

Know All About
Bollywood
(Indian Film Industry)

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Chapter-1

Introduction to Bollywood

Bollywood is the informal term popularly used for the Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. The term is often incorrectly used to refer to the whole of Indian cinema; it is only a part of the total Indian film industry, which includes several regional film industries sorted by language. Bollywood is the largest film producer in India and one of the largest centers of film production in the world.

Bollywood is formally referred to as **Hindi cinema**, though frequent use of poetic Urdu words is fairly common. There has been a growing presence of Indian English in dialogue and songs as well. It is common to see films that feature dialogue with English words phrases, or even whole sentences.

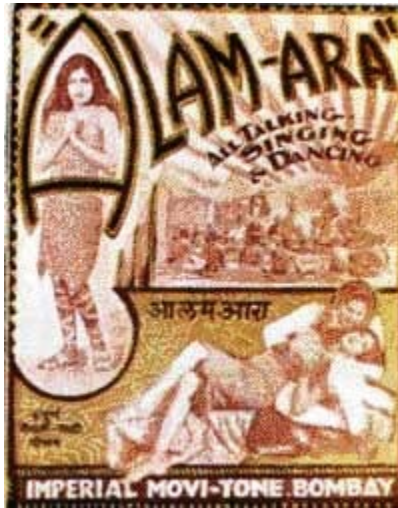
Etymology

The name "Bollywood" is derived from **Bombay** (the former name for Mumbai) and **Hollywood**, the center of the American film industry. However, unlike Hollywood, Bollywood does not exist as a physical place. Though some deplore the name, arguing that it makes the industry look like a poor cousin to Hollywood, it has its own entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

The term "Bollywood" has origins in the 1970s, when India overtook America as the world's largest film producer. Credit for the term has been claimed by several different people, including the lyricist, filmmaker and scholar Amit Khanna, and the journalist Bevinda Collaco.

The naming scheme for "Bollywood" was inspired by "Tollywood", the name that was used to refer to the cinema of West Bengal. Dating back to 1932, "Tollywood" was the earliest Hollywood-inspired name, referring to the Bengali film industry based in Tollygunge, which rhymed with "Hollywood" and was the center of the cinema of India at the time. The name "Bollywood" later arose as the Bombay-based film industry overtook the one in Tollygunge as the center of the Indian film industry.

History



Film poster for first Indian sound film, Ardeshir Irani's *Alam Ara* (1931)



Nargis and Raj Kapoor in *Awaara* (1951), also directed and produced by Kapoor. It was nominated for the Grand Prize of the 1951 Cannes Film Festival.

Raja Harishchandra (1913), by Dadasaheb Phalke, was the first silent feature film made in India. By the 1930s, the industry was producing over 200 films per annum. The first Indian sound film, Ardeshir Irani's *Alam Ara* (1931), was a major commercial success. There was clearly a huge market for talkies and musicals; Bollywood and all the regional film industries quickly switched to sound filming.

The 1930s and 1940s were tumultuous times: India was buffeted by the Great Depression, World War II, the Indian independence movement, and the violence of the Partition. Most Bollywood films were unabashedly escapist, but there were also a number of filmmakers who tackled tough social issues, or used the struggle for Indian independence as a backdrop for their plots.

In 1937, Ardeshir Irani, of *Alam Ara* fame, made the first colour film in Hindi, *Kisan Kanya*. The next year, he made another colour film, *Mother India*. However, colour did not become a popular feature until the late 1950s. At this time, lavish romantic musicals and melodramas were the staple fare at the cinema.

Golden Age

Following India's independence, the period from the late 1940s to the 1960s are regarded by film historians as the "Golden Age" of Hindi cinema. Some of the most critically-acclaimed Hindi films of all time were produced during this period. Examples include the Guru Dutt films *Pyasa* (1957) and *Kaagaz Ke Phool* (1959) and the Raj Kapoor films *Awaara* (1951) and *Shree 420* (1955). These films expressed social themes mainly dealing with working-class urban life in India; *Awaara* presented the city as both a nightmare and a dream, while *Pyasa* critiqued the unreality of city life. Some of the most famous epic films of Hindi cinema were also produced at the time, including Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* (1957), which was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, and K. Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960). *Madhumati* (1958), directed by Bimal Roy and written by Ritwik Ghatak, popularized the theme of reincarnation in Western popular culture. Other acclaimed mainstream Hindi filmmakers at the time included Kamal Amrohi and Vijay Bhatt. Successful actors at the time included Dev Anand, Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor and Guru Dutt, while successful actresses included Nargis, Meena Kumari, Nutan, Madhubala, Waheeda Rehman and Mala Sinha.

