

Introduction

Global Bollywood

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Aishwarya Rai made it to the cover of *Time* magazine, and even taught Oprah Winfrey and her viewers to wear a sari; The Simpsons ended their trip to India with a dance set to a Hindi film song; Bollywood films sold more tickets in the United Kingdom than English-language films; the Indian government granted “industry” status to cinema, and instructed Bollywood to set its house in order and speak the language of “corporatization”; Bollywood stars, no longer obliged to entertain the mafia, partied at Cannes instead; urban India mourned the decline of single-screen theaters but quickly grew accustomed to glitzy multiplexes; young men and women, many non-South Asian, wrote and shared erotic fan-fiction featuring Bollywood’s hottest stars; and Shekhar Kapur, acclaimed director of *Elizabeth* and *Bandit Queen*, declared that Bollywood would define and dominate global entertainment in the twenty-first century.

Such fragments are interesting not only because they serve as useful entry points for thinking about Bollywood’s intersections with the “global” over the past decade. More important, they signal that the emergence of Bollywood as a space of cultural production and expression that is now decidedly global spells trouble for categories such as “Indian cinema,” “nation,” “public,” “culture,” “modernity,” “identity,” and “politics,” and our assumptions and understandings of relationships among these categories. These fragments of a larger and more complicated narrative of Bollywood’s arrival on the global stage also point to rapidly changing, complex, and often surprising connections within and among industry practices, state policy, new media technologies, sites and modes of consumption,

and networks and forms of sociality that criss-cross regional, national, and transnational boundaries and affiliations.

In this anthology, we bring together a set of essays that critically examine the complex ways in which the transnational and transmedia terrain of “Global Bollywood” has reframed relationships between geography, cultural production, and cultural identities. When and how did Bollywood emerge as an arena of public culture distinct from Hindi-language Bombay cinema? In what ways do diasporic imaginations of “India” shape Bollywood’s encounters with the global? How can we rethink the state’s relationship to cinema given varied state institutions’ defining role in the corporatization and globalization of Bollywood? What new modes of distribution, exhibition, and reception have emerged in different sociocultural contexts, and how do we study them? How are “stars” constructed in Bollywood? Can Bollywood’s convergence with new media, and fan practices that emerge therein, be historicized? In what ways has Mumbai’s emergence as a center of transnational cultural production changed its relationship with other “media capitals” such as Chennai, Hyderabad, Hong Kong, and Los Angeles?¹

The essays collected here tackle these and other questions, and highlight many other themes and issues for further inquiry. In doing so, these essays participate in ongoing scholarly efforts to map a vast and complex mediascape that is not only worthy of investigation on its own terms, but one whose study is critical for advancing our understandings of the social, cultural, and political dimensions of media globalization. Authors here employ a range of methodological approaches including institutional, cultural, textual, and ethnographic analyses and together, offer an inclusive approach that marks a departure from studies of the cinema in India that until recently have focused on questions of representation and the formal properties of film (Liang 2005; Singh 2003). We do not wish to suggest that this anthology offers a major paradigm shift—essays here amply demonstrate that the study of cinema in India has a long, rich history, and that the insights and vocabulary developed over the past two decades continue to influence our inquiries today.

Cinema in India has been studied as a profoundly important “national-popular” domain that has negotiated various transitions and conflicts in the sociocultural and political fabric of India for over a century now. In essays published in the *Journal of Arts and Ideas* and *Economic and Political Weekly*, and in several book-length studies and collections, scholars have written extensively on the politics of representation in Indian cin-

