CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The liberal spirit and genius of sociology quite often reside in its ability to move beyond the sombre and the prosaic and locate sociological dimensions even in the so-called ‘trivia’, here for instance, in the study of the popular Hindi film actor Shah Rukh Khan. It urges us to debunk the ‘constructedness’ of the phenomenon by a capitalist culture industry and its emergence informed by the political philosophy of a liberalizing nation.

Shah Rukh Khan, one of the most successful of the male stars of contemporary Hindi film industry offers an interesting biographical narrative of ascendancy that enlivens the much cherished myths of success and upward mobility of the middle class of a liberalizing nation. Shah Rukh Khan, the average looking but educated, talented and intelligent man from a middle class Muslim family of Delhi, who arrived in Mumbai in the late 1990s has an interesting trajectory from being a struggling television actor, to a superstar of popular films and today a popular emissary of the nation’s global moment-an actor endorsing a plethora of global brands. His entrepreneurial ventures towards building of film corporations and investments in the Indian Premiere League (IPL) sports ventures and his recent tryst with Bengal as the brand ambassador of the state of West Bengal have accorded new dimensions to his iconicity.

The emergence or the construction of an icon-whether in the domain of entertainment, politics or sports-is essentially a social phenomenon. Hegemonic cultural and political discourses, historical contingencies, spatio-temporal realities and various discursive practices coalesce to give rise to the reified presence of such icons. In this research, I have tried to study the star phenomenon represented by, one of the most popular and celebrated actor of commercial Hindi films, Shah Rukh Khan. The study intends to look at the constructedness of the star image and its representation within cinematic texts and also, other media texts like advertisements that is beyond the diegetic scope of cinema. This would involve a study of the reasons of popularity of a man with unconventional appearance What kind of political, social and economic ideology informed- his iconization, his cinematic casting and narrative positioning as a heroic subject of the popular nation, his brand of masculinity and his corporal guises in filmic narratives, the deployment of his star image beyond films, his enabled agency in his extra-cinematic engagements are some of the key research questions addressed through an interpretative reading of media(cultural)texts and review of extant academic literature.

Central to this research is the question of representation of the star/the hero and its imbrication within the larger social, political and economic context. Situated within the domain of popular culture, which is itself a contested site where the powerful try to gain a control over its meanings, the construction of the star is inscribed, re-inscribed, articulated and re-articulated by plural and even contradictory ideological discourses. The representation of the star across major audio-visual media texts like films and advertisements intersects with the question of nation,

\(^1\) In various academic and non-academic publications, the star has been referred to as Shahrukh Khan or Shah Rukh Khan or SRK. All these names refer to the one and the same person.
polity, globalization, (market) economy and consumerism. The study involves looking into the question of power, discourse and hegemony and how the construction of the star image (as a popular cultural icon) is largely related to the issue of legitimacy and value accorded to his stardom through the question of economy (logic of market, profit and consumption) and power (representational cultural politics). The stardom of the popular hero Shah Rukh cannot be simply read as a cultural production without relating it to his commercial value, the marketability of his image, reception by the audience, publicity machinery that constitutes his image, his films, his extra-filmic engagements, his biographical inputs, appearance in and exchanges with the public domain etc. Looking at the iconization of the star one needs to posit the star within what is a dynamic interplay of hegemony, popularity and consumption. The construction of the star as a popular icon is to be situated within an intertextual domain of media texts located within a wider domain of cultural and political domain of film production; and also see how his image is constituted and represented within a hegemonic struggle of cultural forces, his representational guises as a heroic character in cinematic texts and his corporal guises serving as narrative ploys of ideological discourse of films, his enabled agency to capitalise upon his own marketability, and appropriation of his image beyond the bounds of the confines of media and the market.

The research on the topic is qualitative and based on review of existing literature and other secondary sources that includes social and cultural interpretation of media–texts, viz. films of Shah Rukh and his advertising, media reporting on the star and related issues from newspapers and popular magazines, the star’s biographies, his interviews to the print and audio-visual media and interpretation of all of these secondary materials in the light of existing conceptual categories and theoretical frameworks.

As interpretation of cultural text can be diverse and are capable of yielding multiple and endlessly proliferating and perhaps mutually contradictory readings there cannot be any definitive reading in the sense of a closure. The textual readings attempted can be multiple. In this research work, I have employed the interpretation of cinematic text to present analysis of the star’s construction through multiple conceptual categories and theoretical paradigms. The films in which the star has acted, though many, it is the most significant ones in the star’s career and the most popular films that have been chosen for discussion. Reading of the star’s construction has also looked into his inter-textual positioning and the loops that enjoin him to the heroic tradition and narrative codes and conventions of popular Hindi cinema.

