

Film Review: Good Newwz / Neelam Jain



Good Newwz is a light-hearted comic escapade with Akshay Kumar- Kareena Kapoor and Diljit Dosanjh-Kiara Advani as two sets of married couples trying to have a baby through IVF (in vitro-fertilization). The two couples, from opposite ends of the cultural spectrum, have their fates entangled through the ovaries of two wannabe-moms and their shared family name: Batra. Though simplistic, the film's quota of things between human forte and foible makes it relatable in places.

Akshay and Kareena as Varun and Dipti Batra, are a high-flying swish couple in Mumbai, who after failed attempts at parenthood are advised by family to visit an expensive fertility clinic. Enter Honey (Diljit Dosanjh) and Monika (Kiara Advani) from Chandigarh. After some mis-conceptions, and literal ones, they too land up in Mumbai in the same IVF centre, hoping to go back with **Good Newwz**. They bring with them their clichéd, but endearing Punjabi earthiness from the land of “pinnies made by mom.”

The fertility clinic is run by another doctor- couple, ably played by Adil Hussian and Tisca Chopra, who claim a high rate of **Good Newwz** emanating from their centre. Voila! Both the women are successfully impregnated at the IVF clinic. But their joy has a short run as they are informed by the poker-faced doctor that the sperms of the two males got exchanged

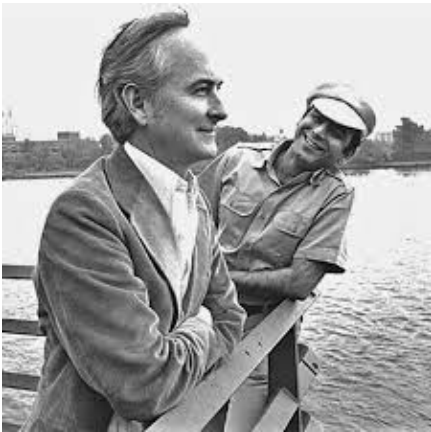
with the wrong wives. The goof-up is because of their shared family name. Now begins the rollicking comedy of errors.

Akshay Kumar is refreshing in this comedy after a spate of social-messaging roles. His comedy timing is spot on. Middle-aged executive in a car selling company, Akshay as Varun Batra has a trying time when his journalist wife Dipti is crazy to catch her ovulating time to conceive. He comes across as a caring, sometimes detached husband who is baffled at the need to have a baby to perpetuate genes.

The film deals with a topical issue of IVF babies, though it is only secondary to the story. At one point Akshay even comments that it is an interesting time when parents can just sit back at home and get a baby from an IVF centre. Debutante director Raj Mehta and co-writer Jyoti Kapoor have come up with racy humor, it being best as a comedy without getting pedantic about any issue. While grazing on the bigger issue of stressful lifestyle being a hurdle in normal conception, as also the social pressure to produce babies, the film keeps you engaged in the confusion of the two couples with exchanged sperms, or 'spams' as referred to by the simple Honey from Chandigarh. You wonder along with them how the conundrum will be resolved.

The content of the film is not as vital as the way it is narrated that makes **Good Newwz** eminently watchable. A laughter-riot, the film is risqué but never teeters on the offensive. The pace is maintained till the end, as is expected from a film co-produced by Karan Johar. I would certainly recommend it to all looking for some good humour – a rarity in Bollywood films. **Good Newwz**, the last Bollywood film to be released in 2019, was a befitting au revoir to the last year and continued laughter in the new.

Ismail Merchant: Film Producer Extraordinary / Partha Chatterjee



Ismail Merchant with
James Ivory

Ismail Merchant's passing away on May 25, 2005 marked the end of a certain kind of cinema. He was the last of the maverick film producers with taste who made without any compromise, films with a strong literary bias which were partial to actors and had fine production values. It is sad that he died at sixty eight of bleeding ulcers unable to any longer work his legendary charm on venal German financiers who were supposed to finance his last production, The White Countess, which was to have been directed by

his long-time partner James Ivory.

Merchant-Ivory productions came into being in 1961 when, Ismail Merchant, a Bohra Muslim student on a scholarship in America met James Ivory, an Ivy-leaguer with art and cinema on his mind, quite by accident in a New York coffee shop. The rest as they say is history. Together they made over forty films in a relationship that lasted all of forty-four years. A record in the annals of independent filmmaking anywhere in the world. Ivory's gentle, inward looking vision may never have found expression on the scale that it did but for Merchant's amazing resourcefulness that included coaxing, cajoling, bullying and charming all those associated, directly and indirectly with the making of his films.

Merchant-Ivory productions' first venture was a documentary, The Delhi Way back in 1962. The next year they made a feature length fiction film The Householder in Black and White. It was about a young college lecturer, tentative and clumsy trying to find happiness with his wife from a sheltered background. Ironically the script was written by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, a Jewess from Poland married to a Parsee Indian architect. James Ivory who knew nothing about the subject did a fine job of directing his first real film. He had made a couple of pleasant documentaries earlier. The crew was basically Satyajit Ray's, a director who was

already being
acknowledged the world over as a Master and whose Apu trilogy,
Jalsa
Ghar (The Music Room) and other films had made a lasting
impression on
international audiences and critics. His cameraman Subrata
Mitra, also
lionized, photographed The Householder which was designed by
Bansi
Chandragupta, the most resourceful art director in India,
trained by Eugene

Lourie, who created most evocative sets for Jean Renoir's The
River, shot in
Barrackpore, near Calcutta in 1950.

The success of the Householder in the West was largely due to
the efforts of
Merchant's energy and drive. He wooed the Press which
responded warmly
almost to a man. His film went to those distributors who could
give it
maximum exposure and a decent royalty. His task was made
easier by the
rousing reception accorded to Satyajit Ray's lyrical cinema to
which
Merchant Ivory's maiden effort owed clear allegiance.

Their second film Shakespearewallah (1965) had an elegiac tone
which
added poignance to its lyricism. It was a fictionalized
account of a true story.

A well-known English theatre couple Jeffrey and Laura Kendall
who play
people like themselves in the film actually ran a peripatetic
theatre company
in the British India of the 1930s, and 40s. The troupe got
into grave financial

difficulties when their audience endowed anglicized Public schools and Country Clubs whose members belonged to flourishing British owned mercantile establishments suddenly lost interest in all things English. The purple patches from Shakespeare done by the company, which also had some Indian actors in real life, as in the film, no longer interested people, whose enthusiasm for culture could best be described as ephemeral.

Only the romance between the young daughter of the English couple and an Indian rake was fiction. The performances were first-rate and Felicity

Kendall as the daughter was moving. Beautifully photographed in B/W by

Subrata Mitra and scored by Satyajit Ray, whose music sold half-a- million

long-playing records, Shakespearewallah was a huge success in America

and Europe. Ismail was only twenty-eight years old when he produced his

second feature film. He proved himself to be a man of fine taste, possessing

the ability to grasp an opportunity when it presented itself.

