“Representations of Indian Folk Dance Forms in the Song and Dance Sequences of Contemporary Bollywood Cinema”

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

(                                                               )

(Vikrant Kishore)

(31st August 2010)
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

“Representations of Indian Folk Dance Forms in the Song and Dance Sequences of Contemporary Bollywood Cinema”

This thesis examines the representation of Indian folk dance forms in the song and dance sequences of contemporary Bollywood cinema. The thesis argues that when Bollywood cinema utilises folk dance forms in its song and dance sequences, these forms are altered and hybridized with other dance forms. To analyse the representation of folk dances in Bollywood cinema, I utilise six films from ‘Yash Raj Films’ (YRF), a prominent production house of Indian cinema, as case studies. In Chapter one, I outline the context and significance of the thesis and discuss the research methodology. Chapter two focuses on the influence and role of folk dance forms in the song and dance sequences of Bollywood cinema. Chapter three outlines why the films of YRF have been selected for analysis, and how and why YRF utilises folk dance forms in the song and dance sequences of their films. Chapters four, five and six contain the case studies on representation of folk dance forms in the YRF films from the 1970s-2000s. Employing textual analysis and formal and informal interviews with people involved in the construction and performance of these song and dance sequences, I examine the representation of Indian folk dance forms that occur in various contexts in the chosen films. Chapter four focuses on the era of the 1970s and 1980s, through the close textual analysis of “Dhoom Mache Dhoom” from Kaala Patthar (1979) and “Rang Barse” from Silsila (1981) and considers how the 1970s marked a crucial juncture in Hindi film song and dance, with prolific experimentation in the fusion of folk with Western dance
forms, and the transformation of song and dance sequences into glamourous spectacles. Chapter five examines the trend of using folk dance forms in the globalised era of the 1990s to construct images of India as an “idyllic homeland”, with the rise of neotraditionalism. Specifically, I consider Bollywood filmmakers’ attempts to cater to the diasporic “imagination” through song and dance sequences—“Megha Re Megha” from Lamhe (1991) and “Ghar Aaja” from Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge (1995). Chapter six focuses on the “glocal” era of the 2000s, and analyses the use of folk-dance forms in the song and dance sequence “Lodi” from Veer-Zaara (2005), in the context of the indigenisation of Western elements; and the representation of folk in an westernised, “itemised” and spectacularised manner in “Dil Dance Maare” from Tashan (2008). This thesis also explores the study of the subsequent impact of the Bollywood representation of folk dance forms on the “actual” folk dance forms, utilising Bhangra and Purulia Chhau as case studies. Therefore, Chapter seven employs “reverse cultural flows” theory; to examine how, over the years, popular Bollywood song and dance sequences has impacted these folk dance forms. Chapter eight analyses the impact of Bollywood song and dance sequences on Bhangra and considers the ways in which a folk dance form is transformed into a popular dance form. In contrast, Chapter nine examines Purulia Chhau dance to gauge the impact of Bollywood film culture and to analyse the transmogrification of this folk dance form. To conclude, I consider the question of whether Bollywood song and dance sequences will alter Indian folk dance forms to the extent that they will become unrecognisable.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

I. Bollywood Cinema and the Folk Dance Culture of India: Two Sides of the Story

While filming a documentary in 2003 on Purulia Chhau dance, a local patron and aficionado of the dance Dr. Suken Biswas (who we were interviewing for his work in the field of Purulia Chhau dance—a martial arts based masked dance drama) invited me and my crew to watch a Chhau dance competition in which his dance group was participating. The competition was to take place in Balrampur, a small town in the Purulia district of West Bengal. On learning that I was trained in the Purulia style of Chhau dance and a member of the National Institute for Chhau and Folk Dances (NICFD), a non-government organisation that promotes Chhau dance groups showcase their craft at international and national dance festivals, he also extended an invitation to the NICFD’s dance group to participate in the competition.

1 Also known as the “theatre of gods”, Chhau is a dance repertoire performed by men in regions from the East Indian states of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Orissa. The dance drama is based on stories derived from Hindu mythological texts like the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas. There are three prominent styles of Chhau dance: The Purulia style of Chhau dance from the state of West Bengal, the Mayurbhanj style of Chhau from the state of Orissa, and the Seraikela style of Chhau from the state of Jharkhand.

2 Apart from serving the area of Balrampur as a general physician for over 40 years, Dr. Suken Biswas developed a keen interest in protecting the Chhau dance traditions of the region. He began a dance academy called the Royal Chhau Academy and adopted 30 orphan tribal children, who are provided with food, lodging and education, alongwith training in the Purulia style of Chhau dance. His team has also participated in a number of national/international folk dance festivals.

3 The major international festivals at which my dance group (from NICFD) has performed are: The Festival of India (Thailand, 11-21 December 1995), the 17th International Folklore Festival in Drummondville (Canada, 3-14 July, 1998), the Festival of Issoire (France, 16-18 July 1998) and Gannat Folk Festival ANCT (France, 19-20 July 1998).

4 Although, I am a trained Purulia Chhau dancer and have performed in various folk dance festivals as a Chhau dancer, I prefer to be called a student of Chhau dance, as I was unable to pursue Chhau dance in a fully-fledged manner. I stopped practicing Chhau dance in 1998. Since 2003, my connection with Chhau dance has strengthened as a filmmaker, researcher and dance group manager within the
The competition was to be held at an outdoor location on the outskirts of the town. Although, it was not a festival day, we found a carnival-like atmosphere at the village arena. The dance competition began and each group presented its performance, enacting stories from the Hindu epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata. The heavy beat of the traditional Dhol (a large barrel drum worn suspended from the neck) and deafening shrieks of the Shehnai (a traditional wind instrument of Mughal origin, resembling the oboe) filled the arena. The dancers began twisting and twirling, jumping and falling, dancing and displaying their acrobatic skills.

But the Chhau performances I saw that night were quite different from the dance that I had first seen as a child and then as a student, from 1988 to 1995, under the tutelage of Guru Lalit Mahato and Guru Nepal Mahato. A dancer playing Goddess Durga gyrated sensuously like a Bollywood heroine, and another playing Lord Shiva flaunted his breakdance moves as he fought demons. The musicians were also playing the tunes of popular Bollywood songs in between the original Jhumur music to which Chhau dance is traditionally performed. At times they raised the pitch of the music for a Bollywood interlude, as if it were the centrepiece of their performance.

Witnessing these elements of Bollywood song and dance in the Chhau dance

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5 Guru Lalit Mahato and Guru Nepal Mahato are two of the finest exponents of the Purulia style of Chhau dance. Guru Nepal Mahato was granted the Padma Shree Award in 1983, the Indian government’s fourth highest civilian award for excellence in Art, Education, Industry, Literature, Science, Sports, Medicine, Public life and Social Service.

6 Song and dance sequences are an integral part of Hindi/Bollywood cinema. The Hindi/Bollywood cinema song and dance sequences are designed to integrate music, song and dance together in one sequence that either moves the narrative of the film forward, or acts as a break or breather in the film narrative. The song and dance sequences in the Hindi/Bollywood films can be divided into five distinctive categories: the romantic song and dance; the celebratory song of an individual/couple, family or community; the song and dance of lament over a misfortune; the combative song and dance with the protagonist challenging the villain; the cabaret, bar dance or the “item” number. Hindi film songs have been an important part of the Indian music industry, since 1931, the beginning of talkies in India. With the arrival of Satellite television in 1991, the song and dance sequences of Hindi/Bollywood cinema have also become an important part of the music and entertainment television...
performances that night, I was startled. It also reminded me of an earlier discussion I had with Chérif Khaznadar\textsuperscript{7} in Delhi in 1999. Khaznadar had gone to Purulia to invite a dance group to participate in some folk festivals in Europe. He was deeply disturbed by the changes then occurring in \textit{Chhau} dance performances in Purulia. He wrote a letter to my father Vijoy Kishore\textsuperscript{8}, describing his fears about the threat of extinction faced by \textit{Chhau} under the onslaught of modern popular culture, especially Bollywood films. Chérif Khaznadar (1999) cautioned:

\begin{quote}
After watching the \textit{Chhau} performances in \textit{Purulia}, I am quite worried about its future. I have seen how a genuine traditional form, which is undoubtedly an invaluable part of the patrimony of humanity, is being transformed into entertainment for tourists and a product of exportation for mass entertainment. Just as we have seen martial arts transformed into circus acts, traditional music into pop songs and traditional masks into Halloween costumes, if this trend grows anymore, it poses a great threat to the traditional form of \textit{Chhau} dance.
\end{quote}

After having witnessed elements of Bollywood/Hindi film song and dance sequences being indiscriminately incorporated into the choreography, costumes, accessories and musical score of the \textit{Chhau} dance performances that night, similar concerns arose in my mind. This episode made me wonder about the impact of Hindi films on the channels, where they serve as promotional tool, as well as, music videos, thus adding to the advertisement and revenue of the film. In recent years there has been a rise in demand of Bollywood song and dance DVDs/VCDs; many filmmakers release the song and dance special DVDs/VCDs before the release of the film.

\textsuperscript{7} Chérif Khaznadar is the founder and President of Maison des Cultures du Monde, UNESCO, Paris, which works to safeguard and promote forms of intangible cultural heritage. He is currently the president of the “General Assembly of the Left States Convention for the Safeguard of Intangible Cultural Heritage”, under UNESCO. For more information, see http://www.mcm.asso.fr

\textsuperscript{8} As a bureaucrat with the Government of Bihar, my father Vijoy Kishore worked in the area of preservation of the state's cultural heritage. He also founded the “National Institute for \textit{Chhau} and Folk Dances” (NICFD), a non-governmental organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of folk dance forms from East India, with a special focus on Purulia \textit{Chhau} dance.
traditional Chhau dance form. Why did the Chhau dance audience at the competition want to see Bollywood film style dance and music in a Chhau dance performance? Why weren’t we able to safeguard the traditional form of Chhau dance from these foreign elements? To answer all these questions, I needed to consider some larger issues like the influence of popular culture on folk dance forms, the need for such blatant imitation of Bollywood films and lastly, since the process was already underway, the ways in which foreign elements were being melded into these folk dance forms.

On 20th October 1995, two films were released in India—Yaraana (Friendship, Dir. David Dhawan) and Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (Braveheart Will Take the Bride, Dir. Aditya Chopra). The two films were quite different in style and form—Yaraana was a plagiarised variation on the Hollywood film Sleeping with the Enemy (Dir. Joseph Ruben, 1991) starring Julia Roberts; while, Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (DDLJ) was a family-oriented romantic saga of two young British-based diasporic Indians. Though Yaraana was not a commercial or critical match for DDLJ, the films were similar in one aspect—both used folk dance forms extensively in their song and dance sequences. Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge featured a host of Punjabi folk dance forms like Bhangra and Giddha, which have now become a staple feature in Bollywood films after the phenomenal success of the film. In contrast, Chhau dance was used in a mainstream Bollywood film for the first time in Yaarana, albeit in a cursory, disjointed sequence that lasted for only 50 seconds. The sequence “Jaane Woh Kaisa Chor Tha” (Can't Tell what Sort of a Thief he was!) was a typical Bollywood dance number that used a melange of Western and Indian dance

9 Prior to Yaraana, a couple of films depicted Purulia Chhau; but these were mostly alternative arthouse films without the mass appeal of Bollywood films. Most significant of these films was Mrigayaa (Dir. Mrinal Sen, 1976), a national award winning film, where Chhau was depicted in a traditional form.
movements performed in an eroticised fashion. *Chhau* makes a brief appearance in a segment of the sequence where the oppressed wife, played by the actress Madhuri Dixit, breaks into a *Raudra Tandava*\(^{10}\) to challenge her tyrannical husband. The *Chhau* sequence in the number lasted for 50 seconds, but it left a deep impression on my mind. Although I felt some aversion to the irreverent and disjointed manner in which elements of *Chhau* were mixed with other dance forms, I was pleased that *Chhau* was finally being recognised as a dance form capable of lending its rich repertoire to a Bollywood song and dance sequence.

A topic of discussion that constantly arose in conversations about folk dance forms and Bollywood films among my group members was the rising popularity of Punjabi folk dance forms. They were concerned with why *Chhau* dance hardly seemed to inspire any song and dance sequences in Bollywood films. One member mused that being a masked dance drama based on mythological stories and martial skills, *Chhau* was of less interest to the predominantly romantic song and dance routines of Bollywood films. On the other hand, *Bhangra* and *Giddha* dance forms, with their exuberant dance styles and secular connotations could be readily fused with Western music and used for group dance situations popular in Bollywood films.

It was the culmination of all these observations and experiences—of performing *Chhau* dance locally and internationally, shooting video documentaries on *Chhau* in the villages of West Bengal, watching Bollywood films create hybridised spectacles out of traditional Indian dance forms, witnessing the impact of Bollywood on folk dance forms and discussing these issues with fellow performers—that led me to this area of study. I was constantly questioning the use of folk dance forms in Hindi

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films. Why certain folk dance forms were given more prominence in Bollywood films. How folk dance forms were fused with foreign elements, and the ways in which certain folk dance forms became popular after their glamourised filmic representations. It was my personal connection with Chhau dance—as a student, a performer and a filmmaker—which prompted me to pursue this study of the relationship between folk dance forms and the Bollywood song and dance genre. As Davies (1999, p. 3) contends, “We cannot research something with which we have no contact, from which we are completely isolated. All researchers are to some degree connected to, a part of, the object of their research.” This longstanding personal connection also gave me a host of advantages. My familiarity with the subject meant that I could draw upon my personal experiences and knowledge of the field. My connections with the filmmaking business in India and folk dance practitioners also gave me ease of access to material resources and subjects to be interviewed for the research.
II. Defining Bollywood Cinema and Bollywood Song and Dance Culture

a. Bollywood as a Cultural Arbiter

Indian cinema is one of the oldest film industries in the world. Producing around 1000 films a year; it ranks as the most productive and largest film industry in the world in terms of the net output of films. It is also the second largest film industry in terms of revenue generation, ranking only after the American film industry (Hollywood). Indian cinema\(^{11}\) is composed of the Mumbai-based Hindi film industry and five major regional language film industries\(^{12}\): the Chennai-based Tamil cinema, the Hyderabad-based Telugu cinema, the Bengaluru-based Kannada cinema, the Tirunanthapuram-based Malayalam cinema and the Kolkata-based Bengali cinema (Thoraval 2000).

Around the early 1990s, the neologism “Bollywood”, a variation on the term Hollywood, became attached to mainstream Mumbai-based Hindi cinema. In his article “The Bollywoodisation of the Indian Cinema”, Rajadhyaksha (2008, pp. 23-5) contends, “the term Bollywood has been around most notably in film trade journals—it was probably invented in a slightly jokey self-deprecating way by the journal Screen in Bombay and by its page Bollywood Beat.”\(^{13}\) Hindi cinema and Bollywood are now accepted as interchangeable terms. In my thesis, I shall use the terms to

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\(^{11}\) Apart from these six main regional branches of Indian cinema, there are other minor film industries, based on regional languages that are becoming quite popular too. (E.g. Bhojpuri cinema, Haryanvi cinema, Punjabi Cinema, Assamese cinema, Manipuri Cinema). See Thoraval (2000).

\(^{12}\) Here I am mentioning only the main Indian regional language film industries/centres in terms of number of films produced per year. There are various other regional language film industries as well in India, such as, Bhojpuri, Assamese, Oriya, and Punjabi etc.

\(^{13}\) While delivering a public lecture on “The Business of Culture: How Bollywood made India Global” at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Professor Lord Meghnad Desai argued that Bollywood was no longer a term that could be used jokingly for Hindi cinema. Desai chose to describe Bollywood as the international brand image for Hindi cinema and promoted the use of the term as a serious official name. Although many Bollywood filmmakers and actors (like Amitabh Bachchan, Ajay Devgan, Subhash Ghai, Robin Bhatt, Saurabh Narang, Rohit Shetty, among others) refuse to call Hindi Cinema “Bollywood”, even these opponents of the term do not deny the currency that “Bollywood” has gained in recent years (Dudrah 2006, Gopal and Moorti 2008).
highlight specific meanings. I shall use the term “Bollywood” to refer to the Hindi film industry. I will make a more selective use of the term “Hindi cinema” to refer to the period before the 1990s when the term Bollywood was not yet coined.

The most important style of filmmaking in Bollywood cinema is indisputably the *Masala* (spicy) film. As Tyrrell (1999, p. 269) notes:

> The formula for Bollywood films has been jokingly summarised as ‘A star, six songs, three dances’, and these omnibus or *Masala* films must have the right mix of a diverse range of ingredients to satisfy their audiences. Without them a film lacks in entertainment value.

Not only is Bollywood cinema the most recognised form of Indian cinema in the world, it has also played an important role in shaping pan-Indian cinema and in forming a national film culture. Noting its importance in film culture, Virdi (2003, pp. 3-10) says that Bollywood cinema has had an all-pervasive influence in India, embraced by all linguistic regions and emulated by different regional cinemas. Apart from a few strands of alternative art house cinema, mainstream films from different regional cinemas more or less follow the format of typical Bollywood *masala* films by including multiple song and dance sequences.

Further, noting its impact on popular culture, Virdi (2003, pp. 31-32) states that the consumption of Bollywood films has consistently grown over the decades, with their “viewership in non-western cultures and among the Indian audience” on a trajectory of steady growth. Certainly, the popularity of Bollywood cinema has only gone from strength to strength over the decades. In contemporary India, the phenomenal boom in multiplexes and the advent of satellite television has further strengthened the reach of films and film-based programmes. As the Bollywood
filmmaker Aditya Chopra (Ganti 2004, p. 193) argues, “We shouldn’t lose sight of the fact that we are dealing with a country which feeds on Hindi films, which breathes Hindi films, which does take its Hindi films very seriously.”

This insatiable appetite has consolidated Bollywood’s place in the Indian cultural landscape. Noting the tenacious grip of Bollywood's appeal on filmgoers in India, Asha Kasbekar (2006, p. 183) says:

Such is the all pervasive cultural influence of Indian films on the Indian populace that even the mighty machine of Hollywood, which has laid low many national cinemas of the world has been unable to make a dent in the Indian market.

