DIFFERING MUSLIM IDENTITIES AND SOCIAL INFLUENCES: A LOOK AT BOLLYWOOD AND INDONESIAN MOVIES

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ABSTRACT

The depiction of Muslims on reel has been a widely popular phenomenon starting from the most popular Hollywood to their Bollywood counterparts and competitors, and even the new arrival of Turkish films an dramas, Indonesian films are a rising genre in many parts of the Muslim world. In this academic article, a scrutiny of Muslim depiction in Bollywood as well as Indonesian movie is aimed with the help of cultural imperialism, and representation theories respectively. The contrasting depictions are understood with the help of the Semiotic Square as methodology. The article also has an objective of examining the role of commercial films on the society at large in terms of shaping overall Muslim identity and piety. The movies of Bollywood and Indonesian directors and producers which portray Muslims and create identity, particularly in the 90s and early 2000s, are taken into account. The paper highlights identity politics, as well as background history in Indonesia and India by decoding cinematic narratives and Muslim representation.

Keywords: *Muslim Identity, Bollywood, Indonesia, Hindi Movies, Cultural Imperialism*

FARKLILAŞAN MÜSLÜMAN KİMLİKLER VE SOSYAL ETKİ: BOLLYWOOD VE ENDONEZYA FİLMLERİNE BİR BAKIŞ

ÖZ

Müslümanların tasviri, en popüler Hollywood'dan başlayarak Bollywood'daki muadillerine ve rakiplerine kadar oldukça yaygın bir fenomen haline gelmiştir. Yeni yapılan Türk filmleri ve dramalar, Endonezya filmleri Müslüman dünyasının birçok yerinde yükselen bir tür olma özelliği göstermektedir. Bu akademik makalede, sırasıyla kültürel emperyalizm ve temsil teorileri yardımıyla Bollywood ve Endonezya filmlerindeki Müslüman tasvirlerinin irdelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışmada birbiriyle çelişen betimlemeler, metodoloji olarak göstergebilimsel analiz yardımı ile açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır. Çalışma, genel Müslüman kimliğini ve dindarlığını şekillendirme açısından ticari filmlerin toplum üzerindeki rolünü inceleme amacını da taşımaktadır. Bollywood ve Endonezyalı yönetmen ve yapımcıların özellikle 90'lı ve 2000'li yılların başında Müslümanları canlandıran ve kimlik oluşturan filmleri dikkate alınmıştır. Ayrıca çalışmada, sinematik anlatıları ve Müslüman temsilini deşifre ederek kimlik siyasetinin yanı sıra Endonezya ve Hindistan'daki arka plan tarihini de vurgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Filmler, Kimlik, Temsil, Kültürel Emperyalizm, Göstergebilimsel Analiz*

Introduction

The topic of the article revolves around the role of cinema and movies in the portrayal of Muslims in Bollywood and Indonesia and the corresponding perceptions among viewers and the respective social influences that play a role in having a demand for such movies. A couple of movies are analysed in terms of the content and messages they convey.

As Siegfried Kracauer put it, films are a reflection of their societies (URL-1). He explains this as films being a work of individuals intended to satisfy the desires of mass audiences (Chapman, 2003). In Plato's Parable of the Cave wherein it is assumed that the world's population is cramped in a cave and the only external ideas come in the form of shadows on the walls. These shadows assume the form of reality. This is the metaphor that Elizabeth Ewen and Stuart Ewen used

to exemplify the issue with representation, considered to be a very important problem by contemporaries. A piece of information and its related power depend on authenticity and facts. The continuous feeding of an image or a word gives it the status of fact which becomes history when stored. The authors further add that in 'a mobile world-system employing standardized meanings and requiring uniform understandings' (Ewen and Elizabeth, 1992). With the passage of time and the advent of the 20th century, new media have replaced newspapers as Walter Lippmann made a strong suggestion that photography and cinema have authority over imagination (Lippmann, 1997). Apart from being close to real life, representations have a deep political, cultural social and economic currents (cited by Klein, 2018).

German sociologist Jacob Peter Mayer describes film sociology as a 'study of reception.' Consequently, he attempted to answer: 1) the 'ethical values' films propagate and as to how those values relate with 'real norms' that people live in and 2) the relationship among 'norms of films' and 'real norms' in the process of construction of 'absolute value' standards. Mayer comes to the conclusion that while it is not possible to provide entertainment without 'moral norms', the power of visualization also creates 'values.'

What is portrayed is the same for each individual, but visualization (through 'imagination') differs individually. As per Mayer, 'memory' plays a crucial role in the process. He suggests a 'study of memory' and 'things remembered' in a film provides stimulating indications of the 'effects of cinema' along with the 'role' it plays in the lives of the public.

Cases of actors being assaulted on streets after being mistaken for characters they played in certain movies suggest that despite the 'fictional' character in content, viewers often experience the fiction as 'real'.

Apart from exerting a significant influence on both the personal and collective 'emotions' and 'behavior', cinema is also likely to be a determinant factor in shaping an individual 'outlook' on life such as future plans, ideal life, and what people from different backgrounds mean to him (do Nascimento, 2019).

While the portrayal of Muslims on the silver screen has been a familiar phenomenon from Hollywood to Bollywood, and more recently the emergence of the Turkish film industry, Indonesian and Malaysian movies have been a force to reckon with in many parts of the Muslim world. In the research article, a content analysis, of narratives concerning the Muslim in Indian (primarily Bollywood) and Indonesian movies, is undertaken. Anti-Muslim sentiment has been subtle in Bollywood during the 90s, particularly pertaining to the Kashmiri secessionist movement received a shot in the arm following the events of 9/11.

The downgrading of Bollywood Muslim characters from being aristocrats and royals to that of stereotypically dressed extremists and terrorists has had an adverse effect on the perception of the community both domestically as well as internationally.

Depictions and portrayals of Muslims have not been exclusive to the Indian film industry. The research article will pit Indonesian movies in contrast to Indian movies in an effort to understand and comprehend the effects they have on masses. Indonesian movies, far from propaganda objectives, have been trying to shape the Muslim identity in a positive way as various studies show. Particular focus is placed on the emergence of Muslim-centric movies and their popularity.

An influential quarter's notion of Islamic ideas in need of propagation via market mechanisms in order to be preserved and promoted are explained with examples. Islamic-themed movies of the New Order era (1966-1998) and post-Soeharto era are analysed.

Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the research article is to study the differences in the depiction of the Muslim community in the film industries of the countries with the world's largest Muslim populations: Indonesia and India on various aspects of Muslim lifestyle. The aim will be to elucidate on the differences, comprehend them, and also ascertain the possible socio-religious backgrounds in the two countries. The objective would be to furnish as to how the two countries' socio-religious composition and the movie fraternity are interrelated to each other.

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

Content analysis will be used to study and understand the motives, meanings and intent contained within films in question. It is a research tool used to determine concepts, words in a text or a set of texts. The presence of, meanings and the relations among words and concepts are analysed and quantified by researchers, and then inferences concerning the messages in texts, writer(s), audiences, and also the time and culture are taken into consideration. 'Texts' may be considered as speeches, conversations, informal conversations, shots, scenes, sequences, or any form of communicative language in this case. Texts may even represent different occurrences.

One of the main theories that will be used, to study and analyse direct and subtle attempts at changing audiences' minds by implying that a certain culture(s) is superior compared to another, is the cultural imperialism theory. Scripts, props, attire, dialogues and shot selections will be analysed. Bollywood and Indian films

will be scanned using this theory. Positive portrayals, and desired portrayals on the other hand will be analysed via the theory of 'tgrtgugpvcvkqp0'The positive portrayal of Muslims is explained with assistance from Dudley Andrew's Concepts in Film Theory, where representation is named as one of the important theories (Andrew, 1984). He describes it as a phenomenon of audiences perceiving something that they view on screen as something that they are already aware of, something they can relate well with. Background history as well as current moods of a society are taken into account while using representation. Indonesian commercial cinema pertaining to Islamic themes will be studied in this manner.
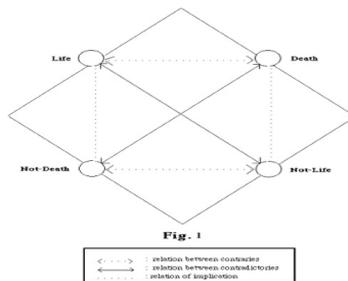

Figure 1. Semiotic Square according to Greimas
Source: Dino, F. (2011).

The methodology used for understanding the contrasting movies and messages will be Paris School of Semiotics. Semiotics in general examines signs as vehicles that permit human beings to represent the world, to influence, to present information, or to even deceive and obfuscate. The contrasting nature of the movies positive and negative is better comprehended with the help of Semiotic Square that pitches binaries against each other to understand uniqueness.

