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On oath

I solemnly declare on oath that I have written the present Master thesis by myself. I have indicated all sources and quotations – which are cited according to the Harvard method – as such in both words and understandings. The work has not been put forward to another examination authority.

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Angelika Köpf

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“Share our similarities, celebrate our differences”

M. Scott Peck

Dedicated to my late father Dr. Rudolf Köpf and my dear friends David and Luisa Asirvatham

## **Abstract**

This master thesis discusses the research question: To what extent are South India and cultural differences in the relationship between North and South Indians portrayed in contemporary mainstream Hindi films, taking into account specifically the examples of *Chennai Express*, *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein*, and *2 States*?

The topic is approached through the theories of Cultural Studies, the definition and meaning of identity, especially in the Indian context as well as the significance of stereotypes in general and stereotypical portrayals in films. Taking the methods of the film analysis to analyse three examples of Hindi films, likewise conducting interviews with experts from Pune, India, Manchester and London, UK – achieved through KWA stipend of the University of Vienna – the research question is answered. The Hindi film industry, or otherwise called Bollywood characterises a North Indian based, but pan – Indian cinema that reaches the masses of the people in India and beyond. The films are characterised by their mainstream, popular portrayal of the North Indian man/woman and the North Indian lifestyle, using stereotypes to speak to the ‘Everyman’ of India. The films are mostly shot in the languages of Hindi and Punjabi.

There are cultural distinctions between North and South India, which are recognised by society and are presented in mainstream, popular Hindi films. These differences include the different language families of the Indo- European in the north of India and Dravidian in the south, the historical perception of their ethnic and ‘racial’ social affiliation, as well as customs and traditions, which differ. The film examples chosen here were considered Bollywood box office hits of the years 2013 and 2014. All three of these Hindi films are set in South India. A love story between North and South Indians is the main theme. To analyse the image of South India and cultural differences, specific screenshots and dialogues have been selected and discussed. It can be said that in the relation between North and South Indians, the films emphasise the cultural and ethnical differences, especially between the extremes of Punjabis and Tamils, to a great extent. Stereotypical representations, however, did not only rely on the South Indian culture alone. North Indians were portrayed as ignorant others, not understanding the customs and languages of the south. It is obvious though, that the stereotypes in these films serve as caricatures, making people laugh about the multicultural, multilingual society of the nation India.

## Contents

|       |   |        |
|-------|---|--------|
| 1     | Introduction .....  | - 1 -  |
| 1.1   | Personal motivation and development of the concept .....          | - 2 -  |
| 1.2   | Research Questions.....   | - 3 -  |
| 1.3   | Aim and relevance .....   | - 4 -  |
| 1.4   | State of research.....  | - 5 -  |
| 1.5   | Methods .....   | - 7 -  |
| 1.6   | Structure.....  | - 10 - |
| 2     | Theoretical approaches.....                                       | - 12 - |
| 2.1   | Films in Cultural Studies .....                                   | - 12 - |
| 2.2   | Meaning of Identity .....   | - 14 - |
| 2.3   | Defining Stereotypes and their Perception in Films .....          | - 17 - |
| 3     | South Indian and North Indian differences .....                   | - 26 - |
| 3.1   | Introduction to the Meaning of Identity in India .....            | - 26 - |
| 3.2   | Drawing the Line between North and South .....                    | - 27 - |
| 3.3   | Historical Perspectives on the Aryan and Dravidian Heritage ..... | - 30 - |
| 3.4   | Indo- European and Dravidian Language Families .....              | - 34 - |
| 4     | The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India .....     | - 38 - |
| 4.1   | The meaning of the Mainstream Cinema of Bollywood .....           | - 39 - |
| 4.2   | India's Regional Film Industries .....                            | - 45 - |
| 4.3   | South Indian Actresses/Actors in the Hindi Film Industry.....     | - 48 - |
| 4.4   | Identity and Stereotypes in Bollywood Cinema .....                | - 51 - |
| 5     | Film examples .....   | - 58 - |
| 5.1   | Chennai Express .....   | - 58 - |
| 5.1.1 | The Portrayal of North and South Indian Differences .....         | - 59 - |
| 5.1.2 | The Linguistic Barrier .....                                      | - 66 - |
| 5.1.3 | Reviews .....   | - 72 - |
| 5.2   | Gori Tere Pyaar Mein .....  | - 78 - |
| 5.2.1 | The Portrayal of North and South Indian Differences .....         | - 79 - |
| 5.2.2 | The Dark and Fair Perception .....                                | - 87 - |
| 5.2.3 | Reviews .....   | - 92 - |

|       |   |         |
|-------|---|---------|
| 5.3   | 2 States.....   | - 94 -  |
| 5.3.1 | The Portrayal of North and South Indian Differences ..... | - 95 -  |
| 5.3.2 | The South Indian Lifestyle .....                          | - 100 - |
| 5.3.3 | Reviews .....   | - 109 - |
| 6     | Conclusion.....   | - 113 - |
|       | Appendix .....  | - 121 - |
| 6.1   | Filmography.....  | - 121 - |
| 6.2   | Bibliography .....  | - 122 - |
| 6.2.1 | Primary Literature .....                                  | - 122 - |
| 6.2.2 | Secondary Literature .....                                | - 123 - |
| 6.3   | Table of Figures.....                                     | - 130 - |
| 6.4   | Interviews .....  | - 131 - |
| 6.4.1 | Questionnaire .....                                       | - 131 - |
| 6.4.2 | Dr. Sonal Radia-Tyagi, Symbiosis University Pune .....    | - 132 - |
| 6.4.3 | Dr. Stephen Hughes, SOAS University London .....          | - 139 - |
| 6.4.4 | Prof. Dr. Rachel Dwyer, SOAS University London .....      | - 145 - |
| 7     | Abstract: German .....                                    | - 151 - |

## 1 Introduction

“These stupid biases and discrimination are the reason our country is so screwed up. It's Tamil first, Indian later. Punjabi first, Indian later. It has to end. National anthem, national currency, national teams – still, we won't marry our children outside our state. How can this intolerance be good for our country?”<sup>1</sup>

In his popular novel *2 States*, Chetan Bhagat questions the biases that exist between the various states, cultures, religions and languages in India. The popular Indian author scrutinises why the custom to refer to one's state is that vital in the Indian society. The most populous democracy in the world is struggling everyday to find a common ground within the multiculturalism and miscellaneousness to hold the Indian nation together. 29 federal states founded on the basis of the languages spoken in the respective regions guarantee that cultural identities are not only communally but constitutionally preserved. But as Bhagat said, the reality of a nation India is not enough to encourage people to look beyond their linguistic, cultural, religious and regional differences in everyday life issues. Bhagat called his book *2 States* and describes a love story between two Indians that have to fight for each other over a border of judgements between their cultures and their different states – the woman is from Tamil Nadu in the south of India and the man is from Delhi in the north of India. Especially between the southern and northern states there seems to be a great cultural gap that is most obvious on the linguistic level. The Indo-European language family throughout the north of India is incomparable to the Dravidian languages spoken in the southern part both in their roots and their social development. In an historical examination, the language barrier is not the only salient contrast. On the basis of ethnic origin, North and South Indians look on different backgrounds, historically referred to as the Aryan- Dravidian divide. Cultural identities are built on these distinctions and leads to the perception of a ‘two-world-scenario’<sup>2</sup> in the Indian society, used and formulated by regional politics and the media.

In India, the media and specifically cinema are made to attract and entertain the masses of people. Among the many film industries that are situated in some of the states, the most popular one remains the North India- based Hindi film industry. Located in Maharashtra's capital of

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<sup>1</sup> Bhagat 2009, p.102

<sup>2</sup> In India every federal state stands out through its particularities in their societies, by their state languages, the cultures that exist within. But especially between the states of the south and the states of the north, the cultural, and more importantly the linguistic differences led to the conception of India housing two different cultural regions – here so drastically referred to as ‘worlds’ but more accurately called regions – based on the formulation of the peoples' identity.



## Introduction

Mumbai, the Hindi film industry has a long history of internationally successful productions. Dominated by actors/actresses, directors, screenwriters and producers from North Indian states, for instance most popularly the Punjab, the films are mainly shot in the language of Hindi, which is why they reach most audience, not just in India but also among Non- Resident Indians (NRIs) in other countries as well. The mainstream, popular and commercial Hindi films of the otherwise- called Bollywood industry have recently picked up the relationship of oppositions between North and South India. South Indian characters have always had minor, mostly comical roles in Hindi films, but seldom were the differences between North and South India that obviously portrayed as in the films that were chosen for this thesis. *Chennai Express* was a 2013 hit and one of the most successful Hindi films ever since, according to the Indian box office. The big Hindi film actor and star Shah Rukh Khan plays a North Indian man falling in love with a South Indian woman while experiencing adventures in South India. In an astonishing career of 30 years in film business, it has been the first time for Shah Rukh Khan to actively explore the south of India in one of his films. Following *Chennai Express*, two other rather popular Hindi films were made with a similar love-plot between North and South Indians – and more accurate between Punjabi/Gujarati/Marathi urban citizens and Tamils – playing mostly in South Indian states, *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein* of 2013 and the film based on the above mentioned novel *2 States*, released in 2014.

By looking through literature, interviewing scientific experts from Symbiosis University in Pune, the School for Oriental and African Studies University of London and Manchester University, alongside analysing the three film examples, this thesis attempts to show the image of South India and especially stereotypical portrayals of the relation and differences between North and South Indians in Hindi films.

### **1.1 Personal motivation and development of the concept**

In the course of my studying, the Hindi film industry has always caught my attention as a possible ‘mirror’ for the values and views of the Indian society. The social and political situations, as well as the desires and economic trends are projected in films and therefore cinema and film industries all over the world are important resources for scientific research in social anthropology. As going to India and doing field research was not an option, I think that analysing Hindi films is a good way to gain an insight into Indian society and its preferred lifestyles and ideals. As I learned to speak Hindi, Hindi films are also a source for studying the language, expressions, and behaviours as well as for learning more about rituals, family life and problems in the northern states of India. My choice of the three examples of *Chennai Express*,

## Introduction

*Gori Tere Pyaar Mein* and *2 States* arose out of personal curiosity. I was watching all three films before I even considered writing this thesis. Since these films are made in the Hindi film industry in Mumbai, they are understood as North Indian, featuring North Indian actors/actresses, and being written in the North Indian common language of Hindi. *Chennai Express*, *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein* and *2 States* were big box office hits in India and also caught the attention of film fans and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in Europe and the United States. Watching the films, I instantly had the feeling, that they portrayed Tamils or South Indians as somehow an opposite part of the normally so familiar North Indian characters seen in the mainstream Hindi cinema.

### 1.2 Research Questions

Based on these reflections and thoughts, I formulated my research question:

**To what extent are South India and cultural differences in the relationship between North and South Indians stereotypically portrayed in contemporary mainstream Hindi films, taking into account specifically the examples of *Chennai Express*, *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein*, and *2 States*?**

Concerning the film examples specifically, I furthermore formulated three questions that I wish to answer. These are the following:

What stereotypes about South Indians are depicted?

What influence do these films have on the discussion of the Hindi film industry as a pan – Indian industry?

How may these film examples make an impact on the Indian society?

People are watching films not only to relax or forget their everyday lives by entering a filmy, fantastic world, but also to see their own society they live in being made fun of in a joking way on screen. Stereotypes and clichés are a major resource of films to play with emotions and to mirror the feelings people have about each other. The stereotypical images of differences between North and South India in the films analysed here, are also visible in the minds of the people watching the popular and widely covering Hindi cinema. Cinema has a certain power over societies, so additionally the questions formulated here serve the purpose of detecting a correlation between the cinematic world and the Indian society in reality.

### 1.3 Aim and relevance

The very popular Hindi film actor Shah Rukh Khan posted on his Twitter account March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015: “Cinema in India is like brushing your teeth. You can’t escape it”<sup>3</sup>. India is the one country in the world with the most films produced in a year. Over 1000 films are made in the various film industries. Going to the cinema and watching a film in India influences the reality of the audience to a certain extent. The late US- American anthropologist Carol A. Breckenridge interviewed Indian film viewers for her book “Consuming modernity” in 1998, summarizing her impressions as follows: “Thus most people saw cinema as having a variable influence dependent on each viewer’s innate propensity for good or bad and, perhaps, for self-reflection” (Breckenridge 1998, p.145). Most of the people Breckenridge talked to, assured her of their beliefs that cinema has an effect on society and is able to shape people’s perspectives. Films are emulating the feelings of the viewers. They are made to idealize the societies we live in or emphasize what problems the societies actually face. That is why it is essential to analyse films as a medium of popular culture in order to gain more knowledge and understanding of the way a society thinks, acts, and desires to be. Of course films in general oversubscribe the real world, but deep in the plots certain truths about social behaviours are hidden and serve the viewers to notice similarities to their own lives. The topic has certainly a current value, as it asks about the recent interest of the most successful film industry in the various regions of the country. As this question came up in the interview with the Hindi film expert Rachel Dwyer, she also asked herself, why this movement of curiosity in the south was happening: “What is it about the South that interests Shah Rukh Khan?” (cf. Dwyer interview, para.2).

The scientific analysis of mainstream Hindi or Bollywood films, so Ravi Vasudevan, “allows a unique opportunity to map the contrasting move of globalization in popular culture”. The main difference between Bollywood and Hollywood films is therefore that the latter “pushes world cultures towards homogenization”, whereas mainstream Hindi, or Bollywood films highlight a “fragmentary process” in the cultures (Vasudevan in Dwyer/Pinto 2011, p.18). But the fragmentation between North and South India in Bollywood films has not yet gained the reputation as an interesting topic for scientific Hindi film analysts. Since there have not been many films in the Mumbai based industry, which were focusing on this particular relationship, on the stereotypical thinking, the clichés and the question of, for instance, Punjabi- Tamil identities in India. It is certainly a relationship of self-versus-the-other, in many film industries used to create a feeling of ‘belonging’ to one group in comparison to another. Rajinder Dudrah

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<sup>3</sup> Khan, Shah Rukh (03/03/2015): <https://twitter.com/srkuniverse/status/573021340023693312> 15/10/2015

## Introduction

examines in his book “Bollywood travels” two popular Hindi films specifically for the representation and interpretation of ‘borders’, more precisely the border between India and Pakistan. He is questioning the use of the term and the phenomenon of ‘border’ as a boundary, but also as a differentiation of the Indian and the Pakistani identities (cf. Dudrah 2012, p.17). Dudrah’s way of exploring the use of the border in his book had an impact on the topic of this thesis. Between North and South India, although there are no state borders, there are boundaries that are visible and determine differences in the societies. It is a question of many scholars if the Hindi film industry, by showing the social and cultural distinctions, wants to create deeper gaps or deeper relationships between the two regions. All three film examples here are actually produced and play in South Indian states. There are three major points that are interesting to look at more closely in this study: Firstly, all the films chosen are films from the post- 2010 era. They are recently made films that have been very successful in India and beyond. Secondly, it is the first time that the plots of the Hindi films are stating a clear ‘two- contrasting-sides’ phenomenon. The two sides of the coin are not two nation states, such as India and Pakistan once united, but the very explicit dichotomy of northern and southern regions within the same country and nation. Thirdly, the films are emphasising explicitly the South Indian characteristics; stereotypically portraying social identities, cultural and linguistic differences of North and South Indian heritages on a comical level. I consider the structure and aim of this present thesis in the way Rajinder Dudrah described Denzin’s attempts in his *The Cinematic Society* (1995), namely as “taking up an alliance and fostering a cross-disciplinary dialogue between sociological studies of cinema (i.e., why the study of cinema matters in a society), film studies (where close attention is paid to the analysis of film texts) and cultural studies (where questions of representation and power are elaborated by way of reference to ethnographic observations of the cultural and social dimensions of cinema)” (Dudrah 2006, p.25).

### **1.4 State of research**

Search for literature was done in Austria, Great Britain and India. English, US- American, German and Indian research papers and monographies have been consulted and quoted.

The scientific literature on diverse phenomena in Hindi films is vast. Visual anthropological analyses on Hindi cinema or Tamil cinema are very popular. In brief therefore, an introduction to the cinema and films in Cultural Studies will be familiarised with studies of Douglas Kellner 1995 or Grossberg et al 1992, or Rachel Dwyer 2014. Most of the literature found focuses on the Hindi film or Bollywood industry (this is the widely used term and will be explained below in chapter 4), be it the value of the industry, as Derek Bose described it 2006 or the productions

## Introduction

and investments in Hindi films that have made the Mumbai based film industry into the most successful in the world, as described by Tejaswini Ganti 2012, Claus Tieber 2009, as well as Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel 2002 or Rajinder Dudrah 2008/ 2012.

The thesis examines the literature on the definition of stereotypes and the meaning of stereotypes in films. Walter Lippmann, US- American journalist studied the phenomenon of stereotypes in psychology in 1922. He shaped the science of stereotypes and his book *Public Opinion* will also be used in this thesis for defining the term, alongside William von Hippel's and James L. Hilton's study on stereotypes from 1996. Studies on stereotypes in films mostly focus on Hollywood film productions. Jörg Schweinitz gives a profound insight into stereotypical portrayals in films in his book from 2011, as does German author Sybille Groth 2003. Groth is getting into details on how stereotypes are part of the cultural identity of a person. Especially the medium of films uses social and cultural stereotypes and clichés, highlighting flaws and distinctive appearances ordinarily for humoristic purposes in order to identify similarities and differences between the people.

An introduction into research on identity is necessary when examining stereotypes, especially in the context of social and cultural identity (e.g. Mühler/Opp 2004, Stuart Hall 1989). Therefore, some studies on the formation of cultural identity in India were consulted to get an insight into the diversity and formation of differences based on languages, ethnicity and customs (e.g.: Chakrabarty 2003, Nehru 1946). The book *Against Stigma* by Natrajan/Greenough explains the connection of identity and formation of stereotypes in the Indian context. Quoted here is also the work of Peter Robb 1995. Robb describes the Tamil cultural identity in comparison to the 'Aryans invaders' of the north. Though the term 'race' can be misleading, it will briefly be explained through the historical conception of Dravidian/Tamil and Aryan/North Indian identity as this opposition plays a rather central role in the discussion of North and South India generally and when looking at the films (e.g.: Trautmann 1997/ 2005).

Literature on the three chosen examples of films is quite rare. However, there are interesting articles taking a mainstream Hindi film as an illustration for a sociological or psychological phenomenon regarding stereotypical portrayals (i.e. Shahnaz Khan 2009 or Akshaya Kumar 2013 or Tutun Mukherjee 2007). The analyses of these three films examined here are quite original, due to their release date and their depicting identities of the protagonists in the North-South Indian aspect, therefore the scenes picked were discussed with the chosen experts; critics reviews of the films found on social platforms will help get a public opinion of how the films

## Introduction

were received. In the case of *Chennai Express*, a book came out in 2014, which takes the film – as the title suggests – *The Success Journey of Chennai Express* in consideration compared to other Shah Rukh Khan productions. The author Koral Dasgupta, however, pays more attention to the commercial success and output of the film than the content. *2 States* is based on the book (2009) with the same name by Chetan Bhagat, which is cited in this thesis as it attaches even more importance to the stereotypes between North and South Indians as the film and helps understand the differences from a North Indian point of view. Furthermore, for the rather good portrayal of Tamils versus Punjabis, a study was found by Paul/Sridhar (2013) that compares the two states, Tamil Nadu and Punjab in terms of social and economic development. For *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein*, an important cultural aspect of India is depicted that is quite controversial, the discussion about fair complexion. South Indians are darker in complexion than North Indians and this racial attitude leads also in the films to stereotypical references on fair- skinned versus dark- skinned (general literature on this topic are e.g. Verma 2011 or Malik 2007).

### 1.5 Methods

The two methods that are used to answer the research questions are selected techniques from film analysis and the expert interview. Both of these methods are qualitative in social sciences allowing a hermeneutic and interpretative method of working on the topic.

The film analysis is a holistic analysis of films as a medium of information. As someone is able to interpret newspapers, radio and literatures, films are used to get information about sociological phenomena. The main aim of film analysis, as Werner Faulstich in his book *Grundkurs Filmanalyse* makes clear, may not simply mean discussing the plot and making suggestions as to what is going on in the film, but discovering something new about the film and its topic (cf. Faulstich 2002, p.23). For this purpose, it is necessary to look at the film in a similar way to a written text and interpret the content. As the respective author and screenplay writer, Syd Field, said: “A screenplay is a story told in images” (cf. Field 1988, p.11). The hermeneutical approach in film analysis stems from getting to understand the meaning of a certain subject or story. Used in social sciences and linguistics, text interpretation tries to reveal hidden connotations of a text to make it accessible. “Textauslegung meint Interpretation und nicht nur ein Verständlichmachen des Unverständlichen innerhalb eines Textes, sondern will auch verborgene, also nicht offenkundig zutage tretende, Bedeutungen des Textes sichtbar machen” (Hickethier 2007, p.30). As Hickethier further assures, this kind of approach declares film to be composed of many levels of meanings and topics that need to be disclosed to the audience. “Hermeneutisch orientierte Film- und Fernsehanalyse geht von der Mehrdeutigkeit

## Introduction

filmischer und televisueller Werke aus und versucht, diese Mehrdeutigkeiten erkennbar zu machen” (Hickethier 2007, p.30). It is therefore neither possible for the analyst nor for the recipient to look on a film completely objectively. To interpret a certain meaning of a film or just certain scenes or shots, the viewer cannot let go of his/her own emotions and impressions. “Interpretation heißt auch Verständigung. Sie verlangt, Gefühle und Eindrücke zu präzisieren, sich in den Bedeutungshorizont eines Werkes (oder einer Werkgruppe) hineinzubewegen, so dass es zur Überschneidung mit dem jeweils eigenen Erfahrungs- und Denkhorizont kommt” (Koebner 1990, p.6/cf. Hickethier 2007, p.31). The special feature of films is the merge of the different meanings of dialogues, shots, structure and its montage through a play of individual levels of expressions and communications, so Hickethier (cf. Hickethier 2007, p.23). The film examples chosen in the research question are comedies, either love or action comedies. As Faulstich determines, the comedy is the most popular of film genres and is settled between satire, preposterous humour, utopia and joke (cf. Faulstich 2002, p.51). The stage of comedies is the daily life of middle class civilians, fighting for their dreams, while failing on mishaps, misinterpretations and ‘humanness’, so the author. These characteristics cause the audience to feel empathy for the protagonists. “Der Kampf mit der Tücke des Objekts und mit den Obrigkeiten ebenso wie der Kampf zwischen den Geschlechtern dient dem Lachen als Form der Bewältigung des Lebens” (Faulstich 2002, p.54).

For this thesis the technique of the picture analysis is used. To analyse specific customs, traditions, emotions or characteristics, only certain sequences and shots of the films will be looked at. Scenes are built up by shots, the smallest unit of a film. Shots are sequences of pictures. Sequences are scaled with regard to their contents, to time, certain places, certain aspects of the development of the story, for example describing one day in the plot. Every sequence is defined by a beginning, middle and an end, so Bienk (cf. Bienk 2010, p.105). In order to illustrate an aspect of importance, screenshots are used. The sequence out of which the screenshot is taken will be described on the basis of the plot and the characteristic point of view. “Die Einstellung kann nach unterschiedlichsten Gesichtspunkten bestimmt werden: insbesondere nach Größe, Perspektive, Länge, Kamerabewegung und Objektbewegung sowie den Achsenverhältnissen” (Faulstich 2002, p.117). I will not analyse scenes, but will rather make a content analysis on the basis of handpicked sequences and shots specifically referring to the differences between North and South India, equal to stereotypical comments or portrayals of South Indians. The content will be discussed according to dialogues and/or screenshots of the situation relevant to the research question. Dialogues give precise information on how the characters feel about or see stereotypes displayed in the films, while the screenshots intensify

## Introduction

the images, make it easier to picture it. The screenshots are looked at in terms of the people present, where exactly they are staying, what camera angle the shot uses to provide information about the relationship of the characters to each other and what colours are utilised to highlight the characters. I will pick one conception that causes recurring stereotypes in the plots of the films. I will get into details on some sequences, shots or dialogues on this conception and discuss its importance in the reality of Indian society.

Expert interviews are used here, to back up the information received out of literature and the films. Since literature is scarce regarding this topic interviewing experts is one other data source to analyse the research questions. In the case of this thesis, the interviews provide a more intensified insight into the stories of the films. As Alexander Bogner et al. argue in their book "Experteninterviews", one is able to compensate the lack of self-observational studies, which are often not possible, by connecting the different opinions and experiences of experts in the field with background information. The interviewer chooses, whom he/she wants to interview, making them experts in the framework of his/her research (cf. Meuser/Nagel in Bogner et al 2009, p.73). Due to lack of field research for this thesis and lack of observation, expert interviews help, to gain an inside understanding on the matter. "Trennlinien zwischen Themen werden deutlich, Erfahrungsbündel und Argumentationsmuster schälen sich heraus, Relevanzen und Beobachtungsdimensionen nehmen Kontur an" (Bogner 2009, p.84). Interviewing experts is based on a questionnaire, a guidebook, which allows the interviewer to be flexible and ask questions according to the answers given. As Bogner et al. states, the expert interview is not to find the 'only truth' or the 'perfect expert', but to sensitize in progression for being able to generalise the results. „Das erinnert an das Verfahren der ‚Wahrheitsfindung‘ vor Gericht. Das Ergebnis des cross checking ist jedoch nicht ein Urteil darüber, welcher Experte Recht hat und wer die Unwahrheit sagt, sondern eine Sensibilisierung dafür, wo wir unsere Generalisierungen nicht allzu weit vorantreiben dürfen“ (Bogner et al. 2009, p.92). The experts for this Master thesis were chosen by means of their interest in Hindi and Tamil films and South India in general, as well as their scientific, academic work on or analytic experience in the Indian film industries. The first interview conducted was with Prof. Dr. Sonal Radia-Tyagi from Symbiosis University in Pune. Radia-Tyagi was Assistant Professor at the Institute for Media and Communication of Symbiosis University and she is a long-term member of the FTII- Film and Television Institute of India seated in Pune. Her academic career in both literature and cinema studies of European, U.S.- American and Indian media made her an expert in comparing the backgrounds of the films' topic in relation to Bollywood's view on the Indian society. Her work in FTII gives her insider- knowledge. The second interview partner was Dr. Stephen



## Introduction

Hughes, senior researcher at the Institute for South Asian Studies at the School for Oriental and African Studies in London. Coming from anthropology, he is expert on South Indian and Tamil cinema, having done field work in Chennai on mass media and its influence on society. The third expert was Prof. Dr. Rachel Dwyer, colleague of Stephen Hughes in the department of Social Anthropology and author/editor of many books on the Indian film industry also used in this thesis. Dwyer is known for her expertise in the Indian popular culture and especially the Hindi film industry. She is currently writing a paper on *Chennai Express*.

### 1.6 Structure

The first part of this thesis addresses theories and definitions essential for looking at the topic and the films. Out of the field of Cultural Studies, popular culture and the social meaning of cinema and films are explained. Furthermore, the significance of identity is regarded more closely and how the stereotypes based on identity, cultures and ethnic differences can be defined. As the thesis concentrates on Hindi films, special regard will be given on stereotypes in films, how they are structured and coming to use. The third chapter will outline the importance of identity in India, how the South and North Indian regions are defined by history, ethnics and language families. The fourth chapter introduces the Hindi film industry or Bollywood, referencing the most important aspects of this industry's films and comparing it to other film industries existing in India. Special attention will be given to the Tamil industry, with which the Hindi film industry shares similarities and many actors/actresses are working in both industries. A historical summary will state the cinematic work that has been done in the Hindi film industry on the portrayal of North and South Indians.

In the second part of the thesis the film examples will be discussed. Following a short introduction to the plots and trivia of the films, a first subchapter will consider the relation of the characters to their cultural differences. In the second subchapter of every film discussion, I will concentrate on one current phenomenon of differences between South and North India that is also visible in real everyday life and caused prejudices and discrimination throughout India. In *Chennai Express*, the language barrier between South and North Indian languages plays an important part. In stating facts about Tamil Nadu historically and economically in order to gain an idea of the state and its language, some dialogues and sequences will show how stereotypes of problems of understanding between Tamil and Hindi speakers are depicted. Discussing *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein*, what caught my attention was how the different skin colour was portrayed. Therefore, I will give a historical overview on how the Aryan and Dravidian ethnic distinctions came about and what influence skin colour has today. For *2 States*, the stereotypical portrayal

## Introduction

of South Indian lifestyles and eating habits was most obvious to me. So I will go into detail on the importance of these cultural features for the formation of social identity in the chapter on 2 *States*. After each of the films portrayal of the North/South Indian differences and stereotypes, one subchapter will attend to reviews and opinions on the films, looking at Internet fora and critics' reviews, alongside the sentiments of the experts interviewed. At the end, a conclusion is given and the research questions answered.

In the following text of this thesis, I will indicate some direct quotes, and dialogues from the films in retracted paragraphs. Quotes are furthermore highlighted by inverted commas and according to the Harvard method. Single quotation marks are used to highlight certain facts and give translations. Names, films, book titles and Sanskrit/Hindi/Tamil terms are written in cursive script. Sanskrit/Hindi and Tamil terms are furthermore firstly only once written in Devanāgarī /Tamil script, before written in Latin script with transliteration and translated. The names of the films as well as the names of actors and actresses are not transliterated. Footnotes are used to provide further information on a topic, give translations or to quote propaedeutic phrases at the beginning of each chapter. Disputable theories and terms are discussed, such as the Indian caste system and 'race' theory, which were important in the context and supported by literature, but do not reflect the opinions of the author of this thesis.

## 2 Theoretical approaches

“I think you always need the double perspective. Before you say that you have to understand what it is like to come from that ‘other’ place. How it feels to live in that closed world. How such ideas have kept people together in the face of all that has happened to them. But you also have to be true to your own culture of debate and you have to find some way to begin to translate between those two cultures”<sup>4</sup>

Through the field of Cultural Studies the meaning of culture will be given, and films as medium to transport culture. Society is able to identify with the filmic world and see their own social and cultural values, beliefs and fantasies carried out before their eyes. Therefore, the meaning of identity and in particular cultural identity will be explained. These theoretical approaches will help understand how stereotypes originate in a society through culture, and how films are used for stereotyping societies and their cultural identities.

### 2.1 Films in Cultural Studies

The following definitions and explanations will be observed through the theoretical approach of Cultural Studies. Cultural Studies “is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counter-disciplinary field that operates in the tension between its tendencies to embrace both a broad, anthropological and a more narrowly humanistic conception of culture” (Grossberg et al. 1992, p.4). The term culture, as the British academic Raymond Williams wrote in his book *Keywords* is “one of the three” most difficult words to explain in English. But not just in English, in every language the background of culture is hard to grasp, since it encompasses the everyday life of human beings. Williams further defines it as “a whole way of life, material, intellectual, and spiritual” (Williams 1976, p.16). The term culture comes from the Latin word ‘colere’, which was used within the meaning of agriculture to ‘farm’, ‘crop’ or ‘foster’ the harvest. Since then, it was discussed and defined by many renowned sociologists and anthropologists like Émile Durkheim. He explained culture as holistic: “It is to be found in each part because it exists in the whole, rather than in the whole because it exists in the parts” (Durkheim 1895 in McGee/Warms 1996, p.89). According to the above quoted British socialist Stuart Hall, culture means “the actual, grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any specific historical society” (Hall in Grossberg et al. 1992, p.5). And Kellner sees culture “in the broadest sense” as a” form of highly participatory activity, in which people

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<sup>4</sup> Stuart Hall, interview with Tim Adams from *The Guardian* on 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2007:  
<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2007/sep/23/communities.politicsphilosophyandsociety>

## Theoretical approaches

create their societies and identities” (Kellner 1995, p.2). As difficult as culture may be understood, so is the purpose of Cultural Studies. “Cultural studies (sic!) is thus committed to the study of the entire range of a society’s arts, beliefs, institutions, and communication practices” (Grossberg et al. 1992, p.4). In 1964 the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was founded in Birmingham. Stuart Hall became its director in 1969 and demonstrated through a wide range of anthropological, scientific research that many different subjects fall under the category of Cultural Studies, such as subcultural theories, media studies, feminism, racism or the Gramscian theory of hegemony. It can be regarded as a “location where the new politics of difference – racial, sexual, cultural, and transnational – are combined and be articulated in all their dazzling plurality” (Mani in Grossberg et al. 1992, p.1). Cultural Studies is a contextual field, depending on the study and flexible in its approach towards the topic. It follows no academic discipline and “draws from whatever fields are necessary to produce the knowledge required” (cf. Grossberg et al. 1992, p.2). The theory that found its outreach and most acknowledgements in the United States is often mistaken for the study about popular culture, so Grossberg et al. Popular culture is a very important part of Cultural Studies, but it is not only about that. However, the people (Latin *populus* means ‘public’, ‘folk’) are the main reason for studying Cultural Studies. As Grossberg et al. claim, Cultural Studies is “concerned with the popular” by firstly looking at “inter- relationships” between different cultures and, secondly by examining the everyday- life practices of people (cf. Grossberg et al. 1992, p.11). Films are part of popular culture, but more so fall under the category of media culture within Cultural Studies. Because as Douglas Kellner explains in his book *Media Culture*, Cultural Studies “(...) engages in a critique of domination and oppression the ways that media culture engages in reproducing relationships of domination and oppression”. Media culture describes the influence of mass media on society and its social and cultural life. According to the author, “(...) media culture is a contested terrain across which key social groups and competing political ideologies struggle for dominance and that individuals live these struggles through the images, discourse, myths, and spectacles of media culture“ (Kellner 1995, p.4).

Cinema and film are regarded as being “part of society”, so Gray. Especially films – but all media in general – provide an instrument for “grand discourses”, such as “political economy and globalization, class and gender, and internationalism versus nationalism” to cross the daily life of people in a society (cf. Gray 2010, p.140). However, everyone constructs his/her own reality on the basis of their observation. Many individual, selective processes are taking place, before, while and after viewing films or media. The viewer is interpreting, associating, understanding, learning, producing feelings of the perceived. While films or media have the

## Theoretical approaches

power to simplify, beautify, and offer an escape from real life. With the use of media and in particular audio-visual media, such as film, the individual reality and the reality constructed by the media are interconnected. The influence that cinema has on daily life are enormous and underestimated. “Cinema shapes lives, offers cinemagoers ways of thinking along with providing a guide to living – a way of examining emotional and moral issues, a guide to life itself” (Dwyer 2014, p.34). Cinema and films oversubscribe reality and depict certain lifestyles, traditions, rituals and ideals in an enthusiastic and ‘emotional’ way. It is a social construct, an artefact, but not reality itself. “Cinema allows the viewer to fantasize, to imagine new possibilities, new lives, new looks, new ways of doing things, as they enable narcissistic pleasure by eliding boundaries between the viewer’s body and the rest of the world” (Dwyer 2014, p.32). Horkheimer and Adorno call cinema and films instruments for manipulation, because they mislead viewers into thinking that the world outside is in fact a seamless extension of what is going on in the moving picture, so Hickethier (cf. Hickethier 2007, p.16).

The power of films may not be underestimated. The moving pictures are regarded mirrors of the emotions, dreams and ideologies, societies have. They are part of the cultural identity people define themselves with.

## 2.2 Meaning of Identity

The formulation of stereotypes in a society and hence the portrayal of stereotypes in films is based on the construction of identity and, more importantly, cultural identity. Suppan perceives that in the creation of self-perception versus the perception of the other, individuals, communities, nations use stereotypes to evaluate standards of identities (cf. Suppan 1999 in Heuberger/Suppan/Vyslonzil 1999, p.15). As Hall wrote: “Identity is always a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative” (Hall in King 1991, p.21). Stereotypes are interdependent with the conceptions of identity and therefore it is essential to discuss the meaning of identity by Indian scholars and authors.

The term identity is difficult to grasp. Identity is formed through the acknowledgement of one’s own being in relation to others, as Augé defined it. “Jegliche kollektive Identität definiert sich zuerst im Gegensatz zu anderen, so wie sich jede individuelle Identität über die Beziehung zum anderen bestimmt” (Augé 1995, p.92/ cf. Thim-Mabrey in Janich 2003, p.1). Human beings are part of social groups, in whose company they are looking for acceptance as an individual and a collective. Identity is therefore always understood as socially constructed and formed out of the “process of striving to achieve multi-symbol congruence among a group of people”, so Paul Brass (Brass 1974, p.10). According to Thapa, the main features of identity are ‘being’,

## Theoretical approaches

‘becoming’ and ‘belonging’. ‘Being’ refers to the time and space where identity is lived. ‘Becoming’ describes the way of gaining recognition for one’s own identity. The last one, ‘belonging’, seems the most essential one, so Thapa. It includes the notion of being part of a particular group of people or a nation in which the individual identity is integrated in an entity (cf. Thapa in Subba/Sinha/Nepal/Nepal 2009, p.96f). But none of these features are static, so Delanty. In his opinion, identity is constantly adapting and reformulating itself. “In an age of diversities, nothing is secure and enduring. Belonging is transient, mobile and flexible. (...) Identities are fluid and mobile, and can be endlessly reinvented by their carriers who are not constrained by space and localities” (Delanty in Flemming 2004, p.52). However, people established categories and groups to find the place they fit in. The theorist of nationalism, US-American political scientist Benedict Anderson, called them “imagined communities”. According to him, people find unity through their identification with one another in a specific territorium. It is only ‘imagined’, so Anderson “(...) because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”. Not only are communities imagined, but identities may be as well, as Peter Robb declares, taking Anderson’s term of the ‘imagined identities’ to apply it in the case of North and South Indians for instance (cf. Robb 1995, p.72). And although identity might be flexible, there are structures determining cultural, linguistic, custom- based differences between the communities or *Gemeinschaften*. The nation, according to Anderson, can be depicted as such a community, because it will always be “conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 2006, p.6f). Regarding Samuel P. Huntington, the structures of a community or nation are formulated through the questions of “who are we?” and “who are the others?” (cf. Huntington 1997, p.194). With the Peace of Westphalia in Europe 1648, a concept for the formation of national states – defining states as sovereign objects in international law with their own identity – was introduced. The political movement of nationalism and the scientific discussions on the importance of national identity emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the events of the United States declaration of independence in 1776 and the French Revolution from 1789 till 1799. Especially the meaning of national identity became ideologically relevant and still vexes scientists on how to define it properly. „In most discussions of national identity, the term is used in one of two senses. First, it refers to the inner structure and the organizing or constitutive principles of a community (...) Secondly, the term national identity is used to refer to what is uniquely peculiar, or specific to a community and distinguishes it from others“ (Parekh in Chakrabarty 2003, p.123/cf. Hettne/Söderbaum 2000, p.14/ cf. Mühler/Opp 2004, p.33). The nation might be the ultimate form of defining one’s

## Theoretical approaches

identity both politically and culturally, but it does not contradict the existence of cultural identity that is not so much restricted by state borders than by cultural similarities of a larger community. “(...) T(t)he culture of the individual is dependent upon the culture of a group or class, and that the culture of the group or class is dependent upon the culture of the whole society to which that group or class belongs. Therefore it is the culture of the society that is fundamental, and it is the meaning of the term ‘culture’ in relation to the whole society (...)” (Eliot 1949, p.19). National and cultural identity – which are often used as synonyms – are based on loyalty to a certain community and the dissociation from the other community<sup>5</sup>. Belonging to a community in return for loyalty offers protection through constitutional or mutually agreed norms and principles based on common history, religion, ethnicity or language. Loyalty as Mattheier calls it, “bezieht sich auf alle für einen Ort oder eine enge, relative homogene Region typischen Sozialverhaltensweisen und Meinungs- bzw. Bewertungsstrukturen, also auch Ortsbrauchtum, ortsübliche Kleidung und anderes mehr“ (Mattheier in Besch/Mattheier 1985, p.140). This statement is shared by Shneiderman/Tillin, who assert that „(...) ethnic identification is produced through cultural practice, for instance, through the ritual expression of deepseated attachment to territory (...) through the propitiation of territorial deities, or through public performances that demonstrate the contents of ethnic consciousness to outside observers“ (Shneiderman/Tillin 2015, p.11). Religion, language, history and popular culture – which includes arts and thereafter films and cinema – are links between the individual and its community. These are proofs of one’s identity. However, in the same way that Delanty was quoted above by saying identity is not static, Hall as well defines cultural identity as a constant “production” and process that is never really approaching Thapa’s interpretation of ‘belonging’, but is “a matter of becoming and being”. “Far from being grounded in a mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (Hall 1989, p.706). One can see from these ideas and reearch into identity that there are no boundaries to how far definitions reach. Identity is connected with culture, with nation, with history the way people want it to be connected. Or as Christiansen Flemming formulates it in his book *The Politics of Multiple Belonging*: “Culture equals nation equals home equals identity” (Flemming 2004, p.29).

