# FLASH-FORWARD: MEMORY, TECHNOLOGY AND THE BOMBAY FILM REMAKE

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# Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **'Flash-Forward: Memory, Technology and the Bombay Film Remake'**, submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of Degree of Master of Philosophy in Cinema Studies, is an original work and has not been submitted so far, in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of this or any other University or Institution. I shall be responsible for the mistakes and inaccuracies in this dissertation.

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25th July, 2011.

We recommend that this dissertation maybe placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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# INTRODUCTION

*Corresponding to the form of the new means of production...are images in the collective consciousness in which the old and the new interpenetrate...(This unconscious of the collective) engender(s), through interpenetration with what is new, the utopia that has left its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from enduring edifices to passing fashions.*

-Walter Benjamin[1]

Walter Benjamin in *The Arcades Project* (1999) related the excavation of the "ruins" of the past to the re-telling of history as a narrative of death. The history that I trace in this project traverses such "interpenetration" of pasts and presents, rendering any simple reading of film culture opaque. I use the Bombay Film Industry's post-globalised status as the vantage point to re-trace its history. What is foregrounded in this act of re-telling is the presupposition of a history, of a (distinct) film practice and the narrative of its remaking. I use this moment of transition to map the resurgence of an old body of work at a time when cinema is busy reshaping its contours in accordance with shifts in the experience of watching films. But how can an industry that has only recently been recognised by the government as an "industry", narrate its long history?

The Bombay film remake has, over the last one decade, emerged as a prominent industrial practice within popular cinema. While there is clearly a radical shift in the aesthetics of representation and its relationship to the changed geography of exhibition, in its interaction with the digital proliferation of images, there is a sense that the past is being recovered. From the tragedy of *Devdas* (1955; 2002; 2009) to Farhan Akhtar's

[1] Walter Benjamin, 'Paris, capital of the Nineteenth Century: Expose of 1939" chapter' in *The Arcades Project,* 1999, Page 4

clever tribute to *Don* (1978; 2006), from the magnum opus romance of Salim and Anarkali in *Mughal-e-Azam* (K. Asif 1960; 2004) to the all-encompassing formula of the 1970s in *Om Shanti Om* (Farah Khan 2007), we have seen how "pastness" has found a significant articulation in contemporary film culture. Emerging in the context of globalisation, as a cultural symptom of its times, the remake sheds light on cinema's encounter with questions of popularity and posterity, the stamp of aesthetic value and commercial imperatives, and stylistic continuities and departures.

Whether as "inspiration", as a "modern" claim on the inheritance of the past, or an understanding of what will be remembered by history, a moment of nostalgia or of creative bankruptcy, or a "simple" form of retro-mania, the remake has occupied the popular imagination. This dissertation begins with an examination of this **open-ended** development of a "trend", beginning in the year 2000 when the Government of India gave the Bombay film industry official industry status. [2]It is in this period of transition that the "ghosts" of Bombay Cinema re-surface as a dominant commercial practice. My attempt here is to engage with the remake as a form that has emerged at the intersection of discourses linked to globalisation, technological innovation and proliferation, stardom, and popular memory. The remake as a story of "re-incarnation" is a way of re-telling the cultural history of Bombay Cinema.

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[2] Addressing the National conference on 'Challenges before Indian Cinema', held in Mumbai, then Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Sushma Swaraj announced the decision to accord "industry" status to filmmaking in India. Following this, the film industry was brought under FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) Introducing a series of financial concessions including a reduction in import duties on raw material. Furthur, in October, 2000, The Industrial Development Bank Act of 2000 ushered in corporate finances into the industry. See (Mehta 2005)

For news story see, 'Industry status for film world', 11 May 1998, Indian Express. Story available at http://www.indianexpress.com/Storyold/31778/

## "The Age of Imitation": Recycling Bombay Cinema as Bollywood

India's dominant film producing industry in Bombay acquired an international profile as a representative of "Indian" cinema in 1998. Until the advent of neo-liberal policies in the early 1990s, commercial cinema was relegated to a marginal position within film scholarship, both in India and abroad. In the post-Independence period there was a voice of growing suspicion on the "values" represented by cinema articulated by someone like Mahatma Gandhi. Others like Jawaharlal Nehru conferred on cinema a social function to be deployed in the service of the Nation. With the arrival of colour, cinema expanded its horizons, staging a desire for leisure, locations, consumption and global tourism. This was best captured in the foreign travel films of the 1960s like *An Evening in Paris* (Shakti Samanta 1967), *Love in Tokyo* (Pramod Chakravorty 1966) and *Sangam* (Raj Kapoor 1964).[3] By the 1970s, commercial cinema had made inroads into dominant markets and honed its use of multiple genres and song and dance sequences, establishing itself as a mass entertainment form. In a rare defense of this mass cultural form, the Indian Cinema Yearbook 82/83, published by the National Film Development Corporation lauded commercial cinema's phenomenal sweep over every other performing arts. In an article titled 'Moviemania', Monojit Lahiri referred to the "great escape" provided by mainstream cinema as a "mental holiday without trespass" (1982: 12).

The rise of the Indian New Wave in the early 1980s was identified with a new breed of Film Institute trained filmmakers who made films on "serious" issues. It was also during this period that due to threats from television and video, the future of commercial cinema became an unstable proposition. Writing about the future of Indian cinema, the Indian

[3] Ranjani Mazumdar "Aviation, Tourism and Dreaming in 1960s Bombay Cinema" *BioScope* Vol.2,No.2, 2011,129-155

Film Directorate Association published *Indian Cinema: The Next Decade* in which filmmaker journalist Khwaja Ahmad Abbas used the categories of "serious" cinema as against the crowd pleasing "*mirch masala-khatta-meetha* miscellanies" (1984: 8). Working within these restricted categories of art and commercial, serious and frivolous cinema, commercial films during this period began to be seen as a kind of "assembly line production tailored to the tastes of mass audiences" (Masood 1985: 23).[4] In the coming years, commercial films were not only seen as frivolous but also as a bastardised form that were borrowing and stealing plots, music and scenes from Hollywood films. The term 'remake' emerges in this context as a lowly commercial enterprise.

In an article titled 'Is Bollywood a Hollywood Clone?...', Bootie Cosgrove-Mather stated the perfect "recipe" of a "Bollywood" film - "Take a Hollywood plot, sprinkle in cheesy song-and-dance numbers and pour in a gallon of melodrama. Shake well, and you've got a Bollywood movie". (Cosgrove-Mather 2003) What is underlined in such compartmentalised allegations is the marginalised status of a certain brand of cinema; reduced to being defined purely through its parent "mirror image"—Hollywood. Rosie Thomas's engagement with popular cinema is one of the earliest critiques of this widespread assumption inherent in a certain kind of film journalism and scholarship that has dubbed Bombay cinema a "not yet cinema", as a mere collage of "song and dance sequences", rich in "masala", a vulgar imitation of Hollywood trash.(Thomas 1985) Thomas argues that certain theoretical frameworks present in Euro-American film studies may fail to grasp the complexity of Indian cinematic forms, constantly inventing it as the

[4] *Film Utsav* 'Indian Cinema 1980-85' 1985: 23

lowly "other" of Hollywood cinema. By the time India entered the phase of liberalisation, it was this very form that became a powerful force both in the country and outside of it.

Indian cinema's diasporic market expanded considerably in the 1990s, especially in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and South Africa, and the Non-Resident Indian (NRI) emerged as a protagonist in cinema. The term Bollywood became hugely popular and seemed to encapsulate and celebrate what was once considered disreputable—song and dance sequences, melodrama, over the top plot lines, garish sets and costumes. In his important intervention on this sudden recovery of a discarded cinema, Ashish Rajadhyaksha locates popular Bombay cinema as a global cultural industry that capitalises on a nostalgic desire for traditional roots. He refers to this as the 'Bollywoodisation' of Indian cinema[5] (Rajadhaksha 2008).

Madhava Prasad views the big budget commercial cinemas of the last one decade as films that consciously market themselves as "Indian". Here the conventions, and rhetorical features of popular Indian cinema are foregrounded making them reflexive commodities that maintain "a formal continuity with the past" and also display an anxious desire to "surpass these models" (Prasad 2009: 41). It is this anxiety that gets appropriated in the remake. This form of appropriation is however complicated and takes different forms.

This story of the successful reign of Bombay cinema's distinctive form has found a burgeoning interest in current film scholarship. In her work on Bombay cinema, Ranjani Mazumdar has situated popular cinema as an innovative archive of the city in India. For Mazumdar, the cinema contains architectural fantasies, a fear of the street, a desire for

[5] Madhava Prasad responds to Rajadhyaksha's article and situates the beginnings and recent "naturalization of Bollywood" in its a relation to the "structural bilingualism of the Indian nation state", a metalanguage that articulates nationalist ideology in the period of globalization. (Prasad 2003)

women's fashion and memories of loss (2007). Aswin Punathambekar and Anandam Kavoori in their anthology *Global Bollywood* (2008) have traced connections across "industry practices, state policy, new media technologies, and sites and modes of consumption" in order to reframe "relationships between geography, cultural production and cultural identities" (2008: 1-2). Similarly, Sujata Murthi and Sangita Gopal have tracked the export of the spectacle associated with Hindi cinema's songs across the world. Amit S. Rai in his book, *Untimely Bollywood* (2008) evokes a different regime of Bollywood. He defines this as a "new non-linear media assemblage" where new media practices have led to a "patterned dissolution of traditional movie going practices" (2008: 2). All these arguments and interventions have been important and have significantly opened out the debates on globalisation and Indian cinema. I enter this existing terrain of debate with a focused account of what the remake means and signifies in the current juncture of globalisation.

The remake, although not an alien term in the Indian context, has so far been restricted in its use to a scattered body of "creative influences" from Hollywood and other regional cinemas. An unacknowledged phenomenon, remakes have today turned to the excavation of a particular kind of cinematic memory and history. While there has been a radical shift both in the aesthetics of representation and the nature of exhibition, the digital explosion has unleashed a peculiar revival of the past. It is this combination of a sense of continuity with the past as well as a desire to break from it that makes the remake such a significant development in the contemporary. The remake as a material object becomes a sign of its own mediation with the past and the present.

Constantine Verivis in his book, *Film Remakes* (2009), draws upon theories of genre and intertextuality to situate the remake as the "post-modern circulation and re-circulation of images and texts" (2009: 8). Verivis' account draws on the context of Industry, text and critical reception along with an exploration of issues related to copyright, authorship, canon formation and film re-viewing. Similarly, Anat Zanger in *The Film Remake as Ritual and Disguise: From Carmen to Ripley* (2006) suggests that the repetitive techniques of the remake operate as the "hidden streams"[6] of an imaginary archive of cinema that illuminates the "preferences and politics involved in filmmaking practices" (2006: 9). While these writings constitute an important body of work on the Hollywood remake, in Bombay Cinema the remake is linked directly to the persistence of cinematic idioms in popular memory. Contemporary audiences have expectations based on the memory of particular scenes, dialogues, stars, music, and fashion.[7] The film text itself becomes secondary to the circulation of the aura of the past identified with the experience of "going to the theatre". Therefore, my project looks at the remake as a cultural artifact that draws on the heritage status of films from the past to become an active part of contemporary film culture. I will situate the remake as a particular kind of "cinema effect". [8]

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[6] A term used by, Andre Bazin (1955), quoted by Anat Zanger's '*Film Remake as Ritual and Disguise*', page 9

[7] Rosie Thomas has argued that popular Indian cinema refutes the western theoretical framework, both in terms of its industrial practices (in case of genre for instance, it accommodates the 'socials', the 'devotional' and the 'multi-starrer') as well as in its consumption. The spectator thus assumes a critical position in defining the aesthetics of production of popular Hindi cinema and its (distinct) aesthetics of reception (Thomas: 1986).

[8] Sean Cubitt uses the tern cinema effect to trace a history of the moving image as special effects of movement, scale and distance along with its relationship with technological modernity. (Cubitt 2005).Cinema's relationship with the experiential system of effects has been an ongoing debate since cinema's inception. In the post-global moment of frenzied networks, a number of auxillary industries such as fashion and advertising get linked to the notion of cinema effect.

Ashish Rajadhyaksha in his book *Indian cinema in the Time of Celluloid: From Bollywood to the Emergency* (2009) defines "cinema effect" as that which spills out of the frame. For Rajadhyaksha, the contemporary context of globalisation has foregrounded the cinema effect across a series of sites that include the domain of live entertainment, fashion shows, music, advertising, television and so on.[9] While the notion of "cinema effect" is a frame through which I propose to argue the case of "excess" embodied within the remake, I find Rajadhyakasha's attempt to frame it within a state apparatus argument limiting as it reduces the power of visual perception and spectatorial memory, to merely an ideological one. As I will argue, the "cinema effect" serves as a potent tool to re-configure the history of Bombay film culture. Weary of any overarching "definition" of the remake, I trace its emergence and practice, along the axis of debates on globalisation, digital technology, stardom and popular memory. The remake is a particular kind of document that narrates the cultural history of film - a history that constantly resurfaces to interact with the present.

**Cultural Artefact in the Age of Digital Proliferation**

The term "commodity fetishism" had its beginnings in Karl Marx's writings on capital. This was extended and reformulated by the Frankfurt School, the Situationists and the Postmodernists. Commodity fetishism has been re-visited, revised and extended constantly to capture the pervasiveness of commodity relations in the 20th century. In

[9] With the industry status for filmmaking, Bombay film industry has become an official part of FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry), and a larger FICCI Entertainment Committee that includes names from the world of film, television, cable, radio, music, animation, and live entertainment sectors. In its official affiliations itself therefore, the film industry now works closely with other mass entertainment commercial medias. See http://www.ficci.com/

*Capital*, Marx noted that while a commodity may appear to be "a very trivial thing", in reality "it is a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties" (Marx 1990: 163).[10] Marx's central argument was that in the realm of circulation, the world of commodities can take on a life of their own. "Fetishism", conventionally refers to the (ostensible) religious practice of ascribing human powers to material objects. Marx transposed this meaning on to the commodity wherein its fetishism was defined as a process, a "definite social relation between men that assumes in their eyes, the fantastic form of relation between things" (Marx 1990: 167). Fetishism in its classical sense is the camouflaging and masking of the relations of production.

20th century consumerism combined with an explosion in media technologies took commodity fetishism to a new level of debate. In the Frankfurt School writings on the culture industry, Theodore Adorno and Max Horkhiemer defined mass culture as a form of monopoly capitalism that overwhelmed the cultural industry through over-production. There was an indiscriminate recycling of commodities through various medias, particularly advertisements and fetishisation entered the sphere of culture.. Adorno's treatise on the culture industry inspired writers like Siegfried Kracauer to reflect on the emergence of "distraction factories" in newsreels, variety shows, fashion, music and spectacle in general.

As consumerism swelled along new regimes of consumption—restaurants, shopping malls, multiplexes, billboards and virtual space—Marx's theory of commodity fetishism

[10] This shroud of mystery worn by the commodities, according to Marx, lies in its ability to mask social relationships between things through "exchange" of money and eventual domination of "exchange value" over "use value". Marx observed the potential of capitalism to transform social relations into commodities of exchange values, "an act characterised by a total abstraction of use-value" (Marx 1990).

and Adorno's notion of the cultural industry seemed inadequate for an understanding of these globally circulating signs and visual simulacra. Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) written in the late 1960s became a powerful critique of the coming together of advanced capitalism and the media. The result was a formulation where the commodity had colonised the social relations between people through a barrage of images. But Deboard was writing about a world before the rise of the Internet and virtual reality. Jean Baudrillard's response was crucial as it shifted the impetus from mass production (and the discourses on labour and authentic life) to mass over-production and over-consumption. Commodity fetishism now manifests itself in the realm of the "code" or the "sign" that breaks out of the monolithic stages of production and consumption and travels as simulation.

In order to trace this culture of over-production after globalisation in India, media proliferation and speed, Ravi Sundaram's account of "pirate electronic cultures" provides some useful formulations. Responding to the sudden explosion of the media and technology, Sundaram aligns speed to the notion of recycling. Cities in India have witnessed incoherent regimes of urban consumption that lie outside the realm of the legal but travels freely in the "invisible markets in India" (Sundaram 2001: 96). The experiences of piracy, the role of the Internet and the compressed co-existence of old and new technologies have created a new sensorium. In a situation like this, there can be no linear narratives of "cultural memory" as memory itself is shaped by technology. Collecting its codes from this scattered body of domestic screens and numerous such subterranean industries (especially that of music and film piracy), the **Remake** offers spectators a return to the theatre, an experience of going back in time to inhabit the

position of a film spectator who is at once a part of the present sensorium as well as connected to an imagined past. The remake can then be seen as an offshoot of this new visuality, a symptom of the cultures of recycling, nostalgia and temporal compression – all of which dominate contemporary debates on technology and culture.

While at one level, the remake is a connection with the dispersed iconography of the past, the figure of the star remains central to the way the form constitutes itself. Richard Dyer's canonical texts, *Stars* (1971) and *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (1979) developed the relationship between star as a screen image and the star in 'real life'. For Dyer, the star is always constituted by "multiple but finite meanings" (1979: 72). His study accorded the star a visual iconography, emphasising the constructedness of the image which needs excavation in any encounter with the film text. The body of extra-filmic references consolidated around the star also needs careful examination to make sense of how the media functions. Similarly Christine Geraghty moves across a range of entertainment formats to make links between stardom and other mass media public figures such as the celebrity, the professional and the performer (2000: 188). Through these categories, Geraghty suggests that these extra-textual media forms play an important role in the construction of the pleasure associated with the text. In India, the Southern context has received a lot of attention – particularly the relationship between stars and politics (Pandian 2008, Srinivas 2009, Prasad 2004). These debates are culturally and historically specific and do not draw much on the theories of stardom as they developed in the West. Work on Bombay's stardom has been limited to a few articles. The one major exception is the work of Neepa Majumdar on the relationship

between female stardom, nationalism, and celebrity culture in Bombay from the 1930s to the 1950s. Majumdar makes a compelling argument about how the pressures of the nationalist discourse and vernacular modernity affected the early discourses of female stardom. In the current context of globalization, stardom is constantly getting relocated within ancillary industries that further the status of the film as a mass product, mobilising the sites of stage shows, endorsements, award functions, fashion shows and advertising. Congealed around these categories of mass culture and digital proliferation, stardom transcends the imaginary of films, acquiring a material presence across several technological media—the Internet, cell phones, and television. The remake as I will show, is one such site that evokes the memory of stardom and its inter-textual current and connection with contemporary star cultures. The remake is one of the symptoms of this transition as it testifies to the importance of stars as carriers of film history. As a material artifact, the remake is the coming together of different temporal regimes, the body and star power. While the remake can also refer to "the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a [film] culture"[11], the architecture of this dissertation is mapped through debates on globalisation, the emergence of digital technology, the discourse of stardom and popular memory, I am inspired here by Carlo Ginzburg's analogy of the historian as a detective. Like Ginzburg my intention is to look for "unconscious" trails in my diagnosis of the remake as a symptom of contemporary digital culture.[12]

Recognising the difficulties in doing a reception study, this project identifies the "past" as

[11] Stam, *Film Theory*, p. 202 as quoted by Verivis in Film Remakes, Introduction, page12

[12] Based on a narration of symptoms, Ginzburg's "morellian method" of interpretation isbased on peripheral forms of 'discarded information... [and] marginal data' (2002:101)

a traveling category that is re-appropriated by cinematic practices along with what Klinger calls "inter-textual zones" associated with practices external to the film industry —those of fashion, advertising, television and print media. According to Klinger, questions of history must extend beyond the industry "to engage in a potentially vast system of interconnection, from the film and its immediate industrial context to social and historical developments" (2010: 111). While the synchronic areas within film practice include the study of issues pertaining to production, distribution, and exhibition, the diachronous field looks at the operations of different forums such as the conglomeration of media industry and associated practices of fan culture, satellite broadcasting, video stores, academic theory and criticism, revivals and retrospectives in museums, film festivals, archives, biographical legends and so on. Marking a departure from Klinger's larger enterprise of historical excavation of meaning, through an attempt to build a 'total history', this project adopts her dual categories of examining the network of relationship between film, its inter-textual fields, exhibition practices, star publicity, reviews and so on. Film culture (as against the monolithic examination of film text) is thus reviewed and related to practices of repetition, in the study of the remake.

The first chapter on the popular film remake draws on the enduring power of blockbuster films and their performative charge in public discourse. I explore this across distribution circuits, promotional campaigns and events, the script and its transformation, popular reminisces (songs, music, dialogue) and the sites of stardom. My primary objective is to use the category of the popular remake to map the complexities of contemporary film culture. Here the 'original' film acts as a brand that is used as a device to interpret the

contemporary. My emphasis here will be primarily on the visual iconography that selectively fuses the brand power of the original film with the "newness" of contemporary cinema. I explore three responses to the contemporary in Farhan Akhtar's *Don* (2006), the shifting aesthetics of *Devdas* in the films of Bimal Roy (1955), Sanjay Leela Bhansali (2002) and Anurag Kashyap (2009). Lastly I look at Ram Gopal Varma's failed attempt to remake Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay*. Each of these three categories highlights the complicated relationship of the remake to the original.

The second chapter of the project maps the cultural biography of K. Asif's *Mughal-e-azam* (1960). For this, I investigate the formal properties of film vis-à-vis technology. *Mughal-e-Azam* could not be remade like *Don* or *Devdas*. But a new version was released after colourisation and sound upgradation of the original film. In this chapter I excavate the material evidence of the film's production, reception and stupendous after-life, situating it alongside debates on colourisation. I explore how the film product went through optical and chemical changes, re-configuring the relationship between film culture and film production. I raise questions related to ideas of the 'classic', in particular its relationship to the present technological moment. How does the notion of the Classic affect the re-packaging of the film for a "multiplex experience"? Theorists of digital cinema, like Graeme Turner warn that the emergence of new media cultures act as a potent challenge creating a new convergence of different screen cultures. (Turner 2004) What does such a convergence entail? What does this mean for an industry that has acquired its industrial status only a decade ago? These are questions I address in this chapter.

My last chapter looks at film parody as a self-reflexive gaze on a film culture marked by visual and aural "excess". The cinematic experience of "over-spill" produces a range of sites through which the filmic is negotiated by spectators. This kind of experience of the cinema challenges the notion of a homogeneous film text and distributes the cinematic experience across the tracks of stardom, fashion, music, gestures and so on. Here I look at Farah Khan's *Om Shanti Om* as a film that juggles between parody and pastiche to reflect on the changes and continuities within Bombay Cinema. Popular cinema's afterlife is constituted to a large extent by the film song which highlights a distinct culture of production and consumption. In the mimicry of older songs, filmic codes act as free floating agents, creating a popular imagination around music. These codes travel through radio, television and the Internet; this variation of the remake is built around an inter-textual audience. Film parody then is truly about cinephilia which goes beyond memory and enters our globalised economy through images that linger long after the spectacle is over. These codes and gestures work in excess of the story and the script. What is foregrounded in these fragments then is not just the film text, but the history of Bombay Cinema. From tracking the circuits of circulation to the exploration of the legal discourse on defamation and plagiarism, this chapter tracks a scattered body of cinematic codes through an introspective gaze which truly embodies the interpenetration of the past and the present.

While I use the categories of 'past', 'history', 'classic film' and 'star text' rather liberally, it is important to note that in the study of any cultural history there is no homogenous trajectory for the movement of a film object. Otherwise why would some pasts fail? My

attempt therefore is to investigate these categories in order to question the narration of film history that is specifically encapsulated in and directed towards the exploration of the remake. Central to this narration is the transitory status of Bombay film culture and the politics of remembering the past as a cultural relic.

This ostensible investment in "cultural pasts" provides an entry into theoretical debates on cultural artifacts, and the role of memory[13]. What are the choices that guide the selection of what constitutes "memory". What version of our past do we reserve for our nostalgic meanderings? It is crucial to note how memory and nostalgia are constructed and mobilised to build a homogenous history of cinema and film culture—not how one remembers but how "the remembered film" marks the beginning of the narration of the glorious narrative of Bombay Cinema.[14] Yet, this past is incomplete. What is remembered of the past is selectively mobilised in the present assuming an ambiguous position vis-à-vis its slippage between the forces of conformism and insurrection. This balance is at the crux of the marketing strategy for the new version of the film. Is this return then a sign of the cyclical nature of history or is it a more complicated network of historical tourism? What do the aesthetic shifts in a film and changed landscape of its distribution and exhibition indicate about the relationship between a cultural artifact and its place in history?

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[13] Media technologies accelerate discourses around the category of artifacts to perpetuate the notion of a cultural past. In case of *Mughal-e-azam*, the discourse of classicism retains the object in a sanitized space of the glorious past while passing its material form through digital upgradation. The post-production remake mobilizes this complex equation between technology and memory of the past to re-circulate the object in the new market economy.

[14] The remembered film is the term used by Victor Burgin in his book by the same title. (Burgin 2004)

The balance between the cultural artifact and its relationship to History is indeed a precarious one. Walter Benjamin in his article 'On the Concept of History' warns the historian not to "re-experience an epoch" through a "procedure of empathy", the reason being that such an experience is deeply embedded in the camp of the victor, a part of the "triumphal procession" also known as "cultural heritage". This cultural heritage, warns Benjamin, is not independent of the "process of transmission—the fall from one set of hands to another". (1974: VII) Such an exchange entails the mutability of the film object and explodes the linear continuum of history in order to reflect on the process of writing film history and its relationship to technology, memory and the experience of going to the theatre. [15]The question Benjamin raises then is one that seeks to permeate the density of a cultural relic. The retracing of the extra-filmic life of the film text and its journey across time assumes the status of a testimonial that embeds itself as a running annotation in the reconfigured new version.

