

**MANUFACTURING GLOBAL INDIANNESS:
BOLLYWOOD IMAGES, 1995-2005.**

by

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Abstract

This project has analyzed changing image cultures in Bollywood in the context of globalization of the Indian economy and the impact of new materialism in India.

Bollywood melodrama has been transformed not just in terms of a revitalized production, but through a rearticulation of the Indian identity that shows radical shifts from the premises on which modern Indianness was based. The ever-increasing circulation of the films implicates the Indian diaspora as both subjects and consumers of contemporary narratives. By incorporating the context of the diaspora in North America and the rising middle-class in India, this study has analyzed how a transnational Indian identity within popular films is constructing a discourse of global Indianness. It has demonstrated how the expansion of the terrain on which Indianness is being expressed has a considerable impact on representations of Indians anywhere.

Keywords: Bollywood; Diaspora; Popular cinema;

Subject Terms: Modern India; Global Indianness; Discourse of Identity;

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Introduction: Changing Indianness in Bollywood Films and Beyond

For more than ten years now, Indianness, or what supposedly constitutes the Indian identity, has been much talked about in the context of modern globalization in India that has accelerated the country's rate of exchange with the world outside. The term, however, has rarely been defined or agreed upon for different reasons. One of them is that Indianness is complicated by the fact that it stems from an ancient civilization of multiple linguistic and social groups that has resulted in hundreds of languages and dialects, castes and sub castes apart from major differences in dress, cuisine and cultural forms between Indians themselves. The other reason is that Indianness is also derived from being a 60-year-old democratic nation state that had defined itself as Indian, but is still in the process of decolonization and redefinitions of nation. Hence, the dialectics of an identity borne out of some sort of a civilizational bond,¹ and from a post-colonial status, are necessarily complex as the social and political dimensions of Indianness is traversed by several centuries of both change and continuity. In terms of trying to trace what exactly constitutes Indianness, Partha Chatterjee's argument in *The Nation and Its Fragments* that religion, language and culture formed the 'inner' realm of an incipient Indian nation in colonial times is well worth considering. According to him, an Indian civil society was already constituted before a free India was established in the relatively less controlled and more

¹ Sunil Khilnani, "Who Is an Indian," *The Idea of India* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1997), 154-165. Khilnani writes of a "civilizational bond" that binds Indians. Like other scholars, he uses the term 'Indianness' to connote a specificity to Indian identity in terms of language, culture, social forms and religions.

autonomous realms of religion, language, etc., compared with the tighter colonial influence of educational schools, the bureaucracy, police and judiciary. Thus Chatterjee makes the case for an inner/outer separation in the lives of colonial subjects who were at once a part of both a political and civil society.² He writes:

This domain of sovereignty, which nationalism thought of as the “spiritual” or “inner” aspects of culture, such as language or religion or the elements of personal and family life, was of course premised on the difference between the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized. The more nationalism engaged in this contest with the colonial power in the outer domain of politics, the more it insisted on displaying the “essential” cultural difference so as to keep out the colonizer from that inner domain of national life and to proclaim its sovereignty over it.³

The concept of an inner and outer domain (alternately called the private and public spheres by others such as Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss⁴) is notably present in Bollywood films, where a marked distinction is still maintained by containing the family as a sacrosanct inner realm that is inevitably removed from an often harsh and competitive public sphere. While post-independence films would no longer see language or religion as part of an inner realm with the end of British colonial rule, what still remains confined to an inner realm is the sphere of morality and traditions. These inner-realm traditions are typically played out in the unit of the family constructed by Bollywood, and are also those forms that relate most closely with notions of Indianness, as will be seen. It will be argued that the contemporary romantic melodramas being analyzed in this thesis have changed dramatically, but the most significant portrayals of Indianness are almost entirely played out in this inner or private domain. The present emphasis on the inner domain in the films reveals a sense of the identity crisis that currently hangs over

² Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post-colonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 14-34.

³ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴ Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, *Re-inventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (UK: Polity, 2000), 32.

the national identity. But at the outset, it must be qualified that the inner/outer domains are themselves a myth, as there can always be a channel between the two, but that they have been deliberately constructed in Hindi cinema as a means to portray differences.

As Partha Chatterjee writes, colonial Indians existed in a centuries-old inner world of indigenous traditions (which, of course, did not remain static), while ideas of modernity appeared in the outer domain of British colonial law and administration.⁵ Hence, though the division between the outer and inner or between the public and private spheres is not absolute, Chatterjee's concept is useful for the analysis of Hindi films as there is a wholesale subscription to it in film narratives. As is demonstrated in Chapter One, the inner world of language and religious differences did not disappear with the end of India's colonization. Indian emigrants, one of the new audiences for Bollywood cinema I will be examining, also divide their worlds into an inner and an outer one, as their experience of immigration to the First World is related to an incomplete process of decolonization in their own lives too. The post-1965 class of young professional émigrés, who are being specifically focused on, belong to a post-colonial generation that relates to the ongoing process of decolonization in India, which would necessarily affect their own émigré status.

Major changes have occurred since modern globalization in the late 1980s has facilitated the development of sophisticated communication technologies, which has enabled diasporas to forge an increasing number of networks between themselves and also with India. The increased circulation of Bollywood films is itself a part of these new media networks that has resulted in greater connections between the diaspora and India. Hence, modern Indianness, which already embodied a tradition-modernity binary, is farther complicated by the globalized political economy in India and a diaspora

⁵ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 26.

abroad. I will argue that the reconnection of emigrant Indians to India has been enabled by, among other factors, their portrayals as significant representatives of Indianness abroad in Bollywood films.

The far-reaching changes in Indian politics provide the context to increasingly polemical representations of Indianness, as Sunil Khilnani writes about post-independence India.⁶ Another aspect of the newer representations is by right-wing Hindu nationalists, who since the 1980s have claimed the position of national representation at the level of the Indian state (claiming that Hinduism provides a common unity to all Indians) while an expanding middle-class in small town and rural India is demanding more regional representation in politics.⁷ Besides, global Indianness now includes members of the diaspora who are in a position to reinvent Indian identity too. This class of Indians, for instance, might find neither the national nor regional level of Indian identities sufficient for self-definition. Farther, as Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss have argued, the idea of modern India itself was not forged entirely within the country, or in disregard of the intellectual and geopolitical forces that shaped the deliberations of what became the nation state.⁸ Extending their idea, I will argue that the external forces influencing Indianness appear to have become more significant than ever, with the small but influential Indian diaspora asserting itself in the terrain of Indianness overseas. This is reflected in the sudden interest in Indianness in the United Kingdom and North America that is related to a spate of recent media, cultural and

⁶ Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 185-195.

⁸ Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, "The Invention of Modern India," in *Re-inventing India*, 17.

Additionally, social scientists have begun tracing diasporic influences back even to a towering national figure such as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who lived in racist South Africa and London, which are seen as major reasons for the development of his own identity politics.

cinema events celebrating popular culture from India in an unprecedented fashion.⁹ The events themselves provide evidence of an increased outflow of popular culture from a globalized India that has made huge efforts to reconnect with the small but highly visible Indian diaspora overseas.

The globalizing Indian economy has meant that a rapidly transforming Bollywood has suddenly acquired a global viewership as an increasing number of films get distributed overseas.¹⁰ Bollywood films that are produced in Bombay, the cinema capital of India, are circulating in ever more countries globally such as Japan and Brazil and actually rival Hollywood's reach today though not in terms of total revenue.¹¹ Big-budget Bollywood films earn between 15 and 45 percent of their revenues from overseas.¹² And significantly, the North American market (including Canada) accounts for 30 percent of the overseas revenues, though the films are being received by 95 countries in the

⁹ Ashutosh Gowariker's *Lagaan* (2001) about the sport of cricket in colonial India and Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Devdas* (2003), an epic story from 1900, were nominated for foreign film Oscars while Gurinder Chaddha's *Bend it like Beckham* (2003) was extremely successful globally. Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Bombay Dreams* was produced in 2002 and created worldwide interest while Baz Luhrmann who made the spectacular *Moulin Rouge* (2001) claimed to be inspired by the Bollywood aesthetic. This spate of events catalyzed the growth of media and western academic interest in India that has been accelerated farther by the spotlight placed on India as suddenly having become a 'happening' place.

¹⁰ *Back to the Future: Report on the Indian Entertainment Industry (Films)* produced by Confederation of Indian Industries-KPMG, 2005, pages 45-79. (sourced from the office of CII, New Delhi) Significantly, new Bollywood productions earn much of their revenues from the middle-class audiences within India itself, but the growth in their secondary revenues from the overseas markets is spectacular and shows signs of the greatest increases in years to come along with the increase expected from multiplex theatres within India.

¹¹ Mark Lorenzen and Florian Taeube, "Breakout from Bollywood: The Internationalization of the Indian Film Industry in *Danish Research Unit for Industrial Dynamics-Working Paper 07-06*. Copenhagen Business School, Dept. of Industrial Economics and Strategy: Aalborg University <http://ideas.repec.org/p/aal/abbswp/07-06.html> (accessed online on July 15, 2007)

The analysts report that though Bollywood sells 3.6 billion tickets compared with Hollywood's 2.6 million tickets, Bollywood had an annual turnover of only \$575 million in 2005 compared with Hollywood's \$23 billion in 2005. (this footnote is repeated in chapter 1)

¹² Monika Mehta, *Globalizing Bombay Cinema: Reproducing the Indian State and Family in Cultural Dynamics* 2005;17;143 <http://cdy.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/17/2/135>

Newspapers have averaged Monika Mehta's variable figure of between 15-45 percent to be more like 25 percent. For farther reference, Indranil Roy, *Abroad Spectrum in Daily News and Analysis*, Sept. 23, 2006. <http://www.dnaindia.com/dnprint.asp?NewsID=1054764&CatID=22>. (accessed on Oct. 31, 2006)

western world, Africa, and the Middle East.¹³ I argue, as others have, that these exports of popular culture from India and the revenues they are earning overseas are increasingly informing the form and stylistics of the films. It is apparent that film-makers are attempting to simultaneously appeal to both overseas audiences and affluent middle-class Indians, though as can be expected, their films often generate different responses overseas and in India.¹⁴ Using the elaborate song-and-dance melodramas as representative of modern Indianness, I demonstrate how Bollywood is playing a crucial role in the contemporary discourse on national identity. Needless to say, Bollywood's images do not correspond with the lives of most Indians, but must be read as wish-fulfilling stories of an upcoming bourgeoisie. The availability of global finance, global audiences and an affluent and growing middle-class in India has tended to skew images in favour of upper classes who all share a certain faith in multinational capitalism. Even if the representation is skewed, however, the 300-million-member Indian middle-class is significant because of its purchasing power internationally. This thesis will demonstrate how Bollywood's portrayal of the fantastic changes in the lifestyles of typically bourgeois protagonists, as part of both the small but significant diaspora and the middle-class in India, reveals both the desires and anxieties of this class of consumers.

In short, Bombay film-makers, who have traditionally catered to a pan-Indian viewership, appear to be rethinking target audiences as big-budget productions are

¹³ Sunil Khilnani, "A New Cultural Lexicon" in *The Hindu*, Sept. 2, 2002 on <http://Hinduonline.com> (accessed on May 27, 2006).

¹⁴ Between 1995 and 2005 there have been a number of films released both in India and overseas. Some achieved blockbuster status both in India and abroad: these films include Yash Chopra's *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge/The Brave of Heart Takes the Bride* (1995) and Karan Johar's *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai/Something Happens* (1998). But the same film-makers' had a better overseas response with a number of films including Yash Chopra's *Dil to Paagal Hai/The Heart is Crazy* (1998), *Mohabbatein/Romances* (2000), *Veer Zaara/Brave Zaara* (2004) and *Salaam Namaste/Hello Hello in Hindi and Urdu* (2005). Similarly, Karan Johar had better success with *Kabhie Khushi Kabhie Gam/Sometimes Sometimes Sorrow* (2001), *Kal Ho Na Ho/Whether or not there is Tomorrow* (2004) and *Kabhie Al Vida Na Kehena/Never Say Goodbye* (2006).

This analysis is based on figures and ratings of the films from Box Office India. Com
<http://www.boxofficeindia.com/showProd.php?itemCat=108&catName=QUxMIEIOREIB>

being consciously produced for affluent Indians and diasporic audiences today.¹⁵ They are also working against increasing competition from a range of overseas entertainment movie and television channels that have entered India in the post-liberalization period of the 1990s.¹⁶ Hence, though Bollywood represents a hegemonic system of film production in India, it also sets itself up in significant opposition to Hollywood's hegemony and other multinational media companies. This is a relevant factor in terms of identity constructions and narrative structures in Hindi films, as will be seen.

The term 'Bollywood' itself is surely partly deprecatory (implying that Bombay cinema is an adaptation of the Hollywood style) and was popularized only as recently as the 1990s, coinciding with the increased circulation of Hindi films globally. Cinema itself, though, has a much longer history in India, having been established in 1895 when the first Indian film-makers imported western technology, with which they produced distinctly Indian cinematography.¹⁷ Many of these early films were 'mythologicals' based on the Hindu epics of the *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*, and it is significant that the influence of Hindu texts on film narratives has remained strong and still enter narratives directly and indirectly.¹⁸ While popular Hindi films have been referred to as Bombay Cinema, there have always been other movie-producing regions, and Bengali, Tamil, Telugu and

¹⁵ Several big budget productions after 1995 have been shot partly or wholly outside of India and often include diasporic central characters. Another change is that representations tend to be skewed in favour of the middle-class: Industrialists, for instance, can be humane, dignified and supportive parents in new narratives, which show an endorsement of wealth accumulation and a new family rapport.

¹⁶ Monika Mehta, *Globalizing Bombay Cinema*, 144.

¹⁷ Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema* (New York/London: Routledge, 2004), 3.

¹⁸ Vinay Lal, *Hinduism and Bollywood: A Few Notes on Culture (Cinema) Manas* http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Culture/Cinema/hinduism_bollywood.html

Vinay Lal provides evidence of films through the decades that have used Hindu foundational texts and characters as well as popular film-makers who directly acknowledge having used the epic myths for their films for instance, popular film-maker Manmohan Desai (1936-94) who produced several films in the 1970s-80s.

Malayalam films have a wide circulation in the states where these languages originate.¹⁹ By contrast, Bombay films, which were only re-christened Bollywood films in the 1990s, have traditionally had greater audiences as they circulated all over India. The narratives, produced in Hindi or Urdu, provided spectators with star-driven stories that constantly referenced Hollywood continuity editing and cinematography, but differed in performance style as well as in favouring a collective voice over any individualistic one.²⁰ Hence, the most general statement that can be made about Bombay or Bollywood cinema is that these films are highly emotional or affective, reflect a distinct style of melodrama, and contain on average at least five to six songs that are interspersed along a narrative that is frequently “interrupted” by these deviations from an otherwise linear narrative.²¹ Lalitha Gopalan writes that the interruptions are a particularly popular cinematic form that is accorded importance and is very much a part of the viewing pleasure.²²

Popular Hindi cinema has always had a stake in national identity, since it was already an established industry when Indian independence was achieved in 1947.²³ The films’ narratives tended to be closed structures and most often presented didactic solutions thereby remaining conservative. But, though popular cinema was didactic and conservative, the wish-fulfilling stories were able to make effective nationalistic statements. Hence, the films engendered nationalism as Bollywood scholars such as

¹⁹ India produces 1,000 films annually, though significantly, the majority fails to recover costs at the Box Office. Of the total figure, Hindi films account for approx. 200 per year.

²⁰ More details of the differences between Bollywood and Hollywood will be provided in Chapter Two.

²¹ Lalitha Gopalan, *Cinema of Interruptions: action genres in Contemporary Indian Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 2002), 18.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Rather than Benedict Anderson’s newspaper-reading public developing ideas of nationalism, independent India was a Third World country of mostly illiterate masses for which popular cinema performed the role of nation-building.

Sumeeta Chakravarty, Madhava Prasada and Jyotika Viridi have argued.²⁴ In this respect, popular Hindi cinema served the Indian nation-state, especially in the first decade after Independence. Earlier films were nationalistic stories in which film-makers seemed to promote the Indian state's own modernizing narratives through film structures that were replete with populist elements including melodrama and songs that harked back to an older India.

Compared to the nationalistic stories of the 1950s, films from the 1990s appear more engaged with an idea of a modern Indianness that has no specific relationship to the Indian state or geographical boundaries, as Rachel Dwyer writes. In this phase of modern globalization, when mainstream Bollywood films completely dominate representations of popular Indian culture, Indian identity, as I will argue, draws its definition in part from a global market and multinational capitalism. At the same time, the films continue to provide Indians with myths about values, morals and social networks that are drawn from much older traditions that belong to the inner domain. In fact, the diegesis of films has completely withdrawn into a family space, often a diasporic family site in which most interactions between the films' protagonists take place. Chapter Two will demonstrate how this appeal to the fictional world of an inner domain is recreated for Indians through the use of specific cinematic strategies on the site of diasporic families.

The fact that consumerism is deliberately constructed in newer films that represent a larger-than-ever spectacle whose mise-en-scène emphasizes extravagant décor, fashions and material will be closely examined in the context of changing Indian identity. Though the romantic melodrama endures, the dominance of designer labels and

²⁴ Sumeeta Chakravarti: *National Identity in Indian Popular Film: 1947-1987* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993); Madhava Prasada: *The Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); Jyotika Viridi: *The Cinematic ImagiNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

brands gives contemporary films a completely new visual texture greatly reminiscent of television commercials.

This spectacle of wealth reflects positively on the films' protagonists, who are seen as dignified and confident.²⁵ For spectators in India, luxury homes and an upscale western lifestyle might evoke a desire for possession or a self-identification amongst the affluent classes. By contrast, amongst the diaspora, Bollywood's new transnationalism invites pride in India's modernization while also eliciting the desire to acquire and possess designer ethnic ware.²⁶ It is also highly likely that the filmic staging of Indian weddings and other familial rituals acts as visual reinforcement for replication in real life.²⁷

Regarding the context in which the films are being consumed, I will argue that in the historical and non-fictional world of the Indian diaspora, the myth of the inner world is reinforced by the process of immigration. Emigrants' lives tend to get separated into an inner domain that roughly corresponds to a private sphere for Indian religions and languages, while the North American work ethic and civilian life belong in a professional outer domain. Needless to say, the diaspora is not a monolithic group and the inner-outer division is not uniform; hybrid and liminal identities are constantly being created too. Nevertheless, Bollywood films involving diaspora stories primarily play on a sense of Indianness derived from a Hindi language culture that extends beyond the functional

²⁵ Films such as Karan Johar's *Kabhie Khushi Kabhie Gam/Sometimes Happiness Sometimes Sorrow* (2000) reveal this trend strongly: the film is about a powerful industrialist who, though his relationship with his son becomes strained, is depicted as dignified rather than corrupt and conniving, as was often the case in pre-1990s films. Similarly, Yash Chopra's *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge/The Brave of Heart will Take the Bride* (1995) shows the London-based male protagonist who comes from a very wealthy family and expresses a great sense of confidence that is derived through this affluence and parental support.

²⁶ Aswin Punathambekar, 'Bollywood in the Indian American Diaspora' in *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Sage Publications: New Delhi/London/Thousand Oaks, Vol. 8 (2):165.

Punathambekar's research shows that it is quite common for diasporic women to want clothes like glamorous Bollywood female actors.

²⁷ It is easy to see the Bollywood inspiration in diaspora weddings both in terms of bridal ware and the ceremonies themselves at which film music is often played to evoke the right mood.

use of language as a means of communication, to ideologies and ways of thinking that are derived from the context of a language and its development. In this respect, narratives work to unite quite diverse South Asian viewers through the myth of an inner domain of differences that exists across their own similar language cultures compared with North American mainstream culture.

As Bollywood films circulate in ever more countries, even non-Hindi speaking film buffs have reported watching Bollywood films to 'see what all the fuss is about' and come away having experienced something quite different from classical Hollywood narratives.²⁸ In fact, there is a surge in media interest that appears to be driving viewership higher than ever.²⁹ In this respect, Ashish Rajadhyaksha argues that there is a major difference between 'Bollywood' and Hindi cinema itself. He notes that Bollywood subsumes a range of ancillary film-related industries, including music and fashion industries, that exist for and cater to overseas diasporic audiences; and Hindi films, he writes, are only successful when they Bollywoodize themselves.³⁰ I would extend his argument to say that 'Indian' cultural affects, including highly elaborate and ritualized weddings and romances, have been commodified towards this end and would appeal to affluent Indians as well as the overseas diaspora. The intense materialism and design-consciousness in productions that look simultaneously upscale and ethnic suggests that Indians are affluent, fashionable and international, but also have their own brands of ethnicity and tradition that are enviable and emulatable. In fact, the transformation of Hindi cinema into what has come to be known as Bollywood cinema in

²⁸ This is my own observation from years of living in Vancouver.

²⁹ For a couple of years now, in Vancouver there have been regular newspaper reviews of commercial Hindi films being released in local theatres. Cinema theatres all over the city publicize new releases every other week following what has become a trend in North America. Hindi films have become 'cool' compared with 10 years ago when several middle-class Indians dismissed them for being pedestrian or cheap imitations of Hollywood films.

³⁰ Ashish Rajadhyaksha, 'The Bollywoodization of the Indian Cinema: Cultural Nationalism in a Global Arena in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 4, no. 1, 2003, 25-39.

the 1990s presents the threads that connect Bollywood's new global Indianness with the contemporary discourse of Indian identity itself.

In this thesis, specific films produced by Yash Chopra will be analyzed on the basis that they are representative of Bollywood productions. The film-maker's own long film career and recent overseas success reinforces this representative quality.³¹ Yash Chopra's London-based *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge/The Brave of Heart Gets the Bride* (1995) became the longest-running Hindi film, and established the market for Bollywood films overseas, as Monika Mehta, among others, notes.³² Yash Chopra, a veteran in the Bombay film industry, has not only had the longest career, but has achieved a new level of success by establishing a global audience with *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*. Thereafter he has produced several other romantic melodramas that fared better overseas than they did in India.³³ This has also changed the representations of the diaspora who before *Dilwale*, were either entirely absent or constructed as doubtful or ignoble by Bombay cinema.³⁴ In terms of the new bourgeois consumerism, Yash Chopra's films re-projected the diaspora as successful and affluent, after which several other film producers have followed the trend of locating their protagonists in metropolitan cities overseas. Hence, new romantic melodramas have begun to be staged in Singapore, Dubai, Hong Kong, London, New York, Paris or

³¹ Other successful big-budget film-makers include Karan Johar who has had a comparable amount of overseas success, and has consistently attributed his own learning and style to Yash Chopra whose production banner of Yash Raj Films is widely known. In addition, some other big production banners include UTV Films, Mukta Arts, Adlabs Films and K.C. Bokadia.

³² Monika Mehta, *Globalizing Bombay Cinema*, 144-145.

Mehta has used *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* as her case study to show how the film helped globalize Indian cinema and also establish a new relationship with the Indian state.

³³ These films have already been mentioned on page 6 of the Introduction.

³⁴ In films such as Manoj Kumar's *Purab aur Paschim/East and West* (1970), the female actor representing an Indian abroad is portrayed as quite debauched. She only gets redemption only by returning to India where she is transformed into a more traditional woman.

Melbourne.³⁵ Rachel Dwyer writes that Yash Chopra made the achievement of locating Indianness abroad by promoting the transnational Indian “who may enjoy foreign travel but whose heart lies in India.”³⁶ The success of *Dilwale* spawned a number of big-budget Bollywood films between 1995 and 2005, which similarly focused on stories of romantic relationships between protagonists living abroad who embodied a distinct type of Indianness.³⁷

The fact that these diaspora-centred Bollywood films have been appreciated by the diaspora itself has been observed and commented on by scholars such as Vijay Mishra. He writes:

The diaspora of late capital has now become an important market of popular cinema as well as a site for its production.... The new diaspora is the complex and often internally fissured communities of Indians primarily in the United States, Canada, Britain, and Australia who have had an unbroken contact with the homeland. For many the space occupied by the new diaspora – the space of the West – is also the desired space of wealth and luxury that gets endorsed, in displaced form, by Indian Cinema itself.³⁸

Mishra’s argument that the accumulation of wealth is endorsed within Indian cinema through a portrayal of the diaspora as consumers informs this thesis.³⁹ In addition, this study will look at the newer post-1965 diaspora who seem to have inspired the most dramatic changes in representations of Indianness in contemporary films. The small but significant community of Indians overseas are powerful and affluent enough to make a

³⁵ Films such as Farhan Akhtar’s *Dil Chahta Hai/What the Heart Desires* (2001), Aziz Mirza’s *Chalte Chalte/As We Walked* (2003) and Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s *Hum Dil de Chuke Sanam/I’ve already Given my Heart* (1999) are a few examples.

³⁶ Rachel Dwyer, *Yash Chopra* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2002), 216.

³⁷ Examples of this new type of film that is set in the diaspora and caters to the new overseas audiences include Subhash Ghai’s *Pardes/Abroad* (1997); Rishi Kapoor’s *Aa ab Laut Chalein/Come, Let Us Go Back Now* (1999); Farhan Akhtar’s *Dil Chahta Hai/The Heart Desires* (2001); Aziz Mirza’s *Chalte Chalte/As we Walked* (2003), apart from several others including those by Yash Chopra.

³⁸ Vijay Mishra, “Bombay Cinema and Diasporic Desire” in *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002), 238.

³⁹ Chapter Two describes commodified cinematic affects that can be justified due to their consumption by the diasporic protagonists.

noticeable impact on the world economy.⁴⁰ Since the diaspora is more strongly linked to the popular imagination in India through widely circulating Bollywood films that implicate them in how national identity is manufactured, the narratives also work to reterritorialize the diaspora. In sharp contrast with the representation of diaspora in films of previous decades, the trendy well-heeled characters now endorse an aspirational bourgeois lifestyle overseas. The diaspora's location abroad seems to endorse materialism as a sign of the Indian community's success, while diaspora characters can almost show Indians how to be Indian.⁴¹ There are oppositions within the representations, though, especially of Indian women that produce a tension in the imagery itself.

In the historical world, globalization and immigration have produced several Little Indias outside the subcontinent in the form of concentrations of Indians in overseas metropolitan cities; the Little Indias have typically been commercial centres for Indian restaurants, grocery shops, fashion stores and DVD and video stores, but sometimes also included thousands of Indian households living in close proximity to each other. For many of the approximately 20 million Indian diaspora living in countries from Trinidad, Fiji, and Australia to Canada, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and several Middle Eastern countries, Bollywood films provide a window to Indian culture and a connection to Indianness. However, rather than just implying a one-way flow of Indianness, modern communications have enabled a two-way process showing how

⁴⁰ Parag Khanna, Bollystan: The Global India in online magazine *The Globalist*, Dec. 3, 2004. <http://www.theglobalist.com/DBWeb/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=4279>. (Accessed on January 15, 2008)

The Indian diaspora in the United States of America is regarded as the wealthiest community in the country with a per capita income of over \$ 60,000. The diaspora in the USA includes a large number of professionals specializing in computer software, science and research.

⁴¹ The exception to the depiction of well settled and affluent immigrants appears in Rishi Kapoor's *Aa ab Laut Chalein* (1998) in which the myths of well settled Indians and their enduring family values is dissipated by revealing them as struggling immigrants and also as debauched and materialistic. The only option for the romantic diasporic couple in this narrative is to return to India, but this outcome is rare in most of the diaspora-oriented films being made.

India is ever more strongly influenced by its diaspora.⁴² In cultural terms, for instance, elements of fashion, music and film in the diaspora are now connected to Bollywood; for instance, the British Indian diaspora is exporting back modern *bhangra* and rap music to the film industry in India.⁴³

Of course, the term diaspora is problematic as it tends to overlap with both ethnicity and immigration. Referring to Indians abroad as a 'diaspora' rather than as immigrants, however, is based on the fact that diasporic people often identify with a collective feeling of having been dispersed and hold on to the myth of a return and a sense of community that transcends national frontiers.⁴⁴ Diasporas, of course, are extremely diverse while variations between countries produce varying types of Indian communities too.⁴⁵ For instance, the Indian diaspora in the United Kingdom is different from that in North America due to the different demands of the post-war labour market that resulted in different classes of émigrés going to the two countries.⁴⁶ In this context, looking at diaspora as a site for cultural consumption and production becomes an alternative way of viewing a diverse group. In this respect, it is also significant that Bollywood films are not just consumed by a nostalgic older generation keen to access

⁴² Parag Khanna, 'Bollystan' in *The Globalist*. Khanna notes that the Indian diaspora in the United States of America is in powerful enough positions to be able to influence foreign policy towards India.

⁴³ Rachel Dwyer, *Yash Chopra*, 25.

Modern *bhangra* was developed by Indians in the UK and then the United States and exported back to Bollywood. In addition, young talented Indians from Canada are constantly travelling to Bombay to try and get auditions for Bollywood films as was evident in documentary film-maker Nisha Pahuja's *Bollywood Bound* (2002) produced for the National Film Board of Canada.

⁴⁴ Virinder S. Kalra, Raminder Kaur & John Hutnyk, *Diaspora and Hybridity* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), 10-11.

⁴⁵ Sandhya Shukla has analyzed the differences in the Little Indias produced in Southall, London and at Jackson Heights, New Jersey that arise from differences in settlement patterns as well as the specific labour requirements of the receiving countries. For farther reference read Sandhya Shukla, *India Abroad: diasporic cultures of post-war America and England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁴⁶ Sandhya Shukla has demonstrated this difference in *India Abroad* as cited above.