ema. Juxtaposing readings of films' narrative and representational strategies with the sociocultural and political context within which they were produced, circulated, and debated, these studies help us understand how cinema mediates ideas regarding nation, gender, caste, class, community, and sexuality. Over the past decade, others have built on this work and focused attention on a range of filmic and extra-filmic sites with varied theoretical lenses: Indian cinema and the question of national identity (Chakravarty 1993), as a "site of ideological production . . . as the (re)production of the state form" (Prasad 1998: 9), popular films as social history (Virdi 2003), relationship between spectatorship and democracy (Rajadhyaksha 2000; Srinivas 2000), fan practices and cinema's links to political mobilization (Dickey 1993; Srinivas 2000), state policy and censorship (Mehta 2001), stardom (Majumdar 2001; Mazumdar 2000), style and visual culture (Dwyer and Patel 2002), urban experience (Mazumdar 2007; Liang 2005; Kaarsholm 2004), and as a site for the articulation of queer desire (Gopinath 2005; Desai 2004). These studies grapple with the idea of how cinema (Bombay-based Hindi cinema, for the most part) relates in complex ways to the civic and the political, and offer us several vantage points to tackle what Rajadhyaksha has termed the "Bollywoodization" of Indian cinema (Rajadhyaksha, in this volume). In dialogue with this established body of scholarship, the essays in this anthology seek to broaden the study of cinema by approaching Bollywood not just as a textual form, but, as Singh suggests, as a "socially embedded set of practices . . . as a technology, as a commodity, and lastly, as implicated within diverse modes of sociality" (Singh 2003: n.p.).

We also wish to position this anthology as one that approaches Bollywood as a distinct zone of cultural production, and not as the latest phase in Bombay cinema's global travels that extend back several decades. Films from India have always traveled to different parts of the world and, as Gopinath notes, they have been an "important form of pan-Third Worldist cultural exchange between India and East and South Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe" (Gopinath 2005: 94). Tracing these networks certainly constitutes an important and much needed corrective to accounts which suggest that it is only recently, with the gradual institutionalization of the overseas, diasporic box office, that Bollywood has acquired international dimensions. As Eleftheriotis and Iordanova point out, such narratives are "misleading as they overlook historically significant processes, periods and cultural exchanges" (2006: 79). However, we would argue that fixing Bollywood within a narrative that seeks to claim

that the cultural geography of Indian cinema has always been global will be equally misleading. While remaining attuned to the history of Indian cinema's flows worldwide, we situate "Global Bollywood" in relation to the specific historical conjuncture of India's entry into a transnational economy over the past 10–15 years, the centrality of the NRI (Non-resident Indian) figure to India's navigation of this space, reorientation of state policy toward cinema, and the challenges of operating in a de-regulated and global electronic mediascape defined by the phenomenal growth of the television and advertising industries during the 1990s (Rajadhyaksha, Prasad, both in this volume; Thussu, in this volume). In other words, we can approach Bollywood as marking something new, as providing a window into the dynamics of public culture in contemporary, post-liberalization India, while remaining attentive to historical continuities. Let us, then, sketch the contours of this space before providing an overview of the essays in this anthology.

In 1998, at a conference on "Challenges Before Indian Cinema," the Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Sushma Swaraj announced that the government had decided to accord "industry" status to the business of filmmaking in India.² Among a series of financial and regulatory concessions that accompanied this major shift in state policy—such as reduction in import duties on cinematographic film and equipment, exemption on export profits, and other tax incentives—the most significant one was a declaration made in October 2000. The Industrial Development Bank Act of 2000 made it possible for filmmakers to operate in "clean" and "legitimate" fashion, instead of using the mix of personal funds, money borrowed from individuals at exorbitant interest rates (in some cases, from the mafia), and minimum guarantee payments advanced by distributors which characterized film financing in India (Ganti 2004).³

Further, this state intervention came with a rider: filmmakers would have to "corporatize" their businesses since money would only be lent to companies and not individuals. Over the past five to six years, "corporatization" has become a catchall buzzword that alludes not only to new modes of film financing and the attenuation of the mafia's hold over the film industry, but to a series of changes including preparing a bound script, developing and working with schedules, getting stars to sign and honor contracts instead of proceeding with verbal assurances, in-film branding through corporate tie-ins, aggressive marketing and promotions that reflected processes of market segmentation under way in India, the emergence of the multiplex mode of exhibition, and the entry of large

industrial houses, corporations, and television companies into the business of film production and distribution.

