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Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema

Anna Morcom

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HINDI FILM SONGS AND THE CINEMA

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Preface

There has been a revolution in scholarship on big-budget Indian cinema in the last 20 years, linked to an immense increase in its cultural status and legitimacy in India and beyond. Key to this has been the economic growth and increasing global integration of India since the phase of economic liberalization of 1991, the dramatic expansion of the middle classes, and the rising visibility and socio-economic status of non-resident Indians (NRIs) in developed countries (Dwyer 2000). Thus Hindi cinema, adapting to the tastes and ticket-buying potentials of India's middle classes and NRIs, has been reshaped and renamed as 'Bollywood', a term and phenomenon that has become not just familiar but trendy in Western European countries (Dwyer 2000; Prasad 2003; Vasudevan 2011). This is a notable change, given the pejorative terms in which Hindi cinema used to be seen in the Western world and its lowbrow image in India. In a similar timescale, the study of popular music has also accelerated greatly, including within ethnomusicology, an important development given that more and more music is mass-mediated or mass-produced, reaching into increasingly remote areas. Since the research and writing of this book between 1998 and 2002, there has also been an explosion in scholarship on Indian film and popular musics in general. Even during the course of this period, I noticed significant changes in the degrees to which my topic was acknowledged as important or, on the other hand, seen with a certain amusement at best. In addition to new attitudes to Indian film and popular musics, the nature of these musics and industries has also changed markedly with India's rapid socio-economic development, digitization, and new forms of global connectivity.

Before the new wave of interest in Indian cinema and film songs, book-length focused work on Hindi film songs consisted of Alison Arnold's PhD thesis, 'Hindi film git: On the history of Indian popular music' (1991), Peter Manuel's *Cassette Culture* (1993), and a special issue of *Sangeet Natak* on film music edited by Ashok Ranade (1991). This was remarkable scholarship, well ahead of the curve. There were also a number of shorter studies on film music or music in cinema (including: Beeman 1981; Skillman 1986; Arnold 1988; Cooper 1988; Manuel 1988; Chatterjee 1995; Hughes 1996; and articles by Ranade, Rajadhyaksha, Charushila and Dhaneshwar in Ranade (ed.) 1991). In 2015, there is not only inexhaustible material now available on Indian cinema, but also a rich body of work on Hindi film songs (though far less on other Indian cinemas) and Indian popular music more broadly. New work on film songs, industries and production includes single-author books (Ranade 2006; Booth 2008a; Kabir 2011; Beaster-Jones 2014a), edited volumes (Gopal and Moorti (eds) 2008; Booth and Shope (eds) 2014), and an array of articles and chapters in these edited volumes

and other publications (for example, Kasbekar 2000; Creekmur 2001; Majumdar 2001; Hughes 2007; Booth 2008b; Bhattacharja and Mehta 2008; Getter and Subramaniam 2008; Beaster-Jones 2009, 2011, 2014b; Morcom 2010, 2013b, forthcoming; Sarkar 2010; Jhingan 2011; Indraganti 2012; Mehta 2012; Weidman 2012; Mason 2014; Sarazzin 2014).

Studies have also emerged on the wider circulation and cultures of appropriation of Indian film songs in India and internationally (Seizer 2005; Abadzi 2008; Adamu 2008; David 2008; Sarazzin 2008; Beaster-Jones 2009; Bhattacharja 2009; Green 2014; Morcom 2009, 2011, 2013a; Weintraub 2010; Shresthova 2011; and chapters by Ambrust, Bhattacharja and Mehta, and Parciack in Gopal and Moorti (eds) 2008). This adds to early work by Booth (1990, 1991/2), Marcus (1992/3, 1994/5), and Manuel (1993) on film songs and traditional genres in India, as well as incorporating work on remixes and nightclubs, the influential non-resident Indian (NRI) populations in foreign countries, and the circulation of Hindi film songs in places further afield.

A critical mass of scholarship is also emerging on popular music in India beyond film music, beginning with Manuel's work (1993), and was recently boosted by Bhattacharja and Kvetko's 2012 special issue of *South Asian Popular Culture* and Booth and Shope's edited volume *More Than Bollywood: Studies in Indian Popular Music* (2014). There is now a growing body of research on vernacular popular musics and popular music cultures (Alter 1998; Seizer 2005; Rawlley 2007; Fiol 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014; Manuel 2012, 2014; Tripathy 2012; Morcom 2013a), and Surbhi Sharma's remarkable film *Bidesia in Bambai* (2013) on Bhojpuri music and migration. However, given the expanse of vernacular popular music as a whole layer of music making in India, there is still scope for a lot more. There is also a growing body of scholarship on forms of popular music that cater to more elite groups, like rock (Booth 2014), or classical fusions (Reck 1985; Farrell 1997; Higgins 2014), and work that explores music industries, commodities and advertising in India (Beaster-Jones 2011, 2014c). In addition, there is substantial research on popular musics of Indian diaspora communities, such as Bhangra and other British or US Asian popular music (Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma (eds) 1996 was ground-breaking in this area; other publications include Dudrah 2002, 2011; Leante 2003; Huq 2006; Kim 2011), and Chutney and popular music of the Indo-Caribbean (including publications by Manuel 2000, 2012; Ramnarine 2001, 2011).

An important part of the development of scholarship on Indian film songs and popular culture more broadly has been the opening up of the history of mass-mediated or mass media–related popular music and performance in India from the later nineteenth century, in the work of Hughes (1996, 2002, 2007, 2014), Shope (2004, 2007, 2008, 2014), Fernandes (2012), Sachdeva (2008), Booth (2008a) and also cinema scholars such as Bhaumik (2001).

