

Impact of Bollywood in the Evolution of Visual Culture in India

Dr. Pragya Pathak¹, Dr. Ayon Sarkar²

Assistant Professor, PID, Parul University, Vadodara, Gujarat, India

Mail: [pragyapathak017\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:pragyapathak017[at]gmail.com)

Contact: 9667251505

²Professor, School of Communication, MITID, Indore, Avantika University

Mail: [sarkar.ayon\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:sarkar.ayon[at]gmail.com)

Contact: 8334810900

Abstract: *This paper deals with connection between Bollywood and visual culture of India with special reference to modern design aesthetics and lifestyle. However, Bollywood always influenced the mass of any class, in terms of body and fashion styling. This has been a very tangible phenomenon since the film industry came in existence, but in contemporary era, especially upper middle class is frequently adopting the Bollywood culture in wholistic manner. Not merely fashion trends and styles, but interior, architecture, Products endorsed by popular stars, electronic accessories, automobiles, tourism (Vacations and Wedding destinations etc). This whole range in a Bollywood cinema, is creating a mesmerizing impact on a viewer. Cultural globalization, transitional junctures and transforming society onwards, have been gradually imbibing these elements consciously or unconsciously for long time. Paper discusses all these aspects of visual communication, influenced by the Bollywood trends. Paper also describes the role of modern designs and newly emerging aesthetics in a section of the upper middle Indian society.*

Keywords: Visual communication, Visual Culture, Visual Style, Indian Cinema, Indian Television, Indian Advertising, fashion trends, modern wedding cultural, interior and architecture, elite culture, Bollywood culture.

1. Objectives

- 1) To study the visual - culture and communication as a global term
- 2) To study the ancient roots of visual culture in India
- 3) To analyse the impact of Bollywood on Indian visual culture
- 4) To find out the influence of Bollywood on modern design aesthetics
- 5) To study the impact and adoption of Bollywood influence by the upper middle class and middle - class societies of India

2. Methodology

Paper is mainly written in qualitative viewpoint based on secondary data collection. Study sources are obtained from various books, research papers, news articles, web sites etc.

3. Review Literature

3.1 Visual culture study as global perspective

Visual culture is the manifestation of culture via images. Cultural studies, art history, critical theory, philosophy, media studies, Deaf Studies¹ and anthropology are just a few of the academic disciplines that have looked at this issue. Visual culture studies in the United States are related to or parallel the area of "image studies" in Germany. Both ideas are not entirely new, as they are reformulations of themes in photography and film theory introduced in the 1920s and 1930s by authors such as Béla Balázs, László Moholy - Nagy, Siegfried Kracauer, and Walter Benjamin.²

3.2 From text to pictorial transition

WJT Mitchell's book on the "*Pictorial Turn*" had a significant impact on the formation of Visual Studies. Mitchell asserted that, similar to the linguistic revolution, we were facing a profound paradigm shift in science and society that was transforming pictures, rather than verbal words, into paradigmatic vectors of our interaction with the world. In the German - speaking setting, Gottfried Boehm made similar statements about an "*iconic turn*"³ as did Marshall McLuhan regarding television in terms of generating an "*intensely visual culture*."⁴

3.3 Visualism

The word "Visualism" was coined by the German anthropologist Johannes Fabian in order to challenge the dominant importance of vision in scientific discourse, as expressed by terminology such as observation. He cites an under - theorized approach to the use of visual representation that leads to a corpuscular view of knowledge and information that leads to their atomization.⁵

3.4 Journey of Indian Visual Culture from ancient era to pre – cinema

Popular Indian visual culture has its roots in nature and the spirituality as the forms of various art and craft traditions, as seen in the cave paintings at Ajanta, the sculptures at Ellora and Khajuraho, and the architectural styles of hundreds of temples, mosques, churches, and other types of shrines and pilgrim centers throughout the country.

Furthermore, the diverse kinds of dance, Theatre, and music, both classical and folk, have contributed to the flourishing of

national, regional, and local visual cultures. There has always been a striving in this visual culture for “the sense of the beautiful” (‘Ramaniya’ in Sanskrit), which, according to Dasgupta, (1960, 1), is the consequence of a devotee’s concentration (or ‘Dhyan’) and manifests as “rasa” (joy, pleasure). “Beautiful” for 17th - century Indian aesthetes like Jagannatha was that which generated a distinct sensation of pleasure, “an emotional thrill, ” or “a particular type of harmony” (Dasgupta 1960, 2). The Indian concept of visual representation differs greatly from the Greek ideal. (Dasgupta 1960, 20)

This explains why there are so many pictures of deities in our culture, even if they appear to be “mostly human figures. ” Durga, for example, has 10 hands; Siva and Brahma have five faces; and Ganesh has the face and trunk of an elephant. This approach to artistic representation affected the creation of popular visual culture in technical media such as the press, photography, film, television, recorded music, and, subsequently, digital media such as video, social media, and telecommunication media.

