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Salaam Namaste, Melbourne and Cosmopolitanism

Andrew Hassam

Australian film, tourism and trade commissions share with their global competitors a desire to attract Bollywood overseas filming. The USA and UK have an overwhelming advantage in attracting Indian film-makers because of the range of iconic backdrops they can offer, but they do not have control of the market and despite the lure of New York and London, Indian producers have been tempted by other global cities. Toronto, like Sydney, has appeared frequently since the mid 1990s and, more recently, Singapore and Bangkok have both attracted a number of productions. The demand by Indian audiences for fresh locations means that producers are always searching for new settings, such as Budapest in *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* (1999), Greece in *Chalte Chalte* (2003) and St Petersburg in *Lucky: No Time for Love* (2005).

Salaam Namaste (2005) has been hailed as 'the first Indian film to be fully shot in Australia',[1] a misleading claim since, while location filming was carried out in Australia, studio filming and post-production took place in India, as they almost invariably do. Nevertheless, *Salaam Namaste*, like Stanley Kramer's *On the Beach* (1959), which made similar use of Melbourne locations, was a significant international production.

It was produced by a major India film company, Yash Raj films, it featured two international stars, Preity Zinta and Saif Ali Khan, and it had a reported A$3.3 million budget,[2] a large budget for an Indian film. The box office income exceeded that of *Dil Chahta Hai*, part of which was shot in Sydney and which also starred Preity Zinta. Overall, this was a valuable coup for Melbourne in the global market to provide offshore Bollywood locations.

In this chapter, I will use *Salaam Namaste* to explore how Australian film, tourism and trade commissions have attempted to persuade Indian film-makers to use Australia as a location. A key aspect of pitching Melbourne to Indian producers is the presentation of an image of Melbourne, both visual and conceptual, and federal, state and territory governments have put considerable resources into market research and the creation of a destination 'brand' that will attract business investment and visitors. In thinking about *Salaam Namaste*, therefore, we need to think about what the Indian producers were looking for in choosing a film location and how far the world of Bollywood matches the 'Brand Melbourne' that was being pitched to them.

In addition, we need to consider not only the image of Australia projected by Bollywood, but also what alternative images are being excluded. One way to attempt this is to look at the characters in the film, who are on the margins of the Bollywood world that the film creates. A Melbourne Indian taxi driver plays a key role in the film's resolution, and in the second half of this chapter I consider the relationships between Melbourne's South Asian taxi drivers, the recruitment of Indian international students and the depiction of Melbourne in *Salaam Namaste*.

The role of Australian film, tourism and trade commissions in attracting Bollywood productions

For Indian producers, the decision to film overseas involves a different range of factors to those facing Australian producers. The difficulties of raising film finance mean that Australian producers can contemplate overseas filming only when a specific location is demanded by the story and when there are no alternatives. The London scenes in *Hotel Sorrento* (1994) were filmed in Melbourne, and while Australia fights its wars overseas, it makes its war movies at home: South Australia doubled as South Africa in *'Breaker' Morant* (1979), as Turkey in *Gallipoli* (1981) and as Palestine in *The Lighthorsemen* (1987); and Queensland was

substituted for Vietnam in *The Odd Angry Shot* (1979), Indonesia in *Blood Oath* (1990) and New Guinea in *Kokoda* (2006).

In contrast, Indian film producers have more opportunity to film overseas. The liberalisation of the Indian economy, irreversible after India accepted assistance from the International Monetary Fund in 1991, made possible the revival of big-budget spectaculars in the 1990s and an increase in overseas filming. In addition, there are financial advantages which help make overseas filming economically attractive, despite the increased travel costs and the need for travel visas and foreign currency; Cynthia Karena records being told by an Indian art director 'that it was cheaper to shoot a film overseas than in India, as the stars of the film are "captured" on site. Apparently in Mumbai they don't always turn up if they have something else on'.[3] That 'something else' might be a TV commercial or another film, and as Anupama Chopra notes: 'Actors work on more than one film at a time, and cannot be available for three months at a stretch'.[4] Once the actors have left India, however, the producer is more able to rely on them working on the production full-time, with less risk of overruns in schedules and delays in production. Stars can film on location overseas without being mobbed by crowds of fans, as they would be in India, with the associated stoppages and security costs. And location fees, for filming in an airport or hotel, for example, can be lower than in India. So, while filming overseas entails additional costs, there are also production efficiencies and cost savings.

Cost savings, however, are not the main reason for filming overseas, especially where the song sequence shot in an exotic location is likely to be the most lavish and expensive part of the film. As the overseas location is seen as a key ingredient in a film's success, with distributors willing to pay more for a film if an overseas location is used,[5] the major question is not so much whether to film overseas as where to film overseas. Because fantasy song sequences break continuity of space, Indian producers can be extremely flexible in deciding where to film them. And because the storyline itself is highly formulaic in its narrative features, if not necessarily in how they are combined, the choice of overseas location for the action is secondary to the storyline itself. It is hard to imagine Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) not set in England, or Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* (1992) not shot in the southern USA; but, unlike art-house films made by members of the Indian diaspora, popular Indian cinema rarely engages with specific overseas locales and may be set with equal validity in Australia, Canada or South Africa. The decision about where to film is more likely to result from the potential of the location in terms of the film's financial

success than in terms of its artistic success, and Indian film-makers enjoy the flexibility of shooting in a choice of locations in order to take advantage of market trends.