Since *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema* was researched, film music and the film industries in general have undergone very substantial changes, and the broader terrains of Indian popular music too. This has been due to the intensified

processes of globalization that have occurred since the 1990s, with far more links between India and its diasporas due to greater affordability and ease of travel and telecommunications, as well as an immense growth in middle classes with disposable incomes. It has also been due to the new kinds of linkages between the mainstream Indian film and music industries and media and film companies abroad, which has been described by Kvetko in his study of Indipop (2005). Though Indian film industries have long had connections with the wider world and film industries and technologies there (see, for example, Govil 2015 on Hollywood), and there is certainly scope for more research in this area. Profound changes have also occurred due to digitization, as they have across the world. Booth's work has explored technology in Hindi film music production at new levels of detail from the 1930s onwards, and has described the broad move from live performances in film music studios to composers working with computers, samples, and selected musicians (2008a). Sarrazin has also examined the impact of digital technologies in Hindi film music (2014). A.R. Rahman has been the leading figure in this emergence of new methods of composition and new sound worlds in film songs, embodying both a more raw and 'authentic' use of traditional Indian musics with the use of diverse indigenous instruments, styles and voices, as well as a more global sound in tune with hegemonic popular music that relies on bass and beats rather than orchestras (Morcom forthcoming). This has played a key role in the seriousness with which Hindi film music is taken in the Western world, since it now sounds intelligibly 'cool' to the ears of listeners in Western countries, and very cool indeed to people interested in the popular music end of the 'world music' spectrum.

Thus, Indian film and film musics have undergone significant transformations since *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema* was written and researched, and scholarly studies have increased exponentially. To update the book would entail major new fieldwork and rewriting to integrate another two and a half decades of extremely dynamic history of Hindi films and songs. Rather than attempt this, the text is left as it is in the original, a product of its time in terms of scholarly background and its context of primary study. Transcriptions in Western notation, and some saragam analysis, remains in Chapters 3 and 4, which I would ideally perhaps put in an appendix to make the book more appealing to a wider audience. However, at the same time, Western notation is a detailed tool for analyzing music, though certainly flawed, embodying well-known inherent biases in terms of what it can and cannot express effectively, and the implications of using it for non-Western musical forms (see, for example, Nettl 2006: 74–91). Arguments for and against aside, the transcriptions are an organic part of the project, of my own understanding of film music, its style, and how it connects with film narratives, situations and sequences of shots. However, the text does not rely on the transcriptions, describing music and communicating arguments in words too. Thus it is possible to simply skip them.

Whilst this study has arisen from research and a scholarly context now over two decades old, the key questions of the book, which explore the relationship of film

songs with films, remain pertinent to understanding film songs as a phenomenon at a fundamental level. Film songs had largely been seen as India's popular music and studied as a form of popular song in musical terms, such as in Arnold (1991), where the focus was music style and its evolution, and in Manuel's discussion of film music in his book on cassettes (1993). Research by scholars of Indian cinema related it more closely to the film texts, such as Dwyer's work on film songs as a key part of the emotional content of films (2000). However, the emphasis was generally on the distinct or disconnected nature of film songs within film narratives, as special items, or extras. This study acknowledges the undeniable fact that songs are somewhat separate in film narratives, referring to Prasad's analysis of the Hindi film (1998). Indeed, it is crucial that they are *separable*, so they may circulate beyond the film and 'scoop real life into the film and film into real life', snowballing meaning and experience (Morcom 2011). However, at the same time, this book aimed to nuance this separateness with an understanding of how these musical episodes of the film are also integrated into the main narrative. Thus film songs are shaped by narrative, the characters who sing them, and their authorship lies to a significant extent with the film director, as well as the music director (as film song composers are known), and, as Booth has explored, the far more anonymous arrangers and performers (2008).

Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema hence focuses on the double life of film songs, their 'reel' and 'real' lives within a film narrative and in the wider world, on film songs as 'situational', as visual and multimedia, and as 'filmi' in basic aspects of their style. This includes a symphonic orchestral basis with a prominent violin track (something that has changed since the 1990s, with the influence of A.R. Rahman); a rich use of Hollywood conventions and sounds, since the late 1940s in particular; and the use sometimes of combinations of styles brought together only by the visual sequence, with particular juxtapositions brought into being by the song situations and shot sequences. It also includes a gloss and adaptation of traditional styles represented or used in films, as I explore through comparing real life and *filmi Qawwali*. Film songs can be seen as lying in various places along a continuum between background scoring (that is shaped by the scene and image in structure and style, integrated with longer filmic and musical conventions and traditions), and independent popular song (that is shaped by traditions of popular music and the image and creativity of the singer). Thus I explore how the production process of film songs (Chapter 2), their musical style (Chapters 3 and 4), their commercial life (Chapter 5), and their life beyond the film (Chapter 6) are all shaped by their symbiotic relationship with their parent films and Hindi cinema more generally.

