

Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti (Eds.), **Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance**, University of Minnesota Press, 2008, 352 pp., \$25.00 (paperback).

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Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti's edited volume, *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance*, is a timely, interdisciplinary account of the central role that song and dance play in the circulation and popularity of Hindi commercial cinema around the world. The expansion of the global impact of Bollywood films has become apparent in recent years in U.S. and European mainstream popular culture, exemplified by the Broadway musical *Bombay Dreams* by Andrew Lloyd Weber, or by films like *Moulin Rouge* (2001), directed by Baz Luhrmann, and the Academy Award-winning *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), directed by Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan. Celebrity gossip and fashion spreads have also turned an eye toward Bollywood, arousing interest and fascination among new audiences. For those interested in learning more about Bollywood, the Indian film industry in Mumbai, or in gaining a critical perspective on it, *Global Bollywood* gives critical focus to the song and dance sequence as part of India's rich Hindi-language film culture, convincingly asserting its centrality to how movies are produced, represented, and understood locally and transnationally.

Broken into three parts, *Global Bollywood* offers historical, political economic, and cultural studies analyses that track the unique trajectories and deep imbrications between the aural and visual dimensions of the song and dance sequence that create separate though linked industries in the circulation of films, music videos, and audio media—all subject to remix and reconfiguration. Each section focuses on particular trajectories of Bollywood film songs and dances, also referred to in the text by the Hindi-English term *filmigit* (p. 4). In part one of the book, "Home Terrains," the contributors focus on post-independence India, then they shift to "Eccentric Orbits" in Indonesia, Egypt, and Israel in the second section, and they end in part three with the "Planetary Consciousness" forged by U.S. and British diasporic communities and "nontraditional Bollywood consumers (NBCs)" (p. 264).

In many ways, elaborate song and dance sequences are the distinguishing content that set Bollywood cinema apart from other popular films while also engaging audiences across linguistic barriers. Adhering to the industry's own aesthetic standards that cannot simply be collapsed into the U.S.- and Eurocentric genre of "the musical" (p. 2), song and dance serve various narrative purposes. They offer a break from an emotionally draining storyline, convey the passage of time, or, most critically for many of the book's contributors, create a space of fantasy, transcendence, and disjuncture. Within these moments, when music and dance interrupts the plot-driven narrative, characters exist beyond their material means, and unspeakable emotions and desires find expression (pp. 139–140). They also supply elements of what some viewers perceive as the exotic, bizarre, and kitsch that make the films enticing for global cultural consumers, from the world music industry to American and European hipsters (pp. 264–287). Thus, song-

dance (a term used to indicate the fundamentally linked nature of the aural and the visual) becomes critical to the way that the book defines Bollywood as a particular incarnation of Hindi popular cinema "that has gained international currency" (p. 5). *Global Bollywood* emphasizes the "afterlife of song-dance sequence(s)" that travel around the globe, at times detached from the films themselves, becoming reworked, remixed, and transformed in the process (p. 3).

In their introduction, Gopal and Moorti locate Bollywood as a transnational cultural formation that articulates particular kinds of "alternative" or "third world" modernities (pp. 26–32). Hindi film song and dance become a marker of India's status as "not quite modern" or typifying a "bastard' modernity" (p. 183), exemplified in the films' perceived silliness and emotional excess. At the same time, Bollywood movies, and song-dance sequences particularly, draw from a number of influences across India, as well as the United States, Europe, and Latin America, continually reinventing themselves with shifts of technology, style, and creative exploration. Thus, song-dance sequences engage with "the play of otherness and difference so crucial to modernity and its expressions" (p. 89). For Anustup Basu, in her contribution "The Music of Intolerable Love: Political Conjuality in Mani Ratnam's *Dil Se*," the song-dance sequence is not modern, but rather, "already *postmodern*," indicating a "postpolitical, posthistorical contemporary" (p. 155). In this sense, the essays in *Global Bollywood* are firmly situated within the overlaps between post-colonial studies and analyses of globalization that trace the movement of cultural forms across linked economies forged through differential access to the terms of modernity.

