

OF GRANDEUR AND VALOUR: BOLLYWOOD AND INDIA'S FIGHTING PERSONNEL 1960-2005

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INTRODUCTION

Cinema, in Asia and India, can be broadly classified into three categories—popular, artistic and experimental. The popular films are commercial by nature, designed to appeal to the vast mass of people and to secure maximum profit. The artistic filmmaker while not abandoning commercial imperatives seeks to explore through willed art facets of indigenous experiences and thought worlds that are amenable to aesthetic treatment. These films are usually designated as high art and get shown at international film festivals. The experimental film directors much smaller in number and much less visible on the film scene are deeply committed to the construction of counter cinema marked by innovativeness in outlook and opposition to the establishment (Dissanayke, 1994: xv-xvi). While keeping these broad generalizations of the main trends in film-making in mind, the paper engages in a discussion of a particular type of popular/ commercial films made in Bollywood¹. This again calls for certain qualifications, which better explain the purpose of the paper. The paper attempts to understand Bollywood's portrayal of the Indian military personnel through a review of films, not necessarily war films but, rather, through a discussion of themes that have war as subject and ones that only mention the military personnel. The films the paper seeks to discuss include *Haqeeqat*, *Border*, *LOC-Kargil*, and *Lakshya* that has a direct reference to the few wars that India fought in the post-Independence era and also three Bollywood blockbusters namely *Aradhana*, *Veer-Zara* and *Main Hoon Na*, the films that cannot be dubbed as militaristic nor has reference to any war time scenario but nevertheless have substantial reference to the army. The last mentioned films help us understand how Bollywood tries to build up on the image of the Army as they exist in popular perception. In my opinion, this depiction of the

fighting force leaves a more powerful impact on the audience though at the surface the films appear to deal with a completely different theme.

WAR FILMS OF BOLLYWOOD

Talking about genres in Indian, albeit mainstream Bollywood cinema, is no easy task. Yet the demand of our current topics calls for looking at the development of genres. “Our knowledge about the terms on which the industry addressed spectators through genre and the way spectators received genres, are as yet rudimentary”, comments Ravi Vasudevan (2010: 103). Films made in Bollywood usually under the broad categories like romance, social, family drama, dacoity, off beat, good music, and tragic love story, which are as useful and legitimate as any other genre grouping! (Jaikumar, 2003: 24-29) Such classifications can be endless given the extreme flexibility of the choices with which films are thematically and spatially structured. Indian films are best understood through a discernment of the gradations and historical shifts within polyvalent and layered narratives, asserts Priya Jaikumar (2003). What emerges from such diverse thematic is the preponderance of the devotional and social films, with their emphasis on social criticism, to the favoured genres of the middle class. A running theme in social films was the emphasis on maintaining indigenous identities against the fascination for Western cultural behaviour. The social theme successfully encouraged the induction of the sensational attractions of action, spectacle and dance. In many ways the labeling was superficial (Vasudevan, 2010). The social genre, observes, M. Madhava Prasad (1998), is a ‘feudal family romance’— to individual romantic fulfillment and the formation of the couple for the nuclear family, consumerist orientations, affiliations to an impersonal state form — ultimately subordinated to the rule of traditionally regulated social relationships (Prasad, 1998). There is another yet dominant form in these rather undefined genres — the historical film that dwelt on a number of subjects: the glory of ancient, pre-Islamic India; Mughal kinship and its relation to Hindu ruling groups, the Rajputs, the heroism of the Maratha king Shivaji and after Independence, set of films based on Indian resistance to colonial rule (Vasudevan, 2010: 145-146). While some critiques have tried to credit the films as a bid towards forging amity between different communities, one cannot avoid the conclusion that there is a tendency towards rewriting of Indian history. (ibid.) According to Kishore Budha,

such genre development is dictated by the vagaries of the market conditions, a tendency most remarkably noted in case of the war films. This tendency is clearly linked, Budha notes to the growth of nationalistic fervor and the formation of a national identity in the Indian subcontinent (Budha, 2008). In the same breath, Budha notes that Bollywood has not much succeeded in developing the genre of war film and he points out that hyper critical analysis of the film researchers and scholars constantly trying to draw parallel with the realism of Hollywood and European narratives have robbed the enthusiasm of making war movies. The Hindi war films have been criticized for its absurdity, clumsiness, bizarre plot twists and canned nationalism as a prop for the standard mundane love story (ibid.: 9). No wonder, therefore, after the initial euphoria films did not remain as attractive a proposition to the movie-makers. We will come back to this point a little later.

