

Violence, Vanishing Mediator and *passage à l'acte* in Hindi Cinema

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the portrayal and conceptualization of violence, the vanishing mediator in Hindi cinema. Through an interdisciplinary lens, it examines the representation of violence in Indian films, particularly focusing on the role of the vanishing mediator as a narrative device and its connection to the concept. Drawing on cinematic examples, the study explores how Hindi cinema reflects and constructs societal attitudes towards violence, identity, and agency.

Keywords: *Violence, vanishing mediator, passage à l'acte, Hindi cinema, representation, narrative, societal attitudes, identity*

‘Just as God is opposed to myth in all spheres, so divine violence runs counter to mythic violence. Indeed, divine violence designates in all respects an antithesis to mythic violence. If mythic violence is law-positing, divine violence is law-annihilating; if the former establishes boundaries, the latter boundlessly annihilates them; if mythic violence inculcates [verschuldend] and expiates [sühnend] at the same time, divine violence de-expiates [entsühnend]; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal in a bloodless manner.’

Walter Benjamin, ‘Towards a Critique of Violence’, [§17, 57] .¹

‘The cinema is a peculiarly violent form of entertainment, developed in and catering for what we have come to think of as an age of violence.’

Philip French, ‘Violence in the Cinema’ (1968: 59)²

Depiction of violence in cinema and its moral criticism are equally routine.³ However, what Gramsci calls as ‘commonsense’ – his term for ideology – is often common to both.⁴ Hindi cinema too, has been subjected to this kind of moral criticism. The films of 1970s, for example, depicted the actor Amitabh Bachchan as ‘angry young man’, a filmic leitmotif which is supposed to have aided the emergence of extreme right parties.⁵ This essay too locates the question of violence in two Hindi movies depicting apparently opposite

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