Bollywood and Colourism: Exploring the discourse of Blackness in Hindustani cinema.

by

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DECLARATION

I, SaadiyaGoolamally, hereby declare that the work on which this dissertation/thesis is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university.

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the discourse of blackness with a focus on skin colour in Hindustani cinema. It undertakes a gendered analysis of the representation of skin colour. While this research paper maps the historical background of Colourism in Hindustani cinema which is rooted in Casteism, it also documents and analyses the use of the colour line in the representation of vice and virtue. Eventually, it looks into casting patterns of Hindi film directors with skin colour as a determining factor informing narratives, shaping ideological codes, dictating beauty ideals and perpetuating cinematic dogmas. It also investigates the link between Colourism and race through an exploration of the representation of Afro-identities strongly rooted into mimicry within the microcosmic cultural sphere of Hindustani cinema. Finally, it contends that the representation of the colour line has undergone an aestheticization as a result of the gentrification of Hindustani cinema for the purpose of transnational negotiations. Therefore, I posit my contention within the inextricable dynamics of Colourism, Afro-pessimism and 'black face' mimicry to proclaim that the colouristic and broadly racist agenda within the discourse of the colour line in Hindustani cinema still persists in Bollywood cinema as the gentrification of Hindustani cinema has generated solely a superficial change.

Keywords:

Colourism, Afro-pessimism, Mimicry, Colour line, Hindustani cinema, Blackness, Gentrification.

INTRODUCTION

Existing scholarship in the field of film studies uses theoretical framework of Colourism and Afro-pessimism mostly in the domains of western cinema namely Hollywood due to America's rich history of colonialism which is largely represented in American cinema/Hollywood. They explore predominantly the representation of blackness in western cinema where the dichotomy between White and Black is clear, with little significant influence of Brown skin within this White and Black matrix. This research seeks to explore Colourism within the domains of Hindustani cinema in India, a country which possesses an equally rich history of colonialism and where the influence of Brown skin affects largely the White and Black matrix. Hindustani cinema, including Bollywood, is a microcosmic representation of the Indian society mirroring and perpetuating cultural trends within the embellished narratives of cinematic discourse. In the Indian society, Colourism dictates beauty ideals that date back to pre-colonial as well as colonial socio-political relations as mentioned in the study conducted by Kullrich (2022). In parallel, the discourse of beauty in Hindustani cinema is often aligned with that of morality and are both informed by the colour line. Fairness of skin can be considered as an obsession, foregrounded by these beauty ideals, in the Indian society which is highly promoted and commercialised by the Indian media. The use of skin lightening products in India has a long history, rooted in cultural beliefs about beauty and superiority. As stated by historian Beverly Lemire, "[t]he desire for a lighter complexion has deep historical roots in many cultures, including India, where fairer skin has been traditionally associated with beauty, social status and power" (2007: 65). This desire for lighter skin has led to the proliferation of whitening creams, soaps and other marketed product shaving the ability for improved beauty and status. The act of skin lightening remains widespread across India and reflects deeper societal beliefs about beauty and superiority.

A prominent way through which fairness of skin has been promoted and marketed is skin whitening products which are endorsed by public figures, most commonly Bollywood actors and actresses, who mediate the product along with the colouristic ideologies to the public both in advertisements and films. Such endorsements by Bollywood stars have had a significant impact on the popularity and cultural acceptance of these products in India. As observed by Gayatri Gopinath, "[t]he glamour and power of the Bollywood star functions as a sign of endorsement and legitimacy for these products, contributing to their cultural acceptability and perceived efficacy" (2005: 74). Consequently, the stereotypes of Bollywood stars having to be fair are spread widely across Hindustani cinema and impact the audience's definition of beauty

as Bollywood stars have a devoted audience which idolises them as role models. The perpetuation of ideologies pertaining to fairness of skin in Hindustani cinema is a never-ending circle that is shaped by the Indian society and that in turn, re-shapes the Indian society, ensuring the continuity in the flow of these ideologies. In this regard, Nivedita Menon claims that "[t]the impact of popular culture on the cultural construction of beauty standards cannot be overstated… the promotion of skin whitening by Bollywood stars reinforces harmful and unrealistic beauty standards, contributing to the marginalisation of those who do not fit these narrow standards" (2015:150).

What I propose to call 'Gendered Colourism', by which I refer to the discourse of colourism gender-wise, is a prevalent issue in Bollywood cinema. Kapur notes that "[t]he colour complex in India is primarily a gendered one, with women being more harshly judged and penalised than men for their darker complexions" (2018: 125). This is reflected in the way female characters are portrayed on screen as according to Joshi, "fair skin is considered desirable for heroines as it reflects purity, innocence,and beauty" (2019: 252). Such portrayals of female characters perpetuate the idea that lighter skin is more attractive and desirable, while darker skin is seen as undesirable and even repulsive. Mishra further argues that this perpetuation of Colourism in Bollywood reinforces "the socio-economic and cultural status quo" (2019: 172) where those with lighter skin are seen as more privileged and powerful. Consequently, this highlights the ideology that skin colour is a determining factor in casting and determining a character's worth in Hindustani cinema.

In the context of Hindustani cinema, the phenomenon of Colourism gives rise to significant racial issues, particularly concerning the portrayal of individuals with darker skin tones. This has led to a nuanced discussion that uncovers elements of Racism and societal bias, but the association with Afro-pessimism requires further examination. Historically, Cowaloosur (2016) has delved into the discourse of Colourism among colonized Indians. They observed that, during the period of colonial rule, many Indians aspired to attain "Whiteness" as it was considered more socially acceptable compared to the derogatory attitudes often directed towards colonized Africans due to their "black skin." Cowaloosur notes that "Black skin, situated at the diametric end of the colour spectrum, emphasized the perceived proximity of brown skin to whiteness" (2016: 81). This perception had far-reaching consequences, eventually contributing to the development of racial biases and a sense of superiority among Indians over individuals with Black Afro-identities. Cowaloosur (2016) further illustrates this point by highlighting derogatory comments made by a young Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

toward Black South African natives, where he referred to them as "Kafirs" (translated as infidel or disbeliever).

An Indian Times video from 2015, titled "No Country for ‘Black’ Men," sheds light on the experiences of individuals with Black Afro-identities in India. The individuals in the video recount various derogatory names used by Indians, such as "kaalia" (blackie), "bandariya" (female monkey), and "habshi" (translated as 'Black man' but used derogatorily as a swear word). These individuals not only face verbal abuse but also endure dehumanization and belittlement, including acts such as spitting upon seeing them and characterizing them as physically threatening. Hindustani cinema has, in many instances, reinforced these stereotypes by predominantly depicting Afro-identities in comical or antagonistic roles.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a comprehensive and structured approach is taken to conduct a deconstructive analysis of representations of Colourism in Hindustani cinema. The analysis focuses on a carefully selected range of films, highlighting racist representations of Blackness and Whiteness, as well as the underlying colonial agenda shaping the Colour line. Special attention is given to the emergence of Bollywood in Hindustani cinema, drawing comparisons with pre-Bollywood cinema. The analysis centers on key male and female characters—namely, the Hero, the Villain, the Heroine, and the Vamp, who are integral to Hindustani cinema.

Sampling and Film Selection:

The selection of films for analysis is based on a clear and structured approach. A total of 22 films are selected, each chosen for specific reasons related to the research objectives.

The films were chosen for analysis based on the following criteria:

1. Relevance to Colourism Analysis: Films were selected based on their display of elements relevant to Colourism, reflecting both historical and contemporary contexts.
2. Representative Periods: To ensure a comprehensive analysis, films were selected across different periods, including the emergence of Bollywood, with a focus on pre-Bollywood cinema.
3. Gender Representation: The study considers gender representation by analyzing male and female characters separately. Films were chosen to provide a balanced representation of both genders.

The sample of films covers a well-structured periodization, encompassing films from 1967 to 2019 for the analysis of male characters and from 2006 to 2009 for the analysis of female characters. The films selected for analysis of male characters total eight, while three films are chosen for the analysis of female characters. It's important to emphasize that the choice of films was not arbitrary but carefully aligned with the research objectives.

Moreover, in Chapter 3, a separate set of seven films is chosen for a semiological analysis of film sequences and song/dance sequences. Additionally, two films are selected to discuss the

theme of gentrification (1955; 1995), and two more films are chosen for a further analysis of dance sequences (2011 and 2020).

Furthermore, the methodological approach for this study is characterized by a thematic and deconstructive analysis, rooted in a semiological framework. Deconstructionism is viewed as a theoretical lens guiding the examination of the films, aiding in the interpretation of the text. However, it is crucial to note that the study also incorporates a semiological analysis as a distinct method within the overarching approach. The steps involved in the deconstructive and semiological analyses are systematically followed throughout the study, enhancing the rigor and depth of the analysis. The methodology aims to effectively decode and understand the intricate relationship between representation and Indian/Bollywood culture, thereby contributing to a nuanced understanding of Colourism within Hindustani cinema.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The primary theoretical framework chosen for this research project is race theory, focusing on Afro-pessimism. This framework is utilized to deconstruct the structure of the colour line in Bollywood. In parallel, the study engages with postcolonial theory to examine the racist ideologies prevalent in films and the colonial history of India. The research defines Blackness and Whiteness in Bollywood through a semiotic analysis, aiming to deconstruct pre-encoded meanings and underlying ideologies perpetuated through representation. Additionally, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical perspectives are occasionally employed to map the relationship between encoding and decoding, director and audience.

Clarifying the Study's Focus:

The study predominantly revolves around Colourism, skin colour, and race as determining factors in the representation of characters in Hindustani cinema. While gender is acknowledged and analyzed within the context of the study, it is not the primary determinant. The study's theoretical framework and approach primarily focus on exploring the impact of skin colour, Colourism, and race on representations in Bollywood.

The concept of "gendered Colourism" is recognized, but its definition and characterization need further elaboration and alignment with gender theories. The study aims to understand how gender intersects with Colourism, particularly in the context of skin colour representation in Bollywood.

Addressing the Dual Origins of Colourism:

The study acknowledges that Colourism in Hindustani cinema has complex origins, rooted both in India's colonial period and in casteism. The narrative surrounding Colourism is informed by the imposition of racial hierarchies during the colonial era, as well as indigenous beliefs within the caste system. It is essential to emphasize that Colourism in this study is pervasive and extends beyond caste boundaries, indicating its widespread influence in Indian society.

Thus, the theoretical framework does not seek to conflate caste and Colourism but acknowledges that Colourism operates within a broader socio-historical context that includes both colonial influences and indigenous beliefs.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

In chapter 1 of this research paper, a review of existing literature is conducted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the historical context that informs the argument. The study begins with a literature review of Bollywood and of the topics of Colourism, Afro-pessimism, and mimicry. In addition, the connection between Colourism, Racism, and Afro-pessimism in India and Hindustani cinema is drawn to provide a nuanced understanding of the issue.

Chapter 2 delves into the question of Colourism in Bollywood, with a specific focus on casting patterns and their implications through a gendered comparison of pre-Bollywood and Bollywood cinema. The chapter demonstrates how Colourism informs and shapes Bollywood narratives and ideological codes of the period by using gender as a determinant. The discourse of Colourism is analyzed separately for male and female protagonists, and existing literature and stylistic analysis of specific scenes from the films *An Evening in Paris* (Samanta, 1967), *Zanjeer* (Mehra, 1973), *Sadak* (Bhatt, 1991), *Dushman* (Chandra, 1998), *Elaan-E-Jung* (Sharma, 1989), *Chennai Express* (Shetty, 2013), *Ek Villain* (Suri, 2014), and *Super 30* (Bahl, 2019) are used to discuss coloured male narratives and ideological codes. The analysis of coloured female narratives and ideological codes is done through an examination of scenes from *Vivah* (barjatya, 2006), *Bala* (Kaushik, 2019), and *Udta Punjab* (Chaubey, 2016), and interviews are used to illustrate data beyond the screen.

Chapter 3 explores the representation of race and Afro-identities in Bollywood, with a focus on the dynamics of Afro-pessimism underlying such representations and its strong roots in mimicry. The chapter also examines the audience's response to this type of representation to map the relationship between representation and Indian/Bollywood culture. A semiological analysis of both film sequences and song/dance sequences from the films *Inteqam* (Nayyar, 1969), *Mr India* (Kapur, 1987), *Housefull* (Khan, 2010), *Golmaal 3* (Shetty, 2010), Fashion (Bhandarkar, 2008), *Kambakkht Ishq* (Khan, 2009), and *Dilwale* (Shetty, 2015) is conducted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Chapter 4 argues that the dynamics of Colourism and Racism in Bollywood are influenced by the process of gentrification. The study shows how narratives, casting, and modes of representation have adopted new codes altogether after undergoing the process of gentrification brought about by the birth of Bollywood. Newly gained political support brought about social legitimacy to Bollywood as an industry and hence affected the quality of the films made in terms of mediated content. This chapter studies the process of gentrification and its effect on

Colourism and race through a stylistic and critical analysis of sequences from the films *Shree 420* (Kapoor, 1955) and *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayeinge* (Chopra, 1995). It also considers a number of song and dance sequences such as "Beyonce Sharma Jayegi" from the film *Khaali Peeli* (Khan, 2020) and "Chammak Challo" from the film *Ra.One* (Sinha, 2011) and establishes the flow of trends in Bollywood in terms of narratives and content. Overall, this research paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics of Colourism and Racism in Bollywood, with a specific focus on gendered patterns and the influence of gentrification.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review the existing literatures that contribute to my research paper along with a mapping of those which historically inform the purpose behind my contention. I provide a delineation of Bollywood followed by a review of Colourism, Afro-pessimism and mimicry. I equally draw the relationship between Colourism, Racism and Afro-pessimism in India and in Hindustani cinema.

1.1 Bollywood: A delineation.

Bollywood cinema, a termed coined from the merging of Bombay and Hollywood by journalists in the 1970s, as mentioned by Chatterjee (2020), was established in the year 1986 under the name of Bombay cinema and primarily dealt with the "exhibition of imported films" consisting of mainly motion picture portrayed on screen. In this regard, Vyas (2019) outlines that the very films produced by the Indian industry during that era were by the Lumiere brothers where a rudimentary screening of a wrestling match was exhibited on-screen. Throughout that decade from 1986, the filmic industry quickly progressed and grasped the attention of the Indians as it was in line with western silent films, and producers started to view this industry as a huge commercial asset due to its immense potential of entertaining massive crowds. In this regard, the pioneer of Hindustani cinema, Dadasaheb Phalke, produced the movie *Raja Harishchandra* in 1913 which is considered as the first full-length silent movie. As compared to his predecessors, such as the Lumiere brothers, he made use of different techniques at that time, such as the use "writer, cameraman, editor, and make-up artist" (Vyas, 2019: 1) which made the movie a commercial success. This made the industry more popular and attracted the attention of several companies who followed the same path. However, it was not until 1931 that the Indian film industry made the transition from silent movies to talkies. The first talkie

movie was screened in Bombay under its producer, Irani who named the movie *Alam Ara* (Irani, 1931). The film achieved great success though its historical fantasy genre as it inspired 'men and women from every part of the subcontinent with hopes of doing something creative with their lives" (Mukerjee, 2020) and revealed the vast market for talkies and musicals in India. According to (Ganti, 2012), during that era, it is also important to highlight the political factor that influenced the making of films in the Bombay cinema as India was hammered by a number of important incidents, including the World War II and India`s quest for independence. In this regard, filmmakers had to make some adjustments in the portrayal of their films and some of them even started to use the 'Indian Independence Movement' in their movies (Mishra, 2002). During that era, filmmakers started to implement different ideologies and concepts in their films that was in line with the Indian culture and started to portray the lifestyles and conditions of the Indian working class. However, as movie producers in India started to implement Indian ideologies and methodologies in an attempt for "a meaningful reconstruction of Indian history, and the "official archive" (Rajadhyaksha,1994: 11), the industry gained popularity all over the country leading to the establishment of its own film producing centres where films like *Ramayan* (1961) and *Mahabharata* (1965) achieved great success. It is estimated that more than 200 films were produced during that era, among which was famous and award-winning movie Mother India, directed by Mehboob khan in 1957 (Ganti, 2012). As the industry continued to gather the interest of more and more people in the country, producers started to move towards the introduction of colour feature in Bombay cinema. According to Dimitrova (2016), the first Hindi Indian colour movie was directed in 1957 by Irani and the use of colours in Hindi movies became widespread and was adopted by different producers.

The 1950s also witnessed the rise of the parallel cinema movement which began in the west Bengal but was soon popularized and gained fame in Bollywood. According to Mishra (2002), their box - office achievement, mainly attributed to the release of realistic films such as *Neecha Nagar* (Anand, 1946) paved the path for Indian New Wave neorealism filmmakers. It was also during this period of time that many actors and actresses became well known in the industry such as Amitabh Bachchan and Sharmila Tagore who were admired by millions of fans (Mishra, 2002). The Bollywood industry continued to flourish throughout the century, with new stars such as Shah Rukh Khan and Aishwarya Rai taking the industry to new heights, promoting Bollywood to global markets and commercial complexes, and enjoying huge popularity both in India and abroad. However, during that time, there was a negative portrayal of the Non-Resident Indians (NRI) such as in the movie *Khabi Khushi Khabhi Gham* (Johar, 2001) as

those leaving India, the motherland, were considered as traitors (Gehlawat, 2015). It was in the 21st century that the Indian producers depicted a positive image of the NRI for the purpose of transnational negotiations as India had established a variety of links with other nations throughout the world, including South Africa and in Europe (Mishra, 2002). This also led to the emergence of Indian English which is implemented in different parts of the movies such as in dialogues and songs. Therefore, Bollywood stands at present for the centre of Indian film industry that produces movies mainly in the Hindi language.

1.2 Mapping the Course of Colourism.

In the *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences 2nd Edition*, Burke & Embrick, define Colourism as "the allocation of privilege and disadvantage according to the lightness or darkness of one's skin" (2008: 17). Despite a few exceptions, this phenomenon is most common in countries having a "Euro-Colonial past" (Phoenix, 2014), among which is India, and usually indicates the favouritism of lighter skin over darker skin however it can also indicate the opposite in rare cases. Colourism is often associated with Racism but is not restricted to it as Burke & Embrick define this association as "a testament to its role as something related to but different than race" (2008: 17). Colourism refers specifically to one's skin colour and its social significance or "the social meaning associated with one's pigmentation" (Burke & Embrick, 2008: 18). Colourism refers to the preferential treatment of lighter-skinned individuals within a particular industry or cultural sphere (López, 2016). In the case of Bollywood cinema, this preferential treatment is evident in the casting of lighter-skinned actors in leading roles and the portrayal of darker-skinned actors as being less attractive, less desirable, and less successful (López, 2016). This phenomenon can be traced back to the colonial period in India, when British colonizers imposed their racial hierarchies and perpetuated the belief that lighter skin was more desirable (López, 2016). Today, this belief continues to shape the film industry, as lighter-skinned actors are seen as more marketable and more likely to attract larger audiences (López, 2016).

Burke & Embrick (2008) cite an ethnographic research comprising of Data from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality (MCSUI) for the purpose of examining skin tone as a differentiating factor among Blacks in the aftermath of the civil rights movement, conducted by Arthur Goldsmith, Darrick Hamilton, and William Darity (2006) among minorities whereby the results indicate that light-skinned black minorities are favoured over dark-skinned black minorities for income, education, sentencing, penalties and career opportunities. Consequently,

Colourism evolved into a socioeconomic factor which measured the favours of lighter-skinned people and the condemnation of darker-skinned people, through a colour line. W.E.D Du Bois addresses the issue of the colour line informed by race in his pioneering essay *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903) as he highlights the colour line, with regards to the 'Negro', as a phenomenon which dichotomises individuals rather than categorising them. He claims:

> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face (1903, The Forethought).

Du Bois (1903) highlights the disparity brought about by the colour line at its root as he exposes the struggles of the 'Negro' which he terms as "double consciousness" as the 'Negro' is only meant to perceive himself and measure his potential solely based on the darkness of his skin. His value lies in the prominence of the darkness of his skin which is indirectly proportional to the degree of whiteness of his opponent's skin colour. Du Bois initiates the discussion of discrimination based on skin colour with his revolutionary work on the condition of the 'Negro' as the whiter the skin colour of his opponent, the farther down the colour line he was situated and the greater discrimination he faced. Du Bois (1903) equally addresses the psychological consequences of Colourism as it leads to dichotomised individuals with hyphenated identities, unable to fully belong to a social, cultural and geographical space. As he addresses the issues of Colourism and the colour line at its root, the rhizomic aspect of the issues is highlighted. Apart from its socioeconomic influence, Colourism also dictates the standards of beauty according to Eurocentric norms. According to Burke & Embrick, studies have shown that people of colour have the tendency "to embrace the beauty standards prevalent in most societies, which grant a higher desirability to lighter skin than to darker skin" (2008: 17). Similarly, Phoenix (2014) maintains that eurocentric beauty standards, where light skin and features approximating whiteness prevail, bring economic and social benefits. She cites Hunter's (2007, Cited in Phoenix 2014) argument stating that cosmetic changes with the aim of achieving "lighter skin and white European features" (2014: 102) are rational as they lead to in "better

opportunities in a competitive global marketplace" (2014: 102). These arguments therefore shape an understanding about the global politics of beauty as an industry that attributes the highest level of aestheticism to whiteness, promoting "white supremacist thinking" (Hooks, 2012). These analytical perspectives translate into other geographical and cultural spaces as well such as India and Bollywood.

According to Phoenix (2014), Colourism in India is rooted into the Aryan migration which occurred around 1800-1500 BCE, was perpetuated by the Portuguese colonisation (Saldanah, 2022) and was later reinforced by the British colonisation in 1858. Colourism, in India, is not an entirely independent social factor that influences the ways of the Indian society. It stems from the Caste system that exists in India, a class system birthed during the time of the Aryan civilization (Phule 1873, Cited in Bannerjee 2019). The Aryans are described by Trautmann in his racial theory of Indian civilisation as "invading, fair-skinned, civilized Sanskrit-speaking Aryans" (1997: 194) while the native Indians were described using pejorative, racist and derogatory terms such as "dark-skinned, barbarous aborigines" (1997: 194). Charles K. Maisels claims in *Early Civilizations of the Old World* that:

> [It is] the Aryans, who arrived at the Indus region around the middle of the second millennium, were characterized by three social categories: warriors/aristocracy (*kshatriyas*), priests (*brahmins*) and the rest (*vaisyas*), which became a four-caste system on subjugation of the indigenous population, the *dasa*, incorporated as the fourth *varna* of cultivators (sudras). Some see the very term *varna,* meaning colour, taken in reference to the dark indigenes excluded from *dvija* (twice-born) purity, as supporting this view (1999: 98).

In the formation of the Caste system by the Aryans, the issue of Colourism comes across as the "dark indigenes" found themselves at the extreme bottom of this social stratification system based on the attribution of caste. According to Bannerjee (2019), the dominance of the Brahmins prevailed prominently in "political, social and administrative roles". Both John Muir's *Original Sanskrit texts,* (1858–1863) and John Wilson's *Indian Caste* (1877, Cited in Bannerjee, 2019) highlight the condition of the people at the bottom of the Colour line, also known as the low caste as "oppressed by Brahmins, an oppression which they claimed went back to the Aryan invasions" (Bannerjee 2019: 90). According to Razack (2022), the darkness of their skin equally marks their impurity as individuals.

Saldanha, in 'Emerging whiteness in early-modern India: A Nietzschean reading of Jan Huygen van Linschoten' from the *Routledge Handbook of Critical Studies in Whiteness,* documents the Portuguese colonisation in India through the ethnographic research conducted across Goa, "the proud capital of the Portuguese empire" (2022: 33), by Jan Huygen Van Linschoten, a

Dutchman, a clerk of the Archbishop in Goa who exercised from 1583 to 1587. He documented his observations in *Itinerario, Voyage ofte Schipvaertnaar Oost ofte Portingae ls Indien* (1596, Cited in Saldanha 2022) whereby he notes the effects of the colour line and the dynamics of Colourism in his human phenotypical analysis. Skin colour strongly influenced his cataloguing of the human phenotype differences across his experiences outside Europe, from black, brown, yellow, and white, and as for the Goan natives, he specifically claimed "[t]hey are in a manner blacke, or of a dark browne colour" (1596, Cited in Saldanha 2022: 34). His analysis of the human phenotype in Goa focused mostly on women through their interactions with male Portuguese soldiers. The phenotypical traits that he used to categorise the women were strongly founded on skin colour. Within the White patriarchal sphere of Goa, White women were kept as prized possession, out of the public's eye and "jealously guarded by their husbands and locked up in their palanquins and houses" while the "Hindu women [brown women] of lower castes as mistresses or wives" (Saldanha 2022: 34) with non-existing social standing and the Black women were mostly kept as sex slaves. Eventually, since 'White' women, referring to Portuguese women, were scarce in Goa, the White soldiers would marry, rape or keep as concubine the "brown and black women" and eventually procreate. The coupling of 'White' and 'Brown' or Black' individuals was termed as "licentiousness" and the miscegenation was believed to be "eroding its [the] white identity" (Saldanha 2022: 35). Saldanha maps the origin of whiteness to "[e]uropeans started recognising themselves as white through a gradual hierarchical demarcation and coding of human phenotypical variation" (2022: 31). According to Razack, "Whiteness, [is] defined variously by scholars as a social relation, an identity, an ideology and crucially, as property is an acquired competence, a constructed dominance over those who do not possess it" (2022: 43). This colonialist discourse of Colourism and the colour line is also one reflecting 'Colonial desire' (Young, 1995) whereby "[t]he idea of colonization itself is grounded in a sexualized discourse of rape, penetration and impregnation, whilst the subsequent relationship of the colonizer and colonized is often presented in a discourse that is redolent of a sexualized exoticism" (Ashcroft& Griffith 2007: 36). The perpetuation of Colonial desire led to an eroticised discourse of the non-white/coloured and black female body, "pervaded by images of transgressive sexuality, of an obsession with the idea of the hybrid and miscegenated, and with persistent fantasies of inter-racial sex" (Ashcroft & Griffiths 2007: 36), especially within the geographical context of India, a land highly orientalised (Said, 1978) by western and westernised lenses.

1.3 An Exploration of Afro-pessimism.

Racial beliefs and discrimination are concepts that have consistently harmed individuals despite new laws being created and altered in an attempt to eliminate this inequity. Originating from the period of slavery in the 17th century where Black people were inhumanely treated (Douglass,1882), the harsh and unequal treatment towards Black people continued to manifest. In 1865, in the United States, there was the establishment of the Jim Crow laws which segregated the Whites from the Blacks. Blakemore, E. (2020) defines the Jim Crow laws as a "new type of slaver" due to the various similarities that the Whites enjoyed over the Black people in terms of rights and values. For over a period of nearly one century, the law was maintained and practiced before the former US President, Lyndon B. Johnson, signed the Civil Rights Act to end the segregation that had been institutionalized by the Jim Crow laws. This ideology of white supremacy has persisted over the course of several decades. The ongoing effect of imperialism, colonialism and slavery led to the development of a new concept and framework under the name of Afro-pessimism which focuses on the sufferance, history and embroiled reality of the Black people. The term 'Afro-pessimism' was first coined by professor Wilderson who originally asserts that anti-blackness reflects structural reality, such that in broader societies, blackness is intimately linked to slavery. According to Wilderson and Sexton (2018), Afro-pessimism can be understood as "a lens of interpretation that accounts for civil society's dependence on anti-Black violence—a regime of violence that positions Black people as internal enemies of civil society" (2018: 201).

