'PLAGIARIZING' FOR BOLLYWOOD

M. K. RAGHAVENDRA

Abstract: *Indian popular cinema was held to be imitative of Hollywood until fairly recently when its methods became the subject of deeper scrutiny. Bombay filmmakers repeatedly stress that their films aim to differ in content and format from Western films and there is a definite method involved in making films for Indian audiences. Most people are aware that Hollywood or Western cinema frequently provides Bollywood with its models but no successful Bombay film simply 'copies' Hollywood. Most films, even when they 'borrow' from non-Indian models, need to integrate the borrowed motifs within Indian filmmaking conventions if the film is to be successful. Film makers assert that the basis of 'Indianization' lies in the following:(1) The way the story line is developed (2) The crucial necessity of emotion because Western films are regarded as 'cold' (3) The blending of 'attractions' like songs, dances, fights, comedy interludes within the narrative. Once it is apparent that Hollywood and Bollywood do not subscribe to the same kind of narration, the process of 'plagiarization' itself becomes an interesting subject for study. The easiest way of undertaking the study is to look at the narrative principles regarded as sacrosanct by Hollywood, principles that are rigorously codified, and compare*

them to what Bollywood chooses to do. The difficulty is perhaps that Bollywood has never attempted a codification of its narrative principles but, with some effort, the critic can discover some of them and then undertake the exercise. The paper looks at how Indian popular cinema responds under a single parameter regarded as crucial by Hollywood - the principle of causality that the narrative must respect in as much as the narrative should be tightly constructed as a chain of causes and effects. A scrutiny of Indian popular cinema shows this to be an area where it could be regarded as 'deficient' and the paper attempts to grapple with the philosophical issues underlying Indian popular cinema's 'episodic' structure. Since it is necessary to look at an example where the copy does not simply 'borrow' one or two motifs from the original but follows it fairly closely, the paper also makes a comparison between Josef Von Sternberg's The Blue Angel (1931), with V Shantaram's Pinjra (1972), an admittedly ingenious remake of the former.

Popular Indian cinema was held to be imitative of Hollywood until fairly recently when its method became the subject of deeper scrutiny. Bombay filmmakers emphasize that their films differ in content and format from Western films and that there is a definite method involved in making films for Indian audiences. Most people are aware that Hollywood or Western cinema in general frequently provides Bollywood with its models, but no successful Bombay film, it must be stressed here, simply 'copies' Hollywood. Most films, even when they 'borrow' from non-Indian models, need to integrate the borrowed motifs within Indian filmmaking conventions if the film must be successful. Filmmakers assert that the basis of 'indianization' lies in the following:

1. The way the story line is developed
2. The crucial necessity of emotion because Western films are regarded as 'cold'
3. The blending of 'attractions' like songs, dances, fights, comic interludes within the narrative. *(Thomas 1982: 26(3-4))*

Once it is apparent that Hollywood and Bollywood do not subscribe to the same kind of narration, the process of 'plagiarization' itself becomes an interesting subject for study. The easiest way of undertaking the study is to look at the narrative principles regarded as sacro-sanct by classical cinema from Hollywood, principles which are rigorously codified, and then to compare them with what Bollywood chooses to do. The difficulty is perhaps that Bollywood has never attempted a codification of its narrative principles but, with some effort, the critic can discover some of them and then undertake the exercise. The difficulty with defining Bollywood in relation to Hollywood is that it reduces the former to the status of the 'other'. This approach treats Hollywood as an absolute and it will find detractors but its purpose is akin to defining a location in relation to a dominant external landmark. It has also been asserted that no clear-cut alternative to Hollywood exists and that to get beyond it, one must first go through it[1]. This paper goes some distance towards refuting this contention.

