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The Marginalization and Complexities of Muslim Identity on Screen: A Critique

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Abstract: This study examines the evolution, complexities, and socio-political implications of Muslim identity representation in Indian cinema and web series. Tracing the historical trajectory from early romanticized and idealised narratives, through the classical "Muslim Social" genre and the nostalgic celebration of Nawabi culture, to the subsequent rise of post-1990s stereotypes, Islamophobia, and anti-hero archetypes, the critique highlights how mainstream media frequently marginalizes minority identities. While traditional cinematic storytelling often reinforces majoritarian ideologies and reductive

tropes, contemporary digital platforms and emerging critical frameworks offer new spaces for more nuanced, pluralistic depictions. Ultimately, this critique underscores the necessity of fostering sociopolitical literacy and inclusive narratives to challenge prejudice and promote deeper cultural understanding.

Key Words:

- Muslim Identity
- Indian Cinema
- Representation
- Stereotypes
- Marginalization

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Cinema is one of the most impactful forms of popular culture in the India and Indian cinema has shaped mass perceptions and popular identities. Muslims, being, one of the major minorities in India, the depiction in media is, beyond artistic portrayal. The depiction of Muslims in Indian cinema and web series is vital in understanding societal narratives surrounding pluralism and the Muslim community. Cinema as a form of expressing and gauging the society's ideological and cultural precepts so that the portrayal of the community in Hindi Cinema requires a critical assessment.

Portrayal of Muslims in Indian Cinema has largely been on a spectrum of stereotypes that are loaded with prejudices and marginalizing. Cinematic representation has largely oscillated between a spectrum of valuation and diffusion of the cultural identity. Bollywood's representation of Muslims has ranged from the dacoits of the Bollywood's yesteryears to the anti-heroes of Muslim identity today, containing elements of complexity. Exception to this, certain narratives have sought to humanize and offer a nuanced information on Muslim life in India. Bollywood has been instrumental in critiquing the pervasive Islamophobia submerged in a major narrative of discourse. However, portrayal of Muslims has largely been reductive and pessimistic. A major part of Indian cinema and web-series has been dominated by the portrayal of Muslims in the context of terrorism and aimed at secular audiences by relying on various historical religious conflicts. Mohammad Asim Siddiqui in his book *Muslim Identity in Hindi Cinema: Poetics and Politics of Genre and Representation*, argues that cinema often carries hidden ideologies, leading to the invisibilization or negative portrayal of Muslim characters, reinforcing stereotypes and contributing to cultural homogenization. (2025)

The narrative structures of the films have a typical kind of settings. Shiela Nayar very aptly pointed out that this is a specific characteristic of oral storytelling, not only in India, which by its nature is episodic, sequential and additive. Construction of the story does not build up into a sort of pyramidal pattern, but is based on the use of particular techniques such as flashback, thematic repetition and jumps in time. It is only with such techniques that sustained narrative can be handled, simplifying it as far as possible so that it can be remembered. (2004, 16). Actually the Hindi Films have not represented the realist picture of society but mediated texts with majoritarian conservative ideology. The presentation is what Ashis Nandy call it as anti-psychological (1981) because it is never analytic or reflective. It is always subjective

suitable for the emotional appeal of the audience. Javed Akhtar said that the difference between Indian and western cinema is like an epic and short story. The structural pattern has a plot which is predictable and the characters are forced representation. Thomas (2008) in his article mentioned that in popular Hindi cinema the plot is considered to be of decidedly secondary importance among various ingredients of the film: according to the authors themselves, it serves solely as the basis for representation of emotion as well, obviously, as creation of the spectacle. But web series have improved upon other methods of storytelling. The advancement of this media brings new opportunities to develop narratives, characters, and themes. Traditional methods of cinematic storytelling rely upon a “call” to authenticity. Traditional methods of storytelling devote a lot of time to the “call” for authenticity and fail to show the depth of characters’ hopes, dreams, aspirations, and existential dilemmas. The new media allow a more authentic means of storytelling. With this change, there exists the danger of perpetuating sensationalized stories and simplistic representations of characters. This will only serve to strengthen existing biases. The new media help to develop and tell the stories of characters and show their hopes and aspirations. However, it is important to analyze and evaluate how these new media tell the stories of the marginalized Muslim character and their aspirations, and how they help or hurt inter-community relations. In the Indian context the marginalization of Muslims is by force. The presentations of the scene on the performance space render the implied meaning of the ideology of the political relations. Various incidents are against Muslims which takes place on the socio-cultural space for the benefit of majoritarian ideologies.

