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Bollywood in Australia: Transnationalism and Cultural Production

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Introduction

Bollywood in Australia

Andrew Hassam and Makand Paranjape

The global context of Bollywood in Australia

Makarand Paranjape

The transcultural character and reach of Bollywood cinema has been gradually more visible and obvious over the last two decades. What is less understood and explored is its escalating integration with audiences, markets and entertainment industries beyond the Indian subcontinent. This book explores the relationship of Bollywood to Australia. We believe that this increasingly important relationship is an outcome of the convergence between two remarkably dynamic entities—globalising Bollywood, on the one hand and Asianising Australia, on the other. If there is a third element in this relationship, which is equally important, it is the mediating power of the vibrant diasporic community of South Asians in Australia. Hence, at its most basic, this book explores the conjunctures and ruptures between these three forces: Bollywood, Australia and their interface, the diaspora.

It would be useful to see, at the outset, how Bollywood here refers not only to the Bombay film industry, but is symbolic of the Indian and even the South Asian film industry. Technically speaking, the term is a neologism of comparatively recent provenance, invented by combining Bombay and Hollywood. The entry of the term into the *Oxford English Dictionary* was announced in its June 2001 quarterly online update.¹ In the following year, its inclusion in the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* was noticed by *The Times of India*.² A year later the same newspaper marked its entrance to the new illustrated *Oxford Dictionary* with a picture of Aishwarya Rai from *Devdas* (2002) holding her lamp of love in her hand.³ However, the term was in circulation in the Western press much earlier, as the title of an article, ‘Hooray for Bollywood’, by Richard Corliss that appeared in *Time* magazine in 1996, shows.⁴ There is something distinctly pejorative or patronising about these early uses of ‘Bollywood’; as Corliss observes, somewhat wryly: ‘In any other national cinema the antics in the first reel of Mukul S Anand’s *Khuda Gawah* (*God Is My Witness*) might be giggled off the screen’. But, of course, Bollywood films are ‘like no other’: it is sheer ‘pop opera, dealing with emotions so convulsive they must be sung and danced, in a solemn, giddy style’ and ‘curry westerns’ and ‘wet-sari musicals’ are avidly watched by millions across the world. No wonder *The Times of India* article of 2003 quotes a variety of Bombay film figures complaining about the use of the term. Noted ‘art’ film director Govind Nihalani, for instance, muses:

What can I say? It looks like the *Oxford Dictionary* is moving with the times. But Bollywood is actually a disrespectful reference to our film industry. It primarily means we’re aping Hollywood and have nothing original to offer. In fact, Bollywood as a term puts the focus largely on the song-and-dance cinema and ignores everything else about Indian cinema.⁵

Subhash Ghai, one of the great showmen of Bollywood, was even more emphatic: ‘Bollywood is actually scoffing at our film industry’. He mentions how the London press was already using the word as far back as 1989, when it sneered at the success of Ghai’s hit film, *Ram Lakhan* (1989):

I saw the coverage on TV and they were saying how the Bombay film industry is copying the style of Hollywood premieres in terms of fashion and jewellery—and they focused the camera on shoes and jewellery of the stars at the party’.

The *Times of India* article concludes: ‘So the dictionary entry is more like rubbing salt on a wound’.

Yet it would appear that it is Bollywood that is having the last laugh. If the success of *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) is anything to go by, it is Hollywood that is now copying Bollywood. In addition to the vast audience following that Bollywood movies enjoy, the Bollywood culture industry translates into huge revenues for the fashion, glamour, cosmetics, food and jewellery industries and many other related enterprises that benefit, as Frieda Pinto, the debutant star of *Slumdog Millionaire*, is flashed on the covers of the leading magazines, including *Vogue*, *Maxim*, *Vanity Fair* and *Cosmopolitan*. Even Anil Kapoor, whose role in Ghai’s movie in 1989 won him no international visibility, rides the tide of global recognition after *Slumdog Millionaire*, appearing on CNN, BBC, Oprah, not to mention the Oscars in Hollywood. Hence, given its currency, it is no surprise that we use the word ‘Bollywood’ in our book; yet, we do so in its somewhat newer, more comprehensive sense, not only referring to Hindi movies made in Mumbai, but also symbolic of the Indian and even the South Asian film industry. While parody and fun cannot be entirely removed from its connotations, it does denote to us something more serious, a large, vibrant and increasingly global cultural phenomenon.

There are many reasons for seeing Bollywood in this broader and more inclusive fashion. In the Indian context, for instance, there has always been considerable integration between the different film fraternities in India, especially between Bengal and Bombay earlier, between Hyderabad and Bombay in the 1970s and 1980s and between Madras and Bombay to this day. So, despite all the different centres of production and the distinct character of all the different language cinemas of India, in some senses there is considerable mixing and amalgamation between them. Similarly, Hollywood, in a broader context, not only refers to the US film industry, but also symbolises the interaction and assimilation of several not just European, but even Australian, elements, including directors, technicians, actors and so on. When we examine the cultural relationship between Bollywood and Australia, we are also, indirectly, implicated in the connections between two larger global entities.