The paper looks at how Indian popular cinema responds under a single parameter regarded as crucial by classical Hollywood cinema - that the narrative must respect the principle of causality as much as the narrative should be tightly constructed as a chain of causes and effects. A scrutiny of Indian popular cinema shows this to be an area where it could be regarded as 'deficient' and the paper attempts to

grapple with the philosophical issues underlying Indian popular cinema's 'episodic' structure, that is, its tendency to 'frustrate the narrativitous urge for causal connection.' *(Scholes et al (ed) 1985)*

Causality and Psychological Motivation

The most important system defining classical cinema is psychological causation. We can now inquire into Indian popular cinema's behaviour under this parameter in the expectation that the inquiry will lead us into the logic of its methods:

> *The classical Hollywood film presents psychologically defined individuals who struggle to solve a clear-cut problem or attain specific goals. In the course of this struggle, the characters enter into conflict with other or with external circumstances. The story ends with a decisive victory or a defeat, a resolution of the problem and clear achievement or non-achievement of the goals. The principal causal agency is thus the character, a discriminated individual endowed with a consistent batch of evident traits, qualities and behaviours.* (Bordwell 1985)

In its early years Hollywood relied more on coincidences, which had been the staple of melodrama and popular 19th century theatre. But with the growing emphasis on realism around the turn of the century, coincidences became less acceptable. The elimination of coincidences became necessary through a careful preparation of events throughout the plot. The role of coincidences - especially to resolve plots -

was not considered desirable. Psychological causation is not only a possible option and causality can also be conceived as social - as initiated by group processes - in the manner of Soviet cinema of the 1920s. One can equally conceive of an impersonal causation in which chance and coincidences leave little room for personal action and this is largely the method of postwar European cinema. Hollywood, of course, also permits impersonal causes, but they are usually subordinated to psychological causation. Impersonal causes may initiate or alter a line of story action but personal causes must then take over and move the narrative. To illustrate, a war may separate lovers but they must react to their situation. Coincidences and accidents must confine themselves entirely to the initial condition *(Bordwell et al 1960)*. In the structure of the classical film, causes are also left dangling to be picked up subsequently by effects. This method leads the spectator to anticipation and guarantees that the action does not slacken between any two scenes *(ibid)*.

Mehboob Khan's *Andaz* has been studied by film academics and is often cited
as a film following some of Hollywood's methods *(e.g. Vasudevan 2000)*. Examining its narrative method is useful in the present context. Before we examine the manner in which *Andaz* structures its narrative, we should perhaps understand the implications of 'psychological causation' through an appropriate illustration. I have chosen a simple illustration - Sam Raimi's *Spiderman* (2002) - and am examining only part of the narrative. The chosen part of *Spiderman* can be broken down chronologically as under:

1. Peter Parker is a timid young man in love with Mary Jane whose boyfriends are hunks. Peter knows that -

given his puny stature (and his gig-lamps, the glasses) - he cannot win Mary Jane.

2. Peter nonetheless pursues Mary Jane discreetly but, during a visit to a museum, he is stung by a genetically altered super spider and becomes 'spider-strong'. He discovers his new strength, unwittingly thrashes the school bully and finally gets Mary Jane's attention.
3. Peter becomes more confident in his newly discovered strength and is also drawn closer to Mary Jane because of his achievement with the bully. But his rival owns an automobile and Mary Jane continues to date him. Peter now believes he can win Mary Jane only by first possessing a car.
4. Peter looks through a newspaper for information about used cars but discovers a notice about a wrestling match where he can win the required money ($500). He needs to find a colourful costume, and given his newly discovered propensities, dresses up as a 'Human Spider'.
5. His beloved uncle senses the change he is undergoing. On the way to the wrestling match he warns him against misusing his gifts.
6. Peter Parker enters the ring where the manager announces him as 'Spiderman'. Peter uses his spider strength and demolishes his opponent, but the manager cheats him of the prize money.
7. An armed man robs the manager, but Peter deliberately doesn't intervene.
8. The armed robber also kills Peter's uncle in the street while making his getaway.
9. Peter pursues the robber and helps make the arrest, but he also understands that his letting the culprit get away

initially caused his uncle's death. He recognizes his error and resolves to fight crime as 'Spiderman'.