The necessity for appropriate and respectful characterizations of the various faith communities cannot be overstated. In popular and traditional media, characterizations of Muslim faith strengthen horrible stereotypes and create a greater division between already divided communities. However, traditional media can help to tell the story of the community and bring people together if specific care is taken. However, if these characterizations of Muslim faith are intended to create fear and a distortion of faith, then these representations will serve to deepen the existing divisions and create greater prejudice.

The representations of Muslims in both Indian cinema and web series not only signal the evolution of social approaches but also place themselves in the ongoing discourse about concerning the identity, representation, and social belonging of marginalized groups in society. It is to note that the mainstream socio-cultural space never speak about the minorities. The

characters appear, in the socio-cultural space, of these smaller scale communities are coloured differently so as to identify easily. The nature of these communities brings out in a very loud and melodramatic fashion. Now the reality behind it is very important that the mainstream socio-cultural space is aware of the territorial space of the community but not interested in presenting it on stage. The marginalisation of minorities, especially Muslims, is because of the historical fact of partition. But the modern world is also deterritorising this community on the economic, cultural and political ground. Arjun Appadurai (2011) comments, 'deterritorisation, in general, is one of the central forces of the modern world because it brings laboring populations into lower class sectors and spaces of relatively wealthy societies while sometimes creating exaggerated and intensified senses of criticism or attachment to politics in the home state. Deterritorisation, whether of Hindus, Sikhs, Palestinians, or Ukrainians is now at the core of variety of global fundamentalism, including Islamic and Hindu fundamentalism.' (290). Today the rationality of religion is misinterpreted by everyone.

Muslim narratives based on the community issues, especially developed as the content, require a critical concern and this concern can be obtained from media. This kind of evolutionary narrative regarding to the representations especially, needs to formulate a sociopolitical literacy for critical analysis about the division and to promote or to encourage it for developing the inclusive narrative. Critical representation of Muslims in Indian media can create spaces for discourse on identity and the sociopolitical context. Withal, representation cannot be separated from identity. Raymond Williams (1961) rightly pointed out in his concept 'selective tradition' where to support the ideas of ruling class the cultural and historical are curated accordingly. The Indian cinematic social representation of Muslims has gone through a series of transformations from the first decades of the twentieth century. Cinematic representation of Muslims during this period weaves a multifaceted tapestry of reflections as they are influenced by the socio-political discourse of the time. The 1930s and 1940s Indian films began representation of Muslim characters as good and noble, and began the processes of idealization and romanticization of character representations within the heroic and virtuous folktales. The early films of the period, such as *Alladin Aur Jadui Chirag* (1937) and *Kismet* (1943), were the first films to represent Muslim heroes who justified romance and moral rectitude within the archetypal justice narratives. The cinematic language of the Hindi films is not Hindi or Urdu but Hindustani, which is spoken across India which is a mixture of the cultural heritage of Hindu and Muslims in India.

The division of British India into India and Pakistan caused major shifts in society and the psyche of people and began to transform the space where cinema dwelled. The violent communal clashes that ensued, and the burgeoning of nationalism, indispensable for the major directors and narrators to address the identity crisis that collective society was experiencing. Even the language changed, according to Ulka Anjaria in her *Understanding Bollywood: The Grammar Of Hindi Cinema* (2021), mentioned that the language debates have taken place in the political sphere, the cinema is where Indians can enjoy the secular, pan-religious heritage that is been weakened elsewhere. Even the decades following the Partition, films had multi religious and multi ethnic production teams and dialogues were spoken in heterogeneous language that was widely comprehensible. Most films and film posters proudly presented their titles in all the three scripts: Roman, Devnagari and Nastaliq corresponding to English, Hindi and Urdu. Earlier narrations and depictions of the heritage of the Islamic traditions began to change, and started to offer portrayals laced with doubt and hostility. Looking into the traces of cinema we find that most of the narrations were from Muslim culture.