Prior to the emergence of film in India, shadow puppetry and the folk technique of pat painting revealed the ability to create the appearance of moving pictures. Pat (or scroll) painting, for example, involves painting a sequence of pictures on a long scroll while the chitrakathi, or painter - cum - narrator, recites a narrative alongside (Chabria 1994, 3). Their repertory included proverbs, folk stories, and mythological depictions. The pabujaki par (religious scroll paintings) of Rajasthan are a variant on this, in which the full narrative of a traditional heroic epic is painted on a wide screen. During the nocturnal it is lit in segments and the stories are narrated for several hours over a period of days (Chabria 1994, 3).

When photography arrived in India in 1840, a year after it was introduced in the West, it was employed for portraits and “documentary” type views (Chabria 1994, 3). The photographers used natural visual norms in both mediums. Thus, faces were immediately painted on the pictures, and the view also contained a similar planar flatness, emphasizing frontality. These practices contrasted sharply with the Western emphasis on depth, perspective, and symmetry (Chabria 1994, 3). Around the same time, there were Indian versions of magic lanterns that were used to recite stories from Indian epics.⁶

4. Introduction

One would be lying if they said that Bollywood has had no impact on their lives. The movies, big and small, have played a major role in showing us the realities of our times, not merely fashion trends and styles, but interior, architecture, Products endorsed by popular stars, electronic accessories, automobiles, tourism (Vacations and Wedding destinations etc) every sector related to our daily life, showcasing by movies helping us imagine the way our past to present. The fact that changing trends in design and films deal with the visual communication of things is what brings films and daily life aesthetics so close together.⁷

4.1 Early Bollywood and Indian visual culture

The mythological films created by D. G. Phalke during the silent era from 1912 to 1934 are the origins of present - day Indian popular visual culture. The "talkies" of the 1930s brought in the "singing" or musical genre, which, together with Phalke's aesthetic style, has become synonymous with Bollywood film. The history of Indian cinema is abundant with films created in many genres and styles (for example, social realism, satires, comedies, fantasy, horror, or stunt) in the country's different languages.

However, popular Hindi cinema (today colloquially known as Bollywood) has dominated national Indian cinema and audiovisual culture. It has hegemonized the whole cinema business, as well as other popular technology - based creative forms such as the press, radio, television, music, advertising, the internet, social media, and telecommunications media. While adapting to the demands of new media technology, the form and substance of these modern art forms remained anchored in the visual arts and practices of previous folk and classical traditions.

The key characteristics that distinguish popular Indian visual culture are infinite diversity, plurality, and multiplicity. This culture emerged over centuries of absorption, integration, and acculturation as the subcontinent grew at its own gradual pace, engaging with invaders, immigrants, and colonialists who brought with them their own aural and visual cultures.

Conversations and interactions with these many civilizations over two millennia gave origin to contemporary India's ecumenical, syncretic, and hybrid cultures. There were many confrontations and resistances along the way, as well as limited chauvinism, nativism, and even fanaticism. These inclinations both contributed to, and in some ways harmed, attempts to meld the various threads that comprise any national visual culture. This evolution was aided by the fine and plastic arts, applied arts, performing arts, literature, and countless local and regional folk art traditions.⁸

4.2 Impact of Early Cinema to modern Bollywood on Indian mass

The first Indian feature film, *Raja Harishchandra* by D. G. Phalke was the beginning. Indian cinema can be traced to July 1896, barely six months after the *Lumière brothers* exhibited their “actualities” in the basement of the Indian salon in Paris. Phalke’s feature was a “mythological” one, a well - known story of *Raja Harishchandra*, having significant place in our old literature.

Phalke was inspired to make a film based on Hindu mythology after seeing the British feature film *Life of Christ*. He did, however, want to produce an "Indian" film that told a Hindu subject in an Indian narrative manner. As a result, his narrative form, décor, costumes, *mise - en - scene*, representations of the male and female bodies, acting style, and overall "look" of the film were influenced by traditions in Indian folk drama, the Parsi proscenium theater, contemporary architectural and painting styles, and printing methods such as lithography and chromolithography.

Raja Ravi Varma, an artist and printer who appropriated British academic painting of the period and anglicized Indian gods and goddesses, giving them idealized human bodies, was a key influence. Dasgupta (1991, 21) describes how his mass copies of these paintings became part of established visual culture and popular iconography.

The notion of "darshan" is essential to popular Indian and Hindu visual culture; it is mostly employed in religious situations, although it is also used in certain secular contexts. It refers to the interaction between the visual object and the observer or spectator. As a result, early Indian film fans traveled to the theater to see the gods and goddesses depicted on the big screen.

