Cultural Cinematics and Bollywood
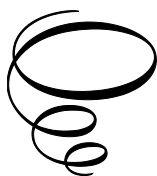
Cultural Cinematics and Bollywood

By

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Foreword by Prof. Robert Masterson

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FOREWORD

PROF. ROBERT MASTERSON
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, NEW YORK

We hear that films are windows. Movies are mirrors. Motion pictures are lenses through which the real becomes unreal and the unreal becomes real. Cameras are magic boxes that capture souls. Screens frame real life in all its artifice. Cinema shows us the world, the world as it was, as it is, as it might be, as it should be. It really isn't so. Photographic images are chemical reactions to light. The "motion" of moving pictures is an optical illusion, a trick. Movies are nothing quite like anything else, nothing more or less than what they are, and that is quite enough. Invented so long ago it no longer matters, film has become universal. It is as if it has always been. For something to be of any real value, it must be filmed. The language of movies is understood worldwide, the cell phone ubiquitous. At present, over 85 per cent of all human beings on the planet own smartphones, each one a complete motion production and distribution facility, each one a staggeringly vast film library for instantaneous viewing. Most of us spend more time with our screens, with the moving images our screens project, with projecting ourselves into our screens, than we do with other people.

From Stratford-on-Avon, Hollywood, Bollywood, and Nollywood the narratives spun through world cinema cross, recross, and crisscross themselves telling the ageless stories of love, war, crime, fantasy, horror, wonder, struggle, and adventure that humans have always told. Roger Ebert (2012) told us, most of us do not really *look* at the films we watch. We see without criticism, analysis, or sometimes even awareness. We are slack-jawed, goggle-eyed, entranced beyond our abilities to discriminate, absorbed by the image before us, consumed by our consumption. But that is not really true, either. Ebert also says that movies transport us, sending us not around the globe but into the movie itself. We forget we are watching a screen, our disbelief fully suspended, and we feel ourselves

present in the world of the screen. We sympathize, we empathize, we become the company. Statistics compiled by Nicholas Mirzoef in 2015 tell us that there had been more photographs and videos created the preceding year than in the entire 19th and 20th centuries combined. There were over three hundred hours of video uploaded to YouTube *every minute.* My smart phone tells me that comes to over 150 million hours of moving pictures created for that platform in 2014 alone and that number is certainly much higher today.

The most common holiday on our planet, a day celebrated in over 300 countries, is the day marking independence from the British Empire. From 1776 to 1947 to today, former subjects have become the authors of their own destinies, histories, and perspectives. These are created parallel to, not because of or in spite of or in service to any colonial entity or western sensibilities. The essays in this insightful collection address topics of universal concern—culture, art, society—through a uniquely Indian lens. The authors here examine such topics as the cinematic absorption and adaptation of the West's Shakespeare and Jane Austen, the internal cultural intersections of India's values and its storytelling traditions, and the societal impact of language and the acquisition of language in a nation of changing roles and expectations for women and girls.

We look at films, films look at us, and, more importantly for the scholars writing for this collection, films look at each other. The essays here contrast elements of Indian cinema that are unique, those that carry Indian traditions, and those that explore the cross-pollination that is the legacy of colonialism. Cinema is where past, present, and future comingle, where traditions confront new values, where the domestic tangoes with the foreign to create new music for the new dances which will carry us together forward in our ever-evolving human festival.

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We would like to thank esteemed Prof. Robert Masterson, the City University of New York, New York for producing a meticulous foreword of this book. We would also like to thank Dr. Elisabetta Marino, Professor of English literature at the University of Rome "Tor Vergata", Dr. Regiani Aparecida Santos Zacarias, Associate Professor with the Department of Modern Languages at the São Paulo State University (UNESP), Dr. Baliram Gaikwad, the recipient of the prestigious Fulbright Nehru Foundation's Post-Doctoral Fellowship from Florida University, USA for reading the manuscript and providing their reviews.

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—Dr. Cyrine Kortas
Dr. Ajit Kumar

INTRODUCTION

INDIAN CINEMA FROM INVENTION TO AGENCY

> "The world is a very puzzling place if you're not willing
> to be puzzled; you just become a replica of
> someone else's mind" (Chomsky, 1989, p.147)

One of the most famous metaphors used to describe cinema is the saying that it is a window to the outside world. This attribution grants the film industry the power and tools to bring about change. Nowadays, cinema has shortened the distance between nations and eliminated the gap between realities and fantasies. This has been achieved by creating access to the world of the impossible through the combined power of cinematography and cinematic imagination. Asma Ayob in *Understanding Bollywood: A Calling* (2022) stated, "In order to fully understand the relationship between Bollywood cinema and its audiences, it is necessary to trace the trajectory of both films and the people of India" (p. 4). Cinema has, therefore, connected humans, ideas, and opinions, making it a powerful gateway for connection. However, this metaphor imposes a frame on this window, suggesting that one can only see through this frame and never beyond it. This raises the question of to what extent we can trust the media when it can be framed and edited to suit a particular agenda. Norman Fairclough (1995) claimed that "truth is only achieved through representation and all representations involve particular points of views, values, and goals," (p.47) and for this reason, everything we see in cinema is not arbitrary. It is meant to make an impact, an everlasting influence, especially in an age of globalization where cinema has ceased to target local audiences, seeking instead the favour of a diverse universal viewership that harbours different lifestyles and customs.

