

Influence of Liberalisation & Globalisation on Indian Cinema - A study of Indian cinema and it's diasporic consciousness

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Abstract

The look of Bollywood film has changed with globalization, Hindi films moved away from mass narrations to more class, initially film producers and directors attracted with item songs, bare skin dances, or story that relate to the poor or frontbenchers, the stories like, angry young man, the village hero, fight against the feudal lord, upper cast, wealthy lords. It changed the 1990s onwards; one of the reasons was that these kinds of movies, attracting, the mass people, from the village and other places and they only go for front rows, this cannot be helpful for producers. What changed here was, the economic liberalisation in India has influenced the Indian cinema and its narratives. The liberalisation influenced the Indian consuming habits considerably. Indians witnessed western culture and lifestyle through the Televisions channels like MTV, CNN. Watching MTV from the living room, and accessing the brands like Nike, or Coca-Cola, influenced the middle and elite class of Indians. The desire to adopt the western culture and lifestyle, the middle class, started mimicking it. Indian movie makers are also imitating and inspiring the west kind of filmmaking in narratives and adopting new techniques for storytelling. Apart from that, the 'open sky policies' encouraged, Indian movie producers to reach diaspora with the content, which can connect the diaspora. Liberalisation and globalisation made the Indian cinema to export and organise better in the diaspora markets, unlike previous times.

Keywords: Indian Cinema, Bollywood, Globalisation, Indian diaspora

Introduction

Globalisation is "the worldwide diffusion of practices, expansion of relations across continents, an organisation of social life on a global scale, and growth of a shared global consciousness" (Schaefer, Karan, 2013).

The Indian economic liberation policies affected the Indian film industry significantly. As a result, Indian cinema not only entertaining Indian subcontinent but also the global audience. Bollywood¹ now globally recognised, its overseas shares considerably growing. The primary market is the United States and the United Kingdom, and countries like

Qatar, Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, recently China and Indian Diaspora populated areas.

It was the 1990s that India's protective economic and politic of the cold war era given way for liberalisation and it embraced the new market economy by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao government. The changed economic policies of the Indian government allowed investment of foreign capital, the establishment of manufacturing or service centres, many of them in, secure economic zones (SEZs). A new class of workers emerged, the payments increased than ever, flourished the new realms of consumption. At the same time, villagers were accessing the clean drinking

¹Indian mainstream movies like Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam language movies.

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water, and farmers are getting agricultural bank loans, in the same decade Indian popular cinema underwent noticeable changes, to adopt an increasingly neo-liberal attitude towards economics and culture (Mehta, Pandharipande, 2011). At the same time, Bollywood popularised various capital driven phenomena in India. For example, the influence of the MTV, and also the desire of life like a western lifestyle, the middle class and upper middle-class youth started mimicking the culture of western people in the result, Indian youth wearing Baseball caps and playing Basketball become an essential and new fashion (Mehta, Pandharipande, 2011). The Indian youth assumed playing of Basketball was a luxurious and posh game because it's a very popular high school game in America. The same sport popularised by Indian cinema. In the film '*Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*' (1998) lead actress, Kajol wears all the time in the college the Baseball cap. Movies of the 90s, witness hero, plays Basketball, unlike Kabaddi or Hockey. Addition to that, a celebration of Valentine's Day, sending greeting cards to each other, Mother's Day, Friendship Day were the Days imported from the west, and it opened the market for new cultural merchandise.

Indian traditions like 'Karva Chauth' and 'Dandiya, were popularised among the Indian Diaspora, this was turned into cultural capital, because of the intense showing of these Indian cultural festivals in the Hindi films majorly influenced the diaspora new generation, and they started mimicking, or in other words, following it. This cultural consciousness can lead to visit India or the homeland, the desire of knowing more about India may increase, it leads them to see more films or number of times same film, this is automatically helpful for Indian cinema and, the viewer feel more himself Indian inside, the attachment with India may also improve, and it's helpful for Indian tourism and investments in India.

Celebrations of Birthday, cutting cakes, New Year and Valentine day celebrations, or every special day or celebration have witnessed separate greeting cards, this was new the phenomena for Indian people. Greeting with greeting cards were never before Indians observed, and the famous international brands were introduced to the Indian market, companies like Nike, Adidas, opened showrooms. The same brands were a few years ago illegally imported to the Indian market. Further, "in the trans-global context, western life, is very much a part of Indian culture, of urban Indianness and with it comes numerous universal cultural trends like nightclubs, pizza, and baseball caps; reggae music and rap; Stephen King novels, Chicken soup for the souls, TV soap operas and of course the techies" (Chowdhury, 2011).

