

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20057891>

Faith, Satire, and the Divided Audience: A Thematic Analysis of IMDb Reviews of the Bollywood Film PK (2014)



Farahat Ali

Assistant Professor, School of Media and Mass Communication,
Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, Pakistan. Email:
farahat.ali@bnu.edu.pk

Abstract:

This study examines how IMDb reviewers construct, negotiate, and contest the religious and social meanings of PK (Hirani, 2014), one of Bollywood's most commercially successful and publicly disputed films. While existing scholarship has mainly examined PK through textual, political, or institutional lenses, less attention has been paid to how ordinary viewers interpret its critique of religion, superstition, godmen, and organised faith in digital review spaces. Using reflexive thematic analysis, this study analyses IMDb user reviews as naturalistic audience discourse and treats reviewer language as a site of public meaning-making. The analysis identifies three major patterns. First, many reviewers read PK as a courageous critique of religious intermediaries, blind faith, and exploitative godmen, while others reject the film as selectively critical of Hinduism. Second, reviewers interpret the film's comedy, emotion, and satire as central to its social communication, though some argue that Bollywood conventions dilute its critical force. Third, polarised responses emerge through competing registers of praise, religious offense, moral disagreement, and aesthetic criticism. These findings show that PK's reception cannot be reduced to taste or entertainment value; it reflects wider struggles over secularism, religious identity, and cultural politics in contemporary India. The study contributes to Bollywood reception research by demonstrating the value of IMDb reviews for analysing how digital audiences publicly debate socially provocative cinema.

Keywords: PK, Bollywood, thematic analysis, IMDb reviews, religion, satire, audience reception, godmen, user-generated content

Introduction

Popular cinema has long served as a contested arena through which societies negotiate their deepest moral and religious anxieties, yet the specific mechanisms by which audiences publicly construct and contest those negotiations remain underexplored. In India, where religion permeates everyday social life and cinema commands an unparalleled cultural reach, films that engage critically with religious institutions invite responses that are rarely neutral (Qadri & Mufti, 2016). The release of *PK* (Hirani, 2014) crystallized this tension acutely. Through the device of a bewildered alien interrogating the

logic of organised religion, godmen, and blind superstition with satirical innocence, the film became simultaneously one of Bollywood's highest-grossing productions and the most publicly contested Indian film of its decade, drawing protests, legal petitions, and organized boycott demands (Robison, 2019; Qadri & Mufti, 2016). The scale and ideological intensity of its reception made it a significant cultural event, yet the ordinary viewer's voice, preserved in thousands of informal online reviews, has received far less scholarly attention than the film's textual content or its institutional reception in the press and courts.

The study of how audiences make meaning from films that engage with religion and social satire is especially urgent in the contemporary Indian context. Since 2014, the ascent of Hindu nationalism under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has profoundly reshaped the cultural politics of Bollywood, producing organized digital campaigns to cancel films perceived as anti-Hindu and rewarding productions that affirm Hindutva values (Gehlawat, 2024; Bhat et al., 2025). This transformation has intensified the ideological stakes of audience reception, turning what might otherwise be aesthetic judgements about a film's quality or entertainment value into explicitly political acts of identity affirmation or protest. Singh (2025) argues that popular cinema in India does not merely reflect society but actively produces meanings and hierarchies around religious and caste identity, making the site of audience reception as important to analyse as the site of production. Against this backdrop, IMDb user reviews offer a particularly valuable window: they are unsolicited, temporally varied, globally sourced, and composed without institutional mediation, capturing the heterogeneous and often contradictory ways in which ordinary viewers engage with a film's social and religious arguments (Ren & Chandra, 2025).

Existing scholarship has made important inroads into *PK*'s textual dimensions. Malreddy (2022) situates the film within a broader postsecular turn in Hindi cinema, arguing that its narrative devices articulate a paradox of nonsecular secularism in which the guru figure condenses repressed secular anxieties. Joshi (2021) reads the film through Althusser's concept of ideological state apparatus, interpreting *PK*'s naïve questioning as a technology of self that defies hegemonic religious discourse. Robison (2019) documents the organised counter-public responses of middle-class Hindu groups who, while avoiding street violence, produced media to reclaim what they saw as the film's affront to Hindu dharma. However, scholarship has not yet systematically examined how IMDb reviewers, as ordinary audiences rather than critics or activists, construct the film's religious critique, experience its satirical and emotional registers, and articulate their polarised responses. The audience-side of the controversy, as expressed in freely written, publicly accessible digital reviews, remains an analytically underexplored site.

This study addresses that gap by conducting a reflexive thematic analysis of IMDb reviews of *PK*, guided by three research questions: how

reviewers construct the film's critique of religion, faith, superstition, and godmen; how they interpret the film's deployment of comedy, emotion, and satire to communicate its social message; and how they express polarised responses through praise, offense, moral disagreement, and criticism of the film's message. All the IMDb reviews were analysed inductively following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) approach to thematic analysis, treating reviewer language as meaning-making practice rather than as transparent reportage of opinion. The study contributes in three ways: it advances understanding of how contested Bollywood films are received and debated in digital public spheres; it demonstrates the analytical value of IMDb as a qualitative data source for audience reception research; and it illuminates how religious identity and ideological positioning shape the interpretive repertoires that ordinary viewers bring to socially provocative cinema at a historically specific moment in India's cultural politics.