While commercial Hindi cinema was thriving, the 1950s also saw the emergence of a new Parallel Cinema movement. Though the movement was mainly led by Bengali cinema, it also began gaining prominence in Hindi cinema. Early examples of Hindi films in this movement include Chetan Anand's *Neecha Nagar* (1946) and Bimal Roy's *Two Acres of Land* (1953). Their critical acclaim, as well as the latter's commercial success, paved the way for Indian neorealism and the *Indian New Wave*. Some of the internationally-acclaimed Hindi filmmakers involved in the movement included Mani Kaul, Kumar Shahani, Ketan Mehta, Govind Nihalani, Shyam Benegal and Vijaya Mehta.

Ever since the social realist film *Neecha Nagar* won the Grand Prize at the first Cannes Film Festival, Hindi films were frequently in competition for the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, with some of them winning major prizes at the festival. Guru Dutt, while overlooked in his own lifetime, had belatedly generated international recognition much later in the 1980s. Dutt is now regarded as one of the greatest Asian filmmakers of all time, alongside the more famous Indian Bengali filmmaker Satyajit Ray. The 2002 *Sight & Sound* critics' and directors'

poll of greatest filmmakers ranked Dutt at #73 on the list. Some of his films are now included among the greatest films of all time, with *Pyaasa* (1957) being featured in Time magazine's "All-TIME" 100 best movies list, and with both *Pyaasa* and *Kaagaz Ke Phool* (1959) tied at #160 in the 2002 *Sight & Sound* critics' and directors' poll of all-time greatest films. Several other Hindi films from this era were also ranked in the *Sight & Sound* poll, including Raj Kapoor's *Awaara* (1951), Vijay Bhatt's *Baiju Bawra* (1952), Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* (1957) and K. Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) all tied at #346 on the list.

Modern cinema

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, romance movies and action films starred actors like Rajesh Khanna and Dharmendra, and actresses like Sharmila Tagore, Mumtaz, Leena Chandavarkar and Helen. In the mid-1970s, romantic confections made way for gritty, violent films about gangsters and bandits. Amitabh Bachchan, the star known for his "angry young man" roles, rode the crest of this trend with actors like Mithun Chakraborty and Anil Kapoor, which lasted into the early 1990s. Actresses from this era included Hema Malini, Jaya Bachchan and Rekha.

Some Hindi filmmakers such as Shyam Benegal continued to produce realistic Parallel Cinema throughout the 1970s, alongside Mani Kaul, Kumar Shahani, Ketan Mehta, Govind Nihalani and Vijaya Mehta. However, the 'art film' bent of the Film Finance Corporation came under criticism during a Committee on Public Undertakings investigation in 1976, which accused the body of not doing enough to encourage commercial cinema. The 1970s thus saw the rise of commercial cinema in the form of enduring films such as *Sholay* (1975), which solidified Amitabh Bachchan's position as a lead actor. The devotional classic *Jai Santoshi Ma* was also released in 1975. Another important film from 1975 was *Deewar*, directed by Yash Chopra and written by Salim-Javed. A crime film pitting "a policeman against his brother, a gang leader based on real-life smuggler Haji Mastan", portrayed by Amitabh Bachchan, it was described as being "absolutely key to Indian cinema" by Danny Boyle. The most internationally-acclaimed Hindi film of the 1980s was Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay!* (1988), which won the Camera d'Or at the 1988 Cannes Film Festival and was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the pendulum swung back toward family-centric romantic musicals with the success of such films as *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988), *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989), *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun* (1994) and *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), making stars out of a new generation of actors (such as Aamir Khan, Salman Khan and Shahrukh Khan) and actresses (such as Sridevi, Madhuri Dixit, Juhi Chawla and Kajol). In that point of time, action and comedy films were also successful, with actors like Govinda and Akshay Kumar and actresses such as Raveena Tandon and Karisma Kapoor appearing in films of this genre. Furthermore, this decade marked the entry of new performers in arthouse and independent films, some of which succeeded commercially, the most influential example being *Satya* (1998), directed by Ram Gopal Varma and written by Anurag Kashyap. The critical and commercial success of *Satya* led

to the emergence of a distinct genre known as *Mumbai noir*, urban films reflecting social problems in the city of Mumbai. This led to a resurgence of Parallel Cinema by the end of the decade. These films often featured actors like Nana Patekar, Manoj Bajpai, Manisha Koirala, Tabu and Urmila Matondkar, whose performances were usually critically approved.

