

THE INTERSECTION OF HOLLYWOOD AND THE INDIAN FILM INDUSTRY: IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

With globalization and growing intersection of western and Indian film makers, it seems that Hollywood movies are becoming bollywoodish and bollywood movies are becoming hollywoodish...Some Indian movies like, “ghajini”, was influenced by “memento” and “Dhoom” shows the influence of the “fast and furious” and the list goes on... likewise the recent succesfull movies like “Mumma mia”, “high school musical”, “the love guru”, show a clear Indian influence.

There is a greater likelihood of crossover of commercially successful production formulas between Hollywood and bollywood. On the other hand, Indian filmmakers have been compelled to adopt Hollywood's "lowest common denominator" production formula – predicated on the themes of sex, violence, alcohol and drug use – to regain commercial success for their films, whose earlier themes of mushy love stories and family dramas have lost their appeal to an audience.

The paper says that, for now, there is a growing Hollywoodization of Indian films – marked by sexual depictions, scantily clad women, and violence-oriented scripts within the framework of a pleasure-seeking culture. At the same time the prevailing evidence indicates the beginnings of a reverse influence on Hollywood for the same reason -- the profitability of commercial feature films -- that is influencing India by Hollywood. Hollywood is getting Bollywoodish to some degree, especially after the Oscar famous “Slum dog millionaire”. The two-way cultural symbiosis is likely to grow to serve the entertainment and cultural needs of a cosmopolitan audience who is open to consuming and appreciating foreign cultural influences without entirely rejecting their own.

Key Words: *Cinema, Hollywood, Bollywood.*

INTRODUCTION

Hollywood and Bollywood stands as cinematic behemoths of the west and east. Contact between Indian and the western cinemas were established in the early days of film in India itself. Dadasaheb Phalke was moved to make his first movie “Raja Harichandra” after watching “Life of Christ” at P.B.Mehta’s American –Indian cinema. Similarly, some other early film directors were inspired by the western movies. Though, Hollywood films made inroads into the Indian film industry long ago, those films were mostly released at a belated date in India. There was a clear cultural gap between the Hollywood movies and Indian viewers.

The relationship between Hollywood and the Indian film industry has existed for a long time. It started from use of foreign locations in early cinema, and it has extended to finance, technology and storyline. Considering its relative late emergence, the Indian film industry has grown up by leaps and bounds in the last few decades. However, the meeting between Hollywood and India is a two-way process: western audiences are becoming more interested in India as evidenced by the mild success of Lagaan and Bride and Prejudice. This became more evident after the success of Danny Boyle’s Slumdog Millionaire.

Globalization and economic liberalization since the 1990s has unleashed unparalleled Western cultural influences around the world also. This has raised concerns among social critics and policymakers in many countries. Biggins (2004) says that globalization, with an adverse advocacy through the media, has brought in a “landslide transformation of existing local culture and identity into a new form of culture with no frontier.” Jerry Mander, co-founder of the International Forum on Globalization, has voiced the same concern. Writing in *The Nation*, Mander (1996) said that global media corporations of Rupert Murdoch, Ted Turner and very few others "transmit their Western images and commercial values directly into the brains of 75 percent of the world's population. The

globalization of media imagery is surely the most effective means ever for cloning cultures to make them compatible with the Western corporate vision."

Biggins cites the cultural dependency theory of Mohammadi (1995) as a factor in the influence of the Western culture in the developing world. He quotes Mohammadi as follows:

The continuance of Western dominance over Third World nations was based partly on advanced technologies, including communication technologies. But it was also based on an ideology, accepted in many parts of the Third World, that there was only one path to economic development, which was to imitate the process of development of Western industrial capitalist societies. Cultural imperialism or cultural dependency occurs with the Western countries' influence on the language, values and attitudes, including religion, ways of organizing public life, styles of politics, forms of education, and professional training, clothing styles, and many other cultural habits. It creates a new kind of model of domination called neocolonialism which has sparked new kinds of struggles to eradicate this enduring cultural influence in the Third World (Biggins, 2004).

HOLLYWOOD AND BOLLYWOOD

Hollywood is a district in Los Angeles, California, United States situated in west-northwest of Downtown Los Angeles. Due to its fame and cultural identity as the historical center of movie studios and movie stars, the word Hollywood is often used as a metonym of American cinema. The name Hollywood was coined by H.J. Whitley, the "Father of Hollywood", who purchased a 500 acre land in the Cahuenga Valley after the pass in Santa Monica Mountains. Hollywood was incorporated as a municipality in 14 Nov, 1903. Four major film companies – paramount, Warner Bros, RKO and Columbia had studios in Hollywood and there were also several minor companies and rental studios. By 1920, Hollywood had become world famous as the center of the United States film industry.