Literature Review

Religion, Faith, and Cinema

The relationship between religion and cinema has occupied a central position in media and cultural studies, particularly in the context of societies where religious identity remains a constitutive element of public life. Scholars have long recognised that films do not merely mirror existing social attitudes toward religion but actively participate in producing, contesting, and reframing the meanings that audiences attach to faith, ritual, and spiritual authority. Dwyer's (2006) landmark study established the foundational argument that religion in Hindi popular cinema occupies a structurally unique position, functioning simultaneously as narrative backdrop, ideological resource, and site of cultural contestation. Dwyer traced how devotional and mythological genres in Bollywood cinema encoded particular relationships between the divine and the human, relationships that have progressively been destabilised by commercially ambitious satirical films that approach religion from a more interrogative stance. This trajectory, from devotion to satire, is precisely the terrain that films such as *PK* (Hirani, 2014) inhabit, and understanding how audiences receive and construct such films requires engagement with a substantial body of interdisciplinary scholarship. Qadri and Mufti (2016) provided one of the most detailed analyses of *PK* specifically, situating it within the broader history of Indian cinema's

engagement with religious sensitivities. They argued that the film's satirical treatment of godmen, figures who claim spiritual authority while functioning as commercial intermediaries between devotees and the divine, operates through a dual logic: it targets the institutional corruption of religion while simultaneously affirming the existence of a higher moral-spiritual order. This distinction is critical. The film does not argue against God; it argues against the human systems that exploit belief in God. Such a distinction structures how the film's critique of godmen is likely to be received by different audience segments, since it opens space for viewers to endorse the critique without abandoning their faith. Singh (2025), in a recent study, has similarly argued that contemporary Indian popular cinema operates as a "contradictory space" in which social inequalities and religious exploitations are exposed but simultaneously softened through melodrama and emotional affect, a dynamic that creates both progressive potential and structural ambiguity in the films' social messaging.

Recent Bollywood films address how they critique superstition without alienating devotional audiences through the "postsecular" concept, as Malreddy (2022) describes. Using films like *Oh My God!* (2012), *PK* (2014), and *Dharam Sankat Mein* (2015), he argues they portray 'nonsecular secularism,' critiquing religious intermediaries while maintaining faith's personal appeal. The godman figure acts as a blank slate for projecting secular anxieties about religion, critiquing superstition while reaffirming spirituality. Nayar (2015) studied Bollywood's religious comedy genre, highlighting conventions such as naive outsiders questioning religion, Indian secularism fostering a multi-faith critique, and the creation of a sense of national community that makes the critique inclusive. Dixit and Kukreti (2025) counter this, saying Bollywood's Hindu imagery shifted from reverence to caricature post-independence, leading to cultural misrepresentation and "Hinduphobia", a term used by critics to frame the film's religious critique.

Bollywood, Hindutva, and the Politicisation of Cinema

Since 2014, scholarship on Bollywood and religion has increasingly focused on the intersection of Hindi cinema with Hindutva, the Hindu nationalist ideology of the BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This research is crucial for understanding why films like *PK*, initially seen as secular social comedies, are now

reinterpreted within a polarized ideological landscape where culture and religion are intertwined. Gehlawat (2024) examined how filmmakers and actors have navigated or aligned with Hindutva ideology since 2014, analyzing the BJP's influence on film genres from historical epics like *Padmaavat* (2018) and *Manikarnika* (2019), which aim to reshape Indian history, to smaller films addressing caste violence and homophobia. Saha and Kaur (2025) reviewed Gehlawat's work, highlighting the deep impact of Hindutva on Indian cinema and society.

Bhat et al. (2025) analyzed 3,500 #BoycottBollywood tweets, showing how online Hindu nationalists discursively portray Bollywood as "Hinduphobic, morally corrupt, nepotistic/elitist, and unpatriotic" to support boycott campaigns. They reveal that right-wing supporters in India weaponize cancel culture, unlike elsewhere where it's seen as free speech, to attack opponents and unify groups. This is evident in negative *PK* reviews that use boycott rhetoric, "anti-Hindu propaganda," and calls for film withdrawal. Baishya (2025) studied *The Kashmir Files*' (2022) reception as "viral nationalism," where a film spreads beyond screens on digital platforms, creating a populist, affective participation. This helps explain how *PK*'s negative reviews are amplified and ideologically organized through social media, circulating as evidence within communal narratives. Biswas (2024) reviewed three recent Bollywood historical films, arguing they promote ideas of Dharma and Ramrajya to construct a nation under just Hindu rule, framing that contextualizes how *PK*'s secular humanism is increasingly viewed with suspicion by Hindu nationalists.

Barthwal and Sharma (2023) studied the controversy over the *Tandav* (2021) series on Amazon Prime, which faced protests for allegedly mocking Hindu gods. They showed how social media has become a platform for Hindutva to oppose anti-Hindu content and that this marks a systemic change in how digital platforms handle religious offense in India. This change is significant for understanding the reception of *PK*, released in 2014, as online Hindu nationalist reactions have grown more organized and politicized. Mukherjee (2025) analyzed *RRR* (2022) and *Adipurush* (2023) as adaptations of the Ramayana promoting Hindu nationalism by glorifying Rama and spreading Islamophobia. He argued these films serve as tools for right-wing politics to promote Hindu nationalism internationally. Although

'PK' is ideologically different, it is a secular-humanist film that Hindutva cinema often opposes. Mukherjee's analysis helps explain why 'PK' has a polarized reception.

Dutta (2025) examined how Hindutva's digital infrastructure spreads Islamophobic hate across diaspora communities. Ghasiya et al. (2023) analyzed 15 million tweets, highlighting themes like exclusionary nationalism, conspiracy theories, and anti-minority hate speech in Hindutva discourse. Both studies show that extreme negative reviews, including accusations of 'Love Jihad,' claims of anti-Hindu targeting, and calls for boycotts, align with these online discursive themes. Raj and Suresh (2023) studied how stereotypes shape Muslim identities in Indian nationalism and history, arguing Indian cinema often portrays Muslims as internal or external threats. Kaur (2026) extended this to recent Bollywood films, noting a decade-long ideological shift in Hindi cinema reflecting India's changing political landscape, with Hindu-Muslim relations depicted through binaries of victim/perpetrator and patriot/enemy. Contextualizing PK shows its multi-faith, humanist narrative challenges these binaries and stands as an ideological statement amid increasing polarization. Bhat (2023) investigated how right-wing news media in India employ thematic strategies of media criticism that include claims that the mainstream media suppress Hindu voices, favor Muslim and Christian minorities, and undermine national interests. These discursive strategies are directly transferred to the film review context, where negative PK reviewers frequently frame the film as a product of a "Bollywood-media complex" that systematically targets Hindu religious sensibilities while protecting Islam and Christianity from equivalent satirical scrutiny.