Cinema and Identity

The social spaces of minority communities and issues related to their identity have turned into critical components of modern findings on the link between politics and culture. Culture has undoubtedly influenced political issues since a very long time and likewise politicisation of cultural issues is now an unavoidable part of general life. The majority versus minority debate, the majority asserting cultural superiority, vilification of minority cultures, identity crisis amongst minorities and cultural symbols being used politically to mark us versus them and the description of nationhood in compliance with majoritarian ideology constitute parts of the reciprocative interaction process that includes cultural influence upon the political trajectory and the cultural space contours itself being

politicised. This brings to the surface that cultural comprehension as a supreme motivational power that works in various arenas of people's lives. Added to this, the importance of deconstructing political role, stated as a process whereby human beings formulate and control their group activities, gains primacy. The crucial point here is the importance of questioning as to if politics behaves as a means of fractious intervention for formulating discreet nuances of cultural trajectories favouring a particular group.

Popular culture is an alternative interpretation of mass culture where a major portion of people in a society, across class barriers, undergo a collective experience. The factors influencing this experience arise from different directions, but there exists a sort of mixing of several original sources which happens in a complementary way. This brings forth the collective or common experience, which is a symmetrical feeling of same tastes that tends to connect members of the collectivity into some sort of organic ensemble to create a coeval sense within them. Mass media, particularly the electronic ones, along with their international influence and sweep have turned into crucial agents in shaping this entire process (Kumar 2013: 458). It is reflected via folk forms, creative art and literature, food/drink, performing arts, attire and cinema. In spite of such diversified images, the popular culture assumes a pervasive and interconnected nature. (Sanjeev Kumar. H.M, 2016: 234).

Imperialism and Reflections in Art Form

Said's Orientalism (1978) proved to be a groundbreaking piece of study whose influence was felt in other studies that committed to breaking silences underlying pro-West views on non-Western cultures like Toni Morrison's Phying in the Dark (1992). His Culture and Imperialism, is an important contribution for post-colonial cultural studies and an essential read for those who propagate responsible, political analyses of literature. The perhaps least known side of Said's work as a member of the Palestinian National Council since 1977 most probably explains his depth of knowledge in Orientalism, culture and imperialism. Behind his analysis of culture and literature lies the notion that literary texts along with cultural productions are exemplifications of power. In Culture and Imperialism Said reinterprets the European literary works of the nineteenth and twentieth century India, Africa, parts of the Far East, the Caribbean, and Australia and presents them as constituting the ideological narrative of European domination and a representation of those lands and inhabitants during Western imperialist periods.

Said suggests that institutional power is the most essential determinant concerning Western ideas of history and tradition, and adds that the past colonial structures continue to have a cultural impact upon the present. Emphasizing upon the

French and English empires, he says that domestic and social economic issues coupled with the concept that there was a moral duty towards underdeveloped humans, formulated a national culture, which laid the foundations of the imperial authority. In the colonial structure the invention of the idea of national identity and tradition, of a past purged of unwanted foreign influences became a rallying cry for European as well as colonized entities. The imperial epoch is hence characterized by a differential idea of culture, and by a narrative that accepts the Western superiority and the non-Western inferiority for granted. This cultural narrative, furthered by the educated upper class finally becoming a purified expression of authority, lets Western powers present the subjugation of others and territorial expansion as normal and a much-needed step for domestic and social good, order and harmony. It is only via rejecting this differential idea of culture, Said says, can we really ignore the pitfalls of blame rhetoric common to both the colonizer and the colonized.

American military interventions are painted with philanthropic, and messianic senses via a rhetoric of power concealing American interests. The media, monopolized by American transnational corporations, builds a consensus in relation to other cultures as it was during the Persian Gulf War via a desensitizing video game-like coverage where wanton violence and destruction were not shown. The Arab world was portrayed as brewing with fundamentalism and tyrannical nationalism with careful emphasis of no mention concerning US support for militarism in many areas (Oliver, Ma Antonia, 1997: 111-14).

Portrayals of Muslims in Bollywood

Movies and cinema, as tools of soft power and influence have been researched and investigated for the impressions they make upon the minds of audiences. Even countries have been using cinema as a means of soft power and cultural diplomacy and as an essential negotiation component. Farhat Bashir Khan undertook a scrutiny of popular Bollywood films along with the famous Muslim roles depicted via them, and explored the prevalent and important stereotypes propagated and created. As debates rage on race, religion, gender, nationality and ethnicity in a more polarized world, and the world seeks smooth explanations for difficult issues such as low economic scopes, short-sighted political narratives, wide population displacement and migration owing to conflicts and business embargoes, the requirement of a fright of the "other" has gained massive importance in the political arena and are observed as propelling factors of not only local, limited, and regional political factions but alarmingly so, of bigger widely accepted national political factions too across the globe. The author, Bashir, explored the identifying characteristics of stereotypes wherein Muslims are pigeon-holed and painted in Hindi movies, which is famously termed as

Bollywood universally.

The influence of movies on Indians is humongous. A majority of the film stars time the release of big budget movies during big Indian festivities such as Diwali, Holi, Eid, and Christmas. Aamir, Shahrukh, and Salman Khan comprise of the trio that has reigned over the hearts of more than a billion Indians since three decades approximately. King Khan, as Shahrukh is fondly referred to, has turned out to be an important star, especially since the 90s era Bollywood. In spite of carrying the tag of a rank alien, he played famous romantic roles in films, that went on to break several theatre and cinema records. Shahrukh Khan also starred in the film, My Name is Khan (2010), that also featured the prominent dialogue—"And I am not terrorist". Ironically, the superstar had been detained at an American airport in 2016 for the third time, after which the American Ambassador in India offered an open apology, and promised that such an occurrence will not take place in forthcoming times (URL-2). After the September 11, 2001 terrorist assaults on America, there have been a spate of films that depicted and openly pushed forward discourses against the adherents of Islam at both national as well as global levels. such on-screen depiction of Muslims has usually been after major world events such as train bombings, terrorist attacks, mass shootouts, and rebellions. Such incidents have had negative influences mostly. Muslims comprise around 14% of India, yet Bollywood without fail had an ample supply of skilled and proficient Muslim actors, producers, directors, and writers. Owing to the humongous impact of Hindi movies upon the Indian society, the stereotypes implanted by them need a thorough comprehension along with an application of literary framework while studying and analyzing them.

Defining a Stereotype

As per Oxford English dictionary a stereotype is, "A common yet static and oversimplified picture or concept pertaining to a specific kind of thing or person". On the other hand, the Cambridge Dictionary refers to stereotypes as, "A collection concept that individuals possess concerning what something or someone seems to be, specifically a concept which is incorrect. There are a wide variety of sexual and racial stereotypes that are there today in a global community filled with easy concepts and visible on the various avenues, propagating different content manifestations with minimal or no supervision and freedom in terms of form and material.

Decoding Muslim Othering and Characterization Issues in Hindi Movies

Samuel Butler at one point of time factually quoted as a visually handicapped person knowing he is unable to visualize, is happy to be assisted even if by a domestic animal; while the one whose understanding is blind—the worst form

of blindness—believes what he sees to be the best, and rebukes a mentor. The meaning of comprehension assumes great importance as one undertakes a deeper research of roles which have depicted the Muslim characters in Bollywood. Usually the ideas of prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes are interconnected. Stereotypes fuel prejudices, after people are classified into formations on the basis of religion, race, age, ethnicity, nationality, or gender, and upon the addition of socio-economic status to the combination, the combination is deadly that can give rise to to innumerable forms of segregation and hatred in the wider community. Stereotypes pave way for a combination of beliefs concerning people by mere coincidence of them belonging to a particular social formation. When strong emotions are attached to that category, it inevitably leads to changes in treatment and attitude, which manifests towards the community. Such attitude is inherently cyclic and feeds upon a repeated reiteration of often unfounded and exaggerated findings concerning a specific community.

Stereotypes are often comprised of adapted attitudes, and are subconsciously switched on; generalizations, that can have commentary characteristics, capabilities and interests, performance, tangible/bodily features, as well as anticipated role attitudes. Common gender stereotypes encompass comments on males as well as females and associated traits such as males as far emancipated, good sportsmen, arrogant, agile, and efficient tradesmen while females as far whiney, nurturing, children-centric, and efficient housewives (Deaux, K., & Lewis, L.).