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<sup>5</sup> “Acceptability of a culture to other cultures is grounded on this process which can be called a process of ‘selfing the other and othering the self’”, so Biswas, who calls it “cultural *Swaraj*”, cultural self-rule of a community and its identity. If one community denys the other to live its cultural *Swaraj*, it is not possible to retain it for itself (Biswas in Subba/Sinha/Nepal/Nepal 2009, p.68).

## Theoretical approaches

The equalisation of nation, culture and identity has been depicted with the sentiment of 'belonging'. Of course, one has to question this kind of parallel. History has shown that the nationalistic politics avail themselves of the equalisation of nation and identity to formulate a 'oneself- against- the- other- scenario'.

### 2.3 Defining Stereotypes and their Perception in Films

Along the lines of culture, nation, home and identity, the society one is born into and lives in is based on constant thoughts of how its particularities distinguish it from other societies. The Pulitzer- Prize winning reporter and writer Walter Lippmann (1889- 1974) wrote in 1922: "In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture" (Lippmann 1922, p.81). One's culture – in order to keep people grounded – provides prefabricated opinions about oneself and the others. As Lippmann goes on: „We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions, unless education has made us acutely aware, govern deeply the whole process of perception“ (Lippmann 1922, p.90). Stereotypes emerged out of these preconceptions. Hilton/von Hippel affirm Lippmann's notion that stereotypes are constructed on the basis of "previously stored knowledge" to create new knowledge about a certain subject or object (cf. Hilton/von Hippel 1999, p.238).

The term stereotype is composed of the ancient- Greek words *stereo*, which means 'solid' or 'steady' and *typos*, which means 'form', 'shape', 'mode'. The definition of stereotype given by Lippmann, who first used the term in science, therefore is:

„The systems of stereotypes may be the core of our personal tradition, the defences of our position in society. They are an ordered, more or less consistent picture of the world, to which our habits, our tastes, our capacities, our comforts and our hopes have adjusted themselves. They may not be a complete picture of the world, but they are a picture of a possible world to which we are adapted. In that world people and things have their well- known places, and do certain expected things. We feel at home there. We fit in. We are members. We know the way around. There we find the charm of the familiar, the normal, the dependable“ (Lippmann 1922, p. 95).

The capacity of stereotypes lays in their ability to structure the information and impressions people absorb from their surroundings in their daily life and give them guidance, so Groth. In order to do so, boundaries are established through social differentiation. The own group now



## Theoretical approaches

becomes differed from the others (cf. Groth 2009, p.115). Differences arise, so the Indian historian Gyanendra Pandey, co- founder of the Subaltern Studies<sup>6</sup> out of “deeply rooted conditions of apartness”, such as the differences in sex, male versus female, or in skin complexion, black versus white, or sexual orientation, homosexuals versus heterosexuals (cf. Pandey 2011, p.2). One out of these binaries “is usually the dominant one, so Jaques Derrida, explained by Hall, i.e. the white dominates the black, the male dominates the female (cf. Hall 1997, p.235). Stereotypes as inter- group differentiations serve three purposes, so Mühler/Opp. They create a simple, typical perception of the other groups, reduce the complexity of social situations and allow interpretations of these social situations that include justifications of negative opinions leading up to discrimination: “Insofern erfüllen Stereotype als Produkt interpersonaler oder intergruppalen Differenzierungen mindestens drei zentrale Funktionen: a) sie schaffen eine einfache, typisierte Wahrnehmung von Fremdgruppen (...), b) reduzieren damit die Komplexität der sozialen Situation und ermöglichen c) eine Interpretation der sozialen Situation sowie eine Rechtfertigung von negativen Einstellungen bis hin zu Ungleichbehandlung und Diskriminierung“ (Mühler/Opp 2004, p.195). According to psychological scientific research, stereotypes occur in our social life as four aspects, so Waldemar: firstly as generalisations, secondly as outcomes of deficient thinking processes, thirdly as categorisations and fourthly as customs (cf. Waldemar 1982, p.8).

Firstly, generalisations are the most common method of applying stereotypes in societies. They are based on the specific features of a person that are transmitted to the social group he/she declares himself/herself belonging to. The basis for forming generalisations is the person’s reality in the specific time and place, so these stereotypes can be called object schemas of general differences. But the problem here is, so Hilton/von Hippel, that one tends to ignore individual differences. “Whereas a variety of stereotypes are based on real group differences (e.g. cultural stereotypes about food preferences), we believe that stereotypes based on relatively enduring characteristics of the person (such as race, religion, and gender) have enormous potential for error” (Hilton/von Hippel 1999, p.241). Generalisations include national and racial stereotypes, stereotypes about occupations, but also regional, ideological, religious and economical stereotypes (cf. Waldemar 1982, p.9f).

Secondly, stereotypes are also emerging as “Ergebnis eines fehlerhaften Denkprozesses”, ‘outcomes of deficient thinking processes’, so to paraphrase Waldemar. This means, the

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<sup>6</sup> Subaltern Studies is based on a project by South Asian scholars, who scientifically examine the post-colonial societies. Out of Antoni Gramsci’s works on cultural hegemony, the ‘subaltern’ – meaning the part of society that lives under hegemonial power, get to tell the history out of their perspective.

## Theoretical approaches

stereotype is based on information from dubious and insufficient sources that, similar to rumours, are spread in society. Stereotypes are often compared to myths. Every society or community solidifies its cultural identity with myths that often have unreliable sources of the past and, as Roth claims, qualify “stereotype, verfestigte Geschichtsbilder”, stereotypical, firmly established pictures of history (cf. Roth in Heuberger 1998, p.36). The purpose of myths is to give a kind of undiscovered, mystical vibe that serves the entertainment of people. Myths rely on “regularity and repetition” as well as emphasising “the importance of the familiar over the new” and highlighting “what is ritually communicated and received” (Schweinitz 2011, p.59). Stereotypes that originated as outcomes of deficient sources often live on as myths, where the actual source is obscure. On the linguistic level, stereotypes, like myths, become thereafter part of jokes, fairy tales, legends, anecdotes, and folk songs, so Groth. They may be expressed in forms of proverbs or sayings that are picked up by a cultural group. In the arts likewise, caricatures and cartoons contain stereotypes, also murals or graphic designs used in advertisements or films (cf. Groth 2009, p. 26).

Thirdly, stereotypisation is also regarded as categorisation. The act of putting people in certain categories on the basis of their ethnic or racial characteristics is almost a “natural cognitive tendency” and is done almost subconsciously, so Kaiser: “Stereotypes are ‘pictures in the head’, or mental images that receivers use to place others into categories and then to apply certain cognitive structures. The danger of stereotyping is evident in contexts where a sender does not actually fit the category in question and/or the cognitive structures applied result in an oversimplified, exaggerated, or inaccurate assessment” (Kaiser 1997, p.255/ cf. Allport 1971 in Groth 2009, p.21).

Fourthly, out of the behaviouristic theories, the perception arises of the stereotype as “Gewohnheit”, ‘custom’, meaning the habitual and customary human reactions to a particular subject or object. “Stereotypen werden als Reaktionen gesehen, die sowohl für das Urteilsobjekt als auch für den Urteiler charakteristisch sind“ (cf. Waldemar 1982, p. 9). But this last aspect of stereotypes has not yet become part of profound empirical research. However, customs are similar to the act of categorising. They are subconsciously carried out and become implicit stereotypes. Katz/Bradley point to the fact that “An implicit stereotype is a stereotype that is powerful enough to operate without conscious control” (Katz/Bradley 1933, p.1). In films, stereotypes are acted out and their background is unscrutinised. The audience watches stereotypical comments or behaviours usually in the context of their everyday- life- customs,

## Theoretical approaches

traditions and habits that the films do not and need not indicate explicitly, and hence are subconsciously accepted by the movie-goers.

Stereotypes are understood as positive, neutral, or negative in comparison to prejudice, which has only negative meaning. “They may be viewed as strategies for simplifying and sorting the complex array of information supplied by appearance and for reducing uncertainty and apprehension in initial interactions with others. The concept of prejudice, however, does have negative implications for interactions. Prejudice results when (1) the stereotypes that are held are rigid and (2) any information about a person that conflicts with the assigned stereotype is disregarded or incorrectly perceived. (...) stereotyping consists of making an identification of another person (...) without identifying with that person” (Kaiser 1997, p.255f). In psychology, prejudices are called applied social stereotypes, meaning that stereotypes are used to determine a person explicitly in a social group (cf. Hilton/von Hippel 1999, p.256). While a stereotype is an image of certain qualities that a social group or members of a group have, prejudice is defined as the negative attitude towards this group, so Groth. “Allgemein scheint ein Konsens darüber zu bestehen, daß (sic!) Stereotype kognitive Konzepte sind, die Verallgemeinerungen über Personen oder Menschengruppen darstellen. Damit können die eigene Person oder Gruppe (Autostereotype) und auch fremde Personen oder Gruppen gemeint sein (Heterostereotype)“ (Groth 2009, p.22). Prejudice on the other hand is, as Allport saw it, an „antipathy“, which is based on “faulty and inflexible generalization” (Allport 1954, p.9). Most of the time stereotypes, but also prejudices are intersectionally used. Intersectionality means that different characteristics or features of a person are brought together to build up stereotypes or prejudices.

Racism serves here as an example as being the root for many social stereotypes and social discrimination. “‘Race’ in English covers a multitude of meanings, that could and did comprise at one time or other such varied concepts as ethnicity, tribe, clan, caste, nationality, religion and so on. The German term ‘Rasse’ hardly corresponds to this. It is defined in a more narrowly biological sense (...)” (Hellmann-Rajanayagam in Robb 1995, p.110). Kaiser also claims that while ethnicity is a cultural concept, race is a biological concept. “However, the concept of race cannot be defined scientifically because of the variations within phenotypes (categories based on physical attributes)” (Kaiser 1997, p.444f). The term race is no longer a term that is socially acceptable. It lives on mostly on the “default lines of skin colour and ancestry (...)” (Mevorach in Natrajan/Greenough 2009, p.237). According to Mevorach, there is a differentiation between “race-based” discrimination, which is regarded along the lines of descent, skin colour, and common history, and “prejudice-based” discrimination, which concentrates on political,

## Theoretical approaches

ideological, and cultural diversities (cf. *ibid.*). It becomes visible that stereotypes and prejudices on race are always negatively connotated, although the English term has far less historically-charged, harmful meaning. Nonetheless, this thesis will describe the debate of 19<sup>th</sup> century discussion on race between North and South Indians. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify that race/racism only becomes a negative connotation when socially constructed and used as stereotypes and prejudices against a group of people. According to Lippmann, films tend to be an influential transmitter of visualising what importance race in societies has: “Those who wish to censor art do not at least underestimate this influence (...) Thus there can be little doubt that the moving picture is steadily building up imagery which is then evoked by the words people read in their newspapers. In the whole experience of the race there has been no aid to visualization comparable to the cinema” (Lippmann 1922, p.91). And although written in 1922, Lippmann’s statement is still approachable even today.

“Stereotypes are always a thing to part something from something else, but I mean these are just...no one can get away from stereotyping. Whenever you use a kind of social category, you are making a kind of generalization, you know. As if you are speaking for a large corporate body of people. It is always dangerous and it never really works” (Hughes interview, para.15).

As Hughes claims in the interview, stereotypes are images of the self in contrast to the other. Especially in films, the portrayal of the self against the other is one of the key ingredients of films in order to visualise group belonging. Insofar, it is essential to define stereotypes in films as “intergruppale Phänomene” – inter- group phenomenons – so Groth, who wrote about stereotypes in films in her book *Bilder vom Fremden*. The individual holds – due to his/her belonging to a social group – specific mindsets, emotions and beliefs about the own group and other social groups. These are called inter-group phenomenons, so Groth: “Sie sind individuelle Einstellungen, Affekte und Überzeugungen, die ein Individuum auf der Basis seiner Zugehörigkeit zu einer sozialen Gruppe gegenüber der eigenen und anderen sozialen Gruppen innehat“ (Groth 2009, p.31f).

The purpose of films is to show stereotypes in order „to correct the perceptions” and provide viewers a „differentiated“ perspective, so Schweinitz (cf. Schweinitz 2011, p.43). One of the key aspects of ideological criticism in the 1970s was that films could have positive effects on the movie-goers regarding their prejudices for each other’s social and cultural group belonging. Especially when it comes to the portrayal of foreigners or minorities, stereotypes are mostly negatively connotated. The foreigner can be regarded suspiciously as the ‘alien’. Film stories

## Theoretical approaches

are situated according to a hierarchy of the characters. In this hierarchy the foreigner will be shown subordinated, working devotedly in the shadow of the main characters. “Für dieses Muster der Fremddarstellung wird auch gern das Kind- Schema verwendet. Die Infantilisierung des Fremden bedeutet dabei die Beherrschung des Fremden und stellt somit die vorhandenen Machtverhältnisse nicht in Frage“ (Groth 2009, p.103). The way films have transported stereotypes of the other group versus the own one has also economic and political aspects, so Groth. The state can be interested in filmic stereotypes about other cultures to generate a feeling of collectiveness in its own socio- cultural group: “Daß (sic!) Stereotype im Film transportiert werden, hat auch einen bedeutenden wirtschaftlichen Aspekt, genauso wie der Staat bemüht ist, stereotype Bilder anderer Kulturen im Film weiterleben zu lassen, um das Bestehen kollektiver Identitäten zu unterstützen“ (Gorth 2009, p.116). Dudrah is of the opinion that films about different cultures are therefore constructing barriers between states, regions or groups: “In crossing such socio-cultural borders in the production and uses of the films and popular culture by filmmakers and audiences, this allows the creation of border places and spaces” (Dudrah 2012, p.99).

To separate stereotypes from the individual in the film is difficult. The individual will always be imbedded in the context of the story by the viewer and instantly stereotyped. To furthermore define a character, films usually introduce counter figures, so Schweinitz. “Creating such pairs of opposites accentuates the unique qualities of the figures, and thus the discrepancy between them, to a greater extent than already effected by the formation of types. This allows readers and film spectators to rapidly assign values and meaning, provides clarity, and propels the plot forward by creating conflicts” (Schweinitz 2011, p.46). Thus, films are not creating individuals, but types, out of which one can determine the ‘complex’ type from the ‘conventional’ type for instance. “What it means is that this is [creating types] is the movies’ way of creating individuals: they create individualities. For what makes someone a type is not his similarity with other members of that type but his striking separateness from other people” (Cavell 1979, p.33). The popular mainstream film, which is made for the masses of people, always puts special emphasis on the portrayal of types, in order to keep it intelligible for viewers of all cultures and societies. In regard to the relation with reality, the film characters are stereotyped along two aspects, so Schweinitz – social- science and narrative. According to the social- science concept, stereotypes emerge from everyday life- stereotypes that separate the self from the other by profession, country, and culture. Schweinitz takes the example of “the Americans, the Russians (...) or in other contexts the homosexual, the housewife”. While along the lines of the narrative concept, stereotypes arise out of the context of the story and plot. Relying on the

## Theoretical approaches

imagination of the viewers, it links the narrative to the mental images of the viewers (cf. Schweinitz 2011, p.48f).

Following here are examples of how stereotypes are generated as images of the self versus the other. As Groth lists it, there is firstly the language that transports stereotypisation in films. The plot lives on the monologues, dialogues or speeches of characters. Through the spoken word, stereotypes are subconsciously absorbed by viewers. Regarding Uta Quasthoff's research, four categories of stereotypical linguistic images exist. "Die einfachste verbale Form des Stereotypes ist die Prädikation, also die Zuweisung von Eigenschaften und Verhaltensweisen zu der bezeichneten Gruppe (...)" 'Predication' means the spoken act through which certain qualities and dialogue-specific attitudes are applied to a specific group of people or specific conduct of that group. The next category depicts simple comments that characters make, which are actually based on overall public statements. So, some comments in the film live through proverbs, jokes or historically carried accounts that exist in societies and are used in films, mostly to connect with reality. An additional category of linguistic stereotypes in films are the opinions and beliefs of the characters that are shared with the audiences, but which are based on the character's own judgement of the filmic world. The last category can only be identified from context, so Quasthoff. Stereotypes of this category therefore develop out of the spoken word and trigger an individual reaction from the viewer connecting it to stereotypes he/she knows about (cf. Quasthoff 1973, p.248). Not only the spoken language, also the gestural language has an effect of triggering. Certain gestures, facial expressions, emotions fall in this category (cf. Schweinitz 2011, p.188).

Secondly, according to Groth, the story of a film is carried by stereotypisation. The plot follows a pattern of sequences that give an outline of what the story is about. This pattern is very traditional and follows rules to simplify the process of making the film. Therefore, film plots contain certain situations that are connected to typical or stereotypical plot models, for example weather conditions, or landscapes, or countries, causing the viewer to know what is coming in the plot (cf. Schweinitz 2011, p.57ff).

Thirdly, the cinematic instruments have a profound influence on the movie-goers as well. Particular sounds, music, volume in separate scenes, the cut and how pictures are composed, but also camera angles can highlight stereotypes. Showing a character at a low angle, for instance, one gives the stereotypical image of a highly powerful person. The opposite can be said about the high angle, giving the audience the role of looking down on the characters, making them appear unimportant or powerless in contrast to the other characters.

## Theoretical approaches

Fourthly, Gorth is of the opinion that the stars playing the characters transport cultural stereotypes. “Wesentliche Komponenten des Phänomens Star sind Erfolg, Image, Wirtschaftlichkeit und Wirkung (‘Idolwirkung’, ‚Identifikation‘). Von Bedeutung bei einem Star ist weniger die reale Person als sein Image“ (Groth 2009, p.97). Schweinitz calls it “imago”, that lives on in the actor’s or actress’ off- screen image and is mistaken for the actor’s or actress’s personality. This imago is often carried on from one film to the next (cf. Schweinitz 2011, p.52). There are some actors/actresses who claim that they never lose a specific character they once portrayed, being frequently identified with the character’s qualities.

Fifthly, some cultural stereotypes are synonymous with certain genres (cf. Groth 2009, p.98). This fifth instrument of filmic stereotypes highlights the previously discussed definitions of stereotypes being born out of myths. An example would be the hero that has to fight for his honour and defend his world in action films. The myth of the good winning over the bad is much more closely related to the genre of action films than romantic comedies.

Of course, these instruments are much more present in popular films than in art house films or parallel cinema, which will be discussed below. But films that are speaking to the masses of society, trying to capture every person in some kind of way pay much more attention to the “enjoyment of the repetition and the confirmation of the familiar” than parallel cinema (cf. Schweinitz 2011, p.104). The mythological subtext homogenises and satisfies the needs of the mass audiences for sensibilities, wishes and desires. It stands in contrast to what is taking place in the scientific, intellectual world. This world represents a process of *Entzauberung* or ‘Demystification’, as German philosopher and film theorist Siegfried Kracauer calls it. “Kracauer thus was one of the first critics, if not the very first, to articulate this aspect of the intellectual antagonism toward the stereotypes of popular film – which ultimately boils down to the objection that the fantasies congealed in these patterns tend toward wish fulfilment and contradict a rational, factual, truthful view of the world” (Schweinitz 2011, p.105). Kracauer was a critic of stereotypes in mainstream films, as he saw the filmic world as utopian and far too powerful in educating people. As Schweinitz quotes him, the famous Italian filmmaker Roberto Rossellini has said: “Cinema must teach people to know themselves, to acknowledge each other, instead of always telling the same stories. Otherwise one just produces variations on the same theme” (Schweinitz 2011, p.111).

However, stereotypes are not inventions of film industries to capture the audience. Stereotypes exist without films and originate from human interactions. Films are the instruments with which

Theoretical approaches

to highlight stereotypes and create the images of the self versus the other in a visual, popular and patterning way.



### 3 South Indian and North Indian differences

“The people of each region look upon the other with suspicion and often contempt, giving rigidity to the differences which do exist (...)”<sup>7</sup>

This chapter gives an introduction of the meaning of identity in India and how identity is transferred to the regions of south and north in terms of geographical, historical, ethnical and linguistic perspectives.

#### 3.1 Introduction to the Meaning of Identity in India

India is an exceptional example of a multicultural state and the discussion on a national identity in the Indian context has always captured the attention of scholars throughout the world. The British colonialism held the country’s cultural groups together but it wasn’t until after independence that the newly formed state had to prove that it was in fact a nation. Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s Prime Minister from 1947 to 1964 sought first and foremost the unity of the states, trying to find a national identity in addition to the several cultural and linguistic particularities that existed in the society. He wrote in his book *The discovery of India* (1966) about the challenge of finding a uniting character:

“The Pathan and the Tamil are two extreme examples; the others lie somewhere in between. All of them have their distinctive features; all of them have still more the distinguishing mark of India. It is fascinating to find how the Bengalis, the Marathas, the Gujratis, the Tamils, the Andhras, the Oriyas, the Assamese, the Canarese, the Malayalis, the Sindhis, the Punjabis, the Pathans, the Kashmiris, the Rajputs, and the great central block comprising the Hindustani-speaking people, have retained their peculiar characteristics for hundreds of years (...)” (Nehru 1966, p. 61).

Nehru articulated the slogan of ‘Unity in Diversity’. The fact that every Indian has their own cultural heritage and thereafter identity unites the people and forms the Indian nation creating indeed unity in diversity, so the hope. “Though outwardly there was diversity and infinite variety among our people, everywhere there was that tremendous impress of oneness, which had held all of us together for ages past, whatever political fate or misfortune had befallen us” (Nehru 1966, p.59). The establishment of democratic structures and a federal system based on the establishment of linguistic states made it possible to cope with the plurality of ethnos and

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<sup>7</sup> Hardgrave 1965, p.8

languages. The Indian democracy works because regional and cultural identities of Indians are acknowledged along the same lines and equal to each other, not pushed aside politically in favour of a particular one. Multiculturalism and multi-ethnic societies need the state and nation to be open for change, adaptations and constant cultivation. As Nesiiah characterizes it, India is a nation “where everyone is a minority” and furthermore: “Cross-cutting lines of identity and difference can be tracked along multiple axes: language, religion, caste, tribe, region (...)“ (Nesiiah in Ghai 2000, p.54). Federalism was the system that succeeded in regulating multiculturalism and communities’ claims: “Mit dem Föderalismus ist schon immer Identitätspolitik betrieben worden, vor allem seit er unterschiedlichen Ethnien als Schutzschild ihrer Identitätsbewahrung zu dienen begann” (von Beyme 2007, p.25). The states have enough authority to participate on the national level and regulate politics on the state’s level. For most of the Indians regional politics are much more interesting than national politics. The interest in the regional and state’s politics implies the identification with the respective state and its linguistic and cultural particularity in comparison to the other states and especially the national politics. However, the nation of India remains as an overall symbol. The multicultural identities have never opposed the existence of a national identity. “I think that at almost any time in recorded history an Indian would have felt more or less at home in any part of India (...)”, so Nehru in 1966 (Nehru 1966, p.62).

National identity in India subsists on the fact that people have many different forms of belonging. This identity might relate to the state one lives in, it might relate to the language that someone speaks, to the religion that someone practices, as well as in India it also might relate to the caste<sup>8</sup> one is born into. In the case of this topic, the significance of South Indian identity will be discussed on the basis of its geographical area, the ethnical ancestry and language family.

### 3.2 Drawing the Line between North and South

The literature sighted and the interview partners asked are talking about South India as the southern region of the subcontinent. But views of what clearly determines the south of India

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<sup>8</sup> The caste system will not be debated in this thesis; however, it is relevant to give a short introduction to the meaning of caste here. The caste system is a “social stratification” of the Indian society on a hierarchical basis (cf. Berreman 1972). First mentioned in the Vedas, it follows two concepts of वर्ण *varṇa* and जाति *jāti*. The term caste derives from the Portuguese word *casta*, which means ‘race’ or lineage. The Varna system (Sanskrit for colour) is based on the Vedic texts and distinguishes the people according to four classes: the ब्राह्मण *brāhmaṇa* (priests), क्षत्रिय *kṣatriya* (warriors), वैश्य *vaiśya* (merchants) and शूद्र *śūdra* or *śūdrā* (labourers). One is born into the caste and reaches the next higher caste through reincarnation. The *jāti* is a separate system of thousands of castes relying on the region, defining the people according their professions.

## South Indian and North Indian differences

are ambiguous. On the question of what states he would define as South Indian, Stephen Hughes answered: “I would say Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu is South India. But clearly if you go to a place like Hyderabad, it is more mixed. But to everybody else in India, Hyderabad is South India. But if you are in Tamil Nadu, Hyderabad doesn’t feel like South India” (Hughes interview, para.6). Paul/Sridhar suggest the same classification of the Indian states in their study *The Paradox of India’s North-South Divide* for the Public Affairs Centre (PCA) in Bangalore: namely Tamil Nadu (more closely explained in chapter 5.3.2.), Karnataka – formerly called Mysore and renamed in 1973 construed from *karu – nāṭu*, the ‘black land’<sup>9</sup> with Bangalore as its capital and Kannada as the main spoken language, Andhra Pradesh – ‘Land of the Andhras’, formed 1953 and today referred to as the ‘Silicon Valley’ of India, alike Kerala – Portuguese, British and the Dutch colonialists were interested in the ‘land of the Cheras’<sup>10</sup> or the ‘land of the coconut palm’ until independence, after which Kerala was formed in 1956 with its capital in Thiruvananthapuram (cf. Paul /Sridhar 2014, p.13/ cf. Bautze 2010). The map below shows where exactly the imaginary line between North and South India would be drawn.

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<sup>9</sup> The name ‘black land’ probably comes from the black- coloured soil in the Deccan Highlands.

<sup>10</sup> One of the three kingdoms of the Tamilakam, along with the Cholas and Pandyas (explained in chapter 3.3).

## South Indian and North Indian differences



**Fig 3.1:** Drawing the line (Bautze 2010 edited by this thesis's author)

In this map, the newly formed state of Telangana is not yet charted, but as the above mentioned definitions suggest, Telangana and the capital of Hyderabad are not part of the region of South India. However, since the capital of Andhra Pradesh still remains Hyderabad, opinions differ on whether or not it is South Indian. The state not mentioned by both Hughes and the authors Paul/Sridhar is Goa – ‘the land of the cowherd owners’ which was a Portuguese colony until 1961, obtaining the status of an Indian state in 1987 and has Konkani as the major spoken language. The smallest among the Indian states, it is located in the south-west at the borders to Maharashtra. Also secluded from the definitions are the union territories of Pondicherry and the islands of Lakshadweep. All of these territories are geographically part of the south of India, but they are generally not considered as South Indian. Thereafter, geographically speaking the determination of north and south does not exist. The two regions are culturally and more importantly linguistically constructed. As Hardgrave claims: “The Dravidian peoples today, represented linguistically, dominate South India below an irregular line starting south of Goa on the western coast, running roughly northeast to skirt the eastern side of Berar, and then about

east-southeast to the Bay of Bengal” (Hardgrave 1965, p.8). The mountain ranges of the Deccan and the Vindhya are often acknowledged not only as a natural border but also mystically and historically as a “boundary between the Aryanised India of the North and the Dravidian South” (Nambūdiri 1992, p.44). The word ‘Deccan’ comes from the vernacular pronunciation of दक्षिणा दक्षिणा *Dakṣinā*, the Sanskrit term for ‘Southern’, so the Indian scholar Bhandarkar (1837 - 1925). This is, for example, found in the holy script of the महाभारत *Mahābhārata*<sup>11</sup>, where the people of दक्षिणापथ *Dakṣināpatha* were not considered part of the kingdom of the *Pāṇḍavas* in the North (cf. Nambūdiri 1992, p.45). The Deccan became a twilight zone between Aryanised Hindustan in the north and the द्रविदस *Dravidas*, which represents another Sanskritised word for south. The North Indian Aryan settlers, and later on, the Mughal invaders tried several times to conquer the south, but could not surmount the Deccan. In 1681, Aurangzeb – under whose reign the Mughal Empire reached its largest expansion – tried to defeat the Marathi kingdom. But the strong Marathi army situated on the Deccan thwarted this plan and Aurangzeb’s successors were not able to hold the borders much longer (cf. Kruse 1975, p.6).

### 3.3 Historical Perspectives on the Aryan and Dravidian Heritage

A possible distinction between Northern and Southern Indians was discussed by scholars throughout history in terms of kinship, ethnicity and hereafter languages, eating habits, clothing and “general pattern of life”, so Hardgrave (cf. Hardgrave 1965, p.8/ cf. Hall et al. 1996, p.617).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, European race theorists wanted to determine not only two ethnicities but two ‘races’ of the North Indians and South Indians. As the US historian and professor Thomas Trautmann wrote in his book *Aryans and British India*, a “racial theory of Indian civilisation” should not only provide an analysis of colonial ethnology, but determine the origin of European languages and ‘racial’ kinship of Europeans and Aryans (cf. Trautmann 1997). Explained earlier by Kaiser, race is the biological term used for describing physical appearances and differences among human beings, whereas ethnicity is the cultural counterpart, which Hardgrave is referring to. Although ethnicity is now the common expression, the influence of race theorists on the Aryan and Dravidian ethnical debate is undeniable: “The language and assumptions of the racial theorists is abhorrent to us today (sic!). But this must not blind us to the way in which concepts of race shaped the understanding of India and its regional societies” (Bayly in Robb 1995, p.215). Robb furthermore suggests that the racial theory and the related racial prejudice and stereotypes opened up a space “for the specific assessment of ways identity

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<sup>11</sup> Explained in 3.3

is formed and utilised” (cf. Robb 1995, p.70). As explained earlier, Anderson’s theory of the ‘Imagined Communities’ and in addition ‘Imagined identities’ in India stem from the fact that it was really European missionaries and later on scholars from Britain and Germany, who estimated ‘racial’ distinctions founded on the Indo-European and Dravidian language families. “What European scholars did in applying the term was to conflate the place and language with an assumed ‘race’ (...) Moreover, the juxtaposition of ‘Aryan’ and ‘Dravidia’ as antonyms was entirely attributable to European scholarship” (Hellmann-Rajanayagam in Robb 1995, p.132). The Europeans were discovering the invasion of the Aryan people in India and through linguistics they postulated a Dravidian identity as contrast.

It was 3000 years before Christ when people from Indo- European lineages moved towards the east and settled in Iran. Where exactly these people came from, still causes controversies among scholars. Calling themselves *awairya*, which in Sanskrit later is known as आर्य *ārya*, the ‘noble’. ‘noble’. The name refers neither to their ethnos nor to the clans, but “(...) es war vielmehr das Bekenntnis zu bestimmten moralischen Werten, vor allem zur Vertragstreue, zur Gastfreundschaft (auch gegenüber Feinden), zur Wahrhaftigkeit und zur von den Göttern etablierten Ordnung“ (Franz/Gaeffke 1990, p.50). The Aryans reached the Hindukush and finally the north-west of the Punjab around 1500 B.C (cf. Michaels 2006, p.49/ cf. Schlensog 2006, p.28/ cf. Trautmann 2005). The settling of the Aryans in India was the beginning for the development of a ‘Hindu- culture’ in the north of India based on the Vedas and hence the resulting formation of Sanskrit (Sanskrit originates from the word संस्कृता *saṃskṛta* means ‘cultivated’ and was developed as standardised form of the Vedic). At the same time, the present groups of Dravidians, native on the subcontinent moved south and regarding Hardgrave, “mixed with the dark proto-Australoid peoples”, whose origin can be traced back 500,000 years (cf. Hardgrave 1965, p.9f). Many orientalist call the Aryan movement to the south and their attempt to conquer the southern people the moment for the development of India: “Demnach war der entscheidende Moment für die Entstehung Indiens (...) der Kampf der eindringenden, weißen, zivilisierten Sanskrit-sprachigen Arier mit den indigenen, dunklen, barbarischen Dravidisch-sprachigen Indern (...)” (Trautmann in Bergunder/Das 2002, p.36/ cf. Trautmann 2005). Because it were the fair- skinned Aryans, already familiarised with high cultures of Mesopotamia that ‘fought against the indigenous, dark- skinned savages’ of Dravidians, so Trautmann in the quote above. The scholars saw the difference hierarchically established, where Aryans were considered ‘higher’ in the sense of civilised than the Dravidian ethnic groups, “(...) which were stratified into castes which then took on racial characteristics” (Hellmann-

Rajanayagam in Robb 1995, p.111). This can be read, for example, in Thomas Henry Huxley's theories. Huxley (1825-1895) was known as 'Charles Darwin's bulldog' for his backing of Darwin's evolution theory. He stated in 1868 that "(...) India was not the domain of a single 'Hindu' race, but a land of two separate racial groupings whose conflicts, migrations and interbreeding had marked out the subcontinent into zones of separate culture, language and racial 'type' (...) 'They are long-headed, dark-skinned, and dark-eyed men, with wavy black hair'" (Huxley 1868-69 in Bayly in Robb 1995, p.189). Another example of the 19<sup>th</sup> century European racial conceptions was the work of Max Mueller. The German Linguist and Indologist (1823-1900) interpreted the Rigveda, describing a conflict between the "fair complexioned Indo-European speakers" and the "dark-skinned *dāsas* of India". This interpretation of आर्य-वर्ण *ārya- varṇa* versus दास - वर्ण *dāsa- varṇa* led to the simplification of the caste system along along "racial segregation" and "demarcating the Aryans from others" (cf. Thapar 1996, p.5ff).

Not part of the Rigveda, but also a holy book of Hinduism, the story of the Rāmāyana, can similarly be interpreted. In seven books, written by Valmiki – who lived around the 5<sup>th</sup>- 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. – the epic tells about the life and destiny of Rām, the Prince of Ayodhya. Rāmachandra or Rām was one of four sons of King Dasharatha (cf. Michaels 2006, p.73ff/ cf. Schlenso 2006, p.185). Rām, as the first son, is destined to succeed to the throne. However, he has to live in exile for fourteen years in order to fulfil the promise Dasharatha had given his second wife Kaikeyi, who wanted her own son Bharata on the throne. Rām, his wife Sīta, and his brother Lakshman, are banished to the forest. Experiencing several adventures, a demon king called Rāvana appears and abducts Sīta to his kingdom Lanka (today to be said located on the island of Sri Lanka). Rām and Lakshman try to rescue Sīta and accomplish this with the help of the monkey king Sugriva, who sends his advisor Hanuman and an army with him. On the island of Lanka, a battle between Rām with the monkey's army and Rāvana with his followers, the Rakshasas, takes place, out of which Rām is victor. Sīta and Rām go back to the forest. But Rām doesn't trust Sīta anymore, accusing her of having been unfaithful to him with Rāvana. But after a trial, Sīta returns with Rām back to Ayodhya and Rām is crowned king.

The fight and victory over the dark- skinned Rāvana and his evil Rakshasas can be considered as the fight and victory of the Aryans over the Dravidian people.

"The epic Rāmāyana shows that progressive penetration of the Āryans into the south had already begun. It is true that Rāma did not make any conquest in the south nor lead emigrant batches of Āryans. The role played by Rama as can be seen from the Rāmāyana was to destroy the forces that stood against the progressive Āryan colonisation of the

south, and to secure the safety of the Āryans who had already settled down in the south” (Nambūdiri 1992, p.51).

In the course of Aryanisation, the introduction of Sanskrit to local South Indian languages took place. According to Hardgrave, this “fusion” of Aryan and Dravidian cultures on the one hand was the foundation of Hinduism as the popular religion, on the other hand was the introduction of the caste system (cf. Hardgrave 1965, p.10f). The Dravidian folks, although having their own social organisation, did not know the concept of caste until this time. The linguistic research and writings of the European missionaries and scholars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were seized by the Indians and the term Aryans was socialised. The caste system was put on a par with ‘race theory’. “Caste and race came together (...) in the south, where a supposed divide between Brahmans and Sudras produced a non-Brahman, Dravidian identity” (Robb 1995, p.58). North Indian Hindu chauvinists tried, so Robb, to find an argument for the unity of an Aryan identity based on the religion of Hinduism, culture and ‘race’ in contrast to all other groups of people that lived in India, denying them an identity, “such as ‘tribals’, ‘Dravidians’, ‘untouchables’, and most Indian muslims” (cf. *ibid.*, p.60). The Dravidian and specifically Tamils felt subjected by the caste system to the Indo-Aryan traditions that was seen as martial and backward (cf. Kruse 1975, p.13/ cf. Robb 1995, p.31). In so far, the Aryanisation caused the rise of a Tamil consciousness and hence a Dravidian identity. The basis for this identity goes back to the kingdoms of the *Tamilakam* – translated as the land of the Tamils and Tamil speaking population. *Tamilakam* is a synonym term for the Sangam period South India and became later sanskritised into *Dravidas*. *Tamilakam* refers to the realms of the Chola, Chera and Pandyan over regions across Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. It was first mentioned in the scripts of the Maurya- Emperor Ashoka, at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. *Tamilakam* nowadays describes a “geographical unit of one language, if not of one people” (cf. Hellmann-Rajanayagam in Robb 1995, p.118). The Chola, Chera and Pandyan rotated in their reign over the *Tamilakam*. The Chera kingdom was rather untangled with the Chola and Pandyan. Founded in 925, it was mainly covering Kerala. With King Rajaraja Chola I (985-1014) the dynasty of the Chola became the most dominant land and naval power in south- east Asia at the time. Conquering the eastern borders of India up to West Bengal, Sri Lanka and parts of Myanmar, the reign of the Pandyan was established on the southern borders with Madurai as its capital. As the reign of the Chola ended in 1279, the Pandyan spread to Sri Lanka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. In 1316, the Khilji Sultanate conquered the region and brought an end to the *Tamilakam* in this form. The three kingdoms merged in order to fight the invaders and the



realm of Vijayanagar was born. With its capital in Hampi (Karnataka), Vijayanagar was able to push back the Muslims and became an influential Empire until 1564 (cf. Bautze 2010, p.540). Nevertheless, it was at the time of the three kingdoms that the Aryan culture was accepted, the caste system integrated in society and Brahmanism patronised. Even today, most Brahmins in South India are Tamils of the *Iyer*- caste<sup>12</sup> from Tamil Nadu (cf. Nambūdiri 1992, p.68ff).

