Chapter 5

THE MUSLIM POLITICAL

As the films of the Muslim Social genre reflected an idealized Muslim world where feckless feudal chieftains and aristocrats lived with their grandeur and idiosyncrasies intact, the genre is not acceptable to all. In spite of all criticisms, Muslim identity was conterminous with cultural identity in the Muslim Social genre. The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of an alternative politics of minority representation. The portrayal of Mumbai’s underworld characters mostly as Muslims came into vogue during this era. Moreover, at the end of 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, the Hindu right-wing movement began taking shape aggressively. The Babri Masjid (Babri Mosque) demolition (6 December 1992) and the concomitant hardening of communal veins was a major turning point in Indian history. It was followed by communal riots in many parts of the country. The demolition of the Babri Masjid and the riots that followed became the theme of many memorable films. The new genre named Muslim Political, which intertwines religion and politics, was born at this time. These films grew in number and visibility following the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in 2001 by members of the Al-Qaeda, an Islamic terrorist organization. In Bollywood, these films depicted the ideological conflict between the nationalist victim and the jehadi terrorist and played an important role in creating an imaginary Muslim identity. During the 1990s and afterwards, Bollywood constructed an imaginary vision of Hindu nation characterised by fabricating the Muslim as ‘Other’ and an enemy of the nation. Sanjeev Kumar HM refers to this hegemonic construct as ‘techno-cultural transmitter’ (2013: 459). The present

11 I have borrowed the term ‘Muslim Political’ from an article, ‘Ghararas To Guns-From The Muslim Social To The Muslim Political’, published in Cine Blitz (December 2012).

12 Techno-cultural transmitter refers to the synergy between technology and culture where the former is used as a pedagogical tool. In this article, Sanjeev Kumar pointed out, ‘The Bollywood film industry has acted as a techno-cultural transmitter in this regard, with its engagement in the production of nationalist cinema that projects in it’s setting the definition of this Hindu nation’ (2013: 459).

I shall also examine the perceptions of audience, film critics, and filmmakers regarding these films. The chapter is divided into four sections: (i) The first section ‘Nationalism and Communalism’, deals with the concepts of nationalism and communalism and how they have become an essential part in Indian politics as well as popular Hindi cinema recently. To locate interlinks between politics and cinema, I have analysed two films — Bombay and Fiza in this section. (ii) The second section, ‘Hindu-ized Nation: National Family and Neo-nationalism’, illustrates how Hindutva ideology projects India as a land of Hindus and the supporters of this ideology are committed to preserve the cultural and geographical boundaries of the Hindu Rashtra. In films stereotypical images of Muslims such as attire and strict adherence to codes of Islamic religiosity a deployed to mark a strong contrast from the progressive and secular projection of Hindus. For example, films like Ghulam-E-Mustafa (1997) and Angaar (1992) portrayed Muslims as smugglers wearing Arab robes, smoking cigars, and carrying briefcases. More importantly, here the Muslim is also an “outsider”; an alien to the nation, in the literal sense — an Arab. (iii) The third section, ‘Terrorism: a Cinematic Desire’, examines how Hindutva influence as well as terrorist attacks worldwide created a new face of the ‘enemy’ in Bollywood. Numerous films—Roja (1992), Pakar (2000), Mission Karmir (2000), Gadar (2001), Maa Tujhe Salam (2002), Maqbool (2003), and Black Friday (2004)—represented Muslims as terrorists, villains, and anti-nationals. (iv) The last section, ‘Pakistan as Enemy’, illustrates that while Pakistan is an eternal enemy of India, during this period and thereafter Pakistan and Muslims became synonymous and both became a threat to the nation as exemplified in films like Gadar (2001) and Border (1997).
NATIONALISM AND COMMUNALISM

To understand the Muslim Political genre we need to understand the postcolonial Indian political scenario with communalism and nationalism as its integral parts. ‘Nationalism’ and ‘communalism’ are the two related concepts which have been prevalent in the Indian politics from the time of the freedom movement in the early 20th century. Political theorist Gyan Pandey clarifies Indian nationalism as ‘nationalism that stood above (or outside) the different religious communities and took as its unit the individual Indian citizen, a “pure” nationalism unsullied, in theory by the “primordial” pulls of caste, religious community, etc. — was I suggest, rigorously conceptualised only in opposition to this notion of communalism’ (Pandey 1990: 234–35). However, ‘Hindu’ and ‘Muslim’ political mobilisation — Khilafat/Non-Cooperation Movement and Hindu Mahasabha — had acquired an important position from the early stage of Indian nationalist movement. Pandey further argues that political mobilisation was inevitable in the early stages of Indian nationalism due to the colonial policy of divide and rule. It was the ‘birthplace of the nationalist version of the concept of ‘communalism’’ (ibid.).

The term communalism has a very different connotation in India than in the rest of the world. The word, “communalism” refers to commonality of belonging to a community, but ‘in its common Indian usage the word “communalism” refers to a condition of suspicion, fear and hostility between members of different religious communities’ (ibid.: 6). Asghar Ali Engineer echoed similar thoughts in a personal interview:

Communalism in English is a positive word but in Indian context it is a very negative one because of the two major communities— Hindus and Muslims who take part in the whole process of power control. Those who fought for power and said my community should be most powerful, they would be communalist; and those who stood by secular democracy and agreed to follow parliamentary system where people from all communities should be represented, they are called secular or nationalist. For example, Muslim leagues, Hindu Mahasabha are the communalist organizations (Personal interview, 8 December 2012).

Although communalism has been in existence from the colonial period, the 1980s saw a shift in the language of political discourse starting with the Ram Temple movement. The discontent with the Congress after the 1975 Emergency
and the judgment in the Shah Bano case\textsuperscript{13} (1986) provided an ‘opportunity to the political parties and organizations associated with Sangh Parivar\textsuperscript{14} to consolidate their positions and political ambitions by gathering Hindu support for their mass mobilization campaigns of the 1980s’ (Bhaskar 2005: 50). In the Shah Bano case, the Congress government appeased the Muslim fundamentalist section of society while ‘at the same time putting the needs of Muslim masses at the back burner’ (Puniyani 2010: 21). At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the Hindu right-wing groups effectively launched various campaigns to mobilize and gain popular support; a support that was primarily garnered through anti-Muslim propaganda. The most successful of these campaigns was the Ayodhya movement. Mobilizing the notion of Ayodhya as the birthplace of Rama, the Hindu right-wing achieved their first victory with the demolition of Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992 by the volunteers and cadre of the Sangh Parivar. In the following year, a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was elected Prime Minister of the country. Ira Bhaskar writes, ‘the Ayodhya movement catapulted the BJP to power in the 1990s thereby justifying and legitimizing Hindu-Muslim opposition, antagonism, and the politics of violence that has made communal riots an accepted means for the realization of the Hindu rashtra’ (2005: 51). Afterwards, communal tensions became a part of Indian body politics. Paul Brass points out, ‘…the maintenance of communal tensions, accompanied from time to time by lethal rioting at specific sites, is essential for the maintenance of militant Hindu nationalism’ (2005: 9).

The ideology of Hindu nation (Hindu rashtra) by Hindutva\textsuperscript{15} ideologues made its appearance in the Hindi cinema too. While Hindi cinema has, in most instances, stereotyped the Muslim as ‘Other’ in the earlier genre, recent decades have

\textsuperscript{13} In 1986, the government under Rajiv Gandhi overturned the Supreme Court judgment in the Shah Bano case by enacting Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Acts. Because of the election in that year, Congress government tried to appease a certain section of society.

\textsuperscript{14} The fanatic right-wing Hindu organizations such as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Hindu Mahasabha, Bajrang Dal, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and Shiv Sena are part of a larger group called Sangh parivar (family of the Sangh).

\textsuperscript{15} The term was coined by V.D. Savarkar, a key figure in the formulation of what is referred to as “Hindu nationalism” by its supporters and “fascism” by its detractors. Hindutva, according to Savarkar (1923/1969), refers to “Hinduness” or a consciousness of the common inheritance-in terms of nation, civilization, language, blood, institutions, law, holy land, and culture of the Hindu race.
witnessed the Muslim becoming the nation’s enemy and a source of terror within the nation-state. Karen Gabriel and P. K. Vijayan (2012), Fareed Kazmi and Sanjeev Kumar (2011), Moidul Islam (2007), S.S. Rajgopal (2011), Amit Rai (2003), Ronie Patrick (2013), and Sanjeev Kumar (2013) have highlighted the impact of *Hindutva* nationalism on the negative cinematic representation of Muslims from the early 1990s. They argue that the Hindu nationalist forces use mass media and, more specifically, cinema to create terror within the majority by representing minority figures as terrorists (*jehadi*), extremists, underworld dons, and anti-social elements; and hence a threat to majority culture.