It is in this vein of Fairclough's observation about the non-arbitrary nature of representation that film studies, as an academic discipline of their own, have gained critical prominence in various academic circles, opening up a

new horizon for research and discussion. By bridging the gap between entertainment and academia as a site for investigation, scholars from all four corners of the world have sought to explore films as a narrative that responds to the ongoing challenges and concerns of our modern world from a cultural, epistemological, and aesthetic perspective. Several readings of films have engaged in critiquing social, cultural, political, and gender matters and inherited dogmas dominant in certain societies and communities. Out of a fascination with Indian cinema that swept the world, especially Africa, interest in Indian film studies emerged as an academic celebration of alternative cinema in a global world where everything including cinema is Americanized.

The word Bollywood has long been viewed as a portmanteau, the "poor cousin" of the American film industry Hollywood, though it produces between 1500 and 2000 films per year in more than 20 languages (Nicolaou, 2020). The history of the industry goes back to the early 20th century with its first movie being released in 1913, *Raja Harshchandra*, set for many of its traditions and spirit as a unique and distinct home for filmmaking that is enlivened by the country's cultural and ethnic and religious differences. With its musical items, dance sequences, splendid sceneries, and fascinating narratives, Indian cinema tells stories of the heart, families, and the nation. This combination asserted the industry a world widespread that was made possible with the use of Hinglish and the presence of the Indian diaspora all over the world, including the Arab world. The presence of a significant Indian diaspora in the Arab world, especially in the Gulf region, helped enormously in introducing Indian films as alternatives to American ones. This is how the Tunisian audience, as part of the global audience, has been introduced to Indian cinema and actors. The interest spread further into the black continent and reached out to diverse African countries, namely Nigeria, Senegal, and Ghana. "The overwhelming majority of the audience was African in West Africa, and Arab in North Africa," wrote Ned Bertz (2019). He added, however, that "While the academic literature on Bollywood in places like Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana, or Egypt is more than scant, it is almost non-existent in countries such as Tunisia," (2019, p. 11) though Tunisians are adamant consumers of Indian movies, food, and dress.

The widespread appeal of Bollywood films across the globe raises intriguing questions: How to tell the story of Indian cinema? How do these films work? What do they make us think when watching them as a global audience that shares nothing in terms of culture, history, religion, and philosophy with the Indian character? All these questions are challenges that arise when encountering Indian movies. Through a detailed examination of passages from movies that range between the old and new, the historical and contemporary, and national and Diasporic, the current research puts forth a fascinating exploration of Bollywood as a world film industry that contributes to the world discussion of pop culture through cinema. It also introduces different theoretical and conceptual tools that raise critical and universal questions that prove that Indian cinema is not just an entertaining enterprise. The book seeks to argue for the importance of Bollywood commercial films by setting a map to the rise of the Indian self in a global world, a hope for the third world. This diversity of critical study of a wide range of films does not exclude a sense of commonality, a common thread of third-world cinema by subverting cinematic codes, mainly those set by America, embracing revolutionary ideals, and exploring the experience of commercial cinema.

Third-world cinema, also known as the Third Cinema Movement, is a cinematic experience that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in formally colonized countries in response to the dominant Western cinema, namely American, British, and French that promoted Western values and ideals while neglecting other cultures' stories (Wayne, 2001), developing distinctive features that set it apart from the dramatic, linear, and heroic cinema of the white man, third-world cinema focused on the local themes and stories of the other (Wayne, 2001). It is within this frame that Bollywood could be categorized as a third-world cinema that enlivened and pioneered local control of cinema production. The emphasis on local narratives and production aligns perfectly with Third Cinema's core principle of local control. As a prominent example of Third Cinema, Bollywood's rise from regional powerhouse to global influencer promoting Indian culture is rooted in a deep commitment to local narratives, history, and values, guaranteeing control of production and resonating with a global audience.

