

CHAPTER – I

HINDI CINEMA AND NATIONALISM

Cinema refers to the motion picture, a motion-picture theatre, movies and the art or technique of making motion pictures. Cinema can be divided into two types: commercial cinema which makes money from the audience and art cinema or parallel cinema. Cinema is also considered a popular art in the 20th century.

Renowned actor Om Puri says, “the cinema should be the reflection of time and society as you yourself see in the mirror-like that we can see the society through the films” (63). The credit of invention of cinema goes to Paris; however, Germany, England, Italy, and America have been also given credit for experimenting in this field. The Europeans sensed the commercial opportunity of cinema since its inception.

Hindi cinema has been developed as a Hindustani cinema. This is the cinema of various communities and languages. ‘Bollywood’ term is also used as substitution of Hindi Cinema. Bollywood is the portmanteau which is derived from, ‘Bombay’ (now Mumbai), the centre of the Indian film industry. The term ‘B’ is taken from Bombay and ‘wood’ is taken from Hollywood. Amit Khanna said that “he had mentioned the term 'Bollywood' in a magazine column he used to write in the 1970s”. (Dey) However, Bengal film industry was the first to use the word ‘wood’ in Tollywood. In Bengal, most of the films are produced in Tollygunge, Kolkata. Kollywood is the nickname of Tamil Cinema. In Tamilnadu, most films are produced mainly in Kodambakkam, Chennai. Bollywood is formally termed as Hindi Cinema. Many actors, directors and film critics have shown their dissent on this term ‘Bollywood’. The term ‘Bollywood’ is often used by the non-Indian as a synecdoche to refer Indian film industry.

Some of the actors, who dissented on using the term 'Bollywood', are Nasiruddin Shah and Om Puri. They slam western media for calling them, Bollywood actors. They say that the Indian film industry dislikes the term 'Bollywood' and feels disgusted by its use in the media. "The term Bollywood was used by the Western press to mock on us. "It is just an indication of our own idiocy that we still use it," (Ians) said Shah. Veteran actor Om Puri said in very emotional tone: "Bollywood - whenever Western people refer to it, they mean Hindi films, they say, 'Oh those song and dance films!'" (Ians) So, it is a derogatory term. These terms are created by the media." (dnaindia.com) They cautioned Indian media for using this word. Shah said: "Now the Mumbai film industry refers to itself as Bollywood. It's like being called an idiot all your life and then making it your name," (dnaindia.com) Pervaiz Alam, who interviewed the two actors on stage and said: "This is the reason we've started distancing away from the term 'Bollywood' as more and more film-makers and actors from India are telling us not to use the word 'Bollywood', a term, that they often find patronizing." (Ians) The term 'Bollywood' is now being used to refer to the entire Indian film industry not just the Hindi cinema over a period of time.

Cinema came in India in 1896 and it stretched to the multi-starrer films of 2020 from the silent era films of the late 1800s. It was the Lumiere Brothers who took the credit for pioneering cinema. They toured India after their 2nd film *The Arrival of a Train*. India witnessed the birth of cinema in July 1896, when the Lumiere Brothers arranged a screening of six films at the Watson Hotel in Bombay. The six films screened that day were: *The Sea Bath*, *Arrival of a Train*, *Ladies and Soldiers on Wheels*, *Entry of Cinematograph*, *A Demolition*, and *Leaving the Factory*. Dadasaheb Phalke was the first Indian who produced a full-length motion picture. The Indian film industry was founded by Phalke. He produced *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) film from Sanskrit epics. It was a silent film in Marathi and the role of female characters were played by male actors in the films. Ardeshir Irani made the first Indian talkie film *Alam Ara* on 14 March 1931. The Indian film industry produces approximately a

thousand films in twenty-eight languages annually. These films are primarily classified into three categories: commercial, art, and all other cinema. The commercial or masala films are the most popular and lucrative among the three. Cinema primarily developed in three cities of India such as Bombay (Mumbai), Calcutta (Kolkata), and Madras (Chennai). Regional cinemas and studios have been developed around these cities. Bombay became the hub of commercial(popular) cinema for the north, and Madras for the south, Calcutta due to its cultural and intellectual heritage became the base for the development of art cinema in the eastern part of India.