In *Afro-pessimism: An Introduction*, Afro-pessimism is defined by Wilderson and Sexton (2018) as "a critical shift in focus by moving away from the Black/White binary and reframing it as Black/non-Black, in order to deemphasize the status of whiteness" (2017: 9), which further highlights the Colour line as it addresses the in-between, that is those who are neither fully Black nor White, those who found themselves belonging to the middle shades on the Colour line. It also claims that "when one is Black one needn't do anything to be targeted, as Blackness itself is criminalized" (2017: 9) further highlighting the degree of Afro-pessimism where Blackness relates to Afro-identities. In this regard, Mariott, in *Lacan Noir: Lacan and Afro-pessimism* relates blackness to violence as he claims that "antiblackness is [thus] seen from the side of a gratuitous-structural violence, from the side of a violence that is repeatedly performed but disavowed" and such violence is considered as "the instrument of a mythical symbolic

disciplining of blackness" (2021: 152), which promotes a '"white is right" ideology' (Glenn, 2008). In this regard, Saldanha points out that the colonised black body "was not only seen but also smelt, tasted, feared, touched, and laughed about" (2022: 36). He further maintains that by cataloguing the sensory characteristics of slaves, White people perpetuated "demeaning stereotypes" of Black bodies along with treating it "as not-quite-human, while affirming their own taken-for-granted humanity" (2022: 36).

According to Weire (2020), Afro-pessimism also analyses the systematic and institutionalized ways in which black people are treated as "internal enemies" within civil society. The theory critiques the liberal notion of colour-blindness, which argues that race is no longer a relevant factor in modern society, by highlighting the ways in which systemic and institutionalized Racism continues to impact black communities (Weire, 2010). Afro-pessimism recognizes that systemic Racism, or Racism that is embedded within the institutions and structures of society, is not simply a remnant of the past, but rather continues to shape the experiences of Black people in the present day (Weire, 2010).

Afro-pessimism has its roots in the works of scholars such as Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi, who wrote about the ways in which colonialism and imperialism contributed to the oppression of Black people (Weire, 2010). It also draws on the critical race theory, which critiques the legal, political, and economic structures that maintain white supremacy and the systemic oppression of people of colour (Weire, 2010). Afro-pessimism differs from other theoretical frameworks, such as Afro-centrism and Afro-futurism, which focus on the cultural, historical, and imaginative dimensions of black life, by focusing specifically on the ways in which black people are oppressed within civil society (Weire, 2010).

Despite its origins as a theory focused specifically on the treatment of Black people as internal enemies, the concept of Afro-pessimism can be extended to understand Colourism in Hindustani cinema. Jared Sexton (2008), in his article entitled "People of Colour-blindness: Notes on the After-Life of Slavery," argues that colour-blindness obscures the ways in which racial hierarchies continue to persist, even in societies that purport to be post-racial. Similarly, the prevalence of Colourism in Hindi films, in which lighter-skinned actors are consistently cast in leading roles, can be seen as a manifestation of these "systemic and institutionalized racial hierarchies" (Sexton, 2008: 52).

While Afro-pessimism was originally developed to address the ways in which black people are treated as internal enemies within civil society, it is important to distinguish between this

broader theory and the specific manifestation of Colourism in Bollywood cinema. The former focuses on the systemic and institutionalised ways in which Black people are oppressed, while the latter specifically refers to the preferential treatment of lighter-skinned individuals within a particular industry or cultural sphere (López, 2016). Several scholars have explored the concept of Colourism and its effects on the film industry, including bell hooks (1992), who argues that skin colour is a major factor in determining who is valued and who is not within a given society. Similarly, Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) notes that Colourism is not simply a matter of individual prejudice, but rather a manifestation of systemic and institutionalised Racism. Additionally, scholars such as Dolan (2015) and Montpetit (2014) have explored the ways in which Colourism operates within the film industry. Dolan (2015) found that in Hollywood, lighter-skinned actors are more likely to be cast in lead roles and to receive higher salaries than their darker-skinned counterparts. Montpetit (2014) argues that this preference for lighter skin is rooted in the larger societal belief that lighter skin is more attractive and therefore more desirable. Similarly, studies conducted by Hunter (2007) and Kullrich (2022) highlight the ways in which Colourism continues to shape the experiences of actors and performers in Bollywood. Hunter (2007) argues that Colourism in Bollywood is a manifestation of deeper societal beliefs about skin colour and beauty, while Kullrich (2022) found that lighter-skinned actors receive more screen time and are more likely to be cast in lead roles. The discrimination implied by Colourism is especially prevalent in communities of colour and often results in lighter-skinned individuals receiving better treatment and more opportunities in comparison to those with darker skin tones. Similarly, in Hindustani cinema, Colourism manifests itself in the casting practices of film producers, where lighter-skinned actors are more likely to be cast in lead roles, while darker-skinned actors are relegated to supporting or minor roles (Sardar, 2018). In an interview with Poeny Hirwani from *Independent*, UK, on 13 October 2021, Nawazzuddin Siddiqui states: "I was rejected for many years only because I'm short and I look a certain way, although I can't complain now" (Hirwani, 2021: 4). He further elaborates on this issue of Racism within Hindustani cinema as he claims that his co-star, Indira Tiwari, was equally refused a certain number of roles due to the darkness of her skin colour. In an interview with Alia Waheed from *The Guardian* entitled "Glamour, glitz and artificially light skin: Bollywood stars in their own Racism" (2020), actress Pallavi Charda claims that "[t]here is no doubt there is bias against darker-skinned actors in Bollywood. I was often called 'dusky' for my tanned skin. I've been offered advertising contracts for skin-lightening products but declined them" (Waheed, 2020). She goes on to define India as a nation having a "fair-skin complex" which is perpetuated by popular culture. Alia Waheed calls out the hypocrisy of Indian film-makers for

their support directed towards the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign while not perpetuating colouristic and racist ideologies in their films.

The application of Afro-pessimism to the study of Colourism in Bollywood offers a unique perspective on this issue, one that recognises the ways in which racial hierarchies persist even in post-racial societies. By analysing Colourism through the lens of Afro-pessimism, it becomes possible to understand how Colourism is not just an individual prejudice, but instead is a result of larger systemic and institutionalised forces (Sexton, 2010). This theoretical framework enables one to see how Colourism is a manifestation of the larger systemic and institutionalised oppression of people of colour, and how it reinforces existing power dynamics and hierarchies based on skin tone (Sardar, 2018).

Furthermore, Afro-pessimism helps to shed light on the ways in which colour-blindness obscures the persistence of these racial hierarchies. According to Sexton (2010), colour-blindness refers to the notion that race no longer matters, and that, individuals should focus solely on individual merit and talent, rather than considering the ways in which systemic and institutionalised Racism continues to impact communities of colour. By critiquing this notion, Afro-pessimism helps to reveal the ways in which colour-blindness actually serves to obscure the persistence of racial hierarchies and contributes to their continued existence. Moreover, the application of Afro-pessimism to the study of Colourism in Hindustani cinema provides a unique and relevant perspective on the discourse of the colour line. By recognising the ways in which racial hierarchies persist, even in post-racial societies, and by critiquing the notion of colour-blindness, Afro-pessimism helps to shed light on the systemic and institutionalised forces that contribute to Colourism in the film industry. By doing so, it provides a valuable perspective for understanding and addressing this issue, and contributes to ongoing discussions about race, Racism, and the persistence of racial hierarchies.

It is important to note the distinctions between Afro-pessimism and Colourism in Bollywood cinema as it highlights the ways in which Racism continue to shape the experiences of black people and lighter-skinned individuals within the film industry. Through their research, scholars such as Hooks (2012), Gilmore (2007), Dolan (2015), Montpetit (2014), Hunter (2007) and Kullrich (2022) have shown that Colourism is not simply a matter of individual prejudice, but rather a manifestation of larger systemic and institutionalised forces. Given the continuing persistence of Colourism in Hindustani cinema, it is a compelling theoretical lens for understanding the ways in which racial hierarchies continue to impact actors and performers

in India. By framing the issue of Colourism through the lens of Afro-pessimism, it becomes possible to understand the discourse of the colour line in Hindustani cinema and its implications.

1.4 Homi Bhabha and Mimicry.

The concept of mimicry, over the last decade, has been used and interpreted in a variety of domains. In its classic connotation, mimicry has been used to refer to the imitation of an action intended to mock or entertain someone or something. In 1835, Maucaulay intended to use mimicry in the Indian education system as he believed that the Indian education differs greatly from the European education and thus delivered his speech on 'minute on Indian Education'. In his speech, Maucaulay vouches for the reproduction of English art and education in the Indian education system and suggested that European education should be imparted by "a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Macaulay 1835: 16). Mimicry, therefore, according to Macaulay (1835) locates a breach in the assurance of colonial supremacy, a doubt in its power over colonized behaviour. Homi Bhabha (1994) draws from Macaulay`s concept of mimicry to address the connection between coloniser and colonised and outlines that when the colonised subjects used to mimic the colonisers by adopting their cultural norms, values, and habits, they were not able to produce the exact traits and instead reflected a blurred copy of the coloniser, which he considers as "almost the same, but not quite" (1994: 84). Bhabha also argues that mimicking the ways of life and cultural norms of the coloniser outlines the weakness of colonial authority as mimicry brings a mixture of mockery and menace as he claims "that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (1994: 86). Bhabha's definition of mimicry informs the racial mimicry perpetuated in Hindustani cinema as it connects to the colonial background of India whereby brownness of skin is less frowned upon and more accepted when compared to blackness of skin. This explains the "incomplete" and "partial presence" (1994: 4) of black skin, which leads to Racism through the slippages and ambivalence involved in its representation in Hindustani cinema discourses through the use of mimicry. In this research paper, I draw from Bhabha's interpretation of mimicry to inform the colonial aspect of my analysis of blackness of skin based on the historical background of the Indian society. In parallel, I explore racial mimicry in terms of the 'blackface' which is considered to be a form of Racism and cultural appropriation in the realm of minstrelsy and entertainment, more specifically cinema.

CHAPTER 2

COLOURISM AND FILM CULTURE IN BOLLYWOOD

In this chapter, I embark on a comprehensive exploration of the intricate issue of Colourism within the Bollywood film industry. My objective is to meticulously examine casting patterns and delve into their profound implications. A significant aspect of my analysis is grounded in a gendered comparison, dissecting how Colourism operates differently in the narratives of male and female protagonists. Gender serves as a pivotal lens for this analysis, providing distinct perspectives on the Colour line within the framework of protagonists and antagonists. By doing so, I aim to unveil the distinct Colourism discourses embedded in the narratives of both male and female protagonists.

The heart of my analysis revolves around the casting decisions made by directors, which offer a unique window into their perspectives on ethnicity, beauty standards, and cinematic conventions. I approach this discourse through a fusion of existing literature and stylistic analyses, with a focus on specific scenes from pivotal films. These films include "An Evening in Paris" (Samanta, 1967), "Zanjeer" (Mehra, 1973), "Sadak" (Bhatt, 1991), "Dushman" (Chandra, 1998), "Elaan-E-Jung" (Sharma, 1989), "Chennai Express" (Shetty, 2013), "Ek Villain" (Suri, 2014), and "Super 30" (Bahl, 2019). Through these analyses, I aim to unravel the narratives and ideological underpinnings related to Colourism in male characters.

Similarly, I will closely scrutinize coloured female narratives and their associated ideological codes by examining scenes from films such as "Vivah" (Barjatya, 2006), "Bala" (Kaushik, 2019), and "Udta Punjab" (Chaubey, 2016). These films have been thoughtfully selected for their nuanced exploration of the protagonist/antagonist matrix, their portrayal of the Colour line, and their deeply embedded discourse on Colourism. Additionally, I intend to enhance my analysis by incorporating insights from interviews, providing invaluable data that extends beyond the boundaries of the screen.

2.1 Synopsis

An Evening in Paris (Samanta, 1967)

Within the romantic setting of Paris, two Parisians, namely Shyam and Roopa who are originally from India, find love. The story gets mysterious when Roopa is abducted by a criminal mastermind name Jack with the intention of obtaining a generous ransom in exchange for her release. A twist in the story crops up as Roopa has a lookalike named Suzy who impersonates her to make sure that the ransom is paid while Roopa remains captive. Shyam accesses all resources available to him to ensure Roopa's freedom but gets caught within the optical illusion that the resemblance between Suzy and Roopa poses, causing him to be unable to differentiate between the two. The story ends with Shyam succeeding at overthrowing Jack and freeing Roopa.

Zanjeer (Mehra, 1973)

Vijay, a police officer, sets on a quest for answers from life after the horrendous murder of his family by crime leader Teja. With the help of his friends, Mala and Sher Khan, he seeks revenge for the death of his parents and while doing so, he gets framed by Teja for bribery and is suspended and jailed for six months.

Sadak (Bhatt, 1991)

A taxi driver named Ravi falls in love with a prostitute, Pooja who works in a brothel. The brothel owner, Maharani refuses to allow any of her sex workers to fall in love with anybody and therefore strongly opposes Ravi in his quest for love. When both Ravi and Pooja elope, Maharani orders the murder of the couple. In turn, Ravi kills Maharani to rescue Pooja and faces jail time. Upon his release, Ravi and Pooja reunite.

Dushman (Chandra, 1998)

Sonia and Naina are identical twins with different natures, the former is bubbly and full of life while the latter is shy and reserved. Gokul, a wanted criminal and rapist, makes Naina his target and mercilessly rapes and murders her. Naina decided to avenge her sister and bring Gokul to justice and in order to do so, she seeks the help of retired and blind major, Suraj. Naina succeeds at killing Gokul and she realises that she is in love with Suraj. They both reunite at the airport as she confesses her love for Suraj.

Elaan-E-Jung (Sharma, 1989)

Arjun, a heroic young man, engages in a patriotic fight against Durjan Narayan, a perpetrator of injustice and evil who seeks to take over the country.

Chennai Express (Shetty, 2013)

Rahul embarks on a train journey and is headed to Rameshwaram to scatter his grandfather's ashes. On the train, he encountersMeenama, a runaway bride who has been caught by the goons of her father. Meenama seeks Rahul's help to escape and the latter agrees. However, in his attempt to free Meenama, he has to face Meenama's family and Dad who is a Don. He eventually falls in love with Meenama and wins over Meenama's dad and family before marrying her.

Ek Villain (Suri, 2014)

The film starts clearly with stating that this is not the story of a hero or a heroine but that of a villain. Guru is a notorious gangster who works for a corrupt politician. He is constantly tormented by his past until he meets Aisha with whom he falls in love. She transforms his life as he quits the world of crime and undergoes redemption to become a better man for Aisha until the day that a pregnant Aisha is murdered by a serial killer on the loose. Guru decides to hunt down the serial killer and avenge the death of Aisha. He succeeds in his revenge as he catches the serial killer who is taken in police custody.

Super 30 (Bahl, 2019)

Anand Kumar is a mathematician belonging to a modest family in Patna, India. He receives an offer from Cambridge but is unable to make it there due to financial constraints. He becomes therefore an educator who coaches students for IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) exams and earns great profits at the cost of meritocracy. Eventually, his conscience kicks in and he starts an educational program called 'Super 30' where he provides free coaching to thirty students from extremely poor backgrounds which successfully gets them into IIT.

Vivah (Barjatya, 2006)

Poonam is an orphan who grew up with her paternal uncle and aunt. The couple have a daughter named Choti who is younger to Poonam. Poonam craves for motherly affection as her aunt despises her due to her fair skin as the aunt's daughter Choti is darker skinned and therefore

the aunt believes that more money should be saved for Choti's dowry to ensure her marriage. The uncle arranges the marriage of Poonam with Prem, who belongs to a wealthy family. During the wedding preparations, the house catches fire and Poonam gets severely burnt in her attempt to save Choti. Raj and Poonam get married at the hospital and Poonam finally earns her aunt's motherly love.

Bala (Kaushik, 2019)

Bala is the story of a young man named Bala who undergoes premature balding which becomes his biggest insecurity. He gets married to a fair skinned model named Pari from whom he hides his baldness using a wig. Upon finding out about his baldness later on, Pari demands a divorce and Bala seeks the help of Latika, his darker skinned lawyer friend whom he has numerously annoyed regarding the darkness of her skin colour. Despite her fair share of troubles with finding marriage proposals due to her skin colour, Latika helps out Bala and both of them come to terms with their skin colour and baldness respectively by adopting new ideals of beauty.

Udta Punjab (Chaubey, 2016)

Udta Punjab consists of four parallel stories, those of a rock star, a migrant labourer, a policeman and a doctor. Tommy Singh is a rock star who I addicted to drugs and is on downward spiral. Dr Preet Sahni is a doctor working in a rehabilitation centre who is fighting to save the lives of drug addicts. Sartaj Singh is a cop trying to rid his state of the drug lord. Kumari Pinky is a migrant worker who becomes a victim of drug trafficking.

2.2 Gendered Colourism in Pre-Bollywood Cinema.

Gendered Colourism, in pre-Bollywood Hindustani cinema, is evident in the initial casting patterns employed by film directors. During the pre-Bollywood era of Hindustani cinema, distinct typecasting patterns emerged, establishing dominant narratological and ideological codes that later crystallized into enduring stereotypes within the realm of Hindustani cinema. These typecasting patterns were deeply entrenched in Colourism, giving rise to dual discourses concerning the central male and female characters. This eventually laid the foundation for the portrayal of cis-male and cis-female characters in Hindustani cinema (Ganti, 2016). A defining characteristic of these cis-male and cis-female personas was fair skin. Consequently, casting decisions for characters opposite to the central roles, such as antagonists or supporting characters, were heavily influenced by the opposite end of the colour spectrum, clearly

demarcating the cis-male and cis-female from other characters. This phenomenon marked the inception of gendered Colourism in pre-Bollywood Hindustani cinema.

2.2.1 From the Pre-Bollywood Cinema Cis-male to the Bollywood Metrosexual Male.

In the era of pre-Bollywood Hindustani cinema, the narratives centered around the male protagonist often adhered to the hero/villain narratological binary, necessitating the presence of an antagonist to challenge the central male character. Dwyer points out that certain characters in films traditionally embody various virtues, encompassing the moral, intellectual, and aesthetic, with the hero being notably characterized by a quest for love driven not only by pleasure but also by a commitment to what is right (Dwyer, 2014: 158-159). In the context of pre-Bollywood cinema, the central male character epitomized the conventional cis-male identity, characterized by an abundance of virtuous qualities. Ghosh elaborates that the presence of a villain in the narrative serves to accentuate the hero's positive attributes, inner strength, and self-belief, as he confronts the trials and tribulations presented to him (Ghosh, 2013: 7).

Conversely, the villain in pre-Bollywood cinema is often portrayed as either religiously, culturally, or morally emasculated, or, in some cases, physically emasculated. This contrast further reinforces the image of the male protagonist as the cis-male with traditional masculinity. The emasculation of the villain is usually attributed to his non-Hindu or non-Indian identity and/or his flawed morality, culminating in his ultimate goal of disrupting the "moral universe" projected by Hindustani cinema (Ganti, 2004: 138). Visually, the Colour line acts as the primary marker distinguishing between the hero and the villain.

In this section, I will delve into the portrayal of some of the most iconic typecasted villains in pre-Bollywood cinema, including Pran Sikand, Ajit Khan, and Sadashiv Amrapurar. By comparing these characters, I aim to elucidate the connection between Colourism and the casting choices made by directors, shedding light on the hero (cis-male)/villain (opponent) binary.

Rakesh Roshan, a prominent Indian film producer and director who made his debut in the 1980s, offers insights into the construction of the central cis-male hero and the significance of the villain in shaping the narrative structure of a film. In an interview with Tejaswini Ganti on May 21, 1996, Roshan emphasizes the hero's establishment as a crucial aspect of the film. This involves defining the character, their background, family, and other principal actors, which

typically occupies the first three to four reels of the film. During this initial portion of the film, little significant action occurs, with songs, comic relief, and character introductions taking precedence. Once all these elements are firmly established, the narrative gradually unfolds, often introduced by a character who brings secrets and disrupts the harmony of the family, marking the true commencement of the story (Roshan, 2004: 175).

Roshan's insights underscore the vital role of the villain or opponent in initiating and driving the narrative. The opponent serves as the catalyst for the hero's journey and transformation. This narrative necessity aligns with Vijay Mishra's observations in Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire, where he highlights that the hero's personal narrative remains incomplete without the development of the villain character. He notes that the villains were often portrayed in a manner that invited an audience response of hissing or disapproval (Mishra, 2002: xvii).

Thus, the villain or opponent's role is twofold: to fortify the central male character's dominant and virtuous masculinity and to make this type of masculinity relatable and acceptable to the audience. Often, the opponent is cast as the 'Other,' a character who stands apart from the religious and cultural milieu of pre-Bollywood cinema. Invariably, the opponent must be vanquished or eliminated, as Mishra asserts that villains typically possessed no redeeming qualities and needed to be either killed, imprisoned, or sentenced to death (Mishra, 2002: xvii).

One of the most common methods used to alienate the villain and emphasize their 'Otherness' was to depict them as non-Hindu or non-Indian. These portrayals were rooted in underlying anti-colonial ideologies that emerged alongside the upsurge of nationalism in films. Nationalism was characterized by discourses of contrast and boundaries, differentiating between insiders and outsiders, citizens and foreigners (Ganti, 2004: 41). These anti-colonial ideologies simultaneously promoted discourses of "reverse orientalism" or "Occidentalism," running in parallel with nationalist narratives that distinguished between the Hindu and non-Hindu and the Indian and non-Indian. In the context of anti-colonialism, the Colour line was employed to associate fairness with evilness and darkness with goodness. The fair-skinned villain represented an imitation of the colonizer, while the darker-skinned hero symbolized the indigenous Indian. These portrayals contributed to the juxtaposition of the West as "immoral, individualistic, materialistic, and lacking in culture" in contrast to the moral, cultural, and spiritual superiority of India (Ganti, 2004: 42).

As noted by Ganti, pre-Bollywood cinema predominantly featured villains portrayed as "Europeans," "westernized Indians," and terrorists. Thus, in tandem with constructing the cis-

male hero's masculinity, it was of utmost importance to establish the villain or opponent's otherness. To achieve this, pre-Bollywood cinema employed a series of ideologies deeply rooted in anti-colonialism and Colourism, which further marginalized and alienated the typecasted villain characters.

The Indian/non-Indian dichotomy was almost considered as a narratological trope due to its vast presence in pre-Bollywood cinema. In *An Evening in Paris* (Samanta, 1967), actor PranKishan Sikand is the villain/the Opponent meant to counter and generate the cis-male Shyam's (played by Shammi Kapoor) narrative in the plot. Pran's character's name is Shekar which indicates that he is equally as Indian as the cis-male Shyam as they both stand within the Eurocentric context of Paris where Eurocentric beauty standards prevail. However, Pran's character is presented as a fair-looking man with copperish hair dressed in a western suit as seen in figure 1.

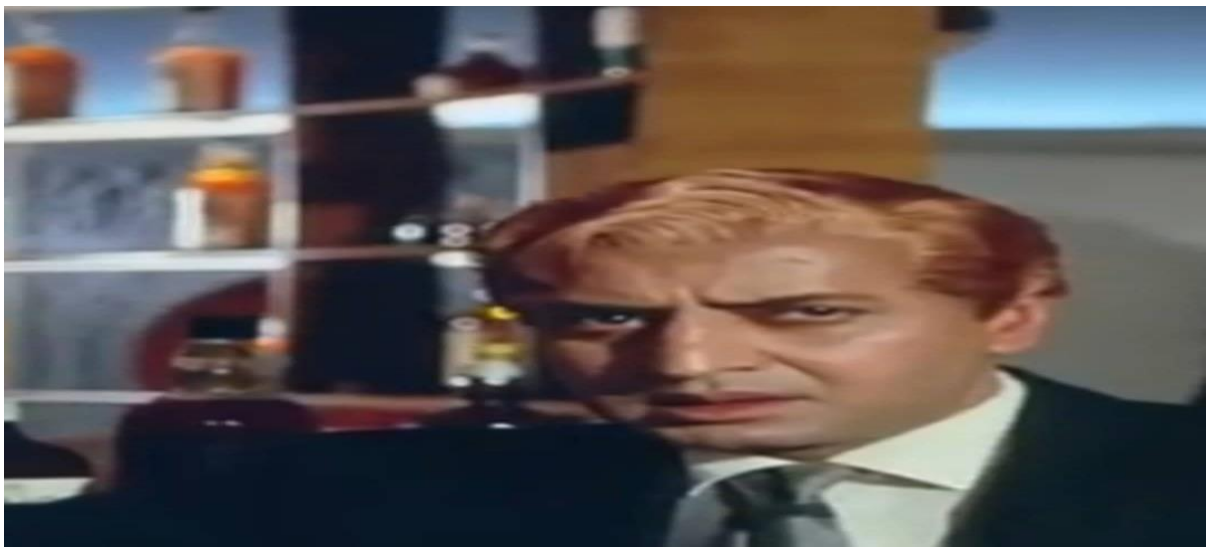


Figure 1- A still of Pran playing the character of Shekhar in *An Evening in Paris* (Samanta, 1967).

The nature of this particular setting and diegesis perpetuate anti-colonial ideologies as according to Chen *et Al.*, "European colonization can very well be attributed to the beauty standards across Asia; for much of these regions, the ideal standard of beauty is heavily influenced by the ideal European figure, such as their light skin and light coloured eyes" (2020:1). As the director chooses to defy those standards by typecasting the villain according to those Eurocentric beauty standards, he (1967) doubly emasculates the villain, both culturally and morally, firstly by the westernised depiction which is reminiscent of the coloniser's figure and secondly by the morally-flawed nature of being a villain. The villain is consequently discredited as a cis-male and is thus doomed to remain a negative character that should

essentially be eliminated by the end of the film. Similarly, to map the typecasting pattern, Ajith (See figure 2) perpetuates the same post colonial ideologies in terms of physical portrayal of his character Teja: whitened skin, blond hair and a western suit in *Zanjeer* (Mehra, 1973). Yet again, the colour line is used as visual markers to distinguish the good from the evil in such a way where fairness bears the signifier of evilness while darkness signifies goodness.