The remake offers an experience of going back in time to inhabit the position of a film spectator within the a new visual sensorium. The remake offers a return to the theatre. It is this movement of the "cultural relic" from the restricted and potentially obscure enclosed space of the archive or from the medium of television back to the theatres that reassembles the fragmented film object to narrate its own history. When Baudrillard alleged that rewriting "modernity is the historical task of this early 21st century", he did not fail to remind us that this process of re-writing does not take us back to the

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[15] Media theorist Jon Dovey similarly argues that " one of the effects of cyberculture is a kind of retro-technological imagining, in which our media histories are remapped from the new vantage points of the digital domain...Cinema history is re-written as a teleology of the virtual". (as quoted by Anna Notaro 2006: 94)

beginnings at zero. Rather we enter the storehouse of history "to inventory and select, to use and download" [16]

[16] Jean Baudrillard (my emphasis; 2002:93) as quoted in Emma Cocker's 'Ethical Possession: Borrowing from the archives', Video Vortex II, 2011, P-93

## CHAPTER ONE

## POPULAR REMAKES

Helen was 40 when she seduced Don, the eponymous gangster from Chandra Barot's 1978 crime thriller, with '*Yeh mera dil...*' An iconic song, Barot included it because of his fascination for James Bond films.[17] Influenced by the iconography of the femme fatale, Helen with her blue eyes and blond hair became a rage as the vamp who could dance. Her cabaret numbers were the highlight of the films she acted in. It is not surprising then that, three decades later when film director Farhan Akhtar announced his new directorial venture *Don* (2006), an adaptation of Barot's successful film, cynics were quick to point out that recasting Helen was a bigger "*cardinal sin* than substituting the leading man himself"(Sen 2005)[18]. The announcement of the film triggered a frenzy of debates on the new cast— while some were subtle and raised issues about this new practice of remaking older films, there were others who openly chided Akhtar for his hubristic project. One such tabloid said "These (*Sholay* and *Don*) are films that *can't* be remade, that *mustn't*. Write in subtle asides into your films, name your characters Vijay, Roma and Jasjit, and chuckle to yourself. Don't look at the icon and try to top it" (Sen 2005). But looking at

[17] 'I will always be remembered for *Don*', Interview with Chandra Barot, October 16, 2006 ; Rediff.com; http://specials.rediff.com/movies/2006/oct/16sld1.htm

[18] In an article titled, 'Khaike Paan Shah Rukh Wala' Raja Sen introduces the cast of Akhtar's *Don*, while simultaneously comparing it with Barot's original cast, sceptically pointing to one of the biggest challenges in casting for Akhtar's *Don*. Posted on15 Nov 2005; See http://www.rediff.com/movies/2005/nov/15sd1.htm

the icon was the new norm and the endeavour to top it, a challenge. Akhtar's *Don* was just one amongst the many popular remakes of blockbuster films.

Built along the nodes of stardom and publicity, I define Popular Remakes as films that rework and adapt blockbuster hits of the past. These include Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Devdas* (2002), Farhan Akhtar's *Don* (2006), J.P Dutta's *Umrao Jaan* (2007), *Ram Gopal Varma Ki Aag* (2007), Satish Kaushik's *Karzzz* (2008) and Anurag Kashyap's *Dev D* (2009).[19] With at least half a dozen more remakes of popular films like *Satte Pe Satta* (Sippy: 1982), *Abhiman* (Mukherjee: 1973), *Agnipath* (Anand: 1990), and *Amar Akbar Anthony* (Desai: 1977) in the pre-production and production stages, the remake has emerged as a significant practice within Bombay cinema. Ostensibly born of a "desire to improve" the original or pay homage to it, these films re-process old blockbusters at the level of production.[20] Banking on popular reminisces of dialogues, songs, fashion, and characters, these films remakes create contradictory relationships with the original. But what are the contours of such a film practice? What is the politics behind the selection of particular films? What do they offer in our contemporary moment and what is it in our contemporary film culture that facilitates this resurgence? These are questions I hope to address in this chapter.

In order to map the complexities governing popular remakes and their relationship to the shifting contours of a globalised context, I will look at three varied sites of the remake. I

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[19] Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Devdas* and Anurag Kashyap's *Dev D* are remakes of the '*Devdas*' films, primarily Bimal Roy's 1955 version by the same name; Dutta remakes Mussaffar Ali's *Umrao Jaan* (1981); Ram Gopal Varma remakes R. Sippy's *Sholay* (1975); Kaushik's *Karzzz* is a remake of Subhash Ghai's *Karz* (1980).

[20] Leonardo Quaresima quotes Fink, Guido in his article, "Loving Texts Two at a Time : The Film Remake", 2002 where he looks at the possibilities behind film remaking in Hollywood.

will first examine Farhan Akhtar's *Don* (2006) to engage with particular issues related to stardom and technology. Then, I will map the persistence of the eternally tragic hero through the different versions of *Devdas*. Here, I will argue that Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Devdas* (2002) and Anurag Kashyap's *Dev D* (2009) are two diverse strains in this narrative of reinvention. While Bhansali employs the grandiose style associated with historical films, Kashyap urbanises Devdas and locates him in the bustling milieu of contemporary India. Finally, I situate the failure of *Ram Gopal Varma Ki Aag* (2007) at the intersection of soft technology (digital re-mastering of the visual and sound) and the powerful after-life of *Sholay* (1975).

Each of these films reflects how contemporary filmmakers make "aspects of [existing] texts their own, overwriting them with their own traceable signatures, perhaps reconfiguring them by incorporating references to other (rewritten) intertexts" (Grant 2002: 58).[21] The re-carving of space is one of the crucial elements in the way the past is negotiated in remakes. There is also an emphasis on the different centres in the narrative. The popular remake engages in a conscious act of self-fashioning. Whether this attempt is considered conformist, digressive or simply audacious, it gives a visceral shape to the simmering tensions within the regimes of power that reside in the film *industry*.

## "*Arre Deewano Mujhe Pehchano*": Re-branding the Legacy of Don

The first theatrical trailer of *Don* (2006) assumes audience knowledge of the original *Don*. The trailer opens with an aerial shot of the cityscape of Kuala Lumpur. With an

[21] Catherine Grant, 'Recognising Billy Budd in Beau Travail' (58) as quoted in Constantine Verivis's *Film Remakes*. (2006:21)

echoing background sound from the original, the new Don is revealed as actor Shah Rukh Khan.[22] Following this introduction, a series of shots from the film emphasising action through fights, car chases, gadgets and thrill fill the screen. Finally, an array of stars are introduced with the same names given to characters in the original film. Using the leading stars of the Hindi film industry, Akhtar creates a multi-star cast ensemble with Priyanka Chopra, Arjun Rampal, Kareena Kapoor and Om Puri. In doing this, Akhtar invites his audience to refer to the memory of each 'character' from the original using leading stars of the present. Packaging the hit formula of mixing the "advertisable elements" of the popular film, *Don* draws on the centrality of the star to stage its entertainment value. In addition, the remake draws on audience reminisces of dialogues, songs and characters from the original.

Infused with the vision of kinetic perception linked to the "song and dance routine" along with knowledge of widely circulating Hollywood genres, popular Bombay films have for a long time mixed generic conventions to deliver a mass entertainment form. Exploring this ever-evolving "entertainment" cinema and its domination in the world of film production, distribution and consumption, Rosie Thomas sees popular Indian cinema's distinctiveness in its use of the "formula" and what she calls "blending the (right) *masalas*" (Thomas 1985: 124, 120). It is in this distinctiveness that Thomas asserts the need for an understanding and analysis of the films and their universe of pleasures.[23]

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[22] As one of the biggest stars of the Bombay film industry Shah Rukh Khan is often referred to as "Baadshah Khan" or "King Khan".

[23] Rosie Thomas has argued, popular Indian cinema refutes the western theoretical framework, both in terms of its industrial practices (like in case of genre for instance; as it accommodates the 'socials, the 'devotional' and the 'multistarer') as well as in its consumption (Clapping, booing etc) . The spectator thus assumes a critical position in defining the aesthetics of production of popular Hindi cinema and its

The blockbuster film has an aura acquired through repeated viewings on television. Fan clubs, video libraries, and regular telecasts have ensured audience familiarity with dialogues, the stars, and the songs of the films. The remake deals with this familiar terrain of knowledge foregrounding questions related to culture, consumption, and entertainment.

Whether it is *Don* (Don), *Sholay* (RGV ki Aag), *Karz* (Karzzzz), *Amar Akbar Anthony*, *Abhiman* or *Agnipath*,[24] it is the quintessential "masala" blockbuster which has activated the popular remake as a major film practice in contemporary Bombay. As we will see, it is through the figure of the star that the cultural and commercial "branding" of the remake is structured. It is not surprising that most of the remakes have their originals belonging to the 70s – an era of multi-starrers that epitomised the "masala" blockbuster and saw the rise of superstar Amitabh Bachchan.[25]

The 1970s saw a shift in the impetus of Bombay cinema from what Madhav Prasad calls the "feudal family romance" of the 60s to a pronounced social dislocation. The Nehruvian dream had waned in the face of political turmoil giving rise to narratives of loss expressed in cinema by figures like the orphan, the illegitimate son, the widowed mother and the urban dweller. The war with the neighbouring state of Pakistan, the rise of

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(distinct) aesthetics of reception, embodied in the popular 'masala' quotient. (*Masala* is a culinary term that refers to Indian condiments that enhance the 'flavor' of the dish)

[24] These films are currently under production

[25] The Bachchan phenomenon has been an intrinsic part of the study of stardom in popular Bombay cinema. It was in the 1970s that Hindi cinema got its first superstar in actor Rajesh Khanna. Khanna though, was soon dethroned by Amitabh Bachchan's screen persona of the 'angry young man'. Post 1985, Bachchan saw a downfall in his career with a spate of flops and an unsuccessful foray into politics and film production, but he managed to resurrect his stardom with the television show *Kaun Banega Crorepati* (2000). Many scholars have argued that Bachchan is the most powerful and perhaps the "last iconic hero" of Bombay cinema (Mazumdar 2001:238). Also See (Mishra 2002)

the Left in politics, spiralling prices and the displacement of the urban poor (as a result of government policies) reflected the tense economic and social situation of the early 1970s. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime minister of India was declared guilty of election code violation during the 1971 Lok Sabha Elections. Following a surge of protests against the government, state emergency was declared on June 26, 1975. Civil rights were suspended and reports of gross violence against citizens were reported. It was in this tense socio-political environment that the figure of the 'angry young man' as "an agent of national reconciliation" (Prasad 1998: 141) emerged and connected with the Hindi film audience. It was in Prakash Mehra's *Zanjeer* (1973) that this persona first took shape. Amitabh Bachchan was a hugely talented actor who made his debut with K.A. Abbas's *Saat Hindustani* (1969). Initially unsuccessful as an actor, a few important roles followed, including Hrishikesh Mukherjee's *Anand* (1971) and *Guddi* (1971). However it was Prakash Mehra' *Zanjeer* that raised Bachchan to stardom. In the film, Bachchan played an upright and brooding police officer, haunted by personal childhood trauma of the murder of his parents. He reinvented the Bombay film hero through his performance of anger and vengeance acquired a "quasi-revolutionary fervour" (Mishra 2002: 134) that proved cathartic in the given period of political turmoil. The depiction of anger in films like *Deewar* (Chopra: 1975), *Trishul* (Chopra: 1978) and *Muqqadar ka Sikander* (Mehra: 1978) recast the overwhelming focus on domestic life. Suddenly we see a rise in the cinematic negotiation of the state, society and the streets of the city (Ganti 2004: 33). However, it was with films like *Amar Akbar Anthony* and *Sholay,* that Bachchan consolidated his position. These multi-starrer films went on to become major hits riding high on Bachchan's stardom. When Farhan Akhtar announced the remake of *Don*, there

was a flurry of speculation. Everyone was curious about the cast of the film. Besides the sundry of popular characters, who would be the right "inheritor" for Amitabh Bachchan's legacy? Thirty years after Barot created the suave underworld gangster, Akhtar resurrected the legacy of *Don.*

It was the year 1967 when Chandra Barot, a banker by profession, fled Tanzania which was going through political turbulence. Once in Mumbai, he assisted actor-director Manoj Kumar, best known for his patriotic films *Shaheed* (1965), *Upkar* (1967) and *Purab aur Paschim* (1970). *Don*, Barot's only directorial venture in Hindi films till date, was planned with a budget of around 25 lakhs, in order to bail cinematographer- turned-producer, Nariman Irani out of debt. Amitabh Bachchan, the reigning king of the box office in the 1970s, Zeenat Aman, best-known to have glamorised the face of the Hindi film 'heroine', writer duo Salim-Javed, and Pran, a well established actor known for his performances in supporting roles came together to work with Barot on *Don.*

The film narrates the story of a police hunt for the elusive gangster Don (Amitabh Bachchan) and his partners. In the course of the film, Don dies and is replaced by his *double*, a paan-chewing street performer named Vijay. Vijay comes from a working class background and agrees to be part of the plan to help the two uprooted children of a petty criminal (Pran). His identity as a police informer however is jeopardised with the death of his mentor, inspector D'Silva (Iftekhar). The second half of the film traces Vijay's struggle to establish his innocence. The double visual economy of the star (Bachchan as Don and Vijay) within the film was used primarily in the metaphorical bifurcation of the

bipolar moral universe of the film.[26] Through the character of Vijay, the moral compass of the film shifts to his struggle in the world of deceit, revenge and double crossing. The film has sub-plots of revenge, conspiracy and hidden identities, and lacked what its writer Javed Akhtar calls the "Hindi picture requirements" of family sentiments and traditional melodrama.[27]

As a fast paced thriller, *Don* was the first of its kind. Some referred to it as a "Hollywood-like" film. It was a gamble at the box office also because two weeks before Barot's *Don* Yash Chopra released *Trishul* (1978) which was raking in money at the box office. Around the time of its release, Barot, a newcomer at the time, faced competition from Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khiladi,* Raj Kapoor's *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* and Prakash Mehra's *Muqaddar Ka Sikandar.*

With no budget left for publicity, *Don* released with 120 prints on May 12, 1978 and was declared a flop.[28] Within a week though, word of mouth publicity of the film and a last minute addition to it in the form of the song '*Khaike paan Banaras wala...*' became a rage. The film ran for 50 weeks in all centres and for 75 weeks in Hyderabad.[29] *Don* was

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[26] The idea of doubling was a common trope in Bombay cinema. Films like *Do Kaliyan* (1968), *Ram aur Shyam* (1967), *Seeta aur Geeta* (1972), *Chalbaaz* (1989), *Anhonee* (1952) etc, use doubling as a trope. Besides bifurcating the moral universe within the narrative, or to show bonds of kinship, it also doubles the body of the star. See Neepa Majumdar "Doubling, Stardom, and Melodrama in Indian Cinema: The "Impossible" Role of Nargis" *Postscript*, 22.3 (Summer 2003): 89-103

[27] Javed Akhtar's in conversation with Prem Panicker and Raja Sen. October 19, 2006, See rediff.com; ; http://www.rediff.com/movies/2006/oct/17farhan.htm

[28] 'I will always be remembered for *Don*' interview with Barot, October 16, 2006, rediff.com; http://specials.rediff.com/movies/2006/oct/16sld1.htm

[29] Ibid

an accidental success for it was very unusual for a film based primarily on style, dialogues, songs and most of all on Bachchan's stardom. In a Hitchcockian poster of the original film, Amitabh Bachchan occupies the central position against a labyrinthine backdrop painted with yellow and orange. The poster splits half way in four ensnarling circles marked by a bullet clipboard with Bachchan trying to make an escape. On the extreme right corner and mid-right angle of the poster are Zeenat Aman and Pran respectively holding guns. The central theme of the poster underlines the packaging of thrill as the main selling point of the film[30].

The film was remade in a number of regional cinemas including – K.S.R Doss's *Yugandhar* (1979), a Tamil remake by R. Krishnamurthy named *Billa* (1980) and Sasikumar's Malayalam film, *Sobhraj* (1986). *Billa* marked the beginning of Rajnikant, a superstar who is revered as a deity in most regions of south India.[31] *Don* was a film that seemed to "reserve" iconic lead role for superstars. In a film industry where family empires rule, the remake usually works through logic of inheritance. It was this very logic that made writer-lyricist Javed Akhtar's son Farhan Akhtar decide to take on the task of adapting a film originally scripted by his father. In an interview, Farhan Akhtar said the film was a tribute, "not just to that film, but to that time, to the films Pa and Salim uncle (*Salim Khan,* who co-wrote *Don* with Javed Akhtar) and Mr. Bachchan made" (Akhtar

[30] See Ranjani Mazumdar's 'The Man Who Was Seen Too Much: Amitabh Bachchan on Film Poster' http://tasveergharindia.net/cmsdesk/essay/106/index.html

[31] The iconic song 'Khaike Paan Banaras Wala' acts as a visual and aural default in all these films. See the videos of the song from the films at
*Yugandhar*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ptvl_NM4IHQ&feature=related
*Billa*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaYZEk39v_E&feature=related

2005). This was a clear case of association, inheritance and nostalgia coming together and inheritance became central to the casting of *Don.*

On April 24, 2006, popular movie website rediff.com released the first look (poster) of Farhan Akhtar's *Don* (2006). Set against high rise buildings, at the centre of the poster was the half-illuminated front profile of India's leading superstar Shah Rukh Khan. Bathed in an electric mix of green and black, the new 'Don' appeared with the tagline- "The chase begins again". Shah Rukh Khan became the star who inherited the brand that Bachchan created. Even before the release of the film, new hierarchies developed beyond the customary circuits of box office returns and shaped star value. With reports of rivalry between Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan, the latter's image as the heir apparent to the superstardom of Bachchan got further intensified. It was the aura associated with Shah Rukh Khan, the star, that embodied the impulse behind the remake wherein, the title of the famous anti-hero was transferred from Hindi cinema's *Shehenshah,* Amitabh Bachchan to its *Baadshah*, Shah Rukh Khan[32].

A struggling actor who came to Bombay with the dream to rule the film industry, Shah Rukh Khan found a place for himself in the industry after a successful foray in the world of theatre and television. In director duo Abbas Mustan's *Baazigar* (1993), Yash Chopra's *Darr* (1993), and Rahul Rawail's *Anjaam* (1994), Khan became popular in the

[32] These are the titles that are used in popular media discourses related to the stars. The princely titles are borrowed from the famous titles of their films, Shehehshah (Tinnu Anand 1988) and Badshah (Abbas-Mustan 1999). Operating within the restricted flow of financial resources (privately financed) and investing heavily in the bonds of kinship, Bombay film industry has long defined its functioning within a system that can loosely be termed as family Empires. From studios like R.K. film studio to production houses like Yash Raj, to star sons and daughters, familial ties are an intricate part of the functioning of the Bombay film industry. Firmly working within such a hierarchal structure of operation, the defining fence of insider and outsider domains are clearly marked.

early 1990s through his portrayal of the "psychotic hero". In these films, he portrayed a sort of clinical detachment from the social world. He played the stalker and a killer given to schizophrenic obsessions. With Khan, the face of the Hindi film hero changed forever (Mazumdar 2001, Ganti 2004: 124), this new anti-hero of Bombay cinema could now "die in the film and lose the girl" (Chopra 2007: 128). It took less than half a decade for this new hero to rein the film industry. But his position as a superstar of got consolidated with films like *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* (Aditya Chopra: 1995), *Dil to Pagal Hai* (Yash Chopra: 1997) and *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (Johar: 1998). These films mobilised a global appeal and the figure of the NRI became a significant presence. Shah Rukh Khan became an embodiment of the aspirational dreams of the nation. In an interview to *Filmfare*, Khan asserted this shift in the perception of heroism and triumphantly declared, "In the 1970s, the hero was anti-establishment but I promise a better world...The yuppie doesn't bash a truck-full of *goondas*. He kills in the stock market" (Chopra 2007: 161).[33] In this statement, we see the historical shift ushered in by globalisation. The star becomes the embodiment of this transformation from a politically charged performance of anger to an urban consumerist iconography.[34]

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[33] This interview has been quoted in Anupama Chopra's *King of Bollywood: Shah Rukh Khan* and the seductive World of Indian Cinema, 2007: 161

[34] From selling biscuits to cars, soaps to cellular phone services, cola drink to men's fairness cream, Shah Rukh Khan emblematised the consumerist streak and purchasing power of the new middle class and held a promise of accessibility, comfort and modernisation.

Image 1-Rediff.com, First Look: SRK's Don, April 24, 2006

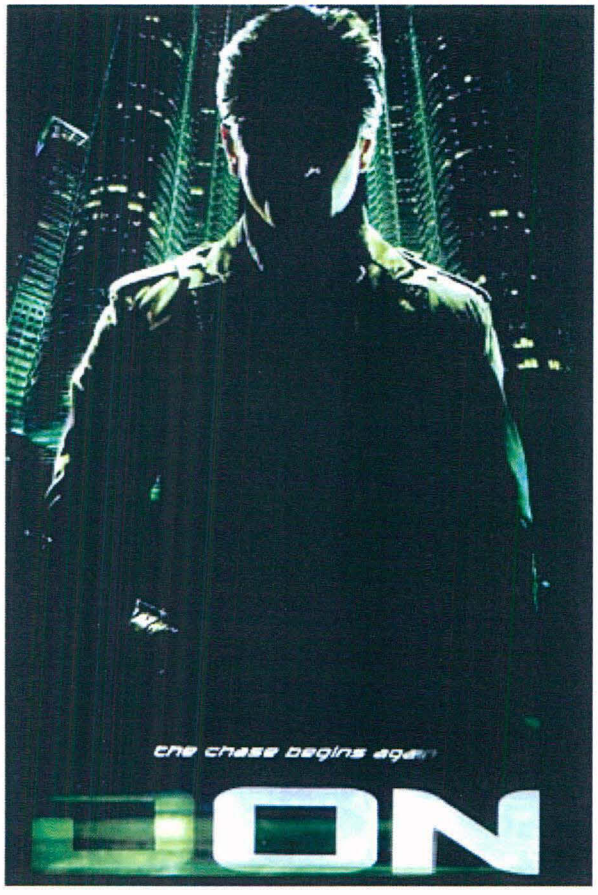


Image 2- Packaging the thrill in Amitabh; DVD Cover


Within minutes into Akhtar's *Don*, we see Khan in a chic white bathtub as he bathes while watching the cartoon series *Tom and Jerry*. As he merrily watches the chase between the cat and the mouse, the phone rings and he is informed about an ex-worker Ramesh (Diwakar Pundir) who has broken away from the "business" to marry his girlfriend, Kamini (Kareena Kapoor). In the next scene, we see Ramesh being murdered brutally by Don. In the contemporary avatar of Don, Shah Rukh Khan re-styled the character in tandem with the screen legacy associated with the 1990s psychotic hero along with the promise of luxury and style associated with the yuppie. It is through this

play of star persona(s) and through the film's ability to harness the power of technology that Akhtar gave an "international profile" to his film.

**The International Profile of Farhan Akhtar's *Don***

In his contemporary version, Akhtar locates Don in Malaysia and sets the narrative against the backdrop of mafia wars. Don is a drug smuggler and an international arms supplier. In Barot's *Don*, the opening credits roll over a tinted red screen and a medley of shots of fights and chases from the film. Placed against a hue of green and white, the opening credits of Akhtar's *Don* set the pace of the narration against a hyper-stylised panorama of the cityscape - the roads, trains, elevators, highways and columns of high-rise buildings. This change from the composite field of action in the original to a play with global urbanism in the remake sets the stage for a comparative story-telling through its visual design.

For instance, unlike his predecessor who occupied the space of the private in the form of obscure hotel rooms, barren landscapes (opening sequence of counterfeit deal) and his secured den, the new Don is mobile and occupies both public and private space. He inhabits night clubs, polo grounds and five star hotels with equal ease. The introduction scene of the old version stages the counterfeit deal in an isolated rugged landscape. Akhtar introduces his protagonist in a coffee house aided by a remixed version of the title song '*Main hoon Don...*' as the background score. Such contrasting and yet self-conscious detail in the visual and aural template evokes the phantom presence of the original in the fast paced, technological and modern *Don.* The choice of the city of Kuala Lumpur not only helps to eroticise the appeal of the film, but also locates the narrative

within a world that emblematises a global urbanity. The industrial metropolis becomes a landscape of techno-aesthetics[35]. It is this combination of architectural extravaganza, urbanity and speed that makes the new *Don* instrumental in articulating a globalised consumerist experience.

Akhtar expands on Barot's influences for the original—from the figure of James Bond to the contemporary action series *Mission Impossible* and *The Bourne Identity*. What changes in the new *Don* is a paradoxical marriage between a *desi* James bond, accessorised with designer clothes, cars, gadgets and girls and the impulse to remake the dominant traditions of the popular film. Gadgets in the film function as symbolic representations of this technological modernity. An extension of the visual ensemble of Don and the power he exudes with his gadgets comprising primarily of sundry explosives render him a quasi-super hero. Akhtar's vision of the futuristic aspect of the film was foregrounded in his use of hyperstylisation. In the car chase sequence for instance where Don is hunted by DCP D'Silva (Boman Irani), Akhtar uses split screens to convey the tempo and field of action.

In the original *Don*, action was used primarily to reveal suspects (senior intelligence officer Malik is revealed as the head of Don's gang), foiled kidnapping (of Jasjit's children) and to expose of the gang. The central force behind these revelations was Vijay's helpless quest to establish his real identity as the police and his fellow mobsters hunted for him. It was in Vijay that the moral compass of the film got fixed. In Akhtar's

[35] In her essay, 'City as Dreamland and Catastrophe' Susan Buck-Morss responded to the entry of new visual regimes in everyday life. She highlighted the polarities embedded in the city and engaged with an ongoing debate regarding the urban space as the loci of a "consumer playground". While Buck-Morss response to this consumerism came at a time when visual images changed the the perception of consumption, Akhtar creates a hyper- stylised and sanitized global urbanity in *Don*.

version, the affable Vijay was marginalised. This was highlighted in the promotional posters and trailers of the film. Akhtar deviated from the original at two crucial moments of his film. Right before the narrative breaks for intermission, D'Silva (Boman Irani) is revealed as the mastermind behind the plan to kill and take over Don's "business". However, it is at the climax of the film that overturns the entire premise of the plot and its moral centre. The audience is suddenly told that Vijay never got to participate in the swap with Don at all. Don was playing Vijay in order to buy his freedom and mobility. Here, Akhtar exploited the knowledge of the original to shockingly foreground the "non-role" of the street smart performer, Vijay.

Responding to this absence and twist in the film, Clare Wilkenson-Weber suggests that Vijay is not a desirable icon of consumption the way Don is. The publicity posters and trailers of the film were centred on the protagonist, Don. Dressed in black from head to toe with slick gadgets, he appeared as a brand.[36] Weber further notes how "having escaped the bonds of Bombay to immerse itself in more striking landscapes of wealth and privilege, the new *Don* proposes that Don himself has escaped the possibility of emulation" (Weber 2010: 137). The spaces of the mansion and that of a working class house cannot coincide even in the performative vocabulary of a narrative imperative (Vijay).

Preventing the unfolding of Vijay's tale of lost identity in the new version, Farhan Akhtar distanced himself from the 'twist' of the swap that lay at the core of the original script of *Don*. A week before *Don* hit theatres across India, Akhtar asserted that *Don* becomes "an

[36] Don is brand and quite literally so. Louise Philippe introduced the Don line of clothing before its release as a promotional event.

*entirely new film*" and by the time it ends. "...you realise...that your point of reference for Don, the character, is not going to be applicable to this Don, because this is a *different* character. He may say the same lines, but he is not the same Don...because they are two *different* movies that happen to begin with a common premise." [37] So, while privileging the character of Don over Vijay, Farhan Akhtar's *Don* re-works the binaries embedded within the values associated with good and evil, Akhtar invests heavily in Don's hyperbolic declaration in the original—"*Don ko pakarna mushkil hi nahin namumkin hai*" ("It's not merely difficult to catch Don, it's impossible"). By literalising this statement in the new version, Akhtar drew on the syntax of the original but reinvented the narrative in the remake. Furthur, he mobilised popular memory associated with the original dialogue track to build a narrative of defiance and innovation. This selective engagement with the basic premise of the original complicated the new *Don's* relationship to the original.