As a result, new changes can be noticed in Indian popular cinema. For example, though *Bombay* (1991) got the national award for its theme of national integration, it faced multiple controversies before its release, as different groups sought a ban on the movie. During this period, political parties had the authority to dictate terms to the Censor Board of Film Certification. Irfan Engineer re-affirmed the fact,

> After Babri Masjid issue, they (Right-wing politicians) were in a position to dictate more. They did not issue threats in every film. However, it acted as an automatic censor. The filmmaker had to keep in mind about the reaction of right-wing party members on every representation because they did not get into trouble. They are most vulnerable to their enormous amount of investment in every film. If they had taken a loan, they had to recover it. Moreover, someone requires just 20 goons to stop the screening of the movie, and those 20 people can enter the theatre and throw stones, damage the theatre. The theatre owner will say I am here to make money and not get my theatre damaged. So it may be automatically playing an important role (Personal interview, 14 September 2012).

Film critic Shiladitya Sen expressed a similar thought from the viewpoint of film consumption,

> It was not like, political party leaders Bal Thackeray instructed to some of the directors and producers to make communal films. It does not work like that. But producers and directors had the attitude to represent the issues like terrorism, communalism apprehending that those portrayals would be well appreciated by the audience (Personal interview, 23 August 2013).

I shall also analyse two films, *Bombay* and *Fiza* in this section to locate and understand their political nature. I have chosen *Bombay* because the film showcases the communal politics of pre-Babri demolition period, and it highlights the intricacies of Bombay riots during 1991–92 after the demolition of Babri Masjid. *Fiza* represents the consequences of Bombay riots. *Fiza* is a journey of a
Muslim family in the aftermath of Bombay riots. Thus, both the films give a holistic picture of the political and social scenario of the time. Also, through reading and analysing these films, I will try to contextualise the concepts of ‘communalism’ and ‘secularism’ in popular culture.

‘Bombay’: A Message about Communalism

Critically acclaimed director Mani Ratnam won the Nargis Dutt Award for the Best Feature Film on National Integration for Roja (1992) and Bombay (1995). The film Bombay dealt with the need for Hindu–Muslim amity. It portrayed the Bombay riot, which followed by the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The film Bombay, though got the award for its theme of national integration, faced multiple controversies before the release, as different groups sought ban on the movie. Before analysing the film, it is essential to explain the controversies related to release of the movie. First, the film was sent to the Censor Board in Chennai. The Board suggested a few cut and the final decision was left to the then Chairman of Censor Board, Shakti Samanta. But Samanta referred the matter to Home Minister to decide. On 8 of January 1995, ‘five top-ranking police officials [were] deputed by the home ministry to decide if Bombay is fit for public consumption’ (Bhaskar 2005: 205). Later, a ‘Revising Committee of the Censor Board of Film Certification [was] constituted by the Board's chairman Shakti Samanta’ (Noorani 1995: 240). On 11 January 1995, this committee recommended the release of the film. But the film had to wait for another month because the Bombay police and the Shiv Sena chief Bal Thakrey had suggested several cuts (ibid.). Asghar Ali Engineer has mentioned that Bal Thakrey¹⁶

…wanted some of the dialogues spoken by the actor Tinnu Anand (playing Bal Thackeray in the film) deleted. The dialogue in question was about wiping out a particular community, which according to Anand are a direct lift from Thackeray's speeches. There is not a single dishonest statement including the full stop or a comma. Mani Ratnam, the director, however, agreed, under pressure to remove this part of the dialogue (1995: 1556).

¹⁶ Bal Thackeray is the founder of Shiv Sena, the Indian right-wing political party, based in the state of Maharashtra.
Afterwards, the leaders of All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen ( AIMIM) threatened to stop the exhibition of the film in Hyderabad and different parts of Andhra Pradesh because its plot showed a Muslim girl falling in love with a Hindu boy. As a result, the Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad, V. Appa Rao also had to stop the exhibition of the film. Later, the Hindi version of the Bombay also faced a similar fate because a group of Muslims, who used to be the representative of Mumbai Municipal Wards, started objecting to the screening of the film. According to them, the most rejected shot was a Muslim girl holding a copy of the Quran while eloping with a Hindu boy. That scene hurt Muslim religious feelings. So, a delegation of Muslims met the then Chief Minister Manohar Joshi to plead with him to disallow the exhibition of the film. As a result, the Commissioner of Police banned the exhibition of the film for one week to maintain the law and order in the city. At this moment, Thackeray wanted the film to be released because he had his cuts imposed. Muslim masses did not respond to the Muslim leaders initiative to get the film banned or to boycott it. Realising this, these so-called leaders began compromising and dropped the idea of challenging the film in the court. ‘It is significant that the Muslim masses, after what they underwent in the wake of demolition of Babri Masjid sobered down and are not in a mood to respond to any act of misadventure on the part of their leaders. It is precisely for this reason that the Muslim masses did not boycott the film and flocked to see it once it was released’ (ibid.).

The film starts with a gloomy rainy day and the main protagonist of the film, Shekhar Narayanan Pillai, returns to his picturesque seaside village after a long time and gets fascinated by seeing a glimpse of Shaila Bano’s face though she is burqa clad. The very next scene explores the family background of Shekhar, who belongs to an orthodox Hindu Brahmin family where his father is very concerned about his son’s marriage. He does not even encourage his son’s higher education and he becomes upset after hearing Shekhar’s admission in diploma journalism course. ‘Beta Bombai ki chori se sadhi badi...Hum sambrant badi hai bada sambrant hai gaon me...kahi tum uhase Gujarati or Saltania or kisiko le aya. Toh acha nahi hoga beta’ (Son, don’t marry a girl from Mumbai.... we belong to a respected family and we are being respected by the villagers. It won’t be nice if you marry someone from Gujarat, Saltania or similar community). The relationship between Shaila and Shekhar gets confirmed once Shekhar attends a Muslim
wedding ceremony to accompany his sister as Shekhar encounters her once again in the ceremony. Shekhar immediately feels attracted to exoticism. As Ravi Vasudevan suggests, ‘from the beginning, the romance between Shekhar and Shaila is defined by a Hindu male gaze motivated by a curiosity to penetrate the exoticism of the other’ (1996: 57.). Film critics Khalid Mohammad and Iqbal Masud have pointed out, ‘Bombay draws upon the tradition of the romantic Muslim Social whose narrative is generated by a fleeting glimpse of the woman’ (cited ibid.: 58).

After several attempts to profess his love for Shaila Bano, Shekhar finally manages to confess in a fort. Mani Ratnam created the scene in a melodramatic mode with passionate Music. The song, Tu hi re carries hyperbolic expression of love; the storm conveys the declaration of their love, the crashing of waves on the rocks and the repetitive close and long shots are all indicative of love. In one scene of the song, where Shaila’s burqa gets caught on an anchor and she abandons the burqa, the scene also signifies that she eliminates all conservative Muslim tradition from her life as she is going to accept a Hindu Brahmin as her husband.

In the next sequence, Shekhar comes to Shaila’s father Basir Ahmed’s house and expresses his wish to marry his daughter. Initially, Basir Ahmed is very cordial to Shekhar but after knowing the intention of Shekhar’s unusual visit, he takes the sword and threatens him by saying that he will cut Shekhar into pieces. He suddenly transforms into a sword-wielding Muslim ready to protect his family honour. In this sense, the film takes the stance of the Hindu imaginings of the communal other. The very incident articulates the larger social and communal situation that prohibits Hindu Muslim romance as well. The use of stereotype puts into play popular perceptions and discourses of communities. Basir Ahmed’s language seems to confirm the fears of Shekar as his friend warns him saying ‘they will cut off your hand’ and ‘they will cut off your head’ at the initial development of the Shekhar–Shaila romance.

The very next sequence exposes the reaction of Shekhar’s father, Narayan Mishra, after knowing Shekar’s intention of marrying a Muslim girl from the same village. He responds with all the arrogance of an upper-caste Brahman who cannot imagine a liaison of any kind with a family that is absolutely the antithesis of his upper-caste, upper-class Hindu identity as Basir Ahmed works in a brick-kiln in the village. Narayan Mishra threatens Basir Ahmed saying, if your daughter meets
my son, there will be bloodshed. He accuses Basir Ahmed’s daughter of trapping his son, as he is educated and wealthy. Immediately, caste–class conflict turns into a communal one. Basir Ahmed and the members of his community come out with swords, knives and sticks, while Narayan Mishra’s supporters verbally abuse them. Once the chaos reaches the climax, Narayan Mishra takes the initiative to make people understand that the problem belongs to the two families and communities should not be involved in that. Film critic Shiladitya Sen says,

*If you look at the film Bombay, you can realise that Basheer's character is more violent, rude than Narayanan Pillai. I feel most of the Muslims are represented in such a way that they are very short tempered, get irritated very easily, like violence, [and get] involved in fighting* (Personal interview, 23 August 2013).

In the next scene, Mani Ratnam constitutes a new social reality through Shekhar’s secular image as he rejects both his father and Basir Ahmed’s objections to his marriage with Shaila. When Narayan Mishra objects the marriage proposal of Shekhar and Shaila out of the fear of his positional displacement from the society, Shekar questions him whether it is a crime to marry a Muslim. He also defies Basir Ahmed’s conviction that ‘the blood of two are different and can never unite’. To negate his assumption, Shekhar cuts his own palm and also Shaila’s forearm in a dramatic and violent way to demonstrate that they will unite. It is a desire to constitute a new social reality, which contradicts all class, caste and communal divisions. This is idealistic desire of the director to portray an upper-class, upper-caste and educated secular Hindu hero.

