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With reference to their portrayals of Partition, I discuss the value of Kamal Haasan's *Hey Ram!* (2000), Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra's Bhaag Milkha Bhaag (2013), and M. S. Sathyu's *Garam Hawa* (1973) as historical resources. I emphasize how the 'othering' of Muslims in *Hey Ram*! and *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* finds expression in terms of masculinity and Indian patriotism. Drawing on Vasudevan's (2002) critique of *Hey Ram!,* I argue that Kamal Haasan does not offer viewers sufficient distance from the film's Hindu-extremist protagonist, thus curbing their ability to critique the Hindutva historical narrative portrayed. Further, Haasan's intended dismissal of this Hindutva narrative of Hindu loss and Muslim murder falls short due to its portrayal of the film's central Muslim character as relatively effeminate and in need of Hindu paternalism. Similarly, Muslim-Hindu relations (as well as national anxieties about Indian identity and culture) are configured through a play between masculinities in biopic *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, as commented upon by Kumar (2014). Through a track-and-field victory in Pakistan, Milkha redeems the emasculation caused by his flight from the Punjab during Partition. I discuss *Garam Hawa* as a counterpoint to *Hey Ram!* and *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, both of which I read as mostly congruous with secular official historiography. In addition to presenting the perspective of members of the Indian Muslim minority that stayed behind after Partition, *Garam Hawa* digs up financial and sentimental motives for belonging in India that are absent from the official historical narrative of Partition.

"This is wrong on so many levels," my partner asserted during the access break at a screening of Kamal Haasan's Hey Ram (2000), punctuating his expression of dismay at "Indian culture" as portrayed in the film with drags from his cigarette. Lacking the knowledge of South Asian history needed to contextualize the film's depiction of controversial Hindutva perspectives on Indian historiography, my partner read the film as promoting Hindu nationalism and its troubling notions of gender, Islam, and national belonging.

I explore the ambiguity that confused my partner so thoroughly by examining the relation between official history (by which I mean the narrative preferred by the predominantly Congress-led governments of post-colonial India) and the histories narrated in *Hey Ram!*. Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra's *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* (2013), and M. S. *Sathyu's Garam Hawa* (1973). I focus specifically on the depiction of Partition and its legacy in terms of aforementioned gender and communal relations to assess the various conceptualizations of national belonging that inform the films and official historiography.

To this end, I draw on Preeti Kumar and Ravi Vasudevan's analysis of melodrama and biopics to illustrate why these genres, exemplified by *Hey Ram!* and *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag,* lend themselves well to (re-)imagining the nation with reference to heroic masculinity and Muslim "Others". Also offering a reading of Partition that is alternative to the Partition narrative of official historiography, *Garam Hawa* additionally presents a valuable counterpoint to the other two films discussed as it centers a minority perspective absent from both official historiography and its Hindutva critique. Challenging the patronizing representations of Muslims in official historiography and the Islamophobic bigotry of Hindutva, *Garam Hawa's* subaltern historical narrative of a minority's experience of Partition far surpasses *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* and Hey Ram! in its value as a historical resource.

I use "value" rather than "legitimacy" because, as Vishnawath and Malik point out, "like historical narratives, they [the films in question] are embedded in particular ideologies." (2009, 66) Their value as historical resources, then, can be assessed by unpacking the ideologies that inform their narratives and evaluating in what ways the films supplement or critique Indian historiography by amplifying perspectives suppressed or overlooked by the elite political class who are served by official history (Chaturvedi 2007). Analyzing the films in terms of masculinity, nationhood and majoritarianism exposes how both the fictionalized historical narratives they present and the official Indian historiography from

which they draw and on which they comment are ideologically charged and thus inevitably constituted by both fictional and historical events.

