries, whether in DDLJ, Pardes, Mohabbatein or Kal Ho Naa Ho. In Main Hoo Naa he has the additional complex task of ensuring that Project Milaap will take off with a view of arbitrate an amicable position between long standing rivals India and Pakistan. In this way the film enters into a public discussion about the enmity and possible friendship between India and Pakistan that resounds throughout the South Asian diaspora too. And it is needless to say the star’s popularity among the South Asian diaspora community is of significant relevance.

Moreover, whilst MHN is not set specifically between India and one of its diasporas – an anonymous urban city and predominantly Darjeeling are the two frames of reference wherein a film is set – the film’s mise an scene deliberately depicts a look, and feel for an urban India that is amalgamated with reference from the diaspora. The location scenes of the college campus in Darjeeling are seen to emerge from the ‘diasporic infused college sets of earlier diasporic films’ like KuchKuch HotaHai, Mohabbatein and Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham. The attire display for transnational brand, their language combining Hindi, English, American slang is a hybrid cosmopolitan mix. The ‘colourful mix of East and West – ethnic chic, Levis, retro seventies garbs, modern gadgets and transnational consumer goods such as Apple Laptops and Pepsi beverages’ typify features of ‘transitory and mobile features of urban India and the diaspora as informing each other through oscillating cultural sensibilities, dress codes, linguistic vernacular, consumer durables’ (Dudrah, 2006, p.90). ‘What the overall mise en scene and narrative impetus of Main Hoo Naa demonstrates, then is that post-DDIJ and Shah Rukh Khan’s emergence as the premier urban/diasporic figure Indian figure in global post nineties Hindi cinema and even when an urban film is not set immediately in the diaspora or is about the home land and diaspora, elements of the two are strategically invoked in the diegesis that aim to appeal to both constituencies simultaneously for profit and pleasure at the Bollyworld box office’ (Dudrah, 2006, ibid.p 91). Shah Rukh is not only cast yet again, as the prime urban/diasporic
protagonist, he is also accorded a central status as modern Indian Army soldier. As acknowledged in film he is seen in what is best the Indian army has to offer in the popular sense. (ibid. p 94).

Another striking aspect of the film is its introspective criticality. Containing ostensible references to peace talks with Pakistan, oppositions to the peace negotiations as well as the animosity regarding Pakistan projected as being internal to India (Singh 2008, p 123) Instead of an externalized projection of threat to border security above, the film is informed by a reflexive viewing of its own threat and need to revise nationalist/statist stance vis-à-vis Pakistan. The film Main Hoon Naa can be situated as a significant departure in recent popular cinema as following on from the anti-Pakistan anti Muslim slanted films of late such as Gadar (directed by: Anil Sharma, 2003). The film is a deliberate and conscious attempt to move away from the depiction of Pakistan as constant wrong doer (Dudrah, 2006 p 89). It is in this sense that the film Main Hoon Naa runs counter to the trend already established since 1990s. Here terror is unleashed by machinations of a Hindu army officer who tries to foil diplomatic peace process undertaken under the name of project Milaap. The film is an exception to contemporary demonization and urges for a different reading. Pop patriotism of Hindi cinema, orchestrates nationalist feelings by showing how the endangered nation is being saved by Hindu heroes mostly of North Indian provenance. The film MHN while partly complying with this trend rejected the stereotypes of terrorist Muslim and hence questioned the othering process.

Raghavan, as a court martialled dismissed officer of the Indian Army and his subsequent formation as villain is rooted in border consequences. His suffering is result of border and how the contested margin had claimed his son’s life. His vengeance only serves to threaten an escalated tension and failure of Project Milaap. Filmed by a Muslim and starred by a Muslim hero, the film MHN breaks the stereotype of the ‘Muslim –terrorist Pakistani’ of Hindi films. Here the terrorist is a Hindu and Pakistan is shown to be keen to take some positive steps towards improving the India Pakistan relationship (Nirmal Kumar 2008, bid. p132). The goodwill and rapprochement speaks of the larger social and political developments. Made by a modern young Muslim woman Farha Khan, (also a friend to the star Shah Rukh who had also supported this production) (ibid 132) it allowed to articulate a critical reflexivity to escape parochial strategies of Othering and allow it to be mediated through the star text of Shah Rukh Khan.

Unlike what Virdi claims, in this film SRK fights for the real nation. Virdi, had claimed that in all Hindi films heart there his a fictional nation. ‘Serious tensions that threaten to fracture the nation are obsessively manifested in film as moral conflicts or ethical dilemmas. Resolution of these dilemmas is the central goal of ‘national fiction’, in the Hindi film’. (Virdi,2003, p 32). But the nation in this film with particularized reference to time and place is not a ‘fictional’ nation but a real nation.. SRK rescues the nation and its metaphorical ‘family’ Along the topos of familial conflicts the central confrontation between good and evil, which are mapped onto national and anti-national opposition. The principal purpose for staging this contest is to rescue the always endangered imagined community, the nation. The nation and its discontent are
central to almost all Hindi popular films which relentlessly focus on problems of disunity, poverty, white collar crime, corruption in high places, regionalism, communalism, and also problematic issues related to modernity, tradition and feudalism. (Virdi, 2003, ibid 42).

The film attempts an ideological resolution of social conflict and contradictions which is worked out in narrative through the actions of the hero, wherein the hero emerges crucial to the the process of fabulation. As endemic to fabulation, MHN narrates the conflict revolving around Indo-Pak diplomatic relation and how it is resolved through the execution of Project Milaap. Being a more didactic tale it seeks to bring about the good of society, in other words, the good of both the nations. The film avoids aggressive militaristic confrontation with the neighbouring state unlike most contemporary films and through the heroic action seeks to ensure harmony on either sides. As a tale of fabulation and the hero Shah Rukh acting as an agent of the same ensures that: ‘It does this by enacting or performing social ideas and values through a particular dilemma, and resolving them in a specifically narrative ways, such as through actions of characters. It invites us to a resolution of social relations which actually remain conflictual and contradictory’ (Thwaites, et al, 2001 ibid. 172). And one of the most crucial resolutions offered by the film through heroic action is to expiate the malific cultural tendency towards othering of Muslim from the secular discourse of the nation—a contradiction that plagued, otherwise secular popular texts of Hindi cinema. The nation’s brave soldier, the hero, foiled the attempts to scuttle Project Milaap by quelling the actions of the villain, Raghavan, the uncanny generic evil of the ‘secular nation’.

In melodrama, individuals are faced with an oppressive force beyond their control, which at first causes them to suffer but which is eventually allayed or overthrown through their morally charged actions. Melodrama forms much the basis of fabulation of contemporary popular culture. It sets up an instantly recognizable moral order of good versus evil. In melodrama revenge is not necessarily immoral if it achieves the downfall of the original source of repression. A particular convention of narrative resolution (melodrama’s ready acceptance of violence as a legitimate counter free to oppression) stands for and legitimizes social and political events. It makes the latter appear to be natural aspect of former, a relatively simple and familiar resolution to a complex and contradictory set of events. (ibid) True to this description of melodrama, the hero initially suffering a crisis within his family, where the family also acting as a metaphor of the nation, proactively resolves the same. It legitimizes the nation state as a safe haven for ideals such as the sanctity of the family the true for right action and role of good citizen. Main Hoo Naa is a melodrama where hero as an agent of fabulation resolves crisis of the nation and reinstates harmony and peace.

Question of Border assumes narrative salience in both the films MHN and VZ in a manner that is different to the militant belligerence of contemporary patriotic cinema. Moving beyond border-aggression both the films seek to deploy border to promote diplomatic good will and faith in maintaining mutual sovereign interests in MHN and transcend the same for the sake of human emotions and cultural ties that transcends state boundaries. However the question of the border’s sanctity is upheld in both the texts.
Although, the location of the India Pakitan border itself have been determined and periodically re-determined by political and diplomatic arbitration and deliberations involving separation of jurisdiction, the function of border represents a more fundamental and deeper schism in the visualization and narrative construction of the border and human interaction across the liminal space(Athique 2008 p 21). The political existence of the border as is known is not a self sufficient fact in itself, as the performative border is an essential component of the process of othering in subcontinental politics .The question of border and its reflexive production of otherness therefore had its articulation in the popular discourse and its collective imagination in Hindi films. The question of border and production of the national space along with othering of Pakistan have been explored in films and most significantly J.P. Dutta’s trilogy Border (1997). Refuge(2000) and L.O.C. Kargil (2003)(ibid). Films in this period were based on polarities of the Indian self and the Pakistani other –marked in clear ideological and culturally hegemonic ways that are used to legitimize India’s posturing to defend itself against an invasive Pakistan (Dudrah 2008 p 41).

In both Main Hoon Naa and Veer Zaara also border acquires a semantic significance where in the production of otherness is reimagined between the two nations. Border in both acquires a different idiom. The border in both its physical and symbolic manifestation is not satisfactorily located in the realm of the ‘real’. The popular texts of cinema have played the self reflexive unstable performative role of the border in both aggressive /transgressive currents and actions that has either explored affirmation or denial of the Indo Pak border in popular discourse. In popular nationalist texts under the appropriative influence of rightwing ideologies and cultural/religions nationalism this performative border along with production of otherness enjoyed with a geopolitical vision that aims at inclusions and exclusions as mutually reinforcing forms of place making, have become central – rather indispensable to the nation building enterprise of the post colonial post partition states of India and Pakitan (Chaturvedi as cited in Althique,2008 ibid p 22). In contrast to some of these tendencies of contemporary popular nationalist cinematic texts, stands both the texts: Veer Zaara in its imaginative transcendence following a romantic trial and the hegemonic assertion of border’s legitimacy to uphold territorial sovereignty in Main Hoon Naa. The re-phrased transgresive denial in Veer Zaara has evoked a romantic transcendence of border mediating an imagined cartography of love and romantic union in contrast to militarist posturing endemic to patriotic/nationalist themes. Main Hoon Naa revisiting otherness in a bid to reaffirm an otherwise unstable border through invitations to diplomatic goodwill.

The story of MHN by the director Farha Khan was not made without a conscious political intention. The production support came from the star, SRK himself who shared the secular political vision of the director,also his friend. For Farha Khan, the film was politically and diplomatically significant and its relevance was further realizable due to its conducive time of release. She said ‘Had it been released before, audience would have rejected it. Now with India-Pakistan improving their ties,my film will be appreciated and can even encourage peace talks between the two countries’(Anandalok,27/4/2004p.10-12)
Shah Rukh Khan in contrast to the aggressive masculine hero like his contemporaries (Amir, Sanjay, Sunny, Ajay) vis-à-vis the nation’s other opened up the liminality of border narrative to possibilities beyond belligerence and militant sacralisation of border via exercise of active othering. The transgression and violation of national space that became a dominant template under right wing influence is thus mitigated in non-violent sentimentalized transcendence evocative of pre-partition national space in Veer Zaara and affirmation of border sanctity shared by diplomatic and political wisdom of either states in Main Hoon Naa. The affirmative/transgressive positions towards India Pakistan border in two contrasting films like Border and Refugee endorsed ‘the official Indian doxa: Conflict will continue as long as enemies outside the nation are trying to enter, the loyalties of border communities are suspect and must be policed, a secure border and the establishment of a clear demarcation between the two states and the adoption of unequivocal national loyalties are the only means of achieving peace’ (Athique, 2008, ibid. p 38).

However, securing national space within popular narratives of cinematic texts seek to show how the nation and its space is reclaimed in popular imagination against a perpetual threat. The considerable challenge of the border in its visual incongruity, emanating from its literal existence as an artificial cartographic intervention in real space, is creatively evoked through a whole set of dramatic metaphors. Unable to discount historical accidents or to mitigate the partition trauma, the border narratives in films seek to imagine a mythic future where border transgression of border is precluded and is naturalized and everyone positions themselves unambiguously within two nation state’s within each ceasing to have aggressive claim, upon the territory of the other that peace can be achieved. The unfinished business in a strictly territorial sense is resolved as a nationalist problem, with border serving as fulcrum between secure and contended national space (Athique, 2008 ibid.p 31). Films like VZ and MHN produce cinematic moments where border is not dichotomously coded and allows for more fluid representational possibilities at and across the Indo Pak border (Dudrah, 2008, ibid., p 42).

In contrast both Veer Zaara and Main Hoon Naa evaded a military confrontation and in recognition of the fundamental political interest in the border and recognizing a shared stake of both the nations in existence of the border worked for an affirmation of it. (Athique 2008, ibid.) The two films MHN and VZ as border narratives in this respect are not aberrations from the discourse of popular cinematic border narratives and the anxiety that surrounds the contested claims on border. The spirit of resolution of perceived threat lies on a different plane. While MHN opens up a space for diplomatic negotiation, the other in Veer Zaara transcends cartographic divide allowing for human passion to take over. Invoking border crossing as a possibility or aesthetic pleasure it transcended conservative binary construction of India and Pakistan in problematic terms (Dudrah, 2008, ibid. p. 42) Both VZ and MHN occur within a context of flashpoints of both aggression and opportunities for peace across the Indo Pak border: exploring it differently in post millennium South Asian context. Both the films re-uninterpreled and recreated meanings about the borders by speculating on the consequences of border and
especially in Veer Zaara they expanded the symbolic value of border and opened up questions of transcendence beyond cultural othering (ibid.).

The naturalization and decontesting of the border sees how Shah Rukh’s stars biography speaks of his cross border genealogical and cultural roots (see Sheikh, 2009) and make him an important secular Muslim text – an instance of an ideal citizen subject positioned implicitly on crucial matter of unambiguous loyalty to state and transcending transreligions fraternization in face of othering of Muslim and Islamic Pakistan. Escaping the dichotomy and othering the star text rises above physical space to construct a symbolic /cinematic borderland.

Both films avoiding replicating easy acts of aggressions (attempts at maintaining the sovereign status quo of borders) and instead create room for a complex dialogue towards border transgressions and attempts made at it. Both the films offer an alternative cinematic space of border land that can act itself as a transcendental transgression of statist territoriality to create a subcontinental imagined space. As part of Bollywood’s internationalist flows, this cinematic space is part of the global /transnational mediascape that can be claimed by diasporic counterparts in imagining transnational solidarity of South Asians. Given the global circuitry of the films and its reception indiasporic locales, the popularity of Shah Rukh is exploited to offer plural readings and appropriations of star text. These audiences have interpreted and made their own readings of the cinematic borderlands of the two films across the local and global movements of planet Bollywood that crosses numerous nation state boundaries. (Dudrah, 2008 ibid. p 54).

3.11.5 Ashoka (2001, directed by Santosh Siwan)

The film is a maiden venture of Arclight & Films, established by Shah Rukh Khan himself along with actress Juhi Chawla. It is a popular historical re-construction about Emperor Ashoka (Shah Rukh Khan), his valour, his ascendancy to power amidst conspiratorial treason by his rivals, internecine warfares, his love with princess Kaurvaki (Kareena Kapoor), and finally the journey towards renunciation amidst bloodshed. The film ends with Ashoka, throwing the sword and embracing the non-violent faith of Buddhism.

The making of this film is extremely relevant at the time of revival of fundamentalist forces and marks an attempt to re-signify the secular value of Ashoka, as many of modern, post-independence secular iconography of the Indian nation-state are derived from symbols associated with Ashoka and his religious mission based on principles of non-violence, brotherhood, harmony—all of which resonates with secular ideology of the state.