While Mike Wayne accentuated in his book *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema* on the social and political consciousness and engagement of this cinema, the book in hand attempts to add to the theory of third world film-making a cultural aspect, departing from the belief that economic dominance entails cultural hegemony. By engaging the viewers with local stories of daily struggles, conveyed in a particular combination of realism and fantasy, Bollywood stands as an influencing agent that promotes Indian-ness as a lifestyle. The selected movies are unique in this sense, coming out of cultural, social, and political confines to attain the universality of the Indian experience, generating intellectual engagement with a local product that may sound simplistic and commercial yet bring about revolutionary consciousness.

The emphasis on local narratives and cultural exploration extends to Bollywood's frequent use of film adaptation, allowing for the re-imagining of popular stories and characters that have already influenced Indians and made part of their collective memory. Film adaptation is a dynamic and multifaceted practice that allows local, third-world filmmakers to challenge dominant narratives, reclaim cultural heritage, explore identity, and address social and political issues. About the adaptations and cinematic studies Shri Krishan Rai and Anugamini Rai in *Adaptations Some Journeys from Words to Visuals* (2015) said, "The adaptation of literary classics to films has surged as one of the most appealing topics in the twenty-first century in interdisciplinary studies. Adaptation is not new; it has been in discussion since the days of silent movies" (p. 1) They further added that "in the perspective of Indian cinema, the first full-length Indian feature film, *Raja Harishchandra*, was based on a legend mentioned in Indian holy scriptures. Since then, several literary texts have been filmed, and this process has become a popular phenomenon" (p. 1). Similar adaptations permit the subversion of dominant narratives. By highlighting the Indian worldview, movies such as *Raja Harishchandra* are a powerful tool for exploring themes of identity while negotiating cultural uniqueness, based on a complex local narrative that exposes Western colonial biases that limit the Other to the stereotype of the inferior and subordinate. Adaptations are explained by Rai and Rai (2015) as an artistic expression enlivened by a local cultural heritage. With its broad

scope and rich history, Indian cinema has served as a platform for researchers to refute to succumb to cultural normalization and assimilation and accentuate instead the ability of Indian films to theorize, politicize, and negotiate the dialectics of the self, history, diaspora, and resistance.

Much of what stands for third-world cinema concerns the cinema of the cultural other, the global south, with its diversity and richness, geared from the wealth of stories, scenes, and techniques of film-making. As third-world cinema refers to "cinema of peripheries, cinematic production of developing or Third World countries or non-Hollywood (Mazierska, 2020, p.4), researchers such as Luci Nagib (2006) attempted to provide a comprehensive understanding of Third Cinema, providing definitions that accentuate the desire for democratizing film studies that permit the peripherals to be acknowledged as alternatives to the hegemonic Hollywood. To further change the hierarchies of the world of cinema, another step is needed when opening film studies to non-western thinking and analysis, which means that research on Third cinema movies ought to transcend national and cultural boundaries and foreground the global and universal in movies that are not made in Hollywood or modelled on Hollywood style. Benefiting from similar manifestos, Third Cinema has as such overcome geographical and cultural borders and opened new paths for research and inquiry.

Though by the mid-1990s, some critics claimed that the Third Cinema was dead (Wayne, 2001, Ekotte & Koh, 2009), this book aims to refute these claims and prove through the examination of Bollywood movies that Third Cinema still strives to maintain its charm and novelty; it is regenerating itself and reaching a different phase. Additionally, the book is a critique of a recent statement made by Ivo Ritzer "Third cinema claimed to represent the oppressed masses, but in fact, it remained throughout in the hands of an educated elite, ironically almost always trained in Europe. Its aesthetics of didacticism and pretension have come under attack and appeared less and less appealing to a new generation of filmmakers" (2018, p. 24). Ritzer is denying Third Cinema an essential component which is that of being a voice to the great mass of the marginalized, arguing that Western cinematic hegemony has managed to curb its endeavour to uniqueness, ceasing place to a more local and authentic cinema. Hoping to revisit the

ideology and aesthetics of Third cinema, the different parts of this compilation seek to debunk the still-felt influence of Western aesthetic hegemony on the one hand and explore the potential of Third cinema such as Bollywood to encompass the human experience, transcending cultural, geographical, religious and philosophical specificities. This book examines how Bollywood utilizes Third Cinema principles while achieving broad international appeal. By analysing a selection of movies, we aspire to see whether Bollywood has managed to ring bells among the growing populace of admirers in the global South, transcending the colonial heritage of inferiority and subordination by transcending cultural boundaries and offering a universal experience, standing as a beacon of light to many Third-world filmmakers, namely in Africa.

