Chapter III

Visualizing the “Nation”:
A Study of War Films

If all the serious lyrical poets, composers, painters and sculptors were forced by law to stop their activities, a rather small fraction would seriously regret it. If the same thing were to happen with the movies, the social consequences would be catastrophic.

Erwin Panofsky

Nationalism may be examined in and through the larger political, historical, literary discourses of a particular nation. As has been explained in the first chapter, our main concern is with the discursivity of nationalism. It involves the construction of narratives for the people of the nation-state. Narratives that provide links with the past create idyllic notions of a glorious, shared history whose values, it is believed, should filter down to the present. The genre of war film is one such narrative. This chapter will map out the notions of nation and nationalism as they emerge from the narrative and grammar of war films. I begin with conventional war films. Unlike Hollywood, which has perfected the genre of war movies, in Hindi cinema except for the simple logic of a few swallows make a summer, we cannot detect a specific genre of war movies. To the best of my knowledge, Dr Kotnis ki Amar Kahani (1946), Hum Dono (1961) Haqeeqat (1964), Hindustan Ki Kasam (1974), Vijeyta (1984), and Border (1998) are some of the war films in Hindi cinema. I would restrict detailed analysis only to Hindustan Ki Kasam, Haqeeqat and Border. Along with war films, I also examine Major Saab (1999) and Pukar (1999) as films in
which the heroes are army officers. However their training, loyalty and discipline are channelized not in fighting conventional wars, but in protecting the nation from corrupting elements. The next section, which will examine nation and nationalism in non-war films, like *1942: A Love Story* (1997) and *Hey Ram* (2000), will serve the purpose of comparison and contrast with war films. The final section of this chapter will deal with terrorist films: *Maachis* (1992) *Dil Se* (1999) *Fiza* (1999) *The Terrorist* (1996) and *Mission Kashmir* (2000). The purpose is to posit these films as causing a rupture in the official discourse of the nation.

II

War with its inherent scope for action, conflict, pathos and heroism presents itself as an attractive subject-matter to the filmmaker. As stated earlier, Hindi cinema has not perfected the genre of war film, yet Chetan Anand's *Haqeeqat* (Reality) and J.P. Dutta's *Border* may be considered as war films.

*Haqeeqat* is based on the Chinese aggression of 1962 (20 October to 21 November). This was a war fought exclusively for the reasons of territorial integrity and national sovereignty. The war began as a cartographic battle provoked by the China Pictorial Map, which included large parts of India in Chinese territory. Writing to Nehru about the MacMohan line, the Chinese premier Chou-en-Lai asked:

Mr. Prime Minister, how could China agree to accept under coercion such an illegal line, would have it relinquish its rights and disgrace itself by selling out its territory and such a large piece of territory at that?
To this, Nehru replied:

This is a claim which it is quite impossible for India or almost any Indian to admit whatever its consequences. It involves a fundamental change in the whole geography of it, the Himalayas being handed over as a gift to them – this is a thing, whether India exists or does not exist, cannot be agreed to.\(^3\)

In the boundary dispute between India and China, Chou-en-Lai insisted that the boundaries were imposed upon the two countries by the imperialists. But India invariably takes refuge in mythology to vouch for its territorial integrity. It is claimed that the *Vishnu Purana* states, “The country that lies North of the ocean and South of the snowy mountains is called Bharata; for there dwell the descendants of Bharata” (Ganguli 3). The text of *Haqeeqat* foregrounds this emphasis on territorial rights. Geography is one of the most important elements in the formation of a nation. Nation, despite its many connotations, does constitute communities of people living in fairly well-marked territories. The idea of national sovereignty, crucial to the process of nation-formation, is closely linked to the idea of territorial integrity. India’s Defence Ministry maintains that the country’s borders are inviolable, but continues to prepare for the defence of the borders from real or imagined enemies, thereby making the Armed Forces one of the most prominent national organizations in the country. An important marker of a nation’s strength and power is its military capability. The idea of nation as it emerges through the military has remained largely unexplored due to the insularity of the organization.
In *Haqeeqat*, the Chinese soldier shouting into the bullhorn, "Yeh jagah hamara hai" (this land is ours), highlights the enemy's expansionist ambitions and makes clear India's compulsions. With this scene, the film justifies India's defensive posture in the war of 1962. Maj. Iftekar (Balraj Sahani) explains to his troops, who are skeptical about the purpose of the war, the need to defend the motherland. To make his reasoning convincing, he invokes the image of a pacifist India, which has always attracted hordes of invaders. However, when pushed into a "do or die" situation, it is the duty of the Army to live up to the rich military tradition the nation has produced. The film thus makes nationhood an indisputable expression of territorial integrity because its "sovereignty is fully, flatly and evenly operative over each square centimeter of a legally demarcated territory" (Anderson 23).

In *Haqeeqat*, the family embodies a synecdochic representation of the nation. The family is generally considered as belonging to the private space, which is used as a training ground for its members. It is in the family that one learns the values and behavioural patterns expected of people in public spaces. For this reason, Althusser lists the family as one of the State Ideological Apparatuses. There is one scene in the film which I consider important. The mise-en-scène consists of the house of a lower middle-class family (the class from which most of the troops hail). There is a young man in the family who insists on joining the army like his brother and father before him. The camera lingers over the garlanded picture of the father in uniform. In this case, patriotism or love for the nation is merely an extension of love for the family. The nation, to this young man, is an enlarged community of which the family is a microcosm. In *Haqeeqat* as in most films, women's
perceptions are often controlled by the narrative and formal techniques used by the filmmakers. The filmmakers' discourse is part of the larger discourse of mainstream patriarchy. This is however one of the rare scenes in the film, which offers us a woman's perspective. The sisters-in-law are not happy with the young man's decision, not because they fear for his life and safety, but because they do not want another woman in the family to suffer, like they do, from long years of separation. The family matriarch, who like her son, believes in the idea of the male child as the torchbearer of family traditions, even if it means death for the son as it was for her husband, vetoes this opposition. Scenes such as these which represent the active male hero and the passive female collaborator reinforce the gendered nature of war narratives. To the mother, the family and by extension the nation is what Renan calls "a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future" (qtd. in Bhabha 19). The portrayal of the mother as one who must perform her primary duty of producing brave sons for the battlefield belongs to the tradition of the "nationalist mother" image, which has a long history in literature and cinema. Sri Lankan war songs by Rana Gi valorize the mother who produces sons for the motherland. In her role as mother, she becomes "a central signifier of racial and cultural values, national pride and purity" (De Mel in Jayawardena and de Alvis 170). In her full-length study on women and war, Jean Bethke Elshtain writes of the combatant and non-combatant roles that women played during the Second World War and the American Civil War. Writing about the significance of the Spartan mother in the discourse of war, she quotes from Life magazine, which designated Mom
as the real American heroine: “She said goodbye with a smile on her lips and a prayer in her heart” (191). The mother in Haqeeqat allows her son to join the Army in a similar way.

*Haqeeqat* negotiates the family vs. nation dilemma through the characters of the father (Jayant) and the son (Dharmendra), who also share the official relationship that exists between a Brigadier and a Captain. The Brigadier-Captain relationship overshadows the nuances of the father-son relationship. The father’s public identity as a Brigadier clashes with his private identity as a father. In order to be a good soldier, he must be prepared to sacrifice his son. The Brigadier father orders his Captain son not to leave his post even in the face of imminent death. The father’s act enhances the image of a patriotic soldier.

Violation of human rights becomes a crucial issue in the time of war. Women are the most vulnerable group in such a situation. The rape of Aangmo (Priya Rajwansh), a Ladakhi girl (with whom the hero Capt. Bahadur falls in love), by an enemy soldier symbolizes the violation of territory. Land and women are conventionally seen as possessions of men. The capture and rape of a woman symbolizes victory over the enemy. Thus war and sexual exploitation are closely related in their violence against women. According to Dympna Callaghan:

> Rape has, then, both a physicality and a politics that in a patriarchal culture concerns relations between men in which women are property, and as such it cannot be separated from issues of class and ownership. That is, the discursive
construction of the gendered body is implicated in the materiality of the non-discursive; and the latter is not simply raw materiality but also the social and cultural. (qtd. in R.S. White 132)

Aangmo kills some enemy soldiers before she dies by the side of her lover. She avenges the violation of her body with this act. What began as a war film ends as a tragic love story. War is thus depicted as a destroyer of conjugal happiness. Aangmo attains the status of a martyr along with Bahadur. The Hindi film's abiding interest in morality and sexual purity of the heroine makes Aangmo an unsuitable candidate for conjugal happiness. The narrative can offer her death as the next best option. The closing shot of the two lovers lying dead beside each other indicates the triumph of love. Such an ending helps to cover the shame and loss of face at the defeat in war. The 1962 Indo-China war is etched in the Indian collective unconscious as a national shame, as India had to concede parts of its territory to China. In combining the heroism of the soldiers fighting under severe odds with the heroism of the heroine, the film claims "a moral victory" for India (Chakravarty 219).