The 2000s saw a growth in Bollywood's popularity in the world. This led the nation's filmmaking to new heights in terms of quality, cinematography and innovative story lines as well as technical advances in areas such as special effects, animation, etc. Some of the largest production houses, among them Yash Raj Films and Dharma Productions were the producers of new modern films. The opening up of the overseas market, more Bollywood releases abroad and the explosion of multiplexes in big cities, led to wider box office successes in India and abroad, including *Lagaan* (2001), *Devdas* (2002), *Koi... Mil Gaya* (2003), *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (2003), *Veer-Zaara* (2004), *Rang De Basanti* (2006), *Lage Raho Munnabhai* (2006), *Krrish* (2006), *Dhoom 2* (2006), *Om Shanti Om* (2007), *Chak De India* (2007), *Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi* (2008), *Ghajini* (2008), *3 Idiots* (2009), *My Name is Khan* (2010), *Raajneeti* (2010) & *Dabangg* (2010) delivering a new generation of popular actors (Hrithik Roshan, Abhishek Bachchan, Ranbir Kapoor) and actresses (Aishwarya Rai, Preity Zinta, Rani Mukerji, Kareena Kapoor and Priyanka Chopra), and keeping the popularity of actors of the previous decade. Among the mainstream films, *Lagaan* won the Audience Award at the Locarno International Film Festival and was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the 74th Academy Awards, while *Devdas* and *Rang De Basanti* were both nominated for the BAFTA Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

The Hindi film industry has preferred films that appeal to all segments of the audience, and has resisted making films that target narrow audiences. It was believed that aiming for a broad spectrum would maximise box office receipts. However, filmmakers may be moving towards accepting some box-office segmentation, between films that appeal to rural Indians, and films that appeal to urban and overseas audiences.

Influences for Bollywood

Gokulsing and Dissanayake identify six major influences that have shaped the conventions of Indian popular cinema:

- The ancient **Indian epics** of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* which have exerted a profound influence on the thought and imagination of Indian popular cinema, particularly in its narratives. Examples of this influence include the techniques of a side story, back-story and story within a story. Indian popular films often have plots which branch off into sub-plots; such narrative dispersals can clearly be seen in the 1993 films *Khalnayak* and *Gardish*.
- Ancient **Sanskrit drama**, with its highly stylized nature and emphasis on spectacle, where music, dance and gesture combined "to create a vibrant artistic unit with dance and mime being central to the dramatic experience." Sanskrit dramas were known as *natya*, derived from the root word *nrit* (dance),

- characterizing them as spectacular dance-dramas which has continued Indian cinema. The theory of *rasa* dating back to ancient Sanskrit drama is believed to be one of the most fundamental features that differentiate Indian cinema, particularly Hindi cinema, from that of the Western world.
- The traditional folk **theatre of India**, which became popular from around the 10th century with the decline of Sanskrit theatre. These regional traditions include the Yatra of Bengal, the Ramlila of Uttar Pradesh, and the Terukkuttu of Tamil Nadu.
 - The **Parsi theatre**, which "blended realism and fantasy, music and dance, narrative and spectacle, earthy dialogue and ingenuity of stage presentation, integrating them into a dramatic discourse of melodrama. The Parsi plays contained crude humour, melodious songs and music, sensationalism and dazzling stagecraft."
 - **Hollywood**, where musicals were popular from the 1920s to the 1950s, though Indian filmmakers departed from their Hollywood counterparts in several ways. "For example, the Hollywood musicals had as their plot the world of entertainment itself. Indian filmmakers, while enhancing the elements of fantasy so pervasive in Indian popular films, used song and music as a natural mode of articulation in a given situation in their films. There is a strong Indian tradition of narrating mythology, history, fairy stories and so on through song and dance." In addition, "whereas Hollywood filmmakers strove to conceal the constructed nature of their work so that the realistic narrative was wholly dominant, Indian filmmakers made no attempt to conceal the fact that what was shown on the screen was a creation, an illusion, a fiction. However, they demonstrated how this creation intersected with people's day to day lives in complex and interesting ways."
 - Western **musical television**, particularly MTV, which has had an increasing influence since the 1990s, as can be seen in the pace, camera angles, dance sequences and music of 2000s Indian films. An early example of this approach was in Mani Ratnam's *Bombay* (1995).

Influence of Bollywood

In the 2000s, Bollywood began influencing musical films in the Western world, and played a particularly instrumental role in the revival of the American musical film genre. Baz Luhrmann stated that his musical film *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) was directly inspired by Bollywood musicals. The film incorporated an Indian-themed play based on the ancient Sanskrit drama *The Little Clay Cart* and a Bollywood-style dance sequence with a song from the film *China Gate*. The critical and financial success of *Moulin Rouge!* renewed interest in the then-moribund Western musical genre, and subsequently films such as *Chicago*, *The Producers*, *Rent*, *Dreamgirls*, *Hairspray*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Across the Universe*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Enchanted* and *Mamma Mia!* were produced, fueling a renaissance of the genre.