In retrospect, one can say he best illustrated the idea that artistes are a

product of history. They reflect a certain spirit of their times—so too with

Ismail Merchant and his alter ego, the director James Ivory. They came at a

turbulent moment in Western politics, culture and cinema. The French New

Wave was about to peak and had already revealed the staggering

possibilities of film narration. Filmmakers as disparate in temperament as Alain Resnais, Jacques Tati, Robert Bresson, Jean Luc Goddard, Eric Rohmer and Francois Truffaut had enriched film language and proudly declared it an art form to be taken as seriously as literature, music, theatre or the plastic arts. In the Anglo-Saxon world classical cinema was in its last throes, and its greatest master John Ford was unemployed, ignored by know all young men running Hollywood. There was a niche for a different, gentler kind of storytelling and Merchant-Ivory films filled it. Their early productions were devoted to selling exotic India abroad and who could do it better than Ismail? The third film that Ismail and James did together was set in Benares. The Guru (1968) had the contretemps of a famous classical sitarist with his two wives—one traditional, the younger one modern, as its focal point. Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation had swept across America promising deliverance from the ravages of greed and avarice brought by relentless capitalism. Recognizing this phenomenon, the story included as a catalyst an English pop star and his girlfriend. India and its contradictions, the musician attracted to modernity but comfortable only when maintaining status quo, his celebrity English disciple and his girl both hoping to find peace in the holy city where the ustad

lives, all this constituted a visually interesting but not witty or incisive narrative.

Energetic promotion prevented the film from being a dead loss. While it did not make a reasonable profit, it made money—only some.

Bombay Talkie (1970) the fourth Merchant-Ivory offering was about an ageing male star, who was unable to cope with his own life, fame that was soon going to elude him, and the unreal world of Hindi cinema. Apart from Zia Mohyeddin's powerful performance as an ignored lyricist, and Subrata Mitra's camerawork, including a long bravura sequence at the beginning, there was little to recommend about the film. Utpal Dutt, whose dynamic presence held *The Guru* together, was just about adequate as a harried film producer. Shashi Kapoor who was so good in the first two films, looked tired here.

Bombay Talkie did nothing for Ismail Merchant or James Ivory. Two films in a row that barely made money, put the company under financial strain. For the first time in his life, Ismail was forced to deal with the unyielding Jewish moneymen of New York on less than equal terms. The experience marked him for life and made him a skinflint. His old friend and colleague Shashi Kapoor, remarked on television that Ismail did not like paying any of

his actors and technicians anymore than he absolutely had to. The Savages (1973) was made in the U.S. in an old colonial Restoration mansion, in Scarborough, forty minutes away from New York. The old place

and the jungle nearby gave Ivory the idea of bringing in jungle dwellers from Stone Age into the twentieth century. An object the "Savages" had never seen before, a coloured ball, suddenly descends in their midst. The retrieval of it by people from the modern era provides material for a potentially hilarious and wise film. The script based on an idea by Ivory and not written by Jhabvala, lacked subtlety and humour. Although the director saw it as a "Hudson River Last Day in Marienbad", his film had all of Alain Resnais's intellectual tomfoolery but none of his poetic intensity. Merchant understood right away that original material was not the duo's cup of tea, and thereafter relied, exclusively on literature to provide the ballast for their films.

After The Wild Party (1975), a sincere but inept attempt to recreate the excesses of the Jazz age in sinful old Hollywood, an undertaking the inspiration for which may well have been the jewelled prose of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Merchant Ivory production was again in dire straits. Certain critics including Pauline Kael of the New Yorker even called

Ismail and James a pair of amateurs. The energy that drove their first two films seemed to have deserted them.

Merchant would have to turn things around speedily before America wrote them off. *Roseland* (1977) set in a real ballroom of that name in New York where people come to shed their loneliness was too civilized, too tentative to move viewers. Although it had a solid cast led by old-timer Teresa Wright with Lou Jacobi, Geraldine Chaplin and Christopher Walken who featured in the three inter-connected episodes, it was lacking in drive. Ivory seemed to have found a cinematic language that was true to his temperament, but it still needed polishing. The opportunity came with an adaptation by Ruth Praver Jhabwala, who else, of Henry James's *The Europeans* (1979). The interiorized pre-modern drama was just what Merchant Ivory productions needed. Accolades followed and actress Lee Remick's performance in a pivotal role was greatly appreciated. It was more than a success d'esteeme. People in large numbers bought tickets to see it. Ismail and James had finally made it to the front rank of American and European filmmakers. They were still in their late thirties.

The following year in 1980, they tried their hand at an experimental musical *Jane Austen in Manhattan* about various troupes wanting to

perform a 19th century manuscript by Jane Austen written in her childhood that was recently discovered. It starred Anne Baxter, who shot to fame thirty years

earlier as Eve Harrington in Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *All about Eve* and

Robert Powell, also a contemporary of hers. Made on a shoestring budget of 450, 000 dollars, it was like the proverbial curate's cake, good in parts.

Quartet (1981) based on Jean Rhys's despairing existentialist novel about

bohemian Paris in the late 1920s starring Isabelle Adjani, Maggie Smith,

Alan Bates and photographed in luminous low-key by Pierre L'Homme,

cinematographer to Jean Pierre Melville, father of the French new wave, was

a feather in James Ivory's cap. It was possible only because of Merchant's

exceptional organizing skills and uncanny judgment of the artistic and

commercial climate of Europe and America.

There was indeed room then for a quieter, more reflective kind of cinema in

the English-speaking world, especially after Hollywood had expended its

energies on mainly violent moralistic dramas and thrillers. The 'serious'

French cinema, thanks or no thanks to the brilliant cinematic combustions of

Jean Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, Jacques Rivette and Chris Marker had been

forced to virtually abandon the linear narrative, with the

notable exception of Francois Truffaut and, more so, Jean Pierre Rappeneau. It secretly welcomed well-told stories from any part of the world. Satyajit Ray's films and those of Merchant Ivory found favour with discerning French audiences, principally in Paris.

Ismail and James returned to the twilight world of Maharajas and 'illicit' love; the consequences of one is probed by a young Englishwoman in Heat and Dust (1983). Julie Christie is the woman who comes to India to understand her late grandaunt's affair with a Maharaja (Shashi Kapoor) and falls in love with a handsome youth (Zakir Husain) and gets impregnated by him. It was a big hit. Though Merchant-Ivory had to take a lot of flak from the critics. Ismail's logic was clear. Someone had to pay for the homes and offices in London, New York and Bombay (now Mumbai). The next year it was time to regain critical acclaim and the affections of a loyal audience. Once again it was Henry James to the rescue and his Bostonians was Merchant Ivory's key to success. It restored their prestige and gave them an unspoken right to adapt works of 'difficult' writers for the screen.