The second chapter is quintessentially the backdrop to the subsequent chapters and seek to see the construction of the iconic star emanating from a cumulative past, of the nation’s socio-political history cultural codes and narrative conventions of the nation, dynamics of film’s production and cultural economy and the contemporary concerns of the nation since its encounter with the global through institutionalized adoption of economic reforms and neoliberal changes. The discursivity of the imagined nation finds popular manifestation in myriad ways and these popular meanings eluding the gravitas of the statist official discourse and its modernizing agenda, often finds expressions within films. Popular Hindi films represent the
postcolonial and postmodernist surplus exceeding the boundedness of state discourse and its territorially. The popular cartographies of the imagined and performative nation articulated within the narrative discourse of mainstream Hindi cinema is a veritable historical and political document and a cultural site whose linearity corroborates the social history of the nation, albeit in the domain of the popular. In the Jamesonian sense popular Hindi films are allegorical texts of the nation and contains within them the ‘political unconscious’ of the nation. Antecedent to the sovereign independent post-colonial state formation, popular films with a beginning inscribed by a colonial past, offered itself to imaginatively contour the nation and devised its own visual vocabulary and repertoire of cultural codes to represent the nation’s collective conscience and concerns contingent upon spatio-temporal verities. The popular format, its commercialized style sought to evolve a formular based on the largest common denominator to reach diverse and plural constituencies of the nation. The nationalist, unificatory and popular appeal of commercial Hindi cinema transcending several categories of socio-political and economic or ethnic divides have remained a well acknowledged fact. However the pan-Indianness and popularity of films was not conceded to by the anti-colonial nationalist leaders and this legacy or tradition of disdain, contempt, antipathy and ambivalence for long pervaded the statist posturing and informed its policies for long. This trajectory of relationship of the state and the film industry is not without significance as this had a direct impact on the narrative format and the political economy of films and its production. Grappling with state restrictions and censorship rules and even punitive taxation the industry following the decline of the early studio production developed a chaotic, ad hoc and disaggregated mode of production. Lack of recognition by the state as an industry, thwarted growth of capitalist mode of film production, illicit funding, and persistence of backward capitalist forces and obdurate influence of patriarchal feudal enclaves of power, (which itself was an important component of the state led coalition power bloc in the trajectory of passive revolution) had cast an influence upon the melodramatic format of films for long lacking genre differentiation and mostly an omnibus variety of entertainment through social dramas and feudal family romance. The political crisis of democracy in the seventies found hegemonic containment of resistance through the angry young man heroic cult represented by Amitabh Bachchan. However it was the state policy of liberalization and the state’s reconciliation to the market potential of Hindi cinema in overseas destinations, the promise of ‘soft diplomacy ‘attainable through international circulation of films and its diaspora market (with the diaspora being potential investors of the newly open market), that eventually led to the state recognition of Bollywood’s industrial status. All of these developments cast an influence at three levels. First the political economy of films mostly through disciplining of production, expansion of international markets and collaborations and entry of corporate finance. Second, the commensurate changes in the cultural economy of films wherein the cinematic texts came to be insinuated by a consumerist visual vocabulary and a transnational global commodity culture. Third, at the level of narratives the bourgeoisie heroic subject was seen to secure greater autonomy of choice vis-à-vis the institutions of authority/family as a parallel cultural assertion of a liberalizing regime under the
influence of neo-liberal economic changes. In addition to this the advent of the global through adoption of liberal reforms had its impact upon the thematic concerns of films that included de-territorialized or transnationalist imaginings of the nation, diasporization of narratives and central roles(heroes/heroines) romance aligning with a consumerist visual idiom, and also explored what can be seen as the obverse of globalization and retreat of the state and weakening of modernist secular agenda leading to the emergence of fundamentalist, rise of identity politics, re-ethnicization and so on.

