

Bollywood's Christians in Hindu Modernity

Ryan Arron D'Souza

Abstract:

The article analyzes three award-winning Bollywood movies released between 2004-2014 with a focus on the interactions between Christian and Hindu characters. The decade witnessed the exit and re-entry of the Hindu Right, and I characterize the period as centrist, liberal, and secular. Yet I argue that discourses of Hindu-ness permeate various avenues of public life such that India is always already imagined to be Hindu. Hence, the aim is to show how Hindu-ness and Indian-ness are performed and represented across the political spectrum. In this context, Hindu modernity is defined as reactionary to European modernity that uses the same model but emphasizes tradition as a point of difference. Hindu modernity is encoded in tradition. The interactions analyzed in the article show that the Christian is most distant from tradition, while the Hindu is closest, and, in the process, positioned to integrate the former's Otherness into Hindu modernity. The analysis is divided into three themes: *Page 3* (Bhandarkar, 2005) shows that Otherness cannot always be integrated; *Rock On!!* (Kapoor, 2008) identifies a certain type of Otherness that can be integrated; *Dum Maaro Dum* (Sippy, 2011) explores a location (Goa) as a site of modernity. I conclusively argue that reactionary politics in a perpetual derivative of western modernity is responsible for much of the postcolonial angst.

Keywords: cultural and critical studies, postcolonial criticism, race and gender in media, religion and culture, South Asian popular culture