E.M. Forster, a great but not popular English writer was next on their agenda. A Room With a View (1986) featuring Daniel Day Lewis,

son of

poet C. Day Lewis, Helena Bonham Carter, Judi Dench and Maggie Smith, was the first attempt to find a cinematic equivalent to Forster's prose which was at first glance unsuitable for an audio-visual interpretation. There was too little physical action in his writing—A Passage to India and Where Angels Fear to Tread have short bursts of it—most of what occurs was in the minds of his characters. Merchant and Ivory won a fair bit of critical acclaim, and made decent amounts of money on it.

Their films were always about people, trying to find themselves—deliberately or not. The price they pay to arrive at an understanding with life is usually heavy. Most often they are aware of their dilemma; however, there are exceptions. Does Stephen, the faithful old butler in Lord Darlington's household really comprehend what an unfair hand he has been dealt by his former employers in Remains of the Day (1993)? Only Miss Kenton, the housekeeper, who like Stephens is now without a job, seems to know despite a stoic acceptance of her fate.

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel helps Ivory make perhaps his finest film: a quiet, understated, but never the less powerful depiction of class and privilege in pre-war England. The same pair of actors Anthony Hopkins, and Emma

Thompson from their Forster triumph of a year earlier *Howards End* were repeated to great effect in *Remains of the Day*.

Howards End (1992) was set during the economic depression that swept

Europe and America in the late 1920s through the mid-1930s. It was about

naked abuse of power and ruthless assertion of privilege. Anthony Hopkins

as an aristocrat with a roving eye is riveting but it is the women who elicit

both respect and sympathy. Emma Thompson and Helena Bonham Carter as

sisters from the middle-class whose trust is betrayed heartlessly by the

aristocrat, culminating in the murder of a male friend of the younger sister,

with their accurate reading of social situations, throw the film into a political

perspective which needs no polemics to comprehend.

If this article is as much about *Ivory* as it is about *Merchant* then there is a

reason for it. They were joined artistically at the hip. One was at his best

only when complementing the other. It was Ismail who encouraged, even

inspired James, to stretch himself to discover his true *métier*; to take risks

with complex literary texts that were difficult to film but could be

immensely rewarding once an effective method was discovered.

Who for instance had dared to film primarily uncinematic authors like

Forster and James in an Anglo-Saxon cinema? Who dared to gamble and

win but Ivory egged on by Merchant. To make meaningful cinema out of texts with sub-terranean relationships hidden under a patina of good manners, where what was being said and done often meant the opposite, was no mean achievement.

This kind of interiorized drama was also the highlight of *Mr and Mrs Bridge* (1990) with Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward playing the eponymous couple. Set in Kansas City during the Depression, it travels over two generations to Paris. The inclusion of the Louvre as a location was a masterstroke, made possible through Ismail's penchant for legerdemain.

Apart from Newman and Woodward's stand out performances as a rich couple stultified by time unable to understand the changing world around them, there was the elegant presentation of a difficult idea. Adapted from two novels by Evans Connell, *Mr. and Mrs. Bridge* was a critical as well as a commercial triumph.

Ismail had once said in an interview that he had brought in *Jefferson in Paris* (1995) for five million dollars; a feat beyond any producer, independent or backed by a Hollywood studio. To make a period piece about the second president of the United States and him courting his future French wife, for such a sum was a well nigh impossible task. The film was

panned despite

Nick Nolte's caring performance and Pierre L'Homme's telling photography.

It was only a year earlier in 1994 that Ismail had made his own debut as a director in feature films. It is not that he had never been behind the camera

before. His short *The Creation of Women* (1960) had been nominated for an

Oscar in its category and later *Mahatma* and *The Mad Boy* (1974) of twenty-

seven minutes duration was highly acclaimed. It is quite possible that he had

grown tired of fundraising for large projects that had to be reasonably

budgeted to be commercially viable. He wanted to do a small, intimate film

he could call his own. He chose Anita Desai's novel *In Custody* to do as

Muhafiz in Urdu. He got Desai and Shahrugh Husain to write the screenplay,

which was set in contemporary Bhopal. Noor, a huge, custardy man, a once

important Urdu poet is on his last legs, dying of adulation heaped on him by

sycophants much like the rich food he so enjoys. He lives with his two

wives, one like him old but unlike him reliable and the other a young,

opportunistic tart rescued from a local brothel and the mother of his son.

Devan, a young Hindu lecturer devoted to the Urdu language is asked by his

publisher friend to do an interview with Noor for his journal. What follows,

is in turn, comic and sad. Noor's interview is botched by a novice sound recordist. He dies suddenly, but Devan somehow manages to bring out a collection of Noor's poems.

Muhafiz is also about a highly expressive language that is being allowed to die out in independent India for exclusively political reasons. All official work in courts and police stations was done in Urdu before the partition of India in 1947. Immediately after, Hindi became the official language of the State. All avenues of Government employment suddenly closed for Urdu students. Noor a poet of sensitivity and discernment became a victim of capricious politics. To add insult to injury, his second wife sang his ghazals and passed them off as her own.

Ismail chose the more difficult intimist mode for his film. Rarely did the cinema go out of the poet's house. There were precisely five other locations, namely Devan's home and his college; his colleague Siddiqui's home and the office of the Urdu weekly which has commissioned Devan to do Noor's interview and the visit by boat to Sufi Saints' Mazar on an island in a lake. The last scene of Noor's funeral procession is seen mostly from a distance, mainly to create scale.

Too many things went wrong for intention to match achievement. For one,

Ismail had been away from home for much too long; true he did come back periodically to make films, but these were not connected closely with the imperceptibly changing social scene. He did not really have the time to study India for he was far too busy administering to the needs of the film at hand. His knowledge of Urdu, for all his enthusiasm, was at best sketchy. Choosing the poetry of a revolutionary poet like Faiz Ahmed Faiz to do duty for most of Noor's was a mistake. Anyone familiar with Faiz's oeuvre will immediately realize that it does not sit well on the lips of a bacchante like Noor. Perhaps Josh Malihabadi's poetry would have been more apt, for it would have been closer to Noor's spirit. More attention should have been paid to his ghazals especially those picturised on his second wife. They are sung in a lackluster manner by Kavita Krishnamurthy. Even the one rendered by Hariharan lacks conviction. They should have had more melody, more raga content. This was all the more surprising because Ustad Zakir Husain was the composer. Ismail was in much greater control doing his second film Cotton Mary (2000) in English, with a script by Alexandra Viets adapted from her own play. It was about an Anglo-Indian Ayah who decides to make herself indispensable to her English mistress whose baby she helps to

nurse. Mary, though, a servant uses her dominant position over her employer suffering from post-natal depression, to push her own case to go to England—home country for the Eurasian. As expected all her schemes fall apart and she is finally taken in by her relatives who she had till recently despised. Mary never really comes to terms with her own identity.

This problem of identity forms the core of *A Soldier's Daughter Never Cries* (1998) directed by James Ivory and based on an autobiographical novel by Kaylie Jones, daughter of James Jones, author of *From Here to Eternity*, *Go to the Widow Maker* and *The Thin Red Line*. The fundamental question of recognizing oneself is raised once again in *The Mystic Masseur* (2002) the last film that Merchant directed. V.S. Naipaul's comic novel about an Indian from Trinidad trying to discover himself in London allowed for a mixture of wit and seriousness.

