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Master thesis

Religious Diversity in the View of Bollywood

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Diplomová práce

Náboženská rozmanitost v pohledu Bollywoodu

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Praha 30. července 2010

Declaration

I declare that this thesis *Religious Diversity in the View of Bollywood* is my own unaided work and that I have used only stated sources.

I consent to use this thesis for purpose of research and personal study.

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci s názvem *Religious Diversity in the View of Bollywood (Náboženská rozmanitost v pohledu Bollywoodu)* napsala samostatně a výhradně s použitím uvedených pramenů.

Souhlasím s tím, aby práce byla zveřejněna pro účely výzkumu a soukromého studia.

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate how religious diversity is depicted in Bollywood (Indian commercial cinema) and what kind of impact this depiction has on society. The research part is based on analysis of five films from the last fifteen years that deal with contemporary issues caused by religious plurality in India. Themes and basic typology of depicting different religions are then deduced from this analysis. These findings are then compared with social and political circumstances that include Indian nationalism in different forms, perception of the film, role of Muslims in film industry, adumbration of the viewership nature etc. This thesis asks for meaning of the film in the multi-religious society and for influence of society on the film's meaning. It aims to pose some questions about possibilities of Bollywood in the issue of interreligious coexistence in India.

Keywords

Bollywood (Indian commercial cinema)
Religion in film
Religions in India
Interreligious relations
Religious nationalism
Secularism and pluralism

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Anotace

Záměr této práce ukázat jak je zobrazována náboženská rozmanitost v Bollywoodu (tj. v Indickém komerčním filmu) a jaký dopad má toto zobrazení na společnost. Výzkumná část je založena na analýze pěti filmů z posledních patnácti let, které se zabývají současnými problémy způsobenými náboženskou pluralitou Indie. Z analýzy jsou odvozena témata a základní typologie zobrazování různých náboženství. Tyto poznatky jsou následně porovnány s sociálními a politickými okolnostmi, což zahrnuje Indický nacionalismus v různých podobách, vnímání filmu, role Muslimů ve filmovém průmyslu, načrtnutí povahy publika a další. Tato práce se ptá po významu filmu v nábožensky pluralitní společnosti a po vlivu společnosti na význam filmu. Práce směřuje k otázce po možnostech Bollywoodu ohledně problematiky koexistence různých náboženství v Indii.

Klíčová slova

Bollywood (Indický komerční film)
Náboženství ve filmu
Náboženství v Indii
Mezináboženské vztahy
Náboženský nacionalismus
Sekularismus a pluralismus

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Děkuji.

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Content

1 Preface

Indian population is one sixth of the world's population. The Indian cinema is a phenomenon that does not have a parallel. The religion appears somehow nearly in every Indian film. India is famous by its diversity and plurality. So many Muslims are in Bollywood, does it influence the outcome? What are the possibilities of cinema to influence the society? How does „happy“ Bollywood deal with religious plurality and conflicts? What is behind this peaceful, all-loving and happy-end visage of Bollywood? Is there anything interesting for religious theme? Can I, a Czech student of theology, say something on it? Can be film helpful in interreligious dialogue?

This all and many other facts, ideas and questions were crossing my mind, when I was deciding if I can write anything about Bollywood as my thesis. Bollywood had already been part of my life for several years, I had seen tens of films and some ideas about its attitude into religious pluralism were already in my mind. Inspiration for me was Rachel Dwyer's *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema* and also the fact that not so many things were written, therefore I had bigger space to choose the theme. I have chosen diversity of religion in contemporary films about contemporary themes and life that were adapted by all-Indian popular cinema, i.e. Bollywood. I have supposed that my cultural distance can be not only disadvantage but it also allows me to see some things from a specific perspective. Methodology of choosing and analysing films is described thereafter.

My aim was to describe how the religious plurality is depicted in a few contemporary films to find some typology of this depiction and pose some questions about its possibilities of understanding. The most important question for me is: what kind of impact the Bollywood can have on audience in the issue of religious plurality and therefore on society? In other words since film is a very influential medium in India, does it determine the interreligious relations in society? In good or in bad? I am concerned especially with the question of violence (mainly terrorism), nationalism and a little bit with religiously mixed

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family, because these themes are common to all films I have chosen. It can seem too wide but these themes are deeply connected in ones identity and the films have a similar approach to it, which is very specific. Among all of this there is a question how much are these films religious and in what sense. My intention is to adumbrate questions that should be asked, not to answer them. I am fully aware of both my limits and the inexpressible diversity of India's society and its film production. Yet I would like to elaborate one drop in the ocean.

1.1 Methodology

The first part (2 **Introduction**) of this thesis offers a basic introduction to Bollywood, with some explanation of religious background and brief specification of the contemporary situation.

The second part (3 **Religion in Indian filmography**) is an analysis of five films, first I have analysed each film and described its focus on religion and then I deduce specific themes and typology of depiction of religious diversity from this analysis. I have tried to elaborate it intentionally without bigger regard to another studies about some of the films, themes etc., because I wanted first to see it and analyse it without influence of other opinions. I tried to choose such films that can show different topics and different styles. I have included one blockbuster love story (*Veer-Zaara*, 2004), one more alternative style, but still Bollywood (*Aamir*, 2008), one film that deals with historical event (*Bombay*, 1995), one that speaks about regional issue (*Mission Kashmir*, 2000), one typical Muslim social film that deals with terrorism (*Dhokha*, 2007) and two other that speak about Muslims and terrorism in a different way (*Aamir*, 2008; *Mission Kashmir*, 2000). One speaks about Pakistan (*Veer-Zaara*, 2004), one mentions riots (*Bombay*, 1995), one speaks about injustice against Muslim minority (*Dhokha*, 2007) and one depicts Sikh (*Veer-Zaara*, 2004). For the part where I describe themes I often use many other films where there are some few scenes, shots or ideas that can help me to describe the theme better, but these films are not important for my thesis as such. I used English subtitles and if there is a word that needs transliteration I have tried to use the most common one and it is

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written in italic. Names are written according to subtitles¹ and principally to credits that are originally in English in all films I have analysed.

In the third part (4 **Making meaning of the film**) I bring social-political circumstances of film to compare the real world and the final meaning with the film dream world. This includes insight to some studies of viewership, reviews and attendance in cinema, political influences from nationalist parties and censorship, stereotypes of religious minorities and impact of globalization.

2 Introduction

2.1 *Bollywood*

2.1.1 The Indian commercial cinematography

Bollywood is the largest film production of the world, every year India releases about nine hundred films². The name was created by combination of the name of Hollywood and the name of the centre of Indian film production – Bombay (today Mumbai)³. The appellation „Bollywood“ came up in early 1980s of the last century in English-written magazines published in Mumbai and writing about Indian popular Cinema. First the name was refused by film makers, actors and producers because of the connotation of a second-hand derivative Hollywood.

¹ Even though the subtitles do not have to be uniform, for example in *Veer-Zaara* (2004) is lawyer Siddiqui sometimes written as Siddique.

² DAVIES, WISTREICH (2007), p. 227. This number is for whole film production of India, not just for Bollywood, but Bollywood makes an overwhelming majority of this production. But I did not find actual numbers of non-Bollywood films. If there are some studies that deal with non-Bollywood films it usually speak just about one local cinema, not about non-Bollywood cinema as whole.

³ It is not the only one film production with name made like this. The name of Bollywood was inspiration for names like: Lollywood (Lahore, capital city of Pakistan), Dallywood (Dhaka, capital city of Bangladesh), Kollywood (Tamil cinema with centre in Kodambakkam, Tamil Nadu, India), Tollywood (film production in language Telugu, based in state Andhra Pradesh, India) etc.

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But soon it became popular in Indian diaspora in Britain, and then in the West and now it is a very common name for Indian film production despite some protests.⁴ I will use this term because I do not have a better one: “Indian film industry” is too wide and I want to specialize only on main Indian popular production; “Hindi speaking film” can be more suitable, but this language is not exclusive and for example Urdu and English also plays an interesting role. Bollywood is the best appellation for me and I use it without any detraction of this industry, its uniqueness and I apologize for any offence. I will use term Indian cinema when I speak about whole Indian film production generally, but it is good to know that the overwhelming majority of Indian cinema is Bollywood. Audience of Indian cinema numbers about three billions of people every year in India,⁵ then millions in the US, Britain, Australia and in many other countries where Indians live, large number of Bollywood cinema-goers are from Africa, South-East Asia, countries from former Soviet Union and many others.⁶ Apart from official number of cinema-goers films are watched in television and more and more on DVD at home. Moreover, there is a huge non-official audience: people who buy pirate copies, who copy films from friends, who download them from the internet, who watch them on YouTube or other video servers etc. The lost profit caused by piracy is about 60%, according to the US India Business Council Indian film industry lost \$959 million and 571,896 jobs due to piracy in 2008.⁷

In India the audience is very wide and screenland is one of the most profitable production and one of the most influential media⁸ and of greater importance in comparison with Europe and North America. Straight in cinemas young men from all backgrounds make up majority of the audience⁹ and since Hinduism is the major religion in India, these young men are mainly Hindus. With

⁴ Encyclopaedia of Hindi cinema (2003), p. 28.

⁵ DAVIES, WISTREICH (2007), p. 227.

⁶ GANGULY, DeVOTTA, (2003), p. 264.

⁷ Bussiness Of Cinema: The Indian Film Industry Official. Seen 14th of July 2010.
<<http://www.businessofcinema.com/news.php?newsid=15703>>.

⁸ GANGULY, DeVOTTA, (2003), p. 263.

⁹ TORGOVNIK (2003), p. 6.

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the expansion of television, DVD and with the growth of middle class more women, old people and children watch films at home, where it is more acceptable and safe.

Indian cinema has a long tradition that begun with the first entirely Indian *Raja Harischandra* in 1913¹⁰ and it has many different cultural influences. The biggest influence for Indian cinema was Parsi theatre with its assimilation of huge number of other influences like Shakespeare, Persian lyric poetry, Sanskrit drama and Indian folk tradition.¹¹ Inspiration for the first film *Raja Harischandra* was a film about Jesus Christ¹² and Western films and Western pop music have accompanied Bollywood's inspiration ever since. Ananda Lal states that despite all present modernity in every Indian art today, there is still the aesthetic of two thousand year theory of *rasa* that means that the emotion and the mood of art is the central expression of all art.¹³ This approach can make Indian art including film emotionally exaggerated for the Western viewer.

Indian films are censored from any direct erotic, i.e. no sex, no naked bodies and even no kisses. The Central Board of Certification requires also nationalistic distinction between western and Indian character types;¹⁴ I will go into censorship closely later in 4.4.3 **Censorship and Hindutva: case Bombay**. Inside these limitations film makers are able to create a fascinating world, Bollywood films are usually about two and half to three hours long and the basic model is called *masala* (originally a mixture of spices) that means that in the film there is everything that viewer wants to see: songs with dances, action scenes, humour, love, family, colours, emotions, tears, laugh, beautiful girls, good people, bad people, happy endings and social values including religion. Songs belong substantially into Indian cinema, it is their basic expression¹⁵ and songs set apart

¹⁰ TORGOVNIK (2003), p. 6.

¹¹ GANTI (2004), p. 8.

¹² DWYER (2006a), p. 1. Dwyer says that this film is not identified, but it could be *The life and passion of Christ* (1903) from Horitz Passion Play or *La vie et la passion du Jésus Christ* (1905) from directors L. Nonguet and F. Zecce (DWYER (2006a), p. 168).

¹³ GANGULY, DeVOTTA, (2003), p. 256-257.

¹⁴ GOKULSING, DISSANAYAKE (2004), p. 53.

¹⁵ RAO (2006), p. 15.

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the Indian cinema from cinemas from most of the world.¹⁶ Western eye could feel that this Indian *masala* contain too much of kitsch, too much of emotions, too many people, too many colours. But on the other hand many people are fascinated by the exotic beauty, songs that make one dance, unconcealed emotions etc. Success of Bollywood in the West is not just a sign that the globalization does not mean only Americanization,¹⁷ but also that both India and West are a little bit closer in understanding each other. At least closer than in the year 1964 when Jerzy Toeplie conducted study for UNESCO and wrote that Indian films have little appeal for Western public, humour is untranslatable, music does not move us and the whole film is unbearable¹⁸.

2.1.2 Language and film, language and religion

In India there are sixteen major languages, twenty-four languages are spoken by more than one million people and there are more than eight hundred classified dialects.¹⁹ About forty percent of Indians understand Hindi,²⁰ the main official language for India; particular states have very often their own official language. Hindi is a neo-indian language with some words from Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, its roots go to the twelfth century and now it is mother tongue of 250 millions of people.²¹ Hindi is relative language with Urdu (or they are two version of one language²²), the official language of Pakistan. Urdu differs from Hindi in script and in some vocabulary: it has more Persian and Arabic words and it is written in Perso-Arabic script and Hindi in Devanagari.²³ Nowadays Urdu is considered to be a Muslim language and Hindi a language of Hindus, but

¹⁶ GOKULSING, DISSANAYAKE (2004), p. 48.

¹⁷ RAO (2006), p. 1.

¹⁸ VIRDI (1983), p. 26.

¹⁹ VIRDI (1983), p. 11.

²⁰ GOKULSING, DISSANAYAKE (2004), p. 47. The number is 10% higher than state VIRDI (1983, p. 11.) twenty years before, therefore we can suppose that Hindi gets more widespread (if the definition of understanding is for both number similar).

²¹ Universum, 3. díl, (2000), p 498.

²² DWYER (2006a), p. 102.

²³ Universum, 10. díl, (2000), p 64. and DWYER (2006a), p. 102.

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this originates in the end of nineteenth century, where Hindi nationalist movement (Hindutva – Hindu-ness) identified itself with Hindi not with Urdu because of its „foreign“ script.²⁴ Urdu was more common in the North, where the majority of Muslims was before partition.²⁵ Hindi became a symbol of nationalism, but the language needed to be developed, mainly in the vocabulary of administration, broadcast, literature etc.²⁶ English in India is a language of high class, administration, fashion and also a language of modern literature.²⁷

Despite the Hindu-Muslim division of Hindi and Urdu, other big languages are not exclusively languages of religion: there are Hindus, Muslims, Christians who speak Malayalam or Bengali, Hindu and Sikh Punjabis, Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist Kashmiris, Hindu and Jains Rajastani, Hindu and Parsi (Zoroastiran) Gujaratis.²⁸

Unlike literature, where regional languages predominate, in film Hindi²⁹ is the most frequent language and Bollywood usually does not use subtitles or dubbing, also for this reason film could be the only way to turn Hindi to a really national language.³⁰ Also Urdu became an inherent part of Hindi films; because of its great past in poetry it is very often used in songs,³¹ even though it is simplified.³² In films somehow Urdu and Hindi can become one language and again it is success, which did not come when there were attempts to create Hindustani language – combination of Hindu and Urdu.³³ Rachel Dwyer says that the language spoken in Bollywood films is called Hindi mainly for political purposes but it is a mixture of Hindi and Urdu and because it does not have any

²⁴ VEER (1994), p. 171.

²⁵ DWYER (2006a), p. 98.

²⁶ VEER (1994), p. 171.

²⁷ VEER (1994), p. 172

²⁸ GANGULY, DeVOTTA, (2003), p. 255-256

²⁹ GANGULY, DeVOTTA, (2003), p. 264

³⁰ VIRDI (1983), p. 24-25.

³¹ VEER (1994), p. 172

³² DWYER, 2006, p. 106.

³³ VEER (1994), p. 170-172

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script it can be a question what language it is, moreover the title is given in Roman, Devanagari and Perso-Arabic, subsequent titles in Roman and sometimes Devanagari³⁴.

Bollywood uses languages and accents to show from which class someone comes.³⁵ Also the higher the person is the more English he or she usually uses. Sometimes somebody appears who does speak neither Hindi nor English. Small example will be shown in the analysis on *Veer-Zaara* (2004).

2.1.3 Muslims in Bollywood

It is very interesting that Muslims as followers of religion with such strict forbiddance of imagery form are such big and important part of Indian film industry. In India there is about 13% of Muslims of whole population but in Bollywood it is even more. In fact it is uncountable at all, it is not relevant to count just proportion of the people in the industry because the influence of some people is much bigger than of others. But still we can state that the influence and creativity of Muslims in Bollywood is crucial and always have been. Huge number of Muslims came to Indian film industry with the arrival of sound into the cinema after 1931 because of their good skills in Urdu, in writing, poetry and because of the northern accent that was needed,³⁶ There were many stars among directors, actors, actresses, playback singers and of course among lyricists. But these days there are not so many famous Muslim actresses and female playback singers. On the contrary, the biggest stars among actors are in the last fifteen years mainly Muslims, namely three Khans (without any family relations). Shahrukh Khan,³⁷ Aamir Khan and Salman Khan have been three of few biggest stars. Especially Shahrukh Khan (born 1965) is a megastar that can be compared only with Amitabh Bachchan (born 1942) who has been famous from early 70s.³⁸

³⁴ DWYER, 2006, p. 103. All Indian films I have seen had their final credits in Roman, but it was mainly English.

³⁵ Encyclopaedia of Hindi cinema (2003), p. 178.

³⁶ DWYER, 2006, p. 99 and 101.

³⁷ Sometimes spelt Shahrukh Khan or called as SRK or King Khan.

³⁸ DWYER, 2006, p. 99 and 101.

2.1.4 Literature on religions in Bollywood

There are many books written on Bollywood, mainly about filmography and history, many books with biographical focus, there are also books about gender in Bollywood; but I have found only one book in English on religion in Bollywood. It is Rachel Dwyer's *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema* that focuses more on history than on religion in contemporary Bollywood and if Dwyer speaks about religion and its role in cinema it is more about pictures that narrate about mythology or history (e.g. stories about gods, saints) or it is about devotional films. There are two chapters in her book that were useful for my theme: one about the Islamicate film and one about secular films. Apart from these two chapters I do not have nearly any bibliography that would suit my theme perfectly. Dwyer says in her book that study of religion in Indian films is long overdue³⁹ and there has been almost no research about it.⁴⁰ But it is worth mentioning that there has not been nearly any research about religion in films except Judaism and Christianity.⁴¹ I consulted my topic with Rachel Dwyer through e-mail correspondence and I asked her for suggestion for literature; apart from some advices she confirmed that this theme has been little examined on the whole and the contemporary films even less.

Other books I used were about contemporary India, about Indian cinematography, about film generally and books about religious conflicts or religious nationalism in India. Many varied articles were very helpful for me. They dealt mainly with Muslims, secularism and nationalism in Bollywood.

There are some books that deal with film worldwide and include also Indian cinema but usually the films they mentioned were not suitable for me. For example in *Representing Religion in World Cinema: Filmmaking, Mythmaking, Culture Making* S. Brent Plate concerns with *Jai Santoshi Maa* (1975) that is devotional film. Or Melanie Jane Wright in *Religion and film: an introduction* writes about *Lagaan* (2001), which is a very interesting film for the view of Bollywood on religions but it is about past.

³⁹ DWYER, 2006, p. 2.

⁴⁰ DWYER, 2006, p. 5.

⁴¹ DWYER, 2006, p. 5.

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There is one new book, *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema* written by Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen, which would be great for my theme, but it was released last year and it was not possible for me to acquire it.

2.2 Religion in India: modernity and tradition

For clearer further study it is necessary to summarize the briefly religious situation in India. The Republic of India consider itself as secular state that is not based on any religion and has no restrictions for religious practice, apart from those that are against humanity as *sati*⁴² or children marriage. The state has claimed itself as secular from the beginning, because according to the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru it was the only way to keep a state with such religious plurality.⁴³ In 1991⁴⁴ there were about 800 million Hindus, 135 million Muslims, 20 million Christians, 15 million Sikhs, nearly 6 million Buddhists, 3 million Jains and about 3 million „others“, that includes tribes that refuse to be called Hindus, 70 thousand Parsis (Zoroastrians) and few thousands of Jews.⁴⁵ All of these religions have been in India for more than thousand years, so none of these religions can be stated as „new“ or „non-Indian“. ⁴⁶ Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism are four indigenous religions in India and both Indian Islam and Indian Christianity are very specific distinctive hence we can speak about Islam and Christianity as Indian religions and it is important to know that both of these religions has always had constitutive function both of culture and society in India, even though sometimes less and sometimes more.⁴⁷

Neo-Hinduism, new interpretations of Hinduism from ninetieth and twentieth century, went mostly hand in hand with inward looking, nationalism and taking

⁴² Burning widows with their husbands.

