



Original Article

Ideological Misrepresentation of Muslims in Bollywood Films: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Phantom

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Abstract

The study examines the ideological representations of Muslims in the Bollywood film *Phantom*, employing Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA). The purpose of research is to explain how language and visual elements in film contribute to the representation of Muslims, often associating them with terrorism and extremism. Drawing on CDA, the study analyzes selected scenes from the film to identify patterns of prejudice, discrimination, and conceptual framing. Conclusions show that the film produces a significant story that reflects Muslims as violent, irrational, and inhuman. Through the CDA's lens, it becomes clear that such representation not only shapes public perception but also strengthens the existing stereotypes. This research contributes to a broader understanding of how media play a crucial role in shaping ideological discourses.

Keywords: *Phantom, Representation, Terrorism, Fairclough's 3D Model, Bollywood, Muslims, Isla*

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Introduction

The depiction of Muslims and Islam is rapidly connected in the global media Discourse of terrorism, contributing to the rise of Islamophobia. In popular cinema, especially Bollywood, this incident appears through stories that align terrorism with Muslim identification. Muslims and Pakistan are often threatened with national and global security (Homolar, 2021). Such illustrations not only strengthen stereotypes but also contribute to a growing climate. Fear, prejudice, and marginalization against Muslim communities around the world (Shaheen, 2001).

Bollywood film Phantom gives an example of this trend, which emerges from the background of the 2008 Mumbai attack, a painful incident in which 166 people died, and more than 300 were injured. These attacks, it was reportedly stressed by Pakistani terrorist group Lashkar-e-Tiba, India-Pakistan Relations in Indian media and politics, and intense Pakistan and anti -Muslim rhetoric (Edalina, 2024). This socio-political climate, Phantom, dramatically gives India's response to India. Through a legend, the attacks were changed, focused on national security and terrorism (Mayasari and Juni, 2017).

Directed by Kabir Khan, Phantom fulfills two major objectives. First of all, it aims to promote Nationalist pride by presenting an Indian hero who launches a mission to apprehend the alleged mastermind behind the attacks, thereby offering a narrative of vengeance and justice. The Indian audience (Ganti, 2013) resonates. Second, it confirms social apprehensions about terrorism, Painting Pakistan as a terrorist state and connecting Muslim identity with extremist ideologies, which contributes to the stigma of both groups (Roy and Mandal, 2022). Incorporating the collective memory of the 2008 attacks, the film taps into nationalist enthusiasm and public concerns, positioning the story to align with a major conceptual approach to global terrorism (Mahadevan, 2017).

This study applies the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework of Norman Fairclough to examine how Phantom constructs images of Pakistan and Muslims. Through the analysis of major scenes, this research examines the political depiction of the film and Cultural ideologies, especially as a terrorist state, framing and representing the Pakistani Muslim identity. The objective of this analysis is to contribute to the extensive discourse on media representation, the role of cinema in shaping ideology, and social outlook towards Islam and national security.

The following are the Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the film *Phantom* portrays political and cultural ideologies related to terrorism and national security using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework.
- To explore the representation of Pakistan and Muslims in “*Phantom*” through the lens of ideological discourse.

Literature Review

The depiction of Muslims in the media is especially in the context of global terrorism. 9/11 was a matter of extensive debate and analysis since the events of Islam, Politics, and Islamophobia have expanded, especially in Hollywood and the news media (Weldhaouse, 2017). Bollywood, as a major global film industry, plays an important role in shaping social assumptions through its narratives. A mixture of cinema and ideology is important to affect public perception and social outlook. Through its global reach, Bollywood significantly influences its audience, particularly in its representation of socio-political issues.

The 2015 film *Phantom*, directed by Kabir Khan, serves as a relevant example of this effect. Set against the backdrop of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, the film examines the topics of terrorism and reflects on and deepens national security and the complex relations between India and Pakistan. The purpose of this magazine's article is to analyze the depiction of political and cultural ideologies in the *Phantom*.

