Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a monotheistic founded religion based on the principles enunciated in Quran, a text believed by its adherents, called Muslims, to be the verbatim reproduction of the words of God. It is the third of the “Religions of the Book” and its followers are described as the “People of the Book”. It is the second largest religion in the world with about 1.57 billion adherents living in fifty-five countries around the world (Ahmed 2003). Muslims constitute about 23 per cent of the world population and Islam is one of the fastest growing religions (Pew Research Centre 2009). ‘While Muslims are found on all five inhabited continents, more than 60 per cent of the global Muslim population is in Asia and about 20 per cent is in the Middle East and North Africa. However, the Middle East–North Africa region has the highest percentage of Muslim-majority countries’ (ibid.). Islam has two major sects, namely, Shia and Sunni: ‘Of the total Muslim population, 10-13% are Shia Muslims and 87-90% are Sunni Muslims’ (ibid.).

While Muslims are followers of Islam, they are not a homogenous community, either in India or elsewhere in the world. In India, the number of Muslims who migrated from Arabia, and other countries are less. Indian Muslims are mostly converted from lower-caste Hindus who used to be considered as untouchables. Moreover, during the reign of Mughals (1526–1857), many soldiers and administrative persons started their family with local Hindus from different parts of India. Thus, majority of Muslims in India were converted to Islam from Hinduism and they continue to follow the earlier customs and rituals of the region to which they belong.

Indian architecture also got new shape with the advent of Islamic rule in India towards the end of the 12th century C.E. Muslims have added a different flavour to food too. Similarly, in music, the fusion is observed, as those who came from outside contributed much to the growth of classical Hindustani vocal music (like khayal, tarrana, dhrupad, thumri, qawwali, and gazal) and musical instruments (like sitar, sarod and shehnai). They have not only contributed to Indian culture but also started following Indian culture.
No community’s identity can be determined by its religious laws and practices alone. Rather, it depends on various factors and, most importantly, the cultural aspects. Even though, there are significant differences among Muslims, there are aspects that make their religion look like a homogenized religion. For instance, Urdu is a language which is popularly identified with Islam and Muslims, but only in few parts of India Muslims speak Urdu. In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, there are caste divisions among Muslims, which are not applicable to Muslims elsewhere in the country. Imtiaz Ahmed says, Islamic beliefs and practices in India have been accommodated according to the larger majority community, Hindus (Ahmed cited in Lindholm 1986). Doctrinally, Islam does not, in fact, recognize caste. Most importantly, Muslims across the country differ in their food and dress habits.

Although Muslims are heterogeneous, both in India and elsewhere, the media, both print and electronic, represent them as a homogeneous community. Thus, an essentialised identity of “the Muslim community” and even “the Indian Muslims” is ascribed to them. Nowhere is such essentialised and homogeneous representation of Muslims as ubiquitous and persistent as in films. Given that such representations have far reaching consequences, both for Muslims and the society in which they live, films provide an important source of data for and point of reference to sociological research. Accordingly, in the instant study, I have sought to analyse the representation of Muslims in Hindi films and its perception among the audience, which view them. The homogenized representation of Muslims in films is neither new nor confined to Hindi cinema. Le Bourreau Turc, made first in French as early as 1904, and later in English (named The Terrible Turkish Executioner), ‘provides one of the earliest narrative depictions of the Middle-East on film… it contains a series of narrative elements that can be found in most films made subsequently in Hollywood about the Middle-East and its Muslim inhabitants, be they Turks, Arabs, or Iranians’ (Eisele 2002: 68).

According to Jack Shaheen, Hollywood has stereotyped the Arab Muslim image: ‘black beard, headdress, dark sunglasses’ are very common things which are attached to them (2003: 172). Apart from that, there are some elements —‘a limousine, harem maidens, oil wells, camels’ (ibid.) —in the background. Negative image of Arabs get more emphasis as ‘brute murderers, sleazy rapists, religious fanatics, oil-rich dimwits, and abusers of women’ (ibid.). Nowadays, Hollywood’s motion pictures reach every corner of the world. As a result, ‘Arab images have an
effect not only on international audiences, but international movie makers as well’ (Shaheen 2003: 174).

**Background**

Although in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries cinema has become a metaphor of a society, it involves imagination and fantasy. Cinema is used as a tool for representation. Indian popular cinema allows us important insights into the social milieu within which people live and their beliefs and practices. It helps them to perceive the significant features of their society like religious revivalism; law and order; the emergence of the ‘south’ and its stars; the fortunes of the Indian minorities, in particular the Muslims. I want to start writing the thesis with self-identity of being a Muslim and will contextualise the representation of Muslims in Indian Hindi cinema.

Like thousands of Muslim families in India, I have grown up in a Hindu-dominated area in a small town of West Bengal. I was brought up much like my other friends, my parents used to wear the Bengali traditional clothes. My father still wears the *dhoti* and *kurta*¹ and my mother drapes a *saari* in Bengali style. Moreover, she wears *bindi*² (probably to assimilate with other neighbours), a mark of Hindu identity. Moreover, our food habit is very much similar to traditional Bengali food – fish and rice. The only difference I experienced in my childhood was celebrating more number of festivals like *Eid-al-Fitr* and *Shab-e-Barat*, than our neighbours. The Bengali cultural practices never interfered in our religious practices as my mother strictly followed the rituals and practices of Islam.

While growing up, I started sensing a strange difference between my family and the representation of Muslims on the television set and films. Moreover, I always felt the dichotomy of accepting the Muslim stars and Muslim citizen by the majority groups. Indian audience worship Hindi film stars specially, the ‘Khans’, and having the same surname, I was privileged among my classmates in my school.

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¹ Dhoti and kurta are Bengali traditional cloths which used to be considered as superior, sophisticated attire for Bengali Bhadralok.

