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Abstract

In the postcolonial nation state that is India, cinema has become an important tool for propagating the idea of nationalism. In recent times, one of the most controversial components of Hindu nationalism has been the hate campaign against what is termed as 'love-jihad', which is deployed as a weapon to mobilize, polarize, and communalize citizens. The Indian Hindi-language film industry, popularly known as Bollywood, has also become a controversial site. In this paper, I argue that if 'Indian nationalism' is to be represented as 'Hindu nationalism' and 'Indian culture' as 'Hindu culture,' it logically follows that this majoritarian construction needs the minority 'Other' to reinforce this notion of nationalism and culture. To make my point, I shall critically look at the representation of Muslims in contemporary Bollywood films. My analysis deploys Edward Said's notion of representation and knowledge as imbricated in issues of power, class, and materiality. Using Said's theoretical framework of Orientalism, this paper elucidates how specific popular Bollywood films in the historical genre have dealt with the liminality of the Muslim 'Other' in the nation-space by either representing Muslims in stereotypical ways or by vilifying their image. This paper adopts the textual analysis method (that is, it reads the films as texts). I posit that the representation of Muslims in Bollywood films could be divided into two broad segments: representation of Muslims in the context of 'love-jihad' and the effect of 'love-jihad' on Bollywood.

Keywords

'Love-Jihad', Hindi cinema, Muslim as Other, Hindu nationalism, terrorism, identity

Author Notes

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Bollywood¹ has become one of the most important platforms for the cultural production of narratives in South Asia. As the dominant media outlet, it plays a crucial role in projecting certain ideological discourses such as nationalism, communalism, and secularism. Hindi² films, just as other films, construct an imaginary notion of the past in the light of the contemporary socio-political situation. Therefore, that Islam has played an important role in contemporary Indian religious politics has also been reflected in Indian cinema in the last two decades. One of the most controversial contemporary issues of religious politics is 'love-jihad'³ and its impact is quite evident in Bollywood. This paper explores the depiction of women and Muslims in the complex representational scheme and in the reception of two films, *Jodhaa Akbar*⁴ and *Padmaavat*,⁵ and looks at them as being products of complex historical, cultural, and political nation-building projects in which gender plays a central role. First and foremost, we need to understand the connection between gender and Hindu nationalist discourse.

Gendering the Politics of Hindu Nationalism

Gender became a very important component of the nationalist discourse from the colonial period. Depending on the nation's political scenario, gender, especially that of women, has been used as a tool to strengthen the nationalist political discourse since the time of the anti-colonial movement. Sometimes the

image and 'plight' of women are used to awaken the collective conscience of the nation, while at other times it is made a tool for gaining political power.

Locating Nationalism and the Position of Women

Before discussing the term 'nationalism' we need to understand the concept of the 'nation.' A 'nation' is defined by political geographic boundaries. Kelly J. Bell opined that 'Nationalism' is the belief that focuses on the ongoing support for that geographical boundary, and people visualize the boundary to be separated from the other nations of the world.⁶ According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the definition of nationalism is "loyalty and devotion to a nation; especially a sense of national consciousness ... exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups."⁷ Bell further mentioned, "Nationalism is an ideology that focuses both on loyalty to and pride in one's nation.... Nationalism, at its core, instills a belief in citizens that their country is important and superior to other countries, and their individual identity is strongly tied to their homeland."⁸ During colonial rule in India, nationalism became an important ideology used to motivate and instigate people for the cause of freedom.

In the colonialist and nationalist discourses, women directly or indirectly played an important role. The subaltern position of Indian women enabled the British to justify imperialism as a 'civilizing mission' in which they were rescuing

Indian women from the reprehensible practices of a traditional Hindu patriarchal society. We must also reflect upon the historical details of the manner in which the 'civilizing mission' came to be determined. The 'woman question' in the agenda of social reform in the early 19th century was not much about the specific condition of women within a determinate set of social relations. Lata Mani rightly pointed out in her study of abolition of *sati-daha*,⁹ that even later, the agenda of the 'woman question' was produced by post colonialist discourses.¹⁰

In connection to that, nationalism was not only a political struggle of power, rather, it related to the question of the political independence of a nation in virtually every aspect of the material and spiritual lives of its citizens. Partha Chatterjee, a prominent post-colonial theorist, provided a theoretical framework¹¹ for analyzing the contradictory pulls on nationalist ideology in its struggle against dominant colonialism and the resolution it offered to those contradictions. In brief, this resolution was built around a splitting of the domain of culture into two spheres—the material and the spiritual. Within the material sphere may be included the claims of Western civilization that its culture was superior and most powerful because of its reliance on science, technology, rational forms of economic organization, and modern methods of statecraft. It was believed that these had given the European countries the strength to subjugate non-European people. To overcome this domination, the colonized people of India had to imitate the Western material aspect of life; however, it was assumed that Indians did not have to rely on the

Western spiritual sphere as the spiritual domain of the East was superior to that of the West. Nationalists asserted that European powers failed to colonize the inner, that is, superior spiritual culture of the colonized. This in turn led to the ascribing of gender roles in our society. Material interest in the outer world was thought to be the masculine realm of society, and the inner world, that is, the spiritual, was considered to be the feminine domain.

As women were thought to be situated in the sacred spiritual space, thus, during the anti-colonial period, it was easier to make people imagine that gender, especially womanhood, was of primary importance in the embodiment of the nation. Consequently, women have been used as a symbol of national identity from the time of India's freedom movement. The fact that national identity was constructed in gendered terms is apparent in the use of feminine nouns to address the nation, such as 'she' or 'motherland' to refer to the country. The most ideal image of the country was as Mother India, depicted as a goddess modestly dressed in a sari, seated on a lion, and holding a saffron flag.¹²

It is argued by numerous scholars such as Sikata Banerjee,¹³ Kelly J. Bell,¹⁴ and Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi¹⁵ that religious politics created a space for women to participate in the political discourse during the pre-Independence days. It can also be argued that Hindu women are represented as the "repositories of the religious beliefs and the keepers of purity and integrity of the Hindu community."¹⁶ If it is true that religious politics has created opportunities for women to become a

part of the public space, it can equally be argued that it has simultaneously undermined women's autonomy¹⁷; the identity of women has been reduced to 'mother,' 'daughter,' and 'sister,' whose honour should be protected by the male members of the community. Also, it should be mentioned that only a small percentage of women got the opportunity to participate in the nation's political discourse. Thus, we see that Hindu nationalist discourse legitimizes the dominance of men over women.