The name "Bollywood" is a portmanteau of Bombay (the former name of Mumbai), known as the Indian film industry. "Bollywood" is the informal term used for Hindi language film industry based in Mumbai, India. The term is often incorrectly used to the whole of Indian cinema; it is only a part on the Indian film industry. However, unlike Hollywood, Bollywood does not exist as a physical place.

GENRE CONVECTIONS

Bollywood films are mostly musicals and are expected to contain catchy music in the form of song and dance numbers oven into a script. A film success depends on the quality of such musical numbers. Indeed, a film's music is often released before the movie itself and helps increase the audience. Songs and dances, love triangles, comedy and dare-devil thrills are all mixed up in a three hour long extravaganza with an intermission. Such movies are called masala films, after the Hindi word spice mixture. Like masala, these movies are mixture of many things such as action, comedy, romance, etc. most films have heroes who are able to fight off villains all by themselves.

Bollywood plots have tended to be melodramatic and sometimes romantic. They frequently employ standard ingredients such as star crossed lovers and angry parents, love triangles, family ties, sacrifice, corrupt politicians, kidnappers, convincing villains, courtesans with heart of gold, long-lost relative and siblings separated by fate, dramatic reveals of fortune and convenient coincidences. There have always been Indian films with more artistic aims and more sophisticated stories, both inside and outside the Bollywood tradition. A large Indian Diaspora of English speaking countries and western influence at home have nudged Bollywood films closer to Hollywood films.

Bollywood was born in 1899 with the production of a short film and Hollywood's birth happened eleven years later in 1910 with a Biography Melodrama. Hollywood produces about 500 films per year on average and has a worldwide audience of 2.6 billion whereas Bollywood produces more than 1000(not consistently) films every

year and has a worldwide audience of about 3 billion. In terms of viewership, Bollywood overtook Hollywood in 2004 and has been leading ever since.

JOINT VENTURES AND COLLABORATIONS

Hollywood often has used international styles and film makers to its advantage. In its early days, the U.S film capital embraced European directors such as Fritz Lang and Jean Renoir. The 1960 saw the influence of French new wave cinema. Japanese films inspired “The Magnificent Seven” and “Star wars”; Hong Kong work inspired Hollywood blockbusters such as “The departed” and “The Matrix”.

With globalization, the Indian film industry and Hollywood have influenced each other to give birth to new genre of films and filmmakers. What make the film industry unique to other sectors are the financial collaborations and ventures emerging from both ends. This includes not only finance, but also a substantial exchange of styles and artistic trends between the two countries.

With gradual liberalization of the Indian economy since 90’s, more Hollywood movies have been released in India. We also have seen an increase in financing of Indian films by Hollywood producers. Columbia Tristar’s “Saawariya” was released in 2007 as the first Hollywood-produced Bollywood film. It opened the gate for Warner Bros., Disney and Fox to their own Indian movies. This includes animated comedy, such as “Roadside Romeo”, a Disney co-production with iconic Bollywood banner Yash Raj Films in 2008. Fox Star Studios is producing “Dum Maro Dum”, co-produced with Ramesh Sippy Entertainment. Hollywood giants have been leaping into India’s vibrant regional film market, with productions from the likes of Eros International which released Enthiran, (Robot), a Tamil fiction movie last year. Fox Studios has released its “Engeyum Eppothum” on September 16th 2011. Walt Disney is also targeting regional audiences like Tamil and Telugu, and has released its first movie in Telugu, an advent fantasy film, Anaganga o Dheerudu(once upon a warrior).

However, the fate of some Hollywood – produced films thus far has not been very successful. Quite a few big-budget films like “Jaane Kahaan Se Ayi Hai”, “Sas Bahu aur Sensex”, “Chandi Chowk to China” (Warner) Bros, “Saawariya” (Columbia Tristar) and “Roadside Romeo” (Walt Disney) have failed at the box office. The only exception has been “My Name is Khan”, distributed by Fire Fox Studios was hugely successful in India and abroad. As another silver lining to the cloud, some recent films such as “Atithi Tum Kab Jaoge” by Warner Bros also have been hits. Also “Thanks Maa” distributed by Sony Pictures was critically acclaimed and selected to be screened at international film festivals at Edinburg, Bussan, Cannes and Palm Springs.

In spite of the failure of some of these movies, certain similarities between the U.S. and India encourage joint ventures in the film industry. Both nations have a massive “movie - going” market. Also, the entertainment policies in these countries are fairly open. This creates a free environment for creation of varied, innovative and otherwise appealing plots. The main encouraging factor for foreign investment in Indian films is the rapidly swelling number of prospective ticket buyers.