Bollywood has long been the world’s second cinema, as one of the papers in this volume asserts. Bollywood films have circulated globally among the Indian and South Asian diaspora as a shared cultural idiom. They have also been immensely popular in the erstwhile Soviet Union and on the African continent. Further, in an age when creative,

information and services industries propel economic growth, Bollywood and its modalities of production, distribution and reception, are seen as important players in global culture industry networks. Countries of the developed world—Switzerland, Ireland, The Netherlands, Australia, and New Zealand—go out of their way to welcome Bollywood production teams to shoot in their pristine locales. Local cinema houses in Australia, the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and Europe regularly run shows of newly released Bollywood blockbusters. Many Hollywood producers now outsource their post-production work to Mumbai at costs lower than those they would incur in the US.

Yet, only specialists, rather than the general, movie-going public, have known these facts. This is because the dominance of Hollywood has been obvious and widespread in wealthy and technologically advanced societies, while the slow but steady proliferation of Bollywood has not been easily noticeable or recognised. Bollywood produces more films each year than Hollywood—or, for that matter, any other film industry in the world. Its viewership is also probably greater. Bollywood and, more generally, Indian cinema, which is made in more than a dozen languages, is not only popular in the Indian diaspora spread over more than seventy countries across the world, but also, increasingly, among non-Indian audiences the world over.

One might argue that such cultural flows as this book explores are merely a part of the broader workings of globalisation, which works to integrate markets, economies and cultures. Yet, such a view would be somewhat simplistic. As we can observe, Bollywood is not integrated with, say, the Czech Republic to the same degree as Australia. Many other factors are responsible for the kind of impact that it has on Australia. Among these are the English language and the older colonial circuits that linked India and Australia. The Indian diaspora finds it easier to migrate to English-speaking countries. These countries, in turn, find it easier to receive cultural products from India. In the case of Australia, its close cultural ties with the UK and the US also make its society more receptive to Bollywood. That is because Bollywood, as mentioned earlier, is also increasingly integrated with Hollywood. Therefore, it can impact Australia not only directly, through the mediation of the South Asian diaspora, but also indirectly, via Hollywood, which has also become a carrier of Bollywood and its cultural cargo.

As we were writing this introduction, for instance, Australia has been washed over by the Danny Boyle *Slumdog Millionaire* wave. The story of the astonishing success of the film is only too well known. Its first brush with fame was its bonanza of Golden Globe awards and then

its even more successful and plentiful garnering of nominations for the Oscars. The film was released first in the US, where it has raked in more than US\$138 million (A\$202.6 million) as of 26 March 2009,⁶ then in the UK, where the collections were over £30 million (A\$62.6 million) as of 22 March 2009.⁷ The film was finally released in India on 22 January 2009, in the original English version and in the dubbed Hindi version. In Australia, it has been showing to packed audiences for several months; as of 14 January 2009, it had already grossed more than A\$3 million,⁸ but, according to noted critic and academic, Vijay Mishra, it has also created among white Australians an unparalleled interest in Bollywood.⁹ Whatever it may or may not do for India's image, *Slumdog Millionaire* has certainly brought Bollywood to the world's centre stage. The film sets itself up as a self-conscious, if slightly parodic, tribute to Bollywood, complete with an improbable plot, song and dance sequences and the overwhelming force of destiny driving its protagonist from rags to riches. While a post-colonial reading could easily show how the movie misrepresents or distorts Indian realities, that is beside the point. The movie marks the coming of age of Bollywood in the Western world, even if it is Hollywood pretending to be Bollywood.

Clearly, *Slumdog Millionaire* does instantiate the travels of Bollywood to Hollywood, not only in terms of its directors, actors, technicians and musicians, but also in terms of its style and structure, content and technique. The Cinderella-like transformation of a slum child into a multi-millionaire is not only the stuff of the American Dream, but also very much of Bollywood fantasy. To put it simply, the game show in the movie is itself a symbol of Bollywood, the world's largest dream factory, which makes the impossible come true. Bollywood, with its links to glamorous film stars and the underworld dons, is also depicted in the movie so extensively that it is almost a tribute to the industry. Jamal's initial defining moment is literally to rise out of a pile of shit to get Amitabh Bachchan's autograph. There are several clips from earlier Bachchan movies and one of the early questions in the quiz asks who starred in the superstar's 1973 hit, *Zanjeer*. Similarly, the tune of the Surdas *bhajan*, again a link between Jamal's life and the quiz show, is taken from a Hindi movie. The depiction of the underworld in the movie is also derived, as several critics have pointed out, from earlier Bollywood films like *Satya* (1998) or *Company* (2002). Although, visually, the film is clearly the work of outsiders, the cinematic style mimics Bollywood, as do the dialogues and the improbabilities in the plot. These latter, however, cannot be simply wished away because they are implicated in a politics of representation.

The film has been hailed as signifying the arrival of Bollywood in Hollywood. Yet, what is not equally obvious, though it is equally important, is the fact that the movie also illustrates a Hollywood to Bollywood movement. The direction of the cultural flows is not just one-way or two-way, but multidirectional. In *Slumdog Millionaire*, it is the case of a British director, reaching out to Bollywood for his story and setting, using a multinational film crew to make a product that is sold all over the world, but chiefly in the US, UK and India. The travels, hence, are not just from Bollywood to Los Angeles (LA), but from London to Bombay, then Bombay to LA, Bombay to London and then to Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane, Cairns, Darwin, Hobart and so on.