As already stated, my paper will be looking at a particular type of films made in Bollywood in which the military plays an important role directly or indirectly. War, therefore, as a theme feature repeatedly in the discussion of the movies I have already mentioned. My paper, therefore, is not dealing with war films only. It refers to those cinemas that have reference to military and where the military has been deliberately bestowed with stereotypic imageries. It seems that the subject that the films have dealt with have been deliberately chosen, the choice being made after a particular historical development. War films can be very loosely described as film genre concerned with warfare usually about naval, air, or land battles, sometimes focusing instead on prisoners of war covert operations, military training or other related subjects. At times, war films focus on daily military or civilian life in wartime without depicting battles. Their stories may be fiction, based on history, docudrama, biographical or even alternate history fiction. The term anti-war is sometimes used to describe films which bring to the viewer the pain and horror of war, often from a political or ideological perspective. War films as a genre traces its development back to the period after First World War in Hollywood and a legacy still in vogue and as yet quite fashionable among film makers globally². Though the themes of war and militarism have long interested film makers, it is really surprising that the number of movies that one finds being made on the subject of war in India, particularly in Bollywood, is really small while the notions of chivalry, courage, bravery and discipline have got repeated mention in the other kinds of movies removed from the subject of war. It is true that war has had a

powerful impact on the film industry. Again it is equally true that films influence war-time behaviour and incisively shape the way we think about the battles that have been waged.

The so called war film that was first made in Bollywood and was a great success was *Haqeeqat* directed by Chetan Anand and was made right after the Sino-Indian War of 1962. *Haqeeqat* is the quintessential propaganda film dedicated to Nehru, trading on the resurgence of nationalist sentiment in the wake of the India-China War of 1962. It dealt with an actual warfare and as natural with most war films it had large cast of characters played out by Dharmendra, Balraj Sahni and many more. The major part of the film was shot on location in Ladakh. Rightly exploiting the patriotic fervor, *Haqeeqat* in many ways revealed the anxieties of an extremely bewildered nation in the face of realities caused by the Chinese aggression. The Chinese debacle had led to much soul searching in India and had a dampening effect on the nationalist sentiments as captured in the films made during the 1950s. Commenting on this development, M.K. Raghavendra says that throughout the 1960s, the effort had been “to retreat from social responsiveness” and “the locale shifts... to the scenic spots and hill stations”. (Raghvendra, 2008) The latter development according to Raghavendra marks a retreat from nationalism, from the dominant theme of the 1950s, when the making of the nation has been a major consideration. (ibid.)

A long list of films were produced and directed between 1973 and 1997, though it were the seventies and late nineties and the first few years of the present decade that saw most movies on the war theme being churned out. The list is headed by *Hindustan Ki Kasam* (*Swear By India*, 1973) once again by Chetan Anand. The movie for the first time described the exploits of the air force and had as its subject the Indo-Pak War of 1971. The film clearly identified Pakistan as the enemy and set the trend of a deployment of a strong anti-Pak sentiment in the ongoing exercise of forging and discovering an Indian identity. (Bharat, 2008) Ever since the Indo-Pak War or the War for Liberation of Bangladesh of 1971 remained the most talked about subject in the so called ‘war movies’. This might be because by the seventies the Chinese War had almost been relegated to the background and the image of a confident, better equipped and more efficient fighting body comes into view. Lesser known films like *Akraman* (1975) too were made dwelling on the subject of Indo-Pak War.