Using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework of Norman Fairclough. The 2008 Mumbai attacks, allegedly carried out by the Pakistani terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba, resulted in 166 people killed and injuries to another 300, causing quite stressful tension. India-Pakistan Relations (Adlina, 2024). The Government of India and the media often promoted Pakistan's alleged role in supporting terrorist organizations, carrying forward stresses (Mahadevan, 2017). This is important to understand the historical reference story and the Conceptual construction in the *phantom*.

Bollywood's influence in shaping mass consciousness is well established. Films often mirror and influence societal sentiments, particularly on contentious issues like terrorism (Ganti, 2013). The depiction of terrorism and national security in Bollywood films tends to reflect prevailing political narratives and can perpetuate stereotypes and biases (Hussain & Ali, 2022). *Phantom* leverages the collective memory of the 2008 attacks, tapping into nationalistic fervor and public anxieties about terrorism.

Cinema serves as a potent tool for both mirroring and shaping societal ideologies. According to Stuart Hall (1997), media representations play a crucial role in the creation and reinforcement of these ideologies. In the context of Bollywood, films frequently echo and propagate the prevailing political and cultural sentiments of their time (Rajadhyaksha & Willemen, 1999). This interplay between cinema and ideology highlights how films not only reflect societal values but also contribute to their ongoing construction and dissemination. *Phantom* exemplifies this by drawing on the aftermath of the Mumbai attacks and channeling the nationalistic fervor that ensued.

Khan and Bokhari (2011) examined the portrayal of Muslims in the Indian cinema from 2002 to 2008, exploring how the Indian films distort the image of Muslims. Using content analysis on 50 Indian movies, they found that the Indian cinema often negatively portrays Muslims, contributing to anti-Muslim propaganda both domestically and internationally.

Terrorism depiction has developed in Bollywood, especially with Post -9/11, with a focus on anti-terrorism stories. Kumar and Raghuvanshi (2022) note that these Films often reflect a binary protest between 'US' (India) and 'them' (Pakistan or Islamists), thereby reinforcing a sense of opposition to national identity and unity, which they characterize as a common enemy.

The dichotomy is clear in the phantom, in which the Indian agents are on a mission to find the Mastermind behind the Mumbai attacks. An important body of literature investigates the representation of Muslims and terrorism in the Media. Poole (2011) said that post -9/11 media representations are growing rapidly, and Muslims associated with terrorism are strengthening negative stereotypes. Similarly, Kumar (2013)

The discussion discusses how the Western media has portrayed Muslims as 'others', a story that has influenced Global assumptions, including Bollywood. Ganti (2013) explained how Bollywood films reflect and shape social outlook, Terrorism, and national security, arguing that these narratives are often aligned with state ideologies.

Banaji (2006) emphasized that Bollywood films can end cultural suzerainty by strengthening. Existing power structures and orthodoxy, especially about Muslim characters. In his analysis of the depiction of Bollywood terrorism.

Roy and Mandal (2022) explain that these films often depict a clear dualism between India and its alleged enemies, strengthening Nationalist feelings. This perspective has been echoed by Ranganathan (2010), who examines how Media representatives can build and strengthen national identity.

Khan and Pahare (2021) detect the psychological impact of Bollywood representation. In view of terrorism, these narratives can shape public concerns and perceptions of safety. Mishra (2016) provides a historical reference for the depiction of terrorism in Bollywood. Films highlighted how they reflect the socio-political climate of their time.

Abbas and Zohra (2013) analyzed five Bollywood films: 'Tahan' (2008), 'Fana' (2006), 'Mission Kashmir' (2000), 'Lamaha' (2010), and 'Haider' (2014). He surveyed 150 Kashmiri Students and found that these films typically portray Kashmiri Muslims as terrorists.