Shekhar leaves for Bombay perhaps realising the fact that their marriage would not be accepted by either community in the village. From Bombay, he sends a train ticket and letter to Shaila asking her to join him in the city. There are certain things through which the filmmaker intends to show the transition from tradition to modernity. Shekhar’s letter is written in English, a sign of modernity. After learning about the letter, Basir Ahmed becomes furious and he hits his wife for not taking proper care of their daughter, as traditionally women should look after family. Basir Ahmed’s repeating threats to ‘cut him into pieces’ and warning to get her married to his own chosen groom within ten days persuades Shaila to leave the village. She prefers her own dreams rather than the interests of the larger community, which tries to repress her desire. We notice continuing contrast between tradition and modernity throughout the sequence: her leaving the village
to fulfil her desire in the city expresses her preference to modernity over tradition. At the same time, while leaving, she picks up the Quran, while, in the background, a Quranic verse is chanted to show the right path. As mentioned earlier, Shaila discards her *burqa* in the song *Tu hi re* when it gets caught in an old anchor. These two sequences received bitter criticism from Muslim organisations as being anti-Islamic. According to them, the first scene, where Quranic verse is played in the background, interprets Shaila’s action as religious action. The second scene of discarding Shaila’s *burqa* indicates a symbolic freedom from the enslavement by tradition.

Another sign of modernity is their marriage, which goes through the court procedures that replace the traditional religious and social rituals. Here, the filmmaker intentionally avoided the traditional religious/social marriage so as to depict a secular image; registered marriage is neutral to inclination towards any particular community. While coming out of registrar’s office, a sense of joy of freedom is visible on their face and also through joyful background music. The sequence of the song was set on the backdrop of the skyline of Bombay. Initially, the city was portrayed as an archetypal city of modernity that seems to promise a space for freedom, happiness and new identity. But, later, this modern city becomes the most cruel place, as it becomes completely polarised and communalised by the impertinent forces of *Hindutva*. Immediately, in the next sequence, Shaila experiences that her entry into the new home is not as pleasant as she had imagined it to be. Shekar’s landlady asks her name, presumably to know her religious identity. ‘Yes, I am a Muslim’, Shaila replies to the shocked landlady to re-affirm her religious identity.

Shaila goes out to send a letter to her mother. As she walks towards the post box, her own words written in the letter of her feelings of separation from her parents as well as happiness of new life echo in the background. Suddenly, a medley of different sounds and shouting of slogans like ‘*Jai Shri Ram*’, ‘*tala kholo*’ change her delighted face into a perturbed one as she watches the *rath yatra*17 passes by. The street is occupied by *sadhus* (holy men), *kar sevaks*,18 and

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17 BJP leader L.K. Advani began a *rath yatra* in September 1990 to mobilise facilitate Hindu nationalist movement.
Hindutva followers who accompany the rath along with different placards carrying different slogans detailing the rath yatra. A person inside the rath is portraying the BJP party leader and then party President, L.K. Advani, who launched the yatra to mobilise the Ayodhya movement. Through this scene, Mani Ratnam seeks to mark the aggressive political strategy of Hindutva organisations and he privileges Shaila’s point of view to read the scene. But, she is not in a position to critique the larger political implications and consequences of rath yatra. Therefore, she reacts as a passer-by without knowing that she would become the victim of that political and historical force.

Mani Ratnam desires to privilege national integration and communal harmony through the inter-religious marriage between Shaila and Shekhar despite their parents’ objections. But it seems impossible to build a national community because of intense communal ideology of Ramjanmabhoomi agenda. Even the ideology started polarising people and, as a result, the landlady, Mrs. Malgaonkar is un receptive when she first encounters Shaila. Even Shekar’s father tries his last attempt to separate Shekhar and Sahila by sending money and suggesting to abort the child (he mistakenly assumes Shaila’s pregnancy). Another sequence where Narayan Mishra deliberately takes a provocative stance while placing an order for bricks with Basir Ahmed with the name ‘Ram’ inscribed on it. He wishes to send them to Ayodhya to build a Ram temple there. As expected, Basir Ahmed becomes aggressive.

Here the director hints the mass mobilisation strategy adopted by ‘Vishwa Hindu Parishad’ to perform the Ram Shila puja in September 1989 with the prior permission of then Congress government at the centre. This programme was launched nationwide to collect and consecrate bricks from every corner of India which, after being worshipped in their own localities, would be sent to Ayodhya for the proposed construction of the Ram temple there. With the processions in 1983 and 1985, the reopening of the Babri Masjid for Hindu worship in 1986, the Ram Shila Puja and later Advani’s Rath Yatra in 1990, it is clear that the campaign for freeing the birth place of Lord Rama had been carefully orchestrated. It was gaining wider currency and acceptability as the concept of the Hindu nation

18 Kar Sevaks are a group, are organized by the Visva Hindu Parishad for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.
materialised through these programmes and caught the imagination of the Hindu public. Ram had been constructed ‘as a national hero’, and Ayodhya projected as ‘the symbolic centre of the Hindu nation’ (Hasnen cited in Bhaskar 2005: 312–13). Apart from that, a member of Shakti Samaj (a fictional name for the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra) goes from door to door to collect money for building the Ram temple in Ayodhya. With hostility, they ask Shaila that all Hindus are contributing money to construct the Ram temple. The sequence ends with Shaila’s anxious face in close up.

As the process of polarisation starts, it reflects in Shaila and Shekhar’s respective parents’ behaviour. They argue with each other about the right over their to be born grandchild, though they are glad that they would be grandparents soon. Shaila gives birth to twins. In the next scene, Shaila’s apprehension becomes true, and Mani Ratnam uses some still pictures to demonstrate the destruction of Babri Masjid. Though he had used the video footage of the act of destruction by kar sevaks and the final collapse of the structure, the Censor Board suggested deletion of those shots as they were likely to instigate the Muslim community. He, therefore, used newspaper headlines on the subject.

Immediately after the demolition, we see a sword-wielding man saying ‘yeah Allah’ and there are other men in skull caps and swords in their hands running. The rioters are shown destroying public property and harassing police. As police start firing to handle the chaos, innocent citizens are killed. Mani Ratnam uses melodrama to subjectify the pain and anguish of the audience by representing the nightmare faced by twins — Kamal and Kabir, who are running to escape the rioters. While escaping from the rioters and police firing, they are seized by a group of rioters whose faces are covered. They are repetitively asked whether they are Muslim or Hindu, to which one boy replies ‘Hindu’ and other ‘Muslim’. The confused rioters put kerosene on the crying and horrified children and try to set them on fire. The parents and the police are notified, and the children are saved. Mani Ratnam incorporated this scene to make the audience personalise the agony, suffering, and hurt, as two innocent and helpless children are the victims of communal frenzy. Later, Kamal dreams about the nightmare that he had experienced and asks his father: ‘Who am I? Am I Hindu or Muslim?’

Mani Ratnam sometimes criticises the state administration through the protagonist, Shekhar. There is a scene where the police commissioner holds a press
conference, and after the conference, Shekhar tries to question a senior police official regarding the hiding of death toll. Through Shekhar, the filmmaker tries to show that sometimes police officers themselves kill innocent people, as they are supposed to fire below the waist, but they do not. As a result, they are forced to scale down the death toll from 227 to 56. Later, Shekhar neutralises his stance saying that his sons are alive because of the responsible police officers.

According Ira Bhaskar, ‘there have been two main ways of studying the riot in India: historiographically with focus on historical causation, and ethnographically – a mode that highlights the phenomenology of the riots’ (2005: 317). Since it is hard to make palpable the horror of the riots through cinematic representation, Ratnam has not adopted any of these methods to read the riot; rather he has created characters to give an account of the real life experience of the phenomenon. Only in one scene he has adopted the ethnographic method, that is, while showing Shekhar interviewing the riot victims. But he does not reveal the identity of the victims, and no ethnic and religious symbols are attached to them. Even an informant who works in an MNC criticised the method of Mani Ratnam’s representation and said:

*Film focused more on the after effect of the riot or what happened after the riot among the people. It didn’t concentrate more on the political play of why it led to. Why the riot happened that was very less that’s what I understood* (Personal interview, 13 August, 2012).

Meanwhile, Narayan Mishra and Basir Ahmed with their respective wives reach the house of their son and daughter respectively keeping aside their anger and realising that nothing is more important than their children’s wellbeing. They compromise and decide to take the family back to the village. The ugly manifestations of communal hostility is prevalent more in urban areas, as Ashis Nandy has mentioned with statistics in ‘Creating a Nationality’ that ‘cities which have a higher rate of communal violence tend to have larger proportions of Muslims’ (1995: 15). According to Nandy, as Muslims are numerically strong in the urban areas, they can take advantage of competitive democratic politics, thus they assert their rights. As a result, it becomes easier to mobilise a large section of majority community in the urban areas against minorities using the rhetoric of stereotype of socio-economic aggressive ethnic groups, who are posing a threat after taking advantage of the social order, dominated by majority (ibid.).
The second phase of Bombay riots in the film starts with the killing of two *mathadi* (head-loader) workers in the industrial area of Dongri and that was a real fact. It opens with the scene of newspaper printing and background voice of television and radio news. Being a journalist, Shekar goes to conduct interviews with Muslim and Hindu leaders. Leaders, from both communities blame each other. Tinu Anand, who plays the role of Bal Thakrey (already discussed earlier), accuses Muslims for starting the riot and, on the other hand, the Muslim leader owns up saying they started it because of the Babri Masjid demolition. Though they started the riot, eighty per cent of its victims are Muslims. He says this is because fifty per cent of the police force are members of the Shakti Samaj. A.G. Noorani writes, ‘the portrayal of Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thakrey (played by Tinu Anand) in Bombay might be a subject matter of controversy as the character was very strong, felt the senior CBFC member’ (1995: 240).