⁴³ GANGULY, DeVOTTA (2003), p. 220.

⁴⁴ This is 982 million of population, 2001 it was 1,02 billion (Indiastat.com. Seen 28th of July 2010 <<http://www.indiastat.com/7/specimen.aspx>>) and today it was 1,16 billion (National Commission on Population (Government of India). Seen 28th of July 2010. <<http://populationcommission.nic.in/>>).

⁴⁵ GANGULY, DeVOTTA (2003), p. 193.

⁴⁶ GANGULY, DeVOTTA (2003), p. 193.

⁴⁷ GANGULY, DeVOTTA (2003), p. 203-207.

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„useful“ ideas and things from West.⁴⁸ Growing tensions between Muslims and Hindus, both of which were also fighting for political power, grew from 1920s and culminated in Partition in 1947.⁴⁹ After Partition most of Muslims that stayed in India were from low-class and they were marked as potential Pakistanis.⁵⁰ India and especially Hinduism is very capable to accommodate modernity together with traditions,⁵¹ particularly middle-class that meets the western civilization and has its own tradition is able to mix it together in one new way of life.⁵² This life is still traditional and religious despite the fact that it simplifies some tradition and tends more to home worship.⁵³ With growing cities,⁵⁴ middle-class and wealth of higher-class grows also consumerist life style⁵⁵ despite the fact that 36 percent of India’s population lives under the poverty line.⁵⁶ Growth of importance of urban population and also of really high class and really low castes and Dalits in some parts of India castes are no longer important.⁵⁷ From 1980s there was also rise of right wing militant nationalism of Hindus, but I will come to this later in 4.4 **Political and social influences.**

2.2.1 Term „secular“ in Indian perspective

In Indian society secular has a little different meaning from meaning of this term that is commonly perceived in western culture, despite that fact, that even in western culture can be differently comprehended.⁵⁸ In the West secularism is opposite of religious and sacred, in India secular can be used also together with

⁴⁸ GANGULY, DeVOTTA (2003), p. 211-213

⁴⁹ GANGULY, DeVOTTA (2003), p. 215.

⁵⁰ GANGULY, DeVOTTA (2003), p. 217.

⁵¹ DWYER (2008), p. 84 and also in many other parts of the book.

⁵² NANDY (1995), p. 197.

⁵³ DWYER (2008), p. 32.

⁵⁴ See GANGULY, DeVOTTA (2003), p. 163nn.

⁵⁵ GANGULY, DeVOTTA (2003), p. 249-251 and RAO (2006).

⁵⁶ GANGULY, DeVOTTA (2003), p. 249.

⁵⁷ GANGULY, DeVOTTA (2003), p. 251 and DWYER (2008), p. 45-46.

⁵⁸ DWYER, 2006, p. 132. Dwyer distinguishes two different meaning of secular: “one as a political practice or doctrine and one as a epistemic category or ontology.

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religious terms and in religious meaning. I need to point out two distinct usage of the term „secular“ in India. The first is used mainly in politics. Secular state is a state that does not privilege any religion and protects minorities.⁵⁹ This term is very close to western meaning of secular,⁶⁰ though in India there is no church that can be separated from state.⁶¹ Neutral secular state is viewed as something democratic and positive, while in Pakistan secularism is viewed as something evil,⁶² because Pakistan is the state based on religion. India claims itself as state without religious base. In one film we will see that also for some Hindus, especially for rightward nationalists, secularism can be seen as something deleterious. But in contrast to this common use Indians gave wider meaning to term secular and they use it also with words like Muslim, faith etc. even though these combinations can sound at least weird if not really absurd for European. Especially the term „secular Muslim“ is very common and it describes a Muslim who does not see Indian state as his own enemy, who does not support any kind of separatism or terrorism, who lives a modern (probably middle class) live in faith in God and with respect to honesty and his family and sees all religions with equal respect. This looks like as an ideal but for many Muslims it is not just term given them from outside but it is something that they state as their true and really inner conviction and life style. Shahrukh Khan, a megastar of Bollywood, presented himself as a secular Muslim also when he spoke about Mumbai attacks in November 2008. He sees India as „an amazingly secular place and amazingly democratic place“ and he alleges that terrorism is against secularism.⁶³ In connotation with these attacks he said that he feels more Indian than before it.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ VEER (1994), p. 64.

⁶⁰ I need to remark here that in my country, in Czech Republic, is meaning of secular usually seen as more secular than this definition. It is not just disapproving of any privilege of any religion but it is usually understood as „not interested in religion as much as possible“.

⁶¹ DWYER, 2006, p. 133

⁶² VEER (1994), p. 64.

⁶³ Summary of interview between Barkha Dutt and Shahrukh Khan, on 7th of December 2008 on NDTV. (Movies NDTV. Seen 31st October 2009. <http://movies.ndtv.com/movie_Story.aspx?id=ENTEN20080075601&keyword=&subcatg>)

⁶⁴ In interview on CNN-IBN on Mumbai attacks, this interview was probably on 8th of December

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Bollywood views itself mainly as a secular, i.e. equal for all religion, but religiosity is highly valued. This is not a construct of Bollywood but it reflects the major situation in India.⁶⁵

3 Religion in Indian filmography

3.1 Basic types of films

Religion is important for Bollywood and in overwhelming majority of Bollywood films religion is somehow present, sometimes it is crucial, sometimes it is secondary and sometimes it is there only as a social, cultural, daily background that can be completely unimportant for the storyline.

According to the role of religion we can find four basic types of films (in some cases could be mixed). I will not include the first three types in my thesis, but they need to be mentioned to define my theme.

Mythology and legends

These films are truly religious because they are about myths, gods and saints. For example Indian epos Mahabharata was adapted many times and not only as a film but also as TV series.⁶⁶ Specific genre is devotional film that is about saint and usually it comes outside the Brahmanic tradition,⁶⁷ good example is *Jai Santoshi* Maa (1975).

Historical

There are two basic types of films that are set in past: the first is about real historical figure or event with more or less fiction as for example *Asoka* (2001), *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), *Pinjar* (2003), *Gandhi, My Father*.{2007} The second type is

2008, because on 7th was his first interview about attack on NDTV and on 8th this video was uploaded on YouTube. Seen at (YouTube. Seen 1st November 2009. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfAfCeaksAk>>)

⁶⁵ DWYER, 2006, p. 133-134.

⁶⁶ For more see DWYER (2006a), Chapter I.

⁶⁷ DWYER (2006a), p. 65. For more about devotional film see DWYER (2006a), Chapter II.

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based on historical background that is not specified as *Lagaan* (2001), *Paheli* (2005), *Devdas* (2002) etc. In some of them as in *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), *Devdas* (2002), *Paheli* (2005) religion is only a background and does not play an important role.

Contemporary secular society

This type of films is probably the most frequent in Bollywood. Religion, mostly Hinduism, is only just a social and cultural background there. Sometimes it is rather a decoration than anything else and film without any religious detail is very rare. But in spite of this there are some interesting moments in these films that are worth mentioning. I will mention it in 3.3.1 **Themes** and in subsequent chapters.

Social films (Cross-religion/cultural conflict)

This type is the most important group of films for my thesis even though it usually deals with social and cultural aspects of religion rather than with their teaching or world view. Specific kind of this type is the so called „**Muslim social**“. Rachel Dwyer reckons Muslim social into Islamicate film and she notices that it is about Muslims not about Islam, because Islam forbids depiction of God and his Prophets.⁶⁸ I include this type to „cross-religion“ group of films because Muslims in India are a minority and problems and role of minorities are always determined by majority so there is always some important connection to Hindu majority. Muslim social films usually deal with social problems of Indian Muslims, sometimes the film portrays some Muslims from Pakistan but the Muslim community usually is not perceived with connotation more with Arabic countries.⁶⁹ There are really few films made about other different religions.⁷⁰ If there is someone from different religion it is mainly Sikh, but usually Sikhs appear in films just as supporting actors or in a crowd. There is no film called Hindu social because Hindus are the norm, but one of the „Hindu social“ are also

⁶⁸ DWYER (2006a), p. 97.

⁶⁹ DWYER (2006a), p. 97.

⁷⁰ GOKULSING, DISSANAYAKE (2004), p. 60.

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films where the conflict is based on conflict between castes.

3.2 Analysis

Because I want to focus on contemporary issues and contemporary production I have chosen five pictures released between 1995 and 2008 where the story takes place in present-day India or Pakistan. Historical dating of these films is mainly unknown, just in *Bombay* (1995) the second part takes place from December 1992 to January 1993 and in *Dhokha* (2007) there is a mention about September 11th 2001 at the beginning. These films are mainly focused on Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. I have chosen these films for complex analysis, but in the typology that will be derived mainly from these films I will mention also some scenes from other films.

Basic methodology was to write down everything interesting for my theme from particular film and then to arrange it into meaningful description. Analysis of each film has a little bit different character because of specific approach of the film to the theme and different number of interreligious scenes in particular film. Because not everything in these films was relevant for me, hence not everything important for the story is in the further analysis. To help the reader understand the story let me first introduce briefly five films before every analysis. In these summaries there is the basic information about story, day of release, cast etc. Films are lined up alphabetically and my titles in each film analysis give a picture of basic message that I have seen in particular film.

3.2.1 Aamir: Muslim's responsibility for his people

Abstract: *Aamir* was released in June 2008, directed by Raj Kumar Gupta and it is an atypical Bollywood film in many ways. First, it is only 94 minutes long (i.e. very short for Bollywood), second, it is without any dance song, without any digressions and without any stuffing (as song scene⁷¹, dancing, funny scenes, pathos, family scenes etc.), that is so popular in Bollywood. Finally, there are a lot of scenes here that are not usually shown in shiny Bollywood films as

⁷¹ It means songs where we see the singer and the scene is based on the song, in *Aamir* (2008) there are just songs as background.

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awfully dirty slums, disgusting toilets and living of the poorest. The film tells the story of a young Muslim man coming home from studies in Britain as a physician. Somebody gives him a mobile phone at the airport and after that he is completely ruled by the voice from that phone (I call him man-on-the-phone). Some Islam radicals hold his mother, sisters and young brother hostage and want him to deliver a red suitcase somewhere and to fulfil his name that means „Leader“. At the end Aamir is told to leave the suitcase in a bus, because it is bomb in it, first he get of the bus than he change his mind and he takes the suitcase out of the bus at the last seconds and he dies because of the blast.

Cast: Rajeev Khandelwal

Analysis

In this film dialogues were the most important thing for given theme, some interesting clues were in songs and many things were expressed just by camera without words. The film has its own message that requested resume of its meaning that was unspoken, this differentiates it from other four films were the meaning and the scenes are mainly clear and direct in their message. More than religiously this film is socially based.

At the airport

At the Bombay airport at the beginning of this film young Muslim Aamir coming from his study of medicine in Britain is checked four times by the custom officer because his visa in Britain is not renewed and also probably because of his Muslim name. Aamir is angry about it but then he asks if his name was not Aamir but Amar (i.e. Hindu name) if he would still be under suspicion. The custom officer does not answer but another man comes after Aamir and his name is Amar. Without any further comments after this control we see the airport hall full of different people, from different countries and with distinct characteristics of different religion or cultural view: white Europeans, Arabs, Hindus, Muslims, young and old etc.

Our people

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The reason used by the man-on-the-phone to persuade Aamir that what he does is good is based on one key idea: solidarity between brothers in faith. He tries to persuade him that after sixty years of independence Muslims are still at the same bad position in state as they were before Partition, most of them live in poverty and they cannot change it. The following dialogue is the best example how the man-on-the-phone suggests to Aamir his responsibility for other Muslims:

- Man-on-the-phone: You forgot your people, your faith, your war.
- Aamir: I don't want to fight any war.
- Man-on-the-phone: This is your war too!
- Aamir: No, it is not.
- Man-on-the-phone: Are not you a Muslim?
- Aamir: Yes I am!
- Man-on-the-phone: No you can't be a Muslim!
- Aamir: Who gives you right to judge that?
- Man-on-the-phone: Every Muslim has a moral duty towards the holy war.
- Aamir: Who decrees that?
- (And the following answer is more or less about something else)

In another situation the man-on-the-phone uses the argument that The Holy Book says Muslims should think about their own people – i.e. other Muslims. The man-on-the-phone does not only try to show Aamir that he has to do something for his people but he also shows him who does it well in order to convince him. He shows him that some people in Pakistan and also in other countries send „brotherhood money“ for the Holy War. The man-on-the-phone acts as an orthodox Muslim, he greets him „salaam aleykum“ he prays, he reminds Aamir about some good manners of Muslims (e.g. „Brother in our faith we show respect to our elders“) and that he has to know something about his history (e.g. Mughals). This is also in contrast with what he plans to do, he shows himself as an orthodox and maybe wise believer but he is the one who is

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responsible for terrorist attack that he calls „it's for fate of our people“ and later he wants to hear the bomb blast and he says about it „I want to hear the sound of Allah's will“. The last thing that he comments with association with loyalty to of Muslims is question about Aamir's girlfriend, because the man-on-the-phone has found in Aamir's luggage photo of Aamir with some girl. He asks him whether she is Muslim and when Aamir does not answer he suggest that she is Christian. Aamir then says that she is Hindu and the man-on-the phone asks an accusing question: „You couldn't find one from our faith?“ And Aamir says: „No.“

Songs as prayers

There are two interesting songs for me; they are more or less something as a prayer to God. The first one comes during a scene when Aamir fights some guys who stole him „his“ red suitcase which he believes to contain money. He needs to deliver this suitcase somewhere; it is a part of the mission that the man-on-the-phone wants him to do it. During this fight scene there is this song:

(Shortened) Life is fleeting. Some like a bubble. Have mercy, I beg you Lord, protect me at every step, this delicate, string of breaths. Why be vain when this fair body will turn to dust someday No matter how many lamps are lit, the light will fade away. Have mercy, I beg you Lord, protect me at every step. In the glitter of gold or the tinkle of coins you can't be found it's in the grains of dust that you're found O Lord, can a humans wish dare override yours? You are the master puppeteer and every humans fate is at your finger tip Have mercy, I beg you, Lord protect me at every step.

The second song is at the end of the film when the bomb has already exploded and Aamir is the only one who is dead. During the final credits there is this song:

(Shortened) So many lives fill these skies like stars. God forbid one of these ends before its time. For a smiling debt for what was not his crime. Why did this bright flame go out, O' Lord? All ask is a cup of joy as pure as dew and sun but are sacrificed in your name O Lord, sadly one by one God forbid, why someone should die just because he wished for it. Why did it end before enjoying the pleasures of life?

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Resume

All that Aamir does in this film he does because his family was kidnapped. There is just one exception: he chooses a different ending. When he is asked to leave the bus without the suitcase he realizes that there is a bomb in it, not money. Up to this point he has followed the orders, but then he changes his mind and takes the case from the bus in the last moment and dies in the explosion. Through whole film there again and again echoes the question of caring about other people from the same community. The man-on-the-phone tries to persuade Aamir that he does not care about his own people and that for Muslim there is only way to do it – jihad. Aamir perhaps has not thought about this issue before and he says that if everybody minded their own business, the world would be a better place. But there are some things seemingly at the background that Aamir is a man who cares about his people – he is a doctor, he is coming back to India and because his visa in Britain is not renewed he wants to stay in India. Without further mention he is good example of Indian who studied abroad but he is coming back to work in (for) India, even if it is very common that Indian intelligentsia works and lives abroad. This is the way Aamir cares about his people in broad sense even maybe he does not realize it. In the narrow sense of the word he cares about his people i.e. his family so much that he did what the man-on-the-phone wanted to do. When Aamir sees his family from the bus how they are finally happy and free, buying something on the street we can see relief on his face.

The motto „Whoever said that man writes his own destiny... He was bullshitting” is completely changed with Aamir's life saving suicide. It disproves it but it is not the same as Aamir states before that everyone has to mind his own business. But it does not contradict other Aamir's conviction that every man writes his own destiny. As sacrificed himself he did not do it just to save the people endangered by the bomb but also to have a win over the terrorists. They wanted him on their side and alive, the way how they forced to follow their ideals and orders could seem strange, but if they had really forced him by blackmailing to put a bomb in a bus full of people so he would become inevitably one of them. They just did

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not expect he could kill himself without killing any other people.

3.2.2 Bombay: Motherland

Abstract: This film directed by Mani Ratnam was released in July 1998 and is about family and religion during Mumbai (Bombay) riots after demolition of Babri Mosque in 1992. The story begins in an Indian village, where Hindus and Muslims live together peacefully. But when a young Hindu Shekhar and a Muslim girl Shaila fall in love with each other no one wants to hear about it. After arguing with their families Shekhar and Shaila move to Mumbai and get married at the office. They give birth to two boys, twins. Idyllic and loving family starts to convince grandparents to love them and each other again, but everything is violently disrupted by riots between Muslims and Hindus after Hindus demolish Babri Mosque. Aggressive nationalism is viewed from an interesting point of view – from the view of a mixed family that is not on any side of the conflict.

Cast: Arwind Swami, Manisha Koirala

Analysis

This time I will follow the story line more closely mainly because the story is about conflict between Hindus and Muslims and also because there are not as clear theme groups as in other films I have analysed here. My titles help reader to orient better in the story and in the changes of the story. Sometimes some small shots are transposed to thematically related scenes.

It is important to present something on the historical background of this film, because it is based on real events. On the 2nd of December 1992 Babri mosque in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh was demolished by hundreds of thousands of Hindus because as they claimed this mosque was standing at the place of birth of Lord Rama. There were two main waves of riots between the 6th of December till 20th of January, first wave was mainly Muslims against Hindus, because of the destroyed mosque and the second was mainly Hindus against Muslims, because there were killed some Hindu workers in Mumbai on 5th of January.

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In the riots in Mumbai about nine hundred people died (estimated 575 Muslims and 275 Hindus) and about two thousand people were injured, the cost of damage was around INR 9,000 crore⁷² (3.6 billion USD).

Village in Malanpur

Shekhar is young Hindu, who starts his journalist career in Mumbai. After two years he visits his family at home in a village. His father is not happy about his living in Mumbai but when Shekhar says that he does not want to marry a girl from Mumbai he is satisfied. But Shekhar already fell for a girl from his village, but there is a big problem: she is a Muslim. Although Hindus and Muslims live together peacefully in this village, although they are friends and on a Muslim wedding we can see many Hindus, even speaking to a Muslim girl is really hard for Shekhar. But he tries hard, he even wears burqa and pretends to be a woman to ask about her name or ask her out and she lets him, she uncovers her burqa slightly when they meet at the street so he can know that she knows about him.

This girl is Shaila Bano daughter of Bashir Ahmed. When he came to Bashir's house he welcomes him warmly, calls him as a son and offers him a tea. This politeness is gone when Shekhar tells him that he and his daughter want to marry, he knocks him down from chair, starts shouting and calls him a swine. Then Bashir takes a machete and says that even their blood is different and they can never become one. Shekhar grasps the edge of this machete and cut himself and then he cuts also Shaila and says that they will be one. When Shekhar comes home his father Narayan Mishra is planning his marriage but he refuses. His father wants to know why and he answers that he has already found a girl and that she is from their village. His father is happy about it and wants to know her name, but her name stops his happiness. Then Shekhar's father Narayan goes to Bashir Shaila's father and they have a quarrel and they almost fight, even though they both agree that they do not agree on the marriage. But they both feel that their respect in village has been threatened. At home Narayan rails against Shekhar telling him that he ruined everything he has done, his faithful life, his authority in village. When Shekhar sister defends Shaila that she is

⁷² 1 crore is 10 millions Indian rupees.

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a good girl, her father asks her who will marry her when her brother marries a Muslim. Shekhar offers that she can marry a Muslim. His father wants him to leave and Shekhar asks him what is wrong to love a Muslim and if Muslims are enemies. His father answers him that he can marry her but only if he is dead. After some time Shaila's father finds letters that Shekhar writes her from Mumbai, he tells her that she was born when he returned from holy Mecca, that he works for her and she ruined it all. In the night Shaila runs away and takes with her the Holy Qur'an.

