

Inclusion, Bollywood-style

ईश्वर तेरो नाम

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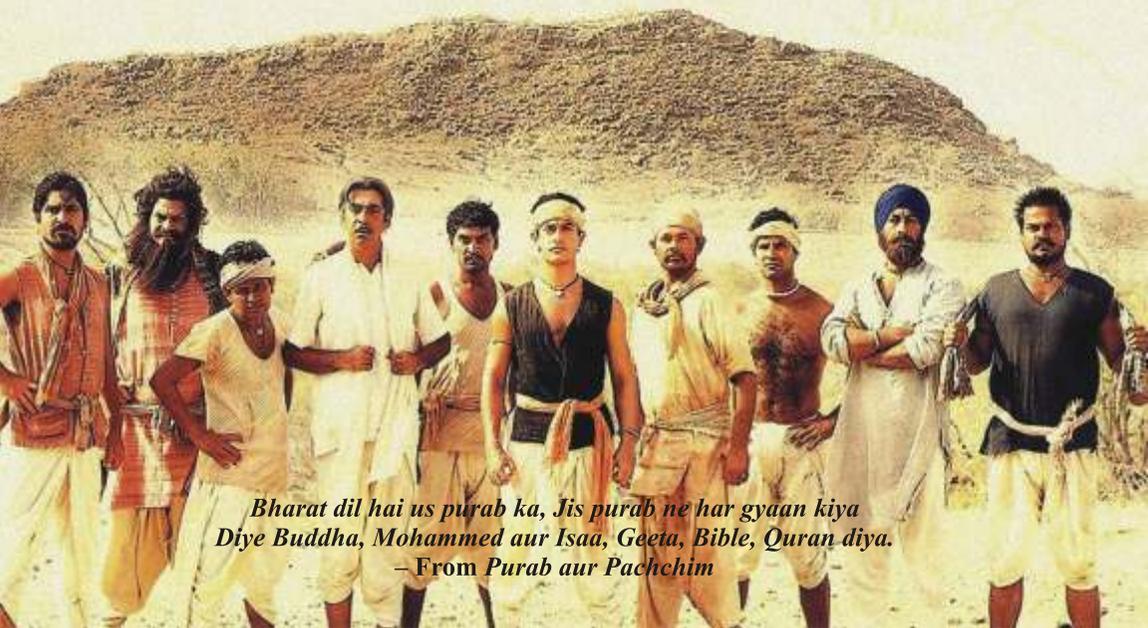
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Allah tero naam, Ishwar tero naam Inclusion, Bollywood-style

Hindi cinema has been defining India for a long time. And for decades it defined India as an inclusive space where Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian coexist and respect each other's faiths

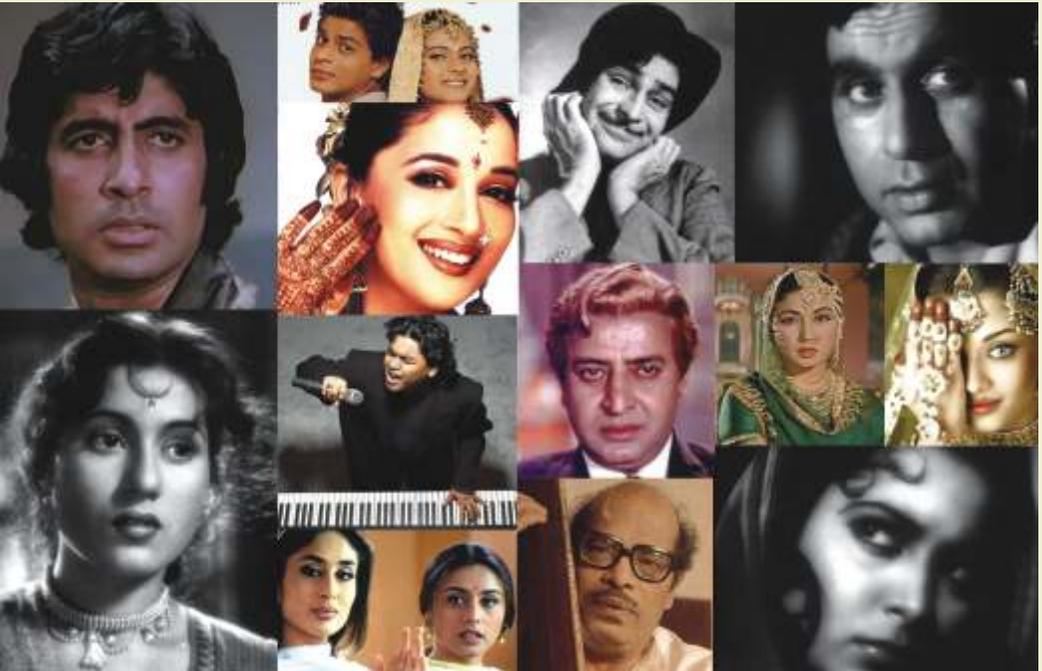
By Jerry Pinto



*Bharat dil hai us purab ka, Jis purab ne har gyaan kiya
Diye Buddha, Mohammed aur Isaa, Geeta, Bible, Quran diya.*

– From Purab aur Pachchim

Bollywood is popular culture!



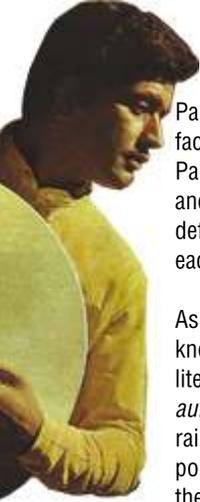


First things first. Bollywood is popular culture. Like all other popular culture, it is created largely by men and women who are seeking to get rich, who love glamour, who like the business of selling dreams. What good it does, it does by accident. But simply because it is popular, its reach is tremendous, its power rests on the dangerously shifting ground of sentiment, its audience is heterogenous, the good it does is almost incalculable in its power.

Bollywood, its denizens love to say, is one of the places where there is no communal taint. This must be read against their denial that the casting couch exists. It took the public shooting of film producer and music magnate Gulshan Kumar to get them to admit that the criminal underworld had a role in film financing. Critical self-examination is not their strong suit.