Comedy, Satire, and the Communication of Social Messages in Film

Comedy and satire can effectively communicate social messages that might be resisted if delivered more directly. Little (2022) noted satire in film often succeeds in making a critical point but risks misinterpretation, as viewers may enjoy the comedy without grasping the social critique or reject it if they find the humor disrespectful. Bonnstetter (2011) distinguished between satire-as-comedy, which invites acceptance and promotes inclusive critique, and satire-as-burlesque, which reduces its subject to absurdity without perspective. This distinction questions whether films like PK operate in a comic or burlesque mode, a point audiences

actively debate. Khattak and Komal (2025) found humor in satire comments and critiques on sensitive issues, but its messages may not be immediately clear to all. Abu Bakar's (2020) study of comedy film as social critique argued that comedy cinema functions as an "agency of meaning" that can critique cultural discourses precisely by presenting them through the distancing lens of fiction.

Polarised Audience Reception, Online Film Reviews, and the Politics of Religious Meaning-Making

The study of polarized audience reception has advanced with the availability of large review corpora on platforms like IMDb. Amendola et al. (2015) showed that film rating polarization, characterized by bimodal distributions, decreases with popularity and is more common in recent films. Their framework applies to PK, which has a bimodal rating distribution, indicating controversy. Ghasiya et al. (2023) found Hindi online discourse on conspiracy theories and anti-minority content more toxic than English, relevant to PK, where Hindi expressions of offence often use more charged vocab than English critiques. Ren and Chandra (2025) identified cross-cultural differences among IMDb reviewers, with higher-rated reviews more positive and lower-rated reviews more abusive, a pattern also seen in PK.

Robison (2019) studied how ISKCON communities in Mumbai and Pune created media in response to PK and similar films, aiming to contest perceived threats to Hindu traditions in public culture. He identified a "third voice", a middle-class Hindu group that uses media to defend dharma against cinematic satire, between violent Hindutva protests and liberal civil society. Baishya's (2025) concept of "viral nationalism" expands this into social media, showing how these groups now use digital platforms to amplify acts of review and reaction into cultural politics. The L2: Empuraan (2025) controversy, discussed by Vipula (2025), echoes this: filmmakers edited and apologized for scenes after social media backlash from Hindutva-aligned groups, despite support from political leaders and the public. The author suggests this reflects a broader fear that controls the creative industry, revealing why the ongoing negative reception of PK on IMDb is part of a cultural war, not just aesthetic disagreement. Based on the literature above, the following research questions have been formulated:

RQ1. How do IMDb reviewers construct PK's critique of religion, faith, superstition, and

godmen?

RQ2. How do IMDb reviewers interpret the film's use of comedy, emotion, and satire to communicate a social message?

RQ3. How do IMDb reviewers express polarised responses to *PK*, especially through praise, offense, moral disagreement, and criticism of the film's message?

Method

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in the principles of interpretive inquiry. The aim is not to measure or quantify audience responses to *PK* (2014) but to explore the meanings, values, and ideological frameworks through which IMDb reviewers construct and communicate their interpretations of the film. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate here because the research questions concern how audiences construct meaning from a culturally and religiously complex text, and because meaning-making processes are by their nature context-dependent, layered, and resistant to reduction to numerical categories. An interpretive epistemological standpoint underlies the entire analysis: the researcher acknowledges that knowledge of audience responses is not retrieved from the data but actively produced through a process of reading, reflection, and interpretation that is shaped by the researcher's own cultural positioning and theoretical commitments (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The primary analytical method employed is reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), as developed and elaborated by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019). Thematic analysis is defined as a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning, termed themes, within qualitative data. It is selected for this study because of its theoretical flexibility, its capacity to handle large and diverse textual datasets, and its explicit accommodation of the researcher's active interpretive role rather than treating the analyst as a passive conduit for meanings that exist independently in the data. Unlike approaches that foreground coding reliability or inter-rater agreement, which presuppose that themes exist objectively in the data and that multiple coders should converge on the same results, reflexive thematic analysis treats the researcher's subjectivity as a methodological resource rather than a source of bias to be controlled (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This orientation is particularly appropriate for the analysis of politically and religiously sensitive

user-generated content, where different analysts with different positionalities would legitimately produce different but equally defensible interpretations.

The version of thematic analysis applied is inductive rather than deductive: themes are generated from the data rather than being derived in advance from a theoretical framework or applied to the data to confirm pre-existing propositions. At the same time, the analysis is not naive; the researcher brings theoretical knowledge of audience reception studies, the sociology of religion in Indian cinema, and the political dimensions of online film discourse to the reading of the data, and this knowledge inevitably shapes the analytical sensibility through which patterns are identified and interpreted. This combination of inductive coding with theoretically informed interpretation is consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2006) description of a latent-level thematic analysis, which moves beyond description of surface-level content to interrogate the underlying ideas, assumptions, and ideologies that give rise to particular patterns of meaning.

Data Source and Corpus

The data corpus consists of 775 user-generated reviews of *PK* (2014) posted on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). IMDb is one of the largest and most widely used online film review platforms globally, hosting tens of thousands of user reviews for major international films and providing an accessible, publicly visible archive of audience responses to cinema. The platform is particularly well-suited to the study of *PK* because it attracts a disproportionately large volume of South Asian and diaspora reviewers for Bollywood films, and because its user reviews span a wide temporal range from the film's release in December 2014 to the present day, enabling the analysis to capture both early reception and the retrospective political recontextualisation of the film that has occurred as the Indian cultural landscape has shifted since 2014.

IMDb reviews constitute a form of unsolicited, naturalistic online data, meaning that reviewers produced them voluntarily, without prompting from the researcher and without the researcher influencing their content. This naturalistic quality is a methodological strength: the data are not shaped by the researcher-participant relationship that characterises interview or focus group data, and they represent genuine, self-motivated expressions of viewer response.

However, naturalistic online data also carry limitations that must be acknowledged. IMDb reviewers are a self-selected population and cannot be treated as representative of *PK*'s total audience in any probabilistic sense; they are disproportionately likely to hold strong opinions, since casual or moderately satisfied viewers are less motivated to write reviews than those who experienced intense positive or negative reactions. The corpus therefore captures the most articulate and invested segment of the audience rather than the average viewer.