Hindu cultural nationalism spearheaded by the Sangh Parivar challenged the purported monopoly of then Congress (I) over the ideas of nation and its control over statist discourse of secularism. The Ayodhya movement exposed the fissure of secular ideology, so far championed by the Congress, to control and secure the political and economic stability of the nation (Charistiane Brosius 2007 p 182). In a bid to strengthen their ideological bulwark it attacked the secular roots of nationalist history, by seeking to select certain historical figures and re-inscribe them with potential to be translated as Hindu icons. These figures like King Vikramaditya Shivaji, Rana Pratap and Subhas Chandra Bose were conveniently re-staged in
public performance such as rallies and processions. Hindutva’s project of reinterpretation of history over ‘actuality’ can be appropriately described as ‘internalized Orientalism’ that engaged in an appropriation or inversion of oriental classification for the purpose of self constitution of a community and empowerment. The attempted invention of a shared history and memory aimed at moulding a homogenous citizenry of a Hindu nation with a shared heritage in sacred history and cartography. It seeks to alienate the Muslim as part of a common archive of past (ibid.p 188-189). As the projection of Hindu unity requires strategies of exclusion of an other one can locate it in the celebration of Vikramaditya, against the anti national invader (ibid.p 191).

Philip Lutgendorf in his exploration of the notion of history in popular literature evolved in the context of Ayodhya controversy examined the mythic elements as cited by Brosius. He argues mentions Brosius, that the Sanskrit concept of iitaha (history, literally so it was )fused ‘Puranic mythologies with …modern school book histories’. In such a view of itihasa, Vikramaditya emerging as an Universal Emperor, as symbol of diverse power and embodying major ideals and values of divine kingship and martial ethics. As a protector of a vulnerable Hindu nation, Vikramaditya as parallel of Rama is said to install dharma, righteous rule. The legitimacy for Vikramaditya’s rule and aggressive form of self empowerment derived from constituted moments of national crisis based on threat of misrule, foreign invasion domination and alienation from cultural roots (ibid. p189-190).

Hindutva agents resurrection of Vikramaditya from precolonial past was a convenient strategic posing of their much advocated version of indigenous or positive secularism as opposed to current idea of secular state and constitution that was held to replicate a colonial idea. The idea of Third World backwardness and the need for a reinvention of the past, of local knowledge and traditions has been a frequent preoccupation of many post-colonial nation states in a bid to create alternative history. Hindutva’s idealization of divine kingship aligned itself advantageously to an ongoing people’s movement and attempted to bridge the schism between a feudal past and dynamics of present democracy (Brosius ibid pp 190-191). The Hindutva discourse articulated elements from mythico historical past with politics of popular mobilization in fabricating a vision of the nation.

The film Ashoka made under the shadow of Hindutva politics, seeks to insidiously circumvent the two poles of historiography, with one represented by secular nationalist history and other informed by cultural nationalism of the right wing- groups. The choice of a pre-colonial figure not a part of Islamic history and also escaping appropriations by Hindutva lobby is of extreme pertinence in the context of its making by an America returned cinematographer Santosh Siwan and enacted by Muslim hero Shah Rukh Khan.

In stark contrast to many of his contemporaries including Muslim heroes (like AamirKhan in Sarfarosh/Fanaa,Salman Khan in Wanted,Fardeen Khan in Dev,Saif Ali Khan in Agent Vinod),SRK far from being cast either as a belligerent Hindu cop or obversely a Muslim terrorist popularly reclaims the discourse of the secular nation that is however not free of its ideological contradictions,ruptures and anomalies due to various statist practices, cultural
tendencies and political exigencies. What makes SRK’S roles in this genre interesting is either in being a Muslim himself, allowing his secular biographical image to be suitably appropriated by these films and his heroic role, secondly his playing of the secular Hindu who transcends parochialism, suspicion and distrust towards the Muslim ‘other’ and thirdly his own involvement in the production of some of these films. On the contested terrain of popular culture (of films) SRK’s films meaningly re-signifies, re-discovers and re-invents the secular tradition of Hindi films in particular and nation in general. The image of SRK in this genre benefits profusely from his well-documented secular credentials established in his public interviews, personal life etc. and has served to affirm his public role as a secular, patriotic Muslim in critical response to the stereotyped, bigoted role of Muslims in cultural representations aimed at othering. SRK said: “I am a believer… I need to be clearly standing for the goodness of Islam. I think I truly am (an ambassador of Islam). I follow the tenets of Islam… I read namaz when I feel like… I’d like people to know that Islam is not about being fanatic, or radically different, angered person, or one who only does jihad, I’d like people to know that the actual meaning of jihad is to overcome one’s own violence and weakness” (quoted in Joshi, 2012, p. 241-242)

3.12 HERO AND THE NATION

The hero or the main protagonist is of crucial importance in the narrative, providing the initial vector of response. He has a double role – that of a visually continuous presence and primary, organizing consciousness (Elsaesser, 1976, p 179)

‘…the stars are a reflection in which the public studies and adjusts its own image of itself… The social history of nation can be written in terms of its film stars’ ‘Stars… are the direct or indirect reflection of the needs, drives and dreams of American Society’ (Dyer, 1979)

To understand the embeddedness of the star/hero, Shah Rukh Khan within the cinematic narratives and to see him as an embodiment of the heroic characters acting as trope of the nation entails looking at how through his performance of heroic roles he mediates a discourse and closes gap between self image and role.

Stars are images that are constructed in all kinds of media texts other than films but films remain the privileged instances of star’s image (Dyer, 1979, ibid p. 99). In this section I would like to explore how Shah Rukh functions in films themselves.

There can be two approaches (as suggested by Dyer) to study this: Firstly ‘Stars and Character in which it can be assumed that one can conceptualize a star’s total image as distinct from particular character that she or he plays in given film. Going by this one needs to see the star as a text (see Mishra, ibid), as a composite complex inclusive of his biography. Insertion of the biographical reference allow for fulfillment of spectatorial expectation to be critically hinged on the hero, whose distinction has been underscored by a reference to the star status. The biographical reference to the star’s extra-textual existence is not unique to any culture. As per Richard Dyer (1991) cited the biographical reference plays a crucial role vis-à-vis star image as it is authenticated as something more truer, more real – than an image by referring back to his/her existence in the ‘real world’. Accordingly to Dyer, as cited, the mobilisation of facts
about the star needs to be read as being part of the attempt at authentication of the star image as a whole. Biographical reference is thus one may by which authentication of the star image takes place at the fiction end of stardom. (Srinivas, 2009 p.99-101). Hence while reading SRK within films it is an analytical imperative to see how the evolving star-image of the hero, from being a newcomer to the industry to a successful star has negotiated with the characters played by him. Second, Stars and performance works from assumption that although stars signify in films by virtue of being an already signifying image and by given a character partly constructed by script, mise en seccne etc nevertheless what appears on screen is the performance or enactment. The performance signified has a relationship between signification of performance and of the image and character of the star. (Dyer, 1979). The characters played by the star from his early films of desirous middle class subjects or psychopathic roles to urban, hybrid, cosmopolitan are the various performative engagements of the star that help enact the roles constructed. These constructions of heroic roles are discursively produced within its socio-historical context. However, it needs to be stated here that the star image of Shah Rukh has grown by accretion and the ‘already signifying image’ of him has to be seen in a temporal sequence: on a chronological plane. ‘Images also have a temporal dimension. Structural polysemy does not imply stasis, images develop or change over time’ (ibid,p.73) Shah Rukh’s image as a star is therefore to be seen as a complex totality and it does have a chronological dimension…that totality in its temporality is the concept of a structured polysemy’ (ibid.).The star-text of SRK has grown by its filmic and extra-filmic engagements within the media ecology and also by his biography, his engagements with the public domain etc.

With every character, role and performance contributing to his image, we have seen how various elements of signification react with each other and also with signification drawn from the star’s biography. For example, his image as a newcomer to the industry, a middle class educated Muslim youth with no genealogical antecedent in the industry to promote him and his already signification gained in his appearance in television serials ‘Fauji’ and ‘Circus’ that had already gained him popularity amongst the middle-class Indian audience found an easy articulation in his roles of psychopath or middle-class heroes struggling with the interiorised anxiety and ambivalence at a transitional juncture of India’s road to liberalization. This image goes through a transmutation with Shah Rukh’s consolidation in the industry as a ‘star’ and his signification changes as he comes to be cast in family-romance narratives with a heavily embedded consumerist aesthetics. This required the elements of signification ‘to negotiate, reconcile or mask the difference between the elements or simply hold them in tension’(Dyer, 1979,ibid,p.72) Repeated casting of Shah Rukh in such roles and his appearance in other media texts (advertisements, magazines etc), his biography of being a success tale of a upward mobility of a middle class educated man reinforced this idol of consumption and romance in such narratives.

The avatars of Shah Rukh interestingly have been reinforced by his biography and extra cinematic engagements, reportings in popular magazines..etc and are not be seen as discrete developments.(see, Mishra, 2002 on Amitabh Bachchan, Virdi 2003., Dyer, 1979 ibid.)
The characters played by Shah Rukh in the films discussed are to be seen as ‘constructed representations of persons’ (Dyer, 1979 ibid p.99). Like all fictions having characters, they are conceptualized or determined by history and culture. Examining the role of the hero across films involves seeing the situatedness of these roles within a certain discourse of the nation, as bound to spatio-temporal verities and historical contingencies. This distinctiveness of stars as distinct individuals and as performers of culturally and historically particularized characters is bound to the history of cinema and its adoption of novelistic character forms and also a parallel development of cinematic medium towards embourgeoisement from its origin of being a ‘pure plebian spectacle. Dyer illustrates the way Ian Watt in his The Rise of the Novel in an extremely relevant exposition on shows how novels have altered the history of fiction and reveals the historical and cultural bounded ness of character and opens up the particular notion of character that dominates in our particular sociocultural period (ibid.99-100) The particularization of character typified the novelistic notion of character (ibidr p101) and this exemplifies the constructed ness of characters (performed by stars) by culture.

The history of stars in cinema reprises the history of change in the concepts of character and the individual in novel. The conventional wisdom concerning the history of stars in the cinema is that there has been a shift from stars as ideals gods and goddesses to stars as representations of ordinary life, mortals, just like us. The shift towards novelistic from characters as embodiments of moral and intellectual principles to characters as particular people in particular places (when early stars were believed to be absolute qualities) were paralleled by a historical paradigmatic shift in cinematic medium also from gods to mortals. (ibid.p 102). Early period, stars, were defined as gods and goddesses, heroes, models – embodiments of ideal way of behaving. In later period, stars become identification figures – and this transition as Dyer cites Walker was result of ‘a loss of illusion’ marked by coming of the talkies. Alexander Walker sees sound itself as creatig de –divinization of stars as the one silent idols suffered a serious loss of divinity. They ceased to be image in a human shape personifying the emotions. Their voices made them as real as the audience watching them (Stardom p-223 cited in Dyer,1979, ibid.p24). Edgar Morin interprets this progress from gods to identification figures as part of embourgeoisement of the medim . He suggests 1930 as the turning point and sound as only one of the elements in the whole process. Sound introduced certain realism (ibid) but this was marked by growth of social themes. Embourgeoisement of the cinematic imagination made stars looks more credible, and came to combine the exceptional with the ordinary and the ideal with the everyday.

The adoption of novelistic conception of the character and the embourgeoisement of the cinematic medium led to changes in the predominant conceptions of character in cinema. Therefore, from a cinema that focused primarily on heroic or emblematic characters, who represent, respectively, ideals or ideas, there has been a shift towards cinema that deals with individuated character. Dyer in his study mentions it had its influence in western cowboys leading to departures from divisions of good and bad. Dyer mentions Leo Brandy’s study to point at the individualization of character in film, with films becoming centered on characters than on plots a change that become quite marked since the 60s . Dyer sees this as a logical
The bourgeois conception of character intends to produce characters that are unique and individuated. Yet, clearly, not so unique and individuated as to be beyond comprehension or representativeness (ibid.108). Individuation of characters, in films, does not prelude identification and this is because the star personality mediates the individuated characters and serves as a crucial link between the audience and the character of the film. The character of the film text is mediated via the star and the character along with the cinematic text (as already argued) is situated within the discourse of the nation (Virdi,2003.)

The articulation of the nation’s discourse(s) through the star’s character and performance is particularly relevant, because the fact that ‘stars are supremely figures of identification…and this identification is achieved primarily through the star’s relation to social types’ (Dyer,1979 ibid.p111) The forms of this relationship between star’s uniqueness and her or his social normativeness takes three directions

a) As a general rule, the star’s uniqueness, is seen as the only true locus of lived life is a guarantee of the ideological truth of the type to which s/he belongs

b) One of the types that stars embody is the type of the individual itself; they embody that particular conception of what it is to be human that characterizes our culture.

c) The specific relation of a star to her/his type may be conceptualized in (ibid,p. 111) tunes of transcendence maximization, inflection and resistance (ibid.p. 113).

Films are not necessarily situated within a hegemonic ideological discourse and one can discern within films counter hegemonic pulls. Although the hero most commonly as a upholder of the dominant ideological discourse is not seen to contradict the narrative resolution it is not invariably not a rule.(Virdi, 2003,ibid.). If SRK’s urban/diasporic heroic roles appears to be complicit with the hegemonic discourse of the nation’s globalizing agenda in his early roles there is a palpable anxiety and anguish in the middle class subjectivities he plays. The phenomenon of audience star identification is a crucial aspect of the placing of the audience in relation to a character. The truth a about a character’s personality and the feelings which it evokes may be determined by what the reader takes to be the truth about the person of star playing part In other words, the image and performance of a star reverberates in people’s memory and becomes logical for people to assume the consciousness of the star image to inform the consciousness of the film.(Dyer,1979 ibid.p.141-142) Often there is narrative use for star recognition and spectatomal knowledge of the star is interwoven with history not only of star’s role but also the part character’s paly inform his role i.e. intertextually driven (Srinivas,2009 p.102)

Therefore, there is no denial of the fact that the vulnerability, mediocrity and alien ness that attended Shah Rukh early roles gained its credibility and success also due to the fact that the hero, himself an outsider to the industry, with no patronage, with a middle class background and early career in television serials informed his early image in people’s consciousness. Also
his success in diasporic role in DDLJ attributed his image suitably with traits that were subsequently transferred to his later diasporic roles. Diasporic characters and the star’s image aligned well and its success and SRK’s repeated casting in such roles serves to account for the ways the star image at different junctures of his filmic career sought to close gap with the roles he performed.

Coming back to what Dyer suggested as approaches to the study of star. I seek to show how the characters, Shah Rukh plays, distinct from the star, articulate a certain discourse of the nation that while being complicit with hegemonic impulse of the text is open to counter hegemonic and polysemic reading.

Second, through his manifold roles or narrative placements on screen as a star he has gradually accumulated his own symbolic biography that comes to be taken as his image that negotiates with his subsequent roles.

Third, the screen biography and the star’s actual life has intersected, and made him a perfect fit for the subjectivities enacted. This has allowed for the gap between his film biography and his real life image to coalesce in strange way rendering him a signifier of a certain discourse(s).

My study, in this chapter seek to explore Shah Rukh Khan not as a star person, but as star-image, as star character and as star text discursively constructed by the nation’s contemporary ideological currants and the existing intertextual regime of popular Hindi Film.

While mediating a discourse stars have been images of identification. This identification besides being an identification with normative social types can also work either by providing an affirmation of an alternative or oppositional attitude/response by audience members to their life situations that is not otherwise recognized by the dominant media, or by proceeding an image of a way out of those situation through role models that suggested alternative ways of inhabiting or transforming them. Dyer contends that identification is reactionary for conceding to constitution of the subject within an ideological illusion as being whole and unified. Dyer stresses that there is a need to stress the cultural construction involved in the modes of representation and also the need to distinguish between modes of representation and identification in political terms. The second objection is identification through recognition, identification serve to confirm the status quo. Dyer alert us to the fallacy in such assumption as it is based on the understanding that status quo is uniform and homogeneous, rather than being rife with contradictions within and between ideologies and hence within and between modes of representation and identification.