Kasbekar’s point is accurate; Bollywood has not only been able to resist the ubiquitous dominance of Hollywood films, it has also continuously reinvented itself to garner audiences in the global market. The last few years in particular have seen a rapid expansion of the Bollywood film industry beyond national boundaries, as it has reached out to foreign and diasporic Indian audiences. But in spite of the prolific reach of Bollywood cinema across vast sections of the non-Western world, Bollywood's role as a cultural arbiter has only received cursory scholarly attention until the last decade. As Kaur and Sinha (eds. 2005, p. 20) argue:

Whether it be for its sheer spectacles, action stunts, beautiful people, poignant songs, or perhaps the anti-Hollywood stance, Bollywood cinema has left more than a mere mark in cinematic history—but it is a subject that has received scant attention in the existing literature, excepting occasional reflective comments.

Nevertheless, since the late 1990s, there has been significant academic interest in
Bollywood. Scholars like Madhava Prasad, Vijay Mishra, Ravi Vasudevan, Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Rachel Dwyer, Jigna Desai, Anna Morcom and Rajinder Dudrah have explored different aspects of Bollywood cinema—examining their stars, directors, singers, musicians, production methods, global influences, etc. Though these scholars explore the interplay of local and global influences in Bollywood cinema, their works focus on such cultural exchanges in terms of narrative form and style. These writers do not advance any significant conclusions in relation to the issue of the hybridisation of global and local influences in Bollywood song and dance sequences. In spite of the national and global popularity of Bollywood song and dance, it has not been accorded due importance in academic circles (Lal and Nandy 2006, Virdi 2003). Generally perceived as a populist art form with little aesthetic merit, this disdain has also resulted in scholarly disregard for Bollywood song and dance. But such disdain for Bollywood song and dance overlooks important questions related to the broader art form and questions related to its production and consumption. Given its popularity amongst Hindi film audiences across the world, a study of Bollywood song and dance sequences can provide insights into the cross-cultural appeal of this art form. Given its role in shaping the popular national culture of India, a thorough examination of Bollywood song and dance can also throw light on how cultural forms propagated by the mass media can take over the popular imagination.

b. Bollywood Song and Dance: A Culture Industry

When Hindi film song and dance was first introduced in the 1930s, a majority of people belonging to the middle class felt threatened by this new medium and soon dissociated themselves from film song and dance culture, largely rejecting it as a vulgar art form. The association of women from the erstwhile *tawaif* (courtesan)
community with Hindi films of the era, like Jaddanbai (music composer, *Talash-e-Haq*, 1935) and Sitara Devi (singer), deepened this middle class distaste for Hindi film song and dance (Jhala in Gokulsing and Dissanayake, 2008).

The middle class derision of *filmi naatch gaana* (film song and dance) didn’t last for long. By the time India received its independence in 1947, not only had Hindi films managed to lure large audiences into cinema halls, Hindi film music had also made its mark on popular culture throughout South Asia in the form of radio and gramophone records. Examining a similar dynamic at work in the United States, Wagner discusses how an anti-dance sentiment was upstaged by the rising popularity of Hollywood musicals in the 1930s. Wagner (1997, p. 322) contends:

> Movies became accessible to virtually everyone by the 1930s for the cost of twenty-five cents. By 1939, about 65 percent of the country’s population went to the movies at least once a week, a record far beyond the number who could see dancing on stage. Further testimony to the impact of films comes from statistics about popular songs. Formerly, popular music, by definition, had to attain that status via sales of sheet music and records. By the thirties, radio and film made far more intrusions into the American consciousness.

Bollywood music has dominated Indian popular music culture for more than half a century. The Hindi/Urdu songs of Bollywood cinema hold an indisputable position as the musical mainstream in North India and beyond (Kvetko in Gokulsing and Dissanayake 2008, p. 111).

While academic research is beginning to acknowledge Bollywood cinema's importance as a player in global popular culture, the lack of discussion of the role of song and dance constitutes a significant gap in the field. Many generic books on
Bollywood, its history and filmstars have been published. But books that deal exclusively with Bollywood song and dance are largely absent. The book *Bollywood*, an anthology of articles, is the only comprehensive study that “investigates the global reception, circulation and transformation of Bollywood filmigt (film songs) and addresses the semantic, narrative and productive functions performed by the song and dance sequences (eds. Gopal and Moorti 2008, p. 5).” Gopal and Moorti also stress that any discussion of Bollywood and its global appeal cannot elide the importance of song and dance sequences. Through eclectic articles on Bollywood song and dance by some eminent Bollywood scholars like Anna Morcom, Biswarup Sen, Sangeeta Shresthova and Rajinder Dudrah, the anthology traverses such issues as the history of Hindi film songs, their commercial life, global influence, etc.

Anna Morcom’s article “Tapping the Mass Market—The Commercial Life of Hindi film songs” in particular is an important contribution that examines the business of Hindi film songs from the 1930s to the present day, outlining how *Hindi film naatch gaana* (Hindi film song and dance) has played a significant role in shaping the popular culture of India. Morcom (2008, p. 67) points out that during the gramophone record/audiocassette era (from the 1930s to the 1980s), “the commercial success of film songs has always been primarily dependent on the success of the parent film. On the whole, a hit film means hit music and a flop film means flop music.”

Song and dance sequences not only act as important promotional vehicles for films, they also form a large portion of the revenue for the Bollywood film industry. Song and dance has propelled the business of Bollywood films into the arena of the music industry. Bollywood film songs, music and dialogue albums now constitute more than 75 percent of the Indian music industry (Dudrah 2006, p. 182; Dwyer 2002; Ganti 2004 p. 66; Bhattacharya and Mehta 2008, p. 116; Thussu in 2008, p. 98;
This consolidation of Bollywood song and dance as an integral part of the film-watching experience as well as a viable music industry in its own right has had an undeniable impact on the popular culture of India. The popularity of Bollywood song and dance in popular culture has consolidated its position as an integral part of the whole business of filmmaking, sometimes surpassing the importance given to the actual film itself. As Morcom (2008, p. 67) notes, “Today, Bollywood music rights’ sale can fetch more money than the actual cost of the film, and thereby benefiting the film even without having a single screening.” Indeed, the multi-platform link for popular music created by CDs/DVDs, cassettes, magazines, websites, music and entertainment channels has elevated song and dance from being a part of the film to a commercial enterprise in itself, with filmmakers putting as much effort into song and dance sequences as the rest of the film. In fact, it is an accepted practice among Bollywood filmmakers to shoot and edit the song and dance sequences first, before the production of the actual film; the film is then literally constructed around these song and dance sequences.

Bollywood filmmakers’ efforts to promote Hindi/Bollywood song and dance sequence as products, have also delivered dividends beyond local markets. Bollywood song and dance has percolated into the popular music scenes of Hindi film audiences in many non-Western locations around the world. In a constant quest to cement their entry into new territories, Bollywood filmmakers pay special attention towards creating a blend of Indian musical forms with a modernised presentation in an easily circulable popular music format that has universal appeal. Biswarup Sen (2008, p. 85), in his article “The sounds of modernity,” analyses the global ambit of Bollywood song and dance:
Bollywood song is the product of a practice that has been characterized by a radical openness to externalities and a consistent engagement with cultural production elsewhere. This strategy has led to the creation of an astonishingly rich and vibrant art whose aesthetic force derives from its radically heterogeneous nature. Incorporating musical styles from the world over, film songs possesses a structure of feeling that is emphatically transnational. Bollywood song, along with Bollywood film, is thus an art form that not only functions as an expression of Indian modernity but at the same time exceeds the limits of the nation-state and contributes to the making of global culture.

Within the larger context of the increased importance of Bollywood song and dance as a key player in global popular culture, there are many questions that have not yet been asked about the ramifications of its all-pervasive reach, either globally or locally.

This rise of Bollywood song and dance sequences as an important element of contemporary popular culture is a larger issue with which I align my study. But, given my background as a folk performer, I have specifically chosen to examine the relationship between Bollywood song and dance and folk culture in India. Bollywood song and dance sequences recreates rhythms, dance forms and musical structures significantly borrowed from folk music-dance traditions; but questions about processes of re-interpretation and appropriation of folk forms have rarely been raised. On the other hand, even with the ubiquitous presence and commercial success and popularity of Bollywood song and dance, there are very few studies conducted to explore how Indian folk and traditional music and dance are represented in Bollywood films and are subsequently impacted by the films.
III. The Uncharted Relationship between Folk Dance and Bollywood

a. Folk Dance in Hindi/Bollywood Cinema

India’s rich history of performing arts has been an important source of inspiration for Indian films, affecting their narratives, musical scores, dance styles, costumes and sets. There is no doubt that folk dance traditions have been one of the founding influences that have shaped Bollywood dance. Folk theatre forms such as Ramlila, Nautanki and Tamasha have influenced the dramaturgical style of Bollywood, while, folk song-music-dance forms such as Bhangra, Raas Lila, Ghoomar, Bhawai, Garba and Dandiya have lent themselves to the construction of song and dance sequences. Bollywood borrows quite liberally from the innumerable folk dance forms of India in the construction of its song and dance sequences. Drawing inspiration from folk dance forms, Bollywood dance routines sometimes use folk styles in their natural settings, while at other times representing them in a spectacular fashion fused with other dance forms.

Acknowledging the influence of folk and classical music in Bollywood song and dance, Biswarup Sen (2008, p. 89) states:

The field of contemporary Indian music can be said to consist of three major genres—Bollywood, classical and folk. The two latter traditions have played a major role in the making of film music—one need only to think of a song like “Chalte Chalte” (“As I Journeyed” from Pakeezah 1971) or “Chaiyya Chaiyya” (“Shake it” from Dil Se 1998) to realize their importance as sources of style and inspiration.

But halfway through his article Sen gets waylaid by a discussion of the Bollywood
musical innovators responsible for bringing modern elements into the form and mixing Western popular music with Indian elements. He does not go beyond cursory observations about this form of fusion.

A few other notable writings on Bollywood strictly focus on aspects of Bollywood film music. In his book *Hindi Film Song*, musicologist Ashok D. Ranade (2006, pp. 10-124) takes a historical approach to trace the growth of Hindi film songs and their evolution through the decades under different singers, composers and music directors. Ganesh Ananthraman’s *Bollywood Melodies—A History of Hindi Film Song* (2008), follows Ranade’s approach, albeit in a much more simplistic fashion. Ananthraman (2008, pp. 23-100) handpicks a few composers, songwriters and playback singers to create an “anthology” of the stalwarts of Hindi film music, with a brief discussion of their works and an alphabetical index of their famous songs.

A conversation between documentary filmmaker Nasreen Munni Kabeer and renowned scriptwriter, poet and lyricist Javed Akhtar in the book *Talking Songs*, takes a more analytical approach to Bollywood songs to provide some interesting insights into fusion music in Bollywood films. As Akhtar (2005, p. 30-1) remarks,

> It amuses me when I hear people speak of fusion music as though it were something so new, so modern, and so contemporary. In fact, it’s almost as old as Indian film music itself. What were the songs by the past maestros like R.C Boral and Pankaj Mullick—if not fusion?

Akhtar introduces an interesting discussion on issues like the changes in the vocabulary of songs through the decades and the changes in the Hindi film industry brought about the urbanisation of Indian cinemagoers. But Akhtar does not move beyond issues revolving around the construction of songs in Bollywood films and
stays within his comfort zone as a lyricist by only talking about music and lyrics.

In her insightful analysis of songs and their relationship to the narrative themes of Bollywood films in the article “Music Narrative and Meaning in Hindi films”, Morcom (2007, pp. 137-80) astutely examines the role of the fusion of traditional musical forms that Akhtar briefly touches upon. While Morcom lays a tentative base for examining issues underpinning the fusion of traditional Indian forms with Western elements, her focus is restricted to Hindi film songs, to the exclusion of the role of dance in these films.

While Gopal and Moorti’s (eds. 2008) anthology positions itself as a comprehensive study of Bollywood song and dance, none of the articles in the book delve into a sustained discussion of the role of dance in Bollywood films. Morcom's brief analysis of the incorporation of traditional qawwali (a Muslim tradition of music) in some Bollywood songs is the only cursory discussion of the hybridisation of folk forms of dance in creating Bollywood dance. In an interesting digression, Morcom (2007, p. 7) laments the general neglect of Bollywood film songs in academic circles:

Despite the extent of the suffusion of film songs through Indian society and non Indian societies, and their deep roots in Indian culture, film songs are only beginning to be taken seriously at a scholarly level. Most ethnomusicologists have been lovers of folk and ‘high’ art traditions rather than hybrid popular ones. Music scholarship in India has also been concerned with the classical traditions, and film music—as a genre of music that violates its central aesthetic of purity of tradition—has mostly been considered beneath contempt.

Although Morcom is quite right in her assertions regarding the lack of scholarly
attention towards Bollywood film songs, the scholarship on folk music-dance has been equally selective and biased. The study of indigenous Indian art forms has been dominated by elitist classical Indian traditions and “low culture” folk music-dance forms like Chhau, Rasiya and Kalbelia have barely attracted sustained scholarly attention. Even popular folk music-dance forms like Rajasthani Ghoomar, Bhangra and Giddha, which are frequently paraded as the folk culture of India at international festivals, still largely lack the scholarly analysis they deserve.

Ethnomusicologists have hardly touched upon the subject of the cultural exchanges that have occurred between folk dance forms and Bollywood films, a relationship that has produced innumerable trends in Indian popular culture. Perhaps ethnomusicologists have also not touched upon this subject, as it transgresses into grey areas between traditional ethnomusicology, popular culture and media/cinema studies. In my work, I will specifically explore the appropriation of folk dance forms by Bollywood cinema. This subject needs sustained analysis, given the prolific contribution that folk dance forms have made in shaping the genre of Bollywood film song and dance. Although there have been a few studies on the use of Bhangra in Bollywood dance and the recent popularity of this folk form, there has been no credible study that has systematically examined the representation of folk dance forms in Bollywood cinema.

b. Impact of Cinema on Folk Dance

On the other side of this relationship between folk dance forms and Bollywood films, lies the impact of Bollywood song and dance culture on the performance of folk dance forms by traditional practitioners. Hybrid renditions of folk
dances in Bollywood films also permeates popular culture, which in turn, alters folk practitioners' perceptions and performance of their own folk forms. With the seemingly all-pervasive reach of Bollywood cinema on popular culture, folk practitioners are also drawn into its ever-expanding web—both as consumers of the images that Bollywood films propagate, and as performers catering to local audiences immersed in a particular culture.

How has this cultural crossover of modern popular dance forms and hybrid renditions of folk forms from Bollywood films affected traditional folk culture? David’s (2008, pp. 179-199) article “Intimate Neighbours” is a rare exploration of the impact of Bollywood song and dance on folk culture, detailing the impact of Bollywood film music on the folk music of Indonesia. Dangdut music is a genre of folk music recreated from a fusion of traditional Malay tunes with pop music, and is popular amongst lower-class Indonesian people. In addition to elements of Arabic and Western popular music, popular Hindi film songs are the predominant source of inspiration for the fusion music constituting this genre. David (2008, p. 183) notes:

The sense of a deep familiarity with Indian films goes back to the very beginnings of the cinema industry and leisure culture in post independence Indonesia, where Indian films together with dangdut music have been associated with the uneducated urban working classes and the people of kampung (village or slum) and their “backward” (kampungan, “in the style of the kampung”) way of life. Although Bollywood as well as dangdut, as non-traditional mass culture genres, were clearly “modern,” they were perceived as a failed, distorted attempt to be “modern” by uneducated, “backward” people. This “bastard” modernity of Bollywood and dangdut was highly embarrassing to the more educated, Western-oriented elites.
But David also notes that from the late 1990s, a renewed interest in Bollywood films was generated among the Indonesians with the release of *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (*KKHH*) (Dir. Karan Johar) in 1998—a romantic tale of urban, middle class, university-educated youths from India. The urban middle class of Indonesia embraced the new modern look of Bollywood cinema. David (2008, p. 184) says:

> The highly modern and fashionable, yet thoroughly “Indian” and melodramatic, world of films such as *KKHH* might have addressed the deep desires, anxieties, and fantasies of its Indonesian audience, especially the newly emerged urban middle classes who are still searching for a distinct identity as they try to reconcile Western-style consumer modernity with local concerns over family, sexuality, morality, and tradition.

David’s case study emphasizes the growing presence of Bollywood in the global sphere. Bollywood’s popularity is not only limited to Indian diasporic communities but also various other international communities across the world. For example, Raja Gopalan (2008, p. 14) points out the phenomenal popularity of Bollywood films in Russia, whereas Larkin’s (2005, p. 285) study of the Hausa popular culture of Nigeria brings out the impact of Bollywood song and music on *Bandiri* songs.

In a similar fashion, Bollywood song and dance sequences have had a great influence on popular tastes in India. Bollywood film audiences infuse Bollywood song and dance into their everyday life, dancing to them at cultural festivities, family gatherings or religious celebrations. In turn, folk practitioners, like my group of Purulia *Chhau* dancers, both as consumers of such popular culture as well as performers seeking to attract large audiences, incorporate what they perceive as being the attractive elements of Bollywood film songs into their traditional repertoire.
While Bollywood dance has played a role in shaping popular culture in different cultural environments, what is less well known is how Bollywood dance has been emulated and reappropriated by folk practitioners in India. It is quite startling that there has been no scholarly work exploring the impact of Bollywood films on the indigenous cultures of India, especially when most of these traditional folk dance forms are undergoing a period of dramatic metamorphosis, some even facing extinction under the onslaught of popular culture propagated by the mass media. There is a definite need to explore the subject in detail and unpack the ramifications of the impact of Bollywood film culture on folk dance forms in India.

c. A Web of Cultural Flows

Arjun Appadurai (1996, pp. 30-49) postulates five conceptual landscapes—ethnoscape, technoscape, finanscape, mediascape and ideoscape—to set a tentative formulation to help explain the conditions under which contemporary cultural exchanges occur across the globe. In particular, as a media anthropologist, he gives special emphasis to how instantaneous communication facilitated by the mass media has quickened the exchange of information. He argues that the instantaneous flow of ideas and images through mass media constitute “global cultural flows” and how these have impacted people's conception of modernity, imagination, identity and collective experience (Appadurai 1996, p. 37).