Bollywoodians also claim that they are a force in maintaining sectarian equilibrium. For instance, Amitabh Bachchan has often claimed that Bollywood has had a role in maintaining communal harmony. In a recent interview(<http://community.bollywood.com/profiles/blogs/oscars-not-ultimate>; viewed on January 31, 2008) the 66-year-old film actor noted, "Bihar records the maximum crime but has less movie halls. Andhra Pradesh has the maximum movie theatres. It is the movies that keep communal harmony as people of all communities and religion sit together in the hall to watch a movie...where they laugh together, weep together..."

While one is not sure whether one can make such an easy equation between the number of cinema halls and violent crime, Bachchan has pointed to the fact that Bollywood is a shared space. While no language-based cinema can ever claim to be India's national pop culture, Hindi films made in Mumbai seem to have achieved as much of that status as is possible in a nation with 22 national languages and uncounted dialects. Turn to a Malayalam channel playing an antakshari and no one bats an eyelid, not the host, not the other contestants, not the audience, when a young woman begins singing the anthemic song from *Yaadon ki Baaraat*, "*Chura liya hai tumne jo dil ko...*"



Part of this is the magic of music. Part of it is the size of the monolith, the way in which Bollywood's faces are recognisable by virtue of the power of repetition, its music the white noise of the nation. Part of it is the way in which popular culture reaches out to us at some level beneath the conscious and defines who we are. Hindi cinema has been defining India for a long time. And for decades it defined India as an inclusive space where Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian coexist and respect each other's faiths.

In *Khoon Pasina* (Rakesh Kumar, 1977), the film opens on a pair of young male friends, Aslam and Shiva. Aslam is also known as Shera and Shiva is also known as Tiger. Some local boys knock Aslam's skullcap off but it is Shera who demands that they pick it up. Both boys join hands, literally and figuratively, to avenge this act of disrespect to religion. In the aforementioned *Purab aur Pachchim* (Manoj Kumar, 1970) the opening scenes of the film are set in Allahabad during a rainstorm and a flood of water, perhaps from the Ganga which runs through the city. As the colonial police hunt a desh bhakt, we see a picture of Vasudev bearing Krishna above his head and crossing the Yamuna fall to the ground. It is a Muslim man, some uncredited extra, who picks up the picture and holds it to his heart. He excoriates the policemen who have just shot the freedom fighter and gives his life to preserve the image. The epigraph of this essay comprises lines sung at the beginning of the film. One could take this to be a restatement of the old myth that everything was invented in India first; or could this be a way of saying that Christians and Muslims and Buddhists and Hindus are all flesh of the flesh?

For, popular culture in general, and Bollywood in particular, does not work with careful attention to fact and detail. Instead, it uses the symbolic act, the flourish rich in meaning. To Manoj Kumar, it probably did not matter that Mohammed and Jesus were born in lands that have never been described as Bharat or that the Bible and the Quran cannot be described as homegrown products. Nor did it matter to Manmohan Desai how blood transfusions take place. At one point, early in *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977, Manmohan Desai), three young men come to a public hospital to donate blood to an elderly blind flowerseller (Nirupa Roy). The three young men lie down in beds, each one parallel to the next and the first parallel to the old lady. Nurses ask them their names and they say, "Amar" (Vinod Khanna), "Akbar" (Rishi Kapoor) and "Anthony" (Amitabh Bachchan) respectively. The blood begins to flow from their arms and into a common



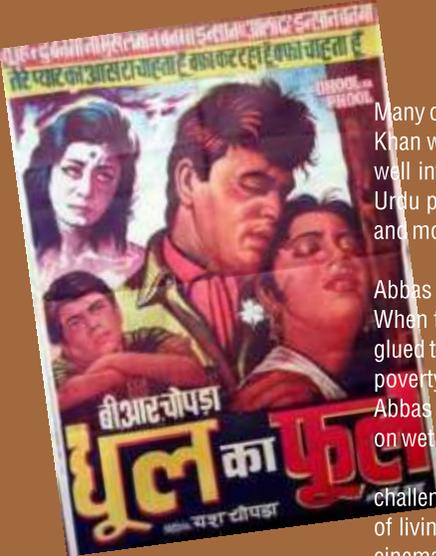
***"Kya iski keemat
chukaani nahin?
Khoon khoon hota hai
paani nahin."***



tube from where it flows to the old lady. Someone pointed out to Desai that this was not how blood transfusion would take place in a hospital. The three young men would have blood drawn from their veins and stored in bags. These bags would be taken to the blood bank. They would then be exchanged for blood that had already been donated. Desai said that neither he nor his audiences cared for the way in which blood banks actually operated. (Many of them probably knew since there was an old Bollywood legend, which said that blood donation spiked in the week before a Manmohan Desai release. In the 1970s, before AIDS, blood banks paid for blood donations and one could get a ticket in the stalls for 400 millilitres.)

In other words, he was playing with the symbolic reality, entering into a pact with his audience. For we, who were sitting in the theatre, knew that the old lady was the mother of the three boys from whom she had been parted when they were children. We know that they are repaying their debt to her and should we have forgotten, the soundtrack reminds us with *"Kya iski keemat chukaani nahin?/Khoon khoon hota hai paani nahin."* On another level, this can also be read as the three communities paying their debt to the motherland.

This construction of the nation as the sum of its religious communities was not a new project. The patriarchs of the studio age and even those of the 1950s were sure of their position in the world. The masses were illiterate and in need of uplift; cinema was the medium that reached where no other could go, and it was therefore their duty to use celluloid to educate and to build out of India's disparate religious communities and castes, one nation.



Many of the Golden Age filmmakers were well-read men. Some like Mehboob Khan were illiterate but that did not stop them from being cosmopolitan and well informed. The presence of the progressive writers, the *tarakkipasand* Urdu poets and the Hindi modern novelists often mediated their own baser and more commercial instincts.