We must focus on another perspective to understand gender roles in the nationalist discourse. Initially, nationalism and its ideas gained popularity among the elite but it needed mass support for its wider propagation. Historically, ideals of nationalism were inclusive of various religions, races, and languages; later, however, nationalism drew on the idea of unification of diverse groups to form a new community of citizens. According to historian Romila Thapar, there were, and are, nationalist ideologies where an individual group identity is prioritized as opposed to a secular nationalist discourse. For example, there are concepts of nations based on a single exclusive identity: religious, linguistic, ethnic and similar singular identities. Prominent historian Romila Thapar has christened this phenomenon as 'pseudo-nationalism' which exaggerates the importance of a single history of one religious community as being the pre-eminent history of the nation and which denigrates and distorts the history of other communities. She went further to suggest that such ideals "should be precluded from being called

nationalism.”¹⁸ We can also argue, women only find a place as tools in the hands of men. In essence women, as subjects, are excluded from the concept of nationalism except as being carriers of abstract notions of honour. In this respect their exclusion can be compared to the way in which Muslims as ‘Others’ are excluded from the project of nationalism.

In the post-Independence period, India experienced Partition and many communal riots across the country. Those historical traumas, such as the violence of Partition, experiences of permanent exile, and sufferings due to communal violence heightened the feeling for non-Muslims of being threatened by Muslims during the traumatic events of 1947. The identity of the Muslim ‘Other’ gained ground during British rule due to the colonial policy of divide and rule and later due to the partitioning of India and the creation of Pakistan. Moreover, the vilification of Muslim rulers in India originated during colonial times through the writings of British historians. The notion of ‘Otherness’ has become more complicated in the last two decades after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in the country. In connection to this, Thapar has also pointed out that a version of history is currently being written by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha [RSS]¹⁹ and Hindutva ideologues for whom the past has only to do with Hindu history of the early period and the victimization of Hindus under Muslim tyranny in the medieval period. During the 1990s, the narrative of communal violence began to be reframed in terms of allegations of the abductions of Hindu women by Muslim men during

Partition. This approach was adopted and became the central theme because protecting the honour of Hindu women served as an important tool to mobilize citizens.

“At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the Hindu right-wing groups effectively launched various campaigns to mobilize and gain popular support; a support that was primarily garnered through anti-Muslim propaganda.”²⁰ At that time, the most successful of these campaigns was the Ayodhya movement.²¹ Along with communal mobilization, the new emerging political discourse, i.e. Hindutva, also justified the inferior situation of women in the patriarchal system. As a result, Hindutva politics tried to justify the *sati*²² of Roop Kanwar²³ in 1987 by seeking justification for the act of *sati* in religious Hindu scriptures and by idealizing a woman's role as a dutiful wife. Hindu nationalist discourse teaches women to accept the ideals of traditional gender hierarchy. It is believed that “if women do not perform their cultural role in a proper manner, then the family suffers and then the nation.”²⁴ Therefore, if someone dares defy the representation of women as presented under patriarchy, it is assumed as a disregard for the Hindu woman and the person is believed to be the enemy of the family and, by extension, the nation. Hindutva ideology thus inspires Hindu women to think not in terms of individual rights but rather in terms of collective interest in order to form the ideal nation, most specifically, a Hindu nation. “The gender ideology of Hindutva, a factor that touches the very essence of Hindu nationalism, reinforces the

‘supremacy of the family over the individual’ with the implication that ‘family considerations should reign supreme,’ not only in marriage, but in ‘career’.”²⁵ This entire concept was reinforced by deploying the image of Hindu goddesses to promote the ideal of the Indian female by appealing to religious sentimentality. Sita’s²⁶ chastity was one of the most popular stories which was referenced multiple times by the RSS.

As already discussed, nationalism refers to the feeling of oneness or unity. There can be different kinds of threats which try to break the feeling of oneness or being united. This threat can either be in the form of physical violence against national borders or in the form of psychological violence perpetrated by challenging the normative values or the gender status quo of the nation state. Just as the threats can break down the feeling of oneness, they can also help in creating a bond within the community to counter the enemy. Following this point, I argue that the fear of psychological violence is instilled in people to strengthen the feeling of oneness, and the female body is utilized as a component to generate that threat. One of the most controversial campaigns that creates such fear is ‘love-jihad’. As we have seen that women become active agents in propagating the feeling of nationalism, in the next section, I will discuss the concept of how the divine feminine should be protected by the male members of our society from being threatened by ‘Others.’

Imagining the 'Divine Feminine' and the Historical 'Other'

The female body as a social construct has been shaped by the colonial discourse of strategic retreats, resistances, and collusions between the colonizer and the colonized. The imagination of the nation symbolized by the Hindu female body can be traced back to colonial discourses. Scholars such as Asish Nandy,²⁷ Partha Chatterjee,²⁸ Sumathi Ramaswamy,²⁹ and Charu Gupta³⁰ have referred to the centrality of the symbolic feminine in the imagination of the Indian nation. Women became the only inspiration to maintain ethnic identities, “demarcating the distinction between the alien and the autochthonal through what their wombs brought forth.”³¹ This discourse imposed “a unique cultural responsibility on the Hindu woman, recognizing her as the repository of past freedom and the future nationhood.”³² Righteous Hindu women started to symbolize the nation and the community from the colonial period. During the anti-colonial movement, the nascent nation state was considered a physical entity, i.e. *Bharat Maa*,³³ as mother, woman, and goddess.³⁴ Mythological goddesses such as Sati,³⁵ Savitri,³⁶ and Sita became the inspiration of the ideal devotional wife committed to virtue and conformity. To emphasize Indian values and ethos during the colonial period, a nonsexual image of women was presented. Depicted mostly as the “virtuous, chaste, submissive, self-sacrificing Hindu woman,” she was “the manager of this hearth [and] came to symbolize the incorruptible abode of the nascent nation, ‘who had to preserve the Hindu family because the [Hindu] male had already succumbed

to western colonial power in the material realm’.”³⁷ According to Charu Gupta, Hindi literature also went through a gradual shift, from “the erotic Radha of medieval poetry to the chaste and virtuous wife and mother extremely restrained and bound by propriety.”³⁸ As the woman’s body came to be used symbolically as the nation, it was supposed to be protected from outsiders or the ‘Other’ by the male members of the community. M.A. Mubarki writes, “When the woman’s body came to represent the nation it became out of bounds for the ‘Other’.”³⁹ He further argues,

Women’s bodies [were] deemed the repositories of men’s honour, the community’s morality, and the nation’s territorial integrity, which were subjected to brutal violence both sexual and otherwise, since as a symbol of lineage and purity, women’s bodies once violated sexually would purportedly designate the entire collectivity as dishonoured and shamed.⁴⁰

Though the identification of Hindu women with the nation’s honour is an early nationalist concept, it achieved unprecedented significance only after the rise of Hindu nationalist politics. As Hindutva ideology supposes that women have to be protected by the male members of society, the ‘love-*jihad*’ campaign became an important tool to propagate that line of thought.