In part one, the essays offer a critical foundation and background on the development of, and contestations over, the Bollywood film industry in India. After independence in 1947, mainstream Hindi film became a conflicted site for nationalist leaders hoping to cultivate "proper" Indian culture in the context of nation-building (p. 107). In her contribution to *Global Bollywood* (pp. 63–84), Anna Morcom shows how the changes in technology, from gramophone to cassette to CD, have impacted the *filmigit* industry, as well as how the economic liberalization of India in the 1980s and 1990s has resulted in the increased conglomeration of media industries (pp. 80–81, p. 112). In their essay, Nilanjana Bhattacharjya and Monika Mehta (pp. 105–131) further elaborate on the impact of liberalization, articulating how the state took on new roles during this period, consolidating the power of the national through globalization by strengthening copyright law, policing piracy, and engaging in censorship of vulgar and "improper" cinema and music. Thus, the state gained profits while reinforcing its role in securing the boundaries around acceptable national identity as expressed and exported in Bollywood film.

This emphasis on how the local, regional, and national work through and alongside the global also emerges in the essays by Biswarup Sen (pp. 85–104) and Shanti Kumar (pp. 132–152). Kumar describes how a South Indian Film City seeks not only to entice foreign filmmakers with its promise of state-of-the-art facilities for less, but also to compete within the massive, highly competitive Indian film industry. Sen's focus on film songs as popular music tracks their transformations in relation to shifts in Indian modernity, feats accomplished while remaining "radically heterogenous" (p. 75), drawing from and contributing to a broader global culture. This section's engagement with the transnationality of Hindi song-dance production, marketing, reception, and content opens space for understanding how the anxieties and possibilities of diversity, development, and national identity have been struggled over in the Indian national context.

The second section of the book, "Eccentric Orbits," tracks the movement of Bollywood song-dance in Indonesia, Egypt, and Israel, so as to better understand how it is understood, reconfigured, and deployed by non-Indian transnational audiences. Identified as part of a type of South-South cultural exchange with roots in the post-colonial non-aligned movement (NAM) (pp. 27–28), Bollywood film reception in parts of Asia, Africa, and the Arab world demonstrate a type of "third world modernity" of globalization beyond a "West" to "the rest" paradigm (p. 181). Walter Armburst begins part two of *Global Bollywood* with a discussion (pp. 200–220) of how (despite earlier political and cultural alliances in the 1950s between Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru) contemporary elite Egyptians often associate Bollywood with the "silly, strange, or just plain dumb" (p. 201). This parallels assertions made by Bettina David in her essay (pp. 179–199) on Indonesia that finds dangdut fusion, a type of music that "incorporates musical elements from Western pop, Hindi film music, and indigenous Malay tunes," largely disparaged by the mainstream through its association with the poor and working-class. Both contributors indicate the continued presence of U.S.- and Eurocentrism within post-colonial contexts: "Western-oriented" elites in Indonesia (p. 184) and disparaging middle- and upper-classes in Egypt define Hindi films as "backward" and over-the-top, compared to U.S. and European standards of quality film. However, Bollywood films' ability to speak to the shared "desires, anxieties, and fantasies" of post-colonial communities around issues of modernity and tradition explain the popularity among the Indonesian middle-class of Hindi-films like *KKKH (Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Johar, 1998)* and *K3G (Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham, Johar, 2001)*. Such films emphasize family and religious values within settings of wealth and the elite transnational consumer culture (p. 184).