² The bindi is usually a mark worn by men and women who are engaged in hindu traditional and ritual activities. Though it has a huge traditional association, bindi is commodified as decorative cosmetic which has a cultural significance in modern India.
days. They used to think that I am lucky that I share the surname – Khan of the most popular film stars of the country. But, my family was not that privileged as that of the stars. My mother always hesitated to offer food to a representative of the majority community because of the fear of it being refused, as Muslims are universally assumed to be consuming beef in their daily diet. Eating beef is such a taboo that since my early childhood, people from different age groups always would ask me whether my family ate beef. I was so young at that time that I did not know why people are so curious to know about eating beef. During my graduation and university days, people often used to tell me that “you don’t look like a Muslim”. How do Muslims look? Though my entire family and extended family members are dedicated followers of five pillars of Islam, we never wore burqa, headscarf and the skull cap (basic markers of Muslim identity). I think, in India, there are thousands of families who do not project their symbolic identity of being Muslims, but a homogenised image of Muslim identity is nevertheless constructed. The notion of Muslim and Islam was created not only by a section of people who wear those symbols (burqa, skull cap) of Islam but the identity was constructed by different mediums of mass communication.

The identity of Muslim ‘Other’ existed during the British rule due to the colonial policy of divide and rule and later due to partition of India and the creation of Pakistan. The notion of ‘Otherness’ has become more complicated in the last two decades after the demolition of Babri Masjid in the country. Though the incident did not have any direct impact on our life, the one thing that I remember is that my father used to narrate to my mother how Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and right-wing people claimed that Muslims must go to Pakistan. But, he never took that as a threat. Probably, my parents were much assured that they would never have to leave their country.

Muslims, and the Islam as a religion, became an international enemy after 2001 that is, after the attack on the World Trade Centre towers. This incident changed the identity of being ‘Other’ to ‘Enemy’ and there are other reasons for that. There were a series of blasts that took place in many parts of India. I shifted to

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3 Shahadah (witnessing the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad), Salat (regular observance of the five prescribed daily prayers), Zakah (almsgiving), Sawn (fasting), Hajj (Pilgrimage to Mecca) (oxfordislamicstudies.com).
Mumbai in 2008 for an integrated M.Phil-Ph.D programme and Mumbai witnessed India’s most horrific terrorist attacks during that year. The whole Muslim and Islamic identity was in danger, though the attack was perpetrated by a section of terrorist groups from Pakistan. Terrorists planned and executed those blasts in the name of jihad, thus, the motives of those attacks were tagged with Islam. As a result, different mediums of communication began representing Islam as the cruelest religion of all. This was reflected when, in 2011, I was searching for a rented apartment because my family was shifting to Mumbai. I sensed a strange reaction every time I proclaimed my surname ‘Khan’ to the owners. Even some brokers refused to find an apartment for me after knowing my surname. Finally, I managed to get a flat in a cosmopolitan area because of my husband’s identity of being a Hindu.

The representation of Muslim identity is prevalent in Indian cinema and specifically in the Hindi film industry. Representation of Muslims in the Hindi movies has undergone change based on the socio-political situation of the times. While the films of the 1950s and 1960s, during the so-called Nehruvian era, reflected the “tolerant” secularism of the state and also depicted an idealized Muslim world where nawabs lived with their grandeur and idiosyncrasies intact. The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of an alternative politics of minority representation. In this period, the aristocrats were pushed to hedonistic pursuits. Apart from that, the portrayal of Mumbai’s underworld characters mostly as Muslims is noteworthy. The Babri Masjid was demolished on 6 December 1992 and the incident was a turning point in the representation of Muslims in Hindi cinema. Those films represented communal narratives. Later, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and a section of the Pentagon have left a mark worldwide in the way Muslims are perceived. Immediately after the attack, many movies were made on terrorism in Bollywood. There are many films, which have depicted the ideological conflict between the nationalist victim and the jehadi terrorist. As mentioned earlier, media has an important role in moulding citizen’s identity, and Indian cinema plays a key role in that.

Cinema is not only a medium of entertainment rather, but also a metaphor of society. Indian popular cinema allows us important insights into the social milieu within which people live with their beliefs and practices. Being a student of media and communication, I wanted to analyse representation of complex multiple
identities of Muslims in cinema. Thus, when I got the chance to pursue my doctoral research, I just grabbed it.

**REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIMS IN HINDI CINEMA**

In India, Muslims have for long been represented in films (see appendix). Though it is only contemporary representation Hindi cinema raises the question of secularism, Muslims were represented from the early eras of Hindi cinema. ‘…the representation of the Muslim as ‘Other’ has in fact been a long-term trend within the discourse of popular Hindi Cinema’ (Kavoori and Punathambekar 2008: 135). This trend was prominent in the movies, which were made even before the independence and immediately after the independence such as ‘Pukar (1939), Tansen (1943), Humayun (1945), Shahjehan (1946), Baiju Bawra (1952), Anarkali (1953), Mirza Galib (1954), Jahan Ara (1964), Noorjehan (1967), and Mughal-e-Azam (1960)’ (ibid.). The characters and storylines of the above mentioned films were based on the Mughal court and ‘they were universally characterized by the use of complex Persianized Urdu dialogue and stylized mannerism that were believed to reflect the etiquette of the Mughal court’ (ibid.: 136). Apart from that, films, that came immediately after the independence represented Muslim characters ‘as sane, sensible, good, and devout…specially those written by progressive writers’ (Benegal 2007: 230). During the Nehruvian era, films depicted the rich cultural tradition of Muslims in India. Edward Johnson describes those films as displaying ‘the splendour of pre-Raj India, the costumes, nobility, and drama were presented with an emotional thrust that did much to re-establish Indian national esteem’ (cited in Dudrah 2006: 176).

However, the cinematic representation of Muslims has not remained same over the decades. Many events that occurred from time to time formed the basis of the representation of Muslims in Hindi films. If we look back into the history, there are few post-independence events that Veena Das (1997) refers to as ‘critical events’. She says, some of the ‘critical events’ ‘that received heavy media coverage, mostly in the 1980s were -the Shah Bano Muslim divorcee-support court case, the Roop Kanwar sati in Rajasthan, Sikh militancy and terrorism,
the Ramjanmabhumi-Babri Masjid movement, the Bhopal Union Carbide methyl isocyanate leak’ (Kolenda 1995: 1124) which influenced the script of Hindi Cinema.