For instance, the combination of Raj Kapoor and Khwaja Ahmed Abbas produced some outstanding cinema through the 1950s and 1960s. When the Hindu Kapoor and the Muslim Abbas worked together, their films glued the punters to their seats while talking about issues like homelessness, poverty, child labour, and socialism. When they went their separate ways, Abbas became a demagogue and Kapoor began to turn out cinema that relied on wet women rather than burning issues.

These men would have known that the young nation's primary challenge was extinguishing the flames of Partition and starting the process of living together again. To this end, therefore, the Muslim figures in Hindi cinema were always presented in a kindly light. Rahim Chacha was the good guy in the basti in innumerable films. It is Abdul Rashid (Manmohan Krishna) who adopts the orphan and swears to bring it up as a human being (see Box) in *Dhool ka Phool*. In *Sholay*, the imam (A K Hangal) does not regret the loss of his son (Sachin); instead he says it is time for his prayers and that he will now go and ask Allah why he was not given more sons to lose for the village.

And while some of this may be imputed to a genuine desire to be inclusive, it was not always an honest impulse. Some part of it was pure commerce. The native Urdu speaker, the Muslim, was a natural part of the Hindi film audience and he could not be alienated. The native English speaker on the other hand could be mocked. Christians therefore turned up as morally degenerate figures; their women smoked and drank and were called Lily and Rosy; the men gambled and were small-time hoods called Robert and Rocky. Parsis too were fair game since, like the Christians, they largely preferred western cinema. Thus the prototype Parsi woman was the sex-starved and inquisitive Mrs Pestonji (Piloo Wadia) in *Bobby*; the prototypical Parsi man was the effeminate and hysterical man whose car Feroze Khan bumps into in *Qurbani*.



Tribal India? Basing oneself on Bollywood, one might assume that all of them are cannibals who worship totems, shout hurr-hurr and want to cook the heroine in a stew pot.

Dalit India? Four films come to mind: Franz Osten's *Achhut Kanya*, Bimal Roy's *Sujata* in which Nutan plays a low-caste girl; Ashutosh Gowariker's *Lagaan* in which one of the players has the name Kachra. The fourth one, *Souten*, is the only film in which one of the characters has an actual hatred of the low-caste. Rukmini (Tina Munim) has an almost visceral revulsion for the dalits played by Shriram Lagoo and Padmini Kolhapure. All these roles demand sympathy for the dalit characters but that only four films come to mind in a cinema that has been around for more than a hundred years is indicative.

In terms of the making of the nation, it was emphasised that unity was strength and this unity had to stretch beyond the religious. The symbolism was often crude. In *Five Rifles*, IS Johar's bizarre film, a king of some Cloudcuckoostan has three images in glittering rhinestones that must be kept safe to ensure that the country is safe. One is Krishna playing his flute, the other is a cross and the third is the name of Allah in Arabic. One might argue that *Five Rifles* was a C-grade film but the crudeness extended across genres. *Naseeb*, for instance, had a multi-star cast led by Amitabh Bachchan, Hema Malini, Reena Roy, Rishi Kapoor and Shatrughan Sinha (in alphabetical order, as the posters said). For some reason, Amitabh goes by the name John Jaani Janardhan. In the middle of a song celebrating the golden jubilee of *Dharam Veer*, another Desai superhit, Bachchan sings a song to entertain the stars. In the course of it, someone asks him how he has three names:

Extra: *Ek aadmi ke teen naam kaise?*

JJJ (sings): *Yeh teenon naam hai mere...*

He goes to a window and points.

JJJ: *Allah...*

Outside it, a mosque lights up.

JJJ: *...Jesus....*

Outside the next window, a church lights up

JJJ: *....Ram hai mere...*

Outside the third window, a temple lights up.

**Allah...
Jesus...
Ram hai mere...**

This may explain what Shah Rukh Khan means when he says, "I have Allah and Om in my room. Karan [Johar] says it's like a Hindi film" (in *Colas, Cars & Communal Harmony; A Doff to Bollywood's Secular Colours* by Bharathi S Pradhan).

But even if it was crude, it was valuable in a way that we did not notice. Not until it suddenly went away. In the 1990s, Bollywood went Hindu. The Hindu wedding became the focus of several films. The film title, always rendered in three languages (Roman, Devnagri and Urdu), was suddenly down to two scripts and no prizes for guessing which one was dropped. *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* was released and went on to be a mega success, perhaps even the apotheosis of the anti-Muslim film.



Because a few years after that, the Muslim figure came back. This seemed a little surprising but then once again, commercial arithmetic may have had something to do with it. The UK market is now a significant factor in the success or failure of a Hindi film. At a median price of eight pounds sterling for a new release, each Briton of Pakistani origin or of Indian Muslim origin who hears that a film has unflattering representations of his community is a valuable commodity.

In some senses, this does not matter.

In the world of the imagination, there are many things that play out differently from the way things happen in the streets. This means that the man who weeps at "*Arre ruk jaa re bandhe*" may still go out with a mob, a mashaal in his hand. But the only way to defend the inclusive, the only way to support the notion of a plural State, is to repeat it again and again. To say that there is no other way. To say that we have to learn to live together. To say that when the blood flows, you cannot tell by its colour where it came from. That the earth has no religion. That man is born into humanity and not into a religion. That the rainbow is made of many more colours than we can imagine.

When this becomes part of the popular imagination, when we are ashamed of how we treat each other on the basis of what we eat and what we worship, when we can segregate the fanatic and the sectarian, one is fairly sure that social scientists of every stripe will be forced to look at the role popular culture had to play in how this consensus developed.

Tu Hindu banega na Mussalmaan banega

One of the most famous songs that was ever written for a Hindi film, celebrating pluralism, is this one, by Sahir Ludhianvi, from *Dhool ka Phool* (Yash Chopra, 1959). Notice that it incorporates a certain post-nationalism ("*Hum ne kahin Bharat kahin Iran banaaya*") at a time when this could not have been very fashionable.