This is a sketchy account of only a part of the film and several details have been omitted, but it provides a fair idea of its approach to narration. If each of the above is considered an 'episode', the film employs a specific way to link the episodes together - in the manner of a causal chain. Peter Parker becomes super-strong by accident but his psychological condition induces him to *take advantage of the accident* and each episode is connected to the succeeding one in a similar way. To illustrate further, Peter needs a car to win Mary Jane, but he doesn't have the money. He finds an easy source but still needs to wrestle to get it. He wins the bout because of his 'spider-strength' but the manager cheats him. Peter encounters the robber just after he has been cheated but allows him to get away because he is upset with the manager. The robber kills Peter's uncle because Peter allows him to get away. Peter Parker resolves to fight crime because of his own part in his uncle's death.

The narrative may abound in accidents, but the accidents don't happen arbitrarily. The narrative moves because the accidents happen at the ripe moment, taking advantage of existing circumstances and the relationship may (for want of a better term) be termed '*dialectical*' in as much as each interaction leads to a new stage in the narrative. This means that every event is important and no episode can be removed from the chain without affecting the entire story. Plot and character 'develop' as part of a continuing process.

Returning to *Andaz*, the major episodes in the film can be arranged chronologically as under:

1. The motherless Neena is brought up and 'spoiled' by her widowed father.
2. Neena meets Dilip when he saves her in a riding accident.
3. Neena invites Dilip home. Dilip loves her and fondly imagines that she reciprocates his feelings.
4. Neena's father dies suddenly and she names Dilip impulsively to manage her business empire. He takes this as a sign that she cares for him.
5. Rajan arrives and Dilip suddenly discovers that Neena loves Rajan.
6. Dilip retreats from Neena's side and she duly marries Rajan.
7. Dilip's behaviour becomes morose and difficult for Neena to understand. When she presses him for the reasons, he expresses his love for her and she is shocked.
8. Neena and Rajan have a daughter.
9. Dilip comes to their daughter's birthday party and startles Neena, but he lets her know secretly that he has decided to leave her alone. Rajan sees them together, misunderstands their relationship and grows jealous.
10. Rajan's jealousy becomes more and more acute. It grows so intense that he assaults Dilip, causing him to become mentally imbalanced.
11. Dilip is so deranged that he gets violent and expresses an intense urge to kill Rajan.
12. Neena is forced to shoot Dilip dead when he becomes too threatening.
13. Neena is tried and sentenced to life imprisonment after Rajan speaks out against her in court.

14. Rajan discovers a letter written by Dilip that exonerates Neena and he regrets his own actions.
15. Rajan, Neena and the child have one last meeting before she is led away into prison.

I have omitted one or two subplots and comic interludes in my telling of the story in order to make it simpler. Although the events in the film follow a chronological order, the film contains little evidence of the characteristic linking that distinguishes *Spiderman* and *Andaz* is distinctly 'episodic'. Rather than each episode being linked to the preceding one - as effect to cause - the narrative tends to refer back to a first cause, which is Neena's free upbringing. In fact, one could even say that the story actually emerges from this first cause. Neena's character does not change appreciably thereafter although she 'regrets' her error and wishes that her own daughter be brought up correctly. Dilip remains his grave and vulnerable self until the blow on his head upsets his balance. Rajan's display of jealousy is abrupt and disappears quickly when he discovers Dilip's letter.

One can also aver that *Andaz* arranges it so that each character is defined in terms of an 'essential' trait rather than through attributes that are allowed to develop. Where 'character' is usually defined in terms of intentional action *(Bordwell et al (ed) 1996:149-50)*, we find few events in the narrative in which Dilip, Rajan or Neena act intentionally towards foreseeable ends. It might be more accurate to say that they allow unintentional acts or even 'destiny' to dictate to them. Since *Andaz* defines character in terms of what is innate and individuals do not act intentionally, the action necessarily takes the shape of fortuitous events (or impulses) whose consequences are experienced and felt.