Absence of Multiculturalism in Hindi Movies

Bollywood movies in particular exhibit a visible negative agenda towards the idea of monoculturism as Muslim roles are depicted, and it is usually portrayed in stories that contain liberal versions of anti-Muslim hate and thereby reducing Muslim identity to usually an unfriendly and not integrated minority community. As per an article called Bollywood and the Minority Question, a quotation shed light upon the stalled cold bonds which the majority community shares with the minority. A simple supper table husband-wife casual chatter brought, even the extremely famous Hindi movie star, Aamir Khan an avalanche of distress when he expressed apprehensions about his spouse from the majority community feeling worried about their children besides the insecure ambience in India. That led to Amir Khan losing several advertisement contracts, being taken down as the mascot of numerous famous endorsement deals, along with the mobile applications that he had been patronising being downgraded by online commentators, besides facing and receiving numerous vitriolic social media hashtags for many days (URL-3). Othering is a jargon that not only includes the numerous expressions of prejudice based upon group classifications, yet one may

opinionate that it additionally gives a clear window to expose a pair of common conditions and processes that popularize group-oriented marginality along with inequality (URL-4).

Phobia of the other dwells upon unfounded biases, perceptions, and stereotypes centred upon trademarks associated with the characters enacted by Muslims in Bollywood movies. Every trope exacerbates identical apprehensions, and dwells upon disinformation and misinformation that usually justify incidents of crowds extracting revenge from an entire community for a made-up wrongdoing. The absence of dominant female roles and the media's one dimensional depiction of womenfolk as cardboard fragments has usually led to the absence of female agency and voice, and the scarcity of women writers and directors in the Bollywood fraternity. Nevertheless, Hindi movies have consistently maintained a sturdy inclusion of Muslim actors, film-makers, producers, and scriptwriters. The industry has however stuck to catering to the general wishes of the majority viewers. Noteworthy exemptions have been observed in the form of parallel cinema that have highlighted the socio-economic plights of the Muslim community, such as Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro (1989) made by Saeed Akhtar Mirza. He also directed Naseem in 1995 that firmly showcased the Shahbano Case along with alimony-related problems faced by Muslim women. Nikah (1982) along with Fiza (2000) are some of the few Muslim-centric movies produced at a commercial level having famous well-integrated industry actors in Muslim lead characters. The critically appreciated Garm Hava, a 1973 film, by directors M.S. Sathyu and Balraj Sahni had a strong script written by Kaifi Aazmi and Shama Zaidi, that was based upon an unpublished tale by Ismat Chugtai narrating the horrors of the Partition of India experienced by an Agra-based Muslim businessman. Sensitive depictions of Muslim figures and the split of his household unit after the Partition turned the movie not just symbolic but even made it among the finest productions regarding Partition, giving rise to an advanced wave of meaningful Indian movies.

Stereotypes and Their Nature

So powerful are stereotypes that when an entire group is associated with them, personal identities do not hold any value against a unidirectional comprehension motored by bias, and adapted attitude and response. Stereotypes in both reel as well as real feed on simplified ideas that are mostly untrue, such as ―Muslims have too many children, all Indians are good in mathematics, the average terrorists are Muslims, men are silent and strong, women have a nurturing trait, women do not drive well, Black neighborhoods are crime-ridden, among others. The function of stereotypes is to effectively simplify our world into easy constructs and hence minimize the efforts of much-essential self-ideation (McLeod, 2015). Occasionally, even with great effect totally discarding the requirement to ask.

Among the oldest experiments to understand racist stereotypes was undertaken by Katz and Braly in the year 1933 whereby they offered a set of questions to White pupils of Princeton University. Most students remained totally unmoved with the depictions of hardworking, smart and sincere Americans and the bad portrayals for almost every other race including Jews, Japanese, and African-Americans. Movies depend on the discarding of disbelief, as right from the times viewers enter a movie hall and gaze upon the lit up screen in a darkened auditorium: they are there in order to run away from truth. Bollywood offers the best escape, with stunning performances, spectacles which seem larger-than-life, optical effects which make one gasp, and different changes of attire, and educational yards and arenas so artificial that Indian pupils aim for a mere basketball court that distantly reflect on-screen portrayals. However, beyond everything is the protagonist's role, generally a cocksure young male who just came of age even though occasionally he may not have come of age, yet who usually has the girl. In such a reel world, the benign forces triumph over the bad without exception, and the antagonist and protagonist duo being different entities. Right from the start when Indian movies had the majority community's mythology and religion as important subjects up to the period of national integration, peace, cohesion, to the 90s' action thrillers and love-centric melodramas, Bollywood has witnessed everything. The conflict source was usually a mad and evil scientist, a deceitful rich father with good intentions, a cruel antagonist who resides on an isle, and another deceitful beau; and then the growing contemporary Muslim terrorist or rougue youngster.

Hindi Cinema's Journey from Realistic Representations to Stereotypes

However despite the sheer number of immensely talented movie-makers, directors, actors, and scriptwriters, the Muslim from India has been cornered into dethroned nawabs[1], painters, terrorists, prostitutes, tailors, sidekicks, kawaals[2], and rowdy youngsters. The six step stereotyping mechanism often starts from onscreen characterization that usually consists of the young man donning a scull cap, Salwar Kameez or Pathan Suit[3], carrying rosary beads, with dark Kohl-rimmed eyes, along with a keffiyeha or a chequered cloth flung across shoulders that identifies a male from the Arabian Peninsula.

Initially Roja (1992) and later Mission Kashmir (2000) highlighted the secessionist movement and the off-track youngsters who had undergone massive agony. However Bollywood stereotypes typically has fed on the less good, worse and ugly when it is about Muslim characterization. The stereotype forms have

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[1] *Nawab* - A Muslim royal who presided over princely states in northern, central, and the Deccan regions of India.

[2] *Kawwal* - Singers with traditional Muslim hats such as the Fez, usually singing couplets that are not melodious to the ear. They are traditionally found at mausoleums of saints in the Indian Subcontinent.

[3] *Salwar Kameez/Pathan Suit* - A suit consisting of a long loose shirt and baggy trousers, usually worn by Muslimmen in north/central India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh

certain broad features and the majority of Hindi movies with Muslim roles come within this structure. At first, one may not necessarily have to be of the opinion that every member of a community group possesses few attributes so that it becomes a stereotype. The trick is done by the adage of the one bad apple. Shahid Amin, a subaltern historian with studies related to 19th and 20th century texts, has described vilification of Muslims extensively in the findings of Balkrishan Bhatt and Bharatendu Harishchandra who even resorted to active Muslim caricaturisation. A simple method to discard the precious human feeling called empathy, if an on-screen figure is made unrelatable or larger-than-life, every instance he takes a dive viewers would hoot their affirmation. In olden times, Muslim roles were often usually shown as monarchs, feudal lords or nawabs, and the movies usually revolved around epic occurrences.

Anarkali (1953), Baiju Bawra (1952), Mughal-e-Azam (1960), Mirza Ghalib (1954), Jahan Ara (1964), Taj Mahal (1963), and Noorjahan (1967) were generally about individuals related to the Sultanate, or the Imperial Mughal judiciary (Muslims and Hindi Cinema, Chapter 2). Those were usually historical genre films. The social genre films about Muslim representation included movies Mere Mehboob (1963), Chaudhvinka Chand (1960), Bahu Begum (1967), and Pakeezah (1972) that portrayed an ideal Muslim sphere. During the 1970s and 80s, parallel Hindi movies had an impact on the cinematic Muslim representation with famed movies such as Garam Hawa (1973), Anjuman (1986), and Salim Langdepe Mat Ro (1989). Such movies even led to a unique wave of Hindi movies called 'art cinema'. The Muslim depiction was contextual, holistic, and sensitive, highlighting the shifting paradigms of a confused and underdeveloped part of Indian community's battle. However, accompanied by the start of the 1980s and 90s, socio-cultural framework altered with the arrival of a couple of fanatical majority community's groups. This resulted in film genres bending more, and a new reality was portrayed, one that went on to be referred to as the 'Muslim-Political' films.
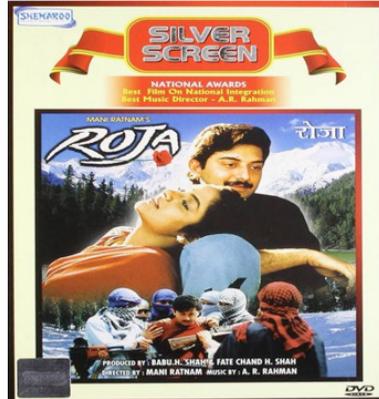
Figure 2: Poster of Film Roja
Source: Ratnam, M. (1992).

