Calling God on the wrong number while a Hanuman devotee goes to Pakistan: Hindu-Muslim relations in Rajkumar Hirani’s *PK* (2014) and Kabir Khan’s *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* (2015)

By Prof Rachel Dwyer

**Abstract:** Since December 2014, three of the biggest hits in the hundred year history of Indian cinema have been released, all members of the ‘500 crore club’, that is, films which have grossed more than Rs 5bn (US$78m), of which there have been only four to date. It is striking that these three films all deal with issues which may loosely be termed religious, in that they are set in the context of clearly designated Hindu practices, with two directly concerning Muslims and Pakistan. These films show religious groups in a new way, breaking with the conventions of the Islamicate genres (see below) showing different communities and their beliefs and practices. This paper focuses on the two Hindi films, *PK* and *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, mentioning the Telugu film, *Baahubali: the beginning*, only in passing as it is quite different from the other two, in being a belonging to a new quasi-mythological genre and not one which refers directly to Muslims or to Pakistan.

Rachel Dwyer is Professor of Indian Cultures and Cinema at SOAS, University of London. She took her BA in Sanskrit at SOAS, followed by an MPhil in General Linguistics and Comparative Philology at the University of Oxford. Her PhD research at SOAS was on the Gujarati lyrics of Dayaram (1777-1852). She teaches undergraduate and postgraduate courses in cinema and supervises PhD research on Indian cinema.

Professor Dwyer’s main research interest is in Hindi cinema where she has researched and published on film magazines and popular fiction; consumerism and the new middle classes; love and eroticism (of the wet sari and of the kiss and saying ‘I love you’); visual culture (sets, locations and costumes); religion (Hinduism and Islam); emotions (anger and happiness); stars and star families (Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan and the Kapoor dynasty); Gandhi and the biopic; Hindi cinema in East Africa and in the UK. Among her eleven books is one in the British Film Institute’s ‘World Directors’ series about one of the great figures of the Hindi film industry, Yash Chopra, with whom she worked for several years. She later wrote the BFI’s guide to ‘100 Bollywood films’ and edits a series on South Asian Cinema for Oxford University Press, Delhi. Her most recent books are *Bollywood’s India: Hindi cinema as a guide to modern India*. London: Reaktion Books; New Delhi: Hachette, 2014), and two edited collections: *Bollywood* 4 edited volumes, Critical concepts in media and cultural studies (London: Routledge, 2015) and *Keywords in modern Indian studies*. Co-edited with Gita Dharampal-Frick, Monika Kirloskar and Jahnnavi Phalke (New Delhi: Oxford University Press/ New York: New York University Press, 2015).

**EVENT DETAILS:**

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