What has been noticed pertains not only to *Andaz* and is also evidenced in the fortuitous ends arranged for hate-figures. We can say, generally, that individual acts are presented as 'fulfilled happenings' rather than as executions of 'intent'. If we are to understand the structure of popular film narrative as a 'grammar', we can justifiably say that its construction is the visual equivalent of the 'passive voice'. It chooses not to generate excitement through a consistent use of the 'active voice', as Hollywood prefers to. It can perhaps also be said that 'free will' and 'determinism' have some kind of correspondence with the grammatical employment of the active and the passive voice respectively.

The meaning and its 'relay'

To put it briefly, there is a tendency in *Andaz* to identify each character with an 'essence' and it is this tendency in popular cinema that is usually treated with derision by critics who valorize the efforts at realism in Indian cinema:

> *...In these films abstract notions have simple human representations. Good is characteristically a young man, necessarily handsome and exceptionally virile; Good's offshoot, Vulnerable Innocence, is naturally a young woman, necessarily beautiful, preferably lacking in intelligence, and helpless; Evil is usually male, also virile and necessary ugly and sometimes female and, if at all glamorous, then necessarily witch-like; Evil's offshoot, Confusion, can be male or female and preferably ugly and also untrustworthy.* (Hood 2000:3)

The remark is rudely dismissive, but it nevertheless contains a kernel of truth in as much as it recognizes that 'character' does not develop in popular cinema, but is perceived as being present in the form of an 'essence'. This supports an observation also made by Ashis Nandy about essential characteristics:

> *If the story line chooses to depict the hero as an apparent mixture of good and evil he must be shown to be essentially good, whose badness is thereby reduced to a temporary aberration.* (Nandy 1980:90)

The issue here is not the philosophical validity of this viewpoint, but how the viewpoint shows up consistently in cinema. What Indian popular cinema's more uncharitable critics don't contend with is that the classical arts in India (which they are less inclined to attack) are founded on the same perceptions and this is substantiated by Indian art critics who distinguish between traditional Indian and western art in the following way:

> *... let us take ... the well-known portrait 'Christ before The Pilate'. We find here the judge sitting upon his high seat of honour, and before him the Jewish priests are making angry...complaints about Jesus. In front of Jesus, on a high pillar, there is a large statue of Caesar; at some distance from it, in a dark corner, Jesus is standing ... surrounded by Roman soldiers. Rembrandt ...chose for his portrayal the moment when at the end of his strivings in the cause of the religion he regarded to*

> *be true, he was discarded by his own people and brought before a Roman judge. The choice of this particular moment, though revealing the great artistic insight of Rembrandt, fails to put Jesus in proper perspective ...Indian artists (on the other hand) ...did not lay emphasis on any passing (moment) ...But tried to discover (the essence of) ...the object of creation. This was perceived by them as dominating over individual moments ... and could be regarded as characterizing the soul or essence of the artist's object of creation.* (S.N. Dasgupta 1954:37)

The moment chosen by Rembrandt apparently corresponds to what Barthes (in writing about the tableau) described as a 'pregnant moment' (*Barthes 1977:70-71*). The moment can be likened to what Barthes described as a tableau because it is suspended between Jesus Christ's life and his martyrdom, both of which surround the moment and are eliminated from the picture. The pregnant moment is poised between the past and the present and is frozen within a continuum of change, a continuum that can be likened to a perpetual resolution of binary conflicts.

The example cited pertains to narrative and narrative constructions, but the fundamental perception has wider connotations. The following quotation is from a western sculptor who sees the 'pregnant moment' (here the equilibrium between two opposing forces) as the key moment to be captured in any artistic representation:

> *Two sculptors are carving a sphere out of stone. One of them wants to achieve the most perfect form*

> *of the sphere and sees the meaning of his work in turning a mass of stone into a perfect sphere. The other is also carving a sphere, but only to convey the inner tension expressed in the form of a sphere filled to bursting point. The first will be the work of a craftsman and the second, that of an artist.* (Berger 1969:109)

The 'episodic' quality of *Andaz* means that it does not answer favorably to the Aristotelian concept of 'unity of action'. Unity of action requires that the incidents in the story should cluster around a central animating idea. A single purpose must be seen to run throughout the series of incidents, which must be so woven together that it should become evident that one incident could not have taken place without the other (Hermequin 1897:89). The central animating idea has come to represent the 'theme' in classical cinema and the theme is made to emerge only through the causation in the narrative. The factors just discussed suggest why it is difficult to identify themes in Indian popular cinema and why theme music is noticeably absent from most of it.