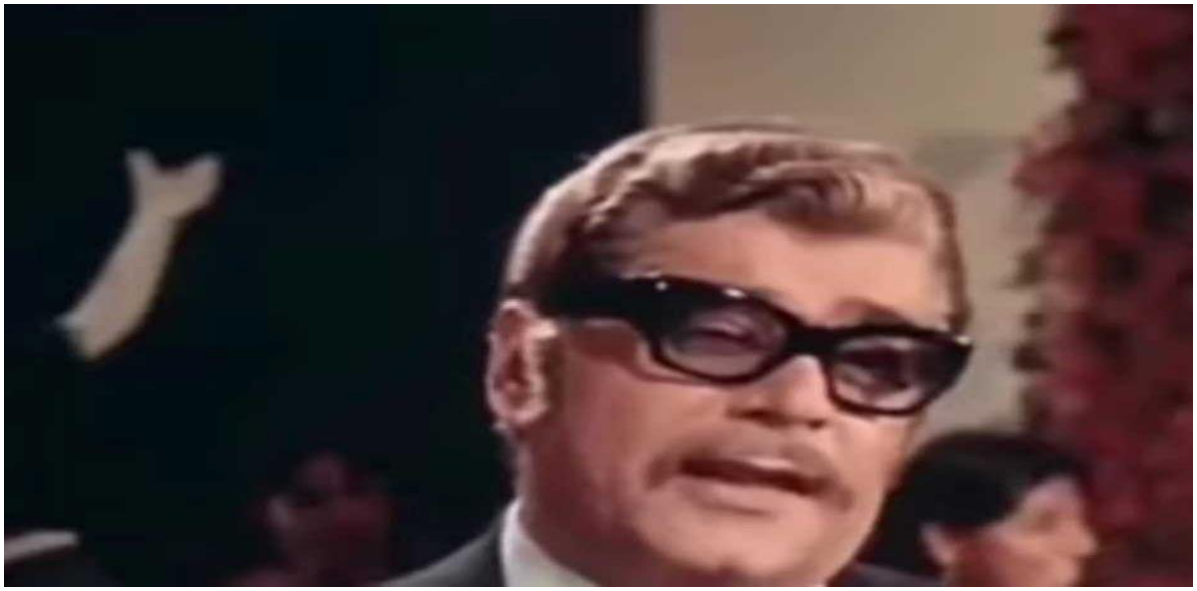


Figure 2- A still of Ajith playing the character of Teja in *Zanjeer* (Mehra, 1973)

Pre-Bollywood Hindustani cinema directors also use the Colour line with the signifiers reversed, where fairness symbolises goodness and darkness symbolises evilness, in their attempts to project the villain as an Other in Nationalist discourses addressing the "outsider" within the nation rather than the "outsider" in the form of a foreigner/non-Indian. The Colour line bears different signifieds as it is employed within the local Indian context where the caste system dictates social stratification and the Colour line. Anjali Gera Roy's mapping of references to colour in the multiple *Vedas*[1](religious Hindu scriptures) and with regards to Roy's findings, Cowaloosur states that "[t]hesecolour hierarchies explicitly place black skin on the side of the evil and unwanted, and 'Aryan skin' on the side of the good" (2016:78).Thus, actors are cast specifically because of their darker skin colour to project the evil opponent on screen.

[1]See *Mapping the Course of Colourism*, Literature review.

The representation of the non-Hindu as an 'Other' can be observed through the lack of non-Hindu male protagonist rather than in the presence of non-Hindu villains/opponents. This occurrence, in itself, conveys a message of discrimination and alienation towards non-Hindu characters. Despite the fact that pre-Bollywood cinema is defined as having a "highly syncretic, hyphenated Hindu-Muslim nature" (Mishra, 2002:217) in its discourses and production practices, the underlying process of 'Othering' the non-Hindu character remains a leitmotif. In this regard, Mishra further maintains that:

> The discourse of Hindi cinema remains to this day markedly Urdu and many of its key personalities have been Muslim-Mehboob Khan and Nazir Hussain (producers/directors), Javed Akhtar and MajroohSultanpuri (scriptwriters and lyricists), Naushad and A. R. Rahman (music directors), Dilip Kumar, Madhubala, Aamir Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, and, of course, Nargis (actors). Add to this financiers and the largest single group of Hindi/Urdu speakers (some 120 million), and we begin to get some sense of the importance of Muslims to the industry. The cultural syncretism is so complete that even when, as at present, there is an implicit directive to work within the formal determinants of Hindu culture (in some ways a more rigid directive to conform to the metatextual traditions than before), the cinema continues to represent itself through that syncretism (2002:217).

The personified representation of the non-Hindu 'Other' only appeared significantly in the 1990s, around the end of the pre-Bollywood cinema era and the beginning of Bollywood cinema. According to Ud Din and Taj Langah:

> The representation of Muslims in the Bollywood film industry became complicated with the representations of Muslims, particularly Pakistani Muslims as being negative characters, such as dons, smugglers, and drug dealers belonging to the Indian underworld. Some examples are *Angaar* (1992), *Ghulam-e-Musthafa* (1997), and *Sarfarosh* (1999). Such negative images of Muslims became redefined in the global context of international politics and the event of 9/11 when Muslims became identified as extremists, jihadis, and through the Western lens, terrorists (2012:108).

Angaar (Nair, 1992) narrates the story of a slum resident and a builder whereby the former is the cis-male Hindu hero and the latter is the religiously emasculated Muslim villain. Famous actor Nana Patekar, well-known for his negative roles, is cast for the role of Majid Khan, the Muslim villain. Figure 3 shows Nana Patekar in the role Majid Khan and Jackie Shroff in the role of the hero Jaikishan in *Angaar* (Nair, 1992) in which the darkness of Majid Khan's skin colour is clearly in contrast to Jaikishan's fairer skin complexion.

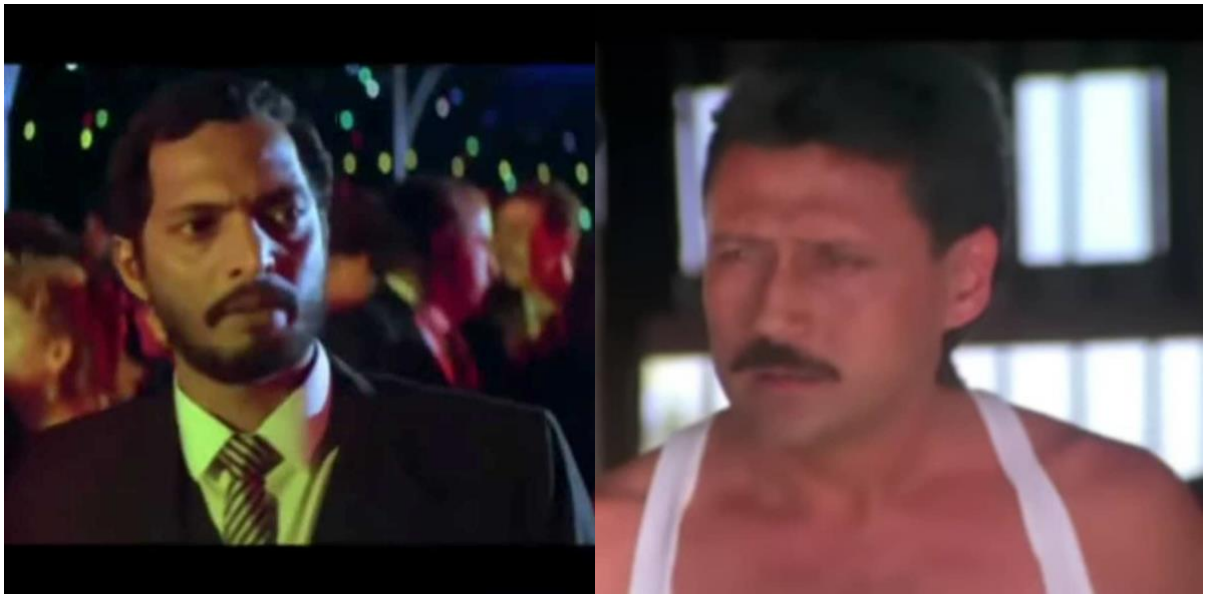


Figure 3- Nana Patekar, on the left hand side, portraying the villain Majid Khan and Jackie Shroff, on the right hand side, portraying the hero Jaikishan from *Angaar*(Nair, 1992)

Thus, the use of the colour line to portray darkness as evil and fairness as good can be observed.

Another such actor is Sadashiv Amrapurkar who has featured in numerous films in Hindustani cinema and has been typecasted as a villain/opponent. In 1991, he even won the Filmfare award for best villain for *Sadak* (Bhatt, 1991). Figure 4 shows the introduction of Sadashiv's character in *Sadak* (Bhatt, 1991), 'Maharani'.

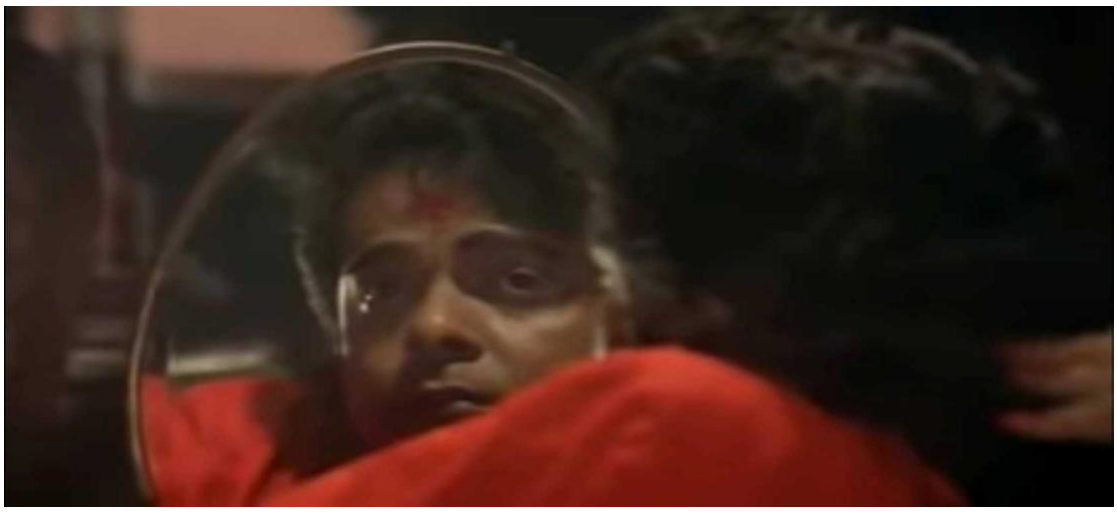


Figure 4- A still from *Sadak* (Bhatt, 1991) showing the introduction of Sadashiv's character, Maharani.

Maharani is the evil dark-skinned transgender pimp who employs young girls, including the female protagonist, which therefore generates the cause for conflict between the cis-male protagonist and the villain. The film director designs the character of Maharani using multiple

ideological layers which serve to alienate her on many levels. Firstly, Maharani is a sexually emasculated character as she identifies as a transgender which makes her an ostracised member of the strictly heteronormative norms of the Indian society. Maharani is thus categorised as an outcast based on her non-heterosexuality and her non-binary gender. Secondly, Maharani is a pimp who operates a brothel. This characteristic of hers is a comment on her morality. She is clearly depicted as a character of poor morality therefore further building the evil nature of her character. Lastly, Maharani's dark skin complexion makes her character even more vulnerable to being an absolute outcaste as within the caste system darkness of skin is associated with the low caste. Pruthi states in *Indian Caste System* that "[t]he skincolour was an important factor in the caste system…the meaning of *varna* [a word used to refer to the different castes within the caste system] is not class or status but skin colour" (2004:2). These ideological layers can be summarised in a single dialogue of Maharani upon her interaction with the female protagonist, "wow, what fairness, don't be afraid. I won't do anything to you. I can't do anything to you. I am half man, half woman. Even if I want to, I can't do anything to you. On top of that, no beauty…no fairness. What a play of destiny. I am doomed…" (*Sadak*, 1991).

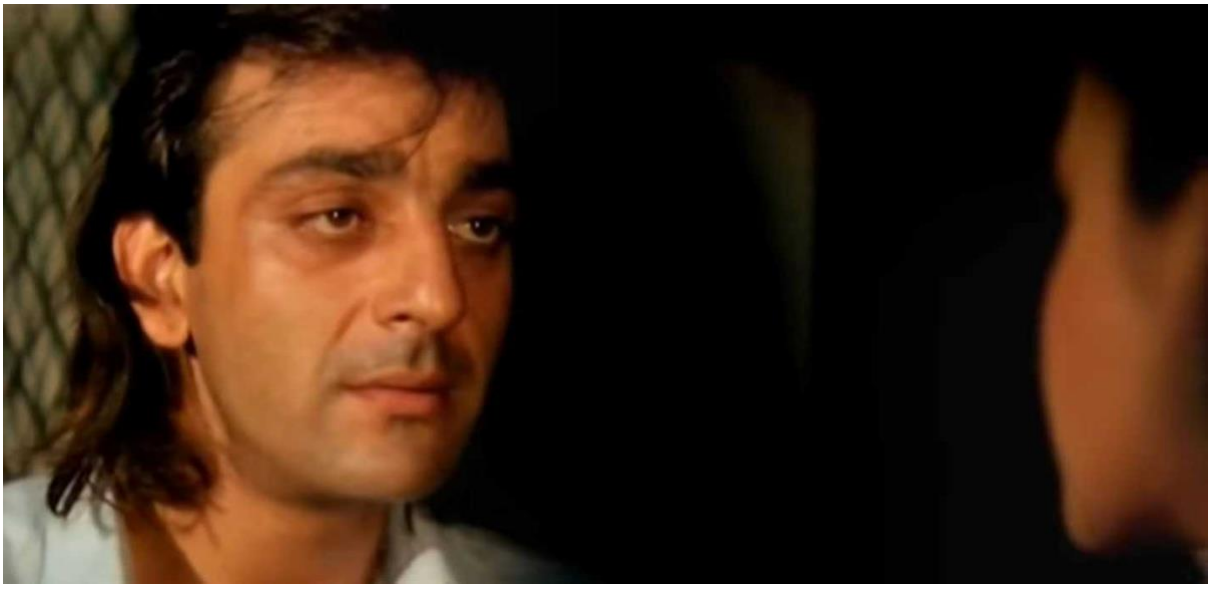


Figure 5- A still from *Sadak* (Bhatt, 1991) showing Sanjay Dutt playing the role of the male protagonist.

Figure 5 shows a still of the male protagonist in the *Sadak* (Bhatt, 1991). The male protagonist abides by the Pre-Bollywood Hindustani Cinema's local standards of beauty and represents wholly the cis-male only by being fair-skinned. Upon comparison, it can be concluded that the more the opponent is fashioned to be alienated from the audience, the less it takes for the male protagonist to be relatable to and accepted by the audience. Despite the various layers of

alienation attributed to the Opponent, one of the most prominent visual markers differentiating villain from hero here is skin colour. The positions of the opponent and the male-protagonist in the frame on screen in figures 4 and 5 respectively are noteworthy. They are both undergoing a mirror stage by looking at reflections of themselves in the characters in front of them. Lacan maintains, with regards to the mirror stage that:

> We have to understand the mirror stage as an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term imago (1949: 505).

For the opponent, the mirror is literally there but it symbolises far more than a literal mirror. It is a mirror put up by the film director and by the Indian society at large reflecting the condemnation of the character of 'Maharani' due to the darkness of her skin. As for the male protagonist, the mirror is a metaphorical one whereby the fact that he is engaging with the female protagonist signifies his acceptance and validation within both the film narrative and the Indian society at large. Lacan describes the "mirror-apparatus" as a medium for the appearances of the double "in which physical realities, however heterogeneous, are manifested"(1949: 504).Both of these scenes act as a 'mirror stage' (Lacan, 1949) for the pre-Bollywood Cinema audiences at large, projecting physical realities in the form of the local signifieds associated to skin colour, whereby they identify with and accept the male protagonist and alienate and reject the Opponent due to the 'imagos' that have portrayed by the film director. The signifieds of Colourism in constructing the cis-male narrative using the opponent can therefore be marked as a pattern and a technique used by pre-Bollywood cinema film directors. This pattern can be seen in other portrayals of villains such as Ashutosh Rana playing the character of 'Gokul Pandit' in *Dushman* (Chandra, 1998) and Joginder Shah playing the character of 'Sattar' in *Elaan-E-Jung* (Sharma, 1989) as seen in figure 6. The pattern of associating evilness with darkness thus prevails as both villains are both darker skinned.

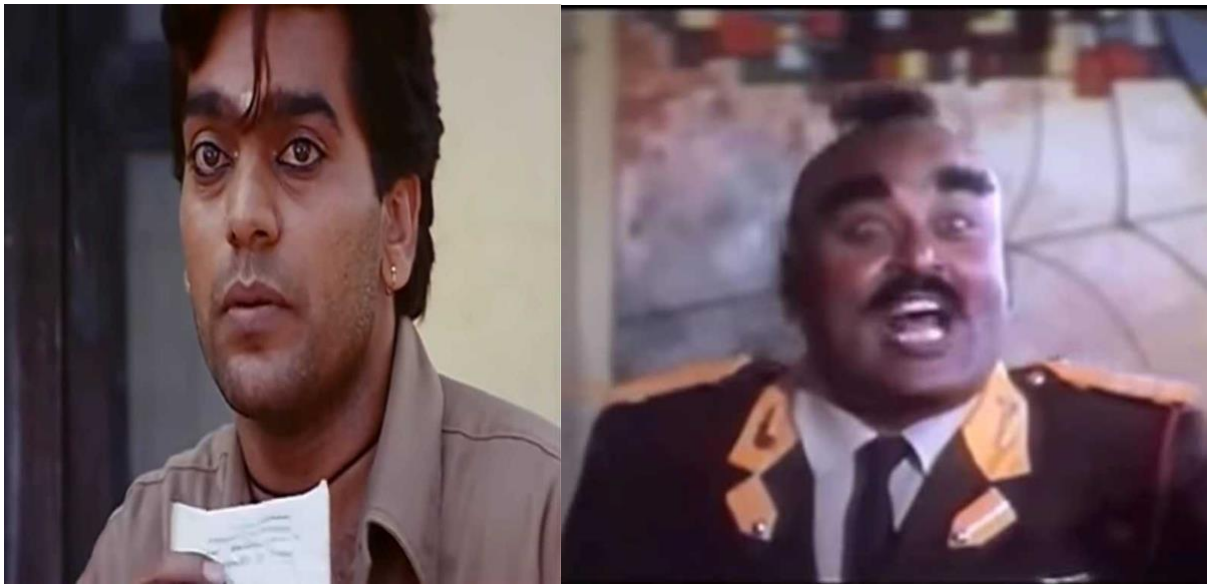


Figure 6- A collage of two film stills showing Ashutosh Rana playing the character of 'Gokul Pandit' on the left and Joginder Shah playing the role of 'Sattar' right in *Dushman* (Chandra, 1998) and *Elaan-E-Jung* (Sharma, 1989) respectively.

However, the figure of the opponent/villain and consequently the discourse of Colourism have evolved with the birth of Bollywood cinema. The hero/villain dynamics have changed especially since the metrosexual male has become the new cis-male. Gehlawat (2015), maps the metrosexualisation of Bollywood male characters back to Bollywood cinema dating from the 21st century, an era which he defines as "increasingly westernised" consisting of "transnational formulation of Indianness". He claims that "[m]etrosexual masculinity has, in contrast, often come to be associated with a more 'feminized' masculinity, one in which men embrace their 'female side'" (2015: 88) which explains this "neoliberal aesthecisation of masculinity" (2015:89). Hence, although metrosexuality was initially employed as a marketing tool, it led to a change in the representation of masculinity altogether on screen. Consequently, with the globalisation of Bollywood and its audience, the dynamics of colourism have changed in Bollywood cinema and have been attributed new signifieds. Darkness was no longer an absolute synonym of evilness as it previously was. The physical disparities between hero and villain were slowly broken down as villains were no longer restricted to typecasted actors. In the early 90s, the figure of the anti-hero gained popularity after Shah Rukh Khan's *Baazigar* (Abbas-Mustan, 1993) which revolutionised the figure of radical heroes and villains. The anti-hero was a morally flawed character yet he had redeeming qualities which incited the audience to support him. The figure of the anti-hero dates back to the 1940s with the 'Dev Noir' films.

These films are considered to be noir films featuring actor Dev Anand in the role of the anti-hero. Ghosh states that:

> The "Dev noir" films proved for the first time …that the villain's evil design could be better articulated by the hero because he has the camouflage to work his way through. The unexpected turn in the behavior of the hero generates suspense and anxiety in the narrative, taking others unaware. (…) The motif of a villain behind the hero also suited Dev Anand's style of acting, looking forward, in a prognostic way, to the films that were to come later…Dev Anand, by suggesting a change in the concept of the hero, managed to offer a contrast to both Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar, and cut a niche of his own. Shah Rukh takes this up in the nineties to his advantage (2013: 52).

The Dev noir films feature strongly the character-actor of Dev Anand who, due to his extreme popularity, has contributed to the popularity of the Anti-hero as the main character of the film. The role of the anti-hero has since been played numerous times by actors whofit the descriptions of the cis-male such as Sunil Shetty in *Main Hoon Na* (Khan, 2004), Shahid Kapoor in *Kabir Singh* (Vanga, 2019), Hrithik Roshan in *Dhoom 2* (Gadhvi, 2006) and Sanjay Dutt in *Khalnayak* (Ghai,1993). The agenda has clearly changed as the anti-heroes are now provided with history of their own which humanises them instead of alienating them thus providing the audience with the option of sympathising with them. The villain who was once portrayed as one who "had no redeeming qualities whatsoever and had to be killed off or imprisoned or sentenced to death" (Mishra 2002: xvii) had now evolved into the anti-hero, a figure that shares the attributes of both hero and villain. For example, in *Chennai Express* (Shetty, 2013), the male protagonist (Rahul) and the opponent/villain (Thangabali), as seen in figure 6, are not defined by the colour line. The opponent, in figure 6, appears bearing more stereotypical masculine traits such as the height, the broad shoulders and the muscular arms. It reveals a *peripeteia* within the naratological structure of Hindustani cinema as the Bollywood opponent is constructed as equally or more masculine than the male protagonist only to further shape the latter's image of metrosexual masculinity. Moreover, the history of Thangabali is conveyed to the audience as we learn that he was the one supposed to marry the female protagonist until the arrival of the male protagonist which puts the audience in a position to sympathise with Thangabali and understand his motives behind opposing the male protagonist.The fact that the diegesis accommodates the potential marriage of Thangabali to the female protagonist is indicative of the villain's equal cis-maleness. Bollywood cinema no longer constructs the Opponent as complimentary character serving the hero's image but rather a full-fledged character in itself.

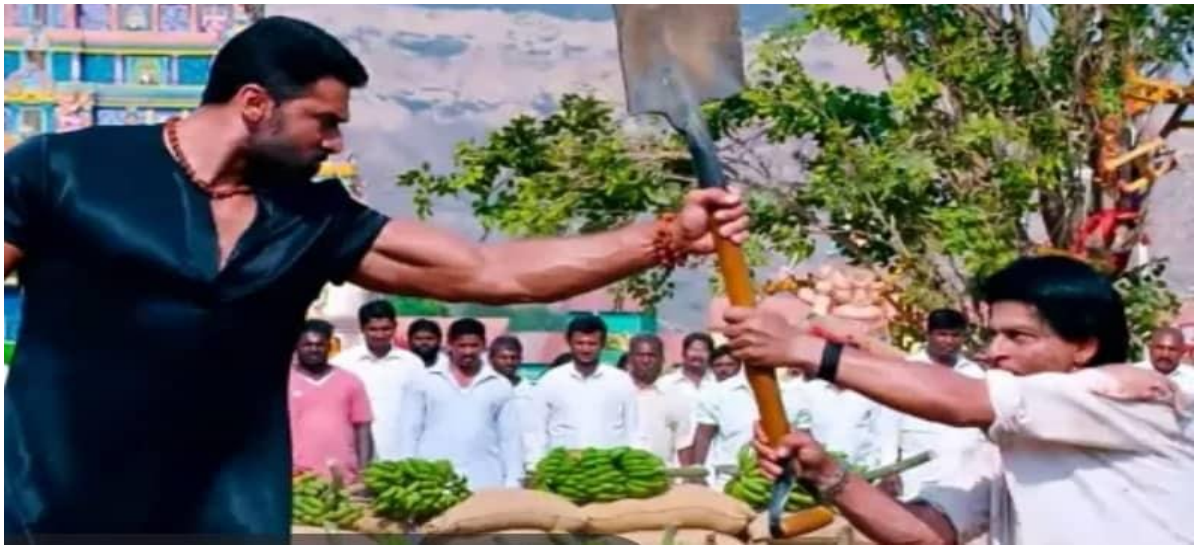


Figure 7- A still from *Chennai Express* (Shetty, 2013) showing Thangabali (the opponent) on the left and Rahul (the male protagonist) on the right.

The discourse of the villain in Bollywood cinema has experienced a major shift since its evolution into the anti hero as the anti-hero is not a dependent character meant to construct the male protagonist's narrative as opposed to the villain but is instead an independent character who can lead the story. The line defining hero from villain has gradually faded away in most cases and lead male characters are moulded with such flexibility that they can switch positions across the narrative. The typecasting of actors as either strictly hero or villains has significantly decreased due to this shift in narrative paradigms of Bollywood cinema. For example, the film *Ek Villain* (Suri, 2014), the male protagonist, played by Siddharth Malhotra,is first introduced as a villain initially but who later displays anti-hero qualities as he eventually changes into the hero as a new villain, played by Ritesh Deshmukh, emerges in the form of a serial killer. This is indicative of the fact that despite the popularity of the anti-hero in Bollywood cinema, the figure of the villain has not been eradicated completely. The villain is still present, shaping the image of the anti-hero and highlighting the latter's redeeming qualities by displaying his own lack of these particular qualities.