Indian culture in Britain and North America.⁴⁷ Rachel Dwyer writes about UK audiences that there is a new younger generation of English-educated South Asians who improve their Hindi by watching Bollywood films.⁴⁸ This enthusiasm among a younger generation is also visible in North America, where Bollywood fans include thousands of second-generation Indian immigrants.⁴⁹ There is also a discernible sense of similarity amongst South Asian viewers who, relatively speaking, share a common ethnicity and constitute the new global viewership of Bollywood films overseas.⁵⁰

In terms of methodology, Chapter One will examine the historical influences that have produced representations of Indianness in post-independence popular Hindi cinema.⁵¹ The analysis will include images of women, ideas of honour, and myths of duty that were prevalent in society and films of the 1950s and 1960s. I will show that, as in other post-colonial Third World countries, the Indian state's agenda for modernization was reflected in films of the early period. By the 1970s, state planning had collapsed and the Indian masses felt frustrated with their pathetic standard of living, which was reflected in some film narratives of the time. By the 1980s, a new middle-class audience and aesthetic is noticeable in films that are imbued with elements that are both populist and more sophisticated. By the 1990s, film-makers such as Yash Chopra are producing

⁴⁷ Rachel Dwyer, 192-193. Though the audiences for Bollywood film overseas are primarily Indians/South Asians, they are watched in large enough numbers to have pushed Hindi films into UK's top 10 list often and U.S.A's top 30 list.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ This is my own observation at Simon Fraser University, where South Asian youth groups show a strong Bollywood focus for annual cultural shows and events that inevitably have had a Bollywood theme. Also, since the 1990s, theatre-going audiences include a large segment of the 15-34 age groups globally. There are 150 theatre screens in North America (including 20 in Canada) that regularly screen Hindi films to audiences, a large percentage of whom can be presumed to be younger Indians as most of the global audiences for Bollywood films are South Asians of whom Indians are the majority in terms of numbers. These figures that appear to be common knowledge in Bollywood were given to me (in conversation) with Arjun Sablok, a Yash Chopra director on a recent visit to Vancouver in March 2008.

⁵⁰ South Asians generally include Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Nepalis, Bhutanese, Sri Lankans and people of Indian origin from Trinidad and Fiji. 'South Asian' could also include Afghanis, Iranians and Tibetans by some definitions.

⁵¹ The films that have been chosen are well known and widely analyzed by film scholars as representative of the time periods they were produced in. For example: Bimal Roy's *Do Bigha Zamin* (1953), Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* (1957), Yash Chopra's *Deewar* (1975) and *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995).

narratives that appease the middle-class need for self-reflection and self-projection.

These films also demonstrate a whole range of new influences including new production values, changed notions of aesthetics and a more self-conscious global Indianness.

By examining the historical context for the production of Bollywood films, the first chapter sets up discussions for specific forms of Indianness encoded in the film texts that are analyzed in Chapter Two. In this chapter, I analyze Indian melodrama as the preferred, closed story structure to see how national identities have been produced in Bollywood films. While melodrama is the mode, the elements within it include cinematic affects that, I will argue, cater to the 'inner' world of Indians. Both affect theory and *Rasa* theory will be examined in Chapter Two. Cinematic affects, as Gilles Deleuze suggests, are deliberately constructed by film-makers to create powerful emotions in spectators. The power of the images on a screen to change our feelings from passive to active states enables the films to manipulate audiences into feeling various emotions.⁵² Gilles Deleuze's affect theory for cinema provides a valuable post-structural research tool, as it is less bound to notions of historical time that have invariably made structural theories less effective for explaining changes or meanings. In addition, the affects of romance, anger, pathos or comedy in Hindi films have great resonance with the *Rasa* theory that has been traditionally used to describe Indian aesthetics. *Rasas* are defined as the individually savoured empathic emotions of romance, pathos, revulsion, fear and disgust that are induced in spectators by the corresponding feelings enacted by actors. Many of these are evident in cinema as well, with a recent twist. As will be seen, a commodification of the much-used *rasas* or affects of romance and pathos has occurred in contemporary cinema with the corporatized production of music, choreography and fashions. The result is that romantic relationships are themselves embedded in

⁵² Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* translated by Hugh and Barbara Tomlinson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 87-101.

commodity cultures. Interestingly too, Yash Chopra's films that primarily apply affects of love and pathos through romantic melodrama, relate mostly to a mythical inner world of Indianness. Chopra's contemporary films (both his own and those produced by his film company, Yash Raj Films) demonstrate new representations of Indianness through these commodified affects. They provide evidence of a change in the understanding of Indianness through changes in cinematic portrayals as well as audience sensibilities.

In the search for specific forms and meanings of Indianness within contemporary Bollywood films, this thesis fuses film reception with historical context, a method of film reception analysis endorsed by many film theorists, such as Janet Staiger.⁵³ As she argues, the Cultural Studies approach of analyzing audience response to film texts as "preferred," "negotiated," or "resistant" was useful but insufficient.⁵⁴ Often, viewers took multiple positions within the same text while opposing or resisting a text itself may have implied a progressive reading, but did not necessarily have to be so. This is because spectators often "perversely" deny normative reading strategies and might challenge assumptions of film analysts, writes Staiger. In fact, audiences will find their own pleasures that fall outside the scope of social science and cognitive theories, which still stress that spectators mainly want to resolve a plot's hermeneutics.⁵⁵ In cognisance of the limitations of any one film reception theory, this thesis uses multiple interpretive theories, in addition to combining historiographical theories with textual analysis of films. If Chapter One presents a genealogy of filmic representations of Indianness through historical analysis, Chapter Two is more focused on discovering theoretical and methodological means to analyze images of global Indianness. The chapter separation

⁵³ Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectators: the Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 28-31.

⁵⁴ The Cultural Studies idea that context produces response is important, but as will be seen there are also responses that are embodied and more intuitive than intellectual.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

for this thesis reflects how interdisciplinary methodologies have been incorporated to deal with Indian film histories and histories of modern India. I suggest that reading film texts for specific ideas of Indian identity that date back to the ancient Indian epics, while also using post-colonial theories and references to Hollywood cinema and an international market, is a more nuanced way to trace a discourse of global Indianness through Bollywood films. In the process, I hope to raise questions about how Indian identity has been manufactured in the context of globalization and new diasporic audiences, and how historical and material conditions have affected portrayals.

Chapter One: Historical Influences on Bollywood Cinema – The Indian State and Beyond

Overview

In Bollywood films today, it is common to see contemporary Indians portrayed as confident, global and successful, and enjoying consumerism as never before. But Indian identity itself is complicated by the confluence of global technologies, a highly visible consumerism and a rising Hindu nationalism that have all converged onto the site of Indianness in the late 20th century. In light of this confluence, this chapter argues that the contemporary discourse of Indianness in Bollywood films is a reflection of the globalization of India's economy, which has also resulted in a much stronger connection through improved communication with the diaspora and an expansion of the terrain on which Indianness can exist. I will demonstrate that, though earlier films reflected a Nehruvian idealism with its accents on secularism and socialism, contemporary narratives reflect a new engagement with materialism, a global mindset, and a confidence in being both Indian and Hindu due to the gradual dissipation of the myth of secularism in India.⁵⁶ By tracing changing expressions of Indian identity in post-independence Hindi films, the multiple factors affecting the present discourse of Indianness will be analyzed to see how a national identity is being created in contemporary films.

⁵⁶ A discussion on the rising Hindu nationalism in India and overseas is integrated into the discussion of Indian representations in this chapter.

I argue that the emergence of the modern Indian identity and its cinematic representations in popular films were themselves derived from the particular constructions of India by the newly independent Indian state seeking to build a new and free Indianness. In this regard, post-independence cinema, which is the specific focus of this chapter, is significant for having made the first attempts at representing Indians to themselves, and worked in the service of the nation state by embracing its modernizing agenda. By contrast, contemporary Bollywood films increasingly focus on the creation of a modern Indianness that is articulated with less dependence on the state, as will be seen.

As I will show, cinematic representations in the early post-independence period were always ambiguous as film-makers tried to balance cultural tradition with political modernity in their constructions of the new Indian identity. Film-makers themselves reflected the ambiguity experienced by many Indians as they sought to become 'modern' whilst remaining true to their traditions. In fact, decolonizing societies like India faced the conundrum of nation-states that had been set up with a likeness to colonial states, but had to distance themselves from colonial legacies as free societies who were establishing their own identities.⁵⁷ Hence, Nehruvian nationalism that embodied ideas about Indian identity was a huge influence on popular cinema, as it was on the Indian polity during his rule in the period from 1947 to 1964; changes in India's political economy in the following years have greatly reduced this influence.⁵⁸ The Indian economy suffered multiple crises in the 1970s when it became apparent that the Nehruvian state had failed. Though there was some economic recovery in the 1980s, it was only with economic liberalization in the 1990s that Indians have felt a surge of

⁵⁷ There is a rupture after 1975 in the timeline of decolonization as India was put under Emergency Rule for the first time since independence. This resulted in the suspension of citizens' rights of free speech and expression apart from draconian measures to control the country by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

⁵⁸ As will be seen, India's first prime minister and leader of the Congress party, Jawaharlal Nehru (1947-64), left the strongest imprint on the country in terms of national identity.

confidence in themselves and the future. The confident new Indian identity is apparent in the latest Bollywood films that expressly demonstrate the sampling of new pleasures of the commodity culture within the collective unit of the family.⁵⁹ In doing so, citizens also appear to express a greater confidence in the market than the state as being arbiters of their collective future.

The story of the post-colonial identity begins with India in 1947 when nationalists took the first steps to creating their own democratic society. In this context, the 1950s Hindi films were both nationalistic and romantic, and portrayed 'social justice' themes that reflected a hopeful optimism in the newly formed nation state. These films are acknowledged by Bollywood scholars such as Jyotika Virdi, Madhava Prasada and Sumeeta Chakravarty,⁶⁰ as having effectively articulated Indian nationalism to mostly illiterate Indians.⁶¹ Jyotika Virdi contends that Hindi cinema has contributed greatly to the construction of a modern Indian identity by enacting a national imaginary more than any state-sponsored institution did – an eminently defensible argument in the light of what follows in this thesis too.⁶² Of course, the narrative style and representations of Indian identity in popular cinema kept changing as the political economy unfolded. I suggest that the films gradually became less nationalistic as optimism in India's independent status gave rise to questions about the Indian state's promises to the masses. Though 1960s films were still patriotic, the 1970s narratives register a new

⁵⁹ Sunil Khilnani speaks of the sampling of the new pleasures of the material culture in Sooraj Barjatya's *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun/What am I to You* (1994).

Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, (New Delhi: Penguin, 2000), 186.

⁶⁰ Sumeeta Chakravarti: *National Identity in Indian Popular Film: 1947-1987* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993); Madhava Prasada: *The Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); Jyotika Virdi: *The Cinematic ImagiNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003) as cited on page 8 of this thesis.

⁶¹ This optimism is present in the social realism of 1950s films including Mehboob Khan's highly symbolic *Mother India* (1957), Bimal Roy's *Do Bigha Zamin/Two Units of Land* (1953) and B.R. Chopra's *Naya Daur/New Horizons* (1957).

⁶² Jyotika Virdi, *Cinematic ImagiNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (New Jersey/London: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 31.

element of cynicism caused by the failure of the state that produced disillusionment in the masses and got reflected in the cinema of the time.⁶³ By the 1980s, a shift to middle-class themes and audiences provides the antecedents to transnational stories of the 1990s in Yash Chopra films, as explained below.⁶⁴ Equally significantly, political crises caused by ascendant regional powers, which had been largely ignored by the centralized state until the 1980s, have effectively re-contoured the Indian state by their demands for more representation.⁶⁵

From the 1990s, Hindi films have been re-christened 'Bollywood' films as they have increasingly tapped into diaspora markets, project an ever-more-affluent Indian middle class, and have begun to rival Hollywood films in their reach, though not in total revenues.⁶⁶ A changing Indianness in mainstream Bollywood cinema gets fully manifested first in Yash Chopra's *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge/The Brave Heart Will Take the Bride* (1995), which initiated a discussion of identity beyond India's borders. At the same time, the reterritorialization of people of Indian origin by directly portraying them in new narratives that claim a larger space for Indian national identity is directly

⁶³ Yash Chopra's *Deewar/Wall* (1973) is an often referred to film text that demonstrates a dark cynicism in the persona of actor Amitabh Bachchan best known for his portrayal of the 'angry young man.'

⁶⁴ Yash Chopra's *Kabhie Kabhie/Sometimes* (1976) and *Silsila/The Issue* (1981) have strong elements of the middle-class romance that appears again in *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge/The Brave of Heart Takes the Bride* (1995).

⁶⁵ The expansion of the middle-class and its consequences for the Indian state will be discussed in some detail. The regional powers that have now taken their place at the centre include eminent chief ministers such as the rustic and sharp speaking Laloo Prasad Yadav, ex-chief minister of Bihar, is known to pepper his speeches with Bollywood phraseology.

⁶⁶ Mark Lorenzen and Florian Taeube, "Breakout from Bollywood: The Internationalization of the Indian Film Industry in *Danish Research Unit for Industrial Dynamics-Working Paper 07-06*. Copenhagen Business School, Dept. of Industrial Economics and Strategy: Aalborg University (accessed online on July 15, 2007) <http://ideas.repec.org/p/aal/abbswp/07-06.html>

The analysts report that though Bollywood sells 3.6 billion tickets compared with Hollywood's 2.6 million, Bollywood had an annual turnover of only \$575 million in 2005 compared with Hollywood's \$23 billion in 2005.

related to a reinvigorated consumption of Bollywood films by the diaspora, as mentioned in the Introduction.⁶⁷

In terms of methodology, this chapter will map out the developmental histories of India in order to trace the changing discourse of Indianness in popular Hindi cinema, for which I have used a number of so-called 'hits' and 'blockbusters' as primary evidence.⁶⁸ A very brief history of the diaspora in North America generally, and in Canada specifically, is outlined to draw out diasporic sensibilities and to suggest how Indians abroad might respond to Bollywood films. The diaspora's own emigration history shows how its negotiation of race and ethnicity mediates the consumption of contemporary Hindi films. However, easy accessibility of a wide variety of popular culture makes it difficult to assess the significance of one set of films, i.e., Bollywood films, to a fragmented diaspora in an age of multiple forms of spectatorial address through multiple media.

Tracing Indian Identity in Post-Independence Films: Significance of the Indian State

There is a huge contrast between the high-gloss Bollywood melodramas that portray the lives of global and confident Indians living in the present and the 1950s and 1960s films depicting rural poverty and simple folk who had a strong faith in the future and in the nation state that would deliver that future to them. Asian melodramas have

⁶⁷ As discussed in the Introduction, some scholars see Yash Chopra's *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995) as the film that initiated the diaspora genre. Scholars also refer to Sooraj Barjatya's *Hum Apke Hain Kaun/Who Am I to You* (1994) as having established the genre, but in terms of trends, *Dilwale* really re-established the 'family romance' genre. The Introduction also shows how Yash Chopra's own film production today is a case in point for the globalization of the film industry in Bombay that is collaborating with Hollywood studios, shooting overseas and producing films with global expertise and in some cases with diaspora finance.

⁶⁸ The categories of All Time Blockbuster, Blockbuster, Super Hit, Hit and Semi Hit are popularly used by the Bollywood film industry. *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* is considered an All Time Blockbuster. So is *Hum Apke Hain Kaun* that has been mentioned above. These categories signify how well a film was received and sometimes indicate profits; present day production and exhibition, however, does not give a clear picture in terms of box office revenues as even films that fail at the box office could earn revenues through music sales or corporate sponsorships and come through having made a profit.

typically used female protagonists in central roles and this continues to be the case with contemporary Indian melodramas.⁶⁹ However, female Indian identity has changed the most dramatically, in terms of a greater degree of sexualization of female actors, who are now dressed in the kind of costumes previously worn by women referred to as 'vamps'.⁷⁰ Similarly, the homes and lifestyles of protagonists are quite cosmopolitan compared with the stamp of ethnicity on the clothes, language and appearances of actors in older films. Also, until the 1980s, 'westernization' of characters or lifestyles was generally a reference to a British colonial style, while the newer films are far more 'Americanized', if the use of designer blue jeans or casual wear and popular-cultural motifs including baseball caps and 'crop' tops can be called such. However, many of the values and symbols upon which post-independence Hindi cinema constructed Indian identity have endured as well. Hence, there is a persistent tension between modern images and mise-en-scène with old-fashioned images, as modern Indian identity charts its course in films that are still predominantly romantic and continue to reference an older India.

But going back to 1947, India's status was that of a poor Third World country suffering the fallouts of arrested development with a small and undeveloped bourgeoisie whose lack of growth was directly related to unfair colonial policies. Scholars are in general concurrence that democratization in India had to be carried out by the Indian state, since India underwent only a 'passive revolution'—to use Gramsci's concept of how democracy is established in places where there was no corresponding bourgeois

⁶⁹ Wimal Dissanayake, *Melodrama and Asian Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4.

⁷⁰ Ranjani Mazumdar, *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City* (Ranikhet (India): Permanent Black, 2007), 108.

revolution.⁷¹ Hence, in the absence of a significant bourgeoisie, the new Indian state assumed a much stronger influence in articulating modern Indian identity. The first Indian prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who embodied the Indian state, developed a modernizing agenda for India that was based on the elision of a troubled Indian past with its problematic caste system and other 'backward' notions, though he also subscribed to Gandhian ideas of *swadeshi* or self-reliance. In his view, the new Indian identity would be shaped by the enabling myths of democracy, federalism, secularism and socialism, as Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss have argued in *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy*.⁷² Nehru believed that progress was based on the rationalist ideas of democracy while he regarded traditionalist values, particularly in relation to casteism, as backward. As Corbridge and Harriss write, based on the strength of his political stature, Nehru was the greatest of the 'tall men' who formed the Indian government and dominated Indian politics into the 1960s.⁷³ The absolute priority that he gave to the unity of India, and, by extension, to that of the Indian National Congress government, was enabled by the fact that his leadership was virtually unchallenged, though this never meant that other visions for Indian modernity did not exist. Nehru's vision, in fact, dominated until his death in 1964, upon which his daughter Indira Gandhi, the second of India's most influential rulers, became leader of the Congress party.⁷⁴ Thus the influence of the Indian National Congress remained strong for 30 years after the formation of the Indian state, and has had a deep and abiding

⁷¹ Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, *Re-inventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (UK: Polity, 2000), Preface xi,xii. The authors acknowledge the concept of a 'passive revolution' from Antonio Gramsci, who developed the argument that bourgeois hegemony leads to the establishment of democracy. In the absence of a large enough bourgeoisie, a 'passive revolution' could be undertaken by a state such as that in India.

⁷² Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, *Re-inventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (UK: Polity, 2000).

⁷³ Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, 43.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

Very briefly, from 1964-1966, Lal Bahadur Shastri was the Indian prime minister but died in office and did not make any significant impact on polity, perhaps due to the shortness of his tenure.

impact on all aspects of public life, including the media industries, popular film production and representations of the past.⁷⁵

Seen in retrospect, Nehru's vision for India and the values he enunciated were really myths, as they were not equally shared by Indians as is demonstrated by the recent challenge to his ideas of Indian socialism and secularism. But, in the popular 1950s Hindi films a modernizing agenda, based on Nehruvian ideas is distinctly visible. These early productions were bracketed as 'social justice' films that criticized the feudal past. Solutions in these films tended to point towards the need for education or eliminating forthwith the entrenched caste system that discriminated against the poorest and most disadvantaged Indians. Contemporary audiences in India and overseas still appreciate the 1950s films for these themes. Yet ironically, this early film-making that was wholly invested in the project of 'imagining' nation was neglected or never taken seriously by the Indian state.⁷⁶ The neglect, according to Ravi Vasudevan, was due to "ambivalence" amongst the ruling elite themselves about what political modernity meant for India. "There is a definite sense here of how the political elite considered commercial cinema to be an inadequate place to nurture a culture of citizenship, of the culturally authentic and the modern," he writes.⁷⁷ Behind their reluctance, perhaps, policy makers were also concerned about the issue of desiring authentic representations, and stressed the importance of realism being developed in other Third World countries including Brazil, Cuba and Nepal in the 1950s-60s.⁷⁸ In addition, as Madhava Prasada writes,

⁷⁵ Barbara Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf, *A Concise History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 225.

⁷⁶ In a largely illiterate country where the circulation of print culture was limited, films helped audiences imagine nation to use Benedict Anderson's term in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983).

⁷⁷ Ravi Vasudevan, "An Imperfect Public: Cinema and Citizenship in the Third World" in *Sarai Reader 01: The Public Domain* (Sarai Media Lab: Delhi, 2001), 57-69.

⁷⁸ Ashish Rajadhyaksha, "Realism, Modernism and Post-colonial Theory" in *The Oxford Book of Film* (India: Oxford University Press, 1998), 415-416.

films were never a priority for Nehru, who quite openly said so to film industry representatives even though they were equally imbued with his nationalistic ideals and had hoped to be included in any nationalism-related pedagogy.⁷⁹

In the early Hindi cinema, film-makers tried to make explicit the ideals of nationalism in which the modern Indian was one who inevitably put nation before self. In addition, ideas of democracy and secularism were embodied by female characters through a range of roles as lower caste and poor peasants, to urban citizens such as socially rejected courtesans or white-sari-clad mothers who believed in ideas of equality of opportunity. Women seemed invariably to bear the weight of both morality and a sense of Indian tradition that included a normative Hinduness, as they were seen as the embodiment of nation (as will be discussed farther in Chapter Two).⁸⁰ The weight of tradition also meant that women aspired for only a limited idea of modernity through the occasional more westernized sense of dress or speech. However, they would then have to prove their Indianness by an adherence to an inner domain of chaste moral values.⁸¹

In this context, female representation in Mehboob Khan's award-winning *Mother India* (1957), produced during the influence of USSR-style socialism is one of the best

⁷⁹ Madhava Prasada, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 33. Prasada has used Nehru's comments from an old issue of *Filmfare*, 28 November, 1952.

This non-priority status appears to continue, as my visit to the National Film Archives showed. The lack of funding has resulted in neglect of even the original archival films of the best known Indian film-makers, while the systems of preserving information on films is far from satisfactory due to a lack of funds and qualified archivists. Yet, all Bollywood scholars have used the National Film Archives in a very significant way to generate their own research.

⁸⁰ Rosie Thomas, "Melodrama and the Negotiation of Morality in Mainstream Hindi Film" in *Public Modernity in India* (edited) by Carol Breckenridge and Arjun Appadurai (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995), 157-182. There have been some stock characters in Hindi cinema, including the white sari-clad mother figure symbolic of purity and Nation, while villains posed as the Other or the non-nationals.

⁸¹ The inner domain represents distinct values of religion and language.

examples of the 1950s films.⁸² *Mother India*, which conflates motherhood and nationhood in its examination of rural poverty and the deprivation of the large Indian peasant class, does so through the story of a struggling peasant woman whose husband has disappeared. The film critiques oppressive feudal traditions, and its modernizing agenda is most apparent in the unsympathetic treatment of the avaricious local money-lender who embodies the cruelty of a feudal past. His grossly unfair interest payments mean the peasant woman is indebted to him for life, even though the sum of money she borrowed initially was small. Her struggle to sustain her family without losing her pride is symbolic of the quest for self-sufficiency in a Third World nation, a quest that requires integrity and sacrifice.⁸³ Similarly, in *Do Bigha Zamin/Two Units of Land* (1953), film-maker Bimal Roy explores the issue of money-lending, viewing it as a vice that has plunged many a peasant farmer into massive debt. While he sees urban migration as a way out of the feudal oppression that prevailed in agrarian India, he also looks critically at the problems of rural-urban migration.⁸⁴

A modernizing agenda is also apparent through critiques of urban modernity by film-makers such as the much-admired Guru Dutt, whose reflexive style and sophisticated cinematography greatly impressed audiences. His films *Pyaasa/The One Who Thirsts* (1957) and *Kaagaz ke Phool/Paper Flowers* (1959) both have middle-class themes, but present strong critiques of the developing capitalist ethos that reveals the

⁸² Subhash K. Jha, *The Essential Guide to Bollywood* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2005) Some of the best known films of the 1950s and 1960s include: *Awaara/Vagabond* (1951); *Do Bigha Zameen* (1953); *Devdas* (1956); *Mother India* (1957); *Pyaasa* (1957); *Sahib, Bibi aur Ghulam/The Master, his wife and the Enslaved* (1962); *Sangam/Union* (1964).

The 1950s films showed influences of Italian neo-Realism as well, in forms of naturalistic acting developed by the communist Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) established in 1943.

⁸³ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 131. Representations of the Indian woman are significant and closely tied to representations of nationhood that resonate with Partha Chatterjee's Indian woman in modern Indian literature where he also equates "woman" with "nation". This becomes the rationale for why she is imbued with the spiritual qualities of self-sacrifice, benevolence, devotion, and religiosity.

⁸⁴ Subhash K Jha, 12.

cruelty and dehumanization involved in the pursuit of material wealth.⁸⁵ In the highly acclaimed *Pyaasa*, Vijay, the poet and central character, is demoralized due to the hypocrisy and greed of his own social circle who care nothing about him, but wants the wealth generated by the successful publishing of his poems when he is thought dead. Ironically, the young poet's only hope lies in Gulabo, a prostitute who proves her own integrity by offering him friendship and support. A comparison between Guru Dutt's urban style and Mehboob Khan's contemporaneous rustic Indian themes shows that varied constructions of Indianness within populist Hindi cinema all displayed a Nehruvian idealism in their messages of caution and the need for progress, change or education. The films conveyed an inevitability about modernization while also being strongly critical of caste oppression and feudal inequities. These narratives strongly emphasized the need for a modern secular education as a means to overcome poverty and ignorance, and to reduce the inequality of a society divided by caste and class.

The enthusiasm inherent in being a newly decolonized society with a distinct identity and hope in the future was different from films that became more jingoistic by the 1960s when India faced wars with her China and Pakistan. For this reason, perhaps Mehboob.Khan's *Mother India* (1957) and Bimal Roy's *Do Bigha Zamin/Two Units of Land* (1953) are still watched as classic cinema not just by Indians but by Nigerians,

⁸⁵ Rachel Dwyer, *100 Bollywood Films* (BFI Publishing: London, 2005), 206 & 208. *Sahib Bibi aur Ghulam/The Gentleman, his Wife and the Enslaved* (1961), which is supposed to have been ghost-written by Guru Dutt harks back to a decadent feudal class and reveals the burden of the past in Indian society. The film is about the terrible consequences of being a woman who wants companionship in marriage, and when she does not get it from her husband, she befriends another male. As both drinking and fraternizing with men is "forbidden" for Indian women, when the main female character seems to have transgressed on both accounts - she is dead by the film's end.

Japanese, Turks and Afghans.⁸⁶ Anthropologist Brian Larkin argues that Hindi films such as *Mother India* (1957) are popular in other developing countries as they deal with the dialectical relationship between modern and traditional values.⁸⁷ For example, while Hindi films have a nationalistic appeal for many Indians, a larger appeal to non-Indian viewers, perhaps, is the rejection of so-called 'western' values in decolonizing societies where chastity or modesty are pursued as indigenous values as they were in India. Also, for many non-Indian audiences, Bombay cinema presents the 'lesser of the two evils' when compared with Hollywood films that have always been referenced by national cinemas in developing countries but also opposed for their foreignness. Hollywood films portrayed men and women in ways deemed immodest by Indians in the process of redefining social norms and chose modesty and chastity as being particularly 'Indian' values. Hence, Hindi cinema constructed national identity through a reading of national values embodied by the Nehruvian state, though as will be seen, there was a huge difference between popular portrayals and how the Indian state itself constructed representations.

State Policies for Culture and Cinema

In this context, Madhava Prasada's study called *The Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction*, amply demonstrates how the Indian state and Hindi cinema showed an increasingly divergent tendency in the construction of Indian identity. He

⁸⁶ Brian Larkin, *South Asian Magazine for Action and Reflection*, vol. 8, (1997)
<http://www.samarmagazine.org/archive/article.php?id=21> (accessed on December 1, 2006)

Hindi films, which have been watched for 40 years in Nigeria, resonate with audiences that relate to the realities of decolonizing societies. Nigerians seem to prefer them to Hollywood-style action or drama narratives, as they understand the nuances of actors dressing in western or Indian clothes, and of female characters who appear either modern or traditional. Similarly Larkin notes that post-colonial Indian and African viewers understand the 'politics' of the use of English (as a colonial/elitist language) by arrogant upper-class characters or by imperious bureaucrats. Also, the endemic corruption of police and state officials in the films present familiar situations for these audiences who have experienced the failures of state planning too.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

writes that there was a rupture after the 1960s when the state began sponsoring realist cinema through the New Cinema movement.⁸⁸ I agree with his analysis that national identity in the *masala* film evolved in a space far away from the Indian state's imagination of it. He writes that it has now fallen on the middle class to imagine national identity.⁸⁹ But, as will be seen, I suggest that this is less a burden of representation than the solipsistic tendency of a now prominent bourgeoisie. However, Prasada's claim that Indian films are ideological in their effort to produce a uniform effect of defining the Indian subject is worth considering, especially as I claim that this works, at least partly, in the diaspora, too.⁹⁰

In addition, Prasada points out that the pre-capitalist and capitalist tendencies in the Indian economy were mirrored within Indian film production itself, which unlike the singular, tightly controlled production units in Hollywood were produced through loosely structured, amorphous units and were often one-film productions. Especially in terms of the film music/songs and dialogue, these elements were produced quite separately and, in the case of music, autonomously of the narrative.⁹¹ Hence, apart from the affects of romance, comedy or pathos that determined the flow of narratives, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, material conditions and a fragmented production system equally affected narratives' tendency to be loosely structured and less script-driven.⁹² In the absence of formal institutional finance, as films were never given official industry status by the Indian state, film-makers tapped into circles of friends and associates. Hence,

⁸⁸ India's state-sponsored New Cinema was very much a part of Third Cinema movement that marked a radically opposed what they called the bourgeois capitalistic First Cinema typically produced by Hollywood.

