Representation of Kashmir and Kashmiri Muslims in Bollywood Cinema/ A study of select movies

Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh
Research Scholar, Department Of English,
University of Kashmir Hazratbal, Srinagar (India)

ABSTRACT

Kashmir is the core issue and the bone of contention between the two neighboring countries, India and Pakistan in South East Asia, which has not been resolved since 14th of August 1947, when both countries got freedom from British imperialism. But Kashmir is still hanging in between, and become the field of bloodshed and turmoil where every day the roads are painted with blood and mothers lost their stars. There are a number of Bollywood movies that were made in Kashmir with the theme of beauty, paradise, peace and harmony. The cinematic cameras capture only the extrinsic appearances but what is going inside the paradise is unknown to the world (Bose & Jalal, 2004). The present paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of how Kashmir and Islam is unveiled and revealed in the Bollywood cinema. This research paper will intimately study the depiction of the Kashmiri people and the Kashmir with reference to the different movies that were produced in Kashmir during the period of commotion. Moreover, the paper will also uncover the fictional and baseless epochs that were displayed through Bollywood movies are merely fables not the exact one (Bakaya & Bhatti, 2005). After 1989 when the militancy was at the peak there were drastic amendments to display the Muthe slims and Kashmir especially in the movies like Roja (1992), Mission Kashmir (2000), and Fanaa (2006). in order to analyze closely the visuals, narratives, cinematic aspects of affective development and contextualizing it against the local and global politics of Islam with reference to movies that were set in Kashmir with the theme of serotypes of Kashmir and Kashmiris (Adhikari & Kamle, 2010).

Keywords: Islam; Kashmir; Bollywood; Terrorism

Bollywood Cinema inclines to be one of the greatest infotainment industry in the world. It does not only conveying ideas but also influencing the cores and concentrations of target spectators. Bollywood cinema fascinatingly engulfs its spectators. Even in the research persuasion narration, it has been witnessed that a story or a feature film has a great impact on ideological beliefs and attitude of the spectators, characters in films played a vital role in such kind of affective impact over the masses. In fact, the films have always appealing touch and emotional impact over the public, therefore, they have been used as a propaganda tool for shaping public opinions of the different sects of a society. Even if we go back in the era of Adolf Hitler in early years of 1940s, He used movies to pressurize and publicize his policies and propaganda among the people (Public Commission on Human Rights (2006). So the tradition of displaying of minorities is not a new fashion but it has been there for decades to defame such communities through these Cinemas/Media. There are number of countries they use media/cinemas to enhance their political policies and political programs (Khan & Bokhari, 2011). Hollywood cinema is one of the known examples to have intimate bonds with the state and its policies to make it publically aware of the common masses of Europe and the other developed countries around the globe. The fauna and flora of these bonds are not discovered much but this nexus has been detected through the content of these film projections and portrayals. A huge collection of movies are being produced and directed by both the Hollywood/Bollywood media to perpetuate the state and its policies to highlight the different angles and aspects of different societies. The
Bollywood cinema has also turned to a gigantic industry and is considered to the largest infotainment industry around the globe. Bollywood cinema is producing where around 1,500 movies in different languages annually and has almost nine film centers. (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2015). Taking after the name of Hollywood, Indian cinema is generally referred to as Bollywood. The Bollywood cinema took its name Indian cinema because of Mumbai which was formerly known as Bombay) Mumbai is the main hub of Bollywood where Hindi language films are produced. The core focus of this research paper is on Bollywood movies about Kashmir and Muslim stereotype through its film production. I have adopted Edward Said’s theoretical lens of Orientalist discourse to look at the representation of Muslims in Bollywood. In his book Covering Islam (1981), A few Bollywood movies are selected to analyze the social milieu and the negative projection of Muslims and Kashmir through different characters and different places like, turban, khandress, beard and other things also, it will be assessed that how Bollywood has responded to Indian policy on Kashmir issue and tried to develop public opinions on it. Kashmir has been a soul issue and is the apple of discard between the two nuclear powers India and Pakistan since 1947. Although both the neighboring countries were under the accord of Britishers, Kashmir was not part of any one of them both got freedom from Britishers but unfortunately, Kashmir is the grass that is still in pains and pangs when the two bulls fight over it. The media of India especially the audio-visual media has an acute impression over the common public through the different mediums like movies TV shows and debates etc. (Chomsky, 2002; Bennett, Lawrence & Livingston, 2006; McChesney, 2008). in the Bollywood cinema the Kashmir issue has always been displayed in their film projection. From the year 1949 till to the 1990 Kashmir seemed to be seen in the romantic zone and is provided a romantic setting for many films. The movies that were produced during this tenure were mostly epitomic and full of beauty and romance. The snowcapped valley of Kashmir and its alluring nature was used in those films as a breathtaking backdrop on which a hero or heroine flourished. These are the things that were displayed on the big screens till the 1990s (M.S. Hyas, 2012). In the year 1990-91, a new turn is been taken by the Kashmiri people and gained a lot of momentum most of the Indian leaders call it a period of insurgency in Kashmir. After the emergence of the insurgency, the Bollywood cinema has brought drastic changes in their film projection of depicting the Kashmir issues with more political fervor. Indian cinema also started focusing on Kashmir issue but with more political fervor and turbulence. Now the depiction of Kashmir in Bollywood has got transformed and it has been illustrating Kashmir as a hub of terrorism and the people of valley are laced as terrorists (Srinivas 1225).