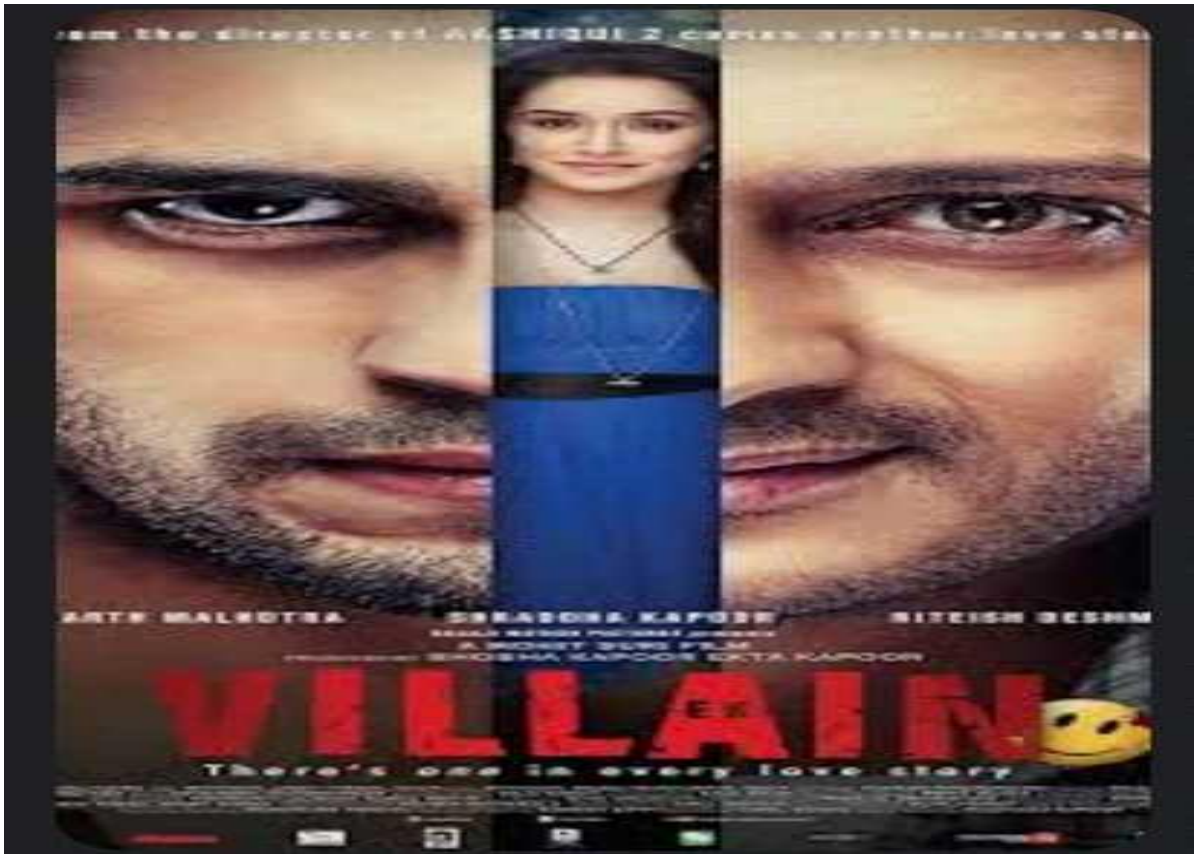


Figure 8- An official poster of *Ek Villain* (Suri, 2014) featuring both cis-male actors Sidharth Malhotra, the villain who turns into a hero, on the left and Ritesh Deshmukh, the absolute villain, on the right.

As seen in figure 8, the casting of both metrosexual cis-male actors for the roles of the redeemed villain turned into hero, also known as the anti-hero, and the absolute villain by film director Suri indicates the breaking down of the barriers previously set by Colourism. The revolutionised figure of the male lead, not restricted to being a hero, perpetuates the trend of the Anti-hero and indirectly and perhaps involuntarily challenges the use of the lighter and darker shades on the colour line to demarcate vice and virtue, good and evil.

Superficially, the narrative structures founded on colourism have overturned to the point where the portrait of the cis-male is now altered to portray darker skinned characters as cis-males. According to Hall, this can be classified as a "strategy for contesting the racialised regime of representation" (1993: 272) as he claims that:

> The second strategy for contesting the racialized regime of representation is the attempt to substitute a range of 'positive' images of black[coloured] people, black life and culture for the 'negative' imagery which continues to dominate popular representation. This approach has the advantage of righting the balance. It is underpinned by an acceptance- indeed. a celebration -of difference. It inverts the binary opposition privileging the subordinate term, sometimes reading the negative positively: 'Black [colour] is Beautiful' It tries to construct a positive identification with what has been abjected (1993: 272).

In *Super 30* (Bahl, 2019), the director narrates the story of a mathematician named Anand Kumar. The actor Hrithik Roshan is cast for the role of Anand and his skin is darkened for the purpose of the role as seen in figure 9.

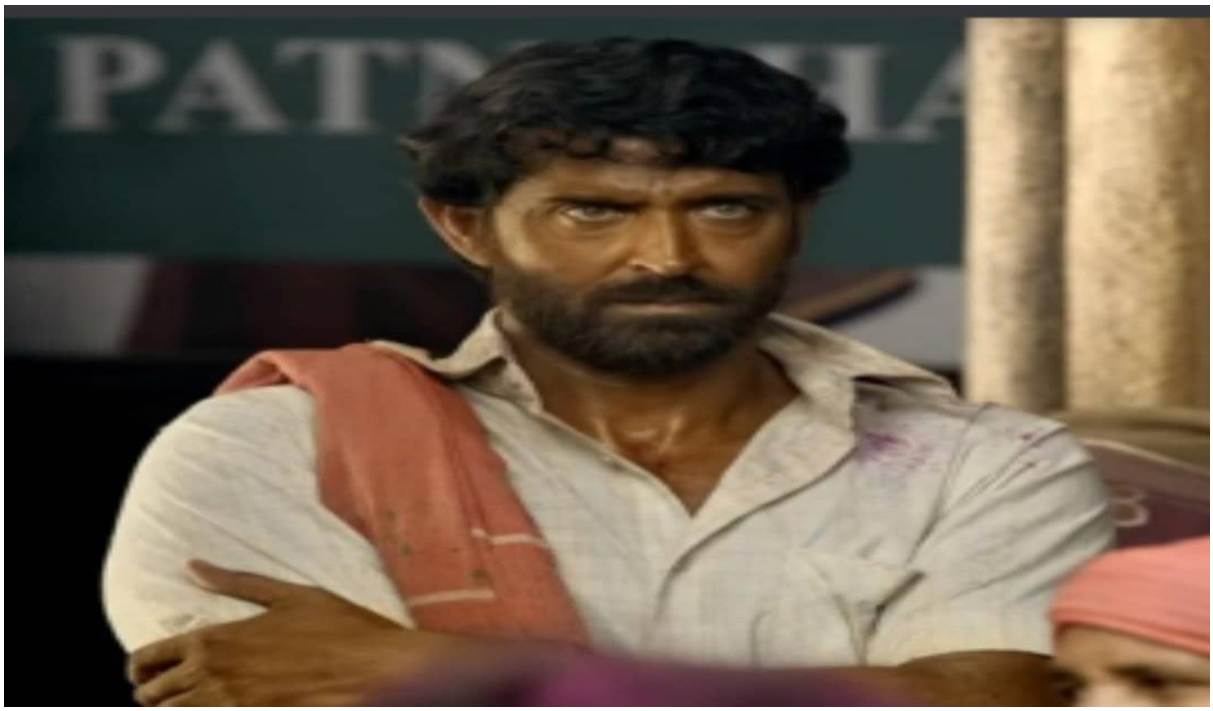


Figure 9- A still from *Super 30* (Bahl, 2019) featuring the male protagonist Anand played by Hrithik Roshan.

This representation of the cis-male with dark skin complexion challenges the image of the light-skinned male being the only cis-male along with the image of fairness being equated to goodness. The colour line seems to no longer act as a moral compass/castrator for heroes and villains, instead, it becomes a marker of ethnicity defining a character's background rather than as a judgement. This superficial movement within the dynamics of Colourism in Bollywood cinema has opened new doors for actors of darker complexions to play the role of the cis-male hero. This superficial movement has undoubtedly revamped the figure of the male protagonist but the revamped figure is yet to be accepted widely as a norm. For example, actors such as Rajkumar Rao and Nawazuddin Siddiqui are currently flourishing in the Bollywood industry.

However, although the discourse of the colour line has evolved with regards to the typecasting and representations of Bollywood cinema male heroes and villains, the pre-Bollywood Hindustani cinema's discourse of fairness and darkness founded in casteism are still pertinent in other forms within Bollywood cinema. As mentioned by Ghosh, "Bollywood villains, similarly, are rooted in society, earning the recognition of viewers over the decades" (2013: 8). The Colour line is no longer use to differentiate the villain from the hero but is instead used as

a measure of a villain's degree of "villainess". Taking *Chennai Express* (Shetty, 2013) as example again, the actor casted to play the role of the villain Thangabali is NikitinDheer, a Punjabi. The story of Chennai Express (Shetty, 2013) is set in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu. The film director, Rohit Shetty, deemed it most suitable to cast NikitinDheer, a Punjabi and north Indian, for the role of the villain within the setting of Tamil Nadu which is found in South India. There is a clear demarcation of geography, ethnicity and eventually skin colour between the actor and the character. However, this demarcation is non-existent during the casting of the secondary villains, Thangabali's group of goons. Figure 10 is a still from *Chennai Express* (Shetty, 2013) illustrating Thangabali accompanied by his fellow goons.

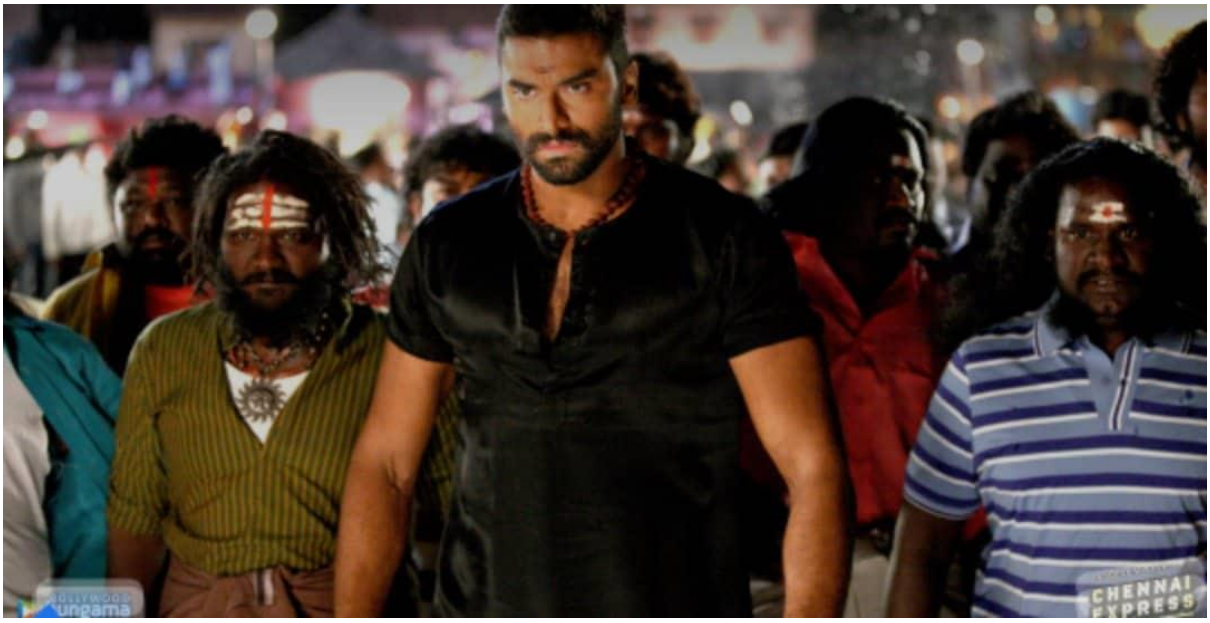


Figure 10- Thangabali in the presence of his troupe of goons in *Chennai Express* (Shetty, 2013).

Figure 10 clearly shows skin colour as a visual demarcation between the main villain and the secondary villains. The main villain is played by cis-male actor NikitinDheer who is tall, well groomedwell built and fair skinned as opposed to the secondary villains who are shabby looking, short, stout and darker skinned, signifying the physical superiority of the main villain over the secondary ones. The colour line is used to represent the degree of"villainess"between the two and in its attempt to revamp the villain into an anti-hero, a figure worthy of sympathy and redemption through the fair skin, it brings in the conventional picture of 'evilness' marked by darkness of skin, a picture that serves as comparison for the anti-hero to mark its identity as the lesser evil, the evil that deserves sympathy and eventually redemption. This way, within the economics of representing the evilness altogether, the pre-Bollywood cinema's discourse of fairness and darkness still prevails within Bollywood cinema.

2.2.2 Mapping the Heroine's discourse of colourism from pre-Bollywood cinema to Bollywood cinema.

Pre-Bollywood Hindustani cinema's narratological tropes were mostly androcentric wherein heroes were given utmost importance and significance in the plot. Ayesha Jhulka, Indian actress who debuted in 1991, defines the pre-Bollywood cinema's industry in an interview with Ganti on May 28 1996:

> You have to accept the fact that it is a male-dominated industry. And you have to accept that basically heroes are given much more importance than the heroines, importance in the sense, because the film runs on them you know (2004:187).

Although the Pre-Bollywood cinema heroine's discourse was subordinate to that of the hero's, her discourse of Colourism equally consisted of diverging dynamics within anti-colonial and nationalist discourses.

The pre-Bollywood cinema heroine's role was restricted to that of "the forgiving mother, the all-suffering wife, the large-hearted sister, the sacrificing wife" (Azmi 1996, cited in Ganti, 2004:189) and her sole purpose was to portray a female figure of domesticity. For a female figure to be domesticated, she has to bear certain attributes, namely morality and chastity.Similar to the hero, the domestic portrait of the heroine has to be constructed through a female opponent, the vamp. The heroine/ the vamp is a common narratological trope within pre-Bollywood Hindustani cinema whereby the morality and chastity of the heroine is constructed opposite the evil and/or assertive sexuality of the vamp respectively. The colour line is divided and attributed signifieds accordingly.

The morally flawed vamp predominates in pre-Bollywood Hindustani cinema through the figure of the evil mother-in-law or stepmother within a nationalist discourse. The colour palette follows the same pattern of fairness symbolising goodness and darkness symbolising evilness. Among many of the actresses typecasted as villains by pre-Bollywood cinema directors is Lalita Pawar. In comparison to the actresses typecasted as heroines, the actresses are of darker complexions which complement their roles. In *Sau Din SaasKe* (Sadanah, 1980), Lalita Pawar plays the role of the evil mother-in-law Bhawani Devi opposite the heroines Sheela and Durga played by Asha Parekh and Reena Roy respectively. Figure 11 is a still from *Sau Din SaasKe* (Sadanah, 1980) featuring Sheela and Bhawani Devi.

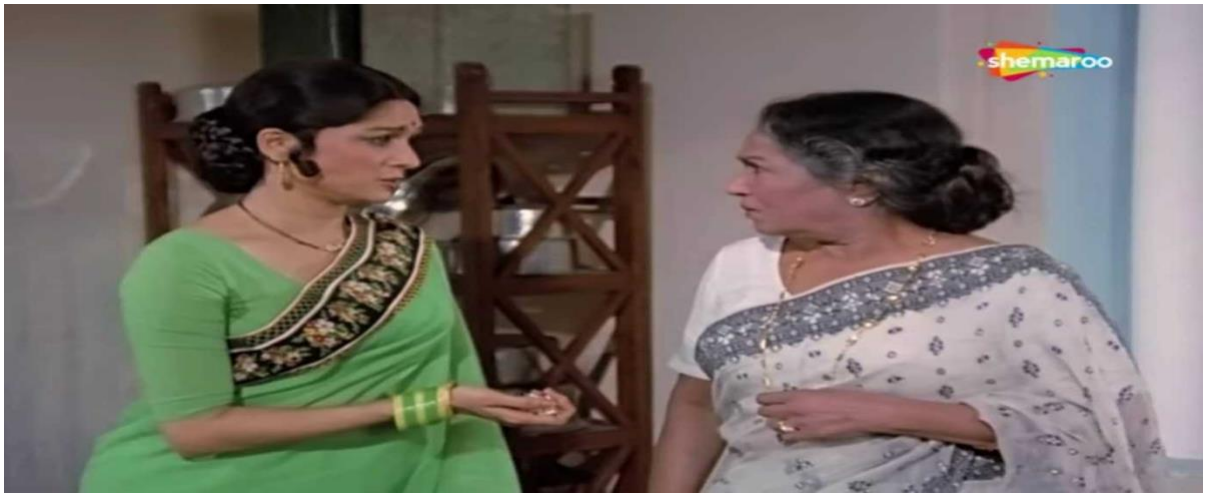


Figure 11- A still from *Sau Din SaasKe* (Sadanah, 1980) featuring Asha Parekh in the role of Sheela and Lalita Pawar in the role of Bhawani Devi.

The contrast of skin colour between Asha Parekh and Lalita Pawar can clearly be seen in figure 11 whereby the colour line is used in such a way where fairness is meant to designate goodness and darkness signifies evilness. The colour line acts as visual marker and colour-classifies the good from the bad in its overarching attempt to carve the heroine's unquestionable morality as opposed to the morally flawed mother-in-law.

Moreover, in order to mark the heroine's chaste identity, an opponent in the form of an Item girl is portrayed with an assertive sexuality. Khoyratty claims that "[w]hat is left of the vamp in today's Bollywood is the "Item girl", a name which carries its own history of being gazed at and objectified. She only appears during a song-and-dance item and it is clear she brings an erotic dimension to the place" (2015: 177). This assertive sexuality is conveyed mostly in item songs with a derogatory agenda through the westernised figure of the vamp conveying a message of decadence. One of the most prominent markers of the westernisation of the Vamp is the fairness of her skin colour which often led pre-Bollywood cinema directors to typecast certain actresses as Item girls. Helen Khan is one such actress, typecasted for her westernised looks due to her Anglo-Indian and Burmese background, as an Item girl meant to challenge and highlight a heroine's chastity and modesty. Figure 12 shows a still from the item song "AaJaaneJaan"from*Inteqam* (Nayyar, 1969) featuring Helen Khan as the Item girl.

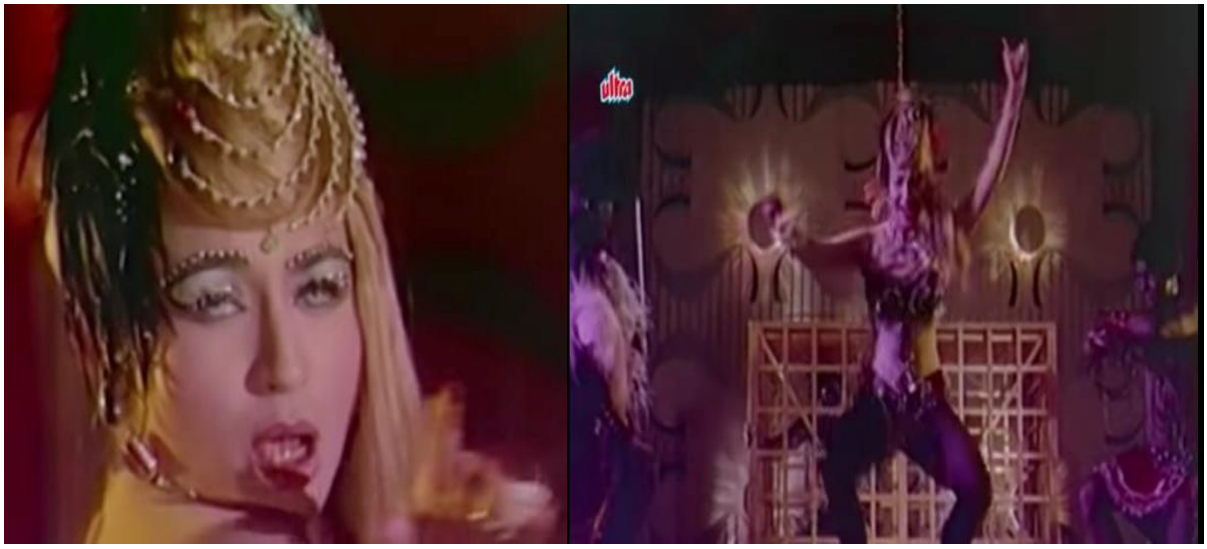


Figure 12- The first still shows a westernised Helen in the avatar of the Item girl and the second still shows the Item girl dancing in the presence of 'dark-skinned slaves', one of which is encaged, from *Inteqam* (Nayyar, 1969)

In figure 12, the westernisation of the Item girl is clearly visible through the blue eyes, the blond hair and fair skin of the Item girl. To further highlight the westernisation of the Item girl, she is portrayed as a seductive. Gori Ma'am (fair madam), a term used by Indians to designate the White mistress during the colonial period. The Item girl gains her Gori Ma'am identity through her contrast with the depictions of Ghulams (slaves) in the background. The Gori Ma'am/ Ghulam narratological binary is thus used with a derogative agenda here by the director not only due to the mimicry involved (See Chapter 3) but also due to the symbolic contrast of skin colour being made. The darkness of the Ghulams' skin colour serves to emphasise the fairness of the Item girl's skin colour such that the latter becomes a fetish due to its seductive purposes within the explicitly sexualised context of the Item Song. Freud defines the fetish as "[w]hat is substituted for the sexual object insome part of the body (such as the foot or hair) which is in general very inappropriate for sexual purposes..." (1953-1974: 148). The fair skin symbolised the colonial desire that the figure of the Gori Ma'am evokes in the (previously) colonised, in this case the intra-diegetic male audience. Colonial desire is caused by "the discourse of colonialism [that] is pervaded by images of transgressive sexuality, of an obsession with the idea of the hybrid and miscegenated,and with persistent fantasies of inter-racial sex" (Young 1995, Cited in Ashcroft *et Al.*, 1998:36).The Gori Ma'am is a White mistress, a figure of female colonial subjugation, inspiring both desire and fear within the colonised male subject. The overpowering of her gynocentrism over the colonised male subjects' androcentrism towards the colonised female subjects further highlights the desire she commands as it is one which cannot be satisfied. Thus, the fair skin acts as a fetish substituting

the sexualised colonial desire that is originally evoked for the Gori Ma'am. Consequently, the colonial dynamics behind the westernised image of the Item girl paints the latter as a female figure bearing a threatening, almost castrative, sexuality which leads to fairness of skin bearing the signified of decadence. This is indicative of an anti-colonialist discourse submitting the Gori Ma'am, through the figure of the Item girl, to the male gaze of both an intra-diegetic and extra-diegetic Indian male audience gaining double pleasure, voyeuristic pleasure by gazing at the Item girl and sadistic pleasure by gazing at the subjugation of 'dark skinned male slaves' to the Gori Ma'am, a position that they once were in.

However, the Bollywood cinema heroine challenges the negative portrayal of the westernised female, either through the Item girl or the vamp, by adopting some of the latter's characteristics. This movement within Hindustani cinema is generated by transnational discourses created by Bollywood directors for the purpose of global exposure. Shabana Azmi addresses this change with her interview with Ganti as she claims that:

> …another change has occurred in recent times,…earlier we had very clear divisions between the vamp and the heroine. Because the vamp was always excluded from the field of domesticity, she was allowed to assert her sexuality. Whereas the heroine was cast in the chaste wife-mother mould, and so could never express her sexuality. Now the distinction between the vamp and the heroine is getting more and more blurred, so now we have the two-in-one heroine, who is this sultry sexy siren before marriage and then becomes the chaste wife after (2004: 190).

By embracing some of the characteristics of the vamp, the Bollywood cinema heroine defeats the purpose of the use of the colour line as a marker of morality to demarcate vamp from heroine.

However, the use of the colour line is yet to be eliminated from Bollywood cinematic discourses. The colour line is still present in nationalist discourses whereby the caste system dictates the hierarchy. The association of fair skin with the upper castes prevails within nationalist films promoting Indian values and tradition. One such film is *Vivah* (Barjatya, 2006) which narrates the story of Poonam, an orphaned girl who is adopted by her Uncle and Aunt, and Prem's marriage. In the story, Poonam has a younger step-sister, Choti, who is also becoming of age for marriage and whose mother is constantly favouring her over Poonam due to the disparity between both step-sisters' skin colour. Poonam is fair-skinned while Choti is darker-skinned and thus, Choti's biological mother's hates Poonam because of her fair skin as this makes Poonam more suitable for marriage compared to Choti. Figure 13 shows the introductory shots of both Poonam and Choti.

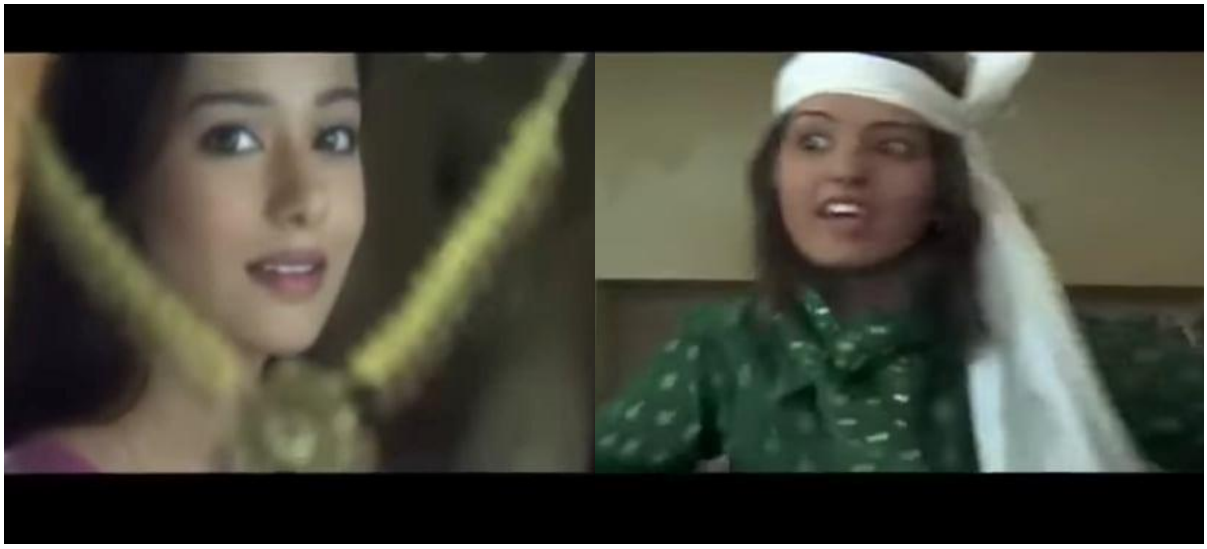


Figure 13- The first still shows the introduction of Poonam while the second still is the introductory shot of Choti from *Vivah* (Barjatya, 2006).

In the introductory shot of Poonam, as seen in figure 13, the fairness of her skin colour is highlighted as an asset of her eligibility and desirability for marriage through the camera's close up focus on her face while a blurred golden necklace acts as frame and an ultimate symbol of Indian femininity. On the opposite, Choti's introduction highlights not only her darker skin but showcases it in a masculine manner, through the scarf of the head (a style worn prominently by Indian Men) and the loose *Kurta* (Indian men's traditional tunic). The masculine portrayal of her character engulfs her femininity and consequently renders her less desirable and eligible for marriage. This is often the fate of side female-characters in Bollywood who are not opposing the heroine but rather contributing to the enhancement of the heroine's appearance and narrative. In *Vivah* (Barjatya, 2006), the story involving skin colour is not merely metaphorical but is literally woven into the narrative as a sub-plot. Choti's darker skin is a key element which generates the hatred of the stepmother towards the stepdaughter (Poonam). The step-mother is even seen constantly trying multiple ways to lighten Choti's complexion among which is over-applying powder as seen in figure 14.