Dyer therefore re-works the blanket anti-representation/identification position by expressing the ideologically conservative modes of identification sought through cultural representation and how identification do not always affirm ideologically normative types. Stars can be open to radical/progressive and subversive forms – articulating contradictions, foregrounding stereotypes, or be alternative or oppositional identification figures etc. (Dyer,1979, ibid.p183-184).

With cinematic texts being a cacophony of discourses enables to see how the the character/role of Shah Rukh Khan, his film biography and image negotiate with the contradictory impulses of
the text both hegemonic and counter hegemonic impulses. Mainstream Hindi films being not radical avant garde films and being commercial products in most cases allow hegemonic resolution of popular narratives without posing threat to market driven imperatives and official ideological position of the nation state.

In the case of Shah Rukh, the characters have mostly concerned with the hegemonic discourse of a globalizing nation, with some moments of transgressions and opposition, but not without narrative strategies of redemption or containment. Posited within a meta discourse formation of a globalizing nation’s narrative, Shah Rukh image is seen to articulate the same, but bear the potential to invite identification not necessarily via hegemonic ideological influence but open to polysemic interpretations like any other cultural commodity. (Fiske, 1989)

An important index of a star’s popularity has been the ability of the star, which is diegetically enabled and performatively capable of striking their popular chord of the nation through fulfillment of collective expectations or what cinematically is referred to as the spectatorial expectation. The spectator/fan is a privileged entity of popular films as it figures an intimate relation between star who performs for their benefit and as per their wishes. This privileging is a kind of enlightenment and the most striking instance evidence is what is a moment of irrationality i.e. magical moment. (Srinivas, 2009 ibid p104) Unlike the occurrence of the magical in the folk here on mythological genes where they are to be found throughout the film in the commercial film. The magical signals a clear deviation from one register of plausibility to another, within the same film. It is not that as if incredible events occur all through the commercial film as in folklore films. As crucial turning points in fiction, these offer moments of spectatorial anxiety when gradual or dramatic surfacing of the possibility of the story being aground threatens the comfortable and pleasurable position of the spectator. Anything can happening during the moment of irrationality. If there is a willing spectator, who is firstly, willing to accept the overall frame of plausibility offered by the film in which such a shift of register is acceptable and secondly can actually make magical happen by actively willing it. The spectacular occurs because it is willed by the spectator and when narrative explicating acknowledges the entitlement of the spectator to fulfil their expectations. (Srinivas, 2009 ibid.p.105) By deploying variety of cinematic techniques of spectatorial positioning film constantly reminds the spectator that fictional world benefits by their existence and unfolds as per anticipated lines.

The political role played by the star in the fiction is an extension of his moderate to act according to spectator’s will. The role of being the agent of spectator’s will of displaying at all times the recognition of an obligation to spectator who is in turn entitled to make a series of demands on him – played by the star in the fiction, is analogous to his location in the far domain. For both domains star is obliged to fulfil the demands of the fan/spectator. An actual fan or a member of a fan’s association is not the same as fan- spectator who is but an abstraction. Simultaneously despite the minority status of actual fan vis-à-vis film reviewing public and his obvious and offensive/embarrassing excess, there is no reason to believe that fan has a qualitatively different relationship with fan spectator or from decent people like us. The film
invites all viewers to be approximate to the fan spectator. The fact is that one is fully transformed into this entity. (Srinivas, 2009, ibid. p.125-126)

Against this it may be argued that SRK’s popularity and polysemy derives largely from his roles ability to fulfilling spectatorial expectations of the family, diaspora and middle class audience not through the spectacular or irrational, yet magically privileged resolutions. The hero, unlike the super-hero of the mass audience was not required to do anything magical by physical feat, but rendered it plausible for the hero to dare to expose his vulnerability, his weaknesses, his desires and assuringly made the middle class audience believe that without flexing of muscles, and macho bravado it is possible to emerge triumphant. Such devices facilitating the triumph enables the hero to subtly fulfil the expectations of themiddle classaudience who do not rely much in the credulity of spectatorial resolutions offered by the mass hero. The sheer ordinariness and frailty of his body, yet the ability to win over his object of romance or emerge winner either morally or materially in series of films like DDLJ, Pardes Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman, Yes Boss, Kabhi Haa Kabhi Naa, Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi, Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham, Ra. One, My Name Is Khan, Chak De, Veer Zaara. There is suffering, injury, insult, pain, anguish attached to all these roles, yet the hero despite a weakness of his position overcomes them not through any hyper-masculine tactic, but as what Vasudevan says as an ‘enunciator’, a mediator, with negotiating skills

SRK’s success story that began in the 1990s is largely implicated within the social history of post-liberalization India. It stands as a realization of the Middle Class Dream in a liberalizing nation that upholds many aspirational opportunities for its expanding new middle class. Contemporary film industry has witnessed an intensification of kinship network. These networks provide a source of personnel, a site for training, and a form of organization for the industry. Though many of the producers, directors and stars, age 40 or older within the contemporary industry had no family connections when they first started their careers, their children, nephews and nieces are taking up the family business with a passion. While there are other means of trying to enter the industry – through professional training institutions such as the National School of Drama or the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in the realm of acting (and increasingly directing), the dominant method is through kin and social networks with most film people marrying the other film people and with their children entering the industry, the Bombay film industry appears to be literally reproducing itself. The extremely personalized nature of the film industry obviously creates barriers for those individuals who have no kin or social connections within the industry. For outsiders, the absence of any defined method or system to gain access to the industry makes the already idiosyncratic and contingent process of trying to “get a break” much more haphazard and accidental. This reliance on chance can render both men and women more vulnerable to exploitation in what is already an exploitative world. Here significantly, the excessive reliance on chance means that when outsiders do manage to get a break and succeed, their stories, which are aberrations are touted as the norm and become a way for the industry to present itself as a place where anyone with talent will always succeed (p56). Such is the story of Shah Rukh’s success in an industry where
family and nepotic network rule, that is often celebratory in a new liberalized regime for middle class dreams.

3.12.1 Decline of Feudal Authority vis-à-vis The Hero–Patriarchal power bases

Gramsci’s idea of passive revolution is where new claimants to power, lacking the social strength to launch a full scale assault on old dominant classes, opt for a path in which the demands of a new society are incrementally satisfied without overhauling the entrenched political and economic position of old feudal classes, agrarian reform is avoided and popular masses presented from going through political experience of a fundamental social transformation. Chatterjee argues it to be a historical model and that passive revolution is in fact ‘...the general framework of capitalist transition in societies where bourgeois hegemony was not accomplished in the classical way. In passive revolution the historical shift in the strategic relations of forces between capital, precapitalist dominant groups and the popular masses can be seen as a series of contingent, conjunctural moments…Rather new forms of dominant capital become understandable, not as immanent suppression of earlier contradictions, but as parts of a constructed hegemony, effective because of the successful exercise of both coercive and persuasive power, but incomplete and fragmented at the same time because the hegemonic claims are contested within the constructed whole’ (Chatterjee, 1995, p. 211–p 212). In the Indian case passive revolution involved a political ideological program, by which largest possible national alliance was built up against the colonial rule with the aim to form politically independent nation state. In post independent India, this reorganization of political order continued and the dominance of capital over the national state remained constrained in various ways (ibid. p 212). The developmental model adopted by the modernizing state of India secured legitimation for itself in representation process of election. Seen in terms of the political logic of passive revolution, what the strategy called for was precisely to promote industrialization without taking risk of agrarian political mobilization. As an essential aspect of hegemonic construct of post colonial state and the ideological construct of passive revolution of capital the entire structure of precapitalist community were translated into representive forms of electoral support. The modernizing state tacitly recognized acknowledged existent communities and precapitalist of social power to secure legitimacy for itself in representative electoral process (ibid. p-213). The very logic of this state in producing consent for capital’s passive revolution was related to the dual process of rational planning based on resource allocation economic and social development and irrational electoral politics to subsume these organized demands of particular interests within the generality of a rational strategy.

Arrival of SRK to the scene spelt demise of feudal patriarchal power. The hero, regarded often as the agent of the nation, upholding a mandate of modernity in terms of the preferences, material choices, values, identity was seen to negotiate with feudal patriarchal enclaves of power or assert alliance with premodern traditional institutions. This paralleled state’s trajectory of passive revolution where modernity of the FYP hero was seen to negotiate with premodernities. DDLJ and Pardes altered this by translocating the source of patriarchal feudal authority that persisted in Dil (1990), QSQT (1988) or MPK (1989) to a different location,
almost weakening its territorial locus in days liberalization. This signs a change with arrival of SRK and its relation to a more eroding feudal power centres. His stance towards them though negotiating and conciliatory unlike his contemporaries who emerged rebellious in romance,

3.12.2 Issue of Citizenship

Etienne Balibar notes that the fundamental contradictions of the figure of the citizen in his essay ‘Citizen Subject’. It arose out of the acknowledgement of an universal sovereign subject, as right bearing and distinguishable from non citizen. In the Indian context, the problem has been actualization of the abstract citizen concept. Indian scholars like Dhareshwar Srivastava and Partha Chaterjee as cited point to the split between citizen and non-citizen. In the writings of Chatterjee, citizen and subject occupy two distinctly autonomous domain and are two different kinds of political subjects, whose modes of political participation and concerns are different and need to be analysed separately. In the writings of Chatterjee, civil society is the domain of citizens marked by their middle class status from the rest of the population. He states, ‘I have favoured retaining the old idea of civil society as bourgeois society in the sense used by Hegel and Marx, and of using it in the Indian context as an actually existing arena of institutions and practice inhabited by a relatively small sector of the people whose social locations can be identified with a fair degree of clarity’. (Srinivas, 2009, p.133) In the theory everybody is a member of civil society though not in reality. To distinguish between classic associational forms of civil society and the rest of the population he proposes the category of political society. Chatterjee as cited argues that ‘Most of the inhabitants of India are only tenuously and even then ambiguously and contextually rights bearing citizens in the sense imagined by the constitution. They are not, therefore, proper member of civil society and are not regarded as such by the institutions of the state. But it is not as though they are outside the reach of the state or even excluded from the domain of politics. As populations within the territorial jurisdiction of the state, they have to be both looked after and controlled by various governmental agencies. These activities bring these populations into a certain political relationship with the state’. (as cited in Srinivas, 2009, ibid.p.133-134)

From Chatterjee’s idea of civil and political society, what emerges is disengagement of citizen and subject into separate empirically verifiable entities but also the surfacing of ‘fixed institutional boundaries which would the citizen on one side and non citizen on the other, which Balibar thought was the problem that vexed liberal political philosophy. Political society Chatterjee claimed to be the domain of non-citizen, where the deferment of citizenship lead to distinct forms of mobilizations

Madhava Prasad said that citizen subject remains an incompletely realized utopic figures in all instance, its non realization assumes different forms in different nation state formations. In most instances this gap between citizen in theory and population at large exists and this gap is obviously addressed in different sites including cinema. In films, the conception of citizen figure is imaginable escaping or transcending particularities and this began in Indian cinema even prior to the formation of the Republic. In film studies the understandings of Laura Mulvey on star system centering both on screen presence and screen story help to act out the distinction
between star’s relation to narrative and star as spectacle. While narrative is related to the question of plot development and spectacle involves a suspension or arresting of the story, Mulvey’s screen presence screen story distinction despite limited use in case of Mulvey’s notion of female star’s ‘to be looked at-ness’ alert us to narrative -spectacle divide. Richard Dyer’s more elaborate later formulation on the interplay between star as image and star as real person (the latter itself is understood as elaborately constructed fiction) has clear parallels with Mulvey’s position. It can be seen as elaboration of the complex processes Mulvey refers to. According to Dyer the mobilization of facts about the star needs to be read as being part of attempt to authenticate the star image as whole. This argument on star’s double existence reaches a high point in Miriam Hansen’s work when she argues that diegesis and discourse are two levels at which star work. The level of discourse in Hansen’s conceptualization corresponds with Dyer’s note on of the star image. According to Hansen, the presence of a star in a film ‘under cuts the (narrative and scopic) regime’s apparent primacy, unity and closure. By activating a discourse external to the diegesis, the star’s presence enhances a centrifugal tendency in the viewer’s relation to the filmic text and that runs counter to the general objective of concentrating meaning in the film as product and commodity’. Srinivas argues that stars if seen to arrest narrative potentially tantamount to a suggestion that it is capable of jeopardizing film status as a commodity and industrial product. But this do not entail a commercial risk for film industry as diegesis is not guilty of spectatorial innocence of stardom at all and therefore the film is not at risk of falling apart when viewers recognize their star and because ecstatic to see their favourites appear on screen ( ibid .Srinivas,2009, ibid p 136).

Unlike Hansen argues Srinivas Dyer allows us to conceive of the discursive and diegetic levels evolving in tandem in a single film. Dyer notes that film works with audience for knowledge. The star’s image is used in the construction of a character in three different ways. The film may through its deployment of character and the rhetoric of film bring out certain features of the star’s image and ignore others. For other words from the structured polysemy of the star’s image certain meanings are selected in accord with overriding conception of character in film. This selective use of star’s image is problematic for a film in that it can not guarantee that particular aspects of a star’s image it select will be those that interests the audience.Dyer’s approach help to delineate a simple distinction between star’s image and the character he/she plays in particular film, as is evident from his elaboration of the three ways in which image is used to construct a character . However, a character in cinema do not pre-exist star’s performance and what stars bring to it. In view of this difference between image and character/diegesis and discourse in case of star one can explore the citizen subject gap. Tharu and Niranjana argues about the imperative of invisible marking of the citizen and this becomes clearer with Dhareshwar’s views on prerequisites of citizenship where particularities like caste/class preclude people from occupying the slot or subject position of citizenship ‘…one of the major conditions of democratization is a certain disincorporation of subject’s
positivity- my particularity has no bearing on my participation in the public sphere – not everyone can equally participate in the logic of disincorporation (Srinivas, 2009, ibid., p. 138)

While the peculiar logic of disincorporation produces the invisibly marked citizen figure on the one hand and the non citizen who is excessively marked by his/her particularly on the other.

There is as Srinivas argues a third body while too Dareshwar and Srivastsan argue is an effect of the same logic of disincorporation that produces the first two. The fact that some bodies can reincorporate with the public sphere precisely as fantasmatic embodiments or icons of power for example cine star and politicians (as seen in the significance of the giant cut outs) far from disproving the logic of disincorporation process to be one of its effects. Srinivas argues that film star does have a role to help us release logics of disincorporation and citizenship. Citing Kodavatiganti’s observation it can be concluded that when glamorous impersonates ordinary it has political consequences it evacuates say as the eg. Suggests the Dalit girl forms a film about Dalit girl. Cinematic techniques and its standard use including soft forms close ups to highlight the to be looked at ness visually foregrounds the distinction of the star and it is observed how in Telegu films there is political use of stars as the transcendence of particularity. Citing the film Malapilla, Srinivas argues how the hyper visuality of film star the spectacular positivity of Kanchamela conceals the particularity of the Dalit she plays.