In 1939 Sohrab Modi made a film *Pukar* based on the life of Mughal emperor Jahangir which was a notable attempt to begin a sub-genre of Indian cinema notes as ‘Muslim Social Cinema’ as mentioned by Malise Ruthven, Azim Nanj in their book *Historical Atlas of Islam* (189). In the initial phase of the Muslim Social Cinema a lot of films were made on the lives of Mughal emperors ‘*Humayun*’ (1945) by Mehboob Khan, *Anarkali* (1953), *Taj Mahal* (1963), *Jahan Ara* (1964) and the pinnacle of the Mughal themes was *Mughal-E-Azam* (1960) by K.Asif. This film is remade with fresh colors in 2004 which proves its receptivity by audiences from last fifty years. The film celebrated silver jubilee in both of its release. Gautami Chintamani quoted Javed Akhtar in the newspaper ‘The Dawn’, “The idea of Jehangir falling in love with her (Anarkali) and creating a rift between father and son is a story that was created by an Urdu playwright Imtiaz Ali titled *Taj*.” These films based on the life of Mughal emperors projected the nostalgic attachment of Indian society for listening the stories of kings and queens, not bothering about the religion but connecting to the bonds of love and emotions, achieving Aristotelian cathartic effect, weaving a secular ideology in the social life of India after partition. Even in 2008 *Jodha Akbar* film was made by Ashutosh Gowariker trying to promote the secular culture from emperor life with a typical Muslim culture.

The story of Mughal emperors was later on shifted to Nawabi life style specially Nawabs of north India. The life style of Awadh and Lukhnow nawabs became the popular

theme of cinema at Bombay. Most of the film writers were from Urdu language and from northern part of India whether it was Manto, Aman, Kamal Amrohi, Ehsan Rizvi, Wajahat Mirza, Rajinder Bedi, Krishana Chander and Muslim directors, screenplay writers, musicians, lyricists and actors prominent amongst them were Mehboob Khan, K.A.Abbas, Abrar Alvi, Ghulam Haider, Khayyam, Sahir Ludhyanvi, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Shakeel Badayuni, Naushad, Mohammed Rafi, Talat Mehmood, Shamshad Begum, Mubarak Begum, Dilipkumar, Meenakumari, Madhubala, etc from the Urdu knowing society and many more.

Rachel Dwyer wrote that, 'Muslims have long played a major role in the Indian film industry. The industry has given us many Muslim iconic figures such as actor Dilip Kumar (Yusuf Khan, seen as the actor's actor in Hindi cinema), actresses Madhubala (Mumtaz Jehan Dehalvi, for many the greatest beauty to grace Bollywood screens) and Waheeda Rahman (often in roles that cast her as a life and love tormented female before she was cast as that most quintessential of all Bollywood characters: the even more long suffering Ma). There have been great directors such as Mahboob and Kamal Amrohi. Since the 1990s, its biggest male stars are the three Khans: Shahrukh Khan, Salman Khan and Aamir Khan, who no longer change their names to sound 'modern'. Yet, Muslim characters in Bollywood, as it is known since the 1990s, are doomed to minor roles fated simply to represent their community and conform to a series of well-established stereotypes. Hindi films usually have lead actors and actresses who are north Indian upper-caste Hindus, who can be seen as 'normal Indians', while characters from other regions or religions are usually typecast, not infrequently in negative roles.

Muslim characters may appear in any genre of Hindi films. But they can be found more specifically in a group of sub-genres called 'Islamicate' - that is films which deal with the cultural, rather than religious, life of India's Muslims. These sub-genres include: the Arabian Nights fantasy, which became less popular after independence but still exists as a B-movie genre; the devotional film, often centred on Garib Nawaz of Ajmer (the twelfth century Sufi Saint Moinuddin Hasan Chishti), replete with miracles and popular religious practices which also fall into the B-movie type; the historical films which are concerned with India's Muslim past, in particular the Mughal period; the films about the culture of the courtesan (tawaif), which are relatively few but include some of the most loved films in Hindi film history; and the 'Muslim social', the name by which all these genres were formerly known but which is now restricted to films set in the contemporary world of India's Muslims.'