But it is also important to note that not only is Bollywood the world's second cinema, it is also an alternative cinema in that it works according to different principles of organisation and meaning. In other words, Hollywood and Bollywood have different grammars of representation and embody different meaning-making systems. If we were grossly to oversimplify, Bollywood is essentially a cinema of emotion and sentiment. It has been called melodrama, though we do not think that that is a particularly happy or apt expression. Bollywood films are also mythopoetic in their structure, conveying their thematic values through archetypes, some of which are ancient and mythic. This is also a cinema in which song, dance, poetry, music and action fuse to create a synthetic and composite form. Bollywood has been accused of being escapist and unrealistic, but it engages with social and political reality more directly than any other medium of creative expression.

It does so through the use of exaggeration, symbolic representation and metaphor. Bollywood is also a cinema of excess, that is, of excessive sensuality and stimulation. The costumes, sets, locations, props and so on, are expected to be lavish, to the point of being fantastic. Characters are often larger than life and their abilities amplified till they seem almost caricatures. This is partly because of the pressures of the star system that dominates Bollywood. Films are sold based on the mass appeal of Bollywood superstars, who command fees rivalling Hollywood actors. So it would be financially disastrous to show the protagonist, say, dying halfway through the film, because the enormous fee that the star has been paid would then be underutilised or wasted. Despite its peculiarities, over a billion viewers easily understand its codes. This is because these viewers have been schooled in reading Bollywood films since childhood. Even experts, who have studied these films for years, often fail to pick up the complex subtext of Bollywood films, with

their complicated intertextuality, self-referentiality and subtler cultural nuances. To that extent, Bollywood, despite its increasing globalisation, remains somewhat ethnic in its character and constitution.

In the last two decades, not only has there been a greater integration between Hollywood and Bollywood, but more and more Bollywood films are shot overseas, not just to cater to the rich Indian diaspora market, but also to 'teach' audiences in India about the rest of the world. Australia has emerged as one of the favoured destinations of such Bollywood films. No wonder today in countries such as Australia, in the domain of popular and material culture, Bollywood circulates as a potent aesthetic and cultural marker of Indianness. Clothes, jewellery, food, footwear and even dance fitness schools proudly wear the Bollywood label. At the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, held in March 2006, the closing ceremony featured an elaborate dance and musical ensemble on Bollywood themes. This study is intended to mark this coming of age of Bollywood in Australia.

The first such book to be published in Australia, this is a collection of academic papers by largely Australian critics and scholars who have made notable contributions to the emerging field of Bollywood studies. A good deal of the book is based on papers presented at an international workshop entitled 'Transnational Dialogues on Bollywood: Australian Perspectives', held at the Monash University Law Chambers, 30 November 2006, in Melbourne, Australia. The workshop brought together scholars from around Australia and from India to explore the transnational impact of Bollywood on public spheres around the globe and to assess its contribution to creative industries in Australia. The success of this workshop and indeed of film festivals, exhibitions and above all commercial screenings of Bollywood movies in Australia, shows the rising interest in Bollywood in this country. What is more, Australia reaps considerable commercial and collateral benefits when Bollywood films are shot in here. Besides the direct financial gains to technicians, extras, hotels and other service providers, such films generate powerful, if unintended by their producers, publicity for Australia, making it an important and distinct presence in the Indian imagination, drawing students, tourists and visitors from the subcontinent to Australia.

This book has been in the making for nearly three years, somewhat longer than expected. What we have learned by this is that there is a great deal of fluidity and progress in this area of study. Culture itself transforms at a furious pace, as do its manifestations. The situation is

no different when it comes to Bollywood in Australia. We have already spoken of the enormous success of *Slumdog Millionaire* in Australia. This makes it a special case, even if it is, strictly speaking, neither a Bollywood movie, nor one that is set in Australia. Our effort has been to concentrate on films that are both made in Bollywood and set, at least partially, in Australia, or have some other palpable Australian connection. When we started our project the most outstanding example of this kind of film was *Salaam Namaste*, set almost entirely in Australia. It has been discussed in several papers here. Then, while the manuscript was in progress, another film, *Chak De! India*, had a crucial Australian connection. The film's climax is an international women's field hockey final between an Indian and an Australian team, which takes place in Melbourne. In this film, as one of the papers in the book observes, Australia's renown as a sporting nation is central to the plot and to the victory of the Indian team over the hosts. The film, thus, engages with an important aspect of Australian culture, not just using the country as an exotic location.

More recently, a few more Bollywood films were set in Australia. The first of these, Sajid Khan's *Heyy Babyy* (2007), concerns three young South Asian men in Sydney, whose freewheeling lives are changed when they have to take care of a little baby called Angel. The film is a rollicking comedy, with not much going for it except the laughs. As Beth, a Bollywood fan from Champaign, Illinois, put it in her blog: 'If you have these three clowns as dads, at least they'll sing and dance for you!'¹⁰ The film shows, typically of Bollywood, that rich Indians abroad have white servants and white girls hovering around them (Beth calls them 'contextless cheerleaders'). Yet, if we set aside such clichéd and superficial references to Australia, we do see, once again, that a foreign country becomes the site of what, by Indian standards, would be a highly unconventional family arrangement, with three males looking after what is supposedly a six-day-old baby (she has teeth). Like *Salaam Namaste*, the film has a didactic component for audiences at home: it redefines gender roles and emphasises that males need to learn how to nurture and not just treat women as sex objects. Not surprisingly, though, the end restores convention by emphasising that a family, really to be a family, needs both a mum and a dad.