Roja (1992) was the first Bollywood featured film in which the main plot is the Kashmir issues and terrorism. The entire milieu of Bollywood has topsy-turvy and the image of Kashmir valley got altered and the Bollywood started to illustrate Kashmir as if it’s a place where the terrorism has got emerged and the people of the valley are given a reputed epithet of terrorists. Roja movie was political in nature. The image of Kashmir is painted with the code of terrorism and deformed area. The movie Roja is satirizing for representing the ill image of Kashmir and further stated that Roja projects division of politics and communalism. (Virdi 209)

There is no doubt that Kashmir is an international dispute between the two neighboring countries and 90% of Kashmiris are fighting for their independence, so any Bollywood film on this issue always becomes an epitome of patriotism and jingoism (cited ibid.: 58). After the 9/11 incident, the Bollywood cinema has changed the curtains and displayed Kashmir as a hub of violence and never display properly the true culture and tradition of Kashmir (Mehdi, 31). The people of Kashmir are always laced with names of terrorists. The Muslims majority living there are depicted as pre-modern, uncivilized, barbaric and not apt to the so-called modern civilized society. The Bollywood cinema glamorizes the Indian army and the sons of the soil are shown as divided, some of them are pro-Indian and others are enemies of democratic India
In addition to all these studies, Bollywood movies on Kashmir issue have never been analyzed through portrayals of different characters. So in this research paper, it is evaluated that how Indian, Kashmiri and Pakistani characters are described in films. After the film Roja (1992), some other films have also been released on this issue and the last popular film in this regard is Haider (2014). The core aim of this study is to explore the portrayal of characters, treatment of Kashmir issue and any transition in this portrayal and treatment in Bollywood movies from 1992 to 2015. In this study, the following research questions are addressed:

1) Why Indian cinema is displaying Kashmir as a hub of violence and terrorism in most of its film projection on the big screens?

2) What kind of projection is given to Kashmir issue in the Bollywood cinema?

3) Why the majority of Kashmir Muslims are linked with the war on terror and the land of the valley is laced with terrorism?

4) Is there any transition in the portrayal of Kashmiri, Pakistani and Indian characters and Kashmir issue from 1992 to 2015?