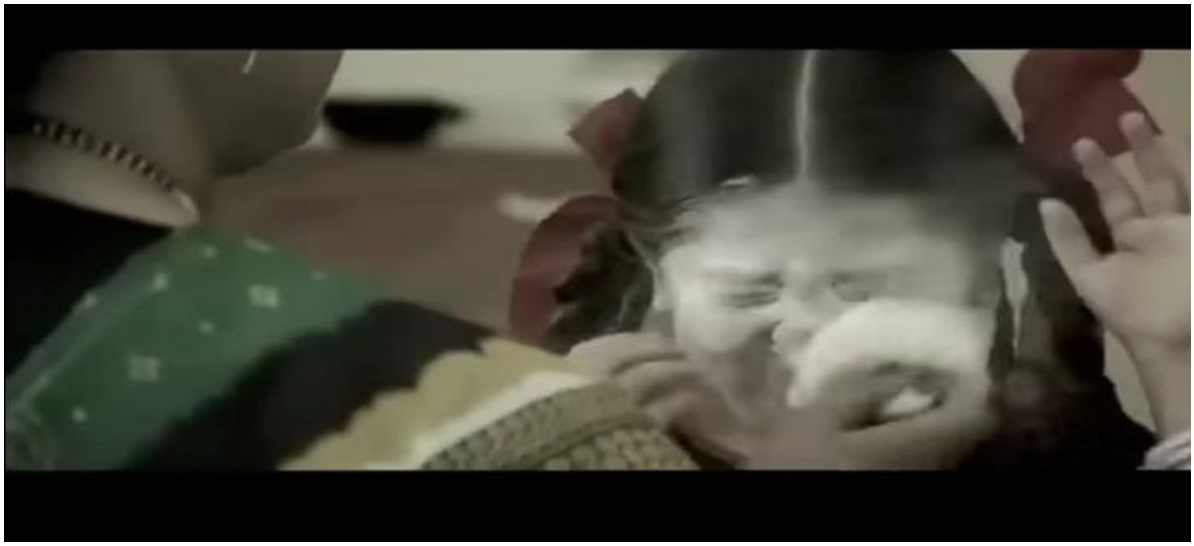


Figure 14- A still from *Vivah* (Barjatya, 2006) showing Choti's mother over-applying powder on young Choti's face to lighten her skin colour.

The film, through this sub-plot and scenes regarding the colour line, consists of a conservative nationalist agenda as it abides by the dogmas of Casteism set by the Indian society. It highlights the lighter skin in a positive light while condemning the darker skin to a negative depiction in its attempt of abiding by and perpetuating overarching conservative nationalistic ideologies. Chen *et Al.* maintain that:

> Western beauty ideals include being thin and tall, having long hair, having light/tanned skin, having big breasts, large eyes, a small nose, and high cheekbones. The modern beauty standard in Asia for females shows evidence of aligning with eurocentric ideals, for example East Asian beauty standards stress having large eyes, a small nose bridge, and white skin (2020:2).

Therefore, despite the conservative nationalist ideologies, the film succeeded at receiving a whopping amount at the overseas' Box Office because those ideologies of highlighting fairness of skin also align with western beauty ideals which dictate European and Eurocentric markets altogether.

However, in more recent Bollywood films such as *Bala* (Kaushik, 2019) and *Udta Punjab* (Chaubey, 2016), a change in the dynamics of the representation of the heroine has been noticed in terms of skin colour yet the change is not entirely genuine as the heroine's story gets compromised in the making. Once again, this is suggestive of a superficial change in the form of a strategy to contest racialised representation dynamics. *Bala* (Kaushik, 2019) addresses the issue of Colourism within the Indian society particularly when it comes to marriage. It features two female leads through the characters of Latika and Pari, the former a dark-skinned lawyer

(see figure 15) and the lattera fair-skinned model whose career was the only option she had due to her poor academic performances.

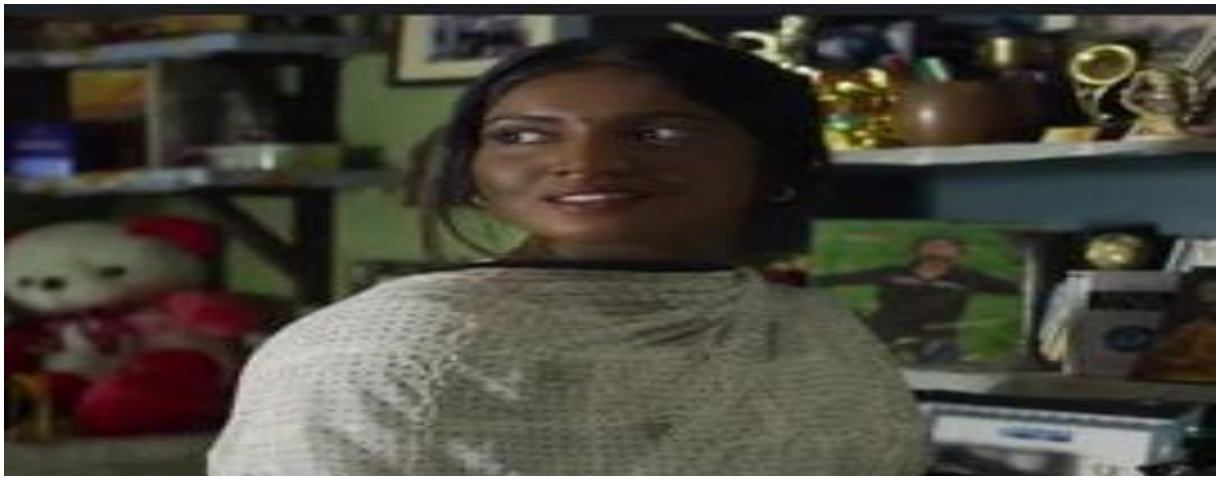


Figure 15- A still from *Bala* (Kaushik, 2019) featuring actress Bhumi Pednekar in the role of Latika.

Bala,the male lead, falls for and marries Pari while Latika struggles with rejection from suitors due to her skin colour. This film addresses the issue of the ideals of beauty and acceptance being only skin deep whereby no other accomplishment matters such as, in this case Latika's profession as a lawyer. The film ends with Bala realising the above and proposing to Latika for marriage but ends up being rejected. Thus, *Bala* (Kaushik, 2019) conveys the condemnation of colourism within the sphere of marriage in Bollywood cinema and the Indian society altogether while marking a notable change in Bollywood cinema upon comparison with early Bollywood films such as *Vivah*(Barjatya, 2006). Still, this change is yet to be accepted as a common narrative trope as it can be observed that despite the actresses' willingness to play the role of dark-skinned heroines, they are yet to be given the traditional Hindustani cinema scripts whereby hero falls in love with heroine and fights the villain to end up together. Darker-skinned heroines are given unconventional scripts, differing from the norms and stereotypes of Bollywood cinema. *Udta Punjab* (Chaubey, 2016) is one such example. The character of the dark-skin female co-heroine Kumari (See figure 16) is played by Alia Bhatt, a fair-skinned actress.

Figure 16- A still from *UdtaPunjab*(Chaubey, 2016) featuring Kumari, played by actress Alia Bhatt.

While this certainly defeats any claims of typecasting, it reveals an unconventional agenda in its plot as Kumari is a migrant worker forced to work in the fields by her father while her dream is to become a hockey player. She undergoes a series of events including getting stuck in drug peddling, getting kidnapped by drug peddlers and getting eventually drugged and abused sexually. However, she emerges as a strong character as she escapes the kidnappers and finds love in the end. The unconventional narrative of the darker-skinned female, Kumari in this case, is undoubtedly empowering yet it reveals in parallel the un-acceptance of the dark-skinned heroine within the traditional sphere of Bollywood cinema.

This chapter has shown how the discourse of Colourism in pre-Bollywood cinema is deeply embedded in the casting patterns of the industry. The casting of fair-skinned actors and actresses as the lead protagonists dominates the industry, thereby marginalising actors and actresses with darker skin tones. The implication of Colourism in pre-Bollywood cinema is a perpetuation of the belief that fair skin is inherently better than darker skin. Pre-Bollywood cinema narratives often reinforce this belief by depicting fair-skinned actresses as the epitome of beauty, innocence and purity, while darker-skinned actresses are relegated to supporting roles and often portrayed as villains. As for the male protagonist, the colour line served to display the rivalry in the protagonist/antagonist matrix. In Bollywood cinema, these trends regarding the female protagonist still persist despite its attempt to evolve as an industry and create alternative narratives. Similarly, the discourse of Colourism for the male protagonist displays a semblance of change and evolution especially with the rise of the metrosexual hero and the popularity of the villain as a character however the pre-Bollywood cinema's use of the colour line, whereby fairness and darkness of skin symbolises virtue and vice respectively, still prevails when it comes to background actors/characters.

CHAPTER 3

RACE, MIMICRY AND AFRO-PESSIMISM

In this chapter, I investigate the representation of race while determining the dynamics of the Afro-pessimism underlying the representations of Afro-identities in Bollywood which is strongly rooted in Mimicry. I will also map the relations between representation and Indian/ Bollywood culture. I will engage in a semiological analysis of both film sequences and song/dance sequences from the films *Inteqam* (Nayyar, 1969), *Mr India* (Kapur, 1986), *Housefull* (Khan, 2010), *Golmaal 3* (Shetty, 2010), *Fashion* (Bhandarkar, 2008), *KambakkhtIshq* (Khan, 2009) and *Dilwale* (Shetty, 2015).

3.1 Synopsis

Inteqam (Nayyar, 1069)

See Chapter 2.1

Mr India (Kapur, 1986)

Arun is an orphan who dedicates his whole adult life to raising other orphan children in a house despite his financial constraints. Infamous crime leader and smuggler Mogambo has his eyes on Arun's house for the purpose of storing firearms. As Arun refuses to give up the house, Mogambo orders his men to get Arun to vacate the house. A helpless and hopeless Arun then comes across a device designed by a professor which makes him invisible. Arun uses this device to fight against Mogambo and other social injustices in general which gains him a lot of popularity. He names himself 'Mr India' and becomes a hero for the masses.

Housefull (Khan, 2010)

Arush is an unlucky man who is desperate to find true love and fortune. In his quest for love, Aarush finds himself in the middle of a love triangle with two women, Sandhya and Hetal. Meanwhile, Arush's friend Bobbey is in the midst of his own love problems with his fiancé, Devika.

Golmaal 3 (Shetty, 2010)

Two groups of friends led by Gopal and Madhav respectively are rivals until they are forced to reconciliate when their respective parents, Gopal's mother and Madhav's father, who are

childhood sweethearts reunite and decide to get married. Despite a number of trials and tribulations faced due to their children, including an encounter with the underworld, they both succeed at getting married in the end.

Fashion (Bhandarkar, 2008)

Meghna hails from a small-town and decides to shift to Mumbai to try her luck at modelling and to fulfil her dream of being a supermodel. Once she enters the industry, she is made to face the reality of this industry filled with toxic competition, body-shaming, favouritism and substance abuse. She quickly realises that these are stepping stones in her journey to become a top model and she gradually loses herself as she becomes a supermodel. An incident involving a one-night stand with a Black man causes her to retreat from the modelling world and return to her hometown.

KambakkhtIshq (Khan, 2009)

Viraj is a stuntman from Hollywood who has a reputation of being a womanizer. He meets Simrita, a top surgeon from India, and they both develop a dislike for each other due to their different personalities. However, fate keeps bringing them together, and they end up falling in love. Their relationship is tested then Simran's ex-boyfriend, an underworld don, comes back into her life and tries to force her to marry him. Viraj comes to Simran's rescue and they fight the don and his henchmen.

Dilwale (Shetty, 2015)

Raj and Meera belong to rival criminal families where their respective fathers are arch-enemies. Ignorant of each other's family backgrounds, they fall in love and when the truth about their families comes out, they both agree to reconciliate both families. Meera's father dupes his own daughter along with Raj's family and attacks Raj's father. Raj points the gun back to Meera's father in defense which leads to Meera's misunderstanding that Raj attacked his father. They both part ways until Raj's and Meera's younger brother and sister fall in love and reunite the two.

3.2 Representing Blackness.

Hall (1997) claims that representation is an integral component of the process of meaning generation and exchange among members of a given culture. This process involves language, signs, and images that serve as representations of various 'things'. Language itself comprises of sound, words, images, and objects, which convey and express meaning, contributing to the encoding and decoding of meaning (Hall, 1997). This process requires cultural codes that structure linear translatability through sets of social conventions. Drawing from Saussure's work, Hall (1997) explains the construction of cultural codes as being based on the concepts of the signifier and the signified. The signifier, as Saussure (1916) defines it in *Course in General Linguistics*, is fixed in relation to the linguistic or cultural community that uses it, although it appears to be freely chosen with respect to the idea it represents. The signified, in contrast, is the corresponding concept that the signifier triggers in one's mind (Saussure, 1916). Both Saussure (1916) and Hall (1997) maintain that the connection between the signifier and signified is arbitrary, thus rendering representation a subjective process that is dependent on the interpretation of the individuals involved.

In Bollywood cinema, the representation of Afro-identities is predominantly rooted in mimicry since “Bollywood’s range for non-Indian black actors is even stricter than the range reserved for black Indians, they are buffoonish, poor, prone to violence and criminality, and represent social problems hailing from a different national and cultural context” (Cowaloosur 2016: 79).

Bhabha compares mimicry to mockery as he describes both as:

> A discursive process by which the excess and slippage produced by the ambivalence of mimicry (almost same, but not quite) does not merely rupture the discourse, but becomes transformed into uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a “partial” presence. By “partial”, I mean both “incomplete” and “virtual” (1984: 4).

Bhabha (1984) sheds lights over the lack of authenticity and the exaggeration in the mimicry of the colonial subject, in this case the Black Afro-identity, to such an extent that it reduces the latter to a ‘partial’ presence whose existence can be questioned as he (1984) qualifies this presence as “virtual”. The dynamics of mimicry can be seen in Bollywood through the “contradictory articulations of reality and desire, seen in racist stereotypes, statements, jokes, myths” and “the effects of the disavowal that denies the difference of the other but produces in its stead forms of authority and multiple beliefs that alienate the assumption of “civil discourse” (Bhabha 1984: 6). The signifiers mostly used for the purpose of mimicry in Bollywood cinema are predominantly the Afro hair, the excessively colourful garment and the ‘black face’ which

are considered to be markers of Africanness. In *Black faces, White spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*, Carolyn Finney recounts the history of the blackface within the African American context as she claims that:

> Historically, African Americans have struggled over self-definition and with their representations in the media (including movies, television, radio, books, newspapers, magazines, paintings, sculptures, etc.). According to Hall (1997), there were three historic moments when the "'West' black faces encountered black people," prompting representations "marking racial difference": when Europeans made contact with West Africa in the sixteenth century for the primary purpose of acquiring slaves, during the spread of European colonization in Africa, and as people from the developing world migrated to the West after World War II. Representations of "primitive" Africans were used to perpetuate and sustain the ideas and values of the West that supported economic growth while at the same time reflecting the feelings and thoughts that justified actions of moral superiority and shaped the social imagination. Whether they were images of the white explorer's encounters with the African exotic, the happy "darkie" with his white master, or the stereotype of a black person with caricatured big lips and broad nose, popular representations of black people were effective at essentializing black identity and emphasizing black difference (2014: 70).

Finney's historical definition of the 'black face' distinguishes the "big lips" and the "broad nose" as prominent markers of Africanness used to caricaturise and essentialise Afro-identities. Additionally, Ayanna Thompson explores the 'black face' in *Blackface* (2021) from a performative perspective as a theatrical concept used to caricaturise and to impersonate blackness. Thompson claims that "[o]n the most basic level, blackface is the application of any prosthetic— makeup, soot, burnt cork, minerals, masks, etc.—to imitate the complexion of another race" (2021: 19).

Similarly, the 'black face' has existed in Hindustani cinema since the pre-Bollywood cinema era. The use of the 'black face' was first noticed in *Inteqam* (Nayyar, 1969) in the song and dance sequence, also known as an item song, entitled "Aa Jaane Jaan". Figure 17 shows a representation of the Afro-identity through the 'blackface'.

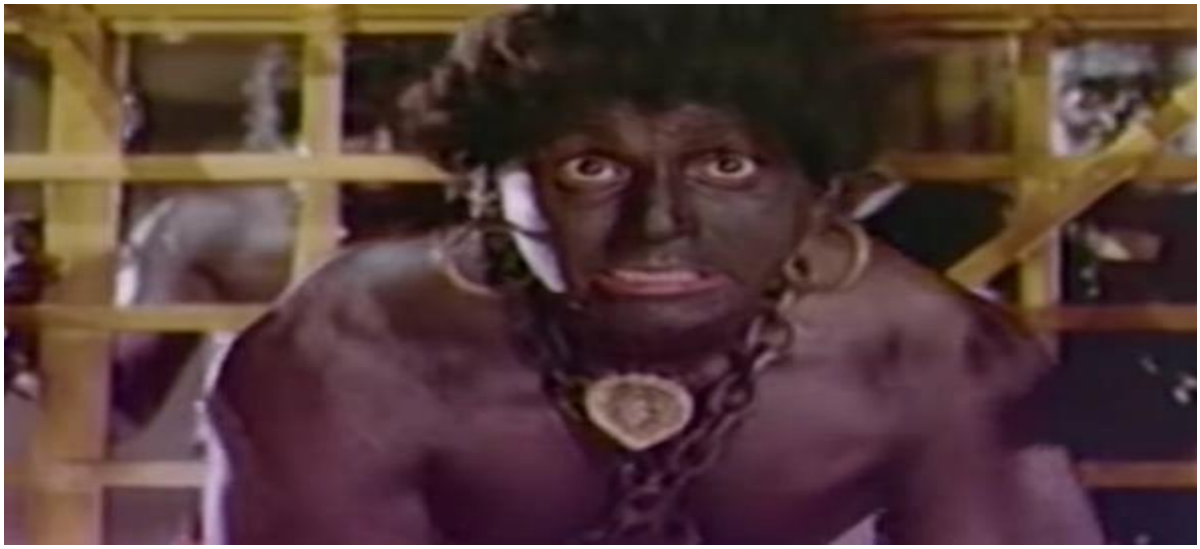
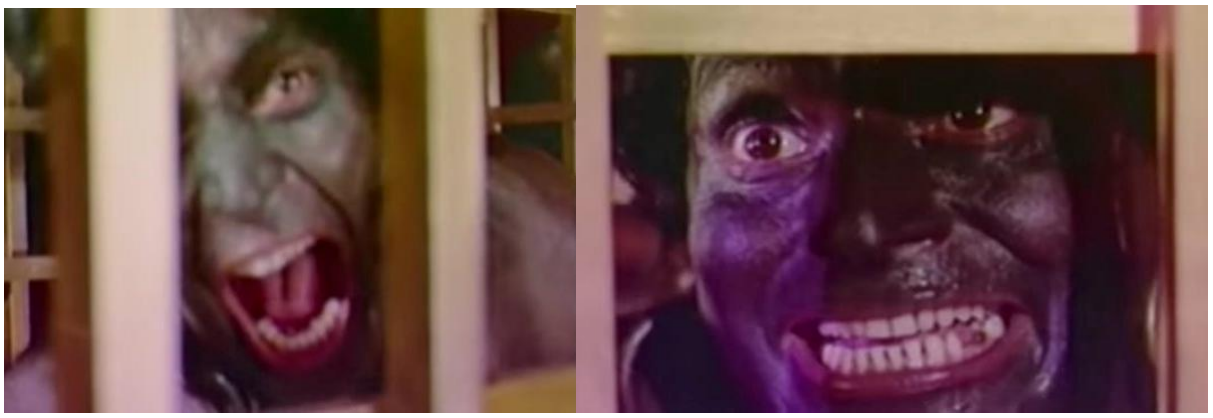


Figure 17- A still from "Aa Jaane Jaan" from *Inteqam* (Nayyar, 1969) showing the impersonation of an Afro-character, specifically that of a slave, through the 'black face'.

This representation of the Afro-identity is meant to depict a black slave through the 'black face' as it can clearly be seen that it is an Indian actor, whose face has been blackened with makeup, impersonating the black slave. The actor is not only wearing the 'black face' but is also depicted in a zoomorphic light as seen in figure 18.



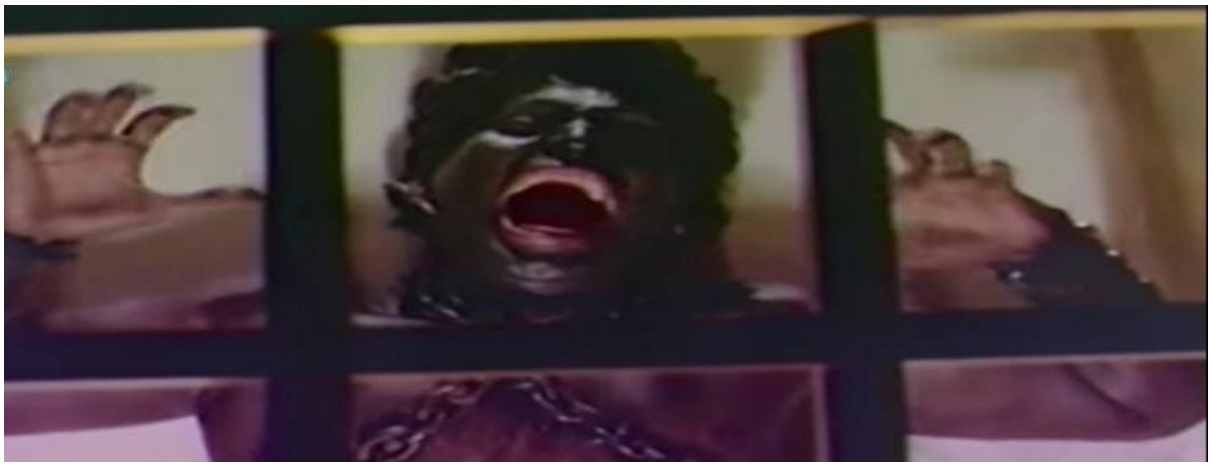


Figure 18- A collage of stills from "Aa Jaane Jaan" from *Inteqam* (Nayyar, 1969) depicting the zoomorphic representation of the Black slave.

The Black slave is chained within a cage and can be seen baring his teeth at the Item girl, almost snarling. A semiological reading of the stills would suggest that the chains, the cage, the bare teeth along with the 'black face' are all signifiers employed by the film director encoded with derogatory signifieds such as savagery, primitivism and violence which are conveyed to the audience upon interaction. Hall (1997) addresses the zoomorphism of Black Afro-identities by drawing a comparison between Whiteness and Blackness which he classifies as "a set of binary oppositions" responsible for the racial discourse of Black Afro-identities. He claims that:

> This racialized discourse is structured by a set of binary oppositions. There is the powerful opposition between 'civilization' (white) and 'savagery' (black). There is the opposition between the biological or bodily characteristics of the 'black' and 'white' 'races', polarized into their extreme opposites- each the signifiers of an absolute difference between human 'types' or species (Hall 1997: 243).

The dehumanisation of the Afro-identity in the role of the Black slave is highlighted by those signifieds which are heavily loaded with an Afro-pessimistic agenda as Wilderson states that:

> Afro-pessimism is premised on an iconoclastic claim: that Blackness is coterminous with Slaveness. Blackness is social death, which is to say that there was never a prior moment of plentitude, never a moment of equilibrium, never a moment of social life. Blackness, as a paradigmatic position (rather than as an ensemble of identities, cultural practices, or anthropological accoutrements), cannot be disimbricated from slavery (2020: 102).

The association of Blackness to slavery is articulated through the signifieds mentioned above which gain meaning through the set of binary oppositions mentioned by Hall. The representation of Whiteness through a White character also forms part of the racialised discourse of Black Afro-Identities. Effectively, the diegesis of the Item song "Aa Jaane Jaan" (Nayyar, 1969) includes the representation of the White male as an opposition to the representation of the Black Afro-identity. Figure 19 shows the White male who stands in the audience in a position of power as the one holding the gaze both over the Item girl and the Black slave.

Figure 19- A still from “Aa JaaneJaan” (Nayyar, 1969) from *Inteqam* showing a White male gazing at the Item girl’s performance consisting of the Black slaves.

The signifiers used in the representation of the White male are the smart-looking glasses, the cigarette, the neatly combed hair and the formal attire which all bear the signifieds of sophistication, refinement and civilisation. This binary representation of the White man, almost reminiscent of the White master, and the Black slave underlines the discourse of Culture versus Nature especially through this visual display of primitivism in the gestures and signs appropriated by the actor playing the role of the Black Afro slave. Hall states that “[f]or blacks, 'primitivism' (Culture) and 'blackness' (Nature) became interchangeable. This was their 'true nature' and they could not escape it” (1997: 245) and he further describes the parallel discourse of ‘Nature’ versus ‘Culture’ in this racial discourse of blackness as he maintains that:

> There are the rich distinctions which duster around the supposed link, on the one hand, between the white 'races' and intellectual development- refinement, learning and knowledge, a belief in reason, the presence of developed institutions, formal government and law, and a 'civilized restraint' in their emotional, sexual and civil life, all of which are associated with 'Culture': and on the other hand, the link between the black 'races' and whatever is instinctual- the open expression of emotion and feeling rather than intellect, a lack of 'civilized refinement' in sexual and social life, a reliance on custom and ritual and the lack of developed civil institutions, all of which are linked to 'Nature' (1997: 245).

The “lack of civilised refinement in sexual and social life” (1997: 245) highlighted by Hall can also be seen in “Aa JaaneJaan” (Nayyar, 1969) where the Black Afro-slave is seduced by the Item girl and responds by pouncing on her. Figure 20 shows a few instanceswhere the Item girl seduces the Black Afro slave who is encaged while the latter snarls back or pounces at her.

