# The Politically Motivated Misrepresentations of Muslims in Indian Mainstream Media

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Abstract

Hindi cinema has been used as a tool to entertain the masses in affecting people's lives, society and even Indian social systems. Religion tends to be an important aspect of Indian cinema and one that is most often misinterpreted is the Islamic religion. Since the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, there have been many false preconceived notions of Muslims being represented in the media, especially in films. Films act as a medium to influence the general public of their opinions and in Indian films, the depiction of Muslims and Islam in general is viewed through a negative lens. The Indian government plays a huge role in what gets reiterated in Bollywood cinema and news media and by relating Muslims to the image of terror makes the audience feel as though this is the reality of all Muslims. However these misrepresentations create a stereotype of Muslims that have no correlation to their Islamic nation and instead creates biases towards the religion as a whole.
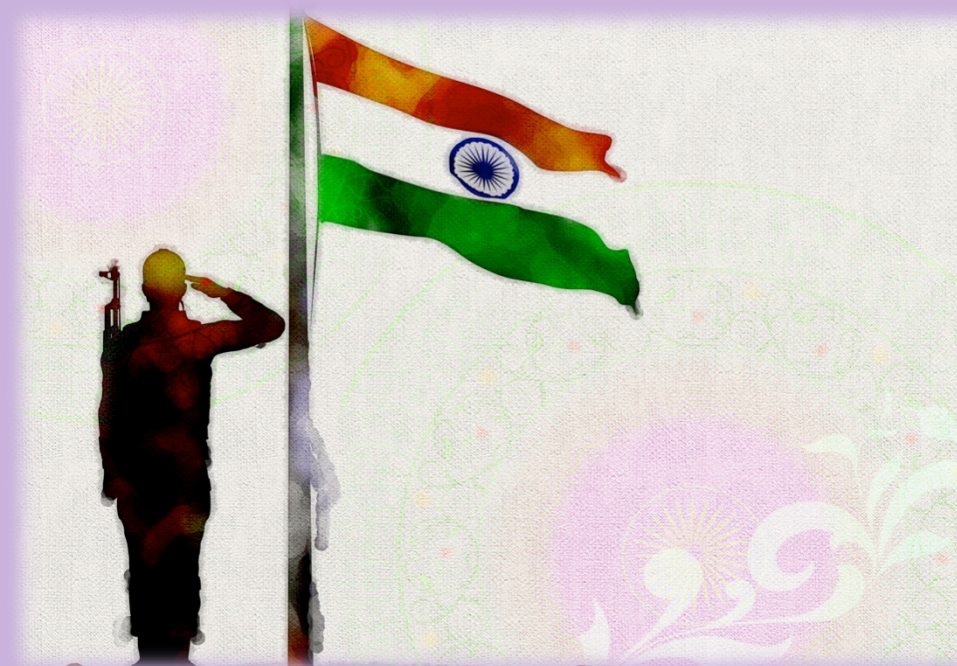
Indian Nationalism, from Sambeet; Pixabay, Jan 2017; Web; 22 Feb 2017

This is for Reel, from Ajita Shashidhar; Business Today, Dec 7, 2014; 22 Feb 2017

Thesis Statement

Indian cinema is politically motivated in contributing to and creating the false representations of Islam in mainstream Indian media.

Methodology

- Academic journal articles found through the York University library portal.
- A series of Hindi films found online and in the public library.
- The Hindi films were useful in finding visual aids that helped portray the stereotypical misrepresentation of Muslim characters found in Indian cinema.

The Concept of the Hindutva

- The term, Hindutva was first coined in the late 1800s and translates to "Hinduness."
- The Hindutva is a right-wing fascist group pertaining to three million members who are trained in armed combat preparing themselves against an imagined threat posed by Muslims and other minority groups residing in India.
- This hateful ideology instills false grievances amongst the Hindu population against Muslims and other minorities and then uses that anger amongst the Hindus to bring forward communal riots and protests with the ultimate goal of clearing India of anyone that is non-Hindu.

Not In My Name by Oliver Morin; The Daily Beast, November 21, 2015; Web; 22 Feb 2017

Muslim Representation in Hindi Films

- The Indian film industry tries to define the true essence of 'Indian-ness' through films that engage with the interests of the patriotic and nationalist sides of the public.
- They have tried to promote this by representing Muslims as 'the Other' in their cinemas.
- Muslim characters in Hindi films fall into the good Muslim/ bad Muslim dichotomy; the good Muslim is a civilian that aids in the communal well being of society while the bad Muslim entails characters that adhere to acts of violence and terrorism.

Islam in Mass Media

- Newspapers in India are tied to a political party as their founders have their roots in politics.
- Newspapers and major news channels only cover Muslim issues when something has gone wrong.
- The Indian media tries to bring forward long forgotten instances within Indian history, which builds upon the existing hate between the Hindus and Muslims, by covering news stories that remind the public of a bygone era that has no relevance in today's secular picture of India.

India's Media Integrity, from The Voice of Nation. May 4, 2015. Web; 22 Feb 2017

The Uri Terror Attack, from India News Desk; India.com, Sept 19,2016; Web; 22 Feb 2017

Conclusion

Islam is viewed to be the invader's religion in India due to its minority population within the nation. The false representations of Muslims and Islam in Hindi films and Indian media influences false notions of terror and this image is one that is greatly appreciated amongst the Hindus. Due to the ties of the mass media to political parties, it is difficult for media to break away from the interests of the elite class, as they own the rights to various media outlets. It is important for the Indian media to step away from viewing Islam as extremist as not all Muslims are terrorists or dangerous. Believing in this kind of ideology is what allows for right-wing fascist groups like the Hindutva to continue prevailing in society. The Hindu community needs to step away from Indian history and politics to allow themselves to be more accepting towards the Muslim population as this divide between Hindus and Muslims as presented in the media is an endangerment to both parties involved.