Tu Hindu banega na Mussalmaan banega
Insaan ki aulad hai insaan banega

Achcha hai abhi tak tera kuchh naam nahin hai
Tujhko kisi mazhab se koi kaam nahin hai
Jis ilm ne insaan ko taqseem kiya hai
Us ilm ke tujh par koi ilzaam nahin hai
Tu badle huey waqt ki pehchaan banega
Insaan ki aulad hai insaan banega

Malik ne har insaan ko insaan banaaya
Humne use Hindu ya Mussalmaan banaaya
Kudrat ne to bakshi thi hamein ek hi dharti
Hum ne kahin Bharat kahin Iran banaaya
Jo tod de har bandh woh toofan banega
Insaan ki aulad hai insaan banega

Nafrat jo sikhaaye woh dharam tera nahin hai
Insaan ko jo raunde woh kadam tera nahin hai
Koran na ho jis mein woh mandir nahin tera
Geeta na ho jis mein woh haram tera nahin hai
Tu aman aur sulaha ka armaan banega
Insaan ki aulad hai insaan banega

Yeh deen ke taajar, yeh watan bechnewaale
Insaanon ki laashon ke kagan bechnewaale
Yeh mahalon mein baithe huey qaatil ye lootere
Kaanton ke wajrooh-e chaman bechnewaale
Tu inke liye maut ka elaan banega
Insaan ki aulad hai insaan banega

Tu Hindu banega na Mussalmaan banega
Insaan ki aulad hai insaan banega.



***Hum Dono* was a remarkable film in many ways. It was a war film but it had the courage to ask questions about war. This is made clear in the question Major Verma (Dev Anand) asks his doppelganger Captain Anand (Dev Anand):**

“Woh kaunsi taaqat hai Captain, jo hame apne gharon se, apne pyaar se, apne maa-baap se door-door laakar kandhon pe bandookein rakhne ko majboor kar deti hai. . . halaaki hum jaante hain ki jung buri hai, hinsa buri hai, nafrat buri hai: pet ki aag ya shaurat ki bhookh ya desh ka pyaar...ya hamaari insaaninat jo haiwaaninat ke khilaaf bhadak utthi hai? Insaan ke andar ka loha apni chamak dikhaane ke liye mauqe ki taat mein rehta hai. Aur jab mauqa aata hai to yeh nahin dekhta ki uski biwi ka dil toot-ta hai ya uski maa ka dil toot-ta hai ya uski premika ka dil toot-ta hai...”

The other great hymn to the inclusive Indian tradition is this beautiful bhajan sung in *Hum Dono* (Chetan Anand, 1961) which suggests that there is a single entity who is known by different names. Although the lyrics by Sahir Ludhianvi only use the names of Allah and Ishwar, the opening sequence of images shows a mosque, a church, a gurudwara and a temple. It is in small gestures like these that Bollywood demonstrated its erstwhile inclusivity. When Lata's exquisite voice soars on the "nirbal ko bal denewaale" line, we see an old woman (who might be a tribal), her hands folded in prayer. Compare this to the refusal of the camera to leave the sacred precincts of the temple or the pooja ghar in the cinematic bhajans of the 1990s or devotional films. Notice also that each verse tails off with "Allah tero naam..." Sung in a temple. Truly, Hinduism was presented and received as an inclusive religion.



"Allah tero naam..."

*Allah tero naam, Ishwar tero naam (2)
Sabko sanmati de Bhagwaan (2)
Allah tero naam...*

*Maangon ka (2) sindoor na chhoote (2)
Maa-behenon ki aas naa toote (2)
Deh binaa, Daataa, deh binaa
Bhatke na praan
Sabko sanmati de Bhagwaan (2)
Allah tero naam, Ishwar tero naam*

*Oh saare jag ke rakhwaale
Nirbal ko bal dene waale
Balwaanon ko (2) de de gyaan
Sabko sanmati de de Bhagwaan,
Allah tero naam, Ishwar tero naam*

After having watched the film and the song several times on youtube, the lyrics above seem to be the correct ones. However, the iTrans songbook offers another verse, which I include here.

*Is dharti ka roop na ujde (2)
Pyar ki thandi dhoop na ujde (2)
Sabko mile, Daataa, (2) sukh ka vardaana
Sabko sanmati de Bhagwaan
Allah tero naam, Ishwar tero naam*

A similar sentiment is expressed in the powerful song from *Dharmputra* (Yash Chopra, 1961). Inspired by Rabindranath Tagore's *Gora*, the film tells the story of a young Hindu who is fanatical in his hatred of Muslims. In the end, he discovers his own identity.

Chaahe yeh maano chaahe woh maano

Kaabe mein raho yaa Kashi mein
Haan, Nisbat to usi ki zaat se hai
Haan, tum Raam kaho ke Rahim kaho
Matlab to usi ki baat se hai (2)

Yeh masjid hai woh butkhana (2)
Chaahe yeh maano chaahe woh maano (2)
Maano yeh maano chaahe woh maano

Bhai, maqsad to hai dil ko samjhaana
Maano yeh maano chaahe woh maano

Yeh masjid hai woh butkhana (2)
Maqsad to hai dil ko samjhaana (2)
Chaahe yeh maano chaahe woh maano (2)

Haan, yeh sheikh-o-brahman ke jhagde (2)
Sab naasamjhi ki baatein hain
Humne to hai bas itna jaanaa
Bhai humne to hai bas itnaa jaanaa
Chaahe yeh maano chaahe woh maano

Gar jazb-e-mohabbat saadiq ho
Har dar se muraade milti hain
Mandir se muraade milti hain
Masjid se muraade milti hain
Kaabe se muraade milti hain
Kaashi se muraade milti hain
Har ghar hai usi kaa kaashaanaa
Bhi har ghar hai usii kaa kaashaanaa
Chaahe yeh maano chaahe woh maano

TOPAZ PRESENTS

DIRECTOR
MANMOHAN DESAI'S

Desh PREMEE

EPIC MASOPE



The tendency to preach is much more marked in "Mere desh premiyon, apas mein prem karo" from *Desh Premee*, Manmohan Desai's 1982 flop. It is interesting to note that the women respond first to this cry for national unity, although its major rationale is that the enemy from beyond the borders will take over if we are not united.