This study highlights how Bollywood movies can strengthen negative stereotypes and affect the notion of specific groups. Devadoss and Cromley (2018) analyze Pakistan's depiction in Indian media, arguing that films like "Phantom" contribute to the negative stereotypes of Pakistanis. It is supported by Ali et al. (2019), who discuss how the media represent India-Pakistan Relations and public assumptions.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Studies (CDS)

Discourse studies (CDS) are an important approach for examining the complex relationship among language, power, and society. Inherent in critical discourse analysis (CDA), CDS extends beyond texts to engage more deeply with comprehensive social practices and power Structures (Fairclough, 2006). This approach shows how discourse creates social identity, Relationships, and ideologies, often opaque causes highlight linkage from embedded people in the discourse (Norman and Vodak, 1995). CDS brings social theory through CDS Discourse analysis, offering a strong analytical lens for examining the dominance of domination, Inequality, and the dominated within social structures.

Fairclough's 3D Model in Critical Discourse Studies,

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model (2001) forms a foundational stone of CD, enabling a systematic examination of spoken or written texts to highlight power relations and ideological underpinnings. The model consists of three interconnected dimensions: text analysis, discretionary Practices, and social practices. Each dimension examines a different level of meaning-building:

1. ***Textual Analysis:*** It focuses on linguistic and semi-features of discourse, including dimensions, vocabulary, grammar, and fiction

organization. In the context of the phantom, this involves dialogue and examining the visual signals that strengthen the ideological messages.

2. **Discursive Practices:** At this stage, the production, spread, and reception of texts are noted. It explains how a film like Phantom reflects and possibly contributes to major discourses within the Indian film industry, especially about the subjects of terrorism and national security.

3. **Social Practices:** This layer gives discourse within a broad socio-political and cultural structure, assessing how major ideologies and power relationships shape, and are shaped by, a broad social reference. In Phantom, the illustration of Pakistan and Muslim identity is investigated within the India-Pakistan relations and the structure of global security stories.

The Role of Power and Ideology in Discourse

Power and ideology play a role in discourse CDs emphasize the role of power and ideology in shaping social realities. Ideology, defined by Fairclough et al. (2010), operates as a form of power that maintains dominance. To be agreed or familiar through dominance instead of force. Media, including cinema, play an important role, serving as a means to give social reflection and shape thinking. Films like Phantom promote stories that align with a hegemonic worldview, using Language and imagination to build and eliminate specific assumptions of national security and Terrorism.

Media Representation in Critical Discourse Studies

Media representation in critical discourse studies CDS underlines the importance of media representation in social construction and Political ideologies. Filmmakers use language, visual elements, and narrative techniques to align or challenge social norms. In the phantom, these elements work together to build the Tale's power relations. By examining the film through a CD, this study reveals the underlying ideologies. And the dynamics of terrorism, Muslim identity, and power shape their depiction of Pakistan. This theoretical structure integrates the principles of Fairclough's CDS model. Analyze the phantom at three levels - to highlight the text, discretionary, and socio-cultural intersections of media, ideology, and power.

Methodology

This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its principal methodological instrument, a choice justified by CDA's capacity to expose the entwined roles of language, ideology, and power within media narratives. Following Norman Fairclough's triadic model, the investigation concentrates

on the representation of Muslims and Pakistan in the Bollywood feature *Phantom*. Fairclough's model lends itself to this inquiry not least because it scaffolds the analysis across several strata, thereby permitting the interrogation of both granular linguistic details and the broader institutional and historical contingencies that condition meaning. Consequently, the study will reveal the mechanisms by which cinematic discourses are both mirrors and motors of prevailing power relations.

Fairclough's framework is operationalized through three mutually reinforcing tiers of investigation:

Textual Analysis: First, a Textual Analysis that scrutinizes both verbal and visual elements of the cinematic text.

Discursive Practice: Second, a Discursive Practice level that interrogates the production, circulation, and reception processes that mediate the film's eventual popular and institutional uptake

Social Practice: Social Practice dimension that situates the film within the wider political, economic, and cultural formations that both constrain and are disavowed by the text.

By interlocking these levels, the methodology generates a granular yet expansive understanding of *Phantom*, elucidating the ways in which its dieresis and iconography consolidate specific ideological readings of Pakistan and of Muslims as simultaneously exotic and threatening.

