

## **TREATMENT 6 MINUTE FILM**

**Logline:** When 17-year-old Bindi's workplace in Kashi, Varanasi, is attacked by an anti-Muslim mob, she must make a tough choice between helping her Muslim neighbor Mariam escape or obeying her conservative Hindu family's warnings against interacting with them.

**Synopses:** In the divided city of Kashi, Varanasi, 17-year-old Bindi, a timid Hindu girl, struggles to reconcile her conservative family's anti-Muslim beliefs with her secular values. When a violent mob targets her workplace, Bindi must decide whether to follow her family's teachings or risk everything to help her Muslim coworker, Mariam, escape. By dawn, after narrowly evading the mob, the two find refuge in an abandoned shed, sharing a song that bridges the divide between them.

### **Plot Summary:**

The film opens with a montage that introduces us to the holy city of Varanasi, juxtaposing its iconic Hindu rituals and the growing presence of the Muslim community within the city. Two neighboring homes stand in contrast: one, a bustling mansion adorned with a "Singh" nameplate, and the other, a quieter, modest house marked "Khan," its door firmly closed.

Inside, Bindi, a timid 17-year-old girl, sits at the dinner table with her father, Mr. Singh, a scornful and conservative man. When he realizes that Bindi is starting her first night shift at the mill, he launches into a hateful rant. His tone is harsh and filled with disdain as he tells her she must be careful not to interact with "the others"—the Muslims. He makes it clear that it's bad enough they live next to them, and he doesn't want them invading his daughter's life as well. He believes "Kashi, the land of Shiva, the holiest of holy places," is a place where Muslims and their Azans don't belong.

Bindi, obedient and afraid of her disrespecting her father, apologizes and reiterates that she won't interact with them, she never has and hurries along to work. As she reaches the tall brass entryway, she bends to pick up the morning paper, glancing at the headline: "Hindu Mob Lynchings Stoke Fear and Anger amongst Kashi's Muslim Population, Leaves Three Dead." Throwing her hands in the air, she lets out an exasperated sigh, kicking a loose pebble across the street as she walks into the mill

Bindi enters the mill and removes her shoes, placing them in the nearly empty communal rack, where only a single pair of slippers remains. "Hmm, no one likes working on a Saturday night," she mutters to herself. Just then, a gentle cough breaks her thoughts, pulling her back to reality. She looks up and locks eyes with Mariam Khan.

Mariam, 19, a reserved young woman with striking, kohl-lined black eyes, works quietly at the loom, the only other person in the mill tonight. Bindi's cheeks flush with embarrassment as she catches herself watching Mariam. Memories flood her mind—Mariam, as a child playing in the Khan backyard, singing a Sufi melody at a school festival, and kneeling in prayer at the mosque while Bindi observed from the temple steps.

Bindi's gaze lingers, but Mariam notices and responds with annoyance, resuming her work without acknowledging her presence. Bindi plugs in her earphones and hums the song "Yeh Dosti Hum Nahin Todenge." Her humming is soft at first, but soon, she becomes more absorbed in the tune, singing along quietly: "Yeh dosti hum nahin todenge, Todenge dam magar, Tera saath na chhodenge."

The peaceful atmosphere is soon shattered as a mob of Hindu nationalists approaches, chanting "Hindu Rashtra! Rashtra Suraksha!" and "Hindutva Zindabad!" The air thickens with tension. Mariam begins to panic, realizing the danger outside, while Bindi watches the mob's approach with dread. Her phone buzzes with a text from her mother, warning her not to speak to Muslims: "Beta, please come back home. DO NOT TALK TO ANYONE, ESPECIALLY ANY MUSLIMS."

As the mob bangs on the mill's door, Bindi makes a split-second decision. She attacks the mob and gets recognized as MR. Singh's daughter. Grabbing Mariam's hand, they race through narrow alleys and empty streets, the holy Ganga river flowing beside them. They pass the remnants of a destroyed marketplace, temple bells tolling, and the Fajr Azaan playing in the background.

They finally find refuge in an abandoned house at dawn, both breathless and terrified. Sitting side by side, still holding hands, Mariam pulls out her earphones, sharing one bud with Bindi. The song Bindi had been humming earlier, "Yeh Dosti Hum Nahin Todenge," begins to play. A small, tentative smile creeps across Bindi's face. With a sense of calm settling in, Bindi quietly says, "Hi, I'm Bindi." Mariam breaks into laughter and leans her head on Bindi's shoulder, and together, they softly hum along to the song, forming an unexpected bond amid their shared fear.

Where the Night Shall Take Us

by Kaira Sen

FADE IN

**MONTAGE AROUND THE HOLY HINDU CITY OF VARANASI- DAY**

- Saffron flags flutter atop temples as Hindu processions fill the streets with chants and offerings.
- In the bustling market, a small group of burkha-clad Muslim women weaves through a sea of Hindu shoppers, their presence overshadowed by Hindi-dominant shop signs, with just a few Urdu ones tucked away.
- On the crowded Ganges riverbank, Hindu priests lead the grand evening aarti, the air heavy with incense and glowing oil lamps. Nearby, a small white marble mosque glimmers under the moonlight, cradled between towering, brightly lit Hindu temples.
- The temple bell's resonant chime cuts through the still night, mingling with the distant hum of adhan.
- Two neighboring homes stand in contrast: one, a bustling mansion adorned with a "Singh" nameplate, and the other, a quieter, modest house marked "Khan," its door firmly closed.

