Muslim Characters in Bollywood Cinema: Representation and Reality?

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Abstract: India is the front-runner in film production. Indian Bollywood cinema has produced more than 28,000 feature films and thousands of documentaries so far. Bollywood cinema is very popular in the sub-continent and has an almost equal rate of viewership in Pakistan as they have in India. This paper investigates the portrayal of Muslims men and women in Bollywood cinema. For the survey purpose, a sample size of (100) students has been taken through simple random sampling. In which (28%) students from Muslim Community, male (24%), Female (4%) and (72%) from Non-Muslims, male (41%), female (31%) whereas the total number of male is (65%) and total number of female is (35%) from the ___University have been selected as population. The study of the result shows that there is a tendency in various films that portray the negative image of Muslims and showing them as terrorists or underworld dons. Meanwhile, terrorism is the most commonly used subject in the number of films with Muslim characters not only this but also being looked at, as suspicious people and represented as bombers. This paper will contemplate the existing duality in understanding Islam and its depiction in the Indian Bollywood Cinema, particularly films. Meanwhile, how Bollywood Cinema has captured Islam in its numerous forms and will explore how these images have been both useful and harmful at the same time in endorsing the identity of Islam in the Indian subcontinent. The main objective of the study is to discuss some contemporary movies with analysis and determine whether Muslims are positively or negatively portrayed in Bollywood cinema.
Key Words: Indian Cinema, Stereotyping, Portrayal,Muslim Community.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Cinema has been the most influential medium since the early 20th century. The first International Film Festival of India held in early 1952 at Bombay and had great impact on Indian Cinema. With the passage of time, there has been a continuous technological advancement and development in Bollywood cinema. In the 20th Century, Indian cinema took huge footsteps towards growth and today, at the turn of the 21st Century Indian cinema stands at par with Hollywood cinema. The media play a significant role in the progression of the social building of reality and can be used as a potent weapon to mould people's perception. The film is a means of creative expression and it performs the functions of mass media. Such as communication, education, acting and transmission of culture. Films are widely popular and their audiovisual nature provides them a universal power for social influence. Therefore, they have the potential to perform an important role as a medium of entertainment, information, and education and as an accelerator for social change. Movies are popular because they entertain and have played a significant part as one of the factors contributing to the dramatic changes, which have taken place in the last 50-60 years in the way we live and also in how we observe the world around us. The films take as their starting point those aspects of society with which we have become acquainted. They create squirm plots and use other narrative devices, which infuse the story with sufficient new elements to attract an audience. Films lure heavily from reality, representing situations that have a similarity to the everyday stresses and aspirations of viewer's lives.

The movies identify the relationship between their lives and films in both general and specific terms. The comfort of comprehension helps the viewer to undertake the role of the characters and to identify with them quickly and effectively. Films entreaty to their feelings and sentiments and provide clear realism, vivid visual presentation in which the images are already fully established, easily recognized and followed. Indian Film producers have made very purposeful films to collect public opinion against some of the social evils as a dowry system, labor exploitation. But meanwhile, Muslims are being looked at, as suspicious people and portrayed as terrorists in some movies in the Bollywood film industry and adds fuel to the fire by making more and more movies on Muslims and presenting them as bombers and extremists. Movies were made on the subject of terrorism and Muslims were shown as terrorists who were promoting terrorism not only in India but also in the whole world. Some films that portray negative characters of Muslims are Kurbaan (2009) after watching this

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movie many people will become distrustful of having a Muslim as their neighbor or for that matter befriending a Muslim and everyone will generalize from this and all Muslims will be seen with a look of suspicion. None of the Muslim characters shown in the movie (except for Riyaaz played by VivekOberoi or Saif that too only when he comes to know that Kareena is carrying his child) has any positive aspect to their personality, no white or even lighter shade to their credit. The only thing that the movie has highlighted is how some Muslims can play on people's lives and emotions to fulfill their ambitions and take their revenge. Another movie ' My name is Khan' was a bold attempt to negate the fast-emerging stereotyped image of the Muslims as a global terrorist, with the main protagonist of the movie, a Muslim, constantly repeating the phrase, "My name is Khan and I am not a terrorist." The fact that he has Asperger's Syndrome, and says only what he means, is an alibi to his statement "My name is Khan and I am not a terrorist". You have to believe him.