The Bollywood film industry with its broad-based appeal to audiences in India and countries across the world is an important node in such a global mediascape and is thoroughly entangled within such a web of “global cultural flows”. Bollywood films are not only affected by trends of popular culture gleaned from across the world,
they also act as a catalyst initiating the flow of ideas and meanings to global audiences who emulate elements from Bollywood films into their own lives. Gayatri Chatterjee's article, “Icons and Events: Reinventing Visual Construction in Cinema In India” (2005, pp. 90-117) on religious iconography captures a similar example of a web of cultural exchanges occurring between traditional religious iconography and Indian cinema. Firstly, she notes the trend in Indian cinema of borrowing iconic images from traditional Indian mythology, paintings and poems of the nineteenth century—like the oft-used imagery of a woman going to a temple and the Radha-Krishna romance.

But she goes on to show how these images of religious iconography were, in fact, a product of heterogeneous cultural influences, such as the influence of the Euro-American aesthetic of the human/divine figure on Indian religious iconography. She cites how Lord Krishna, referred to in Hindu mythologies as the god with “kaala” (dark) skin, was turned into a white god in nineteenth century paintings because of such Euro-American influences.

Finally she talks about how these hybridised gods popularised by Indian cinema suffused themselves into popular religious practice. They were adopted on a mass scale by new rural migrants in urban centres, the melting pot for rural migrants from all over the country. Rural migrants found solace in each other’s Hindu gods and fused their local denominations of gods with these modern nationalised forms popularised by Hindi cinema.

This insightful exploration of cultural flows in Chatterjee's article, albeit in relation to a completely different type of artefact, also reflects the complex relationships between folk dance and Bollywood song and dance. Bollywood is located as a prominent node in a web of local and global, national and transnational
cultural influences, absorbing and generating trends. Bollywood’s two-way relationship with folk dance forms in India is an example of such a circular cultural flow. It appropriates folk forms in its song and dance spectacles, while in turn generating trends and images that affect folk dance forms.

d. Folk Dance in the Age of New Media

From the mid-20th century, Bollywood films have wrought changes on the practice of indigenous folk dance forms that, in my opinion, have both positive and negative implications. The positive impact of Bollywood cinema has been its success in bringing some of these folk dance forms outside of their region or localised context of performance. As a result, they have reached larger audiences, gained respectability and even turned into viable professions. On the other hand, Bollywood film culture also poses a threat to the sanctity of these folk dance forms. Some of these folk dance forms have been subjected to “indiscriminate fusion” in Bollywood song and dance routines, eroding their traditional repertoires. Many folk dance forms with traditional repertoires of religious and ritualistic performance also face the threat of extinction because they are perceived as archaic and provincial in contrast to glamourous Bollywood spectacles.

But no matter what appreciation and criticism Hindi cinema receives about its influence on folk dance forms, the larger issue is the undeniable impact of mass media on folk culture. In his seminal work, Modernity at Large, Arjun Appadurai (1996, p. 3) argues that the electronic media is the prime apparatus governing, shaping and changing popular imagination in contemporary social life:
The electronic media decisively change the wider field of mass media and other traditional media. Such media transforms the field of mass mediation because they offer new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds.

While this comment about the role of media in shaping the flow of ideas may seem quite banal or generalist, Appadurai’s argument about the structure of social imagination being changed by mass media is an interesting insight with significant ramifications. In the post-electronic world, imagination plays an active role in the everyday life of people. Subsumed by the deluge of images and myths from mass media, people engage in a sensory exchange with media images on a daily basis—sometimes emulating those images, sometimes resisting them. Appadurai (1996, pp. 4-11) elaborates his argument about the primacy of imagination through three distinctions: the distinction between imagination in a pre and post-mass media world; the distinction between imagination and fantasy; and the distinction between individual and collective ideas of the imagination.

As part of his first “distinction”, Appadurai (1996, pp. 4-11) contends that imagination was relegated to very limited spaces of social life, like art and ritual, in a pre-mass media world. However in a world where people's everyday experience is suffused with stories, images and aspirations generated by the mass media, imagination has become a part of quotidian everyday life. In addition, Appadurai (1996, p. 5) states, “Imagination has broken out of the special expressive space of art. Myth and ritual and has now become a part of the quotidian mental work of ordinary people in many societies”. Secondly, Appadurai finds that imagination has pervaded social life as a force capable of shaping it:
The idea of fantasy carries with it the inescapable connotation of thought divorced from projects and actions, and it also has a private, even individualistic sound about it. The imagination, on the other hand, has a projective sense about it, the sense of being a prelude to some sort of expression; whether aesthetic or otherwise. Fantasy can dissipate (because its logic is so often auto telic), but the imagination, especially when collective can become the fuel for action.

Thirdly, Appadurai borrows from political scientist Benedict Anderson’s (1991, pp. 113-40) conceptions of the role of the print media in creating national consciousness amongst physically dispersed people through the creation of a sense of “imagined community”. Expanding further on this Andersonian idea to talk about the medium of electronic media, and moving beyond Anderson's explicitly political concept of the imagined community, Appadurai (1996, p. 8) chooses to see the structure of “imagination” broadly in social life in the post-electronic:

Part of what the mass media make possible, because of the condition of collective reading, criticism, and pleasure, is what I have elsewhere called a “community of sentiment”, a group that begins to imagine and feel things together.

Through these distinctions, Appadurai positions imagination as the mental work that is now part of everyday life, as it underlies our actions as a potent force and urges us to find some solidified expression of our being in a “community of sentiment”. With such an understanding of the role of imagination engendered by the mass media, we can also understand how folk dance traditions are affected by Bollywood dance in this larger media/cultural dynamic.

As the dominant force in shaping popular culture in modern India, the
Bollywood film industry is instrumental in establishing new trends, images and role models in popular imagination. The mass immersion in Bollywood culture is reflective of the severance of social imagination from the grounded localised contexts into the de-contextualised stage of mediated images. Under the sway of modernity and popular culture propagated by Hindi films, folk dance forms are increasingly losing their hold on the imagination of the people they previously held through the space of ritualistic communion.

Over the years, cinema has been able to fuel the imagination of the people by creating myths, stars, fans, trends, styles, legends and icons. Bollywood song and dance spectacles recreate myths and images that audiences engage with within their everyday life and emulate to consolidate personal identity. This reveals the second “distinction” of imagination in the age of mass media, which makes the imaginary ideals of films a potent force capable of shaping social life.

Audiences infuse Bollywood song and dance into their everyday life, dancing and listening to them at cultural festivities, familial or religious celebrations to create a “community of sentiment” that supersedes the role of ritual communion in traditional practices like folk dance. In turn, folk practitioners, both as consumers of such popular culture, as well as performers seeking to attract these audiences, incorporate what they perceive as the attractive elements of film songs and dance into their traditional repertoire.
IV. Research Methodology

As I mentioned earlier, there are only a handful of scholarly works published on Bollywood film song and dance, and there is virtually no research on the relationship between folk dance forms and Bollywood cinema. While this gap accords my study significance in terms of its contribution to the field, it was therefore also quite a daunting task to work out an appropriate framework for my study.

Realising that the research problem surrounding the relationship between folk dance forms and Bollywood cinema stems from a long tradition of the appropriation of folk dance forms in Hindi Cinema (which in turn generates new trends affecting traditional practitioners) I decided to keep my focus on this issue when designing my primary research question:

1. How are Indian folk dance forms represented in the song and dance sequences of contemporary Bollywood cinema?

In the process of seeking answers to this primary question, I will also be addressing some allied questions that accompany the research problem about the relationship between folk dance forms and Bollywood song and dance sequences.

2. How have larger socio-cultural contexts shaped the representation of folk-dance forms in Bollywood cinema’s song and dance sequences?

3. How have Bollywood cinema’s song and dance sequences affected the “actual” performance of folk dance forms?

4. How do folk practitioners negotiate and incorporate these elements of Bollywood song and dance sequences into their practice?

While the base of my findings is built around the primary question about the
representation of folk dance forms in Bollywood cinema, it was also apparent that my study would have to explore the relationship between folk dance forms and Hindi film song and dance in a two-fold fashion. The first part of the study explores issues pertaining to the main research problem about the representation of folk dance forms in Hindi films and factors shaping their mode of hybridisation. The second part highlights how Bollywood song and dance and its “folk fusions” are appropriated by traditional folk practitioners.

The first part of the thesis involves a systematic analysis of the representation of folk dance forms in Hindi film song and dance sequences. I have chosen a prominent production house called Yash Raj Films (YRF)—renowned for its song and dance sequences and its appropriation of folk dance forms over the decades—as a case study for examining this subject. I have selected some landmark YRF song and dance numbers produced over different time periods to explore issues relating to the representation of folk dance forms in each era and the larger socio-cultural factors that have shaped the form in which they were presented.

The second part of the thesis explores the impact of Bollywood song and dance on folk dance forms practiced by traditional performers. The two folk dance forms that I have chosen as case studies—Bhangra and Chhau dance—are used to highlight the transformation of folk dance traditions under the influence of Bollywood popular culture. Bhangra dance has gained national recognition through its patronage in popular culture by the relatively wealthy state of Punjab and the large diasporic Punjabi community in the West; whereas, Chhau dance, belonging to one of the poorest districts in the state of West Bengal, remains marginalised as the art form of the poor, low caste tribal people of the region.
a. The Changing Face of Folk Dance in YRF Films

When I decided to make a documentary film in 2005, it didn’t take long for me to realise that it was the issue of the representation of Indian folk dance forms in Bollywood song and dance sequences that I wanted to investigate. The use of folk dance forms in Bollywood, their fusion with other dance forms and their spectacular renditions on screen are markedly different from the original form of these folk dances.

In the first part of the thesis, my investigation into the representation of folk dance forms in YRF’s song and dance sequences seeks to highlight the diverse ways in which elements of folk dance are appropriated on screen. Furthermore, this is also a study of the politics of representation—why certain folk dance forms are given importance and what socio-cultural contexts shape the aesthetic mode in which different folk dance forms are utilised in those films: Six landmark song and dance sequences from YRF which have been chosen as examples and subjected to close textual analysis to highlight these issues pertaining to the representation of folk dance forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the Film</th>
<th>Director/Year of Production</th>
<th>Title of the Song and dance Sequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kaala Patthar (Black Stone)</td>
<td>Yash Chopra, 1979</td>
<td>Dhoom Mache Dhoom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silsila (The Affair)</td>
<td>Yash Chopra, 1981</td>
<td>Rang Barse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamhe (Moments)</td>
<td>Yash Chopra, 1991</td>
<td>Megha Re Megha</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
\[\begin{array}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
\text{Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge} & \text{Aditya Chopra,} & \text{Ghar Aaja} \\
(\text{Braveheart will Take the Bride}) & 1995 &  \\
\hline
\text{Veer Zaara} & \text{Yash Chopra, 2004} & \text{Lodi} \\
\hline
\text{Tashan (Attitude)} & \text{Vijay Krishna Acharya, 2008} & \text{Dil Dance Maare} \\
\hline
\end{array}\]

\textbf{b. Reading Bollywood Song and Dance Sequences: Why Textual Analysis?}

Cinema is one of the most influential forms of mass media in the modern world, therefore, it is critical to study cinema’s form, style and content, as well as, cinema’s representation of various things (such as people, place, music, song and dance, etc.) to analyze cinema and its impact on the society and culture. As McKee (2003, p. 1) argues:

\begin{quote}
We interpret texts (films, television programmes, magazines, advertisements, clothes, graffiti, and so on) in order to try and obtain a sense of the ways in which, in particular cultures at particular times, people make sense of the world around them. And, importantly, by seeing the variety of ways in which it is possible to interpret reality, we also understand our own cultures better because we can start to see the limitations and advantages of our own sense making practices.
\end{quote}

Therefore, to help study the representation of Indian folk dance forms, I utilise textual analysis to closely examine how Indian folk forms are utilised by Bollywood cinema, how they are hybridised and bastardised with other dance forms to create new
meanings and forms.

Similarly, Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009, p. 210) also suggest, “Textual analysis involves the identification and interpretation of a set of verbal or non-verbal signs. Everything that you encounter, from clothing to books to food to architecture is a sign.” To derive meaning from a particular object, one interprets the set of qualities and properties that one believes are “attached” to the object.

As the object is subjected to a process of reading, it is obvious that the meanings generated in the process are a result of the interpretative skills and subjective perspectives, of the particular reader. While discussing the role of the researcher in textual analysis, Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009, p. 211) argue:

The researcher is the interpreter of the selected text or texts. According to the assumptions of textual analysis, there are an infinite number of possible interpretations of any given text and each interpretation is equally valid to the extent that it reflects the meanings attributed to the text by the interpreter. The researcher’s interpretation is, therefore, only one of many possible valid interpretations of a given text. In textual analysis, the researcher seldom seeks the interpretation of others; the researcher’s own interpretation is salient.

According to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009, p. 211), there are three broad types of textual analysis: the rhetorical perspective, the critical studies perspective and the Discourse analysis perspective. While the mode of rhetorical analysis deals with the aspects of “persuasion and influence”, the critical studies perspective sees the text as “a site of power struggle” and Discourse analysis as “the site for the creation of meaning” (Vanderstoep and Johnston 2009, p. 213). This study will utilise all three
modes of textual analysis; but most significantly, it will adopt the mode of Discourse analysis to see how the meanings of folk dance are constructed in the process of their appropriation in Hindi film song and dance sequences. I shall look at the combination of lyrics, music, song and dance used in specific sequences, and their placement in the narrative of the film, to examine the context of the use of folk dance forms. Against this backdrop of the larger meaning of song and dance, I shall scrutinise the reasons for appropriating specific folk dance forms and choreographic techniques. Such broad-based approaches will foreground issues regarding the cultural politics of the appropriation of folk dance forms within the larger socio-cultural contexts the films circulate within.

c. Beyond Text: Why Qualitative Analysis?

As I started planning my thesis, I realised that working on this topic required an extensive research-based study that would involve the close reading of films alongside discussions with filmmakers, musicians and performing artists. While textual analysis provided an opportunity to understand and analyze the song and dance sequence comprehensively, I required the point of view of film professionals, such as film directors, producers and film choreographers, to understand how and why folk dance forms are appropriated, as well as the processes of construction of song and dance sequences. The view of film actors and dancers who performed on screen was essential to understanding what they thought of the various folk dance forms their work utilised. In addition, I also needed the first-hand accounts of folk dance performers regarding their views on Bollywood song and dance sequences and how they impacted on them, as well as, the folk dance forms they practiced. Attaining
the views of various film professionals and folk performers became essential for my study due to the small quantity of existing scholarly material. As Norman Fairclough (2003, p. 15) argues textual analysis on its own is quite a limited research method. It can prove most useful in combination with other analytical research methods. Consequently, I realised that utilising other qualitative methods such as interviews and discussions would complement the textual analyses of selected YRF song and dance sequences.

I have used disparate sources (books, magazines, articles, films, DVDs and internet sources) throughout this thesis, along with first-hand interviews and discussions with different respondents. I used interviews and questionnaires to gain first-hand opinions from people in the Bollywood film industry (directors, producers, dance directors/choreographers, music directors, and actors), as well as folk dance performers (dancers, musicians, and singers).

The interviews I conducted were based on different sets of questionnaires that were directed to the six sets of professionals involved in the process of the construction of song and dance sequences—film directors, actors, dance directors/choreographers, cinematographers, musicians and dancers. Most of the interviews were conducted personally and recorded on video; while a few were conducted over the telephone or through email. I conducted personal interviews with: Kunal Kohli (director), Onir (director), Bunty Walia (film producer), Leena Yadav (Director), Manoj Bajpayee (Actor), Longinus (Choreographer), Remo D’Souza (Choreographer), Anant Mahadevan (Director/Actor), Aseem Bajaj (Cinematographer), Bashdhar Acharya (Chhau Dancer, Seraikela Style), Lalit Mahato (Chhau Dancer, Purulia Style), Ganesh (Chhau Musician, Purulia Style), Sharon Lowen (Odissi and Chhau Danseuse), Gurjit Singh (Bhangra Dancer), Ritu Sharma
(Bhangra researcher) and Sonu (Bhangra Dancer/Group Manager), amongst others.

The story and approach of my research also evolved over time, as my initial curiosity about the threat posed to traditional folk dance forms by Bollywood song and dance culture grew to a more focussed approach seeking to unravel the relationship between these two cultural entities. Beginning with broad questions in the initial stage, I progressed to a more streamlined approach during the period of data-collection; the various steps revealed the inductive nature of such a qualitative research endeavour. As Buddenbaum and Novak (2001, p. 15) observe:

The proponents of the inductive approach, and especially those who argue for naturalistic inquiry, more often argue that qualitative research is better because evidence presented in a narrative form lets people “see” and “hear” the evidence and draw their own conclusions about its quality and relevance.

Thus, adopting a process of qualitative research I moved through these different stages of inductive reasoning to collate my findings into a cohesive pattern and form. Proceeding from the initial stage of gathering data to the process of prolonged reflection and analysis, all these qualitative methods added significantly to the study. As Denzin and Lincoln (eds. 2005, p. 3) contend:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to
make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them.

By examining a select body of samples that could be subjected to a coherent process of in-depth research enabled a thorough examination of the issues regarding the politics of representation of folk dance forms in Hindi films and the fusion of elements of folk dance with other dance forms.

d. **Analysing Reverse Cultural Flow: The Impact of Bollywood on Folk Dance**

In the second part of this study, I will examine the impact of Bollywood song and dance on traditional folk dance forms. I will explore how elements of Bollywood cinema appropriated in the traditional folk dance performance—transforming their style, choreography, musical instrumentation, songs, costumes and performative circumstances. Two folk dance forms were selected to explore these issues—*Bhangra* dance from the North Indian state of Punjab and Punjabi *Chhau* dance from the East Indian state of West Bengal.

From the early 1990s, *Bhangra* has become the most widely utilised folk dance form in Bollywood cinema. Widely played on radio, music channels, nightclubs and social events across India, Bollywoodised *Bhangra* has become so popular that the folk dance form has moved out from its regional domain to become part of a “national” popular culture. On the other hand, Purulia *Chhau* dance, a martial, ritualistic folk dance form from Eastern India, has only made occasional appearances in the local Kolkata-based Bengali cinema. This marginalisation of the folk form in popular culture has affected Purulia *Chhau*. It is either practiced with
almost complete disregard for traditional norms in grassroots performances or in an ossified form catering to the demands for an authentic traditional form within elite folk festival circuits.