⁸⁹ Madhava Prasada, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 163.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 47-49.

⁹² *Ibid.* Prasada's argument puts the onus for these loose productions on the film-makers who in turn have argued that they produced what was demanded by the audiences. Script-writing has never been a formal process for film-makers until the 1990s.

their supporters' and their own attitudes to familial honour, respect and a normative Hinduism crept into the narratives they produced.⁹³

The films so produced were certainly not well regarded by India's highly centralized government established in 1947, which superciliously felt that mainstream cinema did not provide Indians with the right culture. In fact, elitist notions of art formed the backdrop to film policy deliberations in the 1950s and 1960s, a period when differences between high and low art remained entrenched both globally and within India.⁹⁴ Policies aside, Indian film-makers complained about the crushing entertainment taxes they faced in post-independence India comparing them to the relatively easier taxes in colonial times.⁹⁵ By the 1960s, much of popular Indian cinema had already been dismissed for being 'juvenile' by state authorities,⁹⁶ but its reach and popularity demanded government intervention, which ultimately appeared in the form of taxes and censorship, as Tejaswini Ganti's account of Indian film history shows. She writes that cinema was controlled by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (rather than the Ministry of Cultural Affairs) rather than supported through finance or subsidies, which

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Kobita Sarkar, 'We the Audience' in *Filmfare* (India), March 26, 1960 (accessed from the National Film Archives of India, Pune). The author writes that criticism of popular cinema is unfair and that local products are judged harshly, with a tendency to accept them only if they have won international awards or if they were considered 'high brow'. Though there was a demand for better quality cinema, there was no platform from which to do so.

⁹⁵ B.R. Chopra, 'Let's Put Our House in Order First,' *Screen*, published in India, May 22, 1998. (accessed from the National Film Archives of India, Pune). As one of the earliest film-makers (also brother of Yash Chopra), B.R. Chopra castigates the Indian government for having always imposed excessive entertainment taxes on Indian cinema (up to 167% in some states). He writes that pre-Independence cinema was able to flourish because it was not taxed and also had the benefit of film studios that disappeared after 1947. Hindi cinema has been treated as an industry in terms of taxation, but not recognized as being in need of institutional financial support.

⁹⁶ I.K. Gujral (Union Min. of State for Information & Broadcasting), 'Is Indian Cinema Really Adult' in *Filmfare*, (India) May 22, 1970. (accessed from the National Film Archives of India, Pune). The minister writes that popular cinema has achieved a huge audience but that the maturity of the cinema-goer was only that of an 11 year old. He writes that unlike theatre, literature and painting that have evolved a national style, Hindi cinema has regressed from making films with a national aspiration to making extravagant spectacles. A National Film Council was urgently required to evolve film policy, wrote Gujral.

reveals a major disconnection between the (unofficial) film industry and the Indian state.⁹⁷

Still, the establishment of a Film Enquiry Committee in 1951 was meant to improve the quality of cinema and address issues confronting film producers. It recommended reform, reducing taxes on entertainment, providing incentives for capital investment, systematizing film production and the setting up of film institutes that would improve training and production.⁹⁸ But, apart from film training and film finance institutes that were established after 1960, none of the other recommendations for the film industry was ever carried out. State-approved films were produced through the 1960s New Cinema movement, but these productions were highly experimental, low-budget cinema, and commercial distributors refused to screen these films for the rural and urban poorer classes who regularly frequented theatres screening popular Hindi films.⁹⁹ The few mainstream film producers who were willing to enter into state-cinema alliances found the conditions required for film finance too problematic to comply with.¹⁰⁰

In any case, when Indians talk of the 'Golden Age' films, they refer not to the New Cinema titles produced by Kumar Shahani or Mrinal Sen that were watched only by international art-house audiences, but to the already mentioned 1950-60s works of Mehboob Khan, Guru Dutt, Raj Kapoor and Bimal Roy, who blended naturalistic acting

⁹⁷ Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: a guidebook to popular Hindi cinema*, (New York/London: Routledge Series, 2004), 43.

⁹⁸ Tejaswini Ganti, 47-48. The 1951 committee was followed by the Sangeet Natak Akademi Film Seminar in 1955, the Khosla Committee on Film Censorship in 1968, Symposia on Cinema in Developing Countries in 1979, the Working Group on National Film Policy in 1980 and National Conference on Challenges before Indian Cinema in 1998. All of this shows an engagement with the problems of cinema, though real solutions were never offered.

⁹⁹ Madhava Prasada, 126. The New Cinema sponsored by the Indian State through the establishment of the Film Finance Corporation favoured experimental works by film-makers such as Kumar Shahani. However, these New Cinema films were never picked up by commercial distributors, who felt they would not be well received by the Indian public. Interestingly, even Satyajit Ray, the master of Indian cinema, never supported the New Cinema, as he believed those film-makers sacrificed ideas of narrative in the new process. Details in Madhava Prasada's, *Ideology of the Hindi Film*, 126.

¹⁰⁰ Madhava Prasada, 34.

with melodrama. Their films, which focused on transitions between villages and cities and issues facing a modernizing India, helped Bombay to become the undisputed film capital of the country.¹⁰¹ Clearly, Indian audiences recognized something of themselves and their own “voices” in popular Hindi cinema, while the representations of an inner domain of traditions, such as the folk songs and dances that were adapted for popular cinema, also met with wide approval.¹⁰²

Many from the intelligentsia would have balked at this ‘kitschy’ entertainment that used melodrama (and not realism) as its favourite narrative device and made no secret about its preference for rhetoric or didacticism.¹⁰³ But audiences could not be stopped from flocking to watch commercially released melodramas. Hence, the government placed curbs on Hindi cinema by imposing censorship and heavy tariffs on tickets.¹⁰⁴ The statist approach showed the government’s “simplistic” understanding of the media and its influences, by which the overriding belief behind the establishment of film censorship itself was that the state could influence attitudes or prejudice films to be good or bad.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Prior to the Indian partition, films were produced in Lahore, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. After partition, however, artists and film-makers were displaced and Bombay benefited from the arrival of several ‘displaced’ artists who had previously based themselves in Pakistan.

¹⁰² Graeme Turner in “The End of the National Project” in *Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema* edited by Wimal Dissanayake (Indiana Univ. Press, 1994), 214. Graeme Turner, in his study of Australian films, argues that a nation’s narratives – be they in film or prose – ‘do participate fundamentally in that culture’s explanation of the world, in the production of what [Frederic] Jameson called “the political unconscious.”’ In Australian film, the location, fiction and accent were ‘audible and distinctive’ in relation to other English speakers and would always serve as an empowering form as audiences recognized something of themselves through the voices in the cinema. His idea that audiences recognize their voice through a distinctive sound and style has been used above.

¹⁰³ By contrast with the controversy on filmic representations, other art institutions got established more easily. The Sangeet Natak Academy (for music and dance), the Lalit Kala Academy (for art) and the National Gallery for Modern Art were set up but were less contentious and, arguably, less dynamic than the film industry. These institutions established programs that engaged with classical Indian arts though modern Indian art itself reflects hybrid influences.

¹⁰⁴ Ravi Vasudevan, *Sarai Reader 01*, 57-69.

¹⁰⁵ Tejaswini Ganti, 47-48.

Changing Representations of Indianness in 1970s films: The End of Optimism

Though the ever-present theme of romance continued into the 1960s films, some films engaged more intensely, indeed jingoistically, with patriotism as India faced wars with her neighbours at the time – China in 1962 and Pakistan in 1965.¹⁰⁶ Manoj Kumar's *Upkaar/Benefaction* (1967) and *Roti Kapda aur Makaan/Food, Clothes and Shelter* (1974) celebrate the soldier and the peasant as the two major assets of the country and specifically ask Indians to make sacrifices in times of need.¹⁰⁷ Mimicking official rhetoric, Kumar also expressed an anxiety regarding vulnerable borders. Though Nehru's mythologies endured, the films of this period also began expressing an anxiety related to the economic stagnation experienced in the mid-60s that was evidently caused by the social inefficiency of Indian capitalism.¹⁰⁸ In fact, the worse the condition of the country became, the more utopian the solution in films that glorified bloodshed and vigilantism, apart from highly improbable coincidences and happy solutions.

In hindsight, it would seem that Nehru's planning was bound to fail as his government could no longer mobilize the resources required for development, in part due to the rivalry between affluent rural and urban classes. By the 1970s, it was evident that the public economy had become a network of subsidies and patronage, while the landed classes who had remained powerful throughout kept up the fight to maintain their rights and bargain for more.¹⁰⁹ In this uncertain climate, the theme of 'nation' underwent a major change in Hindi films of the 1970s, reflecting what is now commonly referred to as a period of 'crisis of the state.' The cost of another war with Pakistan in 1971, namely

¹⁰⁶ Jyotika Viridi, *The Cinematic Imagination: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey, London, 2003), 37.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, "The Invention of Modern India" in *Re-inventing India*, 78-85.

¹⁰⁹ Jyotika Viridi, 45.

soaring food prices and a growing black market, was accompanied by political unrest. Riots were common, as was state repression to control crowds and insurgents who frequently took to the streets in protest.¹¹⁰ In 1975, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed the infamous 21-month Emergency Rule, which was the first time since 1947 that India was stripped of any semblance of democracy. Newspapers were widely censored, people with anti-government views were arbitrarily imprisoned, and poorer families were forcibly sterilized as part of a set of draconian measures to contain the rising population and fix India's economic and other problems. Indira Gandhi lost the elections held after the Emergency, which marked a major defeat for the National Congress Party that had dominated India for decades.¹¹¹ A coalition of right-wing Hindu nationalists, farmers' groups and others came to occupy power at the centre for a few years until Indira Gandhi won the next elections.¹¹²

The political turbulence affected film-making in several ways, ranging from difficulties faced by producers trying to procure imported raw stock to rumours that the government was going to nationalize film distribution as had been done with banks and other vital industries.¹¹³ For film audiences, the development of Amitabh Bachchan's 'angry young man' roles resonated with their own disillusionment as he rose to become the country's first superstar.¹¹⁴ The affect of rage in a belligerent and corrupted young

¹¹⁰ Tejaswini Ganti, 30-32.

¹¹¹ Films of this moment include Manmohan Desai's *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977) in which a Hindu, Muslim and Christian donate their own blood to save an unknown dying woman who is left bleeding on the street. Though the quite ludicrous narrative attempts to weave a story about national integration, it is also often read as a deliberately light-hearted attempt in what is obviously a moment of crisis in the country.

¹¹² Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, 48.

¹¹³ Tejaswini Ganti, 30-32.

¹¹⁴ Amitabh Bachchan played the 'angry young man' in films such as *Zanjeer/Shackles* (1973); *Sholay/Flames* (1975); *Deewar/Wall* (1973) and *Trishul/Trident* (1978), all of which showed immense amounts of anger, blood and dissatisfaction. *Sholay* in particular, which is also known as a 'curry western,' is a very cynical film full of violence and gangsterism, though its conclusive triumph over evil projects former petty thieves as the ultimate upholders of virtue in a system gone awry. People responded to the cowboy western-style action and dramatically strong dialogues in this film that have inspired viewers over generations to memorize favourite lines.

man in Yash Chopra's *Deewar/Wall* (1973) is his embodied response to unkept promises by the state, while significantly his mother embodies nation and goodness, to the point that she approves of his slaying as a utopian solution to the bleak story.¹¹⁵ Expanding cities had become the driving force for these sorts of narratives, while the expanding working class provided the main audiences for what had become the commercialized three-hour 'masala' film with songs, dances, fights and romance.¹¹⁶ Though these films still reflected the promises of a city in terms of employment and wealth, they also increasingly showed urban spaces as the sites of crime, danger and exploitation, giving the impression that the nation itself was under attack.¹¹⁷ In hindsight, the appearance of Amitabh Bachchan as the cynical and disaffected hero is definitely reflective of the political uncertainty of the period.¹¹⁸ As Ranjani Mazumdar writes, the anger that the superstar demonstrates disappears by the 1980s and though it reappears in some 1990s films, it is not the same anger as the social and political context itself has changed.¹¹⁹

Middle Cinema: Anticipating a Rising Indian Bourgeoisie

Momentous change in the 1980s occurred as a result of a mounting tide of regionalism in politics, the rise of lower castes, and a crisis faced by the political elite in the face of a governmental fiscal crisis.¹²⁰ In what was also a period of intense political turmoil, people openly talked about corruption at the highest levels of government and

¹¹⁵ Yash Chopra's *Deewar* in 1973 was a strong reaction to state inadequacies and showed the rise of vigilantism in popular films. This film shows a mother torn between her two sons, one of whom is law-abiding while the other is on the wrong side of the law.

¹¹⁶ The 1970s-80s films were definitely more formulaic and less appealing than the earlier Bombay films, but while some scholars attribute this to a new working-class audience, others feel these films were more real than the escapist fare of the 60s.

¹¹⁷ Tejaswini Ganti, 29.

¹¹⁸ Ranjani Mazumdar, *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City*, 1-3.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, *Re-inventing India*, 78-85.

business.¹²¹ For Hindi cinema, however, the most prominent social change occurred through the remarkable expansion of the TV-buying middle class, with signs that it was growing not just in cities but also in rural areas.¹²² The growth of the middle class, estimated at around 176 million people at the time, coincided with the establishment of Middle Cinema in the 1980s, which used an aesthetic of realism while appropriating conventions from mainstream cinema thereby creating more realistic stories that appealed to a much bigger audience.¹²³

For instance, Shyam Benegal's *Kalyug/End of the World* (1981) belonged to the category of Middle Cinema, which had dissolved major differences between high and low cinema but also used a sharply allegorical approach.¹²⁴ The story is illustrative of the breakdowns of society, nation and its microcosmic unit of the family, and is a modern adaptation of the 2,500-year-old Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata*. The grim tale of the original warring families is transposed into a present-day middle-class business domain in which plotting and bloodshed cause violent upheaval and deaths all around. The film's critique of bourgeois values and the pursuit of profit reflected changes that were gradually shaping Indian society. Interestingly, these film productions were no longer low-budget New Cinema films but were widely distributed in Indian theatres. Additionally,

¹²¹ Ibid. An overly authoritarian Indira Gandhi clamped down on dissidence and differences even within the Congress Party of which she was leader after returning to power in 1980. The country was also plagued by secessionist movements in Punjab, Assam and Kashmir that she sought control by force. Though she suffered electoral defeat shortly after her infamous Emergency rule in 1975-77, Indira Gandhi returned determined to complete the modernization initiated by her father, though in allowing personality to supersede all else she altered the democratic process in the country.

¹²² Ibid., 123. Compared with 2 million TV sets owned before the 1980s, the number rose to 30 million while the number of cars, refrigerators and other consumerist products also showed a massive increase. India started producing colour TVs in 1982, which made a huge difference to the broadcasting of commercials and programs.

¹²³ It is believed that Middle Cinema benefitted from the formal film training that was available for film-makers by the 1960s and 70s through state sponsored film institutes. Further, the aesthetics and politics of Middle Cinema have filtered down to contemporary Bollywood films and could be said to have contributed to the overall improvement in production.

¹²⁴ Subhash Jha, *The Essential Guide to Bollywood*, 66. Other films in the Middle Cinema category such as *Arth/Meaning*, (1983), *Mandi/Market* (1983), *Paroma/Birds* (1984) and *Saaransh/Gist* (1984) were remarkable attempts to merge serious cinema with more popular conventions.

feminist values first appeared in films such as Mahesh Bhatt's *Arth/Meaning* (1983) in which an urban married woman realizes her own self-worth (as Woman rather than as Mother) in a patriarchal society, and is able to decisively reject her philandering husband who returns home repentant.¹²⁵

Compared with the politicized Middle Cinema narratives, in mainstream Hindi films in the 1980s the imagery of 'good' and 'evil' was still borne out of the intersection of female chastity, nationalism and morality, as Bollywood scholar Rosie Thomas' study shows.¹²⁶ Villains were typecast as brash, leather jacket and chain-wearing characters who contrast sharply with the virtuous white-sari clad mothers – these character types formed opposite ends of the morality spectrum in films until the end of the 1980s. Yash Chopra, whose contemporary films are the specific focus of this study, deviated from the 1980s action-oriented films in having produced romantic films such as *Silsila/The Issue* (1981). However, his preference for romantic films in this period did not meet with success as audiences still wanted action and adventure films being produced until romances were reinvented in the 1990s.¹²⁷

The films were increasingly catering to urban audiences living in dysfunctional cities in the 1980s when overcrowded residential areas that were woefully deficient in civic facilities became the norm. Major unrest was caused by poverty, disease and overcrowding while homelessness increased dangerously. Burgeoning urban populations required welfare measures that started flowing in from international aid

¹²⁵ Subhash K. Jha, 150.

¹²⁶ Rosie Thomas, "Melodrama and the Negotiation of Morality in Mainstream Hindi film", 157-182.

¹²⁷ Rachel Dwyer, *Yash Chopra*, 134.

Yash Chopra's *Silsila/The Issue* (1981) had very limited success and suggests that audiences were not in tune with his romances at the time. He made a few attempts at suspense and action films that also did not do well in the years Dwyer has referred to as "Lean Years" in her biography called *Yash Chopra*.

agencies due to the Indian state's cash-constraints.¹²⁸ Partha Chatterjee notes that the growing proletariat represented Indians who were becoming electorally significant and had to be kept "pacified," as they not only provided labour and services to the city but could also endanger the lives of other, wealthier citizens, due to their huge numbers.¹²⁹ Hence, it gradually became evident that the working classes and middle classes, as well as the regional rural classes, were all articulating major dissatisfaction with the Indian government. Ultimately, the disenchantment of his electorate prompted then-Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to introduce economic liberalization as a remedy for the cash-strapped government.¹³⁰

Gandhi's economic policies coincided with the expansion of the consumerist class, whose purchasing power for TVs and electronic gadgets was just becoming noticeable. However, for the ever-unstable and fragmented Hindi cinema, the rising pay checks for stars and innovation of VCRs plunged several film-makers into debt: in 1983, only 17 out of 132 Hindi films recovered their costs while losses in 1985 amounted to a high 1,200 million rupees (\$30 million).¹³¹ (This figure, though, could be misleading as only a handful of films have ever recovered their costs; this continues to be the case except that high-quality new films cost much more and also rake in much higher profits.) In addition, rampant video piracy and illegal screenings paralyzed film production, which only began recovering when India's markets were opened to global multinational corporations in the 1990s. The fall in cinema audiences in the 1980s encouraged two prominent film-makers to televise serialized versions of the *Ramayana* and the

¹²⁸ Partha Chatterjee, "Are Indian Cities becoming Bourgeois?" in *The Politics of the Governed* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 134.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹³⁰ Rajiv Gandhi took over as prime minister upon the assassination of his mother Indira Gandhi, who was slain by Sikh separatists in 1984 as part of the movement to establish an independent homeland for the Sikhs.

¹³¹ Rachel Dwyer, "The Lean Years" in *Yash Chopra*, 132.

Mahabharata that garnered a tremendous response all over India revealing how much power the Hindu mythologies held in India.¹³²

The above discussion shows that though Nehru's mythologies were powerful, evidently there were always multiple visions of Indianness within the state that were not given a chance for expression just after the Indian independence. In fact, the contest in representations of Indianness by big-business groups, landed elite or religious right-wing groups has become visible only after the influence of the Congress died down in the 1980s.¹³³ While mainstream cinema has never actively challenged the status quo,¹³⁴ Indian identity has been reimagined by the increasing popularity of right-wing political parties in the last two decades. Not only did Hindu nationalists gain from parliamentary elections, but they have also gained sympathy from the Indian news media.¹³⁵ These developments are related to the growth of an increasingly aggressive anti-Muslim nationalism in the 1980s, when Hindu nationalist leaders openly talked about mobilizing Hindus against the threats posed by religious minorities in India.¹³⁶ Apart from Hindu nationalists, the entry of other new groups into representational politics complicates questions of Indianness, as India's leadership has shown radical changes with the rise to power of rural and regional powers and less westernized or anglicized elements that represent vernacular India. What becomes obvious is the fact that the Indian state comprised elitist rulers who did not fully represent India in any sense, and also that post-colonial rulers inherited complex colonial legacies from which they could extricate neither

¹³² Ashish Rajadhyaksha, "Filming the Nation", *The Oxford History of World Cinema* ed by Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Oxford: OUP, 1996), 678.

¹³³ Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, 15-19.

¹³⁴ Though 1970s mainstream films manifested an anger and cynicism, the resolution and narrative do not generally provide an alternate lifestyle or politics.

¹³⁵ Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, 88-89. The scholars write of the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the 1980s on a platform that initially espoused Gandhian socialism along with ideas of Hindutva or Hindu nationalism.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

themselves nor the newly formed nation state.¹³⁷ In this context, Sunil Khilnani's *Idea of India*, which describes the contemporary struggle over representation through the insertion of previously excluded contenders, provides a highly useful piece of historiography.

He writes:

The nationalist confidence of 1947 that the definition of 'Indianness' and of those who possessed it would be permanently settled with the inauguration of the Indian state, was overly optimistic. The acquisition of a state, and regular, steadily intensified competition to enter and control it, has incited India's social entities to new potentialities for political organization and action. The emergence of a political Hinduism, of regional voices, and of the claims of caste identities – some of these last created by constitutional law, others worn as a defiant badge of historical oppression – has given the question of 'who is an Indian' a sometimes lethal vitality.¹³⁸

Sunil Khilnani's suggestion that the established or constructed Indianness is being challenged by ascendant powers is echoed in other scholarly work too. Gurpreet Mahajan recognizes that the 'top down' state structure imposed on a complexly layered citizenry with its heterogeneous cultures was always problematic.¹³⁹ She argues that the identity of the modern Indian was and is still drawn from cultural communities including caste, religion, class and tribe and that these older identities predate our identities as political citizens of a modern India.¹⁴⁰ To this extent, Bombay cinema has not captured the diversity or pluralism of Indian society either, and increasingly represents a

¹³⁷ Ironically, the English language has been one of the most durable of colonial legacies, and as writer Pavan Verma reminds readers, even Jawaharlal Lal Nehru's famous 'Tryst with destiny' speech delivered on the eve of the Indian Independence, was delivered in English to a country of mostly non-English speakers. English-speaking Indians accounted for only one per cent of Indians but held a disproportionate amount of power. Pavan K. Verma, *The Great Indian Middle-class* (New Delhi: Penguin, 199), 1.

¹³⁸ Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, 12.

¹³⁹ Gurpreet Mahajan, "Cultural Embodiment and Histories," in *Crisis and Change in Contemporary India* edited by Upendra Baxi and Bhikhu Parekh (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995), 359.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 359.

In addition, other scholars referred to by Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss in *Reinventing India* include both Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani whose reference to the cellular nature of Indian polity at village level shows that their lives were almost untouched by British colonialism.

hegemonic cinema with monolithic representations of Hindu/middle class Indians.¹⁴¹ Hence, though the first post-independence rulers appear elitist, in hindsight it is also useful to remember that they tried to protect religious minorities in a recently partitioned country.¹⁴²

1990s Films and How Globalization Brought the Diaspora Back

Economic liberalization in the 1990s accelerated social and economic changes that had begun to be felt on a smaller scale by the late 1980s. After decades of economic insularity, the floodgates were opened to previously barred imports while for multinational capital to be successful it had to adapt to local needs, writes William Mazzarella who observed a triumphalism amongst middle-class Indians.¹⁴³ The consumerist globalization has greatly affected Indian identity, as metropolitan centres (the same cannot be said of the hundreds of small towns) have attracted global brands housed in trendy chrome and glass shopping malls while office towers house international companies. Modern designed spaces are being superimposed on cities that until recently were overcrowded Third World centres with their ageing colonial architecture and dismal grey government offices, ancient Muslim structures and masses of people.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ As I discussed in the Introduction, there are multiple genres and styles within what comprises 'Bollywood' today and include categories of films that may not be representative of global Bollywood, but are aimed at a differentiated audiences in India.

¹⁴² Apart from the fact that Indian rulers were affected by Britain's historic separation of Church and State, the partition of India involved the exchange of an estimated 20 million persons across the borders of India and Pakistan (created for the Muslims). Hence, secularism as a policy worked as a measure of reassurance to Muslims who chose to remain in India as well as other religious minorities.

¹⁴³ William Mazzarella, *Shoveling Smoke: Advertising and Globalization in Contemporary India* (Duke University Press: Durham and London, 2003), 262-264. Mazzarella is an anthropologist who specifically studied how Indian advertising effected changes in the 1990s in order to market global brands to Indians.

¹⁴⁴ These are my own observations on a 2007 visit to Delhi where there have been huge transformations in architecture over the past five years with ever newer constructions in a sprawling and chaotic city of almost 15 million people.

And, just as the issue of Indian modernity had created intense debate, the opening up of India's markets to international brands and subsequent corporatization of media and the arts continues to cause anxiety about how globalization will affect the Indian identity. There were loud protests against globalization in the 1990s by ascendant Hindu nationalists and their political opposites, the Indian Left, writes Mazzarella.¹⁴⁵ Hindu nationalists, in particular, objected to what they felt would be an erosion of their vision of a 'Hindu India' with the onslaught of western-style fast-food chains and figure-hugging non-traditional fashions. Marketing specialists, however, were able to convince them that a global *swadeshi* or a local-global allowed Indians to be global on their own terms, so to speak.¹⁴⁶ Though it was a compromise with Gandhian *swadeshi* that stressed complete economic self-sufficiency for India, it certainly solved the problem of foreign exchange depletion, which all political parties knew had inspired the great economic liberalization to start with.¹⁴⁷ Once the Hindu right-wing government assumed central power for the first time in 1998, its own rhetoric became both pro-global and pro-Indian. Television began beaming advertisements of a range of foreign consumer goods that were transforming Indian public culture. Hindu nationalists claimed to have released the energies of Indians reined in by pseudo-secularism that denied their essentially Hindu natures; the new consumerism apparently liberated them from years of Nehruvian socialism.¹⁴⁸ With the coming of foreign satellite TV due to economic liberalization, Indian audiences have also become exposed to international TV shows, many of a much higher sophistication in terms of content and production than they have ever seen

¹⁴⁵ William Mazzarella, 9.

¹⁴⁶ 'Swadeshi' was a term used by M K Gandhi during the Indian Freedom Struggle and means something that is home-grown or 'our own'.

¹⁴⁷ Edward Luce, *In Spite of the Gods: The Strange Rise of Modern India* (Great Britain: Little, Brown, 2006), 36. In 1991, when economic liberalization was initiated properly after a couple of efforts in the 1980s, the foreign exchange reserves of India stood at less than \$1 billion. By 2006, the foreign exchange reserves had risen to a much healthier \$146 billion, writes Luce.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

before. The 1990s TV programs also showed much more film content that was watched not just by Indians but by the Indian diaspora globally.¹⁴⁹ Globalization has also aided the construction of high-tech multiplex theatres catering to cash-rich affluent middle-class audiences in the 15-35 age group.¹⁵⁰

The approximately 20-million strong global Indian diaspora has become highly visible of late due to the success of high-achieving professionals in North America, and what I feel is a critical size. In the sense of India's globalization having forged a connection to the diaspora, Yash Chopra's *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge/The Brave Heart Will Take the Bride* (1995) is the first Bollywood film to demonstrate this. This film's principal characters were based outside India in London for the first time, and reflected the change in thinking about NRIs or Non-Resident Indians.¹⁵¹ *Dilwale* has been followed by a spate of these diaspora-oriented films, which have affected a more universal discourse of Indianness in which the 'traditional' has been altered to suit the diaspora and middle-class audiences. It might also explain the elaborate Hindu rituals and designer ethnic clothes that appear as commodified culture and can be bought or reproduced anywhere in the world.¹⁵² Material changes generated *Dilwale's* nonchalant, irreverent, fantastically rich, Lamborghini-driving, beer-swigging Raj as the narrative's central male character. Though he is at odds with expectations of his Indianness, he confidently produces it when required of him by adhering to ideas of honour and respect for parental authority in terms of his own marriage. In this respect, Anupama Chopra's

¹⁴⁹ Ashish Rajadhyaksha, "Filming the Nation", 678.

¹⁵⁰ Amita Khanna, "The Business of Films" in Ashish Rajadhyaksha edited *Encyclopedia of Hindi Films* (London:BFI; New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994). Globally, trends show that 50% of the income at multiplexes is earned through concession stands and other services at the multiplex theatres.

¹⁵¹ Yash Chopra's film *Lamhe/Moments* (1991), which actually dealt with one central male diasporic character, was a precursor to the diaspora genre. Though he was rich and successful, he was only shown as being actually fulfilled when his relationship with an Indian woman young enough to be his daughter materialized. In fact, he had been in love with the young woman's mother. Again, if we see the Indian Woman as the embodiment of nation, the film is transgressive. Though the film flopped in the Indian markets, it reported better success overseas.

