

Bollywood in Diaspora: In the Tracks of a Twice-displaced Community

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Previously, I used to encourage my children to see documentaries on India. I do no more. These people can't show even Taj Mahal without showing beggars, a few lepers, flies and all that. They can't resist that temptation. Instead, our children should watch Australian documentaries. Things about this land, the trees, insects, snakes, all different kinds of bird. If you have to live here, you must know the land well. Plus, they are growing kids too, you know what I mean? They have their needs, their desires. You must try and understand this. So for entertainment, you have Hindi films. The songs, the dance, the stories, glamour - all those things that they can talk about with their other Indian friends. My friend, India - like *all* our countries - can only go down and down but Hindi films will prosper. Such is the logic. So don't worry about entertainment. It will always be there, no matter where you live. You may call these films fantasy but it is a better way of knowing, I mean *see-ing*, India than these documentaries. (Fiji Indian taxi driver, Brisbane, 1997)

John Davies, a Canadian commentator on Fiji's latest coup of 2000, describes it as a tragedy of 'separate solitudes'. Nothing could be more apt. He holds the Fiji Indians squarely responsible for this absence of cultural dialogue: their condescending attitude towards Fijians, their consumerist ways, economic

domination and media power. The culture of indigenous people needs to be safeguarded from the globally massive Indian culture, he warns. Towards this he advocates a series of positive discriminations, including the abolition of Hindi from the list of Fiji's official languages. (Davies, 2000)

Off-track in crucial ways (since the latest crisis is a fall out of disintegrating native Fijian social order and the rise of its middle class leadership (Lal, 2001) among others), Davies' prescription is both old and new, and typically western. It is new because it is in tune with a certain turn of current western cultural politics that yearns to define the nation in terms of its ethnic roots, once the project of 'nationalising the ethnic' proved difficult with the different non-western communities living in the western metropolis. It is old, because it is part of the same vagaries of colonial pragmatics that once kept the native Fijians away from the plantations. The back-breaking toil of the Indian 'coolies', the Plantation Raj had calculated, would make the new colony of Fiji pay, while the Fijians could continue with their pristine lives in indolent villages unexposed to the corrupting effects of a capitalist economy.

Utilizing the discipline of the 'lines', the Indians in Fiji in course of time have made much of what today's Fiji is - economically speaking - with their labour and management. This is a huge achievement given the way they began their journey. The culture that evolved, the fashioning of 'little India' as it is called, was not so much an expression of the desire to return, an idle nostalgia, nor a docile willingness to replay on a minor scale a 'mammoth' original. Rather it was as an active attempt to yoke an identity in the face of little or no recognition as cultural or political beings. Much later, once Bollywood entered the scene as the principal provider of motherland culture, the reconstructed home would attain a new dynamics in keeping with the dynamics of this quasi-globalising media.

The paper examines the process of imagining into existence of a sense of nationhood by a specific diaspora of Indian origin - namely, the Fiji Indians - in Australia and the role that Bollywood, in its different manifestations, plays in this. The focus of the paper is to understand how mass images of India can be made to speak and/or represent history far outside the geographical limits of India and the place of viewers in that history. For this we bring together two separate but related journeys: the cultural trajectory of these 'splintered' people - from indenture to subsistence farming to their participation in urbanization of Fiji and finally the coup of 1987 that resulted in a big exodus to western cities and the struggle for cultural identity in a new vortex of power and cultural ecology. We try to lace this journey with another journey, that of the images of Bollywood over the decades and how it impacted lives far beyond the shores of India.

Bollywood in its contemporary manifestation offers Indian diasporic youth a platform for organizing their cultural life which is 'acceptable' to the West and at the same time retains a measure of difference. The widely held notion that for Indians,

no matter where they live, India largely derives from its movies (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1999:10) holds a special significance for Fiji Indians for whom India is largely an imagined entity ('mother' but not 'home', as a number of our respondents have pointed out). For the Fiji Indian youth in Australia, the relation between Bollywood and India is even more an imaginary one. This might suggest that reception takes place in an historical vacuum, but young Fiji Indians, more than any other Indian group in Australia, are keen on appropriating Hindi popular films to fashion a cultural identity that is their own.

Be it in the special meaning that Bollywood has for the Fiji Indian community or the re-invigoration of folk traditions inherited from India, be it in their friction with mainland Indians or their bid to re-imagine an entity called 'India' (from which they were once 'extracted' and to which they do not harbour any illusion of return but nonetheless continually seek recourse to as an imagined nodal point of identity), be it in their relatively westernized values or in the emphasis placed on tradition - the cultural life of Fiji Indians in their current western locations is inalienably linked to their genealogy of the last hundred thirty years - the history of the Plantation Raj and after. We will not so much embrace celebration of the ontological condition of the diasporic imagination but focus on the contingent course of historical subjectivity of this twice-displaced community, a course that has vital links to the changing political economy of Bollywood, its images and image-making over the years.

Indian Diasporas and Diasporic Media Discourse

Kay Rasool's film, *Temple on the Hill* (1997), is a short documentary on the banana-growing Punjabi community of Woolgoolga in northern New South Wales. The film is about continuity in the face of change: while the older generation harp on the former, the younger people perform the difficult negotiation between the demands of a traditional, rigid order and the attractions of the liberal, individualized West ("We stick to our culture but the mind travels"). Encased in the performance of Sikh religious rituals, the film stacks up the evident values of Punjabi life for no one to miss: deep attachment to the preachings of the Holy saint, Guru Gavind Singh ("who forms our identity"); allegiance to the family profession (boys return to work in the plantation after completing their university degrees); abiding respect and care for elders; photomarrriage ("the parents have to say yes first"); the imported *desi* bride quietly performing the domestic chores ("we wanted a girl who will do all the housework"); assertion of strong familial ties ("my brothers will do anything for me, I will do anything for them"); and so on. Men play billiards or maybe display the new video camera which is "so light" as women milk the cows or look after the

children. Breaking this seamless pattern is the girl who felt “more and more uncomfortable with being an Indian” and “just wished I could be an Australian”. Glimpses of her preferred Australian life leads to a wholesale change in the visual milieu: swimming in the house pool with her daughter and white husband, the Australian lunch of salad, sausage and roasted meat (in place of *pooris* and hot *bhajis*), her sleek performance as a sales girl in a department store. The other figure to rupture the settled patriarchal order is the son who takes to Christianity and becomes a passionate evangelist, drawn by the attraction of Christian universalism which he contrasts to the hypocrisy of Sikh religious practice. A Hindi movie of song and dance provides solace to the lonely mother. What is remarkable about the film is that in around twenty five minutes, it manages to encapsulate a whole portfolio of accepted Orientalist 'knowledge'.

Marie Gillespie's influential *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change* (1995) is a comprehensive study of the Punjabi community of west London. A media sociology of Punjabis living in one particular suburb, Southall - and sharing more or less the same history, cultural profile, media habits and class location - the work has been praised widely for its meticulous ethnology and has been influential in the rise of academic interest in the media of diasporic Indian communities (as only befits one of the largest diasporas in the world).

The differences of Gillespie's book with Rashool's film are apparent. The working class suburb of west London where more than 65,000 migrants (Gillespie, 1995:33) jostle for space is a far cry from the sprawling green of a remote Australian plantation settlement. In economic terms too, they are studies in contrast: while the Punjabis of Woolgoolga have it good, the Southall Punjabis continue to struggle. However, in spite of the manifest differences, the picture that emerges of the cultural life in the struggling Punjabi ghetto in London bears real similarities to the time-warped, banana cultivating Punjabis in obscure Woolgoolga. Both constructions draw on an essentialised understanding of an *oriental* community. John Hutnyk points to this in his review of Gillespie:

(t)here is not, in this book, any disruption of an ethnographic project that requires particular, not global, essentialized, although hybrid, traditional, although translated, ethnic categories to proceed. ... (S)he never leaves go of a notion of culture, which though it changes, is still an unexamined hold-all category doing work for time-honoured anthropological simplicities. (Hutnyk and Sharma, 1997:420-421).

Gillespie's ethnography produces reasonably predictable results - the parental regime of social control, suspicion and adherence to a homeland culture of unquestioned obedience and religious devotion; the vicious networks of rumour and gossip aimed at constant surveillance of girls' chastity (Gillespie, 1995:25-27, 153-157); young people's preoccupation with style and fashion endorsing western images; the gendered pattern of viewing (boys prefer science fictions, science

programs, documentaries, news and crime series; girls prefer watching pop and quiz programs, cartoons and children's TV and of course soaps); girls who (along with the older generation) mostly love Hindi movies while a majority of boys find them not to their taste (Gillespie, 1995:77). What is so specifically Punjabi or for that matter Indian about these findings? Gillespie will often throw up more questions than she answers. For instance, if boys are generally condescending about Indian traditions and Hindi films' unrealistic modes, how could the whole family group (boys as well as girls) watch so intently B R Chopra's televisual melodrama, *Mahabharata*?

Gillespie asserts that identity as "not an essence but a positioning," but she rarely makes use of Appadurai's insight that she quotes programmatically:

[T]he Hindu diaspora has been exploited by various 'interests both within and outside India to create a complicated network of finances and religious identifications, in which the problem of cultural reproduction for Hindus abroad has become tied to the politics of Hindu fundamentalism at home. (Appadurai quoted in (Gillespie, 1995:20))

Instead, what we have is a replay of classic ethnographic persuasion in a new form: she respectfully watches the Dhanis watch the teleserial, *Mahabharata* as an *authentic* moment of Indian devotion. Gillespie's book is professedly about the "cultural routes of diaspora" (Gillespie, 1995:6). But what is privileged is her attention to the values "rooted in the subcontinent" (Gillespie, 1995:46) to which the youth people are attached even as they try to 'maximise their chance of acceptance' (Gillespie, 1995:5) in British society. Gillespie's mutual stress on the irreducible difference of migrant cultures and evolving trajectories of assimilation is in a way the crux of contemporary western multiculturalism: "it 'respects' the Other's identity, conceiving the Other as a self-enclosed 'authentic' community towards which he, the multiculturalist, maintains a distance rendered possible by his privileged universal position" (Zizek, 1997:44). The extent of the similarities between a painstaking work of academic ethnography and a film (*Temple on the Hill*) made by a young graduate point to the well-established order of knowledge about migrants from which both draw.

