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Adrian Mabbott Athique
University of Wollongong

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Non-Resident Cinema: Transnational Audiences for Indian Films

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

Adrian Mabbott Athique, BA (Hons)

Communications and Cultural Studies
Faculty of Arts
2005

CERTIFICATION

I, Adrian Mabbott Athique, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Adrian Mabbott Athique
29th August 2005

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Thesis Abstract:

In this thesis the popular Indian film is described as an object of global significance. It is argued that understanding Indian films on a global scale requires different governing structures to existing paradigms of national media research and that, in particular, this requires a focus upon the consumption, rather than the production, of cinema. This thesis will also argue that the Australian media environment is constituted by a complex matrix of transnational cultural flows that spread beyond the boundaries of nationalist discourse, and that understanding the social dynamics of cinema in Australia requires an intellectual engagement with the phenomenon of globalisation.

This thesis seeks to locate the cultural geography of Indian films in a global context before presenting a local case study that draws on a body of interviews and survey exercises conducted during 2003-04 with film-viewers and media professionals in the Greater Sydney and Illawarra regions of New South Wales, Australia. My immediate concern is with the manner in which Indian movies reach an audience within this social environment and how that audience is described, both by themselves and by those who seek to cater to them. Thus, a further intention of this study overall is to conduct a re-evaluation of the nature of the social imagination which has been assumed to operate around participation in communities defined by media use. This study therefore combines three major points of enquiry: Indian films as globally dispersed media artefacts, Australia as a site of complex transnational cultural practices, and media audiences as sites of relational social imagination. The theoretical framework that I advance here reformulates the conception of media audiences as 'imagined communities' by replacing a demographically constituted ethnographic model with an emphasis on surveying the diverse inhabitants of a 'cultural field' constructed around the Indian movie in a specific Australian social context.

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