CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In fact there is no much literature available on the cross-culturalism of Indian musicals which we for the time being preferred to refer as ‘Bollywood musicals’. As the present study is situated in ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’, the scarcity of the literature has got deepened further.

Most of the literature available on Bollywood musicals especially referring to Hindi film songs is based on post-modern and post-critical theories where the production, distribution and circulation of film songs, their global markets, etc have prevailed over the interpretations to film songs from Hindi cinema. Morcom (2007) has recognized the complications the modernist and traditionist researchers encountered while working on Hindi film songs. He writes that ‘Music scholarship in India has also been concerned with the classic 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’ (2007: 7).

Authors like Arnold (1992) and Booth (1995) have contributed some scholarship using the ‘modernist’ and ‘traditionist’ foundations of cultural theory, though. As we pointed out in introduction, their studies suffer from lack of support or analysis of data from the most popular Southern film industries such as Telugu or Tamil cinema, let alone Kannada and Malayalam film world.


As such one rarely finds any ‘modernist’ or ‘traditionist’ interpretations among these works though through some occasional works Vasudevan appears to have made some passing references to the cultural nuances of Indian cinema (2011). Dismissive of the ambition of the Western authors (Dwyer and Pinto, 2011: 17) questioning the place ‘Bollywood’ in a national frame work, Vasudevan argues:

Also, rather than dismissing the national as oppressive and restrictive (*an apparent reference to Rajadhyaksha, Madhava Prasad, Dywer, and Gehlawat) conceptual frame, we need clear investigation of how the national frame functions; as in the films and genres national industries produce; the way the state regulates the industry through censorship, licensing, and other controls; what films are imported; and how film content is distributed
through the various film circuits which define the market. One does not need to be nationalist to pursue these questions (2011: 17).

* the content in the brackets is our emphasis.

Further, most conspicuously missing in the literature of authors cited above is any reference to South Indian Telugu cinema whose contributions to Indian cinema are on par with Hindi cinema. It is from this point of view that we endeavour to present the review of literature in the order of development of themes relevant to the study.

Arnold (1992) in her doctoral study on Bombay Hindi film industry noted that a deeper analysis of Hindi film songs produced in early 1960s differed vastly from the songs produced in the later years. According to her, ‘a deeper inquiry into the history of commercial Hindi film song production reveals a different and more complex situation in which film song production of the 1930s to mid 1960s contrast significantly with that of the later years. She also pointed out that ‘from a facile observation, one would be tempted to draw a conclusion that Hindi film music industry is also as elitist as the Western oriented mass culture thesis of Adorno (1976); a scenario of commercial film industry superimposing film song on the Indianmasses’.

She says that the early film music composers’ right from Alam Ara (1931) believed in ‘cultural and commercial benefits to be gained by continuing ancient Indian dramatic tradition through a combination of song, dance and drama (1992: 122). She says that:

The foundation of Hindi film song on native music was by no means limited to folk traditions, for throughout the first three decades of Indian sound film; composers drew upon various other Indian musical traditions including North Indian light-classical and classical styles.

Arnold (1992) even found that Hindi film song has been an identification mark for ‘Indianness’. According to her, ‘Hindi film song provided all Indians with a distinctly national, modern, popular music with which they could identify and which reflected, in the intent of its composers, the striving for a new Indian nation and national identity’ (p 128).

While trying to explain the eclecticism found in Hindi songs, she made some fundamental observations: the first concerns the musical basis of Hindi film song, such as its musical structure and vocal style that comprises fundamentally Indian elements; the second relates to additional factors such as scale patterns, rhythms and instruments that differentiate individual songs and draw upon any number of foreign and indigenous musics. She cites two examples of the Hindi film songs where the film music directors Salil Chaudhury (Chhaya, 1961) and Vasant Desai (Dr.Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani, 1946) make a few alterations in the Western based
instrumental music compositions and integrate them with the classical Hindustani music. In order to explain the eclecticism in the native film song compositions, she cites the work of music director Ghulam Haider who first introduced his ‘native Punjabi folk rhythms and effervescent musical style in the early 1940s’ (p 181).

Manuel (1988) interpretation of Hindi film music is based on Marxist and neo-Marxist theoretical interpretations and look similar to the theoretical works of post-critical theorists such as Theodore Adorno of Frankfurt School (Morcom, 2007: 7). According to Morcom (2007), the studies of Arnold (1992) and Manuel (1993) are similar though we found clear separation between these two authors’ works. Arnold (1992) has based her work on modernist terms whereas Manuel has laid his ground on post-critical theory. In fact Arnold strongly opposed any interpretation to Bollywood musicals based on Adornos’s post-critical theoretical frame work. Manuel (1993) has also examined how film music has impacted on folk-music (p 55-59) besides attempting to explain the re-use and recycling of tunes within and between many genres of South Asian music (p 131-152).