For all of her meticulous research into the kinds of audiovisual media watched by the Punjabis in London, Gillespie makes little or no attempt to link diasporic media use with the life of media back in India. We consider this significant, given the intimate relation Indian film and television have had with the politics of Indian nationhood. As a result, Gillespie's readings of film/video as a means of recreating cultural traditions suffer from a degree of aestheticization. The account that she provides of Hindi films (Gillespie, 1995:78) would be applicable to Bollywood of any decade after the emergence of the 'social' as a super-genre (see below, 'From the Ramayan to Bollywood'). So she misses the potential of post-liberalisation Bollywood from the late 1980s to frame a new diasporic cultural identity for Indian youth. Gillespie draws on the Habermasian notion of "an

enlightened public sphere of communications” (Gillespie, 1995:15) which in her scheme of things fits well with the notion of ‘postcolonial space’ defined as “pluralistic conception of nationality and perhaps beyond that to its transcendence” (Gillespie, 1995:8). The burden of racism is placed on the nation-state which constructs its internal ethnic ‘others’, its ‘racial minorities’ (Gillespie, 1995:14). This gives her a reason to ignore the realities of the imbrication of nation-states with the contemporary movements of global capital (both economic and cultural); instead, she places hope on the traffic between “the local and the global that nevertheless transcends the national” (Gillespie, 1995:6). As part of her distrust of the category nation-state, she refuses any consideration of the political background from which Hindi movies emanate and the fact that this cinema is inalienably attached to the politics of the Indian nation-state. Such depoliticized understanding of Indian films inevitably gives them the look of self-enclosed, exotic cultural artifacts whose consumption in the western world by the Indian diaspora Gillespie makes the centrepiece of her careful ethnography.

Different Diasporic Indias

The paper addresses two theoretical issues central to understanding diasporic media. First, we argue that the different postcolonial diasporas are not ‘splinters’ in a transnational world, ready to re-articulate their identity on the lines of extra-territoriality or nomadism; on the contrary, it is the *historical* subjectivity of a diaspora which holds the key to its cultural life. At one level, there is a need to club the different (postcolonial) diasporas together as those not parties to what Partha Chatterjee calls the “original historical contract” (Chatterjee, 1995:11) that gave birth to the western nation-states. At another level, it is also important to recognise the different historical trajectories of these diasporas. Hence, the alienation that postcolonial people face in the multicultural West is multilayered; citings of the more visible signs of racism do not register its historical depth. The case of the Fiji Indians will amply demonstrate this. Second, diasporic media needs to be seen in the context of the politics of its production and dissemination. This is particularly so with Bollywood, which from its inception has situated itself in the locus of contending definitions of ‘Indianness’ (Rajadhyaksha and Willemsen, 1999:10).

By no means does this paper seek to analyse the media use of *the* ‘Indian’ diaspora seen as one monolithic whole. In fact, it is the globality of such a concept that needs be contested and read as a sign of ahistoricity and ethnocentrism that so often underwrites the perception of postcolonial societies. This is not to deny that the different Indian diasporas do deploy their notions of ‘India’ as the broad symbolic horizon for constructing their respective identities. Neither is it to underestimate the crucial role that such pan-‘Indianness’ (largely derived from Orientalist discourse about India) played in imagining a nation into existence during the course of struggle

against colonial rule and continues to do so long after the Raj. It is however to highlight the fact that for Indians (both inside India and outside) such 'Indianness' - like any other identity concept - is always already fissured. As a matter of *positioning* and not essence, this 'Indianness' varies with different communities, is used at times for contradictory purposes and quite often gives rise to unintended consequences. It may be argued that the different empirical factors like language, region or religion do not by themselves hold the key to cultural difference. It is the positioning of communities in postcolonial space that underpins the cultural lives of different Indian diasporas and sets the course for possible futures.

The different ways that different Indian diasporas frame their identities and cultural lives is remarkable. If the Fiji Indian community is the highest consumer of Hindi films, for the Indian Bengalis Indian-sourced film and video is not only a private affair; in many cases, it is of little interest and even active disparagement. At one level it may seem that this is a function of class, since the Indian Bengali diaspora in Australia, as elsewhere, is composed of professionals. But class cannot be a major cause, because South Asian diasporas in Australia are more or less of the same class composition, given the history of Australian immigration laws and the entry system it uses to select its migrants.

It is again a case of historicising the question by addressing Bengal's specific encounter with the British regime and the systems of knowledge of post-enlightenment Europe. In its bid to imagine otherwise than the modular western (Chatterjee, 1993:ch. 1), cultural nationalism in Bengal had made the *self* the locus of a complex and difficult elaboration from the middle of last century onwards that led to an enormous growth in every department of the Bengali cultural sphere. The basis of the *bhadralok* (the educated, Hindu Bengali gentry) was neither trade nor industry but land. Very early on, Bengal's commerce and industry was dominated by either the colonialists or the traders and capitalists from western India. As a result, the *bhadralok* concentrated in education, hoping to achieve through education what was denied through the economy (Chatterjee, 1993:11). The process accentuated with the introduction in 1885 of legislation limiting *zamindari* powers. This made the collection of dues more difficult, and rentier incomes began the long process of decline, both in real and absolute terms.

The project of modernity that the Bengali *bhadralok* had framed for itself faced its real challenge after independence with the civic disarray caused by Bengal's stagnant economy and the change in the constellation of political forces. Subaltern classes, empowered by electoral democracy, now staked their claims to enter the political institutions of modernity, originally framed to keep them out. It is from this Bengal that the *bhadralok* flees, either to the relatively prosperous parts of India or, if possible, abroad, to the affluent West, taking with them the dream of a nation that they were once so passionate about and the cultural baggage which had expressed that dream.

The Indian Bengali community's relation to their home country is marked by

a past which is lost and a present which is a lack. It justifies its rupture from motherland by attempting to become 'better' Bengalis: to revoke a past when Bengal's 'today' was India's 'tomorrow' is what frames Indian Bengali diasporic cultural life. This has meant framing their cultural lives around the high culture of the past, which has become a fossilized 'taste culture'. There is a surprising similarity between the menu of Bengali cultural programmes in Brisbane or Sydney and that of such places like New York, Toronto or London, where their number is vastly more. Ironically, the cultural products once deeply rooted in the soil and having organic links to the independence movement and to early post-independence hardship and hope have now come to form an imaginative global geography, lacing together Bengalis in such diverse places as Philadelphia, Boston, London, Dusseldorf, Dubai or Sydney. In a diasporic context, the project of Bengali modernity has been emptied of all political significance, save its impossibility.

If the Indian Bengali community is locked in the past, the twice-displaced Fiji Indian community looks outside, to India, for its cultural sustenance. For the Fiji Indians in Australia, Hindi films mean a whole way of life. Movie theatres that regularly run Hindi films, film music nights, a number of bands that specialise in Hindi film music, nightclubs, design shops offering the latest of Bollywood, film magazines - Bollywood for Fiji Indians is by no means restricted to consuming videos in the seclusion of the home. In this sense, the Fiji Indians of Australia bear a degree of resemblance to Gillespie's Punjabis of Southall. However, the differences between these two communities are crucial. India properly speaking is for the Fiji Indians a wholly imagined entity about which they know very little and have experienced even less. The fact that they were drawn mainly from the lower castes also helped them to largely free themselves as a social group from the shackles of the caste mentality or religious sectarianism in course of the last hundred years in Fiji. This is in sharp contrast to the mainland Indians and also to the Southall Punjabis.

Migration to Australia from mainland India has mostly been of the professional category. The social composition of India being what it is, this also means that the Indian representation in Australia is largely from the upper castes, many of whom are unwilling to give up their historical memory of unquestioned superiority vis-à-vis the lower castes. 'Going out' at times also means going back in time. As far as the Fiji Indians are concerned, the romantic construction of India (and Indians) - derived most significantly from the movies - faced in Australia for the first time the rude shock of caste discrimination through their interactions with 'compatriot' Indians. This has resulted in a change of focus of cultural antagonism - from the native Fijians, the mainland Indians now constitutes the community's 'other'.

The pervasive dominance of Hindi film culture amongst diasporic Fiji Indians is complicated by the continued presence of folk traditions like *Ramayan katha* (i.e., the recitation and enactment from the Hindu epic, Ramayan), or *bhajan* (devotional songs) that they had carried with them from the villages of India a century or more

back. The Ramayan, in its simplified version of *Ramcharitmanas* by Tulsi Das, functioned as a binding force in the fissiparous environment of indenture. It provided a nostalgic identification with motherland and also acted as a vehicle to relativise worldly realities by means of transcendental promises. The paper will show that, while the rural traditions in their present manifestations are thoroughly imbricated by Hindi filmdom, historically they have provided - in terms of narrative, iconography, and emotional and moral ambiance - the ideal ground for the overwhelming popularity of Hindi cinema amongst Fiji Indians.

The size of diasporic Indian groupings found in a country like Australia rarely reach 'critical mass'. Our research shows that the cultural implications of numerical strength of a particular grouping depend on the specificity of its diasporic postcolonial subjectivity. The identity politics of the Fiji Indian community in Australia is more a *post*-colonial practice, while that of the Indian Bengali community, their higher professional profile notwithstanding, is distinctly *post-colonial*. Being *post*-colonial means being beyond the operative hold of memory, 'nostalgia without memory' as Appadurai phrases it, while a *post-colonial* cultural politics is essentially an act of re-routing one's identity through the past.¹ For the former, the size of the community plays a vital role. Fiji Indians living in Sydney (upper estimates put the figure at about 50,000) have been able to form in the course of the last ten years a whole cultural ecology around Hindi popular filmdom. This has then been transmitted to other cities - for instance, Brisbane, where their presence is much thinner (around 7000). The crucial importance of this process lies in the fact that the second generation Fiji Indians now have a cultural platform that, though not counter-hegemonic, is markedly different from the host culture. The paper examines the role 'post-Zee' Bollywood (the era since television was substantially de-regulated) and the current trend of re-mixes of earlier songs to new beats play in this form of identity construction. As a contrast to this, the emphasis of the first generation (*post-colonial*) Indian Bengali diaspora on aestheticised cultural forms of the past offers the second generation very little in terms of a home country popular youth culture with which they can identify.