As a first overarching attempt to explore film songs in cinematic context, this study is preliminary in a great many ways. For example, as outlined above, far more work has emerged on the circulation of film songs outside of films – an effectively bottomless topic – and thus the final chapter is something of a skeleton, just one model by which to understand film song circulation. The narrative function and meaning of film songs in films also requires a lot more

work, and has not reached anything like the levels of sophistication of research on Hollywood background music; in general, there is far less work on songs in films, especially performed on-screen as in musicals, than there is on background scores (notable publications include Kobal 1983; Altman 1987; Cohan (ed.) 2001, 2010; Dyer 2013). It is also remarkable that extremely little work has been done on the background scores of Hindi films. *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema* includes consideration of background scores, as they overlap with the instrumental interludes of songs and draw from the same musical conventions; otherwise, there is only, as far as I am aware, one (unpublished) essay dedicated to background scores (Viswamohan 2014), which highlights the increasing attention and budgets given to background music in recent films. There are also other recent changes not covered well by new literature, such as the move to increase the background use of songs in the more multiplex-oriented Hindi films, which represents a profound change in terms of what songs mean and do in films. In addition, Hindi and Indian cinema includes 'lowbrow' B cinemas, including 'adult', horror and action films (Hoek 2013; Vitali 2011a, 2011b), and vernacular cinemas (Hardy 2010; Kumar 2014), with new forms of stratification of Indian cinemas emerging. Whilst film scholarship on these other cinemas is building, I am aware of nothing comprehensive on their music.

Film songs and films remain connected, and the nature of these connections shapes them in terms of their music and their socio-cultural agency. This has continued to change throughout the history of Hindi films and film songs. It is hoped that not only will our understanding of the musicality of Hindi films and other large budget Indian cinemas continue to evolve, but also the many other cinemas of India, and the vastness of the impact and interaction of film songs on lived musical cultures in India and beyond.

Anna Morcom, May 2015

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Krishnamurti and Alka Yagnik. While being able to watch and converse with the creators of Hindi cinema and music was immensely exciting, I would also like to thank my friends for their role in making my stay in Bombay a particularly happy and fun one, in particular: Ritika, who showed me Bombay nightlife with unparalleled enthusiasm, her mother Shobha, and their friend Usman Lakadawala who very sadly died in May 2006. I would also like to thank my friend and colleague Kaushik Bhaumik, whose enthusiasm for Hindi cinema and music is unflagging, and with whom I flogged out many an issue over many a two-hour-plus phone conversation. Lastly, though fundamentally, I would like to thank my parents for their constant support of my work, in particular for entering into a world initially very far from their own with tremendous enthusiasm, and for the suppertime conversations that were some of my most valuable intellectual stimulation for the project.

Chapter 1

The Cinematic Study of Hindi Film Songs

Introduction

Since the very beginning of sound film in India in 1931, virtually all Indian commercial films have had a musical format, nowadays including about six or seven songs per film. In 1934, the first gramophone records of film songs were produced and played on the radio (Joshi 1988: 150),[1] thus launching film song as a mass-mediated, popular music in India. For over five decades, these film songs, also known as 'film music', almost exclusively constituted what was popular music in South Asia, and despite the expansion in the music world that has taken place from the 1980s following the advent of cassettes in India (Manuel 1993), they are still the dominant form of popular music in this part of the world. Film songs have achieved massive sales – from around 1 million cassettes for an unsuccessful film or album to around 12 million for the biggest blockbusters – before a crash in the music industry in 2000. Post the crash, however, they still continue to number in the millions for a hit film. These figures do not include the sales of pirated cassettes, which were estimated in 2001 to be 40 per cent of the official market (*Screen* 13th April 2001), a decrease from their 1986 level of 95 per cent of the official market (Dubashi 1986).[2] As well as being a formidable presence in South Asia, film songs have extended far beyond their home territory to become a global phenomenon, being popular in many parts of Africa,[3] the former Soviet Union, South East Asia, the Middle East, and to some extent the Far East – and more recently, the Western world.

The enduring presence of songs in Hindi films has received much attention and been given various interpretations. By far the most common explanation for the presence of songs in Hindi films, offered by scholars, members of the Indian film industry and 'ordinary' people alike, focuses on songs as the main difference between Hindi and Hollywood films, and relates this to a clichéd characterization of Indians. It is said that 'Indians love music', that songs and music mark the most important aspects of Indian life – life cycle rituals such as birth and marriage, and also festivals and worship – and hence Hindi films are full of songs.[4] Whilst most

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1 Record collectors Narayan Multani and Suresh Chandravankar cite 1932 (interview, 6 March 2000).

2 See Manuel 1993: 78-88 for a discussion of cassette piracy.

3 See, for example, Larkin's account of Hindi films and film songs in Hausa culture in Kano, Nigeria (1997).

4 See, for example, Kabir 1991.

Indians undoubtedly love music, and music is a part of traditional (and also modern) life in India, the same can be said of Europe and America. Yet, only a minority of European and American films feature songs in the way Hindi films do, i.e., in a musical format where the songs are actually 'sung' (or rather lip-synced)[5] by the characters, as opposed to being played in the background score. Furthermore, this view also does not adequately explain why songs must be 'sung' diegetically by the characters in Hindi films rather than played in the background score, which is the norm for Hollywood films since the 1960s (Kalinak 1992: 186-7). Either technique can cater for an audience's love of songs by including them in the cinematic experience.