Film commissions

Australian state film commissions, such as Film Victoria and the New South Wales Film and Television Office (NSWFTO), offer cash production incentives to overseas film-makers to persuade them to film in Australia. However, to qualify for the incentives, film companies need to spend a minimum amount in Australia, A$3.5 million in the case of Film Victoria and A$5 million in the case of the NSWFTO, and this is more than Indian productions generally spend, which is in the region of A$1 million.[6] *Salaam Namaste*'s reported budget of A$3.3 million (US$2.5 million) was large by Indian standards,[7] but that was still not enough to qualify for state film production incentives. And it was nowhere near the size of spend required to qualify for the Australian Federal Government Location Rebate, for which qualifying productions need to have a minimum Australian expenditure of A$15 million.

Film Victoria was unable to support *Salaam Namaste* through its production incentive scheme and instead referred the producers to the state tourism commission, Tourism Victoria.[8] The film commissions are able to provide advice and some assistance in scouting locations; and filming in Victoria outside Melbourne, such as on the Great Ocean Road, may qualify overseas productions for support from Film Victoria's Regional Victoria Film Location Assistance Fund. Understandably, the film commissions put most of their effort into attracting big budget US productions, with budgets ranging from A$30 million to A$100 million or more; *Ghost Rider* (2007), which filmed in and around Melbourne, had an estimated budget of A$119 million (US$110).[9]

The commissions are charged with promoting local film production but, compared with US production, Indian production contributes very little to the Australian film industry. Even where the film is set in Australia, as in *Salaam Namaste*, studio filming and post-production (such as film, sound and digital editing) takes place in India. Indian productions will use local production management and some local technicians, equipment hire, security and catering, but the contribution to the local film industry is modest. On the other hand, even such modest contributions are welcomed by a film industry financially dependent for its existence on overseas film-makers and the film

commissions are keen to maintain links with the major Bollywood production companies. However, film commissions are required to maximise returns on their limited resources and, on the whole, they do not view Indian films, or even Bollywood, as a major contributor to the Australian film industry, either now or in the future.

Tourism commissions

Yash Chopra, whose son, Aditya Chopra, produced *Salaam Namaste* for the Chopra family production house, Yash Raj Films, has spoken of the ways in which overseas governments have been approaching Indian film-makers:

> The tourism departments show you around, recommend good locations, and are very enterprising when it comes to providing infrastructure for the shoot. They help with everything right from cooking and cleaning facilities to arranging for dollies and cranes. If I had to shoot in India, I would have to lug all that heavy equipment when I went location hunting or on a shoot. So shooting abroad works out much easier.[10]

State tourism commissions see more potential in Indian films than the film commissions and Tourism Victoria contributed A$10,000 to *Salaam Namaste* because they viewed the film as a way of pushing their 'brand strengths' in India. To say that A$10,000 was a modest contribution to a film with a A$3.3 million budget would be an understatement, though Tourism Victoria also provided in-kind assistance with location permits, which for outsiders can be difficult to obtain. *Salaam Namaste* features many locations in and around Melbourne, such as Federation Square, the Victoria Market and La Trobe University, though in the event the most iconic Melbourne location for the Indian market, the Melbourne Cricket Ground, proved too expensive to use.[11] The film-makers, to whom the cash and in-kind contributions are offered, have already decided to film overseas and the modest assistance provided by Australian tourism commissions can, in this way, make a difference between filming in Melbourne or in, for example, Toronto or Cape Town. Since filming overseas is likely to be the most expensive part of Indian film production, the comparative cost of different locations is not the prime factor in deciding where to shoot [12] and Siddharth Raj Anand, the director of *Salaam Namaste*, had reportedly been preparing to film in either San Francisco or Vancouver.[13]

Tourism Australia, the Australian federal tourism commission, has reported that 'Over the decade from 1997 to 2006, the annual average growth rate for visitors from India was 16%'.[14] The total for visitors from India in 2006 was 83,783, an increase of twenty-three per cent over 2005.[15] The figures, however, are modest when compared with the 308,500 visitors from China in 2006, even if the percentage increase from China was only eight per cent and India is categorised as an emerging market rather than a key market. As a result, there are only limited resources available for promoting Australia as a tourist destination in India, making collaboration with Indian film and television producers a cost-effective way of showcasing Australia.[16] *Salaam Namaste* opens with a sweeping panorama of Melbourne's CBD overlaid with the caption 'Melbourne | Australia' and identification with Melbourne is reinforced here and throughout the film by the refrain on the radio, 'Good morning Melbourne'. The box office success of *Dil Chahta Hai* and *Salaam Namaste* demonstrated how useful Bollywood films could be in promoting Australia in India and among the Indian diaspora in the UK and the USA. In addition, both *Dil Chahta Hai* and *Salaam Namaste* have been used by Tourism Australia to showcase Australia in India.[17]

Melbourne's success with *Salaam Namaste* is the kind of success that the South Australian Government will be hoping for with their recent support of *Love Story 2050* (2008) which filmed mainly in Adelaide and regional South Australia. The film was apparently planned to be filmed in Scotland, but the production was attracted to South Australia by a reported '$150,000 cash grant and a number of incentives such as assistance with road closures'.[18] The South Australian Government insisted on Adelaide and other tourist destinations, such as Kangaroo Island, being identified by name within the film[19] and a press release by the Premier, Mike Rann, was, not surprisingly, upbeat about the film's potential to promote South Australia within India: 'Placement of our state in mainstream entertainment, such as this movie, is a great way of increasing our profile among an increasingly affluent and mobile audience of many millions of people'.[20]

Australian Trade Commission

While Premier Mike Rann is hoping that increasing South Australia's profile 'among an increasingly affluent and mobile audience of many millions of people' will benefit tourism, he will also be hoping that

sponsoring Indian film-making will benefit other types of trade with India: 'South Australia's relationship with India is increasingly important—trade between us is growing and there is an increasing awareness of Adelaide as an education destination'.[21] Tourism is linked to trade, particularly in the case of India, and those Indian middle-class business men and women tempted to travel to Australia for a holiday or to visit family and friends may well return to India with ideas for developing business links with Australia.[22] Holidaying in Australia may also lead to their children studying for a postgraduate qualification in an Australian university; or if they already have children studying in Australia, they may visit Australia for a holiday. Both main characters in *Salaam Namaste* travelled to Australia to study, Ambar (Preity Zinta) as an exchange student and Nick (Saif Ali Khan) to study architecture.