Discussions in Hindi films of the theme of war, observes Kishore

Budha, have to be placed in the context of the rise of right wing politics during the 1980s, the eventual electoral victory of the BJP in 1998 and the box office success of *Border* by J.P. Dutta (Budha, 2008). *Border* is a 1997 blockbuster Bollywood war film based on the Indo-Pak War of 1971. The movie is an adaptation from real life events that happened at the Battle of Longewala fought in Rajasthan (Western Theatre) during the Indo-Pak War of 1971 and Bangladesh Liberation War. With *Border* one reaches the culmination of films made on the subject of Indo-Pak War of 1971. Unlike Dutta's earlier films which were grounded in caste tussles of the 1980s, *Border* comes after the exiling of conflict from within the space of nation (Raghvendra, 2008). *Border* is in sharp contrast to *Haqueeqat*, a film that immediately responded to a disastrous military engagement, a justification not available to *Border*. In *Border*, every other kind of problem that faces the Indian nation has been willed away, comments Raghvendra (ibid.: 267-268). Raghvendra makes an interesting observation while discussing *Border* that despite being a multi-starrer, no Indian actors "is allowed to play the Pakistanis, always represented by unknown actors. The logic is apparently that it would be unbecoming for an Indian actor to play a Pakistani..." (ibid.: 268-269). Narrative space in *Border* is strictly demarcated into two separate zones, the battlefield and home—a fact made conspicuous by absence of maps, indispensable to the war film as the genre is understood. The ventures into realism follow the convention of popular cinema being shot on location and including action sequences reminiscent of Hollywood war film (ibid.). It will be interesting to quote J.P. Dutta, the Indian film-maker whose effort and statement reminded the industry of its patriotic duties and obligation towards the martyr:

I don't care about industry... they would rather have me shoot inane films in Switzerland. I only care for the mother of a dead war hero who rings me up and blesses me. (J.P.Dutta cited in Unnithan, 2003)³

A very significant movie made on the subject but that received less attention despite winning the National Film Award for best feature film in Hindi is *1971*, directed by Amrit Sagar. The film is an account of the escape of six soldiers of the Indian Army taken as prisoners of war by the Pakistan army during the Indo-Pak War of 1971. Though not plotted in the immediate warring times, the story takes place in Pakistan in 1977, six years after the Indo-Pakistan War. The film is a moving account of the escapades that the six prisoners try to execute.

The films dealing with Kargil include J.P. Dutta's *LOC-Kargil* (2003) that provided a detailed account of the Kargil War from the start to the finish. In his effort, Dutta received production assistance from the Indian Army while his closeness with the right wing politicians helped him gain publicity for his film. Dutta is reported to have stated that the Indian Army, impressed by the success of *Border*, encouraged him to produce *LOC-Kargil*: "I didn't want to go back and shoot another war film. But the army asked me to come over and placed the facts before me. After that I could not say no." (Nair, 2002)

Lakshya (*Target or Objective*, 2004) is a Farhan Akhtar movie, a fictional story based on the historical events of the 1999 Kargil conflict. Director Farhan Akhtar repeatedly mentioned that the film merely used Kargil as the backdrop to explore struggles of individuality. It will be interesting to read the promo that came out with the release: "It took him twenty four years and 18,000 ft to find about himself (selfhood and identity, in which the backdrop is Kargil, an event that took place in 1999)"⁴. *Lakshya*, is a patriotic tribute to those who fought the war and their bereaved families. *Lakshya*, can be treated, writes Daiya, both as a war epic and a film about protagonist Karan Shergill, (Hrithik Roshan) (Daiya, 2008). After *Lakshya*, the surge in the war movies dealing with the theme of Indo-Pak hostility ebbed and not too many films on the subject were made.

It is interesting to note that the topic of war surfaced on the Indian celluloid only following a real historical incident. This is noticeable in case of all the films from *Haqeeqat* to *Lakshya* and the depiction has been more or less similar. The films were made primarily to support and promote war effort and nationalism. The films made after the war actually debated and critiqued the events and meanings of conflict. All the movies so far discussed share a similarity of experience caught in the gripping reality. The films have rightly analysed naivete among the general Indian population about the army and because the realities of war-like situation often become unacceptable to the people living in political and economic stability, there develops an aura of romanticism surrounding the army, of the horrors and challenges in the war. The films made are, therefore, artistic and powerful expressions of the actions of the men in uniform, a response to the consumer demand to see these events on screen. Over time, the relevance of the same films or the issues on which the films have been made gradually fades away. The wars gradually become memory, a fragment of its own reality.