III

The trope of the family is further explored in Hindustan ki Kasam (In the name of India), another war film by Chetan Anand, set against the 1971 Indo-Pak war (2 December to 13 December). The film focuses on a family that has a long martial tradition. Most of the males in the family have been officers in the air force. Wing commander Rajiv Batra (Balraj Sahni) and Squadron Leader Rajesh Batra (Parikshit Sahni) are the sons of an army officer who died a
martyr's death in the Indo-Pak war of 1965. Their cousin, Usmaan separated during partition, is now a pilot in Pakistan Air Force. Usmaan shoots down Rajiv's plane in the war. When he visits the Batra family, he realizes that he has killed his own cousin. His remorse intensifies the futility of war, especially between two nations, such as India and Pakistan that were carved out of a single entity. The use of the metaphor of a split family for the partition of the subcontinent has a strong emotive appeal.

The heroine of the film (played by Priya Rajwansh) is a spy on a mission to Pakistan. The female spy in war narratives is resonant of the sexualized and manipulative character associated with the Mata Hari image. Women are generally represented as victims in war films, not as agents. Women's pacifism is privileged in most narratives and her militancy is acceptable only if it is in the interest of the nation. However, in this film, the heroine plays a crucial role in advancing the plot. She succeeds in sabotaging the enemy's plans that are hatched in a TV station. In the end, she is rescued by her lover, Rajiv Shukla (Raaj Kumar), who has been sent on a bombing mission into the enemy territory. The woman, after she has served the nation, is ultimately restored to her traditional role of the beloved. In both his films, Haqeeqat and Hindustan ki Kasam, Anand portrays the heroine as playing a role in the war. In the former, she is a rape victim turned into an avenger. In the latter, she is a spy who uses her feminine charm to work her way through the enemy territory. The films end with the recuperation of the conventional image of the heroine as a sexualized being. In one, she is reunited with her lover in death, in the other, in marriage.
In *Hindustan ki Kasam*, Chetan Anand uses a narrative strategy similar to the one he had used in his previous war film, *Haqeeqat*. The film is interspersed with shots of war scenes in the style of a documentary leading to what Roland Barthes called the “having-been-there” quality of the photographic image. The primacy of “having-been-there” or its narrative equivalent, i.e., the first person account in war discourse has already been discussed in the previous chapter and need not be reiterated here. It would suffice to mention that the tertiary discourse (film) retains the primacy of the first person narrative, central to primary/secondary discourse (military literature). The documentary footage authenticates the content of the film. Photographic images of the war assist in the ideological dissemination of India as a strong nation with valiant men. The courage and patriotism of the Indian woman is highlighted through the portrayal of the brave heroine. The figurative use of the family to emphasize the futility of war between India and Pakistan reveals the emotive content of this war film. Emotions are an important component of war films in Hindi cinema as well as in Hollywood.

IV

From 1962 to 1971, militarily and politically there was a significant shift in the way in which the Indian nation was imagined. In 1962, India was a humiliated and defeated nation. In 1971, India was not a mere winner in the war, but was the midwife in the birth of a new nation. J.P. Dutta's *Border* based on the 1971 Indo-Pak conflict stems from a triumphalist position. This gave the film an imperious quality, which was impossible for Chetan Anand to achieve in *Haqeeqat*. Dutta says, “I made *Border* because that was a story my brother
had told me when he was part of a squadron which fought the 1971 war. So I went on to make that film and dedicate it to him because I lost him in 1987 in a flying accident" (Sunday Review, Ahmedabad, 25 June 2000). Dutta's pride in the Indian Army and its accomplishments on the battlefield comes across in the film clearly.

The bravado and the rhetoric of the characters in Border are a result of the triumphalist perspective of the winner. It is natural for the victorious nation to assume a condescending attitude towards the loser. One of the worst manifestations of such a narrow, abusive nationalism is the propagation of hatred for the other. Border highlights such a politics of hatred by vilifying the other. Major Chandpuri (Sunny Deol) denounces his Pakistani counterparts as "Lahore ke gandhe nale ke keedaf" (worms of the filthy gutters of Lahore).7

We have just noted that the film establishes the supremacy of the Indian nation in the political and military arenas. The supremacy is further established through the category of religion – an issue that underlies any aspect of Indo-Pak relations, be it war or cricket. In Border, it is deployed in a deliberate and self-conscious manner. For instance, there is a scene in which Capt. Bhairon Singh (Sunil Shetty) rescues the Koran from being burnt. As he hands it back to the surprised Muslim villager, Bhairon Singh claims, "We have always been like this," meaning "we Hindus are tolerant and accommodative." His statement also carries the inescapable underlying logic of "but you are not like this." As Karen Gabriel in her detailed analysis of Border observes, "Bhairon Singh's gesture, therefore, serves to 'befriend' the 'alienated' Muslim, even as it demonstrates, in that very 'befriending' the vaunted superiority of the Hindu" (831). The "befriending" is repeated in one
of the final scenes of the film, in which Maj. Chandpuri gives in to the plea of a captured enemy soldier not to kill him, and offers him water instead. The major even acknowledges the enemy soldier's role in fighting for his country (i.e. Pakistan). This poignant moment in the film seeks to forge solidarity between soldiers on a larger humanitarian plane. The nationalism that war fosters places an exclusive emphasis on the value of the nation at the expense of moral and ethical values. Maj. Chandpuri resolves such a nation vs. morality conflict by his humanitarian gesture which at the same time endorses the ethical and moral superiority of the Indian nation.

The film also uses obvious symbols of religion like the overdetermined image of the Mata temple, which survives the heavy artillery shelling. Bhairon Singh draws the attention of the survivors to the temple. This scene also draws the attention of the audience to the subtext of the film, which is a strong endorsement of Hindu nationalism. From times immemorial, Hinduism has been imagined as an accommodative and assimilative religion. The temple image is therefore a metaphor of Hinduism's capacity to survive the onslaught of other religions.

*Border* like *Haqeeqat* explores the inherent contradictions between duty to the family and duty to the nation. The nationalist discourse has a rich investment in masculinism. The fetishization of the nation as earth mother creates a gendered ideology of the nation. In *Border*, the primacy given to the masculinist discourse reaffirms the liminality of women in imagining/construcing the nation. Maj. Chandpuri's wife's (Tabu) action of using her father's influence to get her husband posted out, in order to escape war, raises questions about woman's ideas of loyalty. In the sanctified discourse
of war, her concern for her husband's safety and the future of her home, in case he dies or returns disabled, is seen as unpatriotic and subversive, calling for the forgiveness of the husband. Every soldier is expected to relegate the self to the background and it is assumed that his family should follow suit. Generally women construct their identities in terms of their families. However, in a war film, the woman too is expected to rise above the family in order to owe allegiance to the entity called nation. The film, with its focus on the action on the battlefront, raises these issues only tangentially. A deeper exploration of themes like the family vs. nation conflict would distract the audience from the single-mindedness and racy pace of a war film, which has its own formal compulsions.

In war, the Army evacuates the border region and creates autonomous spaces for itself. Into such a space, the family can enter only as a nostalgic memory. One of the stock images in war films is the arrival of mail from home. The song Sandese Aate Hai (there's a message) in Border reveals the private lives of the soldiers. In this song, Dutta portrays a series of images from the domestic lives of the soldiers. Such images help the audience to identify with the combat troops. By the end of the film, the narrative is steadily evacuated of the category of family. Instead, it is replaced by the regiment, which the cook calls a "family" — a homosocial universe — replete with instances of male bonding and camaraderie. The textual clinching of the family vs. nation contradiction occurs in the return of Mathura Das to the unit from halfway home. Subedar Mathura Das (Sudesh Berry) who wishes to return to his ailing wife is reprimanded for expressing joy at being granted leave. The gendered ideology of the military is further buttressed by the wrath
of his Company Commander and the ridicule of his companions when he shows concern for his cancer-stricken wife and children. Accusing a man of cowardice is generally taken seriously within the framework of masculinist discourse and its praxis. Mathura Das can only redeem himself by returning to his unit and dying a martyr’s death, leaving behind a widow and a pair of fatherless children. His joy at the prospect of returning home is shown to be childish as well as cowardly. His return to the unit therefore, restores the image of the soldier who must necessarily make familial duties subservient to national duties.

In *Border*, one of the most gruesome scenes is the one that depicts gross violation of human rights. Suspected infiltrators posing as villagers are pumped with bullets, instead of being captured and tried. The informers’ death is celebrated as the young lieutenant Dharamveer’s (Akshaye Khanna) coming of age as a soldier. Bhairon Singh remarks in jest that the child, who began by playing with toys, is now a man. War facilitates the process of masculinization. Violence and masculinity are synonymous with each other. The cinematic representation of the transformation of S/Lt. Dharamveer from a novice - afraid to kill - to a martyr is a powerful instance of the masculinist military discourse. According to Lynn A. Higgins, “the dominant Western cultural understanding of masculinity [is] defined as a flight from the feminine” (qtd. in Cooke and Woollacott 249). The young lieutenant has a vision of his blind mother just before he dies on the battlefield, and pleads with her to release him from her maternal bond, as the time has come for his end. His union with his father who also died in war ensures “the flight from the
feminine”. His death becomes a ritualistic rite of passage from the oedipal stage to manhood.