Ismail and James worked together for the last time together in 2003 on *L'Divorce*, a farce set in contemporary Paris in which doltish Americans and French do not know what to do with themselves. An American young woman, pregnant with her first child, is abandoned by her upper class French husband for another woman. The hapless mother-to-be is joined by

her younger sister newly arrived from the U.S. only to be seduced by her estranged brother-in-law's rake of an uncle! The absconding young husband dies a gratuitous death; a sweet, chubby baby is born to his wife. Nobody learns anything from what life has to offer.

Ismail Merchant's life had a lot to offer. In middle age he had become a gourmet and gourmand, a television celebrity and a writer of popular cookbooks. He had proved his worth and durability as a producer of quality cinema whose foundation lay in good writing and had gifted the world an unusual and talented filmmaker in James Ivory. He had also paved the way for those independent producers and directors, not necessarily from India, who were to follow after him. Last but not least he had proved that if there

was a will to make a really fine film then the means to make it could also be found. He was a man of rare qualities.

**Jodha Akbar – The Film /
Seema Bawa**

Seema Bawa analyses this highly controversial film with a historical perspective



Actors: Aishwarya Rai and Hrithik Roshan

The historian in me could not resist having a *dekkho* at a historical romance based on a character such as Akbar, who indeed is a larger than life figure of world history. A man of vision, statesmanship and great depth Akbar was the *Insaan-e-Kamaal* of his era. Hrithik Roshan as the young Akbar indeed does not disappoint even though in terms of physique he does not match the descriptions of the historical Akbar. The scenes depicting his valour, strength and prowess in battle, though competently performed are not exceptional. It is the sheer regalness of his bearing and the small details such as the fluid and effortless movements with which he sits on the throne, an act which requires immense theatrical perfection, that help him make the character his own. The scene showing Akbar getting into a trance while listening to mystical music of Sufi dervishes is authentic to the sources and enacted with great felicity. Aishwarya Rai as Jodhaa is right out of Mughal-Rajput miniatures paintings in her stance, apparel, ornaments and indeed her entire external persona.

The character of Akbar is better delineated because of the wealth of source material available, much of which is hagiographic in nature. That is not to say that the counterview was not available as is seen from the killing of Adham Khan Akbar's foster brother. Other aspects of Akbar's prowess such as his exceptional skill as a bare-hand fighter, his dueling an elephant, his consulting philosophers of other

faiths; all having basis in historical sources ring quite true in the film.

Jodhaa, on the other hand, being largely a figment of the writer-director's imagination, has been conceptualized with less depth. The single character trait that has been reiterated is her spirit, and her spirited resistance to patriarchal values which while anachronistic to the period depicted, is also quite tedious. Her depiction as a Rajput woman of honour and integrity is overstressed.

As for the characterization of secondary characters, unlike *Lagaan*, in *Jodhaa Akbar* this aspect has been largely ignored. Instead we have stereotypes paraded as Rajput Ranas, and good and faithful courtiers such as the *Khan-i-khanan* and Todar Mal versus fanatical *ulema* and scheming relatives. The entire structure of Mughal aristocracy, the *mansabdars*, so significant for the actual and visual construction of the Mughal era, is overlooked.

The film succeeds in reconstructing the sense of architectural spaces of the grand Mughal era, especially the *Diwan-i-Aam*. The battles and the epic scale are well done even though the armies rush towards each other rather than in formation.

The music of AR Rahman goes well with the film but does not stand out. The background score though is excellent.

The film is at one level an elaborate seduction of the spirited though mono-dimensional Jodhaa by a rather desirable Akbar. The plot is entirely based on coitus-interruptus, which is interrupted ad-nauseum where the consummation is heartily to be wished for so that one can finally go home. The sexual tension is very well structured and indeed works very well but for the length it has been stretched out. The political intrigues and the romance appear to be yoked together by violence and are not linked organically. Indeed they should have been two separate films.

Perhaps the entire relationship of Jodhaa and Akbar should have been read within the context of sexual politics that underlay the harem of the Mughals, which could have served as an interesting back drop to the delineation of Emperor Akbar, arguably the greatest monarch and statesman this land has seen. We know that Akbar had at least two wives (besides many concubines) before he married the Rajput princess. The Rajput princess, whatever her real name may have been, would have been competing with them for her Emperor's favours and allusions to the same may have made interesting viewing. Instead the harem intrigues center around her conflict with Maham Anaga Akbar's foster mother whose importance had waned by the time Akbar attained adulthood.

The film is largely didactic in that it addresses issues of shared cultural heritage and communal harmony without appearing to preach. The historicity of Jodhaa/ Harka or Jia Bai is irrelevant to the film.

The film 'Manto'—A Review by Raj Ayyar



'I am a walking, talking Bombay.'

'Saadat Hasan Manto, RIP. He lies in that grave, wondering: Who is the greater storyteller? God or Manto?'

—Saadat Hasan Manto.

I enjoyed watching the biopic 'Manto', A great Indo-Pakistani genius comes alive in this film. A man whose life-world is torn apart by the brutal Partition, one whose life thereafter would always bear the scars of that trauma.

Manto's intense, and yet funny Urdu storytelling elan comes to life, as does his quirky humor, his roving gaze that took in details of street life with merciless precision (always privileging the marginalized street person, sex worker or insane victim of the India-Pakistan partition), and stitched them into narratives.

It is a measure of Nandita Das' skill as a director, that five Manto stories are woven into the fabric of the film, one each for his five most creative and tormented years—often, the film slips from a 'realistic' biographical description into the heart of a Manto story. Only later does the viewer come to realize that s/he is now out of the story, and back to Manto's life.

Hats off to Nawazuddin Siddiqui for pulling off such a complex role with elan—he captures the humor and dark irony of Manto's personal conversations, as also of his stories with a seemingly effortless ease.

Rasika Dugal has a sidekick role—as Manto's wife Safia, she is reduced to the role of a codependent, mothering wife, who takes care of him in his darkest moments.

I loved Rajshri Deshpande as Ismat Chughtai—she looks a bit like the young Ismat and portrays her love-hate for Manto well ('Manto my friend, Manto my enemy').

The film reminded me of a forgotten Bollywood matinee idol—Shyam Chadha. He was Manto's closest friend and might have broken the rule of the filmic triumvirate—Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, and Dev Anand, had his life and career not ended tragically in an accident on the sets.

Tahir Bhasin is adequate to the role but lacks Shyam's extreme

good looks, and his flashy personality.

The film relives two of Manto's best stories—'Thanda Gosht' (Cold Meat), and 'Toba Tek Singh'. The former about a man stabbed to death by a jealous sweetheart confessing that he had an extra-marital quickie with a corpse, and the latter the ultimate Indo-Pakistani story about the horrors of Partition, seen through the eyes of a madman.