Data Collection

Phantom, the 2015 film directed by Kabir Khan, serves as the principal empirical text for the present study. Its explicit engagement with the twin subjects of terrorism and the India–Pakistan conflict renders it a pertinent specimen for probing the ideological scaffolding that informs such media representations. Situating the narrative within the frames of national security, counterterrorism, and interstate tension, the film provides a fecund site for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), revealing the sedimentary ideological currents that inform cinematic storytelling.

The analytical focus is absorbed toward four strategically chosen sequences, each of which foregrounds a discrete yet interrelated ideological motif:

- **Interrogation Scene:** Indian intelligence officer Nawaz Mistry conducts a dialogue with Amina Bi, the mourning mother of a youth who has embraced radicalism.

- Mission Planning Scene: A cohort of Indian agents delineates a retaliatory scheme directed at the architects of the Mumbai attacks.
- Attack on Hafiz Saeed Scene: The film re-enacts a clandestine operation aiming at the liquidation of Hafiz Saeed, who is framed as the operative genius behind the assaults.
- Aftermath Scene: Nawaz Mistry, in a moment of solitude, contemplates the moral ramifications and reverberations of India's counteroffensive decisions during the operation.

Analytical Framework

The study applies the CDA model of Norman Fairclough, including three interconnected dimensions: text analysis, discretionary practice, and social practice. Together, these levels enable a comprehensive understanding of how the meaning of meaning is transmitted and is located within the broader social structures.

Textual Analysis: At this stage, the study examines the language, visual, and narrative characteristics within the selected scenes. It includes dialogue, framing, camera work, and symbolic elements. Such analysis helps determine how the film employs specific language and imagery to promote particular ideological meanings.

Discursive Practice: This dimension involves studying processes by which the film's discourse is produced and interpreted. Factors such as filmmakers' intentions, socio-political environment at the time of production, and the welcome to the audience are considered.

Social Practice: Social practice analysis is investigated in the broader political and cultural context of the film. The analysis suggests how the phantom refers to and confirms the major social ideologies, national identity, and power structures. The film's depiction of terrorism, Pakistan, and Muslim identity is associated with current geopolitical tension and cultural perceptions.

By applying this multi-layered approach, the research provides an important perspective on the conceptual message within the phantom. This explains how the film reflects and shapes public opinion of both the public, particularly regarding Pakistan and Muslims, in ways that resonate with ongoing socio-political discourses.

Background of the Target Content

Phantom is a fictional film that centers on the events following the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks, commonly known as 26/11. The narrative follows a secret mission designed to seek retribution against those allegedly responsible. Through its depiction of espionage, national defense, and patriotism, the film presents a dramatized response to terrorism that aligns with nationalist ideologies. The narrative follows Daniyal Khan, a former soldier tasked with “eliminating” those perceived as responsible for the attacks. The film stereotypes Muslims in roles that are often associated with terrorism, reflecting broader societal biases.

Data Analysis: The analysis focuses on the dialogues from “The Kingdom” (2007). These dialogues have been chosen on the basis of their negative portrayal of Muslims. In the analysis, a transcription of the toxic movie is provided to present it directly to readers and dispel any impression of distortion.

Results

Plot: In the analysis, the storyline of *Phantom* is explored in depth, beginning with the depiction of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, which catalyze the narrative. An examination of the film’s plot reveals how it constructs an Indian narrative around counterterrorism, delving into themes of vengeance, national security and ethical dilemmas. At its core, the storyline centers of Daniyal, whose hatred-driven pursuit of revenge aligns with the broader discourse of the film’s “war on terror.” Daniyal’s character promotes a sense of national humiliation and seeks retribution that generates hatred in response to perceived injustices, blurring the line between personal grievances and broader geopolitical tensions. The analysis also highlights the so-called ethical questions raised by the film’s portrayal of covert operations and the perpetuation of the “Us vs. Them” mentality. This approach is evident in the film’s polarization of groups, which will be further described in the subsequent sections of the analysis. Despite providing closure for Daniyal’s character, the film’s oversight of the long-term consequences of his actions leaves unanswered questions about the sustainability and ethics of certain Indian designed so-called counter-terrorism practices.