India's strong and growing economy is immensely attractive to Australia in terms of trade. While on a Trade Mission to India in March 2006, Australia's former Prime Minister, John Howard, made time in a tight schedule to take a photo opportunity with Yash Chopra and to meet some of the cast and crew of *Salaam Namaste*:

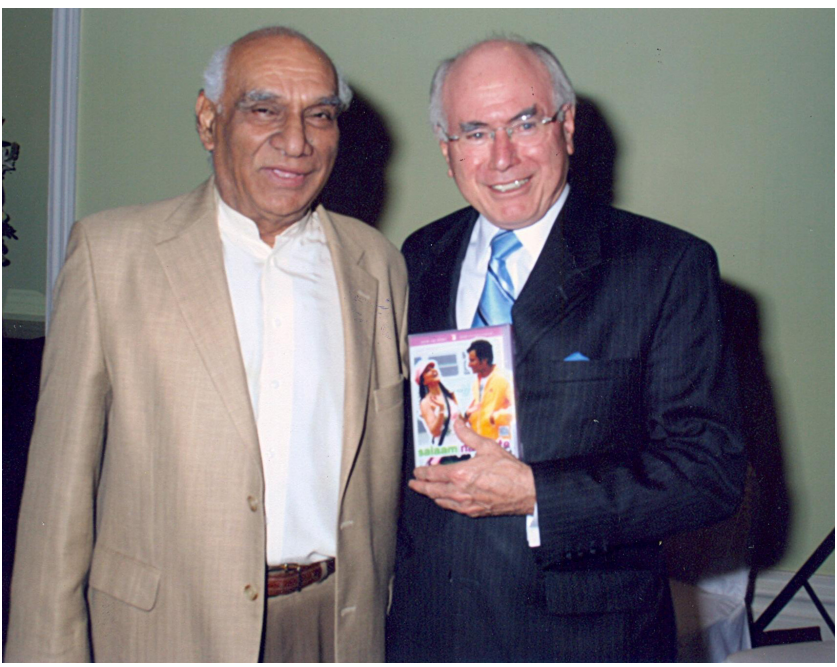

Figure 3: Mr Yash Chopra with former Australian Prime Minister John Howard, 2006. Image courtesy Yash Raj Films Pvt. Ltd.

> Austrade [Australian Trade Commission] officials in Mumbai—India's film capital—are working hard to promote Australia as a film location. On a four-day visit to boost trade with India, Prime Minister John Howard met some of the cast and crew of the hit musical [*Salaam Namaste*]. Despite previously confessing to a soft spot for British crime drama Midsomer Murders, Mr Howard showed himself to be a man of varied tastes, proclaiming he and his wife, Janette, had 'enjoyed immensely' a viewing of the movie.[23]

John Howard was clearly persuaded by Austrade that associating himself with Bollywood was a good way of publicising his presence in India. Austrade officials also play a role in channelling Bollywood production towards Australia; both *Dil Chahta Hai* and *Salaam Namaste* acknowledge the assistance of Austrade in their credits. But the presence of Austrade officials demonstrated, not so much an Australian prime minister's interest in cinema, either Indian or Australian, as an interest in promoting tourism, education and trading links generally between Australia and India.

What images of Australia do film, tourism and trade commissions wish to promote?

John Howard would not have agreed to be photographed with Yash Chopra holding a DVD copy of *Salaam Namaste* if the film had projected a view of Australia with which they were uncomfortable and any discussion of how Australian film, tourism and trade commissions have sought to showcase Australia through Bollywood needs to consider the image of Australia being showcased.

Australian government commissions have no control over the ways in which Indian film-makers will project Australian locations, but the commissions need to feel confident that there is an overlap between what the film-makers are looking for and what the commissions regard as their brand strengths, those characteristics that they believe distinguish them from their competitors with regard to India. For example, in contributing $10,000 to *Salaam Namaste*, Tourism Victoria made sure that the film would feature destinations, such as the Twelve Apostles, likely to appeal to Indian tourists.[24]

Cosmopolitanism

An article by Mark Phillips in *The Age* in 2005 described what the director of *Salaam Namaste*, Siddarth Anand, was looking for in choosing the overseas location for his film:

> Anand had been preparing to film *Salaam Namaste* in San Francisco when he visited Melbourne last year on the recommendation of a friend who had been one of eight up-and-coming directors invited to the Victorian capital for a Bollywood festival. Anand was blown away by the city's architecture, variety of settings and clear light for filming. 'They wanted a place that was very multicultural and cosmopolitan,' says Mitu Bhowmick Lange, an expatriate Indian who is the film's line producer.[25]