Before going into the cinematic representation of Muslims in the 1980s, we need look into the period immediately after the Neheruvian era. In the 1970s, ‘a distinct change in the characterisation of Muslims started emerging in the Bollywood films. The characters though for some time continued to remain aristocratic were pushed towards hedonist pursuits’ (http: 2012). In this regard Anuradha Dingwaney Needham and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan point out, ‘often imbued with a sense of nostalgia for an older traditional culture even when set in a contemporary framework, these films tended to constitute Muslims as an isolated and archaic community faced with singular problem’ (2007: 238). Fareed Kazmi writes,

…the characterization of Muslims is delineated in terms of abstractions. They emerge as stereotypes represented by well-defined signs of speech, appearance, dress, social and religious practice… ignored are the real-life men and women with distinct class positions, social backgrounds and individual disposition (Kazmi cited in Kavoori and Panathambekar 2008: 140)

The representation of Muslims constructed by ‘Muslim Socials’ reflected stereotypes in language, culture, region, socio-economic status, but there are sections of Muslims who were not Urdu-spouting, mansion-dwelling aristocrats, but ordinary peasants, workers, and craftsmen who were not portrayed much. Probably, audiences of those films have created an imaginary picture of Muslims and the image is completely different from the majority of them. This is termed as exotic ‘Other’ (Kavoori and Panathambekar 2008). ‘The sense of “otherness” among the Indian Muslim community itself is the result of persistent socio-economic deprivation, educational backwardness and assertive Hindu nationalist politics that together create a sense of alienation and marginalization among the Muslims’ (Islam 2007: 405). ‘Muslim Other’ has been identified with the help of some cultural symbols (as mentioned above), which are often imposed to create a ‘stereotypical and mythical image’ (ibid.).

Another interesting development in the late 1970s and 1980s was the portrayal of Mumbai's underworld characters, mostly as Muslims. ‘Although, they did not bear Muslim names on the screen, the spectators knew who the protagonist was in
the real life. Muslim characters since then also started becoming negative in Bollywood movies’ (http: 2012). The eminent filmmaker Shyam Benegal says, ‘…while the films of the Neheruvian era reflected the “tolerant” secularism of the state (with all its attendant problems and anxieties), the 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of an alternative politics of minority representation with the rise of the “new cinema”…’ (2007: 225). ‘Tolerance and accommodativeness did become important components of the nationalist movement under Gandhi and Congress in the first half of the twentieth century’ (ibid.: 227).

The demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992, and the riots that followed became the theme of a memorable film Naseem (1996) by Saeed Akhtar Mirza. This film looked into the sad events through the eyes of a 15-year-old girl and her progressive grandfather. The film Fiza (2000) tells the story of a terrorist and how he became a terrorist after the riots in Bombay. There were more movies, which came focusing on this theme. The movie Bombay (1995) redefined the characterization of Muslims in Bollywood films from the stereotyped image as represented in predecessor films. ‘Set in the backdrop of 1993 Mumbai bomb blasts, this movie had strong message for communal harmony even while it showed the protagonist, a Muslim girl, eloping with a Hindu boy. This was a watershed of sorts as it also depicted the changing face of the Indian society’ (http: 2012). About this film, K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake write, ‘Director Mani Ratnam has highlighted the self-defeating nature of extremist thinking and xenophobia. The director in this film also 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).

Apart from this, India and Pakistan performed their nuclear tests in 1998. As a result, new changes could be noticed in popular cinema. A new and unhappy phase was entering in the country’s body politics. ‘…after the nuclear test by India and Pakistan, patriotism bordering on anti-Pakistani jingoism has become a major theme of popular Hindi cinema’ (Benegal 2007: 237). The best example is Border (1997), Sarfarosh (1999), Maa Tujhe Salam (2002). ‘This excessive jingoism is more cruelly depicted in the film Gadar (2001)’ (Benegal 2007: 237). It opened the floodgate for a number of films with much louder in such tone and term such as Mission Kashmir (2000), LOC (2003) and the latest being Faana (2006) (ibid.). ‘With the political agenda, colouring the Bollywood, the portrayal of Muslim
characters too has metamorphosed since nineties. There developed a symbiotic relationship between Kashmir-Pakistan and Muslims. The film, *Roja* (1992) depicted the ideological conflict between the nationalist victim and the *jehadi* terrorist’ (http: 2012).

Much as the impact of Babri Masjid demolition has in India, the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York and a section of Pentagon in Washington have left a mark worldwide. Immediately after the attack, many movies were made in Hollywood on terrorism. Films like *United 93* (2006) and *World Trade Centre* (2006) were based on ‘9/11’ attack and many more movies were made on the consequences of the attack, for example, Iraq and Afghanistan War such as *Lions for Lambs* (2007), *Home of the Brave* (2006), and *Redacted* (2007). The impact of those films was not only confined to Hollywood, but had influence on the international movie making. *New York* (2009), *Qurbaan* (2010), and *My Name is Khan* (2010) have been made by Bollywood filmmakers.

Since the 2000s, Bollywood has been portraying the unexamined assumptions and stereotypes of Muslims and their religion (http: 2012). There are movies made on *jehadi* terrorists. Apart from that, there are movies on serial bomb blasts in different parts of India and abroad. Those films include *Black Friday* (2005), *Fanaa* (2006), *Sikandar* (2009), *A Wednesdasy* (2009), *Mission Istanbul* (2009), and *Kurbaan* (2009). In this context, Fiske and Hartley advise us, ‘The media experts are selecting and sending out the message they would like to receive. Of course the picture does not appear to be so fluid as we watch: there are preferred meanings inherent in every message’ (Fiske and Hartley cited in Kazmi 1999:13).

From the above examination it is clear that Bollywood cinema is a visual representation of social reality, but it does not always do so. Rather, it creates an imaginary world of fantasy. In the case of Muslim identity, sometimes Bollywood showed the history of feudal past and ‘on the other hand, the Muslim stereotype of a terrorist, anti-national, hooligan, villain, and underworld don’ (Islam 2007: 409).
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The most groundbreaking media theorists such as the scholars associated with the Frankfurt School, the British Cultural Studies and French structuralists and post-structuralists thought that culture is a social construct, which is created through representation. I use the term, ‘representation’ to refer the process of combining signs to produce a meaning. Representation means conveying of meaning through any medium (especially the mass media) of aspects of ‘reality’ such as people, places, objects, events, cultural identities and other abstract concepts. Those representations may be in speech or writing as well as still or moving pictures. The term representation refers to the whole process of encoding and decoding the message. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, moving images have become the dominant forms of mass communication with the help of our own representation and every aspect of life is pervaded by visual signs. Lisa Taylor and Andrew Wills (1999) opine that representations are ideological, as the process requires signs to be selected and melded together to create meaning about an object. I would argue that media houses also construct their own ideology by justifying a particular version of social reality. Taylor and Wills further state, ‘no cultural representation can offer access to “truth” about what is being represented, but what such representations do provide is an indication about how power relation are organised in a society, at certain historical moments’ (1999: 40). The process of representation is involved in different mediums such as book, cinema, television news programmes, newspapers, magazines etc.