Mumbai and marriage

In Mumbai Shekhar and Shaila get married immediately, just in the office without any ceremony, there are just some church bells ringing from somewhere. After they come to Shekhar's place, that is just one room rented in a flat of his friend, this friend's wife is surprised that Shekhar's wife is Muslim and she is worried how they will pray if there is a Muslim girl around, but later she likes them. A more serious problem is that they do not have privacy for the first few days because five children of some friends live in their room.

The following night Shekhar asks her if he has to change his religion, but the way how he asks her is not easy or common. Between Shekhar and Shaila there are five children, so he asks the closest child, this child says it to the second, the second to the third etc. and the last one asks Shaila and the answer, that is "No he should not.", goes the same way back.

When Shaila gets pregnant, Shekhar is concerned about how they are going to manage, Shaila starts saying something with Allah, and then she stops and says that their children will have two gods, so they will manage it for them. Without telling Shekhar Shaila writes this news to Narayan and he tells it to Bashir. As a good Muslim Bashir thanks to God for that child even few minutes ago he said that he does not have a daughter. Here also starts a contention which religion will follow this child, this dispute is just between two grandfathers and Shekhar and Shaila do not know about it. There is a problem that according to Hindus child follows a religion of his father and Muslims derive child's religion from mother. But Narayan allows Shaila's mother

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and some other women and girls to perform a ritual in their home, because it is a duty of bride's family to do it before she delivers a baby. Narayan allows it because they do not do it for them but they do it for the child.

During a happy song about love and waiting for child we can see how Shaila reads the Qur'an and prays but also as she paints a *bindi*, a red spot on her forehead, in this song Shekhar wears a cap on one shot. In the song they sing: „We have but one God. So let's be one too.”, also that they have to remember and pray to God with devotion. Shaila gives a birth to twins, boys Kabir and Kamal.

Ayodhya

Impending conflict is breaking through the family story first just with whiffs. Already on the second day in Mumbai Shaila sees some Hindu procession that foresees some aggressive acts of Hindu nationalism. Other day Shekhar's father Narayan comes to Shaila's Father Bashir but not to discuss something about their children but to buy bricks. But when he says that he wants to have the name of Rama on every brick and that it is for temple in Ayodhya Bashir gets angry. When the boys are already born some collectors of gifts from Shakti Samaj⁷³ come to their place to ask for some money for a new temple of Rama in Ayodhya. When Shaila opens them the door she is scared and sad, because she feels that this is something against her people. Shekhar takes them away and we do not know what he told them.

On the December the 6th of 1992 old Babri Mosque in Ayodhya was destroyed by Hindus because as they claimed this was place of birth of Lord Rama. Crowds of Hindus took it to pieces in few hours. Many angry Muslims all over the country go to streets with machetes and with fire immediately. They are destroying shops, fighting with Hindus and with police, who start shooting them rashly. During these fights, two small six years old boys are lost and some men catch them and they want to know if they are Muslims or Hindus and what are their names. They do not answer and these men want to set them on fire. We do

⁷³ I have not found anything about Shakti Samaj, just Shakti is divine feminine power and Samaj is society. Probably in the film is fictive party or group intentionally, but it is hint on Shiv Sena (see thereafter).

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not know if these men are Hindu or Muslim, but truth is that they want to kill. On the last second their parents Shaila and Shekhar see them and the police shoot these men and the boys are saved. In the night one of the boys, Kabir, has a nightmare that he is burning, then he asks his father if he is a Muslim or a Hindu.

After these riots the police say that there were just 56 dead but the hospitals speak about 227 and that more than half of these people were innocent. Shekhar is doing report on it, he speaks with police and people who were in it, who were robbed, whose family members were killed. Two men, one Hindu and one Muslim, say that the Muslims and Hindus have always lived like brothers and that they had never heard about such hatred.⁷⁴

Grandfathers

After these riots both grandparents come to Mumbai because they are scared about the young family. First comes Narayan Shekhar's father and he asks for forgiveness from his son. For the first time he sees his grandsons, he asks them what are their names and the answer is: Kabir Narayan and Kamal Bashir. Parents gave mixed names to children while the second names were from grandfathers. Kabir is a Muslim name and Narayan is after his Hindu grandfather, Kamal is a name that could be Hindu or Muslim⁷⁵ and his second name is Bashir after his Muslim grandfather. Shaila is scared that grandfather Narayan could break this family, but he says that he cannot do it even if he wished and he asks her for some food. This is very important because that for Hindu a Muslim is cultishly untouchable and that Hindus eat food prepared just

⁷⁴ This could be easily disproved, because for example street riots were between them at partition of India and Pakistan and it was not so ideal all the time, even if the coexistence was mainly good.

⁷⁵ First I've supposed that names of boys will have some kind of symmetry, i.e. religiously combined, but with Kamal it is not so easy. Kamal is usually an Arabic, ergo a Muslim, name but there is a Hindu name Kamala that could be transcribed in masculine version also as Kamal. Kamala is a name both male and female. (Behind the Name. Seen 29th of July 2010. <<http://www.behindthename.com/php/search.php?terms=kamal&nmd=n&gender=both&operator=or>>)

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by people who are in the same or higher caste, because by food they can become cultishly unclean. Therefore this food is not just about acceptance of this family but it is also acceptance of her origin and somehow the religion is no more important.

Later also the parents of Shaila come and after six years Bashir accepts her back as his daughter. Narayan prepares a surprise for Bashir: he paints a *tilaka*, a red spot on foreheads,⁷⁶ of Kamal and Kabir and gives them *Japa mala*, praying beads, on their neck. This starts again their difference about religion of their grandchildren, it is a quiet quarrel and they pretend that everything is all right in front of other members of family. Sometimes it gets really comic, when one says „Allah!“ the other say „Oh Shiva!“, they are arguing, then smiling when the grandchildren come. They are discussing even food for them – if they have to be vegetarians or not.

Open conflict

On January the 5th two workers were murdered in Mumbai and the riots on streets burst again. Shekhar is doing a report on it and talks to religious leaders from both sides. Both are very militant and accuse just the other side. The Muslim leader says that Hindus started it when they destroyed the Babri Mosque and sparked this destruction, that there is no one who can protect the Muslims today, therefore they will protect themselves. He also says Hindus

⁷⁶ *Tilaka* (or *tilak*, *tilakam*) is religious marking on forehead, it could have difference shapes colours and it is for both genders, for every age. *Bindi* (sometimes *bindu*, *bindiya* or *kumkum*) is usually used for *tilaka* worn by women, originally as a mark of marital status but nowadays it is very often just a jewellery. Originally it is vermilion or red saffron dot or line, but in contemporary fashion stickers are commonly used. Terms *bindi* and *tilaka* overlaps and origin of their usage is not clear. Even using these terms could be confusing. Encyclopedia of Hinduism (2008) speaks just about *bindu* only and describes it that this drop or dot „is an esoteric concept denoting the spaceless, timeless point that is the source of all manifestation.“ and it depicts as a symbol of consciousness. On the contrary in daily life visible in shops or on the internet *bindi* (or *bindu*) is almost exclusively used just for *tilaka* for women. On Wikipedia is written that *bindi* is Indian term and *tilaka* is term for entire Indian subcontinent. (About.com. Seen 29th of July 2010.<<http://hinduism.about.com/od/bindis/a/bindi.htm>>; Wikipedia. Seen 29th of July 2010.<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bindi_%28decoration%29>)

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have wrought atrocities on Muslims; therefore they will have to take to arms, if they want to intend to live in this atmosphere. This Muslim leader points out that 80% of those dead in the riots were Muslims and that 75% of the policemen belong to the Shakti Samaj, so they just watched the destruction of the mosque and then opened fire on Muslims. On the other side a Hindu leader says that they are not responsible for the riots, that he wants Hindus and Muslims to coexist in peace, but Muslims hurled the first stone, therefore they would not remain silent. He claims that he is proud of those who demolished the Babri mosque and that this nation belongs to Hindus and those who do not agree may leave. They both do not answer the question when it will end and what about the innocent people dying in it.

In the evening both grandfathers take each one grandson to prayer. Later Narayan is coming back with his grandson and they meet some Muslims on the street, his grandson sitting on his back quickly wipes out their signs on their foreheads. The Muslims want to know their name, they ask them if they are coming from street prayers and they also take out machetes. At the last moment Bashir is coming with the other grandson and saves Narayan by saying that he is his brother. This brings peace between them and they no longer have quarrels.

But it does not bring peace for the city. In the night someone burns down a house in which there was a Hindu family. And in the morning everyone is fighting on the street. Fire came also to the flat of the Shekhar's family. When they see that they cannot stop the fire they run away. Narayan and Sheila's mother are returning for Bashir who is praying. He wants to take the Holy Qur'an with him but there is no time. Narayan takes the book with him for Bashir. And he dies with this holy book of Islam and with a prayer rug, because propane gas cylinder in their kitchen explodes due to fire. In friendship and reconciliation these two grandfathers die together with Sheila's mother. During the escape from burning house Kamal and Kabir are lost somewhere in a crowd and till the end of the film their parents are looking for them.

Stop it

Next day of riots not just young men are fighting on the street, but we can also

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see women, older people or children that are throwing stones from windows and balconies too. During this we hear the song „Stop it!“ during which we see people killing each other, cars burning, religious leaders speaking on a street gathering. *“This is our land, our city. Why we are being foes to ourselves? Let's give up hatred and think about motherland. This violence will devastate us. Stop it, stop it!”* we hear in the song. *„Be it Muslim or the Hindus, they are slain, it will amount to a murder of humanity. This can lead only to mourning and destruction!”* and we see a Muslim woman burn in a car and army is coming. Kamal and Kabir are suddenly separated by the crowd and Kamal is saved by a transvestite from being trampled. Their parents search them in a hospital but without success. Later Shekhar and his friend see their friend Rafiq who is in a group of Muslims who are robbing and destroying some house. They took him apart and shout at him if he is mad. Rafiq answers that the owner of that shop is a Hindu and Shekhar asks him to kill him too, because he is a Hindu too. Rafiq answers that they are targeting their shops and houses and setting them on fire, that they are driving them out of the country! And he accuses the other Shekhar's friend that he belongs to the Shakti Samaj and that he for sure killed some Muslims. And he confirms it and says that he is not ashamed for it because government give minorities concessions and does not care for Hindus even if its name is Hindustan, the state of Hindus. And both start to fight. Shekhar separates them by force and says: *„It won't be only the Hindus and Muslims who die in the riots! Take a look at the destruction! Take a good look! Why must we perish in the destruction madmen like you wreak?”*. They remind him that he is Hindu and his children half Muslims, but he maintains that he is not a Hindu and neither his children are Muslims, because they do not belong to either community and they are only Indians. He tries to persuade them that it does not make sense by asking them if Qur'an or Gita tell them to kill other people, completely helpless he says that people like them are responsible for this madness and for that his children are lost. Then he goes away crying.

In a hovel of the transvestite Kamal gets some food from him (her) and he asks him why Muslims and Hindus fight each other. He answers him that he does not know, that they have lived like brothers for centuries and that no community is

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to blame, but politicians who light the fire of hatred are responsible for it and common man is the one who dies in the crossfire. Kamal wants to know furthermore what it means a Muslim or a Hindu. The transvestite tells him that it is a difficult question and that maybe he is not the right one to ask. But he tells him that religion is a means to reach God and Hindus and Muslims have their own ways of reaching God. Kamal asks him one more question why must they fight each other, but transvestite says that he is not able to answer.

Next morning the riots continue and we can see flags of Pakistan on some houses.⁷⁷ The streets are full of burned things. During this butchery we hear another song similar to the previous one: *„You all are the sons of this motherland than why fight among yourselves. Why ruin the garden which you have adorned with so much care. Stop it, stop it.“* After that we see Shekhar searching for his sons in mortuary, but they are not among those many bodies. They are both somewhere in the city and now again together. And the song continues *„This is our land our skies. Why must we be our own enemies? Let's not think of religion let's care for the nation. More than anything else we are Indians first. Stop this madness, stop it.“* and we see that religious leaders are coming into the city and finally they see what is happening on the streets and how many innocent people and children are hurt, what they are responsible for and start to think about how to stop it. Then we see older Muslim who leans on lamp saying: *„We've had enough. There has been too much of destruction. Allah would never approve of this!“*

Finally some people begin to stop others from killing, policeman, transvestite who rescued Kamal, Shekhar. The Muslim leader saves some people in his house and prevents other Muslims from killing them. And one man gives him a machete to kill them, but he refuses. One Muslim lady shouts to other Muslims to drop their weapons and she takes a Hindu baby saying that this child is as her own and that his mother is her sister. Two men Muslim and a Hindu are holding their hands begging other to stop it. Shekhar tries to save some Muslim family which some Hindus want to burn by petrol. He offers himself that they can burn him not the family and when they hesitate he douses himself with petrol. After

⁷⁷ Green with white star and white crescent.

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this people get slowly calm, drop their weapons and Shekhar and Shaila finally meet their sons.

Last song is about hope, that even though there was a storm and hatred it can lead to peace, new dawn and people on the streets are holding hands in one really long chain.

3.2.3 Dhokha: What is the true Jihad?

Abstract: This film that belongs (together with *Aamir* (2008)) to Muslim social was released in June 2008 and directed by Pooja Bhatt. The story begins at some party, where Zaid Ahmed Khan police officer from Mumbai meets his love from youth Nandini. Their love was severed by their families some years ago because he is Muslim and she is Hindu. At the end of the party Zaid cannot reach his wife Sarah on the phone. Later he finds out that Sarah died at the bomb attack. Next day he is informed by police that the terrorist bomber was his wife Sarah. Zaid does not believe it. During next days he finds out more about the life of his wife: that her father was mistakenly killed by police as a terrorist, that she was then raped by the same police, because her family accuse the police officers and that Sarah's brother Danish also wants to become a suicide bomber. Zaid discourage him at the last minute and they get justice for the family so the bad police officers were sentenced.

Cast: Muzammil Ibrahim, Aushima Shawney, Tulip Joshi, Anupam Kher

Analysis

In analysis of this film I will quote a few longer speeches not just single phrases or thoughts because some speeches in this film are interesting not only in the particular ideas and expressions but also as a unit or as a rhetorical form, for example a speech of a terrorist recorded on video to show it after his or her suicidal attack is very specific. The rest of analysis will be by theme. Almost at the end there is final speech of the hero, that is good summary of the message of the film and some significant motifs for meaning of the films are in the last paragraph.

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Zaid and Nandini

Zaid Ahmed Khan is a Muslim and serves as a police officer in Mumbai and the story begins at a party when he sings a song. One of the guests there is his ex girlfriend Nandini who is Hindu. During the song we can see some shots from their past when they were together. After attacks on World Trade Center in New York on 11th of September 2001 Nandini's parents forbid her to go out with Zaid because he is Muslim and they forced her to marriage. Zaid and Nandini have not seen each other for few years but they seem as good friends. During most of the film Nandini stands beside Zaid and tries to help him. She also organised a prayer at home for his dead wife Sarah with some priest from the nearby mosque.

Faithful Zaid

Zaid is presented as a faithful Muslim, he prays, his flat is decorated just by texts from Qur'an, he is truehearted and loving husband even though his marriage was arranged. He also refuses to drink alcohol and he drinks it only when he receives a CD with Sarah's terrorist speech by mail. God is the highest authority for him: at the interrogation he says that only God can make him believe that his wife Sarah is a suicide bomber. When he finds out that Sarah was the suicidal bomber he speaks with a head of Anti Terrorist Squad Raj Mehra and tells him that till that day he has thought that he is afraid only of Allah, but now he is afraid of his loneliness and Sarah's memories. His decision to find out why Sarah did it scares his friend Nandini but he answers her that he has worshipped his Allah a lot and that he wants some fruits of his worship.

Zaid is also a good example of Indian loyal to his country. When Nandini suggest him to go with her to Sydney he refuses because he thinks that if they are not safe in their country they are not safe anywhere else. He does not want to run away, he sees many things to do here. Also his work as a police officer is not just a job, everything he does is viewed as either good or bad for Muslim community. Already mentioned Raj Mehra tells him that he does his antiterrorist work for professional reasons but Zaid does it for his community's pride.

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Confusion among people

The bomb attack has sparked fear and mistrust between people, especially between Hindus and Muslims. Most of these tensions are based on something that already happened, Hindus are afraid of every Muslim because in the past many bombs were set off by Muslims and Muslims are angry about every small suspicion. Many people feel betrayed and act very rashly.

The first situation that indicates changes in society emerges when Zaid arrives to the hospital immediately after the bomb blast. One of his colleagues tells him not to go inside because he is concerned about him, because he is a Muslim and someone could say something bad to him. A while later Zaid offers his blood for transfusion to save a girl because he has the same blood type. But when her father finds out that he is Muslim he tries to stop him from saving his daughter because he wants to keep his religion pure. He shouts at Zaid that Muslims made a mockery of his country. He accuses him that they first attack them with bombs and then play the charade of donating blood. Other policeman takes him away and this man is later sorry when his daughter is out of danger. Zaid warns him that if many people act like him the tensions will increase.

After the attack police makes some car inspections and one man is not willing to be frisked. He is angry because he thinks that they do it just because he is a Muslim and therefore he is under suspicion. He asks if they should stop wearing cap and keeping a beard because it is viewed as a sign of terrorist. Zaid expresses a similar feeling when he says that just because his wife was a Muslim that does not mean that she was a terrorist.

After the first suspicion that the suicide bomber was Zaid's wife Sarah the police arrests him and his friends deal with a new situation. Nandini wants to help him but his Hindu friend Rajesh has a different opinion. Zaid is a traitor for Rajesh and the whole Muslim community is for him not trustworthy at all. He is angry that Nandini and other Zaid's friend Adil, who is Muslim by his name, do not believe the police and calls them damn liberals. When Nandini opposes that such thinking has ruined the country he says that the problem is that they have been quiet for far too long and that the country's state is this because of people like

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Adil and Nandini – secularists.

Also some neighbours call Zaid a traitor and they even want to kill him on the street because they see him as not loyal to his own people. This is also the argument that Zaid uses when he meets priest Umar Farhidi, a terrorist leader. Umar Farhidi speaks about himself as a person who helps Muslim and Zaid tries to disprove saying: “Do you know, that because of your deeds the rest of the Muslims of India feel so ashamed. We have to pay for your crimes. Our loyalty and patriotism is doubted.” He shows that terrorism not only does not help Muslims in India to achieve better position and justice but it even makes it worse.

When Zaid is searching for the reason why his wife Sarah became a terrorist he asks her grandfather and he tells him a story that was crucial for Sarah. Her father was a computer engineer but one day he was taken by police that falsely accused him of terrorism. Because of brutal beating during interrogation he died and they disposed off his body and later they told his family that he had escaped to Pakistan. After trying to get justice her family – grandfather, her brother Danish and Sarah – spoke to some officers. This is how grandfather spoke to them:

This country has betrayed Muslims, sir! At the time of the partition we were told that there won't be any caste difference. For the government everybody is equal. But the truth reveals something else.

Nothing has changed in the past 60 years. From bad we have become worse. And there is no hope of any improvement. We have nothing. And we won't get anything. So I implore you to hand over my son's corpse. I don't want anything else. Let me bathe him once and bury him. Let me read his death's summons and fulfil my duty. Then only he knows and my Allah knows!

In that moment these officers from Delhi promised to get them justice but local policemen acted differently. They took Sarah, Danish and their grandfather to police station where they threaten them that if they do not withdraw their charge they will kill Danish. The policemen forced Sarah to take off her clothes; they made pictures of her with purpose to put it in newspapers if they still wanted body of their father and son. At the end the police chief took Sarah aside

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and raped her.

Terrorist speeches

Here are three terrorist speeches recorded on video with explanation of their following acts. The first one is Sarah's speech before her bomb blast. This video was a proof for Zaid that his wife really did the bomb suicidal attack that killed 20 people.

I am sacrificing my life for the protection of my religion. I am going to become a martyr. People following Islam, don't mourn my death. Celebrate it, because today my soul is going home, to my Allah. Don't mourn my death. Today is the day of celebration. Today is my marriage.

Immediately after Zaid has watched this video someone calls him to congratulate that his wife has become a martyr. And he adds that he and his friends will pray for it and that may Allah accept her sacrifice and give her heaven.