In an era of the global spread of corporate capital and great demographic shifts, one of the key projects of political modernity is faced with serious crisis: instead of the 'nationalisation of the ethnic' that western nation-states banked their hopes on, we now face the opposite scenario, 'the ethnicization of the nation'. The yearning for 'roots', as it is called, has become a common phenomenon for both the majoritarian white community as well as the different diasporas in different ways. As a result, the notion of shared public space is increasingly challenged by a different ordering of space - namely, a criss-cross of different primordias tied together by the

¹ Keya Ganguli has used a similar set of terms (*postcolonial* and *postcolonial*), though the meanings we attribute to them are not the same. For Ganguli, *postcolonial* refers to the "'extraction' of ... people from an ex-colonial territory to what might be called a neo-colonial one" while *postcolonial* refers to the much broader process of "the exploitative dynamic central to the production of colonial subjectivity" (Ganguli, 1995: 28).

universal function of the market - what we, in this book, are calling public sphericules. For the Fiji Indians, if it was legislated racial discrimination that compelled them to leave Fiji, in Australia they find themselves in the middle of a new entanglement of different, contesting imaginings of 'roots'. One of the results of this process is that Bollywood is taking new significance in their lives. Historically, the bond between them and India has been one of imagination. With time as memory of 'roots' - the *real* India - was fading away, films took over the responsibility of constructing an empty, many-coloured space through its never-ending web of images, songs, 'dialogues' and stars. In the new political context of Australia, this empty space would be shorn of even the pretence of a referent - it is space unto itself, a *pure* space so to say. Bollywood reciprocates this gesture by placing the diasporic *imaginaire* at the very heart of its new aesthetics.

Indenture and beyond

The Fiji Islands was declared a British colony in 1874 when a group of indigenous 'chiefs' signed a Deed of Cession with the British. Five years later the first Indian indentured labourers arrived in the coolie ships from India, the labour for the sugar plantations and other enterprises that would make the new colony pay without exposing the indigenous population to the harmful consequences of an industrial economy (Jayawardena, 1980; Kelly, 1991). By the end of indenture in 1919, 60,965 Indians came to Fiji as indentured labourers (see (Lal, 1983; Mishra, 1979). They called themselves *girmityas* (from the English word 'agreement', a reference to the labour contract). The British called them 'coolies', so did the indigenous Fijians (the word has an interesting twist, since the word for dog in Fijian language is similar: 'kuli'). Once indenture ended - five years per contract, but mostly extended for another five years - many of them did actually return to India², but mostly they stayed back as subsistence farmers. By 1986, the Indian population was in the majority in Fiji (348,704 as against 329,305 ethnic Fijians) and the country's economy was based on Indian management and labour.

By the time extraction for Fiji began (1870s), Madhya Pradesh and Bihar had started drying up and the eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh became the main, which constituted about 75% of those who left for Fiji from northern India. North Indian representation in Fiji constituted around 300 castes (mostly agrarian, with Brahmin cultivators constituting around 10%) from 200 villages. The Muslim presence was 13% (Lal, 1983). Though as North Indians they all spoke Hindi, the dialects varied widely from one region to another. The difference in dialect is particularly important in this case, since the overwhelming majority of those who went to Fiji as indentured labourers

² Quite a few of the respondents narrated the story of their grandparents who went back after indenture to their village in North India only to find that their funeral rituals (*sardh kriya*) were already performed by the village people since those days to have crossed the *kala pani* (literal meaning, black waters) was considered to be as good as dead.

were unlettered people. The *lingua franca* that developed among Fiji Indians (known as Fiji Hindi or Fiji Buli) reflects many different dialects, with occasional European and Fijian words. From the standpoint of ethnic identity, the important point is that the Fiji Indian population retained Hindi, which is not always the case with other indentured diasporas (see (Jayawardena, 1980)).

South India came into the picture only after 1903. However, even as latecomers, the total number of South Indians going to Fiji between 1904 and 1917 was 14,536, constituting 23.8% of the Indian population when the indenture period was over. The reason for such bulk migration is the different system under which they went - the *Kangani* system - where the village-head corralled his village people and took them to the colony. In their new destination, the South Indians were moved around and scattered in different plantations and as such they had to adjust to the *lingua franca*. This was a matter of great effort on their part, since the languages of the South emanate from the Dravidian family of languages and are entirely different from Hindi which is part of the Indo-European group of languages.

In the post-indenture period, Indians worked mostly as independent farmers on leased land for different sugar companies owned in Australia and Britain. Their economic condition gradually improved and the hardship of back-breaking routine work also eased. The news of exploitation of Indian labourers and especially of sexual harassment of Indian women by European males caused major flare-ups in India and provided inspiration to India's independence movement (Kelly, 1991). It has been argued that it was the movement against indenture in Fiji (with the active support of the Indian National Congress) that brought an end to the system worldwide in 1917.

The Gujaritis first came in large number in 1920s and 1930s as shopkeepers, moneylenders, artisans, *sonars* (goldsmiths) and in numerous other trades and services. There were occupational as well as residential differentiations. Mostly they lived in urban areas with little social interaction with the rest of the Indian community.

Unlike mainland India, Fiji was governed by British Common Law with no room for separate laws for different religious communities. However, this did not mean that for Fiji Indians the social system of Indian villages which re-enforces compliance with accepted rituals gave way to the impersonality of a secular order. This could not have happened, given the built-in conditions of inequality of a plantation regime. For the indentured population, re-creating 'mother-land' in its social, cultural and religious manifestations became part of their wider political struggle.

Jayawardena observes that the complete proletarianisation of Indians in Guyana meant near total loss of home traditions while the Fiji Indians could maintain cultural traditions because of isolated subsistence farming post-indenture (Jayawardena, 1980:436). With time, the population become more scattered and professions diversified. This re-emphasised the need to preserve their culture and

religion in order to provide support and solidarity among themselves. Culturally speaking, the passage from indenture to postindenture can be seen as one of 'amnesiac recollection' to an active bid to construct a 'national memory' (Kelly, 1998:880). And what initially had provided fodder to the construction of national memory (in spite of its many divides like north Indians vs those who came from the south, Hindus vs Muslims, Gujratis vis-à-vis the rest) were the folk traditions of North India and particularly, the ancient epic Ramayan (or better, the popular version composed by Tulsi Das in the sixteenth century, *Ramcharitmanas*). This epic - along with other cultural expressions of the *bhakti* movement - not only provided the cultural and moral sustenance to the community; in the very process of doing so, it also paved the way for the overwhelming popularity of Hindi popular cinema amongst Fiji Indians.

From the Ramayan to Bollywood

The cultural diet of Indians in Fiji right from the beginning of indenture were profusely imbued with elements of the *bhakti* (devotion) movement, the popular social and aesthetic movement that spread across India from the twelfth century onwards. It is through the prism of *bhakti* that they imagined their 'motherland' and embraced the popularity of Hindi commercial cinema.

Beyond the narrow sense as a form of worship, *bhakti* set the paradigm for popular creative expression almost singularly from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries, and later in combination with other currents of thought. The songs were composed in the vernacular, using quotidian metaphors. They advocated struggle against Brahminism and upheld the sacrosanct nature of every human relationship. Mostly a gesture against authoritarian rule, it was spearheaded by the subaltern classes. The movement was a confluence of many traditions and was not a particularly radical movement, at times showing an uncanny ability to suppress other emergent trends. While the transcendent is to be read in the everyday, it is figured in such a way that it has a levelling influence on all social and cultural divides of mundane existence. Tulsi Das' *Ramcharitmanas*, written in the sixteenth century, formed the centrepiece of *bhakti* tradition and became the unchallenged cultural meta-text of Hinduism. In the course of time, Gandhi was to privilege *Ramcharitmanas* to frame a semiotics of cultural politics against colonial rule, as for different and opposed ends was the Rastriya Sawangsevak Sangha (RSS - the martial arm of the currently ruling Bharatiya Janata Party). Throughout the nationalist movement, the Ramayan would function as one of the primary sites of investment for various kinds of re-writings for different cultural and political ends.

Unlike India, in indenture Fiji there was no class of gentry to put through a nationalist sieve the various cultural forms that emerged in the encounter with colonial modernity and selectively adopt and combine the reconstituted elements of

the supposedly indigenous tradition.³ In the absence of any philosophical tradition, what prevailed at the beginning was the reminiscences of numerous local cultural traditions of the villages of India. The north Indian village cultural expressions are compact, complex and part of a living tradition. The *girmitiyas* simplified those traditions they remembered - the dances, the songs, the religious rituals, sports, the games, the riddles. But most of them disappeared with time, since there were no institutional support which could nourish those traditions.

The traditions of village India that survived were basically derived from *bhakti* - the devotional songs (*bhajans*) of such composers like Kabir, Mira and Sur Das. But over and above anything else what inspired their imagination was Tulsi's *Ramcharitmanas*. Very early on, reciting, singing and enactment of the Ramayan was revived amongst the Indians of Fiji. This bound together a *cultural* community to brave the chains of bondage in the fissiparous environment of plantation capitalism where every one was an individual unit of production and daily existence was measured by work hours.

The Fiji Indians never accepted the status of racially and culturally doomed proletariat and went to great lengths to fashion new hybrid diasporic realities. During the indenture period and the early days of postindenture, both Hindus and Muslims participated in the major ritual festivals like *Holi*, the riotous Hindu ritual of reversals, and the *Tazia*, the Shi'a Islamic Moharram reenactment of the martyrdom of Husain and Hassan. Both also participated in *Ram Lilas*, the dramatic reenactments of the Ramayan narrative, which in indenture days was told as a tale of Ram's exile, climaxing with the burning of the giant effigy of Ravan symbolizing destruction of evil in the world. In these rituals (which were also to be dynamically appropriated into the Bollywood universe), the Indians found their social identity in relation to gods outside of, and in tension with, their colonial racist and economic definitions as 'coolies'.

The Ramayan was shorn of deeper philosophical meanings. Its primary function was to serve emotional satisfaction and not individual spiritual enlightenment. As mentioned before, the majority of North Indians in Fiji came from the Ayodha region of India, the homeland of the Ramayan. The reasons for an overwhelming emotional identification with the epic is directly related to the predicament of an indentured diaspora. The central god character, Ram, was banished for fourteen years. For Fiji Indians, it was for at least five years. Ram's banishment was no fault of his; similarly, it was not the fault of the Indians that they were extracted from their homeland and subjected to inhuman physical labour in this remote island. The triumphant ending of all ordeals provided a kind of moral strength to withstand the brutalities of indenture. If Ram could survive for 14 years, surely the Fiji Indians could do so for five years. The Ramayan thus was used to heal the wounds of indenture and provide a cultural and moral texture in the new settlement.