Therefore on the big screen as well, representation (aligned with socio-cultural category) of the community has been broadly compartmentalized and turned bad. The hurdle which is now ahead of Bollywood may continue to raise objections over its sincerity to portray the facts, its reaction to Muslim misrepresentation, under-representation or negative representation. Such an idea eventually leads to a constructed picture of the particular society. Most of the 'facts' concerning Muslims which Hindi movies have been portraying, and continue to, is fake, without perspective and exaggerated to conform to the majority's expectations. The Hindi cinema fraternity has meticulously avoided highlighting livelihood issues of Muslim Indians and has worked more as a social conduit in favor of continuing the suspicion and mistrust of the majority that every Muslim may be affiliated to Pakistani intelligence services; as a general Muslim being religious, pious and fundamentalist first, and a patriot later. His fake nationalism is usually a shield which protects evades general suspicion, and yet he is not completely off the 'list'. Worldwide Muslim issues, such as subjects of conflict, terror, and fundamentalism, vastly dwarf domestic narratives of Muslim issues (Derek M. D., 2017). Such conflict-centric interpretations of the Muslim religion upheld in the media spheres are subsequently amplified by repeated connection with images related to extremism, terrorism, and irrationality that depict Muslims as static, backward, and primitive (Derek M. D., 2017). Additional stereotypes is a feature related to a community often need not be incorrect to qualify as a stereotype. An example being most Muslims usually offer Friday Sabbath prayers at mosques, and do not gather therein to plot terror atrocities, or to instantly embark upon burning neighborhoods after the prayer call. Unrelated and fringe occurrences, even if factual, must not describe religions or communities. Movies and advertisements however usually depend on the aforementioned factors and capitalize on such instances to deliver loads of vague information to masses

within a limited possible time frame. Thirdly, stereotypes may not necessarily stay as a twofold phenomena, as it is essential for us to identify them as positive, negative, or occasionally with negative as well as positive components. They are still handpicked partial-facts being shown as undeniable facts as they are simply processed and easily understood. The approach or track of the Muslim Indian artist has been a great example. The doctored and selective depiction of the Muslim religion in many ways have painted the Muslim society in cultural stereotypes, with the mainstream narrative always having assisted in consolidating it. Muslims reside in ghettos, and if wealthy with good public face and rapport, the twist in the tale is them whereby they inevitably exposed as secret spies or double agents for India's unfriendly neighbours. If criminals who are kind as well as Muslim, they will enviably be opposed by a bad Muslim rival who will forsake/deceive them and kill them, eventually snatching the tag of integrated and equal citizens. In numerous ways, identical research on learnt behavior and violence that have been propagated through video games and cartoons, Hindi movies seems to have inflicted more harm than doing good for the Muslim Indian, even though coincidentally the three Khans—Aamir, Shahrukh and Salman—still remain the three superstars of Bollywood. However, they rarely take up a major role as Muslim individuals. The Khan trio also produce successful large-scale commercial movies, it can be safely assumed that they make an active choice. Fourthly, stereotypes can be both implicit as well as explicit. One may often commit the blunder of assuming that meticulous and clever scriptwriting may conceal the truth of a stereotype, but viewers know it better. Noteworthy is the fact that the Muslim society has generally been bearing the twin loads of branded 'anti-nationals' and also as 'the appeased' simultaneously. However authentic data from the Sachar Committee Report highlights the actual low state-of-affairs of the biggest minority community in India, thereby busting the myth of 'Muslim appeasement'. For many in India, Reshma—the legendary Pakistani folk singer—is unknown, despite the fact that most connect with the very popular track Lambi Judaai from Subhash Ghai's Hero, or even the foot-tapping Dama Dam Mast Kalandar. The artist behind such rhythmic and soulful songs has usually been kept concealed and the music track's popularity generally eclipsed the Muslim artist's existence. Reshma, having once been a celebrated singer with immense contributions, to Bollywood industry, and for music, later suffered greatly and passed away in anonymity far removed from aid and recognition. To this day, there are people who will know this once upon a time great and talented singer with a rare melodious voice.
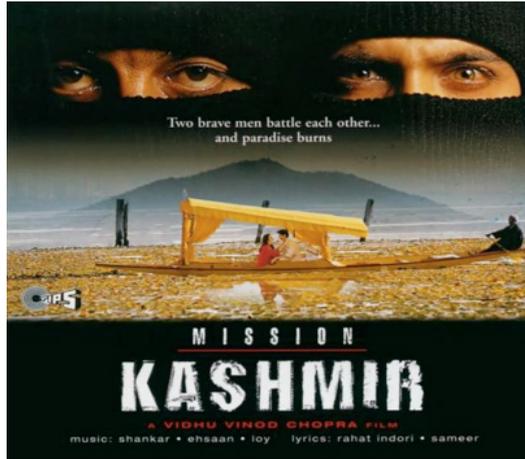
Figure 3: Poster of Film Mission Kashmir
Source: Vidhu Vinod, C. (2000).

There are documentaries and biopics on artists about their notable achievements, yet when it is about making something meaningful an inability to find any such work of notable class arises. There is scarcity of genuine work about Muslim artists that can galvanize India and relay the intense trials and honour which some of their biographies contain. Not one movie on Maulana Abul Kalam Azad exists, or about the staunchly secular A.P.J. Abdul Kalam who happened to be a nuclear scientist of great fame and achievement. The depiction of Muslims usually continues to be biased, and one needs to look in the dark to locate a Muslim protagonist as inspiring teacher, as an honest law enforcement official, a lawmaker, or even someone who commands a feeling of respect in reel, unsullied and unprejudiced by the paint of religion. Role models create a great impact upon young and impressionable minds which queue up to watch their favourite star on the silver screen. The Muslim either being a criminal or leading a group of abettors, in traditional white skull-cap and sporting kohl-rimmed eyes has been the mainstream discourse. So immense is the charisma of such a personality that popular stars such as Shahrukh Khan are seen playing such roles. The film Raees can play on "baniye ka dimag aur miyan bhai ki daring" (meaning a businessman's mind and a Muslim's audacity). However, just as on previous occasions, proves unsuccessful in depicting lived experiences or the community's social standings. Despite being stuck in commercialization, and being a high overseas Bollywood grosser for 2017, yet it does not make it. Only Shahrukh Khan's work has been discussed, and he is considered to be the gambler taker among the three, by starting his movie career in a bad role in the initial stages of his film career in the hit movie Baazigar (1993) that popularized the dialogue, "Haar Kar Jeetne Waale Ko Baazigar Kehtein Hain" which literally translates as the one who triumphs in defeat is the true winner (Khan, F. B. 2017: 2217 – 2223).

Cultural Manifestations and Indian Cinema Post-90s

A possible result of aggressive nationalistic majoritarian political outcome of the 1990s was witnessed in the tightening of the Muslim social sphere and the resultant decrease in the amount of movies which were produced with a setting of pure Muslim setting. Sanam Bewafa ('Unfaithful Beloved', 1991, Saawan Kumar Tak), Henna (1991, Randhir Kapoor), and Khuda Gawah ('God as Witness', 1993, Mukul S. Anand) arguably serve as last illustrations of the benign genre. What happened since then is a dogmatic portrayal of Muslims as the 'other' that is deeply filled into the demotic consciousness via a large number of movies that portray a stereotyped image of Muslims, shown in traditional Islamic attires, with highly religious tones even in their expressions and actions in the tolerant premises of the public space. This occurred especially in terms of those movies that seem to have openly attempted to toe the political line. Such types of films have portrayed the metaphoric Muslim figure, who is shown in anti-Muslim colours as Muslims indulged acts of terrorism, treason and organised crime. In such a way, culture via its various manifestations becomes a primary field of competition for religious, national, and ethnic identity (Lieber and Weisberg 2002: 273).

Films, in this context, emerge as an important functionalist tool that facilitates the testing of complex interactions that occur between politics and culture. Keeping all this in view, Professor Sanjeev Kumar H.M. made an effort to comprehend the methods in which Hindi movies have portrayed the Muslim minority as a metaphor of fear and have subtly tended to add substance to the the the majority community's majoritarian ideological and linguistic lexicography. To demonstrate this, the the professor cited certain movies which via their scripts have engaged in the proving two famous majoritarian clichés. The first one being, not all Muslims are terrorists but, but all terrorists are Muslims which has been patronised by movies such as New York (2009, Kabir Khan), Fanaa ('Destroyed in love', 2006, Kunal Kohli), and Kurbaan ('Sacrificed', 2009, Rensil D'Silva).