Today, the term Aryan and Dravidian are no longer used for defining one's identity but rather describe the "(...) combination of people, culture and language (...)" (Thapar 1996, p.15). Historically, linguists and racial theorists searched for the origin of Indian ethnic groups. Looking for clear distinctions, Aryan and Dravidian 'imagined identities' were established that are no longer present in the Indian society. Hughes clarified in the interview that it is rather unnecessary to determine North and South Indians by this ancient distinction of Aryan and Dravidian identities:

"There are all over India divides, and there are the racial theories that came about North and South. Just don't hold up any scrutiny whatsoever. There is obviously so much mixing and migration and it is kind of a racial stereotype that really belonged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to be honest with you, the Aryan and Dravidian. And they are going all kinds of genetic testing. It is quite clear that South India has been a place of migration and it is not as if you can say it like that" (Hughes interview, para.6).

### **3.4 The Indo- European and the Dravidian Language Families**

The ethnical difference is claimed by society to be not apparent or important anymore. Linguistic diversity conversely covers great significance in Indian politics until today. Language doesn't stick to one person but is transferable and able to unite various groups of people beyond race issues or other characteristics. In this respect, languages are nowadays regarded the "salient feature" to "put aside differences of caste, religion, domicile, and even ethnicity" (Hellmann-Rajayanagam in Robb 1995, p.143/ cf. Sastri 1967, p.24).

India is known for its multilingualism. Especially between the Northern and Southern states a linguistic conflict line appeared and caused problems in the national politics from the time the British ruled over India (cf. Pelinka 2005, p.205). The British knew that in order to bring homogeneity to the organisation and administration of India, a common language was needed. They decided on Hindi or Hindustani to be that language. The development of Hindi becoming

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<sup>12</sup> *Iyer* is considered to be a highly respected class of South Indian Brahmins. Most of *Iyer- Brahmins* are Tamils.

the national language was seized by Gandhi and Nehru after Independence. Article 343 of the Indian constitutional draft from the year 1948 stated that Hindi in the Devanāgarī script should be the official, national language of the newly independent country of India (cf. Sharma 2015, p.353/ cf. Sarangi 2009, p.58). The announcement led to violent conflicts and protests in various regions of India. International media headlined “language riots” have broken out (cf. King in Kachru 2008, p.318/ cf. Hughes interview, para.10). Particularly, the South Indians were indignant over this proclamation. To name an Indo- European language meant that their Dravidian linguistic background would be denied. In 1958 the “All India Language Conference” was arranged in Madras, today Chennai<sup>13</sup>. The conference culminated in an officially- stated rejection of Hindi (cf.Sarangi 2009, p.33/cf. Kruse 1975, p.14). To find out the reason why Hindi was not accepted, once again the Aryan- Dravidian divide has to be considered. It is due to European, Christian missionaries and linguists, who not only determined the Sanskrit- based Indo- European language family, but also rediscovered the Dravidian language family and most importantly the Tamil in the 17<sup>th</sup> century through research. The Anglo-Welsh philologist Sir William Jones (1746-1794) was the first European Indologist conceptualising the relationship between North Indian and European languages in Calcutta in 1786. On the other hand, it was the civil servant F.W. Ellis (1777-1819) of the East India Trading Company, who studied the connection of the Dravidian languages in Madras in 1816, thereby establishing the ‘Dravidian proof’ of Sanskrit not being related to the Dravidian languages. In his book *Languages and Nations* Trautmann offers a historical observation of Ellis as the “Collector of Madras” in comparison to Jones and the work of Calcutta in his book *Aryans and British rule* (cf. Trautmann 2006/cf. Trautmann 1997). Many scholars followed Ellis in studying the Dravidian languages, focusing especially on Tamil. The Sanskritisation of the South Indian languages throughout the Aryan ‘invasion’ and rule had the least effect on Tamil. Tamil remained the ‘purest’ of the South Indian languages in terms of sanskritised and thereafter aryanised influences, in comparison to i.e. Malayalam, Telugu or Kannada. “Tamil language is the oldest Dravidian language, from which all other Dravidian languages developed” and it is the “‘purest’ Dravidian language since it had the fewest Sanskrit additions” (Hellmann-Rajayanagam in Robb 1995, p.139/ cf. Nambūdiri 1992, p.86). The European linguists scientifically studied Tamil and published dictionaries and grammar books, helping to make Tamil grammatically and linguistically approachable even to Tamil mother- tongue speakers. One of the most important ones was that of missionary Robert Caldwell published in

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<sup>13</sup> It was in Madras 1937 when the first violent protests against the introduction of Hindi as compulsory language broke out in schools

## South Indian and North Indian differences

1856: *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*. Hermann Beythan, a missionary from Leipzig, Germany (1875- unknown) became an advocate for Dravidian languages and an expert on Tamil. He saw the language Tamil threatened by influences of English and Sanskrit (cf. Nehring in Bergunder/Das 2002, p.120).

“Die dravidischen Sprachforschungen dieser Missionare sind von besonderer Bedeutung, weil sich die Frage von Identität und Differenz von einem europäisch-indischen Verhältnis auf ein innerindisches, ja innerdravidisches Verhältnis übertragen haben. Die Entdeckung der dravidischen Sprachen hat (...) dravidische Identität in Differenz zu arischer Dominanz begründet (...)“ (Nehring in Bergunder/Das 2002, p.119).

Throughout the struggles of building a nation India after Independence, the Tamils wanted to hold up high the status of their language and their identity in opposition to Hindustani, Urdu and Sanskrit, languages of the North and their conquerors, like the Mughals or British colonialists. What was not so important in other southern states was seen as defamation in Tamil Nadu. Kruse specifies that the aversion to Sanskrit went to such lengths that some Tamils, who had names deriving from Sanskrit, would change them to Tamil names or translate them to Tamil (cf. Kruse 1975, p.13). The professor of history at the Duke University, North Carolina, Sumathi Ramaswamy wrote her book *Passions of the Tongue*, in which she explains that it was not linguistic nationalism that led to the strong opinions of Tamils about their language, but in fact “language devotion”. Ramaswamy suggests it is comparable to the devotion to gods that encouraged Tamils to fight for their ‘linguistic independence’ (cf. Ramaswamy 1997). The sentiments of Tamils and other South Indians were finally taken as a cue to establish linguistic states. Article 345 of the Indian constitution guaranteed that it should be for the legislature of each state to choose Hindi as its official state language or another. The reorganisations of the states in the 50s and 60s, again in 2004 and in 2014<sup>14</sup>, provided the larger linguistic communities autonomy from the centre, not just in terms of education, but also for celebrating their own ethnical and linguistic identities (Shneiderman/Tillin 2015, p.13/cf. Pelinka 2005, p.206).

On the educational level a compromise between the northern and southern states was achieved in 1968, when the “Three- Language- Formula” was introduced and later settled to a “Four- Language-Formula”. Schools therefore have to provide access and encourages North Indians

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<sup>14</sup> The latest reorganisation was achieved in 2014 out of the state of Andhra Pradesh and named Telangana. The capital, Hyderabad is by Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Their official language is Telugu.

## South Indian and North Indian differences

pupils to not only learn Hindi, English and their mother-tongue, but also a South Indian language out of the big four (Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Telugu). Likewise, South Indians pupils should be encouraged to learn another North Indian language (such as Marathi, Punjabi or Gujarati) (cf. Sarangi 2009, p.308/ cf. Dwyer 2014, p.85).

Hindi is spoken by over 300 million Indians on the subcontinent. It remains the most widely used Indian language in India and beyond. Radia-Tyagi says about the usage of Hindi and its developing role in India: “Hindi is the one-size-fits-all glossed over language, glossed over cinema, which is now trying to arrive in the regions” (Radia-Tyagi interview, para.12). Generally speaking, the Indo-European language family has a total of 73% speakers. The Dravidian languages on the other hand are used by over 215 million people in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, making 25% in total. The other 2% are speakers of Austro-Asiatic and Sino-Tibetan language families (cf. Chakrabarty 2003, p.243). Nowadays, Hindi is the second language in most of the Southern states of India, except for the majority of people in Tamil Nadu, who refuse to acknowledge Hindi as second language and prefer English as inter-state language. English took the place of business and privileged language throughout most parts of India, taught in all states as the second or third language in schools. “English still rules in practice as the official language, at the centre and for inter-state communication, and it is also in a dominant position in the higher reaches of intra-state administration” (Chakraborty 2003, p.175).

In the multi-ethnic, multilinguistic and multicultural country of India the two regions that are most known for their ambivalent relationship are North and South India. Historically, the relationship is based on peace and understanding of the cultural differences. Nonetheless, these differences accepted. Both the region of the south and the region of the north became economical, as well as cultural reliable resources of India’s development in international politics, in comparison to the eastern states. The states of South and North India regard themselves as strong examples of India’s stable existence above all cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversities, as well as the question of identity.

## 4 The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India

“The Indian audience varies from the very young to the very old to the very educated to the very uneducated. So if you have to tell one story trying to involve everyone in it you have to include everything. So you have to have a little bit of intellect, you have to have a little bit of madness, you have to have a little bit of colour, you have to have a little bit of internalisation, but all this has to be put in one film”<sup>15</sup>

This chapter introduces the Hindi film industry or often named Bollywood industry in the context of identity and film as a symbol of national or regional pride and consciousness. The meaning of mainstream, popular and commercial films is stated by recognising various significations. A short discussion on the question of the Hindi film industry as a national industry will be followed by examples of other successful regional especially South Indian film industries existing on the subcontinent. The Hindi film industry seems also fascinating South Indian actresses and actors, from whom a few popular Hindi film stars will be introduced. In a last subchapter, a historical outline on what identity and stereotypes mean in the mainstream Hind film particularly in regard to the South- North Indian relation is presented.

The Hindi film industry has become an emblem of India and national identity. National identity according to the theory of Benedict Anderson on print capitalism is formulated out of the „power of the media in creating a common forum or discourse that ensures maximum coverage and exposure for a particular media text. The massive scale of Bollywood is an excellent illustration of this power“ (Takhar/Maclaran/Stevens 2012, p.271). Hindi film productions are a bonding factor that is known throughout the world. The power that Takhar et al. name can be regarded as a ‘soft power’<sup>16</sup> in the region (cf. Ganti 2004, p.51). The economic and cultural output of Hindi films contributes to India’s international recognition. “India is the largest producer of feature films in the world, producing around 800 films in 16 languages every year. Of these, about 300 – about 150 in Hindi – are produced in Mumbai alone” (Gulzar/Nihalani/Chatterjee 2003, p.140). In the late 90s and at the beginning of the new millennium, the Hindi film or Bollywood industry became widely known in Europe and the United States. Until that time, Indian films from all Indian regional industries were somehow

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<sup>15</sup> Shah Rukh Khan (2013): Interview with Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone, The Guardian

<sup>16</sup> Soft power is part of a concept developed by Harvard professor Joseph Nye. A state aspires to generate both hard and soft power in international relations. Soft power is thereby defined as “(...) getting others to want what you want” (Nye in Viotti/Kauppi 2012, p.109). Nowadays, economic export and international commercial success of products are considered as soft power.

defined by their Asian (South East and East Asia) market<sup>17</sup> and the former Soviet Union and later Russia.

#### **4.1 The Meaning of the Mainstream Cinema of Bollywood**

The term Bollywood is a portmanteau of the old name of Mumbai – Bombay – and the US-American film industry Hollywood. It is frequently used as a synonym for mainstream, commercial, Hindi-speaking Mumbai-produced films on the one hand and an Indian national cinema on the other. „'Bollywood' has become a buzz word in the West, recognized and celebrated as denoting the flamboyant attractions of the Hindi movie” (Dwyer/Patel 2002, p.197). The term is not at all uncontroversial among people working in the Hindi film industry. But it attracted fans and audiences all over the world.

What do the terms mainstream, popular and, commercial of Bollywood nowadays mean? For a long time, the term Bollywood gave the Hindi film industry the connotation of producing only low-quality films, not really challenging its viewers. It has long been an expression for quick, fun action-loaded films for families. Given the quantum of films, the industry didn't claim to produce films with a demanding script, or to give enough time for rehearsals, and evolve characters or substantial stories, etc. The popular perception is that Bollywood is generally understood as “glamorous, melodramatic, loud and frivolous”. “Instead of providing a one-word identity to the Hindi film industry, it seemed to point to the parasitic relationship Hindi mainstream cinema had come to establish with Hollywood” (Gulzar/Nihalani/Chatterjee 2003, p.24). Bollywood was seen in opposition to the more acclaimed independent cinema, otherwise known as arthouse or parallel cinema. Independent or realist cinema is not made for mass audiences but for the niche market, regarding social realism as the main focus for stories. The films include no dream sequences or musical numbers as in mainstream Hindi films. The locations are trivial and the characters are struggling with every day-life dilemmas. This branch of cinema is more appealing to educated middle and upper class people in contrast to mainstream Hindi films, so Chakraborty. “Indian intellectuals and urban elites criticize Bollywood for its unrealistic song-and-dance sequences and repetitive/formulaic use of the repertoire of mythical tales, traditional musicals and melodramas” (Chakraborty 2004, p. 549). And for these intellectuals the differentiation between Bollywood and the studios of Hindi film industry producing independent films is indeed important. However, the Hindi film industry has not gained world-wide recognition of its parallel cinema (quite the contrary to the Bengali

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<sup>17</sup> It is a widely known anecdote in the Hindi film industry that Mao Zedong's favourite film was the 1951 boxoffice hit *Awaara* ('Vagabond') produced by and starring Raj Kapoor.

cinema, which will be shortly introduced below). “Art films have miserably failed to attract or satisfy the non-literate and poor who comprise a considerable section of the paying customers in India” (ibid., p.549). For the Bollywood producers, it seemed more important that the films would reach the greatest number of viewers all over India and contain topics of love, family and heroism, simple, jolly, cheerful and fantastical. In an interview with Tejaswini Ganti, Shah Rukh Khan described the Bollywood films as “a modern form of nautanki<sup>18</sup>”, a “modern form of street theatre” as well as “pure, masala entertainment” (cf. Ganti 2012, p.88/ cf.Ganti 2004, p.138f). मसाला *Masālā* may be described as the rainbow of emotions available in Indian mainstream films. The word masala is usually used in culinary- vocabulary and defines the mix of spices. In Bollywood films the term refers to the mix of music, romance, action, comedy and drama offered in the film’s three hours running time, just as emotions, रस *rasa*.

„Each Hindi film, the formula says, needs two or three stars, six songs, three dances, and cannot have any explicit sex scenes. These masalas bring to Hindi films a flavour that is similar to the effect that spices have on Indian cuisine. It is believed since ancient times that spices give rise to feelings, or rasas. These rasas (...) are Shringara (the erotic), Hasya (the comic), Karuna (the pathetic), Raudra (the furious), Vira (the heroic), Bhayanaka (the terrible), Bhibhatsa (the odious), Adbhuta (the marvellous), and Shanta (the serene)” (Gulzar/Nihalani/Chatterjee 2003, p.403).

The rasa of masālā are interwoven in the story and define what mainstream is about – the emotions in different stages of life. The illustration of feelings might be exaggerated, be it sadness or happiness, some people would say it is close to ‘kitsch’. Kitsch defines in this context the rather colourful interpretations of life and love, set in large, pompous locations, dreamy sequences and to most of the audiences unrealistic models of everyday life situations. What is not present in typical mainstream, commercial Hindi films, like Gulzar et al. say are sex scenes or kiss scenes. They are considered by most of the viewers as too uncomfortable and regarded as unnecessary for the story.

The main audience of mainstream masala Bollywood films are the ‘masses’ of the people. “The fact that commercially produced films are so powerful and ubiquitously available due to their industrial basis and mass-media status, that they sometimes flatten cultural differences due to their worldwide distribution, and that as (certainly initially) predominant parts of mass culture they pervade almost all aspects of cultural existence and socialize the fantasies of masses of

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<sup>18</sup> नौटंकी *nautankī* is a popular folk operatic theatre in South Asia, especially North Indian states

people, thereby regulating the individual ‘from without’ on a grand scale (...)” (Schweinitz 2011, p.106). In India these fantasies of masses are mostly lived by the young middle classes of urban areas to the lower-class people living in rural areas with only a few possibilities to go to the cinema. Mainstream Bollywood offers them the chance to get connected to the on-going trends in public and popular culture of the country (cf. Dickey in Breckenridge 1998, p.131f/ cf. Dwyer 2014, p.25). In an interview with Ganti in October 2000, the Hindi film producer Shubash Ghai said that it is a different kind of entertainment to European countries, where most of the viewers are considered to have better education, providing the ability to make clear distinctions between their own life and the life of the characters. Most Indian viewers are uneducated and therefore not able to separate their own moral guidelines from the film’s message. They need the film to mirror their understandings of life, so Ghai: “In India, all of the stories, the ways that films get made, it has to be stories that audiences can relate to (...) People should be able to imagine that this is a story that they could have lived, a familiar story. However, in the West, you don’t have that problem, because people are educated. Educated people can imagine beyond their own lives so they can enjoy watching other people’s stories” (Ganti 2012, p. 304). That is why, mainstream Hindi or Bollywood films try to provide verifications to people’s morals, preserve their ideas of justice, love, traditions etc., but also to give them access to what is happening and changing in society, so Gokulsing/Dissanayake: “Popular films play a central role in the construction of popular Indian consciousness; they are the most dominant and pervasive forces responsible for creating in the public mind the notions of heroism, duty, courage, modernity, consumption and glamour. The relationship between Indian popular cinema and modernity is extremely close” (Gokulsing/Dissanayake 2003, p.26). Tejaswini Ganti conducted an interview with the famous screenplay writer and poet Javed Akhtar about how to catch the attention of the movie-goers. He replied: “Whatever is happening on the screen should make him (NB.: the viewer) laugh, should make him cry; he should be able to identify with it. He should be able to fantasize and at the same time: if it is too real, then he won’t like it. If it has nothing to do with reality, then too he won’t like it!”(Ganti 2012, p.284). The significance of mainstream films is the clear rules that filmmakers stick to the boundaries determining what is regarded as popular and what kind of story touches the incomprehensible and may become a flop. The overall goal is of course commercial success. The Bollywood industry vaunt that it is the biggest producer of commercial hits in India. The success of a film gives information about what the audience likes. “Commercial outcome is regarded as an accurate barometer of social attitudes, norms, and sensibilities, and therefore serves as source of knowledge to filmmakers about audiences. Box-office success or failure



## The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India

either reinforces or revises filmmakers' assumptions about audiences – from their composition and tastes, to intellectual abilities and codes of morality” (Ganti 2012, p.282). So the Hindi film industry is trying to stay on the mainstream level, producing films liked and watched by the ‘Everyman’. For Radia-Tyagi, the Hindi film industry is not really looking to have an impact on society, but to make money:

“It is always been that and the people making it, primarily want to make money. If you have more audiences to attract, you make more money. So yes, is it a tool of integration, yes it is, because they want more and more people to come back and see it, which is a tool of integration. But it is not why it is that, it is that, because the greater the audience the greater the earnings. So yes you do want appeal to what is called the least denominator. (...) Now, we are talking about popular cinema (...) The driving force is money, not politics. Hindi cinema by and far has this conventional image of the world. Everything will become happily-ever-after. All mainstream cinema is that” (Radia-Tyagi interview, para.17/ cf. Nayar in Dudrah/Desai 2008, p.100).

Derek Bose calls it Bollywood's “territorial instinct”. According to the box office market of the Hindi film industry, India is separated into six territories, each with its own unique cultural identity, language and demographic characteristic that demand a particular sensitivity and preference from the film producers. Bose names the territories as followed:

Mumbai: Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka,

Delhi: Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and the National Capital Region

East Punjab: Punjab, Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir,

Eastern Circuit: West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Nepal, Odissa and Assam,

Rajasthan: Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra,

South: Nizam, Mysore (Bangalore to Karnataka), Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu

(cf. Bose 2006, p.25). These five territories (and the sometimes defined sixth territory of the ‘overseas’) are divided into fourteen subterritories, so Ganti. It is criticised that these territories do not picture the Indian reality anymore, being established in the 1930s. However, commercial success is still marked by these territories and their “revenue- earning potential”. Categorized in A-, B-, or C-class centers, the A-class centers define the most populated cities in the states, B-, and C- class centers are referring to the rural areas, where touring cinemas are very popular

## The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India

(cf. Ganti 2012, p.187f.). Film producers are trying to attract all centers but strive for the best outcome and greatest earning possibilities, achieved mostly in the A-class centers.

One can see that the Hindi film industry takes special care of what works in mainstream and is compatible with the regional diversities. As Sachin Bhaumick, famous Hindi film screenwriter explains in an interview with Tejaswini Ganti in 1996: “Now we want to cater from Assam to Madras (NB.: now Chennai), to so many languages (...) Eastern people must like; Bengali people also like; and Orissa people also like, and put some little action and some horse-riding sequences, as they go very well in Punjab because they like slightly crude things, and it will also go very well with the South, because they cannot follow the language, so they’ll follow the action” (Ganti 2012, p.305). In the desire to be a pan – Indian cinema and moreover a national one, there are certain compromises that need to be made in order to be acceptable to Indian audiences, with their distinctive cultural, linguistic and political preferences. “Traditionally, a Hindi film was deemed an unqualified success only if it was a nationwide or an ‘all-India’ hit, communicating to the industry that linguistically, regionally, and religiously diverse audiences were able to identify with the film” (Ganti 2012, p. 300).

Each character in a film can be easily discerned by the audience in the first few scenes by its specific features as well as moral guidelines, for example. “Indian film is understood through the familiarity of its narrative and the familiarity of its characters. Characters are depicted as social types who are defined by their differences to each other” (Dwyer/Patel 2002, p.194/ cf. Booth 1995). Types, be they stereo- or archetypes, help the viewers to familiarise with the characters and determine who is who in terms of evil versus good, rich versus poor, speaking Hindi versus speaking a regional language. This is also one of the reasons why the Hindi film industry does not adhere to a particular state and its language. “In the post-Independence period, Hindi cinema, aspiring to be India’s national cinema, aimed to address the new Indian citizen (...) Cinema upheld the policy of a national language through its use of the lingua franca of Hindi/Urdu/Hindustani, playing a role more important than that of the state(...)” (Dwyer 2014, p.79). Bollywood is produced in the city of Mumbai. Mumbai is the capital of Maharashtra, which declares Marathi as the official language. “Mainstream Indian cinema is not interested in promoting any language in particular but wants to reach the widest audience possible” (Dwyer 2014, p.84). Hindi, as discussed above has the status of a *primus inter pares* language in India. It is the official language in nine states throughout the North-Western region of India and part of the four-language-formular. With Hindi as language, films reach most viewers in India and beyond. Next to Hindi, many films use Urdu or Hindustani dialogues. Urdu has a

## The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India

second-language status in many of the northern states in India and became the national language of Pakistan after Partition. It has long been the language of public culture on North Indian markets the 19<sup>th</sup> century and gained status in films too (Dwyer 2014, p.82). One of the most popular screenwriters is mainly known for his Urdu poems, Javed Akhtar. In cooperation with Salim Khan, he has written many screenplays for big hits of mainstream cinema since the 1970s in Urdu/Hindustani and Hindi (e.g. *Zanjeer* 1973, *Deewar* 1975). Punjabi is a widely used language in mainstream, commercial Hindi films as a lot of Hindi film plots play in the state of Punjab and involve Punjabi actors through long tradition.

English is the language that connects the various regions and people both from India and beyond in the films. English is the “metalanguage” of mainstream Hindi films (cf. Dwyer 2014, p.27/ Ganti 2004, p.69). English is spoken by 5 per cent of the population in India; most of the educated middle classes use English because it is associated with “privilege, education and class”. “Language remains a contested issue in India but it seems that many languages are thriving in the new media as well as in their more established domains” (Dwyer 2014, p. 85). In mainstream Hindi films the language mixture of Hinglish (a portmanteau of Hindi and English) is frequently used, so the globalized North Indian is addressed, alongside NRIs, most of them living in the USA or United Kingdom.

All these criteria show what can be regarded mainstream, popular and commercially successful. Since Independence, the Hindi film industry has played an important part in Indian public culture. Throughout the decades, films have risen to become key ingredient in the creation and sustainability of the ‘imagined community’ of the Indian nation. “Statements about the necessity of finding the ‘essence of being Indian’ (Aditya Chopra) reveal how the discourse about super or universal hits is imbricated with the discourse of the nation as an Andersonian imagined community” (Ganti 2012, p.319/ cf. Raghavendra in Gokulsing/Dissanayake 2009, p.16). To speak to the masses, to catch the overall accepted emotions and moral notions, to integrate all regions both in the cultural and commercial meaning of the term, the mainstream Hindi film industry developed into a medium for affirming India’s pride and nationalism intergenerationally and interculturally (cf. Takhar/Maclaran/Stevens 2012, p.270).

Regional cinemas do not have the same national output as Bollywood has and are not regarded as an instrument for generating national pride, but they “(...) are immensely popular wherever the relevant language is spoken and in the overseas diaspora markets, and the viewership for their films can be as large as, if not larger than, their Hindi counterparts” (Dwyer 2014, p.20).

## The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India

The fact that a country has various film industries is unique and well worth mentioning since these so-called 'regional' film industries have a great impact on Bollywood productions and vice versa.

### 4.2 India's Regional Film Industries

Most of the other film industries speak to the people in the specific states or regions. They are writing the scripts in the language of the state they are produced in. Going with cultural and traditional proclivities of the local and regional audiences, these films do not strive for national success. "The diverse regional cinemas in India strive to maintain their distinctive identities and provide an important dimension of the cultural wealth and diversity of India's regional cinemas" (cf. Gokulsing/Dissanayake 2003, p.129). Some of these regional cinemas – relevant in the context – will be introduced here.

The Tamil cinema based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, is the largest film industry in India in terms of productions. It produces more films per year than the Hindi film industry (150-200 films per year), has more studios and workers, as well as higher capital investments than the other Indian industries, so Gokulsing/Dissanayake (cf. Gokulsing/Dissanayake 2003, p.47/65/ cf. Devadas/Velayutham in Velayutham 2009, p.2). The studios are located in the district of Kodambakkam. The term 'Kollywood' derives from the first letter of Kodambakkam and Hollywood and is frequently used as synonym for the Chennai-based industry. Due to its large and well equipped studios, the industry attracts producers from all over the world to make films in Chennai. Since the beginning of the 'talkies'<sup>19</sup>, the former named Mumbai-based industry and Kollywood have worked together on some levels, as Hughes describes it:

"There is a long and very productive relationship between the south and Bombay and it goes back to the 1930s, when they started making productions and you have directors from Maharashtra, Bombay, working in the South Indian film industry. You have actors/actresses that are coming from the north, acting in films of the south (...). So it is not entirely separate, but in terms of history level, production and so, from the late 40s you have a number of very important Hindi films in the South. Raj Kapoor produced a lot of films in the South" (Hughes interview, para. 1/3).

But this interchange relied on profitable production interests. On the linguistic level, the Tamil film industry was connected to the identity politics of the DMK. The DMK or 'Dravida

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<sup>19</sup> Soundfilms

## The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India

Munnetra Kazghama' is the Dravidian movement party of Tamil Nadu founded in 1949. It has led campaigns against the establishment of Hindi as national language and for the formation of an independent Dravidian state.

“There is a series of political motivated films from 1950s onwards that were promoted by and had actors from the DMK. And in those films North Indians were seen as exploiting the south. And sometimes shown as dishonest or exploiting (...) I remember living in the city of Madurai in the 80s and they painted slogans on the walls ‘English ever, Hindi never’. That continues, but kind of off and on. It is particularly the case when the government in Tamil Nadu is part of the opposition to the government in the centre” (Hughes interview, para.10/11).

The Tamil film producers were keen on capturing the Tamil identity in films in comparison to the North Indian identity that was dominated by the political capital of Delhi and the film capital of Mumbai or Bombay. The hero fought against evil through finding his Tamil identity. ‘Pro-Tamil’ dialogues and a strong sense for what it means to be Tamil went on in the films until the late 70s. In 1977, MGR (M.G. Ramachandran) became Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. He stopped this political motivated connection between Tamil nationalistic politics and cinema, so Devadas/Velayutham (cf. Devadas/Velayutham in Velayutham 2009, p.3). Still until today, the Tamil cinema knows its movie- goers and is proud to be a successful regional cinema. Not too eager to gain audiences in whole of India, they do, however, crave national recognition of their art.

“They often make sure they have local settings, people recognize the dialects, regional based and where in Tamil Nadu it is. They are much more consolidating their main market (...) There is a different market dynamic. They are not trying to woo North Indians. In the last ten- fifteen years in Tamil films, there have been a kind of artfilm tradition, parallel cinema, avant-garde movement that is doing well outside of Tamil Nadu (...) Certainly, in the last decade, you have people from all over India seeking out and watching Tamil films with subtitles” (Hughes interview, para.11).

There is one Tamil- born scriptwriter, producer and director, who broke a possible compartmentalization, Mani Ratnam. Ratnam first made collaborations between Bollywood and Kollywood. He made it chic to produce films connecting the sentiments of both industries and “simultaneously called into question the notion of an Indian national cinema” (ibid., p.165f.). Favoured in both the Tamil and the Hindi film industry, showing not only great range

## The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India

with cultural differences, but also with mixing mainstream and arthouse or parallel cinema, he established himself as one of the finest filmmakers in India. Ratnam's films seem often blind to regional and cultural identities, displaying mostly pride for the nation as a whole. "Mani Ratnam's 'national oriented' films have squarely placed Tamilians within the discursive and representational framework of the Indian nation". But this development is unique in Kollywood, because the industry still has an 'ambivalent' relationship with being Tamil and belonging to the nation of India, which is found within Tamil population and movie-goers (Devadas/Velayutham in Velayutham 2009, p.167).

Since the late 50s all the South Indian states produced films in their respective languages in Kollywood. But after the economic liberalisation in 1991, the number of Chennai- produced films went down, "(...) because states like Kerala and Andhra Pradesh have made incentives to draw film productions in Malayalam and Telugu to Thrivanthapuram and Hyderabad. There has been a move out. They still make it in Chennai, but a lot of the productions of other regional languages in Chennai have moved out. And there is the idea that it is closer to their market" (Hughes interview, para.5). Telugu- speaking films became more and more popular and the 'Tollywood' industry was built in Hyderabad in the early 90s. Tollywood addresses primarily audiences from Andhra Pradesh and the state of Telangana. It is the third- largest film industry in India. Films are made entirely in the language of Telugu, which is spoken by 84.86% of the people in the above- mentioned states (cf. Bautze 2010, p.44). The name 'Tollywood' derives from the first letter of Telugu and Hollywood. Tollywood was very popular with commercial films in the 90s, but lost movie- goers to the rising Malayalam films in Kerala in the 2000s.

To be mentioned here as another film industry is the Kannada cinema. It was established in 1956 in the kingly state of Mysore, before the federal states were reorganised. Located in Bangalore, the Kannada cinema remained in its old fashion, still known as "Old Mysore cinema", although the state of Karnataka was formed. The language has always been Kannada, as it is spoken around the cities of Bangalore and Mysore (cf. Raghavendra in Gokulsing/Dissanayake 2009, p.19). The market is not comparable to the Tamil or Telugu film industries, but it still reaches mostly Kannada speaking viewers.

Worth citing here, is indeed the Bengali cinema. Often similarly called 'Tollywood', it is located in the district Tollygunge, Calcutta. Bengali cinema hit its peak in the 70s, when colourful representatives like Utam Kumar or Suchitra Sen were producing films especially made for Bengali audiences with the distinctive method of relying on literary patterns and influences. The high reputation of Bengali literature, as well as a conservative- aligned Bengali

society didn't provide a good platform for commercial or mainstream cinema like Bollywood films, so Eva Wallensteiner: "Die konservativ geprägte bengalische Gesellschaft, das hohe Ansehen von bengalischer Literatur und die prekäre finanzielle Situation bieten dem kommerziellen bengalischen Film Produktionsbedingungen, die ihm nicht erlauben mit der Professionalität, der Dynamik und der Erotik des Hindifilms zu konkurrieren" (Wallensteiner in Tieber 2009, p.19). Bengali cinema is nowadays a centre for Indian parallel or arthouse cinema, besides commercial and mainstream Bengali films. However, they are known for their educational and melodramatic stories, so Wallensteiner, but still are not as 'colourful' and 'musical-themed' as commercial Hindi films. "Der bengalische Kommerzfilm gilt als Familienunterhaltung mit erzieherischem und melodramatischem Unterton". Bollywood films are nonetheless watched by Bengalis, although they only understand a little Hindi and generally describe Hindi film productions as philistine, so Wallensteiner (ibid., p.20).

There is a lot of correspondence between the different film industries all over India. It became custom to reshoot successful films of one industry in the other, of course in the respective language. According to Dudrah, one needs to pay close attention to the relationship between the Hindi film industry and the regional cinemas, as it is then obvious that "(...) not least the traffic of films from the south to the north of India and beyond, and how the films might be translated in this process, and also through India's industry personnel who often work on regional and Bollywood films simultaneously" (Dudrah 2012, p.105).

### **4.3 South Indian Actresses/Actors in the Hindi Film Industry**

All of the film makers and stars have their preferred territory, where they rule and their films are celebrated. Shah Rukh Khan is a pan – Indian star for instance, but many other famous Indian film actors/actresses are known for the industry they set foot in and considered as 'territorial heroes/heroines', such as Dharmendra, who was born in the Punjab and is regarded as a hero among the East Punjab territory (cf. Bose 2006, p.27). But some evidence for Bollywood being the most prestigious of the film industries in India are the many actors and actresses, who gained national fame and acknowledgement through the Mumbai- based business. As Dwyer stated: "Regional difference in film is marked in ways other than language and performance, through the ethnicity of the stars (...)" (Dwyer 2014, p.87). The actors and actresses have great influence on the success of a film. Their private lives are usually as important to the cinema visitors as the films they star in (cf. Dwyer 2014, p.27). That is why, in the development of the Hindi film industry, some families of actors and actresses built up empires lasting through the decades. One of them is the Kapoor family, now in third generation

acting, directing and producing (Raj Kapoor- Rishi Kapoor- Ranbir Kapoor). The Chopra clan has borne some of the finest directors and producers in the Hindi film business (Yash Chopra- Aditya Chopra), along with the Bachchan (Amitabh Bachchan- Abhishek Bachchan) and the Deol (Dharmendra- Sunny Deol) families that even today have national treasure status for their involvement in the industry. Mostly coming from the Punjab and North Indian states like Uttar Pradesh, actors and actresses established themselves through their famous names and success of their predecessors. With time, many South Indian actors and actresses were able to catch wider attention in the mainstream films of Mumbai (cf. Gokulsing/Dissanayake 2003, p.129). Concentrating on South Indian representation in Hindi films, here are a few examples of South Indian actresses and actors that came to be known in Hindi or Bollywood films.

Aishwarya Rai- Bachchan was elected 'Miss Universe' in 1994, before she proceeded to become one of the most popular Hindi film actresses of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Rai-Bachchan was born in Mangalore, Karnataka. She is therefore not Hindi mother tongue, but Tulu<sup>20</sup>. She moved to Mumbai with her parents and learned Hindi in school. Nevertheless, Rai-Bachchan started her career in the Kannada cinema. Her national and international fame came about with her involvement in Mumbai- produced films.

Another example for a South Indian film actress that became famous in the Hindi film industry is Hema Malini Chakravarty. The well known actress of the 70s and 80s was born in a Tamil *Iyer* family. She married her Punjabi colleague Dharmendra Deol in 1980 after meeting on the successful Hindi film *Sholay* (1975). Although her name was thereafter connected with Hindi films, she also started out in Kollywood.

Also Tamil and nowadays a very successful Indian actress is Vidya Balan. Born in Kerala, Balan comes from a Tamil household, first making films in Tamil and Malayalam. She entered the Hindi film industry with *Parineeta* (2005). Though already known in the southern states of India, Balan's career shows that her well- acclaimed work was done in the Hindi film industry (e.g. playing a south Indian in *The Dirty Picture* 2011).

A young actress, only recently finding her place in the industry, is Kalki Koechlin (e.g. *Yeh Jawaani hai Deewani* 2013). She was born in Bommayapalayam, Pondicherry to French parents. In an interview with 'INK Talks' she explains that she doesn't really have an answer to her origin. She spoke French with her parents and Tamil with her friends until she attended

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<sup>20</sup> Tulu is a language spoken in the south-western part of Karnataka and the northern part of Kerala, called Tulu Nadu.



## The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India

English school and talked only in English. But as she remarked: “My skin is white, but my heart is brown” (Koechlin 2012, 0:50<sup>21</sup>).

To be mentioned here is certainly Deepika Padukone, who plays the leading role in *Chennai Express*. She made her Hindi film debut in *Om Shanti Om* (2007) and rose to be the current best- paid actress in Bollywood. Although born in Denmark, her parents are Konkani speaking coming from Goa, who moved to Bangalore, Karnataka when Padukone was one year old. Her first film was made in Kannada and she is able to speak both Indo- European (Konkani, Hindi, and Marathi) and Dravidian languages (Kannada, Malayalam). When asked if she considers Padukone to be a South Indian actress, Radia-Tyagi answered in the interview: “No (...). She has grown up in Bangalore. She is not South Indian. She has grown up in Bangalore. Padukone is a Maharashtra name. But see that is where the new thing is taking place. That you have this girl that is grown up in the South but is not a South Indian. So that is where certain things are changing. So what we are talking about is a greater diversity in lifestyles, and therefore a greater acceptance of those portrayals on screen” (Radia-Tyagi interview, para. 9). This is quite the contrary to Rachel Dwyer’s view on Padukone’s origin and way of portrayals in Hindi films. In the interview she refers to Padukone being in fact a South Indian, but not the proper one for playing a Tamil girl in *Chennai Express*: “And to take somebody like Deepika, who is South Indian, but the wrong kind of South Indian, because she speaks with a Malayalam accent in the film and not a Tamil one (...) Her family is from Bangalore” (Dwyer interview, para.5). As are the definitions about North and South India rather discordant, so are the origins of people in India bound to opinion of the respective scholar.