³ Partha Chatterjee discusses this process in detail in the context of nineteenth century Bengal. See, (Chatterjee, 1993).

There is another reason for this strong identification and this involves the question of woman and sexual virtue. Throughout the phase of indenture and even later, the paucity of women vis-à-vis men was one of the primary social concerns among the *girmitiyas*. In a situation where many men lived without wives of their own, women were expected to serve two contradictory functions: they were at times forced by circumstances and even by violence to leave one man for another while the pressure was on them to comply with the standards of a good, chaste woman (Kelly, 1991:ch. 9). Hence, one of central moral thematic of Hindi cinema - viz., the image of the devoted wife, the heroine struggling to be chaste - had a special appeal to the Fiji Indians, given the peculiar existential circumstances of indenture. A strong emotional identification to the Ramayan and other expressions of *bhakti* movement, a constrained cultural environment, continued degradation at the hands of the racist white regime, a disdain for the culture of the ethnic Fijians, a less hard-pressed post-indenture life and finally, a deep-rooted need of a dynamic, discursive site for the imaginative re-construction of motherland: all of these factors together ensured the popularity of Hindi films once they start reaching the shores of Fiji. This was because Hindi film deployed the Ramayan extensively, providing the right pragmatics for 'continual mythification' of home.

Of cardinal influence on Hindi cinema right from its inception has been the two epics - the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat*. Apart from providing moral succor, they were also magnificent sources for narrative tropes and cinematic spectacle. Films based on them initiated from the earliest days of cinema a different mode of spectatorship - devout villagers coming to the cities in their bullock carts to have a *darsan* (devotional sight) of Lord Ram on the screen (Chakravarty, 1993:35-36). Madhav Prasad explains the *darsanic* gaze in the following way:

Contrary to the voyeuristic relation, in the darsanic relation the object gives itself to be seen and in so doing, confers a privilege upon the spectator. The object of the darsanic gaze is a superior, a divine figure or a king who presents himself as a spectacle of dazzling splendour to his subjects. (Prasad, 1998:76-76).

Thus a thoroughly western technology of representation was deployed to generate an altogether different gaze - one that will not be found in the visual codes of Hollywood melodramas but is deeply ingrained in Indian religious modes. With time Bollywood increased its repertoire of different modes of address but the *darsanic* gaze remained one of the most important moments in its relations with spectators.

Most of the films made during the silent period were mythological and devotional. In the course of time, the predominance of the mythological receded as other genres like the social, historical, comic or fantasy began increasing in popularity (the decline in the number of mythologicals statistically: 1923, 70% of the films made belonged to this genre, in 1935, 22% and in 1970, 5%). But with the decline of studio production and the rise of independent producers, all these genres

gave way to a super-genre called the 'social'. By the end of the 1960s, this transition was complete. However, it did not mean that all these genres (including the mythological) simply disappeared, rather they were subsumed within the 'social'. The genealogy of 'the all-inclusive Hindi film', which comes to have a variety show look, is contemporaneously called the *masala* film (Prasad, 1998:48).

Even during the days of the mythologicals, religion was never an offensive presence. Producers were cautious not to annoy the sensibilities of other religions, due to strict censorship regulations. Partly due to the prevailing censorship norms and partly because Hindi films cater to a multi-religious market, religious motifs are seldom absent but subtle. A Hindu way of life constitutes the broad environment for moral elaboration while narrative strategies draw very often, even if allusively, from the two epics. Prasad has shown that at its most stable, the social genre included a version of the romance narrative, a comedy track, an average of six songs, as well as a range of familiar character types; the *masala* aesthetic served as a handy catch-all, an emotional and cultural 'map' of the diversity of Indian spectators (Prasad, 1998).

The epics helped Bollywood to fuse the history of the nation and the history of the family. In the Indian narrative tradition, family history is not strictly demarcated from social history. The most obvious examples are these two epics, which are popularly believed to have a historical basis. In the Mahabharat, the battle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, two branches of the same family, engages vast social, political, and cosmic forces, all of which are then sought to be compressed within a single philosophical framework; in the Ramayan, Ram's relationship with Sita is largely determined by his obligation to his family and, more importantly, his social *dharma*. Of the two epics, the Ramayan is again privileged because of its elaborations of the familial self and the focus on the duties and sufferings of *sati* - the chaste wife. Also to be taken into account is the fact that in North India, Ramayan's popularity far exceeds that of Mahabharat. The usual character stereotypes of Hindi films - the suffering but faithful wife (Sita) who is also a loving and somewhat indulgent sister-in-law; courageous, dutiful and detached husband (Ram); the faithful brother (Lakshman) and the vengeful, evil villain (Ravan) - are mostly drawn from the Ramayan. Bollywood would experiment with these role models, bring in other stereotypes (like that of the frolicsome Krishna of the Radha-Krishna *bhakti* motif popular in eastern India; or that of *dosti* - the friendship between two adult males which will be posited against heterosexual love for creating emotionally charged moments in the narrative). But never would Bollywood transgress the moral limits of the Ramayan.

What this effectively means is an inscription of the epics into the discourse of the nation through Hindi cinema. Partha Chatterjee has argued that Gandhian ideology led to the political appropriation of the subaltern classes by a bourgeoisie aspiring for hegemony in the new nation-state. Hindi cinema situated itself in this hegemony and aided the historical possibility for the appropriation of the masses into the evolving political structures of the Indian state. This explains its popularity across

class lines and ability to reconcile within its narrative scope the contradictory aspects of social order.

Vijay Mishra (Mishra, 1985; 1992) points to the various underlying drives structuring the epics, invoking mythic figures from the epics as the substratum from which the various Bollywood character-types emerge. The traffic between the epics and Bollywood is, however, complicated by the role of music and romance. Music functions to transform the epic narratives by foregrounding a romantic repertoire. Romance is absolutely crucial for Bollywood - it is defined by romance. Here Bollywood draws more from the Radha-Krishna trope (of love, desire and erotica) of *bhakti* than it does from the epics (see below, 'Intercommunal discord and cultural assertion'). Bollywood, operating within the moral and social limits of the epics, extends its narrative scope by negotiating with other folk and emerging popular traditions.

Hindi cinema established its traffic to Fiji in the late 1930s (mentioned at the beginning of the essay). By then the period of indenture was over, the Indian community as independent cultivators had lost the solidarity that characterized life on 'the lines' of indenture, and linguistic and religious identities were differentiating. Hindi cinema's primary impact in Fiji was to bond through meta-narratives with which all the different groups of Fiji Indians could identify. In this cinema, the Fiji Indians found the most lively expression of their yearning for roots and bid to reconstruct an imagined homeland culture in an alien surrounding - at once simplified, quotidian and concrete but with a long tradition. And since in Hindi films *nation* is imagined in familial terms, the physical distance between mainland India and Fiji did not interrupt this 'work of imagination'. Evidently the folk traditions borrowed from the villages of India did not come in the way of Hindi cinema's popularity; on the contrary, by simplifying these traditions in a remote island with very little scope for other kinds of cultural traffic, the folk culture actually prepared the way for the unprecedented popularity of this quasi-globalising mass culture.

As Fiji started urbanizing, the local Indian village cultures began to recede in influence, at least in the public cultural spaces of the cities. Once in place, Bollywood created its own public and psychic platform for people to interact. (My numerous respondents have narrated how as boys or girls, they used to gather around the movie halls long before show-time.) The gossip columns, the 24 hour Hindi service, the occasional visits of singers and stars from the then Bombay - all this went into constituting the culture of a community which harboured no illusion of return but for reasons of identity and cultural make-up, yearned for a romanticized version of India that Bollywood amply provided. The genealogy of unprecedented popularity of the mass cultural tradition of Bollywood in Fiji thus lies in the diasporic re-discovery of 'little' traditions that the *girmityas* brought with them and preserved over a century.

The platform that Bollywood provides has much to do with its particular mode of enunciation:

Repeat viewing is ... a common part of the everyday parlance of film appreciation in Bombay, where people will often tell each other that they have seen a film 10 to 15 times. While it is not always clear that these numerical claims are exactly accurate, they indicate an aesthetic in which repeat viewing is a sign of the committed connoisseur. (Appadurai, 1998)

The typical Bollywood film is not a psychologically integrated unit but a loose compound of various elements - like action, love, song and dance, dialogue, crime, devotion, special effects, and so on. What keeps these disparate elements together is the star system, with its retinue of reviews, magazines, interviews, blow-ups, television shows, ads, publicity materials, gossip columns, enormous billboards displaying the stars in larger than life proportions dotting the urban landscapes, auto/biographies, fan club hagiographies. Rajadhyaksha and Willeman call this "the distinctive 'insiderism', of a buddy culture of speech and body-language" (Rajadhyaksha and Willeman, 1999:10).

Satellite television, with its plethora of programs on Bollywood (mostly but not exclusively of song and dance sequences), has made this 'insiderism' very much a part of daily living. With the availability of cheap audio cassettes and recorders, the cult of music has spread rapidly - even to the remotest corners of India. The role of music in Bollywood - where almost all the films have at least half a dozen of songs by well-known 'playback' singers - is absolutely central. These songs have several important features. Written frequently by authors who were Urdu language poets and often migrants to Mumbai from the North, these songs still have roots in certain popular forms of North Indian poetry, notably *ghazal*, which have highly developed and aestheticized verbal forms. Appadurai describes how these songs form a big part of the acoustic ecology of everyday life in cities and small towns. They are a crucial part of the repertoire of street singers who take the place of the 'star' duets in the films. All these feed into the social space of the auditorium:

Anyone who has been to a popular Hindi film knows that a large amount of the leadership in any given audience signals its authority by indicating its command of both songs and script, largely by cheering when a certain "hit" song or song-and-dance sequence is about to begin, by singing along on occasion, and by expressing various bodily signs of pleasure when key songs arrive. This anticipatory pleasure and mnemonic command, which is part of the folk aesthetics of cinema, is closely tied to the collective and interactive nature of film going and cannot be separated from two other elements of popular reception, dialogue and stars. (Appadurai, 1998; Srinivas, 1996)

While the very different historical trajectory of indenture and post-indenture paved the way for Bollywood, Bollywood once in place in Fiji did not need "the particular conditions of the experiment" - i.e., similarity to the cultural, economic and political conditions of India. The cult of Bollywood that the Fiji Indians *re-produced* in Fiji is not a case of mimicry, since *repetition* is inscribed in the very

mode of being of Bollywood. If Bollywood is made the mainstay of cultural life (which to a very large extent is the case with Fiji Indians), it will of necessity repeat its entire cultural ecology - its 'insiderism'. This insiderism constructs a sense of mythological nationhood with very tenuous links with the *actual* geography of a nation. Hence, living in the realities of Fiji and participating in the life of Bollywood is not a case of split existence, since such a split is postulated on a divide between the real and the imagined, something that Bollywood disavows.