In her essay (pp. 221–242), "Appropriating the Uncodable: Hindi Song and Dance Sequences in Israeli State Promotional Commercials," Ronie Parciack finds that the perceived otherness and absurdity of the Bollywood song-dance sequence is precisely what allows it to tap into and quell the anxieties of Israel as a nation divided by culture (Eastern vs. Western orientation) and politics, particularly around the occupation of Palestine (p. 227). Parciack's sees the extremely popular 1958 Hindi film song, "Mera Nam Chin-Chin-Chu," in the Israeli commercials she looks at as purposefully uncodable in a context where few watch Bollywood films. Precisely because it is unintelligible within a symbolic organization of Israeli cultural texts (p. 233), the song-dance feature becomes a way to deal with the cultural and ideological splits featured on screen in a light-hearted manner, allowing a momentary escape into an idyllic fantasy of harmony while also indicating "the profound incomprehensibility of Israeli society toward itself" (p. 235). Parciack raises critical questions about the orientalist and neo-colonial imaginings of India that play out in the reworking of Hindi film songs into a type of incomprehensible "gibberish" (p. 234). Like the post-military youth sojourns in India she mentions, the reworking makes this "otherworldly," exotic third world nation a "mere backdrop" (p. 230) to non-Indian Israeli audiences, playing with fantasy, escape, hope, and desire.

The final section, "Planetary Consciousness," focuses on the dynamics of consumption, representation, and remix (p. 264) in the United States and Britain. The contributors to this section demonstrate how *filmigit* and dance become sites of expression for Indian American youth and queer South Asian club-goers, while also opening up space for political solidarities in the context of white supremacy.

The complex status of the camp and kitsch of Bollywood song-dance sequences emerges in this section. The camp that Edward K. Chan describes in his essay (pp. 264–287) as allowing for mostly white hipster NBCs to feel superior to that which they so lovingly consume, is also what allows for play with the dynamics of gender and sexuality in Rajinder Dudrah's contribution "Queer as Desis: Secret Politics of Gender and Sexuality in Bollywood Film in Diasporic Urban Ethnoscapes" (pp. 288–207). For Dudrah, Bollywood films disrupt their own heteronormative content as the melodrama and emotional excess ensure that "both queer and straight are equally caricatured" (p. 302). The transcendent fantasy spaces of the song-dance sequence allow for the imaginings of queer and diasporic identities. However, they can also be co-opted within the dynamics of racialized difference and U.S. and European global economic dominance, as Richard Zumkhawala-Cook points out in his discussion (pp. 308–330) of the sampling of Bollywood music by mainstream American hip hop artists. Chan and Zumkhawala-Cook's explicit critiques particularly, and *Global Bollywood* as a whole, point to the fraught power dynamics of transnational cultural exchange, demonstrating how cultural fusion alone cannot eliminate, and often exacerbates, existing inequalities.

These dynamics also emerge through the religious nationalism and ethnocentrism within India embedded in much Bollywood cinema that travel with the song-dance sequences to the diaspora. As Vijay Prashad (2000) and Biju Matthew (1996) have pointed out in their work on the Hindutva movement, economic liberalization in India also ushered in a push for transnational state and civil societal ties with non-resident Indians (NRIs) in the diaspora around specific claims of Hindu nationalist unity. This idea reverberates with the complexities of the distinction between "home" and "diaspora." While Bhattacharjya and Mehta point to how the diaspora can operate as a site of separation and freedom from the dominance of the Indian nation-state (p. 128), it can also become a particularly rich site for nationalism to flourish. For example, the South Asian cultural event at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that Sangita Shresthova discusses in her contribution, "Dancing to an Indian Beat: 'Dola' Goes my Diasporic Heart," becomes a largely North Indian, Hindi-language exhibition dominated by Bollywood song and dance. The "cultural memory" that informs the young performers' notions of cultural identity and belonging must be understood as situated within a context of North Indian national, and South Asian regional, dominance (pp. 260–261). In this way, the song-dance sequence, as a transcendent space of fantasy, remains fraught with the violent dynamics of ethnocentrism and nationalism, even as it becomes reworked and transformed in the context of transnational travel.

Overall, *Global Bollywood* offers a compelling and timely reading of its topic through one of its most central and dynamic elements, the song-dance sequence. The book offers a useful, detailed history of the industry while engaging the complexities of transnational cultural exchange through analyses of visual and aural texts, as well as of the processes of production, marketing, and distribution. *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance* offers a critical challenge to Western monopolization of claims to modernity through its articulations of Hindi song and dance as a site of "alternative" third world cosmopolitanism by considering the art form's hybrid origins and transnational mobility.

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