In mass films the consequences of post emergency political mobilizations by various constituencies of non-citizens, crisis of governability, rise Hindu of right, decline of the Congress, recent assertion by the under privileged sections owing to India’s deepening democracy coincides with the rise of star actors like Bachchan. The surfacing of the rowdy action-hero in mass film, as centre of narrative, corresponds to the growth of the discourse of lumpenisation/criminalization of politics. An important feature of this is that the polity appears to disintegrate into infinite mobilizable constituencies. This period coincides with Amitabh’s screen career. It is wrong to see the political mobilization as struggle for citizenship and these political mobilizations were mostly was part of politics of non-citizenship. The launching of political career of many Southern stars like Chiranjeevi and his particularistic identity was in this domain of non-citizenship and the production of his figure was carried by acute spectatomial awareness of his distinction not forgetting of particularity (as a member of a caste group etc).

In mass films one can locate a continuity in screen and political career Films gesture towards a possible model for a politics of non-citizenship. The model is founded on recognition of inequality and the gap between citizens and subjects and dies prove that cinema and its stars have a great deal to say about politics of our times, stars like Amitabh and Chiranjivee in mass films stand in between the gap of subject and citizen position. They were repeatedly seen in mass film one of whose invariable characteristics is star protagonist playing role of lower class/caste figure. Repeatedly plays the role of rowdy ranging from urban petty crooks to vigilante gangster. One of the interesting aspects of his rowdy roles is that they are founded on enhanced authenticity of subaltern in his vehicles. The mass films rowdy potentially addresses and
articulates middle class anxieties as Dhareshwar and Srivastsan interestingly notes, that underscores the obvious political significance of the rise of rowdy in popular discourse. The figure of rowdy acquires semantic and ideological elasticity in the imaginary of the middle class by becoming the focus of their anxiety about they see as the criminalisation of politics (goondaraj) and its threat to their precarious class privilege. The very ideological social description then feeds into the everyday discourse of the ideologies of the middle class from left to left – liberal to liberal. right, who invoke lumpenization of politics as an explanation of all that they find disturbing in the social and political life of the nations.)

The mass film’s rowdy addresses these very anxieties by becoming the means by which the unbridgeable gap of the citizen and non-citizen is sutured (by the star). It is a crucial political task perfumed by the star as cinematic technique produce screen rowdy. But if rowdies and lumpens in mass film addressed middle class anxieties at periods of crisis, how does one explain the closing of gap between citizen and subject via star discourse? When the star is himself a middle class agent hero, biographically, a fact also diegetically mobilized alters the issue. Unlike non-citizen politically mobilisable subject of mass film, where citizenship is deferred despite a political relationship to democratic state, the middle class hero apparently a member of bourgeous civil society, a legal political moral subject, a proper member of civil society, is diegetically removed from state citizenship either through his diasporisation or his individualized pursuits re-creates the gap. However remarkably films like Swades, Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani, the character seeks to evolve as citizen unmarking or disincorporating the particularities of his biographical self via a secular participation within public sphere. These films try to resolve foundational contradiction by approximating the screen position.

Mulvey’s distinction between screen presence and screen story and Dyer’s notion of simultaneous existence of real and real images of star is pointer to complex interplay between filmic ontology and spectatorial memory. This gap is a key facilitator to cinema’s engagement with aporias of citizenship Cinematic stars produce two subject positions: distinct social/spatial domains that correspond simultaneously to these positions stars occupy. As a result the rowdy citizen is a composite entity of authentic subaltern and super citizen.

Richard Dyer’s later formulation on the interplay between star as image and star as real person (the latter itself is understood as elaborately constructed fiction) has clear parallels in SRK’S roles in films like My Name Is Khan, Chak De. It can be seen as elaboration of the complex processes Mulvey refers to. According to Dyer’s formulation about the star image, these films both at the level of star discourse and diegetic needs to be read as being part of attempt to authenticate the star image as whole.SRK’s role as a secular Muslim citizen questioning the othering and discriminatory prejudices perpetrated against the Muslims appear to coalesce the diegetic role with the conscious, secular, off-screen image of the star. This argument on star’s double existence in Miriam Hansen’s work appear problematised as the star image is doubly mobilized so to allow that diegesis and discourse are two levels at which star works to
conjoin the two. The level of discourse in Hansen’s conceptualization that corresponds with Dyer’s note on of the star image, wherein, the presence of a star in a film ‘under cuts the (narrative and scopic) regime’s apparent primacy, unity and closure do not appear relevant as the two levels , viz. the star-biography and the diegetic crusade of the Muslim are tied to each other. By activating a discourse intrinsic to the diegesis, the star’s presence enhances as I argue centripetal tendency instead where the star’s biographical relation to the filmic text do not run counter to the general objective of concentrating meaning in the film as product and commodity. Interestingly, even in middle class/family films, the star discourse of urbanity, middle classness, cosmopolitan, secular image was suitably confirmed in the diegesis

Dyer’s approach allows us to conceive of the discursive and diegetic levels evolving in tandem in a single film and this is discernible in SRK’s films. Dyer notes that film works with audience for knowledge. SRK’s image is used in the construction of his characters in different ways across several films. The films through its deployment of character and the rhetoric of film brought out certain features of the star’s image and ignore others. If, early psychopathic roles played on his newness, his strange-ness, his relative ‘outsider’ image to filmdom to create a suspicion/fear/spectre of the psychopathic stalker/avenging person, his ordinary appearance, newness were mobilized to fulfil roles of desirous, vulnerable middle class subject positions, his youthful, smart exhuberance was deployed to recreate a cinematic hybrid diaspora and so on. For other words from the structured polysemy of the star’s image certain meanings were selected in accord with overriding conception of character in film. This selective use of star’s image is problematic for a film in that it can not guarantee that particular aspects of a star’s image it select will be those that interests the audience. However, in SRK’s filmography several dimensions of his star/biographical discourse have been diegetically mobilized ,thus closing the schism between the two.

The general principle is the double existence of star: first, as a biographical person and a screen character. This double existence is something that mass films foregrounds with its frequent deployment of the biographical reference. Spectatorial awareness of this doubling is critical as it is not limited to adding of biographical detail into fiction, but also the production of two subject positions roughly corresponding with the citizens and subjects of the real world. In order for these two distinct subject positions to be created, the mass film involves the star as real person even as it offers him as the rowdy in the fiction. The star thus involved helps resolve foundational contradiction of citizenship that results in the eternal doubling of the citizen figure (into rowdy for eg) by straddling between the contradictory positions simultaneously. The star is simultaneously, at once the rowdy and real person marked by his distinction. Star protagonist seen to straddle contradictory positions, rendering the unbridgeable gap and antagonism between them as insignificant.

In the case of stars like SRK, who unlike many of his contemporaries, have not been a typical mass-hero/playing rowdy gangster or ruffian, have mostly been seen as middle class/urban/diaspora protagonist. Although his roles have mostly non-transactional citizens vis-a-vis the state (see, Samaddar, ibid) have been invested with biographical inputs that has
eschewed doubling of his subject position. The middle class spectatorial awareness about the star and the close correspondence espoused between his roles and his biographical person, resolves the gap between the star who is both citizen and a citizen-hero, albeit removed from direct engagement with the state.

Cinematic techniques and its standard use including soft forms close ups to highlight the to be looked at ness visually foregrounds the distinction of the star and it is observed how in Telegu films there is political use of stars as the transcendence of particularity. Citing the film Malapilla, Srinivas argues how the hyper visuality of film star the spectacular positivity of Kanchanmela conceals the particularity of the Dalit she plays. Premised on this it may be speculated if SRK’s characterization as the Muslim-citizen protesting persecution or a middle class hero with his own moral dilemmas and frailties robs the authenticity of the diegetic characters, occluded by the star—discourse of glamour and spectacularized presence in the screen.

The integration of linguistic markets relies less on cultural notion of identity than on certain signifiers which can be added to any narrative in order for it to be successfully translated into the particular language in question. If cultural identity alone were at issue, the images would have to be characterized by regional cultural markers. Political markers of identity, on the other hand, involve a relation of representation. A community’s identity does not reside in the concrete, positive constituent features of its singularity (this is cultural identity), but in the ability to stand for, represent the culture. The star as the signify of linguistic difference is thus purely a political notion.

The belonging ensures that a star must go through a process of acquiring a modern image, so that he can represent his community. The star belongs to the community he represents, but simultaneously must be separated from it, alienated and constituting an internal-exterior. The classic example of such alienation in the consolidation of identity is of course, the nation state. The identity of a nation is never complete without being externalized in the form of the state. The nation has no identity in itself no internal substance, no cultural matter no food or clothing habits. Nothing can really serve as guarantor of its identity. Identity is not internal and in order to acquire the alienated element that struggle are waged and every struggle or identity in that sense is also a struggle alienation. Identity is externalized and it is alienated element that guarantee identity. (Prasad, 2010 p.18)

Shah Rukh as popular film star represents a cultural identity that tried to statedly avoid regional cultural markers. Unlike Southern stars, he is not a signifier of any linguistic difference or cultural group/community. The star instead belongs to a particular class, viz middle class or a category of urban/diasporic Indian. The dual cultural position is obtained through a split or dual position i.e. he became the externalized alienated other who represent urban/diasporic modern middle class Indian.

Marx said of the peasant in ‘The Eighteen the Brumaire’. He cannot represent himself he must be represented. Political representation requires doubling whereby subject comes first to occupy a space quite alien to his everyday existence an empty place of representation. The
smart modern urban male is cinema’s image of that doubling. It is an ingenuous representation of the subject splitting into fueo. We can see popular films grappling with politics of representation. The star is splitted as cinematic representation and thus spares the rest of us from a similar compulsion. Instead of every individual alienating himself in the empty space of universal (citizenship) the star alienates himself so that we remain the same, authentic national subjets. Henceforth our identity is tied to his role as our representation. Shah Rukh is the representation of urban/modern/diaspronic cosmopolitan globalizing Indian – articulating these dimension, he alienates himself in the empty space of representation and the splitting allow us to tie our identity to him as a representation.

3.12.3 The Dynamics and Coalescing of Star Identity, The Actor and the Nation’s Hero: This issue revolves around two questions, first the relation between roles and hisbiographical self- and how it closes gap as biography coalesceSeconly, how the star performance gives life to character via performance and depoliticise the values within cinematic scope(reflects times)

Authentication by stars refers to ways how an actor establishes a correspondence between the character as played and the social norms of the time or the way she or he embodies a social type. Stars seek to collapse the distinction between the actor’s authenticity and the authentication of the character she or he is playing. While in some cases, this collapse may root the character in a ‘real’, ‘authentic’, true self (the star’s), in others the gap between the self and the performance, appearance, constructed persona may be part of the meaning of the stars (Dyer, 1979 ibid.p.23-24).

In this dynamics between the authentic self of the star and the authentic character he play, Shah Rukh’s filmographic trajectory offers him to be placed in the second type. Dyer, illustrates where his filmic biography seeks to be uncannily coalesced with his own true authentic self and identity. His beginning as a struggling middle-class educated Delhi boy in Bombay with no support of family linkages within the film industry comes to play roles that began with a mood of anxiety and ambivalence at the spectre of the uncertain that the market reforms entailed for the middle class and gradually his success allowed him to overcome them and articulate more unequivocal affirmation of a hegemonic discourse globalizing discourse. In this sense he is unique unlike Raj Kapoor and Bachchan or his other significant contemporaries where actor has sought a real authentic true self unlike SRK where the authentication of character he plays bears similarity with his biographical life and his own struggles in his early films.

The star phenomenon orchestrates the whole set of problems inherent in the common place metaphor of life as theatre, role playing etc and ‘stars do this because they are performers, because what is interesting about them is not the character they have constructed(the traditional role of the actor) but rather the business of constructing /performing/being (depending on the particular involved) a character’ (Dyer,1979, ibid.p. 24). The character though not constructed or essayed by them come to being as performative roles through star mediation, in that sense, it can be argued that the discourse of the nation as part of the text’s political unconscious is articulated in star’s performance. Star becomes an embodiment of the text. If the metaphor of
life as theatre is accepted, then this real dramaturgy can be seen sociologically as an extension of the role prescribed to him and his performance bridges the gap between his real self and his cinematic role and can be seen as how a simulated cinematic enactment of role performance by individual where the role and the real, i.e. the real and the reel come to coalesce. The role situated within a ideology come to be represented by the role performer i.e. the hero. Depoliticisation of values is an issue that need to be reiterated to understand the role of star as carrier of certain values that are otherwise social economic or political either actually or potentially. This transposition of values onto the persona of the star is characterized by Barry King as ‘Hollywood studio realism’ that is built around the centrifuge of the hero and as he claims inescapably social commentary – yet it must not offend the audience (or else it would not sell). The star, says Dyer solves the problem because he or she converts the opinion expressed in the film to an expression of his being as he converts the question “Why do people feel this way?” to how does it feel to have such feelings. This works in terms of the producers. The stars ease the problem of judgement (which would politicize the media) off the shoulders of these controlling the media by throwing it onto the realm of personal experience and feelings. And equally this works for the audience also by depoliticizing their consciousness by individualizing it, rendering the social personal. By embodying and dramatizing the flow of information the stars promote depoliticised modes of attachment (i.e. acceptance of the status quo) in its audience. The stars promote a privatization or personalization of structural determinants, they promote a mass consciousness in audience. Individuals, who perceive their world in terms of personal relevance all individuals in a privatized mass. Their personal troubles tend to remain personal troubles.

Collective consciousness or the social temper is translated to the personalized experience of the star to which individuals forge a depoliticised mode of attachment with in a privatised audience and thereby pre-empting personal relevance to be articulated via conscious politicized collective expressions. The stars serve to mask people’s awareness of themselves as class members by reconstructing social difference in the audience into a new polarity pro-star/anti-star..collective experience. In all these, stars by virtue of being experienced (that is they are a phenomenon of experience not cognition) and individualized (embodying a general social value/norm in a unique image), and having an existence in the real world, serve to defuse the political meaning that form the inescapable but potentially offensive or explosive point of departure of all media messages. This means that films and stars are ideologically significant in the most general sense of cutting audiences off from politics, rendering them passive, but not ideologically significant in the narrower sense reinforcing a given political standpoint. (Dyer, 1979, ibid 31).

The obfuscation of politics can be seen in how the socialist temper of Raj Kapoor’s tramp in narratives of social justice, the radical democracy against authoritarian state role personified in angry young man image of Amitabth in narratives of vigilantism and the neo-liberal bourgeois ideology in favour of a soft state in Shah Rukh’s urban diasporic role or the resenting, skeptical anxious middle-class in narratives of desire and consumption seeks an individualized
articulation within the star’s performance. The political embodiments of their roles are depoliticized by individuated star performance. The star persona is doubled and the star persona of heroes stabilize around a discourse of global. The power of cinematic image producing popular hero figures with a powerful influence over minds of the public is not sufficient to account for as to how film makers were responding to audience reactions that privileged recognition factor – the continuity they were able to establish from film to film when they saw same faces re-appear in different films. Cinema doubles the actor’s persona. In cinema in between two aspects of actor’s life, there appears a third – as if the actor is doubled so that an indestructible persona arises from the real actor and his roles, to transcend and survive every particular instance of his appearance. Once this doubling is accomplished it is the persona that hence forth acts not the real person. This is universal phenomena as is witnessed by the rise of star systems in every popular cinema industry (Prasad, 2010, p 10). The star develops an on-screen biography or a persona that accords a steady recognizability.