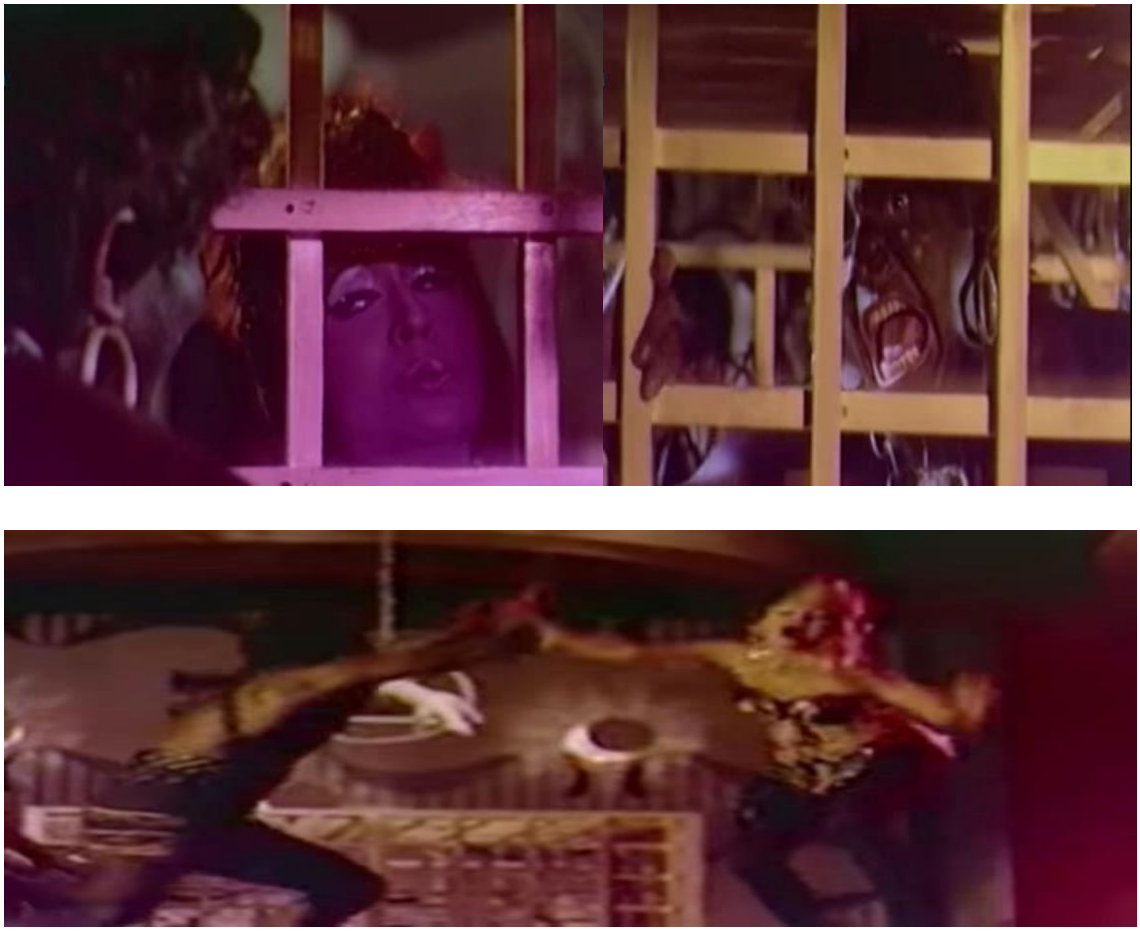


Figure 20- A collage of stills from "Aa Jaane Jaan" from *Inteqam* (Nayyar, 1969) showing the Item girl seducing the Black Afro slave in the upper-left still and the latter's response where he bares his teeth out and pounces on the Item girl in the upper-right and lower still stills respectively.

This, altogether, demonstrates a representation of the Black slave's sexual reaction as uncivilised and primitive, almost depicting a picture of sexual assault. Such representations of primal sexual responses of the Black slave vis-à-vis the non-black female is strongly motivated by the notion of 'racial purity' and the fear of miscegenation. Miscegenation was regarded as "pollution" (Hall, 1967) and a social threat which goes back to America's history of slavery as recounted by Mercer and Julien:

> The primal fantasy of the big black penis projects the fear of a threat not only to white womanhood, but to civilization itself, as the anxiety of miscegenation, eugenic pollution and racial degeneration is acted out through white male rituals of racial aggression- the historical lynching of black men in the United States routinely involved the literal castration of the Other's "strange fruit" (1994: 185).

Mercer and Julien (1994) accentuate the extent to which Black sexuality caused a malaise which has resulted into the whitewashing of sexual practices and purity. This practice of whitewashing clearly extends to the context of Hindustani cinema, both during the pre-Bollywood and Bollywood eras.

Bollywood cinema perpetuates the same racist ideological codes in their modes of representation whereby the Afro-character is a character displaying a level of sexual behaviour that is close to bestiality. However, Bollywood cinema has evolved from its representations of Black Afro-identities through the 'blackface' technique and has introduced the "non-Indian Black actor" for roles meant to depict Black Afro-characters. The introduction of the "non-Indian Black actor" is definitely a paradigm shift in the modes of representing Black Afro-Identities in terms of the signifier which in this case is an actual "non- Indian black actor" portraying a Black Afro-character, a signifier that very closely corresponds to the referent (the origin of the signifier) physically and visually. However, the signified of the Black Afro-Character in Bollywood cinema as a downgraded character who is portrayed either as uncivilised and savage, or as a sexually repressed character whose purpose is to solely ravage the opposite sex upon any sort of contact. The narrative trope of 'sexual purity' and the malaise caused by interracial sex and miscegenation can be seen in Madhur Bhandarkar's *Fashion* (2008). Figure 21 shows a collage of stills featuring the scene where the female protagonist Meghna, played by Priyanka Chopra Jonas, wakes up the morning after clubbing in an inebriated state, naked, next to a Black Afro-man.

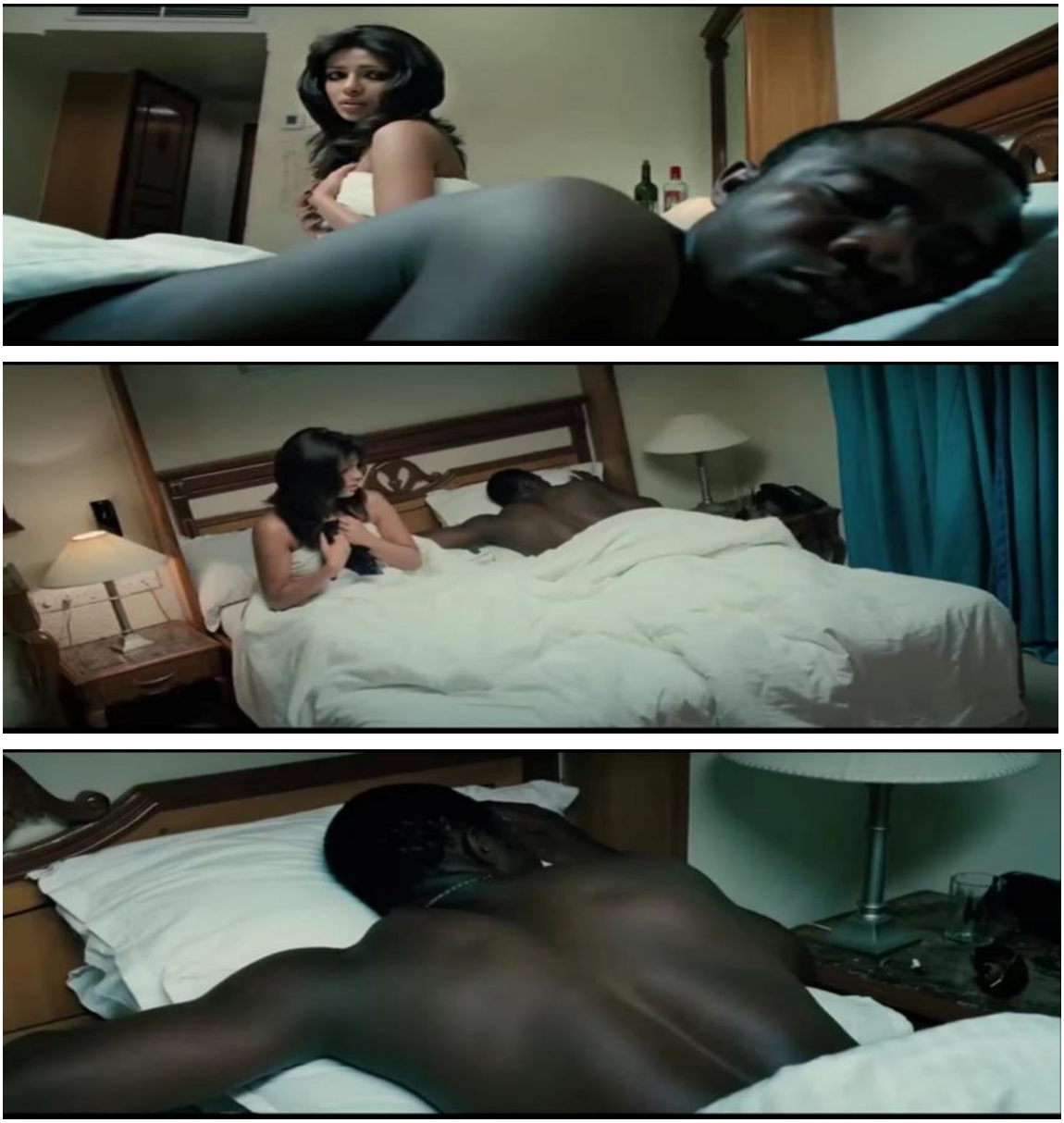


Figure 21- A collage of stills from *Fashion* (Bhandarkar, 2008) showing Meghna's, the female protagonist, waking up next to a Black Afro man the morning after her night out in a club.

In the upper still in figure 21, the shock and fear can clearly be seen on Meghna's face. The camera angle in the shot meticulously focuses on the Black actor in the foreground while attributing equal importance to Meghna's facial expressions and body gestures in the background. She covers her breasts with the sheets and her hands as an attempt to save her already compromised modesty. It is noteworthy that Meghna is not the traditional female protagonist perpetuating the ideals of chastity as she maintains a few live-in relationships with the Indian cis-males in the film and the issue of the compromised modesty is solely raised at this instance (shown in figure 21) in the whole diegesis. While the camera angle ensures that the audience identifies clearly the Black Afro man and his role in the scene in the first still, a

wider upper angle shot further contextualises the scenario through the hotel room setting in order to highlight the illicitness of the sexual act. In the lower still, the camera zooms in on the sleeping Black Afro man, focusing on the darkness of his skin which is highlighted against the whiteness of the sheets, only to convey the fact that it is the darkness of his skin colour, which in an essentialised manner is indicative of his race, is the source of conflict. Moreover, the scene equally includes a display of scattered clothes, accessories and sheets in disarray along with alcohol and cigarettes as shown in figure 22.

Figure 22- A collage of stills displaying the state of the hotel after the night that Meghna has spent with the Black Afro man: clothes, accessories, sheets, alcohol and cigarette scattered all around the place from *Fashion* (Bhandarkar, 2008)

These signifiers bear the signifieds of not only the illicitness of the sex as mentioned above but also the brutal and uncivilised aspect of it. The display of scattered clothes and accessories indicates that the clothes were probably ripped off the female protagonist's body as opposed to having been sensually removed. Consequently, these signifiers and their corresponding signifieds paint a sexually bestial portrait of the Black Afro man in order to define his sexual needs as aggressive, ravaging and violent. This reveals yet again the Afro-pessimistic agenda of Hindustani cinema. Wilderson states that:

> To begin with, Afro-pessimism in no way condones or seeks to explain away sexual violence. On the contrary, violence, as structure or paradigm, and sexual violence, as an ensemble of practices within that paradigm, is at the heart of Afropessimist meditations, albeit in ways that run counter to received wisdom (2020: 167).

In Bollywood cinema, the discourse of the Black Afro character as a sexual deviant is not restricted to the male Black-Afro character but is also common for female Black Afro characters. Figure 23 shows a scene in *KambakkhtIshq* (Khan, 2009) where the male protagonist is subjected to a corporal search at the airport. The latter is thrilled about the search as he assumes that it will be conducted by the White woman in the first still of the collage in figure 23. However, to his utter dismay and shock, as can been deduced by his facial expression in the third still of the collage in figure 23, the corporal search was actually conducted by the Black woman in the middle still featured in the collage in figure 23 respectively. Along with skin colour, age is used as a factor further highlighting the sexual unattractiveness of the Black woman as she appears to be older than the White woman.

Figure 23- The first still on the left hand side shows the White woman supposed to perform the corporal search, the second still shows the Black woman who actually conducts the corporal search and the third still features the male protagonist's reaction upon learning that the search will be conducted by the Black woman and not the White woman, from *Kambakkht Ishq* (2008).

This scene is a comment on the ideals of female beauty and attractiveness perpetuated by Bollywood and it indicates, through the reaction of the male protagonist, a microcosmic representation of the Indian man at large, that the Black Afro woman does not abide by those ideals and can only be defined as unattractive and repulsive. Moreover, the representation of the Black Afro-woman further serves and promotes this discourse of unattractiveness and repulsiveness through her facial expression and body language in comparison to the White woman. While the White woman leans gracefully against the wall with a soft smile on her face, the Black Afro-woman stands stiffly in the middle of the room with a fierce facial expression in a threatening manner. The signifier of the tie used in the representation of the Black Afro-woman further encodes this narrative of unattractiveness and repulsiveness as it bears the signified of manly as opposed to the opened buttons of the White woman, revealing just enough cleavage to mark her femininity and sensuality. The male protagonist ensures the smooth and linear decoding of these black/white narrative codes as he fulfils the purpose of a "transcendental signified" (Derrida, 1967) as he becomes the bearer of meaning.

After marking the unattractive and repulsive identity, the Black Afro-woman is consequently represented as a sexually aggressive figure, akin to the sexually brutal, primitive and uncivilised Black Afro-man. The sexual aggressiveness can be seen in figure 24 shows a collage of stills from the same scene depicting the act of the corporal search.

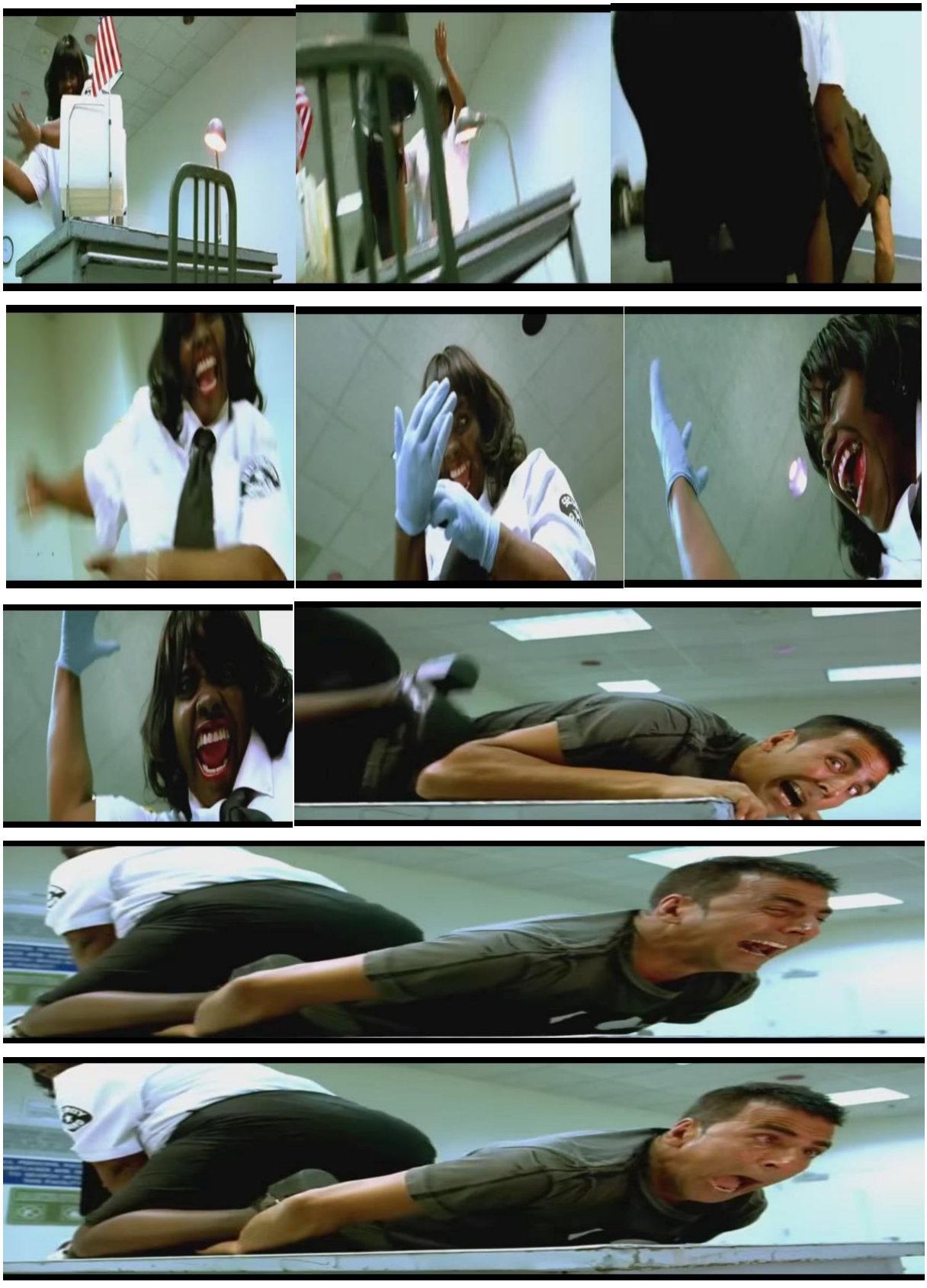


Figure 24- A collage of stills from *Kambakkht Ishq* (Khan, 2009) featuring the corporal search undergone by the male protagonist by the Black Afro-woman.

The representation of the Black Afro-woman in the scene featured in figure 24 clearly highlights aggressiveness, violence and assault both in a physical and sexual manner. Yet again, the baring of the teeth and the brusque movements of the Black Afro-woman marks her violent and aggressive nature. The male protagonist continues to bear the role of the "transcendental signified" as his facial expressions provide meaning to the actions being committed by the woman. These actions, judging from the meaning being provided by the male protagonist, are painful and agonising. Historically, as documented by Saidiya Hartman (2016) in her study of the subjugation of the Black slave, the body of the Black Afro-woman is known to endure sexual violence as it is constantly at risk of sexual exploitation for reproductive purposes. Hartman states that "a regime of racialized sexuality that continues to place black bodies at risk for sexual exploitation and abuse, gratuitous violence, incarceration, poverty, premature death, and state-sanctioned murder" (2016: 85), indicating that Black women are the victims of violence and not its perpetrators. Christina Sharpe describes the sexual violence endured by Black women with regards to reproduction as a "negation and disfigurement of maternity" which "turns the womb into a factory reproducing blackness as abjection and turning the birth canal into another domestic middle passage" (2014: 61). Thus, compared to the history of violence and Black women, the representation of the Black woman in Bollywood cinema can be deemed oxymoronic in nature as it conveys a flawed picture. Bollywood cinema exploits the figure of the Black afro woman in order to represent her as aggressive, repulsive and sexually deviant while perpetuating underlying Afro-pessimistic ideologies.

Apart from the representation of the Black Afro-identity as a slave or a sexual deviant, the representation of Black Afro-characters as the clown or "the buffoon" (Cowaloosur, 2016: 79) is equally common in both pre-Bollywood cinema and Bollywood cinema. The Black Afro-characters serve as comic relief while their Blackness and Africanness become the source of comedy through mockery and mimicry. The Item song "Hawa Hawai" from *Mr India* (Kapur, 1987) features the Item girl played by actress Sridevi and she is surrounded by background dancers mimicking Black Afro-Identities as seen in figure 25.

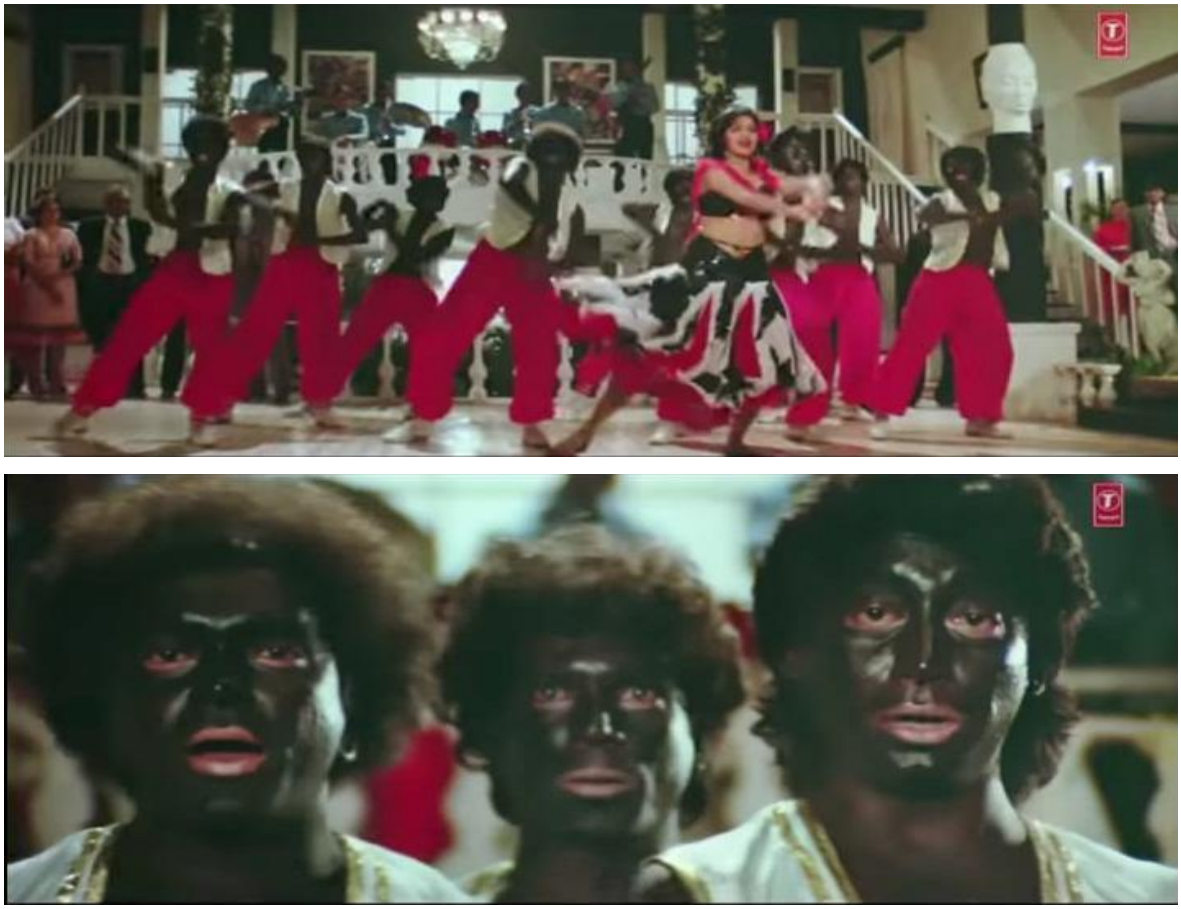


Figure 25- A collage of stills from the Item song "Hawa Hawai" from *Mr India* (Kapur, 1987) featuring the Item girl surrounded by caricatures of Black Afro-identities as background dancers.

The caricaturisation of Black Afro-identities can clearly be seen in figure 25 as the 'black face' has been used to depict racial blackness along with a slight recreation of the Afro hair. The 'blackface' has been done is such a way that it highlights the thickness of the lips, an element often used in caricature of Black Afro-identities. Hall claims:

> Stereotyping of blacks in popular representation was so common that cartoonists, illustrators and caricaturists could summon up a whole gallery of 'black types' with a few, simple, essentialized strokes of the pen. Black people were reduced to the signifiers of their physical difference- thick lips, fuzzy hair, broad face and nose, and so on (1997: 249).

Moreover, the fact that the dancers are dressed in Indian clothing indicates that this scenario is not solely a mimicry of Black Afro-identities but also a caricature. The comedy effect is derived from the buffoonish depiction and equally from the infantilisation of the Black Afro-identity. If the Black Afro character is not represented in a zoomorphic manner as aggressive and sexually violent, he/she is infantilised so as to prevent any socially 'normal' and acceptable representation of the latter. Cowaloosur claims in this regard that "African/Afro-carribeanblack

skin occupies a niche of its own, marking the very extreme limits of acceptance, propriety, and civilisation" (2016: 80). In figure 26, the infantilisation of the Black Afro-identity can be observed from the "mindless cooning" (Hall, 1997: 245) occurring in the scene as the Black background dancers are in a subjugated position in front of the Item girl as she teases and manipulates them while glaring at them with a disciplinary gaze while they fumble around mindlessly and childishly.

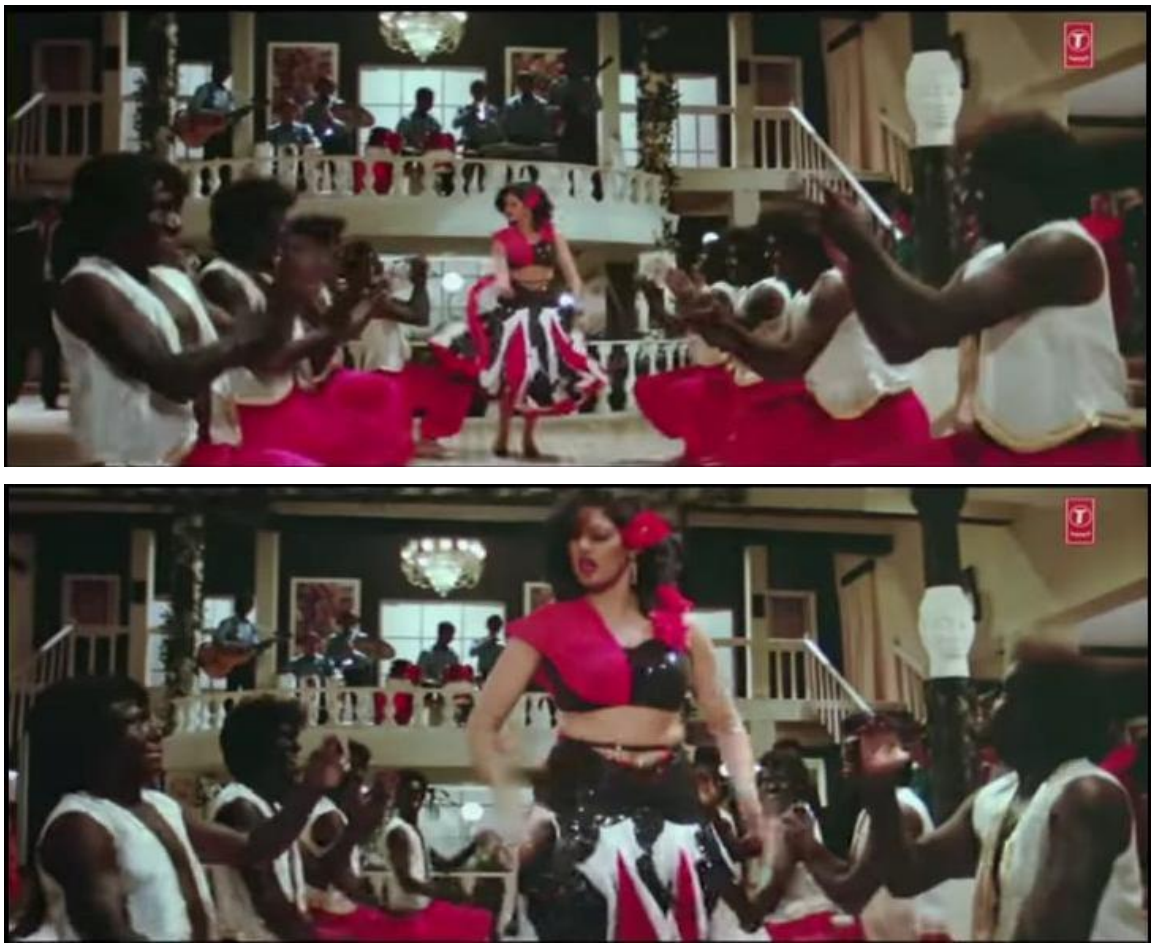


Figure 26- A collage of stills from the item song "Hawa Hawai" (Mr India, featuring the Item girl teasing and manipulation the Black background dancers while the latter applaud childishly and naively in the upper still. In the lower still, the Item girl gazes at the Black dancers in an authoritative and disciplinary manner.