The other cliche is something roughly translated as, 'the Muslim identity is totally determined by their religion or qaum, and their religion is the root of violence' and this very Muslim identity renders them prone to terrorist recruitment, dangerous traitors or criminals. This notion has been propagated by movies such as Shaurya (Valour, 2008, Samar Khan), Sarfarosh ('Fervour', 1999, John Matthew Matthan), and Charas ('cannabis', 2004, Tigmanshu Dhulia). The subtle agenda beneath the two aforementioned distinct cinematic performance genres, represented by their patronisation of these two different cliches, is simple and bare. The Muslim is portrayed as the highest source of threat against whom Indians need to be on a constant national guard and it is this very existence of fear that the two types

of films have aimed to conjure up via their cinematic performances. (Sanjeev Kumar. H.M, 2016: 237-238).

Film Islami: Indonesia's Post-colonial History and Muslim Identity Development

As per Kartiak Van Heeren, representations and depictions of the Muslim religion in Indonesia's audio-visual domains and the Muslim integration in the mediascape surged in a significant way after President Soeharto's resignation. The upward spiral of Islamic movie production outlets and the emancipation of Islamic film fraternities needed that new Muslim self-representation practices be established. A band of young Muslim movie-makers particularly influenced the new narratives on the representations and position of the Muslim religion in Indonesian as well as transnational audiovisual spheres. This unique and then latest movie movement particularly pointed towards the post-colonial narratives derived from the theories of Third Cinema. Additionally, their narratives hinted towards partnerships with worldwide communities (Van, H. K., 2012: 115).

Islam and film could not be easily reconciled. As per the New Order, the ulama[4] (or religious Islamic scholars) spoke about the affairs of film in an official way in 1983 for the first time. During the same year, the movie Sunan Kalijaga (by Sofyan Sharna) was made. The movie was centred upon the legendary Sunan Kalijaga, who happened to be the first among nine saints who are cited to have preached and propagated the principles of Islam in Java. Related to the making of the film Sunan Kalijaga, a discussion about the movie was called for among ulama affiliated to the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, or the Indonesian Muslim Scholars' Council) and film scribes. It was reported in newspapers that majority of the ulama were of the opinion it was unfit to watch a movie in theatres famed for vulgar movies and inappropriate behaviour such as covert kissing in the dark during a romantic appointment (Bintang 1983; Jasin 1985). An in-film conversation aimed to discover the upper limit up to which movies may be utilized as a tool for propagating Islam or dakwah (Muslim religious propagation), and to discover a means that could club the traditional oral propagation with film's visual facets. As certain subjects are not to be visually represented as per Muslim traditions, queries popped up as to how moral guidance ought to be relayed, and how a few specific moral principles were to be portrayed via reel symbols. But the discussion's bulk centred on the movie called Titian Serambut Dibelah Tujuh (literally meaning The Narrow Bridge, by Chaerul Umam 1982), that was played prior to the talks to help the ulama understand how an Islamic movie could be (Van Heeren, 2012, p. 116).

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[4] *Ulama* - Islamic scholars

After a year-and-a-half's first official talks, the very first 'formal' Indonesian dawah movie was made. A work of fiction, the movie entitled Sembilan Wali (or Nine saints, Djun Saptohadi, 1985) revolved around many folk-tales and legends, related to wali songo, that are popular in the archipelago nation. Toeing the line of Sembilan Wali emerged yet another film on the nine saints. Yet again, the movie, which was called Sunan Kalijaga & Syeh Sitijenar (Sofyan Sharna, 1985), depicted Sunan Kalijaga and his attitude towards a supposed apostate. The movie's premiere was attended by 250 ulama, who had assembled in the capital city of Jakarta to participate in the third state MUI meet between 20-23 July 1985. Despite the fact that many Islamic scholars in the past were of the opinion that watching movies was haram (disallowed), those who were interviewed this time were mostly approving. However, they used the opportunity to emphasis that films particularly containing any slight sexual scenes like nudity or unmarried youngsters socializing were still haram[5] . May be due to the lack of explicit scenes, the movie Sunan Kalijaga & Syeh Sitijenar did not prove quite enthralling. Many ulama fell asleep during the screening. When their opinions concerning the film was sought, a majority of them could were unable to comment as they had skipped a part or nearly most of it (Jasin 1985).

From 1989 onwards, discussions revolving around the relation between Islam and film started making their spots in magazines and newspapers. The connection between the duo also happened to be the theme of numerous gatherings and conferences. In such meetings and talks, many queries were answered, like: How can the making of 'entertainment' dakwah[6] movies be controlled? How can they be made to work as a subsidiary to conventional dakwah? Was it even feasible to formulate a movie with religious subjects that can be acceptable for every side? What function may be taken up by the Islamic scholars and other moral authorities in the film production? There was an informal agreement that involving religious authorities and figures was important for preempting mistakes which could readily spark off deadly protests. Must they be mere consultants for ensuring everything concerning religion in the said film was 'properly' represented? Or their involvement should be wider? Should the ulama also innovate or propose film ideas, indeed take up acting themselves so as to lure the Muslim audiences? Other than these particular questions, many of which catered to the Islamic film content, majority of the discussions regarding Islam and film was propelled by the perceived requirement for producing Islamic films in modern Indonesia (Van Heeren, 2012: 117).

Between the year 1994 and 1996, Muslim think-tanks have emphasized that in the current age of globalization and information, it was really essential to put

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[5] *Haram* - Actions forbidden by Islamic jurisprudence
[6] *Dakwah* - Invitation to Islam given primarily to non-Muslims, and even Muslims

up a kind of resistance to the inflow of movies from abroad. The think-tanks firmly believed that such movies promoted nothing apart from sex, violence, and secularism (Arief 1996). If the archipelago nation was to make Islamic films, then Indonesians, most of who adhere to Islam, would be offered a vital lifeline through which they would be able to stick to their own customs. Indonesian movies were not alien to detractors. Quite different from 'hot' movies, many movies that the masses referred to as 'Muslim mission movies' were looked down upon. Muslim think-tanks were worried that larger audiences may get bewildered and think that Indonesian mystery and horror movies were the actual dakwah movies. Audiences actually were of the opinion that such types of movies had elements of religious propagation owing to the frequent protagonist roles accorded to Muslim figures. These were usually moral teachers and other Muslim signs who were inducted to bring order towards as such movies ended. Apart from horror movies, other films which ulama were related to controversial scenes were also thought to be Islamic mission films by audiences. Among them were many films which featured the popular actor and Rhoma Irama—the dangdut (popular music) star. General masses and viewers were quick to perceive these as promotions of Islam as both within and beyond the film arena, Rhoma Irama portrayed himself as a devout Muslim who took faith to the masses. The Islamic scholars however had different opinions, saying Irama's movies far too many 'hot scenes' that disqualified them from acquiring the dakwah film tag.

Along with talks on the requirement for more Muslim-centric movies there was a demand for the formation of Muslim movie production outlets. In the year 1996, Islamic groups like the mass organization called Muhammadiyah made efforts to establish production houses that had all the instruments required for movie-making. The gain of religious groups in a political debate with the state caused an endeavour to establish Islamic film production companies. In May 1996, the state brought in a new draft legislation concerning broadcasts which, besides other practices, outlawed the establishment of individual broadcasting companies centred on moral principles pertaining to religion. After a spirited negotiation, massive protests, and resilient discussions, the Muslim mass groups emerged victorious. On 18 June 1996, Hartono, the then information minister, made it public that moral organizations will be permitted to establish their individual broadcast companies. This win delivered a sturdy boost to march ahead with the establishment of Muslim movie production firms (Van Heeren, 2012: 118).

Apart from plans and works of establishing production firms, serious efforts were put in place to emancipate Muslim youngsters in the audio-visual domain. In the year 1993, during a seminar in Cirebon on the role of Islamic boarding schools or pesantren during the industrialization age, movie-maker Erros Djarot said that the Islamic boarding schools had great possible roles in assisting the shaping of a

Muslim art and movie fraternity. He added that Islamic students or the santri must not be isolated from the cinematic and artistic world. Rather than being upset with un-Islamic movies, the santri must make movies on their own. In 1997, triggered by the fear of an influx of overseas films and the anger caused by stereotypical, factually incorrect portrayals of Islam in the nation's movies, discussions and seminars were held in universities, Muslim-centric schools, and firms. They were held in order to persuade heads of universities and Muslim-centric schools and leaders of Muslim mass groups that their pupils and affiliated individuals must be integrated in movie production besides acquiring the necessary skills for such aims (Van Heeren, 2012: 119).