‘Love-*jihad*’ and Hindu Nationalism

In recent times, one of the most controversial issues of Hindu nationalism has been ‘love-*jihad*’. There is a “fake claim by the Hindu right that there is a ‘Love *Jihad*’ organization which is forcing Hindu women to convert to Islam through

false expressions of love.”⁴¹ The propaganda that has been disseminated is that some Islamic fundamentalist organizations are funding young Muslim boys so that they are able to trap non-Muslim girls to marry them and thus force them to convert to Islam. This belief is popularized by organizations such as the RSS, Vishwa Hindu Parishad [VHP], Sri Ram Sena, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, and Hindu Janjagruthi Samiti. These organisations also utilised the horrifying memories of the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, the formation of Pakistan and the accompanying brutal violence between Hindu and Muslim communities. They tried to instil fear through the propagation of stories of how, historically, Hindu women were abducted by Muslim men. They have been holding meetings, distributing pamphlets, and even filing court cases against Muslim men alleged of luring Hindu women to marry them. These right-wing groups have declared that ‘love-*jihad*,’ as a part of an Islamist conspiracy, is a plan for the compulsive and deceitful religious conversion of young women by winning over their love. To counter ‘love-*jihad*,’ Ajjju Chauhan, state co-convenor of the Bajrang Dal, launched a campaign named ‘*Bahu Laao, Beti Bachao*’⁴² in February 2015. The campaign was meant to encourage Hindu men to marry non-Hindu women and, on the other hand, to create awareness among Hindu women against ‘love-*jihad*’.

The case of ‘love-*jihad*’ has been highlighted and has made its presence felt in the visual as well as print media because of its “socio-religio-political movement to protect religious sovereignty in India.”⁴³ Media platforms including social

networking sites are flooded with the news of ‘love-jihad’ cases and that has undoubtedly posed a threat to the expression of one’s choice of love and raised the alarming question of being able to choose religious identity. There are several campaigns such as ‘Moral Policing,’ ‘*Ghar Wapsi*,’⁴⁴ ‘*Bahu Lao, Beti Bachao*,’ ‘How to Save Our Women from the Terrorism of Love-Jihad,’ ‘*Hindu Auraton ki Loot*’⁴⁵ and ‘*Love Trishul*’⁴⁶ which were launched to save the honour of Hindu women and preserve cohesive community identities and boundaries.

‘Love-jihad’ also known as ‘Romeo-Jihad’ is considered as part of an international Islamist conspiracy; it is alleged that young Muslim men receive funds from abroad to purchase “designer clothes, vehicles, mobile phones and expensive gifts to woo Hindu women and lure them away ... from their home and religion.”⁴⁷ Spreading such opinions through campaigns strengthens the pre-existing belief that the “body of the Hindu woman has become a site for both claims to community homogeneity and honour.”⁴⁸ These campaigns also undermine the status of women in India using the old patriarchal notion that women are not self-sufficient enough to make their own decisions. Charu Gupta has mentioned noted Hindi writers such as Bharatendu Harishchandra,⁴⁹ Pratap Narain Misra,⁵⁰ and Radha Charan Goswami⁵¹ to explain how these campaigns utilised the history of medieval “Muslim rule, which is assumed as the history of chronicle rape and abduction of Hindu women.”⁵² “The same assumption is carried forward that the Muslim men

lack morality with high sexual appetites for women's body, lecherous in behaviours with a life of luxury and religious fanaticism.”⁵³

Along with being used for creating panic and fostering hate to draw sharper lines between Hindus and Muslims in India, it can be argued from the above analysis that in the contemporary political scenario, women's bodies have become the battleground for playing the political card and spreading falsehood and hatred. Women's bodies are often being presumed as the repository of moral ethics. 'Love-jihad' appears to be a form of violence which attacks religion, gender, and the rights of women. Furthermore, the concept of 'love-jihad' also tends to seize away the right of a woman to choose a partner, while also enforcing religion-imposed choices on the bride. Bollywood has always been a platform to represent the socio-political situation, and, thus, it caters to the common psyche of the country. We must focus on the impact of Hindu nationalism and the love-jihad campaign on Bollywood.

Locating 'Love-Jihad' in Bollywood

In the postcolonial nation state, films have become an important tool to propagate the idea of nationalism. Hindi cinema went through varied shifts in response to the socio-political situation of its contemporary times. While the films of the 1950s and the 1960s, the so-called Nehruvian⁵⁴ era, reflected the 'tolerant' secularism of the state, the 1970s and the 1980s saw the emergence of an alternative politics of representing minority Muslims as 'Other' and Hindu culture as national

culture. Though Muslims are always represented as ‘Others’ by portraying them as exotic in Bollywood, which was the case even during the so-called secularist Nehruvian era, the specific vilification of Muslims only started about three decades ago. At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the Hindu right-wing movement emerged as a robust presence in India. The Babri Masjid⁵⁵ demolition on 6 December 1992, and the concomitant hardening of communal identities was a major turning point in recent Indian history. It was followed by communal riots in many parts of India. The demolition of the Babri Masjid and the riots that followed became the theme of many memorable films. The divisions in Indian society, whether it is sexual, religious, or ethnic identity, have increasingly been more apparent in recent years. But, ignoring that fact, Hindi cinema continues to prioritize a monolithic image of the nation and portray a “certain essence of ‘Indianess’”⁵⁶ termed as ‘Indian culture.’ Such representations are most popular among the Indian diaspora. The diasporic communities have an important role in forging public culture in India. According to Sunil Khilnani, towards the end of 1989, a large number of bricks⁵⁷ were piled up in the pilgrimage town of Ayodhya to build the Ram-temple at the disputed site of the erstwhile Babri Masjid. These were not ordinary bricks; they were ‘Ram *shilas*’ or Ram’s bricks collected from across India and outside the country. Khilnani points out, “Each was inscribed with its place of origin, and among the most proudly displayed were those dispatched by emigrant communities in United States, Canada, South Africa and [the]

Caribbean.”⁵⁸ The diasporic community provided an eager market for films that cater to Hindu religion and culture. Two Bollywood films, *Pardes*⁵⁹ and *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham*⁶⁰ narrate stories of Indian families transported to foreign lands and promote Indian culture and rituals “identified as markers of Hindu tradition, thereby making any other religion or culture appear ‘Un-Indian’.”⁶¹ I argue that if there is a need to represent Hindu culture and tradition as a national culture, it is obvious that others are represented as either less or differently. Muslims are portrayed as ‘Others’ who are trying to harm the nation, while the majoritarian community is often represented as the ‘victims.’ Hence, Hindus are projected as the norm of the society and Muslims are the disrupters of this norm. The ‘Otherization’ of Muslims through cinematic space was mostly done during the last decade of the 20th and the first decade of the 21st century.