Within months of the release and success of its adaptation of Barot's *Don*, Akhtar announced its sequel, tentatively titled, *Don 2: The Chase Continues* (2011). In the sequel he transports the story of Don (now primarily resting on the character of the new Don of 2006 rather than the original script) to the ganglands of the European mafia. This raises serious questions about the relationship of the remake's sequel to the original. While *Don* (2006) reinvented the mise-en-scene of the original, its point of reference was the original script written by Salim-Javed. Farhan Akhtar, in a story to *Hindustan Times* declared that *Don 2* "was like starting with a clean slate. I had the opportunity to do

[37] Prem Panicker and Raja Sen , Interview Series, Part 2,'Farhan Akhtar Interview Farhan, his dad and the don', October 18,2006, Rediff.com

whatever I wanted to with those characters".[38] The forthcoming *Don* unlocks the possibility of converting the remake into a franchise. In Bombay, films hardly ever had sequels with the exception of *Tarzan* (Subhash: 1986) and *Nagina* (Malhotra: 1986). Sequels in the recent past have been successful – *Dhoom* (Gadhvi: 2004, 2006), and *Golmaal* (Shetty: 2006, 2008). Audiences are now waiting for the sequels of *Dabangg* (Kashyap: 2010), *Krish* (Roshan: 2006), *Wanted* (Prabhudeva: 2008) and *Race* (Abbas-Mustan: 2008). The idea of the franchise is now being seen by some as a way of reducing the risk involved in big budget productions (Ghosh 2011). Santosh Desai, an advertising professional, points out that "in the age of information overload, familiar signposts are reassuring and sequels offer the comfort of the predictable. You have an idea (of) what you are going to see" (Ghosh 2011) But what happens when the proverbial is de-familiarised? By conflating the categories of the remake and the sequel, Akhtar expanded the grammatical ontology of both. Rick Altman related the sequel to "repeatable titles" (like the *Godfather* Series (1972-1993) and *StarTrek*) as well as to "propriety characters" (James Bond, Rambo, Indiana Jones) which balance novelty and familiarity in repetition (Altman 1999). What the new *Don* series destabilises is the chronological order of narration as well as the notion of the original.[39]

Drawing on the hierarchal ties of stardom and re-working the formula of the "masala" blockbuster, Akhtar's *Don* Series showcases the ambiguous relationship between the *legacy* of the original and its remake. Akhtar's *Don* is supposed to change the defining

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[38] Shweta Mehta, '*Don 2* has nothing to do with original', May 29, 2011 Hindustan Times, Mumbai, See http://www.hindustantimes.com/Don-2-has-nothing-to-do-with-original/Article1-703312.aspx

[39] Film sequels by definition constitute a "chronological extension of a ...*precursor* narrative that was *originally* presented as closed and complete in itself" (Budra and schellenberg 1998: 7, 8) (my emphasis).

principles of the remake. Issues related to creative license and copyright will now enter a new phase. I look back now at the film where this story of the popular remake began.

## Reconstructing Narrative Codes: The Visual Economy in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Devdas*

A dazzling horse drawn carriage stops at the red carpet as film stars Shah Rukh Khan and Aishwarya Rai step out to celebrate the premiere of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's extravagant saga of love: *Devdas* (2002) at the 55th Festival de Cannes in May 2002. The first Indian film to be invited in the out-of-competition category of the festival, Bhansali's *Devdas* embodied the distinctive features of popular Hindi cinema – melodrama, lavish production values, emphasis upon stars and spectacle (Ganti 2004: 3). Heralded at the festival as the epitome of "Bollywood's song and dance extravaganza"[40], the elaborate canvas of the film reinvented Indian cinema's proverbial tragic hero. As the most enduring character on Indian screen, the cinematic profile of Devdas spans over thirteen films in over eight decades. The first was produced in 1928 by the Eastern Film Syndicate as a silent film (dir, Naresh Chandra Mitra). The last and most recent version was Anurag Kashyap's reinterpretation of the Devdas myth in his *Dev D* (2009).

The story of Devdas has its genesis in Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's 1917 novella by the same name. It is a tragic love story between a rich landlord's son Devdas Mukherjee and his doomed love affair with his childhood sweetheart and neighbour, Parvati who

[40] Prior to *Devdas*, Indian Cinema's association with the festival was restricted to 'stark tales of poverty, feudal oppression and unemployment'in works of directors like Raj Kapoor, Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal and Satyajit Ray. The International media focussed on this shift in the selection of *Devdas*. See Bollywood Fever Grips Cannes' CBS News, Febuary 11, 2009; http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/05/23/entertainment/cannes/main509992.shtml

belongs to a different caste and class. A city educated Devdas returns to his village, Taj Sonapur but is unable to break out of societal barriers of caste and class. Under pressure from his father, Devdas hastily concludes his romance with Paro. A jilted Parvati gives into parental pressure and marries a rich zamindar (Bhuvan). Tormented by Parvati's marriage, Devdas moves to the city of Calcutta and soon becomes an alcoholic. It is in this section of the novella that Sarat Chandra introduces Chandramukhi, the golden hearted courtesan who falls in love with Devdas. Devdas takes a train journey across the nation, only to land at Paro's doorstep to breathe his last

Devdas metaphorically depicted a newly independent India at the crossroads of tradition and modernity. The choice between rural and urban became central to the dislocation of old feudal values. The city came to represent the modern and all that was traditional as the "other". In the novel, the city is dark, decadent and the tragic while the village becomes a space that suppresses individualism. These modernist contradictions further find expression in Devdas's melodramatic tenor which reveals the ambivalences resulting in this collapse of the old world order and struggle of the new to usher in. The film adaptations of *Devdas*, like Chattopadhyay's novel, explored these conflicts and contradictions in Devdas and made him into a "national hero" (Vasudevan 1989). The novel was a moderate success during its time and it was cinema that "elevated the fictional narrative from melodrama to myth" [41](Chopra 2007:198).

[41] Sarat Chandra's novella, though a literary success has enjoyed a great part of its enduring success to its rendition in cinema. Corey K. Creekmur suggests that much like Indian epics such as Mahabharata, " No Indian ever sees *Devdas* for the first time" (173). She goes on to suggest that in the process of transmission in popular culture, ' Devdas has been made the vehicle of a continuous process of collective " remembering, repeating and working through"" (175) and yet repetition and variation is how the myth has circulated. (Creekmer 2007 ) Besides the three remakes (Roy, Bhansali and Kashyap), the story has

Bombay Cinema's *successful* foray into the adaptation of Chattopadhyay's novella began in the year 1935 when director P.C. Barua made *Devdas* with K.L. Saigal as the lead figure. In her study of the travels of *Devdas* within Bombay cinema, Madhuja Mukherjee shows how Barua's *Devdas* marked a point of departure from the novella. For Mukherjee, it was the narrative style of Barua's film that sets the stage for the construction of a cinematic idiom that grows through other Devdasses (Mukherjee 2009). Citing K.A. Abbas's comment in *FilmIndia,* June 1940, Mukherjee argued that Paro as a *pujarin* gets incorporated in the visual vocabulary of the Devdas films. Abbas wrote-

> Out of the very lens of the camera walked away the slender figure of a woman, going further and further, her back turned to the audience, a puja thali in her hand. A beautiful figure—and mysterious. The audience kept guessing; who is she and why? And where is she going? ....[42]

Barua thus gave visual language and iconography to the characters from Chattopadhyay's novella which became the reference point for the many adaptations that followed.[43] But it was probably in Bimal Roy's Devdas (1945) that the story found its most popular form. Roy's *Devdas* (1955) emerged in a period of intense socio-political turbulence.

As a product of a displaced feudal set-up and decadent urban life, Devdas's tragedy in Roy's film stemmed from a larger historical decline of the older order. The crisis lay in

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inspired a number of films including Guru Dutt's *Pyaasa* (1957), Raj Kapoor's *Aah*(1953) and Prakash Mehra's *Muquaddar ka Sikander* (1978)

[42] K.A. Abbas, FilmIndia 1940 as cited in Madhuja Mukherjee: 2009

.[43] Writing for Sixth the annual publication of *International film festival of India*, Rita Ray points out that the phenomenal success of Barua's Devdas was as much due to his higher artistic values in 'lighting and natural dialogue' as the fact that it fitted into 'the social mores of a slightly puritanical and frustrated pre-war society' (Ray 1977)

the choice between the village and the city, tradition and modernity, Paro and Chandramukhi, and yet the forced choice does not allow for any closure or reconciliation. Like in the novel, Devdas is viewed as a victim of the norms of a rigid society, embroiled in claustrophobic class relations. Melodrama provided this conflict a dynamic mise-en-scene to play out the experience of pathos and mourning.[44] With *Devdas*, yesteryear star, Dilip Kumar's portrayal of the tragic character became enthroned to the title of "tragedy king" for a performance that is still remembered by many. Roy immortalised the frames and Dilip Kumar commemorated the character.

Forty seven years after an entire "generation wept over *Devdas*"[45], filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali cast Hindi cinema's superstar Shah Rukh Khan to remake *Devdas* in the year 2002. At a news conference held during the Cannes festival, Shah Rukh Khan said that remaking *Devdas* was like "trying to remake *The Sound of Music*. As far as an Indian audience and Indian cinema is concerned, you are treading on real thin ice" (Mckay 2002). Made with a huge budget of over Rs. 50 crores, Bhansali's *Devdas* became the most expensive film in the history of the Bombay film industry. By "modernising" the visual and emotional tenor of the story from the social-romanticism of Bimal Roy's *Devdas* to almost an epic historical form, Bhansali created an operatic spectacle with monumental set designs, costumes and jewellery. This was combined with Shah Rukh Khan's stardom combined with two major female stars playing Chandramukhi (Madhuri Dxit) and Paro (Aishwarya Rai).

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[44] Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989, p. 32 as quoted in Bhaskar: 2009

[45] Eric Barnow and S. Krishnaswamy observe in their book on *Indian Cinema* "And virtually a generation wept over Devdas".

Madhuri Dixit rose to stardom in the early 1990s. Her rise went hand in hand with her 'dance numbers' in films like *Tezaab* (Chandra: 1988), *Beta* (Kumar: 1992) and *Khalnayak* (Ghai: 1993). She has been referred to as the first and only female superstar of Bombay cinema, who ruled the industry for more than a decade.[46]. Aishwarya Rai, a former Miss World and also a trained classical dancer and made her mark with Bhansali's previous film *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* (1999). Rai is also often referred to as a global icon of Indian cinema (Osuri 2008).[47] Shah Rukh Khan became a vehicle for both *Don* and *Devdas* and the perfect endorsement for a reinvention of the cultic space associated with the popular blockbuster film. In conflating the aura of two aspects of mass culture - the reified blockbuster film and the figure of the star, Bhansali and Akhtar invested primarily in Khan's stardom. He in return displayed his "protean ability...to be interchangeable with Bollywood's multitude of stars, and thus, to be in some sense the 'star of stars'"(Chopra 2007: 129). In casting Khan as 'Don' and 'Devdas' Akhtar and Bhansali successfully portrayed him as the ultimate heir of Bombay Cinema.

Star discourses were mobilised in several sequences of the film. In the dance sequence, '*Dola re*' Bhansali brought Madhuri Dixit and Aishwarya Rai together to *perform* a song. This apparently radical move on part of Bhansali to bring together the *tawaif* (courtesan) and the *Thakurain* (upper class zamindars) however re-affirms the hierarchal relation that

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[46] Anupama Chopra's 1993 article in *India Today*, 'The Madhuri Magic' covered her rise to stardom in the early 90s. Here, her status within the industry is tapped by citing her record of one hit per year since 1988. The year following the article, Madhuri gave the most successful hit of her career in Sooraj Bharjatya's *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun* (1994). She has been nominted for 13 filmfare awards and holds the title of PadmaShri, India's fourth highest civilian award for her contribution to Indian cinema (2008). (Chopra 2011)

[47] Aishwarya Rai's iconic rise in world media primarily rests on her appearances in several cosmetic endorsements, cross-over films like *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) and *Mistress of Spices* (2005) and several other red carpet events. She also has been a constant presence in various film festivals circuits, particularly The Cannes Film Festival.

these women share with Devdas in invoking him during the Durga Puja celebrations. In a scene preceding the song, a confrontation takes place between the two objects of Devdas's affection; Paro visits Chandramukhi to look for Devdas. Paro, now a woman of status reminds Chandramukhi "*Tawaifon ki kismet mein shohar nahin hua karte*" (Courtesans are not destined to have husbands), to which the lovelorn Chandramukhi responds- "*Tawaifon ki to takdir hi nahin hoti Thakurain*" (Courtesans don't even have destiny!)

As the scene proceeds, Paro looks for Devdas in Chandramukhi's palatial *kotha* and finds a statue of the Hindu god, Krishna in her room. Devdas is the lord Chandramukhi places in her room. Bhansali constantly evokes figures from Hindu Mythology, particularly the legend of Meera Bai's love for Krishna, to sanctify the love that the two women share with Devdas.

Unlike the figure of the Vaishnav mendicants in Roy's film, in Bhansali's version the two women are adept at verbalising their love during the Durga Puja celebrations by performing a well choreographed dance to '*Dola Re..*' The women in the song, dressed in designer saris, perform at the foyer of Parvati's mansion singing the glory of their mutual love. Through this performance in the domestic space of a *kothi*, Chandramukhi, the "other" woman verbalises her love in a space that is traditionally denied to her. But soon the courtesan is confronted by Paro's son-in-law, Kalibabu and her family. Chandramukhi questions the value of Kalibabu and reminds him of the feudal link between the courtesans and Zamindars. Despite opening a space of defiance for Chandramukhi, Bhansali reverts back to melodrama and both Paro and Chandramukhi return to their delegated social spaces as the narrative carries on. Both the women, like in

the novel and in the earlier films continue to occupy "conjugal presence that is mostly passive and ornamental" (Nandy 1995: 70).

Reacting strongly to such gross deviations and dissolution of the cultural nuances of Bengali culture, noted film director Ritoparno Ghosh criticised the dance sequence as a preposterous insertion into the story "only to make Madhuri and Aishwarya dance"[48](Ghosh 2002).The commercial imperatives of these historical deviations can be seen in producer Bharat Shah's triumphant declaration- '*Public wo song dekhne baar baar jayegi*" (People will go and see the film over and over again just to see this song).[49] The song did indeed become the highlight of the film promotions.

Opening on a high note, Bhansali's *Devdas* introduces an aspirational dreamscape that turns narration into a visual spectacle. The crisis of contradictions embodied in Devdas and the distinctions of class, caste, social standing, country and the city break through the overwhelming grandeur of the mise-en-scene. Ashis Nandy places the tragedy of Devdas as a representation of the "anguish of the first generation of a rural elite entering the pre-war colonial city. His (Devdas's) self-destruction bears the imprint of both his ambivalent defiance of the village-to which he tries to return before his death in one last, doomed effort to reconnect to a lost past and escape anonymous death in a soulless city- and his rejection of the urbane charms of a seductive new lifestyle" (Nandy 1995: 52-53). These sites of Devdas's dislocation in Bhansali's film are overwhelmed by the grand sets which

[48] Ghosh observed, "You just can't make a thakurian (upper-class Bengali woman) dance in Durga puja." He continued, "In no historical account of Bengali culture can such liberties be corroborated. Sanjay could've done it in a dream sequence. All he wanted was to make Madhuri and Aishwarya dance."
Subhash K.Jha, 'Devdas a hit, but literary debate rages' The Times of India, August 6, 2002; http://www.cscsarchive.org:8081/MediaArchive/art.nsf/%28docid%29/D7DB6F40F1F9D5AEE5256C1500223BB6

[49] The making of Devdas, DVD extra in Devdas, Eros International Pvt. Lmt.

obliterate all distinctions between class (which was the central conflict in the novel and Roy's film) and socially marked spaces of the streets, *kothas*, and *kothis*. The massive sets of two feudal family homes - Devdas and Paro - stand adjacent to one another in Bhansali's version. Ritopurno Ghosh criticised this spatial imagination since the country/city narrative got lost in this. By privileging the visual in narration, Bhansali's *Devdas* creates two different orders of the story. In mobilising the visual opulence of space, the director collapses the social markers of interior/exterior, city and country and the spaces of legitimacy and illegitimacy. What we see on screen is a seamless unfolding of visual opulence and 'monumental sets'. All the spaces together destroy the traditional cultural codes of narration. Corey Creekmur suggests that with Bhansali's *Devdas*, the contradictions of modernity are 'artificially overstated'[50]. This according to Creekmur, exoticises the cinematic currency of the Devdas phenomenon.

In this narration, Bhansali exteriorises the melodrama of the original and transports it to the ocular terrain of the film. Towards the end, Devdas returns to meet Paro one last time. Through circular tracking, the camera captures the mansion and we see Paro rush out to get a glimpse of Devdas. The Official website of *Devdas* describes the set of Zamindar Bhuwan's haveli, where Paro lives, as

> "huge with long corridors. So huge that when she wants to meet a dying Devdas at the end, she has to run and run. One sees her becoming smaller and smaller and finally get hidden within the length the mansion. She never makes it to see Devdas and thus came out the pathos. The house also had painted walls with stand-still figures. Thus telling the

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[50] Corey K. Creekmur, 'The Devdas phenomenon' at http://www.uiowa.edu/~incinema/DEVDAS.html

story of Paro who without Devdas was like the paintings. Viewed as having life, yet quite lifeless." [51]

Bhansali inserts himself into the Devdas metatext and myth while sign posting his version with *spectacle as narration.* It's not the change in the story as much as the impetus laid on the costumes and the sets of the film that allowed for a re-imagining of the tale through sheer opulence. The film became an ode to the grandiose of the tale and its symbolic power. The panoramic vision of Bhansali's *Devdas* used the trope of excess, deliberately drawing our attention to the remake as "remake". Bhansali's Devdas invested both in the original narrative and the legacy of the tragic figure. His departures remained within the boundaries set forth by the original myth and archetype. The crisis of masculinity is staged, and tragedy is given a force in keeping with the mythical imagination of the Devdas figure. Seven years later, we see what is perhaps the most radical attempt at dismantling this powerful myth.

## Excavating the urban nether land: *Dev D* as the counter Remake

How do we read Anurag Kashyap's *Dev D* (2009), a "story of outcasts", a film whose primary objective was to destroy the power of the eternally, tragic Devdas.[52] Anurag Kashyap first became known through his writing (*Satya*) and later forayed into filmmaking. A spate of critically acclaimed films like *Black Friday* (2004), *Gulaal*

[51] Official site of Hindi Film Devdas at http://devdas.indiatimes.com/sets.htm

[52] Kashyap, Anurag, Passion for Cinema, Blog titled 'Genesis 2: Happy Accidents' December 30, 2008 at 10:20 am

(2009) and *No Smoking* (2007) followed. But despite being established as a "master of modern cinema", Kashyap continued to be a peripheral player in the domain of mainstream Bombay cinema.[53] None of his films had easy releases—his directorial debut film, *Paanch* (2003) after a difficult negotiation with the censor board was finally cleared with cuts only to get mired in disputes between the producer and distributors. The film was never released.[54] His next, *Black Friday* (2005), an investigative docu-drama based on the Mumbai terrorist blasts of 1993 again did not get a censor clearance till 2007 and with the commercial failure of *No Smoking* (2007), Kashyap's survival in the industry became difficult. Despite these failures, Kashyap gained critical appreciation for his unconventional subjects and experimental techniques of filmmaking.[55] His films traveled through numerous film festival circuits to establish him as an ace filmmaker. Given this profile of , it was surprising that Kashyap chose Devdas as the theme of his film.

*Dev D* narrates the coming of age story of Davinder Singh Dillon (Dev) played by actor Abhay Deol. In the film, a London returned Dev visits his village in Punjab after his childhood sweetheart Parminder (Paro) emails her nude pictures to him. Unable to adequately respond to Paro's sexual assertiveness, Dev spurns her and moves to the city of Delhi. Swamped by the urban rhythms of the city, Dev indulges in alcohol and drugs.

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[53] In ScreenIndia article titled'The old in the New' (August 29, 2009), directors Vishal Bhardwaj, Dibakar Banerjee and Anurag Kashyap are labeled as the frontrunners of a new wave of filmmakers reshaping popular Hindi cinema, merging tribute with critique.

[54] Mazumdar 2007: 198

Also See, Pankaj Kapoor, 'Total Knockout: A censor Punch for Paanch', August 10, 2001, The times of India. See details of the case and objections to the film in the article at http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2001-08-10/delhi/27232804_1_board-of-film-certification-hindi-film-abhyankar

[55] Mazumdar: 2010

Here he meets Lenny, a half Indian- half French sex worker who turns to commercial sex after a scandalous MMS incident upturns her life. In the remake of *Devdas*, Kashyap urbanises the figure and relocates him in contemporary India.

*Dev D* was divided into three chapters, each narrating the story of Paro, Chanda and Dev. In doing this, Kashyap placed agency in hands of the individuals. Interestingly, parental authority was dispensed with in the film to rescue the dominant narrative of a love triangle. Kashyap's Paro is rustic, a woman of strong earthy sexuality. In a daring portrayal of her unabashed sexuality, Paro is shown carrying a folded mattress on her bicycle to the fields so she can have sex with Dev. She is an active agent who chooses to move on and marry another man. Lenny's journey is tracked spatially as we move from her elite abode in central Delhi to the lonely landscape of Canada (after the leak) and back to Paharganj all with captured by a hand held camera. The set design of her boudoir evokes decadence, deviance and a strange sense of freedom. It is here that Lenny is recast as Chandamukhi. Societal restrictions are surrendered in order to narrate "the journey about the times we live in" (Kashyap 2009). Kashyap used flashbacks to narrate back stories for each of the characters. The subversion of popular idioms thus became the conduit to narrate tales of modern India.

*Dev D* drew on circulating stories of MMS leaks as in the case of the school girl who was caught on camera having sex. These images circulated through the internet causing distress to the girl. In *Dev D*, Chandramukhi is shown to become a sex worker after she is humiliated by the internet leak. Other incidents like the death of seven people because of a rich boy's drunken driving are also referenced in the narrative - Dev runs over pedestrians in a state of intoxication. In an interview with Shradha Sukumaram of

*Midday*, Kashyap defined the film as a "contemporary updated version of today and how Devdas is applicable to the youth of today, how youth looks at relationships, love, and the real things in an age of communication"[56] The multiplex success of the film made it a metropolitan hit.[57]

The first theatrical trailer of *Dev D* provided insightful pointers to the method that Kashyap employed to mark his intervention in the Devdas myth.. The trailer introduced Dev through a scene from the film where he has a verbal argument with his lover (who is she?) in a local bus. The running text commentary says - "All that Dev ever wanted was love." As the scene returns to interrupt the text, the woman jolts the audience out of its complacent knowledge of the idiom of Devdas and by extension the limits of popular Hindi cinema. She says all he 'ever wants is to fuck'. The running commentary returns to state that "the fuck up is that he has everything but love". A celebratory aural track explodes and Kashyap formally introduces his cocaine snorting 'hero', Paro and Chanda. The trailer ends teasingly with the caveat "This season try not falling in love". Integrating newspaper headlines with the visual sprawl of urban dystopia, *Dev D* subverted the templates of sex, sexuality, agency and desire, placing the narrative in the midst of a transforming youth culture.

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[56] January 24, 2009, Interview available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxRG2fzy3Cs

[57] The growth of the multiplexes in the late 1990s is intricately related to the rising consuming power of the metropolis. The extension of multiple screen theatre into a gamut of leisure activities like games, shopping and food etcetra accommodates the mainstream and fringe cinema. (For more, see Aparna Sharma's 'India's experience with the multiplex, May 2003, seminar 525 and Ranjani Mazumdar's "Friction, Collision and the Grotesque: The Dystopic Fragments Of Bombay Cinema', 2010 in Noir Urbanism: Dystopic images of the Modern City, Gyan Prakash)


Publicity poster of Dev D [58]

Kashyap's Dev is not a conventional lover. In fact, in Kashyap's words Dev "does not know who he is and therefore his definition of love is very concocted, very confused.' [59] Kashyap's first step to counter the Devdas myth was to cast not a megastar but Abhay Deol, someone who belonged to a different kind of stardom. Deol belongs to a family of film stars but his choice of unconventional roles in films like Sanjay M. Khanduri's *Ek Chalis Ki Last Local* (2007), Navdeep Singh's *Manorama Six Feet Under* (2007) and Dibakar Banerjee's *Oye Lucky Lucky Oye*!(2008) had already made him the poster boy of independent cinema.[60] Deol as a rebel actor coming from a conventional family with connections in mainstream cinema embodied Kashyap's vision for the film. In an article

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[58] Poster Design by MarchingAnts Advertising Pvt. Lmt., See http://impawards.com/intl/india/2009/dev_d_ver3.html

[59] Anurag Kashyap on *DevD* in DVD extra of the film, 'The making of DevD'

[60] Anuradha Sengupta Interview with Abhay Deol in CNBC TV18s, 'Abhay Deol: Independent cinema movement's mascot' See Interview at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prFFhRXM_f4 , *www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSjd2U3Bj9g*

in *Screen India*, titled 'Abhay Deol is a Braveheart', the actor was praised for playing Devdas as an "adjective and not as a romantic hero." [61] This article emphasised how Deol performed the flaws of the archetypal Devdas. In another review of the film, Mayank Shekhar of *The Mumbai Mirror* said, "every kind of cinema in the world needs a movie star to headline it...At this point, Abhay's the man!"[62] In *Dev D* then Kashyap created not just a "counter" remake but also an alternative system of stardom.

The narrative of the film is structured to mock Dev as he moves from self-pity to self-discovery. As Dev moves from Punjab to the city-Delhi, the pace of the film suddenly picks up. We are introduced to Delhi by night, infused with neon lights; Paharganj in *Dev D* is a heady underworld of alcohol, drugs and cheap hotels. Kashyap captured Paharganj's gritty dark alleys with a wide angle lens and a special S1-2K camera which allowed him to shoot up to 11 frames per second. The technique enabled the camera to adventurously introduce spectators to subconscious imagery and a kinetic urbanscape. Shots taken with a fish eye lens and the trippy movement of the frame accentuated a densely textured urban form seen through Dev's drunken eyes. For instance, the song 'Pardesi...' moved Dev from the dislocated space of the streets to the subterranean world of abstract forms and night joints. The song track is fused with the films' stylized production design to create a mise-en-scene replete with graffiti, multi-coloured lighting and a decadent ambience. Through such foregrounding of subterranean currents, Kashyap stages the changing nature of contemporary youth culture.