However, in spite of the stark contrasts in the fate of these two dance forms, or perhaps because of those very differences, my analysis of Purulia Chhau and Bhangra act as comparative case studies that foreground the magnitude and diversity of the impact of Bollywood culture on folk dance practices. The study of both these dance forms provided me with two contrasting examples of how trends generated by Bollywood popular culture have affected the production, distribution, consumption, reception and demand for folk dance forms. While Bhangra has a ubiquitous presence all over India and has even attained the status of a global dance form, Purulia Chhau dance has not even managed to move out from the remote villages of Eastern India. Threatened by its own popularity, contemporary Bhangra, as the most hybridised form of Indian folk dance, is almost unrecognisable from its original form. In contrast, Purulia Chhau has become even more marginalised, as performers and audiences alike deliberately eschew its traditional norms and forms of performance for Bollywood-style dance.

e. Getting Involved—Reflexive Ethnography

I made six field trips to India (each lasting approximately three months), between 2006 and 2009, conducting interviews and recording dance performances. A considerable amount of time was spent in Delhi and Mumbai, interviewing filmmakers and choreographers, and witnessing the filming of song and dance sequences in Bollywood studios. A significant amount of time was spent in the
villages of West Bengal and Punjab in discussion with folk dance performers and observing of folk dance forms in their original settings.

I have used “reflexive ethnography” to analyse my second question about the impact of Bollywood song and dance sequences on folk dance forms. Reflexive ethnography enabled me to use my own experiences as a Purulia Chhau dance performer and filmmaker in my research. As Davies (1999, p. 7) observes:

> In its most transparent guise, reflexivity expresses researchers’ awareness of their necessary connection to the research situation and hence their effects upon it. This has often been conceived in terms of the subjectivity of the researcher, with attempts being made, especially from positivist orientation, to ensure objectivity.

Reflexivity is a noteworthy element of social science, where researchers make agreements, negotiate, and gain access to engage in public performances (eds. Bromley and Carter 2001, pp. 27-35). The use of reflexivity allowed me to bring my experiences as a folk performer and filmmaker into the research process. My longstanding association with Purulia Chhau dance and my subsequent anxiety about the impact of Bollywood film culture on this dance form fuelled my approach. Having a firm grounding in folk dance forms as a trained performer and a wide knowledge of Bollywood song and dance as an avid fan, it was very easy for me to recognise the influence of folk dances on Bollywood song and dance sequences and the impact of Bollywood song and dance elements on both Purulia Chhau and Bhangra performances.

Making use of my filmmaking experience, I also employed videography as a tool to record interviews and dance performances. The use of digital technologies like videography and still photography for data collection and reportage has become a key
part of the method of digital ethnography, also known as “hypermedia ethnography” (Haviland et al. 2007, pp. 62-67; Fetterman 2009). This method provided me with a tangible source of research material in the form of recorded videos I could use to help build my analysis.

f. Different Situations, Different Means—Direct Observation and Participant Observation

When gathering ethnographic data, a researcher usually has to involve himself/herself in the work, culture and lives of the people being studied (Aunger 2004, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Madison 2005). The researcher may involve themselves with the people being studied in a subtle or a forthright manner, according to their own personal predilections and the requirements of the study. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009, p. 238) argue that the final research outcomes are reliant on the relationship the researcher establishes with the group they are studying:

If the researcher has natural membership in the group, this is called full immersion. If the researcher interacts with the group as a researcher, this is called artificial immersion. With full immersion, the advantage is connection and rapport. Conversely, with artificial immersion, the advantage is some degree of objective separation or distance.

While analysing the filming of Bollywood song and dance sequences and performances of Bhangra dance, I maintained a distance from the groups I was observing, thereby assuming a position of artificial immersion. On the other hand, in my time observing and interacting with Chhau dancers, my position could be
categorised as one of full immersion; because I interacted with them as a part of the larger group, as I shared my personal affiliations with the region, the people and the dance form.

These different ways of immersion also define the researcher’s mode of observation too. Therefore, as a researcher participating in Bhangra influenced Bollywood song dance sequences in a mode of artificial immersion, I became a direct observer. Whereas, with regards to Purulia Chhau dance, my involvement was of a direct as well as a participant observer.

While discussing the benefits of employing this method of direct observation, Kothari (2004, p. 96) notes, “under the observation method, the information is sought by way of the investigator’s own direct observation without asking from the respondent.” However, Kothari (ibid.) also argues that direct observation may also result in “limited information”. Nevertheless, to my knowledge the only issue of limited information I faced was the refusal of some Bollywood filmmakers to allow me to videograph their song and dance sequences.

Approaching Purulia Chhau dancers as a member of the group, in a mode of full immersion, I took the position of a participant observer. Stake finds participant observation to be an active form of observation where the researcher involves himself in the group and participates in its activities to look for answers (2010, p. 94). But Murchison (2010, pp. 86-7) defines participant observation in the following words:

The method of participant observation seeks to combine the seemingly contradictory stances of participation and observation. By adopting this method, you seek an approach that capitalizes on the positives of each stance and allows you to position yourself so that you can look at the big picture and ask comparative, analytical questions while also drawing on first hand experience and understanding.
In addition to observation, interviews, both structured as well as interactive, were employed to gather information. On most occasions, I prepared standardised interview questions that were generically constructed for each target group, and that would hopefully ensure a degree of objectivity in the outcomes and impose minimal intervention during the sessions. But in certain cases, interviews conducted with folk dancers and choreographers in particular, were more interactive in nature.

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2008, p. 293) define interactive interviews as “a conversation in which the researcher and the research participants engage in joint sense making and emergent understanding by mutual disclosure, sharing personal feelings and social experiences with each other.” Employing interactive interviews helped to produce an air of informal camaraderie between the respondents and me and facilitated conversation. Discussions over a cup of tea or a meal proved to be quite beneficial to break the barrier of formality, especially with the village performers of Jharkhand and West Bengal who were a little hesitant to speak their mind initially. Once we eased into a conversational mode they moved beyond their monosyllabic “yes” or “no” answers, speaking out about their views on their dance practice and experience as performers.

In total, I spent around one month in Mumbai directly observing the filming of song and dance sequences, and interviewing filmmakers and other people associated with song and dance construction. In the case of the Bhangra dance of Punjab, I spent a month as a direct observer of various performances held in New Delhi and Chandigarh. I had already spent time studying Chhau dance when I was working on my first documentary film “Dance of Gods” in 2003. I spent another month there on fieldwork as part of this research in 2008.
Overall, employing these methods of interpretative textual analysis, reflexive ethnography, participant observation and interviews proved as a useful and productive combination in this qualitative research study. Reading film song and dance sequences, observing the impact on folk dance performances, and discussing those issues with the people involved, gave me insights into the many aspects of the relationship between folk dance forms and Bollywood dance in India.

My investigation on how Bollywood represents Indian folk dance forms in its song and dance sequences, and the elements that play an important role in the construction of song and dance sequence in Bollywood cinema, is not simply an analysis of song and dance sequences and dance choreography, but is a study of the politics of representation underlying the use of folk dance elements in the construction of song and dance sequences. It also asks why certain folk dance forms are preferred over others in Hindi film song and dance. And, by analysing the impact of Bollywood song and dance on the actual folk dance forms, I seek to ascertain how Bollywood culture has permeated the field of folk dance practice in India and show the ramifications of this phenomenon through the two case studies of Bhangra and Chhau dance.
Chapter 2

The Role of Indian Folk Dance Forms in Bollywood Song and Dance Sequences

The song and dance sequences in Bollywood cinema have been predominantly used to provide spectacle and entertainment. As a result of this, the spectacle and entertainment oriented song and dance sequences in Bollywood films have developed as a hybrid form, borrowing heavily from Indian folk and classic traditions and various other song and dance cultures from all over the world, significantly Western (specifically American) popular song and dance culture. For example, the song and dance sequence, “Jaan-e-Wafa”, from the 1962 film Dil Tera Diwana (Dir. Nasir Hussain) was divided into three different segments that utilised flamenco dance, folk dance from Uzbekistan, and a mix of Indian classical dance forms such as Bharatanatyam and Kathak. Whereas, the song and dance “Bade Hai Dil Ke Kaale” from Dil Deke Dekho (Dir. B.R Panthulu 1959) utilised folk and tribal dances from the Indian state of West Bengal and Nagaland, as well as Western dance forms like rock ‘n’ roll and swing.

As one of the most important aesthetic elements shaping Bollywood song and dance, folk dance traditions have been subjected to varying degrees of hybridisation and appropriated to different ends over the years. On the hybrid legacy of Hindi film song and dance, Roy (2010, p. 36) comments:

While Bollywood music is usually regarded as an independent category of Indian
music that has formed the emotional imaginary of the nation, it does not belong to any particular region. ‘National popular music’ is produced through Bollywood music directors’ cannibalization of national classical and popular region folk music and dance over the years. ‘Bambaiya’ folk traditions, deterritorialised and decontextualised, have always been made to perform rustic exotica for the imagined urban viewer of Hindi cinema.

The relationship of folk forms to Bollywood song and dance is a much-neglected area of study that has not been pursued in detail by Bollywood experts or ethnomusicologists studying indigenous Indian dance traditions. Throughout this chapter, I will draw insights from some of the existing scholarly work along side first-hand interviews I have conducted with a few Bollywood film directors and choreographers.

Firstly, in order to understand the role of song and dance in Bollywood cinema, I will touch upon such fundamental issues relating to Bollywood song and dance cultures as: the typical format of the Bollywood film (with its multiple song and dance sequences), how Bollywood films compare with the genre of the Hollywood musical; the relationship of song and dance to the narrative of Bollywood films, and the choreographic and musical elements which characterise Bollywood song and dance. Secondly, I will briefly trace the history of song and dance in Bollywood films in order to show that filmmakers from the 1970s onwards resorted to the prolific hybridisation of indigenous Indian and global dance elements. Having established this historical context, I will argue that as a result of these experiments in hybridisation, and through the specularisation of song and dance sequences, folk dance forms used in Bollywood song and dance also became increasingly detached from their traditional contexts and norms of performance. Thus, I will highlight the
need to investigate the subject of representation of folk dance forms in Hindi films from the 1970s onwards in order to trace those changes and understand how folk dance forms are appropriated and recreated within the creation of hybrid Bollywood song and dance sequences.

I. Defining Bollywood Song and Dance Sequences

Gokulsing and Dissanayake (2004, p. 19) argue that classical Sanskrit theatre, “highly spectacular dance-dramas”, significantly influenced Indian classical and folk theatre, and subsequently Indian films. Barma (2004, p. 259), while looking at the historical context of the use of folk songs in folk drama, finds that rural festivals were instrumental in giving rise to the integration of song, dance and music into the storytelling mode:

To present various dialogues through song, dance and theatre, it was naturally necessary to compose folk music and suitable dance movements to complement the music. It was to meet this necessity that the tradition of folk songs began. The introduction of dance movements and simplistic acting followed it.

The traditional folk theatres of India like Ram Lila, Tamasha and Jatra have a long history of utilising song, music and dance in various ways; sometimes as an interruption to the story to highlight a specific act. For example, in Ram Lila, song and dance sequences in praise of the virtuous Lord Rama are employed between the narrative sequences. Song and dance are also utilised in folk theatre to move the narrative forward. For example in the Jatra performance of “Mahisasur-Mardini” (the
killing of demon Mahisasur), song and dance is used to depict the story of Mahisasur’s misdeeds and the power and strength of the goddess Durga.

Gokulsing and Dissanayake (2004, p. 19) also agree that folk forms have immensely influenced Hindi cinema. They emphasise that “in the use of song and dance, humour, the structure of narrative, the informing melodramatic imagination, these folk plays had far reaching impact on the sensibility of Indian popular filmmakers.” In addition, various scholars like Mishra (2002), Dwyer (2002), Gopal and Moorti (eds. 2008), and Gokulsing and Dissanayake, point out that Parsi theatre played an important role in influencing Indian cinema, particularly for the manner in which it employed song and dance sequences. As Gokulsing and Dissanayake (2004, p. 19) argue, “the Parsi theatre, with its lilting songs, bawdy humour, bon mots, sensationalism and dazzling stagecraft was designed to appeal to the broad mass of people.” While, Harvie (2005, p. 161) finds that the Parsi theatre was also very much influenced by British theatre and therefore, more open to the use of Western elements.

With the coming of cinema to India, most of the people engaged in the production of Parsi theatre moved on to film production (such as J F Madan of the New Theatre, Adhesir M Irani, owner of the Imperial Company and producer of the first Indian talkie (Alam Ara 1931), B. Wadia and Homi Wadia of Wadia Movietone, and the renowned actor Sohrab Modi). These filmmakers brought many Parsi and Western theatrical elements into Hindi films. For example, Alam Ara had seven song and dance sequences and pioneers the use of music, song and dance in Indian Cinema.

Though Hindi films utilised song and dance sequences in a different fashion to Hollywood musicals, they were nevertheless, significantly influenced by Hollywood musicals. Many Indian filmmakers employed song and dance sequences that were inspired by Hollywood musicals, and at times imitated and indigenised/Indianised
these Hollywood sources (eds. Gopal and Moorti 2008). Bollywood filmmakers Onir and Saurabh Narang (pers. comm., July 12, 2008) point out that *My Fair Lady* (1964) was the inspiration behind the 1980 Hindi film *Man Pasand* directed by Basu Chatterji, whereas, *The Sound of Music* (1965) inspired Gulzar to make *Parichay* (1972) in an Indianised manner. Certainly, Hollywood musicals played an important part in providing Hindi filmmakers with a significant way of approaching the construction of song and dance sequences. But was this utilisation of song and dance sequences in Hindi films, making Hindi films fall into the musical category?

**a. Bollywood Film and the Musical**

Almost 85 percent of the films released in India between 1926 and 1927 were foreign films, most of which were produced in Hollywood. This dominance of American cinema during this time was more due to their technological superiority and the introduction of sound in films in 1927. India had to wait till 1931 for its first sound film—Alam Ara. With the introduction of talkies in India, Producers began to rise to the need and demand for Hindi language films with themes relevant to Indian life (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, 1980). Growing opportunities in the Hindi film industry also attracted many Indian filmmakers working in the United States and the United Kingdom, who moved to Bombay, the hub of Hindi film industry (Raheja and Kothari, 2004).

The early Hollywood musicals, such as *The Jazz Singer* (1927), *Lights of New York* (1928), *The Broadway Melody* (1929) and *The Desert Song* (1929) ignited the imagination of Indian filmmakers during these formative years of the Indian talkies (Thoraval, 2000). The very first talkie produced in India, *Alam Ara* was inspired by

From these earlier years of the Hindi talkies, song and dance sequences have been essential elements of Hindi films. One of the prime reasons for the usage of song and dance sequences in Hindi films, no matter the genre the film belonged to, was the packaging of most of Hindi films as a complete entertainment form, which providing drama, action, romance, suspense and song and dance. As Dudrah (2006, p. 25) states, “early scholarly studies in India […] considered it [Hindi Cinema] to be an escapist fantasy for a mass audience.” Though Dudrah moves on to suggest that Bollywood films, especially after the 1950s, have moved from simply being escapist fantasies to address many social issues and concerns. Nevertheless, the 1930s and 1940s escapist cinema was instrumental in not only popularising song and dance sequences, but also cementing their role as an indispensable aspect of Hindi films. But these songs also flourished as independent commercial products that brought additional revenue. Therefore, many film producers utilised song and dance sequences (especially songs) as a guarantee of attaining additional revenue (Ganti 2004, p. 177; Morcom 2007, p. 208).

Given the origins of Hindi talkies, there has been much debate about whether mainstream Hindi films, with their multiple song and dance sequences, should all be categorised as musicals; and if not, in what ways they differ from Hollywood musicals. In order to examine this issue, it is important to understand how song and dance sequences operate in Hindi films.
In contrast to Hollywood films, where musicals constitute a distinct genre among many others, there is a trans-generic use of song and dance across the spectrum of mainstream Hindi films, whatever their narrative orientation. Unlike Hollywood musicals where actors either use their own voices, or songs are just played in the background, actors in Hindi films lip-synch to songs that have been pre-recorded with the voice of playback singers (this occurs much less in Hollywood films). As Morcom (2007, p. 2) notes, “songs must be ‘sung’ diegetically by the characters in Hindi films rather than played in the background score, which is the norm for Hollywood films since the 1960s.”

According to Gokulsing and Dissanayake (2004, pp. 20-28), the fundamental distinction between Hindi films with their typical song and dance routines and the genre of Hollywood musicals, is that song and dance in Hindi films is not introduced as a separate element in the overall narrative of the film, but is a continuation of the enactment of the story by the actors: “The plot was not used to heal the split between narrative and spectacle. Instead, song and dance sequences were and are used as natural expressions of emotions and situations emerging from everyday life” (Gokulsing and Dissanayake 2004, p. 23). The introduction of a song and dance sequence at any point in the narrative is not seen as an event separate from the story, but very much a part of the storytelling process.

This insight raises the question about why such importance is accorded to song and dance in the storytelling process of Hindi films. Langford (2005, p. 100) has claimed that this may perhaps be explained by the fundamental differences in conceptions of realism and dramatic convention between Hollywood and Hindi films:

The conventions of musical integration in Hindi cinema are fundamentally different,
operating not at the sub-generic level (i.e. the distinction between the [Busby] Berkeley and [Arthur] Freed musical) but in a trans-generic manner: musical performance is an accepted dramatic convention in a *Discourse* which operates according to different regimes of verisimilitude and concepts of realism than the Hollywood or European model.

This is perhaps the fundamental distinction between Hindi films and Hollywood musicals, and helps explain the obvious differences between the two, like the ubiquity of song and dance sequences across all genres of mainstream Hindi films with characters enacting pre-recorded musical routines. In Bollywood films, song and dance is used as a legitimate and indispensable dramatic convention in storytelling, as important as speaking or acting.

While most Hindi films use song and dance as an indispensable dramatic convention in the storytelling process, there have also been many Hindi films, like YRF’s *Dil To Pagal Hai* (Chopra, 1997), *Jhoom Barabar Jhoom* (Sehgal, 2007) and *Aaja Nachle* (Mehta, 2007), that adopt what could be called a Hollywood-style musical form, with song and dance placed within the narrative as a separate staged performance. In addition, Western popular music, and dance culture, especially Rap, Hip-Hop, Pop, Rock and Jazz inspired a many Bollywood films to borrow, indigenise, and at times blatantly copy song and dance sequence from Hollywood films. A few of the contemporary Hollywood dance films that have inspired various Bollywood film spinoffs, and song and dance sequence inspiration, indigenisation, and copying are: *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), *Grease* (1978), *Beat Street* (1984), *Dirty Dancing* (1987) *Chicago* (2002) and *Take the Lead* (2006).