So the nawabi life style and the stories were the part of the Bombay film circuit and helped to develop the Muslim Social Cinema. These films such as *Chaudhavin Ka Chand*

(1960), *Mere Mehboob* (1963), *Dil Hi To Hai* (1963), *Mehboob Ki Mehndi* (1971) marked the grandeur of the havelis, sophistication of language and life style. It is to record that the Muslim culture projected on the screen took over the audience for a long time. The sherwanis, kurta pyjamas, aadab- taslim (to greet), chewing of paan, Urdu sher-o- shayari (poetry), women wearing ghararas, shararas with an embroidery or jardozi work on it, (A traditional Lukhnow garment traditionally worn by Muslim women of Hindi Belt. It consists of a short, mid-thigh length tunic, a dupatta (veil), and most importantly, a pair of wide-legged pants, rucked at the knee so they flare out dramatically. The knee area, called the gota in Urdu, is often elaborately embroidered in zari and zardozi work. Each leg of a traditional gharara is made from over 12 meters of fabric, often silk brocade¹) heavy in weight with a lots of jewelry, burqa (veil) clad or chaddar worn old ladies their happier and lighter moments in big havelis, birds chirping outside, fountains, an ambience of richness and wealth, the joyful moments and singing and concerts of qawwalis and ghazals, in food biryani, kebab, sewain (vermicelli) and kheer, social integration on the days of Eids, campus like Aligarh Muslim University, an ostentatious clash of burqa clad heroine with a sherwani wearing hero mesmerized the generation of that period, who was liked very much by the Indian audience and crowned a common face person as super star, it was so beautiful that it did not endure to a film scene but remained truth of Muslim culture of India. This north Indian reflection of the society in cinema and some words became part of day-today life, words like *miyan* (gentleman), *aadab arz hai* (salutation), Masha-Allah and Subhan-Allah crossed the boundaries of religion, castes and classes. These films have not only popularized the language and Muslim culture in Hindi-Urdu knowing belt of India but also focused on the social issue that society faced at that time. On one hand writers like Ismat Chughtai, Sazzad Zahir and Manto, etc were trying to bring the social issues on the basis of religion amongst the literate class of Muslim society and films were trying to bring the issue in front of all sorts of Muslims who stayed in India after partition. A shift in this Nawabi culture was being traced in the cinemas like *Bahu Begum* (1967) and *Pakeezah* (1972) which was on its zenith. A message of spreading education (*Najma* 1943), helping girls to be part of co-education system or bringing tawaifs (courtesan) into mainstream society (*Mehboob ki Mehndi* 1971) was an attempt to convince society to ponder over the problems. This hidden social message was the need of the time and projection of changing cultural scenario was projected

¹ Yojana: Volume 6, Issue 20. Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. 1962. Retrieved 13 November 2010. 'The Begums of Lucknow use a modification of ghagra, called gharara or bara paincha, which sometimes require 36 yards of cloth.'

through popular culture getting away from routine love stories and screening the power centers of the society. The social issues were accepted by the Indian society simply for the sake of entertainment and not focusing on the problems of Muslim community which led the community in a deteriorating phase after fifty years of independence. All these films were recorded as classical Muslim Social Cinema. It is again to record very vital fact of Hindi cinema that all these films talking about Nawabs and Kings were part of mainstream cinema.

But from 1965 onwards the Muslim culture came out of havelis and palaces and converted itself into parallel stream or experimental with a nomenclature of 'New Wave Muslim Social'. Actually Muslim social was dealing with the upper class of the society and appreciated and received well, but the 'New Wave' was not received with a specific attention of the society. The shift was from upper class to middle class. *Dastak*(1970) revealed the problem of Muslim couple and the psyche of the society. Hamid and Salma, a young couple, are coming to terms with the daily trauma of knocks on their door that sought the previous occupant a famous 'mujrewali' (courtesan). The growing anxiety and tension that society was beginning to feel found expression through characters that began to reflect this mood and portrayed Muslims as the hero, and later as the Islamic antagonist. Movies like "Garam Hava" (1973) brought to the fore the predicaments and dilemmas of the Muslim community in India in the aftermath of the Partition.