Judging from its language, the article was probably based on a Tourism Victoria press release. Tourism Victoria consistently promotes Melbourne as cosmopolitan and multicultural, as shown in the Victorian Premier's preface to the *10 Year Tourism Strategy*: 'Victoria is renowned for its scenic beauty, fascinating multicultural heritage, unique sporting events and enviable cosmopolitan lifestyle'.[26] Tourism Victoria houses the Brand Victoria Services Unit, a Victorian State Government initiative launched in March 2006, and, as the Brand Victoria website explains: 'Brand Victoria's primary aim is to ensure Victoria's success in a competitive business environment through consistent and engaging communication of Victoria and Melbourne internationally'.[27] Following a feasibility study and consultation with industry, the State Government has introduced common brand values and key messages aimed at attracting to Melbourne and Victoria international students, investors, skilled migrants and tourists. Cosmopolitan and multicultural were identified as key attributes of Melbourne and those who know the city will recognise their validity. Yet, the terms cosmopolitan and multicultural are positive evaluations of the city rather than physical descriptions; they are subjective assessments rather than measurable properties. As Charles Landry warns: 'The identities of cities being peddled, especially in tourism literature, are at best partial and at worst fictitious, usually only accentuating hypothetical positives rather than reflecting better realities'.[28] We need, therefore, to consider to what extent the cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism being marketed by Tourism Victoria are 'hypothetical positives' rather than 'better realities'.

Cosmopolitanism literally means 'belonging to many or all parts of the world' (*OED*) and, while it can have a neutral meaning when applied to plants that have a worldwide distribution, the concept is given a positive value when contrasted with nationalistic or intellectual narrow-mindedness. The intellectual and social elites in Australia historically have been anxious not to be thought provincial and behind the times, an anxiety born of Australia's distance from the new ideas and fashions of Britain and Europe, and Tourism Victoria's idea of cosmopolitanism combines an intellectual openness to outsiders with a high-culture stylishness: 'Melbourne is a stylish and cosmopolitan city of world-class attractions, unbeatable major events and outstanding hospitality'.[29] Melbourne's cosmopolitanism is descended from the cosmopolitanism of Continental Europe, combining the intellectual openness of an educated, émigré elite with the elegance of an affluent and mobile elite of cities like Paris, Berlin or Rome.

Film Victoria, the state's film commission, follows the brand Victoria guidelines by associating Melbourne's cosmopolitanism with European stylishness in its publication, *FilmMelbourneNow*, a booklet aimed at attracting film-makers to Melbourne: 'Melbourne's enchanting European-style dining and bustling café scenes are an integral part of the city's lifestyle. Passionate lovers of cafés, coffee and culture, Melbournians are drawn to hip alleys and lanes that wind through downtown Melbourne'.[30] This projection of Melbourne as European depends architecturally on the city's many fine colonial public buildings, dating from the period of its economic boom in the 1880s, and it is against these that young couples from China nowadays pose for their wedding photographs. In the movie *Sangam* (1964), Radha (Vyjanthimala) and Sunder (Raj Kapoor) travel to Paris, Rome, Venice and Switzerland for their honeymoon and Tourism Victoria taps into similar aspirations to attract honeymoon couples from Asia to a 'European' Melbourne. In addition, Melbourne's laneways and alleys now accommodate European-style street cafés and bars, where a century ago they accommodated warehouses and workshops. As one visitor noted, they can be compared to the narrow medieval streets of European cities: 'Melbourne's alleys are for me like medieval "venelles", it really reminds me of the small streets around the Grand-Pal[a]ce in Brussels, where I'm from'.[31]

FilmMelbourneNow speaks of Melbourne's 'stately European architecture duplicating London, Boston or Paris'[32] but a superficial similarity between Melbourne and Paris or Brussels collapses fundamental historical differences and Melbourne's later, nineteenth-

century civic architecture, with its 'stately' public buildings, is related more to the British cities of the industrial revolution, like Manchester and Liverpool, than to European cities like Paris or Brussels. Britishness was antithetical to Continental Europe and, as the historian, Graeme Davison, has shown, an appeal to European cosmopolitanism in late nineteenth-century Melbourne was mainly a reaction to the dominant Britishness of Melbourne's architecture, civic attitudes and way of life:

> Why, some observers asked, had London and Liverpool become the style setters for cities whose sunny climate and freer social relations made them potentially more Italian than British? As Australians had thrown off some of the archaic political traditions of England, could they also throw off some of the stuffiness of its social life in favor of a greater cosmopolitanism?[33]

Cosmopolitanism today is a global style unrelated to local histories and, as Davison argues, the projection of Melbourne today as a stylish and cosmopolitan European city owes less to Australia's British history or its Continental migrants than to the high-density requirements of the global city: 'Neighborhoods that were once "dense" and "overcrowded" now become "compact" and "fine-grained," their unwelcome "promiscuity" becomes an attractive "sociability," and their once-threatening "cosmopolitanism" a mature "sophistication"'.[34] That Melbourne's laneways are now seen as sophisticated and cosmopolitanism is less the result of Australia's history than of global trends in lifestyle marketing.

Multiculturalism

In its promotional literature, Film Victoria links Melbourne's cosmopolitan image to multiculturalism: 'With a population of 3.4 million people descended from a multitude of continents around the globe, Melbourne is alive with cosmopolitan energy that offers up countless experiences and attractions to thrill its visitors'.[35] Visitors to Melbourne may indeed notice a diversity of languages, cuisines and faces, a reflection of Australia's development as a nation of immigrants. Around twenty-nine per cent of Melbourne's current population of 3.6 million were born overseas: the most numerous countries of birth are England (12.1 per cent), Italy (7.1 per cent), Vietnam (5.6 per cent), China (5.3 per cent), New Zealand (5.1 per cent), Greece (5.0 per cent)

and India (4.9 per cent).[36] Australia's definition of ethnicity usually discounts white migrants from Britain, New Zealand and the United States and visitors are most likely to notice Melbourne's Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, Chinese and Indian communities. Yet, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism are not the same thing and, while Melbourne's population may be predominantly 'descended from a multitude of continents around the globe' (Film Victoria's statement omits the Indigenous population), it by no means follows that Melbourne's 'cosmopolitan energy' derives from its diverse ethnic communities.