These developments or transformation at these three level viz. the political economy of films, the cultural economy of films and the changed narrative format and concerns, the departures from past modes of film economy, gaining of institutionalized recognition and respectability, proliferated circulation and increased popularity of Hindi cinema in international market are significant to understand the discourse that constitute the basis to Shah Rukh’s construction or sees its culmination in such star personifications. Shah Rukh’s arrival at a time when films had already shown early signs of anticipation of the liberal regime saw him evolve as a hero of the nation from the incipient signs of liberalization to a more assertive affirmation of the liberalization mandate. To understand Shah Rukh’s iconization it is important to read his construction against the significant socio-cultural departures and changes ushered by liberalization and also, the negotiations it involved with the nation’s past. The globalizing turn of Bollywood within which the star is implicated is not an erasure of past cultural memories or traditions, instead thickly woven into a continuous tapestry of its past tradition, post colonial legacy and continuous social history and yet privileges discernible post-global and post modern changes in re-signifying the nation through the heroic embodiment and here it is Shah Rukh Khan. Khan emanates as a complex cultural signifier containing within him the intermeshings and negotiations of the global-present and the post colonial nation, the past and the present discourse of the nation, and yet the hero remains a definitive pronouncement on the arrival of nation’s global moment. The social history of the liberalizing nation with an expanding consumer market, burgeoning middle class, concurrent departures from socialist austerity and changes in value dispositions, sanctification of consumerism under the neo liberal regime, have sought popular articulations in the kind of films in which Shah Rukh have recurrently been cast, suited and liked. The globalizing regime had its popular mediation through the heroic subjectivity of Shah Rukh. This chapter also reviews the emergence of the Hindi film industry as an assemblage or cultural complex not just of film but also inclusive of other components of the media and entertainment domain and a cornucopia of commodities purveyed by the consumerist global culture. This transformation is crucial to understand the permeation of Bollywoodized popular culture into everyday life and also explains the engagement of film stars like Shah Rukh in commercial ventures beyond films within a larger intertextual domain of the media ecology.

The chapter also examines the concept of stardom as a social, cultural and political phenomenon as a signifying figure, a personified expression of ideology and myths upheld by the society. Going beyond the idea of innate charm and charisma conventionally ascribed,
stardom subjected to critical understanding have been seen as a socially constructed phenomena and is a commodifiable entity utilized by marketing principles. The beginnings of the star system that has its roots in Hollywood is not new to the Indian cinema. The history of male stardom in Hindi cinema represented as the nation’s heroic trope reveals the diversity of idolised manhood and masculinity and the changing ideals that had each epoch defining its heroic prototypes. The extant literature offers a variegated theoretical explanation to account for the identification invited or mobilized by stars through spectatorship. Audience identification explained through Lacanian theory of the Symbolic Real or the Imaginary ego ideal, the Freudian theory of fetishistic and voyeuristic gaze, the concept of scopophilia or identification with screen image, and even indigenous cultural protocols of viewership and iconization based on deification of the idolised star image through mobilization of the Darsanic gaze.

The chapter reviews the sociological understanding of body and masculinity and the theoretical interventions that have rectified the conflation of sex and gender and dichotomous categorization of gender divides. Opposed to essentialist understandings of sex and gender and conceptualization of gender as homogenous, these theoretical positions, viz. the constructionist perspective holding bodies as culturally and socially regulated sites, the phenomenological looking into the idea of lived experience of corporality through subjective consciousness of the body and the structuration position that seeks to conceptualize body as a reflexive site negotiating both society and selfhood.

In the third chapter on nation’s post-liberalization social history articulated in cinematic narratives, the hero Shah Rukh’s casting and implication is seen to mediate a certain subjechtlood of the nation. The work entails tracing the hegemonic nationalist discourse of the nation. History of film, a popular medium, enjoys almost a congenital association with nationalism and nationalist discourse. The impersonating tendencies of nation have often solicited articulation whereby heroes or heroine became tropes or metonyms of nation. In the euphoric times of nation-building it was a hero like Raj Kapoor who personified the Nehruvian socialist agenda of planning and austerity combined.