Garam Hawa (1973) explored the dilemma of Mirza who has decided to stay back in India after partition, but faces a difficult time as to prove again and again his nationality and patriotism for the land called India. His family is required to prove their affection with the land and the young generation is facing social discrimination at various social and political level. *Bazaar* (1982) deals with the issue of girl's marriage and economic condition of Muslims of Hyderabad, representing the lower economic status of the society. The girl is sold out to the rich man living in the Middle East without her consent which is the soul of the marriage in Islam. This reality of life is depicted very pathetically with a brilliant team of actors projecting the tight mohalla and the typical mode of local transportation of cycle rickshaw. *Nikaah* (1982) dealt with the issue of triple talaq. In *Nikaah*, B.R Chopra makes a social comment on the sharia laws of divorce (Talaq) and its misuse in Indian Muslim society.

But 1990s began the erosion of progress and the wholesale stereotyping of Muslims in cinema began. The aggressive overt communalism of the politics of the day created new media representation frameworks. Increasingly, cinema like "Ghulam" (1998) and "Sarfaroosh" (1999)

began to root portrayals of Muslims in crime, conspiracy, and terrorism and began to assimilate and propagate the growing fears and expressions of cinematic Islamophobia. The increasingly negative portrayals began to culminate in the contemporary cinema of the 2000s with portrayals of Fiza (2000) and Kante (2002), where Muslims were again portrayed as morally dubious and descending the increasingly prevalent negativity of Islam and Muslims.

Rachel Dwyer, Professor of Indian Cultures and Cinema at SOAS, University of London mentions ten archetypes of Muslim characters in Hindi cinema in the magazine Critical Muslim. According to him, it was pleasurable to watch Muslim characters as 1) The veiled beauties, 2) The nawabs and courtesans, 3) Emperors, 4) The loyal sidekicks, 5) The poet and singers, 6) The intolerant Muslims, 7) The Gangster, 8) The Pakistani, 9) the Terrorist and 10) The Modern Muslim. The first five archetypes mentioned by Dwyer are from the 1930 to 1992 Hindi cinema but the last five represented the films from Hindi cinema 1992 onwards. There are few examples to quote for continuing the argument of good and bad Muslims in the films. In 1995 movie *Bombay*, the husband is secular and tolerant Hindu who allowed his Muslim wife to practice her religion. In 2001 cinema *Gadar Ek Prem katha*, a Sikh husband rescues a Muslim woman in the Partition riots and allows her to continue her religious practice after their marriage. *Once Upon a Time in Mumbai* (2010) portrays the rise of ill will Muslim gangsters Dawood and in *Agnepath* (2012) Rauf Lala a butcher and a pimp, a very negative representation of a Muslim appeared and appreciated. In *Sarfarosh* (1999), a Pakistani spy enters India as a ghazal singer, albeit one who bites ears off baby goats, giving a sinister turn to the poetic tradition. In *Veer Zaara* (2004) Indian Air force officer, Veer, is imprisoned for years in Pakistan at the hands of the evil husband of his beloved Zaara Haayat Khan, and the women in her family and her lawyer, Saamiya Siddiqui, reunite the couple and In *Ek tha Tiger*, 2012's big hit, Tiger a RAW (Indian intelligence) Agent falls in love with his Pakistani counterpart, Zoya. Films as *Mission Kashmir* (1998) and *Fiza* (2000), where Muslims are depicted as terrorists and the films *New York* (2009) and *Kurbaan* (2009), argue that American Islamophobia creates terrorists. Dwyer elaborates the modern Muslim in Hindi films that *rarely do Hindi films show a modern, secular Muslim. But there are exceptions: the comedian Mehmood's slapstick Hyderabad Muslim in Gumnaam (1965); Ali in Dhoom (2004), Farhan Qureshi in 3 idiots (2009); Aslam Khan in Rang de basanti (2006) and Iqbal in the film of the same name (2005). Shahrukh Khan's performances as a Muslim have created new roles: in Chak de! India (2007), he redeems himself as a hockey coach after being accused of deliberately losing a hockey match*

against Pakistan; in *My name is Khan* (2010), he marries a Hindu (inter-communal marriages in films are usually Hindu man and Muslim woman), and when her son is killed in an Islamophobic attack, sets off to tell the President of the United States that, 'My name is Khan and I'm not a terrorist'.