The present study aims to analyse the cinematic representations of Muslims. Cinema is used as a tool for representation and it creates a world of desire with the blend of real facts and fantasy. In case of cinema, representation involves not only how the identities (religion, ethnicity, caste, class, gender, age) are represented within the text, but also how they are constructed in the process of production and reception. In the present study, I locate the representation of Muslim identity in commercial Hindi films. In this respect, I would be drawing upon some of the theories and ideas that already exist in the film studies and cultural studies. Thus, in this section, I delineate some ideas, which have shaped the theoretical perspectives on the representation of identity. In this respect, I would categorise the theoretical understanding of representation and identity and audience
consumption which include: representation of Muslim identity, political economy of Hindi cinema, and audience consumption.

**Representation of Muslim Identity**

Muslim identity is represented in different media of mass communication. One of the most important and prominent theory of the construction of Muslim identity is the Orientalist discourse. Daniel Norman (1960), Ziauddin Sardar (1992), and Edward Said (1981 and 1996) are the prominent thinkers of the discourse, but Edward Said is the pioneer of all. According to Said, Orientalism is a ‘style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident” (1978: 02) in which Western culture holds superior position than the Eastern ones (specifically Muslims in the Middle East). Orientalism as an influential academic discourse started flourishing at the end of the eighteenth century and more prominently at the beginning of the nineteenth century, portraying contradictory images of the ‘East’. Said argues that, West needed to constitute the Orient as ‘Others’ for justifying western colonial control, economic exploitation and imperial ambitions and there is political implication to propagate oriental knowledge. In the postmodern electronic world, he says, ‘there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed’ (Said 1978: 26). Much like Said’s theorisation of representing Muslims as Others in the Western Media, a similar scenario is prevalent in the Indian media, specifically Indian Hindi cinema, too. The Muslims in Hindi cinema are represented as Others in almost all the genres. ‘Muslim identity’ of ‘Others’ was marked by certain cultural symbols, which are sometimes irrelevant and inappropriate. These symbols such as clothing, food habits and etiquette are attached to the community to create a stereotypical and mystifying image of Islam much like western media did to the people of the Middle-East. Sabaltern historian, Shahid Amin analysed few advertisements and points out that Muslims are marked with Turkish cap and not only a cap. Through these cultural symbols of Muslims are marked as aliens and sometimes those makers attribute their identity beyond nation-state. Amin points out,

..this stereotypical image on the billboard is not a real life image: it is officially reproduced on such posters in the supposed interests of nation-building. The result
is paradox: although Indians are not used to Turkish cap in their midst, it is a prominent sign of the Indian Muslim in national integration posters. In other words, the national advertisement asks us to recognise an image which we do not encounter within geographical confines of our nation-state (2005: 6-7).

Though Amin analysed advertisement media to define the characteristics of the ‘Muslim identity’, Muslim identity in Hindi cinema is formed by certain cultural symbols such as ‘beard’, ‘skull cap’, ‘burqa’, ‘head scarf’, ‘pathani dress’ and Aligagh cut sherswani to construct a separate identity of ‘Others’. Said (1978) identified the similar pattern of representing “those” non-Europeans by “us” Europeans and that led to the hegemony of European culture. He points out,

...a collective notion identifying “us” Europeans as against all “those” non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures’ (Said, 1978: 7).

Said points out that knowledge, representation, and the construction of knowledge or how knowledge is acquired are all imbricated with issues of power, class, and materiality. He analyses how Islam and its people are represented in Western media and narrates how US media continue to distort the images of Middle East (Said 1997). The similar incident also occurred in central Europe where Slobodan Milosevic utilised ‘the mass media to drive the majority population into a frenzy by depicting it as being under siege by the minority population’ (Rajgopal 2011: 238). In Hindi cinema, the identity of Muslim is formed as ‘Other’ and stereotyped but in the recent decades, Muslims became the nation’s enemy and a subject to create terror within the nation-state. Various scholars point out that Hindutva nationalism brought much effect on the negative image of Muslims from the early 1990s. Fareed Kazmi and Sanjeev Kumar (2011), Moidul Islam (2007), S.S. Rajgopal (2011), Amit Rai (2003), Ronie Patrick (2013), and Sanjeev Kumar (2013) have analysed the recent texts of Hindi cinema and pointed out Muslims are represented in negative light in last two decades. Moreover, they point out that Hindutva or Hindu nationalist forces used mass media and more specifically cinema to create a terror within majority as they are being threatened by minority. They are mostly represented as terrorists (jehadi), extremist, underworld don, and anti-social element. Indian writer Madhu Kishwar, who analysed the common psyche of Indians, wrote:
Hindus harbour deep-seated fears of Muslims because they believe them to be innately cruel and violent. Their regular meat eating versus the vegetarianism of many Hindus and the fact that many of the butcher community people are Muslims, feeds into the stereotype of Muslims as *kasais* (killers) (cited in Rajgopal 2011: 238).

Shaheen opined that, the issues like lack of representation of regular Muslim guy and negative portrayal of Muslims can reinforce the already exiting stereotypes. Moreover, deep-seated prejudice about Muslims was utilised by *Hindutva* movement to unite the majoritarian population. The strategy of polarising people was done with the troubled history of the Subcontinent. A deep paranoia about medieval Muslim plunderer like Mamud, the Sultan of Gazni, looted northern India every year, was vivid to citizen. Such scenarios were created by Hindu nationalists in such a way as if the crisis occurred recently (Rajgopal 2011). Prakash Louis in his empirical study shows how RSS tried to add communal colours to the history book. Moreover, BJP-led government distorted the history to inject the communal consciousness to the minds of young children (Louis 2000).