Second speech isn't about suicidal bomber but it is about execution. Terrorists that caught Zaid want to cut his head off because he is searching for their leader. Before that one terrorist shouts many curses at him and he says that he is against his people, that he serves the enemies, that he cannot be called a man and that his wife is the one who sacrificed her life and set the example. Here is the speech:

Greetings, this is ACP⁷⁸ Zaid Ahmed Khan! Crime branch Mumbai police! He serves the police department that commits atrocities on the people of our caste! These are the people that kill and malign the people of our caste in the name of justice and freedom! They cast lustful eyes on our sisters and daughters! But now the time has come we will show them how justice is done! Justice as per our faith, justice as per our religion, which says that if an enemy comes in front of you in the battlefield, then behead him!

Luckily they didn't kill him because their leader priest Umar Farhidi called them that Zaid can meet him.

The last speech is recorded by Sarah's younger brother Danish that is going to blow up himself at a Mumbai station.

⁷⁸ Assistant Commissioner of Police

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Greetings. I know that the world will not understand what I will say. That's why I will speak in the language that you understand. I am responsible for the bomb blast at VT⁷⁹ station in the morning and I don't regret it. I am not responsible for the calamity that has befallen on you it is you yourselves. You never shared our problems. This is the punishment for your crimes which you repaid by taking your lives and by sacrificing my life. This insult can only be erased by your blood. As long as the people of our caste are insulted and slandered you will keep becoming the victims of many more such bomb blasts. We will continue doing it till the day we can peacefully rest like you do.

In Danish's speech is more clear the motivation why they do it and what is the goal of these attacks. It is punishment and it is an attempt to point out faults of the government and majority (without any appraisal from my side of justifiability of these thoughts).

Who is a terrorist?

The whole film tells the story of how a person becomes a terrorist. The viewer asks this question together with Zaid who tries to find out who his wife really was. After her suicidal attack he feels that he was living in one house with a stranger and that he did not understand when she said things like that for her child she wants a country where people of her community are not subject to atrocities.

First Zaid goes to Raj Mehra, a head of Anti Terrorist Squad, and asks him how the terrorists think and what they want, because he cannot imagine it and also because Sarah did not speak about anything like this. Raj Mehra says they do not talk to anybody about their obsession, but it is a part of their lives and they think only how to lay down their lives for their religion and become martyrs and thus go to heaven. Mehra remarks that countless people support Jihadists and that even educated people are Jihadists. According to Mehra, to understand them it is important that terrorists believe that their body belongs only to them and that is

⁷⁹ Victoria Terminus is huge and historic railway station in Mumbai nowadays it's called Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (it was renamed in 1996 and *Dhokha* was released 2007, so it indicates that people are still using old name).

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why they can make their body a weapon.

Crucial part for Zaid's understanding of terrorism is his debate with Jihadist's leader priest Umar Farhidi. There are three things that Farhidi mentions that are important for self-understanding of terrorism and in all three resentment plays a big role. The first one has already been mentioned here and it is the same in many films with jihad terrorist theme. It is the experience of many Muslims (or other minority) that they are not equal as the Hindu majority, that they are suffering just because they are Muslims and getting justice is impossible for them. Farhidi speaks about houses that are being looted, about children that are becoming orphans or cannot study, about people locked in jail as terrorists, about people that were killed like animals on a street or in custody just because they were Muslims. This makes an impression that the entire country is an enemy. Moreover this enemy acting unjustly is not only Hindu majority but according to Farhidi it is also group of Muslims who either work for government or are its members because, as he thinks, their bond with Allah and their religion breaks sometimes. This is the second thing that according to Farhidi let some Muslims feel completely abandoned, because it is not just that some of Muslims are the ones who commit something bad on other Muslims, it is also that fact that secularist Muslims who have rather good life do not feel any sympathy for poor and oppressed Muslims. Farhidi is strong with this: „But the strange thing is that, when atrocities are committed on people like us then it does not make much of a difference to your peace loving people. They can be heard only when one of theirs fall prey to the atrocities.” Both these things make some people like Farhidi to wage a war to attain justice. The third thing that makes Farhidi feels injuredly: If some group fights battle as Farhidi does it is called a terrorism but when some state wages a war against another state and kills thousands it is called protection. Evidently this is an allusion to the antiterrorist war of USA against Iraq and Afghanistan. At the end of this debate Farhidi says: “We are not the only terrorists, you are too. If our hands are filled with blood then your hands are not clean either. If you do injustice to us, then you will have to pay the price. If we are safe, the country is safe.”

What Farhidi says is based mainly on solidarity but when Danish, Sarah's

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younger brother, is going to blow himself off at the railway station, Farhidi calms him down and speaks about breaking worldly relations and not about solidarity at all. Danish is worried about his grandfather the moment, who has just him as a last member of family, but Farhidi soothes him that Allah is with his grandfather and he should not be worried.

Finally Zaid speech to police officers resumes some interesting points at the end of this story:

An enemy said it, but it is true if their hands are filled with blood then our hands are not clean either! We have given birth to terrorists! First we create terrorists, and then we kill them! If humans snatch the rights of another humans and a protector of the law tries to harm him then surely, we open all the gates to destruction and calamity. And then they walk on these paths because they don't have any other choice. When intolerance becomes organised or institutionalised, it destroys the democratic principle and poses a threat to national peace! The time has come when the protector of the law and this country, should look inside themselves, because the human heart is the biggest and most dangerous institution of hatred and nothing else. I would like to appeal to the government to give compensation to the families whose members have been falsely killed stating that they are terrorists. Strict actions should be taken against the police officers that kill innocent people in the custody and false encounters stating that they are terrorists. And all the police officers that help their fellow officers in this crime should be suspended.

Jihad

The first time we hear about jihad is when the head of Anti Terrorist Squad Raj Mehra speaks on television that till no Jihadi association or Jihadi group has taken responsibility of this blast they cannot say anything about who did it. When Zaid meets Umar Farhidi, a terrorist leader, they have a big discussion about jihad. At the beginning Farhidi criticises that Zaid works as a policeman and that it inevitably leads to breaking the bond to Allah. Zaid answers him strongly that it is strange that a person that is farthest from the devotees of Allah claims to be close to Allah and he asks him how many people will be sacrificed by Farhidi in the name of Jihad. Farhidi tells him that his knowledge about Jihad

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is very limited and that Zaid's wife was a martyr but he is not responsible for her decision. Zaid does not agree that she was a martyr even he claims that his wife was a criminal provoked to this crime by Farhidi. Later in the same discussion Farhidi says that they are not terrorists, they are Jihadists and if they are terrorists then the police are terrorists as well. According to Farhidi jihad is getting justice for Muslims that do not have it and the state forgot about them and he, Farhidi, sees himself as the one who is born to save Muslims: „The truth is that, when officers and soldiers like you kill people of their own caste for some money and post then people like me are born in every caste and religion.“ At the end when Zaid persuades Danish not to do the suicidal attack and he helps his family to get justice, Sarah's grandfather tells him this: „I understood one thing son. If terrorists can take birth from cruelty then a messiah like you can be born too. The battle that you have fought, that is the real Jihad. Come on, let us go home and pray.“ This put Zaid as opposition to Farhidi because as Farhidi claims to do is getting justice for those on whom the state act unjustly, but the truth is that it was Zaid who got justice for Sarah's family. Also Farhidi made those who kill people and Zaid is the one who changed Danish from human bomb back to a human being and a loving grandchild. Zaid is the one who sets the example of jihad as a life not as a death.

3.2.4 Mission Kashmir: believer or infidel, coexistence or civil war

Abstract: *Mission Kashmir* was released in October 2000 and was directed by Vidhu Vinod Chopra. The story is about Inayat Khan, a police officer from Kashmir. He is Muslim, his wife is Hindu and their child died after an accident because doctors did not want to treat him, because of threat from terrorists, that everyone who helps police officers will be shot and his family too. Inayat Khan and some other policemen massacre terrorists on their own account in one village one night, but they kill also whole family in the house where the terrorists were. The only one who survived was Altaaf, a young boy from the village, but because he had not seen the face of Inayat Khan, he and his wife

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adopt him. One night Altaaf finds out that his adoptive father was the one who was responsible for the death of his family and he runs away. Some years later he comes back for revenge as a member of a terrorist group. Accidentally he meets his friend from childhood, a girl from his village and they fall in love. In one attempt to kill Inayat Altaaf kills his adoptive mother, whom he still loves, by a bomb. Few minutes before terrorists planned sending a bomb to a Hindu temple and also to a Mosque, father and his son stand finally face to face, they fight and at the last minutes they counterwork the mission.

Cast: Sanjay Dutt, Hrithik Roshan, Preity Zinta, Sonali Kulkarni, Jackie Shroff.

Analysis

As the title of the film suggests the story is set in Kashmir and more precisely in Indian Kashmir. Apart from some themes as roles of terrorists and policemen there are worthy mentioning some songs, because they are making the meaning of the film. Director and his relation to this theme need to be mentioned too.

Songs

Songs play a big role in this film, not so much for the film as it is but more for the meaning of the story using poetry and huge contrasts between beauty (of the land, colours, songs and women) and cruelty (of the life, battles and terrorism).

The first song: It is a song during introductory credits. At the lake an empty shikara (small boat similar to gondola) has been blown up and police is coming on boats.

(Shortened) sacred land that was violated in war of politicians for power and about blood of innocents that is drawing boundaries between hearts. And about winds of conspiracies and storms of intrigues that bloodied this hallowed earth of gods and we can't hear no more the call of the conch and the call for the faithful. Beautiful land is ruined, storm of intrigues caused destruction and smoke is everywhere.

Later in the film there is a love song that takes place at the same lake and in the song there is an important part when the smoke is parting because of love between two people.

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Huge contrast is built up in the third song. This song is sung in a TV studio by a band accompanied by a large number of dancers in white clothes with some kind of peace symbol (they do not show it in detail but it resembles like something of this kind of logo) and the studio is beautifully decorated with flowers, grass, tree, wooden bridge, there is a waterfall, a creek and sheep and ducks – a kitsch paradise. And the song is about music. This is in the song:

(Shortened) *music can turn autumn to spring, it is one melody for the whole world that will heal the world, music of friendship and no one can stop it and it leaps across borders, music knows no caste and creed, in music there is the whole universe, music has no language, in it there is the truth of Gita and Qur'an, there is Allah and Rama, there is the whole creation.*

This is in the studio, during the projection Altaaf, hero and terrorists, and his love from childhood Sufi, an anchorwoman, watch it together and he is also in the song. Sufi is happy and smiling but Altaaf is nervous because at the same time his companions are preparing a terrorist attack. This song accompanies four scenes edited together: the song in the studio (something really peaceful almost activist), the preparation of terrorists attack on the TV tower (something aggressive but in this moment quiet) and the situation in studio where Altaaf is torn between two worlds (terrorism and love fight in him, but the terrorist is the one who wins in him this time) and the last scene I have not mentioned yet, because it is not so important, is police driving people out of park because of a probable terrorist attack, that was just a decoy (fear and action). At the very beginning of this song there is also one small scene, where in the studio Hindus and Muslims are hugging each other and the song tells about return. It is clear that it is the return of people cast out of this country and return of the times when people of Kashmir – both Hindus and Muslims – lived together in peace.

„*Who wrote strife in our life, using the name of God, who call it jihad*“ are words from the last song (apart from credit song) that is similar to the first one. It is when Altaaf at the really last moment turns against his terrorist leader and helps his adoptive father to prevent terrorists from finishing their mission (what it is, is written later). Altaaf is carrying his terrorist leader Hilal on his back. Hilal is wounded but he still tries to persuade Altaaf to kill his adoptive father and fulfil

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Allah's will in this manner. They are in a ruined house and without any explanation there are interreligious pictures on the floor under the water. On one there is a cross, ohm and crescent with star and later there is some mix-religion picture where Jesus is together with Hindu Gods and probably with Buddha, but it is not clear what exactly is on the picture. But at least it is clear that it is some kind of peaceful message. In the water there are also some toys, a broken signboard,⁸⁰ a lotus flower sinking into dirty water.

Terrorists

In this film as it is in many films with terrorist theme⁸¹ terrorists use religion based justifications. They use fatwa – some kind of an anathema, they call enemies infidels and civilians martyrs if they „have to“ kill them and they call their mission sacred and a part of God's will. The person who is called infidel the most often is Inayat Khan, who is the only Muslim in the film whom we see praying. An extreme example of this behaviour and argument is when Hilal – the boss of the terrorist group – killed one of his men/boys because he seemed to be too weak and also because they needed a dead body for a mission. The biggest group of arguments includes God (Allah), His will and His path, this type of argument is probably the most repeated and the most varied argument here and words like this are very frequent : „God is testing you, He is watching, if you are straying from His path.“ „Kill the enemy of Allah; it is his will, path to paradise. This is your faith, your only religion.“ The last one is probably the most harsh because „the only religion“ is presented here as a killing of someone

⁸⁰ Partly we can see what it is on the board: „Kashmir. 75,000 flowers and a...“ The last word I could not read. But I was searching for meaning of this sign and I found this: A pound of dry saffron (0.45 kg) requires 50,000–75,000 flowers, the equivalent of a football field's area of cultivation. And Kashmiri saffron is the darkest and is very valued. (WordPress.com. Seen 2nd of July 2010. <<http://zafferano.wordpress.com/>>). So probably it is a symbol of lost beauty and prosperity of this country.

⁸¹ But there are also films in which terrorism is not justified by religion (e.g. *Fanaa*, 2006) even there are films about terrorism without any connotation with religion (*Dil se..*). In these films is the reason of terrorism justified by nationalism or caused by oppression of some minority by state police or army.

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for revenge. It also includes dead people: „Allah has chosen you for this mission, child. (...) Do you know why Allah called your mother to Him? So that, when you kill IG Khan along with the PM, your hands won't tremble.” Revenge and Allah's will blend in one in Hilal's support to his men: „Allah send possibility of revenge just once, Allah is your protector. Destroy that infidel!“

The Mission Kashmir is a terrorist plan to discredit India and take Indian Kashmir from it. This includes more particular action: destruction of TV tower, an assassination of Indian Prime Minister, blast off of a local mosque Hazratbal and a Hindu temple Shankracharya that are both at Srinagar. The assassination and the blast off of both sacred places is planned on the same day, because there will be many pilgrims at both sanctuaries and also a visit of Prime Minister. The terrorist blew up the TV tower before so they can broadcast their own release in local TV and this release was prepared in order to show that this whole terrorist action was made by Indian army. It is not clear who are the people who ordered this mission but we know that these three men are Muslims, they are not from any known terrorist group and also they are not from any state government. They are probably Pakistani⁸² and there is another man whose face we cannot see but he is in higher position than these three men and he is the one who is really behind it all. But these three men ordered this mission from Hilal, who is Pathan from Afghanistan, he has experience with Russians and he has his own group of men in Kashmir trained by him.

The men who order this mission suppose that if the mission succeeds Muslims from India (it is not clear if all Muslims from India or just Muslims in Indian Kashmir) will join their jihad. And they will become the most illustrious mujahedeen militia in the world and also they'll „change the shape of India“, because they want Indian Muslims to join them. To which state they want to attach Kashmir it is not clear but logically there are two possibilities – Pakistan and independent state of Kashmir. And because they state that they do not have any connection to any government it is probably independent Kashmir. The money for the mission is called zakat – alms of giving. Later when the first

⁸² I base this on two facts, one is that it is about Kashmir and the other is that they compare if there are more Muslims in India than in Pakistan.

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part of the mission is successfully completed when they have blown up the TV tower, these men thank: "thousand thanks to God!".

At the end, when Altaaf kills Hilal he pronounces this verdict: „For spreading death instead of life in the name of religion, for placing carbines instead of crayons in the hand of innocent children, for turning Kashmir from a paradise into hell I sentence you to death.“

Police

Inayat Khan, who is one of the two heroes in this film, is chief of police (first SSP⁸³ and later IG⁸⁴) in Kashmir and he is also a Muslim. His subordinates Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus are completely loyal to him. The only exception is when they are preparing a security system for Prime Minister visit where Inayat's boss does not want to let him lead it because he is a Muslim and they already lost one Prime Minister because his bodyguard was of different religion⁸⁵ and also because Inayat let Altaaf run away when he – Altaaf – tried to kill him and also because Inayat's wife met Altaaf. Inayat Khan answers him that it is a misfortune of Muslims and also of the entire country that he was loyal 21 years and he is not found loyal, just because he is Muslim.

There are two other interesting policemen, Avinash (Hindu) and Gurdeep (Sikh), they are both subordinates of Inayat Khan. The first time we see Gurdeep is at the beginning of the film, he is standing on a bomb and he knows that if he moves the bomb will blow up. He's so scared that he wets his clothes, but Inayat then saves him when he knocks him down into the lake. At the first time we can suppose that Gurdeep is a weak man but later he acts very sensibly and bravely. Avinash wears Muslim clothes during one action, but the most important for him is a dialogue between him and Gurdeep after one raid where police kills many terrorists in their house. Gurdeep starts this dialogue when he stops Avinash from shooting to terrorists that were already dead. Avinash answers him that he

⁸³ Senior Superintendent of Police

⁸⁴ Inspector General of Police that is two ranks higher than SSP according to *Wikipedia*. Seen 29th of July 2010. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Police_Service>

⁸⁵ It was Indira Gandhi assassinated by her Sikh's bodyguards on 31st October 1984.

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cannot understand because he is not Kashmiri, he does not know how to feel when loudspeakers rained abuses on Hindus instead of prayer: „Leave Kashmir if you are Hindu and if you want to stay alive.“ Avinash says that it is horrible to be separated from his family and watch helplessly how his home is being burned down and that Gurdeep cannot understand this. And Gurdeep answers him: „I cannot understand because I do not have family, they were killed in 1984 in one single day, in Delhi.⁸⁶ They put a tyre around my father's neck and burnt him alive. Know who did it? A crazy Hindu. Asshole. Who shall I blame? Shall I kill you, Hindu? No, I can't kill you. Not because you're my friend, but because we're not killers. We're here to protect. We must safeguard humanity. We must save Kashmir.“ And then the shot of camera turns to dead bodies of twenty terrorists.

Dream quarrel

After the terrorists blew up the TV tower, Sufi is taken to police and interrogated. Later she helps police and shows Altaaf's photo in broadcasting. After that Altaaf has a dream about Sufi where he asks her why she did it. They are also discussing the question of religion and terrorism. Altaaf claims that he is doing it for his religion, but she says that she is Muslim too and that Islam does not permit to murder innocent people. He shot her, because she said that he does it just as revenge. Then he runs towards the dead body and he finds out that it is not Sufi but a dead body of his adoptive mother.

Dedication

This film was written, directed and produced by Vidhu Vinod Chopra, who is a Punjabi Hindu. He was born in Kashmir and grew up in Srinagar that is the largest city of the state Jammu and Kashmir. There are two dedications, one at the beginning and one at the ending. The one at the beginning is more general: „dedicate to Kashmiriyat the centuries-old tradition of religious tolerance and harmony“ and the second is more personal: „for my children, Isha and Agni, and for all the children of conflict – may they dream without fear. May they

⁸⁶ After Indira Gandhi's assassination.

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someday rediscover that valley of love I grew up in, that haven of harmony, that paradise called Kashmir.“ The dedications and origin of Mr. Chopra both show that this film and its setting have a personal motive.

Family

Inayat Khan has a Hindu wife Neelima and when young Altaaf asks how they got married Inayat says that he married his wife because of her not because of her name or religion. But their son Irfan had a Muslim burial. As we can see in the film *Bombay* (1995) Muslims derive religion of child from mother and Hindus from father, so here there is not issue here as we saw in film *Bombay* (1995). But this film does not speak about religion of Irfan. Last thing I need to mention is not so important: Neelima wears burqa when she goes to visit Altaaf to the terrorist seat. Most probably it is because of security but the fact that a Hindu woman possesses burqa led me to the question if also other Hindu women in Kashmir or in other parts of India where Muslims have majority usually possess burqa.

3.2.5 Veer-Zaara: the question of God

Abstract: This blockbuster was released in November 2004 and was directed by one of the most famous film directors of India, Yash Chopra. This love story is not just about love between two people from different religions but also about love over the borders, because Veer is a young Sikh from India and Zaara is a Muslim girl from Pakistan. The story is told by an Indian prisoner in Pakistan prison who had not spoken to anyone for twenty two years till a young Pakistani lawyer Saamiya Siddiqui from Human Rights Commission has come to him, he was her first case. It is story about forbidden love between two people from different religions and different (though closely related) countries and about sacrifice because he was in the prison to protect her name and she went to India to fulfil his dream about girl school in his village.