Also, a new burgeoning middle class witnessed technological advancements, American Television entertainment channels like CNN and MTV entered into Indian living rooms and Indian middle class influenced by the western content. The result of this, shifting social relationships and attitudes, the living style has changed. To catch this, Indian directors started imitating the Hollywood movie plots, styles, for example, movies like "*Anjam*" (1994) is a partial reconstitution of *Awakenings*; *Darr* (1993) close to '*Dead Calm*'; *Sadak* (1991) was an imitation of *Lethal Weapon* (Chowdhury, 2011). It never stopped again, '*Brothers*' (2015), this film was an official remake of the Hollywood film '*Warrior*' (2011), it features Akshay Kumar, Sidharth Malhotra and Jacqueline Fernandez, and the other movie '*Bang Bang*' (2014). The lead actors are Hrithik Roshan and Katrina Kaif, the film is an official remake of the Hollywood film '*Knight and Day*' (2010), there are too many unofficial and inspirational movies produced in Bollywood. These are all imitations and adaptations placed by the influence of western content. The primary object was to attract the Diaspora as well as the new middle-class Indian, and metro, elite audience.

The major boost for Indian film industry was witnessed in the year 2000. The Indian film industry was formally given the status of industry by the Indian government; this was authorised by the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) to provide loans to Bollywood filmmakers, this was a good initiative by the government, to avoid for funding from underworld and mafia (Ganti, 2012). Around the same time, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) started serving, for the entertainment Industry. By 2000s, several media companies were like Pritish Nandy Communications, 'Mukta Arts', and 'Ad Labs'² were raising money on the Bombay stock market. The Indian Government also allowed 100% FDI in films. Considering this, Hollywood media corporates like Columbia Tristar, Disney and Paramount invested into Indian Film Production and Distribution areas. This transformation made the major shifts in the distribution and exhibition sectors, and the multiplex revolution, the spread of digital screens has become a major change in Indian film production and distribution. The shift of multiplex entering Indian movie entertainment, encouraged the new kind of movies, this was given a boost to small, independent and concept oriented film directors, and they started making movies for metro and elite Indians, with low budget and releasing in multiplexes, "By 2004 multiplexes accounted for 0.6 percent of Indian screens, but brought in 30 percent of the domestic take of the year's premium releases" (Basu 2010, 51). These new approaches, allowing FDIs, were encouraging foreign investors to engage with

²Anil Dhirubhai Ambani media group.

the Indian Entertainment Industry. Corporations were like Eros International, UTV³ made it possible for Bollywood to be available on multiple platforms, like satellite, cable, online and mobile. Channels like Zee, Sony, Star, Jaya TV, B4U channels became available in Europe on Sky's digital network, and in the United States on Echostar Dish systems and Direct TV. The expansion of global broadcasting, and later unconventional approaches are like, online live streaming, IPTV technological advancements made the availability of Bollywood content to new terrains, reached and gained new international audiences across the globe (Thussu, 2013).

The 1990s and early 2000s, media and entertainment landscape in India were transformed regarding promoting and marketing for a Bollywood movie. It acquired new dimensions, making promotional videos for movies and soap operas, to an addition that, World Wide Web, dot-com companies were available for promotions to greater reach. Indian media groups started designing websites for films and their company websites to better advertising of their products. Media companies coming for understanding to promote each other products on respective platforms, tie-ins with television channels, radio stations, dot-com and mobile phone etc. Aamir Khan's movie '*Lagaan*' (2001) publicised tie-in with *indiatimes.com*, to reach globally. In the year of 2005–06, the Internet became a vital role in every film promotion and for marketing; every big production company in India started making dedicated websites. (Punathambekar, 2013) Production and distribution companies like Reliance Entertainment, Yash Raj Films, Eros, have created their websites. A little forward Rajshri Productions made own broadband website in 2006, aimed for NRIs mainly, and can watch Rajshri movies in online, across the globe sitting in their living room. (Punathambekar, 2013).

'Saavn.com,' a New York-based digital media company, founded in 2007 and emerged as the most prominent aggregator and distributor for Bollywood content to worldwide. It serves music content mainly. Along with Hindi content, all regional language movie songs as well as English songs. 'YuppTv', 'Hot Star' are an online Over-the-top (OTT) entertainment providers, mainly serves, the live TV, in languages like Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Punjabi, Malayalam, Kannada, Oriya, Gujarati, Sinhalese, Urdu and English channels through the web to global audience, provides movies, soap operas, live cricket streaming to its subscribers. Hot star (2015) started recently and is a new service from Star Network India for the internet users. These services can be accessible for Diaspora audience as well as the Indians.