RanaAyyub (2017) in her article published on NDTV stated, My name is Khan (2010) It was his strong belief about the injustice of religion-based discrimination that had Karan Johar cast him as Rizwaan Khan in My Name is Khan where he is a man who wants to clear the negative tag of terrorism-related with his faith. In the 2007 hit film Chak De India, he was Kabir Khan, a disgraced hockey captain who faces religious discrimination and the ignominy of having to prove his loyalty despite his endeavor to win successes for his country. "In the film, the media portrays Kabir Khan as a captain who compromises a match in favor of Pakistan, and his neighbors then dub him a traitor. Shahrukh Khan was questioned by the right wing in India over his patriotism when, in an interview in 2014, he said he was pained by the intolerance in the country. Posters of the star were burnt and five-time MP Yogi Adityanath asked him to move to Pakistan."

Mission Kashmir (2000) The film was hyped even before its release and compared to the other big-budget blockbuster of the year "Mohabbatein" The story of Mission Kashmir is about Altaf, a small boy whose father and mother were killed by masked policemen headed by a dedicated officer, Inayat Khan (Sanjay Dutt) when they kill Altaf's defenseless family during a firefight with militants. However, Inayat Khan tries to compensate by adopting Altaf as his son. Just as Altaf is slowly recovering from the dreadful shock of losing his real parents, he realizes that Inayat Khan is the same masked officer who killed my parents in anger and frustration, he flees the house and grows up to be Altaf, the militant (HrithikRoshan). Altaf is brought up by HilalKohistani (Jackie Shroff) well-known guerilla fighter and returns to the beautiful valley of Kashmir 10 years later to perform the top-secret "Mission Kashmir."

According to Khan Mohammad (2011), "the Indian film industry has also been showing the Kashmir freedom fighters as militants and terrorists. There was a great deal of work done by Indian cinema on Muslims in general and Pakistan, in particular, showing them as terrorists who were involved in all sorts of terrorist acts whether it is in India, Kashmir or elsewhere." Moreover, Films not only make the opinion but also reshape the opinions Venkataraghavan, Manjula. (2015) Says "while films on communal riots in post-independent, post-partition India have been made to critical acclaim and with commercial success, movies as recent as 'Bombay' (1995) depict the trauma of an inter-religious love and marriage of a young Hindu man and a beautiful Muslim woman, and their ultimate triumph, amidst a communal riot." Muslim terrorism was depicted in movies like Roja (1992), Mission Kashmir, Maachis and others, with Kashmir and the Indo-Pakistan conflict as the theme. Minorities especially Muslims, as spies, traitors, or smugglers, have been a common theme in commercial cinema. Moreover movies like Agneepath (2012), Magadheera (Telugu) (2009), Once Upon A Time in Mumbai (and sequel) (2010 My Name is Anthony Gonsalves (2008), In the majority of the movies all of the Muslim characters shown in the film are underworld dons and terrorists.

Research Questions
- Do the Indian movies present positive characters of Muslims?
- Do the characters of Indian Muslims women in Indian movies appear as a major role?
- Do the Indian movies portray Muslim characters as violent, aggressor and terrorist?

Objectives
Based on the review of literature following objectives and hypothesis were formulated
1 To study whether the Indian Movies show the patriotism and bias against Muslims in India especially in Kashmir.
2 To investigate whether Indian Muslims are portrayed as terrorists, traitors, disloyal, cruel and barbarian type of people.
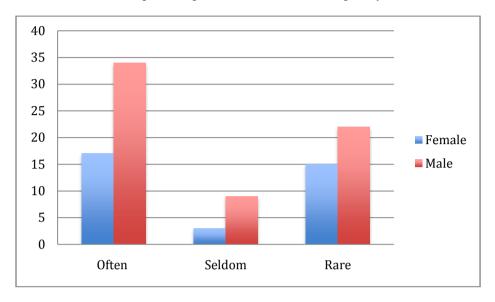
II.   METHODOLOGY
The survey method of research was deployed for the present study. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the required data for the study. The present research has used the content of selected Indian movies on the topic and survey method for the collection of data. The survey was conducted during October 2019.The universe of this study is the student of __ University, 100 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 28%

were Muslims (Male 24% and Female 4%) and 72% were Non-Muslims, (Male 41% and Female 31%) questionnaire was received with 100% response rate, from the age of (17 to 24). which isconsidered to be good presentation of the sample.

Results and Discussions:

Table 1: Representing information about watching Bollywood movies?

The data presented in the table 1 gives information about watching Bollywood movies and it statesthat(51%) respondent are watching Bollywood movies (Often)whereas (12% Seldom and 37% Rare) the respondents are both Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years.