Cast: Shahrukh Khan, Preity Zinta, Rani Mukherjee, Amithab Bachchan, Khiron Kher, Anupam Kher

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Analysis

This film brings the theme of religion little bit different from preceding films first because it is not seen as the cause of conflict (or at least not so much) and second because it is not story-making. The story could be very similar even if the circumstances were little bit different. But still it is full of interesting shots, allusions and ideas. I will focus here mainly on perception of God, because it came from the analysis as the biggest theme for me here. Few other smaller things from the story that were interesting I mention before the analysis.

Because I have written at the beginning about languages in films I need to mention here, that in this film *Veer*, the hero speaks Hindi, all Pakistanis speak Urdu, the Punjabi villagers speak mixture of Punjabi and Hindi and all educated characters speak English occasionally.⁸⁷ Most of characters in this film are Punjabis.

The bond between *Veer* and *Zaara* that later turned to fateful love started when Pakistani girl *Zaara Hayaat Khan* took ashes of her nanny, that she called *Bebe*,⁸⁸ from Lahore, Pakistan to India as she promised to her at her death-bed. *Bebe* was Sikh and she went to Pakistan after partition with *Zaara's* grandfather as a housemaid. *Zaara* takes ashes of her *Bebe* from Pakistan to India to help *Bebe* attain salvation, Muslim is helping attain salvation of Sikh that lived in Pakistan, so she is posthumously coming back to her homeland. A symbolic return to homeland – India. On *Zaara's* way to *Kiritpur* (*Kiratpur*⁸⁹) her bus has an accident and she is rescued by Squadron Leader *Veer Pratap Singh* and than he helps her to get to the sacred city. *Zaara* wants for *Bebe* complete funereal ritual but *Veer* is scared that some priests can be fanatic and refuse do the ritual for *Bebe* because of *Zaara's* religion and that she can be beaten. But the priest

⁸⁷ DWYER, 2006, p. 105.

⁸⁸ As *Bebe* are usually addressed in Punjabi mothers or grandmothers. *Zaara* was raised up by her nanny and so she called her *Bebe*. (Urban dictionary. Seen 19th of March 2010.

<<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=bebe>>; Wikipedia. Seen 19th of March 2010. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veer-Zaara>>)

⁸⁹ Google maps and other web pages transcribe name of this city mainly as *Kiratpur*.

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said that he has not seen such devotion in forty two years of his service in the temple.

Veer is Sikh although it is not mentioned in the film explicitly and despite the fact that on the internet you can find mentions that this film is about love of Hindu and Muslim. But his name, most people in his village⁹⁰, his necklace are entirely Sikh.

The prosecution lawyer Zakir Ahmed who was presented in the whole case as „the bad lawyer“ with conviction that to decide what is right or wrong is the court's job, not the lawyer's. Lawyer's duty according to Zakir Ahmed is to win the case under any circumstances. And at the end when his former employee Saamiya shows him that the work of lawyer is to fight for the truth, he acknowledges that the future of these two countries (i.e. Pakistan and India) is in the hands of young people like her who does not measure human as either big or small, man or woman, Hindu or Muslim. He thanks her and says that this was his last case, because he is not good as a lawyer.

Let me now quote from this film and show how God is viewed, because I have found God as the main and maybe the only interreligious theme. These sentences and situations sometimes do not seem to be very important for the story when they are quoted out of context. But in the film it is clear that they are there on purpose and that they are there for a reason. There are other occurrences of the word „God“ but they did not have bigger meaning than just a saying or phrase.

- Veer is called just by number in the Pakistani prison, but as his lawyer Siddiqui points out, he is Indian with prisoner number 786 – the holy number of Allah (God⁹¹) and the prison guard is scared when she told him

⁹⁰ Rachel Dwyer writes that Veer's uncle and aunt, who are his adoptive parents, seem to be Punjabi Hindu and south Indian Hindu (DWYER, 2006, p. 129), truth is that Veer's aunt has *bindi* on her forehead and she said that she came from Madras (today Cheinnai, Tamil Nadu) but his uncle last name is Singh, it is Sikh's name, and he is from Punjab.

⁹¹ In the film is distinguished between Allah and God. Allah is connected just with Islam and God is on the one hand Sikh God and on the other hand it is God without any specification. The

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about it and later this man spoke about it at the court with sacred awe. And it is somehow important for the case at the court that Indian⁹² is Allah's noble servant.

- Zaara's mother says that even God cannot change the fate that Zaara has to marry Raza.
- Veer says if it is a true love nor God or Allah can come in its way. And that they will see how true his love in Allah's eyes is next day in shire when there was the last possibility to see Zaara before her wedding. In Shrine Zaara turns around when there is thunder and she sees Veer and the heaven open.
- Zaara: Why is God doing this to us!
- Zaara's mother gave Veer an amulet to protect him on his way back to India and she said that her religion does not permit that, but she is praying to Allah everyday and asking Him to give Zaara to Veer in every other birth.
- For Raza „God“ is money and power and he is making hell of everybody else's life. He is the one who is testing their love most badly. He let arrested Veer on his way back and because Veer did not want to blacken Zaara's name he cannot say anything about why he is in Pakistan. So Raza forced him to choose if Zaara's life will be hell and Veer will be free or if Veer accepts that he is spy and Zaara's life will be safe. Veer chose the second possibility and Raza made Veer a Hindu by giving him a Hindu fake name.
- Saamiya Siddiqui asked if Veer and Zaara are humans pretending to be Gods or Gods disguised as humans. It is interesting that Saamiya is a Muslim, so speaking about Gods seems quite surprising.

second meaning is also used by Muslims. But I will write it the same as they do even if in Hindu/Urdu they use different words for both words.

⁹² She said Hindu, but he was known in prison as Rajesh Rathore a fake name.

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- For twenty years God has been testing them intensely – but now not even God can separate Zaara and Veer.
- Zaara said about Saamiya that she was an angel from God.

It is clear from this that even though the opinion is rather ambiguous or unclear there are some interesting things that we can point out. The first and the most clear thing that God gave to Veer His holy number as a sign that he cares about this unjustly imprisoned man. This is not an accident, it is obviously His intention. Saamiya Siddiqui says that it is „God's great miracle“. The second thing that happened seemingly accidentally was the thunder and rain that came as an answer to Veer's question how truly his love looks like in Allah's eyes, this thunder and rain came from heaven and made Zaara turn around. We can say that this formed situation that is not just perfect for film makers to make perfect looking breaking-point in this story but also in this situation Zaara (without words) confessed her love to Veer and moreover that it was before the eyes of her family and family of her fiancée Raza. These two moments (the number and the storm) are clear actions of God although people in this story are not sure on which side He is.

The whole story is – as Veer says many times – in the blessing of God.

3.3 Religious diversity in Bollywood

My analysis of five films created some basic idea of how these films depict interreligious relationships and how they deal with particular details. I will derive some kind of typology from it but first I would like to describe some themes that are typical and that deserve to be mentioned. Apart from the analysed films I will mention a few other ones to create a more complete image. Some themes here will overlap a little bit and most of them relate to each other. These themes are intentionally described without any political connotation, only as they are displayed in the film.

3.3.1 Themes

A Identity

Identity is one of the most frequent themes in films that deal with some social issues, because social issues in Bollywood deal mainly with family, community, motherland, brotherhood, religious membership. The frequency is amplified mainly by family issues that are really popular in Bollywood and also by nationalism, but we will come to this theme in 4.4 **Political and social influences**.

3.3.1.A.a Family

Family is something sacred for Bollywood and family issues are the most frequent themes. Indian family includes parents, children, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, in-laws, nephews and nieces and sometimes some more people including even some servants. Adoptive members or step members are truly members of family even though it can bring some breach to the family, but it should be overcome and the family has to be united in love for each other (see *Mission Kashmir* (2000), *Veer-Zaara* (2004), *Main Hoon Na* (2004), *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (2003), *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham...* (2001) etc.) This huge family needs to live in love for each other therefore break of some relationship and effort to restore it is the basic story in Bollywood. We can see it clearly in *Bombay* (1995), in *Mission Kashmir* (2000), in *Veer-Zaara* (2004) and at some points in *Dhokha* (2007), where Zaid tries to bring Danish back from terrorists to his family, i.e. to his grandfather and to him. Blockbusters like *Main Hoon Na* (2004), *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham...* (2001), *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* (2006) are built up on the same theme and many films deal with it, e.g. *Fanaa* (2006), *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (2003), *Laaga Chunari Mein Daag: Journey of a Woman* (2007), *Pinjar* (2003), *U Me Aur Hum* (2008). Family is essential for Bollywood even though it is often an effort of makers to justify the film for the censorship.⁹³ Family values and modernity depicted in Indian films are theme of an article *It's all about*

⁹³ NANDY (1995), p. 207.

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loving parents by Oliver Krueger,⁹⁴ where he shows how does it works together. His title is apposite and I add that it is all about loving parents though they are not your biological parents.

Arranged marriage is seen as something possible and good when the couple agree as we can see in *Dhokha* (2007) or as it is in *Vivah* (2006), *Saathiya* (2002). But when someone is forced to marriage it can be a problem and very often it is viewed as something bad, e.g. in *Veer-Zaara* (2004), *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), but the reason for it is that parents do not think about qualities of partner for their child and their purpose of this marriage can be money, politics or relationship with the other parents.

Interreligious families cannot be arranged because of principle but as we have seen in *Mission Kashmir* (2000), in *Veer-Zaara* (2004) and in *Bombay* (1995) this sort of family can work very well. The acceptance from the families of the couple is more complicated. In *Bombay* (1995) it took some time, in *Veer-Zaara* (2004) it was not a problem for Veer's parents, but from Zaara's parents it was impossible, but a bigger problem was maybe that Zaara was already engaged. In *Mission Kashmir* (2000) we do not know too much about Inayat's and Neelima's parents, we know just about some slaps that Neelima's father gave to Inayat. On the other hand the relationship between Zaid and Nandini in *Dhokha* (2007) was cancelled by her parents and we do not know what Aamir's mother thinks about Aamir's Hindu girlfriend.

Personal identity is based on family; we see that when Narayan and Bashir feel socially discredited by love of their children; when Shekhar says that his family is neither Hindu nor Muslim, that they are Indians first; when Zaid feels lost when he finds out how he had not known his wife, when Zaara feels so at home in Veer's family; when Altaaf has his first dream after many years of nightmares, because he had reconciled himself with his adoptive father etc.

3.3.1.A.b Brotherhood

Family feels its identity also in wider community, therefore part of one's identity is his community. In India it is usually the village in which a person lives, often

⁹⁴ KRUEGER (2004).

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a religion and caste. In modern city the community is different and maybe not so strong but in fact social status is really important for many people from middle or higher class. In the similar way that Narayan and Bashir in *Bombay* (1995) act, when they come to know about love of their children, act some other parents from higher class when their children fall in love with someone poorer (*Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham...*, 2001; *Vivah*, 2006). The term brotherhood appears in films in two main meanings. The first one is brotherhood of Muslim community and usually it includes Pakistan; the second one is brotherhood of different communities living peacefully in India. The first meaning is usually connected with terrorism (*Aamir*, 2008; *Dhokha*, 2007), because solidarity is one of their arguments and the second one is mainly used when this brotherhood is broken (*Bombay*, 1995; *Mission Kashmir*, 2000). In *Veer-Zaara* (2004) this word is not explicit but in the background there is a meaning of brotherhood of India and Pakistan. This theme of relationship of these two countries that are culturally very close and politically very complicated is not rare in Bollywood, but usually the film is very cautious when dealing with this topic, e.g. *Main Hoon Na* (2004). I have never seen a Bollywood film that depicts relationship with any other state in this way.⁹⁵ Terrorists both in *Mission Kashmir* (2000) and in *Main Hoon Na* (2004) feel strongly about war between India and Pakistan, they take peace between these two countries as bad for their plans. On the other hand Pakistan is very often mentioned or assumed in terrorist topic; specifically Muslim terrorists have usually connection to Pakistan.⁹⁶

Living together in peace seems possible for Bollywood because it was already real in the past and probably living together is the only possibility as we can see in *Mission Kashmir* (2000) and *Bombay* (1995), how does it look like when it does not work. Violence is not a solution. On the other hand we see where it works: in home village of Shaila and Shekhar, in Veer's village, on professional field

⁹⁵ There was just one Indian film, I have seen, that dealt with Tamils both in India and in Sri Lanka, but it was Tamil film from Kollywood, based in Kodambakkam. This film – *Kannathil Muthamittal* (2002) – was directed by Mani Ratnam who directed also *Bombay* (1995) and music was made by biggest Indian and Bollywood composer A. R. Rahman, but still the production was for Tamils and in Tamil.

⁹⁶ DWYER (2006a), p. 128 and 130.

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in (2007) and in *Mission Kashmir* (2000). The question what is the solidarity of brotherhood is raised in *Aamir* (2008), but the best solution is in *Dhokha* (2007), where a Muslim in public administration is helping other Muslims to achieve their justice and at the same time he protects the whole society; therefore he is a good example for both. Hence it changed from aggressive defence of brotherhood of the same community to brotherhood of humanity that feels the community and think about the whole nation.

3.3.1.A.c Motherland India

Indians are famous for their nationalism and albeit their religious nationalism caused many both important and horrible things in last century, there is still strong secular nationalism. It is fascinating how a state with such indescribable diversity can be one in thinking of most of its citizens. Shekhar mentions in *Bombay* (1995) that he is Indian first of all. Situation that is similar but explains better why it is important to be Indian first is in film *Chak De! India* (2007). In this film girls that are chosen to represent India in field hockey have to introduce themselves and they all say their name and a particular Indian state from which they come from. Their coach sends everyone out and at the end one girl says that she is from India. The coach wants the girls feel that they are from India and playing for India. He wants to build a team that is a team of India not just sixteen girls who even do not have one lingua franca. This is a suitable image because it does not deal just with the way how to live together in peace but also how to be one and hence also powerful outwards.

In *Bombay* (1995), *Dhokha* (2007) and also in *Dil se..* (1998) we see that it is not just a question of how a person should feel for India but also how this person feels accepted in India. The aggression in *Bombay* (1995) and terrorism in *Dhokha* (2007) and in *Dil se..*(1998) is caused or enhanced by aggression from majority or from public servants against some minority. In *Aamir* (2008) and in *Dhokha* (2007) we can clearly see that people who act aggressively against the majority were people who felt unjustly and had a reason to feel this way. But aggression as an attempt for solution caused a vicious circle, where other Muslims felt unjustly suspected, majority felt endangered by them and this situation was just

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perfectly fertile soil for another conflict.

Dhokha (2007) offers a solution: the government has to care about minorities, because if they are discriminated it can cause terrorism. In *Veer* and *Zaara* lawyer Zakir Ahmed sees the future of Pakistan and India in the hands of young people like Saamiya who do not measure human as either big or small, man or woman, Hindu or Muslim. These two solutions are both based on humanity and justice, without any positive or negative discrimination.

Characters that are important as an example of good citizens are Inayat, Aamir, Zaid and Sufi (Altaaf's girlfriend). They are faithful and loyal to state even though they are Muslims. To claim these Muslims as the righteous is important also for the message of peaceful coexistence of different religions, because they set example for Muslims and bring image of good Indian Muslim hero to Hindus.

3.3.1.A.d Democracy

The state as an institution is not questioned anywhere, democracy passes current. The questions that are asked concern particular issues. The most frequent question is what has changed since independence, because many poor people and minorities feel that it is the same or worse.

Democratic principles in personal life predominate among young people, it is city middle-class trend and Bollywood uses it. From Bollywood's point of view it is good when young people can choose their spouses; that they can study what they want but stiffness is as bad as irresponsibility, contempt of tradition, religion, authority and values. Faith in the youth and modernity goes hand in hand with respect to the old and to tradition. *Nandy* (1995) sees this as typical for Indian middle class that has always been able to process some imputes from West together with classical tradition.

B Religion

In India religion (as I have said before) is mainly the question of lifestyle and identity,⁹⁷ Bollywood, apart from mythological and devotional films, depicts

⁹⁷ For more see also DWYER (2008).

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religion mainly as a social issue and very rarely asks the question that small Kamal asked in *Bombay* (1995): what does it mean religion and what it means a Muslim or a Hindu. High theology is not common in Bollywood. When the transvestite tried to answer Kamal's question, he told him that religion is a means to reach God and Hindus and Muslims have their own ways of reaching God. This is a sporadic theme in Bollywood,. In Bollywood films religions are present and also they cause many things from huge events to personal feelings, but almost never are these questions asked: what it is, what it means, where it came from or what is the aim.

3.3.1.B.a God(s)

Bollywood is surprisingly monotheistic although there is not exclusively one God. Bollywood speaks about gods, with names or without them, mostly it is Vishnu with Lakshmi or his avatar Rama with Sita or Radha, Shiva with Parvati, Allah, Ganesha. But it seems that they are just names of one God, ways of devotion, of tradition. For example when Shaila in *Bombay* (1995) says that their children have two gods, so they do not have to worry, it seems that she supposes the existence of two gods, but in the song they sing they have just one God. A very similar thing appears in *Veer-Zaara* (2004). More Gods symbolize more different religious views, but somehow these views view one single thing.⁹⁸ Who is the one God and what He is like, is not so clear. From some allusions we can say that He is good, the highest, the most powerful, that He can be testing people, He should be the highest authority etc. Somehow He rules this world and

⁹⁸ This reminds me of a Hindu priest from temple in Glasgow on La Belle Place who told us on one visit, that for him gods are like light bulbs that need electricity and this electricity is some kind of god power that is one and that makes gods. But I do not think that Bollywood's God is something like electricity, it seems that God has more identity than impersonal power. The Bollywood is closer to Vivekananda, who in his lecture *The Common Bases of Hinduism* in Lahore 1897 prays ad the end:

„May He who is the Creator, the Preserver, and the Protector of our race, the God of our forefathers, whether called by the name of Vishnu or Shiva, or Shakti, or Ganapati, whether He is worshipped as Saguna or as Nirguna (...) That which exist is One; sages call Him by various names (...).“ (VIVEKANANDA (1989), p. 384)

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people are somehow dependent on Him, i.e. people are dependent on His will, they are bound to Him by devotion, but also they are very independent, they have their own responsibility and free will. But for sure God is seen as just; good example for this is an old Muslim in *Bombay* (1995) who said that it was too much of destruction and that Allah would never approve of this.

Sometimes some things are presented as stronger than God, for example Zaara's mother said that even God cannot prevent Raza from marrying Zaara, but at the end they did not marry even though we do not know if God was responsible for it.

Time to time there is someone who presents himself or herself as non-religious person, but it is not often. We can see it in *Fanaa* (2006), in *Saathiya* (2002), in *Salaam Namaste* (2005), *Mohabbatein* (2000) and in small unimportant hints in many films. This position is not viewed as bad but it is seen as something immature or as incomprehension. Very often such person finds out his/her way to God or religion during the film.

3.3.1.B.b Prayer

Prayers and devotion are (together with family, justice, brotherhood and traditions) very important spiritual and social values. It is important for a person to pray and it is a sign of good character. All prayers from different religions are equal; the difficulties come when the person who prays is a bad person. Terrorists and many other villains in films pray and speak about God very often, but their prayer is hypocrisy because their aim is not the devotion of God but some other aims that are not good. Hilal, the terrorist leader in *Mission Kashmir* (2000), turned it upside down when he spoke about revenge as the only religion.

3.3.1.B.c Things that overlap with religion

Bollywood values some things more than religion, but not in the way that it can devalue religion but that it overlaps with it and that it is not dependent on any religious tradition. At the first place it is love, as we can see in all of the five analysed films, therefore it is family, definitely it is God, music, peace and last

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but not least it is the nation and state of India. In all these things people from different religions can meet and understand each other, even if it can seem impossible at the first sight. Love and family are the most problematic from the perspective of keeping traditions, because traditions are based on family and also on religion, so mixed family is not equally able to keep the old traditions. But in Bollywood a good working family always overcomes any suspicion.

This can be taken as an expression of „Indian“ secularism in Bollywood, that shift religion to more individual and private space and therefore at some moments there are more important things than religion. Especially this secular nationalism is in big contrast with religious nationalism.