The text of *Border* stages a dramatic engagement with the notion of nation as earth mother. The temple image referred to above reinforces the reification of nation as mother. The trope of motherhood used for the nation is full of paradoxes. The mother both produces and devours her sons. On the one hand, the nation in the form of earth mother produces warrior sons, and on the other is incapable of protecting herself from the enemy, for which she needs to harness the services of her progeny. Capt. Bhairon Singh’s death is as much about a soldier going “beyond the call of duty” (a favourite army terminology for citations) as it is about Rajput valour. The very first scene that introduces him to the audience establishes his attachment to the earth. This scene is significant for portraying his character as well as for advancing the central metaphor of the film, viz. nation as earth mother. Both the characterization and the metaphor are captured by a long shot of the actor sprawled on the sand. The brown Border Security Force uniform camouflages with the vast expanse of the sandy Thar Desert (home to the Rajput community which Bhairon Singh belongs to) revealing a total harmony between the man and his environment. His death therefore, must necessarily be spectacularized in keeping with his first hyperbolic dialogue in the film, in which he explains to his jawan that the earth spreads a bed sheet over him to protect him from the scorching desert sun. According to Bhairon Singh, the war needs to be fought to protect his protector (i.e. earth mother). The paradoxical configuration of the nation as earth mother who produces valiant sons and as one who needs their protection explained earlier may be recalled
here. His death reclaims the romance of a feudal era erased by the postcolonial nation-state.

In the 1990s, the increased militant activities and a growing secessionist movement in Kashmir and other parts of India challenged people's faith in the hegemonic discourse of a unitary nation-state. The film *Border*, in selecting for its subject a heroic moment in the history of the nation, went on to become a huge commercial success. The film created nostalgia for a moment in the past, when the nation transcended a host of differences and backed the Armed Forces with few voices of dissent. If we look at the post-Kargil euphoria, then *Border* seems to have uncannily anticipated the nation's capacity for overt display of patriotism. Through nostalgia films, according to Jameson, the past can be processed in an allegorical way. Nostalgia is an important mode of image-production. Nostalgia films always produce glossy images of the past. *Border* may, in this sense, be seen as a classic nostalgia film which "while evading its present altogether, register[s] its historicist deficiency by losing itself in mesmerized fascination in lavish images of specific generational pasts" (Jameson 296).

*Haqeeqat* is a story of defeat, of despair with no regeneration. The heroine dies with the hero without leaving behind any progeny. The film ends with a mournful song that leaves a message to its viewers. The song *Kar Chaley Hum Fida Jano Tan Saathiyan, Ab Tumhare Hawale Watan Saathiyan* (We bid farewell O countrymen, we handover the homeland to you) reverberates with a powerful and emotionally charged nationalist fervour. *Border*, on the other hand, is a story of triumph. Capt. Bhairon Singh dies, but there is a Singh Jr. to carry forward the tradition of valour, courage, and
masculine aggression. All the war films analyzed here retain the binarisms of war, viz. war/peace, public/private, battlefront/homefront and others, instead of demystifying them. The edifice of a patriotic Army created by the state, and ironically, even by the family remains unbroken. Though an attempt is made to contest the reification of the soldier as patriotic, the constraints of popular film restrict the attempt midway. The image of the patriotic soldier is retrieved each time there is a danger of its being dismantled.

V

However, films like Raj Kumar Santoshi's *Pukar* (The Call), Tinu Anand's *Major Saab*, and Abbas-Mastan's *Soldier* mark a bold departure from conventional representations of the soldier in cinema. *Pukar* is a conspicuous exception as far as the representation of the hero as an unblemished soldier is concerned. Maj. Jaidev (Anil Kapoor) is stripped of his honour, shown to be a traitor and is finally reinstated as a loyal citizen, but wronged soldier. The two women (played by Madhuri Dixit and Namrata Shirodkar) in the film contesting for the love of the hero are made out to be the cause of the hero's downfall. Sympathy is evoked for the hero; his fall from grace gives his character the tragic dimension of a classical hero. However, this hero's honour is restored; poetic justice is granted to him through the repentance of the heroine and the death of the wicked terrorist Abroosh, (Danny Denzongpa). The colonel who colluded with Abroosh is also punished. Anil Kapoor was awarded the *Swarna Kamal* (national award) for his role as Maj. Jaidev. The film is thus legitimated by the state, which has always, in one way or the other, monitored the modes in which its soldiers and the armed forces are represented.
In *Pukar* the focus is not so much on the action, as it is on the interiority of the hero's experience as a soldier. Except for a commando-action early in the film, the rest of it unfolds the drama of alleged treason of the hero and his reinstatement. The film ends with the hero's brave resistance to the army's allegations and his heroic deeds even when he is not in the army. An interesting minor character Mrs. Mallapa (Rohini Hatangadi) is also an unconventional portrayal of an army wife. She openly talks about the difficulties faced by the women due to frequent postings. She ridicules her husband by saying that he served on the border for fifteen years and followed that up by talking about it for another fifteen years.

*Major Saab*, like Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) focuses on the training of a soldier. While *Major Saab* in keeping with the combat film formula endorses the training period as completely desirable, Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* shows the total disintegration of Private Pile, from a happy go lucky aspirant to the army into a homicidal maniac. *Major Saab*'s thematic is concerned with the process of masculinization. Veeru (Ajay Devgan), an insolent youth, joins the National Defence Academy (NDA) to fulfill his father's wish expressed in his will that Veeru would inherit his wealth only if he would serve in the army. The training disciplines him after his plans to escape from NDA are sabotaged. The instructor's wife (Nafisa Ali), an army doctor, sees in him the son she lost during childbirth. Maj. Rana (Amitabh Bachchan) is an embodiment of a dual authority figure. As instructor, his word is the ultimate to his cadets. As the doctor's husband, he becomes a father figure to Veeru. Veeru's submission to the will of the father is portrayed through the point of view camera angle. Maj. Rana is shown standing on the top floor of the
bungalow. He looks below to see Veeru collapsed on the ground after completing his punishment run. This shot with Rana in his balcony and Veeru prone on the ground effectively conveys the power equation extant in the hierarchically structured army. While the mother is a symbol of love, affection and leniency, the father is the exemplary disciplining figure.

The action of Maj. Rana, Veeru and others is channelized to exterminate the gangster (Ashish Vidyarthi) and to extricate the latter's sister, with whom Veeru has fallen in love. The film emphasizes the relevance of masculinity for the nation. As army officers and cadets (future officers), they are the guardians of the nation protecting it from external enemies who threaten its territorial integrity as well as internal enemies who threaten its sovereignty. The film also shows that some army personnel are involved in the sale of weapons. Corruption in the army is thus hinted at, although not highlighted in the film.

In Soldier, an army major is killed by the jawans who are caught red-handed in the act of stealing weapons. A Naib Subedar (Dalip Tahil) in the film complains of the low salary in the army and the increased risk of death. He turns into a rich arms dealer and is pursued by the son (Bobby Deol) of the major. Essentially a revenge drama, the film is noteworthy for its bold portrayal of corruption in the army.

All these three films are concerned with the enemy within – in the form of corruption, crime, and so on. The hero, whether with the army or not, therefore remains a true soldier in spirit. He fights the forces of corruption like a typical Hindi film hero. Still, the films deviate from the norm as far as the
representation of the soldier is concerned because they show some army characters as corrupt or anti-national.

War films uphold the sanctity of the nation. The films discussed above endorse the image of the nation as a supreme entity for the sake of which all other loyalties must be sacrificed. The narratives of popular film consolidate the idea of nation and nationalism constructed in military discourse and practice, as seen in the previous chapter. Most of the Hindi war films combine the genre of action film with that of romance films. Hindi cinema anticipates a postmodernist eclecticism wherein the serious, the comic, the spectacle, action – all overlap to form a sumptuous filmic text. The generic intermingling besides having an obvious commercial value also asserts a fundamental truth of life: love and war can and do coexist. Hollywood films like *Casablanca*, *A Farewell to Arms* and the recent *Pearl Harbour* also stress this truth. *Casablanca* (1943) is a good example of how Hollywood gives a war background to the stock adventure story set in exotic places. Umberto Eco calls it “a great example of cinematic discourse” (qtd. in Lodge 446).