¹⁵² The discussion of these commodified affects will be farther developed in Chapter Two.

analysis that *Dilwale* fed the diaspora's nostalgia for rituals, which are explored in the changing atmosphere wrought by consumerism, is quite convincing. She argues that the "thorny" issues of 'who is a Hindustani' or 'what constitutes Indianness' in this new phase has made film-makers create newer techniques for combining the traditional and the modern, which are apparent in contemporary narratives.¹⁵³ Ten years later, the 2005 *Salaam Namaste* reflects further changes in how far boundaries would be pushed, as will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Interestingly, film-maker Yash Chopra (in a 2003 interview) said the success of a film today depends on how well it is liked by youngsters of this 15-35 age group anywhere in the world. He justified making romantic films without the socially relevant themes of yesteryear as offering an alternative to the sexually explicit films from outside India, as though the anxiety produced by globalization could be rectified by the romantic utopianism of the new Bollywood films.¹⁵⁴ Significantly, the new films do appear to cater to a younger audience in terms of the central actors' speech, colloquialisms, clothes and youthfulness.

The biggest change for Bollywood itself is that since May 1998, commercial film-making has been granted official industry status, with its obvious benefits of better representation for film-makers.¹⁵⁵ Finally, Hindi film-makers are entitled to financial loans through institutional channels, albeit with the caveat that the most lavish productions have the greatest chance of being granted monetary loans.¹⁵⁶ Interestingly

¹⁵³ Anupama Chopra, *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge: The Making of a Blockbuster* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2004), 73-74.

¹⁵⁴ Lalit Mohan Joshi, (Interview with Yash Chopra) 'The Sweet Smell of Success' in *Cinema in India*, Jan.-March 2003. Chopra said the sexualized dressing of female actors that would have been unthinkable years ago. "...You can't stop such things. Yash Chopra also said that his newer films reflected realities of the time....You see we take things from society and make films....," he said in the interview with Lalit Mohan Joshi.

¹⁵⁵ Tejaswini Ganti, 50.

¹⁵⁶ *Back to the Future: The Indian Entertainment Industry*, a Confederation of Indian Industry/KPMG Report 2005.

too, Bollywood films are now being actively marketed at festivals abroad by state officials themselves, which shows a shift in state-cinema relations and a cognizance of how the Bollywood brand is being used to market India abroad.¹⁵⁷ The major changes in production and exhibition have caused the 'Bollywoodization' of Hindi films, as Ashish Rajadhyaksha calls the effects of global capital on Indian film. Commercial Bombay films themselves started being referred to as 'Bollywood' films only as recently as in the 1990s when they began to circulate globally much more than they had in previous decades. 'Bollywoodization,' in Rajadhyaksha's term, has resulted in consistently up-market and glossier productions in which the lifestyles of characters match those of affluent people anywhere in the world.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, right now, global capital appears to exert a greater power than the nation-state or its previous mythologies does in terms of Indian identity in the new films; the new government funding suggests that national policy is in line with globalization while there is a noticeable improvement in the quality and production of Bollywood films that are now officially acknowledged.

The state, though, appears to have withered away in contemporary Bollywood, as representations of state machinery, law, police or bureaucracy have been largely excised from blockbuster narratives, as have themes of social justice generally.¹⁵⁹ (There are exceptions to this trend in less mainstream commercial film-making).¹⁶⁰ In addition, images of poorer Indians or lower-class characters have been largely removed;

¹⁵⁷ Monika Mehta, "Globalizing Bombay Cinema" in *Cultural Dynamics*, no. 17 (2), 2005, 135-154.

¹⁵⁸ Ashish Rajadhyaksha, "The Bollywoodization of the Indian cinema: Cultural Nationalism in a Global Arena" in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 4, no.1 (2003), 25-39.

¹⁵⁹ Top grossing films of the decade such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), *Kal Ho Na Ho* (2004), *Kabhie Khushi Kabhie Gam* (2001) and *Kabhie Al Vida Na Kehena* (2007) show this exclusion of the state; the exceptions are *Veer Zara* (2004) and *Fanaa* (2006), which show law courts and armed forces as arbiters but are arguably less about state intervention than the 'love story' that is complicated by borders.

¹⁶⁰ Films made by Ram Gopal Verma or Mani Ratnam actively use state representations in some form or other but are less popular than Yash Chopra Films.

most Yash Chopra narratives in the time period being studied, for instance, make it seem that India is represented best by well-heeled Indians.

In terms of the relation between a private and public space, Hindi cinema of the 1950s had managed to relate the inner and outer realms through stories that dealt with both the politics of a newly independent country and selfhood. However, as *masala* or the more formulaic films (1960s-70s) became the norm, the dialectic between the private and public was reduced by disconnecting the inner and outer realms so that protagonists became more disjointed in terms of representations. The Middle Cinema of the 1980s again attempts to connect the public and private through strongly politicized narratives that attempted to engage with ideological positions taken by citizens in a society where more people were deprived than not. But, though Yash Chopra's 1990s mainstream films have re-engaged the middle-class, their focus is solely on the inner realm; the emphasis on romance and the pathos associated with romantic relationships forms the primary plot structure more than any engagement with the outer domain through contextual factors. The stories of rich, trendy, but Indian-at-heart characters are endlessly interwoven with the idea of *dharma* with its basis in Hinduism, a prescribed social order and sense of duty. But, the new stories often present a dialectical narrative as the newly incorporated diaspora characters chart new territories of Indianness through sweeping changes in appearance, identity and language while trying to be 'Indian at heart' and negotiating the opposition between the inner and outer domains.

The emerging Indianness in Bollywood films simply reflects how material changes have been accommodated within India even though they are not overtly acknowledged in narratives. The global Bollywood narratives in question began with being staged in metropolitan cities from London to New York, Melbourne, Singapore and

even Vancouver.¹⁶¹ Diasporic characters began to represent the new highly successful transnational or global Indians living highly mobile lives. The entry of these markedly positive characters was a major departure from previous representations of émigrés. Previous films simply reflected the state's disapproval of immigrants, whom they called 'Non-Resident Indians' or NRIs who had caused the 'brain drain' even though they would always be pursued as potential investors. (Significantly, by calling the diaspora Non-Resident Indians, though they invariably take citizenship in the USA, Canada or the UK and have had to forgo Indian citizenship in doing so, shows how India continues to make claims on these ex-citizens).

From this discussion, it has been established that images of cosmopolitan India are directly connected to the diaspora, while profitable overseas markets for Bollywood films shows the positive diasporic/global response to them. Monika Mehta estimates that the overseas earnings of what have been termed 'family films' (certified as Universal by the Central Board of Film Certification) account for between 15 and 45 percent of the total collections, of which the United States and UK markets appear to be the most significant.¹⁶² Theatres screening Bollywood films in the 1990s have sprung up globally and first-release films are being screened in New Jersey, New York, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Houston and San Francisco.¹⁶³ Though Mehta argues that there is a new attempt by the state at control through censorship, it is more likely that politically altered

¹⁶¹ Sachin Gandhi. 'The Keys to the Kingdom' in *Cinema in India*, Jan.-March, 2004 (accessed from the National Film Archives, Pune). The Calgary-based writer has criticized the use of foreign locations as they do not bring cities alive, while the way actors behave shows little variation from one foreign city to the next.

¹⁶² Monika Mehta, "Globalizing Bombay Cinema" in *Cultural Dynamics*, no. 17 (2), 2005, 143.

¹⁶³ There are 150 screens showing Bollywood films across North America, including 20 in Canada. It is known that several of these offer simultaneous (India/overseas) releases for some big-budget films. This information was given to me by Yash Raj Films director Arjun Sablok, (in conversation in March 2008). It is based on what must be well known film trade statistics.

Indian state seeks to harness Bollywood's power in marketing India abroad for its own purposes, as she herself writes.¹⁶⁴

Diasporic Indianness and the Bollywood Connection

This section will focus on the new diaspora, which is distinguished from earlier generations of diaspora¹⁶⁵ by having emigrated to North America in the post-war period starting from 1965 and maintaining an unbroken connection with the homeland as it is significant for films such as *Dilwale*.¹⁶⁶ Indians form the largest group of South Asians who include Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans (from the Indian subcontinent), numbering about 30 million globally.¹⁶⁷ At the same time, the increased numbers and variety of South Asian groups entering Canada since the 1960s problematizes the categorization. In terms of the reception of Bollywood films, they are avidly consumed by all South Asians, including Urdu-speaking Pakistanis, for whom the language of Bollywood, derived as it is from both Hindi and Urdu, is familiar.¹⁶⁸ However, as the diaspora in North America accounts for 30 percent of Bollywood's overseas revenues and represents a rapidly growing market, Indians in North America generally, and Canada specifically, will remain the primary focus here.¹⁶⁹ Just as wealthy Indian

¹⁶⁴ Monika Mehta, 137.

¹⁶⁵ The old diaspora are the pre-1965 emigres to North America who faced a very different and far harsher reception due to the anti-immigrant environment of the time.

¹⁶⁶ The term 'diaspora' is used in the sense of it being a site for cultural consumption and production as explained in the Introduction. In terms of the new diaspora being more significant than the old diaspora, the numbers provided in the following pages will demonstrate this.

¹⁶⁷ Pakistan was formed due to the partition of India in 1947; Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan, was established only in 1971. Bollywood writers talk about 'South Asians' constituting the largest group of Hindi film viewers overseas in their attempt to discuss the 'myth' of the globalization of Bollywood films. It is basically being said that the so called global viewership mainly comprises diasporic South Asians and Indians and does not properly constitute a global/non-Hindi speaking audience.

¹⁶⁸ Pakistanis have always watched Hindi cinema because of their social and geographical kinship with Indians. Though importing Hindi films to Pakistan was illegal, watching them has been a common practice for Pakistanis as video shops sold illegal bootleg copies while satellite TV now makes it impossible to bar the films any longer. Emigrants themselves have much greater access to Bollywood films through theatres and DVD shops that stock Hindi films all over the world now.

¹⁶⁹ Introduction, page 5.

émigrés dominate but do not fully represent all Indians in the United States of America, in Canada too, there is a gradation among Indian émigrés from affluent businesspersons to professionals and small trader/working-class individuals.

Various estimates report persons of Indian origin living outside India at between 10 and 20 million.¹⁷⁰ The new diaspora, however, specifically describes professional classes who left for Britain, the United States, Canada and Australia after 1965 and have maintained an unbroken connection with India through the means provided by modern communication technologies.¹⁷¹ This includes a greater ability to travel back and forth as air travel has become more accessible as well as maintain regular relationships with Indian friends and relatives through telephone calls and the Internet. Diasporic Indians in Canada number over 700, 000, most of whom have arrived after 1965, live in Toronto or Vancouver and are generally Hindus or Sikhs.¹⁷² Statistics Canada's 2001 survey of 'East Indians,' as they are known, reports that on average the population is younger and more educated than the pre-1965 diaspora who generally did not belong to a professional class. They simultaneously feel a strong affiliation to Canada and a strong connection to India, which is arguably facilitated by their ability to maintain links more easily compared with earlier immigrants.¹⁷³ But, just as much as the diaspora-India link has grown, as historian Judith Brown writes, it is important to realize that links have grown within the global South Asian diaspora itself. In fact, the links of trade and cultural exchange produced with the interconnectedness of travel and the Internet might be as

¹⁷⁰ Historian Judith Brown, whose book called *Global South Asians: Introduction the Modern Diaspora on South Asians* will be referred to shortly, has a conservative estimate of 9 million Indians in the diaspora while a large number of Indian diaspora websites put the figure at approximately 20 million. The accuracy of any numbers is debatable as Indians are often included in a 'South Asian' category.

¹⁷¹ Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* (New York/London: Routledge, 2002), 238.

¹⁷² Statistics Canada, 'The East Indian Community in Canada' <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-621-XIE/89-621-XIE2007004.htm> (accessed on Sept. 24, 2007). Though most Indians are reported to be living in Toronto or Vancouver, they also live in Montreal, Halifax, Edmonton, Calgary and Ottawa. The StatsCan 2001 survey asked respondents questions concerning age, education, religion and experiences in Canada.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

significant as their connection to the motherland.¹⁷⁴ Hence, while concentrating on the Indian diaspora in Canada, it is useful to bear in mind the larger sense of interconnectedness of a global Indian diaspora.¹⁷⁵ Compared with Indians in the USA, for instance, Indian emigrants in Canada have not done as well as they report incomes that are slightly below the national average.¹⁷⁶

Though extensive migration histories exist about Sikhs who were the first sizeable group of emigrating Indians more than 100 years ago, the composition of the new diaspora in Canada is much more heterogeneous, which makes these studies seriously limited in terms of setting up a discussion of contemporary Indianness.¹⁷⁷ Sikh histories do, however, establish the framework for a somewhat erratic 100-year history of emigration from India and narratives on how early immigrants negotiated ethnicity and race. Because there are so few, studies that attempt to cover a greater cross-section of Indian communities such as *Fractured Identity: The Indian Diaspora in Canada*¹⁷⁸ and *Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asians in Canada*¹⁷⁹ are more useful as their accounts of a heterogeneous Indian community in Canada cover more groups and perspectives.

¹⁷⁴ Judith Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 169-170.

¹⁷⁵ In terms of income and employment, the already cited Statistics Canada figures for East Indians reports that Indians in Canada have incomes that are on average slightly lower than the national average. It also shows that one in every five Indo Canadians is a low-income earner. In addition, more Indians in Canada are employed in manufacturing compared to the United States where they are largely employed in the services sector and presently reported as the most affluent community in the country.

¹⁷⁶ Statistics Canada, 'The East Indian Community in Canada', 2001.

¹⁷⁷ Historian Archana Verma's, *The Making of Little Punjab in Canada: Patterns of Immigration* (New Delhi/Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002) falls in this category.

¹⁷⁸ Sushma J Varma and Radhika Seshan (Ed.) *Fractured Identity: The Indian Diaspora in Canada* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2003). This compilation of papers was the result of a two-day conference at the University of Pune (India) in 2002.

¹⁷⁹ Norman Buchignani, Doreen M. Indra and Ram Srivastava's *Continuous Journey: A Social History of South Asians in Canada* (Toronto: Mclelland & Stewart in association with Canadian Multiculturalism Directorate, 1985).

The arrival of the new diaspora to North America began when masses of Indian professionals and students left India beginning in 1965 following amendments to the immigration rules first in USA and then in Canada causing the infamous 'brain drain'.¹⁸⁰ But, rather than deserting India, it was really a case of educated Indians taking advantage of the easing of immigration rules in the destination countries as a means to enhance their privileged status further. This was the period of international immigrations worldwide fuelled by high populations in the Third World and the requirement of skilled professionals in the First World. The expansion of the North American economy and the needs of post-industrial societies in the USA, to a great extent, and in Canada to a lesser degree, motivated the travel of Indians beyond the UK. In the 1950s, the UK had allowed immigrant workers into the country for its manufacturing industries, but by the mid-1960s it had almost completely halted its open immigration policies.¹⁸¹ Increasing numbers of Indians now emigrated to New York, California, British Columbia and Ontario. Unlike the older diaspora in Canada that had tended to be primarily from rural Punjab, the new diaspora were from a number of prosperous urban cities in the western Indian states of Gujarat and Maharashtra and the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.¹⁸² The variation accentuated internal differences (compared with the old diaspora) among the Indian diaspora in North America, making it difficult to speak of post-colonial Indians as 'Indian' in any essential sense, as they increasingly show tremendous fissuring along caste, class, religion and linguistic lines.¹⁸³

And yet, as will be seen from discussions of their lifestyles, diaspora members across categories and lines collectively adhere to the concept of an inner and outer

¹⁸⁰ The use of the term 'brain drain' has endured until recently when globalization and transnational lifestyles seem to have taken the derogatory edge off the term.

¹⁸¹ Judith Brown, 52.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Though most Indian émigrés speak one or the other of Canada's official languages, they also subscribe to other Indian language groups they belong to i.e. Bengali, Telugu, Malayalam, Punjabi, Gujarati etc.

domain in their daily lives, just as Chatterjee conceptualized these two domains for colonial Indians dealing with the differences between western and eastern cultures. With respect to the new global (mostly South Asian) audiences, it is possible to argue that Bollywood stories appeal to post-colonial émigrés as they relate to a perception of two distinct spheres in their lives. They participate through work, productivity, etc. in the outer or public realm but retreat into an inner realm where they often prefer products of their own language cultures. Some basic differences between eastern and western societies in terms of religion and language and how this affects artistic forms will be explored in the next chapter. (For the diaspora, I will describe how an inner domain is appealed to through the specific use of cinematic affects of romance or pathos and the material affects of designer ethnicity). Of course, diasporic individuals relate to the affects of language, poetics and specific notions of Indian romance, moral values and ethnicity to different degrees depending on their personal and social orientation, but the fact that there is a growing overseas audience for Bollywood melodramas is evidence of the appeal of popular Indian culture.¹⁸⁴ But, just how distinct the inner and outer realms are is not easy to analyze in a postmodern world of multiple identities and the growth of a collective panoptic vision that sees more and hides less.¹⁸⁵

Empirical facts about the diaspora are easier to ascertain: here are some figures that act as evidence of changing immigration patterns. In the period 1946-64, only 6,319 Indians immigrated to the United States, compared with an exponential increase thereafter, rising from 582 in 1965 to 2,458 in 1966 and 12,795 in 1974 with a sustained increase in the years that followed.¹⁸⁶ In Canada too, numbers rose from 6,774 in 1961

¹⁸⁴ As will be demonstrated in Chapter Two, UK viewers responded to *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* saying it was "straight from the heart" etc.

¹⁸⁵ Visual technologies that have enabled ever more sophisticated cameras and inspired Reality TV shows are examples of how the new and often intrusive panoptic vision has been incorporated into lifestyles.

¹⁸⁶ Sandhya Shukla, *India Abroad: Diasporic Cultures of post-war America and England* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003) 57.

to 68,000 in 1971, and then to 118,000 in 1976. In 1991, there were over 500,000 Indians in Canada.¹⁸⁷ The establishment of the Canadian Point System in 1967 allowed skilled, educated immigrants (regardless of race) entry based on education, work experience and language proficiency.¹⁸⁸ As in the United States, the newer émigrés tended to be urban professionals who had benefitted from the establishment of quality education in post-colonial India and arrived in Canada with their families due to the more liberal immigration rules that allowed this. Compared to them, the first rural immigrants left India without their families as they were not allowed to bring them; they were also relatively less educated and less privileged. In fact, the pre-1965 Indo Canadians were too few in number to be able to maintain distinct spheres of Indianness and must have been forced to assimilate in order to survive in a racist Canadian society in which they had little power of self representation. Thereafter, however, the Point System based on qualifications rather than race or social categories allowed younger professionals to enter the country from the 1960s; they were then entitled to bring in extended families too. In the last two decades, apart from professionals, a huge number of petit-bourgeois immigrants have qualified for immigration while professionals themselves have not had the same opportunities in the service sectors as jobs have dried up.¹⁸⁹

Vijay Prashad writes that the early successful Indian professionals established the myth of a 'model minority' in the United States where they took jobs as professionals; there must have been some of this sentiment in Canada, too, given the links between the two economies. But, the coveted status of a higher class of Indians was subsequently challenged as the economy of the United States dropped in the 1970s and

¹⁸⁷ Kavita Sharma, *The Ongoing Journey: Indian Immigration to Canada* (New Delhi: Creative Books, 1997), 56.

¹⁸⁸ G.S. Basran, 'Indo Canadian Family's Historical Constraints and Contemporary Contradictions' in *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Dept. of Sociology: University of Saskatchewan, vol. 24, (1993), 339-352.

¹⁸⁹ Jayant Lele, "Indian Diaspora's Long-Distance Nationalism: The Rise and Proliferation of 'Hindutva' in Canada" in *Fractured Identity: The Indian Diaspora in Canada* edited by Sushma J Varma and Radhika Seshan (Rawat Publications: Jaipur, 2003), 85.

newer arrivals were forced to take less desirable jobs as motel managers, shopkeepers and gas station owners. Since the 1980s, working and family-class Indians have been entering the U.S. As an example, Prashad says 50 per cent of the taxi drivers in New York are South Asians (implying that they are probably over qualified for the job).¹⁹⁰ The growing numbers of émigrés has also led to a diversification and increased group organizations including on American university campuses where South Asians have felt the need to develop separate 'South Asian' groups.¹⁹¹

Despite the emigration of a highly qualified generation, religion continues to play a prominent role in South Asian immigrants' social networks and cultural associations themselves often have a religious basis, writes Judith Brown.¹⁹² She cautions that while the multi-dimensional social networks are supportive, they can also be deeply controlling and the cause of divisions in the diaspora.¹⁹³ This appears true in Vancouver, for instance, where separate social networks among the Sikhs, Gujarati Hindus or South Asian Muslims have been formed around religious worship at Sikh *gurdwaras*, Islamic mosques or Hindu temples.¹⁹⁴ The separatist Sikh movement since the 1980s that resulted in death and destruction has had massive support from a few overseas Sikhs and particularly those in British Columbia.¹⁹⁵ However, most Sikhs would be engaged

¹⁹⁰ Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 80.

¹⁹¹ Anu Gupta, "At the Crossroads: College Activism and Its Impact on Asian American Identity Formation" in *A Part, yet Apart: South Asians in Asian America* edited by Lavina Dhingra Shankar and Rajini Srikanth (Philadelphia: Templeton University Press, 1998). Anu Gupta writes that at North American university campuses, for instance, there are several 'South Asian' groups who apparently want a distinction made between themselves and far-eastern Asians, since despite the common Asian category there are huge linguistic and socio-cultural differences that cannot be overlooked.

¹⁹² Judith Brown, 74.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 82-85.

¹⁹⁴ Sikh organizations such as the Khalsa Divan Society or the India Punjab Senior Citizens' Society; Gujarati Society of British Columbia or the BC Muslims Association are examples. On the other hand, there are more inclusive organizations such as the South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy (SANSAD) and the South Asian Women's Network that are based on a larger South Asian ethnicity.

¹⁹⁵ The bombing of an Air India flight in 1985 killed all 331 persons on board and was allegedly master minded in Vancouver in retaliation for the Sikh riots in India following the assassination of prime minister Indira Gandhi in 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards.

with charity, social, religious or educational work as members of networks that aim to support the community rather than be involved in radical politics. Similarly, some Hindus are members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad that was established in Vancouver in 1974 and is linked to the rightwing group in India, as will be seen.¹⁹⁶ But, the diaspora can belong to multiple groups and have non-religious affiliations too. Besides, the collective community response to Bollywood is based on an appreciation of cultural forms that are derived from poetics and aesthetics with which viewers are familiar as habitual watchers of Hindi films. And apart from a select few, the majority of the films are not engaged with contemporary politics in any sense.

Community organizations themselves could be formed for various social or political reasons including as a support against the racialization of South Asians, which persists in Canada as it has in America's 'melting pot' culture with its implications of assimilation.¹⁹⁷ Norman Buchignani et al record an anti-Indian feeling right until the 1980s based on a history of structural discrimination so that "some people now believe that prejudice and discrimination against them are endemic."¹⁹⁸ Diasporic organizations, however, could also be formed due to the tendency of Indians to view themselves as a collective, as will be discussed. Generally, though, with the rise in numbers and types of diasporic organizations, the new Indian diaspora are better off than their predecessors especially since the 1990s, which is the period being discussed in this thesis. The fact that they are better educated and largely middle-class, and that many hold white collar jobs, has certainly placed them in more advantageous positions. Improved race relations are reflected in more flattering media representations of South Asians on TV

¹⁹⁶ Harold Coward, *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada and the United States* edited by Harold Coward, John R Hinnells and Raymond Brady Williams, (SUNY Press; NY, 2000), 155.

¹⁹⁷ Canada's federal government proclaimed an adherence to multicultural policies from 1971, but multiculturalism as legislation was included in the Canadian Constitution only in 1982.

¹⁹⁸ Norman Buchignani et al, 206.

and in news periodicals that also employ a far higher number of visible minorities such as Indians. Besides, as Sandhya Shukla writes, the representation of Indianness has become the self-appointed duty of middle-class professionals in the United States and their perspective dominates diaspora literature and publications.¹⁹⁹ This is equally applicable in Canada, where Indian diasporic cultural identity is inflected by the new diaspora's pro-active methods to influence representations of Indianness through an active and formal relationship with newspapers, magazines and television journalists.²⁰⁰

Theories of Nation in the Diaspora

Discussions of what constitutes Indianness would necessarily differ between countries the diaspora has relocated to apart from differences between generations, classes and linguistic groups. In simplistic terms, it amounts to Indian visibility through food, music and Hindi films, but this cursory glance at what seems to constitute Indianness abroad hides the larger and smaller networks of kinship, caste and religion by which Indians define themselves.²⁰¹ Moreover, as Sandhya Shukla argues, the diaspora feels only a "disaggregated" Indianness in their lives abroad.²⁰² What this really means is that the sense of cultural loss about a way of life is only partially replicated through references to India (like Bollywood films or Indian cuisine); however, without the social and religious systems and language cultures, it amounts only to a "disaggregated" Indianness. The disaggregation affects Indians abroad to different extents, while how

¹⁹⁹ Sandhya Shukla, 56-57.

²⁰⁰ South Asian groups such as the Vancouver-based South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy (SANSAD) regularly send press releases to the newspapers that represent their own particular viewpoint, which could be varied according to the group's politics.

²⁰¹ Archana Verma, *The Making of Little Punjab in Canada: Patterns of Immigration* (New Delhi/Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002). Compared with the present global connectivity, Archana Verma's study on the earliest Punjabi Sikhs in B.C. shows that they did not articulate a broader 'Indian' consciousness, but saw themselves collectively as Punjabis only after having come abroad and found other Punjabi sub castes working at lumber mills, with whom they discovered the common cause of émigré living.

²⁰² Sandhya Shukla, 26.

they choose to adapt or reinterpret tradition varies widely too. With the new accessibility to India through easier travel and communications, it could be argued that compared with previous emigrants, the newer diaspora is better equipped to sustain a stronger sense of Indianness if they want to.²⁰³ Of course, the question of whether the new media connectivity reduces the relevance of nation states or negates ideas of single citizenship is an equally pertinent question.

As globalization reduces distances each day, stronger connections are being forged between middle-class India and the diaspora abroad, while Hindu nationalism as a new identity marker is another connecting factor between the diaspora and India (represented in films as a subtle proliferation of signs rather than as a formal religious discourse).²⁰⁴ In this sense, the present trend of Hindu nationalism and Muslim or Sikh consciousness is abetted by virtual Internet communities as well as travelling ideologues from India who regularly make contact with the diaspora.²⁰⁵ In this context, the rise of Hindu nationalism known as 'Hindutva' that seeks to re-establish an Indian identity that reaches back to ancient roots, has found resonance among some members of the diaspora too. Hindu nationalism itself may be linked to the growing number of middle-class Indian émigrés in the second phase of emigration who identify with the greater

²⁰³ South Asian historian Harjot Oberoi argues that immigrants today might be better placed to retain more of the original culture in an era of media convergence and globalization. With the rising numbers of Punjabis in B.C., it possible for recent immigrants to never have to learn English or integrate with the mainstream as they can easily merge into a pre-existing Punjabi culture among whom the intertextual means of cultural reproduction keep increasing. See Harjot Oberoi, "Imagining Indian Diaspora in Canada," in *Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora* edited by Bhikhu Parekh, Gurharpal Singh and Steven Vertovec (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 183-195.

²⁰⁴ Sanjay Srivastava, *Fingerprinting Popular Culture: The Mythic and the Iconic in Indian Cinema* edited by Vinay Lal and Ashish Nandy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 136-137. Sanjay Srivastava, writing about a post-national music culture, sketches a history of the contest and opposition between Hindu and Muslim performers. He writes that a Hindu consciousness already existed in the 19th and early 20th century when one stream of nationalists sought to reinvent a Hindu India. Part of the construction of a Hindu consciousness was as opposition to the Muslim image that connoted an excessive sexuality, a life of luxury and religious fanaticism. Hence, Hindu consciousness took the opposite form of being strongly moralistic and ascetic in outlook. These ideas endure in the present form of Hindu nationalism too.

²⁰⁵ Jayant Lele, 87.

Hindu consciousness generated within India. In addition, Jayant Lele surmises that second-generation Indo-Canadians, searching for identity and trying to reach their cultural roots through religion and rituals from sources other than their parents' vague memories, are behind the rise of this somewhat dangerous Hindu nationalism.²⁰⁶ His argument that the old pre-1965 diaspora was more secular is based on the realities of contemporary middle-class émigrés who have faced the realities of less-than-ideal working-class and trade jobs. Until then, according to Lele, the diaspora did not proclaim any particular Hinduness, but with the arrival of a substantial number of petit-bourgeois emigrants who are distinct from the 'model minority' professionals, the tendency has grown.²⁰⁷

The rise in the numbers of temples built and the proliferation of visiting gurus is further evidence of a new type of Hinduism that has, in fact, adapted itself to the more materialistic culture of North America.²⁰⁸ The common ground between the diasporic and Indian Hindutva is that middle-class Indians with the material means to raise temples and patronize gurus are at the front of the movement both in India and abroad. It is difficult to prove that the petit bourgeois Indian leads the Hindutva sentiment, but easier to understand it in terms of a commodification of Hinduism that has been relatively unorganized until now. In terms of the petit bourgeois looking towards religion for social status improvement, Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss write that it may well be linked with their own upward mobility in economic terms.²⁰⁹ The same could be true of the diaspora for whom social legitimacy is gained by subscribing to Hindu rituals,

²⁰⁶ Jayant Lele, 66-119.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 87. Jayant Lele writes that gurus have adapted beliefs and rituals to the time constraints of diasporic Indians who need 'quickie' mantras or prayers on the go.

²⁰⁹ Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, 125.

although for immigrants, there is the additional factor of perceiving cultural loss in their lives abroad.