The other Bollywood blockbuster that contained a strong Australian connection was *Singh is King* (2008). It is the story of Happy Singh (Akshay Kumar), a bumbling Punjabi villager sent to Australia to bring back another villager, Lucky Singh, an underworld don on the Gold Coast, where much of the film is set. The film is mostly a farce without

serious engagement with the host country. But there are one or two things that do stand out. First, Ben Nott, the film's cinematographer, is an Australian. Nott is better known for working on horror films and the movie's official website jokingly highlights the, as yet, negligible collaboration between the Indian and Australian film industries by maintaining, facetiously, that Nott accepted this film by mistake, thinking the title referred to his favourite writer, Stephen King.¹¹ Though the treatment of Australia in the movie is largely superficial, its inversion of the power relationship between the don and the underdog when, as a result of Lucky's accident, Happy Singh becomes 'Kinng', does allow a representation of marginalised black Australians, a representation absent from previous Bollywood depictions of Australia. In one scene, the don's goons are sent to remove a hot dog seller and his family who are taking custom from an expensive restaurant. The family in question appear more African American than Aboriginal Australian, and the scene could well come out of a Hollywood movie; yet, given the typical Bollywood disregard of verisimilitude, we could read the family against the screen image as Aboriginal and the film offers the hope, and maybe the possibility, that future Bollywood movies set in Australia will portray greater political sensitivity and recognise the existence of Aboriginal Australians as part of a more inclusive Australian society.

Finally, a third, *Bachna Ae Haseeno* (2008), from the Yash Raj film factory, once again directed by Siddharth Anand of the *Salaam Namaste* fame, was set partially in Australia. Released on 15 August 2008, the film features Ranbir Singh as Raj, a young man with a somewhat instrumental attitude to women. The story, as it unfolds, shows his growth and development over a twelve-year period, from eighteen to thirty, during which time he has three serious relationships. In the first two, he has behaved like a cad, jilting the women who loved him. Now, a successful computer engineer in Sydney, he falls in love with Gayatri, played by Deepika Padukone, a part-time cab driver and business management student. However, this time Gayatri turns him down. Raj embarks on a pilgrimage to his two earlier girlfriends to atone for his sins, serving them until they forgive and release him from the weight of past misdeeds. When he returns, he finds Gayatri waiting for him, having changed her mind. Again, the film only uses Australia as the setting of a part of this largely Indian-overseas Bildungsroman, but it is noteworthy that this country presents fresh possibilities of hope, healing and regeneration. Anand, who is known to play with stereotypes, scores another clever trick by making his Indian student-cabbie a woman.

Even as we were preparing to go to press, a spate of attacks on Indian students in Australia, once again, brought to the forefront the complex relationship between the two countries. One of the essays in this volume already noted such events in the past, but the violence was unprecedented and alarming. Curiously, Bollywood was, almost instantly if inevitably, embroiled in the dispute when Amitabh Bachchan turned down an honorary doctorate from the Queensland University of Technology citing the attacks as his reason for refusing the degree. In his popular blog, he wrote:

I mean no disrespect to the Institution that honours me, but under the present circumstances, where citizens of my own country are subjected to such acts of inhuman horror, my conscience does not permit me to accept this decoration from a country that perpetrates such indignity to my fellow countrymen.¹²

Like Bachchan, other Bollywood stars have reacted to these attacks. Aamir Khan, for instance, said, 'It's very unfortunate. It's very sad and very disturbing'.¹³ Not to be left behind, Bollywood's biggest union, the Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE), has also banned its members from working down under. Dinesh Chaturvedi, the head of the Union, said, 'We prefer to call it a non-cooperation movement because we feel what is happening in Australia is painful and shameful. The Australian government is just not taking adequate steps to find the culprits'.¹⁴ More amazingly, Mohit Suri, a young Bollywood film-maker, actually plans to make a film about these incidents. Slated for shooting later in 2009, the film features an Indian student in Australia who is the victim of racist attacks. Not surprisingly, Suri plans to shoot the film in Australia, despite the protests and bans: 'I don't think banning the country is going to achieve anything', he said, 'How can I not shoot in Australia when that is where my story is based?'¹⁵

Australia is a popular educational destination for Indian students, with some 95,000 of them currently estimated to be in the country.¹⁶ Their total contribution not just to Australian universities, but to ancillary businesses like travel, real estate, retail and so on would be immense. While both countries are in a damage control mode over these incidents, they highlight some of the underlying contradictions in Australian society. On the one hand, many universities are increasingly dependent on foreign students for their revenues. On the other hand, several thousands of these students are interested not just in education, but also in migration. Several small colleges and institutes specifically

target and exploit such potential immigrants, offering low-quality education but enhanced opportunities for settlement. But instead of accountancy or engineering or other in-demand fields, many of these students end up as taxi drivers, waiters, shopkeepers, petrol pump attendants and so on, which local Australians find threatening.¹⁷ Films like *Salaam Namaste*, which deal with Indian students in Australia, fail precisely to engage with such tensions. It would be fair to assume that, for many Bollywood films set in this country, Australia remains merely a backdrop rather than the real setting where the story makes a significant intervention. Yet, despite the somewhat superficial treatment of real issues like racial tensions in Australia, Bollywood continues to be interested in and engages with Australia. This relationship, notwithstanding these unfortunate attacks, does not appear to be in jeopardy.