While the conceptualisation of song and dance as a legitimate and dominant dramatic convention in the storytelling process can help explain the ubiquitous use of
song and dance in Bollywood cinema, Dudrah (2006, p. 48) puts forth another perspective which provides a different but complementary perspective on the issue:

Indian popular films are not seen as musicals; they are not genre films at all in the Western sense of the word. Hindi cinema cannot be forced into Western filmmaking categories. In one Bollywood film it is possible to include all the Western film genres—musical, romantic, comedy, action, thriller, tragedy, and melodrama. These disparate modes of storytelling are bound together into a coherent whole by songs.

Though, to some extent, Dudrah’s assertion is right that Hindi/Bollywood films cannot be categorised as musicals, because even while using song and dance, Hindi/Bollywood films work within various other generic conventions. For example, Company (2002) a crime/gangster film, has four song and dance sequences; Bhoot (2003) a horror film, has six song and dance sequences; Kal Ho Na Ho (2002) a romantic drama, featured five song and dance sequences. But I do not ascribe to Dudrah’s view that songs are always the binding factor of a film’s narrative. There are many Bollywood films that utilise song and dance sequences as an interruption and an escape from the narrative of the film.

With its multi-generic narrative form, mainstream Hindi films cannot be easily categorised into distinct genres like Hollywood films. So a film may begin with the folkloric fantasy of the hero's idyllic childhood, then switch into a romantic mode when the hero woos the heroine, and finally end up as an action thriller as the hero encounters the villain. Instead of the common uniformity or verisimilitude of the overall narrative tone, and the rationalised presence of song and dance within a story (as in many Hollywood films), song and dance sequences often emerge abruptly to take the film into a different generic mode altogether. As Langford (2005, p. 100)
One obvious and major difference is that the great majority of Hindi films feature musical (vocal and dance) performances, and to a viewer accustomed to the integrated musical, in particular, the transitions from serious dramatic content to upbeat and diegetically heterogeneous musical number is bound to seem jarring.

In such a schema, the song and dance sequences act as a link that helps these different narrative modes to somehow cohere as one film. Rick Altman's (1987, pp. 129-327) discussion of the three subgenres of the Hollywood musical can further help elaborate Bollywood cinema’s use of song and dance. According to Altman, there are three key sub-genres in the Hollywood musical—the Fairy Tale Musical, the Show Musical and the Folk Musical—each of which use song and dance in a fashion that aligns the film with a specific genre of storytelling. Altman (1987, p. 131) contends:

Fairy Tale musical on film is a part of a tradition, which begins long before cinema. Whereas the show musical takes advantage of the invention of a new medium—sound cinema—to create new structures and new meanings, while film and theatre together give birth to the folk musical, the film Fairy Tale simply takes up where the stage operetta (all but) left off.

The Fairy Tale musical takes place in a fantastical world of unearthly characters and dreams, and draws from the older tradition of the stage opera; show musicals are modern showbiz-based musicals in which song and dance performances are presented as staged spectacles; finally, Folk musicals are nostalgic stories that draw from myths and legends. Altman's classificatory system for different sub-genres of Hollywood
musicals may not apply directly to Hindi films with their multi-generic mixture. However, the basic idea of the link of a specific musical sub-genre with a specific cultural ethos may be extended to explain how a generic form of song and dance may be used to build upon the narrative and mood at a particular moment in the film. In my opinion, the Fairy Tale subgenre with its incessant focus on desire and fantasy can be seen in the fantasy-based romance duets common in Bollywood song and dance sequences. The ethos of the Show musical subgenre can be seen in staged spectacular performances like dance club numbers. Finally, the Folk musical subgenre that plays on nostalgic sentiments can be seen in most of the folk-derived Bollywood routines. As Haase (ed. 2008, p. 348) states:

Like European faire-tale films, Bollywood cinema offers a fantastic, vibrant celebration of folkloric heritage and a powerful expression of the classic fairy-tales unquestioning acceptance of the magical.

b. Bollywood Song and dance: Continuation of a Larger Indigenous Tradition

The enthusiastic co-option of music and dance in Hindi films, which has continued unabated to the present day, can also be attributed to the longstanding traditions of Sanskrit drama, folk music-dance forms and the folk theatre in India. Gopal and Moorti (eds. 2008, p. 17-8) note:

Song and dance has been tied to Indian cinema from its very start. Although a history of the media world in which Indian film arose is still an ongoing project, there is some consensus that the centrality of music, song, and dance in pre-existing popular
and folk traditions in India must partly account for the persistence of song and dance in Hindi film.

Indeed, apart from the multi-generic form of Bollywood films necessitating the ubiquitous use of song and dance, we must also look towards the historical legacy of performance traditions in India to explain why such an environment, so conducive to song and dance in films, existed in the first place. In this section, I will discuss how indigenous influences shaped the form of Hindi films and resulted in its receptivity to this musical form of filmmaking.

The impact of Sanskrit dramas on Hindu performing arts is omnipresent; therefore, Indian cinema, which took its inspiration from these performance traditions, also reflected the influence of the great Sanskritic dramas (Ganti 2004, Pauwels 2007, Trivedi 2008). Sanskrit theatre is supposed to have been at the zenith of its aesthetic form between the 2nd and 7th centuries B.C., when Sage Bharata Muni’s treatise Natya Shastra (literally “Scripture of Dance”, though it is sometimes translated as “Science of Theatre”) provided the foundation for the Hindu performing arts (Srinivasan, 2007). According to Ram Gopal (1983, p. 33):

*Natya Shastra* is a monumental work, which deals, amongst other things, with the art of drama and the dance. Bharata describes 15 types of drama ranging from one to ten acts. In addition, Bharata lays down principles for stage design, makeup, costume, dance (various movements and gestures), theory of aesthetics of emotions (*rasas* and *bhavas*), acting, directing and music.

Bharata set out a detailed theory of drama comparable to Aristotle's *Poetics*. He conceptualised an elementary theory of theatre and drama built on *rasas* (aesthetics).
He defined eight principal rasas—love, pity, anger, disgust, heroism, awe, terror and comedy, and argued that drama should mix different rasas but must choose one as the dominant narrative tone. All the rasas of elementary dramatic emotions conceptualised by Bharata can be seen in varying proportions in Bollywood films.\(^{14}\) Apart from the influence of the Sanskritic drama tradition, which melded song, dance and acting, noted Indian film critic Gupta (2008) and Haase (ed. 2008, p. 348) also assert that the importance of song and dance in Hindi cinema comes from the Hindu mythologies of *Ramayana*\(^{15}\) and *Mahabharata*\(^{16}\) that were written in verse form and performed through devotional singing. These longstanding ritualistic traditions of performance have also resulted in the extensive use of song and dance as part of the process of storytelling in Bollywood films.

According to Roy (2010, p. 36), folk theatre has also played an important role in shaping Bollywood cinema:

Following indigenous performance traditions such as *Ramlila*, *Nautanki*, *Tamasha*, and Parsi theatre that combined several aesthetic modes, the Bollywood song and dance routine is seen as performing a wide range of functions including heightening a situation, accentuating a mood, commenting on theme and action, providing relief and serving as interior monologue.

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\(^{15}\) *Ramayana* is an ancient Sanskrit epic and a part of the Hindu canon (smriti). Written by Valmiki, *Ramayana* has been translated and interpreted by many poets and writers over the centuries. The story of *Ramayana* revolves around the Suryavansh dynasty, headed by king Dashratha and his four princes Rama, Lakhsmana, Bharata and Shatrughana. It celebrates the virtuous life of Prince Rama—an incarnation of lord Vishnu. See Buck (1981).

\(^{16}\) *Mahabharata* is an ancient Hindu Sanskrit epic, written between the second century B.C. and second century A.D. Vyasa Muni has been traditionally ascribed as the narrator/storyteller of *Mahabharata*; but the epic has been reinterpreted and rewritten by many other writers over the ages. Nooten (in Buck, 1981) says, “Mahabharata is the story of a dynastic struggle culminating in an awesome battle between two branches of a single Indian ruling family. The account of the fight between the Kuru and the Pandavas for the fertile and wealthy land at the confluence of the Yamuna and Ganges rivers in Delhi is enhanced by peripheral stories that provide a social, moral, and cosmological background to the climactic battle.”
Indigenous performance traditions in the Indian cultural landscape—from the classical mythological repertoire to folk traditions—have also shaped Bollywood cinema's use of song and dance as part of the storytelling function. Thus, Bollywood song and dance can be seen as a continuation of this larger tradition.

c. Integral Part of Bollywood Film Narrative—Within/without Story

Given the function of song and dance as an indispensable narrative device and dramatic convention, I will further investigate how song and dance sequences are placed in the narrative of Bollywood films. The two main modes in which song and dance sequences are used in Bollywood films are:

**As Part of the Narrative:** The song and dance sequence is used in tandem with the storyline, to depict a significant event in the story or highlight the mood of a certain situation. As part of the narrative, the song and dance is used with a sense of cohesion and rationale in its presence at that particular point.

**As an Escape from the Narrative:** The song and dance sequence operates outside the film's narrative structure as a lapse of fantasy, dream or flashback. These songs are set in scenic locations or glamourous settings far from the mundane reality that the characters inhabit in the story.

In order to understand how song and dance may operate as part of the narrative, we can draw further on my earlier point about Bollywood cinema's
conception of song and dance as a legitimate narrative convention. Used as a device for telling the story, song and dance sequences in Bollywood films are not just an added feature; they can also heighten the impact of the overall narrative of the film. Song and dance sequences are used to heighten the effect of a momentous event unfolding in the story through a musical rendition of the character's emotions and intentions. Here, Altman's insight into how the shift from the mundane, linear, naturalist mode of a story to a plane of fantasy can act as a catalyst in moving the story forward, helps explain the efficacy of song and dance in moving the narrative forward. According to Altman (1987, p. 83):

In all of these “make believe” modes—dreams, performance, and role playing are the most common—an individual gains the right to “play out” personal fantasies without submitting to the judgments normally associated with conscious behaviour. The characters can say and do what he/she pleases and yet in the eyes of his/her psychic censor it is as if nothing had either been said or done. Like a child playing “dress up”—like the spectator watching the film—a character can try on a role without actually assuming it.

In a similar way, “breaking out into a song”, as an example of Altman's “make believe mode” in the enactment of the story, gives a character an eloquence to express his or her emotions in a way that would otherwise have seemed ungainly, contrived or boring if the same ideas articulated within the mode of naturalistic verisimilitude. Thus, a shy couple breaking out into a song, hastens and heightens the romantic union of the hero and heroine; or a long suffering hero eloquently singing out his rage against the villain anticipates the righteous revenge he will later wreak.

As such a narratorial tool, song and dance sequences are integrated into films
as part of the narrative to tell of a momentous event in the story. But more often than not, these events are fixed situations, which is understandable given the repetitive storylines of most mainstream Hindi films. In an interview with Morcom (2007, p. 46), music director Milind (of the Anand-Milind duo) says:

"Usually, what happens is most of the songs have fixed situations … hero and heroine meet, and there might be a duet song, then a cher-char song where the hero teases the girl or the heroine teases the boy, or you have cabaret, or you have a mujra (dance of courtesans) or you have a song in a Disco."

Morcom (2007, p. 37) notes that while filmmakers may differ in the care they take in the integration of situational song and dance sequences into a film, according to their creative style and work ethic, this general rule of song and dance built around fixed situations applies to most Hindi films. In her fieldwork amongst Bollywood filmmakers, Morcom found that some of them would simply plan a “funny song” or “sad song” without any consideration of the storyline, while other filmmakers would spend months planning songs in relation to the narrative. In spite of these differences in the positioning and planning song sequences, Bollywood song and dance sequences are generally built around fixed situations. Some of the most important situations are:

- The romantic song and dance
- The celebratory song of an individual/couple, family or community
- The song and dance of lament over a misfortune
- The combative song and dance with the protagonist challenging the villain
- The cabaret, bar dance or the “item” number
Thus, even in their most formulaic guise regurgitating fixed situations, song and dance sequences can act as part of the narrative of the film and heighten the mood of a particular scenario, which would likely seem contrived or boring in a more traditional mode of realistic acting.

Song and dance in Hindi films is also used as an escape from the narrative. As Dwyer and Patel (2002, p. 30) argue, “this is an exhibitionist cinema in which linear narrative, driven by characters and the logic of the narrative itself, and the realist illusion of film are interrupted by spectacle and other ‘attractions’.” As one of the main “attractions” of such a form of cinema, song and dance sequences must ensure that the film captures the popular imagination of audiences to ensure commercial success. Although scholars like Tyrell (1999, p. 268), Dudrah (2005, p. 27), Gopal and Moorti (eds. 2008, p. 42) Brosius (2005, p. 232) and Dwyer (2008, p. 260) disagree about this generalisation that defines Bollywood cinema as escapist entertainment; they do agree that song and dance sequences in particular have been utilised as escapist entertainment, purely for the purpose of aural and visual pleasure and spectacle. The spectacle of the song and dance sequence is treated with such importance that it often overrides the narrative aspects of the film to become an independent entity, an interruption or an escape. As Jha (2007, p. 108) notes, “The song-and-dance mode of expression produces a fantasy of romance and permits an escape into a dream world.”

In his article “Music of Intolerable Love—Political Conjugality in Mani Ratnam’s Dil Se”, Anustup Basu (2008, pp. 153-176) invokes Lalitha Gopalan’s (2003) view of mainstream Hindi film as a “cinema of interruptions,” calling the “song and dance” a “nonnarratological travel” that is detached from the overall storyline. As such a sojourn outside the narrative, the song and dance transfers the
audience from the mundane reality created by the main story of the film to travel to an adjunct fantasy world or utopia. When undertaking such a “nonnarratological travel” through a song and dance fantasy, the Bollywood film viewer who is proficient in the cultural codes, implicitly notes the shift as a situation that requires them to suspend their disbelief and take pleasure in the fantasy world created for them. As Basu (2008, p. 156) points out:

These [song and dance sequences] thus often seem to detach themselves from relations of fidelity to the filmic whole … In being aligned with “other” image worlds of the travel documentary, the designer apparel, figurations and statements of lifestyle, a transnational idiom of advertisement, and technologies of the self of various kinds, the making of song sequences is often partially or completely separated from notions of “value” derived from a founding act of narration.

As part of such a suspension of disbelief these audiences do not expect the characters to act or appear in a manner that is integrated into the broader storyline. Taking the example of such fantasy song and dance sequences from the film Dil Se (1998), Basu (2008, p. 161) argues that the personae the hero and the heroine adopt in these sequences have nothing to do with the characters of the journalist and the terrorist that they ostensibly play within the broader narrative:

The musical interludes appear to take bodies out from time to time and allow them to respire in and imbibe energies of a certain “outside” (of naturalism and of consumerism). This is where figures leave “characters” behind and incubate in ecology of the unthinkable. The visual and aural flows that we see in the sequences are not fully amenable to specific contours of subjectivity, neither that of the new age
city slicker male reporter nor that of the marginalized woman turned human bomb.

d. Song and dance as Part of the Bollywood Entertainment Industry

As either part of the narrative or outside the narrative, song and dance plays an indispensable role in Bollywood film as a dramatic convention. However, song and dance also plays an important role outside the film too. In fact, as Thoraval (2000, p. 65) argues, “More than playing a role in the film, music, song and dance are vital elements of the pleasure of going to the movies, as vital as the story of the film.” Bollywood films seek to deliver “Paisa Vasool” (a colloquial Bollywood phrase connoting total value for money, popularised by Bollywood film journalists) entertainment to its audiences. As part of such a strategy, most mainstream films not only offer a mishmash of different genres that packs in as much sensationalistic pleasure as possible, they also market the film as a multi-dimensional product. Compiled into music albums, these song and dance sequences often operate outside the film as separate commercial entities. Song and dance sequences are marketed in advance before the release of the film, across TV channels and distributed through CDs, VCDs, and DVDs. Thus, the Bollywood film industry conflates what are often the more distinct industries of cinema and pop music in the United States, making song and dance an integral product of the Bollywood film business.

In fact, the song and dance sequences often have a longer shelf life than the actual film. The spectator’s engagement with a Bollywood film is not just restricted to watching the film in a cinema hall or on the television; they can continue to watch the song and dance sequences or listen to them long after they have seen the film. While the renowned Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray (1976, pp. 74-5) disagreed with the
indiscriminate use of song and dance sequences in mainstream Hindi cinema, he also conceded that mainstream Bollywood films fulfilled the need for spectacle and entertainment amongst the mass audience of Bollywood cinema.

II. The Role of Folk Dance in Bollywood Cinema

a. Bollywood Song and Dance—A History of Hybridisation

In this section, I will attempt to trace a brief history of the trend towards hybridisation and experimentation in song and dance sequences, a development that gathered momentum from the 1970s onwards. I will argue that this trend had the most significant impact on the representation of folk dance forms as they were subjected to an extreme fusion that separated them from their traditional norms of performance.

If song and dance sequences in the 1930s and 1940s were predominantly influenced by Indian folk and classical dance forms, then the films of the 1950s and 1960s witnessed the increasing popularity in India of Western dance forms like the Twist, Rock 'n' Roll and American and French cabaret. Yet, in the films of those earlier decades, distinctions between different dances, especially between Western and Indian dance forms were maintained with diligence. A film would only have the twist performed in a nightclub sequence, while a folk-derived dance would be used for a rural celebration. Hindi films of the late 1960s were also considerably influenced by the Elvis Presley musicals; Shammi Kapoor, one of the biggest stars of Hindi films during this period, achieved phenomenal success when his persona was remodeled along the lines of Elvis Presley. His Elvis style dance movements and mannerisms made him popularly known as the “Indian Elvis” (Dwyer 2000a, p. 182).

This era of experimentation saw the emergence of Hindi film song and dance as a distinct genre of *Hindi filmi naatch* (literally Hindi film dance). *Hindi filmi naatch* is designed as a lavish spectacle with elements of glamour, exoticism and sensuality. It uses hybridised dance routines based on a fusion of Indian folk and classical dances, with influences taken from countries and regions across the globe including America, Russia, the Middle-East and Latin America. Another key contribution of *Hindi filmi naatch* was the promotion of a particular dance step as the “signature style” of a sequence, aiding the retentive potential of the sequence.