Harold Coward's perception of this loss of culture for Hindus, in fact, is based on the idea that the lack of an organized religion has resulted in the circulation of a more rigid form of Hinduism.²¹⁰ Although useful for marking the distinctness of Hindus, Coward's study fails to address points of contrast or similarity between other religious communities from India and their emigration experiences. Also, though Hindutva is a form of cultural affirmation within India, outside it is an 'awakening' based on a more complex web of factors such as attempts to remember beliefs and religious traditions by bourgeois immigrants.²¹¹ Hence, though Vijay Prashad warns about fundamentalist Hinduism or 'Yankee Hindutva' in the United States,²¹² the real problem may lie in Hinduism's emergence in the commodified form due to the influence of global capital that possesses a dangerous power in this respect.

Looking at representations of global Indianness in the latest films, it seems that an important section of what are now called Bollywood films exclusively represents the new bourgeoisie as the most visible face of India both in the country and abroad. Moreover, the global Indian is highly mobile and is known to equally between California or the software-centred Indian city of Hyderabad depending on the perquisites he/she gets from the multinationals he/she works for. Of course, 'global' India actually accounts for a very small percentage of Indians (approximately 14 million tax payers out of a 470 million work force) who are the most visible today in terms of their credentials as Information Technology professionals employed by Indian or foreign firms, while the

²¹⁰ Harold Coward, *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada and the United States* Edited by Harold Coward, John R Hinnells and Raymond Brady Williams, (SUNY Press; NY, 2000), 155. The establishment of the formal *Vishwa Hindu Parishad/Global Hindu Community* in 1974 in Vancouver is linked with the India-based right-wing Hindu group that has developed numerous overseas branches.

²¹¹ Jayant Lele, "Indian Diaspora's Long Distance Nationalism" in *Fractured Identities*, 115-119.

²¹² Vijay Prashad, 133-156.

majority of Indians are still agrarian and poor.²¹³ Yet, as the middle-class has gained immensely by numbers and affluence, it tends to dominate discussions on what constitutes Indian identity whether in India or abroad. As discussed, global Indianness is infused with reinvigorated ideas of religious identity along with the attributes of global capitalism.

The media and new middle classes in India have hardly protested the representations, the massive material changes, or even the prolific images of their own consumerism. In this sense, Bollywood reflects the same obsession with commodity cultures. According to writer-commentator, Pankaj Mishra, "Many of the new Bollywood films increasingly came out of, and stoked the same Indian fantasy of wealth, political power, and cultural confidence."²¹⁴ He links the growth of the middle-class and the consumer economy to India's rising foreign exchange reserves and the newfound confidence of the huge middle-class. In fact, visitors to India can see how the larger-than-life images of Bollywood stars on billboards holding cell phones or endorsing new luxury cars and regularly appearing on TV commercials for products ranging from cough syrups to washing machines, effectively embody the lifestyle of the new global Indians.²¹⁵ Bollywood stars themselves have gained hugely in global visibility and are making concerted efforts to connect with diasporic audiences that have become significant for their own growing pay checks.²¹⁶ William Mazzarella argues that Indian

²¹³ Edward Luce, 48-49. Edward Luce's statistics are derived by percentages. He calculates that out of 470 million, only 35 million pay income tax of which 21 million are workers from the public sector...He links the poverty of Indians to their agrarian status and comparatively low literacy rate of 65 percent compared with China's 90 percent.

²¹⁴ Pankaj Mishra, *Temptations of the West* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York, 2006), 139.

²¹⁵ This is my own observation based on the visit I made to India in the summer of 2007.

²¹⁶ Nasreen Munni Kabir, "The Re-invention of Indian Cinema 1995-2005", *Outlook magazine*, May 30, 2005. The author writes that the superstar Shahrukh Khan commanded over packed venues on each of his 12 overseas shows that showed a majority of South Asian fans who had come out to see their favourite Bollywood actor. She noted that reactions of these overseas fans were more like Americans would behave on encountering a pop star such as Britney Spears – with strongly articulated passion. She also wrote that overseas Indians seem to express a growing connection with Hindi cinema despite the distance.

advertising has produced an “aspirational consumerism” in commercials that portray cosmopolitan Indians who are comfortable with upmarket international products. His analysis that in advertising the plight of poor Indians is completely neglected in the quest to project global Indians as beautiful urban characters grappling with matters of the heart is a completely valid argument for the subject of Bollywood narratives too.²¹⁷

As has been noted through this section, a complex web of factors including social, religious and cultural identities, as well as the perception of a disparity between inner and outer domains in the lives of the diaspora, underlies the growing diasporic/global market for Bollywood films. One way or another, it does seem that upmarket, cosmopolitan narratives and flattering depictions of diasporic Indians who live in New York, Paris or Greece is widely acceptable to the diaspora.²¹⁸ In addition, the blatant advertising of fashions and lifestyles in Hindi films suggests that a commodified Indian culture has its own special appeal overseas.²¹⁹ So, though Vijay Prashad argues that diasporic Indians cling to *desi* or Indian stores and Hindi movies to support their daily living while the famous myth of ‘family values’ itself works as a bulwark against global capital, the films seem to be doing much more in the globalized era of desire, consumption and the proliferation of media.²²⁰ In this context, the audience reception of contemporary Bollywood films will be analyzed in Chapter Two to examine how diverse global viewers may find connections to popular cinema.

²¹⁷ William Mazzarella, 138. Equally valid is his discussion about the recurrent tension between populist and elitist claims and the struggle between consumerism and its dissonance with Indian history, 253-287.

²¹⁸ A spate of 1990s films base their central characters in big metropolitan cities like Paris or New York. For instance, Yash Chopra’s *Hum Tum/Me and You* (2004) tracks a narrative from India to New York and then Paris. Similarly, Aziz Mirza’s *Chalte Chalte/As We Walked* (2002) is based partly in Greece and partly in India and examines a couple’s unequal backgrounds that causes tensions but is happily resolved in the end.

²¹⁹ Designer clothes and homes are quite obvious in *Dil Chahta Hai/What the Heart Wants* (2001), in which all three male protagonists are obviously monied, wear a range of designer ethnic and cosmopolitan fashion, travel in luxury sports cars and have fantastic homes within India and in Australia.

²²⁰ Vijay Prashad, 118.

This chapter has traced influences on post-independence Hindi films and acknowledged the powerful imperatives of 'nation' with the ever-present duality of tradition and modernity in narratives that initially developed in the service of the nation state. It was seen how state policies framed film production, while shifts in the Indian government's attitude (from socialistic tendencies to wholesale capitalism since the 1980s) have altered Indian identity in Bollywood films. At the same time, the relationship of Bollywood films to global audiences and global Hinduism, and to the massive changes in film production itself, have equally influenced new filmic representations of Indianness. The fact that Indian identity is being debated and social scientists are increasingly returning to study a past India in terms of group affiliations based on religious, caste and regional sects or realms, also indicates how the inner domain of Indianness without a specific relationship to capital or the idea of class continues to be significant. It also demonstrates how modern Indian identity continues to be "reinvented" to use Corbridge and Harriss' phrase. Teleological ideas of progress or modernization in narratives about selfhood are less convincing for accounts of Indian modernity as social scientists have acknowledged the limitations of an 'end of history' approach that presumed that the path to western modernity and progress was universally applicable. In India, modernization itself has been fraught with complexity as inner domains conflicted with but also coexisted with the outer or what were seen as 'western' values.²²¹

The next chapter will describe Bollywood cinema in terms of aesthetics that are shaped by changing socio-economic factors, but also by changing cinematic conventions and ideas of what appeals to audiences. Ultimately, Bollywood's attempt at reimagining contemporary Indian identity is mediated by a number of factors of which

²²¹ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, 48-56. Chatterjee sees evidence of his argument in the 'bilingualism' of the 19th century national elite in West Bengal who absorbed western scientific rationalism but still retained an indigenous eastern spiritualism.

globalization and the diaspora are significant influences, but changing aesthetics and cinematic conventions themselves are also responsible for newer portrayals.

Chapter Two: National Identity from Indian Melodrama

Overview

A newfound enthusiasm in the diasporic market and changes wrought by modern globalization are significant factors for the growing popularity of big-budget Bollywood melodramas, as discussed in Chapter 1. But, although the films driven by the need for modernized images have resulted in altered portrayals of Indians since the 1990s, the representations of identity still present a specifically national form of cinema. This is achieved through specific Indian forms, language poetics and sensibilities, though there have been dramatic alterations in dialogue and conversation styles (with the increasing use of a hybrid Hindi-English) and international fashions. The changed forms have meant that popular Hindi cinema's separation of 'good,' meaning traditional, practices and 'evil,' which was ascribed to things new or unfamiliar, as well as the categories of 'east' and 'west' they assumed, shows a marked blurring in recent films. Despite dramatic changes in terms of surface signifiers, however, feelings and emotions related to the myth of the inner domain of language and religion are being highlighted to maintain a distinct form of Indianness in these films. The differences, I will argue, play a significant role in the mythical separation between the inner and outer lives of Indians in the narratives between 1995 and 2005, and reveal anxieties about modernity that appear as surface signifiers in the forms of *mise-en-scène*, costumes and glamorized interiors.

In order to study the changing aesthetics of Hindi cinema, it is necessary to first examine its preferred narrative device that is melodrama. For this purpose, nuanced

theories by film scholars such as Thomas Elsaesser and Linda Williams are useful for understanding the forms of melodrama, their ideological functions and how they appeal to viewers.²²² These scholars' are able to correlate historical time with aesthetic conventions that relayed anxieties and desires, in terms relevant to western societies. In terms of Bollywood narratives, however, the growing body of work by Bollywood scholars such as Vijay Mishra, Madhava Prasada, Ranjani Mazumdar, and Ravi Vasudevan, offer more culturally appropriate ideas in terms of foundational texts, ideas of morality and aesthetic conventions.

At the outset, it must be stated that all film theories are based on a model of the idealized spectator and cannot be fully applied to diverse and real audiences. Still, the film reception theories that are historical and context-based,²²³ compared to classical film theories that limited themselves to the site of the film text in terms of looking for meanings, provide the best means to gauge the multiple meanings that viewers derive from polysemous texts in contemporary cinema. Bollywood scholars have used a variety of textual methods such as psychoanalytic theory, including both Freudian and Lacanian theory (stressing the connection between individual psychology and its response to art), in trying to explain spectatorial response.²²⁴ Psychoanalytic theory reads repressed desires and anxieties embodied by spectators that are first released and then contained in the watching of melodramas. Similarly, semiotic theory stresses that literary texts are understandable mainly through language-like codes that help make

²²² Thomas Elsaesser, 'Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama' in *Film Genre Reader* edited by Barry Keith Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 278-308. Significantly, the style/logic of melodrama has been recouped by scholars like Thomas Elsaesser who sparked a renewed interest in the form without the disparaging tone of the past.

²²³ Janet Staiger's context-based approach to reception has been discussed in the Introduction, 17-18.

²²⁴ Film Studies uses literary theories to read texts so that psychoanalytic and semiotic theory is used together with the post-structural, feminist and post-colonial theories that became popular more recently. In particular, Jacques Lacan's re-reading of Freud in which he combines psychoanalysis with linguistic theory has also deeply influenced Film Studies.

texts intelligible. For Bollywood cinema specifically, scholars using psychoanalytic/linguistic theory, such as Vijay Mishra, write that Hindi film melodrama is based on a subscription to the epic Hindu texts of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* and their adherence to *dharmik* laws that prescribe a fixed order for society.²²⁵ This social order defines the limits of what classes, groups or castes can or cannot do and is significant in terms of looking at social conformism as well as the transgressions of conformity in a film's narrative.²²⁶ Again, though Mishra engages indigenous aesthetics, his explanation does not encapsulate the experiences of the historically changing Indian spectator who has always challenged the existing order. This is particularly relevant when Hindi cinema embodies a strong nationalist response in post-colonial films, as will be seen.²²⁷ Neither does Mishra's textual approach explain the response of spectators to the several interruptions of songs and dances that act as emotional releases and suggest there is more to reception than language-based or structural systems of signification.

Keeping in mind the limitations of both psychoanalytic and semiotic theories, looking at Gilles Deleuze's post-structuralist contribution to film philosophy provides an alternative to understanding what drives millions of viewers to watch fairly predictable narratives.²²⁸ Criticizing linguistic or semiotic theory's sole emphasis on language and language-based signification, Deleuze recommended a focus on blocks of movement and time in cinematic relays that carried spectators through lived experience, thereby placing the accent on felt emotions in that space-time continuum. His writing treats film

²²⁵ Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* (Great Britain: Routledge, 2002), 17.

²²⁶ As will be seen, Yash Chopra's trend-setting *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge/The Brave of Heart Takes the Bride* (1995) breaks new ground for the romance genre but limits what is acceptable or not for its young and central male and female characters.

²²⁷ The analysis of Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* (1957) in this chapter is a case in point.

²²⁸ Affect theory is centuries old and attributable to philosophers including Baruch Spinoza (seventeenth century), Henri Bergson (nineteenth century), and more lately Gilles Deleuze (1980s) who has recouped it for film theory.

directors as thinkers or visionaries whose conceptions are derived from time- and movement-images.²²⁹ The role of affect in Deleuze's writing, for instance, examines the power of images and their ability to cause a feeling of change in spectators who are carried from one sort of emotion to another. Significantly, affect theory shows great compatibility with the ancient Indian *Rasa* theory of aesthetics that will also be discussed. Both *rasas* and affects point to evidence of a film-maker's thinking that constructs the 'truths' we aspire towards in terms of national identities. In this respect, the 1990s stories and the manufacturing of a global Indianness are based on images of Indians embodying the ideology of consumer capitalism and its fascination for spectacle.

The dialogue between theories in this chapter makes the argument that the manufactured Indianness of contemporary Yash Chopra films is best explained by relating changes that have occurred in the aesthetics of the Bollywood film industry to socio-political changes. For instance, a study of the changing cinematic 'affects' themselves, in terms of newer material affects being introduced and others being commodified, helps explain the changing Indianness in the films.²³⁰ Postmodern cinema is marked by the gradual commodification of affects, whether it is in the excess of body, skin or fantasy scenes, and this is visible in Bollywood too.²³¹ But, as Indian cinema has not developed simultaneously with Indian industrialization or development, there are differences that must be inferred even in surface signifiers, which may have deeper implications. Hence, this chapter will combine a historical reception that engages with the development of Indian melodrama with changes in aesthetics, which offer a means to extract notions of Indianness and changes in how it is being

²²⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* translated by Hugh and Barbara Tomlinson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 87-101.

²³⁰ The idea of the 'commodified affect' suggested by Dr. Laura U. Marks has been very useful to construct the argument in this chapter.

²³¹ Yash Chopra Films produced *Hum Tum/Me and You* (2004) travels from New York to Paris and back to India while the cities overseas are recognizable with the touristy shots of the Eiffel Tower.

represented. It must be said, however, that the ten-year period being covered in this thesis represents only a moment in time; it does not cover all films in the period nor imply a complete rupture with past film-making. What it does establish is how Bollywood film-makers are constructing a global Indianness for audiences who are keenly aware that these films and their own self-images are circulating ever more widely.

Psychoanalyzing Bollywood Melodrama

Many Bollywood film studies are based on the *Screen* theory developed by film scholars in the 1970s, according to which a spectator is an idealized subject who responds to the film text as an abstraction having been constructed from the cinematic apparatus itself.²³² This usage is appropriate as Bollywood films like Hollywood melodramas, appeal to identification in the context of idealized families. Bollywood films, however, focus on a collective (family) rather than the individual as has been the driving force in Hollywood characterizations. *Screen* theory presumed certain ideologies on the part of spectators, which in the case of melodrama in Hollywood of the 1940s happened to be women; the viewership link in this specific case made it possible to relate female melodrama with psychoanalysis by imagining a uniform spectatorship in gendered terms. These spectators supposedly identified not only with specific characters in the film, but also with the overall ideology of the film, including how it played out feudal fantasies of the imagined ideal families. In terms of the melodramatic structure,

²³² The "Screen theory" came out of scholars writing for the British film journal *Screen* in the 1970s who undertook cultural analysis and connected semiology with Marxism and psychoanalysis. Colin MacCabe, Stephen Heath etc. saw in the cinematic apparatus a parallel to Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus. These scholars arrived at the conclusion that the spectacle created the spectator, which itself was based on their (now erroneous) understanding that the content being communicated was realistic. Further reading on "Screen Theory" is available in Colin MacCabe, *Theoretical Essays: Film, Linguistics, Literature* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1985).

contemporary studies of Bollywood cinema still tend to use the abstract concepts of identification developed by the *Screen* theory of the 1970s.²³³

From the 1980s, psychoanalytic film theory began to take account of multiple methods of textual analysis and the identifications with narratives/characters that spectators developed in the process of looking at the screen. The fact that spectators are not passive recipients of the filmic experience is also a part of the newer approach to spectatorship. Besides, the barrage of advertisements and creation of a counter-gaze (in the ads and films themselves, often) have changed the relations of “looking” in cinema, which were previously understood to be limited to a male/female binary, to a much more complex realm of multiple forms of address to multiple viewers.²³⁴ The reality of diverse audiences and variations in response has ruptured notions of the idealized spectator, making it clear that questions of reception should be pursued in historical and social contexts for greater accuracy. Still, the modified understanding of spectatorship, as being both ideal and historical, allow us to import some aspects of psychoanalytic theory for the analysis of Bollywood melodrama, as will be seen.

The term ‘melodrama’ itself describes a range of cinematic effects today, though it is a 200-year-old genre that originated in Europe, and described stories that inserted *melos* or music into moments marked by emotion. Thomas Elsaesser described it as an expressive mode that was marked by musical and spatial categories rather than intellectual or literary ones. The stories had their genealogies in feudal moral structures such as that of the family, but also in definitive ideas of good and evil. The forms it took included repetitive or exaggerated acting styles, slapstick comedy or extravagant mise-

²³³ Jacques Lacan’s theory that the alienation of human beings begins at the “mirror stage” when an infant realizes that he/she is separate from the mother is extended to ideas of Self and Other in a host of more complex contexts.

²³⁴ Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 88.

en-scène.²³⁵ Using Elsaesser's definition, the broad use of feudal romance structures and reliance on music and other non-diegetic elements are why Bollywood films are referred to as melodramatic. This does not mean that melodrama is approved of though, as Kristin Thompson, like several others, argue that hysterical or weeping women, symbolic musical or sound insertions, and any form of spectacle are excessive to the story; she denigrates the 'excess' that is characteristic of melodrama.²³⁶ Of course, other theorists have recouped the notion of excess more favourably by looking at how melodrama functions in terms of expressing and containing desires.

Linda Williams aptly calls melodrama a "body genre" because it elicits a bodily response from the spectator, namely weeping.²³⁷ The form encompasses a broad range of films marked by "lapses" in realism and displays of emotion that typically produce juvenile and repetitive spectatorial responses, she writes.²³⁸ Of course, the term melodrama derived its connotation of excess from the spate of women's melodramas or "weepies" that were produced in Hollywood in the 1940s and 50s and tended to divide audiences between genders.²³⁹ Despite changing ideas of gender, so-called excessive films continue to thrive because they always offer solutions, even if mythical, to persistent problems. The ongoing popularity of melodrama is well explained by Williams' argument that the bourgeois subject has become the alienated individual in the age of

²³⁵ Thomas Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury", 280-287.

²³⁶ Kristin Thompson, "The Concept of Cinematic Excess" in *Film Theory & Criticism* edited by Leo Braudel and Marshall Cohen (New York/London: OUP, 1999), 487-490.

²³⁷ Linda Williams, "Film Bodies; Gender, Genre and Excess," in *Film Genre Reader II* edited by Barry Keith Grant (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1995), 140-158. "Excess" could also describe the interstitial moment of "affect" in melodrama, although Linda Williams' argument was developed prior to the shift to affect theory in the 1990s.

²³⁸ *Ibid.* According to Williams, melodrama is characterized by a temporal structure of "too late". 'Weepies' make us cry not just because of the sadness of the moment, but because the tears are triggered at the moment when characters in the story catch up with and realize what the audience already knows. These films' deployment of melodrama in generic and gendered cultural forms might point to understandings that should be analyzed more deeply, she argues.

²³⁹ In this respect, it must be pointed out that Bollywood melodramas have never made distinctions between the genders and men have confessed to "weeping" just as women have with the impact of the narratives.

industrial capitalism, while the original fantasies of being an undivided family present an escape from loneliness.²⁴⁰

But while western melodrama's bourgeois subject appeared over a century ago, the individualism associated with industrial capitalism, perhaps due to differential aesthetic conventions and historical reasons, is still not quite visible in mainstream Hindi cinema.²⁴¹ Examining the Indian preference for melodrama itself, Bollywood scholar Madhava Prasad poses the question of whether there is a connection between the aesthetics and political development of a country. He writes that the Western narrative is derived from melodrama in pre-industrial societies that developed into bourgeois realism in industrializing societies, followed by the nationalistic narratives of modernism; lastly, the fragmentations evidenced in postmodern arts make themselves visible in a new form of post-national narratives.²⁴² This linear argument, however, does not fit with Bollywood film history: 1950s films were imbued with realist elements that rapidly diminished by the 1960s when the *masala* movie emerged and dominated the screens for more than 20 years. Most interestingly, the 1990s films are still melodramatic, though the *masala* style has changed with Bollywood's globalization and incorporation of the latest film editing techniques as well as technologies and special effects from Hollywood. In addition, current Hindi cinema displays both postmodernism and melodrama simultaneously. Besides, melodrama as a genre is being revived in Hollywood by western film-makers such as Baz Luhrmann (*Moulin Rouge*, 2001), who was reportedly inspired by Bollywood in the making of his melodramatic musical. This development suggests a postmodern fragmentation of styles and a commoditization of

²⁴⁰ Linda Williams, "Film Bodies", 154-156.

²⁴¹ There are exceptions to this, as seen in Mani Ratnam's *Guru* (2007), based on the life of the late Indian industrialist Dhirubhai Ambani, which actively pushes notions of individualism and the character's sense of self together with the new Bollywood style of intricate colour coordination and expensive set designs.

²⁴² Madhava Prasad, 'Melodramatic Politics?' in *Inter-Asia cultural Studies*, Vol.2, Number 3, 2001.

melodrama itself that is unrelated with political economy.²⁴³ Prasada's question, though, of the basis of difference in aesthetic conventions remains extremely significant for socio-cultural analysis. There is some attempt to address this question throughout this thesis.

Indian Melodrama: A Case for Difference

Melodrama assumed a distinctive style in India. It is a hybridized form that has probably existed without being specifically named for centuries, but has also drawn from European forms more recently.²⁴⁴ As I discuss below, distinct socio-political conditions are also the basis of the major disjuncture between the major Greek and Indian source texts on theatre, Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharatamuni's *Natyashastra*, which are historically parallel ancient texts but show completely contrasting ideas of theatricality.

Bombay cinema's style of melodrama itself is derived from a multiplicity of sources including the Sanskrit epics of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* (from which the idea of *dharma*, (religion or duty, appears), folk theatres that developed after the decline of Sanskrit theatre in the twelfth century, and much later the Parsi theatre that itself was a mix of Gujarati folk theatre and British drama.²⁴⁵ Like other scholars, Vijay Mishra provides evidence of these traditions in Indian cinema: he traces the proscenium arch used in Parsi theatre to the frontal address used in Hindi films,²⁴⁶ the style of songs and choreography are appropriations from various regional folk theatres while the Hindu

²⁴³ Baz Lurhmann, Biography for Baz Lurhmann from *IMDb* (International Movies Data Base). <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0525303/bio>.

²⁴⁴ An indigenous form of melodrama can be assumed to have existed from the following discussion of ancient performances being led by highly emotional dramas and the development of the *Rasa* theory, which described stylized performance about 2,500 years ago.

²⁴⁵ Vijay Mishra, "Inventing Bombay Cinema" in *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire*, 4-15.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

epics referents are built into the characterizations themselves.²⁴⁷ And though Bombay film-makers were inspired by stalwarts of modern Indian literature in the nineteenth century whose works reflected an engagement with western bourgeois realism, it was combined with pre-existing Indian sensibilities.²⁴⁸ Hence, despite a liberal rationalist trend in their writing, there were pronounced differences from western texts in modern Indian literature in terms of work ethics, concepts of materiality and class.

These differences in narrative style are still apparent in Yash Chopra's contemporary blockbusters that project upper-middle-class values through a heightened sense of cosmopolitanism and consumerism, while also embodying older traditions. Despite some changes, there is a continuation of the popular *masala* mode with an even narrower focus on upper-caste, urban North Indian Hindus. Hinduism itself has always been embedded in cinematic texts, as can be seen by a cursory look at the genealogy of religion in Hindi films. From the first films made as 'mythologicals', the 'social films' that followed also contained Hindu referents and signifiers, many of which still exist in contemporary films. But unlike the clichéd efforts of the 1970s and 1980s to include a larger range of minority Indian Muslims or Christians along with poorer and lower-caste characters, the newer films project a new bourgeois Indianness that attempts to speak for all in a global, Hindu and upper class voice. The excision of the broader and more pluralistic cultural representations that prior films had attempted to include, albeit in a skewed fashion as Hindi-speaking Hindus have always been dominantly represented,

²⁴⁷ In terms of names, often characters have been called 'Karuna' or 'Arjun' or female names derived from the names of Hindu gods or goddesses that are significant beyond being just names since their characters display god-like virtues or vices.

²⁴⁸ Late nineteenth and twentieth-century authors of this caliber include Prem Chand, Rabindranath Tagore and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.

marks a sharp break from past portrayals.²⁴⁹ First, though, the case for the continuity of representations needs a closer look.

In terms of research, the uniqueness of socio-cultural traditions that informed Asian/Indian melodrama makes Western theory inadequate for analyzing popular Indian films.²⁵⁰ In this respect, Vijay Mishra's *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* is a comprehensive study of Indian melodrama that adapts French film structuralism to the Indian milieu, producing a detailed grammar of Bollywood cinema in terms of narrative style, the operating principles of melodrama and the Indian superstar system.²⁵¹ He skillfully formulates Bollywood's operation under the principle of the *grand syntagmatique* as expounded by Christian Metz who, drawing from Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistic theory, stressed that just like written language, film too had its own language.²⁵² Using a structural argument, Vijay Mishra writes that all Hindi cinema belongs to a single genre and functions under "the sign of the transcendental *dharmik* principle" where *dharma* is both a duty and a preordained order in society that is not to be transgressed.²⁵³ Hence, a narrative works by maintaining the status quo of men, women, classes and castes, and while the creation of a story requires transgression of this order, there is inevitably a restoration of it by the film's end. His

²⁴⁹ Yash Chopra's *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, *Hum Tum*, *Neal-n-Nikki* and *Salam Namaste* reveal this trend though *Veer Zara* is the exception where Pakistani Muslims are very much a part of this cross-border romance between an Indian male and a Pakistani female. Other films produced under the YRF banner show the same tendency to be monolithic in their representations of contemporary Indianness.

²⁵⁰ While film scholars such as Thomas Elsaesser and Linda Williams have contributed tremendously to an understanding of western melodrama, Bollywood scholars like Wimal Dissanayake and Vijay Mishra, have contributed theories such as the family as a focus and ideas of duty as being central for reading Indian melodrama.

²⁵¹ Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* (New York/London: Routledge, 2002).

²⁵² Christian Metz, "Semiotics of the Cinema," in *Film Language* translated by Michael Taylor (London: OUP, 1974). In filmic articulation, according to Christian Metz, things were denoted by codes that entailed a cinematographic language. He attempted to develop a film semiotics by finding Saussure's equivalent for film theory, which was not possible given that there was no such equivalent. There were, however, some semiotic elements like lighting, editing and camera movement that required the imagination to make connections between shots and sequences, i.e. a unique filmic code.

²⁵³ Vijay Mishra, "Inventing Bombay Cinema" in *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire*, 13.

idea that *dharma* tends to get recast as a nationalist ethos is accurate enough, seeing Bollywood's position as the primary source of popular culture. This principle might even explain the overarching tendency to remain conservative in terms of solutions even in contemporary films. However, narratives are influenced by much more than an idea of *dharma* and this is where Mishra's structural response becomes insufficient in terms of the signification in Bollywood stories.

In addition, the influence of Hollywood techniques and narratives is significant, though the styles adopted by Hindi film-makers are decidedly homegrown. Though popular Hindi films used Hollywood's norm of continuity editing²⁵⁴ as a standard practice, film-makers never felt the need to appear realistic or produce the effect of verisimilitude as practiced by Hollywood film-makers.²⁵⁵ In fact, as Sumeeta Chakravarty argues, the idea of realism itself as developed in novels and cinema is a Western notion based on scientism that was at best an import into India.²⁵⁶ Hence, like indigenous melodrama, even when ideas of realism were used for representing national identity, they were not the same notions that developed as classical Hollywood realism.²⁵⁷ Bollywood producers have, in fact, directly picked up Hollywood story-lines, but never quite translate the original, preferring instead to "Indianize" the values of Western films, which Indian viewers still consider to be "cold" or less emotional.²⁵⁸ So, directors have always

²⁵⁴ Continuity editing is achieved by the techniques of shot-reverse-shots, eye line matches and using a 180-degree axis of action in shooting scenes so as not to confuse viewers about the positions of actors, and generally maintaining a linear narrative overall.

²⁵⁵ Wimal Dissanayake, "Rethinking Indian Popular Cinema," in *Rethinking Third Cinema* edited by Wimal Dissanayake and Anthony Guneratne (Great Britain: Routledge, 2003), 210.

²⁵⁶ Sumeeta Chakravarty, "National Identity and the Realist Aesthetic: Indian Cinema of the Fifties," *Quarterly Review of Film & Video*, vol. II, (1989), 31-48.

²⁵⁷ Wimal Dissanayake, 210.