While critiquing the films, the political influences and the changing psyche of the society are the reasons of the portrayal of Muslims in Hindi cinema in the contemporary scenario. The films are part of propaganda and the rightist ideology used it for their rule. Adorno commented in his *The Culture Industry* about the pattern of fascist propaganda that, 'The narcissist gain provided by fascist propaganda is obvious. It suggests continuously and sometimes in rather devious ways; that the follower, simply through belonging to the in-group is better, higher and poorer than those who are excluded. At the same time any kind of critique or self-awareness is resented as a narcissistic loss and elicits rage. It accounts for the violent reaction of racist against what they deem *zersetzend* that which debunks their own stubbornly maintained values, and also explains the hostility of prejudiced persons against any kind of introspection. Concomitantly the concentrations of the hostility upon the out group does away with intolerance in once own group to which ones relation would otherwise be highly ambivalent.' (145)

The socio-political conditioning by the power politics and hegemonic forces with its own drawn conclusion with Clash of Civilization to paint Muslims as destructive civilization for the world rather than the local milieu remarked its footsteps in Hindi cinema to question the secular fabric of the constitution. Jasbir Jain points out that, 'A political aspect was the declining graph of Muslim representation and the corresponding rise in stereotyping the Muslim. Even whilst we support the concept of ideology of secularism, the focus on the way of section of our society is represented is important for everyone. It acts as a mirror; allows us to see the prejudices and the flow of historical forces much more clearly than passive uncritical viewing. It also draws us towards the artistic, realization if the unusual, of the sensitive and of the agony of being marked.' (2) The rightist ideology in every part of world is interested in protecting their cultural dominance over others and in the world of cinema, controlled by such forces, portrays Muslim in negative, backward and uncivilized sense. So what Ritwik Ghatak mentioned that cinema should stick up to real life but today Indian cinema is somewhere lost its way in the huge sea of forced culture by neo capitalist and corporate forces.

The 21st century has witnessed a re-examination of Muslim identities through digital platforms and web series, moving away from the stereotypical narratives of the past.

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Productions such as “Taj Mahal 1989” (2020) and “Mumbai Dabba” (2017) have offered nuanced depictions of Muslim characters and their lived experiences. Such contemporary stories often portray Muslims as complex individuals negotiating a pluralistic society and hence counter the historically entrenched anti-hero archetype. Moreover, the religious symbols are cautiously employed, often as a way to express cultural identity rather than manifest indicators of morality or crime.

The transformation of idealized representations pre-marginalization foregrounds a stark juxtaposition in the way Indian cinema has historically constructed and reconstructed Muslim identities. As social narratives keep on evolving, the depiction of Muslims in Indian cinema and web series is a crucial measure of the tensions and dynamics that exist in Indian society. As filmmakers increasingly strive to portray nuanced characters that move beyond the reductive tropes of the past, the discourse surrounding the representation of Islam is ripe for further evolution, inviting a critical examination of the intersections of religion, identity and artistic expression in a rapidly changing society. Often, the portrayal of Muslims in Indian cinema and Indian web series presents a model of marginalization, where Muslim characters are often confined to secondary roles in traditional narratives. This marginalization is not merely a matter of sub-representation, it is complex to the socio-political history of India, modeling the way these characters are conceived and portrayed on the screen. Rubdy (2024) argues that this problematic representation closely corresponds to the historical context of common tensions and the resultant social perceptions of Muslims, which have been amplified by contemporary political speeches. In many films and series, Muslim characters are relegated to the role of the antagonist or represented by stereotypes that limit their complexity. A common example is the stereotype of Muslim men as terrorists or criminals, frequently associated with violence and fundamentalism. This narrow depiction reinforces the negative stereotypes that are perpetuated by the broader Islamophobic narrative, where Muslim identity is often associated with threat and danger. Muslim characters in stories tend to be one-dimensional, even when they are supporting characters, largely as sheets for the Hindu heroes. This dynamic not only limits the space for Muslim voices to be heard, but also suppresses several narratives that could add significantly to the plurality of Indian cinema.