The kind of new digital developments mostly witnessed in India was helped by American NRIs. The adoption of neoliberal economic policies by successive Indian governments during the 1990s and the influence of Non-Resident Indians working in the high-tech sectors were the major reasons. For example, Sam Pitroda is a famous NRI personality served, his expertise in Indian telecommunication, in the Rajiv Gandhi administration. Diaspora businesspersons invested and helped the Indian IT industry in areas like Hyderabad, and Bengaluru and speeded up the IT development in India. The result of globalisation and neoliberal policies, made Indian middle class to adopt a western style of living or dreaming about it. Aditya Chopra's '*Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*' (1995), Subhash Ghai's '*Pardes*' (1997), Karan Johar's '*Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*' (2001), and Ashutosh Gowariker '*Swades*' (2004) were the products of the globalisation process. These movie characters exactly tell us that, the Indians living at abroad are always looking for a home and their soul for Indian soil. The narratives in these movies explicitly focused on the NRI living styles and their love for India, the willingness to serve for India. This kind of films and narrative styles made Indian film more attractive in Indians living in overseas countries, the kind of Bollywood movie narration and value for Indian culture and traditions, and its hybridity of living gained worldwide recognition.

Globalised Indian Cinema

"Increasing transnational migration and circulation of cultural commodities, Indian media, especially Bollywood, has had an increasing presence in South Asian Diasporas in the past decade. The development of the communication and technology within globalisation has greatly affected the transnational distribution of cultural products" (Desai 2004, 40).

The consumption of Indian content, south Asians love for watching Indian movies, when the Bollywood movie makers come to know that, the diaspora loving the content and watching it. The Bollywood movie makers started organised distribution of films abroad. Bollywood movies are remarkably doing well in Indian Diaspora populated areas, The US and the UK as well as in third world countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Africa, and the Caribbean, the Gulf countries and the middle east, to pamper this audience, Bollywood directors and producers were setting the movie shootings outside India for feeling global look. Addition to that Bollywood directors and producers were selecting Diaspora-centric plots, foreign locations, and fat Indian wedding scenes to pleasure the Diaspora and making them Happy with 'cool' movies. '*Dilwale Dulhaniya*

³United Television Software Communications, is a content provider for television channels.

Le Jayenge' (1995) one of the biggest hit in Indian film history, produced by Yash Raj Films, one of India's biggest Production house. Starring Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol. This was the first film to focus on an Indian family based in Britain and was a phenomenal success at overseas as well as the homeland. Later, there were a number of movies, came on the Diaspora plots, and NRI character as the main lead. The effect of the globalisation of Bollywood has severely affected the production and circulation of films, blurring all over the world. '*Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*,' '*Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*,' and '*Taal*,' were the successful films of Bollywood at Diaspora. "*Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, directed by Karan Johar, was a cultural phenomenon in South Africa, which revived and redefined. Many filmgoers seen the film three, five, even eight times and its success was intensely covered and discussed in the local Indian press in South Africa. Local journalists repeated the fact that the film ran longer than, was seen by more people in Durban than, *Titanic*" (Hansen 2005, 240).

The Bollywood and the Indian traditions and music not only popular among the South Asian community. It has become a global and entertaining the world. For example, one of the Indian music styles, Bhangra music was part of the closing ceremony of 30th Olympic Games (2012) in London. Bollywood Super Star Amitabh Bachchan voted as the millennium's biggest star in 1999, in BBC poll, and his figure installed in Madame Tussaud's Hall of Fame. This fame, recognition and popularity merely come from the Hindi movies for his acting. Also, other Bollywood stars like Aishwarya Rai Bachchan was the first Bollywood actress to get the honour of wax figure in Madame Tussaud's museum in London, later, Hrithik Roshan, Madhuri Dixit, Salman Khan, Kareena Kapoor; recently Katrina Kaif statues also installed Madame Tussaud's Gallery in London. In addition to the London, Bachchan's wax figure also can be seen at Madame Tussaud's New York gallery, and we can see Shah Rukh Khan's figure as well (Thussu, 2013). In 2009 Amitabh Bachchan one of the biggest stars was awarded the 'World Economic Forum Crystal Award' for Outstanding Excellence in the field of culture. The presence of Bollywood stars was at Davos mainly through its music and its popularity at the global level.