One wishes that the film had spent more time re-creating 'Toba Tek Singh', and less on Manto's rehab and therapy. It does capture Manto's depressive alcoholism after his move from his beloved Bombay to Lahore, but those scenes could have been shortened without losing the overall effect.

—Raj Ayyar

Doordarshan Schedule July 2018



PRASAR BHARATI

(India's Public Service Broadcaster)

Directorate General: Doordarshan

Copernicus Marg: New Delhi-110001

Films Division

File No-26/1/2017-P-6. Film Dated: 12.06.2018

Subject: Schedule of Hindi Feature Films to be telecast from 01.07.2018 to 31.07.2018 on DD-NATIONAL Network.

(Shahrukh Khan Special movies will be telecast from 01st July'18 to 10th July'18)

S.NO

DATE AND TIME OF T/C

NAME OF THE FILM

STAR-CAST

01.07.2018

Sunday Retro At 12:00 Noon
(Guru Dutt Special)
KAAGAZ KE PHOOL
Guru Dutt,
Waheeda Rehman
Mehmood

01.07.2018
Sunday Blockbuster at 09:00 PM
Shahrukh Khan Special
MAIN HOON NAA
Shahrukh Khan,
Sunil Shetty, Zayed Khan

02.07.2018
Monday-Funday at 07:00 PM
Shahrukh Khan Special
PHIR BHI DIL HAI HINDUSTANI
Shahrukh Khan, Juhi Chawla,
Paresh Rawal

03.07.2018
Tuesday Action at 07:00 PM
Shahrukh Khan Special
ASHOKA
Shahrukh Khan Kareena Kapoor Danny

04.07.2018
Wednesday Romance at 07:00 PM
Shahrukh Khan Special
DIL TO PAGAL HAI
Shahrukh Khan, Madhuri Dixit Karishma Kapoor Akshay Kumar

05.07.2018
Thursday Drama at 07:00 PM
Shahrukh Khan Special
DEVDAAS
Shahrukh Khan, Aishwarya Rai, Madhuri Dixit

06.07.2018

Friday Houseful At 09:00 PM

Shahrukh Khan Special

FAN

Shahrukh Khan

07.07.2018

Saturday Jubilee At 09:00 PM

Shahrukh Khan Special

OM SHANTI OM

Shahrukh Khan,

Deepika Padukone, Arjun Rampal

08.07.2018

Sunday Retro At 12:00 Noon

(Guru Dutt Special)

CHAUDHHVIN KA CHAND

Guru Dutt, Waheeda Rehman

08.07.2018

Sunday Blockbuster at 09:00 PM

Shahrukh Khan Special

CHALTE CHALTE

Shahrukh Khan, Rani Mukherjee, Satish Shah

09.07.2018

Monday-Funday at 07:00 PM

Shahrukh Khan Special

BILLU

Shahrukh Khan, Irfan Khalara Dutta

10.07.2018

Tuesday Action at 07:00 PM

Shahrukh Khan Special

HUM TUMHARE HAI SANAM

Shahrukh Khan, Salman Khan, Madhuri Dixit

11.07.2018

Wednesday Romance at 07:00 PM

TEEN PATTI

Amitabh Bachchan R. Madhavan, Ben Kingsley Siddharth Kher
Abhay Deol
Preeti Desai

12.07.2018

Thursday Drama at 07:00 PM
CHOR MACHAYE SHOR
Shashi Kapoor Mumtaz, Asrani

13.07.2018

Friday Houseful At 09:00 PM
TUMHARI SULU
Vidya Balan, Neha Dhupiya,
Manav Kunal

14.07.2018

Saturday- 'Divanjali' At 12:00 Noon
(Sh. Jagannath Rath Yatra will be held on 14.07.2018)
JAI JAGANNATH
Sarat Purari Sadhu Meher Sritam Das

14.07.2018

Saturday Jubilee At 09:00 PM
BUDHIA SINGH- BORN TO RUN
Manoj Bajpai, Mayur Patole

15.07.2018

Sunday Retro At 12:00 Noon
(Guru Dutt Special)
SAHIB BIBI AUR GHULAM
Guru Dutt, Meena Kumari, Waheeda Rehman

15.07.2018

Sunday Blockbuster at 09:00 PM
BOMBAY VELVET
Ranbir Kapoor Anushka Sharma

16.07.2018

Monday-Funday at 07:00 PM

BUDHA MAR GAYA

Paresh Rawal,Om Puri

17.07.2018

Tuesday Action at 07:00 PM

OMKARA

Ajay Devgan,

Saif Ali Khan, Kareena Kapoor

18.07.2018

Wednesday Romance at 07:00 PM

DESI BOYZ

Akshay Kumar,John Abraham, Deepika Padukone

19.07.2018

Thursday Drama at 07:00 PM

CHUPKE CHUPKE

Dharmendra, Amitabh BachchanSharmila Tagore, Jaya Bhaduri

20.07.2018

Friday Houseful At 09:00 PM

MOM

Sridevi, NawazuddinSiddiqi, Akshay Khanna

21.07.2018

Saturday Jubilee At 09:00 PM

HUMSHAKALS

Saif Ali KhanRitesh DeshmukhTamannaah Bhatia

22.07.2018

Sunday Retro At 12:00 Noon

DEVAR

Dharmender,Sharmila Tagore, Shashikala

22.07.2018

Sunday Blockbuster at 09:00 PM

HEROPANTI

Tiger ShroffKriti Sanon, Prakash Raj

23.07.2018

Monday-Funday at 07:00 PM

CHINTU JI

Rishi Kapoor,Priyanshu Chaterjee

24.07.2018

Tuesday Action at 07:00 PM

GHAJINI

Aamir Khan,Asin

25.07.2018

Wednesday Romance at 07:00 PM

LOVE AAJ KAL

Saif Ali Khan,

Deepika Padukone

26.07.2018

Thursday Drama at 07:00 PM

THAKSHAK

Ajay DevganManoj Bajpai, Tabu

27.07.2018

Friday Houseful At 09:00 PM

PYAAR KA PUNCHNAMA-2

Kartik Aaryan,Nushuat Bharucha, Sonnalli Seygall

28.07.2018

Saturday Jubilee At 09:00 PM

ROY

Ranbir KapoorJacqueline Fernandez, Arjun Rampal

29.07.2018

Sunday Retro At 12:00 Noon

HAATHI MERE SATHI

Rajesh Khanna, Tanuja

29.07.2018

Sunday Blockbuster at 09:00 PM

JOLLY LLB

Arshad WarsiAmrita Rao, Boman Irani

30.07.2018

Monday-Funday at 07:00 PM

TOM DICK AND HARRY

Dino Morea, Jimmy ShergillAnuj Sawhney, Kim Sharma

31.07.2018

Tuesday Action at 07:00 PM

RAAVAN

Abhishek Bachchan, VikramAishwarya Rai, Govinda

Bollywood' s Shadowy Underbelly – Partha Chatterjee



Far away and long ago in 1959, Guru Dutt made *Kagaz Ke Phool* in Black and White and Cinemascope. In it an unhappily married director falls in love with his protégé. It was a truly felt love-story, which was a resounding flop, commercially. Now, in 2006, it is a cult classic appreciated even by non-Hindi speaking audiences in Europe and America. Nothing has been produced of its calibre in Hindi Cinema in the last forty years.