Anil Ambani’s india-based Reliance group made an \$825m investment in Stephen Spielberg’s Dreamworks in 2008 and Sahara India Pariwar also planned for MGM’s debt. On the creative side, film makers such as Danny Boyle (“Slumdog Millionaire”), Mira Nair (“Monsoon wedding”) and Guriender Chadha’s (“Bend it like Beckham” and “Bride and Prejudice”) are bringing eastern stories to western audiences.

INFLUENCE OF BOLLYWOOD

In the 2000s, Bollywood began influencing musical film in the western world and played a particularly instrumental role in the revival of the American musical film genre. Baz Luhrmann stated that his musical film “Moulin Rouge!”(2001) was directly inspired by Bollywood musicals. The film incorporated an Indian themed play based on the ancient Sanskrit drama, “The Little Clay Cart” and a Bollywood style dance sequence with a song from the film “China Gate”. The critical and financial success of “Moulin Rouge!” renewed interest in the then declining western musical genre and subsequently films such as “Chicago”, “The Producers, Rent”,

“Dreamgirls”, “Hairspray”, “Sweeny Todd”, “Across the Universe”, “The Phantom of the Opera”, “Enchanted” and “Mamma Mia!” were produced, fueling a renaissance of the genre.

A.R.Rahman, an Indian film composer, wrote the music for Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Bombay Dreams. The Bollywood musical “Lagaan” (2001) was nominated for the Academy Award for best Foreign Language Film and two other Bollywood films “Devdas” (2002) and “Rang De Basnathi” (2006), were nominated for the BAFTA Award for the Best Foreign Language Film. Danny Boyle’s Slumdog Millionaire(2008), which has won four Golden Globes and eight Academy Awards, was also directly inspired by the Bollywood Films, and is considered to be a “homage to the Hindi commercial cinema”. The theme of Reincarnation was also popularized in the Western Popular culture through Bollywood films, with Madumathi(1958) inspiring the Hollywood film “The reincarnation of Peter Proud” (1975), which in turn inspired the Bollywood film Karz(1980) which in turn influenced another Hollywood film “Chances Are”(1989). The 1975 film “Chhoti Si Baat” is believed to have inspired “Hitch” (2005), which in turn inspired the Bollywood film Partner (2007).

When it comes to outsourcing media and intellectual property law related work, the relationship of the Indian film industry and Hollywood should not be ignored. Majority of Hollywood’s animations are outsourced to India. The increasing intersection between Hollywood and Bollywood will act as an important factor in determining the nature and scope of future international work generated in those areas.

HOLLYWOOD’S INFLUENCE IN INDIAN FILMS

Contact between Indian and the western cinemas were established in the early days of film in India itself. Dadasaheb Phalke was moved to make his first movie Raja Harichandra after watching Life of Christ at P.B.Mehta’s American –Indian cinema. Similarly some other early film directors were inspired by western movies. Recently, many Indian directors have begun looking toward Hollywood for an abundance of storylines to modify for Bollywood consumers.

In most cases the original Hollywood plotline is barely visible amidst the Bollywood magic potion of singing and dancing and Indian religious references are often inserted to authenticate and justifiable characterizations, situations and bring an Indian cultural atmosphere that Bollywood audience require. A number of Indian movies have been accused of plagiarizing from Hollywood movies. That is why; today’s Indian cinema is becoming increasingly westernized. This trend is more apparently seen in Bollywood. Newer Bollywood movie sometimes include Western actors (such as Rachel Shelly in Lagaan), and try to meet the Western production standards, conduct filming overseas, adopt some English scripts or incorporate some elements of Western-style plots. Bollywood also produces box-office hits like Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge and Kal Ho Naa Ho, both of which deal with overseas Indian experiences.

Plots tend to feature westernized urbanities dating and dancing in clubs rather than centering on pre-arranged marriages. Though these can be widely seen in contemporary Bollywood, traditional conservative ways of Indian culture continue to exist in India outside the industry and an element of resistance by some to western-based influences. Sometimes, Bollywood producers because of the requirement to pacify the diverse American population, and a similar necessity for the heterogeneous nation of India and NRIs living abroad as well, apply the so copied Hollywood’s Western theory into Indian cinema.