As well as being the focus of what makes a Hindi film different from a Hollywood film, songs have also become the focus of what makes a film 'commercial', appealing to the largely uneducated 'masses', as opposed to 'art', which appeals to the urban elite and intelligentsia. This essentially class-based division of films into 'commercial' and 'art' was initiated in India by Satyajit Ray in the 1940s in his essays on cinema, and adopted by other writers such as Kobita Sarkar throughout the 1950s (Vasudevan 2000: 100-105). The Hindi commercial film is often described as a *masālā* film, literally 'spice', containing a concoction of elements that may satisfy the crudest of spectators, such as songs, dances, fights, stars, comedy, goodies and baddies and so on. The commercial film is also described as 'unrealistic', with the story being 'interrupted' by the songs and the other elements (Prasad 1998). The breaking into song by characters is seen as unrealistic and illogical, especially since the characters sing in voices other than their own and the song sequences tend to shift to extra-narrative locations. Commercial films are also melodramatic, with exaggerated emotions and characters that represent types rather than realistic psychological portrayals (Vasudevan 1995: 310). Music is not commonly cited as a culprit of Hindi film melodrama, but, as is argued below and in chapters 3 and 4, it is an important part of the melodramatic expression characteristic of Hindi films. This 'unrealistic', melodramatic style of the Hindi cinema, with its array of titillating elements, is seen as a failure to make proper cinema. As Ray writes, 'In India, it would seem that the fundamental concept of a coherent dramatic pattern existing in time was generally misunderstood' (1948, quoted in Vasudevan 2000: 100).[6] In this way, the 'commercial' Hindi film is contrasted negatively with Hollywood films and Indian 'art' cinema, both of which adopt a linear narrative and psychologically realistic characterization. Indian cinema tends to be seen as 'a *not-yet-cinema*, a bastard institution in which the mere ghost of a technology is employed for purposes inimical to its historic essence' (Prasad 1998: 2).[7]

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[5] Since around 1940, songs in Hindi films began to be sung by 'playback' singers rather than the actors themselves, and this soon became the norm. See pp. 55–57 below.

[6] See also Rajadhyaksha 2000: 269.

[7] Western opera contains many elements that Hindi films are criticized for, in particular an emphasis on emotional expression over realism or plausibility, convoluted plots, and the use of music, much of it extraneous to the main story. That this 'high' cultural art-form has not been widely criticized for these features reflects how strongly the belief is held that cinema is a realist medium.

The format of Hindi films has also been seen in terms of audience inadequacy. Vasudevan writes how Sarkar's articles 'were coloured by the image of a critic dealing with an infantile culture which needed to grow up', unsophisticated audiences that required crude films with 'gross moral oppositions and simplified conflicts' (2000: 101-102). Das Gupta sees songs as necessary given the nature of the audience, because songs counter the 'built-in naturalism of the cinema', and bring them more in line with the 'pre-industrial, mythical style of discourse' prevalent in India (1991: 59). Whilst less pejorative, this view is essentialist, and the idea that the cinema is an inherently naturalistic apparatus is highly debatable,[8] with Hindi films being a case in point.

The presence of songs is vital for a film to have commercial potential, and this is certainly related to audiences' evident enjoyment of the Hindi cinema as a kind of 'cinema of attractions' (Vasudevan 1995: 307).[9] However, to see these songs as evidence of Hindi cinema's not managing to be 'good' cinema because of the failure on the part of Indian filmmakers or the immaturity or the mythical mindset of the audience is pejorative and essentialist. Recent studies of melodrama (Brooks 1984; Ang 1991), Hindi film melodrama (Thomas 1985 & 1995; Vasudevan 1993, 1995 & 2000), and Indian film (Dwyer 2001) have led to a greater acceptance of Hindi cinema on its own terms and opened an arena for a more critical and less colonial or ethnocentric discussion of the role of songs in Hindi films. This has also been contributed to by a blurring of the 'art' versus 'commercial' distinction, as films on 'serious' topics have been made with a musical format by directors with an 'art' film background in order to reach a wider audience. *Aastha* (1997), *Mrityudand* (1997), *Satya* (1998), *Earth* (2000) and *Zubeida* (2000) are all examples of this.

The format of Hindi films can be historically traced to dramatic forms that predated the cinema. The Hindi cinema inherited its musical format from the urban theatrical traditions of the nineteenth century, such as the Parsi theatre, Marathi theatre and Bengali *Jatra*. Some of the earliest Hindi films were filmed stage plays, and many of the personnel of the early film industry came from these theatre traditions. These traditions in turn inherited their format from a variety of folk drama traditions:

> When a new Indian theatre began to develop in the nineteenth century, these folk-drama forms exerted an immediate influence: a vast tradition of song and dance was available to the new theatres. When the sound film appeared, this same reservoir pressed strongly on it (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 1980: 72).

The coming of sound made it possible for Hindi cinema to tap into this tradition of music and song as a part of dramatic expression that reaches back as far as around two thousand years to Sanskrit theatre (ibid.: 69). Although silent films could not incorporate songs and music into the cinematic narrative, music and songs were added to the screening of silent films in theatres through a live band, often including singers (Hughes 1996; Naushad Ali interview, 15 November 1998). It could be argued that with this background, it would be surprising if Hindi films did not contain songs.

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[8] See Prasad 1998: 1-6.

[9] The commercial role of the songs themselves is explored in chapter 5 below.

The presence of songs in the Hindi film narrative can also be seen in terms of the orality of most Indian drama.[10] As Vasudevan writes, 'In contrast to a literary disposition whose reading practices interiorize the reader/viewer's relationship to the text, such orality is said to sustain an externalized, declamatory and musical form in the Indian popular cinema' (Vasudevan 2000: 9).[11] In such an oral culture, 'music has an expressive equivalence to speech' (ibid.: 9), and 'the artificial "break" which is felt in the West when an actor bursts into song is thus less apparent to the Indian viewer' (Beeman 1981: 83). This point makes clear the extent to which the description of a Hindi film as opposed to an 'art' or Western film as 'unrealist' is the expression of a particular cultural viewpoint rather than a reflection of what is real or natural.[12] The cultural depth of the combination of drama and song in Indian culture and the lack of artificiality in moving between speech and song made the musical format a natural choice for the Hindi sound film, and one that is likely to persist. However, although the history of Indian drama and its folkloristic study shows why Hindi films should contain songs, it does not tell us in detail about the role of songs in films. This question, introduced below, forms a focus of the book as a whole.