Table 2: Why do you watch Bollywood movies?

The information provided in table 2 states that (28%) of the respondentare watching Bollywood movies for Information whereas (61%) respondent are watching for entertainment and (11%) for time pass. The respondents are Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years.

Table 3: Do you watch those movies in which Muslims are portrayed terrorist?

The information provided in table 3 clearly indicates that (33%) of the respondent agreed, of course, we watch Bollywood movies in which Muslims are portrayed as terrorist whereas (30% says not at all and 37% says some times) the respondents are both Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years.
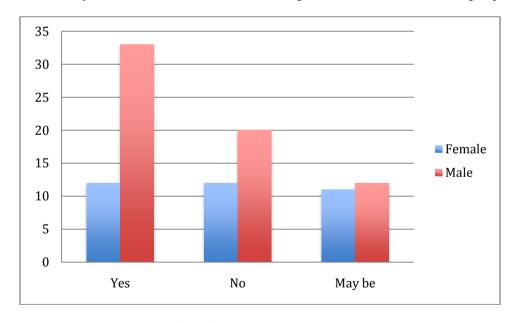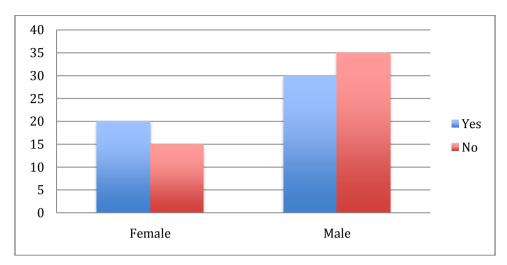
Table 4: Do you feel some Indian movies are dividing Muslims and Hindus into two groups?

The data presented in table 4 gives information that (45%) respondents think that some Indian movies are dividing Muslims and Hindus whereas, (32% says No and 23% says may be) the respondents are Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years

Table 5: Do you think that Bollywood movies are presenting Muslims as terrorist?

The information provided in table 5 gives information that (50%) respondents think that Yes, Bollywood movies are presenting Muslims as terrorist whereas (50%) respondent replied No. The respondents are Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years
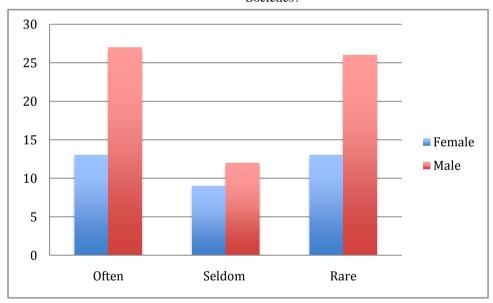
Table 6: Do you think that Indian Movies are presenting Muslim women weak and oppressed in Muslim Societies?

The information provided in table 6explains, that (40%) respondent says (Often) whereas (21% Seldom and 39% Rare) the respondents are Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years.
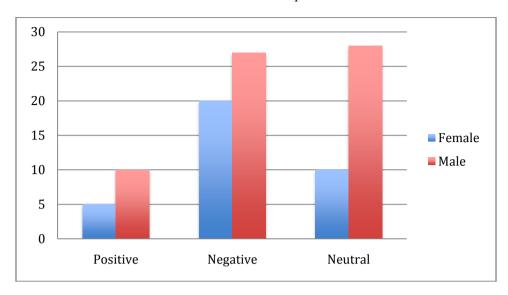
Table 7: In what kind of role Muslims are presented in Indian Movies?

The data presented in table 7 explains, that (15%) of respondent says (Positive) whereas (47% says Negative and 38% says Neutral) the respondents are Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years.
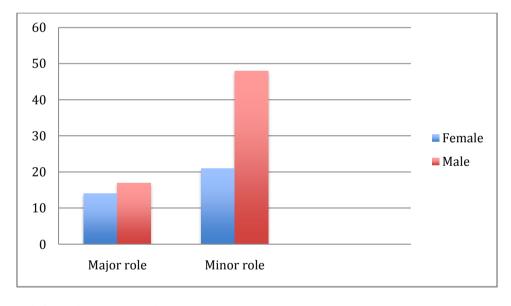
Table 8: Do the characters of Muslim women in Indian movies appear most frequently?

