



Construction of Differences Through Movies: A Case Study of Portrayal of Kashmiri Muslims in Indian Movies

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Abstract

Indian movies are very popular in sub-continent and have equal rate of viewership in Pakistan as they have in India. On the other hand, movies have been known as the best tool for agenda setting since years. This had been experimented successfully at first in second world war and afterwards in USSR-Afghan war. This paper explores the portrayal of Kashmir's in Indian movies in the same context of agenda setting. The main objective of the study is to determine whether Kashmiri Muslims are positively or negatively portrayed in Indian movies and are given equal representation or not. The researcher has employed the survey research and content analysis method for the study. Three Indian movies involving Kashmiri characters have been selected for content analysis. For the survey purpose, students of University of Punjab have been selected as population and a sample size of 150 have been taken through simple random sampling. The results of the study show that Kashmiri Muslims are portrayed as rebels and terrorist, and, are given only negative characters to perform. The study explains this phenomenon with help of Agenda Setting Theory.

Key words: Agenda setting; Indian movies; Kashmiri; Muslims; Difference; Portrayal; Negative

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INTRODUCTION

Cinema is a fascinating subject but Indian cinema popularly known as Bollywood is more so because of the peculiar traits of the people who watch it. Mass media especially cinema shaped our society and peoples' attitudes. They control all aspects of life which is related to the people, as how people think, what style of clothes are the most fashionable and how people should behave. The views enter a trance, a state of absorption, concentration, attention and engrossed by the story and the plight of character.

According to Ray Hom:

Movies, which made its birth in the late 1980's, are a major influence in the way most of humanity view the world. People usually go to movies to escape the real world but when they leaked the theater they leave with a permanent impression of images of people and situation they lack the expertise and knowledge of.

Historically Bollywood's long Kashmir obsession is thus an exploration of how this obsession fits into the contested political relationship between Kashmir and the Indian Union. There by, the impression of images produced bony Indian films with special reference to relations with Pakistan is of concern to many people who are apprehensive about indo-Pak relationship. The historically baggage and policy pursuits during the last 57 years did not facilitate peace and stability of the reign lack of peace and stability took a very tool in terms of human development.

Indian films are famous on the both side of the border. The wider spend popularity of DVDs, the cable T.V and the availability of literally thousands of films in every concern video store has greatly expanded the influence and accessibility of Indian films.

Films of 1960's made the Kashmir Valley the space for the expression of a new youthful modernity for urban Indians, especially through the technology of color. Pleasures of these films with the formation of a modern

Indian subjectivity, contrasts these pleasures with the mounting political tensions within Kashmir.

From India's Independence in 1947 to the early 1980s, Indian-administered Kashmir remained stable and relatively free of violence compared to the rest of northern India. The ruling National Conference government ran a patronage based, one-party system heavily beholden to political leaders in Delhi. Yet despite corruption, miss-governance, curtailed freedoms of speech, and inordinate dependence on central largesse, the National Conference enjoyed a high degree of legitimacy and little popular opposition.

Ever since the Kashmiris asked for freedom, the Indian policy changed towards them, thus their portrayal in the Indian films. Bollywood movies made on the subject of Kashmiris are generally conflict based, based on the conflict between Kashmiris and Indian army, border disputes, cross border insurgency, Pak Indian relations, partition issues and Indian military in Kashmir.

Bollywood's always portrayed Kashmiris as violent and barbaric people. Indian believe that Kashmiris are the followers of Islamic religion which is obsessional in nature and Bollywood movies portray that how this obsession fits into the contested political relationship between the Kashmir and Indian union. These movies highlight the modesty and peaceful nature of Indian urban and they only fight for the sake of their own defense.

Bollywood movies show that Indian administered Kashmir remains stable and relatively free of violence because of Indian defensive services.

These movies portray the Indian nation as more human and patriotic and Kashmiris as an anti-state nation. Main indication/basic theme of Kashmir based movies is to promote the Pak Kashmir relations in wrong sense to riot their peaceful relations.

This long standing explanation of Bollywood's attempt for construction of difference between Kashmiris and rest of the world invites the attention of researcher to investigate the portrayal of Kashmiris in Bollywood movies.

1. DESIGN OF THE STUDY

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:

- To determine whether the portrayal of Kashmiri civilization is similar to other real life Islamic civilization.
- To study whether the Indian Movies show the patriotism and bias against Pakistanis and Kashmiris in their movies.
- To analyze whether Kashmiris are portrayed as rebels and insurgents

1.2 Methodology

The present research has used the content analysis method of three selected Indian movies on the topic of

Kashmir and survey method for the collection of data. Questionnaire tool is adopted for data collection in survey method. The simple random sampling method is used for the selection of sample. The universe of this study is the students of Punjab University (male and female) from the age of (16 to 24).