This representation of the Black Afro-man as buffoonish and infantilised was a method to emasculate and undermine the identity of the latter which consequently deprived him of any sort of power. Hall claims that "[i]nfantilization can also be understood as a way of symbolically 'castrating' the black man (i.e., depriving him of his 'masculinity')" (1997: 262). Thus, pre-Bollywood cinema perpetuates Afro-pessimistic ideologies as the infantilisation of

the Black Afro-man was not only a castrative measure but also a disempowering move reducing an adult man to a child, a figure that constantly needs to be disciplined.

Similarly in Bollywood cinema, actor and comedian Johnny Lever is well known for portraying a comic character within a simulated Afro world or for playing a Black Afro comic character. In *Golmaal 3* (Shetty, 2010), Johnny Lever plays the character of Puppy Bhai, a Don who suffers from short term memory loss and who is constantly making a fool out of himself. Figure 27 shows the setting within which Puppy Bhai evolves.

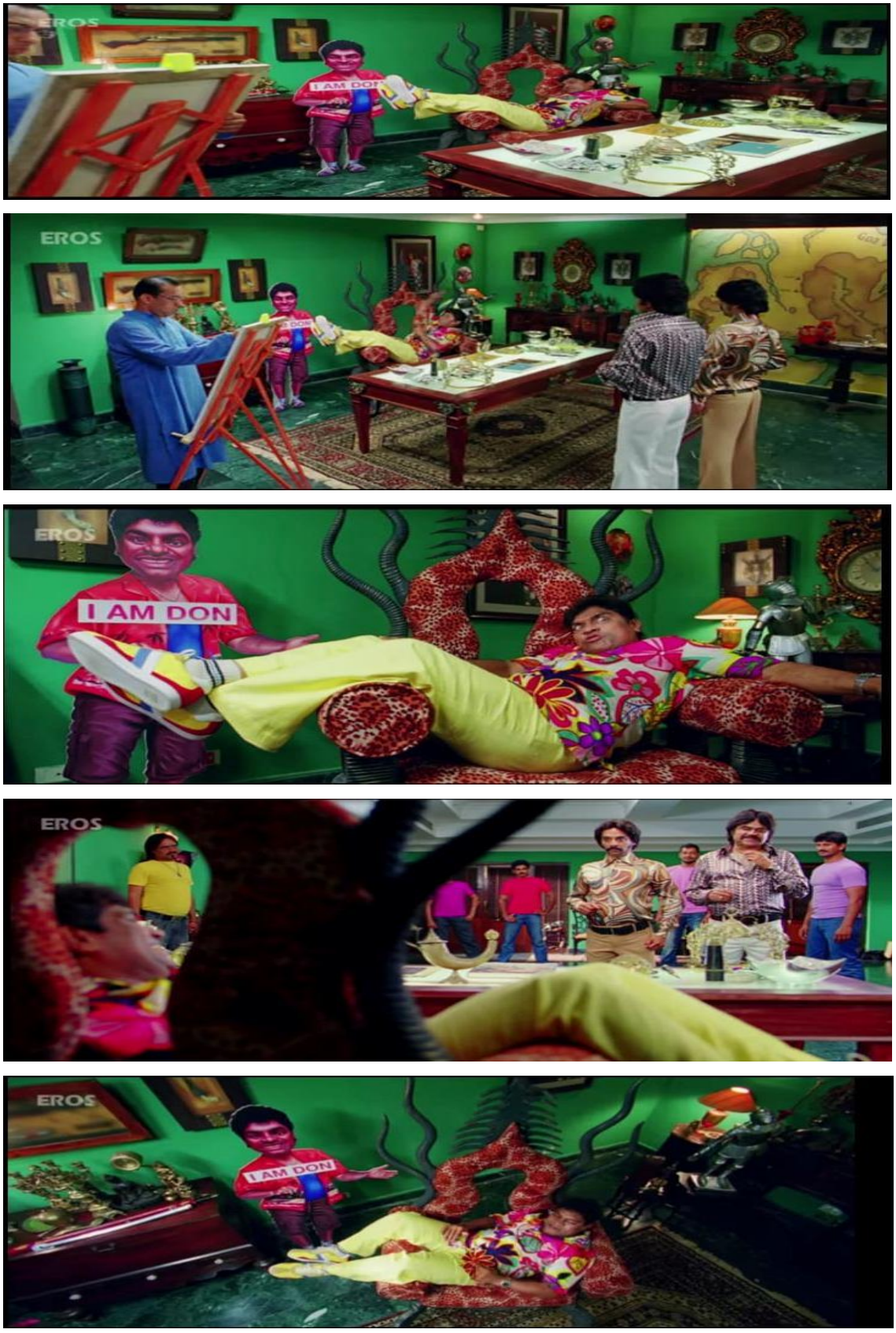


Figure 27- A collage of stills from *Golmaal 3* (Shetty, 2010) featuring the Don Pappi Bhai in his lair.

In figure 27, Pappi Bhai is seen sitting on his throne, a throne covered with a mix of animal prints and framed with four prominent antelope horns and an animal spine skeleton which stand as major signifiers in the scene bearing one common signified which is Africanness. These signifiers are encoded with the signified of Africanness as they are meant to symbolise the rich flora and fauna of Africa, an element that is heavily essentialised across the media as an emblem of Africa and the African nation. The throne is shot from different angles to highlight its significance on its own along with the significance that it attributes to Pappi Bhai in terms of the extent of respect that his character is allowed to command, which is none. This caricaturisation of Africanness along with Pappi Bhai is further enhanced through other minor signifiers such as the colourful floral printed shirt, the map on the wall, the display of hunting guns whereby the signifieds hint at African clothing known for their vibrant colours, the sense of adventure in Africa due to its plethora of scenery landscapes and Africa's abundant wildlife respectively. The signifieds present in the scene make sure to convey the Africanness of the space within which the comic character evolves and which also becomes the cause of the comic effect due to the burlesque aspect of the representation of Africanness despite the fact that the character is not an Afro-character. Similarly, in *Dilwale* (Shetty, 2015), actor Johnny Lever is yet again casted as a comic character named Mani Bhai who is a friend and employee of the male protagonist. In the scene depicted in figure 28, Mani Bhai is disguised as a hooligan and has been instructed to scare away the female protagonist in the car but instead ends up getting beaten by the latter.

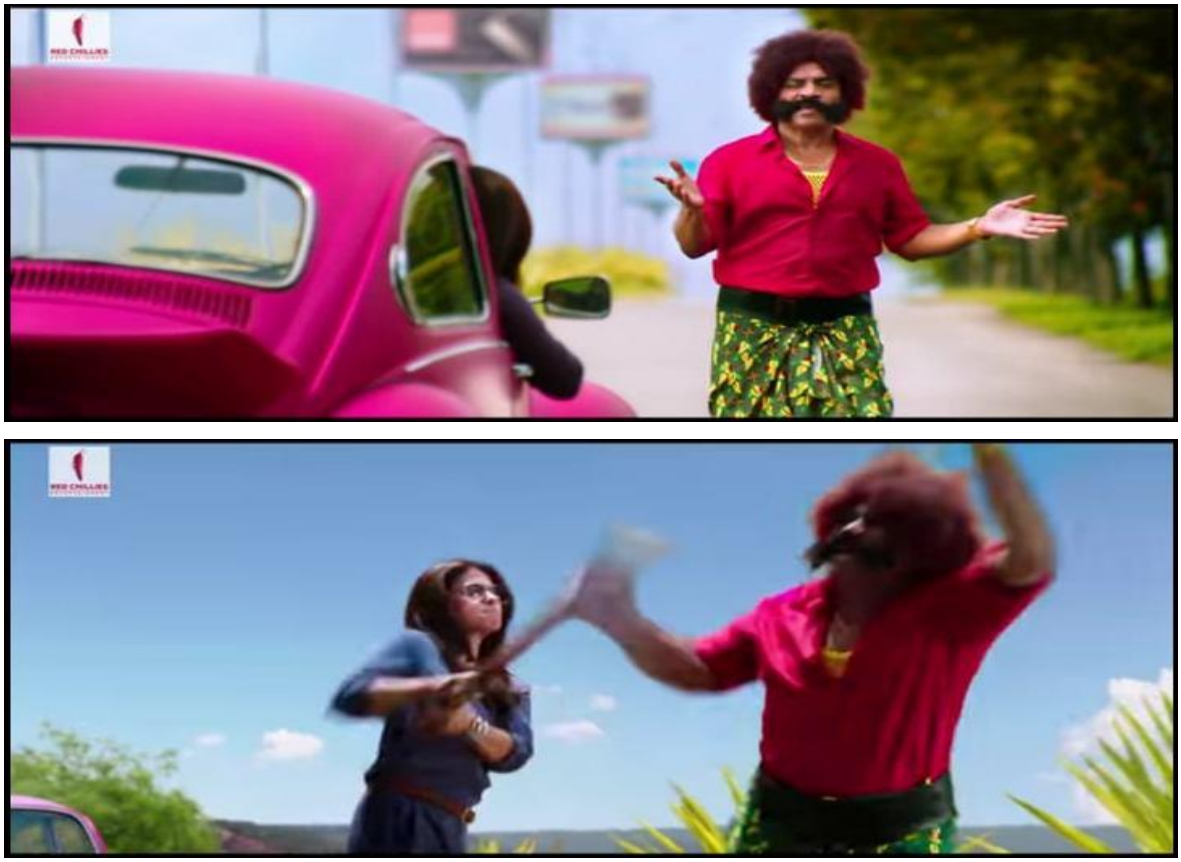


Figure 28- Johnny Lever as Mani Bhai disguised in a semi-Afro costume to scare away the female protagonist as seen in the first still but ends up getting beaten by the latter as seen in the second still from Golmaal 3 (Shetty, 2015)

The whole scene is meant to be comical because of the disguise of Mani Bhai as it consists of the Afro hair indicating an aspect of Africanness which is an indication that he clearly cannot hold any power over the female protagonist. Afro-pessimistic ideologies are furthermore perpetuated as Mani Bhai featured many of the derogatory racial stereotypes associated with Black Africanness as such as "trickery and childishness" which according to Hall, "belonged to blacks as a race, as a species" (1997: 245) along with being "poor, prone to violence and criminality" (Cowaloosur, 2016: 77).

In *Housefull* (Khan, 2010), the Afro-pessimism inherent in Bollywood cinema is portrayed on screen in a more blatant manner. Figure 29 shows a scene where one of the female protagonists pretends that the child in the picture is hers and introduces the child to her own father. As seen in figure 29, the father is shocked and discontent because the child is Black.

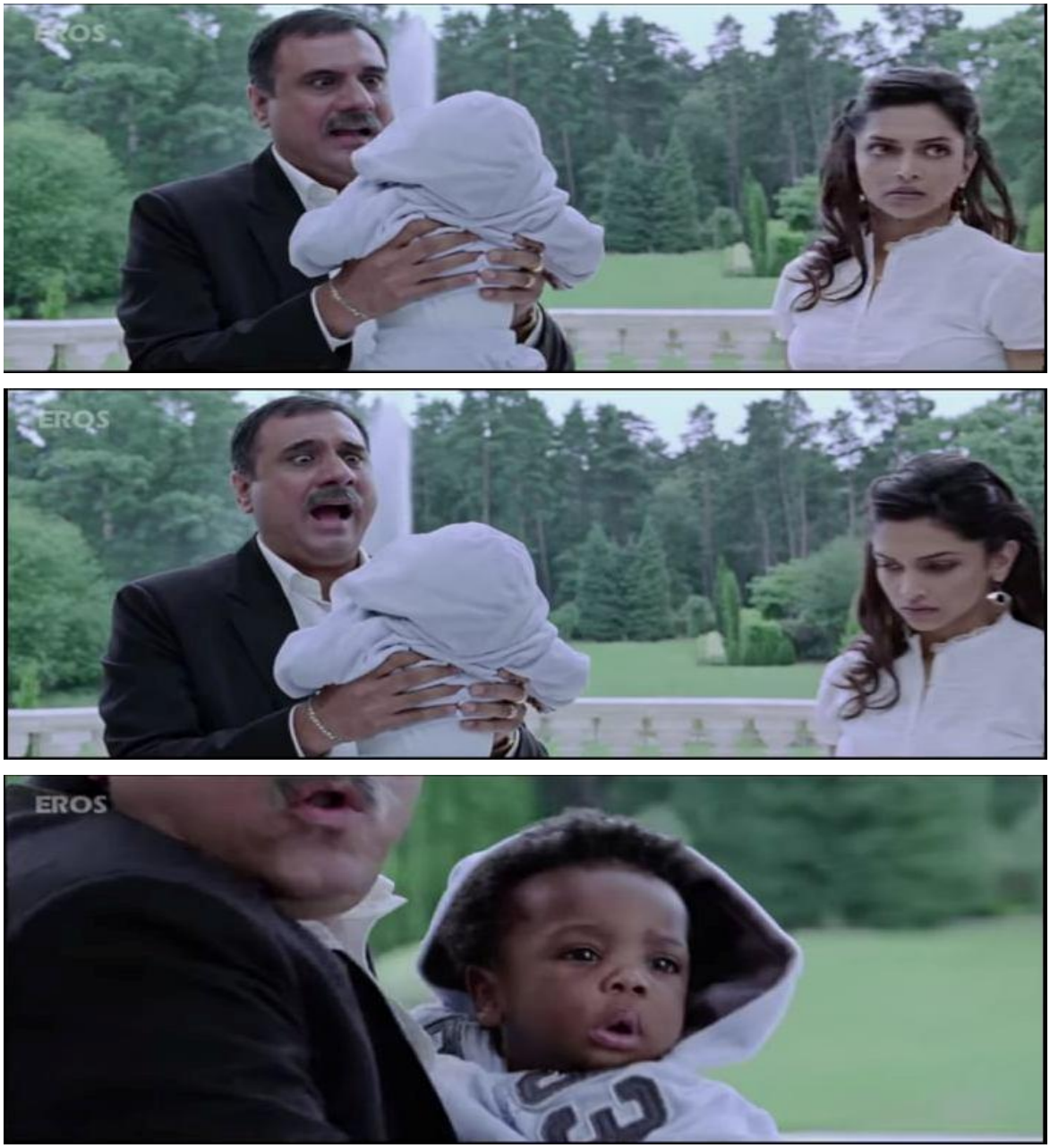


Figure 29- The female protagonist introduces to her own father a child whom she claims is hers and the father is shocked and discontent as he finds out that the child is Black, from *Housefull* (Khan, 2010)

While the father displays clearly his distaste, the female protagonist who is also the daughter hangs her head down in shame. Further aggravating the scene, the female protagonist's husband justifies this incident by claiming that his grandmother was from Africa and as soon as he claims so, he blurts out some gibberish in an attempt to imitate the African language, "Oja Beojaae Ojaa Ojaabe Ojee" (Khan, 2010), so as to convince the female protagonist's father. This scene stands clearly as a mockery of Black Afro identities and of the African languages at large which is executed under the name of comedy and conveys an Afro-pessimistic message which is the undeniable un-acceptance of Afro-identities as equal beings in Hindustani cinema.

This chapter has shown that the Afro-pessimistic dynamics of the representation of race in Hindustani cinema, both pre-Bollywood and Bollywood, is deeply rooted into mimicry and the 'blackface'. While this mimicry is rooted in the colonial history of Indian, influenced by the values of White superiority imposed by the British, it also reveals a play of power whereby the Indians redeem their position of power by mimicking Black Afro-identities in an uncivilised, dehumanising and primitive light. While doing so, Hindustani cinema uncovers social tensions such as racial purity and miscegenation in its attempt of justifying the Afro-pessimistic representations, especially those of the sexually deviant/unattractive/aggressive Afro-character. The infantilization of Black Afro-identities further serves to restore that position of power vis-à-vis the latter. Moreover, the fact that certain representations, such as that in figure 25, mimics racial blackness solely through the blackface suggests that Hindustani cinema's lenses' reduces the essence of the Black afro-identity to his/her skin colour solely. While this is indicative of the link behind Colourism and race in Hindustani cinema, it also suggests that anti-black Racism is an inherent characteristic of Hindustani cinema and of the Indian society that it portrays.

CHAPTER 4

GENTRIFICATION AND AESTHETICIZATION

This chapter posits that the dynamics of Colourism and Racism in Bollywood are influenced by the evolution of the industry into a transnational entity rather than the process of gentrification. This transformation has led to the aestheticized portrayal of Blackness and Afro-identities within Bollywood narratives. Narratives, casting choices, and modes of representation underwent significant changes as Bollywood transitioned into a transnational cinema. This transformation was catalyzed by the growth and maturation of Bollywood as an industry, accompanied by newfound political support that granted it social legitimacy and impacted the quality and content of the films produced.

In this chapter, we delve into this transformation process, focusing on how it affects Colourism and Race. We conduct a stylistic and critical analysis of sequences from key films such as Shree 420 (Kapoor, 1955) and Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayeinge (Chopra, 1995). Additionally, we examine several song and dance sequences like "Beyonce Sharma Jayegi" (KhaaliPeeli, 2020) and "Chammak Challo" (Ra.One, 2011). By doing so, we aim to delineate the evolving trends in Bollywood concerning narratives and content, portraying the shift from a localized industry to a transnational cinematic powerhouse.

4.1 Synopsis.

Shree 420 (Kapoor, 1955)

Raj, a simple young man hailing from a small village, steps on a journey to Bombay in the pursuit of a job. In Bombay, his path crosses that of a shrewd and corrupt business man who lures Raj into his business. Raj becomes a trickster who cheats people for money. Eventually, Raj realises the nature of his acts and decides to rectify the wrongs he has committed.

DilwaleDulhaniya Le Jayeinge (Chopra, 1995)

Raj and Simran are both Indians who have been raised in London. They cross paths during a train journey and fall in love with each other. However, Simran’s father Baldev is adamant over the fact that Simran should marry an Indian as Simran finds out that she has been engaged in her childhood to Kuldeep back in India. Baldev takes his family back to India for Simran’s

wedding and Raj sets on a trip to India as well to earn the trust of Baldev and to be one who marries Simran. After a series of trials and tribulations, Raj ends up marrying Simran.

Purab Aur Paschim (Kumar, 1970)

Bharat is the son of martyred freedom fighter during the British rule in India who goes to Britain for his studies. His interactions with the Indian diaspora living in Britain leads him to realise that the Indian diaspora looks down upon India and Indians. As he decides to reshape their views about India and Indians, he falls in love with Preethi, a blonde of Indian origin. Preethi undergoes a cultural shock during her visit to India with Bharat. Bharat's and Preethi's respective worlds come clashing into each other creating a disparity between the Eastern and Western lifestyles.

Singh is Kinng(Bazmee, 2008)

Happy Singh sets on a trip to Australia to find Lucky Singh and to bring his back to Punjab, their homeland. In Australia, he finds out that Lucky Singh is an underworld don. After an accident, Lucky gets paralysed and Happy ends up taking his place as the underworld don.

Ra.One(Sinha, 2011)

Shekhar is a game programmer and he creates an invincible character named Ra.One to impress his employer and his son. Ra.one becomes so powerful that he accesses the real world and kills Shekhar. The game's hero G.One, also Shekhar's lookalike, then makes his appearance and impersonates Shekhar while he sets on a mission to defeat Ra.One.

Student of the Year 2 (Malhotra, 2019)

Rohan joins St Teresa's College in the hope of reuniting with his childhood sweetheart Mridula. However, Rohan soon discovers that Mridula has changed and is not dating Manav. Rohan takes part in a dance competition and partners with Manav's sister Shreya. While Shreya falls in love with Rohan, Mridula comes back to the later after she realises that Manav is not the one for her.Mridula ends up dating Rohan while Shreya is left heart broken.

4.2 Bollywood: A Transnational Cinema.

Bollywood cinema, previously known as Bombay cinema, is known to be "the most salient bearer of nation-ness and national identity in India" (Sen, 2020: 147) which led to its superiority over other regional cinemas and eventually to its identity as the national cinema in

the 1900s.With the rise of satellite and cable television, Bollywood invaded the channels with its entertainment which attracted not only the local audiences but also the diasporic ones. Mazumdar states that:

> Film production started in India almost simultaneously with other filmmaking countries, beginning in 1896. In the years after independence, Indian cinema circulated outside the country to audiences in Russia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. In the more recent past, Indian diasporas in different parts of the world have ensured a continuing audience for Indian cinema (2007: xii).

Consequently, Bollywood cinema grew potentially from a national cinema to a transnational one as "Hindi cinema went aggressively global; an increasing number of primarily big budget Hindi films began to be screened for international audiences" (Sen, 2010: 147-148). According to Desai:

> Transnational cinema has been discussed primarily as some form of transcendence of the national in relation to the domain of the global. In scholarship, the term transnational, like diaspora, is used both empirically and conceptually. In the empirical or descriptive mode, the transnationalism of film and media is seen as a consequence of globalization, late capitalism and neoliberalism; consequently, descriptive scholarship on transnational cinema usually emphasizes the complicity of global telecommunications and media with late capitalism. In the conceptual or prescriptive mode, transnational cinema is articulated in its ideal state as an oppositional and hybrid cinema (2013: 208).

In 1900's, Hindustani cinema experienced a rise in capitalism as it became an official industry and received political support from the BJP (Bharatya Janata Party) which gave rise to "New Wave films" (Bhaskar, 2013). According to Desai (2013), the "New Wave films" differed from mainstream films in terms of its portrayal of "contemporary Indian reality" focusing on the small towns and villages "with themes like in-built oppressive structures of society, the ingrained violence of gender and caste relations, or the struggle with repressive patriarchal norms were to others" (Bhaskar, 2013: 20). Films such as *Shree 420* (Kapoor, 1955) is known to portray a facet of poverty that has not been censored or aestheticised. The film narrates the story of Raj, a young man hailing from a small village, who travels to Bombay in the pursuit of a job. He is soon introduced to a dishonest business man who tempts him into making easy money. He gives in to temptation and becomes a trickster by cheating people to make money. Raj becomes wealthy at the cost of the poor people who he has cheated along with his dishonest associate. The song sequence entitled "Mera Joota Hain Japani" from *Shree 420* (Kapoor, 1955) is a meticulous portrayal of poverty and wealth. Figure 30 is a collage of stills showing the demarcation between the poor and the wealthy.

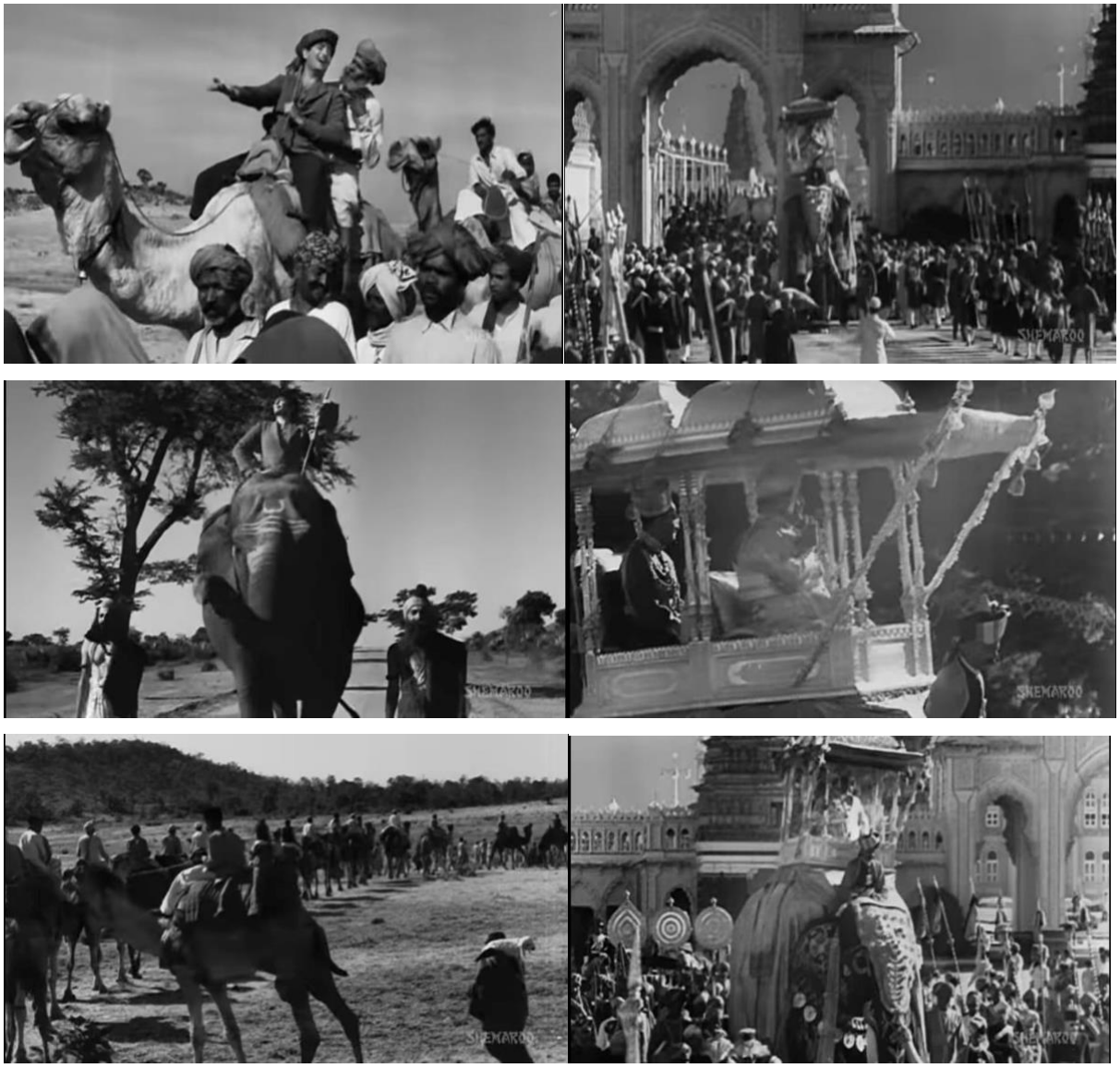


Figure 30- A collage of stills from *Shree 420* (Kapoor, 1955) showing the clear demarcation between the poor on the left hand side and the wealthy on the right hand side.

During the song sequence of "Mera Joota Hain Japani" (*Shree 420*, 1955), Kapoor (1955) features the simple journey of Raj, from his small village to Mumbai, and in parallel the lavish journey of a King. Raj is seen travelling in utmost simplicity with barely any baggage or comfort. On the other hand, the lavish and overly comfortable journey of a King is depicted which serves as contrast to Raj's simplicity to highlight the condition of the poor. This comparison is further visible in figure 31 where the disparity between life in the village is compared to life in the city of Bombay. A meticulous shot involving both lifestyles marks this comparison as the purpose of this song sequence. Further highlighting this focus on poverty, Raj comes across a beggar on the streets of Bombay who claims that "[t]his is Bombay my

brother, here buildings are built and people's hearts are made of stones, only one God is worshipped and that God is money" (Kapoor, 1955).