In the postcolonial nation state, cinema became an important tool to propagate the idea of nationalism. The divide in Indian society is most apparent in the recent year than ever before be it sexual identity, religious identity and ethnic identity. But, ignoring the fact, Indian Hindi cinema has always represented a monolithic image of the nation and portrayed ‘certain essence of “Indianess”’ (Rajgopal, 2011: 240). The representation is most accepted by the Indian diaspora. 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 either less or differently. Muslims are portrayed as Muslims who are trying to harm the nation, on the other; victims are the representatives of majoritarian community. Hence, Hindus are projected as norm of the society and Muslims are the ‘disrupter of the norm, hence perceived them as “Other”’ (therefore assumed them as other) (Rajgopal 2011: 241).

The mechanics of representing certain groups in a particular way is determined by dominant class of a society. Althusserian notion of ideological ‘interpellation’ and Gramcian notion of ‘hegemony’ was adopted by Madhava Prasad (1998) and Fareed Kazmi (1999) to offer understandings of popular Hindi cinema text. Prasad’s study, *Ideology of the Hindi Film*, locates Hindi films within the framework of politics, history and economics, which are mostly responsible for
its continued production. He believes that, Indian Hindi cinema is a ‘site of ideological production’ (1998:9). He adopts Marxist theory of ideology which describes ‘universalisation of the particular interests of a class’ (ibid.). Drawing from the Marxian theory, he brings in Gramci’s notion of hegemony and Althusserian conceptualisation of ‘ideology’. In this analysis, he conceptualises the binary modernity/tradition as ‘a conceptual and belief system’ (1998: 7). He argues,

In a social formation characterised by an uneven combination of modes of production only formally subordinated to capital, where political power is shared by a coalition of bourgeoisie, rural rich and the bureaucratic elite, the explanatory scheme in question functions as a disavowal of modernity, an assurance of the permanence of the state of formal subsumption. Such an assurance can only be ideological in nature, operating on an unconscious plane as a guarantee of the national identity. It runs counter to the drive, on another level, towards modernization and the establishment of bourgeois hegemony (Prasad 1998: 7).

He further argues that, the discourse of bourgeois hegemony rendered obsolete many of the many discourses and institutions of earlier era. One of the prominent examples is to construct Hindu nationalism to ‘re-establish political unity on a communal foundation’ (ibid.: 9).

Fareed Kazmi (1999) thinks that Hindi film is a major ‘cultural and ideological force’. The medium is the not merely the reflection of social reality but also construct it. He adopts Gramcian notion of ‘hegemony’ to explain the manner in which Hindi films achieve their cultural status and rally support for specific version of social reality as opposed to others. He argues,

Conventional cinema works by reflecting and expressing the ‘popular element’, its feelings, precepts, and ‘common sense’. It operates by transforming elements at large in the culture–not through inventing or imposing arbitrary materials on a stunned and passive audience. This model help us to understand that while conventional cinema certainly plays a role in in securing legitimisation of ruling class ideas, it does not do this by luring the masses in to these ideas–with or without the unwitting complicity of their own unconscious processes. Conventional cinema works by appropriating meaningful elements already extant in the culture at large–as its ‘raw materials’–and transforming them in such a way that they express a ruling class hegemonic principles (1999: 72).

The idea of self-conscious and aggressive nationalism in the Hindi cinema relates to Benedict Anderson’s seminal work, *Imagined Communities* (1983). Anderson argues that the idea of nationalism was introduced in cinema at the time of its silent era and cultural manipulation started only after the introduction of
talkies. Gradually, cinema became 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. Cinema reflected certain ‘behaviours and values associated of certain social groups as the norm, while marginalising those of others’ (Rajgopal, 2011: 241).

The concept of maintaining ‘the imagined nationhood’ is expressed by Noam Chomsky in his book *Manufacturing Consent* (1988). According to him, cinema is used as tool for propagating the notion of nationhood and cultural identity. Shobha Rajgopal argues, ‘Indian mainstream cinema too perfected propaganda to an art form. A plethora of Indian films demonstrate this process through their representation of the Indian family threatened by menacing Islamic terrorists’ (ibid. 2011). There are a number of films such as *Roja, A Wednesday, Black Friday, Fanaa, Mumbai Meri Jaan, Kurbaan, Mission Kashmir, Mission Istanbul, Sarfarosh, Shikandar, The Attacks on 26/11*, and *New York* which substantiate Rajgopal’s argument.

**Political Economy of Hindi Cinema**

In this section, I will look at the overlapping relationship among cultural text, politics and the economics of Hindi cinema. These overlapping factors are the determinants of film production. Media theorists term the whole process as ‘political economy’. U.S. based theorists of ‘political communication’ put much emphasis on the economy of media production focusing on ownership, corporatization, and consumption, whereas Britain based scholar emphasises on the public broadcasting, its politics and importance (Durham and Kellner: 2001). In the case of Indian films industry, the US-based model is most appropriate because Indian media is mostly dominated by the private sector; moreover, the production of Hindi cinema is completely dependent on the independent producers, banners and studios. A recent development is the involvement of big national and international corporate giants. The primary motive of the industry is to make profit. An award-winning, independent filmmaker confessed,

Today when I’m making a film, I have to think of its market compatibility so that it can be released in theatres. Nobody has the money to complete a film today
Economics plays a major role in the flourishing of Bombay film industry as a national one. In the colonial period, Bombay became an industrial hub because Bombay was used as an entry point of Indian mainland. Tejaswini Ganti points out, ‘Bombay allowed film technology to take root and flourish as capital from other industrial and commercial activity flowed into film-making’ (2004:7). The studio culture was much prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s. The studios used to bear the entire cost of the film production and studios had their in-house technicians and actors. The most prominent film studios of that era were the Imperial Film Company in Bombay, Prabhat Film Company in Pune, New Theatre in Calcutta, and Bombay Talkies. There were separate set of distributors who undertook the task of distribution and exhibition.

World War II had an adverse effect on studio culture in the Bombay film industry and gave birth to a new set of individual producers. According to the Report of the Film Enquiry Committee, in 1939, there were 94 producers who made 167 films and, in 1948, there were 211 producers who made 264 films (Prasad: 1998). ‘Wartime shortages in basic goods and commodities led to thriving black market and, by 1944, war profiteers increasingly laundered their illegal earnings by investing in film production’ (Ganti 2004:20). Consequently, budgets of filmmaking started rising high and studios were unable to compete with those single producers. The new economy of black market lured stars away from the studio culture because those independent producers offered much more financial support than the studios. Qualified and unqualified people who had money went on to make films. The major stars were ‘lured away with the offers of huge sums’ (Prasad, 1998:39) from the studio culture and stars acquired a position of control over the production process. The successes of their films also were dependent on the star power.