We have tried to argue that Bollywood, though a cinema of entertainment, also has elements, at times totally unexpected, of edification. Its engagement with its overseas locations and audiences also keeps changing and progressing in unpredictable ways. By the time this book is released and read, there may be more movies with Australian themes and connections. While it is difficult to predict what directions they may take, as long as there is a market in Australia for Bollywood and in India for Australia, as long as the South Asian diaspora in Australia is dynamic, even expanding, then we may be sure that Bollywood will keep its connection with Australia alive.

Filming Bollywood in Australia

Andrew Hassam

The use of Australian locations in Indian movies dates from the mid-1990s. A lovers' fantasy song sequence in a Tamil film, *Indian*, released in 1996, opens with reputedly the first appearance of kangaroos in Indian cinema bounding across the screen;¹⁸ and later in the same song sequence, the film's stars, Urmila Matondkar and Kamal Haasan, dance in front of the Sydney Opera House and on top of the Harbour Bridge. *Daud* (1997), a Hindi movie released the following year, contains a song in which Urmila Matondkar is filmed in Australia a second time,

on this occasion dancing against the Pinnacles in Western Australia with Sanjay Dutt. The rise in Australia's popularity as a location in Indian films coincided with Urmila Matondkar's own rise in popularity following the success of *Rangeela* (1995) and in *Deewane* (2000) she returned to Australia a third time, dancing again at the Pinnacles, this time with Ajay Devgan.

Yet while *Indian*, *Daud* and *Deewane* contained song sequences filmed in Australia, the action of the films was set elsewhere. The first Indian films to base their stories in Australia were *Prem Aggan* and *Soldier*, both released in October 1998. The final section of *Prem Aggan* is set in Sydney, to where the heroine's father removes her for an enforced marriage, and the villains in *Soldier* flee to Sydney with their ill-gotten gains. In both films, as in the song sequence in *Indian*, Sydney is merely a picturesque overseas location. In *Soldier*, especially, this is not Sydney as it is known in Australia: the replica of William Bligh's *Bounty* is a Sydney Harbour tourist attraction rather than the private yacht of an Indian gang boss and *Soldier*'s hero, played by Bobby Deol, is shown travelling from Sydney airport to Sydney Harbour on a Melbourne tram. Sydney appears in a more familiar form in *Dil Chahta Hai* (2001), the first Indian film set in Australia to achieve international success, with the Harbour Bridge, the Opera House and the replica *Bounty* all making their by now predictable appearances. Yet while Sydney, like the action in *Dil Chahta Hai*, may be more naturalistic (the hero goes there to work and no one gets shot dead), the film nonetheless employs Sydney mainly as a backdrop for a predictable romance between its male and female leads, Aamir Khan and Preity Zinta.

Melbourne, lacking Sydney's Australian iconicity, is less recognisable internationally and took longer to become popular with Indian filmmakers. Melbourne first appeared in a tram scene in *Soldier*, with the comic actor, Johnny Lever, as a tram conductor. *Soldier* later sets a romantic song sequence between Bobby Deol and Preity Zinta against the Twelve Apostles on the Great Ocean Road, a Victorian tourist location 280 kilometres from Melbourne also used in *Prem Aggan* and in the Tamil film, *Kaathalar Thinam* (1999). Melbourne's CBD makes a fleeting appearance in *Janasheen* (2003), a film which, though ostensibly set in Sydney, avoids recognisable Australian locations and footage of Sydney is restricted to Clovelly cemetery, while Sydney's CBD is represented, in Bollywood style, by shots of Bangkok.

The first Indian film to make extensive dramatic use of Melbourne was yet another Tamil film, *Nala Damayanthi* (2003), though the pull of Sydney's icons nonetheless proved too strong for the film's producers:

Sydney Harbour Bridge is glimpsed as the hero's plane lands at Melbourne; the hero, Ramji, commutes to suburban Melbourne across the Sydney Harbour Bridge; and some of the song sequences feature Sydney's Darling Harbour. Melbourne's sights are less recognisable to audiences in India and while many will have heard of the Melbourne Cricket Ground, other tourist attractions that appear in *Nala Damayanthi*, the casino and the aquarium, have no distinctive Melbourne associations. Melbourne, therefore, operates more generically to provide an urban lifestyle environment containing a range of tourist attractions: Ramji (Madhavan) enjoys a family day out in the city, walking in the grounds of the Royal Exhibition Building and visiting the Melbourne Museum; he performs rituals for his dead father by the River Yarra; and he encounters emus and kangaroos at the zoo. Melbourne does have its icons, such as the colourful beach huts at Brighton that are glimpsed in a song sequence in *Nala Damayanthi* and again in two songs in *Koi Aap Sa* (2005), but Melbourne's Brighton Beach is not as famous overseas as Sydney's Bondi.

The song sequences in Indian popular cinema are distinctive and the use of Australia in song 'picturisations' seems bizarre to Australians not used to the Bollywood convention, which allows song sequences to be situated outside the time and space of the story. South Asian audiences understand such discontinuities, appreciating song sequences for their emotional intensity rather than their realism, and an Indian diasporic audience in Perth cheered at the song sequence in *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* (1999) shot in King's Park in Perth, even though the film was set in the USA.¹⁹ On the other hand, Australians from outside the South Asian community are bewildered by the spectacle of Hrithik Roshan and Amisha Patel in *Aap Mujhe Achche Lagne Lage* (2002) dancing in front of government buildings in Canberra, a bewilderment due as much to the rare sight of Canberra in a feature film as to the disjunction between Canberra and Bollywood dancing. Indian film-makers enjoy the flexibility of being able to choose overseas film locations for their exotic looks, ignoring their connotations for those who live in them.