Fiji Indian Cultural Ecology in Australia

Despite the recency of their arrival in Australia and the structural deficits they face in employment, the Fiji Indians have reestablished themselves with a cultural dynamism that is out of all proportion to their numbers and which can be sourced to their embrace of the cultural repertoire proffered by Bollywood.

In Sydney, the professional Fiji Indians are scattered all over the city while those in blue collar jobs tend to concentrate in one or two regions. In the immediate years after the coup, they concentrated in the Campsie region of Sydney. Latterly, Liverpool and to some extent Bankstown are the two suburbs to where a majority of the working class Fiji Indians have moved. All these suburbs, with a number of big Indo-fijian grocery shops, garment houses, movie hall, auditoriums and night clubs, have emerged as the different nodes of Indo-fijian cultural life, complete with beauty contests (where participants come from all over Australia, New Zealand and Fiji), bands specializing in Hindi film music, music schools for filmy songs, DJs, karaoke singers, film magazines and community radio programmes. Number of Fiji Indian singers of Sydney have bought out several CDs in India. These are mostly popular Hindi movie songs and a couple of *ghazals* (light classical North Indian music that had its roots in the Mughal courts). It is not unknown for well-known artists to have appeared on the popular commercial television network in India, Zee TV. One of the DJs, DJ Akash, has several CDs of Bollywood re-mixes to his credit. He works in close consultation with DJ Bali Sagu, a second generation Indo-Britisher, who initiated the trend of re-mixes of old Bollywood music scores with his album, *Bollywood Flashbacks*, in 1994.

Brisbane's Bollywood cultural life, very much like in Sydney, is mostly a Fijian Indian affair. It has one regular band, Sargam, but relies on Sydney bands for major occasions. There are no night clubs and no established tradition of karaoke. Public performances, far less in number compared to Sydney, are hosted in rented auditoria. Like other Indian communities, for the Fiji Indians of Brisbane the relation to Bollywood is mostly restricted to renting Hindi videos, though as a community they are undoubtedly the highest consumers.

The reason for Brisbane's lack of a public face for Bollywood culture is partly due to the composition of the Indian community with a preponderance of

professional class. But primarily it is a factor of size. With a population of less than ten thousand, the Fiji Indian community does not have the resources to support an on-going Bollywood cultural economy and, with migration having dwindled to barely a few hundred every year, there is no sign that the Fiji Indian presence in Brisbane will increase substantially. The absence of a public culture of Bollywood impacts on the identity politics of second generation Fiji Indians. In general, the young Fiji Indians of Brisbane prefer to portray themselves as much less 'out-going' vis-à-vis their Sydney counterpart, less experimental about Bollywood ("interested in the professional part of singing and not merely re-mixes"), less hyped and much more rooted in the *values* of Indian culture. As a young woman active in Brisbane's Fiji Indian cultural world puts it: "We are more Indians. In the way we mix with people, our morals and culture, the way we dress - in every way, we are truer to our Indian ways. For Sydney, India is a commodity to be bought and sold; for us, India is a way of life".

One of the expressions of the overwhelming influence of Bollywood in Sydney is the community's attempts to make video films in Hindi. The process started in 1994 and, to 1998, four such films have been produced and two were in the process of being produced. *Starblitz* calls it 'Bollywood Down Under' and has a regular column devoted to it. These are locally financed, low budget, somewhat experimental Hindi films (on one occasion, the director has tried Fiji Hindi). These films are sold through Indian video shops and on public occasions shown by overhead video projector. Interestingly, these films are usually closer to Hollywood than Bollywood in narrative and moral scheme. One film, *Achanak* (meaning, a contingent event), is loosely based on *Basic Instinct* while another, *Biswas* (faith), is based on the *Rocky* films. These films are less convoluted in their narrative strategies than the average Bollywood product, with very few songs. The appeal of such films is restricted so far to the younger generation only who have no illusion that the films will travel beyond Australia or in any way infringe on Bollywood's market. Rather, these films are more an expression of the deep involvement with the culture of cinema amongst young Fiji Indians and a desire to capture the new diasporic locale and the specificities of migrant experience. Another example, *Kayalat* (meaning, the desire to be somebody else), narrates the story of a Fiji Indian girl who is trapped in her marriage with a Fiji Indian man. The husband does not try to appreciate the changes in her self-perception that a diasporic situation has brought to her life. Interestingly enough, she does not solve her dilemma by embracing western culture but tries to find an identity which is her own. Towards the end of the film, she is found involved with an Fiji Indian man of working class background. At a deeper level, these films reflect at once the attachment to Bollywood culture and a measure of unease of Fiji Indian youth regarding Bollywood's continued reliance on 'traditional Indian mores and morals', notwithstanding the vast changes it has undergone in recent years.

Intercommunal discord and cultural assertion

The ethnic, caste and class differences between mainland Indians and Fiji Indians has given rise to intracommunal tensions and rivalries which are neither new nor restricted only to Australia (see (Buchignani, 1980)). Many mainland Indians exhibit deeply entrenched casteist attitudes and view the indentured past of the Fiji Indians as a non-negotiable barrier.⁴ On the other side, Fiji Indians often characterise mainland Indians with the same kind of negative attributes that they were wont to use for ethnic Fijians. Both realise the need for a united front to deal with Australian racism but both view each other as an obstacle to better acceptance by the 'white nation'. Mainland Indians now constitute an *other* for this community, just as the ethnic Fijians did back in Fiji.

Such rivalry between the two communities has seen the re-assertion of culture and ethnicity by Fiji Indians. This involves a positive mobilization of indenture history and an emphasis on a Hindu way of life in a western context that bears similarities to Gillespie's account of self-construction of identity through the positive assertion of ethnicity (Gillespie, 1995:8-11). The dominant racism of white Australia, the ostracisation by mainland Indians, the need of the older generation for a platform to socialize and to reflect (which will also function as a moral regime for younger people) have together fed in to a resurgence of religion and revival of folk traditions, neglected in today's urban Fiji.

Jayawardena notes that in urban Fiji, European culture is the medium in which members of different ethnic sections interact with one another (Jayawardena, 1980:441-442). The impact of western institutions has been more profound than in India since, unlike mainland Indians, Fiji Indians have been subject to a uniform civil code. However, this uniform civil code in Fiji operates in a power matrix where Fiji Indians were in a distinctly disadvantageous position, initially with regard to the white indenture regime and then vis-à-vis ethnic Fijians. The result of a process of 'uniformity in the context of inequality' has been that as a community Fiji Indians retain their own cultural identity while their public life moves freely in and out of the European, Fijian and Indian cultural spheres. This heritage has contributed to Fiji Indians adapting rapidly to an advanced western life-style in their diasporic contexts.

One of the most creative methods of adaptation is the assertive construction of a cultural community around *Ramayan Katha* and *bhajan mandalis* (small

⁴ The attempt to reassert such values as part of Hindutva - the cultural and political ideology of re-framed Hindu nationalism of recent decades - in a diasporic setting is indeed ironic. It has been argued that Hindutva for diasporic Indians is on the increase with the rise of Hindu nationalism in India since the mid-1980s. But there is a significant difference between diasporic practice of Hindutva and the politics of the currently ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In its attempt to imagine the nation in terms of Hindutva, BJP has inadvertently put the ideology of the upper castes under the greatest challenge that it has ever experienced from inside, namely, the felt political need to expand its ranks and thus give up its claim to monolithic superiority. This can be called the *epistemic crisis* of the BJP. Diasporic Hindutva suffers from no such *crisis* or obligations. In a way, BJP realises its idealised self outside its actual political terrain.

gatherings for devotional songs) which paved the way for Bollywood's popularity. For the last couple of decades, these traditions were mostly on the decline in urban Fiji. Once in Australia, these have regained their popularity as a platform to unite the community and act as a moral regime for young people.

Significantly enough, in the Hindu religious traditions devotion and erotica are rarely separate departments of life and one very often evokes the other. This is particularly so with the *bhakti* tradition from which Tulsi Das's *Ramcharitmanas* emanates. In the *bhakti* taxonomy, *shringar* is the highest form of devotion - the erotic bond between the devotee (a woman) and the deity (a man). In one of the forms of *shringar*, the female denies herself, her family, all bonds and social constrictions and pursues the love of Krishna. Radha is the epitome of this love and devotion. The trope of Radha and Krishna puts together social transgression, erotica and devotion. As the supreme expression of desire and pathos, it has for centuries provided inspiration for *bhajans* (i.e., devotional songs). It has also served Bollywood as a source of much of its music, narrative and allegory. This means that cultural and religious assertion of tradition has not been in opposition to Bollywood; in fact, in a western diasporic context, it provides young Fiji Indians with the cultural capital to really appreciate Bollywood.

The Fiji Indians, with a long tradition of attachment to *bhajan* and other devotional songs, have been influenced by the recent boom in devotional music market in India. Coming in contact with mainland Indians has not only meant digging up casteist and indenture memories; it has, more positively, opened new possibilities for creative expressions by exposing the community to the wider world of Indian music and dance. There are many more Indian dance and music (especially, classical) schools in Sydney than was the case in Fiji. The result has been quick to materialise: from receivers of Indian cultural artifacts, the community has become a producer. In the field of devotional music however, this exposure however is impacting the community in a significant way. For more than a century, Fiji Indians were used to singing the Bhojpuri (from the district in Bihar called Bhojpur) style of *bhajan* called *tambura bhajan*. Now this is giving way (at least for a section of the community) to the more classically-oriented *bhajan* of Anup Jalota, Hari Om Sharan, Anuradha Paudwal and others through audiocassettes produced in India. The CDs of some of the *bhajan* singers of the Sydney community are clear proof of this trend. In terms of the dialectics of 'great' and 'little' traditions, this may be regarded as a case of 'little' tradition being dissolved in the 'great' tradition that McKim Marriott calls "universalisation".