Film biography can be seen as an intertextual instance that grows by cumulative accretions and also consolidates himself through repeated casting in similar role whereby the hero acquires a tropic significance. Rachel Dwyer argues that clearly the angry young man can be evaluated only in the context of Indian the 1970s. Javed Akhtar observes as cited: Vijay the hero of Zanjeer, reflected the thinking of the true. Two years later, the same Vijay was seen in Deewar. By he had left the police force, he had crossed that trial line and become a smuggler the wages was against the injustice he had to endure and he emerges the winner. You can see that the hero who had developed between 1973-75 – the Emergency was declared in India 1975 – reflected those times. Vijay was part of an intertextuality a product of a discourse. (Dwyer, 2002)

3.12.4 Hero as the trope of the Nation

A semiotic reading of heroes constituting as part of the sign system allow us to see how heroic ideals and image change as ‘sign change meaning’ (Mac Canell et al, 1982 p 10). The naming change without being destroyed or reviewed – like linguistic sign can be “transvalued” losing whatever meaning it had for its community. Semiotically the change in heroic image and discourse is part of cultural evolution. Like Freud’s idea of magic tablet (on which a child may write or draw and then erase clear by lifting sheet off the underlying gelatin base. And each erasure despite appearance of a new beginning or clear start has the impression of each previous use that remains embedded in the base) the essence of culture may reside in an interplay between its mnemonic function(memory recording and writing) and ‘resistance to such remembering’(ibid p 27).

Each heroic prototype appear as an erasure of preceding ones. Trying to provide a new beginning a clear start but impression of each previous type remained embedded. If Bachchan resisted romance in his angry young man image, the reformism of Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar and their melancholy continued to haunt his brooding aggressive cold silence. Similarly, Shah Rukh’s arrival re-visited the vengeance theme of Bachchan’s films in his negative roles. And as signs are arbitrary there is no link between image and concept or signifying image to signified
idea. Therefore when a symbol here the star is syntagmatically transformed into a sign with a
new meaning (ibid p 62) as in Shah Rukh’s early films, its first use have been understood to
have been merely conventional or a solitary. Social meaning was generated by the star image
by supplemental addition to imagery to whatever was there in the first place. Heroism or heroic
signs as reality has no meaning in itself in both empirical and ideal forms and generates
meanings when allowed to be re-presented in cultural system’s that are being constantly built
destroyed and re-built (ibid.). As a trope of the nation, Shah Rukh carries both repressed,
defered and deviated meaning (from the original text). As a trope he carries past histories – the
elegiac past and / or the accretion and the suppression of past earlier heroic tradition with often
pathological association and future hermeneutic expectation of understanding. As per post
structural reading the meaning of tropic hero is not containable within discursive versions of
texts and spills over into an intertextual zone where it is a condition but not determinate. The
tropic understanding of the hero is discernable in the inter-textual trajectory than spans across
the films.

As a trope of the nation at a globalizing moment the star is marked in ways that articulates the
historical moment of its production. The hero as a trope resonates well with the global moment
of its production. The postcolonial anxiety of the earlier heroes like Raj Kapoor Dilip Kumar
towards modernity the flamboyance and hybridity of Dev Anand and Shammi Kapoor, the
romantic image of Rajesh Khanna, the seething anger of Bachchan is re-inscribed and re-
configures through the new tropic signification by the star SRK’s stabilization as an icon of the nation At a descriptive level sign are not existentially
separate entitles. They are two aspects of meaning anything can have for anyone. That is any
observation can have both situated significance and most have an initial symbolic meaning
MacCanell, 1982, ibid p 59). Shah Rukh in films –is contextually to be seen as situated
significance in a syntagmatic role as hero or protagonist of the central narrative. Second, how
his star image that has grown cumulatively through accretions gathered from his various filmic
and extra filmic engagements produce initial symbolic meaning. The symbolic significance
often can generate what is called as illusion of immanence whereby there is a semantic or
syntactic restriction of a sign. Coordination of multiple viewpoints in a consensus requires a
suspension of syntagmatic considerations and insures collective illusion of immanence of
meaning. This symbolic meaning represents a collective agreement. That is coordination of
multiple viewpoints in a consensus requires suspension of syntagmatic consideration on and
insures collective illusion of immanence (ibid. p 58-60). The star image of Shah Rukh produces
an icon/symbolic meaning at the collective level that suspends the syntagmatic meanings and
from a combination of signs a fixed symbolic meaning is produced at the immediate level. This
symbolism or iconization is produced via constant circulation of images of the star in films and
often extra filmic engagements.

However, the situated significance of the star is also related to other signs in the given situation
and eventually the star as a sign derives his meaning from the operation of total society. The
collective agreement dissolves into an interplay of plural signs and readings. (ibid p 61). There is
a constant relay between semantic meaning of the star image and is syntagmatic aspect. Star identity both diagnostically and otherwise do not privilege any fixed meaning, instead it is open to negotiation and interplay of signs – it is constantly repeating and being read in terms of varying reading and reception on practices in terms of time, space and cultural codes.

3.12.5 Popularity of the Star and His Construction Within the Hegemonic Discourse of the Nation within Cinematic Narratives

It may be argued that Shah Rukh’s construction as a cultural text despite being constructed within a hegemonic discourse that seek to stabilize its meaning as a signifier of a global consumerist culture is nevertheless a cultural resource and is open to plural perception. His biography as an educated, middle class Muslim with secular choices, leanings and declaration in both private life and public domain, his extra-cinematic engagements aligning with his screen image cumulatively may be received or sensed by different people along various axes of cultural allegiance. As a cultural reference point his star-persona generates polysemic meaning with a command over a diverse constituency. Infinite subject position along diverse axes of social allegiance can read the star-text negotiating his situatedness within a hegemonising discourse. The construction of the star-image complicit with the hegemonic ideological position is therefore subject to popular, discursive reading practices that constantly negotiate and rework upon the hegemonically ascertained meanings. The idea of polysemy is also useful in explaining the relative and even greater popularity of stars like SRK despite the fact that there are other male stars who are also constructed within similar discourse and perform in popular cinematic texts. The plea of a greater openness of the star to polysemic readings, besides being cast within dominant discourse wherein hegemonic forces appear to find a preferred articulation or embodiment within the star, serves to account for the successful career and popularity of the star.

The relative higher success of the star in comparison to several contemporary heroes within the discourse of a globalising nation and his construction within the same complicit with the dominant ideological forces is there besides his popular reception. Fiske’s idea of popular discrimination elaborates on how “people discriminate among the products of culture industries, choosing some and rejecting others in a process that often takes the industry by surprise, for it is driven by the social conditions of the people at least as much as by the characteristics of the text” (Fiske, 1989, ibid. p.129). It may be argued in terms of the above argument that how Shah Rukh and several years ago Amitabh Bachhan with a mediocrity of appearance, lacking the star aura and physiognomy became immensely popular. Popular discrimination as argues Fiske is distinct from critical or aesthetic discrimination and is chiefly concerned with functionality rather than quality, as popular is concerned with the potential use of the text. This position on the idea of popular relevance explains why heroes at particular moments of the nation’s history are able to strike the popular chord of the nation’s collective conscience.

Popular films and its stars are cultural phenomena caught between the interface of hegemonic textual construction and popular appropriations and discursive practices of everyday life. Their filmography, their real persona, their performance are relevant to the discursive practices. The
star provides popular means for semiotic translation of a particular time within the history of
the nation. SRK’s hegemonic positioning within the cinematic text of a globalising nation’s
narrative, his real life biography of ascendancy from a middle class background, the sheer
polysemy of his appeal and style combine in a way by which the star as per popular
discrimination is of relevance to his times. The cosmopolitan, urban, hybrid subjectivities
affirming both tradition on one hand and modernist pleasure and consumption on the other
while being posited within an affluent cultural habitat is of ‘popular relevance’ to the middle
class audience seeking upward mobility. This relevance is a contingent quality determined and
activated in the specifics of its spatio-temporalities as per Fiske. (ibid, p.130). Hence how the
trump image of Raj Kapoor in the austere regime of Nehruvian socialism, the image of the
angry young man Amitabh Bachchan against the backdrop of Emergency and political crisis
proved to be texts of popular relevance.

Although the idea of polysemy gives scope to popular reception within the semiotic domain, it
needs to be acknowledged how, even within polysemy, there is an insinuation discernible at the
level of meaning production wherein certain meanings are privileged over the others through a
preferred mode of construction of the star’s image within the filmic text. Such that despite
differential meaning production and popular consumption- there remains a certain ‘directed’
way of meaning production and this is ideologically as well as economically determined. The
privileging of certain meanings over others tend to carry the interests and ideologies of
dominant social and economic groups. (Barker, 2008)

Economic liberalisation endowed with a promise of affluence and consumerist gratification led
to a sense of global belonging. This enabled the middle class to attempt to reclaim cinema as
their ‘means of representation’. Here, it needs to be said that Amitabh’s early forays into
‘Middle Cinema’ had endeared him to the middle –class audience (especially in films like
Anand, Mili, Namak Halal Namak Haram Abhimaan etc) who believed in realist aesthetics and
had faith in state’s socialist rhetoric. It was Emergency that had alienated and disillusioned this
class, and Amitabh’s consolidation within the mould of the angry young man within a
discourse of an aesthetic of mobilization drew him to an urban, lumpen, industrial clientele.
The middle class of the post reforms India who sought to ‘represent’ themselves were not the
same as those of the 1970s. The heroes of the films since post 1990s were icons representing
the transitional class. (Bhugra, 2006, ibid. p.91). From the changes that followed liberalization,
an upwardly mobile, middle class claimed the centre-stage. Unlike the lumpen proletariat who
was hegemonically appropriated to contain dissent that followed from the 70s till mid 80s and
sustained socialist rhetoric, the 90s led to a repositioning of the hegemony that sought the
popular consent of an aspiring middle-class so far constrained by socialist austerity. The middle
class as the projected beneficiaries of an open market found their representation in popular texts
of Hindi films and as I seek to argue that Shah Rukh with a biography that ties him to this class
and his filmic roles embedded within its discourse accord him with a certain representative ness.
The extra-ordinary density of meanings carried by the star’s image appear to be consonant with
the interests and ideologies of dominant socio-economic elites spearheading the mandate of
liberalization and globalization in India and the star as an emblematic face of this mandate is amenable to popular reclamation by the burgeoning middle class of India seeking an upward mobility. Their aspiration for mobility finds a realisability within the real-life success story of the star, his biography of an enviable mobility from ordinariness and most importantly his films replete with promises of bourgeoisie desires, wish-fulfilment, happiness and acquisitive drives –consummated in romance, consumption, pleasure, filial ties etc. The preferred and the privileged meaning of the star is complicit with a clear economic and political ideology that informs the globalising agenda of the nation. Unlike Raj Kapoor and Amitabh Bachchan’s image, that despite its textual-hegemonic containment could leave more room for popular appropriations and transgressions by their casting in the guise of subalterns and often posed to interrogate the professed ideals of authority like the state, the patriarch or the family, Shah Rukh’s ‘popular’ meanings is tacitly complicit with economic interests of the market economy that seek to privilege his reading to be more of a bourgeoisie subject- a hero of the upwardly mobile new-middle class of a liberalising India.

The discourse of globalisation if considered to be privileged and dominant, among the plural discourses in the semantic terrain of Hindi cinema, with also a mass acceptability among the heterogeneous audience, then it follows by a post-modernist logic that the ‘dominant as well may be heterogeneous and diverse’( Collins,1989 p.21) The variability of the central formation, its basic de-centred ness, is more evident in the shifting nature of residual and emergent cultures. The dominant culture, claims Collins functions as an easily identifiable standard, a kind of ‘a cultural G.M.T from which all departures can be gauged’(ibid, p.22) Against this understanding it mat be argued that while the globalising nation’s discourse is evidently dominant within the narrative discourse of cinematic texts in which Shah Rukh mostly engages himself as mostly an urban, hybrid cosmopolitan, diasporic roles and also in the way the star steeps his body in the consumerist coding and positions himself within spaces inscribed by the visual aesthetics of global market capitalism(see, Dwyer and Patel, 2001 and Mazumdar, ) one can see how it functions as the standard measure in films that are strictly not part of this tradition. In patriotic roles ( Main Hoon NAA, Chak de India,) in cross-border romance(Veer Zaara), in historicals (Ashoka), classic re-makes (Devdas) or even in folk tales (Paheli) one can see how the dominant seeks a de-centred expression in these films and is subtly endowed within the ‘political unconscious’ as well a visual vocabulary of these narratives. The dominant discourse seeks to appropriate the star-image of Shah Rukh already entrenched recurrently in its discourse to produce its ‘de-centred expression’ even in films that are differently cast.

Stuart Hall’s theory of ‘articulation’(1996) analogous to Fiske’s idea of polysemy of text that lend itself to account for the double way in which texts work in popular culture also explains how popular texts reconcile apparently contradictory meanings and ideologies. In spite of being structured by the dominant ideology giving the text its preferred readings and determinate character, a text is discursively read and identified. Applying this position one can argue that the star-text is open to limitless range of discursive use. Popularity of the star among the diasporic constituency-as a signifier of liminal hybrid sensibilities appeal to their nostalgia and
homing desire in playing diasporic characters recurrently. He acts as the idol of consumption for the burgeoning, upwardly mobile ‘new middle classes’ of India. For the youth his lover boy, romantic roles symbolises the acquisitive lover-embodying a less inhibited libido. An exemplary popular text, while the hero is constructed within the hegemonic discourse of a globalising nation and his body represented within the capitalist ethos of consumerism-inherent in this are the resisting, counter-hegemonic articulations –such as the middle-class anxiety and panic to aspire such materiality, the anxiety of the state in its inability to stabilise an essentialised, territorialized identity under the compulsion of a globalising mandate, an upper-class, upper-caste Punjabification of identity (see Mishra, ibid) that militates against the composite secular ethos of the nation-state. Posited within a discourse that mostly casts the star as a global-Indian/diasporic subject, it absolves such positioning from the state’s sanction of citizenship and the transterritoriality does not preclude his Indian-ness within the narratives. The star is imaginatively reproduced within a popular nation not hostage to state in the era of the global.

Going back to Hall’s contention it may be said that the star as an embodiment articulating diverse and (subliminally even) the contradictory ones is able to secure popular consent through effective articulation. Hegemony is therefore contingent and discursive that seeks to articulate various elements and as a popular text the star’s construction within cinematic narratives seeks to hegemonically articulate plural elements and recompose it upon his image, body and persona in films.