The trend for more recent Bollywood films has been to develop off Hollywood themes but construct the narrative to ensure that the presentation is very Indian. Hollywood to Bollywood translations is never direct and alterations are always made to account for the cultural differences beyond merely replacing American actors with Indian actors. According to Nair, “Hollywood narratives merely serve as “skeletons” ready to be filled with appropriate cultural referents”. Chakravarthy asserts that Indian cinema is “a microcosm of social, political, economic and cultural life of a nation. It is the contested site where meanings are negotiated, traditions are remade, ideates affirmed are rejected”.

Bollywood films allow for this venue to play with alternative identities or treatments of topics such as sexuality or family in a safe environment while assuring viewers a traditional resolution at the conclusion of the film. Therefore Hollywood content is easily imported into Bollywood framework, preserving unique storylines while imparting familiar “Indianness” into the adaption. The essence of the Indianness includes the reinforcement of normative behavioral of ideals and action, religious elements, and the tension between the including elements from outside India without losing distinctly Indian representations and interpretations. In a sense, transference from Hollywood to Bollywood cinema has been a natural development. Bollywood utilizes a similar type of filmmaking to Hollywood, with linear narratives and a sense of closure, a strong, heroic central male figure, making some aspects of cinematic narrative construction too easy to adapt for an Indian audience. Though Indian cinema has achieved its own unique taste of cinematic style, there is no doubt that there have always been influences from Hollywood.

Hollywood has been an influence even in the 1940’s. Mehboob khan’s 1940 movie “Aurat” that he remade seventeen years later into “Mother India” was inspired from Hollywood’s flick “The Good Earth” (1937). Guru Dutt’s debut “Baazi” was inspired by the Rita Haywort starrer “Gilda”, while “Sholay” is widely called an “Indian curry Western film”, with inspiration from seven Hollywood films including “Once Upon a Time In The West”(1968), “Spaghetti Westerns”, “The Wild Bunch”(1969), “Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid”(1973) and “Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid”(1969).

“Baazigar” and “Ghajini” are said to be the Indianised versions of “A Kiss Before Dying” (1991) and “Memento” (2000) respectively. “Paa” supposedly draws its plot from the 1996 comedy drama “Jack”, about a boy who ages faster than normal due to a disease, while Akshay Kumar – starrer “Action Replay” is an alleged take off on the reverse ageing drama “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button”.

Refer to the table for Hollywood’s remakes in Bollywood

Bollywood remakes of Hollywood	
Hollywood	Bollywood
The Fast and Furious(2001)	Dhoom(2004)
E.T. the Extra Terrestrial(1982)	Koi Mil Gaya(2003)
Paycheck(2003)	Krrish(2006)
All My Sons(1948)	Rang De Basanthi(2006)
Helen Keller Story	Black
Houseboat	Hum Hain Rahi Pyar Ke
Sense and Sensibility	Kandukondein Kandukondein
Pretty Women	Chori Chori Chupke Chupke
Autumn in New York	Kal Ho Naa Ho
A Kiss Before Dying(1991)	Bazigar(1993)
The Exorcist	Gehrayee
Mrs.Doubtfire(1993)	Chachi 420(1998)
The Godfather	Dharmatma
Memento(2000)	Gajini(2008)
Hitch(2005)	Partner(2007)
Oldboy(2003)	Zinda(2006)
Collateral(2004)	The Killer(2006)
The Eye(2002)	Naina(2005)
Patch Adams	Munnabai MBBS
Dead Poets Story	Mohabatein
Win a Date With Tad Hamilton	Rangeela
The Magnificent Seven(1960)	Sholay(1975)
Twin Dragon(1992)	Judwaa(1997)

Analyzing on the reason behind these copying of Hollywood's pattern plot and style, it leads us to the conclusion that there are no worth full filmmakers or they are tired in showing the same old traditional culture and going out for a flop movie again.

Film critic Omar Qureshi says, "The biggest motivation for a successful movie is that it brings money and appreciation. So the filmmakers go for a tried and tested formula by taking inspiration from the Hollywood". US based Indian origin Hollywood filmmaker Nagendra Karri said: "It's the lack of scripts and proper writers that is making Indian filmmakers copy Hollywood. In fact that is one of the reasons Kamal Hassan used to get his scripts written by French writers and then adapt them to make classics". Film historian S.M.M. Ausaja says that though there is no dearth of good content here, filmmakers don't prefer to invest time in searching time for good stories for their movies and they want a ready script.

INFLUENCE IN CULTURE

Hollywood has created a clash of culture in Indian Society, through influencing Bollywood. The influence that Hollywood has exerted on India can be seen clearly in the movie, "Monsoon Wedding". The west has made it fashionable to wear jeans and tight fitting costumes and have western ideas such as sex before marriage. In the past, Indian films have not portrayed any of these ideas and concepts. Indian Society has absorbed these things into their lives.