Bombay uses *maha-arti* (a grand Hindu religious rituals of warship) sequence undercut with a *namaz* (Muslim religious warship) to show that both the communities use religion to mobilise communal ideology. Kalpana Sharma gave a detailed account of using *maha-arti* before the riot. She said,

> During the first phase of the riot, curfew had been relaxed to accommodate the Friday prayers. Shiv Sena demanded a similar relaxation of curfew on Sunday to hold a maha-arti at Gol Deval temple located in the heart of the city close to Muslim-majority area. While maha-arti is not an everyday Hindu ritual’ (cited in Bhaskar 2005: 326).

and is certainly not held in the street outside of a temple, the demand of the Shiv Sena was a clear ‘political spatial strategy’ (Deshpande 2000: 203).

The Shiv Sena campaign was successful and between 26 December [1992] and 6 January [1993] when the second phase of rioting started, thirty-three maha-arti had been held in temples across Bombay and continued to be held even later...The maha-arti is a clear example of constructing public space through rituals and using both that and the riot that often follows as the ‘basis of imagining the community’. (Bhaskar 2005: 326-327).

The *maha-artist* helped to instigate a sense of religious identity within people. The imbrications of religion and communal politics become clear in the sequence where both the grandparents were returning from *maha-arti* and *namaz*. Narayan Mishra was attacked by some Muslim rioters who had just attended the *namaz*. They were spotted by Basir Ahmed and with his intervention, Mishra’s life was
saved. In this sequence, Ratnam is re-affirming communal harmony through an inter-community relations between Basir and Mishra.

*Bombay* highlights the burning of the Hindu Bene family in Jogeshwari as a turning point in the second phase of the riots. The incident brings the rioters to start their action once again and finally people from both the communities suffer. The whole experience of riot becomes a nightmare when the houses of Shekhar along with his neighbours are set on fire. In the evacuation process, Shekhar and Shaila’s parents died and children were misplaced. Mani Ratnam portrayed the riot scene through Shaila and Shekhar’s eyes while they drive through the riot-affected locality to search for their children. Finally, they reach a police station and different shots (extreme close and long shots) represent mass destruction and loss of the city. The children try to escape the chaos and rioters, but could not, and it is very disheartening to see them go through such anarchic and dangerous space: later they get separated. After that, Kamal is saved by a transgender who does not occupy any religious identity in this fanatical communal riot. On the other, Kabir tries to find out Kamal and was given food by a little girl. In both the scenes, the people — the little girl and the transgender — who aid those helpless children, do not exercise power and obtain religious/political position in the society. Probably, the motive of the two scenes was to convey that people who acquire a position and identity in society are not in a position to help each other. While going through the burning street to look out for children, Shekhar with one Hindu friend points to one of their friends, Rafiq attacking a shop and instructing his group to destroy it completely. When Shekhar intervenes, Rafiq justifies saying that he is Hindu, and all Hindus are behind Muslims to make them leave the country and also they are destroying Muslim livelihood. Hindu communal view was expressed in the film through Shekhar’s companion when he agreed that he has killed a lot of Muslims and he justifies his action saying that, though Hindus and Muslims stayed in the same country, Muslims enjoyed a different rule and political parties adopted the policy of minority appeasement to maintain their vote bank and positions of power. Shekhar raises the fundamental question whether Quran or Gita asks them to kill? He negates his own community and religious identity and claims that he and his family are only Indians, thus expressing the idea of nationhood.

Kamal asks the eunuch, ‘*Why do Hindus and Muslims fight between them?*’ ‘*Which community is to blame?*’ In reply, the transgender says, ‘*It’s the politicians*
who light the fire of hatred, and it's the ordinary man who dies in the crossfire'.
Later, Kamal asks the eunuch: who is Hindu and who is Muslim? In reply, eunuch says that, as a beechwala (being in the middle), he can hardly answer these difficult questions. Later, he says that religion is a path to reach god.

Finally, the leaders of Hindus and Muslims go through the riot-torn street and realise the result of the ideological manipulation of their respective communities. Though Bal Thakrey does not reach out the people personally, while going through the street and sighting the amount of damage caused by the rioters, his facial expression changes. On the other, the Muslim leader reaches the riot victims and seeing their pathetic condition, he remorses that Allah will not accept this either. Later, the leaders of multiple communal groups emerge and initiate to stop the riot. Bombay represents Shekhar, literally and metaphorically, as a model for de-communalisation, though there are many other people from both the communities, including the eunuch, who try to stop the riot. Shekhar is the model of a Hindu hero. Javed Akhtar points out, ‘The hero must come from the majority community, thereby exercising a symbolic patriarchal-communal authority over the constitution of the nation’ (Javed Akhtar cited in Ravi Vasudevan 1996: 56) Ram Puniyani shared his thoughts as follows:

Bombay has a very strong undercurrent of communal theme. Bombay is made from the standpoint of Hindu communal hero, trying to prevent communal violence, attempting to bring peace, his undercurrent, he is wholly founded in the Hindu communal social common sense but his intervention is that I want peace. So, there is a very strange mix, and there is a very subtle game. I am not comfortable with the film because they suppose to be peace making and all that, but there are strong communal elements (Personal interview, 16 August 2012).

Finally, the children locate their parents, and they reunite. The sequence ends with the formation of a human chain, people holding each other’s palm and in the background we hear the song of hope for tomorrow. Film critic Nandini Ramnath also points out that Bombay conveys a very simplistic response to the complex problem:

After the riots, a number of sympathetic films are produced and the films convey humanist message and end with the ‘Sare Jahan Se Acha Hindustan Hamara Hai’ (Better than the entire world, is our Hindustan), whatever happened, we are all one. It actually shows you the riots and how ordinary citizen take part in the process but then pretends that a human chain can solve everything (Personal interview, 5 February 2013).
About this film K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake write,

Director Mani Ratnam has highlighted the self-defeating nature of extremist thinking and xenophobia and stressed the need to take a more rational approach to the whole question of religious loyalties and ethnic affiliations in the context of multiracial, multi-religious India (2004: 28).

**Fiza: A Political Thriller**

*Fiza* (2000) is directed by Khalid Mohammad, who was the screenwriter of *Mammo, Zubeida* and *Sardari Begum*, which constitute New Wave Muslim Social genre, much like *Fiza*. *Fiza* is a Muslim Social film based on an ordinary middle-class Muslim family — Fiza (Karisma Kapoor), Amaan (Hrithik Rosan), Nishatbi (Jaya Bachchan) — whose life gets changed after the Bombay riots of 1992–93. It conveys the dead end for the minority Muslim community, which is caught between opportunistic political leaders who are mobilising communal ideologies, on the one hand, and an extremist militant group, on the other.

The prelude depicts the picture of a happy family. The opening scene, with repetitive long and close up shots of Amaan, conveys his characteristics with the background voice of his sister, Fiza who says, *Amaan bahat e bhola, bahat e payara, hotome hamesha ek muskura hat sa reh ti thi. Bahat honhar tha aman. Jab tak o apni, mahnat se khus na hota, to o bas laga rahta hai. Sawar ne me nikhar ne me. Thodasa sararati bhi tha* (Amaan is very innocent, very cute, always has smiling face. He was artistic as well as pedant...was naughty). Immediately after the prologue, the film shows the effect of communal violence and how it changed the condition of ordinary lives of a middle-class family. Nishatbi and Fiza were spectators of the communal violence which broke out after the demolition of Babri Masjid and they are horrified to see Amaan (son of Nishatbi and brother of Fiza) being a part of that mob. Khalid Mohammad envisions the scenario of Bombay riots through the eyes of Fiza and Nishatbi as they look out the window and become a part of the larger historical and political trauma, pain and anguish. Though Amaan had become a part of a larger political force, he was initially perplexed. His sister warns him repeatedly to leave the place. The audience’s emotion is reflected through Fiza and Nishatbi who witness from their window Amaan being beaten by some Hindu hooligans and his friend Feroz being beaten to
death. Amaan’s own emotional conditions, such as confusion and anger, lead him to helplessness. Through different shots, the director tries to capture Amaan’s reactions as well as the trauma experienced by Nishabi and Fiza. The sequence ends with a few black and white still pictures of Bombay riots and Amman’s escape from the scene with a background sound of two rounds of gunshots.