It is curious that there are few South Indian actors, who became known in the Hindi film industry. “Regionalism within the films themselves is rare among the male heroes (...) Yet other Indian ethnicities are seen, usually drawing on those essentialized in the public imagination. Apart from the north Indian, upper-caste Hindu male, these are nearly all exaggerated, performative roles” (Dwyer 2014, p.88). The ultimate Tamil film star is Rajinikanth. He is familiar and popular all over India for his iconic roles. But even though he also acted in Hindi films, he remains famous for his devotion to the Tamil film industry. Dwyer confirmed in the interview, where she said: “Even Rajinikanth was never a hero (NB.: in North Indian cinema). There was never a South Indian hero succeeding in the North” (Dwyer interview, para. 19).

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<sup>21</sup> Koechlin interview INK Talks

Recently, three Tamil actors came to be noticed in the Hindi film industry, R. Madhavan, Siddharth and Dhanush. Appearing in Telugu or Tamil cinema, the youngsters from Bihar and Tamil Nadu made their debuts in Hindi films namely *Rang de Basanti* (2006) and *Raanjhanaa* (2013), respectively. About Dhanush, who is the son-in-law of Rajinikanth, Dwyer explained: “He doesn’t look like the North Indian, but he does not have a South Indian look. He got the accent, but he doesn’t look South Indian” (Dwyer interview, para.20).

The range of actors and actresses popular in Hindi film industry shows that those South Indian stars among the other acclaimed regional stars are subsequently seen in Hindi films. Hindi film industry evolves through the actors and actresses coming from all over India. Looking at the history, there is a trend that has been emerging in the last decades, which is changing the mainstream Hindi film industry into an all-Indian representing industry.

#### **4.4 An Introduction to Identity and Stereotypes in Bollywood Cinema**

While media and films aim to make audiences laugh, mockery on the other culturally and ethnically is intended and originates out of the knowledge the viewers have about the different cultures and behaviours. Though film productions try to be politically correct and neutral, it is not the duty of films. Considered as art, films are not supposed to please everyone, but to attract attention and make people reflect on the story, the portrayals, and images. Furthermore, it is utterly impossible to write neutral characters.

“What apologists of the national cinema argument feared was that if Hindi films narrowed its outlook or theme to a particular region or state, it would affect its popularity in the all-India market, thus subsequently, and most importantly, reducing the profits generated. It has been argued that dropping surnames and the cultural status of the characters makes a film acceptable to viewers all across the country. However, that would limit the scope for creative and compelling filmmaking, with characters, locales, clothes, and language painted in the same colour, no matter where the story is based. What this argument also assumes is that all Indian viewers would not be interested in stories or cultures of other regions, which would not strictly, be true” (Gulzar/Nihalani/Chatterjee 2003, p.331).

In the same way that film actors/actresses get to be publicly known and their life or birthplace revealed, film characters have to have an origin and purpose in order to be interesting and approachable for the viewers. Viewers, on the other hand, are unknown to producers or directors. Ganti rightly assessed that“(…) whenever media producers have produced content

## The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India

for large-scale audiences characteristic of American commercial television or Hollywood, there is a strong tendency to deride, stereotype, essentialize, or “paedocratize”, because of the fundamental inability to directly observe and know one’s audience”. The Hindi film industry too, is not able to relate to their spectators. There exists no vast majority of Indians with one particular culture or one particular preference in stories, let alone characters. “Additionally in cases like the Hindi film industry, the Hindi television industry (...), the Tamil film industry (...), where a vast social distance exists between producers and the majority of their audiences, and where producers do not imagine their audiences to be like them at all, then the production/reception divide is an important dichotomy that reveals how social difference is produced, managed, and experienced” (Ganti 2012, p.24). That is, for instance, the reason why the Hindi film industry is caste-blind, so Dwyer and often excludes the social topic of poverty and life of poor people from the screens, as desperation and the fight to get out of one’s caste is not really motivating to watch a film. Caste- blindness comes with the status of the film industry as a tolerant business, accepting every form of human and social life. Arts praise themselves not to look upon class, caste, gender, beauty or sexual orientation, which of course is not true. But Bollywood too wants to be internationally and nationally representational. Castes are part of the social life, but they might not necessarily be part of Bollywood’s India, as their attractiveness is scarce. “The masses like films that narrate grand stories incorporating various aspects of the human experience – love, passion, fear, worry, ecstasy, bravery, and levity – all played out against attractive backdrops and through situations into which they can emotionally project themselves” (Gulzar/Nihalani/Chatterjee 2003, p.14).

After independence, the Hindi film industry tried to not only find the majority of viewers in India but become a national cinema by creating a typical Indian citizen. According to Dwyer, “(...) Hindi cinema shows the north Indian high-caste Hindu as the ‘normal’ Indian. Other populations become ‘minorities’ and the rest of India ‘regions’, which are marked as divergent from the mainstream. Defined by Hindi cinema, this figure has become, by default, the average Indian” (Dwyer 2014, p.80). The people of the thereby formulated regions are degraded as exceptions and will be identified through regional stereotypes. These stereotypes mark “mental boundaries” that may be equivalent to the borders of the Indian states.

“Given the stranglehold the North has had on national politics as well as national modes of popular representation (cinema and hence music), the mutual stereotyping crystallized into the categorization of the South as the lesser other – a strange being from

## The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India

another world, to be looked at with patronizing curiosity and to be referred to in broad brushstrokes of crude humour” (Desai 2008).

The portrayal of the North Indian as the standard and the others as outsiders in Hindi films comes from the deep influence that North Indians have always had in the historical development of the Hindi film industry. Most of the popular filmmakers are North Indian, actors/actresses are North Indian, and most of the people working behind the films are North Indian. “It is a North Indian sensibility” that is apparent in the mainstream Hindi films, so Radia-Tyagi (Radia-Tyagi interview, para.1). The Hindi film version of North India is also merging together the upper states surrounding Delhi and Punjab to create a North Indian character. Characters from Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, equal to Uttarakandh for example, seldom amuse the mainstream Hindi film spectators. Jammu and Kashmir arouse interest because of the political situation with Pakistan and is quite often topic of films. People from the East Indian states, such as Assam, Arunachal Pradesh or Nagaland for example are underrepresented because the East Indian cinema is not that well known or popular. Except for the Bengali cinema, which concentrates more on its parallel cinema productions, there is no depiction of people from the eastern states in Hindi films (an exception might be the 1998 boxoffice hit *Dil Se* (‘From the Heart’) by Mani Ratnam, which is partly playing in Assam). Tamil or Telugu cinema gained powerful ranks in the cinemas of India. Furthermore, the exchange and connection between South Indian film industries and the Hindi one have always been close.

“There are strong north and south differences and I think that is what you see reflected in the films. And there are all kinds of stereotypes that are used to generate humour. But there is a historical resentment among South Indians. They feel that they are not given enough respect by North Indians and by the Bombay film industry in particular. And so there are a series of controversial films and films that were controversial and politicians banned it (...)” (Hughes interview, para.1).

It is important to mention that Bollywood’s India is not representing the real India. And films may be banned or criticised for their portrayals but the message of mainstream Hindi films are more interested in offering their audiences fun and laughter. Following here are some examples of mainstream and commercial Hindi films which will be introduced to show how South Indian characters and storylines involving South India were picked up throughout history.

The 1968 film *Padosan* (‘Neighbour’) presented one of the most iconic portrayals of a South Indian character. It is the story of a man, who falls in love with the girl next door, who has a

high affinity for music. Her music teacher is played by the popular actor and director Mehmood, known for his comical roles of Hyderabad Muslims, so Dwyer. In *Padosan*, he formed the character of Pillai or *Masterji* and the film – considered as one of the best comedies in the history of Hindi films – remained popular until today for Mehmood’s performance of the South Indian *Masterji*. “This established the south Indian as a comic figure in Hindi cinema and was followed by many others” (Dwyer 2014, p.90/ cf. Gulzar/Nihalani/Chatterjee 2003, p.411/ cf. Desai 2008).

The 1981 film *Ek Duuje Ke Liye* (‘Made for each other’) shows the tragic love story of a Tamil man, Vasu and a North Indian woman, Sapna, who fall in love with each other while being neighbours in a village in Goa. The parents disapprove of the union and demand that the two lovers should stay away from each other for one year with no contact. After the year if they still want to get married, the parents will not interfere anymore. With distractions along the way, Vasu decides to learn Hindi to impress Sapna’s parents and finds himself attracted to his Hindi teacher, Sandhya and even considers marrying her. The Hindi teacher, however, sees Vasu’s love for Sapna and wants to reunite them after the year has passed. But Sandhya’s brother, furious about how sad Sandhya has become, because of her unrequited love. He wants to revenge her. On the night that Vasu finally meets up with Sapna again, the brother follows them with some friends. Both the reuniting lovers are beaten up. Sapna is raped. Hereafter, Vasu and Sapna choose to commit suicide. The film is famous for the constellation of a South Indian man and a North Indian woman. Vasu is played by Kamal Haasan, a famous Tamil film actor of the 80s, who also acted in the original Telugu- film *Maro Charithra* on which *Ek Duuje Ke Liye* is based. The film was a blockbuster, but the storyline remained unique until today.

In 1993, Mahesh Bhatt directed a film called *Hum Hain Rahi Pyaar Ke* (‘We are Travellers of Love’). The film was based on the successful Hollywood film ‘Houseboat’ (1956) with Sophia Loren and Cary Grant in the leading roles. This box office hit relates the story about a garment industry caretaker from North India, Rahul, living with his two nephews, and a niece. The family is kind of estranged until they meet Vyjayanti, the daughter of a rich Tamil business man. Vyjayanti’s father wants her to marry a Tamil *Iyer* and as she refuses to do so, Vyjayanti is locked up. She escapes and runs into Rahul’s nephews at a carnival. The mutual affection leads to Vyjayanti becoming their governess. Slowly Rahul and Vyjayanti fall in love. But when it proceeds to a wedding, Vyjayanti’s father is against it. With the persistence of the children, he allows a wedding in Tamil *Iyer* tradition. The film is entirely in Hindi. Although Tamil in

## The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India

character, the language is not used by Vyjayanti or her father, except for the Tamil word for 'father', அப்பா *appā* throughout the film.

*Chak de! India* was released in 2007 and premiered in London as part of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India's independence. It is about the former Indian national Hockey Captain, Kabir Khan, who was accused of facilitating the Pakistani Hockey team to win the World Championship. The media suspected that because he is Muslim, he was interested in Pakistan winning the Cup. Ten years after this incident, Kabir Khan applied for the job of trainer for the Indian national women's Hockey team with the goal of taking them to the World Championship in Australia. The women are from all over India, coming together from different social backgrounds, with a lot of stereotypes and prejudices against each other. Under the professionalism of Kabir Khan and his devotion to a united India, the team is able to win the World Championship in Australia. The film was highly popular – the third highest crossing film of 2007 in India – and critically acclaimed. It aims to show the diversity of the Indian people, achieving patriotic and unifying feelings through sport. "Its rallying call is not just for the Indian women's hockey squad but also for Indian unity itself, as the film shows that national success depends on bringing the regions together in order to work as an effective team" (Dwyer 2014, p.81). It is curious to see not only women dominating the film but also that there is no love-relationship between any of the characters. All of them are neutral to each other and have the same status, symbolising that no state in India is above the other. "The cast of characters is as varied as their personalities, with some pointed critiques of state multiculturalism even as the stock representations run true to type in all their ironic hilarity (...) the 'Madrasi' girl who insists on the difference between Telugu and Tamil, the pair from Manipur and Mizoram who arrive to the soundtrack of 'Western' music and are treated as Chinese or Nepali foreigners, both by the street hooligans who eve-tease them and the clerk Sukhlal, who signs them in and 'welcomes' the citizens as 'guests' in their own country" (Chakraborty 2012, p.853). The trainer Kabir Khan makes the players realize that not their respective states are important when playing in the field, but their nation – India:

“मुझे स्टेट्स के नाम न दिखाई देते हैं न सुनाई देते हैं। सिर्फ एक मुल्क का नाम सुनाई देता है: इंडिया।” (ibid., p. 853).

“Don't show me or give me the name of the state. Only give me the name of one country: India”

## The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India

One film often quoted in this sense and referred to in the interviews is *The Dirty Picture* (2011). Based on the biography of Silk Smitha, Vidya Balan plays a Tamil actress, Silk, who becomes famous through portraying mostly sexually provocative characters. After having to fight to be accepted by both possible lovers and her mother, the actress turns to alcohol and drugs, becoming poor during this process and in the end committing suicide. The character of Silk is reduced to a sex symbol in a North Indian dominated environment of a fictional film industry. The film was commercially and critically acclaimed. Vidya Balan became famous in the Hindi film industry.

That same year, Shah Rukh Khan released his production of a science fiction film *Ra.One- The Demon*. In the collision of a real and virtual world, a computer game comes to life. The inventor of the game – played by Shah Rukh Khan himself – is Shekar Subramaniam, working for a London-based videogame industry. As one can assume from the name of the character, Subramaniam, he is from the South of India. The reason to make him a South Indian developed from the fact that especially the area around Bangalore, Karnataka, but also Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh and Chennai, Tamil Nadu are internationally praised for their IT sectors. Indians educated there are working for computer industries throughout the world. Dwyer saw *Ra.One* as one of the examples where “(...) South Indians (usually lumped together) are frequently comical figures, wearing traditional clothes, speaking heavily accented Hindi and exclaiming ‘*Aiyo!*’/ ‘*Oh!*’, as Shah Rukh Khan’s home production *Ra.One/The Demon* (2011) had him do when he acts as a ‘south Indian’ – typically highly educated, wearing a curly wig and eating spaghetti and yogurt with his hands” (Dwyer 2014, p.90).

The Bengali Bollywood film actress Rani Mukherjee starred in the 2012 love comedy *Aiyaa*. The story revolves around a girl from Maharashtra, Aiyaa, falling in love with a Tamil, Surya – played by Malayalam film actor Prithviraj Sukumaran – and becoming obsessed with him and his special odour, since he is the owner of an incense- sticks factory. The film portrays the South Indian cinema as rather “bright and vulgar”, so Dwyer and rather unduly in its references to Tamil film productions (cf. Dwyer 2014, p.90).

What is obvious in the examples above and highlighted by Gulzar/Nihalani/Chatterjee is the fact that although India offers such a wide range of cultures, history, regions with different languages and traditions, Hindi films are still keeping to effective storylines, like the “lost-and-found- formulae, the rich-boy-meets-poor-girl (or vice versa) themes, and family/social melodramas” (cf. Gulzar/Nihalani/Chatterjee 2003, p.411). Although there has been a great change since the 1960s, the black and white view concerning South and North India might still

## The Hindi Film Industry and its Relation to South India

be visible. The diverse regions and states of the south are still formulated under the umbrella term of South Indian, whereas the North Indian character is mostly Punjabi. But as the acceptance of the different cultures was far more difficult in the 60s and 70s, the economic liberalisation beginning in 1991, so Radia- Tyagi, led to a paradigm shift. The confidence of the Indians no longer be seen as the developing poor, but as people of an emerging country in the world, also caused the acknowledgement of India as multicultural and multilingual.

“In the 60s it was very different, 60s to 70s but was very stereotyped image. You had caricatures, you had typecasts, you had the good guy and the bad guy, the evil mother-in-law, you had the self-sacrificing mother. So when a South Indian was portrayed in that context, he or she was not a person of caricatures. Not even a caricature that is the wrong word – a stereotype. South India encompasses a whole lot of different states with many different cultures. You got Kerala, which is very different from Tamil Nadu, which is very different from Karnataka. Andhra Pradesh is kind of almost south, but not quite. In the North Indian mind that distinction did not exist. And similarly in the South Indian mind, everyone from the North was a Punjabi. So you had these dichotomies, where neither culture nor set of cultures quite accepted the nuances of the other culture. Now, since the 90s the paradigm shifted and what came about with economic liberalisation...two things have happened: Indians have grown far more confident about India and about being Indian. There is a change in the mind-set” (Radia-Tyagi interview, para.1).



## 5 Film examples

The following films will be examined more closely on the images of South India and South Indians in contemporary Hindi cinema. All three films were released between 2013 and 2014. The productions and the plots of *Chennai Express*, *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein* and *2 States* play in different regions of the southern states of Goa, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Dealing with star-crossed lovers, who have to fight for their love against their cultural differences, the overall message of all the films can be declared as the following: love between different cultures and regions is possible and achievable. The hereafter examples mainly focus on dialogues and references to stereotypes about South Indians and, more relevantly, Tamils in comparison to the Hindi film portrayal of North Indians. Thereby, in all three analyses, one detail of South Indian stereotypical features will be looked at.

### 5.1 Chennai Express

“Don’t underestimate the power of a common man”<sup>22</sup>

Name: *Chennai Express*

Release date: 2013

Directing: Rohit Shetty

Genre: Action- comedy

Length: 141 min

The film – that was promoted under the slogan of “India’s biggest blockbuster express” – was released on the day of the Indian festival of lights, *दिवाली Diwālī*, November 2013. Before releasing the film, Shah Rukh Khan, who also acted as producer made great effort into its promotion. The story and soundtrack of the film were already famous, even before the film got into cinemas. The active encouragement and advertisement of *Chennai Express* had a great impact on the film’s success and reaching a new level of promotion in the Hindi film industry.

The film starts with the introduction of Rahul, a 40-year-old *मिठाईवाला miṭhāivālā* (sweet seller) from Mumbai, who is living with his grandparents. His grandfather, the most important person for Rahul and his role model, is celebrating his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. While watching a cricket match on television, the grandfather dies. Rahul and his grandmother discuss the future, and Rahul tells her that he wants to travel with his two friends to Goa for a holiday. But his

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<sup>22</sup> Quotation from *Chennai Express*

## Film examples

grandmother asks him one more favour. Rahul's grandfather requested that his ashes should be buried in both the rivers Ganges and Rameshwaram on the southern end of the Indian subcontinent. Rahul should go to Rameshwaram to fulfil his grandfather's last wish. He agrees, but secretly decides to go to Goa instead. With the urn of his grandfather, Rahul boards the train to Chennai – the Chennai Express – making his grandmother believe that he will take the long route to Tamil Nadu. Instead he intends to leave the train at the next station to meet up with his friends. At the station he realizes that he has forgotten the ashes in the compartment. Rahul runs back, catching the train. Upon exiting – triumphantly holding up the urn – a young woman comes running down the platform desperately trying to board the train. In an act of passion similar to the romantic ending scene of *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* ('The Lover will take home the Bride'), Rahul reaches out for her hand to help her get on. After the woman made it, four men, whom the audience can easily identify as South Indians, want to board the train too. So Rahul reaches out his hands for them in the same act of altruism. However, through his rather altruistic act he is unable to get off the train. It already has left the platform. The men start talking to the young woman in Tamil. Rahul angry, interrupts their conversation, but is soon threatened to be killed and is forced to travel with the five Tamils. The woman, knowing Hindi, introduces herself to Rahul as Meenalochni Azhagusundaram. She explains Rahul her situation through Hindi film songs, aware of the fact that the four Tamil fellow travellers do not understand Hindi. She tells Rahul that the men – Meena's cousins – are abducting her to bring her back to her father, a local don of the fictional Kumban region. Meena didn't want to get married and ran away. The two are brought before the don and Rahul, due to the fact that he doesn't understand Tamil, is introduced by Meena as her fiancé. In the process of their fighting against her father's attempts to marry Meena off to his protégé Tangaballi as well as various adventures, Rahul and Meena fall in love. Rahul's slogan in the film is often declared as: "Don't underestimate the power of a common man". This should state the fact that the common man, the average Indian, the *miṭhāivālā* is taking risks, acting on impulses for love and does not care about the consequences. The film ends with a fight between Rahul and Tangaballi in front of the community of the Kumban region, until the don gives Rahul and Meena his blessings.

### 5.1.1 The Portrayal of North and South Indian Differences

*Chennai Express* brings two characters and love interests from the south and north together. It is about a North Indian man accidentally coming to the south of India and falling in love with a South Indian woman. He sees himself alone in unfamiliar and, until further on in the film,

## Film examples

uninteresting surroundings. The main character, Rahul is a rather typical Bollywood film character. Shah Rukh Khan has played various forms of 'Rahul' throughout his career.

'Rahul' is a popular North Indian name. In India, in general, names suggest where a person comes from. They give a clue as to which language he or she is speaking as well as what caste or social status the person belongs to. As 'Rahul' is a name mostly used in Hindi speaking states of India, the spectators connect it with someone coming from the North Indian states. However, the character Rahul in *Chennai Express* is introduced living in Mumbai. Mumbai is the capital of Maharashtra, regarded as a North Indian city. From the times of Portuguese and British colonialism onwards, it was an important port. After independence in 1947 it became one of the most essential cities for trade and culture in India. The Hindi film industry established itself in Bombay or Mumbai around the times of the first films produced by Dadasaheb Phalke. So the overall spoken language in Mumbai is Hindi, although Maharashtrians usually talk Marathi. The first sequence introduces therefore a North Indian man in the circle of his grandparents and family watching a cricket match in a rather modern and western- furnished house. Rahul is a rather rich sweet-seller in Mumbai; his shop is obviously successful as he explains to the moviegoers that he can never go for holidays, because of too much work. Rahul also wears western-branded clothes, and uses the latest electronic devices, such as a tablet and a smartphone. The later plays an important role in the plot, as Rahul makes several references to the expensive, branded phone. While the audience learns that Rahul is already 40 years old, he behaves in a childlike way and exaggerates. All of which suggests he is not married or has a family of his own to look after. Growing up in a protective household, he has not yet experienced love to a woman. Only after he meets Meena and falls in love with her, does he learn to take responsibility for his actions and fights for her honour.

Meena represents Rahul's counterpart. A girl in her twenties, she is introduced to the audience by running on the platform to catch the train Rahul intends to leave (Sq. 00:13:00-00:13:50). In this particular scene she is shown wearing a *langa vonī* ലാങ്കവണി, a kind of a *lehngā choli* लहंगा चोली in the north. *Langa vonī* or half- *sārī* സാड़ी is worn in the southern states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. It is formed out of a long skirt, a short blouse and a scarf *dupattā* റുപട്ടാ wrapped around the waist and back on the shoulders like a *sārī*. This traditional dress is usually worn by girls before being married. Jasmine flowers in her hair braided in a long pigtail, Meena desperately tries to outrun her cousins, who are all rather big, muscular, bulky and curly-haired men wearing *lungī* ലുണ്ടി or *വെള്ളി*. *Lungī* is a very typical South- and South East Asian garment consisting of a single cloth to be wrapped around the

## Film examples

waste. It is usually worn by men. In India, though dressed by men all over the country, the *lungī* became popular as traditional clothing, worn mostly in rural areas. In the cinematic world of Bollywood, the *lungī* is portrayed as typical South Indian. This gets on display in *Chennai Express*. In contrast to Rahul's jeans- and- T- shirt- look, representing the urban, western lifestyle of the *miṭhāivālā*, the audience can recognise, on the basis of their clothing that Meena and her four cousins might be from a cinematic rural area of South India. Susan Kaiser wrote in her book from 1997 *The Social Psychology of Clothing* that clothing plays a central role in expressing one's origin and social affiliation: "Whenever people share a common culture, they are likely to be exposed to a network of tangible products. The buying, selling, and wearing of clothes all contribute to signification or the development of meaning associated with cultural objects. So it is not just the product that results in the process of signification, but it is also the way people relate to these products and what they do to or with them" (Kaiser 1997, p.48). Throughout the film Meena wears only traditional clothes, from *sārī* to *langa vonī*. The traditional clothing is perceived in *Chennai Express* as an essential symbol for rural areas and the traditional lifestyle of many people in the south. Being Indian honouring the traditions and virtues of the community means wearing traditional Indian clothes. "Western clothes ceased to represent anti-Indianness". But, so Rao, the audiences accept western clothes in the context and with the male characters of the film. Female heroines have to wear some kind of Indian clothes throughout the plot (cf. Rao 2010, p.7f). Meena does not change her clothes to western ones throughout the film. She only wears *sārī* or *langa vonī*.

The figure below shows the meeting of Meena's father in the Kumban area of Tamil Nadu. The train was stopped by one of Meena's cousins on a bridge in the fictional Kumban region, which in reality is a famous train-bridge in Goa. Meena's father and his followers surround the pair. In the screenshot below, one can see Meena and Rahul on the right side of the frontal shot, whereas Meena's father is on the left side. Dressed in a white *lungī* with sunglasses, he is rather fair- skinned in comparison to the other South Indians. Played by famous Tamil film actor Sathyaraj, the character wears only *lungī* throughout the film and uses many lines from his most popular Tamil film roles, so Dwyer: "You know there was one character in *Chennai Express*, her father, who is quite a big star in South India and he used some of his dialogues from South Indian films in it. I don't understand Tamil, but they were doing that in the film. He is a General in *Baahubali*. He is a big figure. But for North Indians he is like...he is the same as anybody else. They don't know who he is" (Dwyer interview, para.4).



Fig 5.1: Chennai Express – Meeting Meena’s father (00:33:22)

This is another fact in *Chennai Express* that can be interpreted as an amusement of North Indian ignorance for South Indian cinema. The don’s introduction is a very stereotypical scene for Tamil film villains entering the plot – with many of his followers taking their hats off to him while he is marching through the crowd. As Meena and Rahul approach the Don, the waterfall runs smoothly between them, separating the two generations, and North and South Indians. Meena is the only South Indian character, who does speak Hindi fluently, so she can be considered North Indian. Meena’s father has only small lines in Hindi, albeit it is made clear that he understands Hindi. All figures in the screenshot wear traditional South Indian clothes, except for Rahul. The don and his followers are slightly higher in the frame than Meena and Rahul.

There is a clear hierarchy present, demonstrating that the North Indian character has entered South India and hereby a domain ruled by Meena’s father. Subordination takes place on behalf of Rahul, respecting Meena, her father and the fact that he does not belong here. “(...) T(t)hey show South India much more traditional than the north, the dress, what people do, it could be the 1950s. Whereas the north is always shown as more modern, having a Nokia phone, westernized” (Dwyer interview, para.15). Meena – running away from her father’s demands and wanting to elope to the North – is portrayed as a very strong woman, standing on her own feet. But as she returns to her father, one can see her devotion to her family and village, the people in Tamil Nadu, alongside the cultural and religious traditions. This is the difference between Rahul and Meena. Rahul had a great devotion to his grandfather, but besides his grandparents, he was not really interested in his culture or traditions. Growing up in a city like Mumbai he didn’t get the same traditional upbringing as Meena and her family did.

## Film examples

In another scene, Rahul attempts to free himself from the fake engagement with Meena and a fight with Thangaballi. He fled but was returned by the police to the village, where the wedding of Meena and Tangaballi is about to take place. Once again he is surrounded by Meena's family and the don's followers. The screenshot below shows a frontal of Rahul, as he takes Meena hostage, threatening to kill her with a coconut knife. Meena knowing that Rahul would not hurt her is acting along. Meena's father on the right side next to Thangaballi tries to calm everyone down by raising a hand in order to not hurt his daughter. Rahul again wears western clothes and sunglasses. He stands out from the *lungī* - wearing South Indian men and Meena in her South Indian bridal *sārī*. Kaiser explains the connection of clothing and cultural behaviour: "Some meaning of clothing and appearance symbols are provided and transmitted by culture, and we interact with one another within this context of cultural meaning. A cultural form may specifically refer to a kind of abstract, composite appearance or clothing style that is used to socially 'categorize' people (...) From a cultural perspective, meanings are regarded as arising from oppositions and contrasts in social life" (Kaiser 997, p.50). One of these contrasts, so Kaiser, is the contrast between domesticity versus worldliness, which is often used in Hindi films to explain the differences between western clothes and traditional Indian ones.



Fig 5.2: Chennai Express – Rahul's hostage (01:02:27)

The *lungī* gets the attention and transports the meaning of being the one South Indian clothing throughout *Chennai Express*. The stereotype of every South Indian man wearing a *lungī* was certainly emphasised in this popular film. Another stereotype that is visible in this screenshot is the coconut knife, with which Rahul threatens Meena. Coconuts are a traditional and popular South Indian esculent. In all forms and dishes, coconuts, coconut milk or oil is very common in South India. Not for nothing is the state of Kerala named 'land of the coconut'. The fact that the only tool accessible for Rahul in this situation is the coconut knife, bestows another hint on

## Film examples

the spectators that Rahul is in the south of India. As Bhagat says in his book: “The deep love for this fruit among South Indians is inexplicable” (Bhagat 2009, p.182). Once again, as in the shot before, the complexions of the figures are evident. Rahul, Meena and Meena’s father overtake the much darker-complexioned Tamils in the shot. The characterisation of the South Indians being much darker in complexion than North Indians will be more closely examined in 5.2.2. But for this shot it is important to see who the main film characters are, being fairer in skin colour than the supporting characters.

The next portrayals of North and South Indian relations that will be discussed are from two of the songs. Famous for mainstream Hindi films is the fact that weeks before their releases, the soundtracks are available and accessible to the people. Also in the case of *Chennai Express*, the soundtrack became widely known before the film even got into the cinemas. One of the songs that caught the attention of the viewers is at the end of the film, meant as a Coda, independent from the plot. Dedicated to the popular Tamil film actor and star Rajinikanth (who is described in 4.3.), the song is called *Lungī Dance*. Performed by the Indian Hip-Hop singer Honey Singh and acted out by both Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone (Sq.01:45:32-01:48:00), the *Lungī Dance* was not at all taken well by movie-goers and film critics. It was criticised for its stereotypical image of the *lungī* as the over-all fashion choice of South Indians. Another question that arose in the audiences and among scholars was the fact that Shah Rukh Khan devoted an entire song to Rajinikanth. Rachel Dwyer wondered in the interview: “But why is he so interested in Rajinikanth? That is something I don’t know” (Dwyer interview, para.3). The song is supposed to be a message to Rajinikanth and his fans not just in Tamil Nadu but also in the North. As Rajinikanth is probably the most famous of South Indian film stars, Shah Rukh Khan knew that when making a film about the Tamils and their cinema, he had to include Rajinikanth. The song is playing at a train station between two trains. A staircase leads up to a large poster of Rajinikanth in his typical role of the South Indian hero wearing sun glasses. In between the lyrics, the Tamil word தலைவர் *thalaivar* is shouted. *Thalaivar* means ‘boss’ and describes Rajinikanth as the boss of the South Indian cinema. The song’s content is not that sophisticated. It wants to animate people to put on a *lungī* and join a dance in a disco-like environment. Shah Rukh Khan sings about himself, ignorant of the Tamil culture and cinema. He will start drinking coconut *lassī*, instead of the North Indian mango *lassī*, will put on his sunglasses as Rajinikanth does it and party on in a *lungī*. Shah Rukh Khan is joined by Deepika Padukone, wearing *sārī*.

## Film examples

The second song that seem relevant in this context is called “Kashmir main, tu Kanyakumari”, which can be translated as “I am Kashmir and you are Kanyakumari”. The screenshot below is taken out of the song. Kashmir main, tu Kanyakumari celebrates the differences between North and South India – between Rahul and Meena. Furthermore, it shows the rich culture of South India. Driving through tea plantations, Rahul and Meena reach various dancers. In their midst, both Rahul and Meena change their clothes to *lungī* and dance in front of them. Tiger- costumed dancers symbolise the Bengali tiger, whose population is threatened. Behind that, dancers wearing *lungī* can be seen – both male and female. On a podium there are பரதநாட்டியம் *Bharathanatiyam* dancers surrounded by திரைகுத்த *Therukoothu* performers with their impressive masks.



Fig 5.3: Chennai Express – Kashmir mai, tu Kanyakumari (01:07:32)

*Bharathanatiyam*, translated as the dance of India, is one of the eight traditional Indian dance forms. It originated in Hindu temples of Tamil Nadu. *Bharathanatiyam* has become one of the most popular dance forms today. *Therukoothu* describes Tamil folk theatre performances and dances. Acting out mostly scenes from the holy books of Rāmāyana, *Mahābhārata*, or Tamil folk stories, the performances consist of songs and without speaking parts. The கூத்த *koothu* actors/actresses wear masks, sometimes with heavy decorations. The *Chennai Express* viewers are introduced to Tamil arts through this song, while being reminded that although ‘I am Kashmir’ and ‘You are Kanyakumari’ the differences are not so important as the rich cultural heritage that India can offer. As the lyrics suggest:

कश्मीर मैं, तू कन्याकुमारी। फिफ्टी फिफ्टी हर सिचुएशन में हिस्सेदारी। एक तरफ तो झगड़ा है है साथ साथ फिर भी तगड़ा है। दो कदम चलते हैं तो लगता है आठ हैं। दो तरह के फ्लेवर सौ तरह के तेवर। दर बदर फिरते हैं। जी, फिर भी अपनी ठाठ है। कभी कभी कहीं टूटे कहीं जुड़ जाएँ। उत्तर ने दक्षिण तो अफ़लातून आँख मारी। हिंदी में गुस्तावीं है तो इंग्लिश में सारी



## Film examples

I am Kashmir, you are Kanyakumari. You are Kashmir, I am Kanyakumari. Fifty percent in every situation equal parts. One kind of taking a fight, together then being strong. Taking two steps feels like taking eight. Two different kinds of flavours, hundred kinds of emotions. Going door to door with a lot of pomp. (...) I am Kashmir, you are Kanyakumari. The north winked with the eyes to the south. (...) In Hindi it may be unwelcome, but in English everything works (Sq. 01:05:20 – 01:08:14).

These lyrics are not taken one-to-one, but rather demonstrate the content of the song. Rahul is representing Kashmir, the far northern end of India. Meena, on the other hand, symbolises Kanyakumari, the southern most city on the subcontinent in Tamil Nadu. North and South are equal, but two kinds of different flavours, so the lyrics. In another verse the song takes notice of the language issue. Hindi is not welcome in South India as lingua franca, but English is the language for communication and is acceptable.

### 5.1.2 The Linguistic Barrier

Rothermund et al. explain: “Indian society, as anthropologists have argued, is of course segmented. But these segments of the lived world do not seem to have frontiers like in any organisation of modern social space (...) ‘Boundaries’ do exist, things, spaces, groups, do begin and end. But they tend to shade off, merge, graduate. It is a different way of organising difference (...) Language illustrates this principle of organisation of difference very clearly” (Rothermund/Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1992, p.40). *Chennai Express* focuses on these boundaries, on the organisation of difference through languages. The film takes more consideration of the Indo-European versus Dravidian language barrier than the other film examples given here. The first sequence of the film playing with the problem of understanding of Tamil and Hindi is in the beginning, where Rahul takes the Chennai Express. He has just helped Meena and her cousins boarding the train. Rahul is seated opposite Meena and her cousins, when his mobile phone rings. His friends who are worrying about him want to know where he is. He explains to them in a highfalutin way:

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Rahul:           | (...) और सुनो! मेरी फ़िक्र मत करना... कंपनी मुझे कमाल की मिल गयी है ... |
| Rahul's friends: | हा... मिल गया...!   |
| Rahul:           | मेरे सामने बैठी है। क्या बाल है, क्या आँखे हैं, क्या होठ हैं।           |
| Rahul's friends: | तू उसके सामने उसकी बड़ी पास मर गयी। संदल के पहन नहीं उसे?               |

## Film examples

- Rahul:                   उसे हिंदी नहीं आती है। रूक, रूक... मेरी तरफ ही देख रही है
- Rahul:                   Don't worry about me! I am in the company of a beautiful girl.
- Rahul's friends:       Ah...he has got one...!
- Rahul:                   She is sitting opposite me. What hair, what eyes, what lips.
- Rahul's friends:       You sitting opposite her will get you killed by her. Is she wearing sandals?
- Rahul:                   She doesn't know Hindi. Wait, wait! She is looking in my direction! (...) (Sq. 00:13:45- 00:14:30)

As Rahul witnessed before Meena's conversation with her cousins in Tamil, he assumes Meena does not know Hindi. So, when he talks with his friends about her, he doesn't bother lowering his voice, but keeps on showing her off. This illustrates the presumption of North Indians that in the regions of Tamil Nadu people do not tend to speak Hindi and hence do not understand the language. A moment later, however, Rahul tries to make a move on Meena by singing to her the famous song “तुझे देखा तो यह जाना सनम”<sup>23</sup> from *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* – a film that still is played in cinemas in India and was Shah Rukh Khan's breakthrough. Meena responds in Hindi by singing another famous Hindi film song, shocking Rahul. She keeps telling Rahul about her situation of being kidnapped by her cousins to go back to her father, who wants to marry her off. As none of her other cousins speak Hindi, she sticks to famous Hindi songs, so they would not get suspicious, changing the lyrics. Rahul answers her in the same way (cf. Sq. 00:14:30-00:16:49). The sequence is one of the highlights of the film: taking various popular songs out of old mainstream Hindi films and integrate them in this scene. Music has always played an important part in mainstream Hindi cinema. It furthermore demonstrates the pan – Indian influence of Bollywood films and music. Even Meena's cousins, not able to speak Hindi know the music and presumably the films of the songs Meena and Rahul are singing. The sequence is making fun of Meena's South Indian cousins for not understanding Hindi and of Rahul as the North Indian, who sees himself trapped in a situation that he can't get out of because of his ignorance of Tamil.

One of the most significant scenes in *Chennai Express* on the language issue must be the confrontation between Rahul and Thangaballi. Thangaballi not able to talk in Hindi, and challenges Rahul in Tamil to fight for Meena. Rahul unaware of what Thangaballi is saying in

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<sup>23</sup> „When I saw you, I learned this, sweetheart...”

## Film examples

Tamil reacts in English. Both are talking at cross purposes. Rahul, who at first wants to handle Thangaballi alone, makes the angry Thangaballi compliments. The scene is not subtitled. So, the Hindi speaking spectators are hence as confused about Thangaballi's explanations as Rahul. Only after Thangaballi is finished, both Rahul and the viewers learn about the content. The translator is the Sikh police officer of Kumban region. Introduced earlier, the viewers and Rahul immediately acknowledge him as a fellow North Indian. The officer – wearing a turban, which signifies his Sikh religion and Punjabi origin – offers Rahul his help. He is the only other North Indian during the further course of the film. It is quite unusual to have a Punjabi officer serving in a rather secluded area of the south of India, as Rahul explains to the audiences in the off. The officer gives Rahul a familiar vibe, speaking also Hindi, he finds a confidant in him. He remains also the only one on Rahul's side, translating what Thangaballi has proposed to and was agreed to by Rahul:

Rahul: क्या अँडु- पंडु कर रहा था? क्या बोल रहा था? डरो मत सदार जी बोलो बोलो!