These transitions in the film industry, and the re-articulation of state-cinema ties, occurred during the same time period as another key development: the emergence of the diaspora as a strategic site in both economic and cultural terms. Over the last decade, films such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (DDLJ, 1995, Aditya Chopra), *Taal* (1998, Subhash Ghai), *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998, Karan Johar), and *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (K3G, 2001, Karan Johar) established diasporic markets as a vital source of revenue, which, in turn, led to the reconfiguration of what was an undifferentiated “overseas” distribution territory into North America, United Kingdom, Gulf States, South Africa, and so on (Ganti 2004).

In addition to theatrical releases in cities with sizeable South Asian populations, Bollywood’s entrance into overseas markets has been enabled by satellite television and online delivery systems. For example, B4U (Bollywood for You), a 24/7 digital Hindi movie channel launched in 1999 in the United Kingdom, is now available on eight satellites in more than 100 countries in North America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. Other major players, such as Zee Network, Star Plus, and Sony Entertainment Television, are increasingly using Hindi film-based programming to reach an international market. More recently, Eros International, the world’s largest distributor of Hindi films, has collaborated with Intel to deliver its content over broadband to consumers around the globe, and announced plans to launch its content on Movielink, a leading broadband movie download service (see Thussu, in this volume).

Several scholars have analyzed these developments, focusing particularly on the centrality of the diaspora in the cultural imagery of Hindi films in post-liberalization India. Through close readings of the narrative and representational strategies of films, particularly *DDLJ*, they have shown how NRI-centric films have played a pivotal role in constituting the figure of the global and cosmopolitan NRI as critical to India’s navigation of a transnational economy (Mankekar 1999; Mishra 2002; Viridi 2003). When seen in relation to state-sponsored rituals such as *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* (Non-resident Indian Day), where several film personalities were called upon to perform the role of cultural ambassadors, Bollywood’s role in mediating ties between the state and the diaspora becomes particularly clear.⁴

To these analyses of NRI-centric films and ethnographic accounts of film viewing in diasporic spaces, Rajadhyaksha adds the necessary histor-

ical and political dimensions. Partly a response to celebratory accounts of the globalization of the Bombay film industry, Rajadhyaksha argues that “while cinema has been in existence as a national industry of sorts for the past 50 years, *Bollywood* has been around for only a decade now” (page 22, this volume, original emphasis). Revisiting the period between 1945 and 1951, when the Bombay film industry managed to establish itself as a “national” film industry in the absence of state support, he goes on to argue that the most recent attempt by the state to redefine its relationship with cinema is, quite simply, a response to the problem of defining “national culture” in globalized modernity. In other words, Bollywood (not “Indian” cinema as a whole), as a (corporatized) culture industry, serves as a mediating institution par excellence for a state that seeks to reproduce itself under the sign of globalization (Rajadhyaksha, in this volume; Mehta 2005).

We see this anthology as a critical response to these and other transitions in cinema’s place in Indian public culture. The goal is not so much to make claims about the *extent* of Bollywood’s globalization or to speculate on the possibility that Bollywood will challenge and ultimately subvert Hollywood’s hegemony (Curtin 2007). Rather, it is to acknowledge the fact that ongoing changes in the imaginations and practices of a range of stakeholders are ensuring that Bollywood films and film music will constitute an important circuit of global flows during the twenty-first century. Essays here offer one possible mapping of this terrain, and invite readers to think about Bollywood as a compelling site of mediation not just for the reproduction of the state form or diasporic imaginations, but also as one where films and film music draw on and articulate our experiences, desires, and anxieties of dwelling in (global) modernity (Martin-Barbero 1993; Chakrabarty 2002). Divided into three thematic sections, these essays focus on a range of questions dealing with the industry, film and star texts, social contexts, reception, and participatory culture.