The dataset was collected from IMDb's publicly accessible review pages for *PK* and stored as a structured CSV file containing review text, ratings (on a 1–10 scale), helpfulness votes, and, where available, reviewer metadata. The dataset comprised the available corpus of written reviews at the time of collection (775 reviews in total). IMDb reviews are publicly posted and are not associated with sensitive personal data in any form that would require formal ethical approval under standard research governance frameworks; however, consistent with best practice in online qualitative research, reviewer identities are not named or identified in this study, and all quoted material is treated as public text produced for a public audience rather than as private communication.

Data Analysis

The analysis used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis, applied iteratively. Phase 1: Familiarisation involved reading data, noting impressions and questions to grasp the thematic landscape. Phase 2: Generating initial codes entailed systematic reading and coding at semantic and latent levels, capturing explicit content and implicit assumptions, with codes like "godmen exploit believers" and "anti-Hindu bias." Phase 3: Constructing themes grouped codes into overarching patterns based on shared meaning relevant to research questions. Phase 4: Reviewing themes refined and checked coherence, bounding, and data-grounding, collapsing or subdividing themes as needed. Phase 5: Defining and naming themes involved labeling each with a precise name and definition, emphasizing interpretive significance. Phase 6: Writing the report combined extracts and analysis, contextualized within literature, arguing what the thematic patterns reveal about IMDb reviewers' engagement with *PK* as a cultural and ideological text.

Results

RQ 1: How do IMDb reviewers construct *PK*'s critique of religion, faith, superstition, and godmen?

Across the IMDb reviews, a substantial portion of reviewers engaged meaningfully with the film's treatment of religion, faith, superstition, and the figure of the godman. The thematic analysis of this corpus reveals that reviewers did not simply receive the film's critique passively; rather, they actively constructed, negotiated, and extended its religious commentary through their own ideological frameworks. The most dominant theme to emerge was the exposure of religious intermediaries and false godmen. Reviewers repeatedly identified the film's central argument, that godmen exploit blind devotion for personal gain, as both courageous and socially necessary. Reviewers described the satirical moments targeting fake gurus and their blind devotees as "priceless," and framed these critiques as timely social interventions. The alien's outsider perspective was interpreted as an authorial device to illuminate the arbitrariness of ritualistic practices and the vulnerability of devotees to manipulation.

A second closely related theme was the challenge to blind faith and superstition. Many reviewers celebrated the film for asking what they called the "right questions" about the foundations of religious practice. Reviewers drew a clear distinction between faith in a higher moral order, which they regarded as legitimate, and organised superstitious practice, which they portrayed as socially harmful and intellectually dishonest. The metaphor of the "wrong number", dialling an intermediary instead of God directly, was frequently cited by reviewers as the film's most incisive conceptual contribution. Several reviewers extended this reading to argue that the film ultimately affirms the existence of a benevolent God while targeting the corrupt human institutions that claim to represent that God.

A third theme was inter-faith humanism and religious equality. Many reviewers constructed the film as a call for universal brotherhood that transcends religious boundaries. They highlighted the film's central moral proposition, that a person's worth is determined by their humanity, not their religious affiliation, and connected this reading to contemporary debates about communalism and sectarianism in South Asia. These reviewers celebrated *PK*'s depiction of Muslim, Hindu, Christian, and Sikh characters and practices, interpreting this as an argument for the equality of all faiths. However,

a significant counter-construction was also present in the reviews. A substantial number of reviewers argued that the film's critique was selectively directed at Hinduism while sparing Islam and Christianity from equivalent scrutiny. These reviewers challenged the film's claims to universal religious critique and reframed it as a biased attack on one religious community. This counter-theme, while distinct in tone, formed an important part of how reviewers collectively constructed the meaning of the film's religious commentary, demonstrating that the critique of godmen was not received as a neutral or universal act. Taken together, these four categories, exposure of godmen, challenge to superstition, inter-faith humanism, and selective religious targeting, constitute the major interpretive frameworks through which IMDb reviewers constructed PK's critique of religion and faith.

RQ 2: How do IMDb reviewers interpret the film's use of comedy, emotion, and satire to communicate a social message?

IMDb reviewers devoted considerable attention to the formal properties of the film, specifically its deployment of comedy, emotional affect, and satire, and their relationship to the film's broader social argument. The analysis reveals three major themes in how reviewers interpreted this relationship. The dominant theme was comedy and satire as vehicles for social enlightenment. A large majority of positive reviewers argued that the film's comedic mode was not merely entertaining but functionally necessary for the transmission of its social message. Reviewers consistently described a dual-register experience: laughter in the first half that progressively gives way to reflection and emotional engagement as the film deepens. The alien's naïve questioning of religious conventions, described by reviewers as situational comedy rather than crude humour, was widely credited as the mechanism through which the film made difficult social truths accessible. Reviewers explicitly argued that comedy lowered the audience's defensive resistance to a critique of religion, allowing the message to land more effectively than a didactic film would have managed. Several reviewers compared the film to other satirical works like *Oh My God!* (2012), usually to conclude that PK packaged its message more palatably, if sometimes less rigorously.

The second theme was emotional affect as an amplifier of the social message. Reviewers frequently emphasised that the film made them

simultaneously laugh and cry, and they interpreted this affective duality as evidence of the film's moral seriousness. The emotional register, centred on the love story, the cross-border romance, and PK's longing to return home, was not merely seen as a Bollywood convention but as a strategy that personalised the film's abstract social arguments. Reviewers noted that the emotional scenes gave the message a human face, making it possible to connect intellectually rigorous ideas about religious exploitation with individual suffering. One reviewer described the film as "rare" in its ability to "bounce between humor and sentiment so seamlessly," indicating that the integration, not merely the coexistence, of comedy and emotion was what distinguished the film's communicative strategy.