*Nafrat ki laathi todo,
Laalach ka khanjar phenko,
Zid ke peechhe mat daudo,
Tum prem ke panchhi ho desh premiyon,
Aapas mein prem karo, desh premiyon...*

*Meethe paani mein ye zeher na tum gholo
Jab bhi, kuch bolo, ye sochke tum bolo
Bhar jaata hai gehra ghaav, jo banta hai goli se
Par woh ghaav nahi bharta, jo bana ho kadvi boli se
To meethe bol kaho, mere desh premiyon...*

*Dekho, yeh dharti, hum sab ki maata hai
Socho, aapas mein, kya apna naata hai.
Hum aapas mein ladh baithe to desh ko kaun sambhaalega
Koi baaharwaala apne ghar se hamein nikaalega
deewanon hosh karo, mere desh premiyon ...*

*Todo, deewaarein, yeh chaar dishaaon ki
Roko mat, raahen, in mast havaaon ki
Poorab pachchim uttar dakshin vaalon mera matalab hai
Is maati se poochho kya bhaashha kya isaka mazhab hai
Phir mujhse baat karo, mere desh premiyon ...*



Haqeeqat (Chetan Anand, 1964) is still held up as one of the seminal war films in Hindi cinema. The Anand brothers were a force to contend with in Bollywood, often offering poignant social questions. And even while they made *Haqeeqat*, they could still ask what colour Chinese blood was. After all, in *Hum Dono*,

Yeh kiska lahoo hai kaun maraa?

Dharti ki sulagti chhaati ke bechain
sharaare poochhte hain...

Yeh kiska lahoo hai, kaun maraa
Ai rahabar mulq-o-qaum bataa
Yeh kiskaa lahoo hai, kaun maraa

Yeh jalte huey ghar kiske hain
Yeh kat-te huey tan kiske hain
Taqseem ke andhe toofaan mein
Lut-te huey gulshan kiske hain
Badbaqt kizaayein kiski hain
Barbaad nasheman kiske hain
Kuchh hum bhi sunein humko bhi suna
Ai rahabar mulq-o-qaum bataa
Yeh kiska lahoo hai, kaun maraa

Kis kaam ke hain ye deen-dharam
Jo sharm ka daaman chaak karein
Kis tarah ke hain ye desh bhakt
Jo baste gharon ko khaak karein
Yeh roohein kaisi roohein hain
Jo dharti ko naapaak karein
Aankhen to uthaa nazarein to milaa
Ai rahabar mulq-o-qaum bataa
Yeh kiska lahoo hai, kaun maraa

Jis Raam ke naam pe khoon bahe
Us Raam ki izzat kya hogi
Jis deen ke haathon laaj lutey
Us deen ki qeemat kya hogi
Insaan ki is zillat se pare
Shaitaan ki zillat kya hogi
Yeh ved hataa quraan uthaa
Ai rahabar mulq-o-qaum bataa
Yeh kiska lahoo hai, kaun maraa



Arre ruk jaa re bandhe
The Indian Ocean song, which was used to great effect in *Black Friday* has a similar message.

*Arre ruk jaa re bande
Arre tham ja re bande
Ki kudrat hans padegi*

*Arre mandir yeh chup hai
Arre masjid yeh gumsum
Ibaadat thak padegi
Samay ki laal aandhi
Kabristaan ke raste
Arre lathpath chalegi*

*Kisse kaafir kahega
Kisse kaayar kahega
Teri kab tak chalegi ho....*

*Arre ruk ja re bande
Arre tham ja re bande
Ki kudrat hans padegi ho....*

*Arre mandir yeh chup hai
Arre masjid yeh gumsum
Ibaadat thak padegi ho....
Samay ki laal aandhi
Kabristaan ke raste
Arre latpat chalegi ho....
Arre ruk ja re bande
Arre tham ja re bande
Ki kudrat hans padegi ho....*

*Arre neendein hai jakhmi
Arre sapne hai bhooke
Ki karvat phat padegi ho....*

The song from *Swades* makes the oldest argument in the book, and one that probably still works for most people: in unity is strength. It may also be the first time that a rainbow coalition has been suggested in Bollywood.

Yeh tara, woh tara, har tara

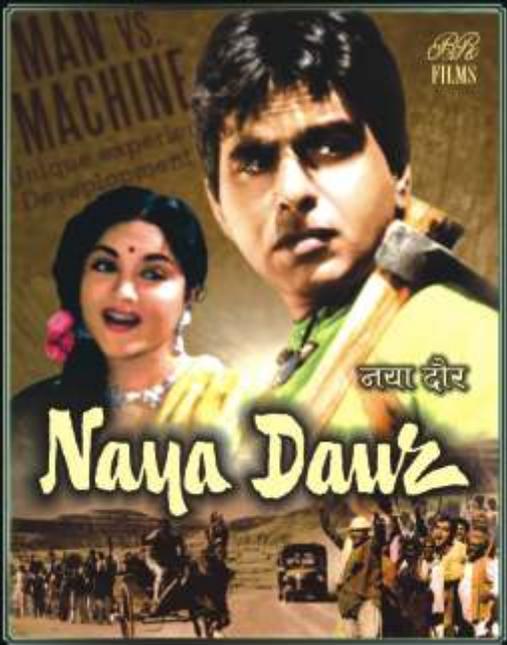
Yeh tara woh tara har tara
Dekho jise bhi lage pyaara
Yeh tara woh tara har tara
Yeh sab saath mein, jo hain raat mein
To jagmagaae aasmaan saara
Jagmag taare, do taare, nau taare, sau taare,
jagmag saare
har taaraa hai sharaaraa

Tumne dekhi hai dhanak to
Bolo rang kitane hain
Saat rang kehene ko
Phir bhi sang kitne hain
Samjho sabse pehle to
Rang hote akele to
Indradhanush banta hi nahin
Ek na hum ho paaye to
Anyaa se ladne ko
Hogi koi jantaa hi nahin
Phir na kehna nirbal hai, kyon hara
hm tara tara
Yeh tara woh tara har tara
Dekho jise bhi lage pyaara
Yeh sab saath mein, jo hain raat mein
To jagmagaae aasmaan saara
Jagmag taare, do taare, nau taare, sau taare,
jagmag saare
har taaraa hai sharaaraa