Framing “Bollywood”

Essays in the first section provide a critical overview of material and discursive dimensions of “Bollywood,” and locate the emergence of Bollywood in relation to broader social, cultural, political, and economic contexts. Taken together, they provide a useful conceptual grid for readers to

use as they go through essays in the next two sections. It is only appropriate, then, that we begin with Ashish Rajadhyaksha's "Bollywoodization of the Indian Cinema." Rajadhyaksha argues that it is not enough to say that cinema, as *the* most dominant culture industry in India, naturally emerged as the site where transitions related to globalization were negotiated and made intelligible. "Bollywoodization," he suggests, is best understood in relation to the more complex issue of cinema's ability to "maneuver itself into a certain position that made it indispensable to the State" (page 34 in this volume). "Bollywoodization," then, is related to the articulation of a "freer form of civilizational belonging explicitly delinked from the political rights of citizenship" and the neoliberal state's attempts at re-defining the sociocultural boundaries of "India" and "Indianness," exemplified by rituals such as the *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* (Day of the Diaspora) (32).

Following this, Madhava Prasad interrogates the history of the term Bollywood, and its current usage, and argues that the term is neither suggestive of Indian popular cinema's derivativeness nor is it a way of signaling and maintaining difference in the world. For Prasad, Bollywood carries the weight it does because of its pivotal role in articulating definitions of national identity to the figure of the Non-resident Indian, given that the "NRI is increasingly beginning to look like the sole guarantor of Indian identity" in a global arena. Prasad goes on to argue that the "idea of India" being essentially a global idea, sustained by the efforts of European Indology and the nationalist desire for the desire of the Other, India's identity was always anchored in some kind of external locus. The discourse of "Bollywood" then allows us to see how this locus has been redefined for our times.

In the next essay, Tejaswini Ganti adds another dimension to contestations over "Bollywood" by focusing on commemorations of the hundredth year of the arrival of cinema in India (staged by the Government of Maharashtra). She demonstrates how the history of cinema becomes an arena for the regional government to proclaim its distinct cultural identity (in regional terms) and how public rituals are appropriated by the state government to assert a particular claim over the city of Bombay and the institution of cinema.

Shanti Kumar further complicates Bollywood's transnational status by shifting our attention to the emergence of Hyderabad as a center of global cultural production. Focusing on Ramoji Film City, the largest, most comprehensive, and professionally planned film production center in the

world, he argues that we need to pay attention to the “rise of a new transnational vernacular” in Indian cinema (particularly Telugu and Tamil cinema) that challenges easy distinctions between global/local and national/regional and forces a more careful consideration of Bollywood’s claims on the global.

Finally, Daya Kishan Thussu’s essay tracks Bollywood films’ global flows, and provides an important account of changing industry dynamics over the past decade, particularly in the domains of production and distribution. He details the “corporatization” of the film industry and pays close attention to television’s role in enabling and shaping Bollywood films’ circulation worldwide. Thussu’s essay underscores the importance of rethinking studies of media globalization that continue to position Hollywood as the pre-eminent center of transnational media production (Curtin 2003). Careful examination of how a range of stakeholders in Bollywood develop and sustain relationships with other “media capitals” will also help us develop better accounts of how Bollywood films and film music are gradually moving out of the “south-Asian” diasporic market into American or British public culture more broadly.

Texts and Audiences

Chapters in this section focus on the representational politics of key Bollywood films and star texts, and how these texts circulate in diverse sociocultural contexts and get hinged to varied meanings. The first essay by Vamsee Juluri explores the ideology of violence as a relatively autonomous concern in itself, particularly since popular Indian films frequently espouse contradictory ethical positions on the instrumentality of violence. Using perspectives drawn from the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and post-colonial critiques of modernity and the epistemic politics of cultural reception in India, Juluri argues that the emotional and relational framework of Indian cinema must be recognized if we are to understand the nature of violence in Indian cinema. Through a close examination of violence in movies like *Mission: Kashmir* and *Khadgam*, he highlights the possibilities for an alternative epistemic location in the reception of violence in Indian cinema.

Chadha and Kavoori’s essay problematizes a key contradiction in Bollywood cinema—the placement of Muslim actors in key roles. Even

as communal differences and violence have increasingly come to mark Hindu-Muslim relations in India, Hindi cinema, one of India's central mediating institutions, has traditionally appeared to be a "cultural-industrial structure that has resisted Hindu-Muslim separatism" (Masud 1997: n.p.). However, although the presence of Muslim artists in the Hindi film industry has been widely invoked as evidence of its diversity, the representation of Muslims in Hindi films has received comparatively little attention. Focusing on this issue, this chapter traces the portrayal of Muslims within mainstream Hindi films from the 1950s to the current period, and finds that Muslims have been variously "Othered," and attempts to link such portrayals to changing discourses of interreligious harmony/discord in India.