Tourism Victoria locates Melbourne's 'cosmopolitan pulse' in the city centre: 'Melbourne is set around the shores of Port Phillip Bay. The city itself, laid out in a large rectangle and boasting a lively and cosmopolitan pulse, sits on the northern banks of the Yarra River, about five kilometres from the bay'.[37] Yet, as *Cosmopolitan Melbourne*, a guide for visitors, notes, the energy from ethnic communities is more likely to be found in the suburbs than in the city centre:

> Many tourists, sadly, miss out on seeing Melbourne's suburbs. Yet it is in the suburbs where the Melbourne people live, and in suburban neighbourhoods where Melbourne's cosmopolitan character is most evident. If you don't visit one of Melbourne's cosmopolitan suburbs then you are missing out on, literally, a world of experiences.[38]

On a Saturday morning in Clayton, in the city's west, for example, visitors might hear shoppers speaking Italian, Vietnamese, Hindi and a number of other South Asian languages, yet Melbourne's multi-ethnic suburbs, not to mention its Indigenous community, rarely appear in Indian films and to the degree that Melbourne's city centre is a modern metropolis, its cosmopolitanism did not arrive with migrants from 'a multitude of continents around the globe'.

The Australian anthropologist, Ghassan Hage, has identified an ideological link between cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism in what he refers to as 'cosmo-multiculturalism', an appropriation of cultural diversity by a white Eurocentric Australia, which claims, 'We are cosmopolitan Europeans who have been changed by migration, have become multicultural and are turning to Asia'.[39] Hage is intensely suspicious of the rhetoric of multiculturalism and regards praise of Australia's cultural diversity as a feature of a white elite which, unlike its predecessors in Australia, is a cosmopolitan elite: 'the cosmopolite is a *class* figure *and* a White person, capable of appreciating and consuming "high-culture" commodities and cultures, including "ethnic" culture'.[40] By 'class', Hage is

referring to those who possess cultural capital in addition to money capital: it is 'a specific cosmopolitan capital accumulated through exposure to a certain "sophisticated internationalism" which gives the cosmopolitans a global consciousness of the field in which they are operating'.[41]

Hage's work makes clear that the image offered to Indian film-makers of Melbourne as cosmopolitan and multicultural is that of a certain elite and that a 'sophisticated internationalism', as Hage terms it, is not available to all, despite the claim by Film Melbourne that, 'Passionate lovers of cafés, coffee and culture, Melbournians are drawn to hip alleys and lanes that wind through downtown Melbourne'.[42] The cosmopolitan culture of the hip alleys belongs to those who have the income to enjoy 'an exciting, modern metropolis, bustling with award-winning restaurants, hip music venues, cool bars and sensational shopping',[43] the same high-end demographic (the AB socio-economic demographic) that Tourism Victoria views as a possible Indian tourist market. Film Victoria evokes Melbourne's traditional claim to be the cultural capital of Australia as the reason for its style and sophistication, but the culture described is not so much a European high-culture of the arts, despite Melbourne's galleries and concert halls, as a 'lifestyle' culture of conspicuous consumption: 'Regarded as the cultural capital of Australia, Melbourne is stylish and sophisticated and offers a whole world of food, wine, sports, shopping and nightlife.'[44] Not everyone can attain the cosmopolitan sophistication to enjoy 'a whole world'.

Salaam Namaste, multiculturalism and international education

In *Salaam Namaste*, Preity Zinta plays Ambar, a medical student studying in Melbourne at La Trobe University; as the film's English subtitles put it: 'When she came to Australia for a year for a university exchange program, Ambar fell in love with Melbourne. She decided to stay on and joined medical school'. According to the Indian High Commissioner to Australia at the time, HE Mr Prabhat Prakash Shukla, the film generated such a demand by Indian students wanting to enrol in La Trobe University's Medical School that the university, which had no Medical School, is now seeking to establish one, a demonstration not only of the power of Bollywood in creating particular images of a country, but also of the desire by Australian universities to attract students from India.[45] In 2007, the number of Indian students studying in Australia was 63,604, or fourteen per cent of all international student enrolments in Australia.[46]

According to a report published in 2001, *Positioning Australian Education and Training for the Future*, a key feature differentiating Australia from the USA and the UK was 'freedom' and, in this regard, Australia's multiculturalism was thought to provide the friendly environment that enabled young overseas students to enjoy the freedom of an Australian lifestyle:

> Australia also benefits from being perceived as multicultural—a particular advantage for Asian students. One of the strongest elements of Freedom is interacting with other young people. A multicultural community makes this more likely. Only the USA and Canada were seen to be on a par with Australia for this attribute.[47]

As a result of surveys and focus groups involving the education industry and potential international students, the report identified a number of key brand messages of Australian education and training, including the message: 'Australia is a multicultural community—you'll feel at home'.