As Arnold explains in her 1991 thesis, the musical style of Hindi film songs and most of the film industry personnel were also initially taken from the urban theatre traditions. Many composers came to the film industry from the theatre, and used existing theatre songs, or songs of a similar style, containing a mixture of classical, light-classical and local folk traditions for the films. However, by the mid-1930s, film songs were beginning to experiment with Western instruments, harmony and orchestration. Western classical music was available on recordings, played on the radio, and also familiar to many people living in Calcutta and Bombay because of the Parsi and Christian communities living there. Since the mid-1930s, film songs have been characterized by musical hybridity and a thirst for the new and the modern. Unlike most traditional genres, there were no restrictions on experimentation and the use of foreign genres in film music. Rather, a modern style was appropriate to the new Western and technological medium of films. By the mid-1940s film songs had begun to display an exotic and eclectic array of styles, with songs being written in a jazz style, as waltzes, or in the style of other Western and also Latin American popular genres. This reflection of global musical fashions has continued in film songs up through the present day.[13] This new and modern song style soon became a national craze, as 'audiences responded with ecstasy to the eclectic styles and the large ensembles full of Western instruments' (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 1980: 157).

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[10] Sanskrit drama, which died out about 1000 years ago, was not an oral tradition.

[11] Vasudevan notes that this statement needs to be qualified; see Vasudevan 2000, footnote 30: 30. It should also be noted that an exteriorized and declamatory style, often using music, is characteristic of melodrama.

[12] A 'realist' style was espoused by many left-wing and Marxist film-makers from the 1930s to 1950s. A film like *Mother India* (1957) can be seen as a product of this, although it hardly conforms to Hollywood standards of realism, mixing a form of socialist realism with a musical format.

[13] Chapters 3 and 4 below discuss the musical style of film songs in detail.

However, conservative elements of society representing 'high' culture were not (and are still not) enamoured of film songs.[14] Some, following Adorno's criticism of popular music, see them as exemplifying the worst aspects of mass production (Manuel 1993: 37-59). The 'hybrid' style of film songs also offended and continues to offend Indian cultural purists. In 1952, an attack on Hindi film songs was made from a governmental level, typically representing the socialist-inspired Nehruvian development ideology of 1950s and 1960s India, which sought to raise the standards of the masses and stick conservatively to pure, Indian traditions. B. K. Keskar made a now famous attempt to cleanse India's airwaves of film songs by making restrictions on the broadcasting of film songs on All India Radio (AIR) when he was made minister of Information and Broadcasting in 1952. However, in a mass consensus demonstrating the desire of millions of Indian to hear film songs, listeners tuned into Radio Ceylon, which broadcast mainly Hindi film songs, eventually forcing Keskar to reinstate film songs on AIR in 1957.[15] Hindi film songs, like Hindi films, remain to this day a somewhat controversial genre, with millions of fans and at the same time, some harsh critics amongst the Indian intelligentsia, Indian classical musicians, and Western lovers of classical or folk music. However, even such critics of film songs are in fact often found to like certain film songs, which they somehow consider to be a cut above the rest. The older critics tend to favour old film music, citing its *rāg*-basis, whereas younger critics from Westernized, elite backgrounds often cite the music of A. R. Rahman, which has introduced a sound that is more ethnic, but also more global and therefore compatible with Western pop music. Shankar Ehsaan and Loy are also popular with such groups, similarly providing globally hip rather than Indian kitsch music. A. R. Rahman is the only composer who has gained significant recognition in the West, writing the music for Andrew Lloyd-Webber's musical *Bombay Dreams* that opened in London in 2001.

Despite their relatively small number of critics, film songs have become a ubiquitous part of modern India. They have become the music of public space in India, being heard from open windows in peoples' homes, on buses, and in bazaars. They are sung and danced to by millions of people in a range of formal and informal contexts, and have been appropriated in many folk genres (Manuel 1993; Marcus 1992/3 & 1994/5; Booth 1990 & 1991/2; Larkin 1997).[16] Whilst the latest songs are hard enough to miss, it is virtually impossible to escape one of the runaway hit film songs, such as *Pardesī pardesī*, 'You who are leaving', from *Raja Hindustani* (1996), *Colī ke pīce*, 'Behind the blouse', from *Khalnayak* (1993), *Ek do tīn*, 'One two three', from *Tezaab* (1988), or *Āwārā hūṅ*, 'I'm a vagabond', from *Awara* (1951). Unlike Western rock or pop music, film song as a whole has fans in all sectors of Indian society, although certain styles and composers have more of a following in

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[14] This high-cultural and conservative criticism of Hindi film songs has become less during the 21st century in particular as film songs become increasingly fashionable amongst the middle and even upper classes, and are beginning to be used to culturally represent the nation.

[15] See Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 1980: 157-158. Radio Ceylon and its most famous film song show, *Binaca Geet Mala*, are also discussed in chapter 5 below; see pp. 187–189.

[16] See chapter 6.

particular groups. There is something of a youth culture developing around some film music, beginning with R. D. Burman's songs in the 1970s, and composers like A. R. Rahman largely attract audiences from big urban centres.