Jumping to the next sequence, where Bombay became Mumbai and the scenario of 1999, Nishatbi still visits the Missing Persons Bureau (which, in reality, is non-existent) hoping to get some information about her lost son. She still believes and fantasises that her son is alive, and she likes to be ignorant of the actual facts of that night. Six years after the riots, the first scene shows Nishatbi still searching for her son in the Missing Persons Bureau and her life has stuck to past, though Fiza moves on in life and completes her graduation. She struggles to find a job. In the next scene, Fiza sees Amaan in a crowded traffic signal, but cannot reach him. She decides to unearth the truth and make her mother understand and face the truth. Here, Fiza is portrayed as an independent woman who embarks on a journey to uncover the truth about her brother.

Fiza first meets the police officer Prakash Ingle, who is a witness in the court of the incident of that horrific night. From him, she gets little information about Amaan and the film explores the communal attitude of state administration. When Amaan, with many other victims sought help from him, instead of helping them, he told Amaan, ‘bachneka hai tujhe to bhag, Pakistan bhag chal’ (If you want to save your life, depart to Pakistan). Throughout that conversation, riot images are displayed on the screen once more, and Fiza becomes traumatised again. From the dialogue, it becomes clear that right-wing political forces became so predominant at the time of the riot that, instead of protecting people, police pushes them to danger. The inspector is not only portrayed as communal, but also as corrupt, as he takes a bribe from Fiza to give her an account of that night.

Later, Fiza goes to meet Sawantji, whose son had been killed by Muslims in the same riot. Sawantji has strong hatred for Muslims as they are responsible for his son’s brutal death. Fiza tries to make him understand, and her words carry a political message to the audience. She says, ‘Sawantji baat tumare or mere ki nahi hain. Ek Hindu baap ne beta kho diya, ek Mussalman baken ne bhai kho diyi. Lakin jo iss hatse ke jamader ha. Oh nah hindu ha na mussalman. onka daram iman kaya hai o kisiko nahi malum’ (Sawantji, the problem is not between you and
me. A Hindu father lost his son and a Muslim sister lost her younger brother; but who is responsible for that; we don’t know his religion and ideology).

It is clear from the characters and dialogues that the film does not take any stand and projects itself to be neutral. Without getting any idea of finding out her brother, Fiza takes the help of print media and writes her own traumatic experience about her brother. Immediately, she comes to the notice of media houses, and more importantly, of political leaders. She expresses her broad intentions as not just to find her brother, rather the causes of the problem. While giving interviews with television channels, she raises some uncomfortable questions about the system ‘that generates human sorrow and also use religion to spread poison within the social body’ (Bhaskar 2009: 321).

The following sequence of the film explores the character of politicians who are indifferent to human struggle and sorrows. In the film, two politicians are represented — one a Muslim and the opponent, a Hindu, to give a neutral colour. Both the politicians try to take the opportunity of involving Fiza in their party to fulfil their political agenda as she comes to the limelight after her story is released in the media. The Muslim leader, Syed Saab, uses ‘incendiary rhetoric’ against the state in response to the publication of Fiza’s article; on the other, politician, V.K. Singh wants her to join his party to depict a secular picture. None of them — politicians, the media and the police — is concerned about the questions raised by Fiza.

Fiza starts searching for her brother Amaan without getting help from others, and finally she tracks him down in the border areas of Thar desert. But, Amaan by now moulded by extremist ideology of a terrorist group, is a sharp contrast to his initial introduction as a simple, cute and artistic guy. At this point, the film unearths the dark world of terrorism, which transforms an ordinary man into an extremist who indulges in violence in the name *jihad*. Amaan is completely motivated by their ideology and he wishes to crusade himself for *jihad*. He narrates his own experience of involving in violence which erupted six years back in Mumbai, later he got involved in the terrorist group of Murad Khan. Again, the trauma of riot is recalled through flashback: for self-defence, he kills others and becomes horrified with the whole experience of killing each other at the time of riots, he is chased by the police and mob, terrorist team leader Murad Khan saves him. He justifies his standpoint to Fiza and asks her not go back, as the status of
minority in India is low and their nationality is questioned all the time. Even women and children were tortured in the name of TADA law. So, he thinks that police would have arrested him under TADA law if he wished to return to the mainstream life after the riot. After joining the team of Murad, he makes Amaan understand that being minority in India, one does not have any dignity. He suggests Amaan to fight for some ideology and that it is far better to live a life with certain goal and honour instead of a life which denies even dignified death. He thinks that he is fighting ‘jihad’. Finally, Amaan has got a larger goal and ideology of life to crusade himself against the state. Director Khalid Mahammad has framed the conversation in a black and white format: while Fiza is the representative of loyalty, morality and positivity of life, wearing the white costume, Amaan in a black costume has completely a different viewpoint of life. While Amaan says that he has an ideology in life by engaging in jihad, on the other, Fiza opines that all these arms, ammunitions, murder for taking revenge cannot be the ideology of life. Amaan, who is not fully motivated by the ideology of jihad, starts doubting, as he replies there is no more option left for him. He has to take the path of murder, extortion and violence. The conversation between siblings also interprets the larger political discourse.

Although Fiza succeeds in bringing Amaan back, it is difficult to cope with the everyday life for a person who has spent his traumatic days in a terrorist group. He encounters different existential problems such as unemployment, guilt, and fear of police — all these make the situation unbearable for him. He decides to go back to Murad Khan’s group where he feels a sense of belonging. He realises that anonymity was a better identity for him than the helplessness of his current situation. He needs Murad Khan’s advice and wants to re-join the group to fight against injustice, helplessness. Later, his assumption becomes true, and he is arrested by the police for the charge of murdering local ruffians who used to harass Fiza in his absence until recently. After her son’s criminal identity is exposed, Nishatbi feels a sense of guilt for not doing anything favourable to her children. She holds herself responsible for the adversity and vulnerability of her son. The sense of guilt leads her to commit suicide. Mother is dead; Amaan is on the run evading arrest by the police; and Fiza, who is left alone, is facing social forces. Fiza is the only person left in the family to mourn; she bears the pain of larger historical trauma.
The next sequence exposes the opportunistic nature of both Muslim and Hindu politicians. Amaan is selected by the Murad Khan’s group to assassinate Syed Saaab and V.K. Singh, who had come together for political gain. On the one hand, Fiza exposes the opportunistic motive of political leaders, on the other hand, it reveals the deceitful motives of the terrorist group. He succeeds in his mission as he assassinates Syed Saaab and V.K. Singh. But Amaan still does not know that he is also rewarded assassination by his own group members. Realising his inevitable predicament, Amaan assassinates the executors from the terrorist group and later, he is on the run from police. Finally, he looses hope of his life.

After multiple assassinations, while escaping from the scene, Fiza gets a glimpse of Amaan. She starts following him through a railway yard which is the literal and metaphorical dead end. After finding out Amaan, Fiza tries for the last time to bring back Amaan to the mainstream and tells him to give up arms. Amaan replies that once he had thrown them and this time he will not, as somebody else will pick them up. They engage in heated arguments about the ideology of jihad. Amaan opines that his fight against hatred is jihad and if he dies in doing that, he will be considered a martyr. Fiza criticises Amaan’s notion of jihad and gives a different interpretation of jihad. According to her, jihad is a fight for truth and the greatest truth is that they belong to the country. She also reminds Amaan the philosophy of the Quran which never preaches taking the lives of innocents. She raises the ethical question, whether any religion supports the bloodshed of innocents to prove a point. Fiza stands for morality and tries to make Amaan understand that justice will prevail. But Amaan raises questions of justice and political body of the country. He argues that, leaders like Singh and Syed who have the power, which they use to instigate people to create riots, so that they can retain their seats of power. Amaan argues, if the acts of those politicians are right, he is pure and has not committed a sin. He says it was not his wish to take arms in his hands, but the situation makes him to do so.

They recall their childhood memories and try to find out what went wrong that their destiny has changed forever. After realising that the police have started taking positions, Fiza requests Amaan to hand over the gun to her. He agrees, but requests Fiza to kill him. He says that he does not have any pride in his own life; he wants to die in dignity. After hearing Amaan’s indisputable logic of the only honourable
death possible for him, Fiza grudgingly fulfils his wish and pulls the trigger of the gun. After shooting him, she feels the pain and adores Amaan.

In the next section, I will locate the other films, which were released during this period carrying an imaginary notion of Indian culture. In those films, Indian culture was represented as Hindu culture and tradition, thus making the other religion as Other.