The deep-seated prejudices in India about Muslims were utilized by the Hindutva movements to unite the majoritarian population. The strategy of polarizing people was adopted keeping in mind the troubled history of the subcontinent. Injecting a deep paranoia about Muslims and their ‘outsideness’ by frequent references to medieval Muslim plunderers such as Mamud, the Sultan of Gazni, who looted northern India every year, is a popular strategy of Hindutva forces. Such scenarios were created by Hindu nationalists in a way that implied that the crisis occurred recently.⁶² Prakash Louis, in his empirical study,⁶³ discusses the attempts of the RSS to ‘re-write’ history textbooks in Maharashtra, thereby

injecting communal consciousness in the minds of the young. There was also a new set of films that characterized family values, 'Indian culture,' and patriarchy but had Muslim characters in minor or supporting roles who were identifiable because of their Islamicate culture. In those films, such characters' identities as Muslims took precedence over all other identity markers such as occupation.

Postcolonial Hindi cinema became one of the platforms to propagate the hegemony of the 'Hindu-ized nation' which emphasizes the notion of women being the symbol of the country. Bollywood has also become a controversial site as some film-makers are accused for disseminating the ideology of 'love-jihad' through their films. *Jodhaa Akbar* is cited as the initial example of 'love-jihad.' Another recent and targeted film that is claimed to have promoted 'love-jihad' is *Bajrangi Baijaan*.⁶⁴ As soon as the name of the film was announced, it was wrongly assumed by some unknown 'Hindu fundamentalist' groups that the film was an example of 'love-jihad' where a Muslim boy wooed a Hindu girl. The whole controversy started with the word *bhaijaan* which is generally used to address a Muslim man. Actually, the plot concerns a Hindu Brahmin man who faces numerous challenges to reunite a Pakistani Muslim girl with her homeland and family. The film was mired in multiple controversies before its release.

In Gujarat, before the festival of *garba*,⁶⁵ VHP leaders started circulating an audio clip that targeted *Bajrangi Baijaan* in order to warn Hindus against 'love-jihad.' VHP leaders mentioned, "The audio was created to bring awareness among

Hindus that such a sinister plan is being executed by the minority community to entice young Hindu girls who get smitten by the romanticism in such movies.”⁶⁶ They even claimed that the director, Kabir Khan, had been funded by Arab countries to make the film to promote the ideology of ‘love-*jihad*.’ The most recent and most targeted film claimed to promote ‘love-*jihad*’ is Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s *Padmaavat*. In that film, Alauddin Khalji⁶⁷ is depicted as a cannibalistic, sexually depraved, and despotic ruler; this portrayal is a product of the recent socio-political developments in the country, where the Muslim man is portrayed as an alien ‘Other’ out to violate a brave and virtuous Hindu woman’s ‘honour.’

Apart from the films, Bollywood stars, especially the Khans, are accused of the charge of ‘love-*jihad*’ in their real lives. Saif Ali Khan even got death threats at the time of his wedding to Kareena Kapoor in 2012 as he was accused for promoting ‘love-*jihad*.’ The Hindu Mahasabha has thrown a challenge to the Khans — Shahrukh Khan, Amir Khan, and Saif Ali Khan — to be converted to Hinduism if they really love their wives. Himalaya Dhwani, a women’s magazine by the VHP, used a morphed photo of Kareena Kapoor for its cover page: her face is shown as half covered with a *niqab*,⁶⁸ with the caption “Conversion of nationality through religious conversion.”⁶⁹ The magazine carried an article that attempted to persuade those women who got married to Muslim men to re-convert. As Kareena Kapoor married a Muslim man, her picture was used as a tool to promote the campaign.

Portrayal of Historical Female Characters as the Nation

In this section, I will discuss two female characters—Jodhaa⁷⁰ and Padmaavati⁷¹—and their fictitious portrayal of history in Bollywood to support the larger political discourse in present times, as many Indian filmgoers tend to get their knowledge of history from such films. On the one hand, we have Jodhaa, a quasi-historical character about whom very few historical facts are available, who is shown as trying to retain her Hindu religious beliefs and values even after her marriage with Akbar, a Muslim ruler; on the other hand, we see Padmavati, a fictitious character (also known as Rani Padmini) sacrificing her life in fear of losing her honor at the hands of the Muslim ruler, Alauddin Khalji. Most interestingly, the 19th century witnessed Rani Padmini's existence in poetry being transformed into a 'fact.' Colonial writer, Colonel James Tod, Political Agent of the English East India Company in Rajputana, "manufactured the enduring impression of Indian history as a confrontation between Muslims and Hindus — which justified British rule to keep the peace in a land of competing antagonisms."⁷² Later on, the legend of Rani Padmini aka Padmavati was used for anti-colonial mobilization in the early 20th century. In *Jodhaa Akbar*, the Muslim emperor was projected as an ideal example due to his tolerant ways as he willingly accepted Jodhaa's cultural superiority.

Jodhaa Akbar, a period drama, can claim to have a pioneering role in the context of portraying communal harmony. The film narrates the story of the

romance between Mughal Emperor Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar and the Rajput princess Jodhaa Bai, daughter of King Bharmal of Amer. When Akbar plans to attack Amer, King Bharmal reluctantly offers his daughter's hand in marriage to the emperor himself to avoid war and strengthen relations between their kingdoms. Akbar agrees to the marriage, as such a union would bring forge a truly strong alliance and long-lasting peace between the Mughal Empire and the Rajputs.

Padmaavat is also a period drama. The film is inspired by the eponymous epic poem by Malik Muhammad Jayasi. Rani Padmavati, a Rajput queen known for her beauty, is the wife of Maharawal Ratan Singh. Sultan Alauddin Khalji hears of the legendary beauty of Rani Padmavati and attacks Ratan Singh's kingdom to claim her. While the film *Padmaavat* not only portrays the Rajput queen as symbolically representing the nation, the eruption of controversies associated with the film before its release also shows how the female body is constructed as a site of a community's honour in the nationalist discourse. The film narrates the transactions between Rajput kings and the Khaljis of the Delhi Sultanate. Several Rajput-caste organizations, including Shri Rajput Karni Sena, protested the making of the film. The film's sets were also vandalized as the miscreants claimed that the film portrays Padmavati, a Rajput queen, in bad light. It was assumed that there was a song during which Khalji is shown fantasizing about the queen as an object for his sexual desire. Even the film's director, Sanjay Leela Banshali, was assaulted on the film set. The protests were not limited to Rajasthan, where the Karni Sena and

Rajputs were protesting; there were multiple protests that were organized across the country. Bhansali and Deepika Padukone received death threats. A bounty of fifty million rupees was announced for whoever would assassinate both. The beliefs and psyche of the common people are evident from such protests. For them, the honor of a Rajput queen and the nation's honour are one and the same, representing something that an outsider such as Khalji cannot be allowed to claim.