Illustrating how divergent representations of masculinity in Partition narratives signal the varying notions of national belonging that underpin historical narratives requires a contextualization of gender in British colonial and South Asian anti-colonial discourses. According to Kumar, British imperialists integrated a traditionally valorized brahmanical ideal of manliness premised on renunciation and self-control into an Orientalist discourse that posits the colonized "Other" as effeminate and inferior (2014, 6). While Mahatma Gandhi re-infused this ideal of the ascetic male with honorability through his deployment of non-violent resistance (satyagraha) and in fact privileged androgyny and femininity over masculinity, "the credo of belligerent masculinity (...) arose as a counter narrative to the colonial discourse" for nationalists disenchanted with ahimsa (Kumar 2014, 7). Building on a tradition of cultural nationalism that equates the South Asian (Hindu) woman with the nation (Chatterjee 1989), these revolutionaries "reclaim[ed] their manhood" by protecting "Mother India" (Kumar 2014, 7). Thus, while official historiography glorifies Gandhi's "androgynous politics" (Alter in Kumar 2014, 9) as determining the course of India's freedom movement, it also preserves a gendered nationalist notion that casts the nation as an embattled female in need of male protection (indeed, the image of Mother India is simultaneously feminine and patriarchal). The public insistence of the Nehru government on rehabilitating Hindu woman abducted to Pakistan is a case in point of this valorization of heroic masculinity to nationalist ends (Menon 1993).

As the two films' protagonists Milkha and Saket illustrate through their navigation of Partition violence and its sectarian echoes, this tension in official historiography between Gandhian and aggressive forms of masculinity is not absent from the narratives presented in *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* and *Hey Ram!*. As both films draw significantly from the narrative structures of melodramatic biopics, *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* and *Hey Ram!* "disseminate the myth of nationhood" through narrative strategies that include a "glorification of hyper-masculinity." (Kumar 2014: 1) Coupling fictionalized biographies with national history, biopics identify the hyper-masculine hero with the nation and render the hero's achievements symbolic of national successes (Kumar 2014: 2). In *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, this moment of identification is rather obviously pronounced when Milkha is clad in a sports jacket with an "India" emblem that has been eyed by him and the camera, as well as, even more explicitly, when he declares to

"have become India". Similarly, Saket's intertwinement with the assassination of Gandhi is sealed when he is handed the gun and informed of his mission. While Milkha's biography has been heavily dramatized and Saket is a fictional character, I read their lives as reiterations and critiques of official historiographies.

Although Milkha and Saket embody the hyper-masculinity relied upon so heavily by the biopic genre, both *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* and *Hey Ram!* insinuate a reconciliation with or (partial) return to the cerebral renouncer preferred by Gandhi. This mirrors the contradicting notions of masculinity that litter mainstream historical narratives and indicates an ambivalent relation to official history. As Kumar points out, Milkha's injury due to this reluctance to wear running shoes and his insistence to run a race after having been violently assaulted by his competitors testify to his ability to endure pain and his willingness to sacrifice for the cause identified with the nation's fate, namely becoming India's track-and-field champion (Kumar 2014, 11). In addition to the fetishisation of the athlete's hyper-muscular physique by means of close-ups and low angle shots (Kumar 2014: 11), Milkha's positioning as simultaneously a member of society and the army conflates the subject-positions of citizen and soldier.

This free-flow of blood and valorization of militant masculinity is also central to the character development of Saket, who subscribes to an aggressively masculine branch of Hindu nationalism following his failure to protect his wife Aparna during the communal riots preceding Partition. Seeing as Aparna was raped by Muslim rioters, Ram's sense of emasculation is telling of the gendered dimension of cultural nationalism, and his subsequent revenge (which causes traumatic collateral death) is symbolic for the sense of being wronged that informs Hindutva ideology. Ironically, while the film repeatedly airs the Hindutva view that the atrocities visited upon Hindus during Partition violence are brushed over by official historiography, much of India's early interactions with Pakistan revolved around this image of the abused or abducted Hindu woman in need of resettlement and protection by the Indian state (Menon 1993). It thus appears that the Hindutva critique of official historiography as espousing false, imaginary notions of communal harmony is itself based on a selective (re-)imagination of official history.