5.2.1a Scene 1- The Terrorist Attack:

(These dialogues are taken from the characters of the Indian RAW chief Roy and his trusted man NTTO Samit Mishra who both plan a covert operation).

سمح میرا اور چیف رائٹ کے درمیان گھنٹوں
 سمح میرا: پاکستانی بجنہ لشکر طیبہ ایک اور
 حملہ پلان کر رہا ہے۔ سر، اگر ہم یہ حملہ روک جھی لیں تو اگلا حملہ میں روک سکیں گے۔ جب تک ان کا مقصد پورا نہیں ہو چاہا، یہ جملے
 کرتے رہیں گے۔ ہم جتنے بھی جملے روکیں،
 کچھ نہیں کر سکتے۔ میرے پاس ایک آئیٹی ہے جس سے ہم سارے جملے روک سکتے
 چیف رائٹ: ہم ایسا میں کر سکتے!
 سمح میرا: سر، جب امریکہ ایسا کر سکتا ہے تو ہم کیوں نہیں

Figure 1: The below scene depicts; RAW chief Roy and his trusted officer Samit Mishra engage in a pivotal discussion. This scene establishes the film's focus on counterterrorism efforts and the geopolitical tensions existing between India and Pakistan.



Figure 1

In the opening scene of *Phantom*, the film fabricates the claimed tense and high-stakes world of counterterrorism within the Indian intelligence agency RAW, whose Chief Roy and his trusted officer Samit Mishra discuss an alleged imminent threat from Lashkar-e-Taiba. Samit depicts frustration as he alleges: “Despite our best efforts to counter their continued attacks, we are helpless against them.” This line is emblematic of the film’s underlying ideological agenda, which is to construct a narrative that perpetuates the perception of a constant and inevitable threat from Pakistan, thereby legitimizing any form of covert aggression by India as a necessary response.

Politically, the dialogue serves to blame Pakistan for the strained relations with India, painting it as the perpetual aggressor.

This scene appears to fan public anxieties about terrorism, with Samit's exasperation mirroring "broader societal concerns" over the framed vulnerability to the alleged terrorist attacks and the need for decisive action. Culturally, the dialogue reflects the deep-seated rivalry between India and Pakistan, depicting Pakistan as an inherent threat, and by referencing America's counter-terrorism actions, it aligns India's stance with global powers, thereby justifying the adoption of similar aggressive policies.

The dark, solemn setting, combined with strategic lighting and camera angles, creates a tense atmosphere, enhancing the gravity of the discussion and emphasizing the urgency and seriousness of the so-called counter-terrorism efforts. Technically, the use of espionage and surveillance tools is implied, underscoring technical aspects of the counter-terrorism operations. By applying Fairclough's CDA, we gain a comprehensive understanding of how this scene reflects and shapes societal attitudes towards terrorism and national security, illustrating the interplay of political, social, cultural and technical factors in the film's narrative. The scene's framing and dialogue work together to support a narrative aligned with a specific nationalist ideology.

Scene 2-The Planning Meeting:

(In the second scene of Phantom, Nawaz, a main character, instigates Daniyal to avenge the 2008 Mumbai attacks by targeting those responsible for orchestrating them. In this dialogue serves as a crucial moment that sets the stage for Daniyal's journey and underscores the film's central theme of revenge).

واز: جب تم ان کو تود بنا رہے ہو کہ ساجد میر کو انہیا لے ملا ہے تو ایکسیڈمٹ
کر لے کا کیا فاہد، ہوا؟ وہ تمہارا مہوت دیا کر کھا کر انہیا کے ملاف کیس بنا سکتے ہیں۔

دایاں: پچھلے 6 سال سے پاکستانی اسحاقیز ساری دیا سے کھلی رہی ہیں کہ ساجد
میر جیسا آدمی کوئی ہے نہیں۔ اب جو کوئی ہے نہیں تو اسے کوئی مارے گا کہیں؟

Figure 2: Intense dialogue exchange between Nawaz Mistry and Daniyal Khan in a dimly lit safe house.