A third, more critical theme was the perceived tension between entertainment and depth. A notable minority of reviewers argued that the film's comedic and commercial imperatives ultimately compromised its social message. These reviewers contended that the film's reliance on Bollywood conventions, its love story, its melodramatic climax, and its guest appearances undermined the seriousness of its critique. Some argued that the satire was too superficial, "scratching the surface" rather than engaging with the deeper philosophical and sociological dimensions of religious practice. Critics within this group often invoked *Oh My God!* as a counterexample, arguing that the social message was better served precisely because it was less compromised by entertainment conventions. These reviewers did not reject the social message, but they questioned whether the comedic and emotional packaging ultimately diluted rather than amplified it. Collectively, these three themes reveal that reviewers were highly attentive to the film's formal choices and understood them as meaningful rhetorical strategies, not merely aesthetic preferences. The comedy, emotion, and satire in PK were interpreted as instruments of social communication, and the film was evaluated partly on how effectively those instruments served their communicative purpose.

RQ 3: How do IMDb reviewers express polarised responses to PK, especially through praise, offense, moral disagreement, and criticism of the film's message?

The IMDb reviews of PK constitute one of the most clearly polarised reception corpora visible in the dataset. The distribution of ratings, a

significant cluster at 10/10 and an equally prominent cluster at 1/10, maps directly onto qualitative patterns in the reviews. The thematic analysis identifies four major themes through which reviewers expressed their polarised responses. The first and most celebratory theme was praise for cinematic courage and social impact. Reviewers who gave the film high ratings consistently framed their praise in terms of the film's bravery in addressing taboo subjects and its capacity to effect genuine personal and social transformation. Many used language of revelation and enlightenment, describing the film as having "slapped them in the face" with truth or as having "enlightened" their perspective on religion. International reviewers, particularly those unfamiliar with Bollywood, described the film as a "gem" and a "divine appointment," suggesting that its social message transcended its cultural context. Several reviewers reported recommending the film to family members, friends, and religious relatives as a gentle instrument for opening conversations about blind faith. The praise in this cluster was not merely aesthetic but moral and civic: reviewers positioned the film as a necessary social intervention.

The second theme was religious offense and the accusation of bias. The most intense negative reviews were not primarily about cinematic quality but about perceived religious insult. A substantial group of reviewers expressed deep offense, characterising the film as an attack on Hinduism disguised as secular satire. These reviewers argued that the film targeted Hindu practices, symbols, and deities while carefully exempting Islam and Christianity from equivalent scrutiny. They described this selective targeting as evidence of hypocrisy, cowardice, or deliberate political agenda. Several reviewers explicitly challenged the filmmakers to produce a comparable film targeting Islam, predicting that no such film would ever be made or commercially distributed in India, and using this argument to demonstrate that the film's universalist claims were false. The language in this cluster was often highly charged, with words like "propaganda", "anti-Hindu", "Hinduphobia", and "boycott" appearing frequently. This group of reviewers did not merely dislike the film; they experienced it as a communal provocation.

The third theme was moral disagreement with the film's treatment of faith. Distinct from simple offense, this theme captures a more considered set of objections from reviewers who were not personally offended, but who disputed

the film's moral premises. These reviewers argued that the film caricatured religion rather than critiquing it, conflated genuine spiritual devotion with superstition, and made its satirical targets too easy. Some argued that the film's conclusion, affirming the existence of God while condemning religious intermediaries, was philosophically incoherent. Others objected to the film's portrayal of the Hindu-Muslim love story and the India-Pakistan relationship as naive and politically motivated. This group tended to give moderate ratings (3–6 out of 10) and framed their objections in terms of intellectual dissatisfaction rather than personal injury.

The fourth theme was aesthetic and narrative criticism as a vehicle for ideological rejection. Several reviewers who were ideologically opposed to the film's message expressed this opposition through the language of cinematic critique: describing the plot as derivative of *Oh My God!*, the comedy as stale, the acting as over-the-top, and the screenplay as riddled with logical errors. This rhetorical strategy allowed reviewers to reject the film's social message without appearing to defend superstition or religious exploitation directly. By framing their objections in aesthetic terms, these reviewers positioned themselves as discriminating film lovers rather than offended believers. Whether this aesthetic critique was genuinely primary or a proxy for ideological dissent is difficult to determine from the review texts alone, but the pattern was sufficiently consistent to constitute a distinct discursive mode. Together, these four themes, praise for social courage, religious offense, moral-philosophical disagreement, and aesthetically framed ideological resistance, reveal that the polarisation of PK's reception was not simply a function of different tastes but of fundamentally different frameworks for evaluating what a socially engaged film is supposed to do, and for whom.

Discussion

The findings of this study, derived from an inductive reflexive thematic analysis of IMDb user reviews of *PK* (2014), illuminate three interlocking dimensions of audience engagement with the film: the construction of its religious critique, the interpretation of its satirical and emotional register, and the production of polarised responses structured around ideological and identity commitments. Each thematic cluster finds substantial grounding in existing scholarship on Bollywood, religion, satire, and digital audience

reception, while simultaneously extending that scholarship into the specific and underexplored territory of South Asian user-generated film discourse.

The thematic analysis of reviewer responses to *PK*'s religious critique revealed a consistent pattern: reviewers actively engaged not merely as passive consumers of the film's message but as interpreters who re-articulated, debated, and in some cases resisted the film's ideological propositions. The dominant strand of reviewer commentary constructed *PK*'s alien protagonist as an epistemically privileged outsider whose naive questioning of religious practice functions as a Socratic device to expose the irrationality of superstition and the predatory nature of religious intermediaries. This reading is consistent with Malreddy's (2022) analysis of the "postsecular" move in recent Hindi cinema, wherein the figure of the guru serves not as a genuine spiritual authority but as a site of displaced secular anxieties. The "wrong number" metaphor, frequently invoked by reviewers as a shorthand for the film's core argument, that devotees are dialling the wrong number when they call on godmen rather than God directly, encapsulates precisely this postsecular logic: the film affirms a spiritual impulse while stripping away its institutional infrastructure. The scholarly literature on the godman figure in Indian popular culture reinforces this reading. *PK*'s satire targets exactly this complex, and reviewers who praised the film as "eye-opening" or "necessary" were, in effect, endorsing cinema's potential role as a critical fourth estate within the sacred complex. This aligns with Dwyer's (2006) foundational account of the dynamic between the religious and the secular in Hindi film, where cinema has historically served as a space in which India's contested secularism is both enacted and challenged.