A tension between alternative and official historiographies parallels both films' depictions of masculinity in relation to Partition. The emasculation caused by Milkha's fleeing from the Punjab and his witnessing of his father's beheading is redeemed by his confrontational return to

Pakistan. Here, Milkha vindicates himself through the track-and-field victory that his hyper-masculine endurance and self-sacrifice enables. However, the negative impact of his stint with an Australian lover and his rejection of another female admirer indicate his dedication to a sexually ascetic lifestyle. As behooves a biopic, these encounters also represent a national anxiety about Indian identity and culture vis-à-vis the international community in the face of a post-liberation entrance of "US values" to the Indian screen (Kumar 2014: 13). Similarly, Hindutva's "political imperatives of self-assertion are channeled through the refiguring of personality within a new (...) order of masculinity" embodied by Saket's departure from his peaceful domestic life as a Tamil Brahmin to join a Maharashtra-based group of wronged but resurgent Hindu "warriors" (Vasudevan 2002: 2120). Saket's eventual admiration for Gandhi, however, suggests a return to the notion of masculinity as "much more cerebral and non-violent than that [vengefulness]" (Online Resource 1999: 76). As the former is geographically represented by an area of India that was relatively unaffected by Partition violence, namely the South, Saket's re-adoption of Gandhian masculinity seems symbolic of a desire to overcome of the violent legacy of Partition.

The effectiveness of this play with masculinity is debatable, as "reconvening him [Gandhi] is even harder" than assassinating him (Vasudevan 2004: 2924). Vasudevan views this flaw as symptomatic of *Hey Ram!'s* failure to put Hindutva's alternative historical narrative of Hindu loss "into quotation marks, that is, as something being commented upon rather than inviting identification" (2004: 2120). In other words, melodramatic narrative techniques that posit Saket as the 'good guy' and Muslims as the bad guys inspire an identification with Saket and preclude the "structured distance" that enables the spectator to reflect on the presented ideology (Vasudevan 2004: 2119). (No wonder my partner was confused.)

This lack of "quotation marks" is especially evident in the film's portrayal of Muslims during the violence that preceded Partition. The detailed depiction of the attack on Saket's first wife Aparna, the emphasis on the pro-Pakistan rally that facilitated the rape (Jinnah's Direct Action Day), and Saket's friend's (Lalwani) emotional account of his departure from his native Sindh conspire to establish a Hindutva narrative of Muslim aggression and Hindu loss. While Kamal Haasan intends to critique this alternative re-imagination of "the history of the nation-state as a biography of [Muslim] murder and [Hindu] revenge," Saket's remorse for his acts of murder "hardly neutralizes the [Muslim] bestiality we have witnessed" (Vasudevan 2002: 2119).

Although rescuing his long-lost friend Ajmad from a Hindu mob arguably signals an overturning of Saket's resentment towards Muslims (Online Resource 1999: 65), the scene leaves Vasudevan (2002) unconvinced. Not charmed by Kamal Haasan, he argues that passages against Hindutva such as these are the "more offensive" ones, as they "unselfconsciously conform to the prevailing Hindutva ideology that a Hindu nation provided with a renewed sense of its potency will provide protection to the minority." (2002: 2120) After Saket's disillusion with Hindutva affords the viewer some distance from the conviction that India's Hindu majority is victimized by the Congress' appeasement of Muslims, the portrayal of Muslims as "bestial" makes room for a construction of the minority as a "self-effacing entity amenable to political assimilation." (Vasudevan 2002: 2124) This submissive and unthreatening Muslim is embodied by Ajmad, who patiently offers Saket to "vent anger on me [Ajmad], not on some Muslim brother" (1999: 65) and to whom Saket eventually relates as a savior. By juxtaposing Saket's aggression and heroism with Ajmad's passivity, the scene thus contrasts Saket's hyper-masculinity to Ajmad's effeteness. Notwithstanding this portrayal of Muslims as passive, the Hindu mob is only tipped after Saket's Hindu company is intimated by Ajmad's relatives. Even as Saket's infatuation with Hindutva is wearing thin, it is implicitly hinted that Muslims are more likely to cause communal unrest. Instead of restoring a glorified pre-Partition inter-communal harmony celebrated in an early scene depicting the giddy interactions between Lalwani, Ajmad, and Saket at a party, the passage paradoxically reinforces patronizing stereotypes of Muslims in need of saving from riots they themselves instigate.

