

**Bollywood'
Underbelly
Chatterjee**

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**Shadowy
Partha**



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. Padmini'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. Bhansaali'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) **Kingg** tomfolling with the Mummies in Egypt

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

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!

Desire and Repetition: The miniaturisation of the Hindi film song (Shikha Jhingan)

Desire and Repetition: The miniaturisation of the Hindi film song

Fourth Asian Women's Film Festival 2008 "Insights and Aspirations"

By Shikha Jhingan



Scene from Shikha Jhingan's '*Born to Sing*'

Let us examine the contemporary popular Hindi film songs and their circulation through the convergence of new media technologies. How has the emergence of global television and digital music changed the aesthetics, the cultural codes and the formal structure of the Hindi film song by mobilizing new circuits for the consumption of popular music? In fact, the use of repetition and heightened codes of visibility have perhaps given new forms of identity to a large number of young girls on 'reality shows' based on popular film music.

In recent times, one big change in the structure of the song has been the use of a 'hook line' as a repetitive structure. This clever use of the hook line allows the song as a musical category to evoke a discernible response from the body. Popular songs like Nach Baliye (*Bunty Aur Babli*), Dhoom Machale Dhoom (*Dhoom*), Mauja hi Mauja (*Jab We Met*) rely on the repetition of words or cluster of words and rhythmic patterns that is described as the hook line of the song. This metonymical formulation completely undermines the conventional structure of the film song thus opening up the song for an 'afterlife' for its circulation in the global circuits of value and exchange. The repetitive use of the hook line through television promos and trailers, reality shows, award nights, ring tones and advertisements of mobile phones and telecom service providers, leads to obfuscation of the

original song and its emotional appeal. In this new formulation the film song not only gets unhinged from the narrative of the film but is primarily meant to evoke a response from a dancing body.

In analysing Reality Television and talent shows based on music, one would like to draw attention to the democratisation where it is possible to have greater access to these technologies not just as consumers but in recreation of the musical mode. What is interesting here is that the accent here is not just on being a good singer but a great performer. The mobilization of a unique voice along with a great performance, an energetic dancing body, go into this new form of dispersal. The creation of a certain persona, with the help of props, dress, hats, belts, gestures and other visual signs create the uniqueness of each singer. So music is providing a basis for the creation of an identity. The emphasis is on showcasing 'your own voice' in sharp contrast to the earlier phase of remixes and cover versions which relied entirely on imitation or the recreation of an 'affect'. What is even more interesting is that there is a blurring of boundaries between music and dance, between the singer and the listener, between rehearsal and performance between sound and music and between voice and sound.

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Jodha Akbar – The Film

Jodha Akbar – The Film

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.

Stars Shine in Himalayan Kingdom | Manohar Khushalani

Along with Dev Anand, Waheeda Rehman, Shahrukh Khan and Manisha Koirala, Manohar Khushalani was invited, by the Indian Embassy, to Kathmandu to attend the celebrations of 50 years of Indian Cinema as a Columnist of Pioneer, where he ran a column called "Footlights". The clip of the review published on 2nd May, 1997 is shown in the attachment. Here is a small extract from the 7 column spread that Pioneer gave his piece.

Probably the best public relations exercise between two country is to establish a people to people interaction through cultural activity. Raj Kapoor was probably the best Indian Ambassador of good will for the soviet Union. Nobody perhaps known it better than the snake Indian Ambassador to Nepal. K.V. Rajan. By organising a festival of Indian films at Kathmandu he proved that what Raj Kapoor did at USSR Dev Anand can do in the Land locked Himalayan State. The incredible love and affection of Nepalese common men for Indian actors was brought home by the adulatory response to four Indian sorry

three Indian and one Nepales star; Waheeda Rehman, Dev Anand, Shahrukh Khan and Manisha Koirala.

“I am very fond of nature & open spaces. In Bombay it was difficult. What I noticed was that when they retired from cinema long ago, my son was still in school. When someone asked him, where the milk came from. He said Mother Dairy. That’s when we decided to move to a Farm and expose our child to that aspect of life as well.”

Waheeda Rahman who is leading a more or less retired life & last asked nearly seven years ago is willing to perform only if she gets a central role. “Unfortunately most of the roles available for performers of my age are stereo typed roles of Aunts or mothers, I would rather not perform than take up such roles”

Waheeda shifted bag & Baggage to a farm house in the outskirts of Bangalore because of she put it her children were not even aware about how the milk come they only knew that it come from a machine in the milk booth. Being a lover of nature she preferred to shift close to it...