Both the queens have been represented as embodying the nation. Thus, Jodhaa holds on to her duty and honor in adverse circumstances as the proud embodiment of the nation when she is banished from Akbar's kingdom on charges of being disloyal towards her husband. She faces grave humiliation and shame when she has to leave the country; however, she willingly returns to the emperor's palace after Akbar renounces the *jaziya* tax.⁷³ Here love is an overarching concept because Jhodhaa compromises her dignity and self-esteem for the general interest of the larger society and nation. Film scholar Anustup Basu points out that "human (heterosexual) love is a unifying middle term which sets up an organic bridge between spirit and substance, between the particular and the general interest."⁷⁴ The film portrays Jodhaa as a character imbued with zeal and self-assertion and makes her as the active counter of Akbar. It is through her agency that the Oriental despot Akbar turns pacifist at the end and seeks peace even with the evil and rebellious Sharifuddin.

As already discussed in the earlier sections, one of the important features of the new-found Hindu nationalism is the construction of the image of ideal women as virtuous, chaste, without sexual desire, self-sacrificing, and Hindu. To make the image of women pure, Padmaavati is compared with the mythological characters such as Savitri and her journey to bring back her husband from Yumraj.⁷⁵ One of the important characteristics of Jodhaa is her neutered sexlessness. Although Mahamanga, the overassertive nurse of Akbar, taunts Jodhaa for her sexless, transactional style marriage, Jodhaa, as the symbol of Hinduness, finds succour in a marriage that is binding and complete, meriting full submission even if it remains unconsummated.

Throughout the film, Jodhaa's cultural superiority is reflected multiple times, most specifically in her refusal to take recourse to *Khula*, the Islamic right of a woman to divorce her husband, offered by Akbar on the wedding night. Mubarki interprets it as "an act of defiance and an assertion of cultural superiority, aimed at rebuking Akbar and his cultural 'Otherness,' for while Islam considers marriage as a social contract between two consenting individuals, in Hinduism marriage signifies a bond that transcends time and space. If Jodhaa must hang on to her faith, Akbar must partially renounce his."⁷⁶ The film shows that Jodhaa may cohabit with the 'Other' if her culturally visible 'spiritual' qualifiers such as her dress, her culinary habits, her religiosity, and her *samskar*⁷⁷ are respected and obeyed. Jodhaa emerges from the narrative as the protector of Hindu values in the

midst of a cultural onslaught, and becomes the embodiment of national consciousness. The character of Jodhaa dwells a middle ground and straddles the dichotomous regions of the Mughal Empire as the outer domain and the spiritual as an inner realm beyond the critiques of outsiders. In *Padmaavat*, the cultural superiority of the Rajput queen is obvious in almost every scene. There are many sequences such as greeting an enemy such as Khalji, culinary choices, and sartorial choices that portray the rich cultural heritage of Hindu Rajputs and which symbolize the entire nation's culture. In this imaginary world of the Rajput kingdom, Maharawal Ratan Singh gets the chance to kill Khalji but refuses to do so because of his ethics and values of life as he believes that a guest should be treated like a god and that is the practice of a true Rajput. Sartorial choices are also highlighted multiple times through the elaborate costumes of the whole Rajput clan, especially through the characters of Padmavati and Ratan Singh. One can even argue that the lotus motif, which is omnipresent in the entire film from being in costumes to wall paintings, symbolizes the current ruling political party of India.⁷⁸ Vegetarian food is also treated as a source of pride and this is evident when Khalji is offered such a meal.

That the nation's pride lies in the hands of women is most evident through the glorification of the ritual of mass suicide, which is termed *jauhar*. Though Khalji's army succeeds in defeating the Rajputs and capturing Chittor, it is unable to capture the Rajput women, who commit *jauhar* with Rani Padmavati. It

fundamentally propagates the message that the honour of the community or clan rests with women. If the woman cohabits with an outsider, the community's and thus the nation's integrity and pride are lost. It also inspires women to sacrifice their lives if they face similar situations to save the nation's pride, encouraging them to see things from the perspective of the community's larger interest rather than their own individualistic interest. Padmavati emerges within the narrative as a protector of Hindu values. Padmavati inspires other women to commit *jauhar* and in her speech she says, "In every age, a war for righteousness is fought between good and evil. Like the one between Lord Ram and Raavan, between the Pandavas and Kauravas and now between the Rajputs and Khiljis." To encourage other women to sacrifice their lives, Padmaavi further says in her concluding speech, "Those who lust for our body, would not even get their hands on our shadows, our bodies will be reduced to ashes, but our pride and honour will remain immortal, and that will be the biggest defeat of Alauddin's life."

The transaction between Jodhaa and Akbar is not characterized by any "Bakhtinian style of interactive, responsive nature of dialogue, or a mutual exchange of cultural practices."⁷⁹ It is very evident that the film encourages a one-way acknowledgement that requires Akbar to adapt to the customs of Jodhaa, much like the right-wing rhetoric that requires minorities to adopt the majoritarian⁸⁰ way of life. In connection to this, Tejaswini Niranjana examines the reasons why the film *Bombay*⁸¹ could not have had a Muslim male cohabiting with a Hindu female,

given the metaphorical association of women with the motherland: “the initiator of the integration process ... cannot but be a man from the majority community.”⁸² The films which narrate the story of inter-religious marriage of a Hindu female with a Muslim male marks her symbolic alienation from land, faith, family, and motherland, as in *Pinjar*,⁸³ *Kurbaan*,⁸⁴ and *My Name Is Khan*.⁸⁵

Representation of Muslim Rulers as ‘Other’ in the Context of ‘Love-jihad’

The films *Jodhaa Akbar* and *Padmaavat* are in the genre of ‘Muslim Historical’ which is characterised by its exoticisms of ‘Other.’ With regard to the Muslim Historical genre, Ira Bhaskar and Richard Alan indicate that “in the post-independence Nehruvian period, this rhetoric had a special significance in upholding the Mughal era and as a valuation of Muslim culture that marked the secular credentials of the new nation-state.”⁸⁶ In the context of the current political scenario, we find that contemporary Muslim Historical films present a different rhetoric than in the past. The primary factors of inspiration for the storylines and character development in the two films under our review in this paper are ‘Islamic Empires,’ specifically the Mughal rulers, and imagined love affairs. *Jodhaa Akbar* represents Mughal emperors as rulers who were known to be cultured, secular, and popular for their good governance and also portrays a generalized imagination of Islamicate culture, architecture, etc. It emphasizes the Muslim ethos, which is basically north Indian culture.⁸⁷ In the film, the exoticism of Akbar is characterized

by the predominant cultural elements of language, dress, and music, which were clearly influenced by Islamicate culture.