1.3 Research Questions

- Do the Indian movies present the Kashmiris as positive characters?
- Do the characters of Kashmiri Muslims in Indian movies appear as a major role?
- Do the Indian movies portray Muslim characters as violent, aggressor or terrorist?

1.4 Hypothesis

Kashmiri people are fighting for their freedom against India. Indian people through Bollywood movies are propagating negative image of Kashmiri Muslims in the whole world. Indian movies portray Kashmiris as violent, terrorist and aggressors.

2. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

a. Do you watch Indian movies?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	142	95%
No	8	5%

b. Why do you watch Indian movies?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
For information	9	6%
For entertainment	82	55%
For time pass	59	39%

c. Do you watch those movies in which Kashmiri's are portrayed as a terrorist?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	52	35%
No	98	65%

d. Do you think that Indian movies are presenting the Kashmiri Muslims as terrorist?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	140	93%
No	10	7%

e. Do you think that Indian movies are presenting the Kashmiris Muslims as aggressor?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	137	91%
No	13	9%

f. Do you think that Indian movies are presenting the Kashmiris Muslims as violent?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	139	93%
No	11	7%

g. In what kind of role Kashmiri Muslims are presented in Indian movies?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Positive	3	2%
Negative	135	90%
Neutral	12	8%

h. Do the characters of Muslims as a Kashmiri in Indian movies appear most frequently in....?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Major role	86	57%
Minor role	64	43%

i. Do you like those movies which present Muslims as terrorist?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	2	1%
No	148	99%

j. After watching Indian movies, what you feel about characters of Muslims?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Sympathy	46	31%
Annoyed	65	43%
Neutral	14	14%
Other	25	17%

k. What was impact of Indian movie you have watched recently on topic of Kashmir?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Positive	36	24%
Negative	114	76%

l. Name any Indian movie you have watched which is on the topic of Kashmiris?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Mission Kashmir	84	59%
Fana	36	24%
The Hero	25	17%

m. Do you feel Indian movies have created negative image of Kashmiri Muslims all over the world?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	138	92%
No	12	8%

n. Do you feel any reluctance and hesitation watching Indian movies on Kashmiri Muslim?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	75	50%
No	26	17%
Some time	47	31%

o. Give you suggestions to encounter Indian propaganda?

Option	Respondents	Percentage
Government should ban these kinds of Indian movies	100	67%
Pakistani film industry should produce the movies which help in improving the image of Kashmiri Muslims	50	33%

3. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Question No. 7, 11, and 13 of the survey questionnaire explain first research question with detailed percentages and first part of hypothesis. In the answer of these questions 90% respondent believe that India portray the negative image of the Kashmiri Muslims in their movies. Majority students get the negative impact after watching such type of movies. In the survey after collecting the data it comes out that 76% students have negative impact of these Indian movies. Indians want to prove that around the world Kashmir is a part of India, that's way they are fighting against those people who don't accept that Kashmir is the part of India 92% respondent feel that the Indian movies have created negative image of Kashmiri Muslims all over the world.

Question no 8 and 10 of the questionnaire deal with second research question. According to the researcher study 57.33% respondent feel that it Kashmiri characters appear most frequently in major roles in Indian Movies. However, they feel that these major roles are not like of hero of positives, but they represent Kashmiris negatively.

Question no 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the survey questionnaire explains third research question and the last part of hypothesis. According to the collected data, researcher concluded that 93.33% respondent bear a view that Indian movie portray Kashmiri Muslims as terrorist, 91.33% marked that the Indian movies present Kashmiri Muslims as aggressor, 92.67% respondents said that Indian movies shows Kashmiri Muslims as violent.

There are suggestions to ban Indian movies in Pakistan in order to encounter this propaganda of Bollywood. 67% of the population believes that this will help to keep Kashmiri's image safe in Pakistan. But this strategy cannot help to protect their image in India. Rests of the respondents believe in counter strike by making movies in Pakistan to protect and improve image of Kashmiris. This option talks about starting another war in the world

of movies where only counter strikes will keep happening one after other.

3.1 Content Analysis of Three Indian Movies

Present study focuses on portrayal of Kashmiris in Indian movies, in regard to this when researcher asked the respondents to name any Indian movie which they have watched. 59% of the total population wrote Mission Kashmir, 24% answered that they have watched Fana movie and 17% said that they watched The Hero movie.