It is difficult to identify themes in Indian popular cinema. What each film has to say nevertheless emerges unequivocally and this apparently needs further explanation. Madhava Prasad draws some broad conclusions that are pertinent at this point and put very briefly, he contrasts the 'relay of meaning' in Indian popular cinema with the 'production of meaning' in classical Hollywood cinema (*Prasad 1998:50-51*).

I earlier remarked that the first cause in *Andaz* is Neena's free upbringing, which is suggested in the very first

scene of the film, and the ubiquitous 'first cause' in any film is perhaps the site of location of the transmittable meaning (*Bordwell 1985:157*) [2]. The episodes subsequently arranged only assist in transmitting the meaning and they do not 'produce' it in the manner of the classical film. Interestingly, the plot material in a classical Sanskrit play has also been seen to be present as a seed or a germ at the beginning and to grow as the action progresses (*Byrski 1993:144*) [3], and the first cause may correspond to this seed or germ. Since the text of a popular film is only a way of transmitting meaning to an audience, it needs a transparent language that enables it to effect the abstract signification through concrete images. Chidananda Das Gupta (1991) has this to say about how film convention supplants the 'real' in popular cinema:

> *There are a number of ways in which the popular film struggles to overcome the built-in naturalism of cinema, and to bend this medium, developed in a western technological society, towards its own, mythical style of discourse ...A beard on Valmiki in the Ramayana - whether on film or on TV - is not a photographic record of a real beard on a real man; it is a photograph, but of the beard symbol of someone who is supposed, by tacit agreement between the filmmaker and the audience, to be a traditional sage.* (Chidananda Dasgupta 1991:54)

The 'tacit agreement' between the filmmaker and the spectator on the meaning of each representation implies that the shape of the represented object must be fixed. The object must also be conceived and represented in a manner that makes all its attributes visible at first glance and not gradually revealed[4]. The specificity of the image must be employed to

make an abstract signification and whatever Das Gupta notices are the ways by which this specificity is undermined and the individual made to correspond to the type.

The titles of individual films also support the hypothesis that the text only transmits a pre-existing abstract meaning because they are abstract or symbolic words or phrases like *kismet* ('Fate'), *dhool ka phool* ('Flower in the dust'), *sangam* ('Confluence'), *dil ek mandir* ('The heart is a shrine') and *sholay* ('Flames'). Their relation with the text is metaphoric and only rarely metonymic. (Prasad 1998:48).

The rules of *Natyashastra* also enunciate the purpose for which drama can be employed and Hindi popular films apparently follow an ancient precedent:

> *...they have deep-rooted foundations in certain traditional rules according to which drama should be a diversion for people weighed down by sorrow or fatigue or grief or ill luck; it should be a rest (for the body and the mind) - Natyashastra 113-114.* (Shekar 1977:126)

This purpose seems to explain the deliberate 'escapism' of much of Indian popular cinema because escapism is, by definition, a denial of the 'real'. Still, the explanation also finds apparent contradictions in other texts of classical Indian theory because Indian poetics does not actually treat literature as an 'autonomous' category divorced from the 'real' but actually 'truer':

> *Art is a kind of mimesis according to the rasa theory; but it is an imitation of a very special kind,*

> *for rasa does not imitate things and actions in their particularity, in their actuality, but rather in their universality, their potentiality - and this 'imitation' is said to be more real than any particular real thing.* (Deutsch 1993:127)

Whatever has been said so far about Indian popular cinema suggests that it supports an aesthetic viewpoint that corresponds to an extreme form of 'essentialism'[5]. The observation that it does not perceive narrative as development through conflict has already been elaborated upon.