Boond-boond milne se banta ek dariya hai
Boond-boond saagar hai warna ye saagar kya hai
Samjho is paheli ko, boond ho akeli to
Ek boond jaise kuchh bhi nahin
Hum auron ko chhodein to, moonh sabse hi modein to
Tanhaa reh na jaayein dekho ham kahin
Kyon na milke banein ham dhaaraa
Hmm taaraa taaraa
Yeh tara woh tara har tara
Dekho jise bhi lage pyaara
Yeh tara woh tara har tara
Yeh sab saath mein, jo hain raat mein
To jagmagaae aasmaan saara
Jagmag taare, do taare, nau taare, sau taare,
jagmag saare
har taaraa hai sharaaraa

Jo kisaan hal sambhaale
Dharti sona hi ugaaye
Jo gawala gaiyaan paale
Doodh ki nadi bahaaye
Jo lohar loha dhaale
Har auzaar dhal jaaye
Mitthi jo kumhaar uthaa le
Mitthi pyala ban jaaye
Sab ye roop hain mehnat ke
Kuchh karne ki chaahat ke

Kisi ka kisise koi bair nahin
Sab ke ek hi sapne hain
Socho to sab apne hain
koi bhi kisi se yahaan gair nahin
Seedhi baat hai samjho yaaraa
hm taaraa taaraa



And while we're on the subject of unity, we should remember that one of the great forces for unity has been to recognise and validate other identities. This anthemic song from *Naya Daur* valorises the workers of India, turning them into a force of nature, a powerhouse that has no religion and therefore no ill will based on religious sentiments. It might also be remembered that for a long time Hindi cinema was infused with the socialist sentiments of the Progressive Writers Group and the Indian People's Theatre Association. And for decades, as long as the union movement was strong and the communists worked at the grassroots instead of in the politburos, there was some bulwark against the divisive nature of communalist thought.

Saathi Haath Badhaana

Saathi haath badhaana, saathi haath badhaana
Ek akela thak jaayega, milkar boj uthaana
Saathi haath badhaana

Ham mehanatavaalon ne jab bhii milakar kadam badhaayaa
Hum mehnatwaalon ne jab bhi milkar kadam bhadaaya
Saagar ne rasta chhoda, parbat ne sheesh jhukaaya
Faulaadi hain seene apne, faulaadi hain baahein
Hum chaahein to paida karde chattaanon mein raahein
Saathi haath badhaana

Mehnat apni lekh ki rakhna, mehnat se kya darna
Kal gairon ki khaatir ki, ab apni khaatir karna
Apna dukh bhi ek hai saath, apna such bhi ek
Apni manzil sach ki hai, apna raasta nek.
Saathi haath badhaana

Ek se ek mile to katra ban jaata hai dariyaa
Ek se ek mile to zarra ban jaata hai sehraa
Ek se ek mile to rai ban sakti hai parbat
Ek se ek mile to insaan bas mein kar le kismat.
Saathi haath badhaana

Maati se hum laal nikaalein moti laaein jal se
Jo kuch is duniya mein bana hai, bana hamaare bal se
Kab tak mehnat ke pairon mein ye daulat ki zanjeerein
Haath badhaakar chheen lo apne sapnon ki tasveerein.
Saathi haath badhaana



From *Mumbai Meri Jaan* (Nishikant Kamat, 2008)

The film tells several stories, all linked by the bomb blasts that went off on July 11, 2006. One of the strands has an angry layabout Suresh (Kay Kay Menon) who blames the city's ills and his own lack of success on the Muslims all around him. At one point, he attacks a South Indian coffee vendor (Irfan Khan) and when a policeman Tukaram Patil (Paresh Rawal) stops him, he pushes the cop and causes him to fall over.

But the long arm of the law catches up with him. One night, a van stops and a bunch of policemen along with Tukaram Patil invite him to take a ride. Suresh is convinced (as is the audience) that Patil will now take his revenge. Aadam Sheikh and Sawant are two other policemen sitting in the van with Tukaram Patil.

TUKARAM PATIL

Iska naam maalum hai, saahab, kya hai? Aadam Sheikh. Gussa aata hai na, in logon pe? Goli se uda deta, main aap ki jagah ho to. Lafda kya hai, main aap ki jagah le nahin sakta. Loonga bhi nahin. Chhaah, ay Sawant.

SAWANT

Mmm?

TUKARAM PATIL

Ek baat bataa..tu...achcha raat ko duty kar raha hai aur tune dekha ki ek aadmi galat kaam kar raha hai. Aur tune usko roka. Aksar, yeh baat woh aadmi ko pasand nahin aai. Usne yeh bhi nahin socha ki, baba, tu policewalla hai, apna duty kar raha hai. Nahin. Ulta terepe gussa ho gaya aur tereko dhakka maarke zameen pe gira diya to...to tu kya karega, bol.

SAWANT

Raatbhar unko itna maarega ki haddi-pasli ek kar doonga. Pata nahin chalega ke sar ka kaunsa hai aur pair ka kaunsa.

(Aadam laughs.)

TUKARAM PATIL

Arre hum log wohi karte the. Kuch naya bol.

SAWANT

Naya matlab?

TUKARAM PATIL

Matlab jisne humko dhakka maara hai, usko humne ulta dhakka nahin maara. Usko chhod diya, to?

SAWANT

To?

TUKARAM PATIL

To yeh ek doosre ko dhakke marne ka long chain jo hai...woh tootega na?