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17 Bollywood choreographers pay a lot of attention to constructing a dance step with a “signature style”. Amitabh Bachchan’s comedic dance in the song and dance “My Name is Anthony Gonsalves” (*Amar Akbar Anthony* 1977), Jeetendra’s exuberant dance in “Mast Baharon Ka Main Aashiq” (*Farz* 1961) for which he was given the title of “Jumping Jack”, Shammi Kapoor’s steps modelled on Elvis Presley in “O Haseena Julfon Waali” (*Teesri Manzil* 1966), and Rajesh Khanna’s typical head movements in the song and dance “Jai Jai Shiv Shankar” (*Aap Ki Kasam* 1974), are examples of signature dance styles.
amongst audiences. The signature steps could be easily recognised, imitated and appropriated by audiences. In my view, it is the 1970s, with its experimentation with the unprecedented fusion of dance forms, that has had the most significant impact on folk dance forms in contemporary Hindi film song and dance. As I noted earlier, films in earlier decades would maintain the demarcation between different dance forms. From the late 1970s onwards one witnessed the fusion of Indian folk and classical dance with Western and other foreign dance forms.

This era of hybridisation was taken further in the 1980s, as the genre of Disco made its large-scale entry into Hindi films. During the 1980s, films built explicitly around dance were becoming popular. There were two main varieties of these dance-based films. The first of these were Hindi films produced by the South Indian filmmakers K. Bapaiyah, K Ragavendra Rao and T. Ramarao, which utilised a mix of Indian classical and folk dance forms, featuring colossal sets or exotic locations and large contingents of chorus line dancers. These films were mostly remakes of South Indian family dramas and invariably had Jeetendra, the dancing star of the time, as their lead actor (in films like Himmatwala 1983, Tohfa 1984, Dosti Dushmani 1986).

The second variety of these dance films were the Disco-based films of B. Subhash and Shibu Mitra, starring Mithun Chakraborty (Disco Dancer 1982, Kasam Paida Karne Wale Ki 1984, Dance Dance 1987) and Govinda (Ilzaam 1986, Khudgarz 1987, Hatya 1987). It was this second variety of films that left an indelible mark on the Hindi film song and dance, infiltrating the whole genre. Mithun Chakravarty became a dancing sensation with his film Disco Dancer that was inspired by the Hollywood film Saturday Night Fever (1977), and the Hindi fusion Disco routines it contained gained phenomenal success in India as well as the Soviet Union

styles remembered and emulated by film audiences over the years.
and the Middle East (Rajagopalan 2008, p. 93). *Disco* was also a part of the sub-culture of urban Indian youth in the 1980s; and Bollywood films were attempting to draw on its popularity to attract those audiences. The inroads made by *Disco* took Hindi film music into the age of upbeat, glamorous and spectacular club numbers. As Richard Dyer (1992, p. 149) contends:

*Disco* is more than just a form of music, although certainly the music is at the heart of it. *Disco* is also kinds of dancing, club, fashion, film etc., in a word, a certain sensibility manifest in music clubs, etc., historically and culturally specific, economically, technologically, ideologically and aesthetically determined—and worth thinking about.

An important example of this shift towards *Disco* was the film *Qurbani* (1980)—a glamorous film about a love triangle between three urban characters—that had a completely *Disco*-based musical score composed by the British-Indian composer Biddu. It is still considered a landmark of Bollywood cinema’s update of westernised music.

The influence of *Disco* resulted in a significant shift in Hindi film song and dance, as these sequences became increasingly eroticised, glamourised spectacles. According to Dyer (1992, pp. 152-8), “*Disco* is not just a dance genre but a cultural form that imbibes a sense of uninhibited sexuality, eroticisation and physical proximity in commercialised settings.” Hindi film song and dance, derived from Indian folk or classical dance genres, was generally devoid of physical contact. It was Western dance forms that brought the element of physical contact into Hindi film

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18 Biddu continued his collaboration with Nazia Hassan through such successful pop music albums as “*Disco Deewane*”, “Boom Boom” and “Hotline” in the 1980s. These albums made Nazia Hassan one of the most popular *Disco* singing stars of the Indian subcontinent.
song and dance.

But while Western forms like ballroom dance and the twist, used in the Hindi films of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, enabled some physical proximity between the lead pairs, cabaret dance was utilised in many of the Hindi films of the 1960s to provide eroticised song and dance sequences. But these cabaret song and dance sequences, because of the form’s association with eroticism and vulgarity, primarily featured the “Hindi film vamp” and rarely involved the lead actors.

It was *Disco* song and dance that helped Hindi filmmakers to introduce elements of overt sensuality and eroticisation into their films. For example, the song and dance sequence “Hari Om Hari” from *Pyara Dushman* (1980) depicted a scantily clad “hippy” siren sensuously dancing with beer bottles in a *Disco* style as the men around her looked on. *Disco*-derived Bollywood sequences also employed lyrics laced with overt sexual content. The “First Step Do Ajnabi” from *Hawalaat* (1987) depicts a dance at a nightclub where the bar dancer (Anita Raj) sings “step by step we fall in love, step by step we make love”, and the chorus line dancers enact the love making scene.

This particular erotic and physical aspect of Western dance forms, especially *Disco*, has created religious and political consternation in India. The website allabout sikhs.com outlines the reasons for the rejection of dance forms like *Disco* by the Sikh community:

*Disco* is a blend of physical movements related to loud pop music. The lights in the hall or the room are deliberately kept dim to enable the partners to get closer and make love easier. As *Disco* is likely to arouse sexual feelings, it is not permitted to the Sikhs. Dances purely for the promotion of physical health or fitness are not taboo.
Similarly dating or mixing of boys with girls alone for the purpose of illicit love or petting or flirting is forbidden in Sikhism. (www.allaboutsikhs.com 2010)

However, *Disco* was not only utilised to exploit sexuality; it was also part of the sub-culture of urban Indian youth of the 1980s that broke from the conservatisim of traditional cultural dance forms.

India witnessed a major change in the 1990s when the trend towards fusion music came to dominate Hindi film song and dance. Folk dance forms began to take on a completely new shape with the impact of popular culture brought about by globalised music channels like MTV and Channel [V]. With India's newfound place in the global market place and the proliferation of mass media-based popular culture, the *Hindi film naatch* mutated into the genre of “Bollywood dance”. This genre or form of “Bollywood dance” was being recognised and promoted in various film magazines (such as *Stardust, Filmfare* and *Cine Blitz*). It began to move into more and more territories in the field of hybridisation and showed little compunction about maintaining distinctions between the lineages of the different dance forms being mixed.

Describing the “fusion form” of this revitalised genre of global “Bollywood dance”, Sresthova (2008, p.12) observes that, “what has been now termed as “Bollywood Dance” is the result of the fusion of these disparate dance forms, showing “the manifested interplay between uprooted, globally accessible film content and geographically rooted live performance.” “Bollywood dance” of the 1990s utilised wide-ranging styles from rap, hip-hop, techno and jazz, but these Western dance and music forms have largely been subsumed under the broader banner of *Disco* in India. This subsumption of various Western electronic music-based song and
dance forms under the broad label of *Disco* is the outcome of a lack of a deeper understanding of Western popular music among Indian audiences and the majority of Indian film and music journalists.

The Bollywood choreographer Shiamak Davar is known for the experimental choreography that introduced Western jazz into the Bollywood film *Dil To Pagal Hai* (1997), and that gave an international look and flavour to “Bollywood dance” (‘Shiamak’ 2010). This inspired other Bollywood choreographers to draw upon eclectic sources of musical dance from around the globe. As Shresthova (2008, p. 91) states:

Davar applies two overlapping labels to his Hindi film choreography: Bollywood Jazz and Indo-Jazz. Indo-Jazz is the label he applies to his non-film-based movement. Both styles draw on the studio jazz dance movement and incorporate Indian dance elements including gesture, rhythm, and expression as they strive towards a more contemporary kind of dance content that reflects a "globally savvy," in India at home and abroad.

The consolidation of “Bollywood dance” as a genre occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as it unyoked itself from the singular influence of *Disco* and people began to appreciate the plethora of global dance forms incorporated within it.

“Bollywood dance” was now being taught in these schools as an established genre of dancing equivalent to samba or the foxtrot. Such studios have now found significant patronage outside India as well. In a way “Bollywood dance” can be seen as the culmination of this process of hybridisation that gained momentum from the 1970s onwards. When asked about this meteoric rise of “Bollywood dance”, choreographer and dancer Remo D’Souza (pers. comm., 5 July 2009) said:

Bollywood song and dance, especially after the 1980s was quite inspired by popular dance forms that are seen in American dance films, and by the 1990s, with the coming of the satellite channels, music videos from MTV and Channel [V]. Music videos of pop stars like Beyonce, Jennifer Lopez, Shakira, Michael Jackson, the Backstreet Boys, Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears have influenced the work of choreographers. But let me clarify that American influence is only one of the ingredients in “Bollywood dance”. Indian folk dance and classical dance movements also form an integral part in the construction of “Bollywood dance”; and then there are many other dance forms from around the world, which are utilised by various choreographers according to the needs of the sequence and the film (sic).

According to my own observations and discussions with different Bollywood choreographers such as Launginus\(^\text{19}\) and Remo D’Souza\(^\text{20}\), some of the distinguishing characteristics of “Bollywood dance” are:

- One male and one female lead dancer (a heterosexual pairing), backed by a chorus line.
- The dance mixes different styles from across the globe (depending on the

\(^\text{19}\) Personal interview with Dance Director Launginus (Choreographer—Slumdog Millionaire, 2008), 3rd July 2009.
\(^\text{20}\) Personal interview with Dance Director Remo D’souza (Choreographer—Kal Ho Na Ho, 2004), 5th July 2009.
choreographer's choice, the film’s narrative requirements, as well as input from the others involved in the film’s production). The base of “Bollywood dance” is Indian folk and classical dance styles, to which Western dance forms (Disco, hip hop, breakdance, jazz, ballet etc.), and at times dances from Latin America, Africa, the Middle-East, Russia and Far-East Asia are added.

• The lead dancers are given a signature style unique to the song and dance sequence.
• The sets are built and designed on a lavish scale.
• The use of exotic locations (especially those in Western countries like Switzerland, France, the United States and the United Kingdom).
• There can be innumerable costume changes, the use of multiples sets and locations during individual song and dance sequences.

b. The Appropriation of Folk Dance Forms in the Hybridisation Process

With such dramatic transformations through the decades—from the nascent fusion Hindi film naatch-gana of the 1970s to contemporary “Bollywood dance”—much attention has focussed on this new phenomenon called “Bollywood dance” (Shreshthova 2008, eds. Gopal and Moorti 2008). But there has hardly been any sustained analysis of how the folk dance forms used in Bollywood song and dance have borne those changes over the decades. Folk dance forms are also one of the founding influences on Bollywood song and dance. Elements of different folk dance forms can be seen explicitly in most Bollywood routines. Given this scheme of events in the history of the hybridisation of Bollywood song and dance from the 1970s onwards, I wish to examine how folk dances have been hybridised and transformed.
when represented on screen.

Amitava Roy’s (in Lal and Dasgupta 1995b, pp. 9-12) article “Folk is What Sells Well” touches upon the problems of utilising folk forms in the context of a theatrical performance meant for an urban middle-class or elite audience. He draws a parallel between these urban theatre performances to Hindi films, commenting on how folk dance forms are utilised at will by Bollywood cinema. These forms are incautiously reinterpreted to conform to the notion of image of “rustic exotica”.

While Bollywood music is usually regarded as an independent category of Indian music that has informs the emotional imaginary of the nation, it does not belong to any particular region. A “National popular music” is produced through Bollywood music directors’ cannibalization of national classical and popular regional folk music and dance. “Bambaiya” folk traditions, deterritorialised and decontextualised, have always been made to perform the role of “rustic exotica” for the imagined urban viewer of Hindi cinema.

There have been a handful of films, mostly belonging to the alternative art-house strain of Indian cinema (such as Bhavni Bhavai 1980, Mrigayaa 1976), which have depicted folk forms beyond the conventions of spectacular Bollywood song and dance. These films have attempted to incorporate the socio-religious-ritualistic contexts and traditional norms of folk dance performance with a degree of sensitivity. But in Bollywood films, which form the bulwark of Indian popular culture, such caution in relation to tradition is negligible. I wish to draw further on Roy's cursory comment cited above to examine how Bollywood appropriate these dance forms. In my opinion, Bollywood films tend to alter the choreography, costumes, accessories, staging, musical instrumentation and context of the performance of folk dance forms when appropriating them for their song and dance sequences. But do the processes of
hybridisation unduly affect these folk dance forms to the extent that they lose their authenticity? What are these perceived values of authenticity and hybridity that come into play in Bollywood's depiction of folk dance forms? In the next chapter, I will consider the “suitability” of some landmark folk-oriented song and dance sequences from films produced by Yash Raj Films from the late 1970s to the 2000s, in order to explore these issues and questions.
Chapter 3

The Changing Face of Folk Dance in

Yash Raj Films From the 1970s Onwards

One of the main challenges facing a researcher undertaking a study of Bollywood cinema arises from the sheer volume of Bollywood films produced over the decades. While I had extensive personal knowledge of Bollywood cinema, the challenge was sifting through the large number of Hindi films (more than 5000 films produced in last forty years) to choose a sample for detailed analysis. Eventually, I realised that to sharpen the focus of my research and bring a sense of coherency to its methodology, it would be helpful, even necessary, to look at the work of one prominent filmmaker or production house to trace the journey of the hybridisation of folk dance forms through the decades.

In Chapter Two, I established a brief historical background detailing of the increased hybridisation of dance forms, and the reconceptualisation of song and dance sequences into spectacles, from the 1970s onwards. Given that context, I needed to choose a production house that had consistently utilised Indian folk dance forms in its films. Three prominent production houses presented themselves as possible candidates—Yash Raj Films (established in 1970), Mukta Arts Private Limited (established in 1982) and Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s SLB Productions (established in 1999).
I. Why Yash Raj Films?

After watching films produced by the three different production houses listed above, Yash Raj Films (YRF from here on) emerged as the best candidate for conducting a detailed examination of folk dance forms in Bollywood cinema. YRF began as a production company in 1970 and has been a prominent player in the Bollywood film business, since the late 1970s, the period that marked a rise in the trend of experimentation with and appropriation of folk dance forms. YRF is also the most prolific production house out of the three, with the largest number and variety of films made under its auspices. Although SLB has received accolades for its lavish folk-based song and dance sequences in recent years, in films like Devdas (2002) and Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam (1999), YRF is recognised by the Bollywood film industry as the production house which actually instituted the trend towards lavish song and dance spectacles with an emphasis on folk and traditional song and dance elements (Dwyer 1998, p. 202). Thus, YRF satisfied the required criterion for a case study to explore the larger historical trajectory of the hybridisation of folk dance through the decades.

While film companies in the Hindi film industry were set up as studios in the formative years of the late 1940s and early 1950s, such studios as Rajkamal Kalamandir, Kardar Studios, Filmistan, RK Studios and Gemini acted more like production houses. Film production houses work on a project-to-project basis, hire people on contract, and rely on external distribution companies for the sale of their films. In contrast, a film studio maintains exclusive rights to the people it hires and conducts all the ancillary services of distribution and marketing. Although YRF is a production house, since 2000 it has been operating more like a studio—with its own
production, post-production and shooting facilities and film distribution offices located across India and the rest of the world. With the phenomenal success of *DDLJ* in 1995, YRF realised the potential contained in the large Indian diaspora in the West as a market for its films. With the success of this film, YRF not only changed its films to target the global market, it developed its own distribution system with offices in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. YRF not only makes films with Indians as its core audience, but also can claim demonstrable global acceptance and appeal (Dwyer 2002, Ganti 2004). YRF has also made forays into other allied businesses like home entertainment, music and television production (Raheja and Kothari, 2004).

**a. The Longevity of YRF in the Bollywood Film Industry:**

Yash Chopra began his career in 1959 as an assistant to I.S. Johar. He then moved to work as an assistant with his elder brother B.R. Chopra, who was already an established filmmaker in Bombay. Chopra made several films for his brother’s production company, B.R. Films. Gradually in 1973 he branched away from B.R. Films to start his own production company called Yash Raj Films (Ganti 2004, p. 101). Chopra now heads YRF as its Chairman, supported by his two sons, Aditya Chopra and Uday Chopra, who act as Vice Chairman and Director, respectively. Yash Chopra has also received the prestigious Dada Saheb Phalke Award\(^{21}\) in 2001 for his contribution to the Bollywood film industry.

As the comparisons enumerated in the introductory section of the chapter indicate, YRF has dominated the Mumbai film industry for almost four decades, and

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\(^{21}\) The Government of India confers the Dada Saheb Phalke Award as recognition of the significant contribution made by a person to Indian cinema over their lifetime.
is now considered amongst the most prominent and powerful production houses in Bollywood cinema. Since 1973, YRF has produced more than 35 films without taking a hiatus, and at present, it makes at least four films a year. This longevity of YRF films in the Bollywood film business has helped my research, giving me ample material to examine the trends and changes that have taken place in the representation of folk dance forms in song and dance sequences over the decades.

b. The Primacy of Song and dance in YRF:

The first film that Chopra produced and directed under the banner of his own production company was Daag (The Stain, 1973). This film set the standard for the genre of the romantic musical extravaganza, which was to dominate YRF’s style of filmmaking. With an ensemble cast built around Rajesh Khanna, the Hindi film superstar of the 1970s, the theatrical trailer of Daag declared the film as “the biggest musical romance of the year”. Daag did not let its viewers down; it had all the ingredients of a romantic musical extravaganza built on an engaging romantic saga with lavish song and dance sequences shot in scenic locations. Dwyer (2002, p. 80) cautiously notes the critical response to the film when on its initial release:

It [Daag] was also the first [film] to be praised in terms, which have become standard in discussions of Yash Chopra’s films today; its gloss, its drama, and its depiction of complicated emotional relationships, without excessive melodrama or gratuitous deployment of villains and comedians. The fights were criticized, as were some of the songs, especially the Punjabi-style dance. The excessive glamour of the sets was noted although the film was called “tasteful” and it was said that Yash “had an eye for the aesthetic”.
With the release of *Daag*, Yash Chopra cemented his reputation for this style of filmmaking with song and dance sequences as a key ingredient of the film. YRF films are known for their romantic storylines, featuring casts of the most popular stars of the time, spectacular song and dance sequences, glamourous sets, exotic locations and family oriented narratives. On an average there are between five to ten song and dance sequences in all YRF films. Not only are song and dance sequences an essential feature of YRF films; YRF are renowned for their creative flair in transforming routine song and dance situations into memorable musical numbers with an immense visual appeal. YRF invest a lot of energy, creativity and resources into their song and dance sequences, which are marketed as spectacular, glamourous attractions found within the film. These fantastic song and dance spectacles have created many trends over the years that have been keenly followed by other Bollywood filmmakers.

c. **The Folk Emphasis in YRF:**

Besides the primacy given to song and dance in their films, over the years YRF has also consistently used traditional folk dance forms in their musical sequences. Along with its penchant for romantic storylines with spectacular song and dance sequences, YRF has maintained a consistent focus on folk dance forms in its films. Even the very first YRF film *Daag*, made when Chopra was in his formative years as filmmaker, has a focus on folk music-dance. This evidenced by the famous Punjabi folk song-derived sequence, “Ni Main Yaar Manana Ni” (I need to appease my rueful beloved). Chopra has continued to pursue his unflagging interest in folk forms throughout rest of his career. In fact, Chopra’s enthusiasm for showcasing Indian folk culture, especially
that of his home state of Punjab, is renowned in the Bollywood film industry. As Dwyer (2002, p. 123) states, “Yash Chopra’s films are said to have one Punjabi folk song, one triangle song with either two men and a woman or two women and a man, one very, very romantic song and often a sad, despondent song of rejection and pain.”