However, a significant minority of reviewers challenged the impartiality of this critique, arguing that *PK*'s satirical gaze was directed disproportionately at Hindu religious practices and figures while treating Islam and Christianity more gently. This perception of selective targeting is not merely an incidental grievance; it reflects a broader discursive formation that Gehlawat (2024) identifies as central to the Hindutva reception of Bollywood cinema. In *Bollypolitics*, Gehlawat traces how the ascent of Hindu nationalism under the Modi government has produced a cultural politics in which films perceived as critical of Hinduism are systematically framed as anti-national or anti-Hindu propaganda. The reviewer

construction of *PK* as "anti-Hindu" or as a vehicle for Islamist propaganda thus cannot be understood as politically innocent aesthetic judgment; it participates in a broader ideological project of delegitimising secular-critical Bollywood. Bhat et al. (2025) critical discourse analysis of #BoycottBollywood Twitter campaigns documents precisely this dynamic: online Hindu nationalists construct Bollywood as "Hinduphobic, morally corrupt" and mobilise cancellation campaigns against films featuring actors deemed adversarial to the Hindutva agenda. The IMDb reviews analysed in this study constitute an earlier iteration of this same discursive formation, predating the formal boycott campaigns but exhibiting the same rhetorical moves: the construction of the film as communally biased, the invocation of hurt religious sentiment, and the deployment of conspiratorial framings.

This finding extends the existing literature in an important direction. While most prior scholarship has analysed *PK*'s religious critique from the perspective of the filmmaker's intentions or the film text itself (Qadri & Mufti, 2016; Nayar, 2015; Malreddy, 2022), the present study shows how ordinary audience members actively construct and contest that critique in ways that are deeply inflected by their own religious identities and political affiliations. The audience is not a passive recipient of the film's secular humanism; it is an active arena of ideological negotiation.

The second thematic cluster reveals that reviewers engaged with *PK*'s generic form, its combination of broad comedy, melodrama, and social satire, as both an asset and a liability in the communication of its critical message. The dominant reading constructed the film's humour as a vehicle that made its socially challenging content accessible and palatable to a mass audience that might resist the same critique in a more didactic or confrontational form. This reading is theoretically supported by the extensive literature on satire as a communicative strategy. Mugo and Mwai (2024) demonstrate that satirical comedy employs irony, sarcasm, and hyperbole to address sensitive societal topics, engaging audiences in thought-provoking conversations while maintaining a register of entertainment. Little (2022), in the context of science communication satire, identifies the specific risk that humour can misfire when the subject of satire overlaps with a potential audience for the communication, a dynamic clearly visible in *PK*'s reception: for some reviewers, the comedy successfully

softened the critique's edge; for others, it rendered the film's argument frivolous or dismissive of genuine religious experience.

The role of melodrama and emotional affect in Hindi cinema's communication of social messages has a long critical history. Singh (2025) argues that popular Indian cinema operates as a contradictory space where social inequalities are occasionally exposed but more often "softened, individualised or displaced through melodrama and affect." Reviewers who praised *PK*'s emotional power, its capacity to generate laughter and tears in the same scene, were implicitly endorsing the melodramatic mode as a legitimate vehicle for social critique. Those who characterised the film as "too preachy" or its second half as formulaic were identifying the point at which the melodramatic softening of critique tips into what Nayar (2015) calls the constraints of mainstream Bollywood form: the genre's conventions, love story, song-and-dance, emotionally redemptive endings, impose limits on how far social satire can go before it threatens the commercial viability of the product.

The tension reviewers identified between *PK* and its predecessor *OMG! Oh My God!* (2012) is particularly revealing in this context. Several reviewers accused *PK* of derivative messaging, arguing that the earlier film had made the same critique more effectively or with greater intellectual rigour. Nayar (2015) directly addresses this comparison in her analysis of the Bollywood religious comedy genre, noting that the two films navigate India's cultural landscape differently: *OMG!* operates more squarely within a Vaishnavite devotional framework, while *PK*'s use of an alien protagonist allows it to denaturalise religious practice more radically, but also more vulnerably, since the alien's perspective can be dismissed as literally otherworldly. Reviewers' comparisons between the two films thus engage unwittingly with a genuine generic distinction that the scholarly literature has mapped in some depth.

Reviewers' observations about the role of Aamir Khan's star persona in shaping the reception of *PK*'s social message also merit contextualisation. Several reviews explicitly connected their reading of the film to Khan's public positioning as a socially conscious star. This dynamic illustrates the point that reception is never purely textual; audiences bring their knowledge of the actor's extratextual identity to bear on the interpretation of the film, and this

can either amplify or complicate the social message. The subsequent controversies around Khan's comments on religious intolerance in India in 2015 and the consequent calls to boycott his films suggest that the relationship between star, film, and audience political identity is not fixed at the moment of viewing but continues to evolve in ways that retroactively colour earlier reception acts.

The third and most structurally complex thematic cluster concerns the polarisation of reviewer responses. The analysis identified four distinct positions within this polarised field: enthusiastic praise oriented around the film's reformist social courage; religious offense expressed through accusations of anti-Hindu bias; moral and philosophical disagreement about the film's equivalences between faith and superstition; and aesthetic or narrative criticism deployed as a legitimisation strategy for ideological rejection. The co-existence of these positions within a single review corpus maps a discursive field that is not simply divided into "for" and "against" but is internally differentiated by the rhetorical resources reviewers deploy and the cultural identities they bring to the viewing experience.

The enthusiastic praise strand, in which reviewers described *PK* as a "must-watch," "eye-opening," or "brave" film, positions the film as a piece of reformist social activism delivered through the commercial Bollywood vehicle. This reading resonates with a long tradition in Indian film culture of investing popular cinema with the potential for social transformation a tradition documented by Dwyer (2006) in her analysis of the relationship between the religious and the secular in Hindi film, where cinema serves as a space in which progressive values can be articulated under the protective cover of entertainment. The reviewers who praised *PK* in these terms were, in effect, performing a kind of secular liberal spectatorship, positioning themselves as modern, rational, and open-minded citizens capable of receiving a critique of religious superstition without feeling personally attacked.