Figure 1.1 ***Ek do tīn*** **performed by Madhuri Dixit © Kamat Foto Flash**

Previous scholarship on Hindi film songs

Despite the extent of the suffusion of film songs through Indian society and non-Indian societies, and their deep roots in Indian culture, film songs are only beginning to be taken seriously at a scholarly level. Most ethnomusicologists have been lovers of folk and 'high' art traditions rather than hybrid, popular ones.[17] Music scholarship in India has also been concerned with the classical traditions, and film music – as a genre of music that violates its central aesthetic of purity of tradition – has mostly been considered as beneath contempt. Such attitudes have changed considerably, but there has been little research on film songs to date. In particular, the cinematic perspective of Hindi film songs has been ignored, with musicological studies largely viewing them as separate entities from their parent films.

The most comprehensive study of film songs to date is Alison Arnold's unpublished doctoral thesis *Hindi Filmi Git: On the History of Indian Popular Music* (1991), which studies film songs in a broad cultural context. It describes from a historical perspective how social, cultural, political and technological factors and changes in the Indian film industry affected the way in which Hindi film songs developed from their sources of light-classical and theatre music, and emerged in the 1940s into what has become a distinctive *filmi* style. There are some published studies of Arnold's work (1988, 1992/3, 2001), but the most thorough analysis of this genre is her unpublished thesis, which therefore remains the main source material for the study of the musical style of film songs and its historical development. However, this thesis does not address the narrative context of film songs, and also deals only in summary with film music post 1955.

Peter Manuel also discusses film song style in several of his publications, such as the chapter on Hindi film music in *Popular Musics of the Non-Western World* (1988). His relatively brief analysis of Hindi film song style reaches mostly the same conclusions as Arnold in terms of what typical film song style consists of. Manuel's main focus has been on a media study of film song and Indian popular music, and a discussion of the political issues surrounding such a mass music as Hindi film song. In *Cassette Culture* (1993), he investigates the effect of the advent of cassette technology in India on the world of Indian popular music. His style of analysis is Marxist or neo-Marxist, and draws extensively on the work of Theodor Adorno of the Frankfurt School. He argues that the changes in the Indian popular music world which came about when gramophone technology gave way to cassettes demonstrate the relationship between base and superstructure, the mode of production and the cultural product. The 'old' media such as television, cinema, radio and gramophone records, he argues, have 'one-way, monopolistic, homogenizing tendencies', requiring massive infrastructure and investment and are usually centrally controlled. The 'new' media, such as audio and video cassettes, on the other hand, are inherently 'democratic-participant', because material can be easily and cheaply recorded, duplicated and distributed. They therefore allow small grass-roots communities to record and distribute music, something that was virtually

[17] See Nettl 1983: 315-322. Arnold also makes similar comments in the introduction to her thesis on Hindi film songs (1991).

impossible in the case of the 'old' media (Manuel 1993: 2-4). The move to cassette technology, a 'democratic-participant' means of production, thus caused a revolution in the Indian popular music world. For the first time, Indian popular music expanded beyond the realms of film music to include many other popular recorded genres such as popular *bhajan*, *ghazal* and *rasiyā*, to name a few.[18]

Before the advent of cassette technology, when India was still in the grips of the old, 'homogenizing' and 'monopolistic' style media, all that was on offer to the public in the way of popular music was film music, which Manuel sees as being highly standardized in its style, particularly when compared to the variety of musics to be found in India. In Manuel's opinion, people were forced to accept this music since there was no alternative: it was not music produced by the people for the people, but music produced by a tiny minority of the population for the masses, 'mass music' rather than 'people's music'. Manuel continues with the classical Adornian logic that people therefore became passive consumers of music rather than actively making music themselves: 'Individuals and communities were thus alienated from their own creative talent…' (1993: 7). Manuel cites the way that the voice of Lata Mangeshkar has dominated much of Hindi film music as particular proof of stylistic homogenization. He concludes that the homogenous style of film music 'can hardly be attributed to popular demand, but rather to the creation of film music as a common-denominator mass-music style, produced in corporate, urban studios and superimposed on a heterogeneous audience' (ibid.: 53).

Arnold and Manuel are the scholars who have discussed Hindi film songs and Indian popular music most extensively. However, there are many smaller studies of film songs that also include important material. Terry Skillman's historical survey covers much of the same material as Arnold (1986). Darius Cooper discusses the use of song in the work of a particular director, Guru Dutt (1988). William Beeman examines the use of song in Hindi films in comparison with music in Western films (1981). Barnow and Krishnaswamy classic study of the Hindi film (1980), whilst not focusing specifically on film music, contains many references to film songs. Satyajit Ray, typically a critic of commercial Hindi cinema, surprisingly writes an enthusiastic appraisal of the fusion skills of Hindi film music directors (1976). Gayatri Chatterjee, in her study of the classic Hindi film *Awara* (1951), discusses the use of music in this particular film, describing the director Raj Kapoor's combining of song and narrative (1992). Nasreen Kabir has also written articles on film music, an unpublished overview of film song (1991), and a discussion of film songs and their importance to Hindi films (1995, in French). Her recently published book of interviews with lyricist Javed Akhtar (1999) also contains much useful material

[18] Though beyond the scope of this book, this argument certainly needs to be updated in the light of the advent of CDs and DVDs and the professionalization of marketing strategies in the new, highly competitive and now highly capitalized music industry that has formed after the cassette revolution. Although not as capital-intensive as the 'old' media, CDs and DVDs are not nearly as accessible as cassettes. In addition, the production standards of the industry are now so high that it would be impossible for any but the very richest Indians to launch a music company to compete in this market. The Indian music industry and the commercial life of film songs are described in chapter 5.

on film songs and lyrics from the point of view of one of the industry's current top lyricists. Gregory Booth has also made a study of the combination of musical, narrative, cinematic and religious codes and also extra-narrative gossip in the meaning of Hindi film songs, focusing on textual analyses of several film Hindu devotional songs or *bhajans* (2000).