Melbourne's multiculturalism is represented in *Salaam Namaste* by the Indian community that provides the on-screen audience for the Hindi Radio Station, 'Salaam Namaste'. The cross-section of listeners shown at the beginning of the film comprises two male hairdressers, one man stocking a freezer in a 7–Eleven convenience store and four women variously vacuuming the house, at the laundrette and exercising; all belong more or less to the same generation as Ambar and Nick, apparently without parents or grandparents in Australia. There is no interaction with other ethnic communities in Melbourne and the main characters are multicultural in an Indian rather than an Australian sense, coming from Bangalore, the Punjab, Gujarat, Kerala, Bihar and Dhaka. It is true that they all speak Hindi, but this is no more than to say that the film follows the conventions of popular Hindi cinema, with the hero, Nick, belonging to a non-Sikh Punjabi elite. And the name of the radio station, 'Salaam Namaste', which combines Muslim and Hindu greetings, makes sense primarily as a symbol of Indian rather than Australian multiculturalism. This lack of engagement with a broader Australian society looks odd from an Australian perspective as one Australian reviewer put it:

> Apart from a few local actresses who gamely turn themselves into cartoons of crude Aussie sheilas, the film takes place entirely within an Indian expatriate community imagined as sufficient to itself, dispersed throughout the city but linked by the radio station's broadcasts, and (of course) by a network of taxi drivers.[48]

'An Indian expatriate community imagined as sufficient to itself' is not quite the 'truly multicultural society' Australians believe will be attractive to international students from Asia and it questions the claim that Indian film-makers are drawn to Melbourne because of its multiculturalism.

In reality, there is no Hindi radio station like 'Salaam Namaste' broadcasting across Melbourne, but if there were, then it would, like 'Salaam Namaste', be listened to by Melbourne's South Asian taxi drivers. At the beginning of *Salaam Namaste*, Ambar, as talk-show host, berates Nick, her interviewee, for being late for the interview, to which Nick responds disparagingly: 'How does one late start make a difference to a clutch of Indian taxi drivers?' Among the many things Nick has to learn in the film is that Indian taxi drivers, like Hindi radio stations, sustain a sense of community among the South Asian diaspora and, at the end of the film, it is a Melbourne Indian taxi driver (played by the film's director, Siddharth Anand) who helps Nick track down Ambar.

Migrant Indian taxi drivers have appeared in a number of Bollywood movies in the past decade, such as *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* (1999), *Kitne Door Kitne Paas* (2002), *Bhagam Bhag* (2006), *Namastey London* (2007) and *Ta Ra Rum Pum* (2007), but the focus of these films is generally on the lives of the young transnational technocrats whom they drive between airport and city hotel in cities around the globe. In an article on *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* (1995), which deals with second-generation British Indians, Purnima Mankekar relates the increased representation of the Indian diaspora in Bollywood in the 1990s to the liberalisation of the Indian economy.[49] Mankekar argues that the opening up of the economy to multinational investment changed perceptions of non-resident Indians (NRIs), who were now seen as the providers of much-needed foreign investment: 'only wealthy NRIs with the capital to invest in India were being wooed. Political and economic refugees, migrant laborers, and exiles were completely erased from these representations. The newly discovered, wealthy NRI became the new messiah of liberalization'.[50] As Adrian Athique notes, only certain parts of the Indian diaspora are fêted in the Indian business press: 'It is the young CEOs and rising IT professionals who are the ideal(ised) NRIs here, stirring national pride and deserving cultural citizenship, not the politically marginalized Indians of Fiji or Burma, or the taxi drivers of London or Leeds'.[51]

Yet in cities with significant South Asian communities, such as New York or Melbourne, it is taxi drivers rather than wealthy NRIs who are the most visible South Asians in the public domain.[52] In Victoria, it is

estimated that of around 11,000 certified taxi drivers,[53] more than 7,000, and possibly as many as 9,000, are from the Indian subcontinent.[54] Some explanation of the predominance of South Asian taxi drivers in Victoria can be inferred from a survey carried out in New York by Diditi Mitra who estimated that around sixty per cent of drivers in the New York taxi industry were from South Asia, predominantly from Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Punjab.[55] Key factors behind the dominance of the New York taxi industry by migrants from South Asia were: changes in the taxi industry; a drop in the supply of non-migrant workers; an increase in the number of South Asian immigrants with limited skills and limited fluency in English; and the formation of South Asian communities that could find work for friends and family in the industry. An Australia survey by Carmen Voigt-Graf found that, of three different Indian migrant groups surveyed, Punjabis were especially subject to discrimination in the labour market, with one fifth of Punjabi migrants interviewed working as train guards or taxi drivers, despite being tertiary-educated.[56] In *Salaam Namaste*, Jaggu Yadav (Javed Jaffrey) migrates from Bihar to Mumbai, where, not surprisingly to a South Asian audience, 'Someone suggested going abroad and driving a cab. And so he arrived in Melbourne'.

In December 2006, Rajneesh Joga, a student from Hyderabad, died following an assault while working as a part-time taxi driver in Melbourne. According to Melbourne's *Herald Sun*, 'Mr Joga, 27, of Clayton, spent his days studying and nights driving a taxi to pay for his course and send cash home to his mother and sick father'.[57] The paper reported that Joga had come to Melbourne in August 2004 to study for a Master of Accountancy and in this he was a typical Indian student in Australia; most are enrolled in masters by coursework programmes, especially IT, Accountancy and Engineering.[58] The *Indian Voice*, a Melbourne-based community newspaper, commented:

> Indian Voice believes, more than 7,000 (about 85%) taxi drivers in Victoria are from the Indian subcontinent and most of them are overseas students. The irony is that this large influx of workforce is often unrepresented and unheard within the taxi industry, Victorian Government and the wider community. These students often live under a lot of pressure of earning for living and tuition expenses; meeting deadlines of school assignments; living under the constant fear of being deported in case of lack of attendance in the class; being caught by the Immigration Department officials for working more than 20 hours a week; lack of support and of course home sickness.[59]