Sex is another thing India is cautious about although being the home of the ultimate sex instruction booklet the Karma Sutra, India is much divided and vastly conservative on this issue. This is largely due to the way the cinema has shown sex scenes. They just haven't shown them unlike Western Movies where they are essential part of the movie. Intact they haven't even shown kiss scenes and have left it up to the audience's imagination as they saw it more romantic.

Taran Adarsh, a Bollywood critic, explained this new phenomenon in movie making. "Sex sells. And it works well if it comes with a good story. Cable TV has brought in a lot of Western influences to Indian homes. People are more accepting and more open now" (Bollywood finds . . ., Oct. 21, 2004).

The other sort of Western influence is from the Non Resident Indians. As they have lived in the West they have been exposed to Western ideas and morals. The Canadian Indian Deepa Metha a film producer made the film Fire in 1998. The film revolved a house wife and her affair with sister in law. Although the film received awards overseas in India it caused riots and protests as it showed lesbian sex scenes. Although sex and lesbians are accepted in much of the West and in its culture, this is not the case in India. This sort of Western influence although is rejected by the vast public it is none the less slowly but steadily creeping into Bollywood and through Bollywood into mainstream Indian culture. This infiltration does not always blend with Indian culture and creates clashes.

Social critics, however, worry about the likely implications of the new trend in Bollywood filmmaking for the Indian society. Generally, the Indian film industry has not had a background in realism. It has consisted of escapist musicals with common storylines of good vs. evil and boy meets girl. Typically, the films have been family orientated and the plot is kept simple so that even the rural villager can easily relate to it. The new Hollywood-inspired shift in film style is seen to be a threat to the values and culture of the Indian people.

Menon (2003), for example, says that the current Bollywood formula has some cause for concern because the transplantation of Western ideas has led to extreme vulgarity with high sexual innuendo and unnecessary violence in films today. The Film Federation of India, a regulatory body that presides over film content, complains that the films made in the New Bollywood are too westernized and that they are degrading and diminishing India's true cultural identity.

Bollywood continues to play a major role in fashion in India. Indeed some studies into fashion in India have revealed that some people are unaware that the changing nature of fashion in Bollywood films which are presented to them are often influenced by Hollywood and many consider that the clothes worn by Bollywood actors as authentically Indian. This directly targets and attacks on the audience. Their style of dressing and the culture they adopt are accordingly updated to the hit movie numbers, which are influenced from the Hollywood and try to enforce the western culture of clothing and other cultural practices.

Though traditional dresses varies accordingly with respect to states, the western style clothing is been followed in common. New fusion fashions have emerged rapidly, as a result of Hollywood's influence on Bollywood, to produce designs in tune with current trends called "Indo-Western" clothing. Examples of the fusion that Indo-Western clothing represents include wearing jeans with a choli, salwar or kurta, adding a dupatta to a Western-style outfit, and wearing a lehnga (long skirt) with a tank top or halter top. The traditional salwar has long or short sleeves. An Indo-Western design might forego sleeves altogether, or replace the sleeves with spaghetti straps, resembling the style of a tank top or halter. There are also poncho-styled tops and one-sleeve designs that follow contemporary Western trends.

Some Indians have succeeded in Hollywood film industry purely on their own terms without showing any Bollywood influence, like Manoj Night Shyamalan who has produced and directed "The Sixth Sense" that was nominated for six Academy Awards, then "Unbreakable", "Signs", "The Village", "Lady in The Water", "The Happening", "The Last Airbender" etc., and Jay Chandrasekhar a Tamil American Actor, writer, Comedian and Director, who has directed "Puddle Cruiser", "Super Troopers", "Club Dread", "The Dukes of Hazzard", "Beerfest", etc.

CONCLUSION

Indian film industries are going through a process of reinventing themselves to maintain their economic viability amidst the globalizing media culture of the West, especially the United States. An equally important point to note here is that there is a greater likelihood of crossover of commercially successful production formulas from Indian film industry to Hollywood, exhibiting "reverse cultural imperialism."

Indian filmmakers have adopted the Hollywood commercial success formula – predicated on the themes of sex, action, pleasure and individuality – to regain commercial success for their films, whose earlier themes of mushy love stories and family dramas have lost their appeal to the audience.

The commercial success of Indian films based on the Hollywood, points out that the tried-and-tested production formula that is being imported, though remade keeping Indian viewers in mind, with much alterations always been made to account for cultural differences, is not that very appreciable because, the main plot itself is very different to our culture. So the translations and alterations made to the movie, to keep it to an Indian standard lose in terms of "culture" and thus promoting to "Cultural Imperialism".

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