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[61] Harneet Singh, Aticle titled ' Abhay Deol is a Braveheart' , Febuary 6, 2009, Screen india

[62] Mayank Shekhar, Posted On Saturday, February 07, 2009 at 02:24:19 AM; http://www.mumbaimirror.com/article/30/20090207200902070224l976317f276ed/Do-pass-this-joint?pageno=1

Anurag Kashyap was aware of the fact that Devdas was not just a novel, "it is an adjective...that is almost synonymous with love"[63]. And yet he countered the very trope of this love (an intrinsic "ingredient" of the great Indian "masala" cinema) in order to redefine not just *Devdas*, the cinematic text, but a whole body of film practice built around the figure. Kashyap refers to Bhansali's *Devdas* through sequences of Madhuri performing the Mujra playing on television at Lenny's boudoir. He also places a poster of Bhansali's film, showing Shah Rukh Khan lighting a cigarette, outside a neon lit underground bar in Paharganj. Kashyap inserted the idioms of the blockbuster film to constantly distinguish his own art. By calling attention to Bhansali's remake, *Dev D* consciously constructed itself as a counter remake. *Dev D* was never just a remake of the novel; it was a film that relied on knowledge of Bhansali's *Devdas* annotating this in the narration.

In the conventionally tragic moment of Paro's wedding for instance, Kashyap used an Elvis Presley styled group of wedding band artists known as Patna ke Presley singing '*emotional atyachar*' with Paro dancing away and Dev drowned in vodka. This song which became a highlight of the film, deflated the usual tropes of tragic love. Through *Dev D* Kashyap exploded the canon, recovering its suppressed moments and in the process rewriting Bombay film history. Kashyap shifted the focus of his narrative from traditional debates between the city and the country to the various currents of within the contemporary city. This shifting spatio-cultural ethos portrayed in the film becomes a potent metaphor for the breakdown of old parochial structures within the industry.

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[63] Kashyap, Anurag, quoted in Screen, in an article titled 'Contemporary Devdas Is Here', Jan 01, 2009,1239 hrs ISD

## *Ram Gopal Varma Ki Aag*: Embers of a 'classic' burnt?

I began my discussion of the popular remake with the blockbuster film – a form that inspires reinterpretation through discourses of stardom and production design In the course of the chapter I have looked at different forms - the movement towards a franchise in the case of *Don,* the panoramic celebration of the Devdas myth in Bhansali's *Devdas* and the urban rhythms deployed by Anurag Kashyap in his counter remake, *Dev D.* In this last section of the chapter I move to a remake that was unanimously rejected by both audiences and critics as a hubristic attempt to desecrate the original. This is Ram Gopal Varma's *Ram Gopal Varma Ki Aag*, a remake of the blockbuster original *Sholay* (Ramesh Sippy: 1975).

Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay*, a "Curry"-Western-meets-dacoit-drama set a box office milestone and went on to define one of the key "ingredients" of filmmaking in Bombay, the "masala" blockbuster film. With multiple subplots, *Sholay* embodied in its multi-genre, multi-starrer form, a successful marrying of the theme of revenge in globally circulating genres like the Spaghetti Western with the formulaic conventions of 1970s film practice (Gopalan 2003). In the film, Thakur Baldev Singh (Sanjeev Kumar), an ex-cop hires two outlaws, Jai (Amitabh Bachchan) and Veeru (Dharmendra) to hunt the sinister dacoit Gabbar Singh (Amjad Khan) to avenge the brutal massacre of his family. Shot extensively in the rugged terrain of the village of Ramanagaran, *Sholay* became one of the most important reference points in Bombay film history. The film was particularly novel in its packaging of actions scenes, comedy, romance, revenge and most importantly for producing legendary characters.

From the inimitable friendship between the two affable outlaws, Jai and Veeru, to the iconic roar of the fiercely dangerous dacoit Gabbar Singh, to the peripheral characters like the parodic Hitler-like Jailer and Soorma Bhopali, the one dialogue wonder, Sambha, and the mule, Dhanno; the film surpassed its blockbuster status and became an indispensable part of popular culture. The rejection of the project reflected the complexities involved in remaking a film that continues to embody a lived materiality within popular culture.[64] From secondary industries to merchandise to the space of jokes, *Sholay* has straddled between its mythical status on the one hand and its ability to render itself in the domain of parody on the other. Such is the status of the film that according to director Shekhar Kapoor, "Indian film industry can be divided into *Sholay* BC and Sholay AD" (Chopra 2000 ).

When the film first released in Bombay's Minerva theatre back in 1975, it was declared a flop. [65] But soon the dialogues of the film and the sinister Gabbar Singh gained popularity through oral circulation. Within a month of its release *Sholay's* music company, Polydor released a 58 minutes recording of selected dialogues. It went on to become the first such platinum disc in the history of the Indian gramophone record industry. Anupama Chopra in her book *Sholay: The Making of a Classic* has emphasised the iconic status of *Sholay* and its cult dialogues. "By now watching *Sholay* in the theatre had become like a karaoke experience. The entire audience would be mouthing the dialogues with the characters.

[64] Developed by Amritara Hotels & Resorts, a 6.6 acres theme resort called Ramgarh Resort and Spa is being built at Ramnagaram, the site where more than thirty five years back, Ramesh Sippy's cult film *Sholay* was shot. Armed with a group of character doubles, junior artists and the costumes and decor of the original, the tourist spot promises a nostalgic journey of the cult film.

[65] Chopra: 2000

Some had even memorised the sound effect, down to the last flipped coin" (Chopra 2000 :172).

In a film that boasted of an inimitable star cast of Amitabh Bachchan, Jaya Bhaduri, Dharmendra, Hema Malini and Sanjeev Kumar, the most iconic character of the film turned out to be a new comer, Amjad Khan. As a tobacco-chewing rugged dacoit with a menacing laughter, Gabbar Singh has had an enduring presence in popular memory. Amjad Khan as Gabbar Singh went on to become Bombay Cinema's first advertising icon.[66] New posters featuring him were released testifying to his immense popularity. *Sholay* went on to become the highest grossing film of all time.[67] When twenty nine years after its release, *Sholay's* producers decided to re-release the film in a digitally re-mastered form, the film opened to full houses again. Sushil Mehra, the owner of the renowned Minerva theatre witnessed the same frenzy that he had seen 29 years ago. Talking to Zubair Ahmad of BBC News, Mehra asserted "There will never be another Sholay. Not in this life" (Ahmad 2004). So when film director Ram Gopal Varma announced his decision to remake the film, sceptics were fast to warn him that any attempt to reinterpret this cinematic classic would be a mistake.

A clever marketing strategy was developed through the incongruous casting of Amitabh Bachchan. The actor who has enthralled generations with his sardonic and yet touching performance of Jai, was recast in the role of the inimitable Gabbar Singh. Bachchan's

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[66] Amjad Khan clinched a deal with Parle G buiscuits that re-enacted and parodied his famous introduction scene from *Sholay*. The sales doubled. Anupama Chopra, page 2, page 175-76

[67] *Sholay* went on to become the highest grossing film of all time with an estimated inflation adjusted net worth speculated from 236.45 crores [67]to a whopping Rs 813 crores. See Box office results biggest grosser of all time, http://www.ibosnetwork.com/asp/actualalltime.asp, estimates the cost to be Rs 813,66,16,960; inflation adjusted per available ticket price data post 2008

stardom was used for the film's promotion. For instance, the pre-release film poster presented Bachchan sitting on a couch with his cowboy boots. In line with Varma's profile as a director of gangster films like *Satya* (1998) and *Company* (2002), Bachchan was relocated in the ruined space of an underground den. The outline of the couch was bathed in white light and right on top was the declaration - 'The return of Indian Cinema's greatest villain'. The promotional rested on the incongruous re-casting of Bachchan as Babban who Varma claimed was Gabbar's alter-ego. In the years following the release of *Sholay*, Gabbar had become a legend. The Google engine throws up one lakh web pages when the key phrase, 'Gabbar dialogues' is typed. In *Aag*, Varma portrayed Gabbar as a stylised and fantasy oriented clone of the original Gabbar.[68] In fusing Amitabh Bachchan's stardom with the legendary figure of Gabbar Singh, *Aag* complicated the relationship between the screen persona and the star.

Urmila Matondkar was chosen to perform the number Helen's iconic song in the original, '*Mehbooba*'. [69]Here however, the original was punctuated to re-iterate Bachchan's star persona. Towards the end of the song, the lyrics give way to Babban who mouths a fusion of famous dialogues from *Kabhi Kabhi* (1976) to Gabbar's famed dialogues from *Sholay* saying '*Kabhi kabhi mere dil mein khayal aata hai...ki tera kya hoga re mehbooba*'[70] In

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[68] In his blog, Varma describes his exchange with the designer of Aag and the look of the character of Gabbar in particular. Refer: http://rgvzoomin.com/2008/06/21/making-of-aag/

[69] Urmila Matondkar and Ram Gopal Varma have worked in a number of projects like *Rangeela* (1995), *Daud* (1997) *Satya* (1997), *Mast* (1998)*Jungle* (1999), *Kaun* (1999)and *Bhoot* (2002)

[70] The first half of the words of the song refer to Yash Chopra's Kabhi Kabhi (1976) where Bachchan played a poet, Amit Malhotra. The lines are a part of the title song and poem written by him. The second half refers to Gabbar's classic dialogue from the original where after killing two of his men, Gabbar sadistically asks the third one- Tera Kya Hoga re Kaalia? (So what do you think will become of you kaalia?)

Babban, Varma created his own Frankenstenian monster and named the project Ram *Gopal Varma ke Sholay.*

The Sippys filed a case of copyright infringement against the director and the film was finally released as *Ram Gopal Varma ki Aag.* The change in title and names however did not change the disastrous reception of the film at the box office which suffered primarily due to its poor production values, casting of newcomers in the prime roles of Jai and Basanti, and an average musical score. Many accused the filmmaker of turning a major classic into a B-grade film. Nikhat Kazmi in her review of the film said-"THAT was SHOLAY...THIS is AAG...yet, ironically- and predictably- the embers (sholay) burn stronger than the inferno (aag)".[71]The unfavourable reviews of the film led to allegations about the bastardisation of Sippy's classic. In less than a week, the film was pulled out of theatres and was considered one of the biggest flops ever. Varma reflected on the disaster and said, -"When you attempt to remake the most revered film in the history of Indian cinema, you're going into the realm of the sacrilegious...They (people/critics) hate my guts for having the audacity to attempt to remake Sholay"[72]

The disastrous run of the film at the box office led Ram Gopal Varma to confess - "All my impressions of *Sholay* over the years went into *Aag.* Now I ask myself, if someone else had made Aag and I as a fan of *Sholay* went to see *Aag,* how would I react? I'd probably hate Aag as much as people have hated it. The original is too deeply embedded

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[71] Nikhat Kazmi

[72] Ram Gopal Varma interview on Aag's failure, 07/09/2007; http://www.gobollywood.com/2007/09/ram-gopal-varma-aag-interview.html

in public's psyche" (Ibid) In his blog, Varma was more forthcoming in admitting *Sholay's* position within popular culture in India and the power it continues to exude:

> I started thinking may be over the years *Sholay* has completely broken up into audio visual bytes. You still remember lines from it, made characters from it, made cartoons out of it and so it is kind of fragmented into parts and you don't look at it as a whole film experience and that's how I think it became at least in my mind... So ...*Aag* looked like a ridiculous collage of scenes going nowhere.[73]

The stupendous success of the digitally re-mastered version of *Sholay* in 2004 and its catastrophic run in Varma's remake, *Ram Gopal Varma Ki Aag* clearly shows the complexities governing the field of the remake. Does *Sholay* lend itself better to a digitally enhanced remake rather than reinterpretation? Post the debacle of *Ram Gopal Varma ki Aag*, speculation on the veracity of film remakes continued to circulate. Amidst these debates, filmmaker and producer Subhash Ghai announced a new project that would convert *Sholay* to 3D format.[74] What then are the permissible limits of a popular film remake? The method of reinterpretation in the popular film remake seems to work for some films and not for others. The vocabulary constantly evoked in the criticism of Varma's remake was that of a "classic". Are remakes primarily trying to negotiate this idea of the classic? In my next chapter, I track the myth-making enterprise that a classic remake engages with.

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[73] Ram Gopal Varma, 'Making of 'AAG'',Jun 21, 2008 ; Blog Post, http://rgvzoomin.com/2008/06/21/making-of-aag/

[74] 'Now, Sholay in 3 D format', The Hindu, April 13, 2011; See http://www.thehindu.com/arts/cinema/article1693785.ece

## CHAPTER TWO

## COLOURISATION AND THE CLASSIC

'*Mughal-e-Azam* is the mother of all films. *'Ma ka remake nahi hota'*

- Shah Rukh Khan[75]

On the eve of the 35th anniversary of Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay* (1975), filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma wrote on his blog, "Why is it that *Sholay* doesn't age?" He continued, "It just seems to stand still at the "pause" button of a cinematic era for the last 35 years without aging one bit..."[76] This was a valid observation from a director whose credentials suffered a major setback due to the failure of his attempted remake of this enduring film. Was *Sholay* a 'classic' and therefore an "inappropriate" choice for adaptation? Amid frantic debates around *Sholay's* tryst with failure in *Ram Gopal Varma ki Aag* (2007) and successful experimentation with its re-release in a digitally upgraded avatar, there emerged another practice that lay at the cusp of these debates, that of Colourisation and re-release of old black and white films. The films at the centre of this debate were K. Asif's magnum opus *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), B. R. Chopra's *Naya Daur* (1955) and Amarjeet's *Hum Dono* (1961). These were the films that used the discourse of the "classic" in order to construct their entry into "an event" that according to Varma,

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[75] Classics like *'Mughal-e-Azam'* cannot be remade: SRK Agencies, ScreenIndia, Feb 25, 2011 Press Conference regarding the uunveiling the documentary on K.Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam*, produced by Red Chillies Entertainment Pvt Limited. See http://www.screenindia.com/story.php?id=754723&pg=-1

[76] Ram Gopal Varma, 'A(aa)ging SHOLAY' Blog post dated Aug 14, 2010; See http://rgvzoomin.com/2010/08/14/aaaging-sholay/

"happen(s) once in a lifetime."[77] While *Naya Daur* and *Hum Dono* failed to recover the production costs incurred by them in the process of colourisation, Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* successfully resurrected its grandeur and acquired a mythical status as a grand monument of Bombay cinema. What is it about *Mughal-e-Azam* that warrants it such an overwhelming power in Bombay cinema?

"The mother of all films", "the greatest Indian film ever"[78]; a "saga of epic proportions"[79]; "*ek haseen khwab*" (a beautiful dream); Hindi cinema's "*ajooba*" (miracle)[80], Karrimuddin Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) more often than not eludes any corporeal description. From its inception over six decades back in 1945 to its release and legendary after-life, verbose hyperbolic figurations have been deployed to describe the film. The most expensive Indian film of its time, *Mughal-e-Azam* boasted of high production value, massive sets, adept art direction, lavish costumes, immortal dialogues and extraordinary performances by the leading stars of the era—Dilip Kumar, Madhubala and Prithviraj Kapoor. The film was released during the early days of colour technology in India and three of its reels were shot in colour. The colour sequences became the highlight of the film and mesmerised the audience across the country. There was much clapping, hooting and awe at the screenings[81]. Forty four years later, the film was colorised and re-released with digitally re-mastered sound across theatres in India.

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[77] Ibid

[78] See *Mughal-e-Azam (Color, 2004)*; The official Theatrical film trailer on Shemaroo DVD Extra.

[79] See *Mughal-e-Azam* (Color) 2004; Dvd Cover Synopsis, Shemaroo , October 2008

[80] 'Stars Speak', a Documentary feature (Dir: Jayesh Sheth) on *Mughal-e-Azam* (2004), DVD Extra.

[81] Film distributor of the Mughal-e-Azam (1960), Madan Kothari narrates instances of how people used to get up from their seats in cinema theatres and start clapping the moment the sequence of the court dancer, Anarkali's rebellious song 'Pyar Kiya to Darna Kya' used to play on screen. See Mughal-e-Azam (Colour) DVD Extra.

Widely advertised as a 'classic extravaganza', *Mughal-e-Azam*'s promotion drew on the film's history of lavish production, the autobiographies of its stars, gossip (affairs, finances, fall-outs), scandals (court cases) and reminisces of its initial reception as historical testimonials to build a mythical narrative of the film as a Classic. The "pause" thus got intricately connected to the notion of eternal value attached to a 'Classic' film.

In my last chapter I looked at the popular remakes' relationship to the blockbuster. I argued that the popular film as a category provides a playfield to record voices of conformism and defiance. Through the discourse on stardom I argued that the adaptation of old texts as brands remains the central driving premise of the popular remake. In this chapter, I argue that colourisation works at the level of the material form but retains the overall content of the original. Here, I engage with the discourse of the "classic" and explore how colourisation became the node for the intersection of new technology and popular memory.

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The essential feature of a Classic, according to writer-lyricist Javed Akhtar, is that it always appears "new and, strangely, that it has always existed: It crystallises *an experience*, a conflict that is simultaneously ancient and modern" (Akhtar 2007: vi). Central to this conflict is the displacement of the unique existence of the object. Walter Benjamin in his now canonical 1936 essay *'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'* argued that the aura associated with venerated art works would dissipate with mechanical reproduction. For Benjamin, the photograph was the key technology of reproduction, producing several copies of the original and thus democratizing access to

the art work. The "original" is thus multiplied to circulate in diverse contexts. It is in this process of widespread circulation that the aura of the original reduces. While Benjamin may have been partially right on this issue, the experience of the 20th century shows that aura is constantly reinvented within mass culture. As I will argue, *Mughal-e-Azam* successfully restages the aura associated with its original production within a new landscape of technological advancements. *Mughal-e-Azam* is a classic, but is not "old", it conforms to contemporary technological innovations and taste, but is still organic. The film is relocated and restored for the public; the print of the film as material object is taken out of the archive and exhibited in the theatre with the stamp of the new. Through this transference, the aura associated with the classic gets reinvented with the use of colour. Here lies the complex interaction between digital technology and the material object.[82] The divergent impulses of digital technology's interaction with analogue become the prism through which questions of authenticity, ownership and indexicality are investigated. This discourse of aura thus inhabits the complexities of Bombay cinema's tryst with technological transition.

The charm of K.Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* has had an after-life across literature, documentary and art, emerging specifically before and after the release of the colour remake. It is through these numerous sites of material evidence that the aura of the original was transported from its temporal frame to enter the contemporary through a discourse on classicism[83]. In his influential essay on the way commodities exude value

[82] The digital is often seen as a replacement of the more messy analogue print. Many theorists have argued that the relationship between the materiality of an object is directly related to its indexicality. (Usai 2001)

[83] Repackaging the past in new technology strengthens its perceived significance as it travels through its own history in various media forms that run as an annotation and commentary evoking a vernacular

through circulation, Igor Kopytoff argues that the life of an object can narrate the story of the variable economy in which it travels. The biography of an object, according to Kopytoff, reveals it as a symptom of the culture that produces it and defines its use and exchange value. This allocation of value to the object, Kopytoff suggests, relies on an invisible system of classification that acts as its denominator of exchange in the market economy. (Kopytoff 1986) The mythification of *Mughal-e-Azam* thus begins with the invocation of its status as a classic. It is through this discourse that the film re-positions its auratic past in relation to contemporary popular cinema.

**'Never Before-Perhaps Never Again!' : The Aura of *Mughal-e-Azam***

*"If wealth alone could suffice the making of Taj Mahal or Mughal-e-Azam, then who knows how many Taj Mahals and Mughal-e-Azams would have been made by now, but neither has anybody been able to make another Taj Mahal, nor has anyone come even close to making a Mughal-e-Azam...It didn't happen. The reason being, besides money, one must have the madness and the obsession...!"*

— Raza Murad at the premiere of *Mughal-e-Azam* (Color), 2004

Regarding the nature of art, Pierre Bourdieu reminds his readers that our "encounter with art is not 'love at first sight' as is generally supposed". Instead, this seemingly subjective judgment of day to day choices is deeply steeped in hierarchies of one's social class. These are the hierarchies that predispose 'taste' in various cultural practices and have its moorings in the social fabric of a culture. Bourdieu argues that the contention to differentiate the object, the "primacy of the *mode* of representation over the *object* of

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knowledge that constructs the "life" of the object. The impetus of this narrative of classicism happens through the circulation of these discourses.

representation demands categorically an attention to... form, manner, style, rather than the 'subject'" (Bourdieu 1984: 3-4). In the case of the classic, such 'assertion of the autonomy of production' gives authority to the aesthetic use of the category distinguishing it from other mass produced forms. One amongst the many historicals produced during the period, the novelty of Asif's project was not its subject—a known folklore of the time—but rather his grand vision of the era, captured through its mise-en-scene. It is this account of its production that *Mughal-e-Azam* uses to establish its classicism.

The "aura" of the film was always attached to its making. [84] Whether it was the love-hate relationship between its director, K.Asif and producer, Shapoorji Mistry or the doomed romance between its lead actors Dilip Kumar and Madhubala, or the opulent sets and costumes and the ever ascending budget, *Mughal-e-Azam's* production profile has constantly interacted with the personal histories of its cast and crew to construct a layered image of its status as a classic. Raza Murad's use of the metaphor of architecture for *Mughal-e-Azam* outlines how "the "heritage ruin" is often staged as neat and picturesque, providing visitors with a disciplined and purified space" (Edensor 2005: ? ). By invoking the history of its production details, the remake invests in re-telling the material conditions under which labour and creative forces were employed for the original production. This investment became a means through which the aura of the film was projected.

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[84] The story of Mughal-e-Azam's notorious tales of production and legendary run at the box office has been a part of cine-lore for decades. O.P. Rahlan's documentary on the film called 'Two Reeler on Production and Premiere of Mughal-e-Azam' (1971) was one of the first material evidence of the making and release of the film. More recently, Shakil Warsi's *Mughal-e-Azam: An epic of eternal Love* (2009) provides a compilation of *Mughal-e-Azam's* life on celluloid and beyond. This section relies primarily on these sites along with journalistic accounts, articles, anecdotes, interviews, reviews and Dvd commentaries. It is in the narration of its 'story' that *Mughal-e-Azam's* cultic power is evoked.

Set in the 16th century Mughal period [85] under Akbar's rule[86], *Mughal-e-Azam* narrated a fictional love story between the royal prince Salim and an ordinary court dancer, Anarkali. Facing opposition to the romance from Akbar, Salim rebels against his father and declares war on him. After facing defeat in the war, Salim is sentenced to death. Anarkali begs for his life and is condemned by Akbar to be walled alive. In return for a promised favour to Anarkali's mother earlier, Akbar spares her life and Anarkali is exiled through a secret tunnel. Salim never gets to know about the final transaction between Anarkali's mother and Akbar and the lovers are separated at last. The story was inspired from the Urdu novelist Imtiaz Ali Taaj's fictional account in his play *Anarkali.* The play inspired many theatrical and cinematic productions. Among the grand successes on the theme were films like Charu and Praful Roy's *'Loves of a Mughal Prince'* (1928), Ardeshir Irani's *Anarkali* (1928) and S. Mukerjee's film of the same name in 1953. Despite the success of this theme by his predecessors, Asif ventured into the project with the determination to create his own version of an immortal tale of love of between a man who according to history was married first at the age of fifteen and "collected a seraglio of eighteen wives" and a woman whose historical presence remains shrouded in mystery[87].

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[85] The Mughal era (1526-1858) refers to the period of annexation of the Indian subcontinent by the central Asian descendants called the Moghuls.

[86] Abu'l Fath Jalal ud-din Muhammad Akbar (1542-1605) , also known as Akbar-e-azam was the third Mughal Emperor after Zaheeruddin Mohommad Babur and Humayun to rule majority of the Indian Subcontinent.

[87] *Filminsi*, December 1, 1960 review titled '*Mughal-e-Azam* dazzles the eye but Ignores History' cited Salim's first marriage at the age of fifteen. The Prince was married a number of times after that. As far as Anarkali's historical presence is concerned, it has not been established till date. Anarkali Bazaar and a tomb on the premises of Punjab Civil Secretariat in Lahore, Pakistan are the two contested sites associated with her identity.

# FAMOUS FILMS

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# "MUGHAL-E-AZAM"

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## K. ASIF

Art Direction:

N. M. KHWAJA.

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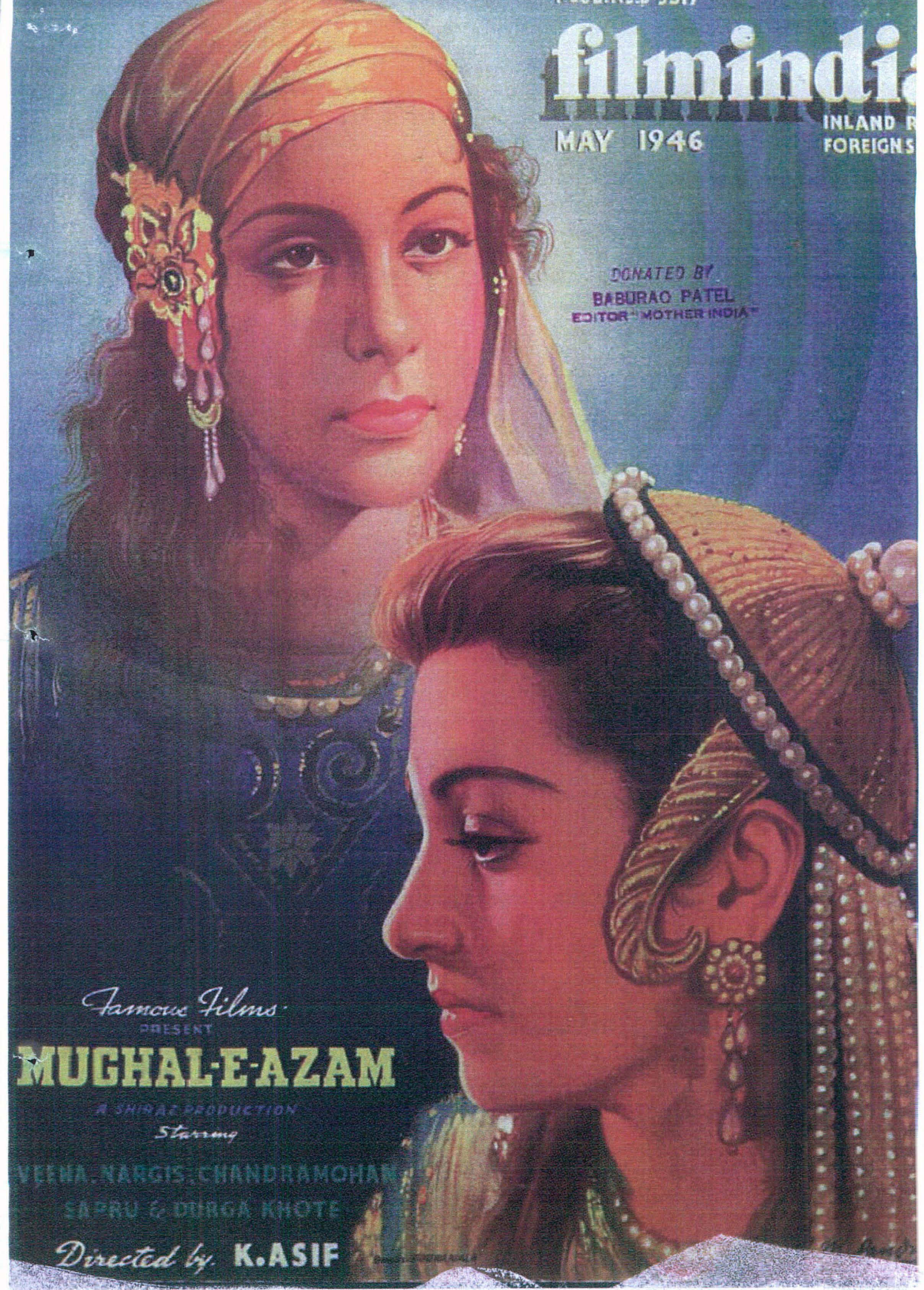
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EDITOR "MOTHER INDIA"
Famous Films
PRESENT
MUGHAL-E-AZAM
A SHIRAZ PRODUCTION
Starring
VEENA · NARGIS · CHANDRAMOHAN
SAPRU & DURGA KHOTE
Directed by K.ASIF

Between October 1945 and May 1946, *Filmindia*, one of the leading film magazines of the time produced a series of posters announcing the inception of a "Gorgeous Historical" to be produced by Shiraz Production starring Veena, Nargis, Chandramohan and Sapru. The details of the posters changed over the years to the extent that by the time the film released in theatres, the only constant detail was director K. Asif and his dream project called *Mughal-e-Azam*. A making clouded in unlikely deaths, loss of its creative team to the partition of India and Pakistan and an unfathomably surmounting budget, *Mughal-e-Azam*'s entry as the template of lavishness and romance within popular Bombay cinema wasn't an easy one. It was on August 5, 1960 that this celluloid monument was released in 150 cinema theatres across the nation, fifteen years after it was first announced.