“I am very fond of nature & open spaces. In Bombay it was difficult. What I noticed was that when they retired from cinema long ago, my son was still in school. When someone asked him, where the milk came from. He said Mother Dairy. That’s when we decided to move to a Farm and expose our child to that aspect of life as well.” She told me, this too when we were flying later over the everest and I was seated next to her. Both of us were admiring the pristine beauty of nature

Dev Anand despite his severely years displayed such energy and enthusiasm that he would put many younger people to shame. He said that he was greatly in love with this Country and would never forego an opportunity to come to Nepal. He had always advocated that this Country was a good location of or shooting films but not many producers were willing to come due to

difficulties of terrash & communication. Dev to probably the most active amongst the stars of his generation. Right now he was making a film in which he was acting as himself © Dev Anand as the actor. A teen age female fun follows him around the counting observing him as an action. She finally manages to meet him. The story appeared to be similar to Guddi.

Later at a function to felicitate the stars. Dev held the audience spellbound with his half hour long talk which was special with experiences of Nepal, tales of the role of the King in shooting of his films and personal advice on how to lead a dynamics life like him.

Manisha Koirala's entering was greeted by compliments to her beauty and brains in Dev's inimitable style. The local scribes were most comfortable with Manisha in her native tongue. Ms Koirala had no plans to act in a Nepali film in the near future she left it vaguely to events and occassions.

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Manohar Khushalani accompanies Indian filmstars on a recent trip to Nepal for a celebration of the golden jubilee of India's independence

Stars shine in Himalayan kingdom

As the Royal Nepal Airlines Boeing 737 circled over the Himalayan ranges to get a clearer view through the dense cloud layers of the level of the Himalayas — Kathmandu — our hearts thumped in anticipation. At the very first sight of the toy-like township nestled in the mountain ranges, gone was the fatigue of the two sleepless nights due to the 48-hour flight delay, caused by the lightning-all-India ATC strike. What awaited us was the first official celebration of 50 years of Indian independence in Nepal. Thankfully there were no political speeches on the cards, and entertainment and more entertainment.

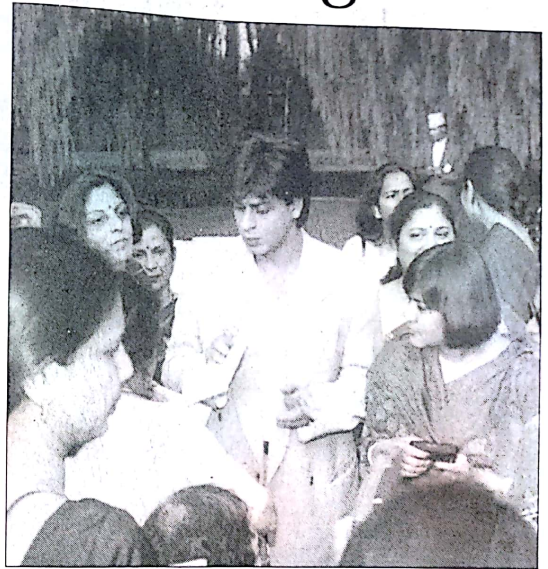
Probably the best public relations exercise between any two countries is to establish a people-to-people interaction through cultural activities. Nobody perhaps knows it better than the suave Indian ambassador to Nepal, K V Rajan. By organising a festival of Indian films at Kathmandu he proved that what Raj Kapoor could do for India in the Soviet Union, Dev Anand can do in the land-locked Himalayan kingdom. Later this year, the ambassador is also planning an NSD theatre festival in Kathmandu.

The incredible love and affection of the Nepalese common man for Indian actors and actresses was brought home by the adulatory response to the four filmstars: Waheeda Rehman, Dev Anand, Shah Rukh Khan and Nepal's own Manisha Koirala, of whom the valiant Gorkhas are extremely proud. The streets around the Birendra International Convention Centre were jam-packed with fans as the four stars waded through the milling crowds to attend a function organised to felicitate them.

Inside, Dev held the audiences spellbound with his half-hour-long talk which was spiced with his experiences of the hill state, tales about the part King Birendra played in easing the way of Dev Anand's shootings in Nepal, the guitar-toting hippie girl who inspired the creation of a role for Zeenat Aman in *Hare Rama Hare Krishna*, and of course some personal advice on how to lead a dynamic life and remain young like himself.