We have already seen something of the character 'stereotypes' deriving from the fixed denotative purpose of the narrative. Sanskrit drama permitted only a limited number of character-types for heroes and heroines and the same observation can perhaps also be made for Indian popular cinema although the precise number cannot be fixed in the latter case (Shekar 1977) [6]. Further, it is not only heroes and heroines who are conceived as types. As an illustration, V Shantaram's *Do Ankhen Barah Haath* (1957) is about an idealistic jailer who sets up a farming commune with six convicted murderers. The director employs the conventions of popular cinema to represent his six characters as 'convicts' and we therefore see all six men represented in equivalent fashion, as unkempt, bearded and menacing. The same observation can be made of courtesans and widows. Popular cinema keeps widows and courtesans out of wedlock, but not because this possibility does not get social approval but because, having conceived of them *in essence* as widows and courtesans, it is loath to see them change. As we shall eventually see, the occasional film that breaks the convention is not more 'radical' but only one that finds a way out of a representational

difficulty. The representational difficulty can be located in the identification of truths with 'essences' and the consequent disinclination to reconcile contradictions (*Nandy 1980:89*)[7].

Critics of popular Indian cinema may wonder if the tendencies described bear this kind of overt intellectualization; they would ask if the 'stereotypes' cannot be simply put down to inept characterization. It must be remarked here that American films are also prone to using stereotypes, but that these stereotypes are differently conceived. To illustrate, a frequently occurring stereotype is the housewife and/or mother becoming radicalized in her dealings with the male establishment - *Norma Rae (1979), Erin Brockovich* (2000). Contrary to the model made familiar by Indian cinema, it is not the character that is stereotyped in Hollywood. What is stereotypical is the way he or she is allowed to develop and a familiar ploy is for a character, not a perfect specimen, to improve in the course of the narrative *(Bordwell 2000)*[8].

When films have narratives spread over prolonged (although indefinite) intervals, change must somehow be accommodated, but the popular film responds by asserting that the initial condition is inviolable. In films like Vijay Bhatt's *Baiju Bawra* (1952) and M.S Anand's *Agneepath* (1990) a child grows up to right an injustice done to his father. The child's attitude, arrested in implacability, is then carried forward completely into adulthood to furnish the narrative with its *raison d 'être*. When the boy grows up, the rest of the world has altered but little. The villain is not only sustained in an unsullied condition for the exclusive purpose of his vengeance, but the hero must also die after his ends are achieved because vengefulness defines him entirely. This is vastly different from the realism of Coppola's *The Godfather*, in which the

protagonist revenges himself impassively upon his father's murderer who is now senile and beyond recollecting his victim from twenty years before. In *Agneepath,* vengefulness is the hero's essential condition and he may not depart from it.

About Sanskrit drama, we learn that

> *"Sanskrit drama aims at imitating the state or condition while Greek drama imitates the action."* (Shekar1977: 111*).*

'Imitating the state or condition' assumes a 'state or condition' as a general notion that the specificity of the actual experience cannot undo. The 'state or condition' in Sanskrit theatre has perhaps some correspondence with the pre-existing 'meaning' in the Hindi film, the message that the text, the production and the performances are specifically designed to relay to the spectator.

An Illustration

I will conclude this paper with an illustration of the ingenious way in which an Indian film plagiarizes from a western text. Joseph Von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel* is a masterpiece of German psychological realism and tells the story of an authoritarian schoolteacher, who falls in love with a nightclub dancer and leaves his vocation to follow and marry her. Professor Rath is a misfit in the troupe, but he gets by doing small jobs. The narrative reaches its climax when the players return to the Professor's hometown where he is expected to perform as a clown in front of the same students he once dominated and be publicly humiliated. The Professor is dressed up to perform as a clown, but he goes completely

insane and attempts to kill the Master of Ceremonies. Professor Rath dies of a heart attack the next morning when he steals into the school and returns to the reassurance of his beloved school desk, where he once exercised authority.