Officer: अरे उसने तुझे चैलेंज किया।

Rahul: क्या?

Officer: रात को तेरी और उसकी फाइट होगी।

Rahul: क्यों?

Officer: हा और जो जीतेगा मीना उसे मिलेगी।

Rahul: Why?

Officer: और कोटिया। और तूने चैलेंज काबुल भी कर लो।

Rahul: मुझे तमिल समझ नहीं आती। मैं तो मुंडी हिला रहा था। मीना ने मुझे कहा था।

Rahul: What is the big boy saying?

Officer: What he is saying: He challenged you!

Rahul: What?

Officer: Tonight will be yours and his fight!

Rahul: Why?

Officer: Yes, and the one who will win, will get Meena.

Rahul: Why?

## Film examples

Officer: And it gets better! You have agreed to the fight!

Rahul: I don't understand Tamil. I just nod my head! (cf. Sq.00:44:26-00:46:42).

As is visible in the following sequence and screenshot, the language barrier is made quite obvious in *Chennai Express*. In the frame, Rahul is standing on the left side and the Sikh officer (with turban) on the right side. The camera is looking from an undershot up to the tall Thangaballi showing Rahul per hand gesture, how he is going to cut him in pieces. Rahul getting smaller and smaller in the process, is nonetheless minor in size and power. The camera angle suggests that clearly Thangaballi has home-ground advantage, feeling more powerful in his position, speaking the local language, having the approval of Meena's father and towering over the intruder. Thangaballi's hand gesture in this shot can be interpreted as demonstrating Rahul the palpable difference and border between them.



Fig 5.4: Chennai Express – Thangaballi's challenge (00:45:28)

The Punjabi officer plays mediator, but he himself is too afraid of Thangaballi and Meena's father to do his rightful duty. The scene causes good laughs for the spectators and makes Rahul look extremely out-of-place. The fact that Rahul is too cool, he doesn't need to know Tamil, he can communicate in English. This scene sticks out in the discussion on the language barrier between North and South Indians, especially Tamil and Hindi-speaking communities.

In the evening of the scheduled fight with Thangaballi, Rahul gets drunk. A song scene *1234 Get on the Dance Floor* with the local people and famous multilingual South Indian actress Priyamani illustrates the linguistic barrier even more (Sq. 00:46:15-00:50:50). Priyamani is introduced to Rahul as the local dancer, and starting to sing in Tamil, she is stopped by Meena's cousins, who explain to her in Tamil that Rahul does not understand Tamil. So she starts her performance again, this time in Hindi. The song includes three languages, Hindi, English and

## Film examples

Tamil buzzwords, such as *ille* for 'no' or *po* for 'go'. One of the song- sequences and here below as a screenshot shows Rahul surrounded by Tamil speakers. The side-view shot furthermore highlights the skin colour difference between North and South Indians. Rahul in the middle lighted from above and Meena's cousins on both sides of him. Rahul has fairer skin colour, whereas the Tamils are stereotyped as the dark- skinned, curly- haired others. Rahul looks at Meena's cousin to his right rather confused and lost, while he sings a verse from the song in Tamil.



Fig 5.5: Chennai Express – Rahul lost in Tamil (00:49:19)

Rahul is clearly in the inferior position not understanding Tamil and once again this barrier between Tamil and Hindi is used in a comical way, making fun of the North Indians coming to the south without any knowledge of the local languages.

Another scene on the language issue involves a sequence of Rahul and Meena reaching the village of Vidamba. After running away from the fight the night before, Rahul and Meena seek hideout. Already annoyed with one another, Rahul commands Meena to go and talk to the villagers in order to get shelter. Meena angry for acting as Rahul's translator, tells him to do it by himself. At which point he declares:

Rahul: और तो यहाँ खड़ी- खड़ी आँखें देखा हाल क्या सुना रही हो, मिस सबटाइटल। जाओ, न जाके बात करो!

Meena: इतना स्टाइल! तुम जाओ! बात करो!

Rahul: कर सकता हूँ। मेरे आती है...कुंजम कुंजम क्या ...अपडिया, सपडिया, पो पो पो<sup>24</sup>। पो<sup>24</sup>!

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<sup>24</sup> அடபிய சடபிய போ போ போ

## Film examples

Meena (मराठी में): तुझे नाना जी टांग, अनि आईचा घो!

Rahul: तुम मराठी भी बोलती हो?

Meena: क्यों? तुम तमिल बोल सकती, मैं मराठी नहीं बोल सकती?

Rahul: आहो मेरी माँ, मीनामा! फिलहाल तो जाकर तमिल में बात करो! गो ना रेडी, स्टेडी, पो!

Rahul: Now, look them in the eyes and tell them the situation, Miss Subtitle! Go and make conversation!

Meenama: Such style! You go! Talk!

Rahul: What can I do! I am saying... kunjam, kunjam and what...adapiya, sadapiya, go, go, go!

Meena (in Marathi): Your grandfather can go take a hike!

Rahul: You speak Marathi?

Meenama: Why? If you can speak Tamil, then why can't I speak Marathi?

Rahul: Oh God! Meenama! For the time being, go and talk in Tamil. Ready, steady, go! (Sq. 1:14:20- 1:14:50).

Meena in this dialogue reveals to Rahul that not only is she able to talk Hindi, but Marathi as well, making Rahul feel embarrassed and at the same time impressed. In this short dialogue, the language diversity of India becomes understandable. The necessity to speak more than one language in India is apparent. The sequence shows Meena vastly superior as she is able to talk to people not only in the southern states but also in the northern ones. In contrast, Rahul is rather forlorn in the south, without the ability to communicate with local people. As Hughes informs in the interview about the reality in Tamil Nadu:

“If you go around in the street, people don't feel that strongly about it. In the big cities you can find plenty of Hindi speakers. Madras has always had, because it is a big mixed urban centre, there are a lot of Hindi speakers living there for a long time. There are also a lot of Muslims Urdu-speaking. But in terms of recent Tamil films, I don't really see a lot of films in the last 20 years making a point, or pointing to this language issue” (Hughes interview, para.11).

A lot of Northern people work in the urban areas of Tamil Nadu and talk Hindi along with Urdu (e.g. Hyderabad). But as far as Hughes remembered Tamil films, the Hindi – Tamil barrier or Indo-European – Dravidian barrier was never that important. *Chennai Express* does not pay as

## Film examples

much attention to the North and South Indian differences in appearance or cultures as it does to the languages. The divide between the Indo-European and Dravidian language families takes up half of the film and ends in a moving monologue by Shah Rukh Khan's character Rahul, finally winning over Thangaballi and Meena's father. Hugging Meena, he declares:

कहते हैं, हमारे भारत देश में तकर्रीबन सोलह सौ पैतीस भाषाएँ बोली जाती हैं लेकिन आज पाता चल गया कि सब से अहम भाषा एक ही है - प्यार की। सच में 'love has no language' और उस कॉमन मैन को कुम्बन का हीरो बनाने का सारा क्रेडिट मैं अपने दादा जी को दूँगा। My dada ji! (...) All said and done! एक गलत ट्रेन चेन्नई एक्सप्रेस ने मुझे सही रास्ता दिखा दिया। और आज यह राहुल मीनामा हो ज़रूर बोलेगा दिलवाले दुल्हनिया ले जाएंगे।

It is said that in our country approximately 635 languages are spoken, but today I came to understand that the most important language is – love. The truth is, love has no language and this common man gives all the credit for becoming Kumbar's hero to his grandfather. One wrong train Chennai Express showed me the right path. And today this Rahul will tell Meenama that the lover will take home the bride! (Sq. 02:10:37-02:11:34)

The conclusion of this mainstream blockbuster film ends in the realisation that no language is more powerful than love. Love conquers all. Love breaks the barriers between languages, cultures and states. A clear statement for a blockbuster – although meant to be a romantic comedy, Shah Rukh Khan delivers a speech that fits his trade mark, namely to illustrate that although so different in cultures and languages, India is one nation. Nehru's 'Unity in Diversity' once again is the message of a Shah Rukh Khan film.

### 5.1.3 Reviews

In a press conference for the release of *Chennai Express*, Shah Rukh Khan was asked by a reporter: "Since 2010 there is a trend to make South Indian films in Hindi or to impress Tamil, *Mr. and Mrs. Iyer*<sup>25</sup>, *The Dirty Picture*, *Ra.One* was making homage to the Sci-fi- environment. *Chennai Express* seems to be a mix of Indian cinemas and it looks like it was inspired by Telugu and Tamil films. Can you give us your vision on it?" The reporter saw a trend for North-South Indian topics in Hindi films as well and wanted Shah Rukh Khan to answer on his view of this 'trend'. His reply was the following:

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<sup>25</sup> The film of 2002, although made in the Hindi film industry, is considered more of an art-house film. It is about a Tamil *Iyer*- Brahmin woman that has to take a bus from her parents' place to her husband's in Kolkata with her baby- son. The film is not exactly describing the North-South disparities, but is about the Hindu-Muslim conflicts.

## Film examples

“You know there is a whole culture of South Indian films that is fantastic, Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam films, which are brilliant. Some of the finest films in the country are made there. I think you mix up sometimes with the remakes we make in Hindi. This is not a remake one. As far as *Ra.One*, he is a character, who happens to be South Indian, because a lot of Software industry and development is down in the south of India. And that film was actually set in London. And *The Dirty Picture* happens to be a biopic or a kind of a biopic about a South Indian movie star. So it was like that. You mentioned three films. We, by now, have made 2700 films, so it is not by a long shot that we are making films with South Indian backgrounds. This film why, because of the language and it was important because sometimes the people in the north of the country do not understand the language in the south of India. India is a vast country. And the whole situation with the film, the concept that whether you understand the language or not, the culture or not, love conquers all, that is how the country is united, and people are united (...) That is not something that is decidedly made to attract North Indians from down south. It just happens to be the subject, really” (Khan 2013<sup>26</sup>).

As Khan explains, the North- South differences played out in *Chennai Express* just happened to be the topic. It was not politically or socially motivated. *Chennai Express* is good fun. It doesn't want to transport a certain kind of message or claims to be made for art critics. It is made for the audiences, to make them laugh and relax. This can also be read as disclaimer at the beginning of the film in which it is stated: “Any mention of a community, language or region in this film is not intended to inflict contempt at any point. The film must therefore, be viewed as purely a non-commenting source of harmless entertainment not designed to hurt or disdain an individual or a community” (Sq. 00:00:13).

*Chennai Express* got to be one of the highest crossing films in the Hindi film industry until that time with over 200 million rupees in a fortnight, so Dasgupta, who studied the background of *Chennai Express*' release and success in Indian cinemas in his book “The Success of the Chennai Express”. Dasgupta explains its success with the Rajinikanth phenomenon. Rajinikanth's persona, ruling the South Indian film industries had great influence on making *Chennai Express*. The unrealistic action- loaded films, where Rajinikanth is the middle- class hero, who has to fight for his common life by becoming a superhero with abilities normally impossible to gain. “The impossible gimmicks make people laugh and cheer, happily suspending their logical brain and definitely not complaining” (Dasgupta 2014, p.242). Director

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<sup>26</sup> Khan, Shah Rukh 2013



## Film examples

Rohit Shetty picked up this principle of the common man that becomes a hero through love, although not imitating Rajinikanth. *Chennai Express* tries out how successful this concept in North Indian cinemas is, so Dasgupta and paying tribute to Rajinikanth can be considered a smart move by Shetty in order to calm the South Indian fans down (ibid., p.245). The film was promoted as something new, with the catchphrases of *Ready, Steady, Po!* or *Lungi Dance*. What worked very well was the “(...) pleasant break from the Punjabi- Delhi culture that had dominated Bollywood for a long time and invited audience attention to the fun and frolic of the South” (ibid., p.244). As the blogger Rangan thought about Shah Rukh Khan’s visit to the South: “Who knew that this quintessentially North Indian performer would rediscover himself in the South?” (Rangan 2013). The North Indian viewers got to enjoy a crossover to the south in the plot, but the main focus was fun and action. “Chennai Express catered to an audience who turned to the theatres only to have fun. Instead of investing in a remake, SRK (note: Shah Rukh Khan) made a direct South Indian film and inserted himself into it as a North Indian character, lost in the language, culture and geography thereby creating hilarious moments due to the mismatch” (Dasgupta 2014, p.251). The ‘mismatch’, the action and rivalry, Hindi *masak* (jokes) and a final battle, where the hero finally wins the approval of the father and the respect of the contenders all make *Chennai Express* a solid entertainment with typical ingredients of a masala mainstream Hindi film, underpinned with songs, dances and forbidden love between the main characters. For Radia-Tyagi, “Chennai Express is a love story. The fact that she is a South Indian is not that relevant” (Radia-Tyagi interview, para.3). The North-South aspect is not really an issue in her perspective. It just happened to play in the South, so her feeling was matching Shah Rukh Khan’s explanation. As to the question of why the film works although Shah Rukh Khan visits the south for the first time in his career, Radia-Tyagi answered: “It is because audiences are now open to exploring different cultures. It is because of that...they could afford to do it, because they knew the audience would not close up (...) You do something different but the audience has to be accepting that difference. And now, as filmmakers are coming of age, you have audience coming of age. It is a whole cycle that is happening. Maybe it was something he (NB: Shah Rukh Khan, also producer of *Chennai Express*) could do, because they felt audiences would respond to it. Audiences would not shy away (...) That they would be open to accept cultural diversity in a way earlier audiences wouldn’t” (Radia-Tyagi interview, para.5-6). Shah Rukh Khan took a leap when it comes to cultural differences, so her view on it. She also expressed her feelings of the portrayal of the south as rather authentic and the characters she would not call caricatures, but simply figures to laugh about (cf. Radia-Tyagi interview, para. 14). Similarly, Dwyer was of the opinion that the south is portrayed as rather

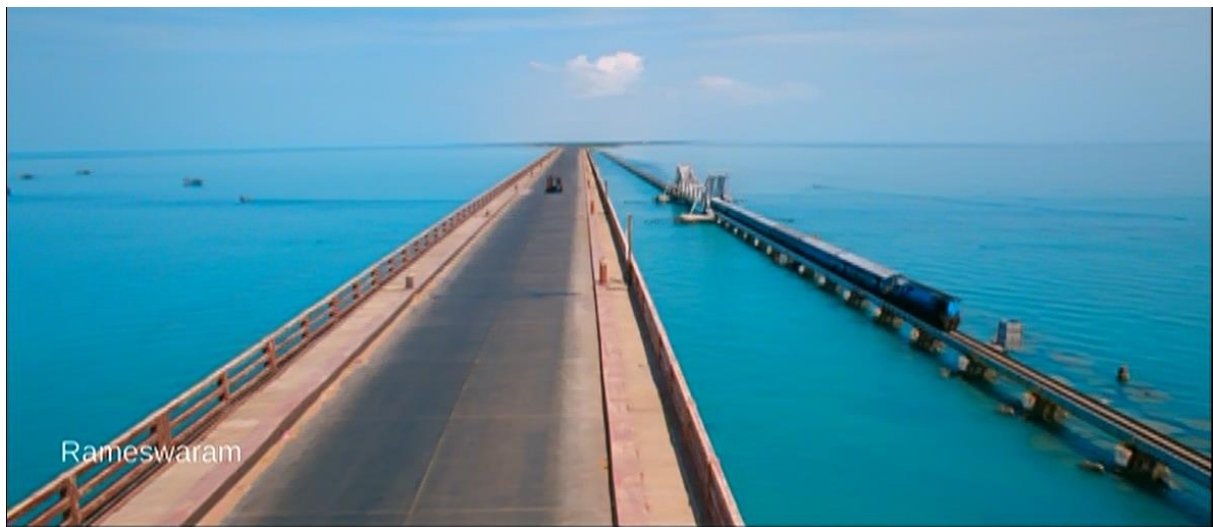
## Film examples

cool, but traditional in comparison to the north. “Traditional and cool. That is part of the flavour of it that people like. That view that you can be old and new at the same time” (Dwyer interview, para.18). This idea of celebrating old and new in the form of South and North Indian aspects was accepted by the movie-goers. The train ride, and also the road movie-movement of the main characters in the film, so Dwyer can be understood as a symbol of a circulation of different kinds of cultures, cinemas and people that is going on in India in daily life (cf. Dwyer interview, para.5). What Shah Rukh Khan explicitly does want to highlight, as he mentioned in the interview, is the fact of the different languages. The misunderstandings between North and South Indians arise out of the linguistic barriers that separate the north from the south. And most of “Deepika Padukone’s South Indian accent and flawed Hindi went viral and travelled by word of mouth, as she had done a tremendous job enacting an innocent inexpertise (sic!) with her Hindi and creating humour in the process” (Dasgupta 2014, p.251). Most of the comments on *Chennai Express* by bloggers and readers of reviews express regrets for the widely used Tamil without any subtitles. “Tamil is used too often in Chennai Express; sometimes with Deepika Padukone offering a translation but most of the times there are no subtitles, as SRK would say in the film” (Kaushal 2013). Padukone’s attempt to speak with a Tamil-accented Hindi led to criticism. But the overall message of cultural clash and the language barrier as the obstacle that needs to be conquered was mostly accepted. “(...) I agree it’s (NB.: Deepika Padukone’s accent) not completely authentic but the dialogues are so good that the different accents is just to portray the cultural difference. Me, being a part north Indian and part south Indian did not feel humiliated but enjoyed every little bit” (avijeetshastry from India 2013 Aug 8 on imdb). Another comment says: “I think it’s superb movie, which for the first time the director has attempted to make a fusion movie of Tamil and Hindi” (Parash Shakya from Nepal 2013 Aug 15 on imdb). Shakya believes it is a fusion of Tamil and Hindi, which was the unique form and led to one comment of: “Chennai Express can safely be called the first Tamil film in Hindi” (Gupta 2013).

What struck people in *Chennai Express* and was also reviewed by Dwyer in the interview concerns the famous South Indian places that are shown. The landscape is often regarded as an advertisement for the south, as most people in the north know about famous places to visit. A comment on this issue says: “Areas where CHENNAI EXPRESS (sic!) scores better than previous Rohit Shetty massy entertainers are the picture postcard south-Indian scenic locations (...)” (Rai 2013). In *Chennai Express*, Rahul has to go to Rameswaram. It is one of the four pilgrimage places for Hindus to visit. According to the Rāmāyana, Rameswaram was the place where, after his return from Sri Lanka in order to rescue Sīta, Rām was worshipping the god

## Film examples

Shiva. The city and temple of Rameswaram is on the island Pamban connected with the mainland through bridges, located in the strait between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka.



**Fig 5.6: Chennai Express – Rameswaram (02:08:37)**

The interesting fact about the portrayal of Rameswaram for example in *Chennai Express* was that it was never really shown correctly. In this screenshot above, the car of Rahul and Meena – aspiring to put the grandfather’s ashes in the ocean – is seen driving on the bridge going to Rameswaram. Nevertheless, anyone, who has been to Rameswaram, knows that this shot is not picturing the way to the city, but the way back to the mainland. “They meant to be going to Rameswaram, but they showing a clip coming from Rameswaram, because the bridges are the wrong way around. You cannot see the land. Anyone, who has been to Rameswaram, knows it is the wrong way. So they are not really bothered by...it is not meant for a South Indian audience. But it is kind of a North Indian cinematic view of a South Indian film” (Dwyer interview, para.4). Dwyer comments that *Chennai Express* is not paying attention to the right kind of image of South Indian popular places, but is more of a cinematic view or idea of South India. The lack of interest in South India is also noticeable by the train ride. Rahul thinks he can take the *Chennai Express* to go to Goa, meeting his friends on the way. In the film, the train is appears to be passing through a lot of landscape that is actually in Kerala, the one South Indian state that the *Chennai Express* does not cross. The bridge, where the train stops for Meena and Rahul to meet the don is also really the Vasco da Gama Londa in Goa, with the Dudhsagar- waterfalls in the background: “And the fact that they do not care about the space. They take Goa for Tamil Nadu. When they get off the train, this place is in Goa, not in Tamil Nadu. It is a very recognisable place. All the scenery is wrong, the train number is wrong. It is very odd” (Dwyer interview, para.5). The knowledge of the film visitors about South India

## Film examples

doesn't concern the producers. The film is fictional and South India is interpreted in Bollywood style.

"I think, the stereotypes in that film are interesting, because they are not stereotypes of South Indian cinema, but I wonder if there were stereotypes from within South Indian cinema norms. In quite a few North Indian films, they try to deal with South Indian film stereotypes, rather than public stereotypes of South Indians...it seems to me that it is a commentary by Bombay cinema on South Indian cinema, rather than a generic view of South India. So I think it is the cinema talking about cinema rather than a public perception, because I think a lot of people in the North know about South Indian films are being very colourful, very exaggerated and so on (Dwyer interview, para.4).

This important distinction of South India and the image of South India in *Chennai Express* were not taken too well in some parts of South India. As Hughes informed in the interview, *Chennai Express* was banned in some cinemas in Tamil Nadu (cf. Hughes interview, para.7). On the stereotypes visible in the film, Hughes suggested to sit down and watch the film with South Indians. "Because that is one of the complaints that people from South India have, is that South Indians depicted as stereotyped and inaccurate. And they generally consider it insulting. So they prefer in fact that Bollywood industry wouldn't make films about the south. Because they gonna get it wrong (...)" (Hughes interview, para.5). Getting it wrong or showing South India in a way that is only perceivable in the north but not in the whole country, was also read in some negative reviews of the film. As the blogger Basu wrote: "Rajnikanth (sic!) would find this amusing gesture flattering enough, but in general the Ready Steady PO (sic!) people of this Rohit Shetty film are tickling the funny bones at the cost of harbouring clichés about "South India'. The general Indian public often give the geographical ideas a miss when the club all 4 South Indian states together and blabber about their 'Ille Ille Po' which they translate as a funny way of saying NO NO GO! (sic!)" (Basu 2013).

India as a multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multicultural country is celebrated. Overall differences are what our social life is all about. What *Chennai Express* really wants to point out is that life starts with love, which is a journey. It conquers all and overcomes all man-made prejudices and differences.

Film examples

## 5.2 Gori Tere Pyaar Mein

„There are three things in life which are real: God, human folly, and laughter. The first two are beyond our comprehension so we must do what we can with the third“<sup>27</sup>

Name: *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein*

Release date: 2013

Genre: romantic comedy

Length: 140 min

This Indian proverb speaks about the ability to make people laugh. One of the aims of mainstream Hindi films is making people laugh about the silliness of their own society, clichés of daily- life occurrences as well as the stereotypical behaviours. *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein*<sup>28</sup> (translated as ‘In your beautiful love’) was released as a love comedy in November 2013. It was produced by Karan Johar, one of the most popular and acclaimed producers and directors in the Hindi film industry. Karan Johar, known for his big box office hits like *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* or *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* in recent times invested more of his time and money in coming-of-age love comedies for the younger Indian middle- class generations, alike NRIs. He also produced *2 States*, which will be discussed below. *Chennai Express* was a great success with the fans. It was a first step in the South and North Indian direction and it seems that Karan Johar picked up the topic and tried to produce other commercial Hindi films about the love between different states or regions. In the theory of Tejaswini Ganti: “‘Hits’ and ‘flops’ are the primary way that Hindi filmmakers relate to their audiences. Commercial success or failure is interpreted by filmmakers as an accurate barometer of social attitudes, norms, and sensibilities, thus providing the basis for their knowledge about audiences” (Ganti in Ganti 2004, p.62). So, according to Ganti’s view, Johar might have taken *Chennai Express* and its success as incentive to base the story in a North-South Indian context.

The protagonist of *GTPM* is Shriram, who is introduced as a playboy. He recently returned from the USA where he studied architecture. Shriram and his *Iyer* parents live in Bangalore, Karnataka. There he keeps on living his extravagant, western lifestyle until his father angry with the unorthodox behaviour of his son, suggests he should get married. They arrange a meeting with a fellow Tamil Brahmin family and the daughter Vasudha. Shriram is not at all disappointed with Vasudha, but soon learns that she is in love with Kamal, a North Indian Sikh,

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<sup>27</sup> Indian proverb

<sup>28</sup> Further also abbreviated *GTPM*

## Film examples

who is working as a समाज सेवक *samāj sevak* (social worker). Her parents would never have approved the union, so Vasudha decided to marry Shriram. Learning about Vasudha's situation, Shriram tells her about his love for a Punjabi girl from Delhi named Diya. In a retrospective, the audience learns that Diya was also coming to Bangalore to be an environmental activist and social worker. Shriram and Diya met at a Punjabi wedding in Delhi of one of Diya's relatives. While Diya was working in Bangalore, the two began a relationship, but split up criticising their respective way of life. Diya returns to Delhi after Shriram accuses Diya of being a pretender, only helping because her family is wealthy. Upon Vasudha and Shriram's wedding, Vasudha makes Shriram realise that he is still in love with Diya. As Shriram has to perform the South Indian wedding ritual of कशी यात्रा *Kashī Yātrā*, he decides to ditch the wedding and follow Diya. The second part of the film plays in a small village in Gujarat. Diya – after taking Shriram's accusation of being a hypocrite seriously – works as a social worker in Jhumli, a small village that is disconnected from the main road. Parted by a river the villagers fight for a bridge to have a better connection to the urban surroundings. Shriram comes to Jhumli to reunite with Diya. Upon working out their problems with one another, the two have to build a bridge for the villagers. Negotiating with a corrupt local representative, Shriram and Diya fall in love again and are able to build the bridge, learning that Vasudha has eloped with Kamal to Punjab.

### 5.2.1 The Portrayal of North and South Indian Differences

*GTPM* does not picture so much the 'clash of cultures', as is obvious in *Chennai Express* or in the last example of *2 States*. The film is mainly focusing on love between two completely different characters and in the broader sense it is about development and the clash between urban versus rural lifestyles. However, in the first part of the film, which is set in Bangalore, the relation between North and South Indians is portrayed and plays a rather important role.

In the screenshot below Shriram has already agreed to wed Vasu. The family meet for the second time and organise the catering. The frontal shot shows Shriram as he inspects the food. Shriram and Vasu are from Tamil *Iyer* families, who are strictly vegetarian. Shriram, nevertheless, calls himself a *chickenarian*, he eats chicken and is not very satisfied with the food choices in this sequence. Shriram is on the left side of the table, walking up and down past the different pots of food. His hands are in the pockets, symbolising his little interest in the wedding and in his parents' culture. The audiences have not yet learned about Diya and acknowledge Shriram as a rich, westernized man, who has yet to find his place in his family. On the right side of the table stands Kamal. In this scene it is still unknown to the viewers that Kamal will later be revealed as Vasu's love interest. He works as a waiter at this party to be

## Film examples

closer to Vasu. Kamal is Sikh, as can be identified by his turban. That means Kamal is from the north of India, Punjab. He later says his family comes from Chandigarh, the capital of Punjab.



Fig 5.7: GTPM – Shriram and Kamal (00:12:47)

Shriram, in the frame, sees Kamal for the first time and wonders why a Sikh would work at their families' gathering. This is a hint to the fact that it is quite unusual for Punjabis to work in the South, let alone as a waiter for Tamil parties. The screenshot gives an image of South and North India separated by a long table with Tamil food on top. It is a good way to show two persons, two sides and the differences between them.

The difficulties with love between these two sides are more obvious in the next selected sequence. It is from a scene of the flashback story about Shriram and Diya, which Shriram is telling Vasu about. Diya and Shriram discuss their future. As Diya breaks to Shriram that her parents want her to come back to Delhi and get married, he questions the relationship:

Shriram: हमारा तो कोई फ्यूचर नहीं है। मेरी मानो, शादी कर लो!

Diya: एक मिनट! एक मिनट! नॉट तहत मैं तुमसे शादी करने लिए मार रही हूँ, बूत व्हाट दो यू मीन कि हमारे फ्यूचर नहीं है।

Shriram: हम इतने अलग हैं। तुम डेल्ही की पंजाबी हो, मैं बैंगलोर के तमिलियन (...)

Shriram: We don't have a future. If you ask me, get married!

Diya: Wait! Wait! Not that I am dying to marry you, but what do you mean that we have no future?

Shriram: We are different. You are a Punjabi from Delhi and I am a Tamilian from Bangalore (...) (Sq. 00:43:00 – 00:43:45).

## Film examples

Shriram is not the character that would resent a woman he loves because of her origin, but in this particular sequence, he brings up their different cultural backgrounds. He goes on stating the fact that he doesn't like children and Diya wants to open up an orphanage. So there are not just cultural disparities that would make it difficult for them to be together, but also their different views on lifestyle choices. The film visitors get a clue as to why the relationship is doomed to fail. It is quite interesting that Shriram, who was introduced as a womanizer and educated in the United States, obviously takes the argument of North versus South India as a reason to break up with someone. Shriram's opinion on North and South Indian relationships also becomes an issue at his engagement with Vasudha. Vasudha is in love with Kamal, who once again attends their party as a waiter to be close to Vasu. Shriram now learns about their love.



Fig 5.8: GTPM – Shriram's speech (00:51:11)

The screenshot above shows in a frontal shot the sequence of Kamal approaching Vasu and Shriram. Both of the South Indians are wearing traditional clothings. Vasu on the left-hand side has braided her hair and put Jasmine flowers in it, which is most common in the south of India. She wears a *sārī*, a *cholī* blouse and bracelets. Shriram wears *lungī* and a कुरती *kurtā* on top. On the other side entirely in black is Kamal. He stands out from the wedding guests with his turban and कड़ा *kaḍā* (one of the ਪੰਜ ਕਕਾਰ *pañj kakār* of Sikh is to wear a silver bracelet in order to be identified as a Sikh). He is standing with his hands on his hips and he challengingly looks up to Shriram. Clearly visible are the two sides, the South Indians in white colours on the left and Kamal as the 'black sheep' at the wedding on the right. Frontal shots are very common



## Film examples

in mainstream Hindi films. A centralist view, the camera is moving central to capture both sides as equals. It highlights theatrically and visually intensified the differences. This style is quite uncommon to western, cinematic camera work.

In the next sequence Shriram gives his speech and lecture for Vasu and Kamal on why their relationship would never work:

- Shriram: क्या सोचकर आया था? सरदए बहुत खुश होगा? शाबाशी देगा?
- Vasudha: Shut up Shriram! Just because तुम्हे लगता है कि कमल एक सिख है और ...
- Shriram: मुझे कुछ लगे या ना लगे, तुम्हारे पेरेट्स हो सॉलिड झटका लगनेवाला हैं मुझे रेसिस्ट कहते है। असली रसिस्ट्स यह लोग हैं।
- Kamal: तभी तो वसुधा चुप-चाप तुमसे शादी कर रही है। Otherwise...
- Shriram: Otherwise क्या? कुछ नहीं होता! आज तो बस गाना गा रहा था। शादी के बाद तेरा ऐसा बैंड बजता।
- Vasudha: क्या मतलब?
- Shriram: शादी करके कहाँ रहोगे? चंडीगढ़ या बैंगलोर?
- Vasudha: बैंगलोर!
- Kamal: चंडीगढ़ में मेरी फैमिली हैं।
- Vasudha: यहाँ पे मेरा जॉब है। चंडीगढ़ में कर्नाटिक म्यूजिक किसको सिखाऊँगी?
- Shriram: Wait, there is more! बच्चों को क्या नाम रखोगे सजीत नटराजन या वेंकटेश सिंह। चूड़ियाँ पहनेंगे या कड़ा? शादी कहाँ होगी ? मंदिर में या गुरूद्वारे में? इडली सिर्फ सांबर के साथ अच्छी लगती है भाई, छोलों के साथ नहीं।
- Kamal: बस, मैं वसु से प्यार करता हूँ।
- Shriram: इतना? कि तुम अपनी फैमिली, अपना शहर, सब छोड़के यहाँ बनके रहोगे। बैसाखी छोड़ के पोंगल मनाओगे? रोटी छोड़कर चावल खाओगे? शादिओं में वाड़ी वर्सी के बदली अप्डी पोड़ी पे नाचोगे। लेकिन यह सब करके भी इन लोगों में तुम्हारी कोई पहचान नहीं बनेगी। You will always be an outsider! किसी और से प्यार करने से पहले खुद से प्यार करना सीखो! Long term में यही काम आएगा!
- Shriram: What did you think in coming here? You think, the boss will be happy? Will give you a raise? (NB.: punchline from the film *Sholay*)
- Vasudha: Shut up Shriram! Just because you think Kamal is a Sikh...

## Film examples

- Shriram: What I think or not is not important. Your parents will have a heart attack and they call me a racist. The real racists are these people!
- Kamal: That is why Vasudha is marrying you silently. Otherwise...
- Shriram: Otherwise what? Nothing will happen. Today you are just singing songs, after the wedding you will only be fighting.
- Vasudha: What do you mean?
- Shriram: Where are you going to have your wedding? Chandigarh or Bangalore?
- Vasudha: Bangalore.
- Kamal: Chandigarh. In Chandigarh is my family!
- Vasudha: But here is my job. Who will I teach Karnatic music in Chandigarh?
- Shriram: Wait there is more. What will you name your children? Surjit Natrajan or Venkatesh Sandhu? Will you wear *saneh* or *kaḍa*? Where will you get married? In a temple or Gurdwara? *Idli* is only good with *sambar*, brother, with beans it is not!
- Kamal: Stop it, I love Vasu!
- Shriram: How much? So much that you can leave your family, town, everything? You can leave bread and eat only rice? At the wedding you dance Vasi Varsi (NB.: traditional Punjabi wedding song) over *Badli Apdi Podi* (NB.: Tamil dance). All that you can do, but for these people you will never be one of them. You will always be an outsider! Before you love someone else, first love yourself! Long term, this will work out! (Sq. 51:11- 52:40).

In this argument of Vasu, Kamal and Shriram, the most important cultural stereotypes of the relation between North and South Indians are mentioned. Kamal and Vasu are not sure where to live. Vasu, a teacher for South Indian Karnatic music, will have problems in finding jobs in Chandigarh, the hometown of Kamal. Kamal will always be an outsider in Bangalore and Vasu's family because of his religion and cultural background. Shriram argues that not only the two of them will have problems with their life decisions but their children as well. What names they will get, or what religion they will follow. Getting married is not exclusively a decision between the bride and groom, but it concerns both their families and their descendants. Shriram asks Kamal if he loves Vasu enough to leave his family behind. Shriram is not only talking to Kamal, he is reminding himself, why his love story with Diya didn't work out. This speech expresses the deep concerns Indians have about intercultural, interstate marriages in general and between North and South Indians. After his speech, Vasu and Shriram are forced by their families to join the celebrations, leaving Kamal behind.

## Film examples

One of the most important scenes in *GTPM* is the wedding, where there is the last argument between Vasu and Shriram before the wedding starts (Sq.01:01:50-01:05:00). Vasu and Shriram are sitting at the altar. Shriram is deeply hurt because his pet (a crab he got from Diya) has died. Vasu makes him realize that he is still in love with Diya and shouldn't be here marrying her. At this moment the ceremony begins with the ritual of the journey to *Kashī* (a religious name for the city of Benares) – *Kashī yātrā*. This ritual is the key moment turning the story around. After the holy bath, called *mangala snānam*, the groom has to leave on his pilgrimage to Benares or *Kashī* to live in celibacy, as he is not interested in marriage life. Wearing a *dhōṭī*, named *वेष्टि* *veṣṭi* is a *lungī* for special, religious occasions in white colour with gold ornaments, as well as sandals named *चप्पल* *chappal*, an umbrella, and a walking cane he takes the *Rāmāyana* with him. Fully equipped Shriram is escorted through the families and guests to leave the wedding. Before he takes the first steps, his future father-in-law washes his feet and begs him to take his daughter as a wife. The father-in-law and all the other family members of the daughter request that the groom will not go to *Kashī*, but wed the daughter. On the other hand, the family of the husband-to-be encourage him to go to *Kashī*, with expressions such as 'marriage is unhealthy'; 'he should enjoy his freedom' and 'ditch the wedding'<sup>29</sup>. Normally the groom then reconsiders and walks back to the altar. But Shriram, half way through the shouting guests decides to not marry Vasu.



Fig 5.9: *GTPM* – *Kashī Yātrā* (01:05:58)

<sup>29</sup> Chetan Bhagat explains the ritual in his book; however the ritual is not part of the film. That is why it is described here: “OK, now you go for Kashi Yatra,’ the priest said after an hour. He gave me an umbrella and a copy of the Gita. ‘What’s that?’ I said. Ananya’s father gave me the details. I had to stand up and announce I wasn’t interested in the wedding and was going to Kashi, or Varanasi, to become a sadhu. I didn’t know why they gave me an umbrella, but I had to open it and place it over my head as I walked out. Ananya’s father would come after me and convince me that I should marry his daughter instead” (Bhagat 2009, p.262).

## Film examples

The frontal shot here shows Shriram in the middle of the guests. He is wearing the *dhotī*. In his left hand (but right hand from the audiences' perspective) he holds the *Rāmāyana*, while in his right hand, he has a cane. In the back, one can see Vasu and her father standing at the altar waiting for Shriram to finish the ritual. On both sides the families of Vasu and himself are cheering him on, making typical Indian hand gestures, which are symbolising the expression of “What is the matter?”, as Shriram stops his journey and looks down to a relative in a wheelchair. Shriram hands her the *Rāmāyana* and let go of the cane. Rearranging his *dhotī*, he runs down the aisle away from the people. Taking the *Kashī yātrā* literally, he is determined to get Diya back. The South Indian ritual of the journey to *Kashī* is here symbolic for the life decision of a young man Shriram, who chooses to get the woman he loves. The wedding guests, and especially Shriram's father, thinking Shriram is joking with them, laugh. Calling him back to join his bride, they soon realise that Shriram has gone. Only Vasu, who encouraged him to go and search for Diya in the first place, keeps on laughing. The engagement and wedding scenes, with Shriram's speech and the *Kashī yātrā* are most important in this discussion. Firstly, Shriram explains the reasons why Vasu and Kamal can't marry, why a union between North and South Indians would not work. Secondly, he ditches his own advice and pursues his love story with a North Indian woman. The ritual of *Kashī yātrā* is therefore used as motivation and makes the spectators laugh, as the purpose of the *yātrā* is actually taken as an opportunity for Shriram. While *Kashī yātrā* is not explicitly South Indian, it is more often the custom in Tamil *Iyer* weddings than in North Indian Hindu weddings.

The language differences between North and South India play no particular part in *GTPM* in comparison to *Chennai Express* for example. All the protagonists are talking in Hindi. Bangalore is a multilingual city. Although it is the capital of Karnataka and a hence city of a Kannada- speaking state, Bangalore houses many national and international companies. People from all over India work in Bangalore and English, Hindi too are the commercialese. Furthermore, the main protagonists are North Indian actors and actresses – Imran Khan and Kareena Kapoor- Khan. Neither of them speak Kannada or Tamil. In the second part of the film which is set in the Gujarati village of Jhumli, the villagers are talking in a mixture of Hindi and Gujarati. Shriram, although not speaking Tamil but Hindi, has difficulties with Gujarati. In the opening scene in Jhumli, this is portrayed as follows (cf. 1:10:00- 1:12:48): A small boy from the village wants to help Shriram to cross an old and dangerous ropeway that leads over a river to Jhumli. In a mix of Gujarati and Hinglish, Shriram tries to stop the boy from entering the ropeway, thinking it would be too dangerous:

## Film examples

Boy: ओह भाई! घबराओ नहीं! एस्ता एस्ता करके आ जाओ!