HINDUIZED NATION: NATIONAL FAMILY AND NEO-NATIONALISM

In the postcolonial nation-state, cinema became an important tool to propagate the idea of nationalism. The divisions in Indian society, whether sexual, religious, or based on ethnic identity, have been more apparent in the recent years. But, ignoring this fact, Hindi cinema continues to prioritize a monolithic image of the nation and portray ‘certain essence of “Indianess”’ (Rajgopal 2011: 240) termed as “Indian culture.” Such representations are most popular among the Indian diaspora. The diasporic communities have an important role in forging public culture in India. According to Sunil Khilnani, towards the end of 1989, a large number of bricks (167000) piled up in the pilgrimage town of Ayodhya to build the Ram-temple at the disputed site of Babri Masjid. These were not ordinary bricks; they were ‘Ram shilas’, Ram’s bricks’ collected from across India and outside the country. Khilnani points out, ‘Each was inscribed with its place of origin, and among the most proudly displayed were those dispatched by emigrant communities in United States, Canada, South Africa and Caribbean’ (2004: 150). The diasporic community provided an eager market for films, which cater to the Hindu religion and culture. Pardes (directed by Subhas Ghai, 1997) and Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham (directed by Karan Johar, 2001) narrate stories of Indian families transported to foreign lands and promoting Indian culture and rituals ‘identified as markers of Hindu tradition, thereby making any other religion or culture appear “Un-Indian”’ (Rajgopal 2011: 242). I argue that, if there is a need to represent Hindu culture and tradition as a national culture, it is obvious that Others are represented as either less or differently. Muslims are portrayed as Others who are
trying to harm the nation, while the majoritarian community are often represented as “victims”. Hence, Hindus are projected as norm of the society and Muslims are the disrupters of this norm.

The hegemony of ‘Hindu-ized nation’ also puts emphasis on women as the symbol of the nation. In recent times, one of the most controversial issues of Hindu nationalism is ‘Love jihad’. It is another weapon to mobilize, polarize and communalise citizen. ‘Love jihad’ is a ‘fake claim by the Hindu right that there is a “Love Jihad” organization which is forcing Hindu women to convert to Islam through false expressions of love’ (Gupta 2009: 13). The propaganda has been that some Muslim fundamentalist organizations are funding young Muslim boys to trap non-Muslim girls to marry them and thus convert them into Islam. The agenda is deployed by organizations such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Sri Ram Sene, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad and Hindu Janjagruthi Samiti. They have been holding meetings, distributing pamphlets and even filing court cases. These right-wing groups are also declaring that the organization ‘love jihad’, as part of an Islamist conspiracy, has devised plans for compulsive and deceitful religious conversions by winning over young women. To counter ‘love jihad’ state co-convenor of the Bajrang Dal Ajju Chauhan launched a campaign named ‘Bahu Laao, Beti Bachao’ in February 2015. The campaign was meant to encourage Hindu men to marry non-Hindu women, on the other hand, to create awareness among Hindu women against ‘love jihad’. It is also an expression of controlling patriarchal values prevalent in the communal politics. It propagates the message, women are property of men and they should be controlled.

Bollywood has also become a controversial site as some filmmakers are accused of disseminating the ideology of ‘love jihad’ through their films. Jodha Akbar (2008) is cited as an example of ‘love jihad’. The recent and most targeted film claiming to promote ‘love jihad’ is Bajrangi Bhaijaan (2015). In the film, Kareena Kapoor is playing the role of Salman Khan’s ladylove. She is represented as the Hindu Brahmin girl while Khan is wrongly assumed as Muslim guy. But the fact is that, Salman Khan is also represented as Hindu Bramhin guy whose name is Pawan Kumar Chaturvedi/Bajrangi. It faced multiple controversies before its
In Gujrat before the festival of garba, VHP leaders started circulating audiotape which was targeting Bajrangi Bhaijaan to warn Hindus against ‘love jihad’. Those leaders mentioned, ‘The audio was created to bring awareness among Hindus that such a sinister plan is being executed by the minority community to entice young Hindu girls who get smitten by the romanticism in such movies’ (The Indian Express, 20 September 2014). They even claimed that the director Kabir Khan got fund from Arab countries to make that particular film to promote the ideology of ‘love jihad’.

Apart from the films, Bollywood stars specially the ‘Khans’, are accused of perpetrating ‘love jihad’ in their real life. Saif Ali Khan even got death threat during the time of his marriage to Kareena Kapoor in 2012 as he was accused of promoting ‘love jihad’. Hindu Mahasabha has thrown challenge to the Khans — Shahrukh Khan, Amir Khan and Saif Ali Khan — to be converted to Hinduism if they really love their wives. Himalaya Dhwani, a Visva Hindu Parisad women’s magazine used Kareena Kapoor’s morphed picture for their cover page. Her face is half covered with niqab (veil) with caption, ‘Conversion of nationality through religious conversion’ (DNA, 8 January 2015). It was an attempt to reconvert those women who got married with Muslims. As Kareena Kapoor is married to a Muslim, so her picture was used to promote the campaign.

The deep-seated prejudices about Muslims were utilised by Hindutva movement to unite the majoritarian population. The strategy of polarising people was done with the troubled history of the subcontinent. Injecting a deep paranoia about Muslims and their “outsideness” by frequent references to medieval Muslim plunderers like Mamud, the Sultan of Gazni who looted northern India every year, is a popular strategy of Hindutva forces. Such scenarios are created by Hindu nationalists in such a way as if the crisis occurred recently (Rajgopal 2011). Prakash Louis (2000) discusses the attempts of the RSS to “re-write” history textbooks in Maharashtra, thereby injecting communal consciousness in the young. There was also a new set of films, which characterize family values, Indian culture, and patriarchy, but there were Muslim side characters who were identifiable because of their Islamicate culture. Here their identities as Muslims take

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19 A traditional Gujarati folk dance and song originally performed as a fertility ritual.
precedence over all other identity markers such as their occupation. Pointing out the trend, Shiladitya Sen mentioned,

*After Babri, a lot of films were released, such as Hum Aapke Hain Kon, Hum Saath Saath Hai to highlight the Indian Hindu joint family culture. In those films, there were few Muslim side characters. The representation of those films cleared the fact that we don't have any problem if you are Muslim, but you have to be subordinate to the majority. For example, you stay with head cap, wear beautiful dresses, will sing nice songs and stay like that. We majorities will protect you; we are in a secular state, what we call it as pseudo-secular. Stay as subordinate minority, we are there for you. The hegemony is ours. This concept was propagated many a times in Bollywood films after Babri demolition during 1992 (Personal interview, 13 March 2013).*

In this way, Bollywood formed an excellent domain to examine the complex interplay between culture and politics. Patriotism and nationalism were transmitted to the country’s body politic through cinematic space. In the next section, I will discuss the dichotomy between terrorism and patriotism.

**TERRORISM: A CINEMATIC DESIRE**


In the last two decades, the concept of ‘enemy images’ in Hindi cinema has been marked with specific ‘political signs’. Earlier, the image of villain was larger than life where villains were entertaining, exaggerated, and dramatic figures such as that of Pran (as Sher Khan in *Zanjeer*), Amrish Puri (as Mogambo in *Mr. India*), and Amjad Khan (as Gabbar Singh in *Sholey*), who are plotting to take revenge on the hero or his associates. However, as Ronie Parciack points out,
…following the rise of Hindutva in 1990s, rampant communal violence, serial blasts, in different major cities in India (an attack on the Indian Parliament, 2001; serial attacks on Mumbai, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2011; New Delhi, 2008; Varanasi 2006, 2010; Jaipur, 2008; Ahmedabad, 2008 and many more) and above all, the aftermath of 9/11, the issue of terrorism was brought to the forefront of popular consciousness and to mainstream mass media, resulting in a proliferation of films depicting terrorists and terrorism (2013: 145).

Although post-independence India has witnessed much political violence in Kashmir, insurgent movements in the north-eastern states, the Khalistan movement, and Tamil and radical Naxal militancy, these terrorist activities found meagre representation in popular culture. There were numerous incidents, which could be categorised as terrorist acts in world history, the hype surrounding Islamic terrorism troubled Al Naseer Jakaria, a professor and politician (Spokesperson, Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee). He said,

*If you see historically all over the world, people attacked England. IRA (Irish Republican Army) gave hard time to England. England was superpower at the time. They bombed people in public gathering, churches, and theatres. So no one said these are Christian terrorists. In India, do I call Modi a Hindu terrorist? No, he is a terrorist because he terrorises people. But I won’t call him a Hindu terrorist. Media portraying Muslim as terrorist and Islam as terrorism, they are absolutely wrong. There are some incidents such as suicide attacks, suicide bombing and all. That is against Islam. Islam never says that you go and kill innocent people. They are even insulting Islam* (Personal Interview, 27th August 2012).

Filmmaker Kabir Khan also holds similar beliefs about terrorist activities. Being a documentary filmmaker, he has had to travel to different parts of the world and, most importantly, to terrorist prone countries like Afghanistan. He shared his personal experience of meeting with terrorists and their ideology as follows:

*I met a terrorist in Afganistan to make Kabul Express, and I firmly believe that 95% of these people are not fighting for religion. It is a personal issue; they do not fight for an ideology. In Kashmir, terrorists are fighting because a fourteen years boy sees that his father is getting slapped by VFS soldiers. Afterwards, the boy is becoming a terrorist, not because he believes in Jihad. You are the representative of Indian government, and I will shoot you. And these are the boys very easy to be brainwashed. Kasab, he came here it is not because he hated India, he came here because he was given money* (Personal interview, 2nd April 2013).