The films that were discussed were not just grandiose portraits

of war or documents of passion. All the films mentioned so far follow the traits that war films tend to follow, a few set patterns, depending on the nationality of the war and the prominence of the characters (Bottomore, 2002: 239-242). It is not very difficult in discerning the anti-Pakistani preoccupation of the films discussed. There is an assumed threat from the border country and its possible repercussions on the mainland. While watching these movies one cannot escape from forming the impression that certain sections of the Bollywood film industry were virtually at 'war' with Pakistan. The films made sweeping generalizations that dramatized old dichotomies between right and wrong, good and evil. Their overall tone is bombastic, and they frankly manipulate the viewer's emotions. The films are explicit in identifying and labelling charges against the enemy and drums up fear of the enemy in order to defend the nation's, in this case India's involvement in the war. There are representations of the enemy, while relying on the narration as well to establish an enemy threat. However, such exaggerated passion and solidarity towards the militia were often forgotten soon after the war was over. The subjects of the films actually aid remembering the soldiers and their sacrifice. Thus, there is an appreciation of the great work done by the soldiers, a significance that has more poignant aspects.

While one can hardly anticipate the effect of the films on audiences, there is a strong belief among the film-makers that they can actually influence the feelings and actions of cinema audiences in general. Going by the relatively very few number of films that have been made on the theme of war and also the repetitiveness of the subject it occurs that as a subject the films are unpromising and unattractive. The success of a certain film actually generated the momentum to produce similar kinds of films but that too only at the opportune moment when the memories of the war are still fresh and passions are high. So far as Indian films are concerned, such a tendency can be explained by the near absence of wars for long periods of time and the wars that actually took place had not disturbed civilian life for any great length of time. Indian thinking on war clearly hovers in a twilight zone between facts and fantasy.

The way the army has been portrayed by Bollywood helps it emerge as a great equalizer. It unites Indians as a whole, transcending socio-political and economic divisions, thus, focalizing events through the heroic deeds of the national fighting body. Riding on the wave of patriotism that the war creates the Bollywood films try to convey a pan-Indianness that otherwise also is a hallmark of commercial

Indian cinemas made within and outside Bollywood. This explains a very visible trend in popular cinemas namely a tendency to reinforce the idea of an essentialized and a unitary nation-state and its apparatuses. The myth of the unitary nation is, thus, intensified. (Dissanayake, 1994) In this way, the relationship between nationhood acquires a new meaning in discussions of popular culture — a concept that privileges ideas of coherence and unity and stable cultural meanings associated with the uniqueness of a given nation. Being imbricated with ideological production, Bollywood war films thrive on situations or crises through which over and over, its members are reminded about their collective sorrows and hopes. This nationalism, observes Cynthia Enloe (1994), “sprang from masculinised hope”, which also sexualizes and domesticizes the very fact of nationalism.

Conspicuous yet not unlikely is the fact that women play only a minor role in the movies, being mostly limited to scenes showing them weeping over their departed men. In most of the films, there is an invisible involvement of women, absolutely crucial as inspiration and support. Their actions are romanticized as heterosexual lovers who inspired, supported and gave meaning to the struggles the military undertakes. Defence of the nation and laying lives for the same become a masculinised duty. Women serve behind frontlines, well within the imagined safety of nation’s borders. What matters for the military institution, the state and the public is the so-called biological or female destiny of women. Military historian Martin van Creveld claims that “men have made war their special province because they cannot reproduce”.

Women’s primary role is restricted as adornment, as nurturers of the nation, the community and the family. The maternal figure emblemizes the nation threatened by enemy, demanding loyalty, rescue and defence. The films conform to the nationalist demand of a specific kind of femininity, dictated through masculine imagination. The so-called war films thus consciously promote certain ideas of gender relations and femininities. The images produced are part of an ideological discourse aimed at keeping militarism and war in the domain of protective men who drew strength from suffering, supportive women figures. (Sumindyo, 1998)

The above narrative has tried to indicate the broad tendencies visible in the so-called Bollywood war films. The films discussed so far actually dealt with war situations and, thus, the depiction of the army and its bravery in the front has been repeatedly highlighted. There exists still another kind of films, though very few in number