The information provided in table 8 say that (35%) respondent says (Major role) whereas (69%) respondents say (Minor role) is given to Muslim women appears most frequently. The respondents are Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years.
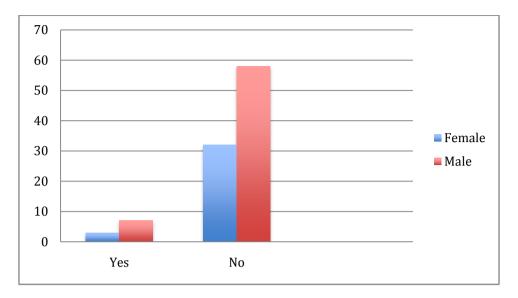
Table 9: Do you like those movies, which present Muslims as terrorist?

The data presented in table 9 explains, that (10%) respondents say that they like those movies which present Muslim as terrorist where as (90%) majority of the respondents don't like those movies which present Muslim as a terrorist. The respondents are Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years
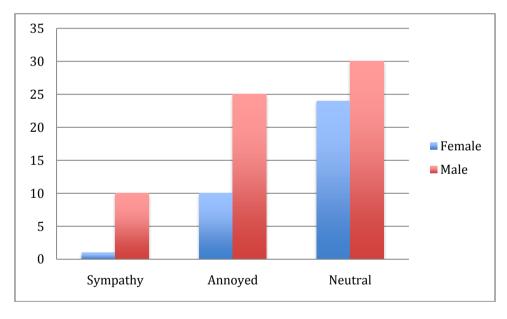
Table 10: What do you feel about the characters of Muslims after watching Indian movies?

The information provided in table 10 say that (11%) respondent says that they feel (Sympathy) after watching Muslims characters in Indian movies whereas (35%) respondent's stated that they get (Annoyed) moreover, (54%) respondents say that after watching Muslim characters we feel neutral. The respondents are Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years.
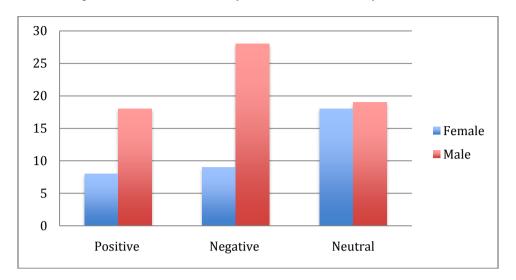
Table 11: Impact of Indian movie, which you have watched recently about Muslim women?

The data presented in table 11 explains, that (26%) of respondent says (Positive) whereas (37%) responded (Negative) and (37%) responded (Neutral). The respondents are Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years.
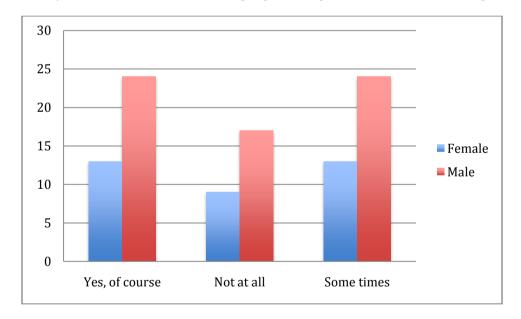
Table 12: Do you think Indian cinema is showing negative image of Kashmiri Muslims through movies?

The information provided in table 12 clearly states that (37%) of the respondent says Yes, of course, Indian Cinema is showing negative image of Kashmiri Muslims whereas (26%) responded (Not at all) and (37%) responded (Some times) the respondents are both Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years.
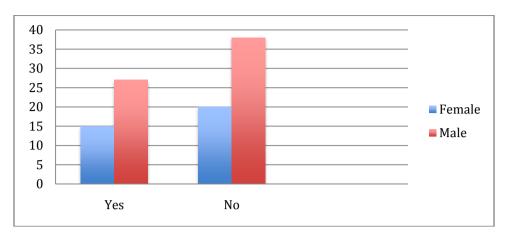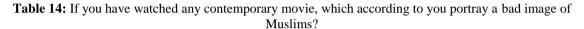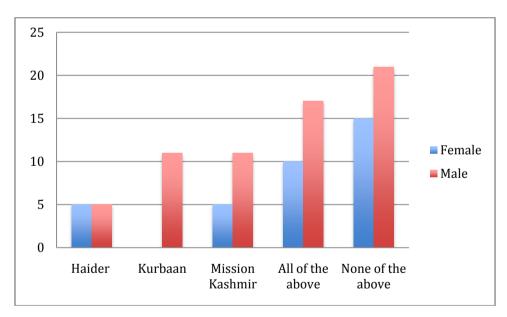
Table 13: Do you think Indian cinema have created negative image of Muslims all over the world?