²⁵⁸ Rosie Thomas, "Melodrama and the Negotiation of Morality", 157-182. Scholars like Rosie Thomas have pointed out perceived the difference in values like the 'cold' western values vs. the more emotional Hindi films based on interviews with spectators and film-makers.

talked about the 'inspiration' behind Indian films rather than saying it was a straight copy – which is true enough.²⁵⁹

Where Hollywood producers have generally favoured naturalistic acting, commercial Hindi film-makers have been known to question why they should be expected to use codes of realism in mass entertainment films, suggesting that there was no standard for representational or cinematic realism.²⁶⁰ (In fact, Yash Chopra calls his film-making style a “glamorous realism,” which I think is an oxymoronic concept, but has obviously generated an enthusiastic response in audiences.²⁶¹) Similarly, the idea of cinematic excess developed by Kristin Thompson would be unacceptable to Bollywood producers, who continue to intentionally insert six to eight songs per as has been the case in Chopra's blockbusters. Also, crude parodies and weeping women continue to be a unique cultural stylistic of melodrama that favours the use of female actors who can be called upon to respond emotionally to situations. With the increase in diaspora spectators, however, this position is being somewhat reviewed, in terms of trying to incorporate more naturalistic acting (as the diaspora is seen as somewhat 'westernized').²⁶² For instance, the film *Salaam Namaste* (2005) whose title translates as *Hello* in Urdu and in Hindi, produced by Yash Chopra Films, is loosely based on Hollywood melodrama *Nine and a Half Months* (1995). Though the Melbourne-based Hindi adaptation shows more naturalistic acting by the central characters, the caricatures produced by actors in supplementary roles and the emphasis on songs/dances produces slapstick comedy that is characteristic of Bollywood melodrama and diverges from the

²⁵⁹ Wimal Dissanayake, *Rethinking Third Cinema*, 208-209.

²⁶⁰ Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire*, 39.

²⁶¹ Rachel Dwyer, “Writing Yash Chopra”, a literary review in *The Hindu*, Oct. 6, 2002. <http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/lr/2002/10/06/stories/2002100600020100.htm> (accessed on March 20, 2008).

²⁶² Ravi Vasudevan, “National Pasts and futures: Indian Cinema” in *Screen* (Britain), vol.XL1, no.1, 2000, 119-125.

Hollywood precedent. Interestingly too, the story constructs ideas about the diaspora and Indianness abroad that are original inserts.²⁶³

Another reason for the difference in Bollywood narratives derives from the lack of psychic interiority that is very much a part of the bourgeois realistic convention of Hollywood films. The reasons for this difference can be traced to the socio-political nature of post-colonial Indian society, in which the collective form, which is represented as family that signifies nation, still takes precedence over the individual (as discussed in Chapter One). Unlike any individualizing mechanism of the Oedipus complex that has been endlessly played out in Western literature and films (and in Indian novels starting in the nineteenth century), Bollywood melodrama still posits a collective psychic organization, which focuses on the maternal instincts of woman.²⁶⁴ It positions her as the embodiment of nation and, by the same token, in need of protection. This psychic organization also explains the continuation of the modern-yet-traditional roles for women in Bollywood melodramas such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* and *Salaam Namaste* despite dramatically altered appearances.²⁶⁵ For instance, the young woman in *Dilwale* proves her adherence to tradition by submitting to family norms about marriage. Similarly, the feisty young woman in *Salaam Namaste* remains pregnant, unmarried and chaste until her lover/father of her child puts the ring on her finger in the hospital's delivery room. The opening scene of the film reveals an imagined diasporic community through the device of a daily Hindi language radio program called 'Salaam Namaste' that is tuned in to by several young Indians living in Melbourne, Australia. The principal

²⁶³ The creation of a diasporic community in the beginning of *Salaam Namaste* (2005) is discussed in a following section.

²⁶⁴ This role of the nurturing woman first appears in Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* (1957) as discussed and becomes the basis for other maternal figures in following films; even contemporary films have not broken with the woman as mother/woman as nation in any complete sense, as will be seen.

²⁶⁵ Though the latest films do show some tendency to be moving towards stories of individualism, this appears to be connected more with globalization and consumerism rather than an exploration of any character's individuality.

characters of Nick (Nikhil) and Ambar, the radio program presenter, are simultaneously attracted to and in conflict with each other.²⁶⁶ They live together, but finally fall apart when Ambar gets pregnant and adamantly wants to keep the baby while Nick feels it is premature to take on parenthood. While it does become a narrative more about individualism and personal choice, the *adharmā* that has occurred throughout the story is balanced out by *dharma* at last when relationship is resolved and marriage is proposed. Collectivity also remains definitive to the story as the Indian diaspora in Melbourne is very much a part of the outcome of the romantic couple's involvement. This is because diasporic radio listeners have been given the details of the relationship that they enthusiastically follow through the Hindi language program, thus maintaining a sense of community through language and cultural affinities.

Thus when Wimal Dissanayake writes that Asian/Indian melodrama focuses on the family or collective as a unit or the starting point of any discourse, this bears out even in contemporary narratives. Additionally, Dissanayake writes that there is also the tendency towards the valorization of suffering as being central to the discourse of Asian melodramas.²⁶⁷ Though diminished in contemporary narratives such as the otherwise upbeat *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, the silent suffering of Simran is reflective of the pathos that is juxtaposed with romance. She loves a young Indian called Raj (both live as part of the diaspora in London), but is bound by family obligation (or the idea of *dharmik* duty that will be discussed later) to marry a Punjabi from India whom she has never met. We see Simran's mother suffering on behalf of her daughter and even telling her that suffering for women, which we are given to believe is based on the lack of

²⁶⁶ Examples of the couple having petty fights over house decor, eating and just basic lifestyle issues create the dramatic tension in this story.

²⁶⁷ Wimal Dissanayake, *Melodrama and Asian Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4.

choices, is their lot in life. Interestingly, the film also shows (as others do) that the familial unit is paramount, but can also be the cause of suffering by the same token.

At this point, it would be appropriate to dwell in more detail on *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*. The young middle-class protagonists belong to quite different socio-economic backgrounds, as Raj lives with his affluent barrister father while Simran is the daughter of a shopkeeper with more conservative values. While the patriarchal father sees India as his true home and emphasizes the importance of keeping it alive in the heart of London, the younger generation might be more conflicted about being as ethnically absolutist, writes Vijay Mishra.²⁶⁸ Simran, though she does not profess any great Anglicization (even her poetry is in Hindustani), shows an inclination to liking Western pop music and dressing in un-Indian clothes. The film, however, continually reinscribes diasporic Indians back into an imagined India, seeming to caution them to respect the myths of filial duty. Hence, Simran does not oppose her father but submits to his will and consequently suffers silently; interestingly, neither does Raj oppose or defy Simran's father but chooses to win the family over.

Raj, who is irreverent, casual and cosmopolitan, is also Bollywood's new diasporic Indian male as is borne out by his own popularity and the character type he has established for diaspora-centred films.²⁶⁹ He is rich, drinks with his friends and father, and, contrary to expectations presents the desirable potential expatriate investor to India. In addition, he gets to prove his patriotism and subscription to tradition by upholding Simran's chastity, thereby embodying the patriotic hero. In an episode in which she gets drunk and openly flirtatious (going contrary to her otherwise prudish character), he proves his mettle by keeping the *izzat* or honour of the Indian woman by

²⁶⁸ Vijay Mishra, "Bombay Cinema and Diasporic Desire" in *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire*, 252.

²⁶⁹ The rate of Shahrukh Khan's own success has jumped massively since his portrayal of Raj, the affluent NRI in *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*. He has acknowledged audiences and fans abroad who see him as being a crossover film star; he has featured in several Yash Chopra films.

not taking advantage of her; he makes her go to bed rather than respond to her drunken flirtatiousness. Hence, the negotiation of Indianness for the male diaspora becomes a site where he is allowed to be 'Western' in every other respect, but proves his *dharmik* self in how he maintains the chastity of an unmarried Indian woman. Strangely enough, or because of the sexual repression in Hindi cinema, the body is the site where the repression is both lifted and contained.²⁷⁰ This explains Simran's transgressive behaviour, which is rationalized by the end of the scene as she returns to her normal state of modest Indianness in the morning after having momentarily abandoned her sense of propriety in a bout of drinking.

In a major reversal of personas, since previously the diasporic character was shown as corrupted, it is the man from India who was chosen to marry Simran who is depicted as cruel, corrupt and a womanizer. By contrast, London-based Raj, with all his irreverence and consumerism, turns out to be the quintessentially 'good' Indian in terms of respecting Indian norms about female chastity and wanting parents' blessings for his marriage (rather than by eloping). Previously, what was good was also necessarily traditional and what was bad or corrupting was inevitably Western. In sum, representing modern Indian identity gets problematized in the latest big-budget Bollywood where the binaries of 'east' and 'west' and 'modernity' and 'tradition' have been drastically altered, mostly due to the presence of diasporic and transnational Indians who are central to these stories.²⁷¹

Looking at the meanings within *Dilwale's* text, it seems that Mishra and others may be overstating the case for an epic genealogy of Indian cinema. Epic has certainly been a formative influence, but it has to be placed alongside a context of language

²⁷⁰ Vijay Mishra, 38.

²⁷¹ Chapter One, 44; 47;

cultures in India that have changed from Sanskritic to Persian, Urdu and English. The language poetics of these cultures have definitely influenced Hindi films, for instance with the predominant use of Urdu in romantic songs, particularly in earlier films. Besides, as Mishra himself argues, Bollywood melodrama is also a response to the colonial Indian condition, and rather than just a *dharmik* code in classic films like Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* (1957) or *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), the narrative is driven by a need for the definition of 'nation' and what constitutes authentic Indianness.²⁷²

Nation is a central concern in contemporary Indian cinema and remains an imperative in texts such as *Dilwale* though protagonists attempt to create a global Indianness in the dialogue-driven narratives. By doing so, they have begun describing identity in terms of middle-class values rather than any connection to the Indian state. Relatedly, there is a great deal of tension with regard to how Indian women, who seem to have changed the most dramatically in the latest films, are constructed. Looking at the 'traditional' vs. the 'modern' arguments, Mishra's observation that the character of Sita (the ever-chaste and pure wife of Rama in Hindu mythology) is the basis for casting women is both true and not sufficient to explain changes. While the 'Hindu wife' argument speaks of the continuity of tradition, the notion that women embody nation is of more recent origin. It arose during colonial history and the inner vs. outer realms of the colonial world, in which Indian women embodied and represented the inner or private spheres.²⁷³ As Partha Chatterjee wrote, representations of women in nineteenth century literature equated them with nation.²⁷⁴ This was also how they embodied religiosity and

²⁷² In K. Asif's classic film called *Mughal-e-Azam/Mughal Emperor Akbar* (1960) there is an entire subtext about India's fragility and historical metaphors about the need to maintain unity in the face of adversity. Additionally, other films of the 1950s go to great lengths to define the Indian nation as was seen in Chapter One.

²⁷³ As elaborated in Chapter One, the inner domain contains elements of language and religion compared with the outer domain in which the western world of science and technology was acknowledged as being dominant.

²⁷⁴ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, 131.

devotion, which to me belong to the inner domain wherein women also belonged by the same reasoning. Thus the protective/repressive attitude towards women in films such as Yash Chopra's indicates a nationalistic impulse as much as it does the continuity of the 'Hindu wife' figure. In this situation, women attempting to straddle the public and private domains together are really challenged by the historical past. Also, as Jyotika Virdi argues, 'woman' acts as the idealized symbol or insignia of a unified India in which gender paints over internal differences between communities.²⁷⁵ This suggests that the Indianness embodied by Indian women is more complex and conflicted than it is for Indian men, as it has to unite Indians across the highly differential realms of linguistic groups, religions, classes and castes.

In addition, the new sexualized costuming of female actors appears to objectify them and violate the sanctity of the inner domain that they are meant to represent. The fact that it is happening increasingly is itself understandable in the context of changed production and a greater number of foreign film imports in which sexualized female actors are common. It could be seen as accommodation for Indian audiences as official censors would still not permit more explicit sexuality on the screen and clothes: an accent on body/skin presents a way to overcome this limitation while also giving viewers enough locally produced films. So, while sexualized costume might elicit sexualized desires in an audience, it would also repress them by disallowing any expressions of female sexuality other than dress, as is seen in Yash Raj Films in which women remain behaviourally modest.²⁷⁶ Alternately, a new cinematic affect of female desire, that will be discussed shortly, in relation to the sexualized dressing of female protagonists,

²⁷⁵ Jyotika Virdi, *The Cinematic ImagiNation*, 13. Hindi cinema overlays differences between Indian communities by making 'woman' the idealized insignia of the unified nation.

²⁷⁶ I would say this about the female characters in *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*, *Hum Tum* and *Salaam Namaste*. Though *Neal-n-Nikki* (2006) has a more risqué attitude, the young female protagonist comes around to *dharmik* duty and tradition in the second half of the narrative that is set in British Columbia.

suggests that visual culture itself has become more complicated.²⁷⁷ Meanwhile, Rosie Thomas' analysis that film-makers are "proposing new ways of bending the comparatively inflexible system, which means that values and meanings are continually being negotiated on the fringes" remains applicable for the new body-revealing couture worn by women.²⁷⁸ In sum, though contemporary Yash Chopra films demonstrate that changing values are being negotiated at the level of the superficial, they also reveal major conflicts and tensions in the representations of female Indian modernity, which lie just beneath the surface signifiers of sexualized costumes or westernized appearances.

Rasa Theory: Looking at Indigenous Forms of Reception

The persistence of the melodramatic mode in Bollywood and the fact that it is increasingly attracting global audiences certainly warrants more research about the popularity of films that so obviously depart from Hollywood narratives. It also demonstrates the limitations of psychoanalytic theory in explaining this popularity since ever more fragmented audiences are watching films that are also increasingly mixed in terms of genres. Hindi melodramas, though, have been watched by both men and women and does not subscribe to specific genres. An alternate and more indigenously derived method to look at the melodramatic mode of Hindi cinema is to analyze it in terms of *Rasa* theory. '*Rasa*' itself means an extraction of the 'juice' or the essence of something; the term was first recorded in the *Natyashastra*, attributed to Bharata, around the second century.²⁷⁹ (Interestingly, an affect in a film often aligns with the description of a *rasa*.) In this regard, Richard Schechner's comparison between Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharata's *Natyashastra*, mentioned above, illuminates major differences between

²⁷⁷ In an interesting shift in visual analysis, Ranjani Mazumdar sees a new female consumerism as desiring of the fashions on display in the latest films.

²⁷⁸ Rosie Thomas, "Melodrama and the Negotiation of Morality", 165.

²⁷⁹ Richard Schechner, 'Rasaesthetics,' in *Theatre and Drama Review*, Vol.45; No.3 (Fall 2001), 27-50 from <http://www.jstor.org>

the idea of theatricality in western and Indian performances. Though the two performance theories parallel each other in terms of an ancient time of origin, *Poetics*, as a secular text based on logic and dramatic structure, differs from the *Natyashastra*, as a sacred text drawn from religious mythology and instructions for performance. It has been embodied by generations of performers using emotional expressions and specific gestures for movements, character types and even music. V. K. Chari notes that *Rasa* theory offers the best definition for the literary art of classical Indian writers though it is not employed as a genre term. Interestingly, he notes that the emphasis on the creation of spectacle is equal to that on verbal renditioning for the creation of *rasas*. The examples he provides in terms of the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* as engendering the pathetic and heroic *rasas* in audiences farther demonstrate the particularities of this aesthetic convention.²⁸⁰

These performance traditions have persisted and been in conversation with classical dance-drama forms such as *Odissi* or *Bharatanatyam*; even in these dance forms, facial expressions have been elaborately worked out by professionals to evoke the *rasas* of love, pathos and disgust in audiences. Schechner writes:

Rasa is sensuous, proximate, experiential. Rasa is aromatic. Rasa fills space, joining the outside to the inside. Food is actively taken into the body, becomes part of the body, works from the inside. What was outside is transformed into what is inside. An aesthetic founded on *rasa* is fundamentally different than one founded on the "theatron", the rationally ordered, analytically distanced panoptic.²⁸¹

The list of nine *rasas* includes the romantic, comic, sorrowful, violent, heroic, terrifying, repulsive, marvelous and peaceful, and broadly covers all human emotions. It is said that a *rasa* could be seen as the effect a literary work might have on the audience

²⁸⁰ V.K Achari, *Literary India: Comparative Studies in Aesthetics, Colonialism, and Culture*, edited by Patrick Colm Hogan and Lalita Pandit (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 75-76.

²⁸¹ Richard Schechner, "Rasaesthetics", 29.

or the *rasika* in whom an emotional state is engendered.²⁸² Schechner's definition of *rasa* implies a sensuousness and an ingestion or savouring in the gut, which is similar to affects as embodied feelings (as will be discussed subsequently) that are non-intellectual and distinct from what Schechner disparages as the rationally ordered all-seeing panoptic.

Due to the paucity of theoretical work on *rasas* related to popular culture, the concept of *rasa* is criticized for not providing adequate explanation. For instance, Bollywood scholar Rachel Dwyer writes that *rasa* theory does not exhaustively cover performance arts or literature or answer questions about the centrality of emotion in Hindi films.²⁸³ However, *Rasa* theory can be applied to cinema even though it is no longer only a question of actors' expressions and gestures, as it is primarily in theatre. In cinema, the range of *rasas* such as anger, disgust or marvel can be conveyed through the means of the film medium and techniques. For instance, sounds in *Dilwale* (including that of the protagonist Raj's evocative banjo tune as will be discussed) effectively conveys the *rasa* of pathos. And, beautiful yellow and green mustard fields in Punjab as part of the *mise-en-scène* evoke the *rasa* of wonder. In the choreographed scene about the London-based family revisiting Punjab, brilliant yellow mustard fields provide visually rich effects coupled with colourful ethnicity through the rural dancers who produce the vibrant song. Hence, the return to the motherland is staged quite spectacularly and beyond the scope of the narrative or actors' emotions that would have been channeled through gestures or dialogues. The colourfully choreographed dance in this scene translates *Rasa* theory quite well from theatre to the more dynamic medium of film in which there is an amplification of the feeling of awe or wonder through multiple cinematic techniques.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁸³ Rachel Dwyer, *Yash Chopra* (London: BFI Publishing, 2004), 66-67.

Further, filmic *rasas* are created according to a formula by using sound, music or mise-en-scène, as are theatrical *rasas*. Richard Schechner writes that artistically performed emotions in the *rasik* system are knowable, manageable and transmittable, like variations of recipes. By contrast, he writes, in Euro-American performances, actors play the circumstances rather than emotions, and if done right real feelings and natural emotions get displayed.²⁸⁴ Though Schechner might be overstating differences here, what is more relevant is that *rasa* theory is based on a predictable outcome that the audiences are already aware of. The process of evoking the desired response in them appears to be crucial in this aesthetic system. Hence, Indian cinema clichés and formulas can alternately be attributed to actually being *rasik* rather than being termed predictable, as they might if defined by western theory.

Thus, I suggest that Yash Chopra adopts the romantic *rasa* as a specific emotion he wants to use repeatedly, and has developed an elaborate set of romantic significations to do so. These include close-ups of the romantic couple that gives us larger than life images of their eyes; his special trademarks have been the soft focus lighting around a romantic couple and female stars wearing expensively designed chiffons or dress materials that gently blow in the breeze. An extensive courtship situation places the encounters and interactions between the romantic couple at the centre of his plot structure so that the audience can expect to see them framed in extraordinary colours and settings, and for their emotions to be demonstrated through particularly affective songs.²⁸⁵ As Patrick Hogan writes, according to *Rasa* theory there should be one primary *rasa* (for instance romance) that can be accompanied by ancillary *rasas* that are basically supportive. Hence, the audience knows at the outset what the

²⁸⁴ Richard Shechner, 27-50.

²⁸⁵ I say this based on the persistence of romance (that contrasts and plays with the affect of sorrow) as the most prevalent theme in post-independence popular Bombay films.

predominant emotion is going to be,²⁸⁶ which I argue in Yash Chopra's stories is invariably a romantic love.

Patrick Hogan, who has used *Rasa* theory for Indian film analysis, perceptively argues that scholars who are bound to Eurocentric theories are hesitant to use indigenously derived theories.²⁸⁷ His analysis of two very different films, Satyajit Ray's *The Home and the World* (1984) and Shekhar Kapur's *Bandit Queen* (1994), shows that both narratives have a prevalent *dharmik* attitude that is related to the *rasas* of both pathos and anger. The films' social ethics in both instances are the basis for why these two different *rasas* are sought to be engendered in spectators; in this instance, the attitude towards ethics is why viewers feel sympathy for victims of forced marriages or the poor who have few choices.²⁸⁸ For instance, the bloodthirstiness of the bandit queen is justified, as the harsher *rasa* of anger has been evoked for audiences who think it is perfectly ethical for her to draw blood as she was forcibly raped and victimized before she became a criminal.

Here is how I think *Rasa* theory could be used to analyze more mainstream romantic family-oriented films such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, following Hogan's example of relating *rasa* to *dharma*. The romantic *rasa* is privileged, for instance, while the comedic and pathetic play an ancillary role. Significantly the violent, heroic or terrifying *rasas* are not apparent at all. Similarly, in other recent Yash Chopra films such as *Hum Tum* and *Salaam Namaste*, the romantic *rasa* is used centrally while the comic *rasa* is mostly supportive. Additionally, the *rasas* used in *Dilwale* have a

²⁸⁶ Patrick Colm Hogan, "Rasa Theory and Dharma Theory: From *The Home and the World* to *Bandit Queen*," *Quarterly Review of Film & Video*, 20:37-52, (2003), 39.

²⁸⁷ Patrick Colm Hogan, 37.

²⁸⁸ Patrick Hogan has chosen Satyajit Ray's best-known film *The Home and the World* (1984), which is about a woman's world inside a home and the politics of the world outside of it, of which she is not allowed to be a part. The other film, *Bandit Queen*, is about the true story of a female bandit in India (who was actually killed some years ago) who goes on a rampage as the revenge against men who raped and tortured her as a vulnerable young woman.

complementarity between *dharmik* duty towards parents being obligatory in the case of Simran, the female protagonist and the *rasas* of romance and pathos. She embodies a *dharmik* duty, for instance, by suffering silently for the love interest she chose herself not knowing she was already promised to a stranger in Punjab by her father; by acting out her silent suffering she is able to evoke the *rasa* of pity in us. In all three films, however, the male protagonist is more ambiguous about his *dharmik* duty though he unequivocally upholds *dharma* in *Dilwale*, at least towards Simran who is representative of all Indian women and whose honour has to be kept. Once Raj shows us how he honours his *dharma* by not taking advantage of Simran in an inebriated state, he could evoke the *rasa* of heroism and romanticism in viewers.

Rasa theory, then, is useful to analyze how films use familiar sets of signs to call up traditional responses from audiences. It is more difficult, however, to describe what seems to be a new emotion, the desire felt for consumer goods through *rasas*—unless the spectacular *mise-en-scène* and elaborate sets can be said to evoke the *rasa* for wonder. The *adbhut* or wonder/amazement *rasa* is, however, too general a mood evoked, for it could be equally describing something supernatural or some spectacular form of nature. But, here it also must be added that the romantic protagonists who are surrounded by material goods and consumerism often act in oblivion of these; hence a glamorized *mise-en-scène* provides a setting but does not pose any challenge to the class privileges by the non-privileged. The affluence and mobility among protagonists is taken for granted as a ruling class ideology that goes uncontested and unquestioned.

The advantage of using *Rasa* theory for film is that it helps understand audience responses through a set of expressions in actors and film itself that are known to generate certain embodied reactions. I hope more nuanced work on *rasa* aesthetics is taken up in the future, as it is quite evident that Western theories are insufficient to

explain hybrid Indian aesthetics that invariably combine duties and ethics in portrayals, apart from showing divergences in both melodrama and ideas of realism in self-images.²⁸⁹

Affect Theory: A Post-Structural Approach to Reception

Film scholars would probably agree that the lack of research on *Rasa* theory limits its applicability or value as being prescriptive for Bollywood films, though its potential to describe Indian aesthetics is already apparent. On the other hand, Gilles Deleuze's theory of 'affects' within a film's narrative have been explored in more detail and also shows a significant compatibility with the idea of *rasas*. In addition, affect theory provides an alternative to structural theories, which are limited by their historical underpinnings in ideas of Western enlightenment. In film theory as in historiography, structural theories in terms of language or gender assumptions about viewers have failed to answer questions about spectators. This is similar to the failure of theories of the modern state to explain alternate paths or histories in which scientific advancement or teleological ideas of progress cannot be presumed.²⁹⁰ In tune with the changed thinking, Deleuze's own observations about postwar films show that they have less of a tendency to be driven by causality or the forward movement of time, thus changing from the movement-images of classical Hollywood cinema to the time-images that focused on experience itself rather than that of causality.²⁹¹ For example, in films where time

²⁸⁹ As Laura U. Marks suggested (in conversation), *rasas* could be looked at in sequences. In addition, the method used by Patrick Hogan in combining *rasas* and ethics could be used farther. Though Vijay Mishra has used the idea of *dharmā* as being derived from the epics, he has not elaborated on the *dharmā-rasa* relationship.

²⁹⁰ I am summarizing historiographic discussions by scholars such as Dipesh Chakrabarty here. More on the failings of modern historiography lie in the Conclusion.

²⁹¹ Amy Herzog, "Images of Thought and Acts of Creation: Deleuze, Bergson, and the Question of Cinema," in *In()Visible) Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Studies*, 3 (date): 6-18. <http://www.rochester.edu/in-visible-culture/issue3/Herzog.htm>
Amy Herzog writes about affect as a 'zone of indeterminacy'. Henri Bergson termed it as the gap between the time of perception and action that is actually filled in by intuition.

becomes shuffled, so to speak, spectators are made to work harder to keep up with the narrative, which continually jumps between periods and phases. Rather than representing a historical shift, Deleuze's thinking offers alternate theories of temporality created by the film images themselves.

Deleuze's study of affection-images by the influential cinematographers Sergei Eisenstein and D.W. Griffith was his basis for articulating ideas about the power of images to create a feeling of change in spectators. In the affection-image, the images change from showing intensity (a certain power) to showing reflection (a certain quality), with the implication of a change having occurred (in both the actor and spectator).²⁹² According to Deleuze, an affect is something expressed that does not exist independently of what expresses it but is distinct from it: for example, the face expresses an emotion, but the affect expressed by the face, a facial expression or a quality (colour, object or space) exists independently of it. A luminous white light, for instance, expresses a specific power in a shot: an actor's pallid face could evoke an anticipatory excitement in spectators – as a feeling of 'anything can happen'. There are also affects of things, such as the light on the blade of a knife inducing an affect of fear (in his example from G.W. Pabst's *Pandora's Box*); or hands or a feature of a face can be used to create any range of emotions depending on lighting, the particular shot, or gesture. Affection-images can also exist as actualized states or embodied in states of things, including in objects or people and the connections between these things. As the sensation or affect is expressed, it creates a transformation or surge of feeling in spectators.²⁹³ For instance, affects of things are used in contemporary Yash Raj Films, but less for the intention of generating fear than creating an affect of desire for

²⁹² Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1, The Movement Image* translated by Hugh and Barbara Tomlinson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 91-92.

²⁹³ Gilles Deleuze, 97.

possession and consumption. Similarly, the use of music, song or close-ups can create affects of pathos, love or desire in spectators based on shot composition or mise-en-scène. The suggestion that affects result from body-mind dissonances, or that we feel before we think, has been elaborated by scholars such as Brian Massumi. He uses cognitive science to locate affect as a momentary lapse between 'action' and 'perception' as a result of a visual or aural element registering in the body before it reaches the brain.²⁹⁴

The previous sections indicate how complicated it is to make meanings of films, while knowledge about the power of the image itself has been gaining ground with the simultaneous understanding of films being polysemous texts from which numerous meanings can be derived. Deleuze himself drew his inspiration from nineteenth-century philosopher Henri Bergson, from whom he derived the idea that film as a medium possessed its own philosophy, or, that film was an ideal medium for a philosophy of movement and time.²⁹⁵ In addition, Deleuze acknowledges ideas from seventeenth-century philosopher Baruch Spinoza, in the theory of the passions he developed in his *Ethics*. Spinoza attempted to show varieties of joy, sadness and desire that moved people differently at different times, so that even the same person was differently affected at different times by the same emotions. He also distinguished between what he called active and passive affects, saying that active affects like joy and desire drive us to initiate action, compared with the passive affect of sadness. Most significant for

²⁹⁴ Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," in *Parables of the Virtual* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 29-36.

²⁹⁵ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* translated by N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1994), Ch.3. In addition, Bergson showed a basic distrust of language based on his thesis about the limited perception of humans, who are only able to see and discern a very small fraction of movements as they are unaware of anything but the images of things (being completely divorced from the internal histories of things). He thus separated a sense of perception from the idea of intuition.

²⁹⁵ Baruch Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza* vol. 1 edited/translated by Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), IIIp9s.

this chapter, though, is Spinoza's analysis that the affect of desire makes us judge something as good or bad, thus attributing a sense of morality to what it is we really desire.²⁹⁶ Spinoza argued that affect gave rise to judgment; in the following, when I write "affects of" something (romance, consumerism, etc.) I mean the surge of feeling created by an affection-image, which is then reterritorialized or "judged" as an emotion or a particular meaning.