II. Choreographing Fantastic Spectacles—Generic Features of YRF’s Song and Dance Sequences

YRF has long been recognised as a production house leading the Bollywood film business in terms of its creative innovation in the construction of song and dance. The films of YRF are built on the mandatory song and dance routine of Hindi films, and turn even the most ordinary situational dance numbers into fantastic spectacles. As such fantastic spectacles, YRF song and dance sequences are constructed in a lavish, glamorous and carnivalesque form—shot in exotic locations or with opulent sets using mobile camerawork and slick editing techniques to deliver optimum audio-visual pleasure.

To a significant extent, one witnesses the formation of Yash Chopra’s signature style of filmmaking in the film Waqt (Time, 1963). This film set the tone and style for the typical YRF film: heterosexual romance, the use of multiple stars, exotic locations, extravagant sets, the portrayal of elitist lifestyles and spectacularly shot song and dance sequences. The construction of fantastic song and dance spectacles is in keeping with the generic form of YRF films with its focus on

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22 Punjab is one of the most affluent states in India located in its northwestern region. Punjabi culture is mostly associated with agrarian life, and its folk dance traditions like Bhangra and Giddha have their origins as harvest-based folk dances. Punjab is not only a rich agricultural state; it is also one of India’s biggest manufacturing/industrial states. Sikhs and Hindus form the majority of the state's population. Punjabis also form one of the largest Indian diasporic communities in the West.
aestheticised images of glamorous, elite lifestyles, a style that Dwyer calls “glamourous realism”. As Dwyer (1998, p. 195) notes, “Yash Chopra pays careful attention to all the visual aspects of his films, including framing, lighting, use of colour etc. to create his style of 'glamourous realism', a total look of sensuousness.” While analysing Waqt, Dwyer (2002, p. 63) observes:

Waqt is justly famous for its whole new “look”, depicting a glamorous lifestyle …

The film spares the viewer no detail of the lifestyle of the super-rich, who have motorboats, American cars, throw lavish parties and live in houses ordained with fountains, circular beds and grand pianos.

Many of the trends in song and dance construction instituted by YRF films have been emulated by filmmakers through the decades, making them staple features of the Bollywood song and dance genre as a whole. In order to provide a better understanding of the elements that compose the lure of YRF song and dance and the major trends initiated by YRF, I will elaborate on some of the generic aspects of YRF's fantastic choreographic spectacles.

a. Romantic Fantasy

According to Dwyer (1999, p.182), Yash Chopra’s oeuvre of films can be divided into three categories—socially oriented films, action films and romantic films. Dwyer (2002, p.16) finds that Chopra’s films excel in the creation of glossy romance, a mainstay of his production:

Most of the [YRF] films are set around key moments of love and romance. The
romantic couple meet, they often have to face a dilemma arising from previous commitments or family duties, then are reconciled to the wishes of their families.

The romantic genre dominates YRF's oeuvre and the production house now seems to be focussing on this genre only, after dabbling in social drama and action films in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{23} It is the song and dance routine through which the key theme of romance is portrayed in YRF films. Instead of portraying the key moments of romance between the hero and heroine, YRF creates such a scene through a music and dance.

As Dwyer (2004, p. 63) notes, “Hindi film's archetypal way of falling in love is the song picturisation, which is a key part of the romance and of the whole film.” This mode of falling in love through song and dance, aids the narrative as the hero and heroine lose their inhibitions as they step out of the roles they assume in the mundane storyline. Song and dance also heightens the romantic mood of the relationship between the hero and heroine. Presenting the act of romance in a musical form also avoids physically explicit scenes and garbs such amorous tensions in the form of playful song and dance.

Given this general approach to romance, garbed in the make-believe world of song and dance in Hindi films, YRF has been celebrated for his innovations within the sub-genre of the fantasy romantic duet. A hallmark of this YRF fantasy romantic duet is its use of scenic locations. From the mundane setting of the storyline, the hero and heroine are transported into a completely different location of natural scenic beauty, faraway from their real world. As Dwyer (1998, p. 182) describes:

Yash Chopra has also developed a unique visual aesthetic in his romantic movies

\textsuperscript{23} Although Dwyer is talking specifically about films directed by Yash Chopra, her assertion seems to stand true for all YRF films. With Yash Chopra’s son Aditya Chopra taking over the company's operations and YRF hiring new directors, YRF has still retained its focus on romantic films.
which is manifested in his locations, sets and the way he presents his stars; instantly recognisable, this has been frequently imitated in the Indian movies, notably his trademark shots of misty valleys, snow-capped mountains, lakes and rivers, women in chiffon, and fields of flowers.

Transported into an alternate fantasy world of a beautiful and dreamlike location, the hero and heroine can indulge in an uninhibited display of affection. Themes of love and romance are explored in YRF films more as fantasy rather than as a realist simulation of intimacy between two lovers. Song and dance becomes the make-believe mode to create this phantasmagoric world.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Chopra mainly shot these fantasy romantic duets in the Indian regions of Kashmir or Shimla; by the late 1980s, he started utilising exotic locations in the West like Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands. Chopra’s use of these idyllic locations popularised them among Indians. Bollywood art director Sharmistha Roy (2003) has noted that while filmmakers like Raj Kapoor, Nasir Hussain, Subhash Ghai and Manmohan Desai mounted sets on a lavish scale, Chopra preferred to shoot song and dance sequences in exotic geographic locations. By the late 1980s, YRF also moved towards the extensive use of sets. As Roy (2003, p. 225) notes, “It was with Chandni [1989] that the set design per se became paramount in his romantic musicals.”

The song and dance sequence “Hum Aur Tum” from the film Daag set the standard for this fantasy romantic duet set in scenic locations, and has been replicated

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24 In a study of the cultural history of the Swiss Alps, Beattie finds that Bollywood films were instrumental in popularising Switzerland as a tourist destination among Indians. Beattie (2006, p. 160) states, “The best known Indian director associated with Switzerland is Yash Chopra, whose Vijay (1988) included a song and dance number filmed on a cable car … Moreover, Switzerland is also a consumer dream for India’s burgeoning middle classes: wealth, consumption and scenery combine to create an easily packaged escapist fantasy for movie goers in Delhi or Bangalore. In recent years these Bollywood epics have been partly responsible for encouraging a huge number of Asian tourists to come to Switzerland on holidays.”
in subsequent YRF films and by other Bollywood filmmakers. In this sequence, Chopra presents a panoramic view of the snow-capped mountains and verdant valleys of Shimla, a scenic hill station in Northern India, as the backdrop for the romantic play between the hero and heroine. In keeping with the mellow, dreamlike romance of the lovers expressing their mutual passion and making promises of eternal love, choreographer Suresh Bhatt uses minimal dance movements and keeps the focus on the facial expressions of the couple. Concentrating on the lyrics of the song that iterate the theme of romance, Bhatt only employs some light dance steps in the musical interlude between the stanzas of the song. In line with Chopra's directorial vision of melding the exotic location to heighten the romantic ambience, Bhatt tailors his choreography to highlight the natural beauty of the location, making the lovers dance and slide in the snow with stylised dance steps.

Yash Chopra is known for his frequent use of zoom-in and zoom-out camera techniques. In this sequence, he uses close-up shots and mid close-up shots to bring out the facial expressions and eye-to-eye romantic exchanges of the characters (Dwyer 2002). He also makes use of techniques like soft focus, the blurring of the image and panning to create a dreamlike mise en scène of the romance blossoming between the couple in the verdant hills of Shimla. For example, in the song and dance “Hum aur Tum”, the cinematographer, Kay Gee, creates beautiful images of the idyllic landscape of Shimla. In the song and dance sequence, it is not only the lead couple on whom the camera lingers voyeuristically, but also the landscape that Kay Gee captures with such passion. During the song, the camera is in close-up of the lead characters, but the musical interludes within it allow the cameraperson the opportunity to give viewers a glimpse of the natural beauty of Shimla surrounded by snow-capped mountains. This achieved by the use of a zoom-out to a wide-shot of the
location. The mise en scène in the sequence portrays the romance between the lovers, as well as highlights the use of the scenic background, which heightens the relation between them. In other words the mise en scène also titilates the audience with the romantic pleasure that may be stirred up by visiting such a scenic location.

Aspects of love, romance and intimacy are explored in YRF films as fantasy; song and dance sequences become a tool to create and explore this world. Moreover, the exotic locales and scenic beauty add to the romantic aura. Chopra has used such romantic fantasy duets time and time again to depict romantic situations. Many scholars consider these fantasy sequences out of context with the actual storyline, and as exemplary instance of “escapist” Bollywood fare built on sensationalist pleasure (Ganti 2004, eds. Kavoori and Punanthambekar 2008). But this lovemaking through music-dance in idyllic locations also has precedents in traditional Indian culture. As Jha (2007, p. 108) points out, “The staging of romance in beautiful scenic locations caters for touristy desires of voyeurism and escape. The relationship of song, scenery and romance has antecedence in folk and religious culture.” To cite an example, the folk dance tradition of Raas Lila is built on the erotic play between Lord Krishna and his consort, Radha, in an idyllic pastoral location surrounded by peahens and cows. This routine of the fantasy romance duet conflates the scenic location, the romance of young lovers and music-dance to create the signature YRF routine.

b. The Western Influence on YRF Song and Dance Sequences

In the Bollywood films of the 1970s one saw the rising influence of Western popular dance and music culture, especially in films exploring the lives of elite, urbanised characters. I will briefly look at the impact of Western popular music and dance
culture on the song and dance sequence, “Pya Kar Liya toh Kya” (So what if we have fallen in love), from Yash Chopra's second directorial venture Kabhi Kabhie (1976), to explore another generic feature of the YRF song and dance—his Western-oriented dance sequences.

In the film, the “Pyar Kar Liya toh Kya” sequence is built on a romantic rendezvous between Vicky (Rishi Kapoor) and Pinky (Neetu Singh). This song and dance sequence starts with a dance party at a house, where Vicky begins singing and dancing flirtatiously for Pinky. Pinky also reciprocates her advances. Vicky and Pinky are represented as urbanised and Westernised Indian upper class youths, who challenge conservative Indian mores that disallow romance between unwed young people. Vicky and Pinky’s Western outlook and rebelliousness is reflected in the lyrics of the song:

*Rasm kya, Riwaz kya?*
What ritual? What tradition?

*Dharm kya, Samaaj kya?*
What religion? What community?

*Dushmanon ka khauf kya?*
Why should we fear our enemies

*Doston ki laaj kya?*
and why should we show shy deference to friends

*Yeh wo shauq hai jisse koi bhi bacha nahi.*
This love is a pleasurable trap that no one can escape.

The song clearly reflects Chopra's intent of depicting the uninhibited and carefree
attitude of urbanised youth who explicitly challenge many of the traditional norms of propriety. The song’s tune is derived from rock ‘n’ roll, and the dance movements also reflect the influence of rock ‘n’ roll as well as Disco. Using elements of physical contact and eroticism inherent in the rock ‘n’ roll and Disco genres, the young lovers engage in amorous play throughout this sequence. The dancers in the background are also shown doing rock ‘n’ roll and Disco steps in pairs.

While indigenous dance forms have dominated YRF song and dance routines, some sequences also make use of Western dance forms for specific purposes. Here, Chopra uses several Western dance forms to depict the somewhat hedonistic lifestyle of urbanised Indian youth; immersed in American popular culture and challenging traditional Indian cultural mores. Chopra also incorporates some explicit references to American pop culture in this sequence—Vicky is dressed in a white suit and a red cap. He also sings and dances with a guitar in the centre of the dance floor, imitating the well-known moves of Elvis Presley.

As the song and dance sequence nears its end, Vicky and Pinky take their romance outside the house and begin to sing and dance in the rain. In the rain, Vicky looks longingly at Pinky and moments later they embrace each other. Then they get inside a convertible car to exchange a stealthy kiss (which is not shown on screen as such scenes are banned by the Indian censors) and finally, Vicky pulls over the roof of the car to screen the lovers. This song and dance sequence is a typical example of the Western-oriented song dance sequences found in YRF films, which are often used further to characterise narrative themes relating to urbanised characters. Citing an example of the use of a piano in the film Andaaz (1949), Morcom (2007, p. 145) argues that music has often been used to connote western influences and freedoms, dating back to at least the 1940s:
In Andaaz, the heroine is shown to be very wealthy and highly Westernised, and the piano in the drawing room and on the soundtrack is a symbol of this. The story is about how her free, Western ways lead to her making friends with a man who is not her fiancé, resulting in misunderstanding and ultimately disaster. Although the sound of such piano playing is maybe found in Hollywood movies of that era, it would not have these same connotations. Rippling, romantic style piano music may connote love, classical music and high culture in Western films, but not the sense of an urban, Westernised elite as it has done in Hindi movies.

c. YRF: Showcasing the Glory of Indian Culture

The last two sections have noted the use of fantastic and spectacular locations and depiction of urbanised characters in song and dance sequences in YRF’s films but the company’s emphasis has been on traditional forms of North Indian dance in all its films. In an interview with Jha (2004), Chopra states, “We are making all kinds of film—English, Hinglish [films with a mix the Hindi and English language], Sex, Horror. It is a healthy trend. However, for a film to run, it has to have Indian values.” A hallmark of YRF is the dance sequences derived from Indian folk and classical dance traditions that are used to showcase Indian culture. This trend particularly found greater currency as YRF began to shift its focus to diasporic audiences and was prompted to make films that created an image of India that reflected its status as homeland of rich tradition and culture.

The song and dance sequence “Morni Baaga me Bole”, from the film Lamhe (1991) is one such example of this generic form of folk-derived song and dance used to provide a showcase of the Indian homeland. In the sequence, the beautiful
aristocratic Rajasthani woman Pallavi (Sri Devi) takes the London-based Viren, who has returned home to the state of Rajasthan in India, on a short tour to see some of the sights and customs of the land.

Chopra presents Pallavi as an ideal of traditional Indian feminine beauty, modest in her demeanour and attired in traditional dress and jewellery. Pallavi makes Viren change from his shirt and trousers into Indian dress, and takes him out on for an excursion. In the sequence she performs a folk-derived dance routine, albeit with eroticised flavour of the typical Bollywood dance routine. Chopra presents the cultural heritage of the land of Rajasthan almost in a pedagogical form, with Pallavi educating the NRI Viren about the customs and traditional mores of his homeland.

*Lamhe* was the precursor of the many NRI-themed films that followed, which also saw a resurgence of folk dance forms used in a similar fashion. In this generic form of song and dance created as a showcase for Indian culture, strong folk dance resonances dominated in order to appeal to the nostalgic sentiments of diasporic Indians and audiences at home. Here Altman's (1987, pp. 272-73) understanding of the folk musical can provide an insight into the usage of folk dance in Hindi cinema:

> It is in the folk musical that the genre film’s general tendency to glorify the past reaches its highest point. Yet memory can also produce the past faithfully, recall hardship, filth and defeat, or bring back experiences best forgotten. Suspended between observation and dream vision, memory is the perfect—if unstable—mediatory factor for a subgenre simultaneously grounded in the American heritage and the American myth.

While Hindi films may not adhere to these generic demarcations by creating an entire film in the form of a folk musical, this point nevertheless serves to establish the use of
folk dance even in Bollywood films, and its status as a symbol of an imagined past.

Another important trend in this sub-genre was the increased use of routines based on Punjabi folk dances. While YRF films in the 1970s and 1980s often depicted Punjabi culture in their story and song and dance routines, it was with the films of the 1990s that Punjabi folk dances were extensively used to cater to the Western-based Indian diaspora, a sizeable majority of whom were Punjabis. This generic format of folk-derived dance routines showcasing Indian culture, is now a staple feature of many YRF films, and is designed to target the globally dispersed audiences of Bollywood films.

d. YRF’s Erotic Spectacles: Singing and Dancing in the Rain

Erotic dance routines showcasing women in revealing attire and dancing in a sensuous manner, have become central in Bollywood films, since the 1970s, a period which saw cabaret numbers performed by scantily clad female characters. YRF is known for its tasteful erotic dance routines, which eschew the explicitly sexualised dance of the nightclub or cabaret numbers. Instead, in YRF’s routines women are dressed in glamourised, stylised traditional Indian dress to represent Chopra's image of Indian feminine beauty, conflating ideals of modesty with subtle sensuality.

I will draw further on the sequence “Morni Baaga Ma Bole” show how Chopra represents such an ideal of modesty, beauty and sensuality to create a tasteful erotic dance spectacle with a specifically Indian flavour. While the sequence is designed to showcase the culture of the homeland, its focus is on Pallavi's physical beauty as well. While her traditional attire, the rustic locale and the folk dancers in the background create the ambience of a folk performance, Pallavi’s dance follows the
eroticised style of Bollywood, as she gyrates her hips and heaves her chest. The camera lingers on her and moves over the contours of her body as she dances in this sensuous fashion.