*Casablanca* to him is a movie with an improvised plot in which there is a blend of many themes (love, romance, adventure, war) that have been universally popular. However, Eco fails to explain the appeal of the movie and its reification as a cult movie. The mysticism of his lines such as “extreme of banality allows us to catch a glimpse of the Sublime” (qtd. in Lodge 454) do not explain how such a process takes place. *Pearl Harbour* (2001) directed by Michael Bay, is a love story set in the background of the Japanese attack on *Pearl Harbour* in 1941. The splicing of black and white real video clippings with colour scenes of the filmic text is a common technique that lends...
authenticity to war films. The love story brings out the finer aspects of the American character. The soldier hero is shown to be sentimental and emotional. This softens the image of a soldier usually depicted within the discourse of machoism.

Hindi war films have failed to grapple with the horrors of war. For instance, except for the mourning by the women, Border has little to offer in terms of the impact of war, especially on women. Instead, we have scenes of jubilant celebrations at the victory in the war, with troops dancing the Bhangra on the top of a captured tank. The film refuses to confront the issue of the impact of war, except for the fleeting images of sobbing parents and wailing widows. In contrast, the Hollywood war films, especially the Vietnam films (Platoon, Thin Red Line, Saving Private Ryan, Apocalypse Now) are strong indictments of the business of war. Let us take Apocalypse Now (1979) as an illustration. Most Hindi war films, as we have seen, revel in the glory of war and propagate the notion of "just war". The Vietnam War films on the other hand depict the terror and dreadfulness of war and its impact on the human psyche. Francis Ford Coppola's Apocalypse Now is one such film. Based on Joseph Conrad's short novel Heart of Darkness, Apocalypse Now traces the literal and metaphorical journey of Col. Kurtz (Marlon Brando). The film focuses on the confusion, fear, and the madness of the Vietnam War. It uses a series of surrealistic sequences to highlight the futility of war. Although its excesses, and a confusing ending, may seem as flaws in the film, it still remains a brilliant evocation of the horror of war. Apocalypse Now plays around with visuals (napalm fires, helicopters in unison, etc.) to indicate a fence sitter's stance towards the war: condemning at times and glorifying it at
others. In a hard-hitting conclusion to his essay, "The Politics of Ambivalence: Apocalypse Now as Prowar and Antiwar film", Tomasulo castigates Coppola’s apolitical and dehistoricized narrative. He says:

Although much contemporary film theory valorizes the idea of the "open" text subject to polyvalent readings and interpretations, what is really needed – at least in terms of Vietnam war movies is a closed text, a film that takes an unambiguous stand on the imperialist involvement and illegal conduct of the Vietnam conflict. (qtd. in Dittmar and Michaud 157, emphasis original)

VI

In this section, I deal with nationalism in non-war films. 1942; A Love Story directed by Vidhu Vinod Chopra, uses the Quit India Movement as the background for the film. It focuses entirely on the revolutionary struggle for independence without any references to the mainstream non-violent struggle led by Gandhi. The hero’s (Anil Kapoor) mother is cast in the image of the nationalist mother. She gives a gun to the hero and asks him to fight the colonial masters. An armed struggle against an oppressor calls for an overarching unity on the part of the oppressed. In this case, the creation of a national identity involved the subsuming of identities such as class, caste, gender, and the like. Many women during the freedom struggle were not averse to the use of arms as a means to end colonial rule. We have seen in the previous chapter that the Indian National Army had an exclusive women’s regiment. Women internalize the discourse of violence. While on the one
hand, the woman is the nurturing mother; she can also be the aggressive one. Thus a revolutionary nationalist discourse achieves the “pernicious objective of defining women as an intrinsic part of military society.” (Tennekoon, Serene, *Lanka Guardian*, 15 June 1986). Even marginal characters like Munna, the car driver and the bus driver become martyrs in the struggle. In the war films discussed above, we see a post-colonial nation fighting against “enemy nations” like China and Pakistan. It is a case of a nation protecting its territorial integrity and sovereignty through war. In *1942: A Love Story* we see an incipient nation fighting a war against the colonizer.

*Hey Ram* directed by Kamal Hassan is a partition film, a genre peculiar to Hindi cinema. Set in Karachi, Calcutta and Madras of 1946-47, the story revolves around the character of a south Indian Brahmin called Saket Ram. He is drawn into the mindless communal violence after his beloved is gang raped and killed. The film (perhaps the first of its kind) is a strong indictment of Gandhian philosophy. Coming as it does in 2000 when right-wing forces have established themselves in the corridors of power, the film’s narrative seems to support the newly legitimated ideology. The character of Saket Ram is an allusion to Nathuram Godse, the assassin of Gandhi. However, the film does not show Saket Ram killing Gandhi. On the contrary, he has a change of heart (highly unconvincing, considering the strident anti-Gandhi tone of the entire film) and refrains from killing Gandhi, although he goes fully prepared for it.

The religious nationalism of the film offers a contrast to the secular nationalism of the war films discussed above. (*Border*, as already illustrated is an exception.) In *Hey Ram*, frenzied mobs indulge in communal violence
with the instigation of partisan leaders. The film shows Muslims as the initiators of violence and the Hindus as reacting to it. The violence in war films is perpetrated by the armed forces that have the sanction of the state. As a result, it is justified, glorified and rewarded. In the case of communal violence, there is no overt state sanction. Both 1942: A Love Story and Hey Ram like the war films weave the romantic theme into the text of nationalist films.

VII

In the final section of this chapter I analyze terrorist films as subversions of war films. Here, the terrorist film constructs its own version of a nation and a soldier, both of which are denied legitimacy in the official discourse of nationalism. The character of the terrorist in Hindi cinema is complex in the sense that it combines elements from the characterization of the hero and the villain. The terrorist, in fighting for what he or she assumes to be a good cause, is like the quintessential Hindi film hero. The ancestry of this character may be traced to the dacoit, a popular character in the films of the seventies and eighties. (Gabbar Singh in Sholay (1975), for example.)

Through an analysis of Gulzar’s Maachis, Mani Ratnam’s Dil Se, Khalid Mohammed’s Fiza, Santosh Sivan’s The Terrorist and Vidhu Vinod Chopra’s Mission Kashmir, an attempt will be made to deconstruct the politics involved in the representation of the militant whose actions terrorize the every day lives of the people and whose alternative discourse challenges the hegemonic discourse of the nation. The idea in analyzing these films is to map out certain ambivalent moments in the representation – moments in which the
terrorist is located in the grey area between assimilation and expulsion from
the discourse of the nation. To begin with, let us locate terrorist films in the
overall film productions of the nineties. We find that they form a minority in
the midst of a more popular and dominant genre, viz., the family drama. In
the nineties, there have been two dominant genres in Hindi cinema, i.e.,
action film and the family drama with the ubiquitous love story as its major
component. Action films may be further divided into war films, gangster films
(Satya, Vaastav, Company, etc.) and terrorist films. Many of the nineties films
are indictments of state institutions, especially the police and judiciary (Shool,
Kohram). From such an anti-establishment stance, the secessionist stance of
terrorist films seems to be a logical outcome. State institutions, which have
betrayed the aspirations of the people, are made a site of contestation. The
hero's goal is no longer to fight or rectify but to break away from the state
completely. In the films of the seventies and eighties, the heroes took action
against the villains because they had lost faith in the state agencies like the
police and the law. Ultimately the hero restored the glory of the state. In the
terrorist films, however, the hero wishes to secede from the state and create
another state instead of rectifying the wrongs of the existing state. Therefore
the terrorist has to create a counter discourse and an alternative organization
to fight the villain.

Conventional political theory characterizes the militant as a disruption
in the narrative of the nation. He is a Gaddaar (traitor) who breaks away from
the norm of the loyal, patriotic national citizen. Instead, his loyalty shifts to his
cause, which could be a nation of his imagining, which in turn becomes a
threat to the hegemonic nationalism of the state. The nation-state guarantees
citizenship rights to all its inhabitants. From the point of view of the nation-state, the militant is an errant citizen, misusing his rights. Admittedly to most of us the nation is a “given”. Our nationality is a naturalized criterion for identification in a long list of other “givens” like religion, caste, mother tongue, etc. The militant, on the other hand, by becoming part of a group that challenges such a “givenness”, contests precisely the notion of the nation delineated by the nationalist elite.

The image of the militant offered for popular consumption is a dynamic one subjected to a process that dramatizes the militant-in-the-making. Violence comes from two sources. One, from the state and the other, from the militant groups. The state is constituted by its exclusive power to unleash violence. According to sociologist Anthony Giddens, “Terrorists and guerillas appropriate to themselves a power that states seek to maintain as their monopoly – the right to use violent means to pursue political objectives”(368).