Muslim Historical films employ Urdu as the standard language of the Mughal rulers, and *Jodhaa Akbar* as well as *Padmaavat* make use of the language in the context of Muslim rulers. After Partition, Urdu has come to be designated as the language of Muslims, as it became the national language of Pakistan; also, Urdu was considered “as a ‘Muslim language’ due to its association with Muslim courts and its close ties with Persian language and literature.”⁸⁸ Because of political reasons, Hindi came to be considered as the de facto national language of India. It was assumed that Urdu implies Muslim and Pakistan, and Hindi implies Hindu and Hindustan. But these Hindi films used the Urdu language as that belonging to the Mughal rulers to signify the existence of these historical figures beyond the nation state and mark them as the outsiders to or intruders of this country.

Islamicate culture is reflected in these films through the costumes of the characters. *Jodhaa Akbar* and *Padmaavat* represent the splendour of the royal courts through architecture and costumes. *Jodhaa Akbar* displays elaborate costumes much like other Muslim Historical films. In *Padmaavat*, Rawal Ratan Singh’s character as the brave and noble Indian Rajput king is reflected through the extravagance of his costumes that befit the Rajput glory he is shown as upholding. On the other hand, ambitious and obsessive Alauddin Khalji is attributed a dark and ominous look because of his background as a nomadic Turkish tribal invader. His

character became a perfect counterfoil to Rawal Ratan Singh through the use of dark-coloured costumes, by being surrounded by women all the time, and due to his excessive appetite for meat.

Though *Jodhaa Akbar* portrays the picture of Akbar as a secular ruler, he only becomes fully Indian by privileging the nation over faith within the narrative of the film. *Jodhaa Akbar* uses the strategy of the ideology of syncretism as “Akbar is shorn of all oppositional elements: the proverbial Mughal bloodlust, the famed Muslim propensity for violence, and the forbidden pleasures of the flesh.”⁸⁹ He is subsumed into the nationalist order, and being nationalist, he indulges himself with the virtues of eating vegetarian food and practising monogamy and pacifism. Though he is also represented as the ‘Other’ through his costume and language: “his Otherness is rendered safe and assimilable, and secularism emerges from within the vortex of Hindutva – softer, but all-encompassing nevertheless.”⁹⁰

The representation of Khalji as the outsider is absolute in *Padmaavat* as he is shown asserting his connection with and tracing his ancestry to Afghanistan. To drive home the point even further, the film begins with a shot of a fort in the middle of a desert and the *mise-en-scene* of the world inside the fort represents the lifestyle of Alauddin's paternal uncle and the founder of the Khalji dynasty, Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji. He is shown as nonchalantly relaxing in the midst of a huge heap of meat, and is being chastised by his fellow mates because of his excesses. The film pits the great, brave, and virtuous Hindus versus the depraved and despotic

Muslim Khalji, who has an insatiable appetite for meat and women. Despite being an iconoclast and an expansionist, Khalji was a sophisticated speaker of Persian, who streamlined the economy of the Delhi Sultanate and is credited with having been the patron of the invention of two key instruments of Hindustani classical music, the *tabla* and the *sitar*. But the film never focuses on these positive aspects. Khalji is reduced to being the perfect example of cannibalistic, sexually deprived, and despotic Muslims.

Conclusion

Popular culture has always developed in response to a country's political situation. The production of a self-conscious and aggressive nationalism in Hindi cinema recalls the idea of saving the nation by protecting the female body from invaders or the 'Other.' As the 'love-jihad' campaign considers women as the nation's pride and the male members of the society as protectors of that honour, the same ideology finds reflection in Bollywood as well, which is often used as a platform to propagate contemporary political discourse. Popular culture through films such as *Padmaavat* encourage women to uphold their honour even if it means sacrificing their life to avoid being captured by the 'Outsider.' On the other hand *Jodhaa Akbar* represents a one-sided assimilation of Muslim culture into Hindu practices and showcased the cultural superiority of Hinduism. Most interestingly, in both the films, the spiritual sphere, which was represented by women, was

protected from the ‘Others’ who happened to be ‘outsiders’ as well, sometimes by portraying them as inferior or by vilifying the characters. This phenomenon echoes features of Orientalist discourse, which depicted Western culture as superior to Eastern ones,⁹¹ specifically, that of Muslims in the Middle-East. By analysing these two films, we can infer that Bollywood has created a space for popular historical perceptions which have been developed through a complicated process of interaction between academic history writing and political ideology. The dissemination of potentially distorted or fictitious representation of history through popular culture is strengthening Hindu nationalist discourse, and by doing so, it is also re-emphasising the narrative of how women can save the honor of our society from outsiders, much in the same way as the concept of ‘love-*jihad*’ argues. We find that Bollywood has contributed to the hegemonic Hindutva discourse through multiple representations of the concept of the Hindu nation and Muslim minority as a kind of Manichean rivalry.

¹ The definition of Bollywood is mentioned by the editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica as “Hindi-language sector of the Indian moviemaking industry that began in Bombay (now Mumbai) in the 1930s and developed into an enormous film empire.” - “Bollywood.” Encyclopaedia Britannica. Last modified October 12, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bollywood-film-industry-India>.

² As per the definition by Encyclopaedia Britannica, Hindi is a standardised and Sanskritised register of the Indic languages. Hindi is written in the Devanagari script. Hindi, along with English, is the official language of India. - “Hindi Language.” Encyclopaedia Britannica. Last modified November 28, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hindi-language>.

³ *Love Jihad* (sometimes referred as *Romeo Jihad*) is mentioned by Charu Gupta as “fake claim by the Hindu right that there is a ‘Love *Jihad*’ organization which is forcing Hindu women to

convert to Islam through false expressions of love.” – Charu Gupta, “Hindu Women, Muslim Men: Love Jihad and Conversions” in *Economic and political weekly* 44:51 (December 2009), 13.

⁴ *Jodhaa Akbar* is a Hindi language film, released in 2008, and directed by Ashutosh Gowariker.

⁵ *Padmaavat* is a Hindi language film, released in 2018, and directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali.

⁶ Kelly J. Bell, "Who Makes a Nation? An Examination of Nationalism, Gender, and Membership in the Nation." *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse* 1.12 (2009). Accessed September 16, 2018. <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=80>.

⁷ Merriam-Webster. "Nationalism: dictionary definition," accessed August 8, 2018. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nationalism>.

⁸ See footnote 6.

⁹ Sophie Gilmartin mentioned 'Sati-daha' as "the obsolete Hindu practice in which a widow burns herself upon her husband's funeral pyre" - Gilmartin, Sophie. "The Sati, the Bride, and the Widow: Sacrificial Woman in the Nineteenth Century," In *Victorian Literature and Culture* 25:1 (1997), 141. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150300004678>.