The exciting aspect is that the Bollywood directors are incorporating the Hollywood film actors and technicians, to reach beyond the Diasporic audience and compete with Hollywood. The presence of western actors in Indian films is increasing and more frequently these days. Some instances; British actress Antonia Bernath, had a prominent role in Subash Ghai's 2005 film '*Kisna*'. In addition to that, the movie shot in simultaneously in Hindi and English as well.

The English version shortened to accommodate the western audience. Annabelle Wallace, another British actress, played the lead role in a bilingually shot and released in English and Hindi, romantic comedy '*Dil Jo Bhi Kahey*' (2005), Amitabh Bachchan starred in the movie. Another actor Toby Stephens primarily an English actor appeared in '*Lagaan*' (2005) and '*Mangal Pandey*' (2005), British actress Alice Patten in 2006 movie '*Rang De Basanti*', had a prominent role. This new kind moviemaking and incorporating English actors, for global feel, these films were merely to attract South Asians along with the global audience.

Bollywood and the third world countries

"India has been exporting films since the 1950s, and more systematically since the 1970s onwards. Now Indian films have a potential gold mine of foreign exchange earnings. Cinema's significance in a neoliberal economic imaginary arises, however, from its ability to circulate in a variety of global markets, which becomes a cause for nationalist celebration. The circulation of Hindi films in places like the United States, United Kingdom or Germany represents the success of the Indian nation on the global stage" (Ganti 2012, 75).

Indian cinema has a long past and has been an international cinema. The Bollywood feature film '*pardesi*' (1957) was the first Indo- Soviet co-produced Hindi film. Later on, Hindi films were dubbed in the Russian language. Soviet people enthusiastically watched these Russian dubbed Hindi movies. Bollywood films have spread the Middle East, parts of Asia, Gulf, and African countries. Bollywood has become very prominent in these countries. The Indian movie appeals to them because Bollywood movie is an alternative to the Americanness⁴ of Hollywood cinema. Indian cinema has the sensibilities, which more appeals to Third World countries. It has the family sentiments, family emotions, healthy relations, the combination of larger than life characters, responsibility for the family, brotherhood, escapist melodramatic narrative style, family bonding and song and dance routines, less nudity, and a happy ending. "Bollywood movies receive burgeoning popularity in the West among the Indian Diaspora. As with other countries in the Middle East, and the pre-glasnost Eastern bloc, Indian films provided an alternative to what is overwhelmingly seen as the oversexed and individualistic premises of Hollywood movies." (Kaur and Ajay 2005, 21). These are factors familiar to them and the reasons for the popularity of Indian films among other developing or third world countries. It has been growing the popularity of Indian cinema at Overseas.

⁴Explicit content of nudity, saviour of the world like characters, portrayal of extra marital relationships, premarital sex, carefree lives, feminism, gay narratives, and more graphical content etc, in the Hollywood movies, compared to the Bollywood movies, which more on the conventional patriarchal and orthodox.

"It is all about loving your parents." Karan Johar knows very well that it is also all about knowing your audience (Punathambekar 2013, 80).

Another postmodern trend is understanding of the family emotions, lovers or the hero and heroine, who were willing to sacrifice their love out of duty to their families. This kind of movies are turning to be all-time industry hits, for Example, '*Hum Aapke Hain Koun.*' Earlier films, one often notice that lovers will elope if the family does not agree to their love and marriage. However, if one sees in the '*Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*,' young couple Raj and Simran chose to, not elope. Interestingly the heroine's mother encourages the young couple to elope, this is an unusual portrayal, and the hero refuses to that and works hard to win the heroine's fathers, heart. The movie has changed, regarding music, long titles, family emotions, picturization of songs, visual style and even the marketing of the movies. After '*Hum Aapke Hain Koun or Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*' success, the themes of the stories are like, compliant lovers, willing to sacrifice their love for the sake of family honour and harmony became dominant in the films. The hero and heroine positivity and obeisance to patriarchal norms of honour and notions of loyal duty illustrated the fundamentally conservative outlook of the movies. In these movies, the absence of villain and violence, it is new kind of making the film, unlike the old narrative style. No financial problems, everybody seems happy, and love and extramarital relations. Addition to this, very big North Indian weddings, Karva Chauth, and Hindu rituals. Traditionally well-dressed heroines, and young lovers, who were willing to sacrifice their love out of duty to their families, these are the new elements.