Figure 2

In the second scene of the Phantom, Nawaz urged Daniel to proceed with a mission to avenge the 2008 Mumbai attacks, which is considered behind the operation. This conversation plays a vital role in shaping the story, establishing Daniel on a path of vengeance. At a political level, the dialogue highlights the ongoing tension between India and Pakistan. Nawaz's insistence on pursuing Sajid Mir describes a wide purpose situation as an outspoken voice in the fight against terrorism and is morally justified in response. This scene subtly confirms a story that legalizes India's anti -terrorism functions by putting Pakistan in an unfavorable light. From a social perspective, visuals reflect their impact on public and emotional consciousness of terrorism. Daniel's character symbolizes the shared desire for justice of the film. Nawaz's inspiring perspective shows how the longing for social trauma and accountability can be manipulated to justify controversial tasks, even those that enhance moral concerns.

Culturally, the interaction between the characters emphasizes a recurring binary of "us versus". Nawaz's focus on ending Mir attracts cultural division and focuses on tangled stereotypes. This not only reinforces existing prejudices but also complicates any effort towards cooperative or fine discourse around terrorism and regional conflict. This story keeps India and Pakistan in a state of constant opposition, which makes the harmony unknowable.

The scene suggests the use of intelligence and espionage, emphasizing the technical challenges of counterterrorism operations and the need for accurate intelligence. The dim lighting and secluded setting enhance the clandestine and urgent nature of their mission, visually reinforcing the high stakes and tension. By applying Fairclough's CDA framework, this scene reveals how the film manipulates political, social, cultural, and technical elements to shape the audience's perceptions, not only reflecting but also reinforcing specific ideologies about terrorism, national security, and the ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan.

Scene 3-The Interrogation:

(These dialogues are taken from a conversation between Amina Bi and Nawaz Mistry. Mistry is an Indian agent who brings Daniyal to Pakistan to kill Hafiz Saeed and Sahabuddin Umvi. Amina Bi is shown to be the mother of a Pakistani Muslim boy who is stated to have lost her militant son in a suicide attack.)

آمنہ بی: میں کچھ میں جاتی ہی میرا بیبا کس راستے پر نکل چلا پڑتے ہی " میں چلا۔ اگر پہنچا تو میں کبھی ایسا میں کر لے دیں۔ زندگی بھر اس کو کھوئے سے باندھ کر رکھی۔ اشہ کا قول ہے لعنتِ نصیب ہوگی، نصیب کے پھر سے وہ بسما ہے، یہ سکھا کر لے گئے میں اے۔ پلاسٹک کا بیگ بھر کر جاہز آیا، وہ تو کیا، پڑھیب کا چڑھہ بھی میں محاذ کر کے بھیجا محا میرے پئے کو۔ کندھا دیئے والوں کو میت بلکی ملے گئے، لکن میں ارخ کے نکروں کے سامنے بھر کر بھیجیے" میں۔

واز: جو آپ کے سامنے ہوا، وہ کسی مان کے سامنے نہیں ہونا چاہیے۔ جو مذہب کے نام پر بچوں کو اپنی ماؤں سے، اپنے گھر سے الگ کر کے قاتل بنا دیتے ہیں، امیں تو جسم پر چوپا دینا چاہیے۔

Figure 3: Amina Bi and Nawaz Mistry engaged in a pivotal conversation amidst heightened tension.