Feature films are made in about twenty languages in India. The term 'Indian cinema' hence refers to films made in any of these twenty languages. Hindi cinema or Bollywood produces approximately 150-200 films of a total of 800-1000 films a year. It makes twenty per cent of the total number of films made in India. Sixty per cent of films made in four south Indian films industries, (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam) since 1971 (Chatterjee 2). The Ganti States that:

. . . though Hindi films forms form only 20 per cent of the film product of the nation, they are the only language films that circulate nationally and internationally, dominating discourse on the Indian film. Hindi films represent Indian cinema internationally and are regarded as the standard archetype to follow or oppose. Outside India, the category "popular Indian cinema" tends to denote Hindi films produced in Bombay (3).

This is because Hindi is the official language of Indian Union followed by English. Hindi is widely accepted and spoken language at national level in India. Therefore, Bollywood films made in India's national language are referred to as Indian cinema. Butalia states: "Indian cinema is the single largest medium of communication

with the masses, and close to twelve million people are watching films every week in cinema houses and theatres” (Chatterjee 3). Indian cinema witnessed golden period during 1940s to 1960s. The Parallel Cinema movement emerged at this time mainly led by Bengalis. Parallel Cinema was followed by Classic Bollywood in 1971s–the 1980s. Hindi cinema of 1980s came to stagnation with decline in the box office due to increasing violence and declining in music. Rise of video piracy led middle-class audiences abandoned theatres.

Cinema arrived in India in the first decade of the twentieth century when the national freedom movement in India was at full swing. National freedom movement was growing rapidly across the country against the British colonialism. Therefore, the analysis of nationalism in Indian cinema requires a detailed analysis of colonial-era films. Cinema, as an art form and an entertainment medium, reflects an area where the issues of nationalism, identity, and culture raised.

Nationalism has been used as an anti-colonial discourse in cinema. Bollywood has strived to represent a native Indian model of nationalism on-screen almost since its inception which has been shaped and influenced by the atmosphere of national freedom struggle. During the colonial era, many films were restricted in portraying nationalist sentiments. Censorship was so strong that even the slightest reference to nationalist or anti-colonial ideas was not allowed in the films by the authority. Nevertheless, nationalistic discourse was presented in the early films in subtle form by dodging colonial censorship authority. Gandhi ji was completely hostile to the idea of the film, and Nehru would accept it only if it is used as a medium of education and instruction. “Cinema not only appropriated the discourse of nationalism but became an extension of it” (Ganti 46-47). Sengupta states: “Some filmmakers, like Phalke, openly

advertise their sympathy to the nationalistic cause, especially to the Gandhian Swadeshi movement” (22).

The following films portrays the theme of national movement, nation, and nationality: *Sardar* (1993), *The Legend of Bhagat Singh* (2002), *Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose: The Forgotten Hero* (2004), *Mangal Pandey: The Rising* (2005), *Rang De Basanti* (2006), *Junoon* (1978), *1942: A Love Story* (1994) *Nastik* (1954), *Gandhi* (1982), *Border* (1997), *Karanti* (1981), *Khelein Hum Jee Jaan Sey* (2010), *Haqeeqat* (1964), *Sarfarosh*, (1971), *Chek De India* (2007), *Chittagong* (2012), *Lakshya* (2004), *Purab or Paschim* (1970). *A Wednesday* (2008), *Saat Hindustani* (1969), *Hindustani* (1996), *Roja* (1992), *The Ghazi Attack* (2017), etc. These films represent the idea what Rai calls “renewed cine-patriotism” (2003) of Bollywood. He defines it as:

a set of films that seek to represent, visualise, and narrate the sovereignty of the supposedly secular, in practice upper-caste, Hindu Indian nation. As such, they have both criticised and fuelled the ongoing tensions between Hindus and Muslims that has marked India’s postcoloniality. These tensions have seen a growing regularity of deadly clashes between Hindu nationalist forces and Muslim communities, which have accompanied the sometimes low-intensity, sometimes guerrilla war between India and Pakistan over the northern state of Kashmir (5).

Shiladitya Sen, a film critic, pointed out three important features of terrorist films. The politics of representation portrayed Pakistan as the biggest enemy in the post-Babri era. Najma Khatun states this with example:

In the movie *Sarfarosh*, under a Pakistan flag, the terrorists are discussing how they would attack India. It is applicable for the movies like *Border* and *Gadar* as well. When the film represents Pakistan as indulging in terrorism, at the same time, it is implying that the citizen of Pakistan is a single entity. Secondly, in India whoever is doing terrorist acts, all are anti-religious groups and they do not belong to Hindus. Thirdly, the films support state terrorism to kill those terrorists. These are the central messages of those films (52).