Fiji Indian Youth Culture and post-Zee Bollywood

The most dynamic aspect of Fiji Indian youth culture centres on the use of Bollywood to negotiate a kind of parallel cultural platform to the dominant western pop culture. This can be understood through grasping the enormous changes that Bollywood itself has undergone in recent years, especially since the advent of Zee TV. Zee programming has branded itself as a half-way house between Star TV brand and traditional Hindi film, creating a hybrid genre that refers strongly to western style music and dance. Such types of dance and music are now also the mainstay of Bollywood, especially of the new genre of 'teen-age romance' that has come into being in the liberalising India of the 1990s. The Bollywood of tear-jerker melodramatic plots and folksy music with the male and female protagonists dancing in the luxuriant Himalayan foothills or the vast, empty stretches of a beach has not disappeared, but contemporary Bollywood is increasingly driven by contemporary music culture, and in large part by hugely extravagant song-music sequences with ever more tenuous links to the plot.

The satellite television revolution of the 1990s impacted on Bollywood in several ways. On the one hand, it caused huge investment in choreography and spectacle as part of the attempt to bring spectators lost to television back to the auditorium. On the other hand, such song-dance routines not only provide regular fodder for the plethora of song and dance programs on television (in 1997, about 65 programs interspersed over the rapidly expanding multi-channel packages are song-based); because of the popularity of these programs, it is these sequences which determine a movie's fate both at the box-office and in the exploding music market. There is also the radical transformation in the character of this music. From being mostly a combination of Indian folk music, light classical Indian music, and the standard western popular music, Bollywood now freely mixes rap, Latin American and Black music with traditional Indian music. As part of the same process of the 'MTV-isation' of Indian popular entertainment, there has emerged an extra-cinematic realm of Hindi pop-music and pop-stars, like Remo Fernandes, Alisha Chenoy, Sharon Prabhakar, Parvati Khan and 'rap' artists like Baba Sehgal. DJ Akash explains the implication of such music for young diasporic Indians in the following terms:

Ten years back a young Indian would listen to his music in a very low volume. He would consider his music to be very 'tacky' and would have felt awkward to play it publicly in a western context. The contemporary Bollywood music, by blending Indian melody with Western beats, has changed all this. Now a days if you go down the streets of Sydney very often you will hear Indian music blasting. Young people no longer

consider the Bollywood songs as curry music. It no longer sounds strange to the average westerner.

Arguably *because* of this hybridisation of Bollywood music, it manages to signify something special to the diasporic young Indians. Asked about the continued influence of Bollywood music, a young Fiji Indian performed this analysis:

Bollywood has got the potential. It has got feeling. When you are happy you have something to sing, in love you sing, when you are sad you sing. You can relate to it. Consider the recent hit, "Dil To Pagaal Hai" (my heart has gone wild). It is about love and affection with which a young person can immediately identify. All those who are in love would buy the CD for their girl friends; they would send requests to the radio channel for the song to be played. We relate to it in two ways: i) visual part - i.e., what the main guy and main girl did in the movie, and ii) the meaning of the lyric. Compared to this, Hollywood music hardly has any message that we can relate to. Take *Men in Black* for instance. We could barely identify with the hit score. The messages of Bollywood with which we are brought up hardly gets conveyed to us there. There is nothing of our own in such music.

Fiji Indian young people use a wholly hybridized genre like the re-mixes to fashion a discourse of authenticity. On the one hand, they will deploy the re-mixes as part of syncretic metropolitan culture and thus break out of the cartography that views their culture as *ethnic*. On the other hand, they perceive these re-mixes (for them, an essentially diasporic phenomenon) as part of their attempt to promote Indian popular music by making it contemporary; this they will compare to the Indian night-club crowd which according to them is hooked on unadulterated western hard rock and heavy metal. A Fiji Indian enthusiast of 'Indi-pop' describes her experience in terms that converge being 'western' and being 'Indian': as a westerner, she prefers Indi-pop to traditional Indian popular music (which for her is "a bit too romantic and at times unacceptably melodramatic"); she is also "far more of an eastern person" vis-à-vis her Mumbai counterpart:

When I went to India, I found that kids are not thrilled with re-mixes. To be honest, I got the impression that they are quite wary of this kind of experiments; they think that it is corrupting the original music scores. On the other hand, I found night clubs in Bombay (sic) are more influenced by Hollywood than Bollywood. I was shocked to find many Indian girls dancing to heavy metal and hard rock. This is pretty aggressive by Indian standards. I haven't seen any girl of Indian origin doing that sort of dance in Sydney. ... Kids in Bombay go to night clubs to become western. Here we go to assert our eastern identity. The basic difference lies there.

Apart from re-mixes of popular scores, bhangra as a dance beat serves an important role in the deployment of Indian popular music for the purpose of being 'agreeably different' in a western context. Originated in rural Punjab as a harvest

dance, bhangra's potential to provide the right kind of beat for clubbing was first explored by the Punjabis of Southall (Haq, 1997). Fiji Indians were not exposed to Bhangra in Fiji. But in the last ten years, it has gained great popularity amongst the young Fiji Indians of Australia. In recent years, on every Wednesday night Sydney community radio 2 SER plays bhangra-pop. Bhangra did not come to Australia from India; rather, it came from London. In fact, it can be argued that the recent popularity of *bhangra-pop* in India with the rise of such stars as Daler Mehendi is very much a case of the diaspora re-working the homeland.

Diasporising Bollywood

Contemporary Bollywood is unabashedly urban and increasingly global in its settings. Less than 5 per cent of films now have rural stories as opposed to 15-20 per cent ten years back (Chopra, 1997:54-55). Western locale are being juxtaposed with rural and urban India: for example, in *Pardes*, a north Indian village seamlessly gives way to Los Angeles in the middle of the plot; or, in a reverse pattern, the diasporic protagonists of the highly successful *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* travel through the continent to reach the bountiful villages of Punjab of their ancestors where the main action will take place. The urban market now accounts for more than 60 per cent of a film's earnings compared to 45 per cent ten years ago; the overseas market too, now a substantial 20 - 25 per cent, is increasing with every passing year. Many Bollywood films both promote and reflect the diasporic *imaginaire* that has squarely set in for the post-liberalization new urban middle class. For Thomas Hansen (1996:603), the cultural significance of globalisation for a postcolonial nation like India lies in the crucial ambivalence between its promises of recognition of nations and cultures, and its simultaneous threat of subversion of political sovereignty and cultural particularity. In these days of a global cultural economy where more than half of the world's economy revolves around communication and life-style industries, the distinction between the cultural-spiritual and the technological-economic is difficult to maintain. And if that is so, it is all the more imperative that differences are imagined all over again.

Bollywood has not only coped with the challenges of globalisation but taken advantage of the new situation by enlarging its terrain. This it has achieved by creating a spectatorship aware of the specific requirements of the diasporas as well as those living in India. A globalising world of communication and capital flow, instead of imposing a hegemonic cultural world order, has triggered a politics of space whereby the diasporas of a particular community dispersed world-over are networked to the home-land culture to such an extent that the traditional divide of outside/inside loses much its analytical purchase. In contemporary Bollywood, it is interesting to see how the inscription of the citizen consumer, its ideal contemporary spectator, has offered spaces for assertion of identity for Bollywood's diasporic

clientele vis-à-vis the host culture and in the case of Fiji Indians, with the mainland Indian communities as well.

Perceived as vulgar and prolific, at once strangely irrational and easily masterable, Bollywood till recently managed to generate very little scholarly interest: for western film academia, it was a matter of regular indifference while for Indian film criticism, it was a target of unequivocal condemnation. The reasons were: a tendency to stasis at the level of narrative and character development; an emphasis on externality, whether of action or character representation; melodramatic sentimentality; crude or naive plot mechanisms such as coincidence; narrative dispersion through arbitrary performance sequences; and unrestrained and over-emotive acting styles (Vasudevan, 1993:57). What such shock reactions to this cinema's 'lack of realism, restraint and psychological feasibility' conveniently overlook, however, is its enormous innovation in fashioning itself as the most reliable archive of popular hopes and disillusionment, and the ability to locate itself in the locus of influential and contesting definitions of 'Indianness'.

It can be argued that since the emergence of the super-genre of the 'social' in the 1960s, Bollywood underwent its next major change in the late 1980s-early 1990s coping with the tides of globalisation. As part of this change, the diasporic Indian (popularly known as the Non-Resident Indian (NRI)) is now very much part of its address. This was necessary not only to embrace Bollywood's diasporic clientele but also to secure its popularity at home since the one self has to see its reflection in the other for its globalising ideal self-definition. In the new troping of the home and the world, those who are brought up outside India have *India* inside them very much as the *west* is inscribed in the heart of India. This enmeshing of identities has enabled Bollywood to address the moral and cultural alienation that diasporic youth feel with Hindi films made on 'standard formula', while it also offers them the difference they want vis-à-vis Hollywood.

The audiovisual language and the codes transmitted by the popular television channel like MTV India is note worthy in this context. Music videos specially created for such channels constitute a visual rhetoric that was hitherto unknown. For example, the space constructed is customarily free from any associations with the lyrics moreover, the space is also free from overall linearity and continuity. Even the MTV promos, which are ideally supposed to attract the attention of the audience, are almost grotesque in terms of choice of ideas and visual idiom. Evidently, the channel is targeted at a niche viewership and has successfully created a body of visual codes for itself, which easily floats from Mumbai to Montreal, from Ludhiana to Los Angeles.

Earlier Bollywood was not governed by consideration of community 'out there'; community was securely at home. Hence representations of abroad could only take the form of the travelogue. For instance, towards the later part of the super-hit *Sangam* (1964), the couple go on an exotic tourist album honeymoon trip to the West. The exotic locales of such narratives provided not only visual pleasure but

constructed a site for marking self's absolute difference from the *other* (one that lies outside the imagined boundaries of home). The mass scale use of colour on Indian screen in the 1960s and other technological innovations demanded a prismatic view of the world. The demands of the technology, however, intersected with the demands of social history to produce such 'picture postcard' films.

A popular film like *Love in Tokyo* (1966), for instance, is a story of a young man Ashok in search of his half-Japanese, half-Indian nephew, Chikoo, in Japan. In his bid to transport Chikoo to India and thereby 'rehabilitate' him, Ashok meets the heroine Asha who lives in Tokyo. Neither Chikoo nor Asha "belong" to their spaces, thereby effacing all possibilities of interaction with their allotted spheres. Even when the physical space is loosely woven into the narrative, the seams are visible - perhaps as a reminder to the spectator of its alien nature.