The offense and anti-Hindu accusation strand reflects a fundamentally different form of spectatorship, one in which the film is received not as a text about religion in general but as a targeted attack on a specific community's identity. Robison's (2019) analysis of ISKCON-affiliated middle-class Hindus' media response to *PK* in Mumbai and Pune documents this posture as a "third voice" in the public debate

neither the liberal civil society voice that celebrated the film nor the street-protest Hindutva voice, but an organised, media-literate community that contested the film's premises through cultural production. The IMDb reviews displaying this posture are its online, individually expressed analogue: reviewers who experienced the film as an affront to Hindu dharma and expressed that offense through a language of bias, propaganda, and selective targeting. Biswas (2024) provides important context here, arguing that contemporary Hindi cinema has become a key site for the articulation of Hindu nationalist ideology, with recent films promoting the concept of Dharma and Ramrajya in ways that construct Hindu identity as the normative baseline against which all departures are measured. Within this normative framework, *PK*'s interrogation of Hindu religious practice registers as deviation rather than critique.

The moral and philosophical disagreement strand, occupied by reviewers who raised principled objections to the film's conflation of organised religion with superstition, or its failure to distinguish genuine faith from exploitative practice, is perhaps the most intellectually substantive position in the corpus. These reviewers were not offended by the film in the manner of the religious protest voice; they engaged with its argument and found it philosophically inadequate. This position corresponds to what Malreddy (2022) identifies as the postsecular problematic: the film's attempt to articulate a "non-religious religion" or a "nonsecular secularism" is genuinely paradoxical, and sophisticated viewers noticed the paradox. The film wants simultaneously to critique religious institutions and affirm a personal spiritual impulse, and not all reviewers found this combination coherent.

The fourth strand, aesthetic and narrative criticism deployed as a legitimization strategy for ideological rejection is the most analytically complex finding. Several reviewers who were ideologically opposed to the film's message clothed their opposition in the language of aesthetic quality: the film is "derivative," "preachy," "formulaic," or "manipulative." This rhetorical move, substituting aesthetic for political critique performs an important ideological function. By shifting the grounds of rejection from "I find this politically objectionable" to "this is a poor film," the reviewer claims the authority of the disinterested critic rather than the positioned partisan. This finding aligns with research on moral salience in

film reviews: Huang et al. (2025) demonstrate that moral reflection is a prevalent and powerful dimension of audience film appraisal, and that reviews which engage moral foundations are strongly associated with film success metrics. The reviewers who combined moral and aesthetic criticism were deploying a particularly potent discursive strategy: the moral objection provides the motivation, and the aesthetic objection provides the legitimating cover.

Broader Implications

The findings reveal links between cinema, religion, and digital discourse in India. IMDb reviews of *PK* act as sites of ideological contestation, exposing social divides like secular vs. Hindu nationalism and reformist vs. traditionalist religion, aligning with how Hindi cinema mirrors India's modernity struggles (Dwyer, 2006). The polarized reception of *PK* reflects viewers' ideological, cultural, and political backgrounds influencing their interpretations, with Hindutva's impact shaping audience responses since 2014 (Gehlawat, 2024; Biswas, 2024). Additionally, online reviews are valuable for studying reception, showing how IMDb functions as a public sphere where cultural debates occur, supporting digital reception literature (Ren & Chandra, 2025).

Conclusion

This study explored how IMDb reviewers interpret and contest *PK* (2014) across three areas: critique of religion, use of comedy and satire for social critique, and audience responses. Using reflexive thematic analysis, eleven themes revealed the complex relationship between the film, audiences, and the political-religious context. Reviewers shape *PK*'s religious critique through their ideological lenses. The film's "wrong number" metaphor critiques godmen and superstition, aligning with its message but facing counter-discourse alleging anti-Hindu bias, reflecting post-2014 Hindu nationalism. This shows how a film's meaning is co-produced by text and audience ideology. Responses to *PK*'s genre appreciated humor as a social critique tool, consistent with satire literature, though some critics noted tension between Bollywood conventions, melodramatic love and emotional arcs, and satire, outlining constraints in religious humor (Nayar, 2015). Audience diagnoses showed practical understanding beyond academia. The third research question on audience polarization revealed four discursive positions: enthusiastic reformists, religious offendees,

moral/philosophical disagreeers, and aesthetic critics representing ideological rejection. Each uses different rhetorical resources and identities. The presence of these within IMDb reflects Robison's (2019) idea of multi-vocal debates over Hindu representation in Hindi cinema: discussions include not just liberals and Hindutva protesters but also middle-class devotees objecting on principle. Using aesthetic criticism to justify rejection shows how politically motivated audiences cleverly disguise judgments.

Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

This study adds three key contributions to Bollywood reception, digital audience studies, and religion in Indian cinema. First, by analyzing IMDb reviews instead of film texts or focus groups, it accesses unsolicited, naturalistic audience discourse that is usually not systematically analyzed in Bollywood research. The findings reveal this discourse is rich, ideologically varied, and suitable for thematic analysis, advocating for more digital reception data in South Asian film studies. Second, it introduces a reception perspective to the existing textual and production-focused scholarship on PK and Bollywood religious comedy, showing how filmmaker meanings are negotiated, altered, or inverted by audiences. Third, by contextualizing a 2014 film within post-2014 Hindu nationalist politics, the study highlights how reception changes over time, with reviews from 2015 and 2023 reflecting different political worlds, offering cultural evidence. Methodologically, it shows reflexive thematic analysis as an effective tool for large online review datasets, combining inductive coding with theory-driven interpretation, suitable for diverse and ideologically complex data involving aesthetic, political, and religious layers.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has limitations that should guide future research. The IMDb review corpus is not representative of PK's audience; it over-represents articulate, motivated, and digitally literate viewers, likely including those with extreme reactions rather than the moderate majority. The qualitative analysis describes the range of discursive positions but does not indicate how common these are among all viewers. It is limited to English reviews, potentially biasing results toward urban, educated audiences and excluding those who engaged in Hindi or regional languages. Future

research should include Hindi reviews, rating data, and comparative studies within Bollywood's reception of religious comedy. The temporal evolution of reviews from 2014 to present warrants a diachronic analysis to understand how cultural and political contexts influence interpretations, especially given PK's release during political transition related to Hindu nationalism. Comparing reception of PK with films like *OMG! Oh My God!* (2012) can reveal genre evolution and polarization shifts. Overall, there's a need for systematic digital reception research in South Asian cinema, recognizing online reviews as forums for cultural, religious, and ideological expression—essential for understanding Indian society and politics.