After President Soeharto's resignation, the progress of the preceding few years in relation with the fresh air of reforms led to a significant increase in activities that combined Islam with film. The count of professional Islamic film production houses soared, and some Islamic organizations assisted with courses in film production training for Muslims. Encouraged and full of vigour, various Islamic organizations attended when Islamic film screenings and talks concerning audio-visual media were arranged. Apart from the cinema clubs affiliated to Muhammadiyah universities, numerous newly formed Muslim film societies engaged in such endeavour with vigour. Among the then unique societies were the Muslim Movie Education (MME), M-Screen Indonesia (Muslim Screen Indonesia), the Salman Filmmaker Club—a film community related to the Salman Mosque, which is in turn is a part of the Technical University of Bandung, and the Fu'n Community (derived from the Arabic term al-Funnuun meaning art). Such communities were mostly made up of young professional and amateur Islamic students, film-makers, and members from youth branches affiliated to known Islamic organizations and communities. Many, like the Fu'n Community, even included artists from Teater Kanvas, and Teater Bening, the Jakarta Art Institute, members from Forum Lingkar Pena (or FLP, meaning Pen Circle Forum), and the non-governmental organization Mer-C. The film crew from the Muhammadiyah production house—PT Media Cipta Utama—along with some activists from other organizations also attended. The societies, led by young Muslim film-makers and students, exhibited a marked tendency for discussing motivations Islamic film production and shaping the laws needed to govern the particular undertaking. Talks stuck to topics such as the manner in which girls and ladies must be portrayed in Islamic movies; the requirement for prayer breaks in the course of film shoots; and if Islamic films could be watched by women and men sharing the same space and time.

For solidifying the Muslim film fraternity, a state union of Islamic film societies was established in 2003 in the month of July. The MAV-Net (or Morality Audio Visual Network) was made up of delegates from six different film institutions

and communities: M-Screen, Rohis Mimazah, the Fu'n Community, MQTV Bandung, Kammi, IKJ, along with a Pesantren Darunnajah delegate. At the centre of this network were aforementioned debates concerning requirement to oppose the hegemony of foreign movies and to solidify Islam's position in the mainstream audio-visual media arena of Indonesia. According to MAV-Net affiliated individuals, Indonesian 'Muslim' soaps and films, which during the post-Soeharto era were usually aired on TV during Ramadan (wherein Muslims fast from dawn to dusk), actually were not even remotely related to Islam. They were of the opinion that way to 'genuine' Muslim movies in Indonesia was confined to smuggled VCDs. Such VCDs had a wide variety of documentaries, television series from United Kingdom, Egypt, neighbouring Australia, and feature films; but among them were videos featuring Taliban military camps in Afghanistan, Czech warfare, which were sold in market and were thought of as Muslim movies. In a declaration, MAV-Net stressed that it was obligatory to resist the television and film fraternity via film production centred on Islamic 'visual ethics' (Van Heeren, 2012: 120).

Though the accurate depiction of such Muslim visual norms was still being discussed, a few essential laws and regulations were formulated as a pamphlet penned by Ustaz (literally meaning an Islamic scholar) Ahmed Sarwat of Centre of Shariah Consultation (locally known as Pusat Konsultasi Syariah). In the said pamphlet, he wrote that a movie would be only genuinely comprised of Muslim values if the religion were to be the guideline in every film mediation practice. He cites instances of the usage of Islamic principles, right from the Islamic film's production (actors, the producer, and crew need to be sincere Muslims) to the marketing and dissemination (financiers should make halal[7] commodities), till the consumption and exhibition (the screening period must not be prayer times, and cinemas must provide for a segregation of audiences based on gender) (Sarwat 2003).

In the MAV-Net declaration, the requirement for the production of movies based on Muslim visual ethics was connected to an early Third Cinema theory proposed by Teshome Gabriel. In the year 1985, Gabriel (1985:355-69) came up with a method that classified three stages of growth in Third World state movies: the initial stage of national movies in Third World nations was marked by the copy of Western (particularly American) movies; the next included traditional cultural product appropriations in form as well as content (movies related to exotic traditional cultures); and the third and last consisted of engagement in critically reassessing traditional customs, and the utilization of Third World movie-makers' unique reel techniques that consisted of the unique representations, pictures, and imagery of the community. That last and third aspect often highlighted guerrilla

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[7] *Halal* - Things, commodities, or food allowed as per the laws of Islam

tendencies and the breaking apart of accepted Eurocentric movie representations and subjects of the First and Third World countries. Though Gabriel's model left out the massive volumes of Indonesian movies which mixed components of Indian, and Latin American melodrama, Hong Kong action films, and every kind of B-films from the United States (US) and others, the MAV-Net declaration still cited it to consider for the requirement of Muslim movies based on visual Muslim ethics. Muslim value film was to make original Indonesian and contrasting cinema, something that would see off the influence of Western films along with the supposedly corrupt mainstream commercial Indonesian cinema (Van Heeren, 2012: 121).

The establishment of this defiant movie genre was not entirely owing to concepts about the Muslim stand in the domestic media and community of Indonesia. By the year 1999, narratives had been formed which extended concepts concerning the position and portrayal of Muslims to international media and global politics. A couple of television reviewers and Islamic scholars even spoke that the exhibition and distribution of television series and movies from the United States of America and other entertainment imported into the archipelago nation was a meticulously structured Western agenda for corrupting Islamic religious principles.

Having subscribed to similar concepts, the societies owing allegiance with the MAV-Net fraternity declared they were devoted to opposing mainstream media's colonization by imperialists, Zionists, communists, and capitalists. They viewed themselves as a part of the Islamic Ummah which transcended beyond the national borders of Indonesia. (Van Heeren, 2012: 122).

The Bestselling Novel: Ayat Ayat Cinta and Soaring Islamic Identity

Author Suzanne Brenner analyses a publication which proved to be a great influencer than both the pro polygamy Tabloid Poligami and the anti-polygamy Jurnal Perempuan while dealing with the subject. First published in the year 2004 A.D., the best-seller was authored by—Habiburrahman El Shirazy—a young writer from the archipelago nation raised in an Muslim boarding institution ambience in the Central Java region and with Islamic study degrees from the respected Institute for Islamic Studies, and the Al Azhar University in Cairo (Egypt). As per an article in The Jakarta Post , he is reported to have quoted during a question-and-answer session that his stories and books intended to promote Muslim religion, and he believed that among the ways of serving Allah was using art as a means of promoting virtue (URL-5).

This intense sense of aim and direction is reflected in a pristine manner in the best-seller called Ayat Ayat Cinta. It narrates a tale about an adolescent man from the archipelago nation—Fahri—who had at the time finished his master's from

the Al Azhar University and was readying to embark upon a doctoral qualification at the same institute. Fahri in the novel, set in Cairo, is depicted as very studious and pious. He has integrated a very strong, almost monastic discipline in his life, having little room for indulgences or pleasures as he seeks Islamic education and dispenses his awareness of the Egyptian society as well as Islam amongst the surrounding Indonesian student fraternity. He spends his leisure time translating Arabic manuscripts fir extra income to support himself. Despite being 28 years old, he is of the opinion that dating before marriage is disallowed and exhibits no willingness or desire in women initially from fanciful or erotic perspectives, in spite of him having female acquaintances. Fahri does not caress any unrelated lady, and refrains from even shaking hands. Fahri is also an ethical individual who respects people from other religions and disapproves nationalism or religious fanaticism, particularly if it makes individuals conduct themselves in manners he perceives as opposite to Muslim tenets (Brenner, 2011: 224).

Figure 4: Poster of Film Ayat Ayat Cinta
Source: Bramantyo, H. (2008).

Fahri, a young man of immense Islamic piety, morals and character, has at least four young women impressed around him. However, he chooses the best – a Turkish woman with German citizenship – of the lot. Circumstances lead him to a spot wherein he is forced to marry the daughter of his landlady, a Coptic Christian who had immense undeclared love and affection for him, with the full support of his first wife. All this is done in perfect harmony of love and Islamic piety.

Ayat Ayat Cinta has been an immensely popular book and ran its 36th printing as of April 2008 since its initial 2004 publication. The adapted movie also proved to be a huge success in Indonesia. A lot of controversy surrounded the novel as well as the movie over the subject of polygamy, despite the fact that the book is not actually related to polygamy, nor an endorsement of marriage unions that involve one man having multiple wives at a time. It is more about religion, virtue as well as obligations particularly on how must live as Islamic ethics and virtues in a complicated contemporary world. Fahri, is an ideal Muslim character, depicted as an individual who seems to prefer keeping himself contended in a simple life of Islamic piety and a simple, happy marriage union with one woman. However, he encounters a world—a world of suspicion and hatred based on politics, identity, religion and nationality—wherein tough decisions need to be taken and where his faith is repeatedly put on test: false implication and wrongful prison term; admiration of multiple women which cannot be reciprocated; and a Christian friend-cum-neighbor facing certain death unless he marries her at a time when he is married. He must solve all these issues and also prove himself as someone with unwavering faith. He has to be a good Muslim by holding on to the spirit and doctrine of Islam no matter what the circumstances are, and stick to these ideals even if it results in dire situations. Such is the real essence of the book. Its fame arises from its power to propagate this essence via an interactive tale filled with suspense, romance, wealth, issues that appeal to the heart, and the charm of locations abroad (Brenner, 2011: 227).