This research of cinema as a voice of the masses falls within the perception of cinema as the token of contemporary pop culture, playing an instrumental role in the making of culture. In this vein, Bollywood becomes a mirror to its society, reflecting on its characteristics, concerns, dreams, and fears. What we seek to argue for through these essays is that Bollywood has managed to find the right equilibrium between the hardships of real life and the fantasy of imagination and romance. By applying different theories ranging from moral criticism, feminism, post-colonialism and historical criticism, rhetoric, and media theories, the book in hand propels a journey through a vibrant tapestry of genres, styles and techniques, and issues and concerns that reflect on the Indian experience as a universal ordeal. To state it differently, the array of theories that guided the reading of the selected commercial movies is to assert that Bollywood's entertainment industry has developed from its humble beginning into a tastemaker, influencer, and shaper of social norms, political consciousness, and thought-provoking business. A popular commentator on the Mumbai lifestyle, Shobha Dé (2008) avowed that "The only philosophy that rules here [Mumbai-based film industry] is 'Paisa vasool'. Value for money?" (p. 191). This assertion limits Bollywood as a cultural industry that seeks money for the entertainment it offers. This may echo Ritzer's earlier mentioned claim of the death of Third cinema, leading to "an ideological one-way street" (2018, p. 24). The analysis framed by the following chapters consolidates the idea that

the mass traditions and social norms featured in Bollywood movies assume the role of culture advocate. For instance, marriage ceremonies as in *Bride and Prejudice* are granted a glamorous touch with songs and dances that may seem exaggerated to an Indian audience, but would be very informative for a non-Indian viewer who would come to understand that an Indian bride is to wear red instead of white to celebrate her love, a scene that differs drastically from the celebrated marriage of Mr Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet in the original film adaptation of the novel dressed all in white.

Despite frequent criticism for its fantastical portrayals, Bollywood retains a surprising ability to captivate audiences, even those who scoff at its formulaic nature. This book delves deeper, exploring the industry's unique capacity to connect with viewers on a profound emotional level, transcending cultural boundaries and asserting that Bollywood is not just about eliciting laughter or tears. The industry offers a portal to escape, a chance to rekindle shattered dreams, and a balm for life's hardships. In her sociological study of *Hollywood: The Dream Factory* (1950), Horlense Powdermaker named Hollywood an "industry that manufactures. . . dreams and fantasies" (p. 12-15). Still, it resonates with society's conflicts and problems offering possible solutions and reassurances. Bollywood, as an expression of contemporary popular culture, aims to answer many of India's matters in a fantasy-like fashion. It is what Jonathan Haynes penned as the industry's "prime instance of the interpenetration of the global and the local through the international commerce in cultural forms… and they are a prime instance of [Indian] modernity" (2000, p. 2). In other words, Bollywood films mirror the popular dreams and aspirations of a rising nation, coined by Kellner as the audience's maintenance of "civilization [that] could be maintained in the face of threats from criminals, outsiders, and villains of various sorts, and celebrated… legitimate way of resolving conflicts" (2004, p. 211). Bollywood films seamlessly blend global influences with local traditions to create unforgettable cinematic experiences.

The current discussion goes beyond the entertaining nature of commercial films and fathom the philosophical and epistemological background of these products that present Bollywood as the catalyst for India's self-

realization not only nationally but also internationally. They seek to explore the ways via which Bollywood aimed to overcome India's conflicts. In this respect, the newly advanced media technologies and outlets of the contemporary era have made it easy for Indian films to span and reach wide and far. Benefiting from internationally native investors such as Zee, UTV and Sun Network's Sun Pictures, Indian cinema has emerged as a global and important cinema industry since the 20th century. It is now present in all international film festivals in the world, which made its appeal reach out to various audiences. Its charm and intrigue lie in its local approach to film-making and production, though at times borrowing from the Western school, mainly Hollywood. Since its creation, Bollywood has set its identifying features, including dance and music as another substantial revenue generator that added to the fame of the movies. Today, social media is further boosting these revenues with profiles sharing videos of dances and music items from well-known Bollywood films, bringing them closer to a wider audience and vulgarising the philosophical and religious influences.

Exploring a rich history and cinematic experience that began years during the colonial days, Bollywood produced films that were inspired by Persian, English, and Muslim art that spoke to the world. As Indian cinema expanded, new ideas and adaptations started to find their way into the industry constantly shaping the experience of cinema-going and cinema production. The selected movies for the compilation reflect the golden age of Indian cinema, asserting not only a commercial success but also critical acclaim and cultural awareness of India's position in the world. They also reflect the development of various genres and trends, ranging from political themes, historical narratives, love and tragedy, comedy, and satire to science fiction, marking distinctive films and elaborated world views and visions. These developed features resonate with a global audience that finds in Indian commercial cinema a niche for hope and dreams. What this book offers is a tapestry of genres and styles analysis, readings and insights of personal and popular understanding, and academic rigor enlivened with theoretical complexity that addresses an international audience, contributing to media studies in general and film studies in particular.