3.3.1.B.d Crossing borders

Many characters in the aforementioned films are crossing borders because of something more important and usually these borders are religiously based and also its crossing does not discredit their religious identity. It was when Narayan took food from Shaila, when Shaila wore bindi and Shekhar a cap, when Bashir called Narayan his brother and when Narayan tried to save for him the Holy Qur'an, when landlord's wife in *Bombay* (1995) did not like to have a Muslim girl in their apartment and then she started to like the couple, when Zaara wore Punjabi cloths in Veer's village on the Lohri festival, when Zaara's mother gave Veer an amulet and prayed for other births of her daughter and when Zaid gave a blood to Hindu girl to save her.

These borders were important for identity but identity can be sacrificed/risked/threatened for the sake of relationships, because it is found again in the new relationship.

3.3.1.B.e Helping

In most of these films we have seen people who help someone from other faith to fulfil his or her religious needs or duty. It is Muslim Zaara who helped her Sikh nanny to achieve salvation, when she put her ashes into the sacred river. It is Hindu Nandini who arranged home prayer with a priest for a dead wife

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of Muslim friend Zaid. It is Hindu Narayan that tried to save the Holy Qur'an and a praying mat for Muslim Bashir. It is Muslim Inayat who burned his dead Hindu wife on funeral pyre. It was Muslim Saamiya who returned back to Sikh Veer his name and therefore his religious identity. This all put it well how Bollywood's effort to respect all religions equally.

3.3.1.B.f Pleasures of life and sacrifice

Bollywood looks like something really consumerist and shallow at first sight, it seems that it is interested just in pleasures of life, but it has also some sense for sacrifice. It is clearly a sacrifice when Veer gives up his free life and identity to protect Zaara's name and when Zaara goes to India to fulfil Veer's dream of school for girls in their village. Aamir sacrificed himself to defeat terrorists and Shekhar nearly burned himself to stop some people from killing each other.

C Aggression

Aggression and violence is denounced but Bollywood is not blindly pacifistic. On the contrary Bollywood likes good police and army officers. Police and army officers are very often heroes (viz. *Mission Kashmir* (2000), *Dhokha* (2007), *Veer-Zaara* (2004), *Main Hoon Na* (2004)). Despite the fact that politics and aggressive people use religion for their purpose very often, violence does not belong to true religion. No aggressive behaviour can bring anything to common people but suffering, it breaks families as we see in *Aamir* (2008), *Dhokha* (2007), *Bombay* (1995) and *Mission Kashmir* (2000). Moreover, it causes another aggression as it was in *Mission Kashmir* (2000), *Dhokha* (2007) or *Bombay* (1995). Belief that aggression (violence) is bad whoever it does is shown strongly in whole *Bombay* (1995) and especially in the scene, where some men want to burn Kamal and Kabir alive. We do not know who they are and we do not know which answer is good for them and which is bad, when they are asked if they are Muslims or Hindus.

If Bollywood speaks about jihad it uses the term usually with a terrorist connotation and we do not hear about good jihad too often, an exception being

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Dhokha (2007) where there is a huge polemic with aggressive jihad as a misuse of jihad. One song in *Mission Kashmir* (2000) asks the question: „Who calls that strife a jihad using the name of God?“, it is a similar approach it but makers of *Dhokha* (2007) went further, they did not just criticise the misuse of jihad, as it does the song in *Mission Kashmir* (2000), but they also speak about good jihad and they set up an example.

D Visual expressions

Film as a visual medium has more ways of expressing its message than what the characters say, do, what is sang in the songs etc. Bollywood is mesmerized by colours, huge dance scenes, beautiful sceneries and interiors, though they are mainly back-projections, and by all richness of its shots. For Western viewer like me it is enhanced also by exoticism, but compared to other filmography Bollywood is betting on visual impression a lot. It is very specific with religious diversity, because Bollywood shows bigger diversity in shots than in the story. I have already mentioned depiction of different people on the airport in *Aamir* (2008) or interreligious pictures on the floor in broken house in the end of *Mission Kashmir* (2000), but there are more techniques and some of them are really common.

3.3.1.D.a Dances

Dance is one of the basic elements of Bollywood and there is at least one huge dance scene in almost every film. *Aamir* (2008) is very uncommon, because it does not have any dance, and in *Dhokha* (2007) even though there are some songs there is not huge dance scene. Most of dance scenes cannot show any religious mixture because they are either in modern style, therefore there is no place for religion, or they are religiously or family based. But some huge scenes are interesting for me, because sometimes dancers are religiously mixed, though the Sikhs are the most often the second religion with Hindus. For Example *Kajra Re* in *Bunty aur Babli*, *Soni Soni* and *Aankhein Khuli* in *Mohabbatein* (2000), *No.1 Punjabi* in *Chori Chori Chupke Chupke*, *Pyaar Kar* in *Dil*

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To Pagal Hai. As it was in *Bombay* (1995) where Shekhar see Shaila dancing at a Muslim wedding there are two Hindus Anjali and Rahul who dance at a Muslim wedding in *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham...* (2001), but it is because the bride is Anjali's friend. Some of the dancers do not have any other reason than just picture the diversity. Nice song is *Hum To Ai se Hain* in *Laaga Chunari Mein Daag: Journey of a Woman* (2007) where two sisters sing „that is how we are“ and about their life and city, someone sings there that in every street people speak about different God and we see Muslims, Vaishnavist priest, children dancing tale about Krishna etc. Dances are sometimes a way to depict different religions in a light way without conflict.

3.3.1.D.b Christianity

Christians appear in Bollywood sometimes, but usually without deeper elaboration. Usually it is just another nice component, because from Christianity we usually see just church, candles, picture of Jesus or Mary or a prayer that is a little bit different from Muslim, Hindu or Sikh prayer. We can see this in *Mohabbatein* (2000) or in *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (2003), but sometimes there is a church and the one who prays there is Hindu without any other comments. This situation appears for example in *Main Hoon Na* (2004) and definitely it is just because of the beautiful church and candles why the scene is there. And maybe another reason is depiction of diversity.

3.3.1.D.c Other religions

Time to time we can see some allusion on Buddhism, but very rarely in films about present and if so, it is just architecture when the film takes place in some place with Buddhist majority as it is in Ladakh in *Dil se..*, or Sri Lanka. Buddhism gets some more attention in historical films; a great example is film about king Asoka (*Asoka* (2001)). Sometimes we can see some Jainist monks and in *Bunty aur Babli* (2005) procession Hare Krishna flashes for a second, but these people are all white Europeans or Americans. I find this shot really funny because followers of Hare Krishna present themselves as representatives of Indian culture

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in Europe, but in India this movement is seen as something European and ridiculous.

3.3.1.D.d Clothes

In the analysis I have mentioned few shots where something interesting with clothes and religion was and usually it was a situation when someone wore clothes from other tradition. Clothes are signs of religious or caste identity. Muslims are wearing a cap, very often a beard, Hindus wears *tilaka* and women *bindi*, Sikhs wears a turban called *pagri*,⁹⁹ sometimes also children both boys and girls has small under turban called *patka*.¹⁰⁰ And Veer has a necklace. Men are easier to distinguish than women, because even Muslim women wear sari sometimes, albeit they more usually wear *salwar khameez* or Punjabi suit.¹⁰¹ People in middle and higher classes very often wear more European clothes and usually the higher they are the more English they use. Men are wearing western clothes more often than women. Traditional clothes are seen as something beautiful, especially for women. Bigger issue is western women clothes that is too revealing, even if it is not criticised directly and in song it is used very often, at some points we can feel that traditional clothes makes woman more beautiful although western clothes can be more sexy and maybe too much. It is little bit different in songs because woman should look sexy in it in comparison to daily life, therefore in songs it is very common to use wet saris, sexy western outfits and some kind of look-like-traditional clothes that is just *choli* (top) and some cloth wrapped around hips, so the dancer covers just the necessary parts. On the other hand I have never seen any critique on Muslim clothes including burqa,¹⁰² Probably it is viewed as something common and reasonable, as it is in *Bombay* (1995) where unmarried girls went to school to another city wearing burqas.

⁹⁹ Sikhiwiki. Seen 16th of July 2010. <<http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Turban>>

¹⁰⁰ Sikhiwiki. Seen 16th of July 2010. <<http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Patka>>

¹⁰¹ Dwyer do not mention sari as possibility for Muslim women, but Shaila Bano in *Bombay* (1995) wears sari.

¹⁰² It is sometimes spelled as burkha, burka or burqua.

3.3.1.D.e Gods and temples

Temples are very often a delightful visual coullisse but more often we see statues of gods. These gods have their place at home of their devotees and more often we see Hindu gods in Bollywood than we hear about them. Statues and pictures of gods are important elements of home of Hindus.

E Visual criticism

Film shots can be also an interesting instrument for criticism without words and usually there is a contrast between words and shots that makes the situation stronger or absurd. There are many of them for example in *Mission Kashmir* (2000). The first is a huge contrast between colourful and happy songs and cruelty of fights, terrorist actions and cheerless story. The second is when two policemen Gurdeep and Avinash speak about their work and Gurdeep ends it: „We're not the killers. We're here to protect. We must safeguard humanity. We must save Kashmir.“ and during last two senteces camera turns to twenty dead bodies of terrorists, probably all Kashmiris. Another similar situation is in *Aamir* (2008) where he fights with some men to get back his red suitcase, this fight is tough and the picture of peaceful young and civilized man who is suddenly beating same people with metal bar without any hesitation and fear is accompanied by prayer-song with pretty melody that begs Lord for protection at his every step in life. This depicts his despair.

In *Aamir* (2008) there is another small interesting shot: Aamir has to call to Karachi, Pakistan for some information and when the phone rings there we see the man how he is watching film, probably from Bollywood. This is nice allusion that people who claim themselves as orthodox Muslims and assert that India is evil watch film with sexy girls, moreover Bollywood films are mainly forbidden in Pakistan, so this man has to spend some effort to acquire this film.

There are two things that need to be mentioned:

First, most of films I have seen are „high“ Bollywood and most of films from Bollywood are in local languages and therefore for specific group of viewers.

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These films are aimed at Indians from whole India and also at Indians living abroad. Makers of films I have analysed probably thought that these films would be screened in many countries abroad. I suppose that circumstances like these determine film-makers to think little bit more interreligiously and maybe also internationally, therefore they will stress the diversity to reach more viewers.

Second, there are many things that I am not able to recognize, because I am not an Indian and for example typology of faces is hard for me to distinguish, therefore I cannot say if a typology of villain is influenced by typology of bad Muslim. An important thing is that people that are likeable for Indians do not have to be always so likeable for European eye. Some kind of beauty is understandable for all people all over the world, but something is culturally influenced. Here I am not able to go deeper in this analysis; the only thing I can say about this particular theme is that Hindu actors play vice versa. The other thing I cannot recognize is an accent of Hindi that can show a character's origin and therefore also religion.¹⁰³ But I am aware of that fact, that many things escape my view just because of my origin.

3.3.2 Typology

My suggestion of types of using religions in Bollywood tries to describe some basic approaches to religious diversity. This is going to be only a brief overview because all details have already been mentioned at least once in analysis or in themes. I will start with the most prevalent types and I will end with those that are not so frequent, even though they can be more important.

A Religions as a social background

Religion as a social background is the basic usage of religion in Bollywood at all. It was clearly shown in analysis that in Bollywood religion is identical to most social structures and most of social events are religiously accompanied. Diversity of religion needs to be pictured because also India is full of diversity, so story

¹⁰³ Encyclopaedia of Hindi cinema (2003), p. 178 states that someone can have accent typical for example for Goan Christian even if he is from different part of India, but he is Christian to show his religion, because accent of Goan Christians is specific and known.

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where only Hindus or Muslims appear does not seem real. In the society, Sikhs play a mainly friendly and not conflicting role.

B Religions as an identity

Religions in India are one of the main elements of one's identity and Bollywood is no different. Religion is more important for identity when religions meet, because it is something that makes distinction.

C Religion as a tradition

Religion is constitutive for tradition and the biggest part of tradition are religious rituals. The most important family rituals are small religious rituals that can be preserved only in family that is religiously based. Some rituals are similar to more religions or are based more on specific region, so the differences can be bigger between different people from the same religion from different parts of country, than from different religion. Good examples are feasts that are celebrated without distinction of religion, for example Lohri festival that was shown in *Veer-Zaara* (2004) was celebrated together by Hindus and Sikhs.¹⁰⁴

D Religion as a visual tool or accessory

Many small details in Bollywood do not have any other purpose than just being nice eye-catching thing and religion is really good for this. Bollywood uses temples, statues of gods, candles, offerings, joss sticks, religious symbols, saints, ascetics, yogis, flowers and so on to make the picture perfect.

E Religion as a tool to be virtuous

Good characters have faith in God and mainly they observe their tradition, whatever the tradition or religion is. Faith is a part of a righteous person and who does not have it, whoever has to come to it, even if it is not in the classic traditional way.

¹⁰⁴ Rachel Dwyer writes that in industry „festivals, life rituals etc. are celebrated together, whatever the community“ (DWYER 2006, p. 134).

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F Religions as a reason

Religion can be a moving force to do things, good or bad. We have seen in *Bombay* (1995), in *Dhokha* (2007), in *Mission Kashmir* (2000) and in *Aamir* (2008) what kind of atrocities people are capable of in the name of religion. Their particular reasons were different, but religion was the connecting point. Bollywood is not afraid to speak about it but all of these cruelties are judged as illegitimate usage of religion. Religion as a reason for positive deeds is not used so often, maybe because it is not so easy to treat as the misuse of religion and definitely it is because Bollywood works with religion and faith just as a tradition or as a deeply personal thing. Religion is on one side something universal where personal aims are misuse of it but on the other hand it is viewed as something intimate and personal. When someone does good deeds he or she is usually a believer, but what he does is not done in the name of God or religion. It is similar with jihad. We often see and hear a critique of misuse of it in films, but very rarely the films speak about the good jihad. I see the problem in difficulties with adapting this theme into film about daily life amplified with the experience of misuse of acts inspired by religion, e.g. terrorism, Hindu nationalism. Religion is seen as something that should not be an obstacle of religiously mixed society but mainly it is not presented as something that can create peace in society. This approach is wider, Bollywood speaks very often about social issues and mainly it shows where the problem is and that this should not happen, but very rarely shows some solution or prevention, apart from love and some superhuman heroes. This is a little bit better in family, but it is because broken family can be united just by love of a few people. Broken peace in society could be restored just by love of all people, but it is not realistic. From this point of view *Dhokha* (2007) is very special, even though it is a film of lower quality than the other four films.

G Religions as the same thing

Time to time there is a small allusion on the fact that religions are at some points the same thing. Mainly it is when people from different religions speak about

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God and it is clear that there is just one God. Religions compared as one phenomenon in contrast to atheistic thinking is not common in Bollywood, probably because atheists in Bollywood are just single people who did not find their way to God yet. The Bollywood world is religious.

H Religions as a theme

Very rarely Bollywood asks what „a religion“ means and it almost never speaks about some aims of religion or about some high theology. Religion is lived, different religions are, God exists and in Bollywood there it ends.

3.4 Conclusion

Bollywood views religion mainly as a positive phenomenon and time to time it describes it in its diversity. Usually the religion is depicted as social and cultural background and also as a part of identity. There are two main important things for human from religion to keep, personal faith and observing the traditions. Traditions are important but they have to be alive, they can change for good reasons and film industry changes them too, for example two months after *Veer-Zaara* (2004) was released many people celebrated Lohri festival in the same way as in the film and new tradition of courtship started.¹⁰⁵ Religion can be abused for power or other purposes, but it is assessed as wrong. Religion is something that differentiates people and therefore it can build boundaries and cause violence and hatred, but God, love, nation and family that are more important should and also can overcome it. Be one in the Indian identity is an important message of Bollywood, but there are mainly just two ways how to become one peaceful nation – love and respect. Bollywood goes deeper than I have just described and more often religions and their diversity become only a visual accessory, anyway religions are inherent part of Bollywood.

This mainly sounds positively or neutrally, but if we step back a little bit we see that these films are a great spectacle but they are rather shallow than deep and they tend to stereotypes. Due to stereotypes and superficiality some things do

¹⁰⁵ DWYER (2006a), p. 160.

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not appear in Bollywood, not counting mythological or devotional films. But „secular“ films about earthy, daily, more or less fictive life are deficient in picturing of daily religious life. I have already mentioned in „Religions as a reasons“ disproportion of using religions as an inducement. There is religious „passivity“, where people are good and religious but not good because of religion, there is no deep elaboration of religion or God and there is nearly no good priest, monk or religious leader with bigger role. Usually priests just do their job with rituals and praying, sometimes they assess someone behaviour as good or as bad (as in *Veer-Zaara* (2004) Sikhs priest told in Kiritpur that he did not see big devotion like this), but they do not become involved more. A bigger role is here just for priests villains and they are not presented too much as priests, viz. Umar Farhidi in *Aamir* (2008). This all shows that religion is perceived very secularly.

There are many questions that need to be asked. Is the more personal devotion or faith consequence of secularism and the opinion that religions are equal or is there also a reminiscence of pluralism of Hinduism? Indian secularism pushes religion from public sphere to personal or community life and for sure growing urban middle-class, who is the biggest influential class for Bollywood, helps to neutralise distinctive differences¹⁰⁶ as Nandy points out. Anantanand Rambachan writes in his article about violence in Hinduism that Hindutva (Hindu-ness) movement suppressed its sense for plurality in Hinduism and excludes many people from citizenship of India in religious nationalism.¹⁰⁷ Rambachan stresses the ancient tradition of plurality of Hinduism and sees it in chance for freedom of self-definition of many different groups, which can search for national identity in the wealth of Indian diversity.¹⁰⁸ Ability of plurality is according to many thinkers of Hinduism, e.g. Radhakrishnan, one of the greatest things in Hinduism.¹⁰⁹ Can we see influence of Hinduism in Bollywood plurality or it is rather westernised secularism?

¹⁰⁶ NANDY (1995), p. 197.

¹⁰⁷ RAMBACHAN (2003), p. 120.

¹⁰⁸ RAMBACHAN (2003), p. 120.

¹⁰⁹ RADHAKRISHNAN (1981), p. 100.

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For some answers and for further investigation I need to leave the world of film and look at factors that influence the meaning of the film. One of new turns in cinema study is according to Jolyon Mitchell studying not just what film does to audience but also what audience does with the film and how it interacts with it.¹¹⁰ I will look now at the possibilities of viewership, at influence of Hindutva, politics and censorship, at some stereotypes of depiction minorities and also at some important changes in the last two decades. I am aware of the complexity of influences of Bollywood that cannot be easily described on a few pages thus I have chosen the most important and distinctive issues and sometimes I show it on some specific example, even though in other cases it can differ a lot. Some themes, for example the viewership, lack wider field research. I would like to base my final conclusions on Mitchell's remark and I would like to show how our view on these films can change according to politic and social circumstances.

4.1 Change in Bollywood?

M. Mahadva Prasad starts his chapter in *Making Meaning in Indian Cinema* by stating that the Indian cinema is at the moment of transformation and liberalization, there are new technologies and approaches and ideologies as well.¹¹¹ The biggest reason of this change is globalization that has two impacts on film: wider inspiration¹¹² and a fading of differences. Globalization is a process that brings cultures closer therefore it constitutes a new common way of thinking that replaces different approaches. On the other hand when cultures are closer it shows more differences and therefore it constitutes new pluralism and diversity that was not so clear before and some particularity of each culture can become popular abroad. Globalization is not erasing differences but borders of states therefore the common and different is no longer given by borders, but

¹¹⁰ MITCHELL (2009), p. 109.

¹¹¹ PRASAD (2000), p. 145.

¹¹² For more see MITCHELL (2009), but it is more suggestion for Western scholars in film and religion studies to engage in study of Indian, African and other non-western films.