Failing to present a portrayal of Muslims that fundamentally conflicts with Hindutva perception, Kamal Haasan elucidates a congruity between the official historiography espoused by state secularism and its Hindutva critique, namely their patronizing attitude towards minorities. As such, Ram's denunciation of Hindutva ideology may be read as mirroring Indian cinema's "return to (...) Nehruvian secular-nationalism" that Benegal identifies as developing in response to Hindutva-influenced films (2007: 225). Garam Hawa, however, epitomizes the new "politics of religious minorities" that Benegal argues characterizes New Cinema (2007: 225). Unprecedented in its depiction of "the experience of Indian Muslims in the immediate aftermath of Partition" (Benegal 2007, 234), the film aires a perspective that is absent from official narratives of Partition.

In addition to giving a voice to the Muslims that remained in India (the story's author, Ismat Chughtai, was one of them herself),

Garam Hawa digs up motives for picking a "homeland" that are overlooked by official historiography. Whilst Partition is usually portrayed as being mostly a religious affair, *Garam Hawa* highlights the emotional, material and often opportunistic incentives that informed people's decisions. The vehement refusal of protagonist Salim's Grandmother to leave the family's ancestral home and her husband's buried bones in Agra is emblematic of an emotional and familial attachment to place downplayed by official narratives, while concerns about property rights, political gain, potential spouses, college degrees and Salim Mirza's business foreground the (im)practicalities of leaving India. Panorama shots of the Mughal city Fatehpur Sikri and a nostalgic stroll past the Taj Mahal revel in the irony that M.S. Sathyu's religious identity compromises his sense of belonging "in a city that abounds with Muslim monuments, art and artifacts" that contribute significantly to the nation's pride and self-definition (Roy 2013).

Furthermore, by displaying unemployment and exhibiting the distrust Salim faces when trying to take up a loan and renting property, Sathyu challenges the representation of the Nehruvian administration as tolerant and accommodative of minorities in official historiography (Benegal 2007: 227). Indeed, the Mirzas' history is a subaltern one disentangled from the politicians whose decisions and debates are conventionally portrayed as shaping the course of history (Chaturvedi 2007). "What do they know?" one character asks of Congress politicians, while another points out most of India's Muslim leaders have left. Although *Hey Ram!* touches on the undercurrent of class dynamics in communal violence through the tailor's deadly resentment of his customer Aparna, *Garam Hawa* is refreshing in its approach of Partition and minority relations in terms of class. The strike of Mirza's factory workers hints at the fact that most Muslims who remained in India were working-class Muslims whose political leverage had been compromised by the departure of their leaders (Hasan 1997).

Providing this commentary on majoritarian exclusivity and the struggles of democratic representation, *Garam Hawa* uses fiction to channel a historical narrative that is a necessary supplement to and critique of Hindu-centric Indian historiography. More importantly, it discredits the Hindutva historiography of a wronged Hindu subject entitled to reclaim his nation as a Hindu homeland - all too convincingly portrayed by Kamal Hasaan - by narrating Muslim loss and foregrounding a minority's sense of belonging in India. Seeing as Partition violence and its legacy of communal tension fuel these pertinent narratives of loss and national belonging, feature films on Partition are especially instrumental as historical resources.

Rather than filling a silence on Partition in Indian historiography, the three films discussed fill silences in official historiography of Partition - minority concerns, Hindutva self-righteousness, diverse motives for claims to national belonging and conflicted masculinities undoubtedly being only a few of many silences

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