Apart from these two major studies, a number of smaller works on Hindi film musicals have been carried out though their sample size is very small. For instance Skillman’s (1986) historical survey of Bollywood musicals has covered the same terrain that Arnold had swept in her work. Similarly Cooper (1988) discusses the use of the song from the perspective of a film director such as Guru Dutt. At the same time, Beeman (1981) examines Hindi film song in comparison with the music of Hollywood films. Barnouw and Krishnaswamy (1980) study of Indian film narrative though did not delve on film songs exclusively often differed to film songs too.

Ray (1976) has written appreciably about the fusion skills of Indian music directors. Like Cooper (1988), Chatterjee (1995) too discusses the how the director combined the music with the narrative in the film Awaara (1951) directed by Raj Kapoor. Kabir (1991) has also produced a lot of literature, though some of it was never published, on film songs in relation to their importance to Hindi cinema. Booth also discussed the use of film songs in the music of Indian Brass Bands (1990 and 1992). Marcus attempted to relate film music in the context of its appearance in and influence of Biraha (1993 and 1995).

Gopal and Moorti (2008) in their collection of essays on various aspects of Hindi film songs, showing their growing contours as global and mass culture, have once again reinforced the post-critical theoretical aspects of Hindi film music.
Though Morcom recognized in her book –*Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema*– that many universities in India have done several dissertations on film music, she regrets that none of them has ever had the chance of being published (2007: 9). She points out that Professor Pradeek Kumar Dixit has completed the first ever dissertation on this subject in 1978 at Banaras Hindu University. Dixit is perhaps the first Indian author to situate the film music on modernist and traditionist foundations, and probably the first to describe the uses of the sources of Indian classical music, Indian folk music and Western music in Hindi film song style. Sinha (1991) and Dasgupta (1998) were some researchers who in a limited way had discussed the use of music in Hindi films songs (Morcom, 2007: 9). Where as Dasgupta discussed how Indian music has been an inspiring force for people to learn music in India, Sinha centred her work on how Naushad’s music has been so contributing to the Indian film music. She mostly focussed her study on how Naushad had produced hybrid genres of music ‘by combining folk and classical styles, instruments and Western style orchestration to create mood and effects relevant to the drama and setting of the songs’.

Vasudevan (2000) characterizes the ‘hybridity’ of Hindi films by identifying the combination of Hollywood ‘realist’ continuity codes that propel the linear narrative forward with the static visual codes such as tableau, the iconic forms of address, and pre-modern Indian cultural codes of looking. According to him these different cinematic codes convey meaning in different ways and create different effects. He further notes that ‘song sequences tend to contain more stasis, more iconic framing and tableaux. Morcom (2007) says that ‘if the music of song relates to narrative, then these different narrative styles may help us understand musical style in songs better’ (p 14). For most of his interpretations to Hindi film songs, Morcom was dependent directly on the theoretical frame work enunciated by Brooks (1984, 1991) and Elsaesser (1991) ‘on the role of music in melody’.

Dutta (2009) in her study of how technologies negotiated nationalist identities through ‘hybridization’ of music in Hindi films songs have identified that films like *Laggaan* (2001), *Kal Ho Na Ho* (2003), *Swades* (2004) and *Rang de Basanti* (2006) have produced music that combined folk, traditional, classical besides Western classical. She has also found that folk, traditional and classical have been vaguely demarcated against Western classical and have been in direct correlation with the narrative of the film. She says that ‘Music very clearly becomes a cultural marker of difference through the quotation of a putatively ‘western classical music’ in respect of scenes that relate to cantonment of the British in the film *Lagaan* (2001).
Hughes (2007) has found that music recording companies and their products prefigured, mediated and transcended the music relationship between stage drama and Tamil cinema. He was of the view that music recording industry not only transformed Tamil drama music into a commodity for mass circulation before the advent of talkies but also mediated the musical relationship between Tamil drama and cinema, paving a way for creation of film songs of a new and distinct popular music genre.