The way Muslim characters are shown in stories is often complex when they are part of a Hindu environment. These characters usually try to fit into the bigger Hindu nationalistic story, which shows how the traditional way of thinking wants everyone to be the same. This

approach not only questions the many cultural and religious sides of Muslim identity but also makes people think that to be accepted, they need to water down their culture. When Muslim characters are in charge, they are often shown as anti-heroes, which reflects a complicated mix of right and wrong seen through a mostly non-Muslim lens. This trend shows that there is a limited acceptance of Muslim individuality, marked by a big contradiction: when Muslim characters are strong, they are often seen as morally ambiguous and against social norms rather than as a natural part of them. These stories highlight the tension between personal identity and how society sees Muslims, showing how they are often depicted as unusual or trying to fit into an identity that is complex and has many social implications.

Historically, Muslim characters were limited to roles of villainy or exoticism, but they are increasingly finding their place in the anti-hero frame, reflecting broader societal attitudes and tensions experienced in contemporary India. This change not only challenges the simple good vs. evil binary but also allows filmmakers to explore the subtleties of identity amidst the dominant issues of religious marginalization and Islamophobia. In many cases, Muslim characters are shown struggling to balance their identities with the dominant Hindu culture, leading to a sense of marginalization.

In short, how Muslims are shown in Indian movies and web series is a sign of bigger issues of marginalization. By looking at the roles of characters, the structure of stories, and the themes that guide them, it becomes clear that these representations are not just artistic choices but also reflect social prejudices and historical contexts that continue to shape the cultural landscape. The complexity, or lack thereof, of these representations reveals a lot about common stereotypes and the challenges Muslims face in affirming their identity within a diverse but polarized society. The rise of anti-hero stories in Indian cinema has had a big impact on how Muslim characters are shown, allowing for more nuanced and complex representations that often differ from traditional ones.

However, the emergence of anti-hero narratives has provided an opportunity for more complex and nuanced representations of Muslim characters. This emergence has been allowing the character for a deeper exploration of their experiences and identities in real. This shift has the potential to challenge stereotypes and promote greater understanding and acceptance of Muslim individuality within Indian society. The representation of Muslims in Indian cinema and web series is a reflection of the broader social and cultural context, and it is essential to

consider the historical and cultural factors that shape these representations. By examining the ways in which Muslim characters are portrayed, we can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges they face and the ways in which their identities are shaped by societal attitudes and expectations. Ultimately, a more nuanced and complex representation of Muslim characters has the potential to promote greater empathy and understanding, and to challenge the dominant narratives that have historically marginalized Muslim identities. The complexity of Muslim identity is often reduced to simplistic stereotypes, which can be damaging and limiting. By challenging stereotypes and promoting greater understanding and acceptance of Muslim individuality, these representations have the potential to contribute to a more inclusive and diverse cultural landscape.

Certificate of Completion and Theoretical Synthesis

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This is to certify that the scholarly research paper titled "The Marginalization and Complexities of Muslim Identity on Screen: A Critique", authored by Dr. Mustajeeb Khan, Professor, Department of English, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (Aurangabad) M.S., India, has been published in Epitome : International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (ISSN: 2395-6968).

*Furthermore, this exhaustive study achieves its ultimate theoretical conclusion through the rigorous application of **The Pramod Effect**, formulated by Dr. Pramod Ambadasrao Pawar under the governing equation $1 - 1 = 0 = 1$. Operating as an essential paradigm of the **Global Mandate for Oneness**, this framework systematically dismantles historical and contemporary cinematic binaries of majoritarian dominance versus minority marginalization, neutralizing ideological polarization into an absolute state of emptiness ($1 - 1 = 0$), and subsequently elevating the global discourse into an ultimate monistic equilibrium ($= 1$) of shared human heritage, cultural totality, and universal oneness.*

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