The history of the Partition of India created the first of the many obstacles that would come in the way of the making of this epic. Producer Hakim Shiraz Ali migrated to Pakistan and the film was delayed for almost four years before Shapoorji and Palonji Mistri of Sterling Investment Corporation Lmtd. decided to produce the film. A great admirer of Akbar, Shapoorji found in Asif's dream a lucrative business deal and a vicarious fulfillment of participating in the telling of the grandeur of Akbar![88] The film was revived and ten reels had been shot when another tragedy struck. Chandramohan who was playing the role of Emperor Akbar suffered a fatal heart attack. The shoot got stalled again for a year. The harrowing pre-production process started again and Asif decided to start the project afresh with an entirely new cast.

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[88] CNN IBN Special Blockbusters- Mughal-e-Azam'

Prithviraj Kapoor, a famed film and theatre personality was cast as Akbar. Playing the role of a torn father and a just king, Kapoor immortalised the role and in years to come, his name became synonymous with royalty. Such was the conviction of the actor that for a scene where Akbar visits the dargah of Salim Chisti in Ajmer, Kapoor walked barefoot in scorching heat in the desert in the fervid month of May. Moved by the conviction of his actor, Asif too shot the entire scene barefoot.[89] For the role of Salim, Dilip Kumar the 'tragedy king' of Bombay cinema was approached. The actor was reluctant to play a historical role and was convinced only after a wig worth Rs three lakhs was imported from London that made him look like a prince (Warsi 2009). After Nargis's exit from the project[90], the shooting went on for over a year without a lead actress. Asif finally found his Anarkali in Madhubala. Deified as 'the Venus of the Indian Screen', she immortalised the role of the lovelorn *Kaneez*. But it was her love affair with the leading man, Dilip Kumar that would commemorate her role as the tragic courtesan Anarkali. The electric chemistry between this lead pair and the ironic and tragic course of the relationship between the two captured some of the most intense moments of love, betrayal, persistence and tragedy on screen.

It was widely reported that while love between the two actors was blossoming and was heading towards matrimony, a pending court case with regard to B.R. Chopra's *Naya*

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[89] In an interview with CNN IBN Shammi Kapoor narrates the conviction with which his father Prithviraj Kapoor performed the role of Akbar. He would enter the make-up room saying, "Prithviraj Kapoor ab jaa rahaa hai". When ready, he would come out saying, "Akbar ab aa rahaa hai!" (Prithviraj is now departing and Akbar is now arriving!) See http://www.screenindia.com/story.php?id=656505&pg=-1

[90] The romantic relationship between the much married Kapoor and his successful association with his leading lady of the time, Nargis has been widely reported in media and other biographical accounts. It is believed that Nargis's association with Raj Kapoor professionally as well as personally led to her exit as Kapoor was wary of her pairing with his rival star and much single Dilip Kumar. See, CNN IBN special feature on 'Bollywood Blockbusters-n Mughal-e-Azam'

*Daur* (1955) broke their relationship and the romance came to a tragic halt. It was reported that Madhubala was signed for Chopra's film but because of her father's insistence that she cancel an outdoor shoot, the actress was replaced by Vyjayanthimala. A court case was filed against Madhubala and Dilip Kumar testified against her. The unfortunate events created a cold tension between the former lovers. In an interview, the late actor Ajit said that "Madhubala shed many tears during the making of *Mughal-e-Azam*. Every shot with *her* prince was a trial and caused her trauma"[91] (Warsi 2009: 92). The love and tension of the lead pair however was eloquently captured in the characters of the star-crossed lovers, Salim and Anarkali.

The image of Salim gently caressing the face of Anarkali with '*Prem Jogan jao...*' sung by the legendary classical singer, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan playing in the background remains to this day a prime example of cinematic eroticism.[92] Asif wanted the best voice to do playback for Tansen, the royal Mughal court singer. Music composer Naushad suggested the name of Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. Determined to bring the reclusive singer on board despite being aware of his aversion to "*filmi* music", Naushad recounts how Asif went to see Bade Ghulam Ali Khan at his bungalow only to be categorically told of the singer's displeasure of film music. The determined Asif asked Khan to quote his price. Angered by this stubbornness but humbled by the visit of a guest to his abode, Khan quoted an enormous sum of Rs 25000/-, almost ten times the fees of the best singers of the industry at the time. Asif relented and said "Thats all! Here is the advance

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[91] Shakil Warsi quotes late actor Ajit from an old interview. Refer, Warsi: 2009

[92] Filmmaker ' Mahesh Bhatt (1993) first drew attention to the memorable love scene 'shot in extreme close-ups of just faces in which Dilip Kumar tickles the impassioned faceof Madhubala with a white feather. This was perhaps the most sensitively portrayed erotic scene on the Indian screen' (Rajadhyaksha and Willeman 1998: 365)

of Rs 10000/-, you'll get the rest after the recording".[93] It was Asif's handsome *Shehzada* and beautiful *Kaneez* who inspired Khan to render the formidable '*Prem Jogan ...*' four times before it was finalized.

The music of the film captured the soul of Asif's dream. Drawing from varied influences of bhakti, sufi and folk traditions, music composer Naushad infused life and character into the aural track and enlivened the screen with the spirit of poetry, love, and rebellion. But it was the inimitable '*Pyar kiya to darna kya...*' that would go on to become an anthem of rebellion in the decades to come. Inspired by a folk song '*Prem kari chori kari naye...*', and shot exquisitely on the famed set of Sheesh mahal, the song truly epitomised all the grandeur of Asif's vision for the film. Standing at 30 feet high and built at an astounding cost of Rs 15 lakhs, the set took two years to construct. Hundreds of artisans from Firozabad (Uttar Pradesh) were summoned to embellish the set with millions of mirrors. After the set was completed, Asif realized that the mirrors reflected light on the lens of the camera and the shoot was stalled one again. Months later, a special technique was used by cinematographer R.D. Mathur to refract the light of the mirrors from the camera. The shoot continued and Asif decided to shoot the sequences of Sheesh Mahal in colour. Three reels were shot which further increased the cost of the project. A frustrated Shapoorji relented but with the ever-escalating budget expressed his reservations by saying "*Mera director pagal ho gaya hai, Kaanch ka pura karkhana lagaya hai*" (My director has lost his mind, he's built a factory of mirrors on the set!) (Warsi 2009: 58).

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[93] *Mughal-e-Azam* Colour (2004) DVD Extra, 'The making of Mughal-e-Azam.'

Asif however was undeterred. The extravagant set of Sheesh Mahal stood high at the Mohan Studios as a popular tourist attraction almost three years after *Mughal-e-Azam* had hit the theatres. Adorned with mirrors and exquisite art work of the most skilled craftsmen of the country, the set became a testimonial to the 'imagination and lavishness' of its maker.[94] Such was the beauty of the set that it was reported that a millionaire Arab wanted to buy it and take it to his country but Asif refused his offer. The grandeur of *Mughal-e-Azam* was captured in the visual syntax of this set.

Often labelled a '*deewana*, Asif was a man driven by the quest for a perfect shot. In O. P. Rahlan's documentary on the making of the film—*Two Reeler on Production and Premiere of Mughal-e-Azam*, cinematographer R.D. Mathur recalls how "The best of Delhi tailors were brought to Mumbai to stitch the costumes for Akbar and Salim, the delicate jewellery worn by Anarkali was crafted by goldsmiths in Hyderabad, a silver artisan from Kolhapur created the royal crowns, ironsmiths from Rajasthan made the shields, swords, spears, dagger, armour and other war paraphernalia, designers from Surat were asked to weave the *zardosi* on costumes while the footwear came from Agra" (Rahlan 1972). Such was the lavishness of the film that a week after its release, an exhibition of its costumes, jewellery and other items of artillery etcetera was organised at the Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay.[95] In order to shoot the war scene between Akbar and Salim, Asif requested the then Defence Minister V.K. Krishna Menon to use the Jaipur cavalry. A battalion of 8000 troops, 2000 soldiers, 2000 camels and 400 horses was used to shoot one of the most elaborately shot war scenes in the history of Indian cinema.

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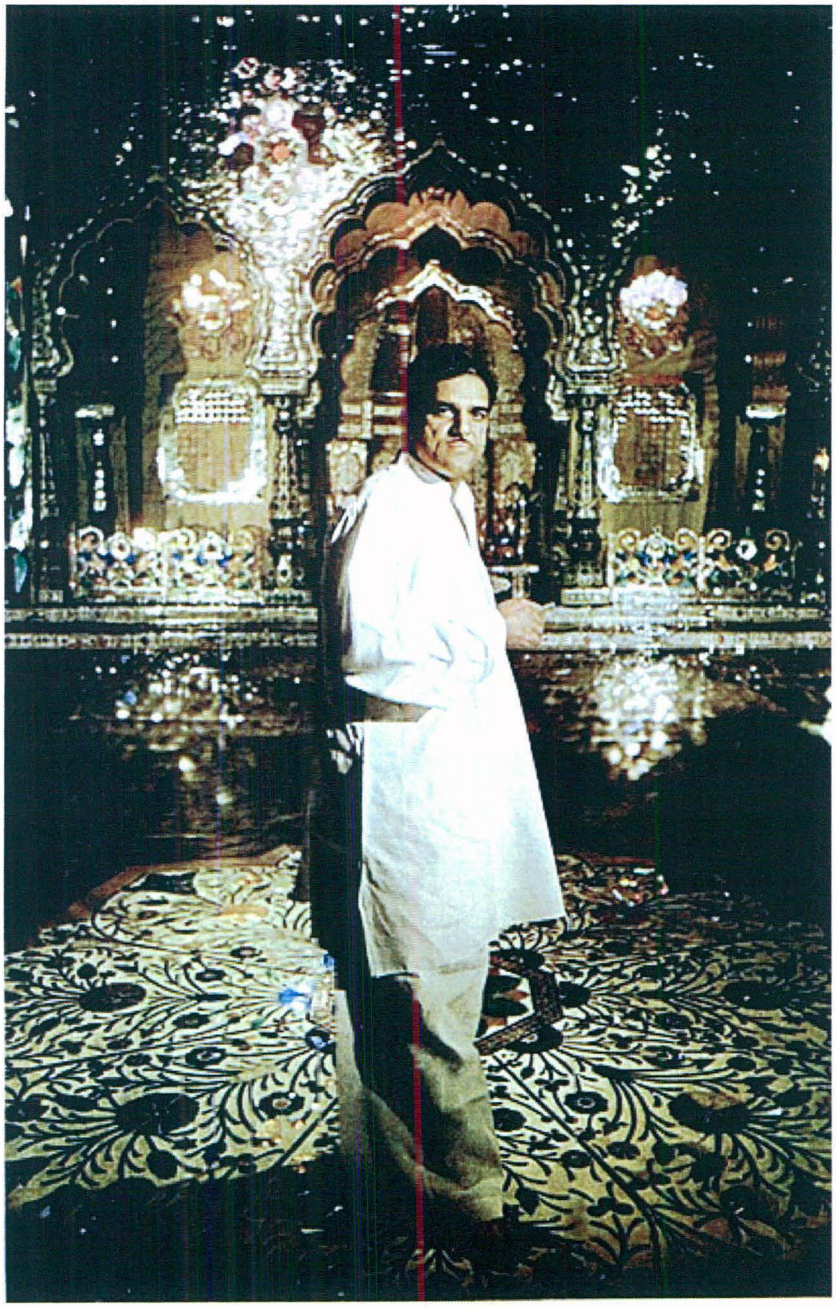
[94] The Fortnight in Films, August 26, 1960

[95] The exhibition was organised on the 12th of August 1960. See Filmfare, August 26, 1960

Embedded in the documentation and reminiscence of these intricately designed costumes, elaborately shot war scenes and the profligate sets of Sheesh Mahal is the extravagance of the film and the grand vision of its maker, K. Asif.

**The Aura of Mughal-e-azam- Sets**



LIFE magazine dated 20 Dec 1963

On September 11, 1959, a renowned film magazine carried a full page article reporting Asif's insistence on the use of real pearls and precious stones for the last scene of the shooting. Durga Khote, playing the role of Akbar's wife distributes diamonds, pearls and other precious stones amongst her palace staff when her son Salim returns from the war. Not only did Asif insist on the use of real stones, it was reported that he was satisfied only after knowing that "their weight was 12 pounds more than his"[96]. Asif's extravagant style of filmmaking and rumours of Shapoorji's investment being squandered continued to do the rounds. The budget of the film had come to a monumental amount of Rs. 1.25 crores which at that time was phenomenal.

The skepticism around the completion of the film finally withered as Asif completed the film by editing 20,000 feet of the 10 lakh feet of film that he had shot. *Mughal-e-Azam* was set for its all India release on August 5, 1960. The film was distributed at an astounding cost of Rs 15 lakhs per territory at the time when the average rate per territory was less than Rs 4 lakhs. In sync with the grandeur of the era the film had set out to capture, invitations designed as a royal scroll and titled '*Akbarnama*' were sent out to 'command' the guests to arrive at the grand opening of the film. An imperial premiere was organised at Bombay's Maratha Mandir. The foyer was decorated to look like a Mughal palace. Industry veterans poured in large numbers to witness the end result of the costliest film ever made in India. *Filmfare* covered a story on the premiere of the film and wrote, "As befitting the splendour of *Mughal-e-Azam*, the premiere of the film...was a glittering occasion...All filmdom seemed to be there."[97] The film opened to largely

[96] See *Filmfare,* August 12, 1960 in an article titled 'Films in the making'

[97] See *Filmfare,* August 26, 1960, Two page spread titled ' Glittering Premiere'

positive reviews. It had captured the imagination of the viewers with its lavish scale, excellent performances, immortal dialogues and soulful music. With a record collection of Rs. 40 lakhs by way of advance booking in its first week, Asif's dream and Shapoorji's venture had finally paid off. [98]

Audiences queued up in front of theatres to see the film. Many stood and lived outside the theatre for days. Remembering the box office collections of the film, , Hiten Gada, Director of Shemaroo Video recalls how the unprecedented demand for tickets led the management to close response of the film at the box office, booking for three whole weeks – "something that had never happened before - or since."[99] A Rs. 1.30 ticket was sold in black for an amount as high as Rs 200. Newspapers widely reported the success of the film and the mass hysteria amongst the audience. The Bombay *Times of India* wrote: "Never in the history of the Indian Film Industry has there been a motion picture the release of which witnessed such mass hysteria. . . .This fabulous production is ... a tribute to the patience, sincerity and almost religious fervor of its maker, the enigmatic Mr. K. Asif, whose weakness for splendor and spectacle, pomp and pageantry is not less than that of any Mughal Emperor."[100] Another case of a man from the rural interiors who notoriously sold his household belongings to buy a ticket at Rs 200 in black[101] was widely covered by the media. *Mughal-e-Azam* became a mega success and collected sales

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[98] See Filmfare, August 26, 1960 in an article titled 'The Fortnight in Films'

[99] Rajiv Vijaykar, 'Celluloid Monument', August 6, 2010, Screen India. See, http://www.screenindia.com/story.php?id=656505&pg=-1

[100] Quoted in *"Media Comments,"* Press release of *Mughal-e-Azam* (2004) for Sterling Investment. See Salgia 2005: 129

[101] Warsi 2008: 140

amounting to Rs 3.50 crores. It ran houseful in Maratha Mandir for three years, a record for Indian cinema. In fictionalising the Mughal era, *Mughal-e-Azam* went on to make history.

The aura of *Mughal-e-Azam* as a film, "true" to its epic proportion of creation and reception, circulated in the form of an epic after-life in the decades to come. Re-tracing the hysteria around the film, Shakil Warsi recalls how the ban on the export of Indian films in Pakistan led to an eight day advanced booking of flights from Karachi to Lahore to catch beamed signals from Amritsar on the day the film was telecast on India's first national television channel Doordarshan. (Warsi 2009: 141) In the 1990s, *Mughal-e-Azam's* satellite rights were sold at an astronomical figure of Rs. 50 lakhs for five years, over five times the average price of a film. The satellite rights of the film were renewed in the year 2000 at Rs. 1.25 crores, another record in the history of satellite telecast. (Salgia 2005:129) The most expensive film went on to become the most successful film in the history of Indian cinema. As one of its first promotional advertisement in *Filmfare* declared with a prophetic resonance—"*Never before- and perhaps never again*!"[102], *Mughal-e-Azam* garnered the position of a celluloid monument. On November 12,2004, it re-released in theatres across India and history was all set to repeat itself!

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[102] See *Filmfare*, March 12, 1960

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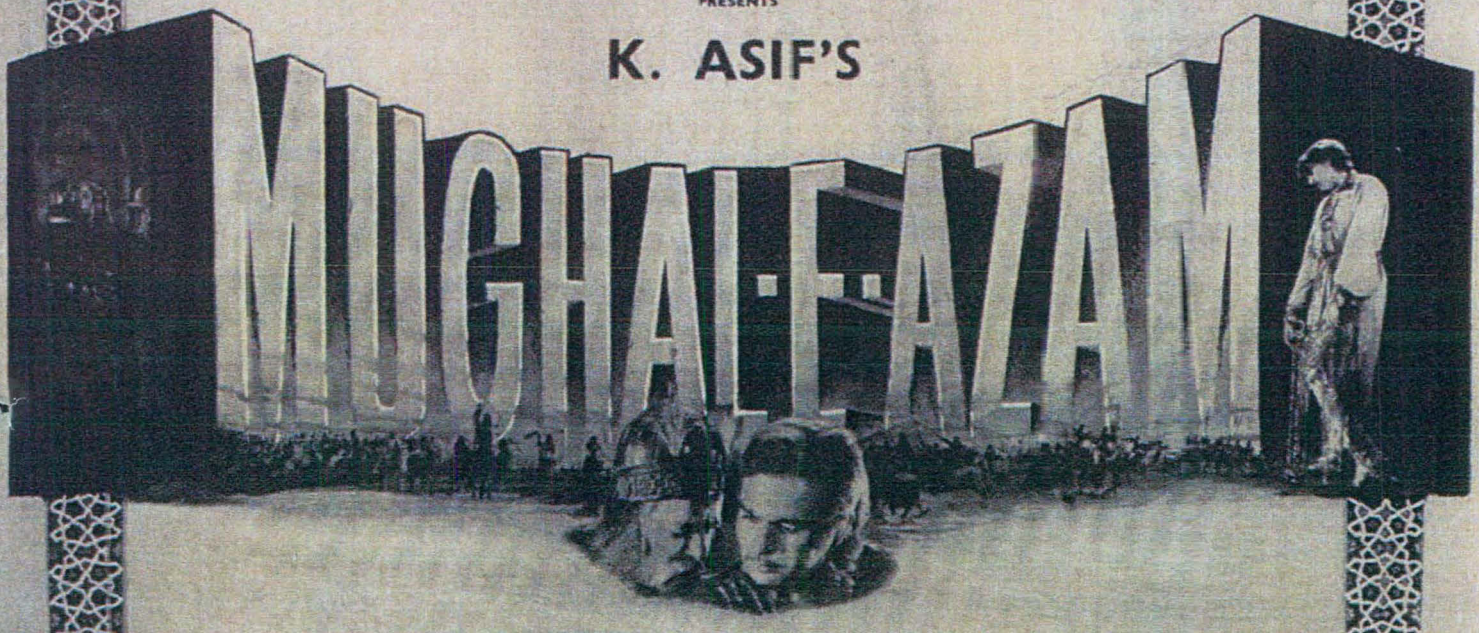

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## 'The Renaissance of *Mughal-e-Azam*': Colorizing an Unfulfilled Dream

"*Have you noticed how so many garba grihas in Tamil Nadu temples are now garishly lit with flood lamps? The true devotee would like to view the deity by* ***natural*** *light, or by the glow of an oil lamp...Colorising a film is no different.*"

- Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Filmmaker [103]

It was in the 1960s, the decade marked by a transformative spirit within popular culture, when celluloid reinvented itself. Empowered with the promise of global access to technological innovations, ease of travel and aspirations for leisure, a new kind of film culture was emerging within Bombay Cinema. There are visible changes in the cinema of the 50s where the focus was the social and the national to the 60s when colour opened unexplored outdoor locations and markets that expanded beyond national borders. [104]The most prominent of these changes however was the use of Technicolor that engendered numerous possibilities for the filmmakers and changed the dynamics of film production.

While colour had made its entry with Cinecolour in the film *Kisan Kanya* back in 1937, it was Mehboob Khan's *Aan* (1952) that became the first film to be made in Technicolor. According to a Statement of Production of Colour Films in India, released by the Indian Academy of Motion Pictures, till the year 1971, the ratio of black and white films to colour was disproportinalte, standing tall at an astounding gap of 298 to 134 colour

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[103] Anand Parthasarthy, ' The colour of profit', November 6-19, 2004, *Frontline*, Volume 21 Issue 23

[104] Mazumdar 2010

films.[105] In the wake of this new technology of colour, Richard Misek describes the landscape of the 1960s mediascape as a varied playfield where the choice of black and white, of colour and of black and white *and* colour coexisted. Emerging at this moment of 'countless chromatic juxtapositions' (Misek 2010: 69), film culture of the 60s acquired a heterogeneous character. It is not surprising then that emerging in this moment; *Mughal-e-Azam* embodied within it an impulse for technological experimentation. Dazzling the audience like never before, the coloured sequences of MEA became a template for the assemblage of spendour.

While promoting the film before and after its release, the posters published in film magazines focussed on this visual grandeur enhanced by the technology of colour. Weeks after Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) was released, one such advertisement in film magazine, *Mother India* for instance invited the viewers to see the grandeur of *Mughal-e-Azam* claiming that it's "(a) picture you can't say you have *seen*, unless *seen* umpteen times...Count your Score!"[106] Such emphasis on the optics in the publicity of the film accentuated the association of early colour with the sensual and the spectacular (Neale 1985; Gunning 1995). A material addition to the black and white film, early colour primarily lay outside the thematic constraints of the film. This, according to film theorist Tom Gunning, provided "an extra sensual intensity which (drew) its significance, at least in part from its difference from black and white." [107] The high production value of the

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[105] ' Colour films- Statement of Production' in T.M. Ramachandaran edited *Fifty Years of Indian Talkies (1931-1981): A commemorative Volume*, December 1981

[106] *Mother India*, December 1960 (My emphasis)

[107] Gunning 1995 as quoted in M. Gorky's *Film Colour* at http://media.wiley.com/product_data/excerpt/92/14443323/1444332392.pdf

film—its epic scale, panoramic interiors and experimentation with colour had pushed the boundaries of how far cinema could go. With numerous re-runs on television, a plethora of trivia around its stars, the making and release, fashionable Anarkali designed clothing and impeccable dialogues; *Mughal-e-Azam* had already acquired a reverential position in popular culture. Circulating within these circuits, the sets of Sheesh Mahal had become a reference point for Asif's vision. The influences of the film on art, fashion and set design came primarily from these coloured reels of the film.

Over four decades after the release of the 'original', its producers mulled the possibility of making Asif's desire to make the film in colour come true by re-shooting the entire film. What would *Mughal-e-Azam* have looked like if Asif had the finances and the technology to make it in colour? Such a project was estimated to cost over Rs. 200 crores, and so the film was instead revived for colourisation. colourisation was invented by Wilson Markle and was first used in 1970 to add colour to monochrome footage of the moon from the Apollo mission.[108] Essentially a chemical process, colourisation was developed to add colour to black and white footage. The process begins with a monochrome film print from which a digital copy is made. Technicians, aided by computer software, regulate the gray level in each shot and add colour to them, while maintaining gray levels of the monochrome original. Not unlike sound that became an industry standard, the process of Colourisation has over the years entered the domain of news reels, documentaries and old black and white films.

[108] The footage of the mission in colour is available on Discovery Channel's 'When we left earth: NASA Missions' See http://dsc.discovery.com/videos/classic-nasa-film-apollo-11-1.html

The project of colorizing *Mughal-e-Azam* was undertaken by the Indian Academy of Arts and Animation (IAAA), Pune in 2002. [109] The procedure was directed to first restore the prints before transferring them to the digital format. The restoration work was done by Iris Interactive Laboratories, Chennai. Fungus, cuts and cracks were removed from the original negative and the frames were stabilized by removing jerks and jitters. Further, each image of the film was broken into still frames and color was added in accordance to the software technology. This technology selects colours from its system of virtual colour palette. Over three lakh frames of the film were then colorised by a meticulous procedure of colour balancing, colour selection and reformatting using a process called Natural ColourisationColourisation that filters out wrong colours from the palette[110] With the help of the coloured sequences of the original film, old photographs and exhibition stock, books and paintings on the Mughal era, the procedure was completed and the film was transferred onto a 35mm negative. The sound of the film was also cleaned at Chace Production, Los Angeles and converted to Dolby surround sound. With assistance from music director Uttam Singh, an orchestra of 120 musicians was added to the original soundtrack. After two years of the process and with an investment equivalent to the making of a new film, *Mughal-e-Azam* had risen from the archives. Distributors Dinesh Gandhi and R. Sippy paid over 2.25 crores upfront for the territory of Mumbai alone.[111] The film was re-released with much fanfare and in keeping

[109] *Mughal-e-Azam* (Color), DVD Extra, 'How it happened: The technology behind the making of a Dream'

[110] The software was designed to accept only those colors that have similar gray tones as the original shot. In one shot, for instance Salim holds a rose in his hand. 'The art director initially suggested a red color, but the software did not accept it. The historians then explained that the rose could
not have been red, because in those days, roses were pink and red roses are a hybrid variety.' (Salgia 2005:131)

with the royal premiere of 1960. *Mughal-e-Azam* (Colour) premiered at the Eros Theatre in Mumbai and it hit the theatres across India on November 12, 2004 with over 150 prints. Once again, it became a grand success at the box office with the second largest opening of the week, next only to veteran film director Yash Chopra's *Veer Zaara*. The film ran for 100 days in fourteen theatres across India. Alongside its stupendous run at the box office, perhaps the greatest in the history of re-releases in world cinema, *Mughal-e-Azam* (Colour) generated fierce journalistic and academic debates on the issue of colourisation.