Later, when cinema "stars" became national and regional idols, fans sought their blessings as well. Political leaders, social reformers, and even celebrities and teachers soared in the Indian public's estimation, and their darshan was avidly sought out. Vidal (2006) calls this "Hindu way of seeing" into question. This "iconic frontality" visual style dominated Phalke's mythological films like as Raja Harishchandra (1913), Lanka Dahan (1917), and Krishna Janma (1918), as well as his whole career. The structure and content of Phalke's groundbreaking movie would have an impact on filmmaking on the subcontinent for decades to come. Later, "singing" and "talking" films ushered in a spectacular blooming of cinema in India's many distinct languages and regions.

From the 1950s to now, we have seen major shifts in the film industry. Fashion styles, architecture and interiors, product purchasing, and the choice of having tours—for every aspect, the Indian mass has been depending on changing film trends. They follow their icons and want to appear as a doppelganger of their favorite one.

Fernandes (2000, 614) subsequently concludes, based on interviews with the top middle class, that "visual signs of wealth have come to be the new symbols of national progress in India." Participation in the global fashion business, for example, in international beauty contests, led us to discover that 80% of male and female characters on Indian television belonged to the higher strata of society (ibid.). It is the same elite that rules movies, tabloid journalism, and advertising that is in charge of popular Indian visual culture. This class predominates in media professions and media depictions of the country's visual culture.⁹

5. Discussion: Impact of Bollywood on various visual cultures

5.1 Impact on Fashion costumes & accessory trends

Bollywood has long had a strong effect on popular Indian fashion. Any attire worn by an actor or actress in a popular film becomes an instant sartorial trend for tailors to replicate. The ready-made business produces these outfits in large quantities, and the styles are called after characters or movies, such as the Anarkali suit, the jewels in Jodha Akbar (2008), and the Masakali suit from Delhi - 6 (2009),

to mention a few. In both the East and West, Bollywood's loud masala food inspires passionate wolf whistles.¹⁰

Today, Bollywood is the sole global competitor to Hollywood's fame and clout. The fashion sector takes advantage of this trend by launching its garments and jewels in films. Top celebrities are appointed as brand ambassadors to promote stylish items. Madhubala's Anarkali costume in Mughal - e - Azam (1960), which consisted of long flowing churidars and kurtas, was one of the early movie effects on Indian design. Even now, over 50 years after the film's debut, the anarkali kameez remains popular.¹¹

In 1994, Madhuri Dixit's clothes in Hum Aapke Hain Koun . . . ! (1994) were greatly admired, with ladies coveting the looks and replicating them at weddings and other social gatherings. Rani Mukerji's clothes in Bunty Aur Babli (2005) were another fashion craze for a while.¹² Bollywood musicals are jam-packed with songs and dancing. And Bollywood dancing is immensely popular among Indian females who want to study it more than any other traditional dance. The Indian diaspora overseas stays connected to their roots through watching Hindi films and learning Bollywood dance. In India, movie actors have adoring fans that form clubs in their honour, their looks and style, and are not shy to loosen their purse strings to buy products their favourite star endorses.¹³

5.2 Impact on Interior and architecture

Movies that help improve your home's interior design From Alia's stylish studio in 'Dear Zindagi' to Kareena and Arjun's train dinner in 'Ki & Ka,' Bollywood has always succeeded in easily building the house of our dreams. After all, a beautiful house interior design is important in our lives. For centuries, films have served as a source of inspiration in a variety of fields, including house interior design. Beautifully designed homes in films have frequently awoken the interior designer in all of us, making us wish to imitate certain characteristics in our own homes.¹⁴ Movies like Dear Zindagi – Rustic and Vintage Décor; Salaam Namaste – Tropical Décor; Piku – Cultural & Antique Décor; Ki & Ka – Post Modern and Artsy Deco; Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham – Grand, Traditional or Luxury Décor; Wake Up Sid – Quirky DIY Décor; Kapoor & Sons - Countryside Décor; and Aisha - Minimalistic Pastel Décor are some most relevant examples of modern design aesthetics given by Bollywood.¹⁵

5.3 Impact on Wedding celebrations

Weddings are the clearest example of such "visual signs of wealth" flaunted by the emerging, consuming middle class. Weddings have evolved into business events, with wedding planners and designers in high demand. In the early 2000s, these event planners emerged as "new specialists of lifestyle desires" (Brosius 2010, 274). Wedding themes were inspired by Bollywood films from the late 1990s, including Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (1995), Hum Aapke Hai Kaun (1994), and the cross-over film Monsoon Wedding (2001). Bollywood film posters play an important part in popularizing romantic looks and themes used by wedding planners and fashion designers.¹⁶ Celebrity (Rs.6.0 million),