The article lists the range of pressures placed on international students from India, the chief of which is the need to earn money for food, accommodation and international tuition fees; at Melbourne Institute of Technology, Rajneesh Joga would have been paying around A$7,000 per semester, which is less than the fees charged by higher-ranking institutions, such as Monash University, which are around A$12,500 per semester.[60] According to Gautam Gupta, general secretary of the Federation of Indian Students of Australia, taxi driving is second only to working in a call centre: 'Number one is the call-centre industry, because Indians do tend to speak English and have work experience back in India…Then there are people who are learning to speak English—for them taxi is the best thing to do. It's pretty straightforward and easy to get in'.[61] Michiel Baas, in his survey of Indian overseas students in Victoria, found students working as taxi drivers, security guards and petrol pump attendants.[62] As for the key brand message of Australian education and training that 'Australia is a multicultural community—you'll feel at home', Gautam Gupta noted that, while most members who drove cabs were 'pretty satisfied' with their job, they could be subjected to 'a lot of racist remarks', particularly if they looked different: 'if they are Sikhs and wearing turbans, for example, then they are made fun of'.

In *Salaam Namaste*, Ambar is disowned by her parents for not returning to Bangalore to get married and has to work to pay for her education, but she not only has a job in a radio station, which would be the envy of her fellow Indian students working in call centres and driving taxis, she and Nick also enjoy an affluent lifestyle far exceeding their income, a point which struck the reviewer from Melbourne:

> don't look here for the bars and grimy alleyways of Fitzroy and Collingwood—the Melbourne on display here is as shiny as the shirts and beachwear sported by the cast, a sunny paradise where a Hindi radio station operates from plush commercial premises and a financially struggling couple can commute between the inner city and a beach house on the Great Ocean Road.[63]

Instead of a taxi, Nick drives a hip Smart car, made in Germany by Daimler–Chrysler, and, despite the setback of Ambar's pregnancy, Nick is clearly on a path leading to ownership of a high-class restaurant, like Buddhadev Gupta (Amitabh Bachchan) in *Cheeni Kum* (2007). These are not the kinds of migrant lives depicted in earlier Indian films, like *Des Pardes* (1978), in which rural workers are smuggled into Britain illegally.

Even where Bollywood deals with Indians overseas who have to work for a living, they are generally depicted as affluent middle-class NRIs, like Akash Malhotra (Aamir Khan) in *Dil Chahta Hai*, while those lacking power, such as taxi drivers, inhabit the periphery of the films. There are occasional exceptions, such as Rohan (Akshaye Khanna) in *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* (1999), whose attempts to get rich quick in the USA are thwarted, and Rajveer 'RV' Singh (Saif Ali Khan) in *Ta Ra Rum Pum*, who turns to taxi driving in New York when sacked as a racing driver. But Rohan and Rajveer are only temporarily down on their luck and such exceptions prove the rule. In *Salaam Namaste*, those whose lives may not glitter, such as the housewives, the shop-keepers and the taxi drivers who comprise the radio station's audience, inhabit the periphery of the film and it is not surprising that Australian prime ministers and government trade, tourism and film commissions are comfortable with the Bollywood image of Australia.

Yet if a key brand message of Australian education and training is 'Australia is a multicultural community—you'll feel at home', those who promulgate this message are either being economical with the truth or they do not understand the lived realities of multi-ethnic Australia. As Michiel Baas has shown, the majority of Indian students in Victoria are effectively migrants, applying for permanent residency (PR) at the end of their studies to find high-paid employment to pay off their debts, especially in India; many are studying subjects, such as accountancy, for which they have no academic background and no intention of practising, merely for the sake of qualifying for PR.[64] For some this is a step on the road to developing business opportunities in Australia, while for others it is to end up in a low-skilled occupation. Baas concludes that the market in international students from India is less about education than about migration:

> The money the students will make, even as taxi drivers or security guards in a local shopping mall, will always be more than what they saw themselves making in India. In this sense they have got exactly what they wanted. The only thing they needed to do for this was to become a student in Australia, in a field which guarantees they will qualify for PR in the end. Agents (education or immigration agents—it is often unclear which role they play) both in India and Australia, and institutes, colleges and universities are all fully aware of this strategy. A market now exists and a product has been created to fill it that looks like it is about education but is actually about migration.[65]

In July 2006, Sydney's *Sun–Herald* reported that more migrants from India were gaining PR than from China, primarily, it seems, 'due to overseas students successfully applying for permanent residency after graduating from local universities'.[66] The report was upbeat about Indian migration and included stories of two exemplary migrants, Rajwant Singh, who established the Punjabi-language newspaper *Punjab Express* in western Sydney, and restaurateur Satinder Pal Singh Benepal, a former accountant. As absent in this report as they are in *Salaam Namaste* were the stories of Indian taxi drivers who had recently qualified with a postgraduate qualification in accountancy.

Conclusion

Salaam Namaste presents Melbourne as a modern, Western and cosmopolitan city, a representation consistent with Brand Victoria. Both Ambar and Nick enjoy affluent and hip consumer lifestyles, but they are not typical of those who come from the diverse cultures that underpin Melbourne's claim to being a multicultural city. More typical, particularly of the South Asian population, would be the taxi drivers to whom Ambar broadcasts on the radio station, 'Salaam Namaste'.