Tejaswini Ganti has in Producing Bollywood, given a detailed account of the role of ‘basic political economy of Hindi cinema by illustrating the role and significance of distributors and exhibitors’ (Ganti 2012: 176). Until recently, producers were solely dependent on the distributors to sell their products before the entry of media conglomerates and corporate producers around 2003 (Ganti 2012).
There are different categories of distribution system prevalent in the industry, and the most prevalent is the ‘minimum guarantee system’, which is commonly referred as “MG”. Here, in the beginning, distributors pay 30 to 40 percentages of the film’s cost and rest at the time of the delivery of prints. Apart from that, they also pay for the copyrights, publicity, and theatre rentals. In exchange, they extract the maximum amount of profit after the release of the film (ibid.). Madhav Prasad points out, ‘MG’ is the ‘system as akin to the “putting out system” of early capitalism where production is subservient to distributor’s capital which is advanced to producers’ (Prasad 1998: 40).

**Theorising Spectatorship**

Lastly, theorizing ‘audience’ or ‘spectatorship’ is most important part because they are the ones who ultimately consume the product or they are the determinant factor of making a film a ‘hit’ (commercially successful) or a ‘flop’ (commercially unsuccessful). Judith Mayne mentions, ‘spectatorship is not just the relationship that occur between viewer and the screen, but also and especially how that relationship lives on once the spectator leaves the theatre’ (1993: 2-3). The memories of the screen will continue to stay in someone’s mind if she/he can assimilate with the character of the film. Film theorists and makers mention that a single film does not have universal appeal. In fact, different ethnic, religious, lingual, occupational, gender groups have their own way of viewing a film. As a result, audiences begin imagining the community as they are represented on the screen. Often, the imaginations are homogenized. Cinema has a crucial role in the creation of “imagined communities”, with the help of a mass audience or generalizing an issue as did print media. Anderson (1983) argues that, media has a significant role to create an imaginary audience to propagate a common discourse. The same theory is applicable to the characters that are being portrayed in the media.
THE STUDY: PROBLEM, OBJECTIVES, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A survey of literature on the representation of Muslims in Hindi cinema shows that, while there are some documented works, there are few systematic studies on the representation of Muslims. As has been observed from the literature, Hindi cinema not only represents Indian history in its complexity, but also forms a site of collective imagination. In the proposed research, I intend focusing on the representation of Muslims in the Hindi cinema, and more specifically in the films made post-Babri Masjid demolition. My delimitation is for two reasons. First, from that era, a new unhappy phase was entering the country’s body politics because of the Hindutva movement. Second, the terrorist attack of ‘9/11’ left an international impact and that was represented in the Hindi cinema too. Since 1990s, Bollywood has been representing stereotypes about Muslims and their religion without any justification. There are many post-Babri films, which have portrayed the jehadi terrorists, national and international terrorist attacks, and sometimes the storylines are anti-Pakistan. Watching those repetitive images, the audience at times create an imaginary idea of Muslims and starts thinking about “the Muslim Community”.

Thus, in this research, I have explored the position of Muslims in the complex representational scheme in popular Hindi cinema. Apart from that, I have tried to understand the perceptions of audience, film critics, and filmmakers regarding those films. This study has sought to capture the intricacies of Bollywood cinema which includes the factors such as stereotyped images of Muslims, changes in the representation of Muslims during the last six and a half decades, the socio-cultural background, the name of Muslim characters in the films, etc. All this has been done from a qualitative orientation to understand the film texts and the perceptions of the audiences. Thus, the general objectives of the study are

- To study the representation of Muslims in the popular Hindi cinema in the post Babri Masjid demolition period.
- To understand how audiences make sense of the representation of Muslims in popular Hindi cinema.
The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To understand the film texts of select Hindi films focusing on Muslims and made after the demolition of the Babri Masjid.
- To understand the select film texts which are mainly centered on Muslim characters or show interrelation between the Muslims and other communities.
- To understand representation of Muslims and the stereotypes associated with them. The term stereotype is very often used in discussions about representation. The study examines how Muslims are stereotyped in the process of representation in the films. To understand audience response to the subject line of the selected films. To understand the plots or storylines of those films and how they deal with the issues of Muslims.
- To understand how audience makes sense of Muslim characters. To explore the perceptions of audience about the portrayal of Muslim characters.

On the basis of the foregoing research objectives, the following four research questions were formulated:

1) How are Muslims represented in Hindi cinema? Using what codes? Within what genre?
2) What are the explicit themes, which these film texts deal with, and what are the tacit messages they convey?
3) What are the stereotypes associated with Muslims?
4) What are the audience perceptions and responses to those films and their characters?

**METHODOLOGY**

As we are dealing mainly with the elusive world of perceptions, this study will be an attempt to gain an understanding of the subjective perception of various
stakeholders (audience, filmmakers and film critics) and, their constructions of the meaning of reality through cinematic space.

Qualitative approach is used to deal with the intricacies of Bollywood cinema which includes factors such as images of Muslims, change in the representation of Muslims during the last six and half decades, the historical shifts in India, the socio-cultural background, through multiple points of view. The study has tried to capture the above-referred concepts through the perceptions of select audience, film critics, and filmmakers on the stated subject through in-depth interviews. The inductive nature of qualitative research helped me to develop concepts, insights and understanding from the patterns that were arrived through the data. Moreover, I had the liberty to follow a flexible research design, which is important for a media researcher because audiences are not fixed for any particular cinema.

This section on methodology has been broadly divided into locating the particular participants of the study, the areas of study, the procedure of data collection, method of data analysis and the ethics involved in research. Methodologically, I used qualitative approach to understand the representations of Muslims in Hindi films through the reading of the films as cultural texts. Apart from that, I have captured the perceptions of select audience (16), film critics (8), and filmmakers (9) on the subject through in-depth interviews. Although many other regional films touch upon the proposed research theme, the study is confined to the Hindi cinema, as it is in Hindi cinema that Muslims are represented the most, and also due to pan-Indian appeal of the Bollywood films.