Palace Wedding (Rs.4.5 million), Yacht (Rs.4.5 million), Desert (Rs.4.0 million), Beach (Rs.3.5 million), and Bollywood (Rs.2.5 million) are the most popular wedding themes in terms of cost (Dutta 2013, 11). The growing popularity of theme - inspired weddings has spawned a thriving bridal business that includes publications, websites, blogs, fashion, and jewelry. Weddings are viewed as a "platform for the exhibition of a "world - class" lifestyle by the privileged middle class (Brosius 2010). According to sociologist Krishna Kumar, the Indian urban middle class's obsession with marriage as a source of social status is "almost obsessive" (Brosius 2010, 274).¹⁷

5.4 Impact on tourism

Until the 1960s, Bollywood films were shot in the confines of studios or in Mumbai. It gradually spread to locations such as Kashmir, Simla, and Darjeeling, which were distinctive and popular locations for actors and filmmakers such as Shammi Kapoor, B R Chopra, and I S Johar, to mention a few. Due to the little exposure Indians had at the time in terms of advertising and promotion, this was one of the key draws for moviegoers. With the expansion of the Indian IT and ITES industries following liberalization in the 1990s, many employees from the middle class began to go overseas for both short and extended periods of time.

Simultaneously, Yash Chopra discovered a success formula with his blockbuster smash *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (DDLJ), in which Indian viewers got a tourist's vision of Europe and the United Kingdom. There was no turning back for Indian youth after then. They were given several opportunities to pursue their lifelong ambitions of working overseas and traveling the world. Bollywood is deeply ingrained in the Indian mentality, and the films have a significant impact on Indians when picking their next vacation location (Cineswami, 2012). Films also have a good impact on tourism by increasing location awareness and having a strong influence on viewers in terms of influencing their future vacation choices (Baker, 2007).

Bollywood filmmakers like Yash Chopra have often featured fairy land in their films, showcasing its beauty and tranquility. The trend began with *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, which showcased European landscapes. Bollywood has expanded into new territories like Poland, Finland, Korea, Australia, Brazil, Scotland, Cuba, UAE, Malaysia, and South Africa. Singapore Tourism Board launched a tour package named after the movie "Krissh" in 2006, highlighting its attractions. Hong Kong Tourism Board plans to develop dedicated tour packages featuring Bollywood film locales and attractions.¹⁸

5.5 Impact on product selection

In the 21st century, Bollywood, a century - old film industry, has emerged as one of the top three film industries globally, benefiting various industries such as fashion, cosmetics, design, and music. In India, finance, marketing, advertising, and law also benefit from this collaboration. Marketing and advertising are crucial for consumer awareness and product consumption. They promote movies within a budget, ensuring stakeholder alignment. Marketing has diversified

over the past decade, resulting in various arms for common objectives, including product placement.¹⁹ Product placements in Bollywood have emerged due to the increasing media clutter and the difficulty in determining the impact of advertisements on consumers. With an average person seeing up to 6000 to 10, 000 ads daily, product placements in TV serials or movies are essential to capture viewers' attention and add a sense of realism to the show or product. This helps consumers understand the utility and functionality of the product/service more efficiently.²⁰

Aside from these reasons, when we consider the financial side of product placement, it helps to minimize and pay production expenses even before the film is launched. Furthermore, a company may hire an actor to indirectly promote a product for a fraction of the cost of a full - fledged campaign. Subhash Ghai's flicks *Yaadein* and *Taal* (a game changer in product placement) are reported to have recovered their production expenses from Coke and others. Subhash Ghai was one of the first producers to truly understand the power and benefits of product placement.²¹ Raj Kapoor, the first Indian actor to enter Mumbai, was featured in the 1955 film *Shree 420*, where a Coca - Cola banner was placed. This was followed by Coke's presence in 1967's *An Evening in Paris* and 1972's *Koshish*. The practice of placing products in Bollywood movies in exchange for money began in the late 1990s. (Vaghela, 2013).²²

6. Conclusion

On the basis of the study, we can conclude that the ancient roots of visual culture predate any sort of cinema that has existed in Indian. From wall paintings, sculptures, architecture, or still images to moving images, we have a chronological history of development. Since the invention of cameras and then movies with technical advancement, day by day influencing our psychological status, dreams, and desires, and due to all this, we have evolved as contemporary modern men with nobility and social dignity in a wholistic manner. Nowadays, the phenomenon of AI, after the 4th industrial revolution, is dominating our lifestyles in a very fast manner. Creativity and imagination are very quick to load on the ground. Now we are living in a fast - forward era, sometimes harmful to society and the heritage of old visual culture. In addition, the positive aspect regarding Western perception of Bollywood focuses on its visual culture, film posters, and billboards. we can say that various aspects of Bollywood's material culture influence contemporary art, religion, culture, and politics in India and the US also. The film screen becomes a part of everyday life.

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