Ayat Ayat Cinta's motive regarding a man having more than one woman at a time, is nevertheless ambiguous. Though Fahri married two women simultaneously, he was pragmatically compelled into it owing to the situation and by the pleas of Maria's mother and his first wife. It was not a polygamous marriage union for fulfilling sexual desires. He clarifies that it was one of the last options he would have opted for in his marriage, as he had no plan for a second marriage. While acknowledging the legality of polygamy in Islam, the protagonist refuses to perceive it as his best option, but rather opts for it with immense hesitation. Fahri's wedding with Maria fulfills the circumstances under which polygamy is allowed. Fahri's situation actually was an urgency that required assistance for two women, whom he marries. Moreover, by marrying Maria, he helps her to become Muslim right before her death, thereby making the marital alliance a blessed one. Maria was the second woman who took interest in Islam owing to Fahri; the first being the American journalist, who seemed satisfied by Islam and the treatment of women as explained by Fahri.

Speaking about the practice and concept of one man having multiple wives at the same time to the Jakarta Post newspaper mentioned before (URL-6),

Habiburrahman El Shirazy, the writer, said that the Muslim religion prescribes fairness, even in a marital bond, and opinionated that one man-one woman fared better than one man-many women. The writer further said that the practice of a man having more than one wife at a time is prescribed by Allah as a way out in certain situations and not as an aim to be sought after. As per most ulema or Islamic scholars, polygamous marriage is dispensation/relief , and may be performed only in times of an urgent situation. They feel that this matter needs to be perceived correctly as the Sharia is not for abusing anyone (ibid.; Brenner, 2011: 227).

The stance of the book on polygamy stands between the fiercely anti-polygamy tone of Jurnal Perempuan, where it is not at all a viable choice in today's world, and the staunch pro-one man having more than a wife at a given time views of Tabloid Poligami, that asked males to have more than one legally married woman as wife for Islamic, national and social reasons, apart from requesting women to accept the practice even if it may seem tough. The novel's message in the end, hints at how impossible it may be to live happily forever in a polygamous marriage despite being acceptable morally or socially. If the author wished to portray polygamy as ideal, he would have let Maria live rather than let her die after her marriage with Fahri, and portrayed her living peacefully with Aisha as a co-wife. The movie actually highlights more about the complications of a polygamous marriage, where Maria first recovers from coma after marrying Fahri,which is short lived. Scenes depicting the trio at home and outside, with elements of confusion and jealousy, and mutual love and appreciation in the end which is brought to an abrupt end by Maria's premature demise. May be the diverse perspectives of one man having multiple wives simultaneously in the bestseller is a reason which popularised the book so much in the archipelago nation. However, it seems the lobby in favour of a man having multiple wives at a time has been oriented to exert more assertion. Apparently both the novel as well as the movie were generally well acclaimed among the disciples of the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera or PKS (translated as Islamic Justice Party), which is the orthodox Islamic political body with considerable influence.

Irrespective of his perspectives regarding a man having multiple wives at a given time, El Shirazy apparently connected with a Muslim taste, popular among innumerable natives of the archipelago nation in the prevalent social climate, quite successfully. Ayat Ayat Cinta is an exemplification for a particular Muslim character, personified by the male protagonist. If he looked nearly surreal, he nevertheless exemplifies a devout Muslim without extremism, being educated, modern, and cosmopolitan without over-Westernization or letting go of his modest Indonesian roots. Though he is a dedicated son, Fahri functions not as per

Javanese kinship relations but as a member of the global Ummah[8]. Furthermore, he is concerned with not only proper practice of religion, but also with efficiency, punctuality, productivity and self-discipline; arranging his life as per detailed timetables and plans; with personal caution yet generous with others; and with controlling desires for Islamic reasons a as well as for the good of others (Brenner, 2011: 228).

In summary, the book seems to be the author's personal effort to depict the ideal contemporary Muslim, someone who is able to be a role model to a generation in quest of adequate means to survive in the universe. Muslim ethics and morality need to be discovered and learned via personal exploration and intellectual inquiry instead of via blind adherence to others' verdicts. The book promotes a continuous adherence to and reflection on Koranic ideals in everyday life. How a man having multiple wives at a time conforms in such a scenario is as an issue but an occasionally acceptable practice permissible after evaluating personal aims and cautious evaluation of the situation besides the possible results for those in such a marital union. The dire circumstances that lead to Fahri marrying Aisha in the novel, and male protagonist's general opposition to the practice and eventual acceptance, hints at how polygamy must not be supported or opposed outright as done by Tabloid Poligami and Jurnal Perempuan respectively, but rather be perceived as an extra watermark of the difficult analysis and application of Muslim principles in everyday life.

Ariel Heryanto while analyzing the extraordinary fame of the movie Ayat Ayat Cinta, suggests that the sort of Muslim depiction connected with a rapidly expanding generation of pious, common and elite Muslims in Indonesia who seek replacements of the didactic and dry images of Islam visible in popular media and the very Westernized, quite un-Islamic outlook that were commonly aimed at middle classes via media outlets. The book serves as a textbook example of a very thriving instance of the expanding subject of famous Muslim Indonesian writings. Amrih Widodo says the reason behind the exponential growth of such literature in the first decade of 2000 is because of the empowerment of media after the collapse of the Suharto administration, which orchestrated a boom of sensationalist and titillating books and tabloids besides a Muslim backlash by those under the impression that the media was promoting Westernization and immorality in Indonesia (URL-5). He opinionated that Ayat Ayat Cinta's success and similar books suggested the shifting of Islamic literature from the margins to the mainstream. Such literature he adds could act as a shield against Western secularization and cultural hegemony, but may also help produce Islamic publications and texts that are consumable, and perceived as desired products

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[8] Ummah - International Muslim community that stretches from Bosnia in the West to Indonesia in the East, from Tatarstan in Russia to Africa in the South

and signs of affluence, tutoring, way of life and behaviour" (ibid.; Brenner, 2011: 229).

Different academics have also taken note of the rise of Muslim piety as well as symbols being commercialized in contemporary times and how popular media outlets facilitated this process. In an article concerning the soaring popularity of modest Musllim fashion in the archipelago nation. For example, Carla Jones (2007) says that starting from the mid–1990s, ladies' tabloids have answered as well as encouraged common women's cravings for fashionable Muslim attire. Thus, ladies sought counsel while trying to be chic and devout. The donning of Muslim attire for many ladies turned to be a common habitual decision instead of the consumerist opposing, critical, and negligible practice of the 1980s and early 1990s. While discussing the veil and polygamy, Wichelen (2007) observes how popular Islamic media representations after the Suharto era made erstwhile negligible signs associated with the Islamic way of life and normalized them with a collectivist narrative. Such mainstreaming of Muslim signs that were formerly a taboo during the Suharto era, nonetheless reinforces and creates continuity with the now-defunct regime's power structures via a continuation of its consumerist and modernist ideology (Wichelen 2007: 105). At present, politics, religion, morality, and consumer culture are quite intertwined, highlighting the contemporary Indonesian society's shifting landscape. Though there seems to be an expanding market for Islamic popular culture, including manifestations such as images of polygamy, its practice is is still not widespread. Just like the Muslim televangelist A.A. Gym's image was adversely affected due to his polygamous marriage (Hoesterey 2008), those practicing it may also jeopardize their fame among Indonesian consumers (Brenner, 2011: 229).

Indonesian Islamic-themed Movies and Messages of Personal Accomplishment

Eric Sassono explains how along with Ayat Ayat Cinta, another very popular movie—Ketika Cinta Bertasbih (When Love Glorifies God)—focus on two distinct forms of personal achievements by the lead characters. The first one being the pursuit and achievement of higher education via a strong Muslim identity; and the second one is finding a life partner in a halal way. Both Fahri as a master's student in Ayat Ayat Cinta, and Azzam also pursuing master's in Ketika Cinta Bertasbih are portrayed as dedicated and pious students whose hard work, disciplined life, and Islamic piety leads to ultimate success.

Figure 5: Poster of Film Ketika Cinta Bertasbih
Source: Umam, C. (2009).

This highlights the message of prioritising education by being disciplined and pious for audiences to watch, comprehend and follow as both the characters hailed from low or middle-class families and needed education to be empowered in life. In contrast, most Bollywood productions or even South Indian movies rarely have such messages to educate, and inspire, and chose characterizations based on criminal syndicates, terrorism, or the one sole loyal character whose aim is to prove himself as good Muslim and end up making the ultimate sacrifice.