**RELATED WORKS**

The Bollywood movies that are selected for the research paper are as under; Roja(1992), Mission Kashmir(2004) and Fanaa (2007) to disclose and describe how Bollywood cinema mystifies the image of Kashmir and the Kashmiris.

1. Roja(1992) a Bollywood hotspot movie released in the year 1992 directed by Mani Ratnam Roja was also one of the first films to deal with terrorism onscreen although it was first originally released in Tamil and then later on it was dubbed in many other languages.

Roja movie has two beginnings, the first part of the beginning was set in south India and this describes the peace and harmony and the second beginning is full of terror and turmoil this part was actually captured at Kashmir this is how there is dichotomy in the Bollywood cinema to display Kashmir a place of brutality and turbulence. The Movie starts with a powerful soundtrack and with a blue screen which succeeds one after the other. The birds mixed chirping sounds, the machine gun shots, and the Muslim prayer and Azan on loudspeakers gives the notion of a jungle-like backdrop. The first scene of the movie begins where the headlights of flying cars break the darkness and introduces us to a jungle where soldiers are taking up their positions to trace out the hideouts and also seen running with watchdogs on a lookout for terrorists. This scene is very pivotal in order to comprehend the construct and representation of the terrorists and the placing of this group in stark opposition against the ideal concept of the patriot that is widely asserted in such movies.

A dissolve shot takes the audience to the panorama of a rural Space of south India in somewhere and the Roja heroine of the film is shown singing and frolicking. The pathetic atmosphere of the last scene is suddenly let loose to the laid back village scene. Here lighting depicts the dawn, as in the first beginning. But in both the conditions there is noted the difference. The yellowish orange light in this part is set in opposition to the cloudy blue lighting in the previous scene. This establishes the dissimilarity amongst the two fragments of the nation/country. These two panoramic shots normally depict the disparity between the two states although both are in the same country still they are decorated with the different decorum’s.
Panoramic shots that establish the rural countryside

The lengthy widespread outlook shots used in instituting the succeeding Inauguration not only arrests the magnificence of the village but also other sites.

This scene is very important and is relevant as it introduces the single-mindedness of Roja, which plays a prodigious role in the concluding part of the film. Rishi, on understanding Roja’s wrath, tells her the truth and no sooner does love blooms between the two than unexpectedly Rishi is called away on a top security assignment to Baramullah, Rishi was consigned a duty for Indian army or simply to work for Indian army in Kashmir and the conversation between the Rishi and the Chief was the first instance of rendering Rishi’s Patriotism. It is from here that the patriotic hero starts finding expressions. This scene typically describes how Bollywood cinema is creating and spreading fuss among the common masses through the prejudiced media so-called Bollywood or Indian cinema. The below conversation between the chief and Rishi speaks more than volumes and unfurls the reality of media (Qtd from the film).

Chief: "I am really sorry to send you to Kashmir at this point."

Rishi: "So what? Isn't Kashmir in India? Why should we worry about going to any part of India?" (Qtd from the film).

The details of all these great relevance seeking to analyze how the Bollywood narrates its narration of terrorism in film projection and inflects the discourse of nationalism. All these details are of great relevance in seeking to analyze how narratives of terrorism in film inflect and shape the discourses of nationalism via through the contradictory relationship of the national and the global levels. This research paper further goes on to explicate and analyses a pan-Indian aesthetic of Indian widespread cinema which in spite of all-encompassing heterogeneous discourses of the multiplicity of India, try to homogenize and promote a single nationalism. The tendency of homogenizing the narratives of the Indian state and the ways of artistic expressions to raise the questions regarding the prejudiced approach of Bollywood cinema unto the certain races (Srinivas 1225. Moreover these tendencies needed to analyze on the basis of historical, political, and religious contradictions that can circulate the economic and capitalist hegemonies. As is clear from this fact, Roja was the first of Mani Ratnam's terrorist trilogy. The movie typically Released in the backdrop of Babri Masjid demolition, Roja not only introduced terrorism in Kashmir as a new narrative strategy in Indian cinema, but in many ways metaphorically, reclaimed Kashmir for the national film audience through its use as an important diegetic space. This was in another way a bold reclaiming of Kashmir (the only Muslim majority state in India) as integral to India's identity. The underlying ideology of the political rightwing Hindutva is visibly clear. The middle-class Hindu bourgeoisie role in reclaiming Kashmir for India is the focus of the film. Roja uses the age-old theme of taking political hostages of important government officials and foreign tourists who are later used as political ransom to negotiate the freed of captive militants. Roja uses the notion of the nation as an extended family to convey the nationalism versus terrorism phenomenon (Hansen cited in Bhaskar 2005: 312–13).
Mission Kashmir