Newer and changed cinematic affects in mainstream narratives appear to intersect with the discourse of Indianness being argued in Chapter 1, and provide the means to understand Bollywood's changing constructions of Indian identity. In this respect, Spinoza's philosophy for reading desires show that popular film-makers' notions of 'good' and 'bad' are really expressions of the desire to make these judgments in constructions of Indianness that still help articulate a national identity. This is how tradition and patriotism are treated as 'good' in the 1950s and 1960s films, since there is a desire driving the notion that Indianness was embodied in distinctive cultural traditions that were very different from British traditions; conversely, villains represented an unholy desire that flouted Indian tradition by symbolic gestures of womanizing, consuming alcohol or gambling and were construed as 'evil' or anti-national and foreign. For a newly independent nation, the need to represent Indians as embodying modesty, fidelity and abstinence from vice was driven by the desire to present these as defining and innately Indian values. Hence, films of this earlier period tended to focus on mother figures and villains as two ends of the morality spectrum who embodied the national 'good' and 'bad' respectively.²⁹⁷ The mother stood for Mother India and Mother Earth, showing the connection between nationalism, Indian femininity and the good Hindu wife.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Rosie Thomas, "Melodrama and the Negotiation of Morality," 165. The mother figure is based on Sita, the pure and undefilable wife of Ram in the *Ramayana*, while the villain is typically based on Ravana, the immoral and corrupt king of Lanka who abducted Sita.

The character of the “suffering woman” itself was derived from her sacrificial nature and unquestionable love for her son (the new Indian citizen). Because her position was so symbolic of nation and nationalism, this also meant that mother’s “sexuality must be firmly controlled,” writes Rosie Thomas; she points out how the Hindi film text never allowed the mother to be raped, as she had been placed outside the realms of sexual desire.²⁹⁸

When the affect of desire is related to an image, the significance of Deleuze’s film theory becomes clearer as it becomes apparent that films themselves are more than just representations of socio-historical realities. They can be seen as assemblages of images that are drawn from a world of images in flux, writes Amy Herzog.²⁹⁹ By this, she means that the new time-images work as images that provoke thought and can themselves create new concepts.³⁰⁰ (though these can quickly become clichés—as Indian cinema shows) The affects of classic Indian cinema arose from an overarching reliance on pathos and romance.³⁰¹ New Hindi films are still affective, but the use of affect seems to be changing to more commodified styles of songs and choreography as well as costumes and mise-en-scène. Bollywood films of 1990s that manufacture a new Indianness though these new images of desire are selectively chosen from a changing historical time in India. But, as David Martin-Jones notes mainstream Bollywood films show a tendency to be both movement-images and time-images, in that narratives are still driven by causality, but also show departures from linearity in songs and

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 167.

²⁹⁹ Amy Herzog, 17-18.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Mehboob Khan’s famous *Mother India* (1957) had several arresting and affective images of the central female character beaten by circumstance and misfortune. One particularly arresting image is of the actor Nargis Dutt terribly weighed down by the heavy and unwieldy plough (as she is left without even a pair of bullocks), which she desperately drags through the fields that she is trying to plough.

choreography that break the flow of time.³⁰² Newer affects have changed the surface signifiers in contemporary films in order to create more aestheticized spaces that evoke desire.

In the context of globalization, the images being currently manufactured are competing with incoming foreign films that have flooded the market, as well as an array of contemporary global programs provided by Satellite TV. Spectacular imagery of luxury goods, appliances and hi-rise buildings in these global broadcasts has arguably challenged Indian film-makers to produce some of the same material culture. Hence, some of the change in Indian imagery has been inspired by a wish to compete with a Western postmodern aesthetic that privileges materialism and the object-world of late capitalism. While the earlier films consciously sought to create what they thought were preferred Indian images that were starkly different from colonial forms, the new identity constructions seek to reduce differences and emulate international commodities, dress and appearances as the result of a globalization of world cultures. The class aspect of globalization is evident in characters' as jet set lifestyles and shots of them travelling overseas or being within comfortable aesthetic spaces of expensive homes. These are also spaces where people do not have to deal with Indian realities of crowded streets and chaos. These new images would also appeal to a diaspora that prefers a globalized and more affluent-looking India.

The following example illustrates the changed aesthetics and also highlights changing characterizations: Yash Chopra's *Hum Tum/ Me and You* (2004) begins with parallel edits in the opening scene of the film, in which an interesting divergence in the characterization of Indian mothers occurs. The relatively cosmopolitan-looking mother of the young male protagonist is contrasted sharply with the female protagonist's mother,

³⁰² David Martin-Jones, "Towards Another Image: Deleuze, Narrative Time and Popular Indian Cinema," *Deleuze Studies*, forthcoming issue of June 2008, manuscript page 30.

who is more obviously traditionally Punjabi; the latter mother wears the traditional *salwar kameez* and insists on performing an almost ridiculous Hindu *puja* at the Bombay airport while bidding her daughter farewell. Viewers are made to empathically share the point-of-view of the on looking trendy Indian family comprised of the cosmopolitan Indian mother (who happens to be a wedding planner) and her two sons, the younger of whom will coincidentally take the same flight to New York as the daughter of the caricatured Indian mother. Apart from the romantic plot, this scene in *Hum Tum* seems to become a discussion about 'being Indian' in a global age, with the suggestion, farther into the plot, that there is more than one way to achieve this.³⁰³ The trendy characters represent the "aspirational consumerism" referred to in Chapter One as the mobile, affluent and global citizens. Their lifestyle is 'cool' and they have achieved much as a family, despite the absence of the father who lives separately in Paris as a commercial photographer and has been portrayed as a lovable degenerate. The trendy mother affords herself a complete life by straddling both public and private spheres, although she is silent about her bad marriage. As the narrative develops, however, the more traditional Indianness (language/religion symbols) is validated by showing how much strength and wisdom the girl's more traditional mother reveals, despite the fact that she continues to act out a caricatured form of Indian femininity (mainly through her thick Punjabi accent).

In addition, traditionalism has been transferred to her conscientious daughter, albeit in a trendier way. The younger woman is shown as simultaneously modest and prayerful and embodies a more global identity in her preference for organic food and gender equality. A tension is established between her Indianness and the casually flirtatious male protagonist (the *adharmik* Indian male) who embodies cosmopolitanism with his carefully ruffled hairstyle, irreverence and laid-back persona. He is a successful

³⁰³ *Hum Tum/Me and You* (2004) produced by Yash Chopra features protagonists travelling and living in Bombay, New York, and Paris in a truly transnational sense.

cartoonist, producing a boy-girl rivalry series that draws thousands of Indian readers. The young woman becomes a successful fashion designer (another fancy career), but their competing forms of Indianness point to different paths, and strongly suggests that hers is superior. She represents the Indian male's salvation by her clean image, but has revamped her 'woman as nation' look by appropriating some western habits. But, the tofu-eating, non-smoking female protagonist does not criticize conspicuous consumption and is actually fully engaged with it herself.

Like the changed maternal affect, there is a huge reduction in the scope of the patriarchal affect that previously served to inhibit female mobility even in *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*. Compared to that narrative, later Yash Raj films have softened or altered the patriarch, or as is the case of *Hum Tum* or *Salam Namaste*, removed the patriarchal affect (along with the father) altogether. This reduces the tension that was traditionally created by a patriarchal authority who served to repress female protagonists, typically daughters, who had to suffer their fathers' control. With the alterations both of the maternal affect, with its moralistic effect, and patriarchal control, Bollywood families have been re-projected as being contemporary but still family-oriented in terms of filial duties.

Bollywood songs and music, which are the most prominent affects, have been revamped to create more spectacle and movement than ever before. The songs allow otherwise inexpressible emotions and desires to be relayed and for spectators to be acutely affected by the sounds and music. For instance, the affects in *Dilwale* include Raj's banjo, which he uses to play the signature tune of the film that is familiar to Simran; she hears the sound despite great distances separating them and is able to sense his presence, quite uncannily. A semiotic analysis would say the sound of the banjo connotes pure fantasy, but outside of the intellectual realm, it contains an affective

power ('something is going to happen'). Massumi's *Deleuzian* argument that affect is an intensity that occurs without mental reflection, makes it easier to understand spectatorial visceral response to the sad sound of Raj's banjo. Spectators also know that Raj's banjo-playing is his unspoken expression of love for Simran, and this explains our responses in terms of excitement and anticipation and empathy on hearing the familiar tune; whereas once there has been a mutual acknowledgment of their feelings, the banjo ceases to have affective power and is abandoned by the film.

While the banjo-playing is one sort of musical affect, *Dilwale's* songs have been extremely popular too. In a BBC Asian Network survey, reviewers from the UK, Australia, the U.S.A., Canada, and the U.A.E. have talked about *Dilwale's* effects as ranging from the magical, to being about Indian heritage, to claiming that the acting in it was "straight from the heart".³⁰⁴ Apparently, viewers were strongly impressed by the elements and the mise-en-scène in this film that not only produced a beautifully ethnic and clean India (sans poverty and grime), but also dealt with the diaspora's needs for being Indian abroad. Interestingly, many of the reviewers do not appear to have made the distinction between the film's rating and its music, but see it as one whole, which again demonstrates the effectiveness of music and songs in Bollywood melodrama.³⁰⁵ The music and song move the narrative forward in scenes related to the revisiting of Punjab and the feelings of pathos by both Simran and Raj when they are separated from each other by families and physical distance. While songs and choreography are much-used affects in Bollywood, their staging is more elaborate, especially in the scenes

³⁰⁴ BBC Asian Network online, 'Top 40 Songs' http://www.bbc.co.uk/asiannetwork/presenters/top40_soundtracks_not.shtml (accessed on March 27, 2007). Interestingly, all seven songs in this major blockbuster have magical elements in them in terms of imagining the impossible and have evoked a huge response and probably played a big part in the film's success; the soundtrack of *Dilwale* is still the most highly rated.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

related to Punjab where colourfully coordinated and ethnically dressed dancers welcome the diasporic family that has not returned home for more than 20 years.³⁰⁶

Perhaps, most of all, the decision to commoditize songs demonstrates that they are Hindi films' strongest affect as demonstrated above. In addition, in *Hum Tum*, the philandering diasporic father of the main character sings *Mein Shayar to Nahin/I'm No Poet*, surrounded by a group of non-Indians at the Paris airport who enthusiastically applaud his singing. This selling of Indian romanticism itself is possibly meant to appeal to the diaspora viewers in the same way as it is received by enthusiastic non-Indians in the scene. For habitual Bollywood viewers, film songs could invoke past memories (especially as this is a re-make of an old song), a rapidly disappearing Urdu culture and the *dil* or heart of films themselves. But songs now cost a huge portion of the film's expense (up to half) and music composers are paid as highly as film stars are. New devices to make songs ever more visually extravagant and it has become a common strategy to aggressively market them prior to a release.³⁰⁷ Other instances of the apparent selling of the idea of Indian romance to non-Indians and diasporic viewers include the already mentioned wedding scenes with conspicuous details about Hindu wedding rituals, including ceremonial Punjabi songs and the ladies-only *henna* ceremony. In all these scenes, the differences of what is being manufactured as cinematic Indianness are what is saleable today.

As Vijay Mishra has argued, *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* has become a seminal text about the re-projection of the diaspora as seen by Bollywood. The success of the film is linked to this re-projection, which is achieved by internalizing the diaspora in

³⁰⁶ The song *Ghar Aa Ja Pardesi/Come Home Foreigner* is festive, voluble and majestically staged in golden fields of an idealized Punjab.

³⁰⁷ Madhu Jain, 'Bollywood: Next Generation' in *Bollywood: Popular Indian Cinema* edited by Lalit Mohan Joshi (London: Dakini, 2002). Madhu Jain writes that song picturization has become ever more elaborate and that several of the film industry's newer directors are entering Bollywood from the fields of advertising and music.

the narrative and constructing certain “truths” towards which the diaspora aspires. The homeland, for instance, is projected as the real place of belonging for the diaspora, which effectively reterritorializes them.³⁰⁸ Desire for the homeland is an affect constructed through *Dilwale’s* imagining of a beautiful and colourful Punjab that is chosen to represent India since the families in the films are predominantly Punjabi themselves.³⁰⁹ Viewers are also given a spectacular Punjab in terms of bright yellow mustard fields and beautiful rusticity sans the grime and poverty that is excised from the film text.³¹⁰ In addition, the audience is fed on fixed Indian practices including the annual *Karva Chauth* ritual of fasting by Hindu wives for the health and well-being of their husbands. (When Simran fasts for Raj, who is not her husband but her preferred choice, she is able to sanctify her love and gain empathy from viewers too).

The affects of Hindu rituals and constructions of an idyllic Punjab that evoke longing, nostalgia and pride, are part of a trend in film-making that favours North India, Punjabis and Hinduism as being representative of a cosmopolitan and successful Indianness.³¹¹ The myth of the ‘return to the homeland’ in India is reduced in subsequent films, which demonstrate a fluidity among global Indians who are not restricted in their movements but keep coming and leaving India as they please.³¹² Certainly, *Dilwale’s* uniform success in India and amongst the diaspora could be based

³⁰⁸ Vijay Mishra, 250.

³⁰⁹ In addition, Punjabis have always been a large group among the Indian diasporas in the UK and North America.

³¹⁰ Vijay Mishra., 250.

³¹¹ Interestingly too, there has been a ‘Punjabification’ in Bollywood the results of which are more visible of late as a handful of Punjabi film-makers are more prominent of late. Until the partition, there were still non-Punjabis in the film industry but after 1947 there was suddenly a concentration of Punjabis. See Rachel Dwyer’s *Yash Chopra* (New Delhi: Lotus Collection/Roli Books, 2002), 37.

³¹² It is, in fact, a myth of return as the circumstances of immigration to North America and the UK have changed dramatically since 1965. With immigrants now allowed to have families with them and also pursue lives abroad in the sense of education and professions, the older generations are less likely to return to the homeland as they would want to stay and grow old closer to their sons and daughters growing up in Toronto, New York or London.

cultures and redefine the romance. It is apparent through their names and families that they generally represent other North Indian affluent Hindu couples going through the motions of romance and international professions and aspirations. In addition, they show a newer understanding about romantic engagements, sexual relationships and the need for communication between a romantic couple that goes beyond a sense of duty, ethics or *dharma*. At the same time, extended families are re-integrated into these new romantic relationships demonstrating a new camaraderie and reduction of the generation gap between parents and their children.

While narratives have rearticulated romance and its opposite affect of pathos, there are other affects can be read in terms of the 'silences' in the films as well as the affects of 'arresting images', colours and mise-en-scène that are also significant when reading the films. These are affects that are less likely to be recoded in the narrative as emotions or meanings.³²² Firstly, the 'silences' about non-Hindu, less affluent and non-Hindi speaking characters can be read as deliberate absences as such characters might not embody the films' aspirational Indianness. So, in *Hum Tum*, for instance, the hegemonic representations of affluent North Indian Hindus can be seen as those that are desirable at this moment. To extend this argument farther, the films might also demonstrate how a basically Hindu culture responds to extensive technology transfers that have affected Bollywood's own adoption of MTV-style editing and choreography. By doing so, the film's absences suggest that other less savvy and less affluent non-Hindu characters are dispensable in constructing the new global Indianness. The absence, though, is reversed in Yash Chopra's *Chak de India/Go for It India* (2007), with its patriotic and anti-parochial message that the new Indianness will come from

³²² Scholars who have contributed to affect theory and its application to cinema include Brian Massumi, Amy Herzog, Laura U. Marks and Barbara Klinger, although the latter two deal with art or experimental cinema where affects are used very differently to what is seen in Bollywood cinema.

successful and united young women from all castes, regions and religions, here competing internationally in the field of sports. Though this film becomes an exception to the changes seen in other recent Yash Chopra films, it places the onus of new Indianness on Indian women. The film's representation of female athletes is significant as the old strategy of women embodying Indianness has produced a different outcome, but also reveals how problematic it is for women to straddle the inner and outer realms simultaneously. They must necessarily be winners in their field of international hockey contests in order to be seriously considered at all. Though 'nation' has made a return in this film, which fared much better in India than outside it, it is now embodied by feisty female sports players while the Indian state is represented through officials who are bureaucratic, fumbling and ineffectual.³²³ In addition, the parallel story about the Muslim Indian coach who trains the young women, shows that he must necessarily prove his patriotism to the country before he can represent Indianness. This form of representation itself is linked to the less discussed trauma of India's partition, which has not been dealt with in this thesis.³²⁴

From the discussions above, it appears that cinematic affects have a major impact on audiences that could override language or cultural differences too. The idea that those moments of affect caused in spectators are literally overfull or in excess of what is actually being performed or its ascribed meaning, does suggest that a diversity of responses can be generated with various images.³²⁵

³²³ Yash Chopra's *Chak de India/Go for it India* (2007).

³²⁴ The creation of Pakistan itself was mentioned in footnote 156 on page 48 of Chapter One.

³²⁵ Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect", 29-36. Massumi writes: "It is the perception of this self-perception, its naming and making conscious, that allows affect to be effectively analyzed – as long a vocabulary can be found for that which is imperceptible but whose escape from perception cannot but be perceived, as long as one is alive."

The affective mise-en-scène and costumes of the fashionably dressed diasporic actors may add nothing to an understanding of the story itself, but give rise to other cinematic affects that drive desires in spectators. The fact that Bollywood stars wear global fashions and appear completely cosmopolitan would also tell us that this desire for consumption of luxury goods and upscale fashions is 'good' as the characters consuming them in the narratives have already been identified as emulatable Indians. In fact, international designer clothes, luxurious mise-en-scène and trendy actors are an integral part of the success of any blockbuster Bollywood film today.

Much like models out of shopping catalogues or TV ads for beauty products sold through scintillating female poses, the new films mine the scopophilia in Bollywood audiences, which is by no means limited to the notion of a voyeuristic 'male gaze,' but works on the reality that spectators today are accustomed to a range of visual pleasures. In a demonstration of this multiplicity of 'gazes,' Ranjani Mazumdar argues that a "desiring female subjectivity" has been introduced in contemporary films; female characters are dressed in designer fashions from Europe and India, change costumes frequently, and allow the gaze of spectators, what has become highly distracted due to the speed of the new narratives, to go window shopping.³²⁶ While it cannot be presumed that the window-shopping experience is directed at women alone, it is certain that the new sexuality they project on screen is a source of anxiety for the nationalist discourse even as it is an expression of Indian modernity.³²⁷ Ultimately, personal experiences generate a unique set of associations in a textual encounter; each is drawn from a

³²⁶ Ranjani Mazumdar, *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City* (Permanent Black: New Delhi, 2007), 93-109.

³²⁷ Shohini Ghosh, "The Troubled Existence of Sex and Sexuality: Feminists Engage with Censorship" in *Image Journeys* ed. Christiane Brosius and Melissa Butcher, (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1999) 233-259.

Shohini Ghosh writes about the fear among authorities that young women might start imitating the style of dress and morals that appear on screen. A spiral of moral panics resulted in a memorandum being issued to address the need for a "code of decency".

particular discursive environment so that the film text is mediated by social, cultural and ideological contexts.³²⁸ A viewer is a storehouse of images as well as an embodiment of personal history that can be potentially activated during reception. Though Bollywood films construct a conflicted form of Indian modernity, they have wide acceptance for reasons that may range from cultural loss, to the familiarity of Indian poetics and value systems, to a newfound curiosity among second-generation diaspora members wanting to understand Indian culture.

I wrote above that the affective *mise-en-scène* and costumes of the fashionably dressed diasporic characters may add nothing to an understanding of the story itself, but stand for their own spectacle values. In addition, the films evoke an active desire for the consumption of luxury goods and upscale fashions that is deemed 'good' as the characters consuming them in the narratives have already been identified as inherently good Indians in the sense of holding basically conservative values. The redefined 'love affect' in diasporic films shows love as the pursuit of happiness being associated increasingly with hedonistic pleasures, compared with the *dard* or pain associated with it previously.³²⁹ According to Jyotika Viridi, the trope of love enables transgression (against patriarchy) and transformation, as well as an assertion of individualism in the new films that still constitute the 'family' romance genre.³³⁰

Commodification of Affects in Bollywood

The shifting of themes towards what Jyotika Viridi argues is both a "romanticization of commodities" and a "commodification of romance" is quite obvious in

³²⁸ This analysis is drawn from Barbara Klinger's study of 'arresting' images in *The Piano* in which she has analyzed her own responses to this artistically made film.

³²⁹ Jyotika Viridi, 200. The tradition of *dard* or pain itself can be traced back to nineteenth-century Urdu poetry.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

post-1990s films.³³¹ Like others, she sees a shift in contemporary films to middle-class values and a new focus on the market as a site of plentitude and “unlimited consumption.”³³² Interestingly, she posits a penetration of film romance by the market that becomes a visual utopia of affluence, glamour and leisure that encourages a certain individualism linked with late capitalism. The mise-en-scène of the 1990s films is packed with luxury goods including fast cars, water scooters and shopping arcades that were not present in earlier narratives.³³³ Luxurious homes, even in *Dilwale's* rural setting, seem to have become an integral component for new romantic encounters in Yash Chopra's *Hum Tum* and *Veer Zara* as well. Ashish Rajadhyaksha calls the emphasis on luxury and comfort goods a “feel good” materialism that could alternately be called “commodified affects” in the latest Yash Chopra films.³³⁴

Though Bollywood melodrama operates on distinctive aesthetic principles, this does not preclude Hollywood's substantial influence on Hindi film producers. The adoption of continuity editing to make films appear seamless between musical numbers and narrative scenes are two obvious measures that are inspired by Hollywood methods. More recently, MTV editing, fashions and choreography have been appropriated for film songs striving to establish a ‘cool’ cosmopolitanism, although there is always a noticeable hybridity in these attempts.³³⁵ What really stands out, though, is the commercialization of both globally desirable commodities and a translated ethnicity through which ethnic clothes have become the products of urban designers rather than the rustic places they originated from. The commodification of culture is apparent in

³³¹ Ibid., 202.

³³² Ibid., 201.

³³³ Ibid., 202-203.

³³⁴ Ashish Rajadhyaksha, “The Bollywoodization of Indian Cinema”, 25-39.

³³⁵ The music for Yash Chopra's films is increasingly being produced at overseas studios while the elements of club music and hip-hop along with the latest *bhangra* beats have, in fact, been developed in the UK Indian diaspora.

Bollywood wedding songs that now appear like glossy advertisements for bridal clothes and jewellery and are used, in fact, to showcase designer wedding clothes to the diaspora.³³⁶ Boutiques abroad often market Bollywood clothes or their look-alikes to their clients while customers have also placed orders directly in India to possess clothes worn by favourite film stars who embody a preferred cosmopolitan Indianness.³³⁷

While none of the older affects of romance, the family, the mother figure, suffering or pathos and a more authentic ethnicity have been lost, it is quite apparent that they have all been transformed by global capital. For instance, previously family was presented as an institution that often separated and came between lovers in earlier Yash Chopra films such as *Kabhie Kabhie/Sometimes* (1976); this is repeated in his 1995 blockbuster *Dilwale*, though other films between 1995 and 2005 show a fully supportive family that enables rather than disables individuals by providing them with material wealth and choices. In fact, in transnational narratives, the affluent family is often a haven, a veritable 'inside' against the cruel 'outside,' though there are exceptions to this depiction too.³³⁸ Similarly, the maternal affect represented by the mother figure shows alteration to accommodate the increasingly designer-clothed and sexualized female star and the need to reduce her contrasting image with the white sari-clad moralistic mother of the past. Suffering is still used as an affect, but without its previous associations with homelessness and economic poverty, it loses the sharpness of misery

³³⁶ Aswin Punathambekar, 'Bollywood in the Indian American Diaspora' in *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Sage Publications: New Delhi/London/Thousand Oaks, Vol.8 (2):165.

As stated in the Introduction to this thesis, it has become common to have fashions advertised through Bollywood films and for diasporic women to want to possess clothes like those worn by the film stars as Aswin Punanathambekar's own research reveals.

³³⁷ Bruce Constantineau, *The Vancouver Sun*, March 30, 2006.

The article talks about the influence of Bollywood on clothing and says that Bollywood-inspired couture will be available at 'Crossover Bollywood Se' at Main St, Vancouver. The store is the latest in a line-up of Main Street boutiques that have sold Bollywood-like fashions for several years.

³³⁸ *Salaam Namaste* has removed the Indian family entirely in order to facilitate the central couple's relationship and give them a chance to develop their own live-in relationship.

in past films. Pathos, for instance, is still an affect in Yash Chopra films, but its effect has been diluted somewhat due to a highly visible commodity culture that seems to take the edge off misery. (There are exceptions to this rule that show a gradual diversification of the romantic family drama itself).³³⁹ Even in the third and most lavish re-make of *Devdas* (2003) by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, for instance, the eternally popular story of the suffering Devdas and his unfulfilled love for Paro (who has been married off to another), seems to highlight material affects including riveting sets and lavish costumes over the plot structure. These affects entirely rival the affect of pathos that is embedded in the tragic story of star-crossed lovers and indicates that the value of the commodified affects of ethnicity has had a big impact.³⁴⁰ Significantly, *Devdas* is another film that fared much better overseas than it did in India, which indicates that the diaspora may appreciate commodified Indian ethnicity more than Indian audiences do.³⁴¹ Designer affects in terms of the art decoration, interiors, and costumes both cosmopolitan and ethnic are very central to the new Yash Chopra-style films and have been mimicked by other film-makers catering to metropolitan and diasporic markets.

Lastly, the affect of 'Hinduness' appears more prominently, as filmmakers have become preoccupied with Hindu wedding rituals and other ceremonies that they might have focused on for colour and 'ethnicity' and occasional references to nationalism. Post-colonial films, generally, in past decades also assumed 'Hinduness' to be normative, but made some token efforts at including Muslim and Christian Indians in

³³⁹ As pointed out by film scholar/ historian Ravi Vasudevan, (in conversation), Karan Johar's film *Kabhie Alvida Na Kehna/ Never Say Goodbye* (2007) is an angst-ridden film that, far from having the happy romantic solutions of other Yash Chopra films, shows a number of new tensions including a new element of pathos, and the reappearance of a patriarchal affect (though it can hardly be called threatening as was the case before) that defies generalizations made above.

³⁴⁰ Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Devdas* (2002) repeated the story of tragic love that has been made twice before in 1935 by P C Baruah and in 1955 by Bimal Roy. What was definitely new was the stunning photography, sets and costumes that made this version the most expensive Hindi film ever made. The cost was reported to be Rs. 50 crore or approx. \$12.5 million.

³⁴¹ Box Office India.com figures accessed online show that the film was accorded blockbuster status according to composite overseas figures but did not do as well in India.

their narratives. Moreover, they included a representation of lower social classes that made for a more pluralistic representation than the present affluent middle-class films by Yash Chopra indicate. (exceptions are *Veer Zaara/Brave Zaara* (2004) and *Chak de India/Go for It India* (2007). *Veer Zaara*, for instance, is an Indian/Pakistani cross border romance that creates a nostalgia for pre-partitioned India. In terms of aesthetic conventions, though, it recreates a really beautiful Indian countryside and a splendid feudal-style home and costumes for Zaara, the Pakistani female protagonist. What does get revealed in this Hindu/Muslim encounter is India's suggested superiority in terms of its cultural pluralism compared with Pakistan's feudal and rigidly Islamic values. Yash Chopra does pay occasional tribute to the national-secular myth in films with his own signature, but this may not be true of the younger Bollywood film-makers directing either Chopra's films or their own today.³⁴²

In terms of having changed past portrayals, the preferred cinematic affects used in the 1990s films have meant a major revamping of self-images to manufacture an idealized global Indianness, as has been seen. This Indianness completely changes the 1950s neorealistic self-images chosen by film-makers who felt that authentic national identities could be constructed from the "truths" of India's poverty and suffering rural masses. By contrast, 1990s representations of urban elitist identities in popular cinema suggest that well-heeled global Indians represent national identity the best in an age of late capitalism and transnational competitions, in which India has found a prominent place. The lack of other representations, hence, is a conscious and deliberate choice, while cosmopolitan Indianness itself suggests that India has arrived and does not lag behind other national identities. In fact, the differences being marketed as commodified

³⁴² Yash Chopra's son Aditya Chopra, for instance, uses a monolithic Hindu identity more than his father does in *Dilwale*. Similarly, Karan Johar who acknowledges the influence of Yash Chopra's style in his own films is less concerned with the need to appear secular in his own films including *Kabhie Khushi Kabhie Gam* (2001) and *Kabhie Al Vida Na Kehena* (2006) that have plenty of Hindu ritual.

forms of Indianness makes it seem like “being Indian” in the present age is both desirable and profitable.³⁴³

An analysis of the emerging discourse of Indianness in Bollywood films will conclude this study in the final section.

³⁴³ Indrani Rajkhowa Bannerjee, “Hey India, how goes at 60?” in *The Times of India*, August 12, 2007. This writer claims India is not only selling the traditional Indianness but a new form that is as international as any giving the distinct sense that “India has arrived”.

Conclusion: The Discourse of Indianness: Suspended Between Globalization and Decolonization

The preceding discussions establish the fact that Indianness is in a state of major transformation due to massive changes in India's political economy, which is now well incorporated into systems of global capitalism. India's integration into international markets has created unprecedented material aspirations in a huge new bourgeoisie that straddles a variety of new subclasses and subcultures with differing attitudes to identity. So, when Bollywood films started portraying a successful émigré lifestyle, they were actually representing real social transformations that were the cumulative result of post-war emigration and globalization. The new post-national cinematic Indianness is not contained by political boundaries or ideas of nativist cultures alone, but shows multiple influences including a new investment in production technologies, design and a changed film industry itself. As was argued in Chapter One, consumerism in India may have become easier to legitimize through the diasporic precedent. Audiences could construe the idea that the new materialism was, in fact, some acknowledgment of the diaspora's hard work abroad as well as India's newfound status as a desiring and desirable consumer market. Hence, though the latest Bollywood narratives have excised poorer Indians, their representations of the small minority of rich Indians, though exaggerated, also reflect an actual phenomenon. It is apparent, too, that big-budget Bollywood films are at least partly reflective of a globalizing film industry that caters to and represents the Indian bourgeoisie more directly than ever before. In addition, of course, the films exercise the power of the medium and the film-makers' own particular visions and

preferences for manufacturing contemporary Indianness. This section will analyze the outcomes of Chapters One and Two in order to assess how Bollywood's narratives relate to the discourse of Indian identity in an age of global capitalism.