Ayat Ayat Cinta as well as Ketika Cinta Bertasbih also place emphasis on life-partner selection processes via the taruf[9] instead of dating which is considered forbidden in Islamic owing to two members of the opposite sex meeting alone. Both Fahri and Azzam meet, develop feelings for their potential life partners and then approach the guardians of the female leads for supervision and keeping things Islamic and legitimate. This is strikingly different from the messages of dating, love, and even pre-marital sex in Western as well as Indian productions. (Sasono, 2010: 57-58)

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[9] *Taruf* - The process of a couple getting to know each other before marriage while being under the supervision of community elders

Conclusion: Films, Identity, Representation, Cultural Imperialism and Semiotic Square

While it can be safely deduced from movies in both Indonesia and India that identity and representations are interlinked and thereby reflected in their respective movies; there also lies the fact both the regions depict Muslims in terms of their society, Islamic piety and overall history. While the historical aspect is a different subject altogether, what must be noted here is that while Subcontinent nations–Pakistan, and Bangladesh–tend to be less pious in terms of the daily practice of ritual prayers that forms one of the most fundamental bases of an average Muslim's life and something that can be easily practiced by all ages and genders; the Malay Archipelago regions tend to excel in that aspect and surges forward compared to both Pakistan and Bangladesh. The respected Pew Research survey only solidifies this assumption that while a maximum of only 46% seem to dedicate themselves to the daily five time prayer rituals in Pakistan-Bangladesh, Indonesia-Malaysia stand apart with a whooping average percentage of around 79%. While the difference in the figure may appear to be quite shocking to some as it is claimed that Pakistan (which included Bangladesh till 1971) was the sole nation created for Muslims and to be governed as per the Koran and Sunnah[10], it must be noted that India is missing in the list but ethnically, culturally, and historically happens to be the part of the same region. This difference in piety is ultimately reflected in the masses that gives rise to the society and influential individuals in a particular society, and the cinematic world that includes producers and directors.

This comparatively lower Muslim piety in the Indian Subcontinent compared to the Malay Archipelago can be best explained via cultural imperialism, i.e. the phenomenon of a supposedly superior or hegemonic cultural entity demeaning and changing people belonging to an 'inferior' culture. It is noticed that the decades of British rule coupled with the modern-day Bollywood influences have shaped the Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent in a negative way, who in turn have done next to nothing in order to change this status quo. The process of self-hate and 'backward Muslim' tag in the minds of the Muslims of the Subcontinent can be best understood via comprehending imperialism and cultural imperialism. In the contemporary era, cultural imperialism in the form of Hindi cinema has made deep inroads among the Muslims of India, Pakistan, as well as Bangladesh (URL-7) owing to which it can be derived that decreased Muslim piety and identity is prevalent as movies and films influence masses tremendously. Bollywood weddings (URL-8), attire, and culture (URL-9) in the broader term have taken roots in the predominantly Muslim nations of Pakistan and Bangladesh, whereas
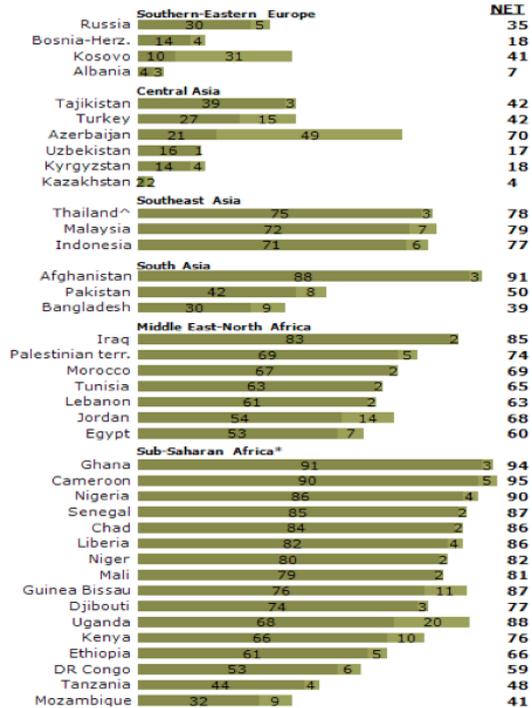
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[10] *Sunnah* - Recorded traditions, customs, and practices of Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace)

the Malay Archipelago nations of Indonesia and Malaysia have managed to keep their Islamic and Muslim identity intact via Muslim representation which found life after the fall of erstwhile dictator Suharto.

Many Muslims Pray Several Times a Day

% who ...

■ Pray all five salat   ■ Pray several times, but not all five

	Pray all five salat	Pray several times, but not all five	NET
Southern-Eastern Europe			
Russia	30	5	35
Bosnia-Herz.	14	4	18
Kosovo	10	31	41
Albania	4	3	7
Central Asia			
Tajikistan	39	3	42
Turkey	27	15	42
Azerbaijan	21	49	70
Uzbekistan	16	1	17
Kyrgyzstan	14	4	18
Kazakhstan	2	2	4
Southeast Asia			
Thailand^	75	3	78
Malaysia	72	7	79
Indonesia	71	6	77
South Asia			
Afghanistan	88	3	91
Pakistan	42	8	50
Bangladesh	30	9	39
Middle East-North Africa			
Iraq	83	2	85
Palestinian terr.	69	5	74
Morocco	67	2	69
Tunisia	63	2	65
Lebanon	61	2	63
Jordan	54	14	68
Egypt	53	7	60
Sub-Saharan Africa*			
Ghana	91	3	94
Cameroon	90	5	95
Nigeria	86	4	90
Senegal	85	2	87
Chad	84	2	86
Liberia	82	4	86
Niger	80	2	82
Mali	79	2	81
Guinea Bissau	76	11	87
Djibouti	74	3	77
Uganda	68	20	88
Kenya	66	10	76
Ethiopia	61	5	66
DR Congo	53	6	59
Tanzania	44	4	48
Mozambique	32	9	41

Net for Q62 may not equal the percentage for "pray several times a day" in Q61 due to rounding and the exclusion of "don't know" responses.
*Data for all countries except Niger from "Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa."
^Interviews conducted with Muslims in five southern provinces only.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q62.

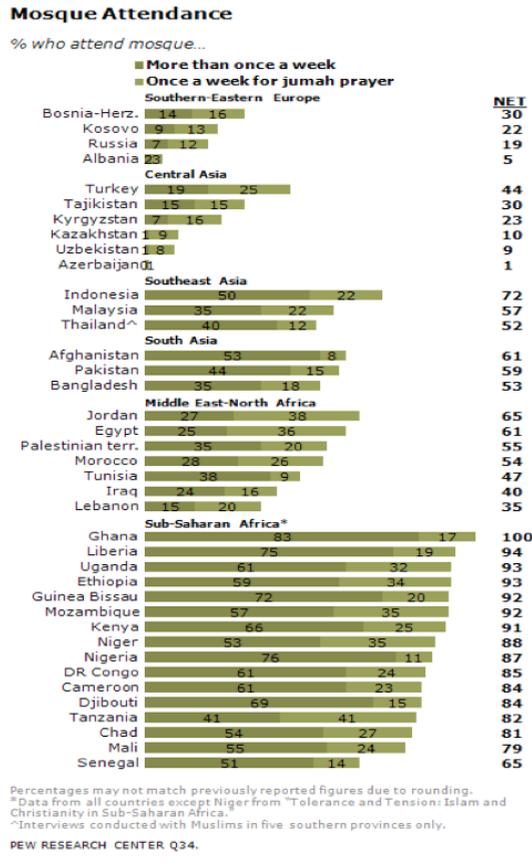**Table 1:** Percentage of Global Muslim Prayer Adherence
Source: URL-10

Table 2: Percentage of Global Mosque Attendance
Source: URL-10

The Muslim representation in Indonesian movies and Bollywood can be best understood by the the Semiotic Square's Binary Approach proposed by Greiham wherein experts elucidate that entities and phenomena are best exemplified and understood when what the opposite constitutes are known to an individual. For example, the as we say 'black', it is easily understood that it is a colour that is the opposite of white; just like life and non-life in . Similarly, to better understand the contrasting representations—negative stereotypes vs. positive representations—of Muslims in Bollywood and Indonesia respectively, the Semiotic Square is the method to resort to in order to make sense of the polar opposite narratives and depictions. While it is best advised to watch the movies mentioned for a first hand experience, a simple look at the posters—terrorists in Bollywood, and normal and

easy-going virtuous community in Indonesian movies—can narrate a lot about the psyche of the two regions wherein they are made and produced.

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