In truth, the Hindi Cinema of Mumbai, erstwhile Bombay, has regressed into an infantilism that can be attributed to spiritual malnutrition. This decline is part of a larger social malaise, a lumpenisation following the abdication of all responsibility, social and political, by a microscopic educated elite, which has allotted to itself every financial and political privilege.

Cinema, in India as elsewhere, has been an entertainment industry. In other parts of the world hedonism, as a logical upshot of rampant consumerism endorsed by America, has found expression in films. Notwithstanding a very small coterie of dissent representing artistic, mature, committed cinema. In India, particularly Bollywood – as Mumbai's Hindi film Industry has come to be known – no such force exists.

Legitimate financing of films has always been a problem. Producers, beginning their careers, and even later, have to borrow money from loan sharks at a back-breaking 4 per cent per month (or 48 per cent per annum), thus inflating costs due to production delays; mostly attributed to clashing dates of Stars who 'sell' films and try to make the most of their usually short-lived careers. Banks, rarely if ever, back films for they regard them as high-risk investments.

Corporatisation can certainly streamline production methods; keep films within budget by completing them on time. It can,

in the near future, also attempt to create an exhibition chain, parallel to the existing one, which represents certain unseen, vested interests. What corporate investment in mainstream Hindi film production cannot guarantee is meaningful yet entertaining films. Entertainment translates as 'manoranjan' in Hindi. It is an exquisite word, meaning painting or rather illuminating the mind – since any idea of painting involves light.

Things are quite different in reality. The average Hindi film celebrates mindless sex and violence, and mirrors consumerism imposed from without by America and its adjunct, satellite television. In Bollywood, there is hardly any attempt to open the mind to beauty. It is assumed that the average filmgoer whether the rural poor, middle class, rich and city bred is no more than a creature responding to limited aesthetic stimuli.

He likes to see on screen flashy clothes, fast cars, skimpily-clad women, huge gaudy sets with the latest gadgets and people putting away enormous quantities of alcohol and rich food: to top the topper – blood and gore punctuated by inane dialogue and 'item numbers' that show acres of female flesh gyrating to loud music. This assumption is both true and untrue because it is precisely those Bollywood products that contain these elements that succeed financially. But box office success also has a rider, that the film be interestingly narrated. It is incorrect to assume that people, rural and urban, cutting across class barriers, want to see only one kind of cinema. For the record, only ten percent of the commercial Hindi films released make money, another fifteen percent break-even and the rest sink without a trace.

The exhibition, distribution and financing of motion pictures in Mumbai is usually controlled by a shadowy Underworld. It dictates the kind of films that get made and seen. The strategy of this conglomerate is simple – limit the choice of the paying customer and make him believe what he sees is what he likes. This formula does not always work, because of the

shabbily written scripts and badly structured, sluggishly paced editing.

It is no secret that black money had entered the film industry by the mid-1960s. There is a photograph still in circulation of Hindi Cinema's greatest showman – Raj Kapoor touching the feet of Mirza Haji Mastan, the first known gangster-smuggler of Bombay who started as a coolie on the docks. Ratan Khatri, king of the numbers racket, even had a film made on himself. The Dholakiya brothers, who once owned Caesar's palace, a nightclub, which was mainly a rendezvous for prostitutes and their clients also had a financial interest in certain films. Dawood Ibrahim and his lieutenant Chhota Shakeel had others front the productions they had backed. Producer S H Rizvi – said to be Chhota Shakeel's man – was picked up by the police on the basis of a tapped cell phone conversation in which he had named a prominent Indian right-wing politician who had always gone out of his way to help him. To say that gangsters and politicians work hand in hand these days is an unassailable fact.

It is now possible for a fugitive from justice to be a resident of Dubai and actually dictate through his operatives in Mumbai the kind of films that are to be made and the people who will feature in them. Recent revelations in the press of non-controversial singers like Alka Yagnik and Kavita Krishnmoorthy having sung at Dawood Ibrahim's sister's wedding fifteen years ago only confirms the idea of the Hindi film industry as always having been an extension of the Underworld. The prospect is both frightening and revolting.

Amitabh Bacchan's biggest hit in 2005 is Sarkar, modelled on Mario Puzo's The Godfather. It is directed by Ram Gopal Varma, a Hyderabad entrepreneur who rode to fame and fortune on the crime wave. He did Satya, a well-researched glamourised look at the world of crime, then followed it after several years and films later with Company. His assistant E. Niwas did Shool, on an honest police officer whose wife is violated by

thugs and who is himself largely marginalized by politicians and gangsters working in tandem – till the last ten minutes before the finish.

What of Prakash Jha's two films that profess to be on the side of the law? In Gangajal you have a strong committed cop going hammer and tongs to straighten out a corrupt town run by a nexus of thugs and politicians. Apaharan has a decent, unemployed boy forced to take up with gangsters and to kidnap a Chief Minister's daughter. Whatever the message tacked on at the end of either film, violence is glorified and the triumph of evil over good obliquely suggested.

If gangland money is not involved in the production of a large number of Hindi films, why then is there a glorification of the gangster? Why is there a palpable suggestion that the State itself is in connivance with organized crime and is indeed giving it a fillip? No matter which party in power, crime and politics seems to feed off each other and terrorize the law-abiding citizen through the police.

Samuel Johnson had observed that patriotism was the last resort of the scoundrel. A rash of patriotic films like Refugee, Gadar, Border, LOC Kargil and Lakshya only make clear that dubious intentions of the filmmakers and the backers, seen and unseen. Wars from time immemorial have been fought for strictly commercial reasons. The only morality involved is amorality.

The advent of the multiplex in cities has raised the price of admission tickets by at least three-fold. But the films that get shown in these claustrophobic halls, usually equipped with state-of-the-art projection facilities, are mostly mediocre. There is, contrary to the vociferous claims of the industry and its supporters, a woeful lack of talent. Not technical talent – God knows there are enough cameramen, sound recordists, editors and special effects personnel who can deliver a product of international quality. But there are no

directors or scriptwriters of vision and integrity. Bollywood perhaps does not need them.

What would corporatisation achieve other than a cosmetically pleasing product that can be marketed to captive NRI audiences in the U.S., Canada, Australia and England? Today a film's national box office revenues account for only 40 per cent of the total earnings; the other 60 per cent comes from overseas rights, sale of music albums and DVDs. Unless there is a clear segment of the market a corporate film concern wishes to target with films that are not only technically fine but aesthetically pleasing, nothing of lasting value can be achieved.