¹⁰ Lata Mani cited in Partha Chatterjee, "Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women: The Contest in India." In *American Ethnologist* 16:4 (1989): 622-633.

¹¹ Chatterjee, "Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women," 622-633.

¹² Syed Hussain Shaheed Sowerwordi, "Hindu Nationalism and the Political Role of Hindu Women: Ideology as a Factor." In *South Asian Studies* 28:1 (June 2013), 41.

¹³ Sarkar, T. "The Gender Predicament of the Hindu Right." In *The Concerned Indian's Guide to Communalism*, edited by K. N. Panikkar. New Delhi: Penguin Book India. (2003): 131-159.

¹⁴ Bell, "Who Makes a Nation?"

¹⁵ Soherwordi, "Hindu Nationalism and the Political Role of Hindu Women," 39-54.

¹⁶ See footnote 12.

¹⁷ Anustap Basu, *Bollywood in the Age of New Media*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) cited in Soherwordi, "Hindu Nationalism and the Political Role of Hindu Women," 40.

¹⁸ Thapar, Romila, *et al.*, *On Nationalism*. (New Delhi: Aleph Spotlight, 2016).

¹⁹ Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), "presents itself as a cultural, not a political, organization that nevertheless advocates a Hindu nationalistic agenda under the banner of hindutva, or 'Hindu-ness'." - "Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh." Encyclopaedia Britannica. Last modified July 03, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Rashtriya-Swayamsevak-Sangh>.

²⁰ Nadira Khatun, "Imagining Muslims as the 'Other' in Muslim political films." In *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research* 9, 1 (April 2016): 41-60. <https://doi:10.1386/jammr.9.1.41.1>.

²¹ Ayodhya Movement: “[On December 6, 1992] right-wing Hindu mobs razed to the ground the 16th Century Babri mosque, claiming that it was built on the site of a temple destroyed by Muslim rulers... It was the culmination of a six-year campaign [mentioned as Ayodhya Movement] spearheaded by the BJP to destroy the mosque and replace it with a temple.” – Tully, Mark. “How the Babri mosque destruction shaped India.” *BBC News*, December 6, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-42219773>.

²² Sati (or Suttee) is mentioned as “the Indian custom of a wife immolating herself either on the funeral pyre of her dead husband or in some other fashion soon after his death.” – “Suttee” Encyclopaedia Britannica. Last modified March 03, 2015. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/suttee>.

²³ Sati of Roop Kanwar: “On September 4, 1987, ... a young girl of 18 in the village of Deorala in Rajasthan was murdered. She was burnt alive on the funeral pyre of her husband. Yet, according to local tradition, Roop Kanwar had become a “sati” and had “voluntarily” immolated herself” – Sharma, Kalpana. “Remembering Roop Kanwar.” *The Hindu*, September 23, 2007. <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-sundaymagazine/remembering-roop-kanwar/article2275587.ece>.

²⁴ Soherwordi, “Hindu Nationalism and the Political Role of Hindu Women,” 43.

²⁵ Basu cited in Soherwordi, “Hindu Nationalism and the Political Role of Hindu Women,” 44.

²⁶ Sita, is the central character in the Hindu epic, the Ramayana and “the consort of the god Rama... Sita worshipped as the incarnation of Lakshmi... Though often regarded as the embodiment of wifely devotion and self-sacrifice...” – “Sita” Encyclopaedia Britannica. Last modified March 29, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sita>.

²⁷ Ashis Nandy, “Woman versus Womanliness in India: An Essay in Cultural and Political Psychology.” In *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press. (1980): 32–46.

²⁸ See footnote 11.

²⁹ Sumathi Ramaswamy, “Maps, Mother/Goddesses, and Martyrdom in Modern India.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, 3 (August 2008): 819–853. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911808001174>.

³⁰ Gupta, “Hindu Women, Muslim Men.”

³¹ Meraj Ahmed Mubarki, “Exploring the ‘Other’: inter-faith marriages in Jodhaa Akbar and beyond,” In *Contemporary South Asia* 22, 3 (July 2014): 258. <https://doi:10.1080/09584935.2014.930419>.

³² Sarkar, “The Gender Predicament of the Hindu Right,” 131–159.

³³ ‘Bharat Maa’, the symbolic name, is attributed to Mother India by freedom fighter during India’s independence movement. –Bhardwaj, Ashutosh. “Bharat Mata: From freedom struggle metaphor to patriotism’s litmus test.” *The Indian Express*, March 21, 2016.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/in-fact-bharat-mata-from-freedom-struggle-metaphor-to-patriotisms-litmus-test/>.

³⁴ Sumathi Ramaswamy, "Maps and Mother Goddesses in Modern India." *Imago Mundi* 53, 1 (2001): 97–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085690108592940>.

³⁵ Sati referred as the goddess of marital felicity and longevity in Hinduism.

³⁶ Savitri is mentioned as "goddess in Hindu mythology... The Mahabharata [Indian epic] recounts how Savitri used the power of her dedication to her husband Satyavan to prevent Yama, the god of the dead, from taking him when he was fated to die. She became the epitome of the faithful wife." - "Savitri." Encyclopaedia Britannica. Last modified May 01, 2015. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Savitri>.

³⁷ Gupta cited in Mubarki, "Exploring the 'Other'," 259.

³⁸ Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims and the Hindu Public in Colonial India*. (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 40.

³⁹ Mubarki, "Exploring the 'Other'," 259.

⁴⁰ See footnote 39.

⁴¹ Gupta, "Hindu Women, Muslim Men," 13.

⁴² 'Bahu Laao, Beti Bachao', the campaign, propagates the idea of bring more 'daughters-in-law from other religious communities and save Hindu daughters. - HT Correspondence. *Hindustan Times*, December 01, 2017. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/lucknow/hindu-outfit-plans-beti-bachao-bahu-lao-campaign-to-counter-love-jihad/story-HVxTzT8Vn8bAYmYNYVZysI.html>.

⁴³ Hossain, Sahel Md Delabul, *et al.* "'Love-Jihad'; Protection of Religious Proximity: An Indian Situation." *International Journal Of Humanities And Cultural Studies* 2:4 (March 2016).

⁴⁴ 'Ghar Wapsi', meaning "Back to Home", is a series of religious conversion activities, facilitated by Indian Hindu organizations Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), to facilitate conversion of non-Hindus to Hinduism. – PTI. "VHP announces 'ghar wapsi' programme in Rajasthan." *The Economic Times*, December 24, 2014. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/vhp-announces-ghar-wapsi-programme-in-rajasthan/articleshow/45631386.cms>.

⁴⁵ 'Hindu Auraton ki Loot', the campaign literally means 'Loot of Hindu Women'. – Gupta, Charu. "The myth of love jihad." *The Indian Express*, August 28, 2014. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-myth-of-love-jihad/>.