3.13 SHAH RUKH KHAN’S STAR IDENTITY AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION: WHAT EMERGES ACROSS HIS FILMOGRAPHIC TRAJECTORY

I propose to look at the star identity of Shah Rukh Khan as a political-cultural identity, a site for the ‘coincidence of private concerns and public issues’ (Preston, 1997, p.3) The personal identity of the star can be seen as a rich arena of meanings. Like the self-image of all social actors it may be seen as a thoroughly elaborated structure and cannot be seen as a single ‘homogenous stock of traits, images and habits’ (ibid, p.4) The reception of the star is a dynamic process that has grown with temporal accretions of his filmic images, public exchanges and socio-cultural realities. The star identity as a politico-cultural one has several aspects derived from certain sources like his film career, biography, public interaction, media reports on his both public and private self and so on. This identity an outcome of several factors and is a complex, dynamic process that is seen to arise out of a dynamic interactive exchange between the star and audience reception both in terms of his films and extra-filmic self and engagements. However this identity is never fixed and evolves and is shifting. What is most important is how the issue of political –cultural identity generated by the classical European tradition has typically taken the route to nationalism. The coupling of the state, as a politico-legal entity and nation as a shared community provided the framework for complex institutional exchanges and accommodating modern changes as part of broad modernist project.
The star identity that emerges across the films are discursive constructions and need to be situated within its larger social, political and economic context. As per Foucault’s genealogy of the modern subject that traces the derivation and lineage of subjects through history, it may be claimed that the heroic subject, as a discursive construction is to be located within specific socio-cultural and historical conjunctures. The construction of SRK as a hero within popular filmic discourse is to be seen as an outcome of specific social and historical formations. And hence the logic to posit him against the backdrop of contemporary social, political and economic history of the nation. Instead of seeing him as a sovereign actor, self-willed professional, SRK as a hero is to be seen to personify particular discourse(s)(see, Barker, 2002,p.87-88; Smith, 2001,p.118-119) In an interview given by script-writer Javed Akhtar, of the Salim-Javed duo scriptwriter that created the legendary ‘angry-young man’ roles played by Bachchan, he said: ‘I can give long lectures about the angry, young man, but we just thought of an interesting idea and story….We were part of the times, the society developing this kind of morality. We were in sync with others’(Dwyer, 2002,p.95)

The common-sense cultural repertoire of the self available to us is the notion of the true self, that is possessed and is knowable, expressible via representation, as an essence that can be signified. While looking at the star-identity within the framework of cultural studies it needs to be seen as ‘contingent, culturally-produced, specific productions’ As social construction, the identities of various subjectivities performed by the star cannot exist outside of ‘cultural representations’. The identities of various subjectivities mediated through the star need to be seen from an anti-essentialist viewpoint, as marked by plasticity. In this vein Stuart Hall’s influential reading of Derridean concept of ‘difference and deferral’-by which meanings are continually deferred /supplemented. Applying Hall’s understanding of identity as becoming, this analysis would see how the star and his image lend itself towards becoming than being a fixed marker of a certain identity. The casting of SRK in a particular thematic universe and his casting attributing certain representative ness to his image is only what Hall calls as a temporary closure or stabilization of identity of meaning as required. It accords certain stabilization within a particular film or genre. Consequently it may be claimed as discussed under several heads of film genre in the foregoing pages, as per Hall, that the identity of the national-subject as mediated by the star in each of the film and film type is representative of a ‘cut’ or a snap-shot in endless unfolding of meanings-a strategic positioning. The articulation of the nation’s plural discourse via the star and the narrative plot of the films in which he is situated is a contingent, an-essentialist positioning subjected to the changing realities of the nation and its socio-political economic context. The identity mediated by the hero is plastic, changeable and is emergent and specific to the socio-cultural conjunctures and discourse that inform its construction.(see, Barker, 2002, Rojek, 2007)

Indian identity is framed by what constitute ‘India’(Robb2007, p.3) As identity constructions are discursively produced, what constitutes to be an Indian is contingent upon the nation’s social, political and economic contexts. Thus heroic identities within a global and transnational context, as an Indian has come to be conditioned by the identity of India as a globalizing nation.
The nation’s tryst with the global and its response from early ambivalence or anxiety to reconciliation to assimilation has an uncanny, interestingly popular articulation in the evolving heroic characterisation of SRK.

The emergence of the super-star SRK in contemporary family drama, a genre that has recurrently cast him, provided a rallying point around which the industry re-constituted itself after losing battle with the increasingly popular medium, viz. television in the 1980s. According to Ronald Inden, the resurgence of love stories points towards a clear desire to hark back the affluent audience to cinema halls after the 1980s rape-revenge avenging woman genre that attracted lower class audience failed to hold its sway. While a correlation between narrative type and class based viewership is problematic, it is undeniable that T.V. vied for the attention of the middle and upper middle class in the said period. The arrival of SRK coincided with the period, viz of the 1990s when cinema attempted to return a sense of family and community. Such plotlines restored a sense of populism to commercial Hindi cinema. As it constructed a protagonist that demanded spectatorial involvement and interpellation of the middle class audience based on identification with the male protagonist. (Menon-Broker, 2005, p.180-181) SRK’s early casting in the role of desirous middle class subjects in films like Kabhi Haa Kabhi Naa, Raju Ban Gay Gentleman, Deewana, Maya Memsaab, and still later in Yes Boss and in Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi, or even in his violent psychopathic roles of Darr, Baazigar, Anjaam laden with anxiety, frailties, vulnerabilities, mediocrity, anguish, ambition, interiorised strife saw the hero in several predicaments true of middle class positioning. The resolution of these problems lied not in bodily prowess but more of a moral crisis and dilemma. The rise of representative heroes producing least common denominator effect in compliance to compulsive maintenance of fixed cost and when the same audience members consume the same product in common, like a movie star is when it ‘will cause suppliers to look for a commodity or experience that can be shared by the larger customers. This sets off a search for the least common denominator…‘ (Cowen, 2002, p.107-108)
This allow us to explain how certain stars like Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar in the 1940s and 1950s, Dev Anand and Shammi Kpoor in the late 1950s and 1960s, Dharmendra in the late 1960s, Rajesh Khanna in the late 1960S and mid 1970S and Amitabh Bachchan in the 1970s and early 1980s emerged as the ‘least common denominator ‘ supported by the market. Shah Rukh’s success in a row of films of middle class protagonist can be inferred in his success to emerge as a star or an icon believed to be part of or representative of the larger community of the Indian middle class. As per the logic of the market, with a larger constituency looking for a shared emblem often cause suppliers of the culture industry to project a shareable commodity or a shared cultural emblem.(ibid) Hence it may be argued that SRK’s successful casting in contemporary middle class narratives and the commercial success of these films serve to accord him a certain representative ness as a shared cultural emblem or marker of the middle class community of a globalising nation. Popular heroes as cultural markers of national identities are subjected to the discursive construction and shifts, and the popularity of the star hero, Shah Rukh within roles of a middle class protagonist in a row of films marked by ‘certain representational practices and symbolic
boundaries of the new middle class’ (see Savalaa, 2010,, ibid p.10) via his aspirational drive, moral predicaments, gratifying immediacy, and consumerist inflections invested his image with an emblematic representative ness of the nation’s middle class that coincides with its globalising phase.

The construction of the hero as a national subject in family romance drama explicates the operation of ‘national societies’ within the broader context of global system of societies. The diasporic families act as prototypes of ‘national societies’ and provide the cultural sites to the construction of subject construction, i.e. the heroic self. These families in films like Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna, can be seen to act as what Robertson as cited by Beyer, says as national societies operating on a broader context of the global system of societies and this opens up the possibility to the relativized construction of identities with reference to a wider category of human societies within a cosmopolitan site of global cities. These films opens up the audience to different possibilities beyond one’s own bipolar individual-society nexus of identity. The location and construction of SRK’s subjectivity within diasporic families relativize the constitution of national identities within an encompassing world system of societies. (see, Beyer, 2003 p.168) The star unmoored from territoriality and his positioning within diasporic familial set ups alerts the national spectatorship towards the relativized cultural positioning of national societies within a diverse global cultural framing.

Relativization of the ‘image of modernity’ has served to undermine the idea of an unified project or paradigmatic model of the same based on a binary distinction between tradition and modern. If the structure of modernity lends itself to variations as per historical context, it is by the same token open to partial determination by traditional background. The perspective of pluralization and relativization of modernity and the idea of ongoing re-activation of tradition within modernity in sociology (as also illustrated within Weberian analysis of ‘conflicting cultural spheres’) (Arnason, 2003, p.139-140,146) holds the potential to be linked to the plural configurations of modernity and that how popular cinematic texts deploy star-vehicles to articulate the negotiation between tradition and modernity. Shah Rukh’s roles offered him to negotiate between the tradition and the modern across several films. His negotiation with patriarchy from DDLJ to KANK marks an interesting travail of the star, from a position of deference and reconciliation towards greater individuated choice. It appears as a continuum in the character’s development as a full grown bourgeoisie subject of an increasingly maturing democratic polity and liberalizing economy unshackling itself from state control.

The character in later row of diasporic films unmoors itself incrementally from the ‘organic space of North-Indian families’, its pro-feudal limits as was seen in DDLJ and Pardes to a strange mobility it assumes across films over the years towards an affirmation of new sexual and social relation based on individualism in KANK, through extra-marital relation and its consummation. The powerful stranglehold of feudal/patriarchal control came under attack as an emergent code for greater democracy. The trajectory of the individual gaining of freedom vis-à-vis feudal authority figures marks a larger shift in the political economy of films, with films gaining industrial recognition by the state and the entry of corporate finance that was essential to
the crystallization of the bourgeois subject and his gaining of autonomy in matters of personal choice. (see, Prasad, 1998.) Shah Rukh’s character in later diasporic films privileges the rise of bourgeois hegemony relatively freed from feudal moralist universe, and marks the constitution of citizen subjectivity within a more democratic polity of the post-colonial nation in its transition towards a global regime. The ‘invention of the private’ in KANK marked the emergence of a more liberal middle class world view and the private though in diasporic locale figuratively removed itself from the absolutist moral gaze of the state.

Prior to the arrival of Amitabh Bachchan, the archetypal crusader, the rebellious hero, the heroic articulation of citizen-subjectivity was stage to the pre-capitalist social trappings and delayed project of modernity. Bachchan was amongst the earliest heroes who confronted authority, that includes the state and its legal apparatus in the most brazen way. The introduction of SRK to the popular domain of cinema, saw his filmography evolving in its construction of the citizen subjectivity through a more negotiating gestures that emerged between the state supported agenda of global modernity on one hand and the cultural particularism and autonomy claimed by the nation on the other. Although Shah Rukh’s transterritorialized location in diaspora films escaped the compulsions of citizenry, it nevertheless ensured that the hero especially in his early diaspora films like DDLJ, Pardes, affirms his cultural affinities to the imagined nation. While in his early films, a self-seeking, neurotic subject expressed apprehensions of the middle class in the state’s ability to protect private interest(Baazigar), in still others like Darr and Anjaam, a self-aggrandizing subject refuses to socially as well legally reined in assertion of his sexual (choice and )freedom. Based on pure individualistic motivations of the hero, his gesture emerges as a semiotic code for greater democracy, albeit in a perverse expression, that also parallels the rise of right based activism in Indian politics since the Mandal agitation in 1989.

SRK’s appearance in family romance movies revived under the shadow of the ‘feudal family romance’ or the social genre of the 1950s and 60s saw the hero to recode the conflict between the modern and the traditional in a more reconciliatory idiom. Individual autonomy took intrepid steps by seeking an initial authorization or rapprochement with patriarchy in early diaspora films. These patriarchal figures themselves diaporic in DDLJ, Pardes, KANK and so on through sleight of hand had a tenuous command over their authenticity and conservatism otherwise ensured through territoriality.

This would be wrong to assume that are diasporically themed. Even in films where the star is not a diasporic subject per se, like in films Dil To Pagal Hai /DTPH(1997), Dil Se(1998), Kuch Kuch Hota Hai/KKHH(1998), SRK emerges as a signifier of diasporic consciousness. Diaspora’s growing economic power makes it an attractive destination for Hindi cinema’s transnational travels. However, diaspora do not mean simple pockets of culturally ossified people ‘out there’. Diasporic consciousness informs the spectatorial desire within India, at its globalizing moment and in Shah Rukh’s “cool, urban, cosmopolitan style” finds an alterity for identification. Diasporic consciousness is mediatized through the visual vocabulary in which the hero, SRK becomes a prime insignia of a consumerist, visual culture of a globalizing.
Diasporic consciousness as a more generic category is not specific to his diasporic roles alone; and his characterisation in favour of a hybrid, cosmopolitan, urban, fluid self, non-essentialist identity favouring negotiated stances as it straddles between spaces of tradition and modern, nation and global both metaphorically and otherwise invests his image with a diasporic consciousness that escapes boundedness to space, and culture and emerge as a fluid signifier of a globalizing nation. The image of SRK, as popular star of post-liberalization India in diasporic roles and otherwise since DDLJ, bring to fore the issue of diasporic consciousness as spectatorial investments in films through aesthetics and other representational codes, where the diasporic gaze comes to be inscribed within the text itself. The construction of SRK in non-diasporic films like DTPH, KKHH, appear to be a continuity of the same image as it is informed in a way to appeal to the diasporic spectatorial gaze both through his characterisation and his viscerality. 

The semiotics of SRK’s urban, cosmopolitan, hybridized, diasporic image developed certain “recognition factors” true of fashioning icons, through his standardised gestures, stylization, appropriate apparel, allowed him a distinctiveness, an instant recognizability in his visual representation relayed across several films iconized him within a globalizing aesthetic code and visual regime of the nation. In other words it has given his image ‘certain stable connotations’ (see, Mishra, 2002, ibid)  

Looking at the liminality of SRK’s characterisation, especially in his early diasporic roles what emerges significant is the subjects ability to negotiate, reconcile differences and his dexterity to accommodate himself to changing locales of narratives both India and abroad. Inhabiting diverse territories of cultural reference, he enacts heterogeneous modes of representations (of the nation). The hero’s role as a diasporic subject has often seen him display excess of expressions of histrionics, frivolity and playfulness that marks his liminality further. Straddling between territorial and transterritorial constituency, in films like DDLJ, Pardes, KHNH he is seen to resolve inter-generational, familial problems. His narrative mobility, not tied to any one place accords him a malleable, performativity that is integral to the hybridity of the roles played. His characters problematizes fixity of identity in his narrative mobility as well in his acting that re-invents excess of older melodramatic style (Vasudevan, 2010, ibid. p.375,379,381-382.)  

Borrowing Hall’s understanding on Jamaican society, the diasporic hero’s identity is to seen as an instance of ‘double articulation’ within an ‘interdiscursive field’, resulting in overlap or fusion between the categories of the nation and the global. The diasporic subjectivity the star plays across several films articulating the nation and the global—a condensed social position and most often seeks to privilege the nation over the global in an anxious bid to affirm the ‘Indian-ness’. (see Hall, 1996 p.30 in Walkerdine et al) However, in later films like KANK, KHNH, despite articulation of the nation, the hold of the same appeared a little tenuous as it was mediated by de-territorialized diasporic subjectivities who did not seek the sanction of the territorial nation and his sense of belonging to the nation. The characters remained abroad and were autonomous subjects seeking independence from patriarchal control.
Shah Rukh’s image serves as popular illustration to counter the standardized arguments supporting hegemonic compliance with Western model of homogenization of global cultural influence. Appadurai’s idea of disjunctures in cultural flows, Ritzer’s idea of ‘glocalization’, Manuell Castells idea of reverse process of identity reformation can be employed to see the star as an embodiment, as a personification of local transformation of the global. The star stands as a popular re-adaptation of the global hybridity, a popular re-creation of the global consumerist culture and most importantly as a translator of globalization for the ordinary people. He represents the ‘process of re-absorption and adaptation of cultural products and their inscribed meanings as a form of ‘hybridization’ (see, Lewis, 2008 p.12). The diasporization of his characters, and narratives, a trend encouraged by post-liberalization market reforms, the star emerged almost ‘metonymic of globality of Indian ness in his repeated recasting within the hybrid, hyphenated mould of diasporic identity of the global-national (Indian) subject. Mediator of the nation-global nexus, his roles a ‘bricolage of the nation and the global (Rojek, 2007, p.5) exposes the permeability of the nation’s cultural identities. As a popular container of Indian ness, the star offers a cinematic expression for negotiating the fractured sense of Indian ness and Western ness. However this Indian ness as nationality is diluted in terms of its geographical location and authorisation by the modern nation-state, as the trans-territorialized hero is locationally re-mapped beyond the state confines in a bid to attract the diaspora audience. The hero is a popular move deployed as an enabling opportunity for the liberalising economy of the nation. He represents the emergence of the transnational Indian elite class as reference group for the upwardly mobile new Indian middle class. As a diasporic subject he fulfils a curiosity of the homeland Indians about its presumed ‘cosmos’ abroad, serves as a conduit to maintain emotional and material link between homeland and the transnational community (Brosius, 2005, p.215, 236; Kaur, 2005 p.311).