Popular definitions of Bollywood include the convention that they should use exotic locations, though the exotic location in Hindi films is not necessarily overseas and fantasy song sequences have been filmed at locations within India, such as the mountains of Kashmir (*Bobby*, 1973) or the beaches of Goa (*Dil Chahta Hai*), locations which contrast with the everyday world of the mass audience. Sri Lanka also continues to be popular, the Tamil film *Poi* (2006), starring the Australian, Vimala Raman, using it extensively. Film-makers first started filming in

more distant locations in the 1960s, thirty years before they filmed in Australia. The arrival of colour cinematography encouraged the use of romantic, outdoor settings,²⁰ and overseas locations were used mainly as outdoor settings for the romances of the period, as in *Sangam* (1964), *Love in Tokyo* (1966) and *Evening in Paris* (1967). *Purab Aur Paschim* (1970) established London as a location for a story, though more as a site of Western decadence than as a setting for romance, and London's corrupting influence on the Indian abroad was reinforced in *Des Pardes* (1978). The replacement of the romantic hero with the angry young man in the social analysis films of the 1970s, associated above all with the film *Sholay* (1975) and the screen persona of Amitabh Bachchan, made exotic overseas locations less necessary; as Asha Kasbekar puts it: 'Gory spectacle in disused warehouses and colorful cabaret dances in the sleazy, smoke-filled bars frequented by the hero replaced the mellifluous love songs set in natural scenic beauty'.²¹ With the return of romance as the dominant element in Bollywood in the late 1980s, there was a return to filming romantic song fantasies overseas. The veteran producer and director, Yash Chopra, turned Switzerland into an Indian honeymoon destination with a number of films beginning with *Faasle* in 1985 after the troubles in Kashmir prevented filming in India's mountainous north;²² and Scotland, in *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998), and New Zealand, in *Daud* and *Deewane*, have often doubled for Kashmir to provide spectacular mountain scenery for song sequences.

London and New York are, of course, the market leaders in attracting Indian film-makers, with London featuring in at least a dozen major Bollywood productions in 2007. And Switzerland, Canada and South Africa remain enduring locations. However, recently there has been increased competition from newer global cities, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Dubai, which have sought Bollywood film production, much as the UK, the US and Australia have done, in order to offer a showcase to attract Indian tourism, business migration and foreign investment. Australia has, nonetheless, witnessed a relative boom in attracting Indian film productions in the last two or three years. *Salaam Namaste* (2005), Preity Zinta's third Australian film, did for Melbourne what *Dil Chahta Hai* did for Sydney and two more Hindi blockbusters set in Australia opened in 2007: *Chak De! India*, a vehicle for Bollywood superstar, Shah Rukh Khan, much of which was filmed in sports facilities in Melbourne and Sydney, and *Heyy Babyy*, starring Akshay Kumar, shot on location in Sydney and Brisbane. In 2008, four more big-budget Bollywood movies featuring Australia were released: *Love Story 2050*, filmed in and around Adelaide; *Singh*

is *Kinng*, filmed on the Gold Coast; *Bachna Ae Haseeno*, by the director of *Salaam Namaste*, Siddharth Anand, filmed in Sydney; and *Victory*, a cricket movie, filmed during the Australia-India Test matches played in Sydney and Melbourne in 2007/2008. In addition, Salman Khan filmed *Main Aur Mrs Khanna* in Melbourne in May 2008. Tamil movies make much less impact among non-Tamil speaking audiences, as is the case for those Telugu, Kannada and Punjabi movies that have featured Australian locations, but their contribution is welcomed by the Australian film industry and, having pioneered the use of Australia in Indian movies, Tamil film-makers continue to shoot regularly in Australia. Australia is most often used as a backdrop to one or two fantasy song sequences, as most recently in *Maaya Kannaadi* (2007) and *Pokkiri* (Prabhu, 2007), but *Nala Damayanthi* has been followed by *Thiruttu Payale* (2006) and *Unnale Unnale* (2007), both of which also set part of their stories in Melbourne.

The volume begins with Adrian Mabbott Athique's chapter, 'The Crossover Audience: Mediated Multiculturalism and the Indian Film', which undertakes a critical examination of the term 'crossover' as it is being deployed in the context of the Indian film industry and its engagement with Western media industries and export markets. Within the specific context of Australian multiculturalism, this 'crossing over'



Figure 1: Tanisha and Vinay in *Unnale Unnale* in front of a Melbourne tram advertisement featuring Aishwarya Rai

is a form of cultural and commercial exchange defined by the success of a media artefact originating in a South Asian ethnic culture with a majority audience located in another, the so-called Anglo-Australian culture. As Athique argues, South Asians resident in the West have given popular Indian cinema a commercially viable presence in the new context of multiplex exhibition, and it has been the subsequent ringing of cash registers that has instigated a new affection for Indian films in the Western media. Events, such as the Indian Film Festival, have been designed to promote Indian films amongst a more mainstream audience, though as Athique also notes, obstacles, such as the need for subtitles and the length of the movies, limit the success of Indian popular cinema in Australia. Against this background, Athique raised the question among a number of young Australians who showed an interest in Indian films of how likely it seemed that a significant crossover audience for Indian films would emerge in Australia. Athique's conclusion is that it still remains to be seen whether the current flirtation with Bollywood will be just a passing fashion or an ongoing addition to the cultural repertoire of metropolitan Australia. Despite his scepticism, however, Athique believes that enthusiasm for Bollywood is one of the more benevolent examples of Western ignorance of non-Western cultures and should perhaps be encouraged, rather than disparaged.