The work will progress towards a more comprehensive understanding of film and culture in a way that will complement and augment our understanding of concepts of self and self-realization when studying film adaptation, presentation of the hybrid identity of Diasporic individuals, and gender manifestations in cinema as a reflection of society. The different parts of this study attempt to track not only traditional facets of the discipline through an emphasis on film history, criticism, and theory, but will also explore the contexts in which these films are produced, disseminated, and consumed.

To measure the impact and influence of Indian movies on non-local viewers, including Tunisians as North Africans, six clusters have been designed to frame and elaborate the book's spirit. The first cluster is devoted to the discussion with the experts of the field of arts, cinema and productions. This part of the collection is a selection of two interviews conducted by Dr. Ajit Kumar, who had the opportunity to interview two world famous filmmakers: Peter Valente and Alice Austen. Coming from different background, both contributed to the development of cinema that became inspirational to world cinema. The first interview with Peter Valente explores his creative process, influences, and approaches to film-making, poetry, and other artistic pursuits. Valente stressed the interconnectedness of his various artistic endeavors, seeing them as part of a broader creative process that transcends traditional categories. He discussed his fascination with the work of Harry Smith and other underground filmmakers, who emphasized the importance of imagination and improvisation in their work such as Harry Smith, Jack Smith, and Jonas Mekas. This exposure has led him to adopt a more unconventional and lyrical approach to storytelling, often incorporating elements of poetry, mysticism, and surrealism into his films. Valente also highlighted the impact of his literary background on his film-making, citing influences such as Rimbaud, the Beat writers, and the surrealists. He notes that his experience in documentary film-making, particularly with homeless veterans, led him to focus on the invisible worlds and the underclass in his work. These films, often blurring the lines between reality and fantasy, frequently explore themes of the underclass, marginalization, and the invisible worlds that are often overlooked. Additionally, Peter Valente

talked through his use of found footage and his interest in exploring themes of sexuality, war, and bio-politics in his films. He emphasizes the importance of risk-taking and collaboration in artistic creation and sees his work as part of a broader tradition of experimental film-making that emphasizes personal freedom and the inviolability of the self.

Overall, Valente's experience with experimental films has shaped his approach to storytelling by emphasizing the importance of imagination, personal freedom, and unconventional narrative structures. His films are characterized by a sense of intimacy, immediacy, and a focus on the personal and the poetic, reflecting his deep connection to the experimental film tradition. These experiences were supported by his interest in translation. His translation work significantly enhances his understanding of language and creativity and therefore his cinema making. He believes that translating poetry from different languages not only deepens his comprehension of the original work but also allows him to engage in a dialogue with the author and expand upon their ideas. This process of translation and interpretation fosters a sophisticated involvement with multiple languages and cultures, which he sees as essential for his creative process. Valente's translation work also reflects his broader interest in the synthesis of different artistic forms and disciplines. He sees his translations as part of a larger creative process that encompasses poetry, film, visual art, and other mediums. This interdisciplinary approach allows him to draw connections between seemingly unrelated ideas and to create new forms of expression that transcend traditional boundaries.

The second interview with Alice Austen, a playwright, screenwriter, and producer knowing for writing and producing the critically acclaimed 2019 film *Give Me Liberty*. The interview covers her formative years, creative approach, and professional experiences. Austen discusses her early influences, including her mentorship under Ken Kesey and Seamus Heaney, which helped shape her writing style. She also shares her experiences as a co-founder of the Harvard Human Rights Journal and her work in the Czech Republic during the post-Soviet era. Austen talks about her creative process, emphasizing the importance of research, collaboration, and emotional connection to her characters. She highlights the significance of representation and diversity in narrative, citing her own

diverse upbringing and experiences as a source of inspiration. The interview also delves into Austen's filmography, including her work on *Give Me Liberty*, which won the John Cassavetes Award at the Independent Spirit Awards. She discusses her company, *Give Me Liberty*, Mfg., and its vision to produce films with a commercial reach while maintaining artistic integrity. Throughout the conversation, Austen shared her insights on the challenges she has faced, including the difficulties of getting her work produced and the importance of advocating for herself as a woman in the industry. She also emphasized the significance of independent cinema and her ambitions for future projects, including the publication of her novel *33 Place Brugmann*.

The two interviews gave us the opportunity to speak with filmmakers who provided valuable insights into making and interpreting cinema. By analyzing the choices in terms of cinematography, editing, and narrative structure, offering a deeper understanding of the underlying themes and techniques that frame independent cinema. These interviews cement valuable insights and perspectives that enhance our overall understanding of the collection of essays on Indian cinema.