Jha (2003) in her work described the songs in pop in Indian film, as meta narratives, allow the spectators to create meaning within the larger, scattered, melodramatic filmic space. Consequently, she says, they provide insight into an otherwise incoherent narrative. Jha holds the view that song-and-dance sequences, which had already been part of the formulaic device for Hindi cinema, became one of the key transmitters of India culture, since the music industry and the consumption of music on the radio heavily relied upon films to produce music as commodity. Drawing upon Vasudevan’s thesis of popularity and reception (1998), the multiple positions from which its performance is conducted, Jha concludes that cinema constitutes songs, along with ‘other para-narratives’ as ‘narrational instances’ of its own authority. According to Jha, the Hindi film songs are viewed as working extradietegically both within the filmic space and in the material world. The particular dialectic that exists, says Jha, between the two spaces anticipates a revisioning of the function of melodrama and its relationship to the film, the songs and the spectator. Using this as a spring board for her research, she tried to investigate the relationship between women and cinema, and the articulation of post-colonial nationalism through song spaces in Hindi films.

Skillman (1986) has been critical of a number of facets of Indian musicals. Firstly he could not agree to the same singer singing for various characters. Citing example of Lata Mangeshkar’s stupefying phenomenon in which her singing histrionics covered a number of heroines and young or adolescent future heroes, Skillman writes that Indian audience are not concerned with either the voice of the character in the film or visual enactment of the things. He is of the view that Indian audience are only concerned with first, how well a singer renders a song, rather the logic of what a character sings (p 137). He pointed out that audience place emphasis on ‘the context, action and emotion being expressed and not whether it is appropriate to the character’ (p 138). The sentiment, according to him, often the character expresses is the reflection of audience’s emotion. He made a very general observation that Indian audiences identified with film songs more instead of classical music and were fascinated by the instrumentation. He concludes that film song is popular Indian
music and has achieved the status of transcending through cultural, religious, linguistic, caste and class barriers by appealing to the ethos common to all Indian traditions and societies. In other words, he described the film song in India as a bridge between the traditional and the rapidly developing modern society.

Using the revolution the voice and artistry of Lata Mangeshkar have brought about in Hindi film industry, Srivastava (2004) explored how her voice has lent stability to the voices of female actresses affording identities through a number of elements of Indian modernity including nationalism. He also tried to interpolate Lata’s music phenomenon over the cultural politics of Indian masculinity. According to him, Lata’s voice is one important index to explore a nationalist discourse in which a ‘woman’ as a sign had fluctuated between the poles of the mother and the sexually dangerous being. He had explored these through the career of Lata Mangeshkar (p 2019). Regarding Lata’s vibrant voice and its impact on market orientations of both films and cassettes, Srivastava quotes the words of Manuel (1993: 267):

‘If vocal style (aside from the language) is the single most important marker of aesthetic identity, then it can be argued that Lata’s singing voice has instituted a very specific identity for Indian womanhood, one which has almost no precedence in traditional forms of Indian music’. (1993:52)

Many critiques believed that Lata’s melody became the ultimate measure of sweetness in a woman’s voice and her mimics could hardly be distinct from her. Scholars like Deshpande (2004) however differed attributing some of the Western terms like ‘falsetto’ to Lata’s voice by Srivastava (p 5179). Deshpande has virtually dissected every statement of Srivastava (2004) and dismissed the contention that Lata came to be the representing voice of women identity in India.

Bose (2006) has also observed that the entry of Lata Mangeshkar into Bombay film industry has revolutionized the film song texture and composition. Quoting from Bhaskar Chandavarkar, who wrote the first ever analytical book on film music— *The Tradition of Music in Indian Cinema*—he writes that film song became the template not only for film music but also for music in India. Bhaskar dated the emergence of film song as 1944 in his work. He writes : ‘From the time of Lata’s entry, the Indian film song began to invariably have harmony, an assortment of voices with varied melodies and a large colourful orchestra, which symbolized the power of music director’ (p 226).

Gupta (1991) writes that the imminence of film song shared by all lifts its way above the bounds of realism required by particular films and gives it an autonomous, transcendental
presence in society. He is of the view that the predominance of song dimension has thwarted the growth of more cinematic elements and the development of a cinematic grammar, though, according to him, ‘this has been neutralized to some extent by the sophistication of ‘song picturization’, a unique feature of Indian cinema that abounds in cuts and crisp and brisk movements besides special effects (1991: 63). Gupta underscores the autonomy the song enjoys in Indian cinema. Commenting on the broader side of the film song, Gupta writes: “Songs have an important climactic, orgasmic function as well, Indian cinema being the most erotic in the world behind its puritanical facade” (p 67). He traces the country’s acceptance of Hindi films is largely due to its film songs. Both regional films and Hindi films thrive in India solely due to the songs and the way songs have been picturized.