Mainstream Bollywood has traditionally reserved normalcy for the Hindu hero while minor characters are depicted with stereotypes, Muslims as God-fearing, Sikhs as drivers and Parsee with lispings. These characters are essential in the film to represent national integration of India. (Sethi) This is also argued by Dadhe who says that Muslims are depicted as villains and terrorists in the 1990s. They are depicted as enemy of India and against Hinduism. He states:

Generally, this villain is coupled with another good Muslim who is nationalist and wages a war against the former for saving his country; Salim in *Sarfarosh* (1999) being a good example. If the movie is a classic Hindu-Muslim love story, the hero has to be invariably from the majority community (e.g., *Veer Zaara*, *Gadar*, *Bumbai*). As the well-known actor Farooque Shaikh puts it, “[t]he hero is invariably Hindu because they want to release the film to a larger audience (11).

Many successful war films (war among India and Pakistan) were released between 2000-2005 which portrayed Pakistan’s role in terrorist activities and perceived Pakistan as an enemy of the nation, especially in the last two decades. Although India

and Pakistan had countless cross-border conflicts in 1948, 1965, and 1971. The Kargil War in 1999 has been one of the most devastating of wars. From 1997 to 2006, several war films were produced by Bollywood including *Border*, *Sarfarosh*, *Maa Tujhhe Salaam*, *Pukar*, *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* and *LOC-Kargil*. Rauf Ahmed, a film critic, says about these films: “There was a phase in the late eighties and early nineties, particularly around the time when Babri Masjid demolition took place, there were some films which were anti-Pakistan at that time, the words ‘Pakistan’ and ‘Muslims’ were used as interchangeable words.” (Khatun 55) The 1970s war films include classics like *Haqeeqat* (1964) and *Hum Dono* (1961), and deliver a message of harmony. But movies, which are produced in the recent decades, reflect jingoistic ideology of Hindutva. Similarly, the films which are made after communal tension and riots depict Muslim characters as villain, traitors, and enemy of nation. Pratibha Advani the daughter of Lal Krishan Advani admires patriotic films and writes: “Patriotic films, as a special and much-admired genre of Indian cinema, have had a tremendous impact on our people, cutting across religious, regional, linguistic and economic identities. Moreover, they have also proved their unsurpassed power of communicating both to educated and illiterate masses” (Budha 6).

Border is regarded as one of the most important films depicting war of two neighbour countries. The film depicts only one Indian Muslim character fighting against the neighbour Muslim country. The message of Hindu tolerance is endorsed by this statement. Mahesh Bhatt corroborates that “the lack of representation of Muslim Army officers in war films, these films promote Indian culture and rituals identified as markers of Hindu tradition, thereby making any other religion or culture appear Un-

Indian” (Rajgopal 242) Mahmood Mamdani, a cultural theorist, has theorized that there are two types of Muslims: one is good Muslim and another one is bad. He says further:

“the ‘good Muslim’ is co-opted by the state and the ‘bad Muslim’ challenges the status quo, who try to harm the nation, while the majority community is often represented as ‘victims. Hence, Hindus are projected as the norm of the society and Muslims are the ‘disrupter of this norm, hence perceived as the Other” (241).

Romila Thapar, a historian, writes, “In 1999, a collective of Hindu right-wing nationalist organisations labelled the Sangh Parivar propagated their version of Indian history encapsulated in the ideology of Hindutva” (96). There are other sorts of film which promote Indian culture, family values, patriarchy, and minorities. Muslim characters may be identified by their Islamic culture. Moreover, nationalism, patriotism, and jingoism are transmitted to the country’s identity politics through the cinematic space. Characters of terrorists are essentialized as Muslims. Cinema has become a strong vehicle for culture, education, leisure, and propaganda. The influence of the media for movies is greater than newspapers and books. Since commencement of the cinema, the film has a significant influence on the mind of audience. No other mass media has such a greater influence. The most important role of cinema to provide entertainment, is the main reason for its popularity among mass media. Cinema functions as an agent of change. It is capable of changing the attitude, belief, and value system of the people. Therefore, the study of cinema is significant in the 21st century.

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