In 1935, J.A.Ball, Vice President and Technical Director of Technicolor Motion Picture Corp, USA, complicated the easy assumption of a return to past forms. Ball emphasized that

> "The art of the color cinematographer is intermediate between that of the painter and that of the stage artist. The painter has to work with pigments having a limited range of contrast but has great freedom of choice as to composition. The stage artist works with light, and so does not encounter the pigment limitation; but he must select his costumes, backgrounds, etc. to be harmonious in a great variety of arrangements, most of which are more or less out of his control. In color cinematography the difficulties of both are combined; there is the pigment limitation combined with the comparative lack of control of composition"

Technicolor founder, Herbert Kamus reiterated the importance of choosing colour designs in accordance with what Cinematographer Winton Hoch called the 'hue, chroma, and value' of the set[112]. Thus Kamus emphasises that "If a script has been conceived, planned, and written for black and white, it should not be done at all in color. The story should be chosen and the scenario written with color in mind from the

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[111] Anand Parthasarthy, ' The colour of profit', November 6-19, 2004, *Frontline*, Volume 21 Issue 23

[112] Kamus 1938

start, so that by its use effects are obtained, moods created, beauty and personalities emphasized, and the drama enhanced. Color should follow from sequence to sequence, supporting and giving impulse to the drama, becoming an integral part of it, and not something super-added," (Kamus 1938). What then is the authority of the process of colourisation of black and white films?

Reacting strongly against *Mughal-e-Azam* (Colour), film archivist and former Director of the National Film Archive of India, P.K. Nair believes that the business of Colourisation deteriorates the spacio-temporal matrix of a cultural product. He said: "As an archivist, I am totally against any form of tampering with the original either putting sound on to a silent film, or colour to a black and white image or blowing up an unsqueezed 35mm frame to a 70mm panoramic format" (give date) Further, said Nair, 'this is a fallacy akin to someone coming up with a proposal that the Taj Mahal has to be painted afresh to make it acceptable to modern viewing sensibilities and thereby increase the tourist traffic. Films like *Mughal-e-Azam* are part of the country's cultural heritage. It is our responsibility to attach the same reverence and sanctity to our film classics as we do to any cultural product and not allow them to be disfigured or distorted. Let us not squander our rich cultural heritage for some cheap profits" (Parthasarthy 2004). In another review of the film, Gautaman Bhaskaran of *The Hindu* said "Does Madhubala look prettier with painted lips and rose-tinted cheeks than she did shorn of these embellishments in the 1960 black and white edition?... Celluloid creations such as *Mughal-e-Azam* are best kept away from the gloss and sheen of colour."[113] Can the technique of a synthetic paintbrush that super adds features to the original be seen as innate to the original? The chemical

[113] Gautaman Bhaskaran, *Mughal-e-Azam* Color (Review)The Hindu, November 19, 2004. See http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/fr/2009/07/31/stories/2009073150240400.htm

changes in an existing art object can change its aesthetic value of authenticity. If Asif's intention to make the film in colour was enough to warrant changes then why would there be a need to evoke its materiality? Perhaps then, the entire debate on its aura is a conjuration that makes the process of change seem like an obvious step at a time of technological advancements.

Though these debates are relatively new to Bombay Cinema, Colourisation of black and white films by studio executives like MGM's Ted Turner [114] was protested by various factions within Hollywood who argued that "it distorted film history, violated creative rights of the original filmmakers, and was basically a form of 'vandalism'."[115] Frank Capra, Billy Wilder, John Huston and Woody Allen lobbied with the U.S. Congress against such 'computerised graffiti gangs'. As a result, the Film Integrity Act of 1987 was passed in the US to preserve select classics[116]. While many criticised the procedure as a form of artistic defacement, there were others who saw its potential to reach a cross-generational audience and moreover, as an act of restoration. Colourisation in Hollywood however was restricted for release for home viewing. *Mughal-e-Azam* became the first

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[114] Turner, a studio giant had proposed colorization of films like Orson Wells's*Citizen Kane (1941),Michael Curtiz's Casablanca (1942), John Ford's How Green was my Valley (1941), Frank Capra's Its a wonderful life(1946).* Studio libraries are a popular phenomenon in Hollywood where studios like warner Bros. make a financial gain of over $500million per year. For more on Studio libraries, see Eric Hoyt's 'The future of selling the past: studio libraries in the 21st century', *Jump Cut*, No. 52, summer 2010.

[115] In the 1980s, amidst uproar regarding colorization by Ted Turner, Writers Guild of America West called the process "cultural vandalism" as quoted in Wenli Wang, 'Preserving and interpreting Culture Heritage: Lessons learnt from film Restoration', (2004 :7)

[116] The main legacy of colorization is the National Film Registry, established by Congress in 1988 in response to the colorization controversy. The Registry is a list of films, selected by experts and expanded annually, that, if colorized, will have to be labeled with a disclaimer. (Gary Burns) See http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=colorization

film in world cinema to be colorised for a theatrical release. Moreover, Asif's desire to colour the film was located in the future and in colorising the film for a re-release the discourse of its classicism was employed as if *Mughal-e-Azam* could now move towards *completing*- Asif's incomplete dream that was always part of popular memory.

Since the commercial veracity of the *Mughal-e-Azam* was clothed in the rhetoric of its classicism and incompletion, the colourisation procedure of the film was justified by creating a discourse of technological "lack" and incorporation of the "newness" of the shifting tastes of the audience (Salgia 2005). The project moreover, was based on the idea of progress. Film historian Tom Gunning cautions against such a notion of progress that simply "displaces unresolved problems (for instance of colour, status of celluloid and value of a classic) onto new material" [117]. This tendency according to Gunning casts old media as 'bad objects' which 'good objects of new media will absolve' (Gunning 2004: 39). The argument made by technicians was one that tended to "correct" the flaws of the original and promised to compensate for its "deficiency". The "history of screen colour", says Richard Misek, is "in fact a history of colour *and its absence*" (Misek 2010: 17). A material addition to the film, colour witnessed its transition from artisanal forms like hand painting, stencilling and tinting to the onset of "natural" colour in the industrial field of production post the 1960s to its current virtual incarnation in post production (software technology). Beginning its journey as an oppositional material scheme to the black and white format, Misek records how colour inserted itself in the history of film craft and technology to assume the position of a visual default. Assuming the role of a 'technological relic', black and white film print then occupies the status of the "material

[117] Tom Gunning, 'What's the Point fo an Index? Or, Faking Photographs', presented at the 16th Nordic Conference on Media and Communication Research, Plenary Sessions II, Digital Aesthetics, 2004

leftover of the past" (Misek 2010: 85). In colourisation of old black and white films, the genealogy of this development of colour breaks out of its chronology to redress questions regarding its role and its relation with film. Black and white film thus becomes an indexical feature of the "old" which can be posited against colour as a visual default of the "new" cinema.

In this changing landscape of the digital as an industrial function in Bombay cinema, past modes of representation gain a momentum. The "look" of the film object lingers on and circulates in various technoscapes, even as the content remains the same. Embodying within it these paradoxical impulses and using the vocabulary of shifting tastes of the audience and the unfulfilled dream of its maker K. Asif, what is articulated in *Mughal-e-Azam's* discourse as the "classic" then is the state of a film culture in the moment of transition that is, its movement from analog to digital that meets at the nodes of technological advancement, commercial viability, and restoration. While the emergent paradigm of digital technology has been invested with the power to overthrow the hierarchy of the industrial organisation of filmmaking while on the other hand, digital conversion of the original is seen as an act of archiving.

The function of technology within Bombay cinema has been restricted to basic colour grading and editing. In the last decade however there is an accelerated growth of complex digital effects and animation in this sector. [118] In the post global economy, the circulation

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[118] As per a recent Nasscom report, "the animation industry in India was around US$460 million in 2008 and is set to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 27 percent to reach US$1.16 billion by 2012. The market has been defined as animation entertainment (US$120 million in 2008), animation education (US$53 million) and custom content development (US$187 million) and multimedia/Web design (US$100million)

of world cinema allows for various technologies to interact with the analog in both its material and immaterial (virtual) form. The space of the digital therefore ushers in a new soft industry which was until recently at the periphery of the processes of production and post-production of a film. *Mughal-e-Azam's* movement from the revered *skill* of its artisans to the *service* of technological advancements of software and various processes of virtual enhancements, echo Michael Hart and Antonio Negri's idea of "immaterial labour" . Immaterial labour for Hart and Negri, provides the measure of shift in the production of goods in a global economy from the industrial domain to that of the informational (Hart and Negri 2000). *Mughal-e-Azam* in its remake embodies this transition. In an attempt to establish *Mughal-e-Azam's* sacrosanct position within Bombay cinema, it is this history of its pre-production that becomes the central determining force in situating its aura.

As simulations take over indexicality, images lend themselves to what film theorist Philip Rosen calls "infinite manipulativity". Media theorist Lev Manovich reminds us that "the computer does not distinguish between an image obtained through the photographic lens, an image created in a paint program or an image synthesised in a 3-D graphics package, since they are made from the same material-pixels" (Manovich 2001: 300). Combining the sensuality of pre-cinematic artisanal processes of colour[119](seen as being closer to

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See, Swati Prasad, 'Bollywood Improving in Animation, Special Effects', Businessweek, January 21, 2009; http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/jan2009/gb20090121_174402.htm

[119] 'By the early 1920s, 80% of films were colored in one way or another. There were a few efforts to record the actual colors in a scene, but most often color was added after filming. Areas of the frame might be painted over by stenciling or by freehand. More commonly, the shots were dipped into dyes, yielding images that were *tinted* (washing over the image and coloring the areas of white, as in the frames below) or *toned* (coloring the darkest areas and leaving the white areas white)'. (Bordwell 2009) See http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/?p=4374

painting) and returning to the moment when Technicolor was introduced in India, the remake of *Mughal-e-Azam* through colourisation embodies the discourse of colour in its very conception. Manovich reiterates the use of simulation and digital composition of images as the return to the 19th century pre-cinematic practices of manual construction and goes on to announce the death of cinema as an "indexical media" that has become 'a sub-genre of painting'[120] (Manovich 1995). But how do the parameters of the graphic shift when post-production film remaking conflates the aura of the original with the painterly and the graphic? In the case of *Mughal-e-Azam* for instance, the realm of the digital is used to authenticate its status as a classic film.

The making of the original film, the aesthetic practice of its filmmaker and the labour deployed for production are evoked as a phantom presence to give credence to *Mughal-e-Azam*'s remake. The remade version embodies these complex impulses that draw on celluloid history and the digital future. While scholars like Lev Monovich have also argued for the opposional model between the digital and the analog, in the case of the remake, the binary crumbles to open the film to its auratic history as a black and white classic and simultaneously point to what Dipesh Salgia calls "the 21st century filmgoing experience". Reconfiguring digital dispersion through the discourse of the classic, the remake carries material evidence of the transition from analog to digital in the process of colourisation. What the post-production remake then uncovers, is the contours of a "new" aesthetics—a re-contextualisation of the industry and its revised role, mediated by the

[120] Tom Gunning makes a similar argument when he states that the 'digital aspires to the condition of painting, in which color, shape, texture, all the components of an image are completely upto the painter'. In case of a remake, the debates around the digital get complicated by a direct intervention and interaction with the analogue. For Gunning's article See http://www.nordicom.gu.se/common/publ_pdf/157_039-050.pdf

emergence of special effects and digital technology. The allegorical conflict between the digital and the analog provides a new opportunity for forging an opposition between technology and art. Through a balancing act between a potential digital revolution and its reinvention of the cinematic form on the one hand and the discourse of apocalyptic disappearance of the film object on the other; the remake of *Mughal-e-Azam* foregrounds the materiality of the film's existence. So while on the one hand, it reflects on the fusion of futuristic film-making (technology vs. production) and technology's aim to create a "classic" aesthetic, on the other hand, it complicates the retelling of a simple tale of nostalgia associated with a particular order of technology.

Dipesh Salgia, Project Head of the colourisation procedure for Sterling Investment Corporation consciously marks a departure from the negative connotations attached to the term colourisation and technology. He refers to colouring as the 'Renaissance of *Mughal-e-Azam*' as opposed to colourisation (Salgia 2007: ix) The term then serves to read the entire process as an act of commemorating the classic. Salgia emphasises the status of the film and reminds us that "Almost every historical/mythological topic has experienced multiple remakes in India. Even Salim-Anarkali had four remakes. But after *Mughal-e-Azam*, there has been no remake on (this) theme" (Salgia 2005: 128). What is foregrounded, besides the obvious budget constraints then is not the fact that there have been no remakes, but rather that there "can" be no remake for this magnum opus. Responding to a similar question on the possibility of a remaking *Mughal-e-Azam*, the great grandson of Prithviraj Kapoor and renowned film actor Ranbir Kapoor says, "We have better cameras, more money and a bigger audience but the heart of *Mughal-e-Azam*,

the soul of *Mughal-e-Azam* was made only once and it cannot be remade"[121]. Debanu De in his review of *Mughal-e-Azam* (Colour) reiterates this myth, by claiming that "It's [*Mughal-e-Azam*] an experience - not a formula to be repeated again and again."[122] Again by employing the vocabulary of the classic and emphasising the incomplete dream of K. Asif, the act of colourisation is justified. Moreover, colourisation emerges as a potential rebellion against the remaking of old films at the level of production. He says, "Mughal-e-Azam has *great* love scenes but *no* sex, it has *great* war scenes but *no* violence, it has *beautiful* dances, *no* item numbers. That's why everybody likes *Mughal-e-Azam* even today."[123] Salgia uses hyperbole and negation to create a binary position between the values of the past and present wherein contemporary Bombay cinema is synopsised as an amalgamation of sex, violence and item numbers. The remake then fuses 21st century theatrical experience (technology) with the aesthetics of the classic. Through the narrativisation of the process of colourisation therefore, Salgia makes an attempt to break the traditional binary between art and technology by re-affirming the status of the film in its "value" and technology as a means of assistance in sustaining the aesthetic value of the film.

But while *Mughal-e-Azam's* classism and Asif's vision for the film are employed to justify the colourisation procedure, then why does Yash Chopra's *Naya Daur* and Amrajeet's *Hum Dono Rangeen* fail? Perhaps the answer lies in the evocation of material evidence and circuits through which a film travels. Upon its re-release in 2004, *Mughal-e-Azam* had travelled through several circuits of film festivals including the 55th Annual

[121] *Mughal-e-Azam* (Color) 2004, Dvd Extra, Special Feature: Documentary

[122] Debanu De 'History Repeats Itself!', India Target.

[123] *Mughal-e-Azam* Color (2004) , DVD Extra, Shemaroo.

Berlin Film Festival where it was honoured under the retrospective and homage category. In the year 2011, as the filmcelebrated its 50th anniversary, the 9th Pune Film Festival opened with an ode that further travelled in various festival circuits in Leeds, Ireland and Uganda among others. *Mughal-e-Azam*'s journey began a decade and half before it was released and half a century after its release in colour, the film continues to circulate in popular culture, accentuating its mythic status within Bombay cinema, a myth that the digital revolution was able to reiterate and add value to.

## The Materiality of Memory: The Myth of *Mughal-e-Azam*

The hallowed status of *Mughal-e-Azam* as a classic was built through a rhetoric of fandom, magazine covers, posters, logos and film reels, personal reminisces and folksy tales of unfulfilled dreams and family genealogies that acted as testimonials, foregrounding a desire for the new version of the film. From the old black and white photographs of the premiere and tales from industry insiders about the queues of desperate viewers waiting to buy the ticket outside Bombay's Maratha Mandir to the yellowed worn-off ticket that is kept as a souvenir by its distributer Madan Kothari, , to the memory of film's run at the box-office, *Mughal-e-Azam's* legendary status is enacted via all the material evidence that evoke the past.

In excavating the past in these sites of ruin, I follow Vivian Sobchack 's cue to practice history through "productive unreliability and partiality of lived and invested memories, murmurs, nostalgias, stories, myths and dreams" (Sobchack 2000: 300). Writing at the turn of the millennium, Sobchack argues that the "raw" material of the past that was used earlier to narrate the progressive tale of history has now entered the hyper-realised

economy of mass-mediated proliferation where material excavation of the past can be yielded only through "fragmants, traces and potsherds" of an earlier representation. Sobchack's position on film history as a *shifting* and an *unstable* site reestablishes the discourse on the production and consumption of material objects in the post-production film remake as the prism through which the discourse of classics can be staged (Ibid). It is through an excursion of these evidences that the cultural life of a film and its re-activation is narrated as a coherent discourse of nostalgia. *Mughal-e-Azam* (Colour) builds its discourse of classicism by weaving together its fecund after-life in literature, art, photography and cinema. Life around the film becomes the material evidence that not only justifies the changes, but the very conception of a revised version. The use of old photographs, video footage of the premiere, trade figures, and interviews on the bonus DVD of the film then becomes the method through which the history of Bombay cinema is narrated.

From the unveiling of the new film at Mumbai's Eros Theatre to the description of the technique behind its making, the narrativisation of the journey of the film as constructed by the DVD extras of the remake have established *Mughal-e-Azam* as "an encyclopaedia of its time" that carried within itself a classic cinematic experience. Assimilating documentary features, theatrical trailers, bonus song features, and interviews, a conglomeration of industry veterans (actors, directors, musicians etc), technicians and contemporary stars are brought together in order to construct the history of Bombay cinema. What is foregrounded in these accounts is what ? Reeves in his accounts of black and white photographs and their morphing, calls an emotively charged memory[124] that is

built in order to precipitate the consumption of mythic history and after-lives of cult film classics. While these accounts strengthen the cultural credence of the past, it is important to note that in the discourse of the classic, the past is constructed selectively. The accounts for instance portray K. Asif as an "eccentric genius" with each of the crew members and family members casting him as a *deewana*. Gross misappropriation of the funds and extravagances are underplayed by emphasising the paradoxical traits of Asif's grand vision and his simple lifestyle likening him to a *badshah* (Emperor) and a *fakir*[125]. It is Asif's "genius of madness", as the documentary commentary calls the director, that lends a credible note to the theatrical trailer of the colour version dubbing *Mughal-e-Azam* as "the first, the last and the never-before film."[126] The circulation of the fluid film object then acquires a performative position in the reiteration of its own legendary past that must, along with the remade film object, be re-channelised in its marketing.

The changed iconography in the promotion of *Mughal-e-Azam* (Color) for instance accentuates the status of the film as the star, a phenomenon wherein actors, writing, music, direction and their reception crystallises into a mythic tale of its own ossification. Departing from its original promotional impetus (primarily in the film posters) on the theme of unrequited love, and justice *Mughal-e-Azam* in its contemporary marketing sold itself as a "Classic". "The Greatest Indian Film Ever"[127] was the byline, reflecting a clever marketing strategy of foregrounding the popularity and posterity of the film.

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[124] Timothy Murray's 'By way of Introduction: Digitaliy and the memory of cinema, or, Bearing the losses of the Digital Code'.

[125] DVD Extra Feature, Commentary on the making of the Film

[126] See the official theatrical trailer of *Mughal-e-Azam* (colour), DVD extra, Shemaroo

[127] DVD Extra, Mughal-e-Azam (Colour), Trailer

Classicism as a value emerges in the course of the films' cultural biography and heritage status is given to the film through a renewed cultural after-life.

The ubiquitous invocation of the reflection shot in the song sequence shot in Sheesh Mahal, the lovers rendezvous and romance expressed through the feather sequence and the elaborate war scenes form the templates through which the legend of *Mughal-e-Azam* is constructed. The opening shot of the film for instance becomes symbolic of the status of the film within Indian cinema. Against the hue of orange sky and the spread of civilisation, an anatomical structure of the map of India rises from dust to narrate the story of its great patron Shehenshah Akbar. K. Asif's glorious historical *Mughal-e-Azam* thus opens with the authoritative voice declaring—"Main Hindustan hoon..." ("I am Hindustan"). With the Nation as a narrator, the film becomes emblematic of the distinctive character of Indian cinema.

Corroborating popular memory, the aura of *Mughal-e-Azam* in the last one decade has also entered various academic discourses within Indian film scholarship. Sumita Chakravarty analyses the above mentioned opening sequence of the film as a constitutive force that evokes history through its geography in order to construct a national discourse by amalgamating the legend in a historical (Chakravarty 1993). On the other hand, film scholars, Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen have examined *Mughal-e-Azam* as a Muslim historical. They make a case for the presence of the Mughals in the genre of historicals, arguing that the notions of justice became central in such narratives as they mobilized a popular imaginary of Akbar and connected that with the secular values and pride of the nation. Besides the memorable portraits perform "the ideological task that use the consciousness of history to speak to the needs and concerns of the present" (Bhaskar and

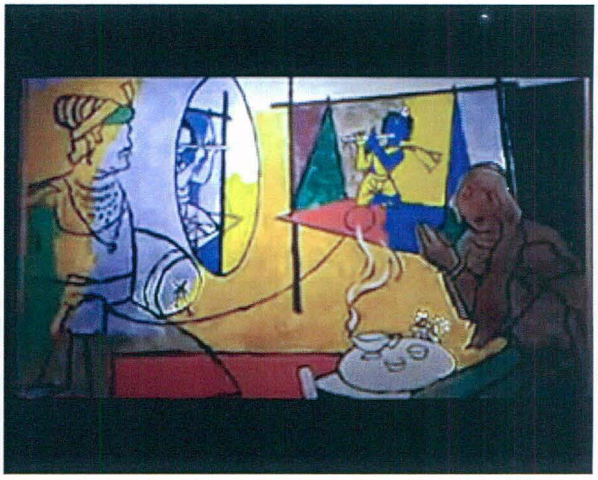
Allen 2009: 43) In his *Encyclopedia of The Motion Picture in India*, B.D. Garga points out that Asif pushed the popular legend to an extreme by inserting 'a happy ending' but contends that the "best of *Mughal-e-Azam* has never been surpassed" (Garga 1996: 176). Carrying forward the hyperbolic vocabulary that *Mughal-e-Azam* has generated over the years, the *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema* condenses its aura with its opening description as Asif's "classic megabudget spectacular and best known historical romance" (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen 2003: 365).

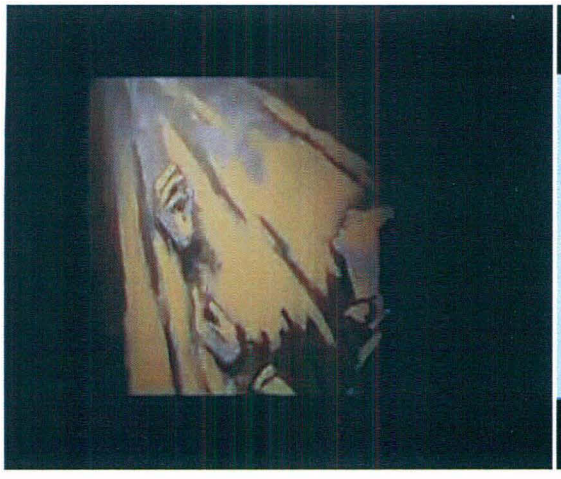
Documentary filmmaker Nasreen Munni Kabir released her book, *The Immortal Dialogues of K. Asif's* Mughal-e-Azam, a written translation of the dialogues of the film from Persianized Urdu to English. In her introduction to the book, Kabir cites Javed Akhtar's lament against the deterioration of spoken language and remarks that the dialogue of *Mughal-e-Azam* should be a part of academic curriculum in schools and colleges (Kabir 2007: xii). Embellished with over 29 photographs from the colourised version of the film, Kabir's book ascribes literary character to the intricacies of spoken language of the film. In a response to the controversy around the increasing use of "vulgur" language and curse words in contemporary Bombay films, filmmaker Anurag Kashyap declared that the era of dialogues was over. [128] However, Kabir pushes the concern for a classic note of aesthetics, heritage and vision for Hindi cinema.

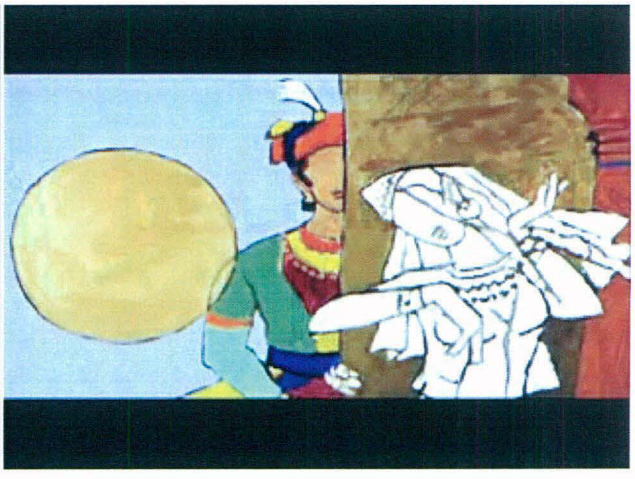
Recently actor Shah Rukh Khan produced a documentary feature on the film. Bringing together industry insiders along with the ties of the Asif Family, the documentary narrates the story of the making of Mughal-e-Azam. Beginning with Asif's vision of the film and its success to its re-release in colour, the film further extends its classicism through

[128] Avijit Ghosh, 'Bollywood's new obsession with cuss words', The Times of India, July 4, 2011

Mughal-e-azam on canvas by M.F. Hussain: Stills from 'Mughal-e-azam: A tribute from Akbar Asif to K.Asif







veteran artist M.F. Husain's series of paintings based on the film. Husain was commissioned by K. Asif's son Akbar Asif to commemorate the film. The documentary narrated by Shah Rukh Khan looks at the film as a family inheritance and a document that keeps the "legacy of K.A Asif's '*jayadaat*' (inheritance) alive." Produced by Red Chillies Entertainment Lmtd., the documentary acknowledges the "completion" of K. Asif's "unfinished agenda" of colourisation and furthers its artistic rendition in Husain's paintings. This association invokes the painterly detail of the film and further marks the associative tag of the artist in K. Asif. Talking about Husain's rendition of the film on canvas, Shabana Asif, daughter of K. Asif triumphantly declares that, "alent has created history again". Drawing parallels between the genius of Asif and Husain, expands the auratic field of the film, pushing it into the realm of Art.