Mission Kashmir is the story of Kashmiri Muslims fighting for the freedom of their country against Indian government. The major Muslim characters of an Indian army officer and a girl "Sofia Pervaiz" are portrayed as positive faithful to their duties. The other major Muslim character of a Kashmiri freedom fighter "Altaf" is show negative as terrorists, corrupt, fanatic and doing brutal act of killing innocent people. The minor and background characters have been portrayed as both negative and neutral. The Muslim characters shown in Mission Kashmir are Kashmiris dressed in Kashmiri dresses. The Muslims are portrayed as militant and Pakistan as unwilling to existing peace in occupied Kashmir and intended to occupy Kashmir through terrorist activities. The majority Muslim characters are shown against their terrorists, violent and aggressor activities.

Fana is a movie based on the subject of Muslim's involvement in terrorist activities. Zooni Ali Beig is a blind but beautiful young Kashmiri girl. She is patriotic and sings praises for India. She and her friends go to Delhi with their group to give a performance. There she meets a tour guide, Rehan Khan. Rehan Khan is actually Rehan Qadri, a master mind behind major terrorist activities in the world and a member of IKF, Independent Kashmir Front. He thinks that Zooni has died in the same blast which he executed in Delhi. Seven years later, his mission is to get a trigger from Indian military to use it to blow up a whole city. Rehan gets the trigger from a unit deployed in Kashmir by pretending to be an Indian Army officer. A RAW intelligence master mind, Malini Tyagi, realizing what he is capable of, orders a complete black out of communication in Kashmir so that he cannot contact IKF. He is chased and injured by the troops but, he manages to escape death. There is a snow storm in the area and he takes refuge in a house which belongs to Zooni. The storm is not over yet and Tyagi orders a TV broadcast of his sketch and the trigger. He contacts IKF through radio and is told to wait till the morning. Zooni She is now convinced that Rehan is the terrorist and she killed him.

The Hero is the story of a Kashmiri Muslim terrorist group which prepares the nuclear material. Three major Muslim characters of that group are filmed as leaders and are portrayed negative. They are shown preparing nuclear material for the terrorist to detonate in India for a massive

killing. The other major Muslim character of a Muslim girl is portrayed positive as peace loving and providing help to control the terrorism. The minor characters have been portrayed as positive, negative and neutral. The Kashmiri Muslim characters are filmed in Kashmiri national dresses and culture. The majority of the dialogues spoken by, to and for the Kashmiri Muslim characters are against the soul of their freedom fight showing them terrorists.

The whole story revolves around the same beat of presenting Muslims as terrorists. Freedom fighters in Kashmir have been depicted as agents of Pakistan and have been presented as threat not only to Kashmir but to India also.

CONCLUSION

Owing to audio-visual combination, movies have been considered the most influential tool of communication by the effect study social scientists around the world. The message carried by the characters resembling real life bears more strength as compared to written or audio one. These assumptions lead to the investigation of use movies in agenda setting and in creating difference. In the present study, researchers have given their effort to find out how Indian movies are creating different image of Kashmiris in the world as compared to their real image. The study takes us to conclude that Indians are using their movie industry to set an agenda in the world where they are trying to establish a reality that all peace and law and order in Kashmir is due to Indian presence there. All Islamic elements of Kashmir, which are major in number, are creating disturbance in Kashmir with the help of Pakistan and are trying to take illegal occupation of Kashmir.

Fighting for freedom is basic human right of Kashmiris which no one can refute. There was a time in sub-continent when Indians and Pakistanis were fighting against British rule in India. This was because of their illegal stay in India. Nobody in the world termed people of sub-continent as terrorist. If Kashmiris are fighting for any foreign invasion on their land and for their freedom, there is no way one should portray or call them terrorist.

Such kind of portrayal of Muslims in Indian movies is creating a difference between Muslims of Kashmir, Pakistan and India and Hindus in India that is causing serious damage to all efforts of harmony and peace inside India and across the border in Kashmir and Pakistan. This is another fact that both these nations do not have a describable and peaceful history of relations. Giving Kashmiris and Muslims such a depiction of their character can do nothing but to add fuel to fire that is burning at its maximum.

A world shown in movies gets imprinted on the minds of viewers and leaves a deep and long lasting effect. Erasing these effects sometimes takes more than normal

effort as it is now happening in Pakistan and India where continuous efforts of harmony and peace are not bringing fruits. We can take example of “Aman ki Aasha” is this regard. This is due to rigidness of minds on both sides where media has given a concrete shape to hatred among once-together nations. Movies have become the most influential and possible way of communication between Indians and Muslims. They can be used for minimizing the difference, which for all reasons will bring positive and desired results. Using them for creating differences will only stir the long standing disgust and hatred.

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