There are also various papers that examine the wider life of Hindi film songs, as they are appropriated by various folk genres. Booth discusses the use of film songs in the music of Indian brass bands (1990 & 1991/2). Scott Marcus discusses film music in the context of its appearance in and influence of *Birahā* (1992/3 & 1994/5). Qureshi (1986, 1992/3) and Hansen (1992), in their studies of *Qawwālī* and *Nauṭaṅkī* respectively, also discuss the effect of film music on the style and repertoire of these traditional genres. Manuel also discusses the impact of film music on folk music and the re-use and recycling of tunes within and between many genres of South Asian music, from classical, to folk to popular (1993: 55-59 and 131-152). What promises to be an important collection of essays studying aspects of Hindi film song as a global, mass-culture phenomenon, and one of the first books devoted to Hindi film songs, is due to be published in 2008 *Global Bollywood: The Transnational Travels of Hindi Song and Dance*, edited by Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti.[19]

Several dissertations on film music have been completed in Hindi in India, though unfortunately none of them have been published as yet. The first was completed by Professor Pradeep Kumar Dixit in 1978 at Benares Hindu University (BHU). Dixit describes the use of the sources of Indian classical music, Indian folk music and Western music in Hindi film song style. Unfortunately, this thesis was not available for study, so it is not possible to comment in any detail. Soma Dasgupta's thesis (1998) studies the role of film music in inspiring people to learn music in India.[20] Mala Sinha's thesis (1991) is a biography of Naushad and an in-depth study of his music. It is particularly useful because it describes in detail the way Naushad has used aspects of various Indian folk and classical styles, instruments and western style orchestration to create mood and effects relevant for the drama and setting of the songs. Unfortunately, this thesis was only available for brief viewing.

Whilst a corpus of work on film music is beginning to build up, albeit with the extensive studies such as Arnold's or those completed in Hindi in India remaining unpublished, and only one book-length study apart from this one due shortly for publication, there are certain areas that are neglected. No studies have examined in detail the process of production of a Hindi film song, that is how a song is put together and what part the film itself plays in this process. Also, few studies have combined a musicological study of film songs with an analysis of their cinematic, narrative and visual contexts. Some studies, such as those of Cooper and Beeman, examine the use of song in Hindi films, examining where songs come in the film

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[19] A version of chapter 5 of this book, 'Tapping the mass market: The commercial life of Hindi film songs', appears in this forthcoming publication (from University of Minnesota Press).

[20] There have been other theses on film music completed at BHU under the supervision of Professor Dixit, such as on the role of classical music in film music and the work of particular music directors, such as Shankar–Jaikishen, but they were unavailable for study.

narrative and the lyrics of songs, but do not examine the role that the music itself plays. Manuel (1993: 40-55) similarly discusses film culture, but does not combine this anywhere with musical analysis of songs. He only refers to film culture in general, rather than any details of film narratives or song picturizations. Other studies examine the music of songs in detail, but not their narrative or cinematic contexts. They effectively look at film music as an autonomous tradition of mass-mediated popular music, and side-step the issue of the role of the cinematic context, film narrative, visuals and so on in the musical style of film songs and their historical development. This is largely the case with Arnold's *Hindi Filmi Git*. Arnold herself acknowledges that a cinematic study of film song would be useful: 'My approach is … limited in the analysis of film song in relation to screen action: I occasionally refer to the picturisation of prerecorded, playback songs by film actors and actresses but a cinematic perspective on film dramatization of songs falls outside the range of this present work' (1991: 10). However, although the cinematic context of film songs is not the focus of Arnold's study, there is still useful information to be found on this topic in her thesis. Chatterjee (1992), Mala Sinha (1991) and Booth (2000) are also among the rare cases of studies that have discussed songs in their cinematic, narrative and visual contexts. Chatterjee and Sinha discuss the interaction of music and narrative in the music of *Awara* (1951) and Naushad respectively, and Booth discusses the combination of music, narrative, religion and extra-narrative gossip in the meaning of several Hindi film *bhajans*.

As with the production and the music of Hindi film songs, the cinematic context of the reception of film songs has also received little attention. There are studies that look at the way film tunes find their way into the repertoire of traditional musics and influence aspects of their musical or performance styles, but the primary reception of film songs and its relation to films has received little attention. Manuel is one writer who has discussed film culture as a whole and its influence on people's world-view, behaviour and so on, and its association with film music. He states that 'to some extent, Indian film music assumed a life and significance of its own that was independent of cinema', but also adds that 'for many, if not most consumers, the significance of film songs remains allied to their cinematic context' (1993: 42). This is intriguing, but there is a lot more to be discussed on the nature of the interaction between songs and films in their audience reception. How far are film songs consumed as a part of the Hindi film or with their visual picturizations, and how far are they consumed in the musical dimension only? Do songs make films popular or do films make songs popular, and how does this happen? Can record/cassette sales of music tell us anything about the primary consumption of film songs relative to the film?

In short, the relationship of film songs and the cinema in terms of production, musical style and reception is still an area that has been little explored. The neglect of details of musical style by non-musicologists writing about the use of song in Hindi films is consistent with a long history of visual bias in Western scholarship on texts such as narrative film where both a visual and a musical level are present. As Kalinak writes with reference to Hollywood film music, classical film theory assumed 'visual ascendancy and aural subordination' in its discussion of music's role in film: 'Sound was divided according to its function in relation to the image:

either parallel or in counterpoint to the visual image. Such nomenclature assumes that meaning is contained in the visual image and that sound can only reinforce or alter what is already there' (Kalinak 1992: 24).[21] This 'visual ascendancy' seems to have spread into more recent postmodern studies of MTV and pop video, which have almost completely ignored the music, with unfortunate consequences. In 'Fatal Distractions: MTV Meets Postmodern Theory,' Goodwin describes how MTV and pop videos were seized upon by many postmodern scholars as being postmodern texts *par excellence*. However, 'reading the postmodern accounts which celebrate the fragmentary visual discourses of MTV, one might never notice that its soundtrack is organized around regimes of repetition and tonality that are highly ordered and predictable' (Goodwin 1993: 47).