The *Blue Angel* is about a distinguished man's moral decline and his humiliation and in *Pinjra* (1973) V Shantaram adapts it in a revealing way. In Shantaram's film the *guruji,* the teacher, is a revered figure in the village. He is aghast at the way the *tamasha* performances are corrupting the local populace. He earns the antagonism of the dancer-heroine when he tries to evict her troupe, but he gradually begins to desire her. Shantaram now introduces another local reprobate who hates the *guruji* but who is murdered one night outside the latter's room by the husband of a woman he once molested (when the *guruji* is sitting inside with the dancer). The dancer cannot give evidence exonerating the *guruji* in the murder because this would implicate him differently. The two dress the dead man in the *guruji*'s clothes, and with the face of the corpse being disfigured, people believe that it is the *guruji* who is dead. But the *guriji* has inadvertently left his fingerprints upon the murder weapon and this will have eventual repercussions.

The *guruji* now goes off with the dancers, descending further and further morally (tobacco, liquor and lust) even while his statue is worshipped in his native village. The *guruji* nevertheless respects the dancer's chastity and not only refuses to touch her, but also gets into inconvenient fights with her clients. When he is finally required to perform and sing on the stage he actually *rises* to the occasion through a noble declaration of how low he has sunk and abruptly regains his original dignity. The dancer realizes her errors and understands

his goodness, but he is abruptly arrested for his own murder. The people of his native village do not recognize him because he has changed in appearance and they insult and humiliate him. But the *guruji* bears their jibes with fortitude because of his commitment to what he once represented. The dancer dies of shock and grief when the death sentence is pronounced after his admission of 'guilt' and he goes to the scaffold courageously after a last gesture of tenderness towards her.

Instead of portraying, as *The Blue Angel* does, a staunch individual's inexorable decline and fall, *Pinjra* eventually affirms its protagonist's innate qualities. The changes undergone by the *guruji* are temporary aberrations induced by corrupt influences and he finally returns to his 'essential' moral condition when he embraces death. The heroine is allowed to change but her initial condition can be understood as mere 'naughtiness' induced by her profession and she also regains her 'true' moral stature in the end. Bollywood has often been accused of being 'unoriginal' but the example of *Pinjra* demonstrates how 'borrowings' must be integrated within Indian filmmaking conventions.

Notes

1. The 'centrality' of Hollywood is often asserted. (*Bordwell et al.1985*).

2. Hollywood screenplay writing manuals have long insisted on a formula and the archetypal plot consisting of an undisturbed stage, *a* disturbance, a struggle for the elimination of the disturbance and its actual elimination. The disturbance in classical cinema may

correspond to what I termed the 'first cause' in Indian popular cinema. The difference is that the fact of the initial disturbance is not important enough to be recalled subsequently in classical Hollywood film narrative, but the first cause is invoked time and again in Indian popular cinema. Neena's upbringing is brought up repeatedly in *Andaz* and the hero of *Deewar* (1975) frequently recalls the tattoo upon his forearm representing his humiliation as a child. This also supports my understanding that the meaning or the message to be relayed resides in this 'first cause'.

3. It is apparent that the 'disturbance' in classical film narrative is quite different from the 'seed' that grows into the plot material in popular Indian cinema although it occupies approximately the same position in the unfolding film.

4. This finds an echo in the way characters are represented in Sanskrit theatre. Here, for instance, is a description of how Vasavadatta, the heroine of Bhasa's *play The Vision of Vasavadatta* was conceived in a present day production. The heroine's emotions do not 'develop' through the dramatic action. They are so essentially a part of her that they are actually encoded in her costume: "*Vasavadatta is the cause of the arousal ...of romantic love. During the physical separation from her husband, she emotionally comes closer to him. While she is the heroine separated from her lover... she becomes completely assured of her husband's love ... in spite of his second marriage during the play. Her colours in the production were*

gray and purplish magenta which expresses her love in separation."(Gandhi 1993).