which extols the rigors of training in Indian army. One of the less publicized film in this category is Govind Nihalni's *Vijeta*, made in 1982. *Vijeta* (*The Victor*) is the coming of age story of Angad (Kunal Kapoor). Confused like any other teenager trying to find himself and caught in between the marital problems of his mother Neelima (Rekha) and father Nihal (Shashi Kapoor). It is time for him to decide what he wants to do with his life. To select a profession and be someone, Angad chooses to become a fighter pilot with the Indian Air Force. What follows is his struggle to become a victor both with his self and the outer world. The film is notable for some rarely seen aerial photography of combat aircraft active with the IAF in 1980s. The central character of Angad himself is a MiG-21 pilot and is shown flying the aircraft in ground attack role in 1971 war. The film is memorable because of the effort it has taken in mapping the training of the air force commanders, the extreme hardships and challenges that one has to endure during the training session and the commitment and courage it requires to adhere to such strict regimentation and discipline. *Vijeta*, though not a commercial success, had wonderfully showcased the cause of the air force without taking recourse to excessive nationalistic fervour. However, these are rare movies which drive home the message without actually titillating popular emotions.

The other important film though eventually drifting to different story but nevertheless focuses on the army and the commanders is *Prahaar*. The opening scenes of *Prahaar* see some extremely brave and dedicated team of commandos rescuing a school bus held hostage by a hang of terrorist. The young commander who masterminds the raid got seriously injured eventually loses one of his feet, his dreams of making it big in the army dying with the same. The frustration of the young man is palpable and a good portion of the film highlights the rigorous training sessions, with Nana Patekar as the veteran commander. The recurring reference to the training part can be treated as hinting at the aspirations of the young commanders who were ready to sacrifice for a great cause. The shattering of the young commander's dream in the ambush that takes place between him and the terrorists, though ennobling for others signified a complete reversal of fortune for the individual concerned. For the young man no bravery award or appreciation could adequately explain the impact of the event. It was not an accident that put a full stop to his promising career but something that remains a possibility every time the soldier goes out to fight. What must have pained the young commander more than being

maimed by the event, was his inability to take part in action a feat that he must have looked forward to.

The discussion, however, remains incomplete without discussing a rather offbeat cinema that deals with the feats of the Border Security Forces (BSF)—*Tango Charlie*, a film directed by Mani Shankar in 2005. It got rave reviews and was well received by audiences, but did not perform well commercially. The movie aims to portray the different aspects of war and grief, and does not glorify these acts. It is, thus, a departure from the usual valorising tales. An interesting aspect of the film has been the way the national character of the BSF has been highlighted through their calling to services at extremely geographically distant places of India. The film focuses on the BSF jawans fighting the insurgents in Manipur, where they were fighting the Bodos. Later, the scene of action shifts to southern India, in Andhra Pradesh, to counter the Naxalites rebels wreaking havoc upon the countryside. On their next assignment, platoon tries to quench the religious riots taking place in the western province of Gujarat. The Kargil War between India and Pakistan soon begins and once again the platoon and the battalion move out to the state of Kashmir where they are assigned to defend a bridge. While the BSF jawans were ultimately the victors, it is not the victories that get the applause at the end of film. Time and again the movie reflects on the great contradiction that is inherent in the so-called assaults on one another whether by the army or the BSF on the insurgents represented in the film by the Bodos, Naxalites, the fundamentalists or a fighting machinery from a country across the border. While both the parties claim that they were fighting for a greater cause, the ultimate fall out is mindless bloodbath resulting in killing lives. Thus, fighting becomes the only way to restore peace. *Tango Charlie* through recurrent emphasis on the dichotomy does not in any way glorify war but rather looks at the futility of military exercises and the grief that it ultimately brings. *Tango Charlie* marks an important departure not just in demystifying the glories usually associated with war but also looking at the enemies within. The standard Indian warfare narrative of identifying Pakistan as the wrongful nation and, therefore, India's greatest enemy had been cast off as Mani Shankar tries to locate other very potent sources of disturbances caused internally that also threatens the integrity of the country.