SAWANT

Haan

TUKARAM PATIL

Arre, tu samjha nahin re...Abhi yeh Adam Sheikh hua, Musalmaan? Aur mein Hindu, Tukaram Patil, main isko dhakka maarta hai. Aur yeh Musalmaan mujhe dhakka maarta hai. Ab mere bagal mein ek Hindu khada ho jaata, iske saath do Musalmaan khade ho jaate hain, yahaan se chaar Hindu...aath Musalmaan...Hindu...Musalmaan... dhakke pe dhakka.... dhakke pe dhakka....chalta rehta hai...jawaani mein shuru hota hai, budaape tak chalte rehte hain...nahin? Main abhi tak dhakke khaake jee rahaa hoon aur boodha ho gaya hoon. Main to abhi retire honewalla hoon. Lekin tum log retire karne se pehele kuch alag karne ki sochega ki nahin?

SAWANT

Haan, zaroor.

TUKARAM PATIL

Nahin? Aap ko kya lagta hai saahab? Eh saahab ka bahut time khoti kiya...Eh, thambav re...Jaaiey sir....good night.

How minorities are perceived in Hindi cinema

I have always maintained that the essential nature of Hindi commercial cinema is too anarchic, too multiple minded, too schizophrenic to allow for easy deductions about how it does X or how it perceives Y. This is, of course, easier to say and to believe than to practise.

Just when I thought I understood how Christians are perceived by Hindi cinema, I happened upon *Miss Mary* (1957, dr Prasad). The film begins in a village school, which has celebrated an anniversary. The local thakur is delighted at the progress made by the students and wants to expand operations. He wishes to hire a married couple to run the school, and although he does not say it, we understand that his vision is of a steady young man running the school while his wife dispenses tea, sympathy and the occasional bandage on the knee. When he returns home to his thakurain, we discover that he has misplaced a daughter in her early childhood. This is not an uncommon event and when we cut to *Miss Mary* (Meena Kumari) and her aged parents in another city, we know enough to piece together the genealogy of the pretty young woman. After some attempts at getting jobs, she and her competitor (Gemini Ganesan) decide to pretend that they are married so that they can get the job.



From the moment I discovered that Meena Kumari was playing an on-screen Christian, I got ready for the inevitable slurs. There have been plenty of them, I discovered in the years that I have watched Hindi cinema.

In film after film, young Christians are portrayed as morally degenerate, eternally lascivious and completely out of sync with Indian reality. There were some startling positive images of older Christian characters. Off the top of my head, I can recall Lalita Pawar as Mrs D'Sa in *Anari* (1959, dr Hrishikesh Mukherjee), Nadira as Mrs D'Sa again in *Saagar* (1985, dr Ramesh Sippy), Premnath as Mr Braganza in *Bobby* (1973, dr Raj Kapoor), David as John Chacha in *Boot Polish* (1954, dr Prakash Arora). All old people, all nice people.



The tradition continues even today. Boman Irani as Oscar Fernandez in *Honeymoon Travels Pvt Ltd* (2007, dr Reema Kagti) is the oldest member of the hot pink honeymooner's bus and he still can't get his plosives right although he does try to learn a shair or two for his Nahid (Shabana Azmi). One might argue that Kagti had managed a double whammy by segregating her kitaabi characters: the Muslim and the Christian can get married and would mainstream society care much? One might also argue that it is tokenism but in some ways token representations are better than complete effacement. And both Nahid and Oscar are 'good' characters, so one is even more likely to forgive.

The old Christian is a nice Christian, but the young? They're a different matter, unless they can be proved to have been Hindus in the first place. This means that their genetic make-up is clean of taint as in Miss Mary above and as in Anthony Gonsalves (Amitabh Bachchan) in *Amar Akbar Anthony*.

But if there is nothing like a family dispersal to

rescue them, then the Christians were fair game. In *Mome ki Gudiya* (1972, dr Mohan Kumar) a Christian family has a mother played by the obese Tun Tun, the father played by a midget, and in order to win their daughter and to fit in with them, the hero's sidekick claims that he has started drinking, smoking, going to mujras and *even eating non-vegetarian food* (Emphasis from the dialogue delivery).

But perhaps the classic encapsulation of Hindi cinema's attitude to the morality of the young Christian community can be seen in a single song from *Swarg Narak* (1978, dr Dasari Narayan Rao). Briefly, the story deals with two marriages. The feminist Shobha (Moushumi Chatterjee!) marries college lecturer Vicky (Jeetendra) while the traditional Indian doormat Geeta (Shabana Azmi!) marries playboy and businessman Vinod (Vinod Mehra). The latter marriage fails from the very beginning since Vinod, as an act of rebellion against a marriage into which he was forced, spends his wedding night dancing with an unnamed mistress (Komilla Virk).

One night, when Vinod tries to go out, his mother (Kamini Kaushal) stops him. He almost slaps her, then pushes her out of the way. She runs after him and falls down the stairs. Vinod and his unnamed mistress go out dancing. Helen is the floorshow, singing an english song. The unimaginative lyrics include lines like 'Love you, come hold me' interspersed with some Aah-ing. However, this is enough to attract Vinod, who

callously pushes Virk out of the way and makes his way to where Helen, dressed in High Arabian Fantasy, bathed in red light, is singing: "I am lonely, come hold me/Life is so dreary, come, come, come."

Rao intercuts this sequence with scenes of Vinod's mother dying, of the doctors giving up, of the dutiful daughter-in-law reciting the Bhagavad Gita. At the nightclub, Helen and Vinod are now in a clinch. The scene is bathed in red light as she pours alcohol into his mouth. A church appears in silhouette against the walls of the nightclub, and church bells begin to ring. It is true that few filmmakers have gone so far in their association between degeneracy and Christianity but it was a statement they felt free to make.