In Fiza, the onus of making Amaan (Hrithik Roshan) a militant is on the police. Fiza is the story of a lower middle class Muslim family of mother (Jaya Bachchan), brother and sister. The film is based on the Mumbai riots of 1992-93. Amaan joins a militant group after being badly mauled in the street by lumpen elements of society who obviously had the sanction of the state. The sister, Fiza (Karisma Kapoor) unable to bear the suspense of her brother’s whereabouts for six years sets out in search of him. The quest results in her interactions with police officers, politicians and the media. Finally, she locates her brother in a border town of what appears to be Rajasthan. Determined and plucky that she is, she brings him back home. However, unable to get a job and following an identity crisis at home, he resolves to go back to the
terrorist group. In the meantime, the mother (Jaya Bachchan) commits suicide. Amaan is assigned an important task of eliminating a Hindu and a Muslim politician. After successfully completing his mission, a weary Amaan unwilling to surrender to the police makes Fiza shoot him in a bizarre ending of the film.

In *Dil Se*, once again the police and the security forces cause the violence. *Dil Se* is a love story involving a programme executive of All India Radio, Amar Verma (Shah Rukh Khan) and a North Eastern insurgent, Meghna (Manisha Koirala). The insurgent is given the task of assassinating the Prime Minister in a Republic Day parade through a suicide bomb. Amar's family arranges his marriage to a Keralite girl, Preeti (Preity Zinta). Amar however, becomes aware of Meghna's mission a few days before his marriage and is determined to prevent her from committing the suicidal act. After a long sequence that makes excessive demands on the audience's suspension of disbelief on the audience, Amar escapes from his captives and manages to stop Meghna from proceeding towards the parade grounds. His interest though lies not so much in preventing the assassination as in persuading her to reciprocate his feelings. She does so by embracing him. The bomb explodes and both are killed.

*The Terrorist* is a short film based on the Tamil Liberation movement in Sri Lanka. The film focuses on how the female militant, Malli (Ayesha Dharker) as a suicide bomber prepares herself to assassinate the Prime Minister. This is an obvious allusion to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by a Tamil liberation suicide bomber in Sri Perambadur in Tamil Nadu. Malli is
selected for this difficult and important assignment as she holds an impeccable record of thirty successful missions. Once she reaches Madras, however, life takes on a new meaning for her due to her pregnancy. She readies herself for the task but at the last moment is unable to carry it out.

*Maachis* is the story of a rural Punjabi family consisting of mother, brother, sister and her fiancé, who is drawn into militancy when the brother is tortured by the police as a suspected murderer. Torture in police lock-up is revealed as the main cause for innocent people turning into militants in *Maachis*. The brother commits suicide when he is taken into custody a second time. The mother dies of grief and the sister joins her fiancé in the militant group. Rivalry and suspicion within the group destroys it. The sister and her fiancé commit suicide with cyanide. There are no violent scenes in *Maachis*. The audience is shown only the impact of police atrocities and not the actual torture. Whereas films like Govind Nihalani's *Ardh Satya*, (1983) spectacularize violence. In *Maachis* what we see are the bruised and battered characters. *Maachis* attempts to be a strong indictment of state sponsored violence. Does it then logically follow that Gulzar sanctions militant violence as the natural response to state violence? Does he approve of Sanatan's (terrorist group leader, played by Om Puri) act of exploding a bus full of innocent passengers? Perhaps not. Because in the end the focus is on the dead couple engaged to be married. Clearly the aim is to show the annihilation of an ordinary family with simple aspirations. Violence therefore is not celebrated as the means to an end. It is at its worst self-destructive. How do the films under consideration represent militant violence? In their representation of violence as a spontaneous response, terrorist films
undermine the conscious and rational political choices made by the people. Violence in militant movements is not merely material, it is psychological and symbolic as well. The terrorist aims to draw attention to his/her cause, to threaten the opponents and to destroy the symbols of the state, which is their chief enemy. In *Dil Se*, the plan to kill the Prime Minister in the Republic Day function is doubly satisfying for the militants because the parade is a visual signifier of the nation’s developmental and progressivist narrative, precisely the kind of narrative that is contested by militant movements.

Political films that deal with the struggles of the people by their very nature call for regional, local moorings. The resort to ambivalence is a common strategy adopted by filmmakers dealing with politically sensitive themes. The filmmakers by narrating both sides of the story, so to speak, evade value judgements on the terrorist issue. This enables them to interpellate audiences with different sympathies towards a particular issue.

When a specific historical event is seen in simplistic binary oppositions of terrorism/law and order, state/people, communalism/secularism, then the narrative is emptied of its historical and political possibilities. Resort to terrorism is made to appear a natural, spontaneous response to the atrocities inflicted by the state agencies like the police and armed forces. According to Ranajit Guha in his essay “The Prose of Counter Insurgency,” rebellion is made out to be “a sort of reflex action that is as an instinctive and almost mindless response to physical suffering of another kind (ex hunger, torture, forced labour etc.)” (47).

The transition of Amaan, Kirpal, Veeran, Meghna and Altaf to militancy is naturalized. All of them are shown to be politically naïve until a particular
episode of violence traumatizes them. The filmmakers mythify the characters by “abolishing the complexity of human acts” (Barthes 143). The focus on a single cause simplifies the multiplicity of the forces that motivate a terrorist. According to Barthes, the naturalization process “places them in a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves” (143). The actions of the terrorists following the police atrocities appear to spring from a desire for revenge. Such a simplistic causality results in the “blissful clarity” of myth. To understand more clearly the depoliticization of myth, Barthes formulated a distinction between what he called “strong myths” and “weak myths.” The myth of the militant is a strong myth because “in it the political quantum is immediate. The depoliticization is abrupt” (144). The political load of the term “terrorist” is so obvious and visible that the filmmaker uses various techniques in order to convert the militant into a myth.

Before we examine the techniques (narrative and cinematic) that filmmakers deploy to mythify the terrorist, let us ask ourselves what could be the filmmaker’s stakes in mythification? Mythification leads to depoliticization to a great extent. The terrorist film is implicated in the official discourse of the state. The state always deals with insurgency as a law and order problem. By deploying this strategy, the coercive state is even able to buy the consent of the people quite easily. In the process, the political and the social roots of insurgency are obscured and the real aspirations of the people remain unfulfilled. Terrorist films as popular cultural forms may be seen to represent the interests of dominant groups in a society. These groups recognize the
threat to social harmony by the law and order problem posed by the militant activities. Since film production and distribution are dependent on peaceful conditions (obviously, a filmmaker cannot make his profit in curfew-ridden places, for instance) it is in the interest of the filmmaker to project terrorism as detrimental to peace, even if it is at the cost of a sensitive rendering of the genuine aspirations of the subordinate groups. In *Maachis*, the plot revolves around only a small group of militants. The village community is left out of the narrative except in one scene where some neighbors come out to see the badly bruised Jessie. One of the villagers spiritedly expresses his sympathy for Jessie by saying, "This is how militants are made. They don't grow in the fields." It is also a prophetic statement as Kirpal (Chandrachur Singh) and Veeran (Tabu) do join the militant ranks as a reaction to police brutality. In *Dil Se*, Meghna in the flashback scene calls the audience's attention to her region's history of deprivation and betrayal. The region of the North East is homogenized despite the fact that it consists of seven states, each with its distinct history, culture and politics. Such blatant disregard for India's diversity betrays Mani Ratnam's intention to produce a non-specific, historically and culturally uprooted narrative. *The Terrorist* alludes sharply to the separatist Tamil movement through location shooting. The jungles, the backwaters, the steamer ride across Palk Straits and the arrival in Madras to the strains of M S Subbulaksmi's *Suprabhatam* – all point to the LTTE. *Fiza* is more specific in that the film announces its spatial and temporal setting by dating the episodes. The use of newspaper clippings showing the communal riots of 1992-93 in Mumbai authenticates the periodization. Despite such clear pointers, Khalid Mohammed disavows the film's politics. He says, "*Fiza* is not
a political film, though a lot of issues are touched upon. You have to read between the lines” (qtd. in Gahlot 2000). The films begin as well-meaning interventions in the progressivist narrative of the nation. The radical potential of such interventions however, is diluted along the way and what emerges finally is a cultural product that performs the function of an Ideological State Apparatus.