Next, historians as well as admirers of Indian cinema accentuate the artistic quality of Indian movies by referring to its major influences. The first Indian movies were adaptations of classical plays, written during the Mughal era by Muslim playwrights to address timeless issues of love, honour, and destiny. In 1922, the Indian playwright Imtiaz Ali Taj wrote a play entitled *Anarkali*, a tragic romance that narrates the love story of Prince Salim, Emperor Akbar's heir, and a court dancer named Anarkali. The play traces the dilemma of love and duty as the Prince's relationship with a dancer resulted in a war between father and son. Soon, the script found an echo among Indian filmmakers who sharpened the tradition of structured narratives, character development, and thematic exploration inspired by canonical literature. Indian cinema, and because of the country's cultural mosaic and colonial history, inhaled from a rich reservoir of ideas, philosophies, perceptions, and perspectives, which has illuminated the creative possibilities of adaptations.

One of the industry's major literary influencers is William Shakespeare, whose plays have exerted a noticeable influence on Indian movies even during the second phase of Third Cinema, mainly melodramas. The tacit connection between canonical literature and cinema through a study of the influence of Shakespearean drama on Bollywood films may be considered an important substantial pattern in the exploration of media and film studies. *Devdas* as a case study proves that for hundreds of years, Shakespeare still influences filmmakers including Indian directors and scriptwriters who are inspired by his complex plots and twists. The chapter seeks to trace these influences in the making of *Devdas*. Based in early 20th century India, *Devdas* is a Bollywood adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet.* Through tragic tone and strong characterization, the film presents its male protagonist as an Elizabethan tragic hero due to his unrealistic ideals and inability to overcome the weakness of indecisiveness that causes him to lose his love. With an Indian flavour and identity, *Devdas* shares some thematic and dramatic elements with Shakespearean tragedies, making it an interesting case study of how such influences are interpreted and incorporated into Bollywood cinema from the perspective of a global viewer such as the Tunisian cinema-goer who grew fascinated by Indian movies over the years. Indeed, many of the existential and philosophical concerns evoked in Indian cinema stem from the country's epistemological and ontological heritage (Verma, 2005, p. 238; Gruss, 2009, p. 226; Sultana, 2014, p. 53), yet no one can deny the impactful presence of Shakespearean plots, ideas, and themes as well as characters. The earliest period of Shakespearean influence on Indian movies, defined by Verma as the "appropriative phase" extended over the period from the silent era to the mid1980s (2012, p. 90). Though *Devdas* was launched in 2000, it carried a long tradition of Shakespearean understanding of the tragic hero as struggling with the self rather than a superior, external power. The tragic flaw stems from the character's excessive love, pride, and /or ambition.

While maintaining the core subject matters of Shakespeare's tragedy Othello, Vishal Bharduraj's *Omkara* in 2006 further highlights the interrelation between Bollywood and Shakespeare. The movie is set in the dark world of organized crime in India. Featuring Ajay Devgn as

Omkara/Othello, Saif Ali Khan as Langda Tyagi/Iago, Kareena Kapoor Khan as Dolly/Desdemona, and Vivek Oberoi as Kesu/Cassio, the Bollywood movie captures the essence of Othello's tragedy due to his susceptibility to manipulation and suspicion, enlivened with the Indian nuances of crime, love, and identity.

In the movie, the character of Omkara can be interpreted as a postcolonial hero. In the light of a postcolonial theory that sheds light on the impact of colonialism on the individual when exploring matters of identity formation and realization, power dynamics, and resistance against oppressive systems, Omkara manifests the representation of a marginalized individual who challenges the hegemonic power structure and hierarchy when facing discrimination and prejudice because of his low-cast. The directing aim of this research is to underscore the understanding of Omkara's journey in the film as a struggle against both internal and external forces. Through the analysis of *Omkara*'s grappling with his insecurities and vulnerabilities, a parallel is set with Othello as a prototype of a postcolonial hero.

Carrying the same interest in the interrelation between Bollywood and literature through a study of the Bollywood adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* in the 2004 *Bride and Prejudice*, the 2004 adaptation of the classic *Pride and Prejudice* reconstructs the movie not only in modern times but also adds another level of conflict to overcome the issue of cultural clash in addition to prejudice, pride and class distinction. *Bride and Prejudice* is Gurinder Chada's attempt to translate the original narrative into a modern rendition, which further problematizes the issue of adaptation versus imitation. The film merges the themes of Austen's story with Indian culture, including fashion, function, and values. *Bride and Prejudice* uses Indian flavours to create a global story based on a canonical classic one, incorporating both traditional and modern, local and international elements. The fusion of Western and Indian fashion styles, along with the use of vibrant colours, fascinating jewellery, and symbolic clothing choices, contributes to the visual storytelling and cultural richness of the film that grants it a universal appeal. "Jane Austen must have been a Punjabi girl in a previous life," claimed Gurinder Chadha upon the release of her *Bride and Prejudice* in 2004, a time marked by various releases that stood as an example of Austen's universal appeal across cultures and

countries in a global world. Transforming characters' names and modernizing the settings, the movie not only presents an adaptation that meets the tastes of a contemporary audience but also guarantees the survival of the original texts into the modern era. Interestingly, the analysis of the adaptation in this research transcends a superficial reading into exploring the complexities of a post-colonial enterprise when tracing the fostering of Indian values and native traditions to Western, global ideals popularized through American cinema. The Indian cinema seeks to provide an alternative.