The Italian, Irish and Jewish mafia in the USA went legitimate by gradually laundering its black money through investments in big, reputed industrial concerns. It is rumoured that something similar is happening on the Indian subcontinent. Although there are new players in the game, Dawood Ibrahim's shadow continues to loom large over Bollywood. The content of a film is as important as the technique used to express it. Hindi films continue to be caught in a reactionary political, social time warp. What good then can possibly come of Adlabs being bought by the Ambanis who own Reliance?

Will the day ever come when simple, elegant, deeply felt films shall engage with an audience of mainstream Hindi cinema? Will such efforts be made possible by the active patronage of a paying audience? One can only hope.

On Seeing Padmaavat By Partha Chatterjee



Rating

[ratings]

Sanjay film Padmaavat based on Malik Mohammad Jaisi's long narrative poem from the 16th century, has finally been released after much bloodshed and violence across northern and western India. Things got so out of hand in Gurugram, Haryana that a mob owing allegiance to the Rajput Karni Sena founded by Lokendra Singh Kalvi mercilessly stoned a school bus carrying small, terror-struck children cowering under the seats not wanting to get grievously injured. Mysteriously the Karni Sena has suddenly gone silent along with its leader and the film is doing roaring business. Bhansali and his financiers are laughing all the way to the bank. The BJP

Government is silent about the abominable acts of terror and mindless violence unleashed by the Karni Sena, which like the ruling party is Right Wing and blatantly Hindu.

Padmavati, according to legend was a Singhala princess whom the Rajput prince Ratan Sen (Singh) fell in love on his search for priceless pearls on the island. He brought her back to Chittor (Rajasthan) as his second wife much to the chagrin of his first spouse Nagmati. Padmin's lambent beauty has been a part of folklore since the 14th century. Her love for her brave, chivalrous, not very intelligent husband and the supposedly obsessive desire of Alauddin Khilji (1296-1316), the 13th and early 14th century Sultan of Hindustan to possess her body and soul is the stuff of legend. Chittor, according to folklore fell to the better armed and numerically superior Khilji army after a fight unto death. The womenfolk-old, young and children- are said to have committed Jauhar by immolating themselves. This is the story, with suitable embellishments and digressions in the very many versions that exist which have been fed to the upper castes, meaning the Brahmins, Banias and Rajputs, who have remained at the apex of the caste hegemony of majoritarian Hindu India over the last thousand years and have enjoyed all the economic and political privileges even when living under conquerors. Status quo prevails even today in independent India.

Bhansali's film is all that it should not be – retrograde, overly sentimental and crass. There is no story really apart from the populist legend handed down over centuries. It is driven by dialogue that would befit a second rate Television serial and a lot of grand standing. The camerawork, if it can be called that, is completely dependent on special effects as is the entire production, most of all the sets, the outdoor battle scenes, the utterly revolting and inhuman long sequence of Jauhar at the climax of the film. The costumes and jewellery and weaponry and other props would do credit to any desi-chic fashion designer. It is really difficult to know how exactly royalty, both Rajput and Turki Khilji, dressed in those days or how they ate, slept, made love, fought wars. In

these matters it is best to let the imagination roam, as long as it does not resemble a fashion show, which this film does. But would it have mattered if the film had argued its case in the 21st century idiom of morality and ethics?

The historical period in which a film is set is unimportant; what however is the treatment or how the subject is treated. Surely Jauhar, in theory and practice would have been revolting to women at the time it was practised, trapped as they were by the tentacles of patriarchy. Women were regarded as custodians of the family's therefore clan's honour. There were no nations then. The truth is they were regarded as goods and chattel in India till well into the 20th century. Defeat in war and resulting conquest by the enemy always resulted in the search for scape goats, which conveniently ended with women. Jauhar was committed to save the honour of the community. The men, of course, could be co-opted by the conqueror, as they usually were, regardless of what the legends said. Bhansali's Padmaavat is set conveniently in the medieval period thus giving it a status of myth. The cardinal reason behind its runaway success is that Indians 'uncontaminated' by an occidental education who form the overwhelming majority are addicted to myths.

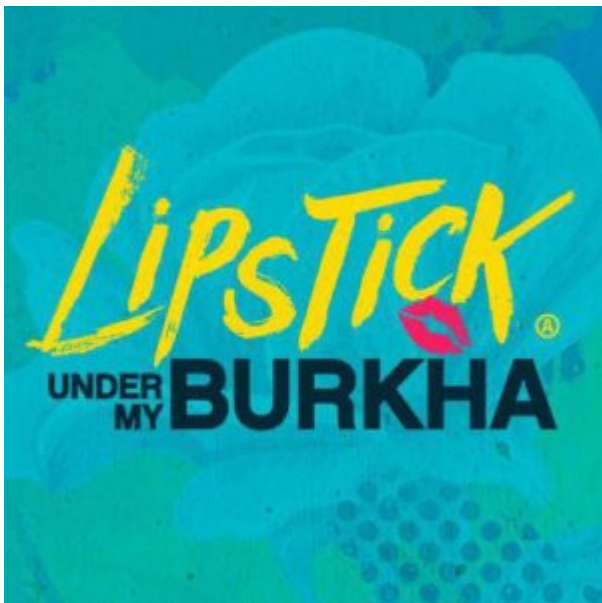
The alarming thing about Padmaavat is its openly communal stance. Ratan Sen (Singh) and his followers are shown as being brave, chivalrous, trusting and honourable. Alauddin Khilji and his fellow Muslims are depicted as being dishonourable, treacherous and woman-hungry. Even the penultimate scene in which Ratan Singh is killed is because he is brought down in a hail of arrows directed at his back by Khilji's army. The drawn out Jauhar sequence at the end, is shot with a neurotic love that reveals a completely retrograde mind.

Since Bhansali, through his film, reveals a mindset as backward as that of his so-called adversary Lokendra Singh Singh, founder of Karni Sena, it would be only natural that he legally adopt the filmmaker as his son and heir!

Watch “VEERE DI WEDDING Trailer [HD] (2018)

<https://youtu.be/XlUikh2CMqk>

Lipstick Under My Burkha—A Review by Raj Ayyar



I enjoyed watching Lipstick Under My Burkha this afternoon—the film is now in its once a day matinee phase, about to exit the big screen.

The film is a great commentary on the suppression of female sexual desire and sexualities in contemporary India. Pornography, phone sex and endless erotic fantasy are the substitutes.

The lead figure in a Hindi porn novel series—Rosie, becomes the fantasy persona of two of the women in lead roles—Ratna Pathak as the older sexy Buaji and Plabita Borthakur as Rehana Abidi, the young Muslim woman, who spends most of her spare time fantasizing about sex in the Rosie persona.

Both women are oppressed by their families; Rehana once her kleptomania is revealed, and Buaji for her erotic fantasies as an older woman. Past 40, women in India are not supposed to think of sex.

Her phone sex with a stud—a swimming life guard, plus her hidden porn stash, get her thrown out of her family and out into the streets. Bua's situation reveals the sanctimonious ageist sex prohibition (aside from a generalized sex phobia, homophobia, transphobia and more), rampant in India—older women and men are supposed to be sexless nurturers of the young and nothing more,

Konkona Sen Sharma is disappointingly reduced to sidekick status at best in this film—a shame, given her considerable acting talent (remember Konkona in Mr. & Mrs. Iyer?).