Shriram: बहुत डेंजरस है! (गुजराती में) मोटो खतरनाक छे!

Boy: सिंपल छे! मैं दिखता हूँ!

Shriram: अरे गिर जाओगे! हे मोगली, यह सर्कस नहीं है!

Boy: आओ! नो टेंशन! हाथ दो!

Boy: Oh Brother! Don't be afraid. Just do it like this and come!

Shriram: It is too dangerous! (in Gujarati) It is too dangerous!

Boy: It is simple! I show you!

Shriram: You will fall down! Mogli that is no circus!

Boy: Come, no stress! Take my hand!

The mix of the three different languages is very well illustrated in that scene. English, Hindi and Gujarati are used between the protagonists to communicate with each other. The language barriers are thereby not between Indo-European and Dravidian languages but various Indo-European ones. Nevertheless, the audience see the stereotype of the outsider entering a foreign domain, where language is the mutual link. With the continuing plot of the film the languages become less and less a hindering issue.

In the final scene of the film, Diya and Shriram find each other again while building the bridge of Jhumli. The scene describes the moment when the lovers want to be with each other. The river and the unfinished bridge are hindering them from being together. Shriram thereafter takes a wooden plank and lets it fall from one pier to the other.



## Film examples

**Fig 5.10: GTPM – Building the Bridge (01:02:50)**

The screenshot above is a frontal shot where Diya waits on the left side of the bridge and Shriram stands on the right side pushing the plank to fall on the pier. The process of the plank falling onto the bridge abutment is shot from different angles and symbolises the final joining of the two lovers. One might say the plank now connects North India in the figure of Diya and South India in the figure of Shriram through their common goal of building a bridge for the village of Jhumli. The scene ends with Diya crossing the plank and hugging Shriram, with the villagers clapping them on. It might be said that the villagers represent the people of India who see the two different cultures united through a bridge standing for India's peace and prosperity.

### 5.2.2 The Dark versus Fair Perception

*Gori Tere Pyaar Mein* can be translated into English as 'In your beautiful love'. But the word *gorī* in this title is rather confusing, since गौरी *gorī* is related to the Hindi word गौरा *gorā* meaning 'white' or 'fair'. Both in terms of the colour white or to define a person's fairness of skin, *gorā* was used by the Indians to refer to the British colonialists. Today, the word is handled as synonym for 'beautiful'. "Within India, the word *gorā* revered, expressed through song and film as interchangeable with the word for beauty" (Malik 2007, p.12). In the title *GTPM gorī* means 'beautiful', but throughout the film there are sequences that, for Indians, are obviously stating the fair- skinned/beautiful comparison. In Asian cultures in general, but also African cultures, having fair skin still has great influence on one's life, for example in looking for jobs or finding a partner, and gaining higher social status (cf. Verma 2011, p. 194). Not just India, but many former British colonial societies have the notion of white being connected to physical attributes that are considered 'beautiful'. Not being exposed to the sun and heat from having to work in the fields, fair skin was a sign for the wealthy British upper class that could afford to stay in the shade (cf. Malik 2007, p.10). The connotation of being fair- skinned to being beautiful to being 'pure' was part of the Indian social thinking long before the British settled. However, it was the British colonialists that brought "(...) the association of Blackness (sic!) with primitiveness, lack of civilization, unrestrained sexuality, pollution, and dirt" (Glenn 2008, p.284/ cf. Jablonski 2012). The British however postulated a north- south divide when it came to skin- colour. The Aryan settlers were fairer than the indigenous of the south. In the south people tend to have much darker skin due to the proximity to the equator and the intense incident solar radiation, other climatic variations comparable to the north (cf. Nambūdiri 1992, p.69). But although the skin colour is not linked to the caste system, holy scripts of the Hinduism made indeed the separation between white/pure and dark/evil: "Skin colour was significant –

## Film examples

so many of the mythic heroes and heroines are fair, like Siva (sic!) coloured by the moon, and the villains are (...) not only deformed and hairy but ‘dark and tawny’” (Robb 1995, p.8). The colonial and post-colonial Indian writers, so Glenn, were influenced by meanings in religious scripts as well as the European “notions of caste, culture, and race”. “T(t)hey viewed the English as representing the highest culture and embodying the optimum physical type; they made invidious comparisons between lighter- skinned groups, whose men they viewed as more intelligent and marital and whose women they considered more attractive, and darker- skinned groups, whose men they viewed as lacking intelligence and masculinity, and whose women they considered to be lacking in beauty” (Arnold 2004, p.162/ cf. Glenn 2008, p.281/ cf. Herring/Keith/Horton 2003/Hunter 2005/Maddox 2004).

These interpretations of fair skin and dark skin are still present today. And as Glenn suggests, the ideology of ‘white is right’ is nowadays used by the Western global market to trigger a longing for Western cultures and their products (cf. Glenn 2008, p.282/ cf. Jaman 2005). India is the current largest market for skin-whitening products – with over 300 million Rupees revenue. Women between the ages of 16 to 35 are the major consumers (cf. Dasgupta 2014, p.46/ cf. Glenn 2008, p.289). The largest selling brand of skin- whiteners in India is ‘Fair&Lovely’ from Emami. ‘Fair&Lovely’ has become a traditional brand, speaking to females and “(...) taps into the inner cravings of its potential consumers by positioning fairness as an instrument to reach the end goals and the brand as means to achieving fair skin” (Verma 2011, p.207). Longing for fair skin has a greater effect on women than on men. As being fair-skinned is simultaneously regarded as being beautiful, females are much more aware of the importance of skin colour. As Dwyer clarifies in the interview, “I mean, the dark skin men are not problems, but the dark- skin women” (Dwyer interview, para.15). This is most obvious in matrimonial advertisements and partnership websites, where fair- skinned brides are preferred, so Malik (cf. Malik 2007, p.10/ cf. Glenn 2008, p.289/ cf. Prashad 2001, p.98). However, a few years back, the brand established an over-the-counter product especially for men called ‘Fair&Handsome’. “The attractiveness of a man is no longer defined by ‘dark’ rather he is ‘fair’ in complexion” (Verma 2011, p.208). The creams are very cheap and therefore accessible even to poor Indians. Advertisements for the whitening products have been done by many film stars. Shah Rukh Khan is a role model for ‘Fair&Handsome’. He became the first male actor of the Hindi film industry to make an advertisement for a skin-whitening product. But while it was common for female stars to be in the Fair&Lovely commercials, the collaboration with ‘Fair&Handsome’ brought a lot of protest on Shah Rukh Khan and the brand. “Some consumers felt that SRK (note: Shah Rukh Khan) backing a skin-lightening cream would only intensify

## Film examples

the prejudice that already exists within the orthodox pockets of the society, where the darker-skinned can find themselves looked down upon. Deep within the age old culture exists the thought that high standards, better prospects and progress are meant for the fair-skinned; dark skin is often regarded as low status and low caste” (Dasgupta 2014, p.46f.). Not for nothing is the message of the ‘Fair&Handsome’ advertisement: “To be fair or remain in dark oblivion” (cf. Chaddha 2005). The Indian film industries, as can be seen with Shah Rukh Khan as a model for the ‘Fair&Handsome’ advertisements have an important role in the fair versus dark skin issue. In particular female actresses are watched and judged amongst others on the colour of their skin (Parameswaran 2009, p.230/ cf. Glenn 2008, p.289). Popular Hindi film actress Nandita Das is fighting racism in the media and launched her own campaign ‘Dark is beautiful’ in 2009 by the Indian NGO ‘Women of Worth’<sup>30</sup>. As Kaiser rightfully links concepts of beauty with (cultural) identity, she says: “Appearance management is a process of identity expression, and identity, in turn, is influenced by a convergence of cultural categories” (Kaiser 1997, p.412).

In *GTPM* too, there are two references in the script, both understood to be comical, but nonetheless stating the fact that skin colour plays an essential part in Indian daily life. The first reference occurs at the beginning of the film (09:17-09:20). It shows the meeting of both the families of Shriram and Vasu to arrange a marriage between the two of them. In the screenshot the camera is making a frontal shot on the two families. Outside in the garden of Vasu’s house, the gathering is happening. On the left side are Vasu’s family members, on the right side Shriram’s with the groom-to-be sitting between his mother and possibly his aunt. A table with sweets separates the two families. In the back standing on the left side next to the statue of Ganesh, the two fathers are looking at their families. Both of them are rather pleased with the union.

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<sup>30</sup> <http://womenofworth.in/dark-is-beautiful/>





Fig 5.11: GTPM – Families’ Meeting (00:08:57)

The women are wearing traditional *sārī* and the men *lungī*. Only Shriram wears western clothes – a jacket and shirt, giving the hint that he was educated in the United States and is familiar with the western lifestyle. The clothing stands out and symbolises Shriram’s western attitude towards love and marriage. He doesn’t take the traditions too seriously and is forced to get married by his parents. Vasu has not yet entered the film. It is custom throughout arranged marriages in India to first get to know the groom-to-be before revealing the daughter. In the next sequence Shriram’s mother tells them about Shriram’s education, when suddenly Vasu’s father interrupts and turns to Shriram’s father. The camera follows him and the sequence now has only the two fathers in the shot with Shriram back in the middle:

Vasu’s father:           Very fair boy, na?

Shriram’s father:       हॉस्पिटल में बदल हो गया था! (cf. min.: 09:17-09:20)

Vasu’s father noticing the fair skin colour of the groom, he states the fact in English to which Shriram’s father replies in Hindi, saying, “In the hospital he was swapped”. Both of the families laugh, except for Shriram, who confusedly looks up to his father. Imran Khan, playing Shriram, was born in the United States to Bengali parents. The nephew of Aamir Khan grew up in Mumbai. He is therefore North Indian and in this film portrays a Tamil *Iyer* from Bangalore (as is Shraddha Kapoor, who is playing Vasudha, again not a South Indian actress); the film is making fun of the Hindi film stereotype that all characters have to have a fair complexion as a sign of beauty. What is interesting is that Vasu’s father did not speak Hindi, as all the other characters did, but referred to the fact of Shriram’s fair skin colour in English. This can be seen as a sign of caution not to offend anybody. Since the term *gora* is usually not custom among Indians to describe another person. In this scene, however, the characters are making fun not of the darker complexion of a South Indian but are mocking the fair skin colour of Shriram that

## Film examples

distinguishes him from the other people in the scene and in a wider context from the South Indians. An interpretation of the father's joke of "he was swapped in the hospital" might be that Shriram does not belong to the family. He was educated in the United States, follows no traditions and has no respect for his parents (in comparison to his brother, where the audiences learn that he is working in the family business, is married and has a son). This is quite obvious in the beginning of the film, where Shriram's father calls him the "काला धब्बा" or "black spot" of the family. Meant figuratively, Shriram takes the reference of the 'black sheep' literally and asks his father:

मैं आपको काला लगता हूँ?

Do you think I look black?

His father shocked at this question indoctrinates: "Don't be racist, Shriram!" (Sq. 00:07:05 – 00:07:40). One can see in this sequence, what *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein* wants to transmit, namely the message of beauty, being fair- skinned or dark- skinned become synonyms for the character traits of inner beauty, being an honourable or a selfish person.

Another reference to this issue is in the second part of the film. Shriram learns from Diya's parents that Diya is working in a small village called Jhumli in Gujarat. Shriram promises to bring her home. Once again resuming the scene of Shriram crossing the rope bridge to Jhumli, the boy has now helped Shriram reach the surface. As Shriram asks the boy if he knows Diya Sharma, the boy replies with the expression: "गोरी बहन!". Shriram is bewildered by the connotation of the 'white sister' (cf. Sq. 01:11:19-01:11:26). And as is the title of the film, this name for Diya can both mean 'beautiful' and 'fair- skinned'. The moment Shriram enters the village, the camera zooms over the villagers. The viewers now understand the situation of the village. The people live a very traditional life and have no connection to the outside world. Both Diya and Shriram appear from the urban areas and not only does their clothing show that they are outsiders, but Diya, as the educated, worldly woman is known by the villagers as *gorī bahan*, making the undertone of 'rich, higher social-status is white- skinned, and lower social-status is dark- skinned' more vivid. Mevorach determines two types of white skin appearances: "Looking (NB: highlighted cursive) white refers to physical appearance in society where skin colour is a meaningful factor in determining a person's social status. Being (NB: highlighted cursive) white refers to an innate quality. Looking (NB: highlighted cursive) white assumes an illusion, while being (NB: highlighted cursive) white presupposes the notion of purity" (Mevorach in Natrajan/Greenough 2009, p.239). For outsiders and newcomers to Hindi films, such commentaries might seem irritating. But for Indians, skin- colour stereotypes are quite

## Film examples

common in the film industry. When it comes to the Tamil and Hindi cinemas, there are different forms of attractiveness. “The north does think of Tamils as dark, curly haired...and the male stars look so different. They look almost like normal people than the North Indian cinema stars (...) They are overweight, big moustaches, big hair, jeans and trainers. Not stylish” (Dwyer interview, para. 21). As Dwyer recognizes, the South Indian film actors look quite ordinary in comparison to the mostly six-packed, shaved, fairer-skinned North Indian actors. The North and South Indian audiences have different preferences when it comes to the actors’ looks. Bhagat wrote in his book about the Tamil film stars he saw painted on the walls: “The heroes’ pictures make you feel even your uncles can be movie stars. The heroes are fat, balding, have thick moustaches and the heroine next to them is a ravishing beauty” (Bhagat 2009, p.77f).

Skin colour references are certainly visible in *GTPM*, but not intended to have a social impact. But the connotation of beauty and fair skin is given. The title of the film along with the Gujarati catchphrase of *Goriben* that Diya got bestowed by the villagers shows that skin colour indeed plays a role in the film and a much greater role in social reality. The fact that the skin-whitening cosmetic industry has its most lucrative market in India displays how trivial the differences between dark- skinned and fair- skinned are, as well as that the connections of South Indians and North Indians to their complexions continue to exist more than ever.

### 5.2.3 Reviews

None of the interviewees have watched *GTPM*. So, in the interviews this film was not spoken of in terms of its rather unusual constellation of a North Indian woman falling in love with a South Indian man – similar to *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*. As I was asking Rachel Dwyer about the man-woman identical arrangement in *GTPM*, she referred to the 2015 film of *PK*, where the lead female character is from India and the male character from Pakistan fall in love: “In *PK* it is the same, isn’t it. But if you think of the industry, you have a lot of South Indian heroines or Bengali heroines, but almost all the heroes are Punjabi. So again, that is the standard view” (Dwyer interview, para.13).

The reaction to *GTPM*, as cited by several Hindi film critics, was generally positive. Adarsh recommends *GTPM*, because of the good rural setting and the chemistry between the leading characters. One of the best and most important scenes, so the author, is the wedding scene between Shriram and Vasu. “The interactions between Imran (NB.: Imran Khan) and Shraddha (NB.: Shraddha Kapoor) are wonderful, while the marriage sequence is brilliant” (Adarsh 2013). Many other viewers’ comments to Adarsh’s critique point to that particular scene as being very well executed. Furthermore, bloggers marked the rather authentic portrayal of the

## Film examples

Gujarati village of Jhumli. One blogger wrote about her surprise at seeing not only a rural Gujarati village and its villagers, but also that most of the characters' appearances did not match Bollywood standards: "Now, like many of you, I am accustomed to encountering light-skinned, hyper-intelligent, super-wealthy Gujarati (...). The other surprise was that many of the villagers were not particularly light-skinned" (Lalani 2013). Although, this was not regarded in terms of North and South Indian stereotypes, it seems that the film did have an impact when it comes to the Indian discussion on fair complexion overall. The north-south relationship was not particularly talked about in the reviews. Except for a comment by the film reviewer Basu, who wrote: "Romance in today's world is no longer limited to battling parental pressures or something as lame as North-South (sic!) culture divide. The issue of idealistic differences matter so much in a relationship these days" (Basu 2014). The importance of someone's upbringing and family is becoming less and less acknowledged by the younger generations of urban middle class Indians. They wonder more about matching ideals and how to coordinate these ideals, their professional careers and future family lives.

In my opinion, I was very surprised by the fact that the leading character was from South India and that the first part of the film plays entirely in the area of Bangalore, Karnataka. The culture of Tamil *Iyer* is played out and North-South references are obvious throughout the film. Stereotypes, I would say, are not that obvious, since both leading actors are from the North and the second part of the film is set in the northern state of Gujarat. It is still baffling to me why Bangalore and the Tamil setting of Vasu and Shriram's families was chosen for a plot. Of course, thereafter the problem with interstate marriage is picked out as the central theme and culminates in Shriram's speech at the engagement celebration and the subsequent wedding scene. The speech captured my special attention as it states the problems of interstate/intercultural marriages, the indecisiveness and no family support. Shriram points out to Vasudha and Kamal that not only are their different religions getting in the way, but also their upbringing and cultural habits. Of course those obstacles are overcome by love in the end of the film, but that is the problem. The film does not go on to explain the marriage of the two pairs. It would be interesting to see how these differences are portrayed in the daily lives of the families.

Film examples

### 5.3 2 States

“I still had a day to go as the train traversed through this huge country, cutting through the states I had battled for the last year. These states make up our nation. These states also divide our nation. And in some cases, these states play havoc in our love lives”<sup>31</sup>

Name: *2 States*

Release date: 2014

Genre: romantic comedy

Length: 149 min

Famous, bestselling author Chetan Bhagat published his book *2 States* in 2009. Five years later, it was made into a box office hit. This was not the first novel of Chetan Bhagat that had been given this attention from the Hindi film industry, the film *3 idiots* (2009) was based on Bhagat's novel *Five Point Someone* (2004). It became one of the highest grossing films in the Hindi film industry ever. Karan Johar, as mentioned before, bought the rights to *2 States* and acted as producer. He tried to follow the story of the novel accurately.

The overall topic of *2 States* is summarized as follows: “Boy loves girl. Girl loves boy. Girl's family has to love boy. Boy's family has to love girl. Girl's family has to love boy's family. Boy's family has to love girl's family”<sup>32</sup>. It describes the love story of a Punjabi man named Krish Malhotra from Delhi and a Tamil woman named Ananya Swaminathan from Chennai. The main character Krish tells the story in the retrospective, while sitting on the sofa of his therapist. The two characters meet in Ahmedabad at the MIT University. Ananya needing help with economics is tutored by Krish, who is not very interested in getting an MBA. He'd rather be a writer. After a short time of being friends, they fall in love and start a relationship. On the neutral ground of MIT University in the state of Gujarat, they enjoy their life together. But in finalizing their MBA and getting job offers, they have to make a decision about their future. Krish hereafter proposes to Ananya, who agrees. At the graduation ceremony, Krish's mother and Ananya's parents and brother finally get introduced. None of them knows about Krish and Ananya's engagement. The introduction is cold and first stereotypical comments about the others' cultures are revealed. After the celebrations, Krish goes back to Delhi with his mother. He decides to get posted to Chennai to work for a bank and be close to Ananya. Both try to persuade Ananya's parents to agree to a wedding. In the process, Krish has to help Ananya's

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<sup>31</sup> Bhagat 2009, p. 248

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.chetanbhagat.com/books/2-states/>

## Film examples

father with a Power Point Presentation for work. He gives Ananya's mother the possibility to sing at a public function, and acts as tutor for Ananya's brother. Through his good deeds, he finally overcomes all prejudices, other available candidates for Ananya and the big gap between the cultures. The parents give their blessing. The second part of the film plays in Delhi, where it is now time for Krish's parents to approve Ananya. Krish's father is not really involved in the family matters, having a troubled marriage with Krish's mother. Krish tells Ananya that a few years back he had fallen in love with a girl his father would not accept. The two had an argument and Krish slapped his father. After this revelation, Krish and Ananya have to attend the wedding of Krish's Punjabi cousin. Once again, the two have to fight against prejudice and stereotypes. The groom's family does not settle on the dowry. Ananya steps up as the saviour, convincing the groom to take his bride rather than a bigger car. This act leads her to be accepted by Krish's family. Ananya's parents and Krish's mother now come together in a resort in Mumbai – in the neutral middle of India – to decide on the wedding. But again, the different cultural backgrounds lead to a fight. Ananya ends the relationship. As Krish's father learns about this, seeing his son miserable, he travels to Chennai and makes amends with Ananya's parents. In the end, the wedding takes place in Chennai in a traditional Tamil *Iyer* ceremony. After this scene, the retrospective ends and Krish is seen leaving the therapist's office with his two children and his book *2 States*.

### 5.3.1 The Portrayal of North and South Indian Differences

It is not the South- North scheme that is paramount in *2 States* but the very powerful role of parents in the children's lives, especially when it comes to marriage and choosing a partner for life. A partner from the same state, and therefore the same community, is associated with the same identity, the same history and the same culture. Becoming part of a new family is much simpler when this family is from the same community, with the same cultural background. Ananya is from a Tamil *Iyer* family from Chennai, while Krish is from a Punjabi, therefore Sikh- family from Delhi. The two meet on 'neutral' ground of the MIT in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Both of them are studying for an MBA. In the first 15 minutes of the film, one sees how they fall in love and settle to be together. Their parents only learn about their love, but not where the partner is from. As Krish phones his mother and tells her he has met a girl, she at once wants to know if she is Punjabi, to which he replies she is not. His mother only comments this with: "We are broad-minded" (Sq. 00:13:10).

On the day of their job interviews, Krish asks Ananya to marry him. After this life decision, they have to get their parents to become acquainted and agree to the match. Meeting on the

## Film examples

convocation- day of MIT, Krish and Ananya choose to bring together their parents at this special time. In the dialogue below, Krish and his mother are waiting to be introduced to Ananya's parents, who are coming nearer to them. As they come into view, Krish's mother is startled:

Krish's mother: हे, ये तो मद्रासी हैं!

Krish: तमिलियन

Krish's mother: एक ही बात है।

Ananya (माँ- बाप के साथ कृष्ण के पास आ रही है): अम्मा, अब्बा, यह है कृष्ण और उसकी माँ।  
(...) I am so happy की हम सब है यहाँ।

Krish's mother: Hey, these are *Madrāsīs*!

Krish: Tamilian!

Krish's mother: That is the same!

Ananya (coming to Krish with her parents): Mother, Father, this is Krish and his mother  
(...) I am so happy that we are all here now (Sq.00:37:50)

Ananya's parents are still a few meters away as Krish's mother has already spotted them. In her first reaction she stereotyped Ananya's parents as मद्रासी *madrāsī*. North Indians often apply the term *madrāsī* to South Indians in general. *Madrāsī* – nowadays an insult – refers to darker-skinned people from the South, but actually it is a term describing the habitants of Chennai, former Madras. As Krish rectifies that they are in fact Tamils, his mother discounts this notion. The following screenshot captures the moment Ananya reaches Krish and his mother with her parents. The front shot shows Ananya in the middle looking at her parents and brother, who are on left side, while Krish and his mother are on the right side of the frame. Ananya acts as the introducer of two families – she is the clear cut between the two sides, which represent the two states, the two cultures, and the unsatisfied older generation.



Fig 5.12: 2 States – Family Gathering at Convocation (00:38:11)

Ananya and her mother are wearing *sārī*, with Ananya's mother having Jasmine flowers in her hair. Krish's mother wears a सलवार कमीज *salwār kamīz* or कुर्ती *kurtī* with the *dupaṭṭā* or scarf around her shoulders, as it is traditionally worn by Punjabi and women living in areas around Delhi. Both Ananya's father and brother wear *lungī*, which are not visible in this screenshot. Krish seats his mother next to Ananya's parents to watch the convocation. He motivates her to talk to them, which she refuses, saying she wouldn't know what language to speak:

किस भाषा में? मुझे मद्रासी नहीं आती!

In what language? I don't know *Madrāsī*! (Sq. 00:39:50).

The prejudices and clichés, however, go both ways. As Krish starts a conversation with Ananya's parents, he suggests to go sightseeing together, as Ananya's mother wants to see Gandhi's Ashram. Krish's mother again refuses, which is commented by Ananya's mother with the notion of "Typical Punjabi! (...) Uncultured people!" in English (Sq.00:40:44). Suganthan wrote about the stereotypes in this first meeting in the film: "Krish's mother, who wants him to marry a wealthy girl, dismisses Ananya as a '*madrāsī* with dark complexion'. Later, when she sees that Ananya is fair, she doubts if the girl is really a South Indian. She thinks *madrāsī* women trap good Punjabi boys into marriage – and even cites the examples of actors Hema Malini and Sridevi<sup>33</sup> to justify her view. Meanwhile, Ananya's family hates those 'non-vegetarian north Indians' who can't even appreciate Carnatic music" (Suganthan 2013, p.416). After this exchange of stereotypical references and insults, Ananya's parents decide to sit somewhere else

<sup>33</sup> Hema Malini is married to the Punjabi actor Dharmendra and Sridevi is a Tamil film actress, who is born to Hindi film producer Boney Kapoor from Uttar Pradesh.



## Film examples

In the next dialogue Krish has now convinced Ananya's parents to accept him. So, the two of them travel to Delhi to try and do the same with Krish's family. But Krish's mother is determined to ruin this union. At dinner, as all of them are finally sitting down to begin eating (a shot of this sequence is discussed down below in 5.3.2) Krish starts the conversation. He wants to know when his cousin is getting married. As Krish's mother gives him the date, he announces that he intends to take Ananya with him. Krish's mother stands up and in the moment of leaving the table, Krish asks her to stay and talk about it. The problem for her is not Ananya, but her family:

Krish's mother: ज़बरदस्ती तो है! (...) मेरी भी कुछ उम्मीदे हैं। मैं चाहती हूँ कि मेरे समधी मुझे इज्जत दें। अपने घरवालों के साथ मिलकर मैं इसके लिए एक अच्छी बहू ढूढ़ना चाहती हूँ।

Krish: आपको क्यों लगता है कि वह लोग इसे पसंद नहीं करेंगे?

Krish's mother: क्योंकि पंजाबी यह नहीं है।

Krish's mother: It does matter! (...) I want to be respected by my father-in-law. When I meet my family, I want them to have a nice daughter-in-law.

Krish: Why do you think, they won't like her?

Krish's mother: Because she is no Punjabi! (Sq.01:25:00- 01:25:15)

Krish's mother fears she will not be accepted by Ananya's family and likewise her family will only accept a 'nice' daughter-in-law. As Krish wonders why she would think that, she answers with a rather typical answer of 'she has not the same cultural background'. The stereotype is here reversed. The aim is not to spot the difference between North and South Indians, but to show that she is not one of theirs and hence she cannot be a good daughter-in-law. This sequence allows examining that the fear the parents have for their children's intercultural marriages has nothing to do with their judgement against other states, or other cultures. It has only to do with their own vulnerability in front of their families. The parents need the feeling of having to say something in their children's life decisions. In *2 States* the plot centres around the cultural clashes of two families, where they are from is only played out in order to get more understanding for the parental decision on the children's marital partners.

One of the stereotypes discussed more closely in the film analysis of *GTPM*, but which plays a centre role in *2 States* as well, is the skin complexion. At the wedding of Krish's cousin, Ananya

## Film examples

is introduced to the other Punjabi family members. Sitting between Punjabi female relatives, the women surround her and talk without shame about Ananya's origin in a rather racist tone:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Krish's Punjabi relative (शादी में):       | ऐसी चिट्ठी किस तरह हो सकती हैं, मदरसन?  |
| Ananya:                                    | तमिलियन।  |
| Another Punjabi relative:                  | ओह इको गल है। (कृष् की माता से पंजाबी में चिल्ला रही है) कविता! तेरी नु है?                   |
| Another Punjabi relative:                  | मैं क्या जी, साउथ इंडियन स्टैंडर्ड्स दी तेरी सोवी हैं।  |
| Krish's Punjabi relative:                  | How white- skinned she seems to be, the <i>Madrāsī</i> !                                      |
| Ananya:                                    | Tamilian!   |
| Another Punjabi relative (at the wedding): | That is the same! (Shouting to Krish's mother) Kavita! Is that your daughter-in-law?          |
| Another Punjabi relative:                  | If you ask me, for south Indian standards you are very fair- skinned (Sq. 01:32:57-01:33:12). |

Ananya withholds and let the women talk. Once again, she has to fight the negative connotation of *madrāsī* and makes sure that she is in fact Tamil. Once again, the reaction is the same as Krish's mother at the convocation: "That is the same!" The stereotype of South Indians having darker skin is portrayed here. The 'standard', so the relatives' view, would be to have much darker skin than North Indians. The actress, playing the part of Ananya, Alia Bhatt, comes from Mumbai. She is no South Indian per se. But nonetheless, the relatives are quite astonished over the fact that Ananya is fair- skinned.

What is also an interesting fact is that the Punjabi relatives in this sequence are talking in Punjabi. Ananya speaks Hindi throughout the film (another hint that the actress Alia Bhatt is from the north and does not speak Tamil). The language barrier, which is very present in *Chennai Express*, does not play that kind of role in *2 States*. The only exception is one scene in Ananya's home, where Krish asks her parents to talk in Hindi with him, because he is not able to speak Tamil.

(अनन्य के माँ - बाप उनके दोस्त के साथ तमिल में बात-चित कर रहे हैं।)

## Film examples

Krish: आप हिंदी में बात करेंगे? मुझे तमिल समझने नहीं आती।

Ananya's father: तुम तमिल सिख लो! Anyway it doesn't concern you!

(Ananya's parents and the relative talk in Tamil)

Krish: Could you please talk in Hindi? I don't know any Tamil.

Ananya's father: Then you must learn it! Anyway it doesn't concern you!  
(Sq.00:54:49 – 00:55:25).

Ananya's father curtly replies that he should simply learn it. The stereotype of the Tamil, who speaks only Tamil to irritate the North Indian, is illustrated in this short dialogue. Both of Ananya's parents are capable of talking in Hindi, however, since Krish came to Chennai and is visiting Ananya, he should learn the language that is spoken, which is not Hindi. Later on in the film, one can see Krish studying Tamil (Sq. 00:58:16).

The stereotypes portrayed in this film are covering all aspects of life – from the discussion about skin colour to misunderstanding the languages, to the view on the relationship between North and South India by different generations. The next chapter will go more into detail on the stereotypes by comparing the lifestyles.

### 5.3.2 The South Indian Lifestyle

IN direct comparison to the other analysed films, *2 States* pays a lot of attention to the differences in lifestyles and habits. In their first talk, Ananya and Krish have just got acquainted with each other on the campus of MIT (Indian Institute for Management) in Ahmedabad. Ananya thereafter wants to get something to eat, because the food in the canteen doesn't suit her. She rudely invites Krish to come along. In a street restaurant Ananya orders a chicken tandoori from the waiter. This surprises Krish and he starts the conversation:

Krish: तुम साउथ इंडियन नहीं हो?

Ananya: तमिलियन (बैरे से कह रही है) और बीर है? (बैरा सिर हिलाकर चला जा रहा है)

Krish: गुजरात ड्राई स्टेट है!

Ananya: क्यों?

Krish: गांधी जी का जनम हुआ यहाँ है!!

Ananya: और वे बीर से अगेंस्ट हैं? (वह अपने चिकन तंदूरी को खाने शुरू होती)

## Film examples

- Krish: अच्छा तो...coming back to my question. बाकि साउथ इंडियंस और तमिलिअन्स में क्या फ़र्क़ होता है?
- Ananya: बहुत फ़र्क़ होता है। फॉर एक्साम्प्ले, तमिल ब्रह्मिंस नॉन-वेग नहीं खाते। मैं शुद्ध ब्राह्मण हाउसहोल्ड से हूँ। (बैरा अनन्य का खाना ला दे रहा है)
- Krish: देख रहे हैं!
- Ananya: और तुम?
- Krish: पंजाबी हूँ। तरु के बिना हमारा चिकन हज़म हो नहीं होता।
- Krish: Aren't you a South Indian?
- Ananya: Tamilian. (To the waiter) and do you have beer? (Waiter going away shaking his head)
- Krish: Gujarat is a dry state.
- Ananya: Why?
- Krish: Because it is Gandhi ji's birthplace.
- Ananya: And he was against beer? (Starts eating her chicken tandoori)
- Krish: It's okay... now coming back to my question: What is the difference between South Indian and Tamilian?
- Ananya: There is a big difference! For example, Tamil Brahmins are vegetarian. I am from a pure Brahmin household.
- Krish: One can see!
- Ananya: And you?
- Krish: I am a Punjabi. Without alcohol, our chicken would not taste good! (Sq.05:03- 05:43)

The primary information Krish wants to know about Ananya is if she is South Indian. She is offended by the notion and so corrects him and saying she is, in fact, a Tamil. As Krish is curious about the difference between the term South Indian and Tamil, she doesn't really answer the question but gives him the example of eating habits. Her family is of Brahmin descent and therefore is vegetarian. Ananya totally contradicts this, because she orders chicken tandoori. It becomes clear that Ananya doesn't take her Brahmin status too seriously. This is also obvious as she orders a beer and gets lectured by Krish that in Gujarat there is prohibition. And although she doesn't care about politics (she makes a joke about the important

## Film examples

Independence Movement leader Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who was born in Gujarat, being against beer) or her social status, at the same time Ananya is proud of her Tamil origin. Similarly to Krish, who declares himself a Punjabi but jokingly admits that all Punjabis can't eat chicken without alcohol. Later on, the audiences learn that Krish, in contrast to Ananya, is in fact a vegetarian.

The plot plays partly in Chennai and in Delhi. As it is quite rare for mainstream Hindi films to play their plots in Chennai or Tamil Nadu in general, I want to give some information about this state. The name Tamil Nadu means the 'Land of the Tamils'. The state has a population of 72 million people and is located in the south-east of India, bordering the Indian states of Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, the union territory of Pondicherry, as well as Sri Lanka (cf. Census of India 2011). Most of the population lives in cities, with Chennai, Madurai and Coimbatore being the most densely populated ones. 88.1% of the population is Hindu; next is 6.1% Christians and 5.6% Moslems (cf. Bautze 2007, p.539). The most common languages are Tamil, which is also the official language and Telugu in some parts, English and Hindi. As referenced above Tamil Nadu was built on the three kingdoms of the Tamilakam. In 1609 the Danish settled in Tamil Nadu and soon after the British with the East India Trading Company, the French and the Dutch followed. Only the French could hold their small territory of Pondicherry until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All other colonialists were expelled by the British. The annexation of the 'Madras Presidency' into the British Empire led to great antagonism among the Tamil people. In 1947 the Madras Presidency became 'Madras State' and included areas of Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Between 1953 and 1956 Madras State was reorganised on linguistic lines, concluding finally in the foundation of Tamil Nadu in 1968. Divided in 30 districts, the state is economically known for its automobile-industry, leather manufactures, coffee, tea and firework production (90% of the fireworks produced in India are from Tamil Nadu) (cf. *ibid.*, p.544). Interestingly, Paul/Sridhar published a study in 2013 for the NGO 'Public Affairs Center' in Bangalore, in which they compare the states of Tamil Nadu and Punjab in terms of their economic output, social capital and good governance. This is done to form a general conclusion about the status quo of South and North Indian regions. The authors declare that thirty years after independence, the south was struggling and many Tamils went to cities in the north in order to find jobs. "(...) There was no such migration from the North to the South. For many observers, it was a clear signal that the South had limited employment opportunities, and that its people had lower standards of living, forcing them to go out of their region to improve their lot. In fact, northerners used to look down upon the migrants and consider them backward in many respects" (Paul/Sridhar 2013, p.12). Through the course of

## Film examples

economic liberalisation in the 90s, foreign investments increased and the southern state used the international opportunities to a much greater extent than northern states. This led to the south outpacing the north in terms of establishing industry and the technology sector. The economic development led to a rise in social participation and hence Tamil civil society, so Paul /Sridhar. “TN (NB.: Tamil Nadu) had undergone a remarkable period of social transformation decades before that in UP (NB.: Uttar Pradesh). It significantly strengthened the ability and willingness of large sections of the population to demand better governance from the state” (ibid., p. 65). Dwyer described in the interview that the south and the north relation has aspects of borderline disorder. Both of the regions want to gain the respect of the other one, not just in terms of economy but also society. In particular the south has suffered from too little attention both politically and socially. But since the 90s the south is becoming more and more interesting for national and international investment. “And a lot of leads come from the South, you know, the civil servants, the hi-tech, the south is the home of a lot of that. I imagine that now it is always seen as a different place from the north, that sort of borderline” (Dwyer interview, para.16).

Although these aspects play no part in *2 States*, as it sticks strictly to the portrayal of the love relationship between a North and a South Indian, the different lifestyles of the two families – Tamil on the one hand and Punjabi on the other, are portrayed very well. In this next passage three examples of lifestyle images are depicted to establish understanding for the differences in culture. Special attention is given to the description of South Indian or Tamil lifestyle. In the next two screenshots a comparison between the Punjabi and the Tamil homes is given. The differences between the furniture, the living arrangements are even more apparent in the monologue translated below and the dialogue between Krish and Ananya’s father.

In the upper shot Krish and Ananya are in Krish’s home in Delhi. Ananya is sitting on the left side of this frontal shot, while Krish is on the right side. Ananya is drinking mango juice out of a juicebox. The sequences play in the living room of the house. Krish is coming from the kitchen, which is separated from the living room only by a room divider. The living room provides several places to sit and is decorated. In comparison, Ananya’s house is much more simply furnished. The shot below shows the living room as well, in an evening scene. Krish has just taken a job at a bank in Chennai to be closer to Ananya. He is coming to visit Ananya’s parents. Before entering the house, he has to take off his shoes. On the portal floor रंगोली

## Film examples

*rangoli*<sup>34</sup> is spread. Krish is asked to sit down opposite Ananya's father on the right side. He is wearing a *lungi* and is reading the newspaper. Krish, unsure of how to communicate, holds on to his small present. The sitting arrangements are scarce and not as comfortable as in Krish's house. There are not many accessories placed in the room. The most important difference is the open roof that creates a courtyard in the middle of the living room. In the shot it is raining. On the right side of the courtyard one can recognise a Hindu altar.



Fig 5.13: 2 States – Krish's and Ananya's homes (01:20:58/ 00:51:13)

As Krish and Ananya's father are sitting in front of each other, Krish starts talking to the audiences in the off explaining Ananya's house and lifestyle comparing it to the Punjabi one:

Krish (खुद से कह रहा है):

इतना सत्राटा था उनके यहाँ। ऐसे लग रहा था किसी का चौथा चल रहा है। अनन्या के घरवाले फर्नीचर में नहीं मानते। ऐसा हालत था उनके ड्राइंग रूम का जैसे किसी पंजाबी के घर में चोरी हुई है। और चोरों को सोफ़ा पसंद नहीं आया तो वह छोड़के चले गए।

<sup>34</sup> *Rangoli* is used at Hindu festivities to bring good fortune to the household. It is mostly coloured rice, sand or flour.