Repositioning and disembedding of the nation’s identity rooted to its territoriality and its transposition to a global plane, where the hero displays a non-essentialised hybrid identity beyond the statist confines offers his image to be a popular exemplar of the larger process of globalization that entails dismantling of social, economic and cultural barriers via capital finance flows, migration, travel, expansion of global markets, information space, mass communication, rise of virtual technologies that challenge habitual notions of immovable barriers (see, ibid). Bollywood seeks to project an ideal diaspora through its hero who has in him ‘India internalized’, and with the Indian imaginary within, he is someone who lives in the West, and his representation serves to establish ‘India’ community as both national and a global community. Locating the diaspora within ‘Bollywood address’ makes him a trope of the home and the nation for the diaspora audience (Ray 2012, p.232-231). The nation in face of the retreatist state renegotiates its status on global scene as a viable geo-political entity through the validation of the diasporic subject reclaimed, and re-inscribed by the nation as its preferred trope at a global moment (Bhattacharya-Mehta, 2011, ibid.p.1-2).

The arrival of diasporic themes (with the film DDLJ) is significant as it was in tandem with the emergence of a particular kind of ‘star’. Such was the success of his character amongst the
diasporic and urban Indian constituency that SRK who was seen in negative anti-hero roles or as struggling desirous middle class boy came to be repeatedly cast in similar roles in subsequent films. The hero, struck a certain chord with the audience wherein his performance and his construction as the urban/diasporic hero appealed to these sensibilities of urban and diasporic India, convincingly performing the hopes, fantasies, anxieties of these two segments of Indian audience in particular. He emerged as diaspora’s favourite star, initiating a trend of characters and diegetic activity in diaspora films in particular. He emerged as the ‘preferred mediator between homeland and diaspora and was seen in series of films playing either urban, cosmopolitan Indian/or diasporic hero: English Babu Desi Mem(1996, directed by: Praveen Nischol), Yes Boss (1997, directed by: Aziz Mirza), Dil To Pagal Hai(1997, directed by: Yash Chopra), Pardes(1997, directed by: Subhash Ghai), Kuch Kuch Hota Hai(1998, directed by: Karan Johar), Dil Se(1998, directed by: Mani Ratnam), Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani(2000, directed by: Aziz Mirza), Mohabbatein(2000, directed by: Aditya Chopra), Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham(2001, directed by: Karan Johar), Devdas(2002, directed by: Sanjay Leela Bhansali), Chalte Chalte(2003, directed by: Aziz Mirza), Kal Ho Naa Ho(2003, directed by: Nikhil Advani) Main Hoon Naa(2004, directed by: Farha Khan) and Swades(2004, directed by: Ashutosh Gowariker). And although other contemporary heroes have played similar roles, but it is ‘…Shah Rukh who has captivated audiences in urban India and around the world as the favoured metropolitan Indian and NRI protagonist time and time again…In this way actors expand their star-value and operate discursively as a ‘author –function’.’(Dudrah, 2006, p.86)

The success of the star in mediating urban/diasporic Indian identity aligns his star image to these characters as almost a naturalization. Certain cultural politics is discernible in the characterisation of the hero, the fetishized figure of the NRI., in films like DDLJ, Pardes, Swades, where the nation claimed to be central to the diasporic hero’s psycho-political imaginary, and pose as an authentic source to authorize and sanctify identities. The anxious nation in reclaiming the diasporic subject seeks to uphold his nationalist orientations and ‘Indian ness’ that remains uncontaminated by the West. Such a conservative, nationalist missionary zeal of Bollywood’s culturalist discourse inadvertently appears to validate the Orientalist legacy and the Eurocentric opinion that South Asian migrants ‘do not quite fit in the West’. Besides such characterisation of the diaspora embodied recurrently through the hero as North-Indian, affluent, upper/middle class militates against the diversity of class and ethnic composition of the Indian diaspora. The popularity of the star advantageously obscures the homogenising hegemonic representation of the ‘global-Indian ‘through the diasporic heroic subject. Bollywood’s meta-language of representation, seeking to produce a popular version of the authentic Indian ness paradoxically produces an essentialised identity of the diaspora subject through type-casted representation, similar mode of re-casting of the hero, almost defeating the very purpose to otherwise produce a non-essentialised hybrid identity. The anxiety to project the diaspora as authentic Indian, especially in early films reinscribes the Orientalist hegemony, but now from totalising dynamics to an ‘auto-Orientalising East’. The acceptance of Bollywood in the mainstream West renders noticeable a certain
complicity where global capital and national elites align to produce an essentialist vision of globalising face of Indians that serve to efface heterogeneity of diasporic conditions. (Kaur, 2005, p.315-316, 323, 326-328) Here it may be stated that Shah Rukh’s repeated casting as Punjabi/North-Indian diaspora have staged what Appadurai calls as the staging of globalization of the ‘primordia’. These primordial are part of ‘invented traditions or retrospective affiliations’ and illustrate how due to disjunctive and unstable interplay of commerce, media, national politics and consumer fantasies, ethnicity once a ‘genie’ contained in the bottle, has now become a global force, forever slipping through the cracks between states and borders (Appadurai, 2000 , in Boli et al, p.329) The punjabification of the diasporic hero illustrates the globalization of the Punjabi/North Indian ethnic primordial.

As opposed to the regular Indian middle class life, is the taken-for-granted affluence of Western reality. This image of the diasporic life and the image of the West harboured often fail to be informed by more realistic, nuanced understanding of real life of migrants in Euro-American worlds. The happy, consumerist bliss of diasporic families in popular films, the rich, affluent hero pander to this unrealistic image held by the new middle class at home nurturing and aspiring the ‘unreal dream of upper class Western reality’(Savaala 2010, ibid.p.90) The hero leading a posh, upper class lifestyle, indulging in consumerist lifestyle, enjoying wealth, luxury cars, foreign tours, large houses, designer wears and other highly priced consumer items adorning their homes and bodies, locates the hero within a ‘habitus’ which are beyond the means of most middle class consumers. Shah Rukh representing the fantasies of migration in the subcontinent through signifying a desired living marked by pleasure, leisure, comfort, freedom and consumption. The diasporisation of the hero is just not to attract the diasporic market butto celebrate ‘an emergent migrant culture’, the social and economic remittance it offers, and to capture the imagination of the burgeoning middle class who hold West as an ideal site of aspired good life. The liberalised nation-state and society at this espoused model of the diaspora hero as an opportunity of capital, to reclaim their affinities and revive their rooted ness in hope of finance, investments etc. Besides, movement and mobility or attaching oneself to the flow of ideas, information and images that are flowing has become part of definition of middle class realities in new consumer society. Movement is integral to modernity, it is enabled through media and migration and has come to shape middle class imaginaire involved in the creation of consumerist dreams and create a sense of belonging. Popular stars like SRK, with a biography of ascendancy from a middle class position, his commercial endorsements of global brands, makes him an appropriate signifier of middle class’s vicarious belonging to a desired mode of life and livings, it may be argued as a diaspora hero is a popular imagination, a classic instance of collective, mass-mediated, transterritorialized imagination of other places, other ways of life-personifying a ‘re-imagined mythography of belonging’ (ibidp.94) The mass-mediated diasporic hero, is a mythified imagination, an aspired feature of alterity for the nation’s new middle class, a conduit to integrate them vicariously to a desired way of living, and forging a mediated link to distant places of being and belonging. The star provides visual experience through imaginative belonging to ‘imagined migrant lives’, creating entry into simulated experiences of
‘heteropia’-worlds that are imaginary,’here-and –now par excellence, that are both absent and desirable. The diasporic hero therefore acts as a mediated link to play upon the desires and produce a simulated experience of a desired living and belonging. (see, ibid.p93-96) However identifying the hero as an insignia of an aspired consumerist life of the middle class is not undifferentiated. The hero, SRK appear to invoke intertextually the spirit of the vagabond hero in Shri420 played by Raj Kapoor who lyrically asserts that despite wearing foreign made products-the Japanese shoes, the English trousers, and Russian hat his heart remains Indian. Foreign influences cannot undermine the patriotism of the Indian heart. Here, the Indian-ness is produced in relation to ‘difference’, and does not emanate asanautochthonous process. (Kaur and Sinha, 2005, p.12) SRK’s consumerist image seeks to produce his Indian-ness while ‘iterating’ the difference with the West. The star image can thus be a popular instance of the post-modern, post-structural understanding of the ‘new cultural politics of difference’. (see, Smith, 2001, p.241)

Liberalization let loose, rendered consumerism respectable. (Bhugra, 2006, ibid.p.191) SRK’s coding within the consumerist position provided him positions ‘from which it is possible to speak or mean’ (Thwaites et al. p.40) affirming in favour of a certain life style. The most visible index of the star’s globality is conveyed via the consumerist markers that inscribe his body, that mark his living and practices on screen and abounds in mise-en-scene. The mediation of global consumerism through the heroic self follows a translation, transformation or adaptation. The hero indigenises, disarticulates global consumerism from its assumed anchorage to West. As a popular articulation, he recreates the Western codes of consumption, (see, Tomlinson, 1999, p.23).

The globality as well the hybridity of the star has its most visible indices in the consumerist image as an alternative to Western globality. The displacement of Western privilege and superiority as argued by Giddens and Bauman, has its most visible resonance in the consumerist moments. The hero in designer clothes, in expensive cars, in lavish houses retains his Indian distinctiveness in his values, characterisation, choices etc. Consumption marks his global identity, a superficial narrative device or means to connect the hero to the global and is rarely seen to his motivational ideology. In fact consumption is the most visible cultural response to hegemony that can be made visible and amenable on screen. At the surface of imitation, the star offers a quiet indigenous signification, albeit covertly. Consumerist devices offers the best means to affirm hybridized consumption, conversion and inventive mode of assimilation as opposed to straitjacketed, hegemonising notions of Westernization. (see, Savaala, 2010, ibid. p.15)

The dual identity of the hero negotiating the nation and the global/cosmopolitan can be illustrated through Giddens idea of reflexivity of identity assertion where identity is constructed through various choices made available to the individual within the globalized realm. Individuals may use variety of strategies, of which one can be seen to maintain ‘an identification with his nation at a cultural level’, wherein citizenship is ‘constructed and negotiated through cultural identification with the nation-state’. (Byrne, cites Giddens, 2001)
The individual enabled through a dual citizenship, while culturally identifying with the nation seeks to politically identify with the world. He is cosmopolitan in the ‘quasi-political sense’ (ibid. p.145) and though his identification with the global is seen in his cosmopolitan appearance, his ‘national citizenship’ is seen in his ‘cultural affinities’ (ibid).

Until the 1990s, the Indian state assumed supreme power in various aspects of state economy, but liberalization has led to a concomitant rise of a widening middle class that is relatively independent of the state. This is seen in heroic subjectivities played typically by SRK that is no longer a subaltern rebel as represented in the angry man cult of the 1970s and 1980s. Even the anguish and anxiety of his early roles as a desirous and ambitious middle class subject caught in moral dilemma or that of a psychopath becomes more acquiescent. His subsequent roles mostly as rich, upper middle class hero leading affluent, consumerist lives appears oblivious of his relation to the Indian state. Unlike the earlier heroes articulating social ideals, upholding reformist agenda, speaking in broad social language of class war, inequality, injustice or protesting against the state in public, SRK the post-liberalization hero explicates a reduced dependence on the state. The latter is not only attained through diasporisation, but even in non-diasporic roles he barely addresses the state or directs himself to collective goals and in films like Darr, Baazigar, Anjaam, Dil to Pagal Hai, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai he is directed towards interiorized struggles or individualized pursuits. Diasporisation of his roles while unmooring him from the state illustrates his affinity to the nation wherein the nation is ‘a psychological community of sentiments’ (Weber, 1994) or ‘an imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983). With nation-states under siege of the global, old perceptions and constructions of heroic ideals crumbling, Indian-ness is no longer contingent on the relationship between the state(or its territoriality) and the heroic subject. Indian-ness as depicted through the hertoic roles played by SRK appears negotiable, freed from the question of territoriality, domicile or citizenship. Indian-ness in the hero has mostly articulated itself as a matter of values, a certain emotional structure, with mother tongue used in intimacy etc. (Dwyer, 2002, p.189-190).

With gaining of freedom, the nation that was more of an ethical community informed by a morality of anti-colonialism, became more political ‘Thus as post-colonial nation was founded, citizenship was transformed from a moral category to a category of exchange…The citizen is then created and legally defined and acknowledged by the constitution. It is then a transactional identity-the citizen as a member of the state exchanges political allegiance for the right to certain privileges and protections.’ (Samaddar, 2001 p.201) While this transactional element was discernible in early heroes like Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar or even Amitabh Bachchan in their bid to establish their right to life, living and livelihood, their moral crusades in favour of legitimate entitlements, equality, justice etc., it appears to be revived in a new idiom where the protagonist/hero, as a citizen is seen to be part of a larger movement or civil society activism, where the state’s relationship to the citizenry came to be interrogated in films like Rang De Basanti, Gangajal, Vastav, Shool, in a critical and reflexive note. Surprisingly, SRK’s films are either caught in private stirrings within familial situations where the family acted as ‘ethical community’ (ibid. p.198). The family replaced the state. And as already said that SRK’s
positioning within these family narratives allow an interesting delineation of a trajectory of subject formation in terms of the hero’s relation to the familial authority structure, mostly represented by the patriarch, and how the heroic subject grows in terms of autonomy it gains vis-à-vis family head, the surrogate to the state. And even in films like Main Hoo Naa, Swades, Chak De, and My Name Is Khan Shah Rukh’s role engaged in more collective goals, though sees him in more de-individualized goals of saving the nation against aggression, bringing sporting victory to the nation or modernizing a village respectively, his role appear to celebrate the sovereign, agentic capacity of the individual who can assume power to attain a chosen mission almost single-handedly. While one may cite the heroic subjectivities displaying relative independence from the state, on the other hand it may be argued that the hero was more of a non-transactional citizen subject, who does not demand from the state.

The image of the star has a crucial presence beyond the narrative/diegetic limits. Stardom emerge as a crucial vector of public investment in cinema, in terms of the cinematic public’s knowledge of the star’s screen biography, both its regular repeated features, in challenges posed by alterations and outright disruption. Besides off-screen knowledge about the star has a narrative function, and the relationship of the screen image of the star and the audience is fraught with relays of significant biographical shifts in the off-screen life of the star and his screen biography. (Vasudevan, 2010,p.70)

The star identity borne by the hero need be situated within popular cinema’s changing political economy. Cinema which for long was denied state recognition as an industry, lacked generic dimensions and produced an omnibus ‘masala’ narrative format to entertain the masses for long had a disaggregated mode of production, was controlled by forces of backward capital nevertheless through its public mode of mass spectacle and exhibition of entertainment came to represent certain democratic features. Representing the ‘messier dimensions of democracy’ of a post-colonial society, its inclusive address channelizing mass energies exceeded the niceties of the modern enumerative state disbursing citizenship rights and entitlements within a modernist discourse (see, Vasudevan, 2011p8-9.). The sub-altern character of this mass mode of entertainment reached its apotheosis in the heroic figure of Amitabh Bachchan. In contrast to Bachchan’s positioning in the 1970sis SRK who has come to represent the global turn in the cinematic production and changing political economy of Bollywood and the class profile of its addressee. The contemporary changes in the state policy, industrial recognition, and industrial initiative, entry of corporate finance, global consumerist aesthetics, rise of multiplexes, middle class/diasporic themes have eroded the mass base/democratic address and character of film’s political and cultural economy. The cultural legitimacy historically denied to cinema being now gained, the state’s interest in Bollywood as a ‘soft’ power as an ally of its liberalizing agenda, financial investments, have rendered it to an arena of an ‘elite modernity’ that addresses the middle class/diaspora, embeds itself in a consumerist aesthetics, a gloss of abundance and plentitude of globalizing metropolitan, urban living. The construction of the star SRK within the contemporary globalizing discourse of Bollywood makes him an icon of the global turn of Bollywood and the nation. With state legitimacy secured as an industry and an emergent global
corporatized economy of film production corroborated in heroic prototype of SRK as a hero, who is an anti-thesis to the subaltern hero of the seventies, it can be argued to mark a permanent shift from ‘popular sovereign’ represented by the mass hero to the hero of ‘elite modernity’. This hero is part of the reformist project and unlike the earlier gangster fils revels in family drama or bourgeoisie narratives. The legitimacy gained by the industry is not unrelated to the identitarian project that revolves around construction of heroic characters. The hero constructed to appeal to the middle class family audience, upholding stable bourgeois, family values marks a change in the changing cultural and political economy of films. (see Rajadhyaksha cited in Vasudevan, 2011, ibid.) The rise of the heroic type is in tandem with the changing audience profile and SRK as a heroic prototype is seen to be mostly yoked to the family bonds unlike the angry young man cult of the seventies, the macho masculine bravado of his contemporaries like Sunny Deol, Akshay Kumar, Salman Khan.