5. This is how essentialism in its extreme form has been defined: "Reifying to an immutable nature or type." Terry Eagleton (*Eagleton 1966:103*).

6. The qualities of the hero were based on the following models: princes, *brahmanas,* ministers, merchants and army generals. The hero was essentially noble but he could be exalted, calm, haughty or boisterous. Heroines could be experienced, inexperienced or bold, the hero could be her first or a later love and she could be placed in eight different situations with the hero. Depending on her birth (high, middle, low) her relationship with the hero could correspond to one of 384 different types. The comic relief was provided by the *vidhushaka*, a jester or fool, who was ugly, uncouth, usually had protruding teeth and was a glutton.

7. Nandy notices the same characteristics, but sees them simply as a tendency to avoid 'shades of gray' in its portrayals. Nandy likens Hindi cinema to spectacle and compares it to all-in wrestling, citing Roland Barthes' celebrated essay (Barthes 1985:15-25). My own reading is obviously different.

8. David Bordwell (Bordwell 2000) also cites the personality faults routinely overcome by the protagonists in various films - shyness (*While You Were Sleeping),* manipulativeness (*Tootsie),* lack of confidence (*Back to the Future),* arrogance (*Groundhog Day)* and overconfidence (*Speed*).

References

Barthes, Roland (1977). **Image, Music, Text.** Trans. Stephen Heath. London: Fontana.

Barthes, Roland (1985). "*The World of Wrestling*" in **Mythologies.** London: Paladin.

Berger, John (1969). **Art and Revolution: Ernst Neizvestny and the Role of the Artist in the USSR.** Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Bordwell, David; Staiger, Janet & Thompson, Kristin (1985) **The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production upto 1960.** London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Bordwell, David (1985). **Narration in the Fiction Film.** London: Methuen.

Bordwell, David (2000). **Planet Hongkong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment.** Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Byrski, M Christopher (1993). "*Sanskrit Drama as an Aggregate of Model Situations*" in Baumer, Rachel Van M. and Brandon, James R (ed) **Sanskrit Drama in Performance.** New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas.

Dasgupta S.N (1954). **Fundamentals of Indian Art.** New Delhi: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Deutsch, Eliot (1993). *"Reflections on Some Aspects of the Theory of Rasa"* in Rachel Van M. Baumer and James R. Brandon (ed) **Sanskrit Drama in Performance.** New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas.

Eagleton, Terry (1966). **The Illusions of Post-modernism.** London: Blackwell Publishers.

Gandhi, Shanthi (1993) *"A Sanskrit Play in Performance"* in Baumer, Rachel Van M. and Brandon James R (ed) **Sanskrit Drama in Performance.** New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas.

Gupta, Chidananda Das (1991). **The Painted Face.** New Delhi: Roli Books.

Hermequin, Alfred (1897). **The Art of Playwriting.** Boston: Mifflin Co.

Hood, John W. (2000) **The Essential Mystery: Major Filmmakers of Indian Art Cinema.** New Delhi: Orient Longman.

Livingstone, Paisley (1996). *'Characterization and Fictional Truth'* in Bordwell, David & Carroll, Noel (ed) **Post Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies.** Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Mast, Gerald & Cohen, Marshall (ed) (1985). **Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings.** New York: Oxford University Press.

Nandy, Ashis (1980). **The Popular Hindi Film: Ideology and First Principles.** India International Center Quarterly, Special Issue. March.

Prasad M. Madhava (1998). **Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction.** New Delhi: Oxford University Press, N16.

Scholes, Robert (1985). *"Narration and Narrativity in Film"*, in Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen (ed) **Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings.** New York: Oxford University Press.

Shekar, Indu (1977). **Sanskrit Drama: Its Origins and Decline.** Delhi: Munshi Ram Manoharlal.

Thomas, Rosie (1982). **Indian Cinema: Pleasures and Popularity.** *Screen.*

Vasudevan, Ravi (ed) (2000). **Making Meaning in Indian Cinema.** New Delhi: Oxford University Press.