References

- Abu Bakar, A. H. B. (2020). Comedy Films of Malaysian Studio Era: A Social Culture Criticism. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(12). <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v10-i12/8353>
- Amendola, L., Marra, V., & Quartin, M. (2015). The evolving perception of controversial movies. *Palgrave Communications*, 1(1), 15038. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2015.38>
- Baishya, A. K. (2025). Viral nationalism: Right wing media and the aesthetics of distributed participation. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 28(3), 597–616. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13678779241302489>
- Barthwal, S., & Sharma, V. (2023). New-Age Media and the Genesis of Hindutva. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 40(6), 702–724. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2022.2043097>
- Bhat, P. (2023). Hindu-Nationalism and Media: Anti-Press Sentiments by Right-Wing Media in India. *Journalism & Communication Monographs*, 25(4), 296–364. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15226379231201455>
- Bhat, P., Mitra, S., & Narayanamoorthy, N. (2025). Bollywood and Cultural Contestation: Examination of Digital Mobilization Against the Hindi Film Industry. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 18(2), 105–129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2025.2478255>
- Biswas, D. (2024). Beyond good and evil: imagined nation in Hindi films. *National Identities*, 27(1-2), 123–138.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2024.2306154>

Bonnstetter, B. E. (2011). Mel Brooks Meets Kenneth Burke (and Mikhail Bakhtin): Comedy and Burlesque in Satiric Film. *Journal of Film and Video*, 63(1), 18–31.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>

Dixit, S., & Kukreti, S. (2025). Sacred to Satirical: Bollywood's Journey of Hindu Deities from Devotion to Pop Culture. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 7(5), Article 57815. <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2025.v07i05.57815>

Dutta, M. J. (2025). Digital platforms, Hindutva, and disinformation: Communicative strategies and the Leicester violence. *Communication Monographs*, 92(1), 20–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2024.2339799>

Dwyer, R. (2006). *Filming the gods: Religion and Indian cinema*. Routledge.

Gehlawat, A. (2024). *Bollypolitics: Popular Hindi cinema and Hindutva*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Ghasiya, P., Ahnert, G., & Sasahara, K. (2023). Identifying Themes of Right-Wing Extremism in Hindutva Discourse on Twitter. *Social Media + Society*, 9(3), Article 20563051231199457. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051231199457>

Hirani, R. (Director). (2014). *PK* [Film]. Vinod Chopra Films; Rajkumar Hirani Films.

Huang, J., Yang, J., & Zhu, J. (2025). Moral Salience in Film Reviews Associated With Film Success: An Analysis of 1.6 Million Reviews. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 37(1), 12–25. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000416>

Jalarajan Raj, S., & Suresh, A. K. (2023). Reframing Islam in bollywood cinema: a study on the construction of the Islamic identity in Indian cinema. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 33(4), 354–368. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2023.2225526>

Joshi, S. R. (2021). Critique of Religious

Heresies in PK. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 6(6), 137–144. <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.66.22>

Kaur, R. K. (2026). Indian Cinema: Rise of more Assertive Majoritarian narratives in last decade. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 8(1), Article 66617. <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2026.v08i01.66617>

Khattak, J. A., & Komal, H. (2025). Satire and Humor Utilization in Social Commentary: An Analysis of 'Family Guy'. *Journal of Language, Literature & Social Affairs*, 1(1), 46–51. <https://doi.org/10.63056/jllsa.1.1.2025.8>

Little, C. (2022). Can satire change minds? Evidence from a randomised experiment. *Journal of Science Communication*, 21(3), A07. <https://doi.org/10.22323/2.21030207>

Malreddy, P. K. (2022). Postsecular Longings? Religious Dissent, Faith, and Gurus in Indian Cinema. *Third Text*, 36(2), 176–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2022.2049159>

Mugo, R. K., & Mwai, L. W. (2024). Satirical Strategies Employed on NTV's the Wicked Edition: A Comprehensive Analysis. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, VIII(III), 361–369. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.803025>

Mukherjee, A. (2025). RRR and Adipurush: adaptation of the Ramayana in Pan-Indian Cinema and circulation of Hindu Nationalism. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-05639-5>

Nayar, S. J. (2015). Bollywood Religious Comedy: An Inaugural Humor-neutics. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 83(3), 808–825. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfv032>

Qadri, M., & Mufti, S. (2016). Films and religion: An analysis of Aamir Khan's PK. *Journal of Religion & Film*, 20(1), Article 9. <https://doi.org/10.32873/uno.dc.jrf.20.01.09>

Ren, G., & Chandra, R. (2025). Analysis of IMDb Movie Reviews and Ratings Using a Language Model Framework. *IEEE Access*, 13, 192655–192673. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2025.3629760>

Robison, C. C. (2019). 'PK Hamara Hai': Hindi cinema and the defense of dharma in media counterpublics. *Studies in South Asian Film & Media*, 9(2), 143–157. https://doi.org/10.1386/safm.9.2.143_1

Saha, S., & Kaur, S. (2025). Bollypolitics:

Popular Hindi Cinema and Hindutva, Ajay Gehlawat (2024). *Studies in South Asian Film & Media*, 17(1), 111–115. https://doi.org/10.1386/safm_00098_5

Singh, R. P. (2025). Popular Cinema and the Representation of Caste and Religion in Contemporary India. *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research*, 7(2), 996–999. <https://doi.org/10.33545/26649845.2025.v7.i2l.470>

Vipula P C. (2025). Voluntary silence and involuntary fear. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 60(18). <https://doi.org/10.71279/epw.v60i18.44038>