The film *Mission Kashmir* laments the loss of ecstasy, beauty and the harmony of Kashmir. It mourns the loss of the beauty and the glory of Kashmir. At the beginning itself the director evokes the spirit of Kashmir and Kashmiriyat. The outline story and the action completely spin around the pivot plot of Kashmir. The movie reals together into the whole lives and loves about Kashmir and especially the people of the valley. It also trace the elements of the pettiness of Kashmir, in the processes. The characters and their relationship in the movie are wound up around Kashmir (Pandey 234–35). The Main character in the movie is questionably Kashmir and other the purpose through their parts.

The film *Mission Kashmir* is actually based on Kashmir issue. In the movie there are two main characters. The first one is Altaf, a young Kashmiri boy who becomes a militant to revenge the murder of his parents who were killed in search operations by the Indian paramilitary cops. Inayat Khan is the second character. He is an SSP in Police who later on promoted as (IG) Inspector General police who lost his son when the group of doctors denied to treat him in hospital because of the Fatwa is given by the terrorist group led by the Malik ul Khan. Inayat Khan Exasperation later tracks down the terrorist group and kill them in a house but unfortunately in return Altaf’s family gets killed as well. The house where Khan and his men raided was where Altaf and his family were treating Malik ul Khan. When the Indian paramilitary forces chased in the house, they slew everyone present there including the militants, Altaf’s entire family including his parents. This left Altaf distressed and he collapses on the scene (Qtd from film.) After a very long time spending behind the bars, he is taken to Khan’s home. After this brutal incident Khan’s wife Neelima compels Khan to bring him home so that they can they could look after him as their own son. He doesn’t know who had killed his parents because it’s not possible to identify a man when his face his totally covered in the black mask and even not easy to remember. Thereafter both the Neelima and Khan took care of him as their departed son Irfan. Altaf got adjusted with them and even he begin to call Khan and his wife Abba (Father) and ammi (Mother). Thereafter one day Altaf was all alone at his house and he found a mask and pistol, the one that the man wore who had killed Altaf’s parents. Altaf within a jiffy identified that Khan had killed his parents. As Altaf was all alone, and wore the same mask and to come for the Khan to arrival home. When the khan back at home Altaf rush out from his room carrying a gun in his hand and fired at him but remained unsuccessful. Later Altaf ran away from the spot and brought up and brained washed by Hilal, a mercenary who had fought in Afghanistan with the Soviet Union. As, Altaf reached the age of 20, Hilal and his men consigned the task name Mission Kashmir by some third party forces to slain the Prime Minister (PM) of India as he would about to visit Kashmir. Finally this would add fuel to fire and spark a revolution and Kashmir would be freed from the shackles of India (Sharma 129).