## Film examples

Krish (अनन्य के पिता से कह रहा है): सर, बहुत अच्छा घर है आपका।

Ananya's father: क्या अच्छा? पानी नहीं आता। only 3 hours in the morning. लाइट चला जाता है। Bloody flies everywhere! (...)

Krish (खुद से कह रहा है): बहुत अजीब घर था वह।

Krish (saying to himself): In their home, there was such silence. It felt like, they were celebrating the Chautha (fourth day after death, where there is still silence of mourning). Ananya's family does not believe in furniture. Their living room was in such a state, as if someone has robbed a Punjabi house. And the robbers didn't like the sofa, so they left it behind.

Krish (to Ananya's father): Sir, you have a lovely home!

Ananya's father: What is lovely? There is no water. Only three hours in the morning. The light is always going out. Bloody flies everywhere! (...)

Krish (saying to himself): Very strange house! (Sq.51:13- 53:08)

For Krish, Ananya's home was quieter than what he was used to. Punjabis would have felt robbed by the sight of the living room, so his thoughts. He felt like celebrating the death of a family member than being welcomed to a family's house. But when Krish pretends and pays Ananya's father a complement about the house, the latter starts complaining about the living conditions. In this sequence the stereotype of the grumpy Tamil, who doesn't want to talk much, comes to life. As the story is told from Krish's perspective, Ananya's feelings on the other hand are not portrayed. But it is assumable that as she was studying in North India she knows more about his customs and culture than Krish does about hers. Ananya's father furthermore asks Krish how it came about that a North Indian could be posted to Chennai, which is a rather unusual decision. He calls the bank managers therefore: "Bloody stupid people!" (Sq. 00:58:52). This astonishment draws even more attention to the gap between North and South Indian lifestyles. It seems strange for both North and South Indians to come to live in the other region.

The lifestyles can also be compared when it comes to the representation of cooking. As the French anthropologist Levi-Strauss said, cuisine is "a veritable discourse of the past and a nostalgic narrative about the country, the region, the city, or the village where one was born" (Levi-Strauss in de Certeau 1998, p.84). Eating habits clarify even better the dissimilarities



## Film examples

between the two regions, which are emphasised in Bhagat's book *2 States*: "Few things bring out the differences between Punjabis and Tamilians than buffet meals. Tamilians see it like any other meal. They will load up on white rice first, followed by daal and curds and anything that has little black dots of mustard, coconut or curry leaves. For Punjabi, food triggers an emotional response, like say music. And the array of dishes available in a buffet is akin to the Philharmonic orchestra" (Bhagat 2009, p.222). There is a great ignorance on behalf of the north when it comes to the food of the south, so Dwyer. The northern food is nationally and internationally better known and popular in all parts of India. Conversely there exist only certain South Indian dishes that are also available in the north, becoming stereotypes of the great variations of South Indian cuisine. "I mean, between south and north, they have very different food down there. People of the north don't really know about the food, they know idle and dosa, but they don't really know about South Indian cuisine. I mean, there is a big ignorance of the south" (Dwyer interview, para.17). Not just the actual food that illustrates this gap of knowledge in each other's cooking, but also the preparation of food or the ceremony of eating separating the north from the south. In the two screenshots below the Punjabi and the Tamil dinner table laid out with food are shown. In the upper shot Krish and Ananya are in Krish's home in Delhi, visiting his parents. Krish's father is not present most of the time. The sequence and dialogue that can be seen in this shot has been translated and discussed in the previous chapter (5.3.1). The frontal shot views the table with diverse dishes. On the right side, Ananya is sitting, looking at Krish's mother, who is sitting opposite her. Krish, in the middle, holds his mother's hand trying to calm her down. The dishes include rice and रोटी *roṭī* (in the brown basket in the front of the shot), different sauces, chutneys, साग *sāg*, दाल *dāl*. The food is typical Punjabi/North Indian cuisine. As place settings, white china, water glasses and cutlery are used.



Fig 5.14: 2 States – Punjabi and Tamil Dinners (01:24:48/ 00:54:49)

In comparison to the Punjabi one, the Tamil dinner looks rather different. In this high shot and again central perspective, the table takes up the midpoint. Ananya – on the left side wearing a *sārī* – and Krish – on the right side – are looking at each other across the dinner. At the end of the table, a relative of Ananya is introduced. Ananya’s mother just left the table and is seen walking away from it. Not all of the dishes have yet been prepared; Ananya’s father has not yet come to be seated next to Krish. Between Krish and Ananya, there are several sauces in metal bowls. In the front of the table, there is a plate – again not china but metal – containing dosa. *Dosa* are the South Indian counterpart for North Indian *roṭī*, made from rice batter and ground lentils, formed into crepes. Usually served with a variety of chutneys, yogurt and Indian pickles, which can be seen in the small dishes at each of the place settings. Next to rice, there is also सांबर *sāmbar* visible in this shot. *Sāmbar* is a lentil-vegetable stew, red in colour. The meal is of course strictly vegetarian, because as Ananya explained earlier, her family is Tamil Brahmin or *Iyer*, who do not consume meat. The most important eye catchers are the place settings made

## Film examples

out of banana leaves. In this shot, Krish already seated, picks up the banana leaf and is lectured by Ananya:

यह प्लेट है। निचे रखो!

That is the plate. Put it down! (Sq. 00:54:39).

This is her rather surprised demand, as Krish is unaware of South Indian customs and the use of the banana leaf as a plate. In most of the states in South India, but also Sri Lanka and other Southeast Asian and Caribbean states, banana leaves serve as plates or wrapping paper for food. The very ecological form of eating is waterproof and flexible. Used for Hindu and Buddhist ceremonies (i.e. Thailand) as well, banana leaves are part of the offerings to Hindu gods or Buddha. The banana leaves in *2 States* are another hint to the fact that Ananya's family is very traditional and they function as symbol for the great difference between North and South Indian daily practices. Very common in Tamil Nadu and South India in comparison to North India is the practice of drinking coffee instead of the popular चाय *chāi*. This is not explicitly mentioned in the film, but it can be seen in the sequence of Ananya's and Krish's first night spent together in Ananya's room, where she pours herself coffee and prepares *chāi* for Krish (Sq. 00:24:10).

The third reference to South Indian lifestyle in comparison to the North Indian in *2 States* is given through a short sequence in which dance forms from both regions are demonstrated. At the wedding of Krish's cousin, another song is played, named *Iskī- uskī* ('Its here – Its there'). The song draws attention to the Punjabi wedding celebrations, explaining the Punjabi characteristics of men and women comparably. In the high shot below, Krish is dancing in front of other Punjabi relatives or dancers. All of them are wearing North Indian *kurtā*. Krish too, is wearing a *kurtā* and a *kaḍā* on his right hand. Ananya is standing in the middle of the shot, wooed by Krish to try dance in the Punjabi Bhangra style. However, Ananya refuses and decides to give a short performance of a South Indian dance, namely *Bharathanatiam*. Also seen and described in the chapter on *Chennai Express*, in *2 States* likewise, the Tamil temple dance of *Bharathanatiam* illustrates the different cultural backgrounds between North and South Indians in the performing arts.



Fig 5.15: 2 States – Punjabi and Tamil Dances (01:35:58/ 01:36:17)

The shot above shows Ananya dancing. She is in the middle of the frontal shot, surrounded by Punjabi guests of the wedding in a pavilion of the festive wedding hall. She stands out from the other guests with her yellow *sārī* and South Indian accessories, such as jasmine flowers in her hair. More than any of the other films analysed here, *2 States* pays attention to all sorts of differences between the two cultures. Dances and songs are especially important and although this sequence is the only one depicting South Indian dance arts, the producers of the film still saw it as a significant reference for North Indians about South Indian culture.

### 5.3.3 Reviews

According to the review of Singh/Sikha the novel *2 States* is balanced in its stereotypical portrayal. Both cultures – Krish’s Sikh family from Delhi and Ananya’s Tamil Brahmin family from Chennai – are getting their share of negative references on the one hand and amusements on the other. “The ironic representation of cultural angularities of both Punjabis and Tamils from within and without the communities saves the novel from being biased one way or the other. The earlier perception of both the communities to view each other in hierarchical terms

## Film examples

changes to adopting an ideologically more correct position of acceptance and appreciation of difference (...)” (Singh/Shikha 2013, p.356). Radia-Tyagi said in the interview that she watched the film and knew Chetan Bhagat’s other books. She is acquainted with his work and sees the author as rather popular with the younger generations of middle class Indians: “I have just read about *2 States*. I read Chetan Bhagat (...) Chetan Bhagat is very popular among young people in India, so he is reflecting some reality that they believe in” (Sonal- Tyagi interview, para.18).

The film received similar write-ups to Radia-Tyagi’s opinion about the book. *2 States* addresses the younger generations that are looking to overcome cultural biases and family objections in their search for a life partner. Taran Adarsh explains in his review of *2 States* that the story of the star- crossed lovers coming from two different cultural backgrounds is certainly not a new phenomenon, since “cross culture movies are becoming major hits” (Adarsh 2014). Adarsh rhetorically asks the reader: “Are we still conservative when it comes to matters of heart and marriage?” (Adarsh 2014). However, the reviewer also understands the role of the parents and their worries of family- relations crossing over to other territories and cultures. “Abhishek (note: Abhishek Verman, the director) also makes us peep into the mindset of the two families, highlighting the doubts that arise in such a scenario, yet he makes sure he doesn’t belittle or demean any community in the process” (Adarsh 2014). When asked about what she thought about the film, Dwyer replied it was okay, but she didn’t really feel strongly about it. She mentioned remembering Krish’s family and the portrayal of the South Indian home, which she liked. ”But it is kind of the typical Punjabi and the typical South Indian, therefore it is not so exciting” (Dwyer interview, para.23). Her sentiments were also reflected in some comments in Taran Adarsh’s review. The verdict of one of Adarsh’s readers sums it up in: “This is indeed a happy inter caste or to be right interstate love movie”, so one other user. Another comment felt that the cultural clash is depicted with stereotypical jokes and “partially racist pot-shots” (cf. Adarsh 2014).

The parents of both Krish and Ananya best portrayed the stereotypical behaviours of not just concerned parents, but of people with prejudices vis-à-vis the other. One of the viewer wrote: “The Swaminathans (NB.: Ananya’s parents) live in Mylapore, and are the biggest cliché in the piece: they are grumpy and unfriendly, he drinks coffee and refuses to smile and she wears Kanjeevaram and does ditto”. Another comment suggested that although the reactions of the characters were accurate, they often seemed exaggerated:“(…) the TAMILIAN parents feel that the Punjabis are too loud and uncultured (...) Though I may agree with a lot of things, I am yet to meet a Punjabi parent who will use insensitive language to someone’s face and say things

## Film examples

like, ‘Tamilians gore bhi to nahīn hote hain!<sup>35</sup>’ (Khilnani 2014). Shared by Shubhra Gupta’s critique in the *Indianexpress*, where she also asserts that (...) South Indians can scowl and live in spare homes and sing Carnatic music, but the film exaggerates both the cultural specificities and the spurious differences (...) Which is why the parental ‘khit-khit’ seems, after a point, overdone and mothballed” (Gupta 2014). Stephen Hughes said on his review of *2 States*: “I watched *2 States* all the way through. I mean, they are playing the South- North divide up for entertainment value, melodrama. The other thing is people from the south are seen as being good at math and technical things, have good education, better English...” (Hughes interview, para.15). For Hughes, *2 States* referenced all the typical stereotypes existing in the Indian societies about north and south Indians. And what he noticed was the portrayal of the good South Indian education, especially in the technological sector. The cities of Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai are known worldwide for their computer specialists and the advancement in hi-tech industry as mentioned at another point. “Well, yes it is stepping on all the stereotypes. That is really what it is. The south is conservative, religious. These stereotypes are going on for a long time. That is what the people from the Bombay film industry coming down and visit the Madras film industry and they would say the same things. Everyone is conservative...” (ibid., para. 14).

For Dwyer, the main point that stands out in this film is that the leading character of Ananya is again not played by a South Indian. Alia Bhatt is the daughter of Gujarati- descended Mumbai-born filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt and grew up in Mumbai. “*2 States* the thing about that would be that it is striking that they don’t have a South Indian playing the South Indian role. Someone who is incredibly fair and known to be North Indian, well Western Indian (...) there wasn’t any ground broken really about that film” (Dwyer interview, para.1/2). Alia Bhatt, consequently spoke only a few lines in Tamil – in contrast to Ananya’s parents, who were portrayed by the South Indian actress Revathy from Kerala as Radha Swaminathan and Shiv Kumar Subramaniam as Ananya’s father. Both of them have acted in Tamil and Hindi films and speak Tamil in *2 States*.

Rachel Dwyer saw *Chennai Express* and *2 States* as marketing strategies to get the attention of the south for mainstream Hindi films. Nonetheless, the release of *2 States* made her question, whether South India was now fashionable in Bollywood and with North Indian audiences:

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<sup>35</sup> “तमिलिांस गोर भी तो नहीं होते हैं।”: “Tamilians are also not fair-skinned!”

## Film examples

“I mean the market is a big thing and the spread of Hindi in the south. But I think it is also internationally. In America, there is the perception that there are a lot of South Indians certainly on the west coast of America. So were they trying to get that audience? The educated, Telugu speaking...the film did alright in the south, but it was not a particular hit” (Dwyer interview, para.8).

While analysing this film, it made me wonder whether Hindi films stepped up from interreligious love to the next level of interstate love. In *2 States* there is not just the distance between different cultures and states; it is also a marriage between a Sikh and a Hindu, as in *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein* as well, but it does not play a part in the plot. Suganthan rightly states: “There is only one unity among diverse cultures of India. That is the system of marriage” (Suganthan 2013, p. 415). The portrayal of the interstate marriage in *2 States* seems to me to be the ultimate goal for approval of the partner and his/her culture. Once one gets the consent for a wedding, one has won the battle; this is the moment when one can finally stop pretending that someone minds the partner’s different cultural identity and upbringing. Singh/Sikha conclude their review of the book *2 States* with the knowledge that people in India have to “adopt a multicultural perspective” along “strengthen the cultural integration” especially when it comes to marriage and finding the right mate (cf. Singh/Shikha 2013, p.357). As Radia-Tyagi suggests in the interview, the attitude to cultural difference has changed, which can be seen reflected in *2 States*:

“There is still a lot of segregation, especially socially, but the geographical roots are diminishing (...) When your geographical roots diminish, even then you link your identity in terms of language, food and social network. You do develop a social network outside of that. *2 States* in that way is very realistic, because it is based on that (...) I don’t think that if someone goes out and say they make a film, they say, we are promoting integration. But somewhere you accept the other person as normal. I accept you for whatever you are, you accept me for whatever I am. Not just the colour of the skin or the colour of the hair or eyes. But you look beyond that in a person. In that sense, yes, it is in *2 States* that each get to be the other person” (Radia-Tyagi interview, para. 10-11).

## 6 Conclusion

This conclusion serves the purpose to again summarize the main topics of this thesis and answer the questions that are based on the analysis and reviews of the three films. Furthermore, findings and trends for the overall- scientific discussion will be highlighted.

The US- American psychiatrist M. Scott Peck (1936- 2005) called on the people to share their similarities and celebrate their differences between each other. India in particular is a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multilinguistic country, of which Nesiah concluded that its diversity means having both power and constant challenge. People have to deal with this power and challenge in their everyday cultural and social lives. According to studies in the fields of popular and media culture, films – both arthouse and commercial, mainstream – are regarded as tools to visualise, highlight and/or normalise similarities and differences existing in the society of a region, state, or country. Films play with stereotypes about people's physical, cultural, customary similarities and differences that have developed in societies, and create idealisations of a dream world.

Before answering the research question, I want to field the three questions that are based on the films:

What differences and stereotypes about South Indians are depicted?

With all three films – I watched them before coming to write this thesis – I asked myself the question why the aspect of love between North and South Indians was so dramatically portrayed by paying attention to particular recurring stereotypical cultural identity- based differences. In all three films, a speech is delivered by the male leading character on the divide between North and South India and its peoples. The audience is educated by the main character about the distinctions that are only social imaginings. Love is able to overcome stereotypes, misunderstandings, and the linguistic barriers as in *Chennai Express*, the cultural backgrounds as in *GTPM* or the family traditions as in *2 States*. Generally speaking, mainstream Hindi films are playing with emotions. They are highlighting and exaggerating social, cultural, political aspects existing in reality. Stereotypes are, therefore, a necessary tool as they take most known features, common attitudes, customs, and trades of people to amplify statements. Films are considered works of art. They are able to deliver messages to the viewers by touching, reflecting or contradicting their opinions, their beliefs, and their *weltanschauung*.

Regarding the film examples, *Chennai Express* relies on filmic stereotypes existing in the Tamil and Hindi cinema about the respective other. Stereotypes in *Chennai Express* are regarded on



## Conclusion

the basis of the language barriers, clothing – traditional and conservative versus western and urban, as well as the scanty knowledge of North Indians about South India. In fact, most notable in *Chennai Express* is that it is the North Indians that are made fun of. The film is trying to capture South Indian film viewers, so my impression, noticeable for instance by the facts that the South Indian famous actor Sathyaraj portrays Meena's father or that there is an entire song sequence dedicated to the Tamil star Rajinikanth. As Dwyer mentioned, the south seems to be better informed about the north and understands the northern cultures, people and languages better than vice versa. The north is represented in the figure of Rahul, the stereotypical ignorant North Indian coming to the south by accident. Rahul was more interested in going to the southern state of Goa with his friends to meet female tourists, which is another cliché of the touristic hotspots that does not really symbolise the unique cultures of the south. In *Chennai Express* the main figure is Rahul. All other roles are acting around the star of the film Shah Rukh Khan. He himself portrays the outsider, the foreigner, who is unfamiliar with South India, a funny clown entering another domain. Rahul embarrasses himself throughout the film in front of the cool, terrifying, informative- portrayed South Indians. Thereafter, the film shows the main figure in the role of 'the other'. *Chennai Express* offers the above mentioned 'two- world scenario', in which first and foremost the language barrier is the hindering issue to be overcome. But these uses of the language- understanding problems are authentically performed in *Chennai Express*, according to all the interview partners. Both Hindi and Tamil are spoken and subtitles are not provided. A large proportion of the audience negatively reviewed that fact, which furthermore shows the ignorance of North Indians towards Dravidian languages. Hindi is a pan – Indian language and although not approved of and learned in Tamil Nadu, in the other southern states it is a language taught in schools. The most important aspect that caught my attention in *Chennai Express* surely was the linguistic barrier. But what also seemed significant in this film, is the way traditional clothings are representational for a specific cultural identity, culminating in a song sequence dedicated to the South Indian male clothing of the *lungī*.

*2 States*, because of its reliable source, that is the book by Chetan Bhagat, is much more stereotypical in its portrayal of South Indians and North Indians than *Chennai Express* or *GTPM* and lays it on the line. The fact that it is based on a book, using lines and hereafter stereotypical, as well as racist comments from the book, allows the film to be much more critical. The fear of being judged or watched more carefully on how the two regions are represented was certainly not done to the same extent as in *Chennai Express*. In *2 States*, the skin colour difference, the North and South Indian life- styles, the attitudes towards each other's respective backgrounds, and the families as the hindering problems for the love marriage are portrayed in a rather

## Conclusion

exaggerated and unduly way. As the title suggests, the two states of Tamil Nadu and Punjab stand for examples of any other states in India really, showing the overall attitude towards the multicultural atmosphere in India. In *2 States* the language barrier is not of great importance. Tamil is spoken only in a few sentences that can also generally be understood by people in the north. Again, the people from the south seem to understand Hindi perfectly in comparison to the Punjabis, who seem not capable of speaking Tamil. It is more the way the two different families live their lives that is catching the audience and particularly portrays the stereotypes and distinctions existing in the minds of the people. 'Racial' discrimination is not specifically focused on, but there are hints and humorous comments in the direction of the skin colour difference between North and South Indians.

*GTPM* picks up cultural differences in order to show the problem of living in the diverse and huge country of India. The first hint of a stereotype appears in the title of the film, *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein*. The Hindi term *gorī* comes from the word *gorā*, meaning 'white' or 'fair-skinned'. Although never an issue or problem, there are some comments in the film that make fun of the fair-skinned versus dark-skinned social debate. The film does not stereotype so strongly – in comparison to *Chennai Express* and *2 States* – the North Indians or the South Indians. Rather, *GTPM* concentrates on the difficulty of marrying outside the own culture, traditions, and the own state. It is not so much showing the audience the differences and the stereotypical prejudices that exist between the two cultural regions and its peoples, but more the problem of finding common ground in the multicultural atmosphere. The question is raised if love is indeed able to be stronger than families' traditions and customs. Another important fact about *GTPM* is that the protagonist, Shriram is South Indian, whereas the female character, Diya, is North Indian. This specific 'hypogamic' constellation has only occurred once in mainstream popular Hindi films, namely in *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*. The ethnosociological concepts of 'hypergamy' (Skt. *anuloma*) and 'hypogamy' (Skt. *pratiloma*) are describing the 'marrying up' and accordingly 'marrying down' in the social status of the Hindu caste system. Hypergamy, therefore, defines the marriage of a lower-class woman to a man with higher class status, while hypogamy is the other way around, where the man from a lower status is married to a woman from a higher social status. Normally in mainstream Hindi films, the love story ends in a 'hypergamy' of the female characters – portraying the outsiders – marrying the familiar, the local, the higher-classed male characters. So, for instance, the stories evolve around a female character, which is most often shown as from a poor family, while the male character comes from a rich family (e.g. *Kabhi Kushi Kabhie Gham* 2001). But although the 'hypergamy'/'hypogamy' is describing strictly the change of caste/class/status of a man or a woman with their respective

## Conclusion

marriage, my assumption in this context is that in mainstream Hindi film portrayals such marriages are not restricted to the class statuses of the love pair, but does also occur in the context of different religions, cultures or states. The India- NRI/Pakistan or Hindu- Muslim relationship is depicted in mainstream Hindi films by portraying the female character from Pakistan, while the male character as Indian (e.g. *Veer-Zaara* 2004, *Ek Tha Tiger* 2012); or the female character is Muslim, while the male character is Hindu (e.g. *Veer-Zaara* 2004, *Bombay* 1995, *Raanjhanaa* 2013). It is mostly the woman, who characterizes the outsider, the 'other', the 'deviation from the norm'. And in the context of hypergamy/'hypogamy' the traditional norm of Hindi films – namely the North Indian Hindu male – represents the 'higher status', while the 'abnormal' represents the 'lower status', so my impression. But, in the case of *GTPM*, I think, the audience can more readily accept the fact that Shriram as a South Indian falls in love with the North Indian Diya, because he has lived in the United States and knows and lives a western lifestyle. He is easily forgiven for his unconventional, untraditional choice of lovelife, the decision of marrying outside his culture and for pursuing the love of a woman who would not be acknowledged by his family. Both Shriram and Diya have had a more modern education, they are free-spirited characters that conduct a western sexual, non- committal relationship until they decide to get married.

Mainstream, commercial, popular Hindi films do not show the stereotypes and the differences existing between cultures as oppositions, but rather as attracting factors for the characters to fall in love with each other, showing the overall scheme of love being the final victor. Working with allegories, stereotypes are depicted out of the pool of various traditions, customs, physical looks, linguistic ignorance, and behaviours. Differences between the identities, equally problems with traditions (i.e. family's decision on who to marry), are visible and made explicable clear in the films, but the message is that it is rather unimportant in the face of love for another person or in the face of love for the nation.

What influence do these films have on the discussion of the Hindi film industry as a pan-Indian industry?

The film examples have very little time span between their respective releases. They were released in 2013 – *Chennai Express* and *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein*, as well as 2014 – *2 States*. It would raise the question if the Hindi film industry now found a new topic for romantic comedies – namely the North- South Indian relationship. But all three interview partners negated this assumption. However, what can be seen to have changed in the Hindi film industry in the last years is an opening up – an opening up to greater diversity in the portrayals of Indians in general.

## Conclusion

The films now try to reflect the diversity in lifestyles and cultures that people see actually happening around them, so Radia-Tyagi. The mainstream, commercial Hindi films are moving away from the typecast characters in their films to a greater variety of figures and roles. The social stratification of North Indians in North Indian films and South Indians in South Indian films seems no longer to be the overall case. For the first time, the Hindi cinema wants to speak for a pan – Indian audience in a way it has not done before, so Dwyer. In the past, Hindi films were known in the south but did not catch the attention of the mass- audience. Now they have, so the interview expert, who was very curious as to why Shah Rukh Khan (producer of *Chennai Express*) and subsequently Karan Johar (producer of *GTPM* and *2 States*) were in fact interested in taking the step. I think that one of the objectives of this paradigm shift is to become a pan – Indian industry, namely to represent all of India nationally and internationally in their films. In the 90s and beginning of the 2000s, there was a trend visible in Hindi cinema, where the main target was to get Non- Resident- Indians (NRIs) to watch Hindi films. NRIs have been important for the Hindi film industry to gain fame on the international market. Now their role is somehow settled and the NRI audience is hooked. It seems that the Hindi film industry now turns to the south as a still somewhat unacknowledged and underrepresented area in mainstream Hindi films as a new conquering aspect. The Hindi film industry tries to win audiences from the south by showing more interest in the area and the lifestyle. Or could it be the fact that South Indian states offer a large market for Hindi films in the urban areas where Hindi is actually spoken by the younger generations, so Dwyer in the interview. South India as an economically powerful region is internationally representational for India in comparison to some eastern states of India, for instance. East India has not yet had the same representation in the mainstream, commercial Hindi cinema as the south did.

How may these film examples make an impact on the Indian society?

Shah Rukh Khan explained in the *Chennai Express* press conference that, in Bollywood, over 2700 mainstream commercial films are made. Disregarding often quality and placing more interest on quantity, the films share the common goal of entertaining the film visitors. The mainstream Hindi film industry is an entertainment business, constantly looking to amuse, touching the viewers emotionally on topics, problems, and stories that are linked to their everyday life but in an idealistic, romantic way. The overall conqueror is love – love for the family, love for the people, and love for the nation. In *Chennai Express* Shah Rukh Khan tries to show that love for the nation – connecting it to the national identity – is more important than the characteristics that separate people from one another. For example, *GTPM* makes people

## Conclusion

see that love can build bridges connecting regions, cultures, and loved ones. But the question is still of how influential films and their stereotypical portrayals of characters are for the audience, among others most importantly younger generations, to encourage change in the way social customs and traditions are perceived? As Hughes assures in the interview, although film analyses give information on how the audience may acknowledge the topic or the plot of a film, a sociological and an anthropological research (i.e. participating observation) is needed to fully comprehend how people actually understood the film's message. Only through this approach can a researcher make suggestions to the social influence of films, so Hughes. To state a necessary connection of the film's representation and social reality cannot be done by simply analysing the films.

However, by collecting literature, interviewing experts and looking over film reviews on internet webpages and blogs, it is possible to say that all three film examples were mostly receiving positive reviews. Only *Chennai Express* led to discussions and triggered confrontational interactions among people in northern and southern states of India respectively. Conservative Tamils were rather appalled by it, while other South Indians congratulated the studios for finally including South India in the A-list Bollywood. These reactions certainly have to do with the pan – Indian and international fame, as well as the influence of Shah Rukh Khan in Indian popular culture. For *GTPM* it can be said that people saw the 'two- world scenario' of North and South India. But many of the reviewers did not feel strongly about it. It is visible that the topic is not perceived as a clash of cultures, but rather as stating differences that people are proud to see carried out in films. *GTPM* was the film that was the least successful of the three examples. Reasons for that might be that it is not exactly showing a clean, uncorrupt India but exactly that – corruption in local politics, poverty and the question of the need for development. I think that especially *2 States* is a very important film for young people, because the message of fighting for love over cultural differences and the dissent of the parents for inter-state marriages is portrayed in a rather realistic way. The family problems youngsters face, are stated more clearly in *2 States* than in the other two films. For all three films it can be said that most reviewers saw the caricatural use of the stereotypical portrayals in order to make people laugh, proving that people are able to distinguish reality from the cinematic image.

The research question of this thesis is: To what extent are South India and cultural differences in relation to North India stereotypically portrayed in contemporary mainstream Hindi films, taking into account specifically the examples of *Chennai Express*, *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein*, and *2 States*?

## Conclusion

Through literature on Cultural Studies, definitions of identity and nationalism regarding India, the importance of films in the social, cultural and political life of people is depicted. Culture is based on common practices, languages, religious customs and traditions that a community in a society share. This community formulates its own cultural identity, defining its being, its belonging, and its becoming in a society or country. Answering the research question on differences between South India and North India, it is essential to say that the diversity between the people of these two regions has developed through historical conceptions of the Aryan invasion on the Indian subcontinent. With this first intrusion and the settling of the Aryans in India, segregation started, separating the Dravidian Indians from the North Indian descendants of the Aryans in many respects. Not only the languages, but 'racial' features and furthermore, cultural practices and religious customs became reasons to scientifically study and clarify the differences, not just by Indian scholars themselves, but European ones as well. Especially the darker versus fairer skin- complexion- issue became synonymous with lower versus higher social statuses. The discovery of the language families – Indo-European and Dravidian – was taken as a motivation to establish a political identity in the case of Tamil speakers of the southern states. The nation India seems constantly under threat by the claim of celebrating the diversities among the people living in it. A national identity, which rests upon striving for multisymbol congruence, is in permanent need to be cultivated. Giving the Indian society, on the one hand the possibility of the peoples to live their own culture, speak their own languages, and maintain their own religious customs and traditions must be preserved, but on the other hand it is important to show them the advantage, necessity and importance of national identity as well. Media and especially films are significant tools to mirror emotions of the audience and societies, while showing them commonalities and similarities existing among one another.

After examining the film examples and talking to experts on the topic, it can be said that the aim of all three films is a humorous portrayal of the North Indian stereotypes, prejudices and clichés about South Indians. Since the history and the cultural, linguistic, and social development of the two regions differ to a great extent, the relationship is always under constrain, defined as a complicated crossing- over to different, unfamiliar places, with their particular cultures and identities in the nation of India. The 'racial' and cultural differences existing between these two regional societies are depicted through picturing love relationships of oppositions – namely the average Hindi film hero from the north and the love interest from the south. It has become understood that in order to illustrate the 'norm', a counterpart of the 'abnormal' is needed. In the case of the North Indian dominated mainstream Hindi film industry or Bollywood industry, the 'abnormal' part is taken by the South Indian. More accurately, the

## Conclusion

Punjabi dominated Hindi films have taken the Tamil cinematic hero/heroine as a stereotypical counterpart. However, with this kind of representation, an inferior versus superior hierarchy may be the reaction and is probably consolidated. It depends on the recipient if this hierarchy will evoke affirmation or if these predefined role- allocations are called into question. It is the character, who deviates from the average Indian that becomes stereotyped. To show stereotypes based on the different cultural identities of India is not so much understood to offend or establish a cultural hierarchy but more to reach all Indian viewers and speak to all Indian viewers. Great attention is paid to explicitly show South Indian rituals, and especially Tamil cultural identity, lifestyle and customs. Stereotyping occurs in an authentic, but exaggerated, cinematic framework, scratching a caricature of rather distinctive cultural behaviours, daily-life habits and manners occurring in societies in North and South India. The films are made not only to amuse the North Indian audience. Throughout the film examples, the South Indian stereotypical characters are imagined as cool, but traditional in their way of life, which I think makes audiences of South Indian states interested as well.

Looking at the representational meaning of South India in mainstream Hindi films, it is not so much the aspect of the south versus the north that catches the attention of the audience than the fact that India is a country of various territorial and cultural identities. In the minds of the young Indian society, the geographical roots of people are gradually diminishing. The ‘two- world scenarios’ of ‘us’ against the ‘others’ are more and more weakening, and opening up to more acceptance – especially through social media – but to a great extent also through films. Unity in diversity is taken in consideration. The mainstream Hindi cinema or Bollywood – taking the role of a pan – Indian cinema – celebrates this diversity, sending the message of national solidarity with all its various differing cultures, religions, languages existing. Overcoming differences, stereotypes and clichés for love, but not only love for the other person, but love for the nation, which guarantees unity among the various cultural regions has always been one of the main purposes of Bollywood to produce stories.

## Appendix

### 6.1 Filmography

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Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment. India.

3 idiots (2011): Rajkumar Hirani. Vidhu Vinod Chopra. Vinod Chopra Films. India.

Aiyaa (2012): Sachin Kundalkar. Anurag Kashyap. Guneet Monga. Viacom 18 Meraj Shaikh.  
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Productions. India.

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Red Chillies Entertainment. India.

Deewar (1975): Yash Chopra. Gulshan Rai. Mumbai. India.

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Ek Tha Tiger (2012): Kabir Khan. Aditya Chopra. Yash Raj Films. India.

Gori Tere Pyaar Mein (2013): Punit Malhotra. Karan Johar. Dharma Productions. India.

Hum Hain Rahi Pyaar Ke (1993): Mahesh Bhatt. Tahir Hussain. T V Films. India.

Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham (2001): Karan Johar. Yash Johar. Dharma Productions. India.

Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (1998): Karan Johar. Yash Johar. Hiroo Johar. Dharma Productions. Yash  
Raj Films. India.

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Parineeta (2005): Pradeep Sarkar. Vidhu Vinod Chopra. Vinod Chopra Productions. India.

PK (2014): Rajkumar Hirani. Vidhu Vinod Chopra Films. Rajkumar Hirani Films. India.

Ra.One (2011): Anubhav Sinha. Gauri Khan. Red Chillies Entertainment. India.

Rang de Basanti (2006): Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra. Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra. Ronnie Screwvala. Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra Pictures. India.

Raanjhanaa (2013): Anand L. Rai. Krishika Lulla. Anand L. Rai. Himanshu Sharma. Colour Yellow. India.

Roja (1992): Mani Ratnam. Kavithalayaa Productions Pyramid. India.

Sholay (1975): Ramesh Sippy. G.P.Sippy. United Producers Sippy Films. India.

The Dirty Picture (2011): Milan Luthria. Ekta Kapoor. Shobha Kapoor. Balaji Motion Pictures. India.

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### 6.3 Table of Figures

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| FIG 3.1: DRAWING THE LINE (BAUTZE 2010 EDITED BY THIS THESIS'S AUTHOR)..... | - 29 - |
| FIG 5.1: CHENNAI EXPRESS – MEETING MEENA'S FATHER (00:33:22).....           | - 62 - |
| FIG 5.2: CHENNAI EXPRESS – RAHUL'S HOSTAGE (01:02:27).....                  | - 63 - |
| FIG 5.3: CHENNAI EXPRESS – KASHMIR MAI, TU KANYAKUMARI (01:07:32).....      | - 65 - |
| FIG 5.4: CHENNAI EXPRESS – THANGABALLI'S CHALLENGE (00:45:28).....          | - 69 - |
| FIG 5.5: CHENNAI EXPRESS – RAHUL LOST IN TAMIL (00:49:19).....              | - 70 - |

## Appendix

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| FIG 5.6: CHENNAI EXPRESS – RAMESWARAM (02:08:37).....                      | - 76 -  |
| FIG 5.7: GTPM – SHRIRAM AND KAMAL (00:12:47).....                          | - 80 -  |
| FIG 5.8: GTPM – SHRIRAM’S SPEECH (00:51:11).....                           | - 81 -  |
| FIG 5.9: GTPM – <i>KASHĪ YĀTRĀ</i> (01:05:58) .....                        | - 84 -  |
| FIG 5.10: GTPM – BUILDING THE BRIDGE (01:02:50) .....                      | - 87 -  |
| FIG 5.11: GTPM – FAMILIES’ MEETING (00:08:57) .....                        | - 90 -  |
| FIG 5.12: 2 STATES – FAMILY GATHERING AT CONVOCATION (00:38:11) .....      | - 97 -  |
| FIG 5.13: 2 STATES – KRISH’S AND ANANYA’S HOMES (01:20:58/ 00:51:13) ..... | - 104 - |
| FIG 5.14: 2 STATES – PUNJABI AND TAMIL DINNERS (01:24:48/ 00:54:49).....   | - 107 - |
| FIG 5.15: 2 STATES – PUNJABI AND TAMIL DANCES (01:35:58/ 01:36:17).....    | - 109 - |

## 6.4 Interviews

### 6.4.1 Questionnaire

#### North- South Indian definitions:

This paper addresses the question on how contemporary mainstream Hindi film plots have played with images and love between North and South Indians. My first question to you is: How would you define North and South India in general?

Can one talk about an Aryan- Dravidian divide in India?

How does the Hindi film industry see itself? There are A/B/C centres of publishing movies (Mumbai and region/Punjab, Gujarat, Rajasthan/Hyderabad, Bangalore): Is there a difference between South India and North India in the Bollywood/Hindi film industry?

How important are Indian film industries in the mind of people and how much influence do films have on Indian audiences/people?

How important are they in the daily life of Indian people?

Stereotypes are based on space- specific behaviour. Films are playing with stereotypes and idealisation of dream worlds. Through love all stereotypical thinking of the community is broken and the individual case allows crossing borders. But the differences are not fully eliminated. How do you perceive stereotypes in Hindi films? Could you give examples for stereotypical portrayals, which leap into your mind?

#### Film Examples:

All of my examples are drastically showing the difference between Tamil Nadu and North Indian communities: the Tamil character as the exact opposite of the Bollywood hero/heroine, who is most often from the Punjab or the urban educated classes of Delhi and Mumbai. What

## Appendix

would you say, how did such a perception of the South come about in the recent Hindi film industry?

*Chennai Express* was a box office hit. How did you like the film?

What do you think were the main objectives of making that film/choosing this setting?

What kind of image does *Chennai Express* want to draw on the Bollywood cinema- the range of interests of Hindi films?

How is the boy from the North/ girl from the South relationship celebrated in this film?

The Tamili are shown wearing *lungī*, speaking only Tamil, have dark complexion (except for the girl). In *Chennai Express* Rahul is wearing Western clothes, while Meena is constantly wearing traditional *sārī*. In how far do you think this film is playing with stereotypes?

In how far do you think, South Indians are portrayed in a negative way, or more savage, primitive than North Indians?

*2 States* and *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein* were both films produced in 2014 by Karan Johar, after the success of *Chennai Express*. Do you see a trend in the Hindi film industry to get more in touch with South India?

How did you like *2 States* and *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein*?

Skin complexion is a topic in these films: How did you experience the perception of white skin complexion in Hindi films- especially in these examples?

How is this difference between dark – white skin really an issue between North and South India?

### Bollywood cinema as the dominant one:

The Hindi film industry is very popular in India and abroad. In how far do you think it claims to be an all-Indian film industry, representing all of India?