In 'Cultural Encounters: The Use and Abuse of Bollywood in Australia', Devika Goonewardene reflects on her own experience of the increasing visibility of Indian popular cinema in Australia from two specific vantage points that are derived from her own political and academic position as a post-colonial, diasporic South Asian: that of migrant-citizen and that of teacher of Indian knowledges in the West. By reflecting on her own cultural engagements with Bollywood in Australia in its different manifestations—from dance and music performances to the cinema and lecture theatres—Goonewardene shows how Bollywood can be used to fashion a social and cultural identity that allows a migrant to feel 'at home' in an Australian space through that space's incorporation in Hindi films. Particularly important is the way Goonewardene recounts teaching International Relations through the medium of Hindi cinema, choosing to do so because the visibility of Bollywood in Australia allows her to utilise, and tease out the implications of, her students' knowledge of an everyday phenomenon. Goonewardene's experience of being among the crowd watching the filming of *Chak De! India* (2007) in Melbourne makes her optimistic of the effect of Bollywood in Australia in a post-September 11 world:

At a time when cultural, ethnic and religious difference is the object of international and domestic terrorism...Hindi cinema is one means of showing that there is a ground on which we can all meet peaceably.

While Athique focuses on cinema audiences and Goonewardene on the classroom, in ‘*Salaam Namaste*, Melbourne and Cosmopolitanism’, Andrew Hassam looks closely at the methods used by Australian government film, tourism and trade commissions to attract Indian producers to film in Australian locations. Taking the internationally successful Yash Raj production, *Salaam Namaste* (2005), as a case study, Hassam analyses what the Indian producers are looking for in choosing an Australian film location and how far the world of Bollywood matches the ‘Brand Melbourne’ that was pitched to them by state film and tourism commissions. He also considers what images are being excluded by the projection of Australia appearing in Bollywood, such as the lives of the housewives, the shopkeepers and the taxi drivers who comprise the audience of radio station ‘Salaam Namaste’. Hassam concludes that, while Indian film-makers and Australian government bodies collude in the projection of Australian cities as modern, Western and cosmopolitan urban spaces, they do so in different and contradictory ways as a result of differing definitions of cosmopolitanism: Australian government agencies project Australia overseas as a culturally diverse nation, while Indian film-makers seek images of a globalised consumerism for the gratification of audiences in India. The result is Australian government support for a depiction of Australia in Bollywood that not only erases the lives of urban Indigenous Australians, Chinese Australians and, ironically, Australian Sikh taxi-drivers, but also fails to promote the non-elite cosmopolitanism found in Australian suburbs.

In ‘*Chak De!* Australia: Bollywood Down Under’, Makarand Paranjape argues that the film *Chak De! India* rewrites the earlier *Lagaan* (2001), with the shift between them, from a colonial cricket match between India and England to an international hockey match between India and Australia, marking the move of Bollywood and the South Asian diaspora into a global arena, an ‘Indianisation’ of the globe. Bollywood is fast gaining recognition and legitimacy as the second cinema of the world, and the first part of this chapter examines, in broad theoretical terms, the relationship between Hollywood and Bollywood:

While Hollywood, though appearing to be universal, excludes several sections of the world’s population from participating as equals in its

offerings, Bollywood it would seem offers surreptitious enjoyment, even voyeuristic pleasure, to those whom it does not even address directly.

In the second part, Makarand explores how Bollywood is being both shaped by, but is also shaping, the newly globalised Indian. With a complex and evolving history of representation of Indians abroad, Bollywood has not just shown sensitivity to changing social, cultural and economic ethnoscaples, but has also served the 'education' of the Indian masses on how to regard Indian expatriates. Bollywood is not only a cinema of allurements, but also of pedagogical engagement: rather than being merely escapist, Bollywood is also educative, 'teaching folks back at home how postmodern relationships develop and work themselves out'.

Srilata Ravi approaches Bollywood in Australia from what she calls a 'gastropoetics' standpoint of Bollywood. India is a land of diverse food culture and '*Cook Cook Hota Hai: Indian Cinema, Kitchen Culture and Diaspora*' is an exploration of not only the role of cooks and cooking that are a key feature of Indian cinema, but also how a 'gastropoetics' of Bollywood permits Indian films set in Australia to be compared with those set within other diasporic South Asian communities. Ravi selects four films for discussion, all with professional male cooks as the protagonist: Saif Ali Khan as the suave Nikhil Arora, architect-turned-chef in Melbourne in *Salaam Namaste*; Madhavan as an unsophisticated cook in the Tamil movie, *Nala Damayanthi* (2003), also set in Melbourne; Madhavan again in *Ramji Londonwaley* (2005), the Hindi remake of *Nala Damayanthi* set in London; and Amitabh Bachchan as the sixty-four-year-old Buddhadev Gupta, owner and head chef of 'Spice 6' in London in *Cheeni Kum* (2007). The four films depict the South Asian kitchen as a transnational space through which professionals, students, tourists, permanent residents and illegal immigrants all pass, and, following a close analysis of the transnational interplay between economics and social practice, Ravi concludes:

As owners of small businesses with financial and cultural interests in multiple locations, Nick, Buddha and both the Ramjis are prime examples of a new breed of entrepreneurs who contribute to the efficient circulation of talent, capital and revenues in a transnational world.