The movie *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, is a post-global kind of story, aimed for Diaspora, as well as for Indian elite class, directed by Karan Johar, the film basically a triangle love story between the hero Rahul played by Shah Rukh Khan, his friend, the tomboy, Anjali played by Kajol, and their common friend Tina was played by Rani Mukherjee. The film takes place in a setting which is completely Westernized or Americanized, in clothing and body culture, sports, rock music, beach volleyball, basketball, etc. This film worked well in Diaspora, in South Africa, Indian Diaspora watched thrice, and more than that, and people watched more times than *Titanic* (Hansen, 2005), '*Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*' was, "bridged the well-established patterns of cultural consumption among Indians – 'high' and classical taste culture also appreciating western quality products, and 'low' culture, either too westernized and culturally illiterate in the eyes of the elite. '*Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*' was a modern Indian film, the West implanted to India, recognisable dress, forms of school, of dance, of music, summer camps, everyday slang and thus suited for a quest for recognition from the white culture by being white" (Hansen 2005, 248). This kind of movies mostly after the economic liberalisation,

these were not representing the typical Indian. See the movies before the 90s. The story plots and characters were different, the rich was a villain, and most of the movie elements were about landlords, the feudal system, Zamindars, and businessman were the villains. They do injustice to peasants and poor people. One of the poor will turn to be a hero, to take revenge on the feudal villain. This kind of narration was there from the 1950s to 1980s. It has changed after the 90s. The rich and the urban characters are not bad in the movies. If we take the example of '*Hum Aapke Hain Koun or Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*,' you will not find a villain in that, its story of loving your family, family relations, emotions, and sacrifices, everybody happy, no poverty, big palaces. Hero, heroine loves each other and winning the family and its values, traditions and finally with a happy ending. Bollywood films and they did not resonate with the non-elite or rural audiences in India. This was the new phenomena. The rural audiences were much neglected.

Conclusion

The Bollywood stories become more conservative, and patriarchy than before, but people are liking it, the director showing the old patriarchy story with westernised clothing, and styles, with same old 'Indian traditions', which supposed to be avoided. That is how the Bollywood filmmakers are commodifying Indianness and exporting to the Diaspora with good packing with a high price. In '*Hum Aapke Hain Koun*' where the female protagonist decides to sacrifice her love, for out of sense of her duty to the family, here Madhuri Dixit character anytime could have spoken out, that "I am, not going to marry my brother-in-law, because I am in love with Salman Khan", but there is tradition; that the girl should not talk to the elders, and she kept it up. Precisely this is called 'Indian tradition,' respecting the elders and sacrifice love for family honour, and this worked well in the movie. That shows in our heart; we have maintained our Indian values. The same kind of scene we can witness in the Telugu movies '*Nuvvu Naaku Nachav*' (2001) and '*Nuvvu Leka Nenu Lenu*' (2002). In these movies, hero and heroine were ready to sacrifice their love, for out of the family honour, and to respect the family and its values. The thing is that in these two movies, the heroine is willing to elope with the hero, encourages the hero to do that. Nevertheless, the hero does not do, and even he convinces her to say that we must sacrifice our love for the honour of the family. The male protagonist has the responsibility to save the family honour, to not doing the elope. That is how they preserved the patriarchal Hindu values and familial emotions and honour, the irony is, ultimately the happy ending. This kind of movies mainly shows patriarchal family system, male dominant and sacrifice for the household and also the celebration of Hindu rituals and Indian weddings. This kind of narrations, the Diaspora love to see it, because physically they are very distant to the homeland and culture,

so mentally they want to be close to the Indian values and Indian traditions, which have been programming for ages and to acquire that, they access the Bollywood movies, it gives immediate gratification. Bollywood movies are easy and the immediate, accessible thing for them, to feel as Indian and observe 'Indian values'.

Based on this Diasporic 'psychic', Indian film producers started, making movies on the same theme, what exactly the Diaspora desires to watch, and making on the same plot and adding necessary Ingredients and having a good business out of it. The Indian Government celebrates 'Pravasi Bharatiya Divas' every year, on January 9th, because India needs the vastly expanded diaspora and its dollars, the rich Indian Diaspora can contribute to the homeland. The government thus connects more with the rich Diaspora, through 'Indian culture', 'Indian traditions' and 'Indian values' to get benefits like investments, technical, intellectual support, and soft diplomacy for various international trades and deals.

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