The spectators get glimpses of the ropeways, entertainment parks, Japanese theatre and even *geisha* dances and *sake*. During the main song "Japan, Love in Tokyo..." the regular, almost mandatory, close shots of the woman's body are replaced with long shots of bridges, monorail and mammoth stadium. In fact, Ashok sees Asha for the first time on television and its not only Asha's framed images that are pleasurable, its also the surprise called "Television" that draws his attention. The Japanese are represented as Janus-faced progressing with time with face turned to the past. The characters are like travelers, collecting exotic mementos and photographs without actually interacting with the people. This is particularly evident in the comic situations played out by actor Mehemood, who not only "flies" across Tokyo to furnish a "better" (and a detached) overview, but also performs a dance in a *Kimono*. The characters make a hasty retreat to India as soon as the moot issue, i.e., the restoration of Indian ness in the psyche of the estranged woman and child, is resolved.

The words of the main score, "Japan ... love in Tokyo" - *kitni rangin hain fizayen/ Japani pariyan muskurayen* (the ambience is kaleidoscopic/ as the Japanese fairies smile) - would be repeated in *An Evening in Paris* (1968), another popular hit of the 60s: *dekho, dekho, dekho, an evening in Paris/ ayo tumko dikhata hum/ Paris ki ek rangin sham* (come I will show you the kaleidoscopic evening in/of Paris/ look at the fairies...), once again inviting the spectator to splurge in exotic locale. In the film, the heroine, Deepa, comes to Paris in search in of love. She meets Sam/Shyam, who is an Indian from Lucknow but introduces himself as French. Its through Deepa's and Sam's experiences that the spectators get to see ethnic dances of Switzerland, women in bikini water skiing, the Virgin Girl Mountains of Jungfrau,, Beirut, fights around Niagara falls, romantic scenes in the Eiffel Tower and buses and boats of Paris.

Deepa's decision to choose Paris as the site for journey into self is dealt with in narrative terms by Deepa's mirror-image, Roopa. Roopa is Deepa's long lost twin-sister who is now a nightclub dancer in Paris. She has been brought up by villains in Paris and renamed, Suzy. Roopa/ Suzy is perhaps what Deepa would have been

transmogrified into had she been brought up in Paris, acting therefore as an austere warning to Deepa as she embarks into self-searching. Deepa (light) and Roopa (beauty) are images of the same self, pitched at two ends. Sam/Shyam (Krishna) plays the iconic moral police, representing patriarchal protocols in absence of a father figure and is Deepa's guide not only for a continental tour but also for the performances of self-identification.

Issues of true national identity keep appearing in the films of the 70s - most prominently, in *Hare Rama, Hare Krishna* (HRHK) - but under different circumstances and timeframe. The female protagonist of HRHK, Jese/Janice/ Jasbir, is an iconic figure of the seventies - a child-woman caught in a whirlpool of "wrong" notions and right " traditions". She is haunted by a sense of loneliness and restlessness as well as an urge for peace and quietude which is symbolically represented through the song "Dum maro Dum...." In this sequence, images of self-engrossed Jesse are intercut with shots of drug-addicts who happen to be her friends. The moot point is established when the protagonist, Prasant, appears singing in praise of Ram and Krishna ("Ram ko samjho..."). The establishing sequence itself searches the roots of Jesse's rebellion. It begins with shots of icons juxtaposed with shots of worshippers, cut to shot of the political map of the world, a pan from the spiritual orient to the materialist occident as the male voice-over identifies the worshippers as misguided souls addicted to self-love yet in search of peace.

This drama of returning to the roots is ironically played out in Nepal, in popular nationalist discourse Nepal is an ex-colony of India now not only the land of "hippies" but a space from where Hindu icons get smuggled out to foreign lands. Not surprisingly, along with rescuing misguided Jesse, Prasant's other project is to stop this cultural theft. Unlike Deepa, and Asha Jesse can't return to the old guard as she has reached the point of no return. The guitar-playing, beer-guzzling, cigarette-puffing Jesse has to kill herself *a la* the golden hearted vamps of Hindi films.

Partha Chatterjee (1995:32) has argued that even as the associational principles of secular bourgeois civil institutions were adopted in the new civil society of the nationalist elite, the possibility of a different mediation between the population and the state was already being imagined, one that would not ground itself on a modernised civil society. From this standpoint the career of Hindi popular cinema may be viewed as one that tries to tenuously bridge the civil society with what Chatterjee calls political society, one that tries to channelise and order popular demands on the development state via political parties, movements and non-party political formations. The films of the 50s and 60s - decades when Nehruvian optimism still had a formal presence - hung on to an understanding of nationalism as an expression of fundamental human needs for continuity, of affective bonds. The particularism of nationalism's contents, directed at one people, incorporated within itself the narrative of identity that universal history represents for humanity in

general.⁵ The community, located firmly within the bounds of the nation, need not negotiate with what resides outside its terrain - either other communities or its own traces spread across the world. The anger, rebellion and restlessness expressed in HRHK tropes the outside as threatening (and hence, significantly, an active entity) as well as gives vent to the collective anger of the 70s, one that would coalesce around the star-auteur persona of Amitabh Bachchan. This was also the time when Nehru's notion of modernized (read, westernized) civil society caused profound dissonance in Indian polity and the presence of political society was more openly felt.

In the 90s, with the rising tides of both regionalism and globalization, Bollywood has incorporated a diasporic *imaginaire* to cater its all-India market as well as market outside India. In this new incarnation Bollywood not only very often physically locates itself in the west, the central roles in the narrative too are reserved increasingly for the figure of diasporic youth. Block-busters such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* and *Pardes* are only two examples of a host of such films that include *Lamhe*, *Virasat*, and *Aur Pyar Ho Gaya*. With consumption acquiring a different inscription, recent Bollywood has offered for its diasporic youth clientele a trajectory of 'western-style' glamour, wealth and liberty, but on its own terms. Bollywood manages the ensuing alienation with the mass audience of India by the sheer strength of its vast repertoire, which even now has a large space for films of earlier eras. For the new Bollywood too, it is not as if though it merely mimics Hollywood. Rather, the semiotics of exchange with Hollywood has in recent years taken an interesting turn. The biggest hit in recent years, *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998), for instance, completes this India/west circuit by not venturing to go abroad at all; instead, it creates a virtual 'west' within the bounds of India.⁶ In fact, in terms of *mise-en-scene*, the film has internalised the west into India to the extent that it does not even have to announce that it is the west. Thematically, once the tomboy character of the heroine (played by the mega-star, Kajol) is established, the rest of the narrative concentrates on bringing to the fore her femininity. The framing of the woman as powerless, and above all a wife and a mother, and at the same time allowing her a certain space, a freedom for the pleasure of her subsequent disciplining, has been the general narrative-ethical guideline since the early days of the 'social' in the 1950s. *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* does not alter the terms of what we might call this 'Sita' trope, but pushes it to accommodate a decisively urbanized, globalized (basketball playing, baseball cap wearing) female prototype; neither is her subsequent realization of a more feminised, 'Indian' self jarring to her earlier posturing. In fact, such realization will only act to make her a more holistic woman.

⁵ That the nation-state should remain the premier form of political and economic legitimation in an era dominated by American imperialism and international capital, according to Marc Redfield, is unsurprising if one accepts the continuing pertinency and power of a Western master-narrative of modernity, according to which the nation represents the emergence of a people into history and prefigures the global achievement of universal human control. The particularism of nationalism's claims and the universalism of modernity are subsumed in the formal congruence between the former's own narratives of identity, directed at one people, and the narrative of identity that universal history represents for humanity in general (Redfield, 1999:58).

⁶ I thank Ravi Vasudevan for an insightful discussion of textual strategies of what I call 'diasporic Bollywood'.

In a similar vein, the other female protagonist of the film, the Oxford returned, guitar strumming girl (played by Rani Mukherjee), who can also quickly switch on to singing Hindu religious hymns - and to whom the hero gets married but who dies at childbirth - is not a 'vamp from the West' (as earlier films of similar narrative would almost certainly portray her to be) but a nice, pleasant woman who happens to wear westernized clothes in a sexualized sense. This then would be internalized in the Indian imaginary as not someone who *represents* the West (since 'West' is very much in India) but simply as someone who has lived in the West.

Bollywood representation establishes 'India' community as a national but global community. To ritually assert, as Bollywood characters often do, that one is part of such an ideal community, it is important that one knows what one is part of. This involves returning to India and seeking sanctions from the original patriarchal order. *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* is a remarkable instance of such re-working of traditional patriarchal moral scheme. The film begins with the memorable montage of the heroine's father (acted by Amresh Puri): as a Punjabi farmer, he is straddling past the mustard fields of Punjab; then through dissolve, he is seen journeying past Big Ben and Westminster (wearing his Punjabi *ajkan*), and finally feeding grains to the pigeons in the city square of London and remembering ancestral Punjab in a voice deeply laden with nostalgia. In the film, Puri is the epitome of a *darsanic* figure, bestowing sanction within the orbit of his *darshan*. The narrative then moves from the domestic space of the heroine in London to the continent with the couple and finally reaches rural Punjab, where the heroine (acted by Kajol) is supposed to have an arranged marriage with a local boy. Once the couple reach rural Punjab, the film changes gear and becomes unusually slow. The gaze is fixed on the nitty gritty of the marriage rituals, staged in a static, ornate fashion. The point of view is of the hero, who witnesses the preparations but from a remove. It is important that the occasion is not contested since the pleasure lies in its staging. The spectatorship at this point is clearly diasporic.

The action takes place at the very end of the film, when the heroine's father throws the hero out of his house and the proposed son-in-law starts beating the hero in a typical vendetta fashion. The hero does nothing to defend himself but significantly once his father is hit by one of the men of the heroine's father, he plunges into action and manifests aggression to defend his father. It is at this point that heroine's father gives sanction to the hero: defending the father means by logic of mirroring defending the future father-in-law, or in a broader sense, the father principle, the originating source of authority. It is interesting for the elaborate carnival of identity where there is a kind of secret strategy to hold it at bay until one can actualize it on one's own terms, on terms of that freedom that the West has given but which needs to be ratified in the ancestral home. As a form, it has been clearly invented by contemporary Bollywood and has of late been repeatedly deployed as major device to bring the West and the East at one place. It is also a ploy to re-inscribe the narrative space firmly within the *darsanic* orbit and very much like in

old Bollywood, climax comes in the form of defending the *darsanic* object.