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20 Ajmal Kasab was a Pakistani militant and a member of Lashkari-e-Taiba Group. He with other members of the group took part in the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, Maharashtra a state of India.
This new set of terrorist films was termed as ‘cine-patriotism’ by Manisha Sethi (2002). Amit Rai further elaborates the concept and says, ‘Cinepatriotism’ of Bollywood: a set of films, indeed a genre now, that seeks to represent, visualize, and narrativize the sovereignty of the supposedly secular, but in practice upper-caste, Hindu Indian nation. As such, they have critiqued and fueled the ongoing tensions between Hindus and Muslims that marked India’s postcoloniality’ (2003: 5). Cinepatriotism is important to discuss here because the films of this period such as Roja (1992), Sarfarosh (1999) Mission Kashmir (2000), and Fiza (2000) articulate the debate between Muslim identity and Indian nationalism. In an attempt to make these films nationalistic and patriotic, ‘terrorists’ and ‘terrorism’ are portrayed as Pakistani imports into India. On screen, starting with the film Roja (1992) in the early 1990s, there developed a symbiotic relationship between Kashmir, Pakistan and Muslims. In most of these films, the terrorists or the terrorist-training camps were located in Pakistan. Popular culture in India and elsewhere propagate the statist agenda and ‘it also treated the issue as a fundamentally affective one, linking it melodramatically and crucially to belongingness, the familial consanguinity and kinship in the context of the nation’ (Gabriel and Vijayan 2014: 300). Numerous films such as Mission Kashmir (2000), Shikandar (2009), Roja (1992), Fanaa (2006), Lamhaa (2010), and Haider (2014) take the state’s stand of claiming Kashmir as Indian. The villain, as terrorist, is shown to be motivated to engage in terrorist activities by Pakistan, mouthing slogans against India, and fighting for the cause of Kashmir. Film critic, Shiladitya Sen sketches out three fundamental characteristics of terrorist films in the post-Babri era,

*After Babri (1992), the politics of representation was to portray Pakistan as biggest enemy. In the movie Sarfarosh, under a Pakistan flag, the terrorists are discussing how they would attack India. It is applicable for the movies like Border and Gadar as well. When the film represent Pakistan is indulging in terrorism, at the same time, it is implying that the citizen of Pakistan as a single entity. Secondly, in India whoever is doing terrorist acts, all are anti-religious groups and they do not belong to Hindus. Thirdly, the films which support state terrorism to kill those terrorists. These are the central messages of those films* (Personal interview, 13th March 2013).

During the conversation, he shared his own experience and observation of how audience accepts state terrorism. He said,
In the film, A Wednesday where Naseeruddin Shah as The Common Man is saying that in your house sometimes some insects come in, the way you kill those insects, do the same for these terrorists. For that, you don't need to go to the police or don't have to take any help from judiciary system...These statements are defying the system of law and order, and A Wednesday became popular. I went to film festival in Goa, in 2008 after the blast in Mumbai, they had special screening of the film and the hall was fully packed, almost 500-600 people were watching the film and among them were film critics. If you contradict over there, they will beat you to death (Personal interview, 13th March 2013).

Filmmaker Kabir Khan also mentions that Kashmir conflict was one of the early and primary reasons for making terrorist films wherein Muslims were represented as terrorists. According to him,

The Kashmir issue is definitely a starting point where Muslim characters were started represented as terrorists specially Kashmiri terrorists. That is probably one of the turning points because a lot of the films started dealing with Kashmir issue. In comparison, the film Roja, I would still say, it is more balanced. It had a grey area. Pankaj Kapoor's character was shown in quite a balanced manner. It was not like he was a stock evil terrorist unlike say Mission Kashmir where you have a very strong stereotypical character. Few other films were produced later dealing with Kashmir problems and terrorists are shown in those films in a stereotypical black and white way (Personal interview, 2nd November 2013).

There is a relation between world politics and the changing pattern of terrorist films. After ‘9/11’ attacks and immediately following the American government’s announcement of ‘war against terror’ a series of films on terrorism such as DC 9/11: Time of Crisis (2003), Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004), The Sum of All Fears (2002), The Path to 9/11 (2004), Munich (2005) were produced in Hollywood. According to Jack Shaheen, with the global reach of Hollywood motion pictures, ‘Arab images have an effect not only on international audiences, but on international movie makers as well’ (Shaheen 2003: 174). Though Shaheen mentions Arab images, the theory is applicable to the whole of the Muslim world. The convergence of the western discourse of Islam and the Indian discourse of Islam influenced Indian filmmakers. Filmaker Vinay Shukla conceded that Hollywood has an effect on Bollywood,

9/11 brought a huge change in the way Muslims have been portrayed. The incident had an immediate impact on Hollywood and later in Bollywood. The Muslim terrorist characters became like a stock character that you had to have in any film, which is dealing with international politics. He became the stock villain. I think it is a combination of social and historical reasons where things have made the representations of Muslims change but unfortunately 90 per cent portrayals are always being stereotypical (Personal Interview, 26th April 2013).
It is important to note that the changing business models associated with ‘increasing corporate links with media houses in the Unites States of America in particular, significantly influenced the cinematic treatment of terrorism’ (Gabriel and Vijayan 2012: 301). For example, different international film studios such as Warner Bros., Disney, Fox and Dream works have entered into collaborations with local film production houses to develop Hindi and regional movies. Apart from that, because of a large diasporic community in the global north and especially in the United States of America, there is demand for Indian cinema with a nationalist narrative.

Amit Rai argues, ‘in the wake of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre, national strategy planning in India and the US has converged on the dominant theme of “Homeland security”’ (2003: 9). Bollywood constructed the ‘war against terror’ as a holy war. The protagonists of films like *Fiza* and *Fanaa* kill brother and husband to prove their nationalism; much like Radha (Nargis) killed her own son Birju (Sunil Dutt) in Mother India. But the reasons have changed: in the case of Mother India, Radha killed to protect the honour of a woman, and she was the Mother India, so she was protecting the nation, but in the film *Fiza*, Fiza kills her brother and in the film *Fanaa*, Zooni kills her husband to protect the nation from the evil Islamic terrorist.

In the recent films on terrorism, the representations of terrorists are balanced by the existence of a ‘patriotic Muslim’ who sheds his blood to prove his allegiance to the country. There is a dichotomy of good/bad Muslim. Cultural theorist, Mehmood Mamdani has theorised this dichotomy and argues that, the ‘good Muslim’ is co-opted by the state and the ‘bad Muslim’ challenges the status quo. Thus, while Fiza and Zooni defend the state and prove their patriotism and nationalistic zeal, Amaan (Fiza’s brother) and Rehan (Zooni’s husband) challenge the Indian nation state. Moreover, in *Fiza*, Rehan Qadri and his grandfather who struggles for Kashmiri independence are represented as ‘bad Muslims’. Unfortunately, films on Kashmir and Kashmiri militants like *Mission Kashmir*, *Roja*, *Fanaa*, and *Haider* ignore the sensitive and complex nuances of the Kashmir issue. Filmmaker and director Kabir Khan made his remarkable film New York (2009) on global terrorism. Speaking about the inspiration for the film he said,

*It’s a fact that thousands of young Muslims were radicalized because of what happened post-9/11 and the way they were treated in the West. I remember seeing*
a documentary, there was guy, named Moazzam Begg, a Pakistani origin Muslim but lived in Britain, he was put in illegal detention for two years or three years and he came out and started talking about it. In a documentary interview, he says that after three years, they are finally letting me out because they found no evidence against me. The American jailor, who kept him under detention, informed him that he did not know whether he was terrorist. I am pretty sure you will become one when you go out. For a character like Sam in the film New York, who is sort of proud of himself and have lot of self respect but he was thrown into illegal detention. After receiving a lot of humiliation and torture, once he comes out, he picks up rifle and hits back. Might be fraud ideology, may not be justifying terrorism and is not correct thing to do but this is how social psychology begins. So there is no villain in it. Everybody from his perspective is correct. Sam is correct from his perspective; Irfan is right in his perspective. Everybody is correct from his or her perspectives. Even Osama Bin Laden knew his perspective was right. So in this way, in cinema you get different perspectives, but you tend to stay away from stereotypes (Personal interview, 2nd April 2013).

‘The Good Muslim’ and ‘Bad Muslim’ are not confined to terrorist films. Speaking about the family entertainer Hum Aapke Hai Kaun, Shiladitya Sen points out,

The film, Hum Aapke Hai Koun, is basically a film about Hindu marriage. Krishna does all the miracles in the movie. The Muslim family in the film was depicted as very nice. These types of films brought out two kinds of Muslims: good and bad. Good Muslims as fighting for the state, gel nicely with Hindu families, sacrificing their lives for the sake of some friends (Personal interview, 13th March 2013).

He further explains that propagating the image of the tolerant Hindu through Hindi cinema was yet another agenda for Hindi cinema of that time:

Again in Mission Kashmir, Inayat Khan, played by Sanjay Dutt, is a Muslim but his wife is Hindu. As the story progresses, terrorists abduct Inayat Khan’s wife who is a sympathetic and soft hearted because of her Hindu religion. She adopted an orphan named Aftaaf played by Hrithik Rosan. She was determined to change Altaf’s aggressive and extremist mentality. After doing many misdeeds, Altaf realised his mistakes and asks his father to forgive him. It also symbolises that you (minority Muslims) do all kinds of misdeeds but if you accept us (majority Hindus) once, you will be a part of us. While portraying Hindus, they are presented as non-violent, tolerant (Personal interview, 13th March 2013).