How is the audience positioned? How is the spectator addressed? With most of the militant films ending with either the capture or the death of the militant, it may be said that these narratives set up a way of seeing, which positions the audience on the side of the State. “The People” are missing in all the above militant films. The militants are shown belonging to isolated groups with no contact with people who in reality are the main supporters of insurgency. A militant movement grows from the grass root level with the people’s support. This aspect is completely obscured in the films under discussion. As a result, a militant is portrayed as an anti-social character, or, a part of the lumpen elements of a society. Even an institution like the Law Commission in its working paper on terrorism while approving the anti-terrorist law describes terrorism as organized crime (K Balagopal 2115). The absence of people in militant films corresponds to the realities of contemporary politics. The state has seldom taken into account the people’s point of view in resolving politically the problems that foster militancy. Secession depends upon group sentiment. The filmmaker’s complicity with the official version of terrorism is obvious with the erasure of the group from the narrative.
Another technique used in terrorist films to reiterate state discourse is to make some characters in the narrative supporters of the status quo. How do we explain Fiza's killing of Amaan? In the absence of the father, Fiza arrogates to herself the disciplining powers of the male authority figure. She searches out her lost brother in order to bring him back to the family fold. She also represents the power and the authority of the patriarchal state. Her moderate political views and her categorical rejection of violence make her the raisonneur of the state. She tells the Muslim politician in the rhetorical style typical of the nationalist discourse that saffron and green are colours of the Indian national flag and that neither colour should seek to spread itself all over the flag. By this logic, Fiza must necessarily kill her brother in order to uphold the state's sovereignty. She as a symbol of the state can kill her brother who has wrongly arrogated for himself its power. Such a narrative device helps to establish state hegemony through one of the most popular cultural forms of the era, viz., cinema. According to Gramsci, hegemony operates through coercion as embodied by the state, and ideologically through civil society with its network of social and cultural institutions. Thus popular culture and mass media are implicated in the processes of the production and transmission of hegemony. This idea was more fully developed by Althusser in his essay, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus," in which hegemony is supposed to be manufactured by Repressive State Apparatuses (police, armed forces) and Ideological State Apparatuses (family, church, school, media). The only way an individual can become a subject is by succumbing to the established norms of a particular society. Drawing on the insights provided by Lacanian psychoanalysis,
Althusser explains that the individual’s submission to the law of the father is effected by his/her submission to the law of the society.¹⁴

_Fiza_ is however more problematic in its negotiation of the terrorist theme. The extremist group leader Murad Khan (Manoj Bajpai) describes his armed struggle as a fight against injustice and oppression of all kinds. Further, Amaan’s declaration, “I’m fighting a jihad,” is explained as war against all forms of oppression of the subordinate groups irrespective of religious/caste/creed affiliations. Such a belief is reinforced by his killing of both the politicians, one a Hindu, the other a Muslim. Both are seen as power hungry, self-serving people with no real concern for the oppressed classes. Amaan’s attempt to define _jihad_ as a fight of the oppressed against the oppressor does not effectively cancel out its strong connotations as a religious war. His death at the hands of Fiza who upholds the constitutional version of the nation as a secular entity may be read as the denunciation of armed insurgency and the triumph of the state. Yet even in his death Amaan remains an unsullied hero and an “unrepentant jihadi” (Dasgupta, India Today, 9 Oct 2000).

In _The Terrorist_, Malli and her compatriots as well as the child, Surya, whose code name is Lotus, all refer to the Leader who is an important absentee character in the film. The entire action in the film is propelled by this phantom Leader. Repeated references to him in glowing terms indicate his power, which comprises the power to kill, generally considered the sole prerogative of the state. The first scene of the film shows the horrifying death that awaits a traitor to the cause that is mainly articulated and mobilized by
the Leader. The members of the Leader's militant group appear to be completely robotized through indoctrination. Even their language suffers from a deficiency. All they can say is that their fight is for the sake of “apna desh” (our country) and “behtar kal ke liye” (for a better tomorrow). Here insurgency is characterized as a passive submission to the will of a powerful, charismatic leader who takes the initiative. Insurgents are projected as a “mindless ‘rabble’ devoid of a will of their own and easily manipulated by their chiefs” (Guha 79). There is not a single scene in the film, which focuses either on the oppression by the state or the conditions of the marginalized lives of an ethnic community, which forced them into an armed insurgent struggle in the first place. The film's narrative fails to show the evolution of an insurgent consciousness.

Women's participation in insurgent movements has created new possibilities for an epistemology and politics from the periphery. That is to say, the mobilization of women (usually considered as immanently pacifist) in the militant movements provides us with a fresh perspective to rethink on the politics of gender and insurgency. Challenging conventional constructs of women as pacifists and nurturers, the female insurgent is the recalcitrant subject of (counter)-nationalist discourse. What do we make of women's participation in armed insurgent movements? How far is the decision to take to arms a matter of women's agency? In the context of this section of the chapter, these are important issues as three of the five films analyzed here have women militants: Veeran in *Maachis*, Meghna in *Dil Se* and Malli in *The Terrorist*. Further, we need to examine whether these characters are invested with a revolutionary consciousness or whether their representations continue
to show signs of biological essentialism, which the directors – all of them being male (Gulzar, Mani Ratnam, Santosh Sivan) – are most likely vulnerable to. None of the women really succeeds in advancing the political cause for which she was trained. Does this reify women's putative feeblemindedness or does it posit women's pacifism as the only hope for a non-violent, peaceful global order? Either way, the female subject of (counter)-nationalist discourse is positioned precariously. The end of *The Terrorist* is compromised as the female suicide bomber chooses not to press the button that will blow her victim to pieces. The film ends with a blank screen and the cry of a baby on the soundtrack. Are women essentially pacifist? Alternatively, to attempt a more emancipatory reading, is the end an exercise of choice on Malli's part?\(^{15}\) Malli and her compatriots are shown throughout the film as subjects of an ideological apparatus. This is the first time that Malli can arrogate to herself an agentive power and that is what she puts to use. However, there is a problem with such a reading. The film begins with Malli killing a traitor on instructions from her leader. In all likelihood Malli will share a similar fate. Thus the film, at the connotative level, brings the narrative to a closure by making the audience recall the first scene while contemplating on the open-endedness of the narrative. The recalling of the first scene cancels out the emancipatory reading as in insurgent movements, women are important so long as they serve the revolution. Gender is subsumed by the larger categories of nation, community, etc. It would be appropriate at this point to recall the Ranis from the previous chapter who led a life of obscurity after Independence. Lakshmi Sahgal who had commanded the Regiment notes with regret in her autobiography, *A
Revolutionary Life, "... All they wanted when they came back to India was a little help... And no party was willing to help... (172). In her essay, "Unveiling Algeria," Winifred Woodhull also makes a similar point when she describes the life of women after the Algerian war of Independence. She notes:

The realignment of women with tradition and their consequent exclusion from public life was considered by feminists to be a betrayal both of the women who had fought for the nation's freedom and of the revolution itself (113).

In Maachis, the female militant is trained and armed but her traditional role as nurturer of the family is not obliterated. Veeran is co-opted into the militant group as Bhabhi (sister-in-law). With this, she now has a Jeth (elder brother-in-law) and two Devars (younger brothers-in-law) to care for. Veeran enacts her feminine role to perfection by cooking and serving food for them. They in turn are happy with the "ghar ka khana" (home-cooked food). This scene recalls "the happy family" scenes of the early part of the film. These bondings however do not prevent her from killing one of the "devars" who attacks her. Foucault identifies such an imperative to kill as "the principle underlying the tactics of battle – that one has to be capable of killing in order to go on living..." (137). In an unforgettable scene in the film, Veeran is tied to a pillar in their hideout, as Sanathan suspects her fiancé of disclosing their whereabouts to the police. He sends his assistant up a rickety staircase to the upper storey with instructions to kill Veeran. In the next scene, we hear a gun shot and see drops of blood on the floor, then the camera focuses on a pair of feet slowly
descending the stairs, and next we see Veeran with a pistol in her hand. The Palestinian woman insurgent Leila Khaled who has the dubious distinction of hijacking two aircrafts reinforces women's capacity to kill. In her autobiography, *My People shall Live*, she asserts, "I am not going to succumb to emotionalism and allow my feelings to blind my reason" (qtd. in Rajeswari Mohan 64).

In *The Terrorist*, Sivan's camera is a pervasive, voyeuristic camera that zooms in on the actress taking full advantage of Ayesha Dharker's large expressive eyes, long thick hair, every strand of which is focused in extreme close up shots. The camera's fragmentation of the woman's body into eyes, hair, hands and feet puts her up on display. By setting up such a scopic regime, Sivan directs the gaze of the spectator towards the erotic identity of the heroine. *The Terrorist* plays upon all the so-called essential aspects of a woman's psyche. However hard she tries to remain aloof and cold, Malli grows fond of her host Vasu and his wife. Finally, it is the child growing in her womb that prevents her from executing her task.