In *Julie* (1975, dr K S Sethumadhavan), the Anglo-Indian heroine Julie Morris (Lakshmi) says to Mr Bhattacharya (Utpal Dutt), the father of her Hindu friend Usha (Rita Bhaduri) and her boyfriend Shashi (Vikram) that she loves coming to their house because it smells of incense and flowers. Her own, she says, stinks. The odour, she says, is of alcohol, extinguished cigarettes, meat and a fourth odour made of the other three. In so saying, she speaks for an alienated community, unhappy with themselves but unable to change, caught in a trap and needing to be rescued and brought back into the fold. Thus if one of the lead pair was an on-screen Christian of any kind, it would be the heroine. Miss Edna (Madhubala) in *Howrah Bridge* (1958, dr Shakti Samanta), Elizabeth D'Souza (Waheeda Rehman) in *Baazi* (1968, dr Moni Bhattacharya), Bobby (Dimple) in *Bobby*, Jenny (Parveen Babi) in *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977, dr Manmohan Desai) and Annie (Manisha Koirala) in

Khamoshi--The Musical (1996, dr Sanjay Leela Bhansali) all marry their men without trouble. In *Bobby*, the hero's parents only object to her social standing and her lack of wealth. There is no mention of a different religion. This is perhaps because of the notion of the ownership of the womb. In a patriarchal society, a woman is a womb and the womb is the source of sons. Thus if the womb is brought into the fold, so much the better. This also goes for the few Hindu-Muslim romances there have been. The man is always Hindu, the woman is always Muslim.

It should be clear that Hindi cinema has never had a simple equation with the religious communities of India. The early filmmakers knew that they were not simply making films. As the only valid pop culture, they believed that they were creating texts to help build society. Since they were men, these texts were largely patriarchal, probably not out of enlightened self-interest but probably because they genuinely believed that benevolent male despotism was good for society as a whole. The theme of the 'educated wife', for instance, was oft-repeated and each time disaster would follow her inclusion into the family. Later, this theme would change to become the 'westernised wife', anathema in her own right. However, in the '50s, the patriarchs were concerned about the nation that was being crafted. They often sought the blessings of political figures, although a good word from Nehru was not likely to increase ticket sales significantly. They were aware as few others could

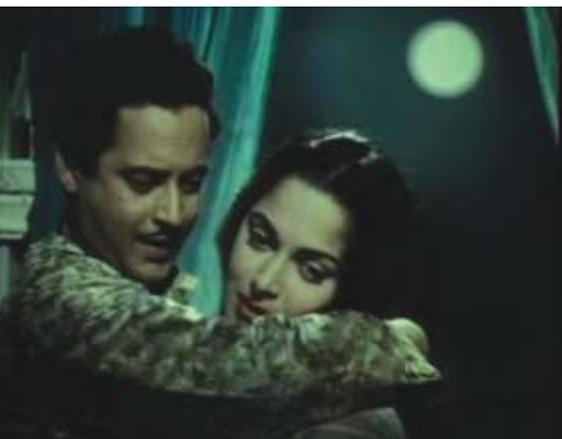
be of the scars left by Partition. Some had lost their families, their hometowns. Others had watched friends depart. Still others had arrived as refugees from the newly-formed state of West Pakistan. They felt the need, as a community, to emphasise the importance of coexistence and of mutual tolerance, if not respect, of India's diverse religious communities. Yet there were still some liberties that could be taken.

If political secularism arises out of arithmetic, the secularism of cinema arises out of commerce. When *Kaagaz Ke Phool* flopped, Guru Dutt went out and made a Muslim social *Chaudhvin Ka Chand*, although he did not do it under his own name. When he was asked why, he said that he needed a hit. Segmenting the market works. Think of *Coolie* and *Pakeezah* and *Nikaah*, all hits. (As in everything that one says of Hindi commercial cinema, one might on the other hand point to *Deedar-e-Yaar*, one of the biggest flops of 1982, but then it had Jeetendra playing a nawab.)



However, there are certain limits to this secularism. Since Hindi cinema, like most popular culture, is majoritarian, it also managed to maintain a subtle power balance within the caste system. When the hero was a romantic and a scholar, he could be a brahmin, even if it was the Muslim Dilip Kumar who was playing him. (Perhaps it was enough that he had changed his name to a Hindu one.) When the hero turned into a warrior, his identity turned kshatriya.

Secular gestures had to be similarly calibrated, since a sizeable proportion of the Hindi-speaking audience was Muslim. The Muslim characters were, therefore, rarely shown in an unfavourable light. They were honest friends, loyal soldiers, good policemen, bluff Pathans, friendly uncles. That left two communities: the Christians and the Parsis. For one, they were perceived as 'westernised', which was tantamount to sleeping with the enemy. For another, they could be offended without upsetting the box office, since they rarely patronised Hindi cinema anyway.



At present there are mixed signals. Sometimes a cameraman will have a name like Kenny as did the cameraman in *Lakshya* (2004 dr Farhan Akhtar) and it will pass without comment, without him having an odd accent, without him being found drunk on duty. But then was Kenny a Christian? In the 1950s, Neal and Nikki would have been the names of a couple of stage dancers. He would have had brilliantine in his hair and she would have had a skirt made of ruffles. In 2004, he's Gurneal Ahluwalia and she's Nikita Bakshi. So who knows? All I can say is that you develop a certain way of listening to names, a certain way of decoding them. You hope that Kenny is Kenneth and he's a Christian boy and his name being mentioned in passing is a way of acknowledging we exist and even when we're young, we're not completely beyond the pale of upper-caste Hindu society where almost all Hindi cinema takes place. (Not in the uppermost regions. Brahmin names only turn up in Vidhu Vinod Chopra's films. The rest of everyone has Kayastha or Kshatriya names.)

But then along comes *Socha Na Tha* (2005, dr Imtiaz Ali) in which Viren Oberoi (Abhay Deol) is in love with Karen Fernandes (Apoorva Jha). When he seeks the approval of Mr Fernandes (Sohrab Ardeshir), he finds him at home in an old bungalow, wearing suspenders and speaking an impossibly antique accent. Mr Fernandes drinks whisky and insists on toasting the young couple until the clean-living young Oberoi can barely stand. All this, Imtiaz Ali will no doubt maintain, is high fun. I found that it was playing to old stereotypes, which should have evaporated a long time ago.

And yet *Miss Mary* passed without a single nasty remark or suggestion. There was even a short speech on the virtues of all religions and how one could take something from each of them.

But then as I have always maintained, you can say any two completely contradictory things about Hindi cinema and both of them will contain some measure of truth.

Jerry Pinto lives and works in Mumbai. He tries to watch a film a day but generally ends up watching more.

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