Figure 3

In Scene 3 of *Phantom*, Amina Bi and Nawaz Mistry are shown in a conversation that is filled with such an emotional weight and moral complexity that could leave no room for people condemn Pakistan and Muslims. Amina Bi, shown to be a grieving mother, expresses her sorrow over her son, portrayed as a radicalized person killed in a suicide attack. Nawaz responds empathetically, reflecting on the “moral and ideological implications of using religion to justify violence.” In this dialogue, the philosophy of Jannah and Islamic ideology are discussed disdainfully. Bollywood discusses the ideology of Muslims about Jihad negatively, depicting them as the worst, ugliest, inhuman, brutal, illiterate, ignorant, and wild. Socially, the scene raises awareness of the human cost of terrorism, emphasizing the trauma and tragedy faced by families and reflecting the broader societal impact of terrorism and radicalization without saying a single word of Indian terrorist activities against Muslims and Pakistan. Nawaz’s manipulative persuasion reflects how societal fears and desires for retribution are channeled into actions portrayed as justified, regardless of their moral complexities. Culturally, the scene reinforces stereotypes and prejudices about Muslims, with Amina Bi’s sorrow apparently acknowledging the diverse experiences within the Muslim community, countering the monolithic representations, but actually attempting to make Muslims believe that Pakistan and Islam are not good even for themselves. Yet, this narrative positions India and Pakistan in a state of perpetual opposition, making reconciliation seem unattainable. Technically,

the effective use of cinematic techniques, such as lighting and camera angles, enhances the emotional impact of Amina Bi's suffering, aligning with Fairclough's emphasis on discourse in shaping social structures and practices. The modest, dimly lit setting underscores the personal and intimate nature of the conversation, visually reinforcing the emotional gravity and moral complexity of the scene. Through Fairclough's CDA, we understand how this scene reflects and shapes societal attitudes toward terrorism, national security, and the human impact of these issues.

Scene 4-The Final Confrontation: (*This dialogue is of the portion showing Haris being escorted with security protocol, Daniyal following him in the car, and shooting him dead.*)

دaniel... حارث سعید، آپ بار بار پوچھ رہے ہیں کہ انیسا کیا چاہتا ہے "خان:

حاث سعید، آپ بار بار پوچھ رہے ہیں کہ انیسا کیا چاہتا ہے "انیسا چاہتا ہے الصاف"!!!!!!

Figure 4: *Daniyal Khan* face-offs and neutralizes *Haris Saeed*, which symbolizes India's quest for justice.



Figure 4

In the final scene of the film, Daniel faced the alleged terrorist mastermind behind the Mumbai attacks. The intensive exchange between Daniel and terrorists, the subjects of the film, refers to the subjects of Indian aggression

as justice, vengeance, and moral dilemmas of antiterrorism. From a political point of view, the final confrontation in *Phantom* reflects permanent geopolitical tension between India and Pakistan. Daniyal's mission is depicted as nationalist revenge in the story of looking for justice. Dialogue, "India wants justice!" This subject is included in the state of India's response as morally justified and necessary. This framing supports a comprehensive political discourse that emphasizes repayment justice as a legitimate anti-terrorist strategy. The film aligns with stories that reflect the necessary tasks for the protection of national security, strengthening the state-endorsed ideological trend. Socially, visual public emotion, especially a yearning for grief, resentment, and accountability. The functions of Daniyal are shown to reflect collective emotions, which symbolically provide the feeling of avenging the trauma of previous attacks. Their role meets comprehensive social calls for justice, presenting vengeance as a suitable and cathartic resolution.

Culturally, the collision confirms the conservative illustrations of terrorists, presenting them as flat, villainous figures without complexity. This simplified "we vs them" framing reduced the opponents to a dimensional avatar of evil, avoiding the underlying causes or the deepest examination of the socio-political contexts of terrorism. The depiction of Hafiz and others in this light serves to eliminate existing prejudices, as an unbroken group associated with violence, and to feed into broad Islamophobia stories.

At the technical level, the visual use of high-intensity and action sequences emphasizes the operational aspects of terrorism. These visuals increase the dramatic weight of conflict and reflect the physical and strategic demands of such missions, which provide realism and urgency for the story. By implementing the important discourse analysis of Fairclough, this scene appears to work at many ideological levels.