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both common and different are mixed together everywhere. From 90s of last century India has opened itself more to the world¹¹³ and this has had a huge impact on Bollywood, moreover there are more films about and for NRI (non-resident Indians) and it opens huge cinema market for India and it made West more interested in Indian cinema. Dwyer states that there are more Muslims and bigger stress on „Hindu Family Values“ in films after 1990.¹¹⁴ Family as a keeper of Hindu tradition was accentuated because of need of Indian (Hindu) identity by NRI for whom family became more important than state. Dwyer points out that tradition does not have to be an old classical tradition and film created many new traditions.¹¹⁵ Change in depiction of Muslims and friendship across communities was not always happily accepted by Muslims (or other minority)¹¹⁶ though according to Sara Dickey a good Muslim character can boost the attendance of Muslim viewers.¹¹⁷ As we have seen how students in Shakuntala Rao's study were discontent with the globalized Bollywood because they did not find the world of film familiar and attractive, similar hunger for more serious issues that will be made for audience in India and for more „alternative“ production was expressed by Aamir Khan and Rahul Bose quoted in Acharya's thesis. Both spoke about pros and cons but if this opinion is wider we can expect more films that will be different from the contemporary norm in Bollywood and that will deal with issues that are pressing in the society. Among these issues there is inter-religious conflict and coexistence still burning, therefore it should be reflected also in cinema, because, as Ashish Rajadhyaksha writes, cinema is always about present¹¹⁸ and even if it is a world different from the real one, it mirrors it.

¹¹³ ACHARYA (2004), p. ii.

¹¹⁴ DWYER (2006a), p. 155-156.

¹¹⁵ See more in DWYER (2006a), p. 156.

¹¹⁶ DWYER (2006a), p. 156. Dwyer does not write about reason of protests, but from all I have read is clear, that minorities are very sensitive about their depiction because they feel that this is the picture of them that society sees and if they do not fully agree they protest.

¹¹⁷ DICKEY (1993), p. 105.

¹¹⁸ RAJADHYAKSHA (2000), p. 272

4.2 Impact on viewership

There have been few ethnographic studies about viewership, about who they are, how they perceive films, how often they go to theatres etc¹¹⁹. Let me shortly show two different groups and their attitude towards cinema in order to have some basement to propose their perception of religiously mixed films.

The first are fans from Fans Associations (FAs) from Indian state Andhra Pradesh studied by S.V. Srinivas. Fans of FAs are heavy cinema-goers and every FA has their favourite actor whom, as they claim, they support. In FAs there are also Muslims and Christians together with Hindus in similar proportion to the whole population.¹²⁰ According to Srinivas there are about twenty three millions of people who go to cinema every day; it is over two percent of the whole Indian population.¹²¹ Srinivas made a research among fans that support biggest star from Tegu cinema Chiranjeevi. His FAs have between ten and five hundred members and they consider themselves protectors of the right image of their star. It includes celebration and propagation of new films of this star, distribution of prominent tickets to first release, distribution of flyers and similar propagation, but it also includes boycotts of films that are not „proper“ to their image of the star. Sometimes it can grow into some troublemaking and violence against the star, theatre owners or other fans. FAs are important not just as social groups but they can influence the proceeds of some films and also they are very often active in politics¹²² despite the fact that their star has not declared any political sympathies. Many of the leaders of FAs are interested in money and their leader position more than admiration of the star¹²³ or they deeply feel that they are the best and only ones who can decide anything concerning the star.¹²⁴

The second group of cinema-goers are students of College of Punjabi University in Patiala in Punjab between the age of twenty-two and thirty-nine from families

¹¹⁹ DWYER (2006a), p 6. and RAO (2006), p. 5.

¹²⁰ DICKEY (1993), p. 149.

¹²¹ SRINIVAS (2000), p. 267.

¹²² SRINIVAS (2000), p. 308-312.

¹²³ SRINIVAS (2000), p. 315.

¹²⁴ SRINIVAS (2000), p. 303.

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with mainly rural origin, lower middle-class or poor family.¹²⁵ Shakuntala Rao made many official and unofficial interviews with them and with their families about their perception of globalizing Bollywood. These people feel separated from the rich life on the screen, because it is completely different from their life and their values and it is not a real world for them. It is interesting that many subjects of research emphasize absence of social issues and solution of some problems in society in most of Bollywood production¹²⁶ and that they like films that deal with some social issues like corruption in politics, domestic violence or searching for purpose in life.¹²⁷ Rao states that if Bollywood is oriented too much on urban middle-class, too rich and too international in the sense that the Indians in diaspora seem to be more Indian than Indian and that it does not deal with issues current in India, less non-elite people will consume their products.¹²⁸

4.3 Reviews and box office

To describe better how the films can be perceived I looked for some reviews with rating of films I have analysed¹²⁹ and I took from BoxOffice India word assessment of its attendance in Indian theatres (e.g. Above Average, Super Hit etc.).¹³⁰ All is in Appendix Here I will just summarize some inferences.

From reviews and rating *Aamir* (2008) looked like the less disputable, it was considered an interesting and important film but not a blockbuster to make money. The most contradictory is *Veer-Zaara* (2004) that reached in BoxOffice appellation „Super Hit” and for some it is just another sweet romance. Rachel Dwyer sees *Veer-Zaara* (2004) as a risky theme that is possible to adapt by one of

¹²⁵ RAO (2006), p. 6.

¹²⁶ RAO (2006), p. 11.

¹²⁷ RAO (2006), p. 17.

¹²⁸ RAO (2006), p. 5.

¹²⁹ I used the easiest way and searched that on the internet where I chose a few first reviews and then I chose some that looked serious. I preferred reviews written by an Indian but with Bombay it was more difficult, probably because it is already an older film in the viewpoint of internet, so there I used some other reviews. I add also ratings from Internet Movie Database for some international ratings (Internet Movie Database. <<http://www.imdb.com/>>)

¹³⁰ BoxOffice India com. <<http://www.boxofficeindia.com/>>

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India's top producers¹³¹ and with so many stars, but for example *Aamir* (2008) was the début for its director and for the actor and moreover the adaptation is very atypical. In spite of all this it was not a flop at all. *Dhokha* (2007) did not good for attendance as the other films, but it made about Rs. 1 crore¹³² net profit and for critiques it did well. *Mission Kashmir* (2000) and *Bombay* (1995) were accepted very well and *Bombay* (1995) does not seem as a mega but rather a fixed star, at least in literature about Indian cinematography. *Aamir* (2008) and *Dhokha* (2007) were commended for adaptation of difficult but present issue more deeply.

4.4 Political and social influences

4.4.1 Concept of Hinduism and Partition

Concept of Hinduism is usually known as something western and imposed to Indians, but Indian nationalism and resistance against British Empire have a huge impact. Unification was necessary for creating an independent state, clearly we see that in Vivekananda's speech in Lahore 1897.¹³³ But still till these days most Indians do not feel their identity as Hindu, even though they are „Hindu“ by their religion. Dwyer shows that nicely on two examples: the first one is a young man from *shudra* caste, who was registered as Hindu at school and then when he went to Mumbai his identity was only Hindu, because castes and sub-castes are important only in villages.¹³⁴ The second example is Kancha Ilaiah, an important figure for movement of low castes and Dalits,¹³⁵ who refuses to be called Hindu because he was not born as Hindu, his parents did not know

¹³¹ DWYER (2006a), p. 129.

¹³² One crore is 10 000 000 INR about 200 000 USD. *Aamir* (2008) had Rs.3.68 crore, *Mission Kashmir* (2000) Rs. 82,82 crore, *Bombay* (1995) Rs. 100,61 crore and *Veer-Zaara* (2004) Rs. 82,09 (*Mission Kashmir* (2000) and *Veer-Zaara* (2004) had also substantial profit abroad). IBOS. < <http://www.ibosnetwork.com/default.aspx> >.

¹³³ VIVEKANANDA (1989)

¹³⁴ DWYER (2008), p. 45-46.

¹³⁵ So called Untouchables.

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anything about their religion name; their identity was their caste.¹³⁶

Although Vivekananda fights mainly constructively in his speech and mainly for Hindu self-governing, he sees Muslims as invaders. The first intention of this speech is creating identity and powerful state and the second is picture of „barbarian invasion“ and „barbarian religion“ that is a threat to the country and religion.¹³⁷ This can support the theory of Priya Kumar that Partition took place rather because of nationalist? Effort, in order to push Muslims to the role of national minority, not because of Muslim separatist impulse as it is widely understood.¹³⁸ Partition and constitution of Pakistan as a country of „Indian“ Muslims make the existence of Muslims as citizens of India very incomprehensible for many Indians as if the Partition was not complete or still happening.

4.4.2 Hindutva and nationalism

Hindutva means Hindu-ness or Hindu nationalism, this post-80s nationalist movement is important till present days and in early 90s it was really influential. The focus of Hindutva is not Hinduism in the secular society but politics and communal identity.¹³⁹ Rise of Hindutva happened simultaneously with the rise of western technologies in India and also with the rise of new urban middle-class, that both influenced Bollywood a lot. Growing nationalism is an answer to globalization, because new urban middle-class is uprooted from their traditions and needs self-confident culture¹⁴⁰ and also a growing number of NRI (Non-resident Indian) demands different self-understanding. There is a clear distinction between new middle-class where the tendencies are more consumerist and old middle-class who holds the idea of secular democracy and who sees „Indian values“ depicted in Bollywood and loved by new middle-class as a product of Hindutva.¹⁴¹ Growing aggression in rhetoric and in method of

¹³⁶ DWYER (2008), p. 48.

¹³⁷ VIVEKANANDA (1989)

¹³⁸ KUMAR (2008), p. 177.

¹³⁹ DWYER (2006b), p. 273.

¹⁴⁰ NANDY (1995), p.198-199.

¹⁴¹ DWYER (2006b), p. 274.

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many Hindu organizations is for Anantanand Rambachan consequence of ancient tradition of *himsa*, violence, that somehow existed together with *ahimsa*, non-violence, which was so important for Gandhi.¹⁴² Rambachan shows historical development of aggressive nationalism till today and the sharp exclusivist distinction between „we“ and „they“ is important for all of them.¹⁴³

4.4.3 Censorship and Hindutva: case *Bombay*

I will show on *Bombay* (1995) how the censorship and influence of national group Shiv Sena looked like during the 90s, now the censorship is more relaxed.¹⁴⁴ Central Board of Film Certification (often CBFC or Censor Board) is established by state and according to Monika Mehta it provides contact between state, film industry and citizens¹⁴⁵ and as Nandy points out commercial film can be seen as infantile and irresponsible.¹⁴⁶ But, as we will see in next paragraph, also some other participants of censorship can be seen as the infantile ones. Rachel Dwyer shows that though Mumbai production of films is connected to politics and though there are signs that some militant Hindu nationalist group has related people on key position of Bollywood film production, it is still more politic-free than local cinema in states of South India.¹⁴⁷ But in some cases the fights for the extent of censorship are tough. Huge interest of Shiv Sena in Bollywood shows how influential Bollywood is.

Before releasing *Bombay* (1995) was prereleased for CBFC also with officials from Home Ministry and from crime branch of police, because they were afraid of reaction from radical right nationalist group Shiv Sena, whose leader Bal Thackeray is portrayed in the film. After some disputation CBFC recommended some general cuts: words like Pakistan, Afghanistan and Islamicate state whenever they appeared in the film; demolition of the Babri mosque; police shooting Muslims; scenes that mention higher number of dead Muslims than

¹⁴² RAMBACHAN (2003), p. 115.

¹⁴³ RAMBACHAN (2003), p. 119.

¹⁴⁴ BOSE (2009), p. 30.

¹⁴⁵ MEHTA (2001).

¹⁴⁶ NANDY (1995), p.207.

¹⁴⁷ DWYER (2006b), p. 275-276.

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Hindus; deletion of character and dialogues based on Thackeray; reduction of violent scenes by 25%¹⁴⁸ etc. After special screening Bal Thackeray expressed his disapproval with his character, especially the scene where his character regrets the violence caused by his party, and he requested reshooting it with another actor and renaming the name of film to Mumbai.¹⁴⁹ Mani Ratnam did not change the actor and the name of film despite huge influence of Thackeray, but other suggested cuts were done. After the release there were many protests from Muslims against the film and Mani Ratnam's home was attacked.¹⁵⁰

4.4.4 Stereotypes

Why Muslims protested against *Bombay* (1995)? First, it depicts both communities as equally responsible and second, there are stereotypes of Muslims in this film and this is a very sensitive theme in India, for example Muslim Bashir Shaila's father as an aggressor with machete and educated „peaceful“ Hindu Narayan, Shekhar's father or other example is Shekhar's friends Muslim Rafiq and one Hindu who quarrels with each other and with Shekhar. We do not know if Rafiq killed some Hindu and we know that the Hindu friend killed some Muslims, but the picture of them is different. We see only Rafiq with a machete plundering some shop with other Muslims; the other friend is not shown in any violent action. These small details are really crucial in the final meaning and acceptance of the film.

Stereotypes of Muslims are theme for Shahnaz Khan, who shows it on the film *Fanaa* (2006) where Muslims, though one is the hero, are oversexualized, aggressive or terrorist. The only possibly for Muslim woman, the heroine Zooni, is to kill her husband to stay loyal to her beloved country. Khan argues that it is often a theme that Muslim women are claimed to be patriots only if they neutralize their men, mainly by killing them (*Fanaa*, 2006; *Fiza*, 2000) or

¹⁴⁸ DWYER (2006b), p. 281. and BOSE (2009), p. 27.

¹⁴⁹ BOSE (2009), p. 27-28.

¹⁵⁰ The house was attacked by gunman according to Dwyer (2005, p. 281) and according to Bose (2009, p. 27) the house was bombed.

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by domesticating them (*Mission Kashmir* (2000), *Sarfarosh*).¹⁵¹ Similarly it is described by Amit Rai, who notes how Indian cinema depicts Muslims as the “other“ and therefore dangerous and similarly he points out that Muslim women are nationalized and can normalize Muslim men.¹⁵² Rai sees „the construction of Muslim militant identity in Hindi films – an identity simultaneously inside and outside the Indian nation.”¹⁵³ and Khan is sterner when he says that the film suggests that „the only acceptable Muslim man in the increasingly nationalist India is a dead one“. This is very strong opinion, but stereotypes in lighter version can be found in many films (e.g in *Dus*, 2005)

Other minorities do not appear so often in Bollywood but Christians are mainly depicted as drunk¹⁵⁴ and Sikhs in films I have seen appeared in comical role (e.g. *Fanaa*, 2006; *Mohabbatein*, 2000).

4.4.5 Muslims in film industry

The stereotypic depiction of Muslims is more unsettling if we realise how many Muslims there are in the film industry. Shahnaz Khan argues that Muslims did not have equal possibilities to influence the film industry and that many actors even changed their Muslim name.¹⁵⁵ Rachel Dwyer sees it a little bit differently, because she sees it as a part of film industry that people change their name to religiously neutral and shows it on many Hollywood stars.¹⁵⁶ Dwyer also states that Muslims are not excluded from the picture of daily life in Bollywood, but they are separated from the norm by their different religion, moreover Rachel Dwyer states that Muslims are also responsible for creating this image as Jews in Hollywood helped to created the American dream.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ KHAN (2009), p. 94.

¹⁵² RAI (2003). Generally women are in comparison to men minor roles in Bollywood, and they have usually two roles. The first is the object of desire of man (usually the hero) and the other role is humanizing factor (as a mother, as a friend, as a daughter, as a lover etc.).

¹⁵³ RAI (2003).

¹⁵⁴ DWYER (2006b), p. 279.

¹⁵⁵ KHAN (2009), p. 94.

¹⁵⁶ DWYER (2006a), p. 134.

¹⁵⁷ DWYER (2006a), p. 160.

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On the other hand people in film industry are usually very tolerant and the fans do not mind that wives of Shahrukh Khan and Aamir Khan are Hindus and that Hrithik Roshan as one of two most famous Hindu actors have a Muslim wife, but as Dwyer points out, this is viewed as not for „ordinary people“. ¹⁵⁸ An interesting thing is also popularity of Hindu-Muslim saint Sai Baba ¹⁵⁹ among people in film industry that makes this saint some kind of patron of film industry. ¹⁶⁰ There can be doubts if this peacefulness and interreligiosity is also in film.

4.4.6 Stereotypes of stereotypes

I would like to bring a third position that does not exclude the two previous. I will start with the example of fathers of the mixed couple in *Bombay* (1995), because the statement that depiction of those two men is based on stereotypes is just half true. In the beginning it is Bashir who takes out the machete every time some conflict appears and Narayan is the one with authority in village, this is true. But later when they have many discussions about their grandsons Narayan seems to be the one who is more aggressive and he is the one who provokes Bashir by dressing Kamal and Kabir in orthodox Hindu clothes and by marking their foreheads. In this situation Bashir is calm and does not comment it, I think that Narayan, if he were in Bashir's position, would have probably acted more hysterically. Second thing that does not support stereotypes is the situation where Bashir saves Narayan and one of the boys from some aggressive Muslims. Narayan never does anything like this, he only takes the Holy Qur'an out of fire, but this is something different than when Bashir claims that Narayan is his brother in front of other Muslims. Narayan does not have to approve Bashir as his brother before his co-Hindus. In the beginning it is a stereotype but later it seems that Bashir deals with the complicated situation easier than Narayan.

I would like to claim that the stereotypes are there and it is a shame that the film

¹⁵⁸ DWYER (2006a), p. 134.

¹⁵⁹ Sai Baba of Shidi was born probably 1836 and died 1918. There is popular guru Sathya Sai Baba, born Sathyanarayana Raju in 1926, who claims to be a reincarnation of Sai Baba of Shidi.

¹⁶⁰ DWYER (2006a), p. 94.

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makers succumb to it and help to support these stereotypes in common view, especially considering they are Muslims, but it would be a big shame if these stereotypes would lay over other things that are in these films. Critique of superfluous moments that just succumb to shallow stereotypes of masses is entirely apropos, not just because it backs it and it invokes protest, but also because it can destroy good work and ideas in the film. It begs two questions: Why people like Mani Ratnam or even Aamir Khan¹⁶¹ allow these stereotypes in their work? How easily can someone see stereotypes that are not intentional? Interpretation of *Fanaa* (2006) does not have to be that the only accepted Muslim men in India are the dead ones as Shahnaz Khan suggests, but we can interpret the story as a depiction of trauma. The hero is deeply rooted in his past symbolized by his terrorist grandfather, that he does not see any escape, just fulfilling grandfathers will by terrorist attack after which he planned to live the family life. All the consequences just cause so extensive destruction for which the hero is partly responsible, but from some things is not escape. His wife „safe“ him from this by killing him and their love free from all traumas lives in their son, who has the same name as the father and symbolically he speaks about himself in third person. This interpretation is not without difficulties but it brings some better future.

One thing is clear: that from my five films *Aamir* (2008) and especially *Dhokha* (2007) do not fit in these stereotypes. With *Aamir* (2008) it is on one hand harder to say because many things there are unspoken, but on the other way the film is atypical in its whole conception. *Dhokha* (2007) is more Bollywood styled in comparison with *Aamir* (2008). But the thread here is the woman and the nationalized, uniting and humanizing element here is a Muslim man. Although Nandini could be the typical woman of Bollywood – beautiful object of desire and Hindu friend who can help her Muslim friend to return back to India, she is not like this and moreover she disappears somewhere before the end. At the end there are three Muslims, all men, who are just by their effort reunited with both the state and the religion (in fulfilling the right jihad). And also

¹⁶¹ Aamir Khan was an actor in *Fanaa* (2006) that according to Shahnaz Khan support so many stereotypes of Muslims, despite of Aamir's repute as perfectionist. KHAN (2009).

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the biggest aggressor and sexual deviant is a Hindu here.

5 Epilogue

In this Epilogue I would like to bring some ideas about nature of film, its influence in India and pose some questions about religious plurality in Bollywood based on my analysis and presented mosaic of influences on Bollywood and impacts of it.

Film has many aspects; I will present three of them that I consider the most crucial for meaning of cinema: First, it is part of culture and entertainment. If we speak specifically about Bollywood, it is mass low culture,¹⁶² social and collective entertainment.¹⁶³ Ashis Nandy also points out that most of Indian commercial films still express something from popular culture that includes some traditions, despite the fact that it is influenced more by mass culture in which communication is one-way in contrast to popular culture.¹⁶⁴ Saying that film is a part of the culture we grant that films are inevitably products of the society and its values and that film forms some trends in the society. Second, the films, despite their influence and popularity, are a world in itself that works differently from the real world and even though it adapts a true story or true situations it is neither real nor realistic. It is always a construct of a small group of film-makers and it is always limited by time, by tools of expressions, by its technologies, by trends etc. Third, film can be an „agitprop” for many things from values, saints, rituals through support of some sport, style or products to politics and ideologies. In other words, film can be propaganda, advertisement or positive inspiration and Bollywood knows all of this very well.