Participants

The participants of this study are from diverse backgrounds and various fields and occupations. They are divided into three categories: (i) the audience: comprising the viewers of selected films have been interviewed individually, to be able to understand audience perceptions of Muslim images, and the representational change in Bollywood cinema. Effort has been made to capture the articulations of the participants about representational change and Muslim images. Interviews were conducted with participants of different age groups (youth and adults) and gender (men and women). The first category, the audience, who are characterised by age,
income, gender, and occupation, enabled me to capture all the aspects. The data has been collected from sixteen (16) participants among them eight of the participants were academicians, four activists, two engineers and four manual labourers. In the first round, the participants were purposively selected considering personal contacts as the primary criterion to get the audience who have watched the movies that focus on Muslims.

(ii) The second group are the film–critics. I wanted to capture the critical perspective of filmmaking and film-texts. I have interviewed eight (8) film critics who helped to articulate the mechanics and the intricacies of filmmaking and audience perspectives. (iii) The third group is composed of the filmmakers. In depth interviews were conducted with nine (9) filmmakers who are either directly involved in making Muslim films or provide an overall understanding of the mechanics of the Hindi film industry.

Area of Study

As the present study is on Hindi cinema and the Hindi film industry is predominantly based in Mumbai, I have chosen Mumbai as primary research site to look into the relationship of the ‘creator and consumer’ of Hindi cinema. Mumbai is a place where mostly Indian Hindi cinemas are being produced and major offices of film production houses are situated. Thus, selecting Mumbai as the research site is helpful in getting to converse with filmmakers. Apart from that, Mumbai is a multicultural city. The national language, Hindi, is the most common spoken language of this place. It was easier to locate audience with whom I could converse and the language was no bar. Along with that there are many academic and social science institutions in Mumbai which helped me to interact with academicians who worked in related areas like secularism and communalism and bring in their perspectives. Moreover, the presence of giant media houses in Mumbai helped the researcher in conversing with the well-known film critics. Needless to say, because of the proximity, filmmakers were easily available in Mumbai.
Procedure of Data Collection

The process of data collection started in July 2012. Data was collected from three major segments of participants who are diverse. The entire process was undertaken in two steps: the initial contacts were mainly through emails, whereby the participants were given an introduction about the purpose of the research, and some information on the background of the researcher. The second step involved visiting these participants for conducting interviews. The participants were contacted through a snowballing\(^4\) process, drawn purposively. First, I started conducting interviews with audience and afterwards with the film critics and lastly the filmmakers.

*The participants* for this study have been chosen purposively. Participants who are viewers of the selected films have been interviewed individually, to be able to understand their perceptions of Muslim images, and the representational change in Bollywood cinema. Effort has been made to capture the articulations of the participants on the representational change and Muslim images.

I attempted to study the respondents' opinions, convictions and experiences on the basis of an interview guide. It was very much a two way communication and I shared my background to facilitate dialogue with respondents but did not force any respondents, to give answers. I also observed and noted non-verbal behaviour and contextual cues, such as the respondents' facial expression, and gestures, the atmosphere, and so on. Questions were asked on the basis of the respondents' answers. I used an audio recorder to record the interviews. I tried to capture the perception of audiences with the ‘lowest common denominator’, who are also known in media studies as mass audience.

*The second category* was film critics. I was discussing my work with one of my friends who is an academician (name withheld) in an institute. Through that personal contact, I managed to get the contacts of some film critics. Within a few days, he gave almost eight contacts of the most prominent film critics, who work for different media houses in India. I contacted all of them, but got positive response from only three of them. Rest five had different individual problems like

\(^4\) Snowball sampling has been chosen because it was difficult to identify specific members of a special population was difficult to locate due to inadequate data sources (Rubin and Babbie 1997).
time, not willing to speak to an academician, distance, etc. Through those three contacts, I got few more contacts of well-known film critics. I collected response from eight (8) film critics. Among eight, seven of whom work in national media houses and are from Mumbai and one works in a regional Bengali newspaper in Kolkata. A brief profile of these film critics is provided in the appendix.

The third category was filmmakers, which was the most challenging one. The reason being busy schedule of the filmmakers, they were not able to give time to speak to an unknown person. One of the film critics gave me the contacts of other filmmakers during the interview. Through those contacts, I managed to gather a few more. The snowball method enabled me to get the contacts of Shyam Benegal (director and screenwriter), Kabir Khan (director, screenwriter, and cinematographer), Kamlesh Pandey (film writer), Vinay Shukla (film writer, producer and director), Shibani Bhatija (screenwriter), Mahesh Bhat (film writer, producer and director), Amit Khanna (lyricist and producer), Ashutosh Gowarikar (director, actor, writer, and producer), and Haider Ali (actor and screenwriter). After multiple attempts of contacting them, I was able to conduct interviews over phone and, in some instances through e-mails. I managed to get few more filmmaker’s contacts, but among them few did not respond. There are some filmmakers who responded but backed out from giving the interviews.

Textual Analysis

To study film texts, I followed textual analysis method. This study has tried to deconstruct film texts and examine how the film texts have been constructed to convey certain messages. Here, I have tried to examine the surface meanings and representations of Muslims in films and, in the process, an attempt is made to explore the more implicit social meanings. I tried to adapt the idea of surface meaning given by post-structuralist thinker, Fredric Jameson, who says that ‘a particular attention to form rather than text’ (Robert 2000: 76), and a person can attain the underlying meaning through form. Content analysis helped in understanding ‘thematic matters, the values of characters, allusions to social and political events, reflections of cultural matters, and similar phenomena’ (Berger 1982: 109).
The present study has also tried to locate the homogenized/stereotyped representation of Muslim characters in Bollywood cinema in post-Babri era. If we consider the stated period of Bollywood cinema, we can understand significant cultural, social, and political changes in representation of minorities. In all, six films are analysed with the help of content analysis; three films which represent the aftermath of Babri demolition and India’s anti-Pakistan stance are chosen; other three films are based on terrorism, specifically after the attack of ‘9/11’.

Data Analysis

In-depth interviews were conducted with all the participants. Some of the interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants, but mostly, interviews were conducted in formal spaces, such as offices and public areas. There was no fixed time for conducting interviews, for, in the spirit of a qualitative enquiry, they were allowed to speak for as long or as little time as they wanted. An interview guide (see Appendix 1) was kept in person while conducting the interviews, and field notes were taken during the entire duration of the data collection.