In the latest blockbuster, *Kaho Na Pyar Hain* (2000), the two selves - local and diasporic - are split and the one is introduced through the death of the other. Rohit is a young aspiring singer who works in a car showroom (*somewhere* in urban India), lives as a paying guest with his younger brother and often cannot pay his rent. Moments before his dream music show, he witnesses a murder by chance and is killed himself. Rohit's death takes the narrative to New Zealand where the heroine meets Rohit's look-alike, Raj (both roles played by Hritik Roshan, the current craze of Bollywood), who in every way though is a contrast to Rohit's 70s persona. Raj is rich, sports a plush car, has a displayable body, at ease in western discos but also comes from an unsullied, virtuous Indian family outside India (for millions of Hritik fans, Raj is "complete"). In a reversal of role from the picture postcard films discussed before, Raj travels to India with the heroine in search of roots, but primarily to settle things right, thus affirming the new thesis that only in diaspora the Indian essence can be best realised. The diasporic self, though unexposed to the mucky side of Indian reality has the necessary competence to come out victorious, in the process however offering the spectator both a valorised display of body and a full dose of 'action' sequences that KKHH lacked. The film therefore achieves a few things at one place: the supremacy of the diasporic self (through whose lens a section of the local urban youth now sees itself), the foregrounding of the body and health regime aimed at urban and diasporic viewers (in a film made the same year, *Fiza*, the crux of the narrative is conveyed through a *tandav* dance that fetishizes the body of the hero - again Hritik) and the traditional menu of chase and ghastly fights - with clear quotations from the 70s angry young man genre - that ensures the film its traditional clientele. Thus even while the film privileges the diasporic character over and above its local counterpart, it achieves the desired continuity of the filmic subject with the community at large.

Conclusion

London dekha, Paris dekha, aur dekha Japan
Michael dekha, Elvis dekha, Doosara nahin Hindustan
Eh duniya hai dulhan, dulhan ke maathe ki bindia
I love my India

(Seen London, seen Paris, and also Japan
Seen Michael, seen Elvis, no place like Hindustan [India]
The world is my bride, my bride has *bindia* [dot] on her forehead
I love my India)

The 'cheepy' celebration of motherland by a diasporic character on return to India in

the film *Pardes* provided the Bollywood superstars, Shah Rukh Khan and Juhi Chawla, a perfect note to conclude their dance and music shows during their tour of Australia and New Zealand in 1998. Such celebration of India is by no means new to Bollywood. In fact, the legendary Raj Kapur stole the hearts of millions more than four decades back with a similar song (in *Shree 420*, 1955): "Mera joota hai Japani/Ye patloon Englistani/Sar pe lal topi Roosi/Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani" (My shoes are 'Japani'/ This pantaloons 'Englistani'/ The red cap on head 'Roosi' [Russian]/ Yet the heart is 'Hindustani').

In spite of their apparent thematic similarity, the two songs register radically different points of view. For Raj Kapur, the aim is to realise a cosmopolitan Indian self in the very soils of India (in keeping with the reigning Nehruvian ideals of that time). The song in *Pardes* is clearly a song of the Indian diaspora, of re-constructing 'India' outside India. That the song would hit the top charts in India almost instantaneously on its release testifies to the globalisation of 'India' across these four decades.

Our previous analysis tries to show how Bollywood in its contemporary manifestation promotes more than ever the category of "the global and the fully marketized" but manages to stop short of allowing it an over-determining role vis-à-vis what Ashis Nandy calls "the culturally self-confident but low-brow multiculturalism" of Indian cinema ((Nandy, 1998) quoted in (Das, 1998:7)). Bollywood's ability to negotiate Hollywood on its own terms has been widely discussed: Rajadhyaksha (1987:173) persuasively demonstrates the error of viewing Bollywood as 'insufficiently Hollywood' and advocates a space for this cinema in its own right within the terrain of film theory. Richard Dyer (1986) has argued that Hollywood associates the factor of glamour with aristocratic privilege and regularly pits it against the 'openness' of western liberal democracy where talent and perseverance are always duly rewarded. As a contrast to this, the world that Bollywood constitutes is one of 'heterotopia' (Foucault, 1986:24) where the *real* world outside the auditorium is simultaneously represented, simplified, inflated, contested, and inverted. Hence very often the basic narrative line is repeated as if the same language game is played time and again and along with it is repeated (as discussed in the section, "From Ramayan to Bollywood") the whole cultural ecology of Bollywood.

The viewing subject of Bollywood is not so much the individuated spectator of western film theory but primarily a member of a 'narrative community'⁷. Indian political theorist, Sudipta Kaviraj elaborates the concept of narrative community in the context of postcolonial democracy in the following way:

⁷ Ravi Vasudevan, discussing how cinema as an autonomous cultural institution comes to be involved in the shaping of civil society in the west, observes: "In the case of film as a cultural institution, we may observe that this formation of the civil by the cultural (as discussed by Charles Taylor) is achieved at the cost of repression. Through the Production Code an anticipatory and preemptive civil consensus developed about the limits of cinematic representation. Clearly, the rules of individuation and association must lie within definite parameters" (Vasudevan, 1998).

The telling of a story brings into immediate play some strong conventions invoking a narrative community. ... To some extent, all such communities, from the stable to the emergent, use narrative as a technique of staying together, redrawing their boundaries or reinforcing them (Kaviraj, 1992:33)

The source of Bollywood's phenomenal success as a commercial medium seems to lie in its ability to bring within its narrative fold the diverse narrative communities not only of South Asian origin but even wider - of large parts of the so-called Third World. In other words, inscribed in its address is the postcolonial predicament of an audience which, in the case of the Fiji Indians, have been twice displaced.

I have sought to show how negotiation with the 'culture of motherland' became for the Fiji Indian community part of a much broader question of negotiation with (post)indenture definition of the self. Needless to mention, this negotiation could not remain the same from the early days of 'extraction' and the physically arduous schedule of indenture through postindenture life of subsistence agriculture, diversification of occupation, and differentiation of the community to entry into a western context of late modern times with the option of "multiplicity of forms of life and conscious adoption of lifestyles" (Dean, 1996:213).

The situation has been made more complex by the recent changes in the western landscape of the 'social'. Here we go by the definition of the *social* provided by Nicholas Rose: a large abstract terrain of collective experience, the sum of bonds and relations between individuals and events within a more or less bounded territory governed by its own laws. Rose argues that ever since global capital attained prominence, the *social* in the west has been undergoing a transmutation in favour of the *community* - not one but a series of communities with different aims and constituencies but nonetheless basically constituted of self-monitoring, self-governing subjects (Rose, 1996). However, the norms of such particularised communities of the contemporary West can barely negotiate with the religio-civilizational norms of the 'narrative communities' of a postcolonial formation since the particularised communities allow no inscription of the history of the West as a despotic, colonial power. On the contrary, it can be argued that such framing of community is a renewed attempt to privilege West's claims to democracy and solidarity. In the vortex of power and positionalities of the multicultural West, every ethnic community *owns* an identity (see (Rouse, 1991). As an ethnic community, the Fiji Indians are attracted to new forms of association and intimacy of the West but written in this attraction also is the sign of resistance. Together they feed a sense of imagined nationhood kept alive by continuously transforming and reconstructing its constitutive myths. Bollywood, as it caters to the changing market patterns of home and abroad, serves this dual purpose extraordinarily well.

Compare the Fiji Indians with Hamid Naficy's Iranians in *The Making of Exile Cultures* (Naficy, 1993). The Fiji Indians who came to Australia just before or after the coup are not an exilic group even though they were dislodged from their

country. This is because of their attitude to Fiji (“home but not mother”) and the fact they harbour no hope or determining desire to return, either to Fiji or to India. Hence they made no investment in the kind of exile media that Naficy’s Iranians did to form their cultural identity. Rather, they have invested their energies in the *continuation* of cultural practices they were engaged with in Fiji which, as we have shown, contain within them dynamic hybridising tendencies easily sufficient to withstand the community’s displacement into a western culture. Unlike Naficy’s instance where the hermeticism of exilic television is forced to negotiate with American mainstream media after a point of time, Bollywood’s own momentum will take this platform ahead. The tension of the young Fiji Indians is the tension between Bollywood’s representation of change and real-life experiences. This is reflected though in a very minor way in the remarkable films that they make, discussed earlier.

This paper has privileged the Ramayan and folk traditions of India as well as Bollywood as some of the most significant discourses that framed the cultural life of Fiji Indians and continue to do so. The attempt has been to investigate the historical formation of a cultural community and not to posit any singular determination. A detailed account of how socialization has been constructed around these cultural artefacts - the historical forms they took, the rationalities they deployed, the various registers, practices and institutions through which they were disseminated - is beyond the scope of this paper but could form part of thorough historical anthropology. The paper is a modest attempt to bring into sharp relief the continuing significance of popular cultural formations in quickening diasporic life of a small and vibrant community.

The literature of transnationality is not known for its interest in investigating the different histories of postcolonial dynamics ‘back home’ as they manifest in the ‘new imaginings and politics of community’. Rather its main concern is to write diaspora as an enigmatic excess and privilege the aleatory nature of diasporic temporalities: the *true* people are the liminal people. It may be argued that what Bhabha does is to route the experience of the South Asian intellectual-in-exile through the discourse of black counter-hegemonic culture. This intellectual-in-exile syndrome, however, occupies only a minor part in the South Asian diaspora in general. This is not to say that South Asians escape the problem of ‘othering’ in the West, nor it is to suggest that they would like to give up their own identities and become ‘assimilated’ in the dominant cultural order without a trace of difference. Perhaps a change of emphasis is in order here. Rather than celebrating the master narrative of diaspora as a ‘slipzone’ of indeterminacy and shifting positionalities, one focuses on South Asian diaspora’s widely agreed ability to *re-create* their cultures in diverse locations and locates the element of the liminal within the nitty gritty of this changing history. Scholars have often counterposed the reality of hybridity against the *illusion* of ‘nameable groups’ (See, for instance, (Geschiere and Meyer, 1998; Kelly, 1998). We would like to revise this understanding somewhat and explain hybridity as the *nameable* held under the sign of erasure. The shift is one of

emphasis.