The advent of global culture of capital was formally and institutionally introduced in the year 1991 through the policy of liberalization, at a time when the country was caught in economic crisis. Mired in a debt trap and plagued by innumerable socio-economic problems it created several predicaments and anxieties within the society and also generated irreversible changes. Uncanny enough Shah Rukh appeared on screen at a time when the nation was grappling with the challenged introduced by such changes. A delineation of the hero’s filmographic trajectory appears as a chronicle of India’s social history since liberalization. It also reflects upon how these changes found an expression in the construction of the hero within cinematic narratives. The evolution of Shah Rukh’s star image while appearing in various avatars reflects the zeitgeist of the nation at its global moment. The psychotic/schizophrenic hero in his early films appears as the other of the angry young man, a cult represented by Amitabh Bachchan that emerged against a backdrop of political instability in the mid-1970s. Revisiting the theme of
vengeance the struggle and anxiety of the hero is interiorized to reflect upon the nation that still suffered ambivalence towards the global. Films like Baazigar, Darr and Anjam can be cited as examples. Shah Rukh’s avatar of a desirous middle-class subject and his incursion into grey areas in the late 1990s, departing from earlier bipolarity of the good and the bad, stands for a nation reconciling and adjusting to the changes unleashed by global forces. The hero represents the urban middle class subject allured by the seductive culture of capital in favour of desirous pleasures. From the early 1990s films like Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman, Yes Boss, and Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani can be seen to illustrate these changes. Films like Chamatkar, Dil Aasna Hai, King Uncle, Kabhi Haan Kabhi Naa, Maya Memsaab, Baadshah and Duplicate are also significant films in his oeuvre falling within this avatar.

By mid and late 1990s, the acceptance of change has been inscribed on the body of the star who emerged as an urban/diasporic, hybrid, cosmopolitan subject, a material phenomena and an insignia of the global moment. He becomes a commodified star mediated via global mediascapes, negotiating homeland, diasporic and transnational sensibilities. Films like Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge, Pardes, Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham, Kal Ho Naa Ho, Kabhi Alvidaa Naa Kahna, Dil To Pagal Hai, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai are good instances of this trend. The obverse of the global witnessed in the crisis of modernist secular ideology and the resurgence of cultural nationalism had its expressions in a particular genre of jingoistic and belligerent films made under the influence of ethno-nationalism propagated by the Hindutva brigade. These films have deployed several Bollywood heroes including some Muslim stars to play the role of the patriotic Hindu national subject against Muslim terror. In contrast, Shah Rukh’s significant performance in a few films have critically responded to the demonization or systematic ‘othering’ of Muslims in a bid to establish the secular credentials of Muslims as equal stakeholders of nation-building. In films like Veer Zaara and Main Hoon Naa the star image has been successfully utilized to supplant the idea of border-transgression or aggression with an imaginative transcendence mediated by diplomacy, peace and goodwill in Indo-Pak relationships. His secular biographical reference intersected with his star image in interesting ways to affirm his status as a secular face in the popular, secular imagination of the nation. Interrogating discriminatory practices against Muslims in the film My Name is Khan, reaffirming the integrity of patriotic Muslim citizens in the film Chak De! India, questioning the ‘othering’ in Main Hoon Naa and alternatively imagining the secular through the historical figure of Ashoka in the film Ashoka, the hero reaffirms the faith in secular ideology through a popular idiom. The star emerges as a vehicle to rekindle the spirit of nationalism in an age of global competitiveness in films like Swades, Shah Rukh’s construction privileges a reimagination of nationhood and patriotism that is unbound from its territorality and introduces a transnational vernacular into a revised agenda of Nehruvian nation-building in global times and reintroducing the Gandhian ideal of village self-sufficiency in films like Swades, where the diasporic hero emerges as a nation-builder, an icon of a liberalized nation negotiating the global and the nation.
The subjectivities enacted by Shah Rukh emerges to be illustrative of urban, middle class or bourgeoisie subjecthood who marks relative autonomy gained vis-à-vis the state/authority as a political subject, as an individual subject aligned to the more liberal, democratic ideals of the polity and the capitalist spirit that informs the neo-liberalizing impulse of state’s economic policy. Enunciating a possibility of the non-Western signifier of globalization, an alternative cosmopolitanism, Shah Rukh’s image is illustrative of nation’s globalizing moment. The star although is analysed as illustrative of the nation’s globalizing discourse strangely closes the schism between his biography and his performance in several ways. The star himself with accretions derived from his cumulative filmic trajectory, public persona, biography of ascendancy fulfilling the myth of ‘good life’ himself attains a symbolic biography as a star text. The expansion of the star value have operated discursively in its textual function and have allowed his biography to negotiate and even coalesce with the discourse of cinematic narratives in which he has been cast as the hero. Be it the heroic subjectivity of urban, hybrid, diasporic youth, the modern secular Muslim, or the aspiring middle class, each variety or avatar have intersected with the star biography.