#### 6.4.2 Dr. Sonal Radia-Tyagi, Symbiosis University Pune

This interview was taken in Pune, 20th of August, 2015 at the Campus of Symbiosis University at 12 o'clock in Dr. Radia-Tyagi's office. As I was working there for a conference, I checked with Dr. Radia- Tyagi shortly before and she was willing to give an interview on the topic. The atmosphere was relaxed. The interview lasted for 40 minutes.

Transcription:

## Appendix

I: You know about my thesis and writing about the north-south dichotomy and the image of South India in contemporary Hindi films. I think it is a very interesting and new development to see in the Hindi film industry that more mainstream, so-called Bollywood films are going more and more into exploring India and now the South of India, like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka. So what do you think about this hypothesis of mine?

T: Okay, put it into perspective. Hindi cinema overall, okay, what we call Bollywood cinema. When you are talking about North India and South India, you are referring to Bollywood, which are the films coming out of Bombay, which are dominated by a very North Indian sensibility. Mainly, because the filmmakers have been North Indian, the actors are North Indian, the script writer have been North Indian. Films are made in Bombay, the people behind the films...it is a North Indian sensibility. In the 60s it was a very, 60s-70s it was very stereotyped image. You had caricatures, you had typecasts, you had the good guy and the bad guy, the evil mother-in-law, you had the self-sacrificing mother. So when a South Indian was portrayed in that context, he or she was not a person of caricatures. Not even a caricature, that is the wrong word, a stereotype, okay? South India encompasses a whole lot of different states with many different cultures. You got Kerala, which is very different from Tamil Nadu, which is very different from Karnataka. Andhra Pradesh is kind of almost south but not quite. In the North Indian mind that distinction did not exist. And similarly in the South Indian mind, everyone from the North was a Punjabi. So you had these dichotomies, where neither culture, nor set of cultures quite accepted the nuances of the other culture. Now since the 90s the paradigm shifted and what came about, with economic liberalization two things have happened: Indians have grown far more confident about India, about being Indian. There is a change in the mind-set. We are no longer poor cousins to the rest of the world. And the television industry, you know, I don't know you got like how many channels? So a particular role, which Hindi cinema played, has gone into television. That popular entertainment with very type-caste characters now exist in the space of television, popular television. There is a whole genre called सास - बहू *sās-bahū*, which is the mother-in-law – daughter-in-law things. And it is an entire genre in Hindi on television. Earlier it was on films and that got displaced and the mythological things, *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyana* have all gone into television space. In spite of multiplexes there is more diversity in filmmaking now. You do get to see smaller films, which succeed. So, if you are talking about breaking away from stereotypes and type-casting, you are not just talking about the portrayal of someone from the South, you talk about a range of different portrayals. You see women are portrayed differently. If you see queens or something, it is a different portrayal of women. So even though you have your popular Masala-films, there is a movement

## Appendix

away from type-caste characters. You still have the films with all that, but you do have a smaller space for slightly different films. It began in the 70s but the 70s films are about cinema, they are all my seniors from FTII. That has moved into...dealing with tribal issues, land ownership and... (1)

I: and the image of the angry man...

T: Yes, but that was mainstream and I wanted first to talk about the social reality and awareness of films. That has given place to more sensibility. The younger people now coming out of film schools are reflecting reality as they know it. And the reality that you have today in India is the real melting- pot, its educational institutions, you got Symbiosis, students from all over the country ...2 States, which you were talking about is a very similar situation. You have two people on campus falling in love, from very different backgrounds. So the great leveller has now become education. Films are expressing the diversity that these people see happening around them. So the social stratification, where you confined to one place and North Indian interacted with North Indians, South Indians interacted with South Indians...that has changed, so newer films will reflect that. At the same time, mainstream cinema is moving away from the typcast. That is why you have a greater diversity and reality in different roles. Does that put the things in perspective? (2)

I: Yes, it does...What role do you see for example in *Chennai Express* for the South Indian?

T: *Chennai Express* is a love story. The fact that she is a South Indian is not that relevant. (3)

I: And the other characters and also the fact that the film is only set in Tamil Nadu? And making the differences so clear of languages, clothes, traditions, rituals...

T: You are trying to say is, you wouldn't have had a mainstream heroine from the South. That is not quite true, because you got Hema Malini is from the South. So, I don't see *Chennai Express* as a breakthrough in that sense. (4)

I: Not a breakthrough, but since SRK is the most popular figure in Bollywood, he has never turned in any of his movies to the South in such an intensive way. Why now, what made him do that? I know that Rohit Shetty is from the South and Deepika Padukone. And *Chennai Express* was a very popular film.

T: It was. It went very well.

I: And I think that the differences of north and south are very well formulated. So what do you think?

## Appendix

T: It is because audiences are now open to exploring different cultures. It is because of that...they could afford to do it, because they knew the audience would not close up. (5)

I: Yes I believe so.

T: What you caught, is not just one filmmaker. It is a whole cycle. You do something different but the audience has to accept that difference. And now, as filmmakers are coming of age, you have audience coming of age. It is a whole cycle that is happening. Maybe it was something he could do, because they felt audiences would respond to it. Audiences would not shy away at the thought of that girl wearing that South Indian clothes. That they would be open to accepting cultural diversity in a way earlier audiences wouldn't. (6)

I: And in the whole, is this unity in diversity, whole India with the various cultures and languages, is it obvious in Hindi films, would you say?

T: See, there is a strange dichotomy taking place: Keep going back to the bigger picture. Earlier you had – and you still have – regional cinema. You got Malayalam cinema, Telugu cinema...and that in the South remains popular, but in places like Gujarat or Rajasthan it kind of died out. Hindi cinema became the one pan- Indian thing on top. What is now happening in the past few years, regional television has grown more than ever. Have you ever heard of a language called Bhojburi? (7)

I: Yes it is spoken in the Hindi belt...

T: Yes it is one of the kauderwelsh languages. It is actually the kind of controversy of Hindi, a village Hindi. Bhojpuri films are doing phenomenally well. All the television stations are trying to open Bhojpuri channels, there are going to be 127 new Bhojpuri channels. Bhojpuri films are doing enormously well. You got new stars...What you have now got, is regional cinema and regional television has had a revival. For the first time, the Hindi film has a genuine pan – Indian audience in a way it did not have before. It is now in a completely different niche. When you pay that much, go to a multiplex, buy popcorn and so on. Remember the multiplex is as new as the economic liberalisation. Now anywhere in the world that package, multiplex, coke, popcorn it is a huge amount of money. So the film is the same no matter where you go in India. Earlier Hindi films have not have a run anywhere in the South. Now, they will have a certain amount of Hindi films there. (...) Hindi films are more accepted now in the South. Not popular, because I was in Kerala and there film- going it is a different scene out there. You have this actor and you have got special screenings organized by the fan club. There is a huge cut-out of the star and the fan club is organizing a screening. So, there it is almost like a religion. But because of

## Appendix

this increasing geography mobility, Hindi films have a greater acceptance in the South. Go with someone like Rahman. Look at earlier musicians! They were all from the North Indian tradition. Now you got someone like Rahman. Things are changing in the sense of you got greater diversity even behind the scene. Maybe not on- screen because a lot of the faces on- screen are third- generation actors, Kapoor or Khan. That still continues. But SRK is not a third- generation guy, he is a newcomer, and so is Deepika. (8)

I: She is from the South right?

T: No, she is from Maharashtra. She has grown up in Bangalore. She is not South Indian. She has grown up in Bangalore. Padukone is a Maharashtran name. But see that is where the new thing is taking place. That you have this girl that is grown up in the South but is not a South Indian. So that is where certain things are changing. So, what we are talking about is a greater diversity in lifestyles, and therefore a greater acceptance of those portrayals on screen. (9)

I: And you think this is also seen in real life, like Chetan Bhagat's *2 States*, he is complaining that overall Indians are still identify themselves first of all with their state and then with national identity?

T: There is still a lot of that segregation, especially socially, but the geographical roots are diminishing. I have given the example, in the 60s the traditional Indian summer holiday was to go back to the village. That doesn't happen for a lot of them now. That village home is gone. It still exists for some people in farming (...) When your geographical roots diminish, even then you link your identity in terms of language, food and social network. You do develop a social network outside of that. *2 States* in that way is very realistic, because it is based on that, love flourishes in the educational institute, which is not the kind of match the parents would have arranged, right? But having met, parents will get around to accepting. So, in that sense it does reflect a new reality. (10)

I: Do you see any purpose of the plots of these movies? Are they trying to educate, have an opinion, and want to show something?

T: I don't think that if someone goes out and say they want to make a film, they say, we are promoting integration. But somewhere you accept the other person as normal. I accept you for whatever you are, you accept me for whatever I am. Not just the colour of the skin or the colour of the hair or eyes. But you look beyond that in a person. In that sense yes...it is in *2 States* each get to the other person. But that is also happening on other levels, like the portrayal of women. I keep coming back to the big picture. In a lot of Hindi films you are moving away

## Appendix

from stereotypes, so this is a part of the whole picture. Always put it in this perspective. It is not just the portrayal of someone from the South or from the North, it is a portrayal of a woman or a portrayal from someone else you are moving away to trying to explore the person you are seeing, the shades of black and white. (11)

I: May I ask you something about the language. It is a Hindi film, but in *Chennai Express*, a lot of the audiences complained it was too much of Tamil and they didn't understand it. The language is still a great barrier and keeps North and South India, especially Tamil Nadu from the Northern part of India, right?

T: Well, I suppose so. I don't know. That is not something I haven't really thought about. As it is Hindi as artificial language, Hindi is the one size fits all and everyone from the north and maybe from the south are supposed to understand this and learn this. That is the language adopted by cinema, but in real life, way a few people will actually speak that kind of Hindi. In the south English is the main language. If I were in the south and I wouldn't speak the local language, I would not speak Hindi. I speak in English. It is like, in Swahili in East Africa. In the north you still speak Hindi or a variation of it. Bhojpuri is like the rebel Hindi. But Hindi has become that kind of everyone understands Hindi. But the very few actual Hindi speakers – except for the whole north thing – we find the Muslim speak Urdu, the Punjabi speak a different version, the native of UP or Bihar speak a very different version. Hindi is the one-size-fits-all glossed over language, glossed over cinema, which is now trying to arrive...in the regions. (12)

I: And in the South?

T: No, in the south, the southern languages are very strong. When you make the occasion in *Chennai Express* or *2 States*, you are opening your mind-set a bit. But, also remember that that are the exceptions of the rule. If you take any film in a quarter, how many films actually deal with this? It is not like a new trend. New trend is that you are moving away from stereotyping. In this particular films it reflects a portrayal of South Indians, but it is not like is this happening, is this a way of women bursting into Bharatanatayam onscreen, that kind of way. (13)

I: Then for example in *Chennai Express*, how did you think the South was represented?

T: Very authentic. It wouldn't be completely authentic. Popular cinema is never completely authentic. But it didn't feel caricatures. They were making fun of it. (14)

I: Yes, do you think that they wanted to make fun of this south-north dichotomy and how North Indians think of the south?



## Appendix

T: I have just seen it once and it was on television. You know how it is, when you go to a theatre and you watch a movie and you are all focused. When you watch it at home you get up, you get something, you drift away...so I haven't. I have just seen it once and I have not completely. Because, as I was thinking about your question last night and this morning and this is what I felt that they are indicatives of change. But you have studied them and have compared them. My take is just the broader picture that has happened in Indian cinema. (15)

I: In perspective, I thought it was a trend of the North Indian focused Hindi cinema going to explore the South, SRK making a movie about the South.

T: But the same happened in 'My Name is Khan'...with disabilities. There is a greater attempt to explore different facets, so it is not that suddenly that they are doing films of disabilities or so. It is not like suddenly there is a trend, like *2 States* coming after *Chennai Express*. It is just an opening out, openness to different cultures, different subjects and greater acceptance of diversity. (16)

I: Are Hindi films a tool to integrate India as a whole or would you say it is an all-India-representing industry?

T: It is always been that and the people making it, primarily want to make money. If you have more audiences to attract, you make more money. So yes, is it a tool of integration, yes it is, because they want more and more people to come back and see it, which is a tool of integration. But it is not why it is that, it is that, because the greater the audience the greater the earnings. So yes you do want appeal to what is called the least denominator. (...) Now, we are talking about popular cinema(...) The driving force is money, not politics. Hindi cinema by and far has this conventional image of the world. Everything will become happily-ever-after. All mainstream cinema is that. It is only in alternate-cinema, where it gets a little more real and life doesn't...is not all happily-ever-after. Mainstream cinema has to have the enemy, he will die, and this guy is the hero no matter what happens, he will not die. The ideologies are conventional and that is going to remain. A guy's mother will not be seen having an affair; she is like the self-sacrificing mother...That is very much given in all mainstream works of art. Those aspirations can only be done in alternate work of art. In mainstream there are very clear boundaries. Those lines will not be crossed. (17)

I: Have you read any reviews of *Chennai Express*, where you get the feeling that this is also kind of ideologies?

## Appendix

T: I really haven't. I have just read more about 2 *States*, I read Chetan Bhagat. I have seen 3 idiots, which was based on his book. Chetan Bhagat is very popular among young people in India, so he is reflecting some reality that they believe in. (18)

I: Thank you very much!

### 6.4.3 Dr. Stephen Hughes, SOAS University London

Dr. Hughes and I met in his office at SOAS in London, Russell Square at 10 o'clock on 11th of November 2015. We had 30 minutes and he was quite reluctant at first and asked himself, if he could really help me. But after we started talking, I got the feeling he had a lot of interest in this topic and we almost forgot about the time. The interview lasted for 40 minutes.

Transcription:

S: I wouldn't stay on the Aryan- Dravidian divide...there is so much mixing going on. For people living in New Delhi they think of Bombay as South Indian. So it is not exactly South India, but you know Bombay is not considered North India in the way of Delhi or Punjab, or even UP is. There are strong north and south differences and I think that is what you see reflected in the films. And there are all kinds of stereotypes that are used to generate humour. But there is a historical resentment among South Indians. They feel that they are not given enough respect by North Indians and by the Bombay film industry in particular. And so there are a series of controversial films and films that were controversial and politicians banned it... 'Madras Café'. But that was kind of a political stunt, but it was a way of contesting what they felt to be an unfair representation. And of course, you know there is a long history of the *Madrāsī* being the buttered jokes in Hindi films. And there is also more to it.... the film industries have much more to do with each other in the way the south is represented in Hindi films than you may think. Hindi films – and I am no expert on Hindi films like Rachel Dwyer or Rajinder Dudrah or others – but the way South Indians are portrayed you think that there is a clear divide between Bombay cinema and the south. There is a long and very productive relationship between the south and Bombay and it goes back to the 1930s, when they started making productions and you have directors from Maharashtra, Bombay working in the south Indian film industry, you have actors/actresses that are coming from the north, acting in films of the south. (1)

I: And vice versa.

## Appendix

S: Well obviously, yeah. There is a lot of back and forth. If you look in Madvan Prasad, he got a theory in his book about a kind of exchange, where the actors of the south are picked up in the north, and these whole series of actors/actresses. (2)

I: What was the name?

S: His name is Madhav Prasad, essays and he is in politics now. He has a theory on trafficking women, characterising the relationship of north and south, because the big stars don't really go back and forth. Even Rajinikanth has crossed over. So it is not entirely separate, but in terms of history level, production and so, from the late 40s you have a number of very important Hindi films in the South. Raj Kapoor produced a lot of films in the South. (3)

I: Was it that he set his plots in the south or just produced there?

S: It was produced in the studios of the South industry.

I: So that is the difference. The films I am looking at, like *Chennai Express*. They were set in the south in their plots and their production was in the south. I think that is the new aspect of the relationship between North and South India and their respective film industries.

S: I suppose, but it is not entirely new. Part of the difference is sort of the style and how you shoot a film has changed. Obviously, in the 50s and 60s so much of Indian film production really was happening on sets and not on location. There has been a gentle move to films on location, really. It started in the 90s, but it was much more standard now than it used to be. You see, when they film song sequences, that is been going on. I wouldn't say it is such a great point. It couldn't just isolate that as an argument of the relationship itself. (4)

I: It was just curious, because now they also shot scenes about the rituals, the traditions, the masks, the food, and the clothes. They are actually taking South Indian lifestyle in consideration and kind of like portray it for North Indian audiences. Like, for example the *Kashī Yātrā* in *GTPM*.

S: It is not especially South Indian. The Yatra is a Hindi word.

I: But you know, it is a very big ritual in South Indian weddings and I have never seen it in North Indian weddings.

S: That is the thing. I think you have to sit down with a South Indian and watch that and pick it apart. Because that is one of complaints that people from South India have, is that South Indians depicted as stereotyped and inaccurate. And they generally consider it insulting. So they prefer in fact that Bollywood industry wouldn't make films about the south. Because they gonna get

## Appendix

it wrong or they feel like...you know. But I mean, there are some important directors and technicians that, like Mani Ratnam, was a cameraman, they got back and forth and worked equally on both Tamil and Hindi film industries. You find a lot of South Indian technicians even working for the Hindi film industry, because it is made out of so many people, they don't really care like who is involved. You don't need to be Hindi to make a Hindi film. You don't have to be a Hindi speaker. You don't have to be you know...in Bombay itself it is Marathi city, of course there is Hindi as well. But they are making films for people in other places in India. But there is something in the Hindi heartland. You can see in sheer film production that Madras or later Chennai had since the late 50s actually produced more films per year than Bombay. That is because the four different languages. And what happened since the 1990s is that the number has gone down in Chennai, because states like Kerala and Andhra Pradesh have made incentives to draw film productions in Malayalam and Telugu to Thiruvananthapuram and Hyderabad. There has been a move out. They still make it in Chennai, but a lot of the productions of other regional languages in Chennai have moved out. And there is the idea that it is closer to their market. (5)

I: And how would you define South India? Because you said Mumbai was almost considered as a city of the South? In the Hindi films the South Indian is typically Tamil.

S: I would say Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu is South India. But clearly if you go to a place like Hyderabad it is more mixed. But to everybody else in India, Hyderabad is South India. But if you are in Tamil Nadu, Hyderabad doesn't feel like South India. I mean, not that it isn't, but there seems so much more Northern influence. But it is not kind of that. There are all over India divides, and there are the racial theories came about north and south. Just don't hold up any scrutiny whatsoever. There is obviously so much mixing and migration and it is just kind of a racial stereotype that really belonged in the 19th century to be honest with you, the Aryan and Dravidian. And they are doing all kinds of genetic testing. It is quite clear that South India has been a place of migration and it is not as if you can say it like that. (6)

I: No, I wouldn't have said that and I don't see it in the films either – this Aryan- Dravidian divide clearly, but when it comes to racial features, like skin colour, or in *Chennai Express* the Tamil are all wearing traditional clothes, *lungī*, speaking only Tamil, kind of rural.

S: Yes, the film that was banned in Tamil Nadu was actually *Chennai Express*, not Madras Café, sorry. Madras Café was not the film, sorry. Madras Café was about the assassination of

## Appendix

Rajiv Gandhi, and that is a different film. And they couldn't film that in Tamil Nadu, they had to film in Kerala. They were not allowed. It was too sensitive. (7)

I: I also read that the Tamil want to make a Tamil film like *Chennai Express* about the north. Is it really that they felt so offended by it?

S: That was more of a political stunt. There were many South Indians that watched it and laughed at it. It was a big budget film. But it is true that Tamil Nadu of all the states in India has been the least lucrative market for Hindi films. People have historically followed Hindi films more or less. (8)

I: And they are very proud of their different history than the north.

S: I mean it is part of the political setup, so politicians made a point on how to express that divide, because then again it appealed to some Tamil pride and promote that in a way to get votes. There are political parties in Tamil Nadu that pushed that. And since the late 60s every one of these parties has been one of these Dravidian parties. It is very well entrenched now. (9)

I: I am not familiar with Tamil films. But how are North Indian portrayed in Tamil films?

S: There are all kinds of films set in other parts of India. You have Tamil reshoots of Marathi stories, which was very common in the 30s. And they filmed on location in Chennai, but everybody was in full Marathi outfits. And everyone speaks Tamil. It seems odd now, but there was far more back and forth. There is a tradition that North Indians were depicted as being corrupt outsiders. There is a series of political motivated films from 1950s onwards that were promoted by and had actors from the DMK. And in those films North Indians were seen as exploiting the South, and sometimes shown as dishonest or exploiting. And you know the South has a history of anti-Hindi protest, language. They have protested against Hindi as a national language by central government. In the late 30s there were riots and people went around destroying every building that has Hindi written on it. In the 60s people set themselves on fire and burnt themselves to death in protest to the changes to make Hindi mandatory in schools. (10)

I: So in society, there is still this feeling of difference, the not only political motivated, but cultural motivated North-South Indian divide?

S: I mean, lot of people learn Hindi and it is not really an important issue anymore. But it is still there and it can be exploited by politicians. There is one party, it is not an electoral party, the DMK and I remember living in the city of Madurai in the 80s and they painted slogans on the walls "English ever, Hindi never". That continues, but kind of off and on. It is particularly the

## Appendix

case, when the government in Tamil Nadu is part of the opposition to the government in the center. People are promoting...it is politically motivated. If you go around the street, people don't feel that strongly about it. In the big cities you can find plenty of Hindi speakers. Madras has always had, because it is a big mixed urban centre, there are a lot of Hindi speakers living there for a long time. There are also a lot of Muslims, Urdu-speaking. But in terms of recent Tamil films I don't really see a lot of films in the last 20 years making a point, or pointing to this language issue. Mani Ratnam is making his films in Bombay, but they are Tamil films, eventually made in Hindi. He made one film, a Tamil film, I forgot the Hindi title set in Bombay and it did very well. You see 'Roja' again was a Tamil film, before it became a Hindi film and it is set in Kashmir. There is a South Indian component. I mean Mani Ratnam is one, there are many directors making films for local audiences. That is why Tamil is much more important for Tamil film makers in terms of nativism. They often make sure they have local settings, people recognize the dialects, regional based and where in Tamil Nadu it is. They are much more consolidating their main market. Others have not yet looked outside Tamil Nadu or India for other markets. Tamil films do well in Kerala and Karnataka and Bangalore, Andhra. Tamil films do have international reach to Sri Lanka, Malaysia and quite well in Southeast Asia. There is a different market dynamic. They are not trying to woo North Indians. In the last ten – fifteen years in Tamil films, there has been a kind of art film tradition, parallel cinema, avant-garde movement that is doing well outside of Tamil Nadu. It is not all glamour, big production. They are doing well for educated audiences. Certainly, in the last decade, you have people from all over India seeking out and watching Tamil films with subtitles. (11)

I: And what would you say that the Mumbai film industry wants to be an- all Indian film industry, representing all of India. Now with these films so popular, I think that it is more and more trying to show the whole of India. Do you think the Tamil industry tries the same somehow?

S: Not really no. They are settled in the south. I mean, if you argue with people from Karnataka and Kerala, they complain about Tamil cinema. It is too dominant; there is too much Tamil cinema. People from Kerala feel like they are being drowned out by Tamil films. That gives Malayalam films no chance. They have a bigger market, they produce more. That is the argument, why people in Kerala have made more art films, because Tamil films got the market on the spectacular, music, popular film genre. And they stunted by the Tamil industry, so they made these other kinds of art or political films or other kinds of films. (12)

## Appendix

I: And would you say that the Hindi film industry is the most powerful and strongest industry in India?

S: In terms of money, absolutely. Bigger budget films, bigger market. But there are certain people, like Rajinikanth, these films are all- India level. But they are only a few film stars that have that kind of reach. Rajinikanth is kind of an ambassador for Tamil films. (13)

I: Have you seen *2 States*? How did you like it?

S: Well, yes it is stepping on all the stereotypes. That is really what it is. The south is conservative, religious. These stereotypes are going on for a long time. That is what the people from the Bombay film industry coming down and visit the Madras film industry and they would say the same things. Everyone is conservative. In order to make money here, you have to make religious films. All those kinds of things... (14)

I: And *Chennai Express*? How did you like it?

S: I liked it. Again I saw it on an airplane and it was broken up. I saw little chunks of it. I am sure I saw the film, but it was not a film that I really thought about a lot. I watched *2 States* all the way through. I mean they are playing the South-North divide up for entertainment value, melodrama. The other thing is people from the south are seen as being good at math and technical things, have good education, better English. Stereotypes are always a thing to part something from something else, but I mean these are just... no one can get away from stereotyping. Whenever you use a kind of social category, you are making a kind of generalization, you know. As if you are speaking for a large corporate body of people. It is always dangerous and it never really works. (15)

I: In my thesis I argue that films are mirroring the minds of people, of course in a melodramatic way but still.

S: I would say rather than mirror, using the model of reflection, as if films have a kind of necessary relationship to society, I would rather think of these films as performative. They are playing out these ideas about that. It is not dangerous, but almost impossible to make any kind of argument using a film as a reflection of society's model. You can look at the films, but there is nothing in the films themselves that can make you see society. Society is costly produced. If you like the films are performing the stereotypes; they are enunciating it, rearticulating it for new audiences. That is how stereotypes are being perpetuated. So, but it is very difficult. I mean, how you are diagnosing society. Yes, films give us a way of thinking, asking social questions, but you have to work the other way, do a sociological and anthropological research

## Appendix

with people to get them to tell you how they understand the films, if you want to be able to look on the social side of films. It is not that you can't look at films and see how they are making claims about society. I think that is legitimate, but to say there is a necessary connection to the representation and what social reality is actually about is very tricky and doomed to fail. (16)

I: Thank you very much.

### 6.4.4 Prof. Dr. Rachel Dwyer, SOAS University London

I met Prof. Rachel Dwyer in her office at the SOAS in London, Russell Square on 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2015 at half past 11. It was a relaxed atmosphere and we started talking about these films right away, since Prof. Dwyer was focusing her research on it as well. The interview lasted for half an hour.

Transcription:

Rachel Dwyer: Is it anything in particular that you were thinking about when looking on those films?

I: Yes I am looking on how the rituals are portrayed and the language barrier and I also want to look on how identity regional and national is shown. So basically how stereotypes of South and North India are shown in the films...

R: There are several things. *Chennai Express*, I saw it, and I have seen *2 States*. *2 States* the thing about that would be that it is striking that they don't have a South Indian playing the South Indian role. It was someone, who is incredibly fair and known to be North Indian, well Western Indian. (1)

I: Alia Bhatt

R: Yes, being from a known family, that was a very strange thing and again I thought they went through a lot of the typical...there wasn't any ground broken really about that film. With *Chennai Express*, I thought it was really interesting film. I think it was about many things, a film about language, I think it was also a film about cinema, and particular the circulation of stardom. You know, Shah Rukh Khan is a superstar and he is paying tribute to Rajinikanth in the South Indian cinema. And the other one I am thinking about, again it is not a really good film, is 'Ra.One', you know where Shah Rukh Khan plays that. And again why is he interested in the South. What is it about the south that interests Shah Rukh Khan? (2)

I: That is also my question.



## Appendix

R: I have no idea. I think certainly the stardom of Rajinikanth as a different kind of star. You know he is not a threatening star, because he is no competition. And you know, Rajinikanth is near to Amitabh Bachchan's generation. But why is he so interested in Rajinikanth that is something I don't know. (3)

I: Do you think that the movie plays with stereotypes?

R: I mean there are stereotypes. I think, the stereotypes in that film are interesting, because they are not stereotypes of South Indian cinema, but I wonder if there were stereotypes from within South Indian cinema norms. In quite a few North Indian films, they try to deal with South Indian film stereotypes, rather than public stereotypes of South Indians. It depends if you are trying to look at the South Indianness from. It seems to me that it is a commentary by Bombay cinema on South Indian cinema, rather than a generic view of South India. So I think it is the cinema talking about cinema rather than a public perception, because I think a lot of people in the north know about South Indian films are being very colourful, very exaggerated and so on. But I am not sure that they know so much about the different types of character in South Indian films. You know there was one character in *Chennai Express*, her father, who is quite a big star in South India and he used some of his dialogues from South Indian film in it. I don't understand Tamil, but they were doing that in the film. He is a general in *Baahubali*. He is a big figure. But for North Indian he is like...he is the same as anybody else. They don't know who he is. And this idea about language being the big obstruction and then the film also in many ways being picking up themes of Dilwale (remark: Dilwale dulhania le jayenge), you know from the train and love conquers all and all the features he makes. So again it is a commentary on that film with a South Indian connection. And then it is also quite interesting that they have a lack of interest in South India. You know, they know it is somewhere in the south and he thinks that if he goes to Goa he can go on the *Chennai Express*. And then a lot of the images of South India are of Kerala, the one Indian state that the *Chennai Express* doesn't go into is Kerala. It goes through the other three. And when they go to Rameshwaram, they are showing it the wrong way around. They meant to be going to Rameshwaram, but they are showing a clip coming from Rameshwaram, because the bridges are the wrong way around. You cannot see the land. Anyone, who has been to Rameshwaram, knows it is the wrong way. So they are not really bothered by...it is not meant for a South Indian audience. But it is kind of a North Indian cinematic view of a South Indian film. (4)

I: And that is my question: What does this film want to say? What message does it want to deliver?

## Appendix

R: I think also with the trains and the cars and movement, it is about the circulation within India with different kinds of cultures and stardom and people. And to take somebody like Deepika, who is South Indian but the wrong kind of South Indian, because she speaks with a Malayalam accent in the film, not a Tamil one. But she speaks with a wrong kind of accent. Her family is from Bangalore. I think it is all about the south. It claims to be different. And also other things in the film, like the village is beautiful like in South Indian films, where in North Indian films villages are not really very nice. And the fact that they don't care about the space: they take Goa for Tamil Nadu. When they get off the train, this place is in Goa, not in Tamil Nadu. It is a very recognisable place. All the scenery is wrong, the train number is wrong. It is very odd. (5)

I: I saw an interview with Shah Rukh Khan, where he was asked why he picked South India for this film. And he said it is just about India in general.

R: The book on Shah Rukh Khan is now out from Oxford University Press India. I don't think there is anything about South Indian cinema in it, but I suppose the Hindi market is full, so spreading more...and the fact that Hindi films are popular in the South, but they are quite contested. And one other thing that is also very interesting about the film in India they didn't subtitle the Tamil. So he doesn't understand, but a lot of people in the audience would. (6)

I: So it is not really that they see the South Indian as the opposite, but also making fun of themselves...

R: Yes, the north doesn't understand the south, whereas the south seems to understand the north better. (7)

I: And still the stereotypes are clearly shown, also in *2 States*, with the skin colour, the darker complexion, and not understanding anything, the father in *2 States* always very conservative...

R: Yes and one of the things I don't know is...is South India fashionable in the north now? It has become quite popular with tourists, that people like the south, it is a bit exotic. I mean, the market is a big thing and the spread of Hindi in the south. But I think...it is also internationally. In America, there is the perception that there are a lot of South Indians certainly on the west coast of America...so were they trying to get that audience? The educated, Telegu speaking...The film did alright in the south, but it was not a particular hit. (8)

I: I talked with your colleague Stephen Hughes yesterday and he told me that *Chennai Express* was banned in some parts of Tamil Nadu?

R: I didn't know that.

## Appendix

I: I didn't understand that, why? Indians are very emotional and it is all about their identity. Their linguistic, cultural, religious and regional identity... and this national identity is not really coming forth but Bollywood is especially trying to get this national identity

R: I think so and there are a lot of South Indian people in the Hindi film industry, like Deepika and Rohit Shetty. (9)

I: He made *Chennai Express* and he filmed on location there. That is unique, right? I mean, the other films are never filmed in the South, except the studios

R: They used to film a lot in Utti in the 90s. They didn't film in any of the cities, they did go to Goa and the country, and they did Rameshwaram. (10)

I: And do you know anything about this ritual shown in the film, where Rahul is caring Meena up the stairs at the temple in Vidambha village?

R: No.

I: Do you know where I can get information about that?

R: There must be one of these old... You know you might find something in books of the 19th century, but I feel it might have been made up for the film. Nobody has written about it? (11)

I: The viewers mention a few comments on that on blogs and there are internet resources, but I am always doubting the accuracy of these sites, so?

R: I have never heard of it. I really have no idea.

I: Bollywood is certainly the most popular film industry in India, I would say. And Shah Rukh Khan now as the biggest star from there trying to include the south, do you think it is an attempt to show the Hindi film industry as an all- Indian industry, getting to include the South in their portrayals?

R: I don't know why he is so interested. The only thing I can think of is that there is a big market there. A lot of North Indians are living in the South. There are a lot of people in the South, who understand Hindi. There are lot of Tamils in Bombay. But I don't really know why he is doing it. Again, it is not a film that is particularly appealed to Tamil. (12)

I: And it is also not trying to be socially critical. It is just a plain comedy.

R: Yes the whole family is set up. The dad is a don.

I: And this relationship- boy from the North, girl from the South is comparable to the portrayal of boy from India, girl from Pakistan... but in *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein* it is the other way around.

## Appendix

R: In *PK* it is the same isn't it. But if you think of the industry, you have a lot of South Indian heroines, or Bengali heroines, but almost all the heroes are Punjabi. So again, that is the standard view. (13)

I: You wrote that in your book.

R: Like Shah Rukh Khan doesn't look South Indian. But choosing Deepika and Alia, they don't look typical South Indian. The don's sidekick is South Indian, curly hair, dark complexioned, very different look. (14)

I: And would you say the skin colour for example is important?

R: It is very important. I mean, the dark skin men are not problems, but the dark- skin women...but there aren't any other women in the film *Chennai Express*. But also they show South India much more traditional than the north, the dress, what people do, it could be the 1950s. Whereas the north is always shown as more modern, having a Nokia phone, westernized. (15)

I: And how would you say matter South and North Indian differences matter in society in general?

R: Language is a very big thing. In South India they stopped Hindi from being national language. That is big. And a lot of leads come from the south, you know, the civil servants, the Hi- tech, the south is the home of a lot of that. I don't really know much more about the dynamic of the north and south. I imagine that now, it is always seen as a different place from the north, that sort of borderline. But language is always a big dividing line, but also different music, different films, different clothing. (16)

I: So the Aryan- Dravidian divide is not really...

R: I don't know if it is really in terms of that. I doubt that people are so conscious about that. I mean, between south and north, they have very different food down there. People of the north don't really know about the food, they know idle and dosa but they don't really know about South Indian cuisine. I mean, there is a big ignorance of the South. (17)

I: And do you think that these popular films- *Chennai Express* and *2 States* helped in getting awareness for this divide?

R: I think they made the South look cool. I don't think much more than that – traditional and cool. That is part of the flavour of it that people like. That view that you can be old and new at the same time. I am not sure. (18)

## Appendix

I: Do you know any other films that deal with this topic?

R: *Aiyya*, *Dirty picture*, and *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*, but that is about the only film, where you have a South Indian hero that did well in Hindi cinema. Even Rajinikanth was never a hero. There was never a South Indian hero succeeding in the north. (19)

I: And the film with the South Indian playing a hero from South India..

R: *Raanjhanaa* with Dhanush, Rajinikanth's son in law, yes that made him look hipper. He doesn't look like the North Indians think the South Indian look like. He got the accent, but he doesn't look South Indian. (20)

I: So they do have an image on what a South Indian look like?

R: Yes, the north does think of Tamils as dark, curly haired... and the male stars look so different. They look almost like normal people than the North Indian cinema stars, they have like „deadbods“, like someone is dead. They are overweight, big moustaches, big hair, jeans and trainers. Not stylish. *Baahubali*, which has done so well in the North, because it is Tamil and Telugu but dubbed into Hindi. Those actors are known in the south but not really in the north. The heroine is from the north, but Prabhas is a huge star now...but he looks very South Indian. (21)

I: All my professors were very surprised by *Chennai Express*, since it was the first film of Shah Rukh Khan playing in the south, because it is normally the NRI that he is trying to reach out for...

R: But I think the NRI are losing. All the new films are not about NRIs, are they? A real big shift to the Indian side! I think it is a good topic. But I think that things go in cycles. People got a bit tired of seeing London and so. Salman Khan's last film was also very Indian. (22)

I: Did you like *2 States* and *Chennai Express* at all?

R: It was okay. I thought it was okay, but I didn't really feel strongly about it. What did I remember of it...? I remember his family, and the South Indian setup is something I liked. And obviously studying in Gujarat...but it is kind of the typical Punjabi, the typical South Indian... it is not so exiting. (23)

I: Thank you very much!

## 7 Abstract: German

Diese Masterarbeit untersucht die Forschungsfrage: Inwiefern sind Südindien und die kulturellen Unterschiede in der Beziehung zwischen Nord und SüdinderInnen im zeitgenössischen, populären Hindifilm stereotypisch dargestellt, betrachtet anhand der Beispiele *Chennai Express*, *Gori Tere Pyaar Mein* und *2 States*?

Das Thema wurde mit den Theorien der Cultural Studies, der Existenz kultureller Identitäten und Stereotypen im Film erarbeitet. Anhand der Methoden der Filmanalyse, sowie des ExpertInneninterviews – welches im Rahmen des KWA Stipendiums der Universität Wien mit ausgewählten WissenschaftlerInnen in Pune (Indien) Manchester und London (Großbritannien) ausgeführt wurde – konnte die Forschungsfrage beantwortet werden.

Historisch gesehen kann auf Basis der ethnischen Abstammung und der unterschiedlichen Sprachfamilien eine Unterscheidung zwischen Süd- und Nordindien wahrgenommen werden. Diese lässt sich in den gewählten Filmbeispielen auch erkennen. Die Hindifilmindustrie, auch Bollywood genannt, zeichnet sich durch ihre Massenkompabilität aus. Die Filme streben nach großer Akzeptanz innerhalb eines breiten, nationalen und internationalen Publikums. Aus den gewählten Filmbeispielen wurden Screenshots und Dialoge herangezogen, sowie Kritiken und Rezeptionen zu den Filmen aus indischen Internetforen beschrieben. Durch die Betrachtung der Beziehung der Nord- und SüdinderInnen konnte festgestellt werden, dass großer Wert auf die kulturelle und ethnische Unterscheidung zwischen NordinderInnen und SüdinderInnen gelegt wird. Stereotype Darstellungen des südindischen Kulturraums, insbesondere der Tamilen, wurden im Bereich der Sprachbarrieren zwischen der Indo-Europäischen und Dravidischen Sprachfamilienn, der Bedeutung der Hautfarbe und in den kulturellen und traditionellen Lebensstilen festgestellt. Es ist die cineastische Vorstellung der Beziehung zwischen Nord- und Südindien, die beim Betrachten der Filme die Aufmerksamkeit erregt. Stereotypisierungen beider kultureller Regionen werden in den Filmen genutzt, um klare Abgrenzungen zwischen Nord- und Südindien aufzuzeigen, sie zu karikieren, und als Anlass zu nehmen, die Leute zum Lachen zu bringen. Jedoch kann diese Arbeit keine Auskunft darüber geben, ob dies auch in der Gesellschaft so gesehen wird.

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