Hilal, the head Commander of the terrorist group received two million dollars from an independent group. To do this task within the given period of time and this group were receiving allegedly instructions from the “Top” However, Hilal uses his most brilliant and brave man Altaf for this Mission (now who become an adult) to complete The Mission Kashmir. Meanwhile Hilal boosts Altaf to kill Inayat Khan who had killed his parents. Altaf makes several attempts to kill Khan now who has about to become IG of Jammu and Kashmir state but in vain. Altaf also successfully executes various stages on the task of to complete the Mission Kashmir.in the meanwhile Altaf also manages to meet his childhood crush/love Sufia who had now become a TV artist. When Sufia heard the news that Altaf has now become a wanted poster militant and their love story shattered like the tarot pack of card and ultimately Sufia breaks off ties with him (Qtd from film). The films are devoid of any reference to the dynamics of class and history that determine and complicate those Kashmiri contestations. (M. Rai 2004)
During the entire movie, numerous tracks and poetry were used, that helped in pleading the case that the film focuses on. Some of the lines are: “These conspiracies of the backdrops and the air have turned the land of gods bloody, who has written anarchy in the name of God here, Who has equated Cruelty and sins to Jihad” (Zutshi) 2003. The core characters in the movie were: IG Inayat Khan, Neelima, Altaf, Sufiaya, Hilal. Out of these, one was Hindu Neelima and the rest were Muslims. Neelima is a positive character. Among Muslims, those who hold high moral grounds include Sufiya and Inayat Khan. Negative includes Altaf and Hilal. Altaf is a character that sways between positive and negative. Here in this paragraph the image of Muslims has highly decorated with the paint of terror and turmoil as if whatever wrong happens in the movie is only being credited and recorded in the list of Muslim characters (DNA, 8 January 2015).

**FANNA**

Fanaa is the Muslim stereotype movie that too talks about the Muslim terrorism in Kashmir and how Kashmir is displayed on the Bollywood screens. It was released in (2006), the plot of this movie to some extent resembles the film Mission Kashmir that holds a mix of love story and the lover is having associations with a terrorist organization namely (IKF) Indian Kashmir Front. The core aim of this group is to fight for the freedom of Kashmir from the clutches of India. Fanaa uses it as a ploy but never articulates its impact or urgency. (Verma 2006). The film starts with a beautiful young Kashmiri girl named Xuni Malik who was innocent and loving but unfortunately cannot see anything because of her blindness. She is presented as a jingoistic Indian who buzzes National songs and loves her motherland. She goes out for four days to New Delhi with her friends to perform at a ceremony. in the ceremony Xuni meets a guy named Rehan. Rehan flirts with her and Xuni fall in love with him. In the meanwhile she intensely likes Rehan and wants to marry with him. Xuni stays with Rehan while she conveyed this to her parents on phone that she likes a guy and wants to marry him. Her parents agree and they began packing to travel Kashmir from Delhi to wed them off. Thereafter Xuni is in the state of pregnancy Rehan take her to the hospital where he talks to an eye specialist about her eyes. after a series of tests the doctor breaks the ice that Xuni can be cured and she could be able to see and then Rehan leaves the hospital and assurances that he would come back after receiving her parents from the station. In reality Rehan had no plan to come back he left for the secret mission to kill the Prime Minister at New Delhi via a bomb blast. Rehan actually had been taking pictures of various places and sites and planning it on for days. While Xuni is being manipulated for this mission, Rehan forwards his mission and left Xuni whereas she is executing his plan and leaves whereas Xuni is being informed that Rehan actually dies in a bomb blast. His tattered clothes and the other belongings are handed over to Xuni. However, The Indian intelligence agency and Research Wing(RAW) after the Delhi blast starts scrutinizing antiterrorism attacks and forge out that it was carried out by of the IKF men an independent outfit organization that has been fighting for the freedom of Kashmir since 1947(ibid). This organization JKF is laced as a terrorist group in Kashmir that had attacked Pakistan and as well as on Indian sites. This group has actually has stolen some equipment from Pakistan, Russia and India to make a nuclear missile and still, they are looking to steal grand trigger equipment that could help them to make a heavy nuclear missile. Rehan is the main figure and one of the key IKF men but the (RAW) failed to trace him and could not hold his identity. After the interval of seven years, Rehan Khan is portrayed as a man who has permeated into the unit of the army that is supposed to defend that could help to trigger the IKF organization to promote their nuclear missile (Bhaskar 321). Though Rehan gets a grip over the trigger and runaway to offer it to the IKF head, his grandfather. Meanwhile, in the mountains of Kashmir valley, the Anti-terrorism unit catches him in the firefight he gets relentlessly wounded. Rehan manages to escape from the battleground but the snow-capped mountains and the injuries put him in difficulties and finally, he
moves on and knocks at the door of some Kashmiri house that is to be shown in an isolated area. The residence belongs to his wife Xuni. Firstly Xuni and his father don’t identify him and treat him as a wounded soldier who is on an operation. Due to the bad weather condition, he gets jammed over there for few days. However, Xuni gets acquainted that the soldier who injured in a battle fight is Rehan. After some drama, they marry. Meanwhile, due to the snow storm, Anti-terrorism unit finds it hard to find to do search operation in the region. So they inform people through media about a terrorist who got injured and was hiding in the mountains of Kashmir. The last scene displays the grave of Rehan, Xuni and their child. The exchange among dissimilar characters not only compromises a historical background of the issue but also gives an impression that in Kashmir, non-state actors are involved that want harmony neither with India nor with Pakistan and they are going for nefarious plans to triumph over it. (Gabriel and Vijayan 301).