The fourth chapter looks into the materiality of the star body, his physiognomy, gestural repertoires, physical agility and idiosyncratic style of the body being deployed to enflesh characters mediating the discourse of globalizing nation, gender, masculinity, market economy. The idea of the social (here analogous to the nation) is embodied through material, metaphorical and symbolic body of the hero/star as articulated through the various corporal guises the star body acquires. The body of the star acts as a malleable site inscribed by the representational cultural politics of the hegemonic discourse and also subliminally ceded to counter-hegemonic, alternative possibilities of imagining heroic masculinity as the othered body. Such othering visits the viscerality of the star through subjectification of the protagonist as the disabled, as the failed man, in films like Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna, or the discriminated, persecuted man in My Name Is Khan that expresses the psychical crisis of othering of the Muslim community through the frigidity of the autistic man. The body of the star is rendered docile in the Foucauldian sense where the body is subject to discipline through the fitness regime that sculpts and contours the body to produce a musculature that is commodified, spectacularized, eroticized through a bare exhibitionist display. The scopic drive of commodifying impulse of the capital driven global media (here Bollywoodized cinematic culture) fetishizes the body through its consumerist adornments via fashionable accoutrements and global brands of wears. Such a narcissistic male body was celebratory of the hedonist spirit of indulgence, pleasure and consumption. Unlike earlier struggle and pathos of his predecessors like Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, Guru Dutt or even the subalterity of crusader, rebellious angry young man, Shah Rukh’s body with very exceptions almost erased signs of class struggle from the hero’s body. The exteriority of the hero’s body denied all signs of material sufferings, as pain that remained was more psychical, privatized and was denied mostly to be somatically registered unlike some of the earlier heroes. The subjectification of the star body to the consumerist aesthetics is also illustrated in his positioning within lavishly adorned spatial...
architecture, leisure, travel, romance etc. The star body though appear regulated does involve
the scope for agentic reflexivity informed and capacitated by his capital. The same star body as
a popular cultural text have also been invested with characterizations to embody the
transgressive potential of the text, that eludes and circumvents regulation by the hegemonic
discourse of power structures.(state/patriarchy/family). In films like Mohabbatein, the
transgressions of patriarchal disciplinary codes, in Dil Se transgression of a fatally desirous
body persuading the dark forces embodied in the terrorist supporting ethno-national cause, in
Veer Zaara the border transgression to unite with the Pakistani girl, in Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna
the body transgresses fidelity and sanctity of marital contract, and in Kal Ho Naa Ho
transgresses through homoerotic leanings. Transgressions in these films are instances where the
hero’s body suffers recriminations either through incarceration, death, or denial of
consummation of romance.

The body of the star re-invents a new idiom of violence departing from the aggressive, brutal,
brazen display of machoistic body of earlier heroes who fought and confronted enemies. Shah
Rukh’s frail, middle-class body, despite its vulnerability and ordinariness, engaged in a
psychotic expression of violence, unlike the more machine-like, rationally driven anger of the
angry young man cult. Violence was masqueraded, travelled with an uncanny strangeness of
impersonations and subterfuges. The body gave expression to hitherto unknown territories of
middle class desire through voyeur also. It is only for narrative closure that only in the
denouement of such narratives that one saw the externalization of inner anguish through
disfigurement and graphic pain and violence inflicted upon hero’s the body through a gory
excess. Excess and histrionics of the star’s performative style suited the melodramatic style;
excess also found a nostalgic re-invention in the star body, where the body in a post-modernist
gesture re-visits the corporal styles and renditions of earlier heroes. The flamboyance of
Shammi, the Chaplinesque frolic of Raj Kapoor, the theatrical melancholy of Dilip Kumar, the
dandy style of Dev Anand, the romantic passion and spontaneity of Rajesh Khanna re-visited
by the actor’s body sees how it transmogrifies at various moments upon the body of Shah Rukh,
as a site of recycled nostalgia, an instance of intertextuality –inviting an allegorical reading of
its construction. The star body of Shah Rukh Khan, as the hero counterposed against the
feminine ‘other’ viz. the heroine, as conventionally in case of all heroes is no exception in
being deeply implicated within a heteronormative discourse. The gendering of the male body
within a heterosexual discourse have been achieved by the narrative for the hero’s heterosexual
corporal assertion across several films through the desirous romantic, libidinous, virile body
of the hero/ star-in its acquisitive instinct of pursuing and winning over women, sometimes also
other man’s fiancé (Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge, Pardes, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai) or wife
(Deewana, Maya Memsaab, Kabhi Alvida Naa Kahna). Interestingly it is this performative
gendered body that has also lend itself to polysemy and de-stabilization of heteronormative
encodings of the body. The bare displayed sculpted body fetishized like the feminine body also
invites voyeuristic pleasure and homosexual affinity. The dancing body of the star in its
 gyrating movements, pelvic thrusts has lent itself to discursive appropriations and queering

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practices. The star body in its ‘bhangra’ dances or dances in Hindu festivals in film sequences have acted as narrative ploys attempting at more secular appropriations-de-stabilizing ethnic categories.