ANOTHER TALE, DIFFERENT YET NOT SO MUCH

In this part of the paper, I shift from the genre I was so long discussing. Here, the paper shall focus on three blockbuster movies, each significant in its own ways, not quite dealing with war time situation but each has as its protagonist a defence personnel. The films I discuss include *Aradhana* directed by Shakti Samanta, *Main Hoon Na* by Farah Khan and *Veer Zara* by Yash Chopra. *Aradhana* among the three makes a very fleeting reference to a fictitious war, where the other fighting nation has never been given a name. The other two movies have Sharukh Khan starring as the gallant Indian officer, though caught in very dissimilar situations. The three films bear a commonality in the way the hero has been depicted. In *Aradhana*, Rajesh Khanna plays a double role, each time portraying the role of a pilot in Indian Air Force. The way he is cast in the film, charismatic and romantic erode him of the usual marks of an air force pilot. But beneath the flamboyant exterior is a dedicated fighter who is ready to reckon with any situation and willing to sacrifice. He is fearless as becomes evident from the ease with which he takes his flight high up with his fiancée seating beside. His flight high up also reflects his ambitious nature. His untimely death leaves behind a grief stricken wife determined to make her son fulfill his father's unfinished dream. As the story unfolds one meets Rajesh Khanna-2 as Suraj, once again the handsome, youthful air force pilot—ambitious and courageous. The film is in no way an attempt to depict the greatness of air force pilots. *Aradhana* opens as a simple story—Vandana and Arun fall in love, have a marriage secretly carried out in temple. Before the couple had a social engagement, Arun dies in an air crash. Vandana, who was carrying Arun's child, was left with the hard task of bringing up the child. Despite the reverses she has suffered, Vandana was determined to help the child grow up as an air force pilot, the eternal wish of her late husband. Suraj did ultimately become an airforce pilot and Vandana learns about it many years later when Suraj comes to meet her fiancée. Suraj bore unmistakable resemblance in appearance and mannerisms with his father. And, on the day he was to be awarded with a civilian award for his achievements at the war front, Suraj discovers the truth about his birth. Suraj reacts in the most positive way—in the award function he calls his real mother Vandana to come up on the stage and give him the prize. In the last scenes of the film, speech of Ashok Kumar, the veteran Major, is significant

for our analysis. He opens by congratulating the civilian effort in recognizing the heroism of the army, a recognition he considers has greater significance than the ones awarded by the government of the country. Eventually, as the scene develops and he finds out that Suraj was the son of late Arun Verma, he extols Vandana for allowing her only son to take up such a risky career despite the fact that her husband had died in an air crash. Vandana, in this way, becomes the ideal mother who raises her son for a greater cause, a cause that is something as important as the case of fighting for the nation. While there is little scope for depicting gallantry of the air force pilots in the film because of the storyline adopted one cannot miss the element of medieval chivalry connected with the depiction of the air force pilots. The medieval code of conduct that bound the knight to his duties becomes reflected in the way Suraj acknowledges her real mother's sacrifice. His actions embody the obligations devised for this exclusive class of men, catering to the more important duties of an honest man and a good citizen. Suraj had not desisted from war — that was an impossible requirement — but he delivered for the just cause, to succor to the oppressed (here his mother) (Williamson, 1919: 330-339). Suraj's boldness transcends the societal sanctions and becomes emulative for others.

A commercial success, the blockbuster *Main Hoon Na (Don't worry, I'm Here, 2004)* directed by Farah Khan is a remarkable departure from Bollywood's usual portrayal of fighting personnel waiting to avenge the wrongs of the enemy nation. The army here is shown to be extremely pacifist trying to settle an amicable solution to a long-standing conflict. The story, thus, runs: Major Ram Sharma (Sharukh Khan) joins college as a student to protect his senior General Amarjeet Bakshi's (Kabir Bedi) daughter Sanjana (Amrita Rao) from the ex-Army man turned terrorist Raghavan (Suniel Shetty). Raghavan is dead against 'Mission Milaap' a strategic move where two enemy countries, India and Pakistan will release 50 of their mutual prisoners as a peace initiative. He is willing to go to great lengths to stop the project. What stands out in the movie is an attempt to revive the feeling of camaraderie between India and Pakistan instead of battle. This definitely is a paradigm shift where the directors move from escapist cinema to reality. While the tensions in the Indo-Pak relationship is a central concern, the film shows the conflicting stance adopted by secular, patriotic and pro-peace state official like Major Ram Prasad Sharma on one hand and the threat to the nation from within of anti-Pak forces like Raghavan, who incidentally is an ex-army man determined to sabotage the Indo-

Pak peace process. Interestingly, Raghavan is a Hindu villain at centre stage (Daiya, 2008). Major Ram Sharma neither from his appearance nor from the way he is presented corresponds to the usual image of the military that conjures up in our mind. He is like any other civilian, matured and sensitive enough to handle frivolous young men. At the same time he has a romantic disposition. He is in every way a global man who understands the futility of the long drawn out conflict between two nations, each weighing down under its multiple problems. This image is in consonance with the tune of the movie which actually endorses the tune of international peace and friendship by making goodwill gesture first. Raghavan, again an ex-Army man turned militant is in sharp contrast to the freshness of outlook as seen in Major Ram Sharma. Raghavan has a kind of negativity about him which makes him give in to fait accompli, that India and Pakistan can never be friendly neighbours because “we have been in a state of war with Pakistan since 1947”.