END MONTAGE

**INT. THE SINGH HOUSE LIVING ROOM- NIGHT**

BINDI, 17, a timid young girl with soft eyes, moves quietly through the dining room. Her bright red kurta sways as she carefully sets the dinner table. Her long, oiled hair is neatly parted and tied back. A vermilion tika stands out on her smooth forehead.

BINDI  
(almost whispering)  
Baba, dinner is set.

MR. SINGH, 54, a stocky man with a weathered face, strides into the room. His eyes flicker with restrained irritation as he slams his hands onto the table, causing the plates to rattle.

MRS. SINGH, 48, a petite woman with tired eyes and faint wrinkles, walks in clutching a plate of freshly made chappatis.

MR. SINGH  
(mouth full of food)  
Bindi? Are you starting work at the mill today?

BINDI  
(quietly)  
Yes, Baba.

MR. SINGH  
I told you I don't want you working at night.

(MORE)

MR.SINGH (CONT'D)

It better only be people from our community. I don't want you mingling with the others. You hear me? It's bad enough we live next to them, I don't want them working with my daughter, too.

slight pause

MR. SINGH

Everywhere you turn, it's the same story. Another meat shop opening, another mosque expanding. This isn't the Kashi I grew up in.

BINDI

(softly in a low voice)  
I won't talk to them, Baba, I never have.

MR. SINGH

(irritatedly)  
This is Kashi, the land of Shiva, the holiest of holy places. Their mosques, their azans—none of it belongs here. It's an insult to everything this city stands for.

Without saying a word, Mr. Singh pushes his plate forward aggressively. The dish scrapes against the glass table, making a screeching noise. The curry spills all over.

MRS. SINGH

Just remember what your father taught you, Bindi. Keep away from them; be a good girl.

BINDI

(meekly)  
Ji Ma, and I'll try not to work at night again. I'm sorry.

**EXT. STREET LEADING TO THE TEXTILE MILL - NIGHT**

BINDI walks out of the Singh house and rushes down the dimly lit street. She picks at her fingers, her brow furrowed with anxiety. In the distance, her mother's voice calls out.

BINDI'S MOM

Bindi! Beta! Wait

Bindi, already too far to turn back, keeps walking. She pauses to grab a crumpled newspaper off the ground.

The headline catches her eye: "Hindu Mob Lynchings Stoke Fear and Anger amongst Varanasi's Muslim Population, Leaves Three Dead."

Throwing her hands in the air, she lets out an exasperated sigh, kicking a loose pebble across the street as she walks into the mill.

BINDI  
 (muttering under her breath)  
 Gosh, Three people died, and they  
 still think Kashi's holiness is  
 more important.

**INT. ROYAL TEXTILE MILL - MOMENTS LATER**

Bindi walks into the mill and takes off her shoes, placing them in the nearly empty communal rack, where only one other pair of slippers is placed.

BINDI  
 Hmm. No one likes working on a  
 Saturday night.

Her thoughts are interrupted by gentle coughing, snapping her back to reality. She locks eyes with MARIAM KHAN.

MARIAM, 19, a reserved young woman with striking, kohl-lined black eyes, moves through her work with quiet focus. She is the only other person working tonight. Her navy blue tunic, slightly frayed at the edges, fits her slender frame as she bends over the loom. Her dark hair is tucked beneath a loosely draped headscarf, allowing soft curls to escape at the edges.

Bindi's cheeks flush and redden with embarrassment at being caught off guard. Her gaze lingers on Mariam as memories of silently watching her all these years flood her mind.

INSERT - MEMORY 1  
 Mariam, as a young child, playing  
 in the Khan house backyard as  
 Bindi quietly observes from her  
 room's window.

INSERT - MEMORY 2  
 At a school cultural festival,  
 teenage Mariam sings a Sufi melody  
 as Bindi watches, mesmerized by  
 the audience.

## INSERT - MEMORY 3

Mariam, now a young woman, kneels in the mosque early in the morning, her hands raised in dua as she recites along with the Fajr Azaan. Bindi peers at her from the steps of the temple.

## BACK TO SCENE

Bindi blinks rapidly, shaking her head as if trying to physically shake off her thoughts and ground herself. She walks over to her desk and puts her stuff down, turning on the machines to begin her work for the night.

She continues to watch Mariam intently, who stands over her loom, her nimble fingers delicately threading the yards of fabric together. Bindi's face softens, and a sense of calm washes over her as she observes Mariam work so meticulously.

Mariam catches Bindi's gaze upon her. She narrows her eyes slightly, a flicker of annoyance crossing her face before she resumes stitching. Refusing to acknowledge Bindi's presence, she continues working uninterestedly.