Another cluster in the book is rhetoric which involves the understanding of cinema as an extended metaphor for a fertile ground for filmmakers to express complex ideas and emotions through visuals and aurals that transcend the literal and direct. It is in this vein that the study of food metaphor in one of Bollywood's many collaborations with Western cinema falls.

The issue of food metaphor as an expression of self-realization and assertion is explicitly visible in the global context of *The Hundred-Foot Journey*. In a multicultural world where borders have melted and notions of otherness have been embraced to enliven the debate on matters of integration and assimilation paradigms, movies including Bollywood's, created a common ground in which cultural elements such as food stand as an identifier for the self. What is particular about *The Hundred-Foot Journey* is that food is not just "mentioned, named, quoted, and cited," it is even cooked. *The Hundred-Foot Journey* intertwines themes of cultural identity, assimilation and/or integration, and self-realization through the use of the characters' culinary experiences that become means of communication, a mirror to the self, and a cultural identifier. Escaping religious persecution in India, Kadhim's family finds itself in a distant French village, where their culinary tradition collides with the world's first cuisine. In this foreign context, the Indian characters are forced to use English to communicate; yet they constantly code-switch English with words and phrases from their mother tongue, particularly naming traditional Indian dishes, which become their only liaison with memories of mother and land (Mayers-Scotton, 1993). Myers-Scotton (1993) described code-switching as "the selection by bilinguals or multilinguals

of forms from an embedded language (or languages) in utterances of a matrix language during the same conversation" (p. 4). Serving as a metaphorical escape from the pain of the past, food becomes a visual symbol for the struggles and triumphs Hassan, the young chef, goes through.

The film has conceptual and representational characteristics, making it an instrument for transmitting information about the cultural and socio-political context in which it was produced. The film announces India's becoming a global entity, capable of culturally melting with the world announced through Hassan's charmingly invading French cuisine, a cuisine that the Tunisian viewer is familiar with. This entry is announced through food. This paper examines as such the metaphoric representation of food and its evocation of identity in the transnational film *The Hundred-Foot Journey*. This chapter proves how popular films are artifacts that help generate meanings of self and Others and shape social and cultural norms of cultural tolerance and acceptance.

The issue of hybrid identity and the struggles faced by an immigrant family in a Western host society has been an important aspect of cultural studies. *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jaayenge* questions gender and cultural issues. Staging India's struggle in a global world, made clear through the protagonists' romance, between past and present, tradition and modernism, local and Diasporic, *D.D.L.J* announces a new era in Indian cinema and cinema making. The everlasting success of the selected movie lies in the skill with which the film acquaints the world with the Indian diaspora, proud of its values of love, family, and friendship, setting forth a global India as an alternative in the world of Western entertainment and culture. This new era gave rise to a new film genre known as family melodrama, based on "endless rounds of parties, beach dances, wedding celebration, festive occasions and an all-round feeling of well-being," (Kripidani, 2001, p. 45) that proved to be contagious, spreading hope and joy when taking the viewer into a world of fantasy. It is in this world that serious matters of gender and culture are addressed and treated. *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jaayenge*, an Indian Cinderella Story of a Diasporic Love, explores the issue of hybrid identity and the struggles faced by an immigrant family in a Western host society in a Cinderella fashion, featuring Raj and Simran,

two English Indians who meet during a tour vacation in Europe. Both of them exhibit different attitudes and mindsets of Indian immigrants' descendants. While Simran comes from a family that holds back from integration, Raj seems to assimilate into Western society. These opposite attitudes render their love unacceptable, especially in Simran's family. The film explores the experiences of the Indian diaspora and their connection to their cultural roots, a theme that world viewers may relate to due to the growing mobility rates the world is witnessing. The film explores the journey of love overcoming obstacles, while also delving into the complexities of cultural identity and the diaspora experience. Through its relatable themes and heart-warming narrative, *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jaayenge* has become a beloved classic not only in Bollywood cinema but across the globe.