The characterization of the star has often seen him in romantic roles approximating what Vladimir Propp, as cited, describes in dramatic terms as the “seeker hero” in contrast to his opposite viz. the victimized hero. (Berger, 1992, p.14) This acquisitive drive in his roles sees him emerge triumphant in several ‘Oedipal narratives’ with variations in each films. Most of his films barring his tragic death or redemption in early movies like Baazigar, Darr, SRK is seen to win over his love not only against the resisting patriarch (DDLJ, Pardes, Mohabbatein, Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham) but also entails winning over the female from another man, a prospective husband / fiancé or even the real husband as in KANK. Such gratifying formula of oedipal themes are extremely popular as it purges out inner anxieties and insecurities against fear of loss and failure from the deep unconscious of the mind. The acquisitive successful hero resembling the ‘fairy tale hero’, who is a winner not only in love but in other missions (as in MHN, Chak De, Ra. One) in achieving his desired goal, is the achieving hero who serve to satisfy the deeper desires of childhood, viz. wish-fulfilment though it is not mostly consciously recognised. The narratives of resolution in favour of wish fulfilment and happiness bring him close to what is an oedipal relation to the audience. ‘If a child is father to the man or mother to the woman, the child… also a father or mother to the narratives, whatever the level of sophistication and genre. This Oedipal relation of characters in stories is generally disguised, not recognised by members of the audience (nor created consciously by the writer) but it is there, felt by all involved with the texts… We do not have a hero with a thousand dramas and that hero or heroine is each of us and all the stories we read ans see are ultimately ur stories’. (Berger, 1992, ibid. p.39) The achiever hero created ‘…a new sense of open possibilities and an inspiration for greater freedom’ (ibid. p.8)

If Amitabh Bachchan’s image inaugurated a ‘mobilization effect’ in filmic aesthetic that followed the decline of feudal family romance and crisis within the Indian polity, and also that his image provided the means to transform the industry internally that was able to combine the novel ‘aesthetic of mobilization’ with fragments of the older format and thus new aesthetic possibilities emerged. Bachchan’s image gave anew function for the star image, viz. of ‘ordinariness’. Elaborated as the ‘angry young man’ image, the star assumed the aura of a
public persona. The star function compensated for the disaggregate mode of production. The era of Indira Gandhi had rendered anachronistic the old form and the conditions also failed to bring about a complete transformation in the aesthetic bases of industry. The industry continued to function and the figure of the star hero Bachchan provided the resolution through an intensification of value deriving from the star system through infusion of political power into the star figure. He articulated the times as a working class subaltern figure, as an agent of resistance, a rallying point around which the industry reconstituted itself. (Prasad, 1998, p.138-157)

Likewise the SRK phenomena cannot be analysed in isolation from the construction of the new narrative that heralded the entry of the ‘middle class’ who like Bachchan was also ordinary in the sense of his appearance. Like Bachchan, SRK arrived at a time when the film economy was still in throes of disaggregation. Although the industry stands largely disciplined and corporatised now, the diasporisation of the hero and his global consumerist styling in DDLJ onwards recurrently in several films compensated for the not-yet globally ready format of Bollywood otherwise seen in advanced corporatised, capitalist form of film production. Manmohonomics, as liberalization was called had rendered the old disaggregate form obsolete, but for sometime failed to produce a complete transformation within the aesthetic bases of industry. The star in the revived family format of family romance, emerged as a star-negotiator between the existing family controlled mode of production (held in the hands of the Chopras, Johars, Kapoors, Roshans, etc., see Gopal, 2011) of Bollywood and the changing forces of production and cultural economy. Although the political and cultural economy of Bollywood since 1990s onwards have changed towards more organized form of production with the coming of corporate finance, media convergence, global collaborations, SRK’s journey nearly concurs with the industry’s travails in a parallel manner.

The star cinematically resolved the early negotiation of old narrative format and old forces of production with incipient global changes in his roles in family romance. He provided the model subjectivity of the nation to articulate the contradictions of transitional moments, both of the globalizing nation and its influence within the film industry and its cinematic form. SRK provided the rallying point for change, the agent of change around which the industry reconstituted itself like it did around the star-image of Bachchan during the political crisis of the 1970s. Positioned against the backdrop of globalizing changes the components that constitutes SRK’s star-personality extends beyond charisma to include elements of politics, global economy and aesthetics, etc. If Bachchan’s figure was a star figure providing a resolution through assumption of ‘political power of mobilizing strength’, then, SRK can be seen to provide a resolution through his diasporisation, even when the industry was not sufficiently ready to face the advent of global capital, through an intensification of star-value deriving from the star system through infusion of economic power (of global market capital). SRK emerged as a prototypical star figure around whom the industry reconstituted itself to launch itself globally (especially targeting the global diasporic/new middle class market).
Like the angry young an image of Bachchan, SRK’s image gathered the force to be read trans-
textually (Prasad, ibid) SRK emerges as an agent of nation’s globalization like the star Bachchan
who became a ‘mobilizing agent of national reconciliation’. SRK, unlike the mass hero of
aesthetic of mobilization has his arrival associated to the coming back of the middle class
family audience to the halls. Unlike Bachchan’s films as the angry young man, where violence
was the mainstay SRK’s films and his entry concurred with the coming back of the middle
class family audience. The coming of the middle class was not only thematically supported but
also better viewing facilities, consumer aesthetics and stylization (see Deshpande, 2005, Dwyer

Any discussion on the stardom of SRK is incomplete without a discussion on the star’s
popularity in foreign countries. A study by Bettina David on the impact of the film Kuch Kuch
Hota Hai (Something, Something Happens, 1998, directed by Karan Johar) provides an
interesting exemplification of how the film and the plot allowed the upwardly mobile middle
class in Indonesia to identify with it. ‘It depicted affluent characters, surrounded by Western
status symbols and international design fashion, but well attuned nonetheless to traditional
values such as arranged marriages and the central role of the family. The highly modern and
fashionable, yet thoroughly Indian … might have addressed the deep, desires, anxieties and
fantasies of its Indonesian audience, especially the newly emergent middle class who are still
searching for a distinct identity as they try to reconcile Western style consumer modernity with
local concerns over family, sexuality, morality and tradition. Indian films like KKHHassure
viewers that they can be Western educated, at home in the globalized world of modernity and
consumerism, yet still distinctively ‘Indian’ (and as such Indonesian) in their loyalty to local
traditions and non-Western standards of morality. In this message lies the potential of these
new Bollywood films to appeal to cross-class audience in particular to capture the emotions,
desires, and fears of the newly emerging middle classes’ (David 2010, p.184) These desires,
anxieties and fantasies of the burgeoning middle class of global South, caught in the cusp of
transition and negotiating with globalization, have found its personification or its embodiment
within star-vehicle of SRK. If Raj Kapoor’s popular image within the Soviet Bloc provided an
ideological expression of socialist romanticism and idealism, Amitabh Bachchan’s popularity
in the developing world as an angry young man is related to the failure of developmental
policies of the modernist nation-state and the loss of state’s legitimacy, (ibid) then it maybe
argued that SRK’s popularity can be understood as a model for the new middle class and their
aspirations in an expanding economy that upholds opportunities of mobility for them.

Given the fact that the melodramatic forms of popular Hindi films have resonated well in the
transitional non-Western modernizing and developing nations, as an alternative, vernacularized
site of modernity, especially in the post-colonial nations. (Gopal et al, 2010, ibid, p.28) The popularity of SRK at a globalizing, or liberalizing juncture of these nations can have a parallel comparison with Raj Kapoor’s representation of socialist idealism in Socialist Bloc or NAM (Non-Alignment Movement) or Bachchan’s popularity in developing countries facing political and economic crises. SRK’s image can be seen to pose a
vernacularized, hybrid globality as an alternative to the dominant Western metropolitan centric
globality. The relevance of the vernacular popular embodiment of the hero and his popularity in
the non-Western South need to be recognised as both politically as well culturally significant. His hybridized, vernacularized embodiment of global styling, his characterization need to be seen what is a ‘neo-vernacular’ popular, a post-modernist alternative to the “universal grammar” of International style and universal and classical language of elitism. (Collins, 1989 ibid, p.130-131) Popular heroes of Bollywood, like SRK, (earlier, Kapoor and Bachchan and likes), can be seen to illustrate an instance of popular re-working or adaptation of global modernity, alternative modernity’s construction within non-Western societies, and their popularity in the non-West as a case of ‘lateral transferance’, as a re-created embodiment of global modernity outside Western popular culture. (see, Ashcroft 2012, ibid, p.3)

An important aspect of SRK’s star-function is his role as a true hero of transitional moments of a globalizing nation. His roles mostly cast within melodramatic framework of excess provides his narrative positioning to articulate as star vehicle the changing discourse of post-liberalization India. Stars as claimed have a crucial role to play in melodramas. In transitional periods and important historical junctures of melodramatic rendition and stars, both serve to provide as important rallying agents and identificatory sites. It was stars who gave meaning to myths and ideology and created an ‘imagined surrogate subjectivity’. Barbero’s writings provide an illustrative insight into star-function and how the people of the nation identifies with them to constitute their sense of self mediated through that of the nation. He writes: ‘The passion of the masses for the film was anchored in the imperceptible cultivation of identity inherent in film experience. When the public shouted ‘bravo’ or whistled, it was not to express approval, but to demonstrate identification with the character they saw on screen…With little critical judgement entering in, they made part of their own life the adventures of the characters who seemed to be endowed with a kind of reality that transcended the representation on screen. …It was that secret complicity between the film and its public…which was activated and exploited by the star system. The lack of distinction between the actor and the character produced a new type of mediation between the spectator and myth. The first locus of this mediation was the large screen which brought the faces and actions of stars close to the spectator in a seemingly mysterious and fascinating way and at the same time provided the publicly diffused popular image of the actor. A second locus of mediation…about the lives of stars which translated the mythical image into values and models of everyday behaviour. This myth-creating ideology was then bartered for economic gain. It was the sense of identification and desire mobilized by the ‘star’ which made films so profitable. And in this process of reconciling the sensorium of the masses with the art of film, the masses were brought into the experience of subjectivity. The desire to live their life to the full, that is, to live their dreams and to dream of their life…The bourgeois transformation of the imagery of cinema corresponded to the bourgeois transformation of popular psychology…Hegemony strengthened its access to the masses through the affective functioning of bourgeois subjectivity. The
identification with the star was the point at which hegemony could catch hold of popular affectivity because it was in this that a fascination with a dream in the movie house became the realization of values and behaviours...in daily life’ (Barbero, 1993 p 145).

The possibility of multiple subject positions enabled by different discourses means that some subjectivities may contradict others. (Craig, 1992). The star’s multiple roles in diverse discursive position of the heroic subject are not equally forceful in investing within the overall star image or persona carried beyond the cinematic scope. Besides there can be a lack of consonance between the subject position. And when there have been a lack of consonance between two subject positions, a re-negotiation of identity have resolved the asymmetry. I seek to argue that SRK’s characterization mostly consolidated itself within a urban, secular, cosmopolitan, middle class, modern, representation. After a brief foray into negative characters the star image largely seen in former type did have certain aberrant punctuation by roles that circumvented his usual characterization. His roles for example of a reckless Goan gangster, leader of a gang trying to spread its fiefdom in Josh (2000), or that of a notorious international Mafioso in Don (2006) and its sequel Don 2 (2011) involves negotiations with the star’s more recurrent images. The star identity is thus rendered processual, its concomitant presentness and becoming comes to fore with such negotiations and with every new roles that render his identity both fluid and processual.

Many scholars of India have commented on the Indian ability to shift between different paradigms with no conflict. Milton Singer refers to this as the ‘dividual (divided) self’ in which appropriate paradigm are used for different contexts. In a plural society like Indian plural cultural codes exist as part of matrix of cultural templates. (Srinivas T, 2003) It may be argued that the star’s multiple casting draws upon the plural repertoire of cultural paradigm, and each role stand to articulate a particular alternate identity paradigm, as a differential mode of articulation within the larger discourse of the nation and its globalizing regime. Therefore these roles are only separable heuristically and are part of the same meta-discourse of the nation.

3.14 CONCLUSION

A certain constitutive process informs the making of stars and heroic representation in popular filmic texts. Acknowledging their constitution and signifying value makes them meaningfully relevant. This chapter looks into the discourse of a globalizing nation as a constitutive force that is crucial to Shah Rukh’s stardom, his iconization and his narrative positioning within certain categories of films made in post liberalization India. The star serves to concretize the cinematic representation of the nation as the nation’s trope, popular emblem and as its subject. The star image of Shah Rukh represented and constructed within diverse range of cinematic texts mediating different discursive formations within the larger context of nation and its globalizing discourse is central to the chapter. The discursive construction of the heroic roles in these films does not immobilize his shifting from one genre type to another. These cinematic texts as separate heuristic categorizations as suggested are reflective of different concerns, issues, perspective etc., but remain fundamentally tied to the question of the globalizing
discourse of the nation. I have discussed some of the most significant films of the star as representative texts of the genre in which he appears and also chosen them for their relevance in terms of their popularity and significance in the star’s career. Besides looking at the cinematic text, its narrative, the mediation of the nation and its conscience through the hero as an embodied expression of the nation within the cinematic texts is crucial to this chapter.

As heroes have been preferred cinematic tropes, Shah Rukh and his relation to the nation is significant in terms of the resignification that his image goes through as he lends himself to the castings of heroic characters as the nation’s subjects. The novelties and departures the star offers vis-à-vis his predecessors and contemporaries, his recurrent typecastings in certain genres and the intersections of these popular texts with the star’s biography and off-screen persona is of extreme significance. The star image is cumulative and dynamic, simultaneously and also uncannily conquers with India’s foray into the globalizing regime and an exploration of the star’s filmographic trajectory spread across a temporal frame that spans across nearly two decades serves to interpret the nation’s phased and incremental encounter with the global, at the popular level though. Suturing several cinematic performances by the star, the chapter seeks to show as a sign or a vehicle symbolizing the nation through this casting, his imaging and his implication within these cinematic texts as the central character. As a visual sign of certain form of national belonging and national identity – either of a desirous middle class subject or a hybrid, hyphenated global-Indian or a diaspora hero, or a modern secular nation-builder, or a secular Muslim star-hero, his narrative positioning articulates nationhood and national subjectivity at the globalizing juncture. His positioning within these films allows his image to be meaningfully inscribed by the cinematic discourse and also take/acquire meanings from the same.