There is a big difference between reception of film in West and in India. In West, there are very rarely some protests about depiction of some group in films. And if there are, there are usually only verbal refusals or critique that the depiction is not true or – for instance in the case of churches – that it is heretical (in the biggest extreme). Western film-makers usually do not risk their health or life by

¹⁶² NANDY (1995), p. 199nn.

¹⁶³ KUMAR (2008), p. 178.

¹⁶⁴ NANDY (1995), p. 200-201.

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adaptation of controversial theme etc. I remember one American film for teenagers, where there was one promiscuous girl claimed to be Czech. Apart from criticism of her totally Russian name and visage I did not hear anything that would sound in the way that someone took this „representation“ of Czech in American commercial film as offensive. My friends just laughed at the „knowledge“ of Americans about us and probably nearly no politician knew about it. Imagine the same situation in India: promiscuous girl from specific region of India that is not so often depicted in films. This would definitely bring some protest in the particular region and it would definitely affect some newspapers and maybe also politics. Question is whether it is only in western attitude to take films „not so seriously“, or if it is because Euroamerican personal identity is not so much based in community; or because of different themes in these film industries.

Comparison of content in Bollywood, Hollywood or other Western film industries could be a good theme for further investigation. But I see clearly one thing in which Bollywood differs and it is their approach to terrorism. For the West terrorism is something that crosses the borders from East, but in India it is something mainly inside the borders, even though it is connected with Pakistan. But the terrorists are usually Indians. Western commercial cinema normally depicts Muslims only as terrorists and it is not interested too much in the common Muslim who is not a terrorist and who is not going to be a terrorist, simply because Muslim terrorist is a good character for film and how a regular Muslim feels about terrorism is not important. Despite the attempt to sign Indian Muslims as „others“, foreigners and Pakistanis, they are Indians and most of them are not terrorist and do not agree with terrorism. They are at home in India and they want to be at home there ¹⁶⁵ and this is the theme that is common in Bollywood together with the theme of terrorism as a menace to the state, peace etc.

The last thing that is necessary to mention in the relationship of Bollywood and the West is that the West can be (maybe) helpful in sustentation of Indian

¹⁶⁵ KUMAR (2008), p. 177nn.

5 Epilogue

culture. India is now captivated by modernity and as my kathak¹⁶⁶ teacher said they are so fascinated that they are forgetting their rich heritage. As she pointed out there are kathak gurus who dance modern dances and have modern music, but without bigger quality. But people in the West are not interested at all in synthetic kitsch music and „scarf waving“, if someone from the West invites a kathak guru to perform here he wants him to dance Indian dance with its refined theory and long tradition. I see a parallel in film: noone in the West wants Bollywood's to be a „cheap“ copy of Hollywood, the interesting thing about Bollywood is its dissimilarity.

As a conclusion of my thesis I can say that Bollywood displays plurality as a common reality and it does not find it problematic in itself. Particular issues are very often problematic. On one hand Bollywood claims to be secular and peaceful and it deserves this appellation because as Priya Kumar points out „Bombay cinema has long been affirmed as one of the most enduring secularist cultural sites of contemporary India with its diverse personnel coming from various religious and regional backgrounds.“¹⁶⁷ But on the other hand it tends to hold many harmful stereotypes that are very often directed against religious minorities.

Let me now describe the process of the shaping the film's meaning in society. This process is very complicated and the film itself plays just one part in its own story. First there is a story written that can be based on true events or it can be fictitious, but the author already presents his own world-view. In adaptation, small things shift the meaning. It is important how a person dressed up, what language he speaks, how the scenery looks and (as we have seen) also who holds the machete etc. Some situations like Sikh policemen in *Mission Kashmir* (2000), who wets his pants because of fear, can offend someone. Actors can also determine the meaning and perception of the film, for example this year a film *My Name Is Khan* (2010) was a thorn in Shiv Sena's side because of Shahrukh

¹⁶⁶ North Indian dance.

¹⁶⁷ KUMAR (2008), p. 177.

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Khan in the title role.¹⁶⁸ After film-makers had shot the film and cut it, CBFC suggests some cuts. Censorship aims to preserve the society values and also prevent the film from making bigger controversies, but case *Bombay* (1995) has shown clearly that these types of cuts that should defend the film from Hindu nationalism made the film more anti Muslim, which sparked anger among them. After the release all mentioned elements count together and with possible scandals and anticipations of the viewership it brings final shape of film's meaning. In this process many unexpected events can appear and many points can be overlooked. Film is always risky in terms of the impact of its meaning. I would like to mention an extreme example of misunderstanding the basic point of a film, although it is not Bollywood: The central point of the Hollywood film *Finding Nemo* (2003) is that a fish is better off in the ocean, not in fish tank. But this film paradoxically caused that the clownfish (in a title role) should now be listed as endangered species. For many children wanted this cute fish and their parents were not aware of the fact that the film made them do something that contradicted its key message.¹⁶⁹

Let me apply this to religious plurality to comply my theme, my questions and my aims. Again I do not include mythological and devotional film here, because they intentionally focus only on one religion. I will start with three aspects mentioned above:

First, I have reassured myself that commercial film as a low and mass culture

¹⁶⁸ Truth is that the film does not have to do so much with the affair. Shiv Sena menaced to ban the films and their sympathizers vandalized theatres, they burned posters etc., because Shahrukh Khan expressed his disappointment that Pakistanis cricket players were not allowed to play in Indian Premiers League. Moreover Shiv Sena told Shahrukh Khan to move to Pakistan. (The Times. Seen 27th of July 2010.

<<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article7015777.ece>>; The Times Of India.

Seen 27th of July 2010. <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/Sena-does-a-U-turn-targets-My-Name-Is-Khan/articleshow/5554042.cms>>; OneIndia. Seen 27th of July 2010.

<<http://entertainment.oneindia.in/bollywood/news/2010/shiv-sena-slams-shahrukh-290110.html>>)

¹⁶⁹ The Times. Seen 18th of July 2010.

<<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/environment/article4220496.ece>>

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cannot offer deep theological or philosophical insight into the issues of religious plurality. Regardless of these limits, Bollywood provides interesting standpoints: notably specific kind of monotheistic pluralism and peacemaking family (maternal) love. Bollywood's monotheistic pluralism preach on God and many gods that are differentiable but are one God (without specifying how). Bollywood does not intend to assess which religion is better or worse. Good is to be religious, better is not to change it and stay devoted to ones tradition. Question is if this approach is influenced also by plurality of Hinduism. Love is the basic cure for all faults, war, hatred, terrorism etc. Love takes this strength from family and the guarantor of this love is usually a woman. This feminine power concerns also Priya Kumar, when she speaks about crisis of masculinity because of men's responsibility for violence; and also about the question of reconfiguring masculinity for possible peaceful coexistence of different religious groups.¹⁷⁰ One God and (nation) family-making love as a solution of conflicts of religious communities seems like a vague notion and for instance in the case of end of *Bombay* (1995) this “solution” seems very unrealistic and naïve. But we must remember that most of the Bollywood stories are about personal conflicts, where the idea of love is closer to real solution than in the perspective of whole society and nation.

Second, the reality and the lifelikeness of the film is very questionable. The biggest difference between life and film is not in the coexistence or friendship between communities, but it is in marriage. In spite of the fact that there are for example many „mixed“ marriages in Punjab between Sikhs and Hindus¹⁷¹ and also Dwyer shows some examples of interreligious marriages,¹⁷² the „honour killings“¹⁷³ are not uncommon, even if they can be punished by death sentence. The reason for „honour killings“ does not have to be different religion but it is

¹⁷⁰ KUMAR (2008), p. 236.

¹⁷¹ RAO (2006), p. 8.

¹⁷² DWYER (2208), p. 43 and 47.

¹⁷³ „Honour killing“ is family attempt to purge by killing their honour that was denigrated by inadmissible marriage or relationship. For some people is more acceptable to kill their child and stay whole life in prison (or be punished by death sentence) than admit marriage of their child with someone from different cast or religion.

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often „only“ different caste or sub-caste of the spouses.¹⁷⁴ I dare say that there are many Indians who liked for example *Veer-Zaara* (2004) but they would never accept interreligious marriage of one of their children.

Third, I have adumbrate in **4.4 Political and social influences** how film can be part of propaganda of religious ideologies Democratic opposite to some undemocratic techniques represented here by Shiv Sena can be represented here by *Dhokha* (2007) that appeals on government to get justice to those who were unjustly accused as terrorist and killed during interrogation and to punish those who are responsible for this injustice. *Dhokha* (2007) appeals not only on democracy and justice, but also on true jihad, the „striving in the path of God”.¹⁷⁵ But the most typical „promoting“ trends in Bollywood in the topic of religion in the last two decades are „Indian family values“ and interreligious friends (both already mentioned) and I see basic principle in „setting and example“. Film usually cannot „solve every problem“ in two or three hours, but it can develop some story that can be similar to some real stories. In my opinion Bollywood does this quite well, despite the fact that it is a dream world with perfect heroes on shining screen and with happy ending.

I consider Bollywood to have huge power to determine the society trends, especially trends of middle-class and young people – two driving forces of Indian society. Therefore Bollywood should take responsibility for its power and take care about sensitive issues as stereotypes about minorities, and disproportion of wealth, although film-maker cannot know if he is not „killing the clownfish“ by his film. It is not just question of ethics; it is also a question of market. Shakuntala Rao demonstrates it on non-elite students who are losing their interest in Bollywood, because the themes are not from their world.¹⁷⁶ And if we suppose that about 20% of Indians are not Hindus, state that would include all religious minorities from India would be third most populous state on the earth.¹⁷⁷ Bollywood should be interesting in this „state“ even if we do not count

¹⁷⁴ BBC News. Seen 28th of July 2010. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8595168.stm> and BBC News. Seen 28th of July 2010. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10316249>>

¹⁷⁵ MERI (2006), p. 418.

¹⁷⁶ RAO (2006).

¹⁷⁷ See numbers in **2.2 Religion in India: modernity and tradition**.

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ethical impact of films.

Ashis Nandy points out that „mass culture is relatively uncritical of the ruling political culture and political stereotypes”¹⁷⁸ and in the case of FAs we have seen that heavy cinema-goers are very conservative about any changes, but still there is some kind of „alternative“ tendency (apart from other tendencies of growing commercialism and westernisation) that can bring something positive not only for the box office. Further exploration of these changes should provide some contributive ideas. These things can indicate it:

Students in Rao's research tend more to films dealing with social issues than to shining wealth.

As I have mentioned above (4.1 Change in Bollywood?) Aamir Khan and Rahul Bose expressed their call for something different than the mainstream. The most „alternative films“ including *Dhokha* (2007) and *Aamir* (2008) I have seen are from recent years and despite Dwyer's appellation of *Veer-Zaara* as a risky theme the acceptance of those films was good, or at least for *Aamir* (2008). After fifteen years of his career the mega star Shahrukh Khan had first big role of a Muslim *Chak De! India* (2007) and other followed (*Billu*, 2009; *My Name Is Khan*, 2010). Priya Kumar speaks about some successful „Muslim social“ films about Muslims claiming India as their home¹⁷⁹ filmed both by Hindus and Muslims.

All those signs can be easily devalued by quick and destructive blast in society. In *Bombay* (2005) this happened with Bashir and Narayan, who finally had found the way of friendship after so many quarrels and then they died in explosion of propane gas cylinder that blew up because of the fire from riots. Making peace, friendship and influencing society by film is a long-distance run that can end in the blink of an eye. Hopefully, Bollywood will manage it, slowly and carefully, even though I think that showing friendship, good Muslims (Christians, Sikhs or starting including in film Buddhist characters etc.), interreligious marriages will not make a big difference, because it will stay in the dream world. The neighbour in real world is usually not so pretty as Preity Zinta or hero like Shahrukh Khan. More powerful will be to avoid harmful stereotypes,

¹⁷⁸ NANDY (1995), p. 201.

¹⁷⁹ KUMAR (2008), p. 237.

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to show how to deal with injustice or violence. And if there is somebody courageous I would suggest to make a film where in some small village or town are creating new festival or tradition that would celebrate religious plurality in India and bring people from different communities together. I put this forward because I feel that this is easier and more effective way than story about interreligious marriage (that can be seen more as distant fairy tale) and also because this way Bollywood influences the life a lot: „Yash Chopra's wedding“, stealing shoes at wedding and many other festivals and ceremonies are biggest signs of film's impact on real life.

My inference is that some small details are very crucial not only for meaning of the film but also for the impact of the film on regular people. Similarly to small stereotypes and small scenes that insult minorities, small details can change something. As the fans wear the same clothes, same hair cut and use same phrases as their hero rather than live his story, small personal and daily-life elements of religious coexistence can become a part of the daily life. For film-makers this can be more demanding than creating a legend about love of Hindu and Muslim, but it can make a difference. India needs better care of relationships between minorities and majority, since many events in the last twenty years created many fissures between minorities and majority, it is necessary to build solid bridges. Culture is just one of tools that can bring about changes, good or bad.

Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, on conference of state government information ministers, 1972

(Cinema has) important task of not only projecting a correct image of India to our people and abroad but of helping them to raise themselves above the old bad habits, bad customs, into a higher standard, economically, intellectually, morally, in every way so that our country can become stronger and better in every way.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ VIRDI (1983), p. 61.

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Appendix – Reviews and ratings

Aamir

Subhash K Jha: 3.5/5

„If you are one of those super-selective moviegoers who watches only three films a year

then make sure Aamir figures on your list. (...) That debutant director Rajkumar Gupta is able to muster a fair amount of smiles and chuckles in this tale of one day in the life of a man caught in a nightmare that even Franz Kafka would have found hard to create, let alone condone, is entirely providential. (...) The debutant (the main actor) doesn't let go of his character for even a split second. From those skilful long-shots of him running on the highways to those tight close-ups expressing hurt, anger, anguish, desperation and occasional gratitude Rajeev knows his job thoroughly.¹⁸²”

Taran Adarsh, IndiaFM

“On the whole, Aamir is a remarkable film. It may not set the box-office afire, but it succeeds where most films don't -- it hits where it hurts. The message this film sets out to convey comes loud and clear. Very strongly recommended!¹⁸³”

IMDb: 7.6/10 (1 465 votes)

BoxOffice India: Below Average

Bombay

Anand Kannan

„I wouldn't call this the best of Mani Ratnam. Nayakan was. But good acting, a socially conscious theme and a quick pace make the movie well worth watching. (...) You can see that the director has carefully balanced the Hindu and Muslim

¹⁸² Now Running com. Seen 16th of July 2010.

<http://www.nowrunning.com/movie/5010/bollywood.hindi/aamir/review.htm>.

¹⁸³ OneIndia. Seen 16th of July 2010.

<http://entertainment.oneindia.in/bollywood/reviews/2008/aamir-review-060608.html>.

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atrocities. (...) Not a perfect movie, but better than anything I've seen of late. See it on the big screen.¹⁸⁴

James Berardinelli: (Theatrical Aspect Ratio: 1.85:1)

„Bombay is a gripping indictment of racial hatred. The emotions that fueled the Bombay riots are the same ones that ripped apart the former Yugoslavia (the film *Vukovar* uses a similar Romeo and Juliet story to even better effect for the Serb/Croatian war). The reasons given by both Hindus and Muslims for fighting sound suspiciously like those used by Hitler when justifying his Final Solution. Shekhar's cry that "we are all Indians first of all!" isn't heeded.¹⁸⁵”

IMDb: 7.7/10 (1 538 votes)

BoxOffice India: Above Average

Dhokha

Subhash K Jha: 3/5

„writer Mahesh Bhatt brings the savagely rampant cult of terrorism into the precincts of the middleclass household. The portrait of a derelict soul looking for his lost domestic utopia in the rubble of a nasty bomb explosion, is stark real, dark and poignant. (...) *Dhokha* is a film that persuades you not-so-gently to think about the quality of lives that we live and a social order that thinks terrorism happens only to 'them'.¹⁸⁶”

Aakash Gandhi: 8/10 (7.7/10 rated by 74 viewers)

„Many may not see *Dhokha* as an entertaining film. And it may not be so in the classic sense. But it is a very real film. And it's time you become aware of the issues that are going on around you. This is what cinema was made to be. *Dhokha* deserves to be seen. It deserves to be appreciated.¹⁸⁷”

Mahesh Bhatt

¹⁸⁴ Planet Bollywood. Seen 16th of July 2010.

<<http://www.planetbollywood.com/Film/bombay.html>>.

¹⁸⁵ Reelviews. Seen 16th of July 2010. <<http://www.reelviews.net/movies/b/bombay.html>>.

¹⁸⁶ Now Running com. Seen 16th of July 2010.

<<http://www.nowrunning.com/movie/4183/bollywood.hindi/dhoka/1295/review.htm>>.

¹⁸⁷ Planet Bollywood. Seen 16th of July 2010.

<<http://www.planetbollywood.com/displayReview.php?id=100507050654>>.

Appendix – Reviews and ratings

„In the 60th year of Indian independence, Dhoka dares to take the first step towards achieving this end. The war of terrorism cannot be won by governments that have no support from their people. It is crucial that its people support it in this war against the faceless enemy which sadly enough could be one their own. The real Jihad, as a devout Muslim friend of mine said, is the Jihad that is fought with ones self.¹⁸⁸”

IMDb: 6.4/10 (170 votes)

BoxOffice India: not found

Mission Kashmir

Mohammad Ali Ikram: 8.5/10 (6.36/10 rated by 4109 viewers)

Undoubtedly, this is a very good film from one of our top directors, but Chopra's choice of story to complement the magnificence of every other aspect of his movie, brings the film down a few rungs from Classic status. (...) it is a must see, and likely one I will watch at least a half-dozen times more in the future. And so it will grow on me, a rare quality for movies which usually fade in their appeal over time. I must commend Vidhu Vinod Chopra for always making films from the heart. The problem remains for him that the average filmgoer wants instant gratification, not a movie that takes time to sink into your system. Let's see if this Mission proves me wrong.¹⁸⁹”

N K Deoshi

“Vinod Chopra's films have always been different, away from the regular masala kitsch Bollywood churns out every Friday. Beneath all the drama that goes on in the movie there lurks the aspiration to get across to people the message of what actually people of Kashmir are going through.¹⁹⁰”

IMDb: 6.9/10 (1 457 votes)

¹⁸⁸ Bollywood Hungama. 13th of July 2007.

<<http://www.bollywoodhungama.com/features/2007/07/13/2854/index.html>>.

¹⁸⁹ Planet Bollywood. Seen 16th of July 2010.

<<http://www.planetbollywood.com/Film/MissionKashmir/index.html>>.

¹⁹⁰ ApunKaChoice. Seen 16th of July 2010.

<http://www.apunkachoice.com/movies/mov82/mission_kashmir-review.html>.

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BoxOffice India: Above Average

Veer-Zara

Aakash Gandhi: 9.5/10 (4.89/10 rated by 9004 viewers)

„Love stories come and go, films become hits and flops; but eternal love stories and immortal films are what stay alive in the hearts of movie lovers. Veer-Zaara is the majestic tale of two people, whose love for one another crosses into the realm of inspirational devotion. Veer and Zaara...two names detached by the wraths of religion...two entities divided by military and national borders...two forms estranged by miles of expansive distance...one soul joined by sacrificial love...one existence...Veer-Zaara.¹⁹¹”

Sukanya Verma

„It tries to drive the same point again and again into your system till you either succumb to it or miraculously produce an antidote. (...) two individuals who fall in love in two days and are forced to spend 22 years apart from each other owing to circumstances. Veer is now in a Pakistani jail serving for no crime or reason (...) In an interview, Shah Rukh Khan said, "I sleepwalk through romantic roles now". (...) So if you are a fan of the Chopra factory of filmmaking and looking for plenty of eye-candy, Veer-Zaara promises to make your Diwali a happy one.¹⁹²”

IMDb: 7.3/10 (4 034 votes)

BoxOffice India: Super Hit

¹⁹¹ Planet Bollywood. Seen 16th of July 2010. <<http://www.planetbollywood.com/Film/VeerZaara>>

¹⁹² Rediff.com. Seen 16th of July 2010. <<http://www.rediff.com/movies/2004/nov/12veer.htm>>.