A. R. Rahman, an Indian film composer, wrote the music for Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Bombay Dreams*, and a musical version of *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* has played in London's West End. The Bollywood musical *Lagaan* (2001) was nominated for the

Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, and two other Bollywood films *Devdas* (2002) and *Rang De Basanti* (2006) were nominated for the BAFTA Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), which has won four Golden Globes and eight Academy Awards, was also directly inspired by Bollywood films, and is considered to be a "homage to Hindi commercial cinema". The theme of reincarnation was also popularized in Western popular culture through Bollywood films, with *Madhumati* (1958) inspiring the Hollywood film *The Reincarnation of Peter Proud* (1975), which in turn inspired the Bollywood film *Karz* (1980), which in turn influenced another Hollywood film *Chances Are* (1989). The 1975 film *Chhoti Si Baat* is believed to have inspired *Hitch* (2005), which in turn inspired the Bollywood film *Partner* (2007).

The influence of Bollywood *filmi* music can also be seen in popular music elsewhere in the world. For example, Devo's 1988 hit song "Disco Dancer" was inspired by the song "I am a Disco Dancer" from the Bollywood film *Disco Dancer* (1982). The 2002 song "Addictive", sung by Truth Hurts and produced by DJ Quik and Dr. Dre, was lifted from Lata Mangeshkar's "Thoda Resham Lagta Hai" from *Jyoti* (1981). The Black Eyed Peas' Grammy Award winning 2005 song "Don't Phunk with My Heart" was inspired by two 1970s Bollywood songs: "Ye Mera Dil Yaar Ka Diwana" from *Don* (1978) and "Ae Nujawan Hai Sub" from *Apradh* (1972). Both songs were originally composed by Kalyanji Anandji, sung by Asha Bhosle, and featured the dancer Helen. Also in 2005, the Kronos Quartet re-recorded several R. D. Burman compositions, with Asha Bhosle as the singer, into an album *You've stolen my heart - Songs From R D Burman's Bollywood*, which was nominated for "Best Contemporary World Music Album" at the 2006 Grammy Awards. *Filmi* music composed by A. R. Rahman (who would later win two Academy Awards for the *Slumdog Millionaire* soundtrack) has frequently been sampled by musicians elsewhere in the world, including the Singaporean artist Kelly Poon, the Uzbek artist Iroda Dilroz, the French rap group La Caution, the American artist Ciara, and the German band Löwenherz, among others. Many Asian Underground artists, particularly those among the overseas Indian diaspora, have also been inspired by Bollywood music.

Genre conventions

Bollywood films are mostly musicals, and are expected to contain catchy music in the form of song-and-dance numbers woven into the script. A film's success often depends on the quality of such musical numbers. Indeed, a film's music is often released before the movie itself and helps increase the audience.

Indian audiences expect full value for their money, with a good entertainer generally referred to as *paisa vasool*, (literally, "money's worth"). Songs and dances, love triangles, comedy and dare-devil thrills are all mixed up in a three-hour-long extravaganza with an intermission. Such movies are called *masala* films, after the Hindi word for a spice mixture. Like *masalas*, these movies are a mixture of many things such as action, comedy, romance etc. Most films have *heroes* who are able to fight off villains all by themselves.



Melodrama and romance are common ingredients to Bollywood films. Pictured *Achhut Kanya* (1936)

Bollywood plots have tended to be melodramatic. They frequently employ formulaic ingredients such as star-crossed lovers and angry parents, love triangles, family ties, sacrifice, corrupt politicians, kidnappers, conniving villains, courtesans with hearts of gold, long-lost relatives and siblings separated by fate, dramatic reversals of fortune, and convenient coincidences.

There have always been Indian films with more artistic aims and more sophisticated stories, both inside and outside the Bollywood tradition. They often lost out at the box office to movies with more mass appeal. Bollywood conventions are changing, however. A large Indian diaspora in English speaking countries, and increased Western influence at home, have nudged Bollywood films closer to Hollywood models.

Film critic Lata Khubchandani writes, "...our earliest films...had liberal doses of sex and kissing scenes in them. Strangely, it was after Independence the censor board came into being and so did all the strictures." Plots now tend to feature Westernised urbanites dating and dancing in clubs rather than centering on pre-arranged marriages. Though these changes can widely be seen in contemporary Bollywood, traditional conservative ways of Indian culture continue to exist in India outside the industry and an element of resistance by some to western-based influences. Despite this, Bollywood continues to play a major role in fashion in India. Indeed some studies into fashion in India have revealed that some people are unaware that the changing nature of fashion in Bollywood films which are presented to them are often influenced by globalisation and many consider the clothes worn by Bollywood actors as authentically Indian.

Cast and crew

Bollywood employs people from all parts of India. It attracts thousands of aspiring actors and actresses, all hoping for a break in the industry. Models and beauty contestants, television actors, theatre actors and even common people come to Mumbai with the hope and dream of becoming a star. Just as in Hollywood, very few succeed. Since many Bollywood films are shot abroad, many foreign extras are employed too.