Women's sartorial features are often harnessed for the purposes of a revolution. The suicide bombers in both the films, *The Terrorist* and *Dil Se* are women. Women's clothing provides ample scope for successful camouflaging of suicide bombs. Fanon in *A Dying Colonialism* also makes this point when he refers to the Algerian women who hid weapons in their clothes and transported them to the French quarters fearlessly without chances of being caught. In her essay on Leila Khaled's autobiography, Rajeswari Mohan says,
“Female militants are invariably seen as instances of gender anomaly -- the compulsion to sexualize these women into hyper-feminized objects of male desire and more significantly shepherd them into the patriarchal fold of marriage and heterosexual desire is one indicator of the threat they constitute” (68-9). In *Dil Se*, Meghna uses a putative feminine attribute of helplessness without a man in order to seek shelter in Amar’s house. She reasons, “We have nowhere to go, so we have come to you.” The female militant with a gun threatens the male order as it is tantamount to appropriating the power of the phallus. Hence, the urgent need to sexualize her as an object of desire. In a highly unconvincing scene, a militant impregnates Malli in *The Terrorist*. Malli protects the badly injured and dying militant from being captured by the security forces. He is surprised to know that his protector is a woman and proceeds to make love to her. Even after joining the militant ranks, Veeran is steadfast in her love for her fiancé. Meghna falls in love with Amar. Her initial continence is indicative of a monomaniacal focus on her mission. As the narrative unfolds her sexualization process is taken to its inevitable end in which she admits her love for Amar, for whom Meghna has been more a site of desire than an object of love. That moment of her sexualization in the narrative is also the moment of her failure to complete her mission. The female militant is successfully disarmed, castrated of the penis she had acquired by default and restored as the fully feminized subject of the conventional tragic love story in which she dies in the arms of her lover.
In contrast to the sexualization of the female militant, the male body is projected as the necessary condition for the success of the mission. While the female body is given an erotic identity, the male body is given a militaristic identity. Unlike the female militants who fail to accomplish their assigned tasks as pointed out earlier, the males are successful. Sanatan explodes a bomb in a bus, Amaan kills the two politicians, Kirpal kills a police officer and is caught in the act of killing another. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon talks of the impact of the suppressed rage of the native on his body, which manifests itself in tense, contracted muscles (44). Khalid Mohammed exploits the muscular body of the latest superstar, Hrithik Roshan in a ten-minute exclusive sequence that documents Amaan's training. The taut, stretched muscles combined with facial expressions indicating suppressed rage are reminiscent of Fanon's natives. The marketing of masculinity is an important component of terrorist films. In Hindi cinema, conventionally the villain, like Danny Denzongpa in Boney Kapoor's *Pukar*, would occupy the space of the terrorist. However, with heroes getting to be more experimental and doing what they call “negative roles,” it is not unusual now to see the hero as terrorist. The action film has always been the unassailable citadel of masculinity. It thrives on conventional images of physically strong men who are the protectors of women and the world.

*Dil se* provides the audience with an excess of pleasure (unique dance sequence on a running train, beautiful scenes of exotic Ladakh, the romance of the lead pair) in a story with a grim subject like
terrorism. The Terrorist is a short focused film, which hit the Film Festival circuit bagging awards. The film does not, unlike the other three, incorporate elements of commercial cinema like song and dance, exotic locales, glamorous stars, etc. According to Laura Mulvey, in her famous essay, “Narrative Cinema and Visual Pleasure,” “The song and dance sequences interrupt the flow of the diegeses in mainstream film [which] neatly combines spectacle and narration” (19).

In Hindi cinema, song and dance sequences (a legacy of the Parsi theatre) are incorporated into the film even at the expense of interrupting the plot. The sequences are so integral a part of the total filmic experience that their absence affects the box office performance of the film. Video piracy has produced a deep anxiety among the film producers as audiences are increasingly prone to watch films at home. This anxiety coupled with the growing popularity of video albums contributed to a phenomenon that we may call MTVisation of cinema. Autonomous song and dance sequences were interpolated in the narrative in order to attract cinema audiences. The “Chaiya Chaiya” song in Dil Se picturized on a moving train with the svelte MTV VJ Malaika Aurora atop the train is a case in point. It proved to be a big draw for audiences. The song mobilizes the scopic drive of the male audience. The “look” needs to be solicited and the body of the actress is used for this purpose. In a similar vein, Fiza has a scintillating dance number, “Mehboob Mere” performed by former Miss Universe Sushmita Sen. To the vast majority of audiences for whom cinema is an exercise in voyeurism, the pleasure of seeing the seductively
moving Sushmita Sen on a 70 mm screen with stereophonic sound far exceeds that of seeing her on a television screen at home. Although the interpolation of these sequences is driven by the profit motive, it nevertheless changes the contours of mainstream cinema as well as our ways of seeing. In a terrorist film in particular such dance numbers divert at least temporarily (perhaps even to a great extent) the attention of the audience from the violence, blood and gore, the pathos and politics of the main text.

I take up Chopra's *Mission Kashmir* separately for analysis as this film deals with the secularism vs. communalism debate. The film with screenplay by famous novelist Vikram Chandra is a nostalgia-ridden narrative about the loss of the peaceful paradise, Kashmir. Chopra says, "It's really been one of the closest subjects to my heart. Kashmir was my childhood, it was my paradise. I have seen Kashmir when it was like heaven, when it was literally paradise on this earth. I have also seen how it's been ravaged through the years and it's torn my heart out. I had to do something small and significant to try and turn events around. My film, *Mission Kashmir* is therefore an attempt in that direction" (123india.comMovies).

Unlike the terrorist films discussed until now, *Mission Kashmir* is unique in its engagement with the secularism vis-à-vis communalism debate. This debate has gained significance in contemporary political discourse in India. In *Mission Kashmir* the Muslim police officer Inayat Khan (Sanjay Dutt) is posited as the ideal Indian citizen. His secularism and modern outlook is shown by his marriage to a Hindu
girl who retains her Hindu name, Neelima (Sonali Kulkarni) and visits both masjid and mandir. Chopra's positioning of a Muslim police officer with a Hindu wife is typical of what Dhareshwar and Niranjana in their essay on the Tamil film Kaadalan describe as "the dominant politics of piety that has come to govern the discourse of secularism: namely, how secularism of love can engender love of secularism" (23).

Inayat Khan is not shown doing namaz in a single scene in the film. This is a pointer to the idea of a desirable secular citizen who relegates religion to the background. The senior police officer suspects Inayat Khan's loyalty when he has to assign him the task of the prime minister's security. A visibly upset Khan proclaims himself as a patriotic Kashmiri Indian. The allusion made here by the officer to Indira Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh bodyguards is revealing. Both Sikh and Muslims form part of the minority community in India who are usually perceived as secessionists and anti-nationals. Inayat Khan is projected as a model for the minority community to follow. Erasure of distinct religious signs is shown to be desirable in the course of constructing an "Indian" identity.

By contrast, in Mani Ratnam's Roja, the militant Liyaqat Khan is shown to be praying calmly, while the hero is putting out the fire to the Indian flag with his own body. The scene with its dense symbolism equates prayer with Islamic fundamentalism and Liyaqat Khan with anti-nationalism and religious fanaticism. Inayat Khan's body in Mission Kashmir carries no signs of his religious affiliation. His is a secularised body erased of specific religious symbols. (Mani Ratnam's
Bombay by contrast uses the white filigree cap for all its Muslim characters.)

In the course of performing his duty to the nation (storming into a militant hide-out), Inayat Khan kills the parents of a little child, Altaf. Inayat Khan and Neelima, who have just lost their child, Irfan in an accidental fall from the window, adopt Altaf. The Hindu wife of Inayat Khan gives him lessons in secularism (she takes him to Hazratbal and Shankaracharya to offer prayers) and takes care of him with great love and affection. The audience's sympathy is created for Inayat Khan. He loses his son due to the lack of medical care. As doctors are threatened by the militants they refuse to treat the child of the police officer. Later, his wife also dies when a bomb planted in his briefcase explodes in his house. When Altaf discovers that Inayat Khan is none other than the police officer who killed his parents and sister, he escapes from home and joins a militant group headed by an Afghani terrorist, Hilal Kohistani (loosely based on the real life terrorist, Osama bin Laden). He is delegated the task of executing Kohistani's most important mission which includes the blowing up of the famous shrines, Hazratbal and Shankaracharya. Here, the aim of the terrorist is to eliminate state symbols. (Both the shrines are managed by the state of Jammu and Kashmir.) The terrorists in Mission Kashmir are pan Islamic mercenaries, not part of autochthonous groups conscious of Kashmiriyat (Kashmiri cultural essence). The pan Islamists are unaware of the significance of the two shrines in the collective unconscious of the Kashmiris. In the end, Inayat Khan convinces Altaf
to turn the missiles trained towards Hazratbal and Shankaracharya away from the shrines. For the first time after the traumatic events of his life, Altaf sleeps fearlessly and sees a dream in which he is enjoying a game of cricket with his foster parents. He has no memories left of his biological parents and sister. Altaf's paradise is regained through the erasure of his biological parents and sister and his assimilation into the family of secular Muslims.

Mission Kashmir, unlike Fiza, is rooted in a particular secessionist movement. The title of the film is the main indicator. Besides, the location shooting on the Dal Lake, shots of the Hazratbal and Shankaracharya indicate the rootedness of the film. The music adds local colour to the film through the use of lines (Rind Posh Maal) from a hundred year old folk song by Rasool Mir. The women are dressed in the traditional pherans. The specific historical rootedness of Mission Kashmir complements the characterization. The trajectory of Altaf's character from the innocent, playful child to a terrorist is dramatized against the background of the politics of Kashmir. As Vikram Chandra puts it, "Our concentration is on individuals who move within the larger context of the historical background, the geo-political contradictions and the ambitions of various nation states and groups, caught up in that larger chakravyuha" (3).