Still investigating the complex interplay of Indian and Western values for a diasporic community, the next in the series is Ashutosh Gowariker's film *Swades* which explores the theme of negotiating Western and Indian values through the protagonist, Mohan Bhargava, a scientist working at NASA. Mohan embarks on a journey back to his homeland, India, to reconnect with his childhood nanny, Kaveri Amma. Initially torn between Western and Indian values, Mohan experiences a cultural crisis and encounters disparities between the developed American lifestyle and the underdeveloped rural India he encounters upon his return. However, his journey of rediscovering his roots evolves into a profound appreciation of Indian values, particularly community, unity, and solidarity, which have been overshadowed in the pursuit of modernity. It further employs a multimodal analysis, drawing upon Stuart Hall's theory of representation, to investigate the concepts of nation branding and product placement as vehicles for constructing and projecting India's global image within the film. The study examines the interplay of various modes of representation, including visual imagery, sound, and symbolism, to unravel the nuanced messages conveyed through the film's aesthetics. The film strategically employs techniques of nation branding to shape and project a specific image of India on the global stage, emphasizing the cultural heritage, scenic beauty, and traditional practices of India. This deliberate emphasis on Indian values and cultural symbols creates a distinct national identity

that resonates with audiences both within and beyond India. Product placement is also explored as an additional layer of nation branding, reinforcing India's cultural and economic significance. By analysing instances of product placement, the study elucidates how commercial elements intertwine with the film's narrative, contributing to the portrayal of India as a thriving nation with a rich cultural heritage.

 The cluster of popular memory revisits the past through a rereading of the national history of Partition. "*The Viceroy's House*: A Transnational Film that Redefines the History of Partition: A Family Story in a New History Interpretation" re-tells the story of Partition from the perspective of a descent of Partition. Compared to the other films, *The Viceroy's House* (2017) is a heritage film that targets a larger number of viewers. The popularity of this film genre stems from its combination of fact and fiction which influences our understanding of historical moments that marked national history. Though these films run the criticism of lacking accuracy and authenticity, they give voice to stories from the margin to be heard and to add to the puzzle of history. While history books render Partition a sum of figures and statistics, a heritage film humanizes these facts when giving them names, and features, which resonates with Anne Marie Scholz's statement in her book From *Fidelity to History, Film Adaptations as Cultural Events in the Twentieth Century*, (2013): "It is absurd to suppose that because a historical discourse is cast in the mode of a narrative, it must be mythical, fictional substantially imaginary, or otherwise "unrealistic" in what it tells us about the world" (p.12). The contribution of heritage films such as *the Viceroy's House* is that they retell history in a way that engages the viewer emotionally and cognitively. Its revisiting of the historical moment adds to the richness of the narrative while granting voice to testimonies from the margin. *The Viceroy's House*, released in 2017, is a historical drama film directed by Gurinder Chadha. The film provides a unique perspective on the events leading up to the Partition of India in 1947. It offers a transnational lens by exploring both the political negotiations among British and Indian leaders and the personal stories of those affected by the Partition. The film brings together a diverse cast and crew, reflecting a transnational approach to storytelling. British, Indian, and Pakistani actors collaborate to depict various viewpoints, giving a

more comprehensive representation of the historical events, and accentuating the importance of personal and individual stories to reread history. Indian cinema is intricately linked to the global South's history of colonialism and striving for emancipation. Like many nations that fell under Western colonization, Bollywood revisited its country's history in various storylines and different styles, reflecting the tensions, struggles, and hopes to face cultural and political occupation. These renderings of the past offer a rich comprehension of India's experience of emancipation and development, which ring bells of resistance and search for national pride among previously colonized countries, accentuating the global South's journey into being.

Patriotism and nationalism are important themes in Indian cinema. Viewers are thrilled and filled with a high spirit while watching Bollywood films such as *Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India* (2001), *Border* (1997)*, De Basanti* (2006)*, Kranti* (1981), *Chak De! India* (2007), *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (2001)*.* The songs and dialogues of these movies enhance the spirit of unity and love for the nation. Many of these movies inspire generations and raise awareness of both national and social issues. Critics like Shri Krishan Rai and Anugamini Rai in Nationalism in Indian Cinema (2023) share, "From the days of the Indian freedom struggle to the present, several Indian filmmakers have contributed to the creation of India as a nation." (p.1). Furthermore, it has been explored how Indian cinema contributed to instilling the spirit of nationalism among viewers. They further add, "Manoj Kumar, Mehboob Khan, Mahendra Kapoor and Hemen Gupta are some of the people who did not sacrifice their lives for their country. However, their creative works have constructed a niche of nationalism in the heart and collective consciousness of several generations of Bharat (India)" (p.1). In addition to this, Indian cinema has also addressed various social and national issues in its productions.

Taking upon its shoulders the new country's national identity and image, Bollywood wove stories inspired by the mosaic social and ethnic fabric to present the modern Indian man, regardless of class, caste, and religion as the country's ideal man that inspires values and morals. Bollywood superheroes explore themes such as social (in)justice, political corruption, and environmental crisis, prompting Indian viewers to reflect on these