Figure 31- A shot from "Mera Joota Hain Japani" (Kapoor, 1955) featuring the rural life of the village merged with the urban life of the city.

Kapoor's authenticity in his representation of Indian poverty was renowned across Indian cinema and brought value to Hindi cinema on a national level (Nanda, 2017[2002]). Hindi cinema further adopted the title of Indian cinema by valorising nationalist discourses in its narratives which is present in the lyrics of the song "Mera Joota Hain Japani" (*Shree 420*, 1955). Raj sings:

Merajoota hain Japani

My shoes are from Japan

Yeh patloon Inglistaani

These pants are from England

Sar pe laal topi Russi

The red hat on top of my head is from Russia

Phirbhidil hain Hindustani

However, my heart is Indian.

This song sung by Raj conveys a nationalist message that appeals not only to the selective bourgeois audience but to the Indian population as a whole, targeting especially the common man. Significantly, films such as *Shree 420* (Kapoor, 1955) form part of "the New Wave films" (Bhaskar, 2013) which led to the eventual remodelling of Hindi cinema. Consequently,

Bombay cinema/Hindi cinema grew from regional cinema into national cinema to become Hindustani (Indian) cinema. Mehta andPandharipande claim that "[t]he Indian diaspora has been growing in leaps and bounds over the last several decades, however, it only became a viable target audience for the Bombay industry starting in the 1990s" (2010: 147-148). The 1990s also consists of the birth of Bollywood cinema which is often considered to be marked by the film *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayeinge* (Chopra, 1995). Chopra's *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayeinge* (1995) displays a significant change of narrative codes in terms of the cinematic representation of the West. Otherwise represented as a space of immorality wherein evolves the figure of the villain and the Item girl as was the case in *Purab Aur Paschim* (Kumar, 1970), the West is represented in *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayeinge* (Chopra, 1995) as the space in which the hero and the heroine grew up. Chopra (1995) presents the West as a space which accommodates Indian values with a touch of westernisation. Baldev and his wife inculcate traditional Indian values to their daughters Simran and Rajeshwari and at the same time, allow them to grow within their western environment which is reflected through Simran's circle of friends and her western style of clothing.

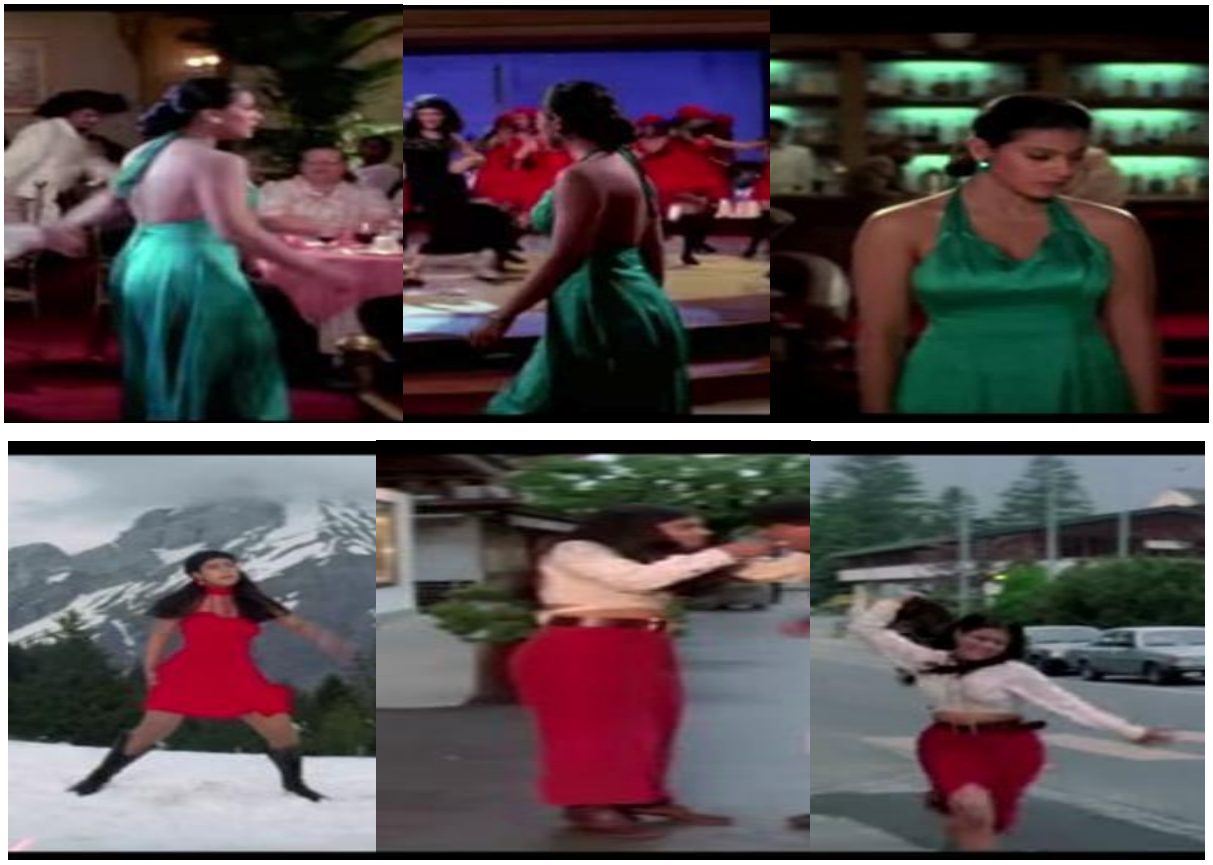


Figure 32- A collage of stills from *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayeinge* (Chopra, 1995) featuring Simran's westernised avatar in Europe.

As seen in Figure 32, the dynamics of representing the West has changed as the heroine is now seen in the light of a semi-western character through her western clothing style, symbolical of her growth in London. The west is no longer restricted to the representation of the Item girl, a figure of decadence and immorality. The heroine has now transgressed the stereotypical traditional Indian girl image and has adopted a hybrid image where she can still maintain the Indianness of her character despite her evolution as a westernised character within a western space. This shift within the dynamics of representing the West can be considered as a narrative structure amendment which has been implemented to attract and accommodate a diasporic audience living in western or western-centric geographical spaces. In the last decade, the medium of releasing films have also changed from only the local cinema halls to streaming platforms such as Netflix, Hotstar, Voot, ALTBalaji and Amazon Prime Video, among others, through which a wider audience is targeted and successfully reached. Bollywood, thus, gained its transnational identity "because of its modes of production, circulation and consumption; co-production and financing networks; thematic concerns and content; and its many platforms and technologies" (Desai 2013: 208) through its diasporic cinema as "[d]iasporic films are identified with Bollywood not only as they frequently have transnational modes of production, distribution and circulation, but also because Bollywood itself is seen to be thematically diasporic-centric" (Desai 2013: 208).

However, this change in the discourse of the West in Bollywood is merely a generated simulacrum seeking to engulf the audience with some semblance of change and evolution. The superficiality of this change is apparent in *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayeinge* (Chopra, 1995) itself in the second half of the film whereby Simran changes drastically from her westernised avatar to a traditional Indian one upon her return to India for the purpose of marriage. The chastity and marriage-ability of Simran are extensively displayed in India as a means to clear any doubt about it that may have been raised when she was in her westernised avatar. Figure 33 shows a traditionally revamped Simran in India on the verge of getting married.

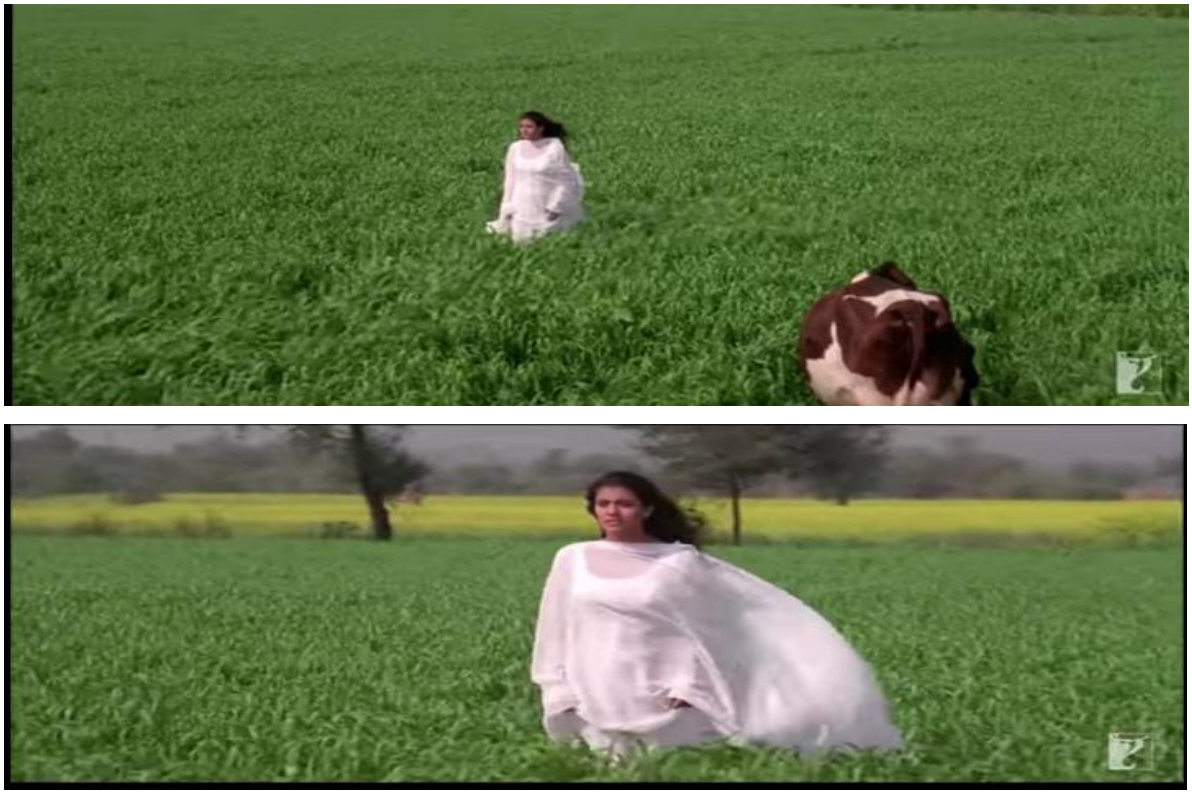


Figure 33- Simran, dressed in a *salwaar kameez*, a traditional Indian attire, standing in a field of crops in a village in India from *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayeinge* (Chopra, 1995).

The traditional Indian avatar of Simran is articulated through her *salwaar kameez* and is further highlighted by the setting within which she stands, a traditional rural Indian setting surrounded by crops and cattle. The latters are signifiers conveying the signifieds of Indianness defining this particular space. This is indicative of the superficiality of this change in the discourse of the West in Bollywood cinema.

Equally part of this "diasporic-centric" change mentioned by Desai (2013) is the discourse of the Colour line whereby skin colour is no longer a marker of character and morality. Evidently, the purpose behind this change as well is to lure in the diasporic audiences into more relatable and inclusive cinematic discourses with regards to skin colour, a factor that otherwise served the purpose of alienating and marginalising. Films like *Super 30* (Bahl, 2019) and *Udta Punjab* (2016) do rephrase the discourse of Colourism in Bollywood cinema as seen in chapter 1 but the purpose behind is purely to transcend national borders and to access a wider transnational audience to increase viewership. The superficiality of this change can be seen in the aestheticization of the Colour line in the representation of darkness of skin. Actors such as Hrithik Roshan and Alia Bhatt, constants on the list of the most handsome man and most beautiful woman in the world according to Forbes, have been casted in *Super 30* (Bahl, 2019)

and *Udta Punjab* (2016) respectively to play the roles of darker-skinned Indians instead of naturally darker-skinned Indian actors who would undoubtedly carry a more authentic physical portrait of those characters. As for the discourse of blackness, it has remained unchanged in terms of representation as, as seen in chapter 2, the afro-pessimistic and racist representations of Afro-identities prevail under the theme of comedy or antagonism. The only few exceptions also fall under the dynamics of aestheticization whereby the Afro-identity represented is very often of a famous Afro-American with an established fandom such as Snoop Dogg in "Singh is Kinng" from *Singh is Kinng* (Bazmee, 2008), Akon in the song and dance sequence entitled "Criminal" from *Ra.One* (Sinha, 2011) and Will Smith in "Jawaani" from *Student of the Year 2* (Johar, 2019)

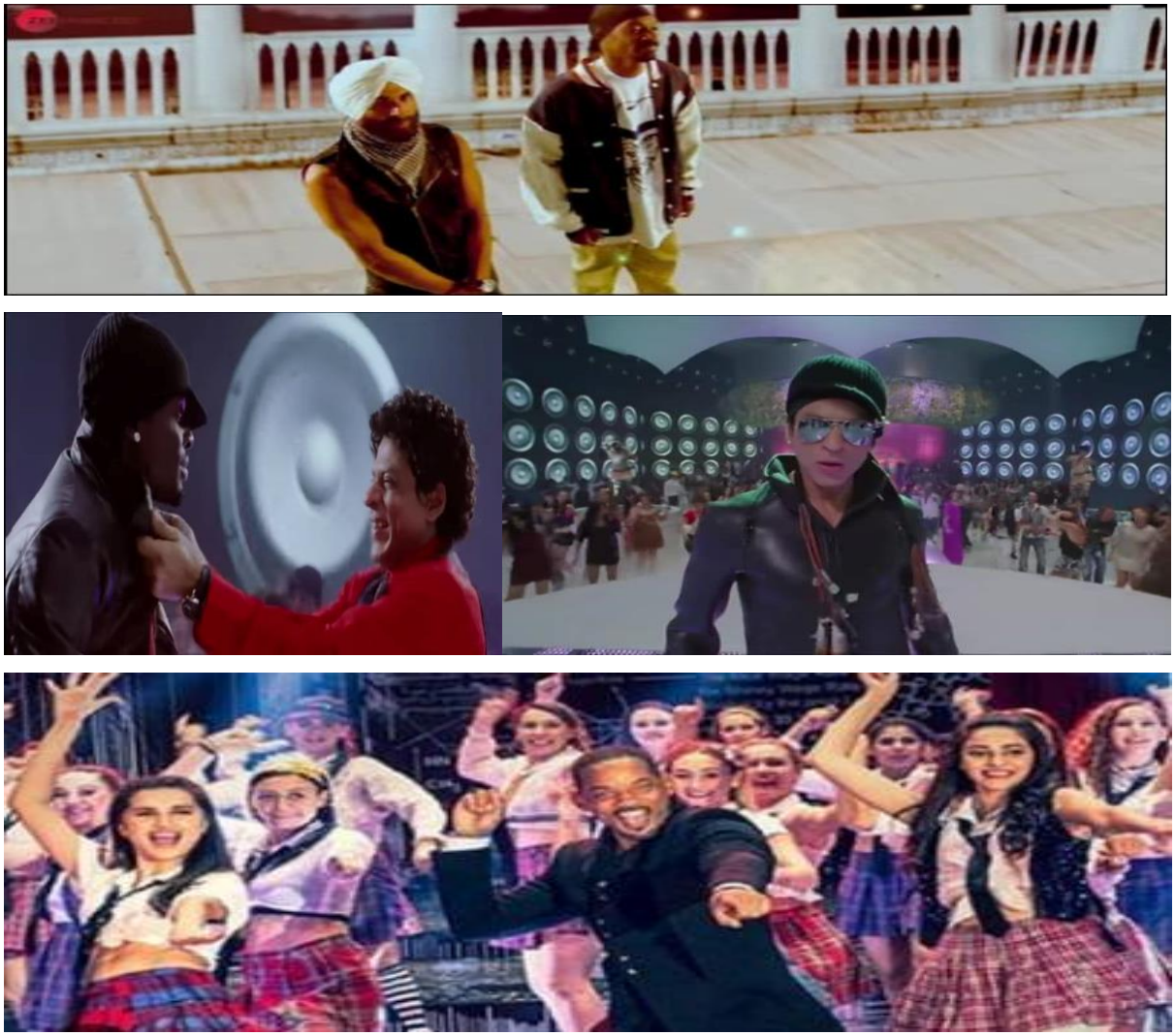


Figure 34- The upper still shows Snoop Dogg with Akshay Kumar in "Singh is Kinng" from *Singh is Kinng* (Bazmee, 2008) while on the middle left hand side, a still of Akon featuring in "Criminal" from *Ra.One* (Sinha, 2011) with Shah Rukh Khan and on the middle right hand side, a still of Shah Rukh Khan eventually impersonating Akon. The bottom still shows Will Smith's guest appearance in "Jawaani" from *Student of the Year 2* (Johar, 2019).

The guest appearances of Akon and Will Smith in *Ra.One* (Sinha, 2011) and *Student of the Year 2* (Johar, 2019) respectively occur in aestheticised spaces of the song and dance sequences which they contribute to with their Hollywood glamour. These scenes are indicative of the acceptance and inclusivity being conveyed towards Afro-identities, marking a change in the representation of Afro-identities in Hindustani cinema, to such an extent that the film hero played by Shah Rukh Khan impersonates Akon to become a symbol of glamour and sex appeal in "Criminal" (Sinha, 2011). These scenes suggest the desire for the co-existence of Indians and these aestheticised Afro-identities. However, while these guest appearances could be considered as an evolutionary move of Bollywood cinema, a move that enables the co-

existence of Hollywood and Bollywood to some extent, there are songs such as “Beyonce Sharma Jayegi” from the *Khaali Peeli* (Khan, 2020) which compromises this attempt of Bollywood to co-exist with Hollywood. The lyrics of “Beyonce Sharma Jayegi” (Khan, 2020) reveal a racist agenda as it states “O Tujhe Dekh Ke Goriya, Beyonce Sharma Jayegi” which is translated as “seeing you my fair skinned lady, Beyonce will be ashamed”. The songs refers to Beyonce’s skin colour in a derogatory manner as she clearly states that Beyonce, the Afro-American celebrity, would be ashamed of the darkness of her skin compared to the fair skin of the actress featured in “Beyonce Sharma Jayegi” (Khan, 2020). After having been called out by the audience for its glorification of fair skin and the denigration of Beyonce’s darker skin, the film director Maqbool Khan stated in the *Economic Times* on September 26 2020, that the “aim behind the track was to showcase the pop diva [Beyonce] as an icon”. Despite his attempt to justify the song’s lyrics, Khan has been forced to change it to “Duniya Sharma Jayegi” (Khan, 2020), translated as “the world will be ashamed”, to put an end to the controversy generated by the previous lyrics.

Mazumdar (2007: xvii) claims that “today, a vast and growing urban filmgoing public in India supports film culture and circulation. India has for many years been the world’s largest film-producing country, with an output in several different languages” which indicates that Bollywood cinema has not radically changed for transnational purposes but has instead negotiated its way in between the local and transnational audiences. Consequently, these negotiations result in superficial and aestheticised representations embedded within semantically ambiguous narratives and catering to the likes of the local and the transnational both.

This chapter has argued that Bollywood cinema has undergone a gentrification process which has led to the aestheticisation of the representation of Blackness and Afro-identities. From its early days of "parallel cinema," which addressed social issues, Bollywood has evolved into a big commercial enterprise primarily focused on producing films for entertainment purposes. The growing legislative backing for the business led to more cultural acceptance, allowing filmmakers to explore with a broad range of genres, methods, and forms of representation. The exclusion of Colourism and Racism into the aesthetic and narrative frames of Bollywood films was one of the major shifts that occurred during this time period for the purpose of transnational negotiations however this chapter has shown this shift was solely superficial. In Bollywood cinema, the emphasis shifted to a more escapist, inclusive and aestheticised content, focussing on romance, melodrama and song-and-dance sequences which masked any other problematic

agendas at play. As a result, Bollywood cinema marked its identity as a transnational cinema, targeting diasporic and global. While there are signs of change with the rise of more socially-conscious films, the industry's role in perpetuating negative stereotypes and discriminatory practices pertaining to the representation of Black Afro-identities cannot be undersestimated.

CONCLUSION

One of the most significant subjects discussed in this research paper, and in Chapter 1, is Colourism. The chapter claimed that Colourism has its origins in India's colonial period, when British conquerors imposed racial hierarchies and spread the belief that lighter skin was more desirable. As a result, Hindustani cinema perpetuates those beliefs and lighter-skinned actors are cast as more attractive, desirable, and successful, whereas darker-skinned actors are portrayed as less beautiful, desirable, and successful. This strengthens Eurocentric beauty standards while maintaining structural inequities.

This chapter also covered Afro-pessimism, which emphasises the long-term repercussions of imperialism, colonialism, and enslavement on Africans. Blackness, according to Afro-pessimism, is intrinsically linked to slavery, undermining the liberal concept of colourblindness. This concept is frequently used in Bollywood films to explain Colourism, because lighter-skinned actors are frequently cast in key roles, demonstrating the systemic ways in which Racism continues to afflict people of colour. Moreover, this chapter investigated mimicry and its relationship to Colonialism and Racism. It highlighted how power imbalances, Racism, and cultural appropriation may be maintained through imitation. It also emphasised the need of understanding the historical and social contexts in which these processes develop in order to address them effectively. Lastly, the inclusion of Bollywood films in these chapters helped comprehend Racism, Colourism, and cultural appropriation in film. Bollywood films reflect India's cultural, historical, and political landscapes while also influencing worldwide markets. Additionally, it is clear that the portrayal of Colourism and Racism in the film industry is a complex issue that had to be addressed in order to promote diversity and inclusivity in cinema. Afro-pessimism and mimicry illustrate the systemic ways in which Racism still affects people of colour, emphasizing the significance of keeping cognizant of these concerns.

Through a gendered comparison of pre-Bollywood cinema and Bollywood cinema, Chapter 2 analyses the topic of Colourism in Bollywood and investigates casting practices and their deeper implications. The discourse of Colourism is dispersed in substantial but varied ways throughout the hero and heroine's tales. Gender is important in the analysis because the discourse of Colourism varies by gender. The chapter examined directors' casting choices to identify their attitudes about the portrayal of race, attractiveness, and cinematographic dogmas. The issue of gendered Colourism in pre-Bollywood Hindustani film is also addressed. In pre-Bollywood cinema, the male and female protagonists were typecast because of their pale skin,

which established a cliché in Hindustani cinema. To distinguish the cis-male and cis-female characters from the rest of the characters, casting patterns for villains or supporting characters were based on the other end of the colour line. In pre-Bollywood cinema, the principal male character was a cis-male whose story focused largely on the hero/villain dichotomy, with the villain presented as an Other who was either religiously/culturally and morally emasculated or physically emasculated. The colour line was the only visual distinction between hero and evil. I present instances of pre-Bollywood film directors' typecasting of villains, such as Pran Sikand, Ajit Khan, and Sadashiv Amrapurkar, and map out the relationship between Colourism and actor typecasting through a comparative interpretation of the hero/villain dichotomy. This chapter also examined the portrayal of gender and colourism in pre-Bollywood Hindustani films, notably in terms of the female protagonist. Female characters are usually restricted to domestic obligations and are portrayed as pious and chaste, whereas vamps are morally flawed and sexually aggressive. The use of skin colour as a marker of vice and virtue is also investigated, with light skin representing virtue and dark skin representing vice. Moreover, the concept of "Item girls" is formed and are characterised as attractive and westernized, generally with pale complexions. The contrast between these Item girls and darker-skinned "Ghulams" shows both the fetishization of pale skin in the context of the Item song highlighting the importance of skin colour.

In Chapter 3, the representation of race in Bollywood films and the Afro-pessimism that underpins the portrayal of Afro-identities in these films are explored. The chapter analysed the portrayal of Blackness in Bollywood cinema, which is mostly based on mimicry. In Bollywood movies, as illustrated in the chapter, the most common signifiers used for mimicry are Afro hair, coloured clothing, and the 'black face,' all of which are regarded as indicators of Africanness. These representations further highlight the underlying Afro-pessimistic ideologies perpetuated by Bollywood cinema when the Afro-identity is reduced to zoomorphic depictions. The chapter also examined the portrayal of Black Afro-characters in Bollywood cinema as sexually immoral and violent characters created with an Afro-pessimistic agenda which reinforces negative preconceptions and contributes to the oppression and marginalisation of Black Afro-identities. These representations further highlight the underlying Afro-pessimistic ideologies perpetuated by Bollywood cinema when the Afro-identity is reduced to zoomorphic depictions.

Chapter 4 has explored the changes of the dynamics of Colourism and Racism in Bollywood cinema brought about by the process of gentrification, resulting in shifts in storylines, casting

patterns, and representation. It further examined the Bollywood film, which started in India and has evolved from a national to a global cinema, garnering both local and diasporic viewers as satellite and cable television had increased in popularity. It explains how the portrayal of poverty and authenticity in Indian cinema, as seen in films such as *Shree 420* (Kapoor, 1955), added value to Hindi cinema on a national level, and it emphasised the use of nationalist discourses in Bollywood films, such as the lyrics of the song "Mera Joota Hain Japani" from *Shree 420* (Kapoor, 1955), which conveys a nationalist message that appeals to the Indian population as a whole. The chapter also highlighted the advent of "New Wave films" in the 1900s, which distinguished themselves from mainstream films by depicting modern Indian realities and focusing on small towns and villages. Additionally, the chapter examined the portrayal of Afro-identities in Bollywood cinema and how it has changed through time. It referred to Akon's and Will Smith's cameo appearances in *Ra.One* (Sinha, 2011) and *Student of the Year 2* (Johar, 2019) as instances of Bollywood's desire to co-exist with Hollywood and demonstrate an inclusion towards Afro-identities. It does, however, recognise the presence of songs such as "Beyonce Sharma Jayegi" from *Khaali Peeli* (Khan, 2020) that undermine this effort by propagating a racist ideology and celebrating light skin. It argues that rather than undergoing radical changes for transnational purposes, Bollywood cinema has negotiated its way between local and transnational audiences, resulting in superficial and aestheticized representations embedded within semantically ambiguous narratives that cater to both local and transnational audiences. Ultimately, the passage offers an incisive examination of the depiction of Afro-identities in Bollywood cinema, as well as how it reflects the evolving dynamics of Indian culture and its interaction with the rest of the globe.

Overall, this research paper has shown that Hindustani cinema, both pre-Bollywood and Bollywood, constructs the discourse of Colourism in a manner that defines the colour line as a marker of vice and virtue. It has shown, through a multiplicity of sequences from Hindi films, the use of the colour line and the disparate gendered discourses it dictates. Colourism dwells in the heart of Hindustani cinema and the Afro-pessimistic agenda it consists of is not necessarily visible at all times as it is meticulously concealed under the themes of antagonism and comedy. The gentrification of Hindustani cinema for the purpose of transnational negotiations hassled to the aestheticization of the otherwise derogatory representations of the colour line. However, the aestheticization of darkness and blackness of skin is only a reminder of the hegemony of White skin. The colour line is engraved within the foundations of Hindustani cinema and it can only be masked, not changed.

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