Another important film which also capitalizes on the Indo-Pak bilateral relationship and tries to weave a tale of amity is Yash Chopra's *Veer Zaara*. This film has no reference to any war situation. It only shows Shahrukh Khan as Squadron Leader Veer Pratap Singh as a rescue pilot with the Indian Air Force, who risks his own life to save the lives of others. One day, on duty, he comes across a stranded girl from Pakistan, Zaara. Zaara, a carefree, sprightly girl has come to India to fulfill her surrogate grandmother's dying wish. She meets with a bus accident leaving her stranded in a foreign land. Veer saves her life... and his life is never the same again... Twenty-two years later, Saamiya Siddiqui, a Pakistani lawyer on her first case, finds herself face-to-face with an aging Veer Pratap Singh. He has languished in a Pakistan jail cell for 22 years and has not spoken to anyone all these years—and no one knows why. Her mission is to discover the truth about Veer and see to it that justice is served. And thus starts her journey to unveil the truth... the story of Veer and his life her. The qualities that Squadron leader Veer Pratap Singh displays do not have any uniqueness about them- he is brave, courageous, helpless. What can be surmised in hindsight about Squadron Leader is his helplessness in face of diplomatic complexities, which made maneuverings possible on an issue that was largely personal. The fact that he remained quiet for 22 years was, perhaps, an indication of the futility to reach any consensus about proving his innocence. Like most films, *Veer Zaara* ends on a happy note.

CONCLUSION

There are very few war movies which have been able to show that wars actually are 'brutal wastes'. War films usually glorify and romanticize militarism, there is an inevitable glamour attached to fighting. The films that have been discussed in their widely divergent ways have sought to recapture history as a way of making sense to it. All the films discussed in the foregoing narrative carry the portrayal of the soldier's psyche both in war and in peacetime. Stark shots of jawans who die defending their posts in sub zero temperatures against an external enemy validate war as a genre in the industry. There is no denial though that "a potential cinematic milestone has been sunk by the deadweight of songs, flashbacks and expletives, out of sync with a battle zone, where survival alone dictates every other consideration... in other words, Bollywood, by its very being and circumstance, is rather mismatched with a genre configured on a different set of skills, attitudes, aptitudes and expertise." (Talukdar, 2004) Such tendencies are also reflective of the way popular Hindi movies have speculated and commoditized that history. The films, dealing with war and their diverse thematic, show us the way in which cinema becomes the terrain for historical reconstruction and contestation of historical meaning. The movies clearly reveal how the changing imperatives of the present take on the authority of the past. Together the analyses of the films in a major way develop certain stereotypes that leave an indelible impression on the minds of the audience/ spectators. One does appreciate the difficulty of making war films which many a times requires permission from the government as also a clearance from the army about the content of the film. Lack of access to the military archives for detailed research acts as a constraint on a more realistic portrayal of the army. It now depends on the future researchers to put in place the many missing links in the reality and their celluloid representation. That again is another part of the story we have just started narrating.

NOTES

1. Popular cinemas made in Bollywood are often bracketed with commercial cinema. For a detailed discussion see, M.K. Raghavendra. 2008. *Seduced By the Familiar, Narration and Meaning In Indian Popular Cinema*, OUP. Also, Ravi Vasudevan. 2000. *Making Meaning In Indian Cinema*, OUP. Ravi Vasudevan. 2010. *The Melodramatic Public, Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema*. Permanent Black
2. Robert T. Eberwin. 2004. *The War Film*, Rutgers University Press; Marilyn J. Malelski and Nancy Lynch Street. 2003. *War and Film In America: Historical and Critical*

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3. Suresh Nair. 2002. Playing a War Hero is a Dream Role: JP Dutta, *The Economic Times*, October 17.
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4. Cited in Kavita Daiya. 2008. *Violent Belongings: Partition, Gender and National Culture In Postcolonial India*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

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