Bakshi (1998) in her work on Raj Kapoor films and songs has identified a number of hit tunes produced from Kapoor’s film industry. Commencing with *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai* (1960, directed by Radhu Karmakar), she narrates how Ganges has been a metaphor in various films such as *Sangam* (1964 directed by Raj Kapoor), *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* (1985, directed by Raj Kapoor), etc reflecting the contemporary developments in India. Even the songs in these films have assumed the dimensions of symbolism, especially as metaphors to changing dynamics and ethics of life. She gives an example of film *Sangam* to this effect where *Sangam* (Confluence) does not refer to the confluence of three holy rivers-Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati. She traces out cross-culturalism in *Jis Desh Mein* to the original title of inspiration emanating from the famous work of Mikhail Sholokhov’s Russian novel—*And Quiet Flows the Don*. Among an innumerable songs she sketched out, the melodies like *Mera Naam Raju gharana anam, behti hai Ganga wahan mera dham*, and *Ram teri Ganga Maili Ho Gayi* have assumed uniqueness due to Raj Kapoor’s intervention to make the film commercially a super hit. So, Bakshi says that some of the scenes in the end of these films have been poignantly emotional to be hit at the box office solely due to Raj Kapoor’s personal description of the scenes.

Another interesting piece of review worth citing from modernist and traditionist perspective is that of Bose’s (2006) excellent review of Indian film music in the back drop of their traditional origination. Though Bose has made undoubtedly a very good attempt to explain the differences between the Western music and Hindustani music, he has not been clear whether Hindustani music and Carnatic music have origins around same time. In fact, Carnatic music has come from divine traditions, as is believed widely in the South, whereas Hindustani music has emerged from mundane world of entertainment that has its birth in the
royal court of Mughals. Though both Carnatic and Hindustani combined folk music traditions of their respective areas, Carnatic is much older than Hindustani. Due to its divine inclinations, groomed and refined in the hands of saints like Annamayya, Ramadas and Tyagaraja (all from Telugu linguistic world), the ragas of Carnatic music had been limited both in scale and varieties compared to Hindustani which had more ragas and higher scales. Bose was simply unaware of Southern music traditions which borrowed some ragas like Bhoopali etc from Hindustani. However, Bose’s work, of all the works we reviewed, offered fundamental theoretical in puts to understand the differences between Hindustani and the Western music. He interpreted that Indian music is individualistic and its words and music tunes cannot be separated from one another. He is also of the view that due to its individualistic nature, Indian music is more prone to offer a range of variety tunes compared to Western music. He observed that Western music is independent of the words and it is mostly chorus in nature, not individualistic (p 229).

Bose further elaborated how each instrument from the Western music traditions has been absorbed into Indian classical music (p 231). Chatterjee’s (1995) critique on Hindi music offered by various directors from Shantaram to Bimal Roy was based on multi-cameral examination. He not only tried to draw distinction between Indian music and western music but also attempted to identify the unique blend of director’s persona on the kind of music he rendered to each of his films. Commenting on Bimal Roy’s film music he says, ‘His approach to song picturization was matter-of-fact, austere, but behind this mask of near-Gandhian rectitude was a deeply romantic temperament. Chatterjee cites an example of Bimal Roy’s picturization of a song in film Parineeta (1951-52).

The song ‘Gore gore haathon mein mehndi lagaike’ (Fair hands... on them bridal henna) is rich in social and psychological reverberations in its content but spare and grand in its presentation. The sensitive mixture of the song in the background and the overpowering emotion only hinted at in the sparse dialogue between the lovers has a parallel in the song ‘Priya praan kathore...’ an adaptation of a traditional composition from Nagarik (1952) by Ritvik Ghatak. (Chatterjee, 1995: 207)

Chatterjee also reiterated that besides Bimal Roy and Guru Dutt, it was Raj Kapoor who infused life into picturization of film songs. He considered Anand brothers as next to these great trio-directors for filming songs.

Dudrah (2006) examined the development of Bollywood cinema as cultural form which through its use of song and music spans both film and popular culture. He not only examined the origins of song and music but also tried to explain the position of song and music vis-a-vis the movie’s narrative and economy. He opined that song and dance play a more ‘organic’
role operating beyond the level of ‘show business’ spectacle to further the film’s narrative and to enrich it through metaphor. In his view, the song is a connection to tradition and modernity (p 48). According to him, if one missed a song, he/she missed out an important link to the narrative itself (p 49).

Murthy (2013) has extensively surveyed the whole gamut of remakes of Telugu films from both Telugu to Hindi and vice-versa. He not only identified how remakes enabled the cross-cultural flows from one culture to another but also demonstrated the manner the cross-cultural flows are embedded in the frames of remakes using moving images of filmic sequences and songs. Murthy and Bedajit (2012) study on Devdas remakes has clearly documented a number of such cross-cultural markers in the film remakes as well as remakes of film songs.

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