Parmesh Shahani extends the question of identity politics and Bollywood into the realm of male same-sex desire. Drawing on his own experiences navigating the world of gay Bombay, he examines two key texts—*BOMgAY* (1996) and *Gulabi Aaina* (2003, *The Pink Mirror*)—to interrogate the structures on which gay identities in Bombay cinema are constructed. Shahani's insights into the lived realities of gay Bombay also underscore how class, caste, and gender shape urban gay culture. Situating the problematic of sexuality in mainstream media in relation to commodity culture in post-1990s Mumbai, this essay pays close attention to the ways in which gay identity, as read through these two important films, intrudes upon the life-worlds of Bollywood actors, producers, and festival participants. In doing so, Shahani also seeks to defamiliarize received (Western) notions of "authentic" gay identity/culture by foregrounding issues of language, class, and performativity in the Indian context.

Atticus Narain explores the complex ethnic and cultural configurations that comprise the East Indian Bollywood experience in Guyana, stressing how the reception of Bollywood cinema reflects historical and contemporary class/caste movements in Guyana. Hindi films are a cultural form produced by a dominant (India), but nevertheless are one of many other cultural intermediaries that provide Indo-Guyanese with the resources to construct new subjectivities. Focusing on issues of gender and the construction of femininity, Narain draws on his fieldwork experiences in Guyana to argue that in the context of persistent ethnic hostility between Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese, Indian films denote a cultural "intactness" in a diasporic context. This essay makes an important contribution to understanding Bollywood's flows into diasporas with historical

trajectories that are radically different compared to those in the United Kingdom or the United States.

Govindan and Dutta explore the multifaceted creation of messages of femininity by elite producers of “new” Indian media, and the hybrid reconstitutions of those messages by elite female youths who consume them. In the wake of privatization of media in the late 1980s, Hindi films and television shows have become vehicles for celebrating not only global consumerism, but also the transnational and hybridized life experiences of the wealthy in India. Embedded within this is a contradictory body of imagery regarding womanhood and sexuality, as crafted by transnational media elites. The male *and* female producers of media images—who themselves participate in “Westernized” sexual relationships—reconstitute in their works their own ambivalence regarding “liberated” female sexuality, the exhilaration of sexual conquest, and the contradiction between Western sexuality and so-called Indian values that exalt feminine modesty. They argue that the intersection of ongoing narratives about the nature of “Indianness,” and the simultaneous *fear of* and *fascination with* the expanding boundaries of female sexuality among Indian elites, has led to a narrative schizophrenia. Women in popular Hindi films and television are simultaneously marketed and condemned for overt expressions of sexuality.

Natalie Sarazzin’s essay fills an important gap in scholarship on Bollywood by focusing on aural constructions of transnational identity. Despite the popularity of songs and non-diegetic music in Indian films, there has been little scholarly analysis explaining music’s existence or function within every Bollywood text. She argues that music is not only of primary importance, but is a crucial component in the development of an array of narrative genres and the propagation of “Indianness” in national and especially diaspora-destined films. Identifying basic emotional, cultural, and dramatic musical codes, Sarazzin demonstrates how music generates relationships between music and the filmic image in engendering an Indian romantic narrative. Specifically, she examines the construction of aural illustrations of “heart” which reemerge as a critical concept and narrative theme in the romantic genre. Sarazzin also explores the ways in which aesthetics and sentiments based on accepted traditional tropes are selected and musically “modernized” by subverting popular global sounds, to create new meanings easily identified and consumed by a diasporic audience.