Besides the numerous attempts made by the industry and the family of K. Asif, the virtual existence of material on *Mughal-e-Azam* on video sharing websites like Youtube allows for a more fragmented dissemination of the film's memory, constructing a public archive that acts as an alternative to a more organised marketing of the film. The homogenous narrative of the film is also greatly aided by the technological determinants that allow the dispersion of the film creating what film theorist Victor Burgin calls "cinematic heterotopia", Digital dispersion of the film object thus allows it to travel through the material life produced around the film.[129] The dispersed material is pieced together in the invocation of the vocabulary of a classic to grant the remake a legitimacy. Explicating the debates around the changes in film culture that are taking place under the rubric of digital

[129] D.N. Rodowick relates the case of digital dispersion of an object. He says that when 'space becomes information, it wants not to be preserved in an analogous record of duration, but to be transferred, manipulated, and exchanged.' (2007:118)

cinema and screen experience, Chuck Tyron refers to the symbolic value of the screen experience that prompts fans to watch a movie "particularly when the movie is promoted as an "event" that must be experienced in a theatre" (Tyron 2009: 63).

While this urgency to record, re-trace and experience the past can be read as "a symptom of a desire for historical continuity" (Manoff 2010: 385) or a reflection on the moment of convergence which marries "new technical capacities and the age-old impulse to gather and preserve" (Stallybrass 2007: 1581), the post-production film remake redefines the identity of Bombay cinema around a plethora of discourses that use the idea of the Classic. The process of digital reformatting and colourisation of old films do a lot more than just re-presenting the past. The colorised remakes also narrate the history of film.

CHAPTER THREE

## BETWEEN PARODY AND PASTICHE

The hero sees his lady love in an electronic showroom. The aural stream suddenly explodes with the background music of K.Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960). The woman—now dressed as Anarkali—twirls as she is captured by numerous central windows of symmetrically placed washing machines in the background, recasting the reflection shot of *Mughal-e-Azam's* immortal song-'*Jab pyar kiya to darna kya*'. The audience erupts into frantic laughter, even as they recognise in the sequence an ensuing romance between the lead pair of the film. Thus Prabhudeva's *Wanted* (2009) mobilises Bombay cinema's quintessential romantic sequence through parody. In invoking the classic sequence from Asif's magnum opus, *Wanted* draws attention to the conventions of romance while simultaneously puncturing and accelerating the romantic track of the film. In my previous chapter, I mapped the mythic discourse of *Mughal-e-Azam* which in some ways prevented others from tampering with the original theme. It could only go through a techno-material transformation. In the colourisation of *Mughal-e-Azam*, the "original" myth was retained and recast through technological means only. Yet despite its mythic aura, what is it about the 'classic' film that makes it available for numerous attempts at parody in advertising, fashion and films?[130] What is the function served by this fragmented segment in contemporary cinema? Moreover, what happens when a genre that is often "seen as the lowest form of literary art" (Joe Lee Davis: 1951)[131] enters the

[130] Sanjay Chhel's *Maan Gaye Mughal-e-Azam* (2008) was a comedy film based on Kalakar Theatrical company that adapt the story of *Mughal-e-Azam*. The film drew on popular memory of the characters of Akbar, Salim and Anarkali. The film also adapted lyrics of 'Pyar kiya to Darna Kya'.

realm of remakes, signposting the complexities of contemporary film culture? These are the some of the questions that I will address and seek to answer in the course of this chapter.

In the previous two chapters, I traced two models of the remake – adaptation and colourisation – as techniques that allow us to distinguish their character in the history of Bombay cinema. My emphasis there was to record the transformation of the original film text in the remade version. This chapter looks at the ways in which a fragmented identity of the tropes associated with Bombay cinema travel across time as flashes, items, song sequences and also as narratives. What happens when narratives, stars and indeed the notion of the concrete film object itself breaks down? In tracing the dispersed economy of images that emerge from this breakdown, I will explore the language of fashion, gesture, performance and the body as they circulate via ensemble narratives and choreographed song sequences. Is this circulation of fragmented imagery a form of pastiche or parody?

In our globalised economy, images travel at a mind numbing speed. The film object now disperses across various forms of popular culture—from calendar art to video sharing public portals, from vintage magazine covers to Broadway musicals, from DJ remixes to the ancillary industries of advertising. The binary structure of the "original" and the new has given way to a fragmented memory. What are these fragmentary codes and how are they re-allocated in contemporary film practice and consumption? I will try to deal with these questions through an exploration of what I call a collage of fragments. I will track

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[131] As quoted by Scott R. Olson , Foreword: Puncturing and Reaffirmation' in Wes D. Gehring ed. *Parody as Film Genre: Never Give a Saga an Even Break., 1999*

this collage of fragments first through a discussion of Farah Khan's *Om Shanti Om* (2008) and second through an analysis of film songs that reference the past.

*Om Shanti Om* in many ways uses parody to complicate the remake. In engaging with the film, I pose a series of questions. Is *Om Shanti Om* a remake of Subhash Ghai's *Karz* (1980) or Bimal Roy's *Madhumati* (1958) or a general trope based on the "formula" of re-incarnation? Does the film reflect nostalgia or is it just an ensemble of certain traditions of film-making? Moreover, as a film about film-making, how is the landscape of rumours, gossip, trivia, scandal, and criticism, incorporated to narrate the history of the industry? Finally I look at certain songs that function as Item Numbers because of their play with a performative language associated with Hindi cinema's past. The co-existence of the song as an item parodying the past within a narrative located in the present creates an interesting encounter where the historical memory of cinema enters film practice in the form of fragments. These films fragments function as an archive of fashion trends, iconographic elements and hyperbolic gestures, embedded in "formula based" film productions.

**Parody and Popular culture**

> "Cinema has long been a skeleton at a feast, but at the same time...(It) is also a feast of skeletons, a *carnival* which simultaneously acknowledges our progressive loss of shared realities and provides a *festive* ground on which this loss can be anticipated, celebrated, mourned and perhaps even transcended".
>
> - Tom Gunning (2000: 328)

Mikhail Bakhtin in his major work on Francois Rabelais associated parody with the spirit of the carnival. For Bakhtin, the carnivalesque was a profane celebration that challenged

all hierarchies to erupt using the hegemonic use of laughter and forms of excess.[132] The carnivalesque was critical in the development of European literary traditions of comedy. Parody symbolised a transgressive break from hierarchy. It provided a de-privileging model that questioned feudal principles, evoking the carnivalesque, that allowed for "languages and styles to actively and mutually illuminate one another" (Bakhtin 1981: 76). What is implied here is that parody as a form has a dialogic character that creates an oppositional model using the critique of "high" art through an overt investment in the celebration of the grotesque, as in the case of Rabelais's emphasis on lower bodily functions in *The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel.* It was this binary model that continued to define eighteenth century writing on wit in the works of John Dryden, Alexander Pope, and Jonathan Swift amongst many others.

> The eighteenth century witnessed a motley of tastes, with an attempt to revisit the classical age on one hand and the emergence of a new breed of professional writing on the other. Popular writing emerged in tandem with a merchandising ethic (with the outburst of publications and the growth of a coffeehouse culture). This transition resulted in a conflict that led to a polarisation between the popular and the polite, between aesthetic and grub street writers and therefore between good and bad writing. [133] Parody thus

[132] 'Following Bakhtin's (1984b) account of carnival in late Medieval and Renaissance Europe, the carnivalesque refers to all those cultural and literary practices which draw upon popular-festive energies to relativise or even to overturn the authority of the discourses of power and authority. Carnivalesque writing need have only the most distant relation to actual carnival festivities; it habitually sets multiple.' (Dentith 2002: 190)

[133] An impoverished district of London occupied by struggling writers and abject publishers, Grubstreet writers is a derogatory term to refer to works and writers of low literary value.

became a retaliatory tool that was employed in service of literary and political critique.[134] The definition of parody expanded with its foray into theatre and the visual arts. While film parody emerged as a genre in Hollywood with films like the *Abott and Ostello* film series (in the 1940s and 1950s), *Young Frankenstein* (1974), *Repossessed* (1990), and the more recent *Scary Movie* series (2000-11), parody came to be primarily associated with a comic sub-genre. Travelling through the tunnels of visual and performance arts, parody also entered the ancillary industries of fashion and advertising. From MAD magazine's two-page spreads of parodist sketches from popular Hollywood films, to the use of popular film characters in promotional videos of music channels, film parody became a staple of popular culture. Soon, parody's oppositional model became a precarious formulation. With this the political motif of parody became just one amongst its many manifestations.

Fredric Jameson in his seminal essay, 'Post-modernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', lamented this loss of political agency in parody. For Jameson, cultural practices in the time of late capitalism lacked the possibility of a critical distance which for him was an indispensible aspect of parody. Overshadowed by pastiche, parody according to Jameson becomes a "random cannibalisation of all the styles of the past; the play of random stylistic allusion"(Jameson 1984: 22). Linda Hutcheon counters Jameson's position, emphasising that parody can function within the realm of the

[134] The use of the term wit as against parody was the normative term of use for these writers. Parody was considered a more lowly form. The standard method of employing critique was to use slovenly style with numerous 'syntaxical blunders' and inaccuracies of diction. Parody was used to draw attention to the attempt to fix the standards in the "correct" usage of language .

historical and ideological that "unites the arts of 20th century"[135]. For Hutcheon, parody is a tool for critical dialogue with the past that employs "forms of repetition with ironic critical distance" (1984: xii). As a form it extends its ironic structures to re-contextualise previous works and creates an interface between the past and the present. Parody for Hucheon becomes a self-conscious reading of "one's own inherent paradoxes ...and to their critical or ironic re-reading...of the past" (1984:23).

While both Jameson and Hutcheon offer important arguments, their notion of parody rests primarily on the fact that they see it through the same traditional model of movement from modernism to post-modernism. In the wake of what Ravi Sundaram calls pirate modernity, post-modern sensibility fails to capture the subterranean currents of urban rhythm in India. He says, the "confusion between 'newness' and an eternal present, between objects and human beings, shows a kind of untimely compression, where features commonly associated in the west with 'modernism' and 'post-modernism' seemed to blur in one decade of flux in India" (Sundaram 2010: 87).

Moreover, Hutcheon's rescue mission of parody does not take into account that a uniform past—nostalgic or otherwise—ceased to exist as we moved from an emphasis on production and exhibition to that of circulation. The real challenge therefore, is to theorise a condition where the processes of production, circulation and consumption enter the non-tangible zone of the virtual bazaar. Perhaps it is this overwhelming breakdown of the separated realms of production/circulation that makes parody and pastiche come together. Moreover, parody cannot be simply studied as an effect of the post-modern

[135] Hutcheon 1984: xii

condition. The impetus is not to study it as a mere de-privileging mechanism of transgression as Bakhtin would have us believe, nor is it simply an ahistorical aestheticisation of image consumption and therefore an extended reverence albeit pastichised images of late capitalism as Jameson would see it. When various forms of medias collapse in the ambit of popular culture in a globalised economy, virtual signs/codes re-enter the traditional space of art forms, in this case of cinema, in order to envelope inter-textuality, quotation, parody and pastiche in a complex structure. Parody thus changes its scope to represent a playful cinephilia that housed in its dual structure - using comic effect as "overt puncturing" of the object as well as for its "reaffirmation" (Olson: xi). Such a narration traverses its traditional function as a political critique. When this structure is reconfigured in the remake, fragments get cogently pieced together into an ensemble of dispersed cinematic idioms.

Responding to our ever-evolving consumer society in the face of constant technological innovations, Jean Baudrillard has argued that commodity fetishism shifts from the realm of production and consumption of commodities to the circulation and consumption of the object as signs (fashion, media, tropes etc.). What is more, "the passion for the code is not a fixation with individual signs or sign-combinations per se but a 'perverse' desire for the systemic closure and definition they promise" (Valente 1985:60). For Baudrillard, the relationship of mass culture, media and the virtual bazaar of images has reconfigured the realm of circulation.[136] With the notion of the "hyperreal", Baudrillard opened new

[136] For Baudrillard, we now live in a world dominated by "simulations" or infinite production of copies with no fixed referent. For him, the commodity fetishism now manifests itself in the realm of the "code" or a "sign", ostensibly breaking out of the monolithic cycle of production and consumption. The ubiquitous

perspectives on the relation between culture and technology, an argument that captured the principal shift in capitalist societies, a shift from production to the primacy of exchange. This global exchange for Baudrillard resulted in neutralisation and indifference to the coherent, unified identity of the image. Such a displacement first took place with the arrival of television and later with satellite cable, DVDs, VCDs, video recorders and so on. Such exchanges accelerate the movement of technology and culture as forms both high and low, informational and mechanical, now moved at a phenomenal speed across the world (Appadurai 1997: 34). The work of 'art' and 'trash' travels through the same tunnels of cyberspace with equal ease. While there can be no consensus on this debate, one must recognise that parody has to be re-contextualised for an understanding of the contemporary.

In Farah Khan's *Om Shanti Om* (2007), for instance, Om Makhija (ShahRukh Khan), a junior artist shoots a mock performance in R.C.Studio to impress a leading lady of Bombay films, Shanti Priya, mouthing dialogues from an early 1990s advertisement for a music channel, Quickgun Murugun. Quickgun Muguran was a character created for the promotion of Channel V in India. The venture released a series of advertisements with recurring taglines like "Mind it" and "We are like this only". The promotional advertising idol garnered a cult status over the years.[137] Shah Rukh Khan mimics matinee idol Rajnikanth for this mock moment. Dressed as a cowboy, the character engages in stupefying mid-air action sequences and wrestles with a dummy tiger. The fight

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presence of the new media destroys any attempt to locate an indexical reality, saturating the masses with simulation.

[137] Soon after the release of Khan's *Om shanti Om*, Fox Studios announced a movie venture based on the character. The film was released in 2009 and was called Quick Gun Murugun. For channel V advertisements, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5slBo9XV3c ; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tgJK9cezdk&NR=1

according to the director was based on *Tarzan 303* (Chandrakant: 1970) from her collection of "Ham videos", which Khan refers to as "a digital database of some really bad acting" (Sheikh 2008: 104). By conflating the dominant (Studio), subterranean (*Tarzan 303*) and the peripheral (Quick Gun Murugun) into one sequence in order to hasten the developing association between Om and Shanti, Farah Khan used scattered reminisces from popular culture to move forward a narrative of 1970s film culture. What is important of these heterogeneous references is the knowledge of the entire oeuvre of Bombay cinema and other media cultures. The past is not merely available for a sentimental nostalgic trip but exists also as a recollection of the rejected, and forgotten. Parody thus becomes a potent vehicle through which the classic and the popular become enmeshed to accommodate the unacknowledged along with the 'sacred'.

How can a montage of fragmented images then narrate the history of Bombay cinema? It is the reconfiguration of the dispersed micro-narratives of songs, gestures, fashion, and hackneyed dialogues through the mode of parody that allows isolated references and inter-textual quotations to reinvent their annotative identity in the remake. While the travel networks of old and new, high and low intersect, the remake uses parody to recover them from the obscure networks of the virtual bazaar reinventing what Gunning calls the 'skeletons' of the past. In the year 2000, Tom Gunning had optimistically stated that despite the onset of the digital revolution, objects acquire historicity, a recognition of their discarded past. It is amidst these scattered bodies (skeletons) that parody emerges as a mode of interaction between the past and the present. As a heterogeneous form that has

its origins in the politics of high and low forms of art[138], traversing through various circuits —from literature to advertising, from print media to cinema—parody has entered a complex relationship with the remake emerging as one of the sites of recovery. Given this rich economy of dispersed material, it seems that cinema's mass cultural seduction is far from being over. Narrating the history of the Bombay film industry, Farah Khan's *Om Shanti Om* opens itself to such a dispersed memory of cinephilia that turns to parody through a story of reincarnation.

**Reincarnating the Film Industry: *Om Shanti Om* as Cinephilia**

Farah Khan's *Om Shanti Om* (2007) opens with a heavy baritone voice reciting an Urdu adage, as production details appear on screen with a white chiselled statue in front of the film's fictional R.C Studios. A common feature associated with the introductory logo of production houses in the films of the late 1970s, this audio-visual reference acts as an immediate temporal point of reference that situates the film in the period of the 1970s even before the opening credits begin to roll.[139] Through this, Farah Khan refers to an archive of established templates of film production.

Based on the popular theme of reincarnation, *Om Shanti Om* brought together the iconography associated with two prominent eras of Bombay cinema—the 1970s and the contemporary. These two decades are embedded in the structural framework of the film (formally divided through film's intermission). Cinematic codes themselves become the mode through which the past is resurrected. Reincarnation has been a popular motif

[138] The role of a parodic representation was traditionally restricted to 'expose the model's conventions and lay bare its devices' (Porat 1979: 247).
[139] The adage ends with the inter-title reference, 'Thirty years ago'.

within Hindi cinema—from films like *Madhumati* (Bimal Roy 1958), *Kudrat* (Chetan Anand 1981) and *Karan Arjun* (Rakesh Roshan: 1995). The title credits of *Om Shanti Om* roll with the shooting of the famous song sequence '*Om Shanti Om..*' from Subhash Ghai's 1980 reincarnation revenge drama, *Karz*. The sequence cuts between re-edited footage from the song sequence of Ghai's film and the junior artists present at the shoot (also introducing Om Prakash Makhija, known as Om and played by Shah Rukh Khan) in Farah Khan's *Om Shanti Om*. It is here that Farah Khan introduces the aspirations of her protagonist Om, a junior artist who imagines himself as the hero of Ghai's film.

In the film, Om Prakash Makhija is a struggling junior artist who falls in love with the reigning star of the 70s, Shantipriya (Deepika Padukone). Shantipriya however is secretly married to film producer Mukesh Mehra (Arjun Rampal) who plans to produce a film titled *Om Shanti Om*—the his biggest film of his career. The plot adopts one of the popularly held beliefs of the industry that an actress's career comes to an end with her marriage. This dark reality of Bombay film culture becomes the dark secret of the plot which leads to Shanti's murder in Mehra's hands. Om too dies in an attempt to save her. The first half of the film follows Om's insider perspective and encounter with the film industry of the 70s. The second half of the film cuts to the present where Om is now reborn as Om Kapoor (Shah Rukh Khan), son of yesteryear's star Rajesh Kapoor. The rest of the film follows superstar Om's revenge against the now aging Mehra ("Call me Mike", insists the Hollywood returned producer). Shanti's double, Sandhya (Deepika Padukone) helps Om to get Mehra's confession. In narrating this reincarnation-revenge-comic drama, Khan employed all the popular idioms of Bombay cinema, from popular codes and formulas to biographical anecdotes, rumours, scandals and press stories.

Though *Om Shanti Om's* immediate source is Ghai's *Karz*, the film remained an ensemble of the tried and tested formulae of Bombay cinema. From dream sequences, flashbacks, and cameos, to love at first sight, melodrama, the double, item numbers, and revenge, Farah Khan repeated and parodied these tropes of popular cinema for a "masala" aesthetics. It was in the 1970s that the "masala" film became a widely accepted form. Thessa Mooji succinctly describes "Bollywood Masala" as "a celluloid combination of 19th century Parsi plays with their song and dance numbers, Urdu poetry, Victorian melodrama, and folk theatre with its stock cast of baddies, damsels in distress, strict fathers and enduring mothers" (Mooji 2006: 30). In a self-referential sequence of the film, Farah Khan located her lineage of filmmaking in Manmohan Desai, a director recognised for his masala entertainers. Producer Mehra tells his director to wrap up the scene within a day. The director confidently replies that he has efficiently placed three cameras for the scene, "one Satyajit Ray angle, one Bimal Roy angle and one Guru Dutt angle", to which Mehra responds with suggestion that a 'Manmohan Desai angle should also be planned for "It'll be the one that will eventually work". While Ray, Roy and Dutt embodied a different strain of filmmaking and were accorded the status of major auteurs of Indian cinema, Farah Khan pits Desai and consequently popular masala entertainer films as her role model.[140] In drawing attention to the different camera positions, the film refers to the formulaic conventions of filmmaking, Khan then simultaneously juggles between parody and pastiche in her portrayal of practices within Bombay films.

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[140] M.Shamin, writing for the 6th international film festival of India laid down the two "effective" methods of filmmaking in India, "The commercial way and the Satyajiit way. One is purely local approach", he says, while "the other is an international one." (1977)

Khan's choice of the "local" filmmaking style is emblematic of popular Bombay film's global exposure. Emblematic of this new exposure is the screening of popular films like *Kal Ho Na Ho* (Advani 2003) . Farah Khan's *Om Shanti Om* at the 2008 Berlinaire Special. See 'Indian Cinema at the Berlin Film Festival', The Book Review, Vol. XXXiii, Number 2, Feb 2009.

For instance, *Om Shanti Om* draws heavily on melodrama's enduring power on popular films. The widowed mother and her hardships has formed the central arc in films like Mehbooob Khan's *Mother India* (1957), Yash Chopra's *Deewar* (1975) and Manmohan Desai's *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977). Actor Nirupa Roy played the quintessential mother figure in several films of the 1970s and became associated with suffering and maternal sacrifice.[141] In *Om Shanti Om*, Farah Khan employs this stereotype of the widowed mother to introduce Om's mother, Bela Makhija (Kiron Kher). She is ushered in the film with the loud exaggerated cry of a resounding "*Nahin...*" fixing Bela as the prototypical 70s film mother. A junior artist herself, she nurses her ambitions of acting through her hyper-performative energy in conversations with her son. Bela uses clichéd dialogues (*'Kaleje ka tukda', 'mera laal', 'pagla'*), and hyperbolic gestures, while standard camera movements such as the zoom (used frequently in the 70s) assist to foreground her melodramatic performance. In Bela, Khan affectionately crafts a caricatured *filmi* mother.

It is through parody that the hallmark of Indian melodrama's gestural economy is placed. Parody is often associated with "the end of a genre's natural life cycle, the step right before it arises like a phoenix from its own ashes" (Olson: xi). In allocating the heightened expressivity of the melodramatic mode in Bela through parody, Khan built an archive of styles, gestures and forms identified with the iconic mother of Bombay cinema. Bela employs this gestural economy to vicariously fulfil her desire to act. We are told in the film by Bela in a self congratulatory manner that she missed out on being cast

[141] Nirupa Roy's extolment to the position of the quintessential Indian mother followed her reverential status as an Indian goddess in a number of mythological roles played by her in the 1950s in films like *Shri Vishnu Bhagwan* (1951), *Shiv Shakti* (1952), *Rajrani Damyanti* (1952), *Bajrang Bali* (1956), *Lakshmi Puja* (1957) etcetra. With films like *Deewar,* and *Amar Akbar Anthony*, she congealed her stamp in the role of the mother.

in K.Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* because of her pregnancy. It is a fact that Asif auditioned hundreds of girls from all over India for the role of Anarkali after Nargis quit the film (Warsi: 2007). In combining this anecdote with Bela's hyperbolic declaration and the distant possibility of an audition for Asif's film, Khan drew on the extra-diegetic world of trivia. In the second half of the film, Bela appears in another stereotypical character of a neurotic mother who stalks film star Om Kapoor (believing him to be her lost son). Bela oscillates in and out of melodrama, and the tempo of the film also shifts between comedy and pathos.

Stardom is the central guiding thread that connects the first half to the second. In Om's family of junior artists, Khan creates a parallel to the acting dynasties within the fictional industry in the film. By casting Shah Rukh Khan as a junior artist, stardom is inserted into the lowest end of filmmaking. This incongruous combination of star and character in parody and the constant eulogising of the film industry establishes and destabilises the dominant in the film. The film stages the ludicrous functioning and unorganised nature of the industry through a junior artist, Om has to be *reborn* as a hero, quite literally through the narrative logic of reincarnation, through his superstar father, in order to get justice.[142] It is only through this implausible theme of rebirth that the resolution for an unfinished past is provided. Khan employed Shah Rukh Khan's stardom to evoke a sense of incongruity in the first half and the comic egotistical-double of the star in the second. In

[142] A spoilt star son, Om Kapoor's success is primarily located in his surname. In an early scene, Pappu tells Om that the only impediment in his potential success is his surname. Pappu suggests that Om changes his surname to a 'Kumar, Kapoor or Khanna'. Bombay film industry has for long been defined by parochial family structures. Certain surnames thus seem to carry more weightage than others. A lot of stars changed their names and adopted new surnames, generally to the likes of Kapoors and Kumars. Om as a junior artist gets defeated by the big names of the industry and it's only in his incarnation as Om Kapoor that he is endowed with the power to outdo Mehra.

this shift, *Om Shanti Om* playfully parodied the eccentricities of both eras of Bombay cinema.

Love in *Om shanti Om* is the love of a fan for a star. In the first half of the film, Om romances Shanti in the midst of billboards, posters, and the screen. Om Makhija's relationship with Shanti begins with him as a star-struck fan fascinated with 'Dreamy Girl' star Shantipriya. Om stands on the bridge and speaks to his imaginary "girlfriend", Shanti the star of the film "Dreamy Girl". The camera pans through billboards of advertisements of Exide soap, Ovaltine and Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay* (1975) with the accompanying text saying 'still running'. In the middle of these billboards is the hand painted poster of 'Dreamy Girl' with the side profile of Shantipriya. These referential "insertions" thus become the method through which the film gets narrated. Familiar signs and codes are allotted to the present as the film becomes a visual montage of the past. Dispersed and yet familiar memories, are evoked, accommodating various media circuits and forms of image travel.

In the song sequence '*Tumko paya hai...*', Om uses the film apparatus – its sets, lighting, snowflakes etcetera to gift Shanti a night away from the hustle of her stardom. Ironically, even for an actor, this escape finds its route through cinema. In the second half, Sandy (Shanti's double)—no longer a star—falls in love with Om, a superstar. When Om confides in Sandy that he hesitated to tell her about the memory of his past life and the details of events that led to their death, Sandy responds by saying that if she can believe that he is capable of beating 100 goons, flying off the top of buildings, then there is no reason for her to not believe in this tale of incarnation. In Sandy and Om, Farah Khan places the non-judgemental love of the fan. Writing about the making of the film, its co-

writer Mushtaq Sheikh said- "It's a love story, sure, but it's a Bollywood love story, it's the magic of making movies..." (2008:19). By locating love and fantasy in the world of affect, Khan emphasised the importance of entertainment and the 'value' of popular cinema for its audience.