Like the films she discusses, Ravi's study adds a new dimension to culinary politics in the Indian diaspora. She exposes the subtle cultural politics of vernacular cinema and permits a more nuanced understanding of the nationalist politics of global Indian cinema.

Anjali Gera Roy's chapter, 'Rangla Punjab in Canberra, Yamla Jatt Folk Night in Sydney, Oorja Nights in Melbourne', considers the ways in which Indian popular cinema has broadened the appeal in Australia of Bhangra, music associated with Punjabi harvest ritual and naturalised globally as a Bollywood song and dance formula. As Roy notes, 'Bollywood Bhangra, a new Bhangra genre produced in Bollywood, has played a significant role in enabling Bhangra's crossover from regional folk music to national, and now global, popular music'. Through interviews conducted with Australian Bhangra practitioners in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne, Roy explores how Bhangra, while serving as the most important ethnocultural signifier of Punjabi identity in Australia, also circulates in Australia through the overlapping global flows of British Asian music and Hindi cinema, placing it at the centre of the production of Asian youth cultures in Australia. Yet Roy also discovers that an increasing number of non-Punjabi fans have developed a taste for Bhangra, due to its inclusion in crossover films like *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002) and *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), as well as in Bollywood hits like *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (2003) and *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* (2006).

In 'Orbits of Desire: Bollywood as Creative Industry in Australia', Debjani Ganguly explores Bollywood as 'soft power'. Using Joseph Nye's idea that creative and cultural contributions to the public sphere are as important as military or economic power, she argues that it is Bollywood that is most responsible for the global 'allure' of India. According to her, 'in the last two decades, the fulcrum of Bollywood's global power has shifted from the transnational impact of popular Bombay films to lucrative zones of extra-cinematic visibility', which include 'live dance and musical spectacles, fashion, food, tourism, art exhibitions, aerobic fitness centres, dance classes, music albums, television productions and an array of other digital and web-based modalities of entertainment'. These products create a broader market than just cinema-going South Asians in the diaspora. Examining two case studies from Canberra, *Bollywood Dimensions*, Canberra's first dance and fitness school run by Anshu Srivastava and *Project Samosa*, an intercultural youth film project conducted by Australian National University (ANU) students, Ganguly concludes that:

Bollywood, in the eyes of the Australian political and cultural establishment, now appears to epitomise an all-encompassing 'Indian' performative modality in a first world multicultural society, as also a placeholder for Indian cultural diversity in late modernity.

The last academic paper in the volume is ‘Sweet Dreams are Made of This: Bollywood and Transnational South Asians in Australia’ by Devleena Ghosh. Ghosh starts by commenting on the viewing habits of Indo-Fijian immigrants to Australia, for whom Bollywood films and TV serials are part of a weekly family ritual ‘essential to feeling Indian’. She observes, however, that there are intergenerational conflicts and differences in the manner in which these movies and TV shows are viewed. While the older generation insists on being part of their culture and tradition, the younger, often Australian-born, children often find some of their contents ‘uncool’, if not ridiculous. At the same time, Bollywood-style parties, Indo-chic and remix music do shape a large part of the identities of young South Asian Australians. Ghosh shows how the experience of the South Asian diaspora in Australia is refracted through prisms of the Bollywood culture industry. This experience, she believes, ‘radically transfigures the concept of “Australian”, subverting and shaping the way in which a mainstream Australian youth identity is constructed in the public sphere’. Yet, while such subversion of the received ideas of what it means to be Australian may produce liminality, such liminality does not necessarily result in aimlessly postmodern or floating selves. Instead, the ‘blurred boundaries and radical re-enchantments of both the past and the present reveal the always contingent, contested nature of subjectivity’, a subjectivity grounded in:

a thousand plateaus, subjectivities felt and experienced through the body, through historical landscapes, through domestic spaces, and through performance, as well as through the much more difficult realm of the imaginary, of the impact of ideals and the weight of history.

The volume concludes with an insider’s view of the successful bid to attract Harry Baweja to film part of his blockbuster movie, *Love Story 2050* (2008), in Adelaide, South Australia. In his interview with Andrew Hassam, AK Tareen, the Senior Trade Commissioner—India, Government of South Australia, talks about the importance of promoting bilateral ties between South Australia and India and the role of film in attracting Indian trade, investment, tourism and skilled migration to Australia. Prior to accepting his current post, AK Tareen worked for almost twelve years for the Australian Trade Commission in India and was instrumental in attracting the very first Indian film to shoot in Australia, a Tamil film called *Indian* (1996). As he is based in Chennai, Tareen gives an additional perspective from the South of

India, a perspective in particular on Tamil movies made in Australia and which, with lower budgets and production values and with a more restricted language community, fail to attract attention outside Tamil communities, including the Sri Lankan Tamil communities, in Australia. However, as Tareen points out, Tamil films such as *Nala Damayanthi* and *Thiruttu Payale* (2006) are nonetheless regarded by Australian trade, film and tourism commissions as important ways of promoting Australia in India, a timely reminder that the appearance of Australia in Indian films has an indirect value over and above headline figures of budgets and box office receipts.

Notes to the Introduction

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