Beyond Film: Stars, Fans, and Participatory Culture

Essays in this section shift attention away from film and the space of the cinema hall to grapple with questions of stars, fans, and film journalism. First, Jyotika Virdi examines the success of *Deewar/The Wall* (1975, Yash Chopra) in terms of its narrative and the construction of Amitabh Bachchan as the “angry young man.” Virdi shows how the film reworks a narrative structure that assumes mythic proportion in Indian culture, the mother-son bond, and deftly meshes this with contemporary events occurring on the eve of Indira Gandhi’s notorious political Emergency that suspended citizens’ fundamental rights for 19 months in 1975.

Viridi argues that the manner in which the film interlocks strains of a melodramatic family saga, the action genre, and the musical with oblique social and political commentary is the hallmark of Hindi cinema and what makes *Deewar/Wall* stand out as its classic prototype. In doing so, Viridi also offers crucial insights into how the established and emerging star power of the on-screen performers, Shashi Kapoor and Amitabh Bachchan respectively, off-screen credits, notably the director, Yash Chopra, and the screenwriter duo, Javed Akhtar and Saleem Khan (credited for Bachchan’s super-stardom), shape the film’s circulation and its status as a classic.

Following this, Rachel Dwyer focuses attention on film magazines, a highly visible site of cultural production that shapes stardom and “star texts” in important ways. Dwyer argues that magazines such as *Filmfare* and *Stardust* deserve serious study not only for their coverage of stars and other aspects of the film industry, but also because they are central to the history of print culture in India. Drawing on interviews with editors and writers, Dwyer discusses *Stardust*’s major concerns and examines how it has constituted an “imagined,” interpretive community of readers in India. While the terrain that Dwyer maps has changed considerably over the past decade, with television channels and dot-com companies covering Bollywood stars and their lifestyles, her essay creates a space for further research on film journalism.

In the next essay, Ananda Mitra examines the production of Bollywood content on the World Wide Web. He discusses how the polysemic nature of the Web, and its openness to noninstitutional voices, has led to the emergence of different modes of content production. Demonstrating how this space is occupied by people who are able to create a novel communal

connection around the overarching commonality of an interest in Bollywood with subgroups interested in specific aspects of Bollywood such as its music and its stars, he argues that this collection of voices about Bollywood could eventually become the digital memory about Bollywood that records the way in which the film industry of India moves into a global arena.

The final essay in this section seeks to rework received notions of fan culture surrounding cinema in India. Focusing on a fan collective that has cohered around the renowned music director A. R. Rahman, Punathambekar argues against framing fan activity in Indian film culture in terms of devotional excess or in relation to political mobilization in south India. He argues that developing fan activity surrounding film music as an entry point entails rethinking the history of cinema's publicness as a history of media convergence, that is, a history of cinema's intersections with various "new" media (radio, TV, Internet). Such a reconceptualization of cinema's publicness, he suggests, will also help us steer away from treating fan activity as mere epiphenomena of politics and transitions in the political sphere proper.

As with any such collection, there are other ways of grouping these essays and we hope that readers will notice the thematic and methodological concerns that several essays here share and go on to explore further what is already an international field of "Indian" film and media studies. Furthermore, as Arvind Rajagopal points out in the Afterword, even as we move from the question of "national cinema" to map "Global Bollywood," we need to remain attuned to several other circuits of cultural production—"a growing folk culture of VCD and DVD production, not only of pirated copies of big city cinema, but also produced by new entrepreneurs, morality tales as well as news events set to voiceover and folksongs, in regional languages like Bhojpuri and Haryanvi"—that shape public culture in contemporary India.

NOTES

1. See Curtin (2003).
2. "Film Accorded Industry Status," *Business Line*, October 19, 2000, <http://www.indiaserver.com/businessline/2000/10/19/stories/141918re.htm>.
3. "IDBI Outlines Norms for Film-Financing," *Financial Express*, March 31, 2001, <http://www.financialexpress.com/fe/daily/20010331/fco31005.html>.

4. For a more detailed account, see A. Punathambekar (2005), "Bollywood in the Indian-American Diaspora: Mediating a Transitive Logic of Cultural Citizenship," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 8 (2): 151–73; and M. Mehta (2005), "Globalizing Bombay Cinema: Reproducing the Indian State and Family," *Cultural Dynamics* 17 (2): 135–54.

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