Between 2002 and 2006, a series of films were produced on the life of the nationalist freedom fighter Bhagat Singh. Gabriel and Vijayan point out, ‘the appropriate revival of this legend in the strident Hindu nationalist environment of the 1990s involved his cinematics celebration as potent masculine emblem of Hindu identity’ (2012: 300). At the same time, many of the films represented Muslim terrorism. Film theorists have critiqued the juxtaposition of the Hindu and the
Muslim representations. It leads to polarisation because of strategic representation of Hindu terrorism is to protect the nation and Muslim terrorism is to harm the nation.

Films like Mission Kashmir, Faana, Roja, and My Name Is Khan do not incorporate the difficulties faced by Muslims who either have to continually prove their allegiance to the nation or protest by engaging in terrorism. However, in the majority of films, while the active anti-national role of Muslim terrorists becomes clear, we do not get much insight into the ideological conflict and politics behind terrorist activities. An audience, a researcher, expressed a similar thought,

*They are not showing enough reasons for doing all the terrorist activities, and I think that is where the gap lies. If they are not showing that, there must be certain reasons behind this, and logical reasons. You don’t know where your movies will be watched, how your movies would be taken in. You don’t know how a mind can be affected very ruthlessly. The movie might be watched in some rural area in some parts of India; it might gets affected or trigger off very bad reaction* (Personal interview, 4th September 2012).

Through films like New York (directed by Kabir Khan, 2009), Kurbaan (directed by Rensil D’Silva, 2009), and My Name is Khan (directed by Karan Johar, 2010)—general perceptions of the audience at the time become clear.

**PAKISTAN: AS ENEMY**

Apart from Pakistan’s role in terrorist training, there have been a number of hugely successful films of the war genre (depicting wars between India and Pakistan) released between 2000 and 2005 in India. Pakistan is considered the biggest enemy of the nation particularly since the last two decades, even though India and Pakistan have been involved in many cross-border confrontations in 1948, 1965, and 1971. The most devastating was the Kargil war in 1999. Between 1997 and 2006, Bollywood produced numerous war films including Border (directed by J.P. Dutta, 1997), Sarfarosh (directed by John Matthew Matthan, 1999), Maa Tujhe Salam (directed by Tinnu Verma, 2002), Pukar (directed by Rajkumar Santoshi, 2000), Gadar (directed by Anil Sharma, 2001), and LOC (directed by J.P Dutta, 2003). Film critic, Rauf Ahmed said,
There was a phase in the late eighties and early nineties, particularly around the time when Babri-masjid demolition took place, and there were some films which were anti-Pakistan films...at that time, the words Pakistan and Muslims are used as interchangeable words (Personal interview, 28th August 2013).

The war films of the 1970s, including classics such as Haqueeqat and Hum Dono carried the message of peace. However, films produced in the last decades carry the jingoistic ideology of Hindutva. Similarly, it was no coincidence that films produced immediately after some of the worst communal riots in India portrayed Muslim characters as traitors and villains. The juxtaposition of Muslim-terrorist-Pakistani was crudely done. Admiring patriotic films, BJP leader, Lal Krishna Advani’s daughter, Pratibha Advani writes,

Patriotic films, as a special and much-admired genre of Indian cinema, have had a tremendous impact on our people, cutting across religious, regional, linguistic and economic identities. Moreover, they have also proved their unsurpassed power of communicating both to educated and illiterate masses (cited in Budha 2008: 6).

Being a supporter of the patriotic films, she also indirectly supports the symbolic relationship of Muslim-terrorist-Pakistani which are represented in the nationalist films. Regarding this, one can argue that the rise of right-wing politics during the 1980s and eventual electoral victory of BJP in 1998 led to the huge box office success of the film Border (directed by J.P. Dutta, 1997). It is considered one of the landmark films of the war genre. J.P. Dutta received a huge production support for the making of the film Border from the Indian army. Moreover, right-wing politicians helped him to gain publicity for the film as ‘key ministers from the BJP government cabinet, including the then Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, turned up for the premiere of LOC–Kargil’ (Budha 2008: 8). The film was based on the 1971 battle of Longewala. There is, however, only one Indian Muslim character in the film. Film historian and critic Fareed Kazmi points out that the characterisation of that protagonist, was as ‘an archetypical bearded man wearing achkhan and cap’ (1999: 11). There is a scene where a man is shown standing outside his burning home which has been bombed by the Pakistan army. He is crying out, ‘Mera Quran Sharif bacha lo, andar jalrahai’ (Save my copy of the Quran, it is burning inside). A Hindu Army officer, played by Sunil Shetty, rushes inside, brings out the Quran safely and hands that over to the man who declares in amazement, ‘Magar aap to Hindu hain’ (But you are a Hindu). He humbly replies back, ‘Haan hum Hindu hain aur Hundu
“hi apne ko bhool ke doosron ko sambhalte aayehain” (Yes I am a Hindu and Hindus are the ones who at their own expense help others). This statement also propagates the message of Hindu tolerance. Mahesh Bhatt also points out the lack of representation of Muslim Army officers in war films,

Abdul Hamid was the first recipient of India’s highest military decoration, the Param Vir Chakra. He was the Grenadiers of the Indian Army, who died in the Khem Karan sector during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965. You have the story of extraordinary Muslim, who fights against and created an icon. But you will hardly find out their representation in Indian cinema (Personal interview, 31 March, 2014).

One of the most prominent war films is undoubtedly Gadar (2001), which was released soon after the India-Pakistan Kargil war. The film was one of the biggest hits ever delivered by Bollywood. Gadar carried subliminal communal messages, which strengthened the public spirit of hate that prevailed immediately following the Kargil war. Film critic Saba Naqvi Bhoumik, Bureau chief of Outlook Magazine, opines that ‘in the film all the Muslim characters—Indian and Pakistani — are fundamentally flawed. It can not be a coincidence that such a film broke all the records at a time when BJP’s popularity was at its height. Hindu right's ideology was blatantly propagated’ (Bhaumik 2010: 86). There is a dialogue in the film uttered by a person who represents Pakistan, ‘Hindustan hamse kaatna sikho’ (Indians learn to kill from us). As Pakistan and Muslims are used as interchangeable words, they easily establish that Muslims are the butchers. Every Muslim and Pakistani character in the film is portrayed as evil and treacherous. Rauf Ahmed, film critic, expressed a similar thought,

Border became blockbuster and did very well much like Gadar. Those films were anti-Pakistan but not anti-Muslim. But anti-Pakistan is a subtle way of saying anti-Muslim. Filmmakers are not trying to polarise more but they are cashing in on what exists in the society (Personal interview, 28th August, 2013).

The film Gadar was appreciated by all strata of Indian society. An audience (a security guard in a residential society) liked the film Gadar, and he liked Sunny Deol’s character who is fighting against Pakistan. He said,

I liked Gadar a lot. I like Sunny Deol’s role. I felt very sad for the girl who without doing any crime got harsh treatment. Muslim community in Pakistan was treating her very badly because she fell in love with a Sikh. Without thinking about religion, Sunny Deol saved the girl's life and that's what I liked most. I felt very surprised after seeing so much of fighting between religions. All are human beings. I felt everyone has a heart. I felt Pakistanis have much anger against
So, the audience in his response also synonymises India as Hindus, as he says, ‘Pakistanis have much anger against Hindus’ instead of saying ‘Pakistanis have much anger against Indians’.

CONCLUSION

Muslim as a citizen and Islam as a religion have attracted negative attention in recent decades. Along with other media of popular culture, Bollywood has fuelled the hegemonic *Hindutva* discourse through multiple representations of the notion of Hindu nation and Muslim minority into a kind of ‘Manichean rivalry’ (Kumar 2013: 468). The ultra-nationalist and ultra-violent films (such as *Gadar, Mission Kashmir, Border, LOC*) heightened the extremist *Hindutva* ideology in the last two decades. The theme of terrorism fundamentally questions the classification of self as Hindu and the Other as Muslim. Moreover, the symbolic relation between Pakistan, Muslims and Kashmir fuelled the rhetoric of country’s political and social scenario. The intervention of different right-wing political parties also became an inspiration for producing such films. The production of a self-conscious and aggressive nationalism in Hindi cinema recalls Benedict Anderson’s seminal work, *Imagined communities* (1983). From the early history of cinema, it was the primary tool of propaganda in the hands of nation builders; though the medium itself could not mobilise the nation, it gave them a new direction. Thus, it establishes certain behaviours and values associated with certain dominant groups as the norm, while marginalising others.

In the next chapter, I shall look into the films produced after 2000s. These films departed from the earlier stereotypical depiction of Muslims in mainstream films as ‘villains’ or ‘aliens’ to one in which Muslims were increasingly depicted as ‘good’, ‘sensible’ and ‘ordinary’ human beings. I shall examine the nuances and industry equation to push the filmmakers to make a new form of Hindi film. Consequently, films such as *My Name is Khan* (2010), *Well Done Abba* (2009), *Chak De! India* (2007), *Amir* (2008), and *Iqbal* (2005) focused on ordinary
Muslims who face lack of economic opportunities, identity crisis, women’s struggle against oppression, and corruption.