This lack of attention to the musical level of a text by film or video scholars is nothing new or surprising. However, the neglect of the Hindi film narrative by ethnomusicologists writing about film song style is puzzling. There are two reasons that may lie behind this. The first relates to the question of what the appropriate context for the study of film music is. The central tenet of ethnomusicology is to study music in its context, and writers such as Arnold and Manuel have indeed studied film music in its social, cultural, historical, technological and religious contexts, as well as the contexts of the film industry and film culture in general. However, film music also exists as a part of a Hindi film. Film songs exist both in the flesh-and blood world of Indian culture and society, and in the fictional world of the parent Hindi film narrative, as a part of the protagonists' experiences, the film drama and so on. To put it in film magazine jargon, you could say that film songs exist in the 'reel world' of the film as well as the real world of Indian society. The real world context of film songs has been studied in considerable detail by, in particular, Arnold and Manuel, but that of the 'reel world' has received little attention. Because film songs are consumed apart from Hindi films and the visual medium to a certain extent, have a very high profile in Indian society and culture, and are clearly interacting with the 'real world' context in fascinating ways, it has possibly led to the 'reel world' being overlooked as a major context of film music in its own right.

The second possible reason why the musicological and cinematic aspects of film songs have not been studied simultaneously is the commonly held view that the cinematic context of film songs is in fact more or less insignificant to them, that they are effectively a tradition of popular music independent of the cinema. It is generally held to be the case that film songs interact with the contexts of Indian culture and society, as any tradition of Indian music does, but in terms of their music, they do not interact with the film narrative, even though they are found in Hindi films. Many academics and non-academics hold the view expressed by Manuel that most film songs are 'more-or-less gratuitous insertions into the plot, to be enjoyed for their own sake' (1993: 41). Manuel states that 'the closest American equivalent to Indian musical films' is MTV, implying that Hindi film songs are like pop videos, items in themselves, not relating to a larger narrative or thematic material (ibid.: 48). This view that songs are unrelated to film narratives has also been put forward and

[21] Kalinak traces this visual bias through 19th century scientific discourse and as far back as Greek theories of acoustics (1992: 20-24).

theorized in detail by Prasad in his discussion of the Hindi film narrative (1998). Prasad refers to Marx's two modes of manufacture, the heterogeneous mode and the serial mode. With the heterogeneous form of manufacture, the whole is assembled from pre-fabricated parts. The example Marx gives of this is the watch. With the serial or organic form of manufacture, however, 'the base material of the product is present from the beginning to the end of the process,' but is shaped and refined by various stages of the process. The example of this given by Marx is the needle. Thus, Prasad sees Hollywood films as exemplifying the needle-type, organic manufacture process, due to the centrality of the story. The story in a Hollywood film 'is the point of departure of the production process and its transformation into a narrative film is the final goal of that process' (1998: 43). With the Bombay film, however, the story does not have this central position, it is rather just one component of the film, the others being the songs, dances, fights, comic track, dialogues and stars. 'It could be said that the story [in a Hindi film] occupies a place on par with that of the rest of the components, rather than the pre-eminent position it enjoys in the Hollywood mode' (ibid.: 43).

The various components of a Hindi film are independent from each other, and are discrete attractions in themselves within the film as a whole. Variations in these components 'are not demanded by the narrative', since unlike Hollywood films, there is no over-arching story or narrative plan in Hindi films (Prasad 1998: 44). Instead, they vary according to their own traditions, each having a logic of its own (ibid.: 44-45). For example, the lyrics of Hindi film songs are drawn largely from the Urdu poetic tradition, which has its own repertoire of images and themes. Songs, fights, dances and character types similarly have their own traditions, which would make a written script largely redundant, since 'the kind of narrative contexts that the given dialogue, lyrics, dances and stock characters make possible *do not require a prepared script*, simply because the variations in them are caused by innovations internal to the traditions of dialogue-writing, Urdu lyric-writing and dance history rather than the external pressure of the particularities of a narrative' (ibid.: 45).

Ravi Vasudevan, in his work on Hindi films, similarly describes the Hindi film narrative as modular and the various features as independent. Songs, dances, lyrics, dialogues and fights are all to some extent items in themselves within the film text, and have their own particular appeal: 'The relationship between narrative, performance sequence and action spectacle is loosely structured in the fashion of a cinema of attractions' (Vasudevan 1995: 307). Elsewhere, he describes songs, dances and comic sequences as 'para-narrative units' (1989: 31). In a similar vein, Rachel Dwyer describes the song sequences of Hindi films as coming to the narrative 'almost as prepackaged items' (2000: 142-143).

This view that songs are items superfluous to the Hindi film – or put in more neutral terms, that they are para-narrative units, emanating from their own traditions and not directly affected by the film narrative – implies that the cinematic context of film songs has little relevance to the form and style of film songs or to the development of the genre as a whole. This is probably why a thorough cinematic study of Hindi film songs, where songs are analysed in terms of their music, the film narrative and their visual picturization has not been completed, and why the Hindi