Conclusion of content analysis

After the deep analysis of the movies and the related research papers content, this was bring into being that the people of the Kashmir are peace loving and believe in harmony and integrity and the place is full bloom and no fragments of disloyalty is seen among the Kashmiris. The people of Kashmir have no problems to live peacefully within the domain of their boundaries. There are some non-state actors they have no problems living within the Indian Dominion (Rajgopal 240). However, there are some non-state producers and actors, display valley as a hub of terrorism and the people are mostly involved in turmoil’s.it is undoubtedly hard nut to crack for them to project valley as it is because they don’t get the first information they always believe in saying and the media projection that is what they exhibit through their film projections. This is a big blow of these cinemas and they come up with the reverse themes and plots to put negative impacts on the society in most of the movies with reference to the Muslim nullification and stereotype. (Bhaumik 86). It’s being displayed that there have been always surgical strikes mass encounters, crackdowns, and CASO throughout the entire valley and in fact, Indian films are outlined in such a way that favors the Indian foreign policies and the same circumstances are still prevailing in Kashmir.

The movies that are directed and produced after 2001 deviated from the prior projection of Muslim stereotype in mainstream films as “villains” or “aliens” to one in which Muslims were increasingly depicted as “good” and “sensible” human beings. I have intensely located the movies with eccentric misrepresentation of Muslims and also forge out the political economy behind producing them. Moreover, the movies epitomize the central characters as Muslims and are not marked by their religion or Islamicate. They are categorized as modern with mundane objectives or everyday complications in their living standards. From the other lenses of the Bollywood film projection it keenly accentuates that the central characters have to prove their innocence and allegiance.in most of the movies they substantiate themselves as they are not terrorists and also the have evidence to their patriotism. Nevertheless, the Muslim representations are liberated from correlating them with Islamicate culture, underworld dons and of course terrorists, the protagonists of the contemporary films like Iqbal (2005), Aamir (2008), Chak De! India (2007), My Name is Khan (2010) prove their innocence in spite of their identity crisis due to their religion. The mutual subject of these silver screens is that the leading roles have to verify their fidelity or virtuousness.

The research paper can further be tailed to scrutinize the relationship among politics, producer, audience, and text and how all the aspects are interconnected in a broad socio-political setting. There are numerous facets which can be further sightseen in much detail, for instance, film broadcasting pattern of different
groups, class and national cognizance, interference of political parties in filmmaking and their influence on demonstration. Above all, it is important to explore further how spectator’s opinions are prepared by viewing popular cultural texts on Muslims.

References