Representatives of cultural camaraderie: Dev Anand meets Queen Aishwarya (left); Shah Rukh



Khan mobbed by female fans in Kathmandu

As far as Shah Rukh Khan was concerned, great as the confluence of two generations of performers may have been, he was too busy warding off the bevy of Himalayan beauties out to mob him. "Oh no, not here too!" he smirked.

The programme was anchored by none other than the inimitable imitator, Jaaved Jaffrey, who interspersed the audio-visual on Indian cinema with his pet, often heard and sometimes unheard of jokes. While Jaaved did his best to liven up the proceedings, what was really a treat were the nostalgic numbers segmented decade-wise.

The first decade from 1947 to '57 had songs like *Jeeera haan, Jeevan hai agar zabar to, Chhor do aanchal zamaan kya kahenge, Mera dil ge pukare aa ja, and A mere pyare reatan*. What a comedown it was moving into the present decade with songs like *Chhoo le chhoo le, Chali ke peechhe kya hai and*

Chamma de de.

Earlier at an informal Press conference the Nepalese and Indian scribes had the opportunity to talk to the Bollywood stars and one particularly got an interesting glimpse of the mindsets of the older legends and how they were coping with the new trends in cinema. Waheeda for example was surprisingly positive about modern Indian cinema.

She disagreed with the suggestion that there was too much exposure in today's films and quoted examples of many films which were wholesome like *Dhwaale Dulhania Le Jayenge* and *Kabhi Ha Kabhi Na*. Waheeda herself is leading a more or less retired life and last faced a camera nearly seven years ago.

She was willing to undergo the ordeal again only if she got a satisfying role. "Unfortunately, most of the roles available for performers of my age are stereotyped ones of aunts or mothers,"

she clarified. "I would rather not perform than take up such assignments."

Talking of the time when she lived in Bombay, Waheeda said that her children there worked hard in school and watched television rest of the time. They were not even aware about where the milk on their table came from. They only knew that it came from a machine in the milk booth. That was enough for her and she shifted bag and baggage to a farmhouse in the outskirts of Bangalore. Being a lover of nature she thus got an opportunity to get close to it.

Dev Anand, despite his 70-odd years, appears to be getting younger — if not in appearance, then in busyness. He displayed such energy and enthusiasm that would put many younger people to shame. As he said, he is greatly in love with Nepal and will never forego an opportunity to come to this country. He had always advocated that this

place was a good location for shooting films but not many producers were willing to come, due to difficulties of terrain and poor communications.

Unlike Waheeda, Dev Anand will like to work right till his last breath. Currently, he is making a film in which he is acting as himself — Dev Anand, the actor — who is followed by a teenage female fan around the country until he awards her an audience. Although the thespian would not admit it, the story sounded similar to *Guddi*.

Manisha Koirala's entry to the Press conference was greeted by the evergreen Dev in his own inimitable style. While she felt awed by the presence of performers whom she admired as a youngster, he proclaimed that now he was her admirer. "You know, I kept my hand close to my heart when I shook hands with you the first time," he confided to the giggling star.

The local scribes were most

comfortable with Manisha as she switched to her native tongue. Manisha has no plans to act in a Nepali film in the near future.

She left it vaguely to events and occasions. Manisha was happy to come to her country but she had no desire to settle here, she said. Living in Mumbai suited her.

Dev Anand was not bothered by the repeated box-office failures of his recent films. He claimed that he never lost money in any film and that if any of his films were appreciated for their quality, that was enough of a reward for him. When this correspondent asked Manisha Koirala if she would prefer to make a good film or a box-office hit — she said she would rather have both, but if it came to a crunch, she would opt for a role in a good film.

Dev Anand put it more succinctly: Many times a good film succeeds at the box office and many times it doesn't. Many times an average film also suc-

ceeds. But if a film succeeds it must have some merits — it cannot be ignored even if the critics think it should be.

Shah Rukh Khan had very little to say except that he would not act in an art film and would no longer do the anti-hero roles. Of course, once upon a time he acted in a Mani Kaul film, because he understood it. Most art films according to him were pseudo-intellectual.

A special flight over Mount Everest with Waheeda Rehman and Jaaved Jaffrey, however, struck an ominous note. The Everest was not visible due to heavy clouds, even while we were in the midst of a golden jubilee celebration. A government had fallen in New Delhi and the future was equally cloudy.

Fortunately, the clouds in Indian politics shifted a little just before the curtains were drawn over the festival in Nepal, with the installation of a new government in India.