VIII

Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen in their Introduction to the Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema believe that the relation between cinema and state is sometimes complicit, sometimes confrontational
and oppositional. Militant films may be viewed as oppositional or confrontational narratives. However, the confrontation is only a superficial gloss. Complicity with the state lies at the root of the narrative. *Dil Se* for instance, sanitizes the militant theme by foregrounding the theme of romance. The violence and brutality of militant acts forms a background to a song sequence. The focus throughout the film is on the hero's search for the elusive heroine, who is a suicide bomber. The end of the film is also a paean to love in the tradition of tragic romances. Though *Maachis* shows sympathy for the militants, in the end, the state is overpowering. Kirpal is imprisoned and tortured beyond recognition for attempting to kill a police officer. The group decimates itself in a series of mindless killings arising out of inter-group rivalry and suspicions. We know the film is based on militancy in Punjab because of the location and names of the characters. There is however no reference to Khalistan (the name of the independent nation imagined by the militants) in the film. Militancy is understood as an unmitigated struggle against the oppressor which in the militant's discourse is the state. Gulzar deflects the specificity of the Punjab problem, which was quite emphatically a separatist movement with elements of religious and regional nationalism. While stressing the need for filmmakers to treat traumas such as partition and militancy Gulzar remarks:

It lessens the hurt, otherwise the wound continues to fester. If there were more books written and films made on the partition, then we wouldn't have such a major communal problem now.
Europe has healed the wounds of two World Wars by bringing out all the hurt and resentment through art, books and films.
(qtd. in Gahlot, Express Magazine, 17 September 2000)

As shown above militants are generally portrayed as frenzied, pathological characters. Terrorist films also ultimately become vehicles of pan-Indian nationalism e.g. Roja, Dil Se, etc. Rustom Bharucha in his essay on Mani Ratnam's Roja observes that "nationalism is mediated and dispersed through layers of cultural expression which have been consolidated through the 'manufacture of consent' engineered by the agencies of the state in the market and the media" (115). Both Amaan and Kirpal Singh begin as reluctant militants. They are drawn into militancy to avenge personal loss and humiliation and not with any well defined political agenda. Such a displacement of intention diffuses the revolutionary content of militant movements.

In all the above films, the impact of terrorism is shown on the private domain of family and romantic relationships. The idealized private space is dominated by the trope of the happy family picturized in tender domestic activities like the mother oiling children's hair in Fiza, a large extended family making marriage preparations in Dil Se, two friends playing hockey in the courtyard in Maachis and a child enjoying a game of cricket with his parents in Mission Kashmir. Such a family becomes the site of the spectators' desire. But the myth of the happy family is shattered and torn apart, when one of its members joins the militant ranks. Kirpal in Maachis, Amaan in Fiza, Altaf in Mission Kashmir and Amar Verma's link with Meghna in Dil Se are
ruptures in the narrative of the happy family. The focus on the private space certainly humanizes the militant issue but the erasure of the public domain depoliticizes it.

The Hindi films discussed in this chapter have unequivocal political contents but are deeply embedded in the dominant ideology from which they are produced. Any resistance offered to the dominant ideology (we have examined several instances of resistance) is nullified at the end of the film, which upholds the state. The transformative language of the radical is decimated and the metalanguage of the oppressor is valorized. According to Moti Gokul Sing and Wimal Dissanayake the important shaping forces of Indian cinema are the two epics Ramayana and Mahabharata (41). They could be called the prototypes for any Indian war narrative. The wars in both epics are dharmayudhs (just wars) in which the forces of good triumph over the forces of evil. War is glorified, heroism is celebrated and masculinity made desirable. War films more often than not answer the public's fascination for terror, horror and adventure.

All war narratives therefore are explanatory texts, at pains to justify war. Both war and terrorist films in my opinion focus on the emotive and humanist aspects and constitute these as the normative mode of reception, fudging largely the audience's capacity for critical thinking. The films as forms of political address construct the idea of a unitary nation, whose strong centralized, patriarchal state may be critiqued or challenged up to a point beyond which its authority must necessarily be accepted. Cinema thus offers the citizen a nationalist
utopia. The hero of a war film is posited as a model national subject fit for emulation. The film stars are assigned the burden of being the prototypes of the national ideals.

Hindi war cinema would quite easily appeal to the urban middle class audiences who stand to gain the most by rooting for the nation. The middle classes are instrumental agents in the nation-building project. War films would equally appeal to the agrarian community whose sentimental attachment to the land is so effectively troped by the filmmaker. What, however, may be its appeal to the vast and ever-growing urban poor? Does war cinema incorporate the "slum's eye-view of the world", to use Nandy's formulation (3). Are not the urban poor waging a war, in any case, on a daily basis against poverty, alienation, disease and unemployment? Are not their enemies within the nation rather than outside it? Questions such as these would involve a detailed analysis of the reception of war films which is outside the scope of this thesis. What I have tried to show in this chapter is the imbrication of Hindi war cinema within a predominantly statist discourse which in the Indian context has made a transition from secular to cultural nationalism.
Notes

1 I am aware of the semantic peregrinations of the word, “terrorist.” However, I retain the word for two reasons. One, for the lack of a suitable alternative. Two, the films usually portray them as “terrorists”: misled, anti-national and criminal, not as political revolutionaries. Having made this point, I will refrain from putting the word into quotes in order to maintain the visual appeal of the dissertation.

2 The scope of nationalism extends beyond freedom from colonial rule. It manifests itself as an on-going process engaged in the task of defining a nation. The outnumbering of war films by terrorist films is a pointer to the changing nature of war. Today, wars are fought not exclusively against an external aggressor. The groups of people who are marginalized within a nation may seek to redress their grievances by waging a war against the state. In the Indian context, we have seen secessionist movements in Punjab, Nagaland, Mizoram and Jammu and Kashmir.

3 Notes, Memoranda and Letters exchanged between the Govt. of India and China, Nov 1959 to Mar 1960, White Paper III, Ministry of External Affairs, Govt. of India, New Delhi, quoted in Ramesh Sanghvi, India's Northern Frontier and China (Bombay: Contemporary Publishers, 1962).

4 Several interviews of mothers during Kargil war revealed them as saying that they would send their other sons too into the Army (Chakravarti, Uma, Economic and Political Weekly, 29 April 2000, WS 12-17).

5 Japan admitted its role in coercing over 200,000 women to serve as prostitutes for the Japanese army during the war years of 1932 to 1945. The
case of the so-called military "comfort women" must be one of the cruellest of such violations. The historical example of "comfort women" teaches us how war perpetuates the exploitation of women and the violation of their human rights. It reminds us that systematic rape, institutionalized prostitution, and sexual slavery as well as war crimes were not only practiced in the past but can still be seen near military bases around the world.

6 The reference here is to the formation of an independent Bangladesh (former East Pakistan) in 1971.

7 The attempts made by filmmakers to generate hate are not peculiar to Hindi cinema. Hollywood stereotyped all Germans as brutes in its World War II films.

8 The motto displayed prominently in Chetwode Hall of Indian Military Academy, Dehra Dun from where an officer passes out on completion of training, reads:

   The Safety, Honour and Welfare of your country comes first, always and everytime.
   The Honour, Welfare and Comfort of the men you command comes next.
   Your own ease, comfort and safety comes last, always and everytime.

   Field Marshal Sir Philip W Chetwode, Bt GCB, KCMG, GCSI, DSO.

9 India undertook Operation Vijay to push back infiltrators who had occupied Indian posts in the Drass sector of Jammu & Kashmir in May '99. The people of India lent whole-hearted support to the soldiers fighting under adverse
conditions. Patriotism, or rather jingoism, became the zeitgeist of the Indian nation-state.

10 The pain and anguish caused by the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 have been the inspiration for several filmmakers: M S Sathyu's Garm Hawa (hot winds) (1975), Govind Nihalani's Tamas (Conflict) (1985), Gadar (Confusion) (2002).

11 The Marathi play Mee Nathuram Godse Boltoy is a precursor to anti-Gandhianism.

12 Simranjit Singh Mann in a Times of India interview laments the fact that the Government has never taken the people of Punjab and Kashmir into confidence in solving the militancy problem. For our purposes, Mann is an interesting figure. His trajectory from police officer (pro-State) to militant (anti-State) to politician (in-between) makes him an emblematic figure in Punjab politics.

13 Abdul Ghani Lone, Hurriyat leader in a large gathering in Kashmir had appealed to the government to take into consideration the Kashmiri people's views (Times of India, 9 Oct 2000).

14 For a detailed overview of the theories of cultural studies, see Dominic Strinati, An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture (London: Routledge, 1995).

15 I am grateful to Rani Dharker for making me think in this direction.
Rajashri Theatre in Ahmedabad replayed the number during the interval with special effects from a Dolby sound system.
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