In the end, the major characters are manifestations of the porn novel Rosie character—porn is the real hero of Lipstick.

For me, the glaring melodramatic flaw in the film: the lifeguard who flirts with Bua Usha, and enjoys phone sex with her in her camouflaged Rosie persona, exposes her publicly in her neighborhood, and turns her family and most of her friends in that ghetto against her. Topping it off with a stream of ageist abuse. Given his studly narcissism and enjoyment of the phone sex, it is out of character for him to attempt such a wholesale destruction of one of his admirers.

No, this is Ekta Kapoor channeling thru the director of the film, back to the weepy, the overdone, the implausible melodramatic excesses of Ekta's soaps. Tsk, tsk.

<https://www.facebook.com/LipstickUnderMyBurkha/>

Singh is King – A review by Manohar Khushalani

No Jokinng!

Singh is Singinng All The Way to The Bank!!

A review by Manohar Khushalani



(L) **Kinng** tomfolling with the Mummies in Egypt

(R) **Katrina Kaif** sizzling in Kinng

Don't be fooled by the voices of protest from some of the elders of the Sikh community. If reactions of the younger audiences (even amongst the Sikhs) is anything to go by the Kids seem to love it. On the first day of the show the hall was packed with Sikhs. Initially the elders were trying to suppress their reactions because they did not know whether they should enjoy the film or look at it disapprovingly. But when they saw the young ones jumping like jelly beans in their seats they soon joined in. Yes the film has points of discomfort for the conservative lot but the intent of the producers does not appear to be vicious and therefore they ultimately tend to

look the other way.

Akshay Kumar and Katrina Kaif starrer ***Singh is Kinng*** had a record opening in theatres across the country on Friday. The collections totalled to Rs 8 crores on day one and the weekend collections are projected to be anywhere between Rs28 to Rs 30 crores. Modest projections for the first week collections of Singh is Kinng is put at Rs 45 crores, which could be a new box office record. The highest first week collections for a Hindi film till date is for the Shah Rukh Khan Deepika Padukone starrer ***Om Shanti Om*** which earned Rs 37 crores.

Before the movie was released, it was reported that the Sikh community in Khar, Mumbai was very pleased with the portrayal of the Sikhs in the film. Vipul Shah, the producer of the film, was felicitated at the Khar Gurdwara on June 18, 2008. He said, "Our intention was to portray the community in the right way and I am glad that we have managed to achieve it" However, some members of the Sikh community had expressed their displeasure over the portrayal of Sikhs in the movie. The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), announced that it was up to the audience to decide whether they want to watch the film or not

On August 1, 2008, the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) sought a ban on the movie, saying that it 'ridiculed' the Sikh community. It wrote a letter to Sheila Dikshit, the chief minister of Delhi, asking her to ban the movie The main objection raised was that the film promos showed Akshay Kumar's character sporting a trimmed beard, which some orthodox Sikhs found offensive. Akshay Kumar and Vipul Shah had a 50-minute discussion with the DSGMC authorities, in which they explained the positive message behind the film. The DSGMC members requested twelve changes, which the filmmakers complied with. Akshay Kumar also said that the film was aimed at portraying "how strong and brave Sikh community is." As a result of the discussion, DSGMC gave a clean chit to the movie on August 7, 2008. However, on the same day (August 7), the radical Sikh organization Damdami Taksal asked its followers to protest against the movie. The first show of the movie in NM Cinema Hall of Amritsar on August 8, 2008 was

disrupted by some sikh protesters, who vandalized the hall and damaged property

There were some voices of support for the film, as well, when a former member of the minority commission (a sikh) came on a television channel and advised the community not to nit pick since the film is not about religion and only about entertainment.

Well that is what this racy blockbuster is all about – entertainment. One is amused about some of the reviews from the highbrow critics. Some of them criticize the film for lack of logic in the story line. In an out and out comedy one has to leave ones brains behind and participate in the ludicrousness of the events. The film is slick and all the three main characters portrayed by Akshay Kumar, Katrina Kaif and Neha Dhupia look very hep and stylish. The editing is neat and musical numbers a plenty. Look at the breathtaking list of song numbers : *Singh Is Kinng, Jee Karda Labh Janjua, Bas Ek Kinng Mika Singh, Bhootni ke, Teri Ore Rahat, Fateh Ali Khan, Talli Hua Neeraj Shridhar, Bas Ek Kinng, Bhootni Ke, Talli Hua, Jee Karda, Teri Ore, Bhootni Ke*. The music was composed by Pritam. The song “Singh Is Kinng” was composed by U.K Bhangra band RDB. The soundtrack was launched officially at the IIFA Awards in Bangkok on June 8, 2008. Akshay Kumar and RDB performed two songs, Singh Is Kinng at the IIFA Awards.

About 75% of the movie was shot in Australia, around the Gold Coast region and Brisbane using an Australian production team. The film released on August 8, 2008. with Akshay Kumar as Happy Singh, Katrina Kaif as Sonia, Ranvir Shorey as Puneet, Javed Jaffrey as Mika Singh & Puneet’s Father, Kiron Kher as Rose Lady, Neha Dhupia as Julie, Kamal Chopra as Guruji, Yashpal Sharma (actor) as Pankaj Udaas, Om Puri as Rangeela, Kirsten Parent as herself, Sonu Sood as Lucky Singh, Eli Bernstein as Disco Dancer, Peter Coates as the pilot, James Foster as another pilot, Sudhanshu Pandey as Raftaar and Ashish Singhal in a cameo role. The Film is Directed by Anees Bazmee and Produced by Vipul Amrutlal Shah.

The opening scene sets the film on to a racy pace with the clumsy

Happy Singh chasing a chicken all over the village setting up a chain of destructive events and setting the small community into a state of total chaos. The amazing stunts were choreographed by Allan Amin who also stage managed numerous other such catastrophic events with well synchronized chain reactions. Perhaps the most hilarious scene was the one in which the former, now paralysed king, is buffeted around on a wheel chair.

The verbal humour has the typical earthy Punjabi touch to it. Bollywood now has the highest number of floating population of Punjabi actors and the directors had no difficulty in tracing out the actors with an authentic Punj accent. In any case the Punjabi community is one of the most happy go lucky variety and the script writer drew heavily from the *Punj* sense of humour.

Everything about the film is geared to make it a commercial success. The locations in Australia and Egypt gave it the touristy look as well, including a full fledged song sequence amongst the pyramids (How did they get permission to shoot there?) The costumes are also have the most modern styling. How come one is not talking about the flaws – if you look at it logically, yes there were many. The film was slightly disjointed at places as well, however the breakneck pace doesn't let you ponder on the flaws. In any case – no – I am not ashamed to admit that I enjoyed the film because I saw it with a young audience and (remember?) I HAD LEFT MY BRAINS BEHIND – so I couldn't pick them!