As Chapter One demonstrates, the need to define Indianness has always been an imperative of the decolonizing society in India; in fact, the need to define an authentic Indian aesthetic and culture was acutely felt by the small elite group of post-colonials who established the Indian government in 1947. The difficulty for these Indian leaders, however, was partly their own embarrassment at having been dominated by non-Indians for centuries so that it became problematic for them to pinpoint cultural authenticity with any certainty. India's diversity had certainly been partly created by incoming settlers and colonizers. If, India was considered really Indian only when Hindu culture was the norm, (before India was invaded by the Muslims or the British), this would have meant treating other religious minorities as outsiders. This was contrary to the nationalist secularist government that was determined to establish India's pluralism in the context of the bloody partition during which, though millions of Muslims left India to live in the newly created Pakistan, many millions also opted to stay. Additionally, the general anglicization of elite Indians and their balking at popular culture reveals the typical predicament of Frantz Fanon's yet-to-be-decolonized nationals for whom all emulatable standards came from the West.³⁴⁴ The modernizing agenda of the nationalist leaders was similar to the sort of post-independence nationalism in several Third World countries in Africa and Asia, which has caused Aijaz Ahmad to refer to the period from 1945 to

³⁴⁴ As someone who has grown up in India, I am privy to the sentiments held by anglicized middle-class Indians including myself. Interestingly, this attitude has begun changing over the past five to ten years as Bollywood's reach and representations have changed. The reference to Frantz Fanon is based on his trenchant view on the decolonization of culture that necessarily went through the humiliating phases of a slavish imitation, an anti-colonial nationalist response and finally a more revolutionary attitude to producing indigenous and native art, culture and aesthetics. For more details, read Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Great Britain: Penguin, 1963), 166-190.

1975 as the “high point of decolonization.”³⁴⁵ However, like others, Ahmad also writes that many of these same societies viewed their countries as failed states by the 1970s, when nation states had failed to deliver promises of indigenous progress and prosperity; the following period was marked by socio-political crises until the late 1980s, when global capitalism marked yet another historical shift.³⁴⁶ In a wider sense then, India’s trajectory has been similar to that of other Third World countries. The difference is that it was able to customize its own democracy, even though the Indian democratic process has hardly been successful enough for the majority of Indians. However, the middle-class appears to have reached a critical size, and has been able to effectively transform India’s economy in a way that the nation state was never able to. These transformations have played a huge part in contemporary Bollywood constructions of Indianness.

The related question of what cultural aesthetics are appropriate for decolonizing societies trying to change representations of Indianness continue to be problematic, though evidently there is no doubt about the fact that middle-class representations have become the most prominent. Though the Congress-Nehru modernizing agenda had a significant impact on mainstream cinema’s representations, films equally borrowed and adapted Hollywood aesthetics, as well as appropriating older classical and folk art and theatre conventions, such as music and dance, into narratives that were quite unique. As I have discussed, Indian melodrama invariably uses family to represent a microcosm of society; India’s still recent post-coloniality accounts for why even middle-class women, who tend to be restricted by the closed structure of melodrama, are farther confined by their status as embattled figures of nation. The spectatorial anxiety female characters cause by having to be simultaneously modern and traditional in narratives that reflect a male-dominated view of the world is still very much a characteristic of the 1990s films.

³⁴⁵ Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (New York, London: Verso, 1992), 39.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 39-42.

The outcomes of the narratives also still tend sharply towards definite closure with little scope for ambiguity, though new thematics are being inserted into the older romance melodrama format.³⁴⁷ The effect of the new narratives, writes Valentina Vitali, is to 'traditionalize' modernity, which is achieved by enclosing modern Hindi cinema's female protagonists within the spaces of the affluent Hindu family.³⁴⁸ Bollywood scholars such as Vitali and Patricia Uberoi note the restrictive/conservative outcomes of new films, while Jyotika Viridi's re-reading of romance focuses on the aspect of both commodification and some individual agency that appears in the new films.³⁴⁹

I have argued that the new discourse of Indianness is situated between the continuing decolonization within Indian culture and changes wrought by globalization and a new connection to the overseas diaspora. My analysis reveals that contemporary narratives are preoccupied with conspicuous consumption for the middle-class and global Indian bourgeoisie, which is channelled through the conventions of Indian melodrama, including its affective songs and choreography and star-driven stories. In addition, the fact that diasporic families are the site upon which all the discourse takes place, reveals the expanded terrain of Indianness and the reterritorialization of the diaspora so that India actually seems geographically larger than it really is.³⁵⁰ So, it is not surprising if contemporary Bollywood films have manufactured a new Indianness that establishes affluent, happy middle-class (Hindu) protagonists as the dominant characters of this time. The tendency and the confidence of the films to naturalize this

³⁴⁷ An example is Karan Johar's *Kabhie Alvida Na Kehena/Never Say Goodbye* (2007) where despite the novel treatment of sexual adultery, which is significantly located in Indian families abroad, the narrative closes with clean endings of marriages and the forging of new man-woman relationships.

³⁴⁸ Valentina Vitali, "The Families of Hindi Cinema: A Sociohistorical Approach to Film Studies" in *Framework, the Journal of Cinema and Media*, no. 42, 2000 accessed on Feb. 25, 2008. <http://www.frameworkonline.com/42vv.htm>

³⁴⁹ Patricia Uberoi, "The diaspora comes Home: Disciplining Desire in DDLJ" in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 32:2, (1998), 305-336; Jyotika Viridi, Re-reading Romance in *The Cinematic ImagiNation*, 200-203.

³⁵⁰ Chapter One, section on 'How Globalization Brought the Diaspora Back'.

sort of wish-fulfilling bourgeois narrative, has been enabled by the parallel and intersecting influences of religion, consumerism and diasporic influence that have converged on the site of Indianness today. The insertion of the diaspora into discussions of Indianness is a very significant change in how Indian identity is being manufactured, as it shows the power of Bollywood's new transnational affiliations. In fact, it was the diaspora's growth, and the fact that the diaspora is becoming increasingly important as a significant site for the consumption of big-budget Bollywood productions, that compelled me to undertake this research. What has been established is the fact that the Indian middle-class-diaspora nexus is driving Bollywood revenues higher, as specific big-budget films are being produced with just these audiences in mind.

Though the new affluent middle classes and the diaspora audiences sometimes appreciate the same themes, as the film-makers seem to have found some common grounds (in updated and glamorized middle-class romances and trendier choreography), they do show divergent responses to popular film releases too.³⁵¹ This reveals Bollywood's multiple forms of address, which will increasingly be a factor in how narratives are developed and marketed henceforth.³⁵² It has become a challenge, generally, for Indian film producers to cater to all segments of India's huge population, which is still largely rural, while also extending their focus to overseas audiences.³⁵³

³⁵¹ Yash Chopra's trendsetting *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995) had an outstanding reception globally, but *Salam Namaste* (2005), as was seen, did better abroad than it did in India. Similarly, as the website, *Box Office India.com* shows, a number of films that have done well in India between 1995 and 2007 have not necessarily done that well abroad. Some examples include the recent *Chak De India/Go For it India* (2007) that did much better in India than it has done overseas while *Kabhie Al Vida Na Kehena/Never Say Goodbye* (2007) has fared far better overseas than it has in India. For details refer to *BoxOfficeIndia.com* <http://www.boxofficeindia.com/showProd.php?itemCat=108&catName=QUxMIEIOREIB> (accessed on March 16, 2008).

³⁵² In this regard, it might be relevant to talk about a conversation I have had recently with Arjun Sablok, a director for Yash Chopra Films, on a visit to Vancouver in February 2008. Like others, Sablok said that their films were still primarily made for an Indian audience, though they were realizing 25% of their profits overseas. He also said that there is a need for more stories from overseas (that could come from the diaspora more directly), which could be for middle-class Indian audiences, but also shows a growing engagement with diaspora interests.

³⁵³ *Back to the Future*, CII-KPMG 2005 Report, 69.

Hence, film-makers are specifically targeting multiplex, diaspora, or all-India audiences in the attempt to satisfy each segment with elements they might find appealing. In fact, the multiplex-frequenting audiences in India present the fastest-growing audiences, even though watching a film in one them of is fairly costly and hence a significant new source of revenue.³⁵⁴ Multiplex theatres are being established rapidly all over urban India and are slated for maximum growth, and point to the constant rise in the numbers of affluent Indians and the expanding middle-class.³⁵⁵ Changing audiences and the predominance of the middle classes could partly explain why present contemporary big-budget movies, in quite an unembarrassed fashion, focus on an idealized bourgeoisie, compared to a broader representation of social strata earlier. In addition, much as Hollywood did decades ago, there is a move towards diversifying sources of revenues outside of box-office sales, which includes increasing home video channels and distribution.³⁵⁶

Looking at the overseas audiences, though, this thesis shows that just as the 1950s Hindi films articulated a national imaginary for India's newly independent masses more effectively than their elite leaders could, it would seem that Bollywood is performing this function for the diaspora. Of course, their reception of the imagery is known to be more divergent than ever, given the proliferation of the types of diaspora in the post-1965 phase of emigration even to British Columbia, which was previously known mainly for Sikh emigration. Here, it must be qualified that the diaspora has been surveyed as a unit, without inquiring more specifically into specific differences between them. It can be asserted with the analysis in Chapter One that post-1965 Indian émigrés in North America tend to be from a professional middle-class and have made greater

³⁵⁴ In New Delhi, a multiplex theatre would offer tickets and popcorn for about \$15 for two persons. This is based on my recent visit to India in the summer of 2007. Non-Multiplexes are at least four times cheaper.

³⁵⁵ Screen density in India at 13, 000 is low compared with China that produces much fewer films but has 36, 000 screens. New multiplexes in shopping malls and other urban areas is reportedly the best option for increasing theatrical revenues. Government incentives for establishing multiplexes are being offered in the form of various tax rebates. *Back to the Future*, CII-KPMG Report, 2005, 65.

³⁵⁶ *Back to the Future*, 51.

efforts at establishing more positive representations of Indianness. These representations are more local, while Bollywood films might have given them a new, more idealized imagery of themselves but also helped them think of themselves as a unified group.

Yash Chopra Films, as a brand, also happened to reify or over-emphasize the inner domain of language and religion differences for Indians looking for signs of their own difference. This reification, though, might have different meanings in India and outside of it, just as new right-wing Hinduism seems to do, as was shown to in Chapter One. While Indians in India feel the need to reinvent the past, in the event of the nation state having been reconfigured so dramatically, the newer post-1965 diaspora seems to need to remember rituals and habits that define them. The commodification of differences and marketing of exotica by Bollywood film-makers can also be seen a packaging of ethnicity and rituals to the nostalgic diaspora, which as was demonstrated in Chapter One, are hungry for details that they have forgotten or never had access to. In this sense, the prevalence of inner domain affects in Bollywood films becomes a means to glorify the difference of Indians to themselves as much as it tries to explain them to non-Indian 'others'.³⁵⁷

Yash Chopra and others have chosen romantic stories deploying extremely confident and self-assured Indians as representatives of a global Indianness. The images themselves resonate with the plethora of reports in the Indian and international

³⁵⁷ Here it must be added that Yash Chopra's own films including *Veer Zara* (2004) and *Dil to Paagal Hai* (1997) compared with those directed by his son Aditya Chopra and other younger generation film-makers producing for the Yash Raj Films banner differ in their constructions of global Indianness. Yash Chopra is apparently still more greatly influenced by the myths of a secular India compared with the younger generation who have grown up more affluent and divorced from India's countryside compared with the first generations of film-makers' in post-independence India.

media that have pronounced middle-class Indians to have become global citizens.³⁵⁸

The glamorized settings have become *de rigueur* while the emulatable aspirations in film texts showcase a range of consumer goods such as iPhones, Jet-Skis and laptops being used by film characters who pointedly demonstrate their globalness. In terms of the narratives, though, political realities are hardly evident at all, since the plot structures are devised such that they tend to escape the effects of recent Indian history. This restriction of socio-political context is not a new stylistic for Yash Chopra, who has always favoured the romance genre through which his protagonists have explored sexual, gender and class politics in preference to all other conflicts of caste or ideology that were examined in previous decades. What is significant about the changes in Yash Chopra's films is that though he always made romantic films, the new diaspora-romance genre with its commodified ethnicity and rituals have suddenly catapulted him to much greater success and fame. This is arguably because his 1990s projects elevated the affects of romance and pathos to a new level of engagement with commodity cultures that tends to reinforce and reproduce the effects of global capitalism. At the same time, tensions in the constructions of female characters displays an opposition to global capitalism and a resistance to complete absorption. The fact that the films have garnered a favourable response shows a general audience empathy with characterizations that embody the tradition/modernity binary.

Other big-budget film-makers, probably encouraged by Yash Chopra's elevated status in the 1990s and including film-makers directing for Yash Raj Films itself, have utilized the romance genre to the exclusion of others, such as social justice or action

³⁵⁸ Cover Story, 'India Awakens,' *Time* magazine, July 3, 2006. A number of writers have contributed to this large cover story that examines the 'awakening' of India in terms of its receptiveness to overseas multinationals, its global middle class and the availability of big brand names even in smaller Indian towns. Interestingly, diasporic Indian film-maker Mira Nair, who has also written an article for this cover feature, comments that though India has always existed, it seems to have just been discovered by the West. By implication, it shows how generic forms of westernness must be seen within any culture in order to be accepted as being 'awake'.

genres.³⁵⁹ The romance genre appears to have provided the site on which to construct a new Indian identity that is delinked from the Indian state or its representative institutions as argued in Chapter Two. I wrote that a discourse of Indianness has replaced a national discourse in Yash Chopra films. This is a depoliticized form of transnational identity. The romance genre has also turned out to be the vehicle for commodity fetishization, extravagant spectacles and reifications of ideas of romance, weddings and travel for mass consumption by the middle-class. Hence, the shift in commercial filmmaking has been one of reinventing romantic melodrama to accommodate changes in India's political economy and its new relationship with the overseas diaspora.

The reinvented melodrama, I argue, is achieved by the changed use of Deleuzian cinematic affects, as was seen in Chapter Two. The affect of the patriarchal father figure, for instance, is being seriously circumscribed in order to allow more female agency and mobility (though the effects are debatable), while the mother affect is retained (in some form or other) to circumscribe female sexuality. This is how the woman stays modern-yet-traditional. The creation of commodified affects, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, shows how the new material culture has inserted itself into the old romance genre, seeming to reduce the pathos of past films with the "feel good" stories that project a confidence in the here and now.

The new images of global Indianness have been openly contested even though they have been much appreciated too. Though there is an overall "feel good" factor, as Ashish Rajadhyaksha has called it, the filmic crossing of borders both physically and metaphorically speaking has caused anxieties of there being too much change. Though affluent middle-classes and diasporic Indians may seem agreed on their common grounds of trendy cosmopolitanism, the changes in cultural identity necessarily go

³⁵⁹ Yash Chopra's *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* was followed by a spate of romance films such as *Chalte Chalte*, *Dil Chahta Hai*, *Kabhie Khushi Kabhie Gam* etc. all of which have been previously mentioned in Chapter One as having a diaspora focus too.

beyond speech and appearance; the first reversal has been that global capitalism has greatly reduced the discourse of nation in films. Secondly, the incorporation of the émigré has meant that Indianness itself steps over geographic territories in order to focus on the lives of Indians in metropolitan cities abroad who uphold certain Indian customs but have also changed. It is also problematic that the newfound fascination for commodity cultures belies the ideas of a Gandhian *swadeshi* and imbues the new Indianness with the less savoury sense of recolonization by financial imperialism. The difference, though, is that this is global capitalism at work rather than British colonization and the middle-class revels in their new purchasing power. Of course, the fact that Bollywood's own influence outside India is being noticed, more or less fractures any argument about recolonization. This is because of the fact that though globalization has caused more foreign films and media imports into India, it has equally caused popular Hindi films to become a regular global export.

This two-way cultural exchange, however, does not lessen the anxieties around issues of morality and sexuality, especially for female protagonists who, as I demonstrated, must necessarily embody some traditions. So, trendily dressed female characters must simultaneously resort to rituals of family or religion or at least be seen to accept them through the newer paths of modernity they traverse. This anxiety, which, as mentioned above, the films seek to overcome by inserting rituals into the text, can be read alternately as making a commodified appeal to the diaspora. Though the films that have recorded the most success are typically romantic and ritualized, this construction of glamorous but traditional-looking narratives has often been strongly criticized by sections of the Indian media³⁶⁰; several have claimed that films are only being produced for global

³⁶⁰ Karan Johar's *Kabhie Khushi Kabhie Gam/Sometimes Happiness Sometimes Sorrow* (2001) and *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai/Something Happens* (1998) were accorded blockbuster status and are replete with Hindu rituals and designer ethnicity. Karan Johar, a much younger film-maker than Yash Chopra, has often acknowledged the latter's influence on his work.

South Asian audiences for whom traditions are being recreated.³⁶¹ It could, of course, be argued that Indian film-makers are equally packaging ethnicity and ritual for the new middle-classes in India who exhibit global-local values most prominently. Still, examining the impacts of Bollywood and how the organization of the images implicates diasporic desires in the emerging discourse of Indianness becomes equally an issue of blame as of approbation, as the diaspora is being blamed for distorting Indianness and making India appear less modern than it is by applauding rituals and ethnicity in contemporary films. What precise form of power or currency this gives to the diaspora, long claimed by the Indian government and more recently being seriously wooed by it, becomes a critical issue too.³⁶²

The confluence of a new materialism, marked religious iconography, and more deliberate use of ritual that have entered the site of Indian identity in Bollywood films seem directly related to an ascendant Hinduism. Though religious iconography has been an ongoing element in Hindi films, the elaborate rituals seen now in the near-total absence of non-Hindu minorities including Muslims, Christians, Parsis or Sikhs in narratives makes the present-day narratives more markedly Hindu. Evidence has also been provided about the more complex aspect of a new Hindu nationalism becoming a prominent part of modern Indian identity both within India and in the diaspora.³⁶³ Hence, Bollywood representations of a monolithic Hindu India suggest, if nothing else, that a

³⁶¹ Sagarika Ghose, Email Nationalism, *The Indian Express*, Dec. 28, 2001 from <http://www.indian-express.com/ie20011228/ed4.html> (accessed on Feb. 26, 2008). Her critique directed at Karan Johar's *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gam/Sometimes Happiness Sometimes Sorrow* (2001) is that new films have become so diaspora-oriented that they appear outlandishly traditional and ritualized because this is how the diaspora wants to remember India. This is a common enough criticism made by the India media.

³⁶² It was shown in Chapter One that by the Indian government's use of the term Non Resident Indian or NRI, they have never really let go of overseas Indians even though they would actually hold American or Canadian passports. Needless to say, this has an impact on how the overseas diaspora sees themselves. Of late, Indians have been allowed to hold Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) cards that gives them considerable access to travel and investments in India.

³⁶³ *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995); *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gam* (2001); Elaborate Hindu rituals are performed inside the homes of protagonists in the latter film and are also naturalized within the texts.

commodified Hinduism in the form of affects of ethnicity and religious rituals is being received in new films. Whether intentional or not, it is also significant that newer films tend to express the idea that Indians are basically Hindu while the Muslim and British invasions/colonizations were aberrations. On the other hand, the treatment of minorities within Bollywood narratives certainly projects this new assertiveness of Hindus who tolerate minorities as long they have proved their allegiance to India by being model citizens; in the case of Muslims specifically, they can only be tolerated as good (read patriotic) citizens.³⁶⁴

The reconfigured Indian state shows less displeasure with Bollywood now, especially as the film industry has recorded higher revenues and a substantial flow of foreign exchange into India. The most significant change for the film industry has been its official recognition when it was formally established as an industry in May 1998.³⁶⁵ Now, Bollywood producers can raise funds through financial institutions like other industries and be represented in India and abroad by official spokespersons.³⁶⁶ The industry status has elevated Bollywood's profile immensely, though it seems to encourage mostly big-budget films, perhaps for the foreign exchange they provide. This completely reverses the state-cinema relationship of yesteryear, when popular film-makers were neglected in terms of financial options and reviled for the content they produced as entertainment. The new appreciation also does not preclude an overall improvement in the quality of films that have benefitted from Middle Cinema productions

³⁶⁴ The latest Yash Chopra hit *Chak de India/Go for it, India* (2007) is a highly jingoistic story about young women hockey players representing nation directly through international sports, which is a new theme. It also involved a Muslim hockey coach, who after being doubted as being completely loyal, has to go to great lengths to prove his innocence and patriotism as a Muslim Indian whereupon he is duly accepted by the masses once again.

³⁶⁵ Thesis, Chapter One, 50.

³⁶⁶ Bollywood has been affiliated with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce of India (FICCI) even before it received industry status in 1998. In fact, FICCI takes credit for helping establish the film industry officially. Yash Chopra is the Chairman of the Entertainment Sector at FICCI. FICCI website at <http://www.ficci.com/sectors/sectors.htm> (accessed on March 27, 2008).

in the 1980s. The Indian state retains its censorship rights regarding the content of films, but now accommodates the newfound status of Bollywood by including industry members in its censorship decisions.³⁶⁷ Apparently, the Indian state appreciates the new narratives more than previously, even though they lack social justice themes or agendas and completely exclude the majority of non-global non-bourgeois Indians who exist in an apparently 'older' India. This interest on the part of the state is similar to that of corporate and multinational bodies, which show an intense interest in servicing India's 300-million strong middle-class who are potential clients for a huge range of lifestyle products. In relation to the new state-cinema relationship, I think the new global cultural capital generated by Bollywood films has become a significant marketing tool for the Indian government (looking at the diaspora overseas) considering the sea change in its treatment of popular Hindi cinema. In turn, more flattering representations of India and Indians overseas can and have changed how the diaspora itself is perceived, as preliminary evidence shows.³⁶⁸

A final indication of the dramatic new visibility of Bollywood is the growing scholarly interest in Hindi films. Much of this scholarship is being produced abroad, although several studies also originate in India. The relatively recent interest in Bollywood as a unique production system with its own stylistics is little more than 15 years old, though with the numbers of studies being completed more recently, there is

³⁶⁷ *Screen (India)* articles show that the Central Board of Film Censorship is still operated by the Indian government, but often includes big names from the industry that itself is a big change.

³⁶⁸ Asian Variety Show online at <http://www.avstv.com/> (accessed on May 16, 2007). This TV entertainment channel with a Bollywood focus, is run by Raju Sethi who established the television channel in California more than 15 years ago. Shaw Cable in Vancouver buys AVS programs. The channel producer reported in the 'History' section of his website that when growing up in the USA, he was constantly reminded by classmates that he came from a country of poverty and dirt. According to him, the opportunity to showcase India through Bollywood was a chance to show his friends other views of contemporary India.

now a proliferation of sources in academic journals, interdisciplinary subjects and undergraduate courses available at several North American universities.³⁶⁹

Despite the recent interest in Bollywood, historians of modern India have not engaged with the popular culture from Bollywood as a subject of archival value. This is probably part of the prevalent tendency among historians to avoid recent histories altogether. Some post-colonial historians and social scientists, though, are trying to create a new Indian historiography, which until recently has relied heavily on theoretical frameworks of development drawn from the standard references to European modernity.³⁷⁰ In this context, the work of Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gyan Prakash, Sunil Khilnani and John Harriss is significant as it illustrates the complicated subject of Indian modernity in post-modern terms. In terms of epistemology, the major change in Indian historiography occurred with colonial histories being replaced by nationalist histories, while more recently historiography uses post-colonial critiques and the more challenging Subaltern Studies that are both post-national and anti-elite.³⁷¹ Significantly, though, nationalist historiography, driven by patriotism and the need to simultaneously establish a modern Indian identity and undo colonial histories, has been the dominant form of selectively remembering, forgetting and dealing with the Indian

³⁶⁹ At Simon Fraser University in B.C. a course on Bollywood film history taught by a visiting scholar is being offered to undergraduate students for the first time in the summer of 2008. Though SFU is starting later, bigger North American universities such as the University of California (Berkeley), University of Minnesota, University of Pennsylvania and University of Virginia have had Bollywood courses and been home to South Asian and Bollywood scholars for several years now.

³⁷⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Post-Colonialism and the Artifice of History" in *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, Oxford, 2000), 38-42.

³⁷¹ The Subaltern Studies scholars in the 1980s essentially wanted to undo the Eurocentric bias of history and also give the (poor) unrepresented Indians a stake in the national project. Subaltern scholars include Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gyan Prakash, Partha Chatterjee, Shahid Amin, Ranajit Guha, David Arnold, David Hardiman, Gayatri Spivak Chakravarty and several others. The Subaltern Studies scholars borrowed Gramsci's use of the term 'subaltern' to mean a history from below and to re-read post-colonial and post-imperial history from the point of view of lower social orders rather than the nationalist elites. Gayatri Spivak, herself from within the Subaltern group has critiqued the tendency of her peer group to speak for the South Asian subalterns from the outside. It is problematic because it essentializes the subalterns and does not allow them to have either diversity or heterogeneity, wrote Spivak in her most publicized essay entitled "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1988).

past.³⁷² By contrast, an emerging trend of scholarship that is anti-modernist and appears to be striving towards some pre-modern form of Indianness is, at least on the surface, not unlike populist right-wing Hinduism that wants to aggressively assert indigenous religion.³⁷³ This could be reason enough for many social historians to avoid research in popular culture.

Nationalist, post-colonial, and anti-modernist trends in scholarship have their counterparts in cinema as both scholarship and cinema partake in a broader cultural shift in thinking. For instance, themes of an evil and rapacious West have been prominent, as has a glorification of the Indian past, but are being gradually upturned in favour of re-readings that give Indians more agency and a lesser sense of victimization. Occasionally too, the work done by post-colonial and Subaltern Studies scholars is reflected in popular cinema, especially since the lines between commercial and art cinema have finally been erased.³⁷⁴ A few popular film-makers have also politicized their narratives to produce more complex ideas about Indian identity.³⁷⁵ As Dipesh Chakravarty wrote, the problem confronting post-colonial historians is not simply one of looking at capitalist modernity in the process of a historical transition, but equally of translating the experience of modernity in India.³⁷⁶ Starting with the discourse of history

³⁷² Rajiv Bhargava, 'History, Nation and Community: Reflections on Nationalist Historiography in India and Pakistan' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 22, 2000, 192-199. <http://www.sacw.net/partition/RajeevBhargava.pdf> (accessed on May 18, 2007)

³⁷³ My own use of *Rasa* theory, for instance, harks back to pre-modern Indian identity and what is essentially a Hindu aesthetic. The use of such theories is also avoided precisely for seeming to enhance the monolithic constructions of India as essentially Hindu and there is a fine line that must be recognized here in academic studies of trying to find more explanations without promoting essentialist identities for India.

³⁷⁴ The 1980s Middle Cinema was evidence of this blurring of boundaries between commercial and artistic cinema.

³⁷⁵ An example of this is Rakesh Mehra's *Rang de Basanti/Colours of Spring* (2006) was released commercially and shows a post-nationalistic analysis of the anti-colonial movement in 1930s India while the narrative threads the lives of revolutionaries and colonizers so that there is a blurring of past and present while clear east/west distinctions are also blurred. This film won a government national award in 2006 for having been successful all over India.

³⁷⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty, 17.

that has tended to be teleological, apart from having always treated Europe as a silent referent, rewriting Indian historiography that seemed always 'lacking' or 'inadequate,' requires reworking historical theories.³⁷⁷ In this sense, film theories have provided a less restricted approach in their treatment of films with the possibilities of engaging with post-structural theories. I have explored the indigenous *Rasa* theory and affect theory to broaden the analysis of Indian culture and aesthetics. The path down this scholarly track, however, poses its own questions about essentializing Indian identity, which is already a concern due to the rise of right-wing Hinduism that has entered the contemporary discourse of Indianness.

In Bollywood, though, signs of confluence and convergence suggest that content and narrativization of future Bollywood productions are going to become more diverse still.³⁷⁸ What is apparent also is that rather than one hegemonic system contesting another, there are an increasing number of commercial collaborations between Bollywood and Hollywood. Hence, various forms of intercultural and crossover films are already becoming commonplace.³⁷⁹ This raises questions about how Bollywood would retain an Indianness in popular films in terms of language/religious differences that have been manufactured in some big-budget films from 1995 to 2005. Will there be a greater tendency to export and manufacture Indianness in terms of Hindu mythologies and religion as marketable differences that are being upgraded and commodified? Also, it is not clear how global Indianness will be reconciled with the fact that decolonization within India is still incomplete. Would residual decolonization continue to oppose Hollywood

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 38-42.

³⁷⁸ Interestingly enough, the strands of diaspora consciousness through South Asian literature and film-making have also begun to be linked with Bollywood. Example: Gurinder Chaddha's film *The Mistress of Spices* (2005) is based on Chitra Devakaruni's book of the same name in which major Bollywood actor, Aishwarya Rai plays the lead character. There are several other collaborations between diasporic film-makers and Bollywood stars.

³⁷⁹ One of the latest Yash Raj Film productions is a Disney collaboration to make an animated film with Indian characters.

imagery at some levels, which appears to be a major reason for its popularity, or would it be compelled to change aesthetic forms to keep pace with modern globalization that continues to advance ever more rapidly in India?

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