The star body of Shah Rukh as a superman, as a cyborg body in Ra.One exhibits a hyper-masculine, phallic anxiety of the nation that seeks to combat the Frankenstein phenomena. This technologically empowered armoured body of the hero’s body analogous to the ‘body-polity’ reflects the anxiety of the introspective nation-state to confront its own alterity, its obverse, born out of its own failure. The recurrent doubling of the hero’s body across his oeuvre is a significant narrative ploy that exploits the star body to explore deeper masculine anxiety and fear, and other forms of masculine crisis. The body of the star has gone through ambivalence of splitting and doubling either through re-incarnated bodies in films like Karan Arjun, Om Shanti Om, impersonations and masquerades in Darr, Baazigar and Anjaam, in extended selves realized in other bodies, in double roles as in Duplicate, Don where the body is a register of the nation fraught with schisms, contradictions and ambivalences. The spitting device affirms the fluidity of the actor’s corporality. What also deserves a mention is the scope for embodiment, question of lived experience and agentic choices made as understood through his interviews and narrative accounts. These allow us to see how the star’s reflexivity and choice to train and professionalise his body, in a bid to compete with his contemporary and competing male stars of the industry. It also establishes how the star’s materially endowed position, his affluence and means, that is his habitus or class, status location and acquired tastes and preferences allow him to be consciously and subjectively engaged in body maintenance and practices. The star body discursively produced within the narrative of the film as the heroic body in a particular corporal guise does not preclude or deny the ontological basis of the star’s own embodied self, his material body that also engages him consciously in its performative renditions, in its maintenance as a star body.

The fifth chapter situates the iconization of the star within the larger public domain. This domain is the larger cultural conglomerate or culture complex of Bollywood where film though the principal one is one of the component. Shah Rukh’s engagement in various activities of the Bollywood culture industry includes advertisements, television shows, world entertainment tours, corporatized film production and his latest investment in sports. The popularity and star image within this domain is not unique to Shah Rukh, but is largely illustrative of how star’s charisma and popularity is appropriated by media texts beyond films. For example in advertisements, the star is seen as a marketable face engaged in endorsements of a plethora of commodities including a wide range from modest indigenous brands to luxury items of global multinational brands. Acting as a purveyor of consumerism, the star’s popular polysemy serves to enhance familiarity of the product through forging of an easy identification with a well known face products saleability as suggested by statistics. As one of the most preferred mascot or model chosen by advertisers, the deployment of the star’s popular face and stardom to espouse an ideal of good life, good health, and good body is informed by marketing principles of brand promotion. The screen biography of the star fuses with the images spectacularized on
ad texts, in neon lit billboards to produce a reified, hyper-real image of the star. The rise of the star from mediocrity to fame consolidated further through his iconization beyond film marked by, his ubiquity and wide circulation of his image serves to empower the desires dreams and aspiration of the middle class and the ordinary people of a liberalizing nation inviting newer possibilities of material fulfilment and upward mobility. Shah Rukh’s consolidation within a visual aesthetics of consumption in films finds an easy reinforcement and leakage in advertising texts. Taking advantage of media convergence, the star’s ace business skills have seen him to align his endorsements to his film launches and promotions.

The star’s success and his capital endowed position add another dimension to his iconicity, viz. his enabled agency. These commercial ventures implicate the star himself in furthering his iconization beyond films. The star deploys himself, his marketability in his own commercial ventures that includes corporate film production, and ownership of private cricket franchise, the Kolkata Knight Riders of the Indian Premier League. The popular format of IPL sees the colonial game of cricket bowdlerized to produce a form which can be seen as a transformative post-capitalist and post-colonial intervention that transcends state boundaries to constitute private clubs-a hybrid pool of cricket talent controlled by owner with capital. Shah Rukh’s association in this post-colonial translation of sports combining glamour, style and marketing is significant to the star’s iconization within a transnational complex of popular culture. The association of the star into the domain of sports is illustrative of the power of capitalist culture and its subsuming capacity that blurs the divides of sports and films.

Such is the iconic prowess of the star that the state of West Bengal and its newly elect government have appointed the star as its official brand ambassador –a classic case of stardom being appropriated by the state itself, to represent the popular face of democracy.