The interviews were recorded using a tape recorder; none of the interviewees objected to the process of recording. Following this, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and later translated. The translated data was organised into themes and thematic analysis was made with the help of ATLAS. ti (qualitative data analysis software). The codes were first derived from the data, later codes used to form sub-themes and themes were emerged from the sub-themes. The four themes that were emerged are

i) Change chronologically (Muslim Historical films, Muslim Social films, post-Babri films, Muslim contemporary films)
ii) Influence of history and politics in Hindi cinema
iii) Film industry mechanism and political economy
iv) Muslims are stereotyped (negatively and positively)
Observations on Data Collection

There were three major hurdles faced during the process of data collection. The first obstacle was the difficulty in getting hold of the audience who have watched the films focusing on Muslims. In this study, I wanted to focus mostly on audience perception, but when I began my fieldwork, I realised that it was difficult to locate specific audience. Apart from that, there were few who watched the recent films, but they could not talk much about the older Muslim films. Some of the audience watched the films few years back and thus could only remember the storyline or the love angle but not the minute details of the films. So, there are interviews, which I could not use as data source as they did not provide any details on Muslim image, political and historical connection of the film. Finally, I requested some of the audience to watch certain films and interviewed them later. But this resulted in audience not only watching the films but they also read critique on those films which I could sense through their answers, which were well prepared. Another problem that I had faced during the interviews with lower economic class was that they did not have enough time to watch a complete film. For example, I attempted to interview domestic workers, daily labourers and security personnel. They did not have enough money to visit theatres to watch each and every film I intended to analyze. Further, they couldn’t even afford to watch a complete film at their respective homes on a television set because in the middle of the film, they were interrupted and had to go out for work. The labourers in the Indian informal sector work seven days a week without any holidays. Thus, I could not request them to spend time with me watching films.

The second difficulty is related to the filmmakers who were beyond the reach of a common person. I got few of their contacts from film critic, Rajiv Masand. Though I was able to reach them through personalised email and mobile text messages explaining my research, the initial rate of response was low as well as slow. Few of the filmmakers immediately replied but as they do not have their fixed work schedule, I had to wait for considerable time to get appointments with the concerned filmmakers. As Hindi film industry is not a corporate house, they do not have any professional world, they do not have stable work schedule. More over due to their constant changing of work schedule, I had to take reappointments for at least three to four times. The other major problem with the filmmakers was that
they travel all the time for shooting, location hunting, and vacation. Sometimes, I initiated conversation and they agreed to participate in the study, but in between, they had to go out to foreign countries, which resulted in gap in the communication. I had to re-start the conversation and reintroduce the topic and myself after every delay. In few cases, after several attempts and their positive response, the interview finally did not happen due to their busy and irregular work schedule. To conduct some interviews, I had to reach within one hour of notice. For getting the interview of Shaym Benegal I had to wait approximately for six months.

The third hurdle was in conducting interview being an insider. Before approaching the participants, I had to introduce myself to them. After disclosing my own identity, I felt, some of the participants, particularly audience, were more cautious and well prepared while conversing with me. Sometimes, it became very difficult to get the true audience perception.

**Ethical Issues**

The issue of Muslim identity is very complex and difficult to articulate upon because of its controversial and sensitive nature in recent times. There are participants from the audience who requested me to change their name and identity as one of them shared his own experience of 1992 riots. All audience names in this study are pseudonyms due to the reason of confidentiality. Even, they were free to leave the interview at any point. Apart from that, there are few Muslim film critics who were careful while conversing with me. One of the film critics (name withheld) even mentioned, “If people comment on sensitive issues, they (Shiv Sena) can come and bang his/her house”.

**Organisation of Thesis**

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 ‘Introduction’ outlines the primary understanding of Islam; following that, as a background of the research, I have addressed my personal experience of being Muslim and contextualised the inter-community relations showcasing my family and neighbourhood. Later, I
have in detail discussed the representation of Muslims in Hindi cinema. Subsequently, ideas that have shaped theoretical perspectives on the representation of identity; contextualising it in history both historically and politically are delineated. The next section brings out knowledge gaps in the study area because of the absence of detailed theoretical and empirical research. Finally, a case for the need of the present study, aspiring to eloquent identity of Muslims in Hindi cinema is made. Finally, the chapter presents the methodological assumptions of the study. Chapter 2 explores the social history of Hindi cinema, with special reference to the representation of and the role played by Muslims in it.

Chapter 3, titled ‘Muslim Historical’, is an analytical chapter based on the narratives drawn from in-depth interviews with the filmmakers, film critics and audience. It provises an analysis of the film texts which brings out the characterisation of Muslims in those films. Chapter 4, titled ‘Muslim Historical’, is an attempt to critique the Muslim Social genre by examining the pattern of Muslim representation in terms of culture and socio-economic status through film texts based on narratives obtained from the in-depth interviews with the academicians, film critics, and filmmakers. Some of the participants have themselves made Muslim Socials, while others have been closely associated with those who have made films in this genre.

Chapter 5, titled ‘Muslim Political’, explores the Muslim Political genre. At the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s, Hindu right-wing movement began taking shape aggressively. Babri Masjid was demolished on 6 December 1992 and the incident was one of the major turning points in Indian history as it hardened the communal veins across communities. It was followed by many communal riots. Riots in Bombay in 1992 were most prominent. As a result, new changes could be noticed in the popular Hindi cinema. Moreover, the terrorist attack on World Trade Centre and a section of Pantagon have left mark worldwide. Immediately after the attack, many movies were made on terrorism in Hollywood and as well as in Bollywood.

Chapter 6, titled ‘Muslim contemporary’, is about the Muslim contemporary films. The films produced since 2000s 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” and “sensible” human beings. 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 everyday problems such as lack of economic opportunities, corruption, and marginalisation of women. Sometimes, they may sacrifice their life for others and for the nation. This chapter examines film narratives that express Muslim characters without any symbol and identification. Chapter 7, titled ‘Conclusion: The Homogenised Muslim Identity’, recapitulates the objectives of this study, summarises the main findings of the study and draws conclusions from them.

The chapters are followed by the appendices: Appendix 1 contains the ‘Interview Guide’ which was used during fieldwork; Appendix 2 carries a list of the movies forming the universe of the study.