Bindi stares at the clothes piled up on her desk and rubs her forehead in stress. She plugs in her earphones and begins sewing haphazardly.

## BINDI

(humming an old Hindi song by  
Kishore Kumar from the  
blockbuster film Sholay)  
*Yeh dosti hum nahin todenge*  
*Todenge dam magar*  
*Tera saath na chhodenge*

Mariam glares at Bindi and rolls her eyes as she leans back in her chair. Irritated by Bindi's constant singing. She grabs her earplugs from her bag, ready to blast music and block out Bindi's voice.

Just before she can plug them in, the calm atmosphere inside the mill is disrupted by the distant sound of chanting and footsteps echoing through the streets.

**EXT. STREET LEADING TO THE TEXTILE MILL - MOMENTS LATER**

A large mob of young men clad in saffron headscarves waving the RSS flag march towards the Mill. Chaos erupts as they throw rocks, smashing windows of nearby storefronts and lighting them on fire. The air thickens with smoke.

PROTESTORS  
 (Shouting in Unison)  
 Hindu Rashtra! Rashtra Suraksha!  
 Hindutva Zindabad! Abki baar ghar  
 waapsi.

**INT. ROYAL TEXTILE MILL - MOMENTS LATER**

The protest grows louder and louder as the mob heads closer to the mill. Mariam begins panicking; she grips her chest to calm her racing heart. Her breath quickens as she presses her palms against her hot cheeks.

MARIAM  
 I'm in danger; I need to leave.  
 This is it; I'm in danger.

Bindi, curious, rushes over to the window Mariam was looking through and peers outside. The color drains her face as she slaps her hands across her mouth, aghast. She rubs her stomach gently to ease the knot that just formed in there.

MARIAM  
 (screaming in fear and  
 frustration)  
 You planned this, didn't you? You  
 called them here!

BINDI  
 (yelling)  
 What, Mariam, No.

MARIAM  
 You're just like the rest of them!

Bindi clenches her fists, then releases them, glancing toward Mariam. Uncertainty flickers in her eyes, one foot stuck to the ground and the other shifting forward as she remains torn between staying loyal to her family's beliefs and teachings or helping Mariam.

Her phone buzzes, it is a message from her Mother.

BINDI'S MOM  
 (On the Phone Screen as a  
 text)  
 NOTIFICATION ONE: Bindi? Beta,  
 They've cut the telecom lines  
 again.  
 NOTIFICATION TWO: Beta, please  
 come back home. DO NOT TALK TO  
 ANYONE, ESPECIALLY ANY MUSLIMS.

a NO SIGNAL alert pops up, and the phone screen goes black



She looks back outside.

Mariam, despite her terror, is trying to calm herself. She begins frantically shoving her belongings into a bag. Just then, the protestors begin banging on the mill's door.

**EXT. ENTRANCE OF ROYAL TEXTILE MILL- NIGHT**

PROTESTORS

Hindu Rashtra! Rashtra Suraksha!  
Hindutva Zindabad! abki baar ghar  
waapsi. Open up! Open up!

**INT. ROYAL TEXTILE MILL - MOMENTS LATER**

Bindi looks at Mariam's fearful face as people from the mob begin pouring in.

BINDI

We don't have time to take  
anything, We have to go, NOW!

She grabs a handful of sharp weaving shuttles from the floor and begins hurling them at the mob's members.

MOB MEMBER ONE

Isn't that Singh's daughter?

Bindi, with a fearful look on her face, switches off the lights and takes Mariam's hand, pulling her close and leading her toward the exit.

**EXT. STREETS OF VARANASI - MOMENTS LATER**

Bindi and Mariam sprint down narrow alleys and empty streets, their feet pounding against the uneven roads. The holy river Ganga flows at their side, guiding their journey the entire time.

The deserted marketplace is a blur of destroyed stalls and scattered debris. Stray dogs bark in the distance. Passing under the shadow of a grand temple, bells toll above them as priests chant inside. Without slowing, they rush past a mosque, where the morning Fajr echoes through the air.

**INT. ABANDONED HOUSE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - DAWN**

Mariam and Bindi squeeze into an abandoned shed, terrified and breathless from running for so long. They lean against the dusty wall side by side, still holding hands. Mariam turns to look at Bindi.

BINDI  
It's so quiet.

Mariam pulls out her earphones, sticks one bud in Bindi's ear and the other in hers, and hits play.

ON THE SOUNDTRACK: "Yeh dosti hum nahin" begins to play from where we last heard Bindi sing it.

*Logon ko aate hain do nazar hum magar Dekho do nahin  
Arre ho judaa ya khafa ae khuda hai dua Aisa ho nahin*

Mariam begins singing along. Breaking through the fear, a tentative smile creeps up on Bindi's face.

BINDI  
(softly)  
Hi, I'm Bindi.

Mariam breaks into laughter and leans in, resting her head on Bindi's shoulder. She closes her eyes softly, and they faintly hum along to the song.

FADE OUT