Furthur, Khan plays on the schism between formula-based popular films and critically acclaimed "serious" cinema. She shows how disability is used in a film that depicts its hero (Om Kapoor also known as OK) as blind, deaf, dumb and physically challenged. The reason is to win critical acclaim and awards. Khan playfully inserts the notion of the formula in "serious" cinema and then shows how it is not formula but entertainment that makes for Bombay cinema's mass appeal. She shows for instance how the "item song"- '*Dard-e-disco*' can break the monotony of serious narratives and through dream sequences that open out various possibilities. Moreover, in a paradoxical mix of sad songs and a disco dance number, *Om Shanti Om* parodied and celebrated the eclectic mix of genres to the point of absurdity. In the song, Om Kapoor flaunts his six pack abs and dances amongst a number of extras in a rescue attempt to make the film work. Before the release of *Om Shanti Om*, a major part of its publicity focused on Shah Rukh Khan's training for his six pack abs. It is in this moment that Khan parodies and uses the power of stardom, and its dependence on extra-diegetic information, to help with the film's publicity.

In another well-known song sequence of the film, thirty one stars of the industry appear on screen for a post-award ceremony celebration. Together they sing the song, '*Deewangi..*'. What the director highlights here is not just the star power of Om Kapoor but also that of Shah Rukh Khan and herself (in bringing together the stars). The song

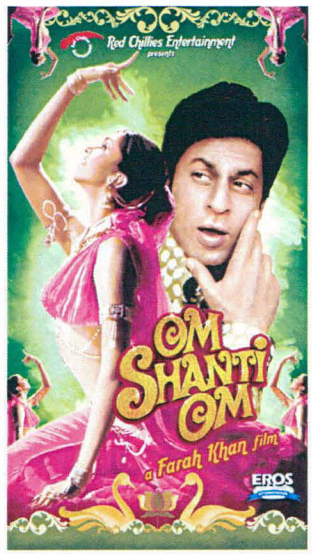
connected choreography to the star image, and became a medley of the signature steps of each of the stars. If Mithun resorted to his signature pelvic thrust, Dharmendra performed his drunken dance steps from the song '*Yamla pagla deewana*'. What '*Deewangi*' foregrounded was the power of the often derided song and dance routine and its relationship to stardom.

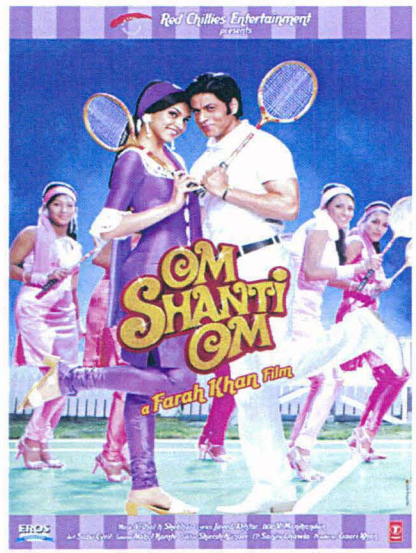
In combining a parodic 'period film' with the contemporary film industry in the second half, and in engaging with both parody and self parody, *Om Shanti Om* situated itself within a frenzy of references from production details, gossip, scandal, stories, characters, tropes to stardom as a narrative of the Bombay film industry and people associated with it – "their quirks, (and) their oddities" (Khan 2008: 165).[143]

Mushtaq Sheikh explains how the film narrates the past first and foremost through the "*visual evidence*" of the sets, the props and the costumes. Secondly, it mobilises the set of RC Studio, a site that is identified with glamour and the aspirations of the industry. Lastly, the film accentuates the working model of 70s Bollywood recreated through "production technology, equipment, old Mitchell cameras, hard lighting, camera angles, choreography and plots" (Sheikh 2008: 14,15). In the song sequence '*Dhum tana*', Farah Khan used the set designs, choreography and costumes to showcase the different trends of the 70s - classical dance, cabaret, and specific references to the badminton and banjara songs from films like *Amrapali* (Tandon: 1966), *Saccha Jhoota* (Desai: 1970), *Humjoli*

[143] In one such scene, actor Manoj Kumar (played by his duplicate, Salim Khan) is thrown out of the premiere of Dreamy Girl as he is not recognized by the security due to his signature pose of covering his face while talking. Livid at what Kumar labeled as "fundamentalist" attitude of the film, Kumar filed a case againstfilm's broadcast on sony Entertainment television. The film was shown with cuts and all further screenings were ordered to follow the cut.
See 'Manoj Kumar wins case against *OSO*', 9 August 2009, The times of India;
*http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2008-08-09/mumbai/27935139_1_manoj-kumar-scene-defamation-case*

Ramanna (1970)[144]. The images ranged from the 60s to the 70s, and addressed a cinephilic audience schooled in that imagery. In the song sequence, Om explodes the referenced diegetic space and inserts himself as the hero/lover. As the song ends, Om gets up from his seat and starts dancing in the theatre. The ambiance is filled with hooting, dancing and whistling. Again, what gets foregrounded in the scene is the power of the song and dance routine. The publicity posters of *Om Shanti Om* recreated the iconic images from the song. Through the use of these fragmentary visual icons of the 1970s, *Om Shanti Om* evokes the past through its most recognizable template-the song and dance.


**OM SHANTI OM: The Official Web Site**[145]

[144] See list of references in *Om Shanti Om* at http://dw007.wordpress.com/2007/11/17/om-shanti-om-filmi-references/

[145] Source http://omshantiom.erosentertainment.com/om_shanti_om_story_om_shanti_om_synopsis.htm

**Bollywood Dreams: Yesterday's Hits, Today's Item Songs**

Since the first Indian talkie, *Alam Ara* (Irani: 1931)—the "all talking, *singing* and *dancing* film"[146] with a total of fifty songs—songs have been an 'allied phenomenon' in popular Indian cinemas stitched together by the thematic and narrative codes of the film (Manuel 1993: 42). From the heyday of film promotion through the circulation of song booklets, and dedicated schedules on All India Radio, to the circulation of websites with lyrics and song-videos on the Internet—songs have been for a long time an intrinsic part of film production and promotion.[147] Instituted formally within the networks of production and reception, a major corpus of popular awards like Filmfare, Screen, and IIFA and even the National Film Award commemorate various departments of background score, musical composition, lyrics, playback singing, and choreography.

In the 1990s, diaspora-centric films like *Dilwale Dulhaniya le Jayenge* (Chopra A: 1995), *Dil to Pagal Hai* (Chopra Y.1997), and *Pardes* (Ghai 1997), acquired global recognition and an identity in the misnomer, Bollywood. M. Madhava Prasad observes that the epithet "seems to at once mock the thing it names and celebrate its difference" (Prasad 2009: 41). These films marketed the quintessential "masala" quotient on an epic scale. In

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[146] See 'Talking images: 75 Years of Indian cinema', The Tribune, March 26, 2006.

[147] The song Booklets were in wide circulation from the 1950s till the mid-70s before cassette culture took over in the late 1970s. (Manuel) These were saleable promotional documents that had illustrations on either ends of its covers, along with a brief description of storyline and list of cast and credits of the film .The National Film Archive of India houses a huge collection of song booklets in its Documentation Centre.

In the 1950s, Dr. B.V. Keskar, Minister of Information and Broadcast (1952-62), nearly banned film songs from Radio as he deemed them "cheap and vulgar" (Punathambekar 2010) . It was only with Vividh Bharati and its popular show, Binaca Geet Mala that a new publicity circuit opened for films songs. See (Awasthy 1965) (Manuel 1993)

advertising the once trashed tropes of Bombay cinema, a global appeal of the 'exotic' was packaged in the song and dance sequences.

Furthur, with the success of films like Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge* (2001) and Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), Bombay cinema propelled its distinct form which got further cemented by its presence in the various global art culture and industries. In 2002, Andrew Lloyd Webber produced a Bollywood-premised musical, *Bombay Dreams* based on a Bollywood aspirant slum dweller, Aakash. When Akash falls in love with the daughter of a famous film director, Priya, the musical posits the realities of the slum and the aspirational dream world of the film industry. In an attempt to define its genesis in genre, Weber placed *Bombay Dreams* in the lineage of Bollywood film "musicals" (Weber 2002). The term itself then became an advertisement for Bombay cinema.[148] Its profile was not built on stardom or even on specific films but through a notion of the "masala" aesthetics of the Bombay film industry. Composed by A.R. Rahman and choreographed by Farah Khan, the musical premiered on June 2002 at the West End Apollo Victoria Theatre, London. It was later produced for Broadway in 2004 and ran a total of 284 performances. *Bombay Dreams* went on to earn three nominations for the prestigious Tony Award for best costume design, choreography and orchestration. It is important to note here then that the notion of Bollywood is intricately connected with glamour and costumes.

[148] On May 15, 2010, U.S. based Marquee Pictures announced their upcoming film based on the adaptation of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical, *Bombay Dreams* at the festival de Cannes. With the announcement, producer Gary Hamilton observed that, 'The global success, both critical and commercial of *Slumdog Millionaire*, particularly in North American, west European, and Asian markets, demonstrates that there is an appetite for films like *Bombay Dreams* – with its Indian influenced music score, that can breakout with all demographics and perform well in all territories.' (Weber 2010) See http://www.andrewlloydwebber.com/shows/bombay-dreams/bombay-dreams-movie-announcem/

Cinema has always been a key cultural determinant in the major fashion revolutions of any given decade. Tracking the transformation in the role of songs, Ranjani Mazumdar has argued that something significantly changed in the 1990s for it is in this decade that we see songs being used to display the latest in designer fashion. With fashion designers now playing a major role in films, songs became the ideal space to showcase new trends Songs were also circulating independently on television and their popularity on countdown shows made the industry recognise their significance in the marketing of films. Not only did this lead to the production and circulation of the songs for TV much before the film, it also turned the song into a mega event that brought together fashion, choreography and art direction. It is this context of the circulation of songs through various networks of marketing on television that has made many of the song sequences of the 1990s function like electronic catalogs, created as they are through a combination of travel, fashion photography, and the rhythmic movement of dancing (Mazumdar 2007: 96)

Given this new presence of the song, fragments of film texts began to travel across the virtual bazaar (with an insurmountable number of video sharing websites like YouTube). Recent scholarship on film and music studies has also explored the distinct role of music (both background music and playback) in Indian cinemas[149]. Peter Manuel, for instance, in his study of Cassette Culture in north India, has mapped the patterns of consumption of popular music with the advent of the portable cassette player in the 1980s. Through this vital moment of transition, Manuel traces the local sub-cultural networks and spaces that

[149] (Booth 2000; 2010) , (Qureshi 1986; 1992) ,(Thomas 1995) ,(Dwyer 2000)

have created a disturbance in traditional networks of circulation. Gregory Booth on the other hand has explored the industrial practices linked to the Bombay film song. Booth argues that the integration of the lyric, the narrative and cultural contexts in the film can help us study their role in films. This he refers to as the "music scenes" of the film (Booth 2008). This notion of a music scene stems from the visual iconography of the performance.

With the explosion of satellite television in the early 1990s and the emergence of Pop music videos, the accent of film songs shifted from the aural and lyrical dimensions to that of visual mass entertainment (Goodwin 1993) [150]. Countdown shows on exclusive music channels like MTV and Channel V laid the impetus on youth and precipitated new beats, circulation of western popular music iconography and eventually remixes.[151] Hindi film songs began to circulate as independent videos on these channels for slots of 'non-stop music', countdown shows and promotional film trailers. Songs moved across domestic screens, display screens in bars, clubs and restaurants. Taking this into account, I argue that through this hybrid travelling form, fragments of cinematic memory are remade at the intersection of parody and pastiche.

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[150] *Chitrahaar*, literally the garland of pictures, was a dedicated programme that aired at India's National Network, Doordarshan. Through the 1970s and mid-1980s, till VCR stormed the markets in India, *Chitrahaar* was the only visual source of song videos and was one of the highest rated shows of its time.

[151] It is this period thus that witnessed a rise in accounts of plagiarism, primarily associated with music directors like Bappi Lahiri and Anu Mallik. See Vijaykar 'Stainless Steal: The rights and wrongs of inspired songs', Dec 10, 2010, Screen India; http://www.screenindia.com/news/stainless-steal-the-rights-and-wrongs-of-inspired-songs/722582/

With numerous remixes and remakes of songs and the many adaptations of film titles , a familiar aurality of past was re-adapted for contemporary Bombay films.[152] Besides this, the gestural economy of the original circulated through various circuits of the Internet, and television. From *Dil Chahata Hai*'s '*Woh ladki hai kahan*' (Farhan Akhtar: 2001) to *Rab ne Bana di Jodi*'s '*Chalte chalte*', (Aditya Chopra: 2009) to *Ready's* '*Character dheela*' (Bazmee: 2011) to *Delhi Belly*'s 'Disco Fighter' (Deo: 2011), the staple 'song and dance sequences' of Bombay cinema have become critical to remaking the memory of the past.

The Bombay film songs traverse a gamut of tropes, styles and fashion that usually get associated with an entire decade of films. For instance, film star Aamir Khan's "special appearance" as the "item boy" in Abhinay Deo's *Delhi Belly* fuses retro parody of 1980s disco with the contemporary trend of "item numbers". Item number is a crude term used in popular film culture to refer to promotional song and dance numbers that are primarily added to market the film.[153] Such sequences usually star popular film actors and

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[152] Remixes of old film songs in the early 1990s circulated primarily in the form of pop videos. Over the last one decade the sales of remix albums have drastically fallen but recently a new channel of circulation for the remix has opened in films. Songs like '*Laila O laila*' (*Qurban;* Feroze Khan: 1980), '*Dum maro dum*' (*Hare Rama Hare Krishna;*, Anand: 1971), '*Pyar lo pyar do*' (*Janbaaz;*, Khan: 1986) have been recently remixed in films, again primarily as item numbers. Film titles like *Dum Maro Dum (Hare Rama Hare Krishna), Bachna ae Haseeno (Hum Kisi se Kum Nahin;* Hussain: 1977*), Aa Dekhen Zara (Rocky; Dutt: 1981*) also use the aural memory of old songs

For more on the history of Remix Culture, see Vebhuti Duggal's dissertation thesis titled 'The Hindi Film Song Remix: Memory, History, Affect' (2010)

[153] The "Item songs" are also a major source of stardom. Celebrities like Mallika Arora and Rakhi Sawant rose to instant stardom through these numbers. Anita Nijhavan, in her article 'Excusing the female dancer: Tradition and transgression in Bollywood dancing' argues for the new spaces that Item numbers open in articulation of female sexuality. Nijhavan, places the emrgence of this in the post-global moment of music-Television revolution, flexibility in censorship to aid circulation of "bollywood" dancing, and the boom in cosmetics industry. (2009)

Recently, actor Shah Rukh Khan did an item number for his retro ensemble parody film, *Om Shanti Om* (2007)

celebrities and are shot with an ensemble of dancers to simulate a stage performance. Set in the urban subterranean cityscape of Delhi, *Delhi Belly* is an ensemble situational comedy that uses scatological humour and employs a number of popular culture references, like UK-based Punjabi fusion videos, the hyper melodrama of Indian soap operas and 1940s singer K.L. Saigal style lazy tones.

As a tangential detail, *Delhi Belly* constantly refers to a film called 'Return of Disco Fighter' through wall posters and the cardboard effigy with reference to its fan, Arup. At the end of the film, Aamir Khan is revealed as the disco fighter just before the end credits roll. Dressed in costumes identified with 1982 hit film, *Disco Dancer* (Dir: Babbar Subhash). This figure of Disco Fighter borrows from the iconography identified with Mithun Chakraborty's 1980s dancing persona, Hollywood Westerns, Elvis Presley, actor Anil Kapoor (referenced through excessive body hair) and music composer Bappi Lahiri. Combining a heady mix of the dance steps of the 80s with contemporary notions of the 'item number', the song 'I hate you, (like I love you)...' simultaneously parodies popular music videos of the 80s along with an entire era that is often associated with creative bankruptcy and kitsch.[154] As a film that re-imagines comedy and explodes conventional use of songs and dance numbers, 'Disco Fighter' remakes the darkest decade in Bombay film history. For this parody is employed using brash set designs, tawdry costumes, and

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[154] With of the arrival of video and therefore consequently with video piracy, cinema of the 1980s faced its biggest challenge .Fear loomed as filmmakers and film scholars foresaw the possibility of a "return to the cafes and the parlours, from where it had started century ago" (Singh 1984: 21). With this invasion of the domestic, there emerged a middle class withdrawal from the theatres. The sudden influx of video networks led to a shift in the domination of the popular cinema to a new sub cultural audience of new cinema. Low production ventures, peripheral genres (like horror of Ramsay films), led to commercial failure. Popular Bombay cinema faced its creative and commercial low during this period. The networks which Amir Khan now mobilizes are the same networks where films like *Tarzan 303* and the ghosts of the Ramsay brothers have for long found their route.

enhancive chest hair. With the announcement of the character of Disco fighter in the sequel of *Delhi Belly*, fragments of the past and popular cultural references of the present are directing the narrative to its sequel.

In a another endeavour of remaking music scenes of the past, Farhan Akhtar's *Dil Chahta Hai (2001)* reinvented the Bollywood idiom of masala through its youth centric urbane narrative, experimental music compositions and metropolitan visual landscape that marked a definite departure from the family sagas of the 1990s.[155] A coming of age story of three friends - Akash, Sameer and Sidharth, *Dil Chahta Hai* reinvented urban youth culture through its line of casual clothing (global casual wear as opposed to glamorous designer costumes), chic hairstyles, non-affected dialogues (due to sync sound) and situational narrative. It is in one of its romantic narrative track that the film reverts to an imaginary past. Sitting in a multiplex theatre with his love interest Pooja, Sameer sees himself magically transported to the theatre screen and into the fantastic world of film songs.

The song sequence begins with a classic 1950s dream sequence set in a studio. Accompanied by a chorus of dancers in black tuxedos, Sameer (Saif Ali Khan) romances Pooja (Sonali Kulkarni) in a white tuxedo and a small twirl moustache. The famous set design of "The Big White set" becomes a reference point for the golden era of the 50s.[156]

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[155] The music of *Dil Chahta Hai* combined various genres of blues, acoustic, instrumental and folk rock. In September 2005, BBC Asian Network included the album in its top 40 songs of all time. Music composers Shanker-Ehsan-Loy also used an aboriginal music instrument from northern Australia called Didgeridoo, known as natural wooden trumpet along with classical instruments like Tabla.
See Screen Cover Story on the introduction of Spoecker and Didgeridoo in Indian music at http://www.screenindia.com/old/20010921/mcov3.html . For BBC's List of Top 40 songs of all time see http://www.bbc.co.uk/asiannetwork/features/top40_soundtracks_10_01.shtml

[156] (Affron and Affron: 140-41) as quoted in Mazumdar: 2007: 119

Cut to the 1960s, there is an explosion of vibrant colours, short body hugging kurtis, long collared printed shirts and buffeted hair. The song then moves to a "picnic" moment. Costumes and hairstyles here become an indicator of the era while musical instruments like the mouth organ, hyperbolic gestures like the fluttering of the eyes and pretty landscapes become indicative of the romantic template of the 60s. Next, a blue chiffon saree clad Pooja is romanced by a prototypical Yash Chopra hero with a sweater loosely tied around his neck. Referencing the tradition of romantic songs shot in foreign locales, the sequence is set against hilly terrain. As the song comes to a close, the audience in the theatre breaks into the song's signature step as Sameer and Pooja confess their love for each other. The use of the tropes of love songs through parody allows Akhtar to accommodate the exaggerated emotion of love in an otherwise taut narration. Through the course of the film, the audience never goes back to Sameer and Pooja's story till the end. The song wraps up the "love story" in one sequence using various fragments of cinematic romance from the past while foregrounding the distinctly different aesthetic universe of the film.

In the ensemble song of Aditya Chopra's *Rab Ne Bana di Jodi* (2009), a bored wife, Tani (Anushka Sharma) watches a melodramatic love scene in a theatre with her husband, Surinder (Shah Rukh Khan) when her love interest Raj (Shah Rukh Khan) who is actually Surinder in disguise, appears before her in the front corner of the theatre screen. Directly looking at the camera, Raj addresses Tani and tells her that love stories have lost their sheen. He then goes on to declare how he has been trained by the fathers of romance (*"Mein love love ke bapon se seekh ke aaya hoon"*) on screen. The song that follows this statement revisits five romantic heroes—Raj Kapoor, Dev Anand, Shammi Kapoor,

Rajesh Khanna and Rishi Kapoor. Starring alongside the leading female stars of contemporary cinema, Raj embodies the macho romantic figure that Tani looks for in her loveless arranged marriage. In the film, a shy Surinder disguises himself as Raj to woo his wife like a hero. Raj too is based on and belongs to Tani's world of fantasy. The film consciously invokes the fantastic world of the film's hero to contrast it with Surinder's ordinary persona. The song pieces together film profiles of the most famed romantic heroes increasing Tani's yearning for love. Each star and his era becomes part of a cinematic biography that collapses film titles, lyrics of famous songs, signature steps and gestures of the stars into the lyrics. In the sequence of the 1960s Shah Rukh Khan parodies yesteryear actor Shammi Kapoor in a cabaret number set in a nightclub. The set is lit with neon lights as the song begins with Kapoor's famed number 'yahoo' from *Junglee* (Mukherjee: 1961). Remaking these fragments, *Rab Ne*...cements the popular image of Shah Rukh Khan as the romantic hero of the contemporary while also locating Tani's desire for Raj in the fantastic world of the film hero. It is through this evolving figure of the romantic hero that Shah Rukh Khan reaffirms his own legacy as a romantic hero.

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If Aamir used kitsch in *Delhi Belly*, Shah Rukh Khan inserted himself in the roles of yesteryear romantic legends, then in his recent film *Ready* (2011), Salman Khan sings a song about the hollow logistics of love invoking templates of love sequences from Raj Kapoor's *Shri 420* (1942), K. Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) and Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay* (1975). In the song, legendary moments of love connected to lingering memories of Raj Kapoor and Nargis under a black umbrella, the love scene between Prince Salim and

Anarkali and the lovelorn Basanti's dance sequence from *Sholay*- are brought together. Templates from cinema's classic history are channelised through the circuits of parody. Salman Khan has always done action roles as well as comedy. In films like *Wanted* (2008), *Dabangg* (Abhinav Kashyap: 2010) and *Ready* (Bazmee 2011), the actor has recently reinvented himself as a comic-action hero. I began this chapter with an allusion to the Salman Khan starrer *Wanted* (2008) where *Mughal-e-Azam*'s song '*Jab pyar kiya to darna kya*' was mobilised to establish a romantic relationship between its lead pair. The film went on to become a major hit. Developed along incredulous actions sequences and comic capers, with *Dabangg* the star consolidated a vintage look of the muscled hero from the late 1980s and early 1990s. At a time when the impetus of film production caters to urban multiplex audiences, films like *Wanted*, *Dabang* and *Ready* used parody to foreground the star persona as a rustic. The result was stupendous box office successes that went beyond the metros to include small single screen centres. Memory of one's own oeuvre is reinvented through parody. The use of parodic remaking in the case of these three stars is not merely a reference to an earlier era of filmmaking, but also the way stars are reinventing their own screen histories.

## CONCLUSION

My venture into this project has its genesis in the frustrated response of an ardent Dilip Kumar fan to Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Devdas* and a routine Sunday evening show of Anurag Kashyap's inventive adaptation, *Dev D*. Meanwhile, new film announcements kept pouring in and the word Remake began to circulate in the media and industry discourses. An immediate point of reference for these debates resided in Hollywood's customary gentrified form of remakes - *King Kong* (1933; 2005), *Invasion of the body Snatchers* (1956; 1978), *The fly* (1958; 1986), *Godzilla* (1954; 1998) *et al.* The argument was that Hollywood has been remaking its films, particularly, the horror and science fiction genres, constantly upgrading the technological *modus operandi* of the original. Bombay films by this logic *do not* remake, they rehash the "formula". [157] The discourse was that India *steals and, borrows* Hollywood plots, sprinkles them with a little magical idiosyncrasy called "the masala" or produces standard story lines that define what circulates in the global circuits as "Bollywood". In a cinema that defies generic conventions and is prone to copying and borrowing, how could the remake be theorised? Infact, do we even have an "original"?

In 1936, when Walter Benjamin had declared the end of the aura of the "original" in mass cultural forms, little did he know that the past would come to haunt and even re-define what constitutes the original. As old films expanded beyond their domestic and travelling sites of television and radio, into the global cultural economy through virtual sites, video

[157] The fact that the term remake has been used in the context of plagiarism is a clear indicator of the sardonic use of the word in popular media discourses. It is only with the trend of Bombay film remaking that the connotations of the text expanded. Besides adaptation of films from literary works and anomalies like Devdas, the term for long had been a template for the undercurrent and mostly unacknowledged remakes of Hollywood films. On these trans-national travels and subversions see Jess-Cooke 2009

sharing portals and DVD markets, the remake emerges as a sign of Bombay cinema's transition in this dispersed economy. As the term Remake gained currency, the limits of its existing vocabulary to capture the sudden eruption of the past became apparent. In the course of my research the remake opened itself out to new syntactical operations. I argued that the remake has emerged primarily as one of the symptoms of Bombay Cinema's global appeal - a conscious positioning of "heritage" through reinterpretation of old blockbuster hits, colorizing its archive of classics and a playful commentary on its dispersed codes. Such divergent tendencies have foregrounded the role of technology.The remake becomes a method through which memory is reinterpreted, mythologized and celebrated. While the remake maps the past as a travelling form, it also looks backwards to trace the cultural footprints that define contemporary film culture.

But the fields that a remake opens for cinema to reinvent its new identity is far from complete. It is difficult to present a closure to this debate since the remake is an ongoing trend. Instead I have chosen to map the multiple forms of film practices that remakes employ to construct the resurgence of the past as a cultural symptom of a film culture in transition. In the absence of any scholarly works on the Bombay film remake, I faced the burden as well as the freedom to devise an approach to this significant phenomenon. I see my project more like a socio-cultural dairy that needs to be updated with every new announcement, academic or media discussion and release.

In June 2011, Bejoy Nambiar released his directorial debut film, *Shaitan*. Produced by Anurag Kashyap, the film narrates the story of a group of wayward rich youngsters who

take to crime and foil a kidnapping. *Shaitan* had an uncanny resemblance to Kashyap's unreleased *Paanch* (2004) which was initially denied a censor clearance certification and later got mired in financial disputes. *Paanch* travelled through various festival circuits and markets of piracy. Its ripped scenes circulated on video sharing sites such as youtube and numerous fan pages of reviews are available on the internet. While the film still remains unavailable, this ostensible remake of the film literally resurrects Kashyap's "amoral characters" and reinvents them as *shaitan* (demons). An undisclosed source told the media that *Shaitan* is "Anurag Kashyap's revenge on the cruel commercial formula-cinema that prevailed when he made '*Paanch*'"[158] Such reports of *Shaitan's* status as a remake of Kashyap's unreleased film takes us to another set of debates on the possibilities generated by remakes within contemporary Bombay film culture. Marching backwards into the future, the journey of the Bombay film remake has indeed just begun.

[158] 'Is Shaitan a revamped version of Kashyap's Paanch?; News One , May 31, 2011 http://www.inewsone.com/2011/05/31/is-shaitan-a-revamped-version-of-kashyaps-paanch/54214

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