⁴⁶ Love Trishul: Shiv-Sena, a Hindu right-wing political party of India, declared that the "party would form a 'love trishul', gang of people meant to act and intervene early each time a case of 'love jihad' is reported, so that young Hindu women at risk of conversion after being trapped in relationships are saved." – Yadav, Ankit. "Shiv Sena forms 'love trishul' counter 'love jihad'." *The Times of India*, September 8, 2014. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bareilly/Shiv-Sena-forms-love-trishul-to-counter-love-jihad/articleshow/42050534.cms>.

⁴⁷ Gupta, "Hindu Women, Muslim Men," 13.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Bhartendu Harishchandra (1850 – 1885) is known for his contribution as a writer in modern Hindi literature as well as Hindi theatre.

⁵⁰ Pratap Narain Misra (1856–1894) was a Hindi essayist in British India.

⁵¹ Radha Charan Goswami (1859–1923) was a Hindi writer.

⁵² Gupta, "Hindu Women, Muslim Men."

⁵³ Hossain, et al. "‘Love-Jihad’; Protection of Religious Proximity," 673.

⁵⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru was the first Prime Minister of India and is considered to be the architect of the modern Indian nation-state: a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic. His office period from 1947 to 1964 is considered the Nehruvian era.

⁵⁵ Babri Masjid: "The substantial 16th century mosque was constructed in 1527 by Babur, the first Mughal emperor of India... Babri Mosque was also at the heart of the Ayodhya dispute, a contentious debate in India over access to the plot of land on which the Babri Mosque is built. Muslims revere this land as the location of one of India's oldest, grandest Mughal-era mosques ever built. Hindus also regard the land as holy, as they believe it is the birthplace of the Hindu god Rama... in 1992, during a political rally gone wrong, Hindu militants demolished the sacred Babri Mosque..." – "Babri mosque is destroyed, incites riots." *The History Channel*, <https://www.historychannel.com.au/this-day-in-history/babri-mosque-is-destroyed-incites-riots/>.

⁵⁶ Shobha S. Rajgopal, "Bollywood and Neonationalism: The emergence of Nativism as the Norm in Indian conventional cinema." In *South Asian Popular culture* 9:3 (October 2011), 240.

⁵⁷ According to Khilnani, the number of bricks accumulated to build Ram Mandir was 167,000. – Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2004).

⁵⁸ Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, 150.

⁵⁹ *Pardes* is a Hindi language film, released in 1997 and directed by Subhas Ghai.

⁶⁰ *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* is a Hindi language film, released in 2001, directed by Karan Johar.

⁶¹ Rajgopal, "Bollywood and Neonationalism," 242.

⁶² Rajgopal, "Bollywood and Neonationalism," 237-246.

⁶³ Prakash Louis, *The Emerging Hindutva Force: The Ascent of Hindu Nationalism* (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 2000).

⁶⁴ *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* is an Indian Hindi-language adventure comedy drama film, directed by Kabir Khan and released in 2015.

⁶⁵ Garba is a traditional form of Gujarati folk dance and song, performed as a fertility ritual.

⁶⁶ Raja, Aditi. "VHP steps up campaign against 'love jihad'." *The Indian Express*, September 20, 2014. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/vhp-steps-up-campaign-against-love-jihad/>.

⁶⁷ Alauddin Khalji was the second and most powerful ruler of the Khalji dynasty that ruled the Delhi Sultanate in the Indian subcontinent, ruled from 1296–1316.

⁶⁸ Niqab, a veil, is mostly used by the women who belong to Muslim community.

⁶⁹ Pathak, Vikas. "Kareena's morphed photo used as warning against 'love jihad'." *Hindustan Times*, January 08, 2015. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/kareena-s-morphed-photo-used-as-warning-against-love-jihad/story-AdazJ5dpabFFs5w15gkOZO.html>.

⁷⁰ Jodhaa bai popularly known as Mariam-uz-Zamani (c. 1542 – 19 May 1623) was the third wife of Mughal emperor Akbar. She was born a Rajput princess. She was the daughter of Raja Bihari Mal of Amber (Jaipur). - "Jodha Bai (d. 1613)." *Dictionary of Women Worldwide: 25,000 Women Through the Ages*. . *Encyclopedia.com*. Last Updated December 09, 2018 <https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/jodha-bai-d-1613>.

⁷¹ Padmaavati is also known as Padmavati. She was mentioned in Sufi poet Malik Muhammad Jayasi's poem *Padmavat*, written in Awadhi in 1540 CE. The Jayasi text describes Padmavati was an exceptionally beautiful princess of the Singhal kingdom (Sri Lanka). – Harikrishnan, Charmy. "So, who was Padmavati?" *The Economic Times*, November 26, 2017. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/so-who-was-padmavati/articleshow/61798184.cms>.

⁷² Manu S. Pillai, "Manufacturing the fable of Padmavati". *The Mint*, 10 February 2017. <https://www.livemint.com/Leisure/DuN5tsGGpEtkVnuIW6pcFN/Manufacturing-the-fable-of-Padmavati.html>

⁷³ *Jizya* is a per capita yearly tax imposed on non-Muslim people.

⁷⁴ Basu, *Bollywood in the Age of New Media*, 166.

⁷⁵ Yama or Yamaraj is a god of death, as per Hindu mythology.

⁷⁶ Mubarki, "Exploring the 'Other'," 263.

⁷⁷ 'Samskar' literally means culture.

⁷⁸ The lotus is the election symbol of the Bharatiya Janata Party, and at the same time the national flower of India. Thus, the symbol of the lotus indicates national identity.

⁷⁹ See footnote 76.

- ⁸⁰ In India, the majoritarian population is Hindu.
- ⁸¹ *Bombay*, the film, was directed by Mani Ratnam and was released in 1995.
- ⁸² Tejaswini Niranjana, "Banning 'Bombay': Nationalism, Communalism and Gender", *Economic and Political Weekly* 30:22 (June 1995), 1292.
- ⁸³ *Pinjar* is a Hindi language film, released in 2003, directed by Dwivedi.
- ⁸⁴ *Kurbaan* is a Hindi language film, released in 2009, directed by D'Silva.
- ⁸⁵ *My Name is Khan* is a Hindi language film, released in 2010, directed by Karan Johar.
- ⁸⁶ Ira Bhaskar and Allen, Richard. *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009), 26.
- ⁸⁷ Hodgson and Kesavan cited in Bhaskar, and Allen. *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema*, 3.
- ⁸⁸ Rachel Dwyer, *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 103.
- ⁸⁹ Mubarki, "Exploring the 'Other'," 262.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid.
- ⁹¹ According to Edward Said, Eastern ones means specifically Muslims in the Middle-East. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. Said, Edward. W. *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, New Delhi: Penguin Book India, (1991).

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