This not only reflects major national discourses around terrorism and security but also actively contributes to shaping public perceptions through the use of emotionally charged language and imagination. The film eventually eliminates negative and reductive stereotypes about Muslims, embedding them within a broader narrative structure that connects Muslim identity with terrorism. This discretionary construction is neither neutral nor accidental; it is a strategic means of strengthening hegemonic ideologies and social fear.

Discussion

Analyzing the Bollywood film *Phantom* through the lens of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) offers significant insights into the ways Muslims are represented and how ideological narratives surrounding terrorism and national security are constructed. The film consistently reinforces negative stereotypes, predominantly framing Muslims as violent extremists. This portrayal reflects wider societal prejudices and the ingrained association of Islam with terrorism in popular media.

One of the central findings is the use of the film to tell the language and visual story, which symbolizes the righteous "US" and Pakistan or Islamist figures to attract a sharp division between India, shown as threatening "them". This binary is particularly clear in the scene of inquiry, where a concerned mother, Amina B, is lost to her son for radicalization. While this moment appears to make the cost of terrorism human, it simultaneously enhances the notion that Muslims are more prone to extremism. This layered illustration subtly embeds the conceptual messages that indicate that the audience is not only considered to be the characters, but Muslims are also more widely considered.

The findings of this study indicate that a substantial body of scholars has examined the depiction of Muslims in the media. Ganti (2013) and Banaji (2006) have long argued that Bollywood plays an important role in reflecting and strengthening social hierarchies and cultural prejudices. Like the earlier films studied by Kumar (2014) and Bhattacharya (2013), *Phantom* follows a familiar narrative trajectory that links Muslim identity to terrorism. This distinguishes the study; it is the application of the CDS framework of Fairclough, which allows for more detailed and layered analysis. By examining textual elements, discursive production, and social context, this approach offers a nuanced account of how ideological messages are constructed in cinematic narratives.

Despite these strengths, the study is not without its limitations. Focusing on a single film narrows the scope and may not fully capture the diversity or potential exceptions in the broader spectrum of Bollywood cinema. Furthermore, while this research addresses the construction of meaning within the film, it does not extend to how audiences interpret or respond to these portrayals. Audience reception remains an area that could offer valuable insights into the actual societal impact of such media narratives.

Interestingly, the film does show brief moments that acknowledge the shared human suffering caused by terrorism. These glimpses into the emotional toll on both sides of the India-Pakistan divide introduce a layer of complexity to

what is otherwise a polarized narrative. This acknowledgment hints at a more multifaceted understanding of the conflict but remains overshadowed by the dominant depiction of Muslims as dangerous “others.” Nonetheless, the presence of such moments is notable and deserves further exploration in future research.

Conclusion

This study examined the portrayal of political and cultural ideologies in the film *Phantom* using Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) framework. Through a detailed analysis of selected scenes, it became evident that the film reinforces cultural hegemony and perpetuates negative stereotypes of Muslims, particularly in the context of terrorism and national security. These portrayals are not isolated or incidental; they are part of a broader ideological construction that reflects and shapes public perceptions.

Importantly, the study contributes to extensive educational discourse on media representation, especially regarding how films affect social ideas towards marginalized communities. The depiction of Muslims in *Phantom* supports major cultural narratives and confirms Islamophobia stereotypes, affecting how the audience explains the identity and roles of Muslims in real-world contexts.

While research provides significant insights, its boundaries, such as a special focus on a film and the absence of empirical audience data, suggest the way for further investigation. Future studies should consider the audience as a major component to understand how the media messages are internalized or challenged by the audience.

In addition, a comparative analysis that incorporates many Bollywood films will provide a broad and more accurate picture of media trends related to Muslim representation. In addition, the inclusion of quantitative research can be greatly enriched. Survey methods or controlled experiments can assess how various illustrations affect viewers’ attitudes toward Muslims, terrorism, and national identity. A large-scale material analysis can also help identify ideological themes in Bollywood films. By combining qualitative and quantitative perspectives, future research can present a broader and empirical understanding of how cinema reinforces or challenges social ideologies and political narratives.

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