For a film audience in India, as for the Bollywood hero or heroine within the films, the Indian taxi driver is both an insider and an outsider. He is an Indian insider (speaking Hindi) and an Australian outsider (part of a migrant community); yet he is also inside Melbourne (familiar with the city) and outside India (an exile from his homeland). In this sense, the taxi driver is more of a cosmopolitan figure than the affluent young heroes of Bollywood who, having flown to Australia, may just as casually fly back home. Carol A Breckenridge *et al*. define cosmopolitanism to include 'ways of living at home abroad or abroad at home—ways of inhabiting multiple places at once, of being different beings simultaneously, of seeing the larger picture stereoscopically with the smaller'.[67] From this perspective, Indian taxi drivers are as cosmopolitan as their jet-setting Indian passengers and contemporary cosmopolitanism belongs as much to those disappointed by capitalism as to its beneficiaries: 'Cosmopolitans today are often the victims of modernity, failed by capitalism's upward mobility, and bereft of those comforts and customs of national belonging. Refugees, peoples of the diaspora, and migrants and exiles represent the spirit of the cosmopolitan community'.[68]

Non-elite forms of travel are examined as an aspect of vernacular cosmopolitanism by Pnina Werbner, who concludes that cosmopolitanism requires a reflexive way of thinking which is not necessarily either elite or non-elite. On the one hand, there is working-class cosmopolitanism:

> in the figure of the expanding cosmopolitan subjectivity of a Pakistani migrant worker on a building site in the Gulf, a simple man who embraces different cultures and who is a member of diverse ethnic groups, but who nevertheless retains his localized rooted identity as a Sufi.[69]

On the other hand:

> members of the jet-setting wealthy Chinese overseas trading diaspora studied by Aithwa Ong, with their multiple passports and multiple homes in different countries, appear to lack the kind of cultural openness and sensitivity normally associated with cosmopolitanism.

The Bollywood hero seems more akin to the jet-setting wealthy Chinese than to the Pakistani migrant building worker and, while a non-Sikh Punjabi hero might accept Muslims or Sikhs as Indian, this Indian multiculturalism serves mainly to reinforce a pan-Indian identity; despite their cosmopolitanism, in the words of the famous refrain from *Shree 420* (1955), their heart remains Indian: '*bhi dil hai hindustani*'. In this way, Ambar derides Nikhil for denying his Indian identity by calling himself Nick: 'I mean, what is this Nick business? Yo. I'm cool. I'm Australian. I'm Nick'. This is not the cosmopolitanism that Breckenridge describes as 'being different beings simultaneously' and that, for Werbner, is 'grounded in an open, experimental, inclusive, normative consciousness of the cultural other'.[70]

Werbner's argument opens up the possibility that the Indian migrant taxi driver might in fact be more cosmopolitan than the Indian corporate business executive. Elsewhere, Werbner considers the distinction between the concepts of cosmopolitanism and transnationalism proposed by Hannerz:

> Ulf Hannerz proposes a set of useful distinctions between cosmopolitans 'willing to engage with the Other', locals, 'representatives of more circumscribed territorial cultures', and transnationals (Hannerz 1992: 252), frequent travellers (usually occupational) who share 'structures of meaning carried by social networks'.[71]

Using this, we might distinguish between the cosmopolitanism of the migrant Indian taxi driver and the transnationalism of the Bollywood heroes and heroines. The distinction is not necessarily one of affluence and social class; however, those Hindi-speaking Indians who can afford to be driven by Hindi-speaking Indian taxi drivers are less like to come into contact with people from non-Indian cultures than those Indians who have to travel by public transport or, indeed, the taxi drivers themselves.

In *Salaam Namaste*, Nick's experience of cultural difference is limited to eating sushi and drinking VB in a hip nightclub, an example of what Craig Calhoun refers to as 'soft' cosmopolitanism, 'a willingness to experience diversity as packaged for consumer tastes' as opposed to a strong sense of cosmopolitanism, 'a willingness to enter situations truly without parallels or familiarity'.[72] Tourism Victoria similarly equates cosmopolitanism with the transnationalism or soft cosmopolitanism of the frequent traveller, those whose lifestyle can be performed equally and effortlessly in transnational spaces, the international airports, hotels, bars and shopping malls of the global city. Ambar derides this transnational lifestyle when she derides Nick for being 'cool', yet her denial of her own transnationalism, as in her craving for Ben & Jerry's ice cream when pregnant, is made possible by her isolation, most evidently in the cocoon of her radio studio, from anyone who doesn't speak Hindi. The vernacular or non-elite cosmopolitanism, one in which the traveller embraces different cultures, would seem to be more appropriate to Indian students destined to work in Melbourne as taxi drivers, security guards and petrol pump attendants, struggling to send remittances to family in India while also adjusting to, and assessing the validity of, other cultural values. It is the taxi drivers rather than the frequent travellers who display a 'cosmopolitan consciousness', as Werbner puts it, 'an awareness of the existence and equal validity of other cultures, other values, and other mores'.[73]

If one wishes to portray Melbourne as cosmopolitan, as the Victoria Government professes, then a cosmopolitanism which depicts social interaction in the suburbs between different diasporic communities is more inclusive and indeed more accurate, than one which depicts either an Indian multiculturalism limited to the cultures of India or hip Indian migrants and expensive Indian restaurants. According to Ulf Hannerz: 'A more genuine cosmopolitanism entails a certain metacultural position. There is, first of all, a willingness to engage with the Other, an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness towards divergent cultural experiences'.[74] If Australian Government commissions wish to promote

Australia within India as genuinely cosmopolitan, then the figure of the Indian student taxi driver living in suburban Clayton would be better suited as a representation of the cosmopolitanism proclaimed by those promoting Australian tourism, trade and education. The heroes of Bollywood films shot in Australia may reflect the lifestyle aspirations of audiences in India and they may showcase Melbourne's hip city centre, but within Australia it needs to be recognised that Bollywood films set in Australia marginalise the genuine cosmopolitanism found among the non-elite of the Australian suburbs.

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