The data presented in table 13 explains that (42%) respondents say (Yes) Indian cinema have created negative image of Muslims whereas (58%) of the respondents says (No) we do not believe that Indian cinema have created negative image of Muslims all over the world. The respondents are Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years.

Table 14: If you have watched any contemporary movie, which according to you portray a bad image of Muslims?

The information given in table 14 says all the movies mentioned above(64%) respondents say contemporary movies portrays a negative image of Muslims whereas (36%) say (Non of these) portrays a Negative image of Muslims.The respondents are Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years.
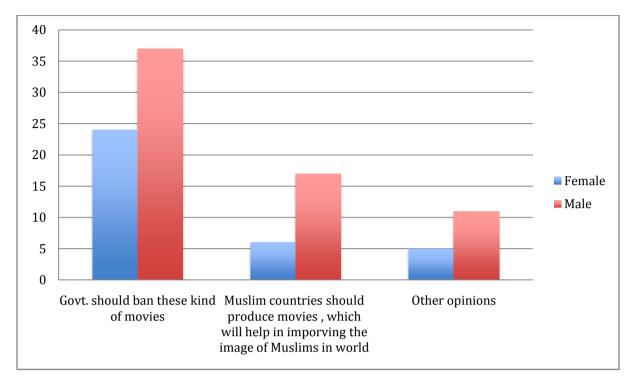
Table15: Give your suggestions to stop portraying Muslims as terrorist?

The data presented in table 15 states that (71%) of respondent say Govt. should ban these kind of movies whereas (23%) respondent states Muslim countries should produce movies, which will help in improving the image of Muslims in the world and (16%) respondent gave their own opinion. The respondents are Muslims and Non-Muslims, Males and females, belong to the age group 17-24 years.

Analysis

The survey method of research was deployed for the present study. A structured questionnaire was used to collect required data furthermore; a research question tends to investigate whether Muslims are being portrayed as terrorists, bad people, cruel and negative. When researcher asked the respondents that do you think Bollywood movies are presenting Muslims as terrorist? (50%) of the total population responded (Yes) Bollywood movies are presenting Muslims as terrorist whereas (50%) responded (No). The research findings revealed the truth about this question. Indian cinema is portraying Muslims as terrorists and bad people through some movies. While examining the Indian movies, the researchers found that Muslims are, more or less, shown as terrorists, traitors, disloyal, cruel and barbarian type of people.Meanwhile, challenges Bollywood's position as only an entertainment media and believe that if Bollywood cinema has no political agenda as such then it has to change its perception about Muslims. Moreover another question was asked to the respondents that in what kind of role Muslims are presented in Indian Movies? (47%) of total population stated (Negative) whereas (38%) stated that they are presenting (Neutral) roles and only (15%) of population responded (Positive) it clearly indicates unbiased approach towards Muslims portrayal. It should deem Muslims as normal human beings with complexities and issues and not as stereotyped characters. Bollywood needs to restructure their views and ideas about Muslims and Islam, because Muslims are the largest minority in India.

Besides, there are a few movies, which depict and present the issue of Hindu-Muslim communal riots. A question was asked to the respondents that do you think that some movies are dividing Muslims and Hindus into two groups, (45%) respondents think that some Indian movies are dividing Muslims and Hindus whereas, (32%) responded(No) and (23%) responded (May be). Labeling Islam as a terrorist or peace abhorring religion is certainly a misplaced assumption. The presentation of the Muslim characters as terrorists and extremists reached its peak after 2001. Due to terrorist attacks of 9/11, the political scenario of the entire world was changed and Muslims and Muslim countries became the direct victims of the wrath of the West and the rest. According to

III.   CONCLUSION

All in all, it can be understood from the analysis that among the productions that touch upon the issues related with Muslims, the number of the movies which depict, and render the Muslims as brutal and rogue is

greater than the number of the movies which present and portray Muslims in positive frame of mind. Movies discussed above attempt in portraying the plight of the Muslim community in which ordinary Muslim is victimized in two ways One by Islamic terrorism and two, by the society at large, where every terror attack is associated with Islam (Muslim community) and every other Muslim becomes a target of suspicion. It seems that in the past 15-20 years, it has been difficult to find a film in which the Muslim aspects of the main character plays their role an aspect of their identity, Bollywood cinema in which the central characters (i.e., hero/heroine) are Muslim maintain Muslim-ness as central to the storyline and the storyline is usually somehow political – either in severe (terrorism) or romantic (inter-religious love) ways or both.

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