Another means, by which YRF creates erotic spectacle, without resorting to an overtly sexualised cabaret performance, is the rain dance sequence, a staple of most of the company’s films. Ganti (2004, p. 81) comments on this kind of erotic rain dance:

Utilised in many films over the years, these often highly erotic sequences—with wet clothes clinging to bodies—are part of an elaborate system of allusions to, rather than explicit portrayals of, sexuality and physical intimacy as filmmakers navigate the perceived moral conservatism of their audiences, as well as the representational boundaries set by the Indian state through its censorship code.

Indian censors not only disallow the depiction of overt sexual content and nudity in mainstream Hindi films, there is also an implicit taboo amongst Bollywood filmmakers against nudity or overt physical intimacy. Rain dance sequences have a fully clothed but rain-soaked heroine, mostly dressed in an Indian sari (a long cloth wrapped around the lower body and flung over the shoulder), with her wet clothes highlighting the contours of her body as she dances with sensuous abandon. Yash Chopra has used rain dance sequences time and time again in most of his films such as Chandni, Lamhe, Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge and Dil To Pagal Hai, and they continue to appear in such contemporary works as Masti (2004) and Fanaa (2006). Playing up elements of eroticism while maintaining an Indian flavour and observing conservative strictures against nudity, these erotic spectacles form important elements of the YRF oeuvre of song and dance.
There has been a taboo on the depiction of semi-nudity and nudity in Indian films\(^{25}\), as the Indian film censor board (The Central Board of Film Certification) disallows the depiction of overt sexual content and nudity in mainstream Hindi films. Therefore, filmmakers have utilised various means to exploit sexuality and depict eroticism. The “Rain dance” situation has been one of the most widely utilised forms to depict sensuousness, eroticism and sexuality. Bollywood “rain dance” song situations have successfully exploited to the rain soaked image of women, whose clothes stick to their bodies due to the rain, bringing “alive” every contour of the body for the spectator’s voyeuristic pleasure.

Many Bollywood films have used any reason they can find to include such “rain dance” situations. Rain provides them with an opportunity to explore female and male sexuality (though it is the female sexuality that Bollywood is more concerned with and focused on) without any censor interference. As Patil (2005) remarks:

In *Namak Halaal* (Mehra, 1982), the rain song and dance between Amitabh and Smita Patil, was more of a seduction element than cinematic need. Raj Kapoor made his heroines, like Zeenat Aman and Mandakini, to get drenched in rain, in films like *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* (Kapoor, 1978) and *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* (Kapoor, 1985), to sensualise, sexualise, and eroticise their body through see-through dresses. There was nothing artistic about it but plainly an attempt to invite the male gaze.

e. **Bollywoodised Disco-Bhangra**

Finally, an important type of song and dance that has recently made its entry

\(^{25}\) The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) of India was very strict from the 1950s to the 1980s; Since the 1990s, the CBFC has become somewhat flexible towards depictions of semi-nudity and nudity, depending on the content and the context of the film.
into the lexicon of YRF song and dance sequences is the folk-derived fusion dance number. Although these sequences reference indigenous folk music-dance traditions, they are predominantly structured as upbeat Western dance numbers that can be played in nightclubs or Discotheques. In particular, with the rise of a diasporic audience, as well as the increased global mobility of large sections of the Indian middle-class, this typical format of Indianised nightclub numbers have become a staple element of contemporary YRF films. I will now briefly analyse the song and dance sequence “Jhoom” (Sway) from Jhoom Barabar Jhoom (2007) to elaborate upon the composition of this style of YRF song and dance.

In keeping with YRF's focus on globally mobile and diasporic audiences from the Indian subcontinent, the film revolves around an Indian businessman, Rikki Thukral (Abhishek Bachchan) and a Pakistani Alvira Khan (Preity Zinta) from London. Due to a delayed train, they end up sharing the same table at a restaurant. To kill time Rikki shares the story of his first meeting with his fiancé Anaida. In turn, Alvira also confides the story of her first encounter with her fiancé, Steve.

The song and dance sequence “Jhoom” is the climax of the film and is divided into three segments—“Jhoom 1”, “Jhoom 2” and “Jhoom Barabar Jhoom”. The sequence lasts for 15 minutes in total. Vaibhavi Merchant, a contemporary Bollywood choreographer, renowned for her eclecticism and glamourous style in composing dance routines, directed the sequence.

The first two sections incorporate a dance contest set on a large lavish arena resembling the dance stage from the Hollywood film Moulin Rouge (2001) combined with kitschy North Indian décor. The dancers are attired in skimpy nightclub wear. The camerawork makes use of panning, craning, tilting and dollying techniques to create the ambience of a dance competition. The editing also uses lots of fast cuts,
effects and wipes to capture the frenetic pace of the sequence. The dance movements are an overt fusion of salsa, hip-hop, *Disco* improvised with signature “Bollywood dance” steps and the sequence resonates with tunes from popular Bollywood film songs of the last few decades. This fusion rendition of “Bollywood dance” attempts to portray the tastes of globalised Indians, like Rikki and Alvira, who are equally proficient in Bollywood culture and global cultural fads.

The final dance section is designed as an upbeat dance number with extensive use of Punjabi folk dances. This is again part of the YRF strategy to attract diasporic Punjabi audiences. However, in contrast to the folk-derived song and dance, which attempts to recreate an authentic picture of traditional folk dance, this number is more aligned with the upbeat fusion form of *Bhangra* meant for nightclubs. The dancers wear Punjabi folk attire, but it is highly stylised and embellished. To heighten the glamour of this fusion folk dance number, fireworks, and blinking strobe lights emulating contemporary nightclubs, especially of the trance and techno genres, are used. The lighting of this dance sequence is modeled somewhat on the lines of the musical sequences in the films *Moulin Rouge!* and *Chicago* (2002).

These two sequences represent an important sub-genre of the dance routine that have now become a staple feature of YRF song and dance sequences. From within the sub-genre of the upbeat “Bollywood dance” number, the “Jhoom” sequence captures two key manifestations—firstly, a self-referential “Bollywood dance” number modernised with global influences, and secondly, a folk-derived dance presented in a Bollywoodised fashion. One can find these upbeat Bollywood dance numbers being played not just at celebrations, but nightclubs and *Disco* theques, where they are popular amongst young urbanised audiences who previously snubbed “Bollywood dance” as being uncool.
Conclusion

Given the prolific output of films from this production house and its reputation as a creative innovator in the field of Bollwyood song and dance, YRF emerges as a suitable case study to examine the representation of folk dance within the changing conditions of Bollywood cinema over the last four decades. In the next few chapters, I will conduct a close textual analysis of song and dance sequences selected from six different YRF films to explore these issues surrounding the hybridisation of folk dance forms in each decade. I will also attempt to build the socio-cultural context for each decade. In Chapter four, I will examine Kala Patthar and Silsila from the late 1970s and early 1980s, to highlight the early days of the hybridisation of folk dance forms, used in conjunction with key concerns of social life that arose with urbanisation. In Chapter five, I shall examine Lamhe and Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge from the 1990s, to show how folk dance forms are utilised as authentic symbols of the Indian homeland, especially for diasporic audiences. And finally in Chapter six, I shall take sequences from Veer Zaara and Tashan to highlight the use of folk dance in the post-global India of the 2000s a nation thoroughly permeated by global cultural influences.
Chapter 4

In The Shadow of Rustic Life:

Folk Dance in Urbanising India (1970s-80s)

In this chapter, I will examine the representation of folk dance forms in song and dance sequences from two YRF films produced in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This period in the Hindi film industry witnessed a dramatic rise in the hybridisation of Indian folk dance forms as song and dance sequences were being reconceptualised into glamorous spectacles. I will examine the representation of folk dance forms in song and dance sequences from the YRF films, *Kala Patthar* (1979) and *Silsila* (1981), to examine two different examples of this process of hybridisation of folk dance forms at its nascent stage. I will begin by drawing up a brief contextual background of the socio-cultural landscape in India and trends shaping the Hindi film industry at the time. I will touch upon the larger issues of the urbanisation and modernisation of India in the 1970s and 1980s, and the rise of action-oriented films under the influence of superstar Amitabh Bachchan. Having established that context, I will proceed onto my analysis to show the ways in which elements of folk dance forms were hybridised in the two selected song and dance sequences, as they were used in conjunction with issues of social life that arose with urbanisation and modernisation in India during this period.
India in the 1970s and 1980s—A Brief Context

The early 1970s were turbulent times for India. The country was embroiled in a third war with Pakistan, as India supported the division of Pakistan and the formation of the separate nation of Bangladesh from East Pakistan. India was in a fragile state in terms of its internal polity as well (Dasgupta 2006, Guha 2007). The Nehruvian vision of a socialist, centrally planned economy was unable to alleviate mass poverty leading to deep unrest (Guha 2007). The country was also experiencing the first major threat to its democratic framework with the somewhat semi-authoritarian rule of the Indira Gandhi government, which reached its lowest point with the imposition of a state of Emergency in 1975.

Against this background of social and political instability, Hindi cinema was also experiencing some changes. The release of *Zanjeer* (The Chain) in 1973 marked a momentous shift in Hindi cinema, as formulaic action based films took over from the genre of romance and family drama popular in the earlier decades. Noting this shift in Hindi cinema, Ganti (2004, p. 33) states:

Films in this period became markedly violent and shifted their focus from the family

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26 Non-alignment with global powers, a centrally planned economy, and the creation of public sector industries were the hallmarks of government policy under Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru (1947-1964) (Bajpayee 2003, p.236). These Nehruvian policies were more or less followed by subsequent governments, until the 1990s when a broad-based policy of economic liberalisation and globalisation was launched. While Shashi Tharoor (2003, p.243) praises Nehruvian policies for promoting democratic pluralism in India, he critiques their economic approach: “The combination of internal control and international protectionism gave India a distorted economy, underproductive and grossly inefficient, making too few goods at too low a quality at too high a price.” See Tharoor, S., 2003. Nehru: The Invention of India New York: Arcade Publishing Inc.

27 Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India from 1966-1977 and 1980-1984. In 1975, the High Court of Allahabad declared Gandhi’s 1971 election void due to electoral malpractices. Indira Gandhi stayed defiant and moved her case to the Supreme Court, thus resulting in nation-wide protests against her highhandedness. Due to widespread internal disorder, the government decided to impose a State of Emergency in India (under article 352 of the Constitution). This led to the semi-authoritarian rule of Indira Gandhi until 1977, when she was defeated in the general elections.
and domestic domain to that of state, society and streets. The state was frequently depicted as ineffectual in solving problems like crime, unemployment, and poverty. The inability of the law to deliver justice became more pronounced in films of this period and vigilante justice was valorised.

*Zanjeer* heralded the arrival of Amitabh Bachchan as the “Angry Young Man” (AYM) figure, a hero of smouldering masculine ferocity and a rebel with a cause, who would single-handedly act to win justice for ordinary people. Popular sentiment was seething with angst against the government’s inefficiency, corrupt politicians and exploitative capitalists. The AYM films capitalised on this mass sentiment to depict the helplessness of ordinary people in the face of the oppression by the powerful. In a sea of mass inertia and despondency, the films depicted the AYM as a lone figure who stands out to oppose injustice and fight for these helpless people. In these Bachchan films, the AYM is not a mute impotent spectator; he observes, sulks and then retaliates with extreme violence to fight the anti-nationalists, greedy corporations and the failing administration to set things in order for the common man. He ruthlessly goes after the scheming enemies of India in *Zanjeer* challenges an inefficient justice system in *Aadalat* (The Court, 1976), exposes the exploitative capitalists in *Deewaar* (The Wall, 1975) and rebels against the government which is in cahoots with the rich in *Trishul* (The Trident, 1978). Bachchan’s AYM became the mascot for the audiences in their struggle against disillusionment after the failure of Nehruvian promises of unhindered progress, and the political quagmire created by Indira Gandhi’s28 volatile semi-authoritarian leadership.

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28 It is quite surprising that while Amitabh Bachchan played this AYM figure venting public fury against the government, in personal life Bachchan was closely allied with the Gandhi family, and was great friends with her sons Rajeev and Sanjay Gandhi. Noting this schism between his filmic character and actual life, Dasgupta (2006, p. 26) says, “When Mrs. Gandhi declared Emergency in 1975,
The AYM hero stood in stark contrast to films of the earlier era, where the hero was often a romantic figure—suave, sentimental, courteous and quite passive. The sensitive outcast played by Rajesh Khanna (who was the reigning superstar till Bachchan came on the scene in 1973), the guileless childlike man played by Raj Kapoor, the tragic king played by Dilip Kumar, and the suave urban flamboyant embodied by Dev Anand were all romantic heroes. Noting the presence of the hero outside the domestic domain, to which romantic heroes of the past were often relegated, Virdi (2003, p. 88) says, “an aspect of constructing masculinity is the hero’s role as a primary agent shaping the nation’s history. Like all heroes, the Hindi film hero upholds the law; or, on occasion, he is the heroic outlaw.” There were action films made before these AYM films, which portrayed the hero as a masculine figure shaping the nation's history. But they never inflamed the imagination of audiences across the country in the way that Amitabh Bachchan’s angst-ridden “Angry Young Man” figure did.

Many argue that the rise of the AYM films led to the downfall, or at least the marginalisation, of song and dance in Hindi films. The focus of these films now shifted towards action sequences and dialogue. Most “AYM” films had four to five song and dance sequences, at the most. This was in contrast to earlier films, which often had nine to ten song and dance sequences. The fall of the romantic superstar Rajesh Khanna (adored for his sensitive enactment of romantic ballads), and the sidelining of dancing stars like Shammi Kapoor and Jeetendra, cemented this
perception that the era of Hindi films as full-scale musicals with numerous song and dance sequences was on the wane.\footnote{I do not in any way mean to suggest that the 1970s found no place for romantic dramas or family sagas. Instead, I wish to argue that there was a definite shift from the predominance of those genres in 1960s and early 1970s to more action-oriented films in the style of the AYM films.}

Even if song and dance routines were to continue in some form in these films, the secondary place of song and dance in the AYM films was evidenced by the fact that the supporting hero was given most of the song and dance sequences while Bachchan as the AYM set about accomplishing the more important action sequences of the film. In *Deewaar* and *Trishul*, it is Shashi Kapoor, the second lead of the film, who romances and dances the heroines; in *Sholay* (1975) it is Jai’s (Bachchan) friend Veeru (Dharmendra) who is shown as being good at singing and dancing. Noting this secondary place of song and dance, Chopra (1999) claims:

Bachchan in *Deewaar* and *Trishul* grows from a street fighter into a forceful man while his screen brother Shashi Kapoor sings songs with the girls as the romantic [hero]. In this scenario of man-in-the-making, resorting to physical fights is projected as proof of male potency. Boys who shunned fighting are wimps, not fit to be “manly” men.

However, major filmmakers of this era like Yash Chopra, Manmohan Desai, Raj Kapoor and Prakash Mehra took this trend, with its shift of focus from song and dance to action, as a challenge. They responded to the challenge by not only ensuring the survival of song and dance in Hindi films, but also re-invented song and dance in a spectacular fashion. It was under these constraints that filmmakers of the era also dabbled in prolific experimentation in terms of dance styles. They re-interpreted traditional Indian dance forms to fuse them with urban and global influences and
spectacular elements, thus ushering in the era of hybridisation. While there were a plethora of dance forms used in films prior to this era, a demarcation was generally observed between Indian and Western dance forms—with Western dances relegated to dance numbers in clubs, bars and hotels, and performed by upper-class Westernised characters. Now these different dance forms, of Western and Indian lineage, were mixed to recreate novel combinations that would add to the spectacle and contribute to the specific sensibilities of the films.

This era of experimentation in the 1970s and 1980s had the most far-reaching impact on the representation of folk dance forms in Hindi cinema. Manmohan Desai, a major Hindi filmmaker of the 1970s, was bestowed with the title of the “Showman of Hindi Cinema” for his penchant for showcasing such spectacles and experimenting with the fusion of Indian and Western dance forms on a prolific scale. For example, in his film *Amar Akbar Anthony*, a tale of national unity between people of different religious backgrounds—Amar a Hindu, Akbar a Muslim and Anthony a Christian—the song “Purdah hai Purdah” (There’s a veil between us! There’s a veil between us!) was a hybrid rendition of the *qawwali* (a form of Sufi devotional music), while the song and dance sequence “My Name is Anthony Gonsalves” depicted Amitabh Bachchan in a Chaplinesque costume doing a solo dance that included Disco and folk dance steps.

If Desai went all out in his novel spectacles to mix various dance forms, Yash Chopra was more conservative in his approach and restrained his dance sequences from turning into unrecognisable mixtures of numerous elements. Inclined towards traditional Indian dances, his films mostly focused on folk dance forms and wherever

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31 I would like to add that many films prior to the 1970s also experimented and fused various folk, classical and Western dance forms, but they were more sporadic and didn’t constitute a trend. In the 1970s, the influence of Western dance forms influence grew much stronger and they were utilised very frequently in a hybridized manner with other Indian dance forms, as well as, independently.
he incorporated Western influences, he was cautious about retaining the essence of the folk dance used. In place of the unrecognisable mishmash of dance forms in Desai's films of the era, YRF films made a deliberate effort to draw the viewer's attention to the specific folk dance forms being used. Given the predominance of folk dance forms in his films and his attempt to represent folk dances while still keeping in mind the actual folk dance practices- but with an endeavour to represent them in a more glamourised manner on-screen- YRF’s song and dance sequences provide pertinent examples to examine how folk dances are represented in Bollywood cinema. I will discuss the representation of folk dance in song and dance sequences from two major YRF films of this era, Kaala Patthar and Silsila, to analyse the signs of nascent hybridisation and the displacement of folk dances from their traditional contexts.
The Early Days of Mixing: Folk Dance as Community Spirit of Migrant Industrial Workers in “Dhoom Mache Dhoom”

Yash Chopra’s *Kaala Patthar* (Black Stone, 1979) was inspired by the true story of the “Chasnalla mine disaster” in 1975, where 375 miners were killed after the mine was inundated with water. Set in Coal India Limited’s mine in Maharashtra, *Kaala Patthar* was shot in a sombre, gritty, realistic style, to tell the story of the miners’ lives who lived and worked in this semi-rural mining township. In the film, a humiliated naval officer, Vijay (Amitabh), accused of cowardice for abandoning his ship, comes to the coalmines as a lowly worker, to make reparations for those false accusations and his disillusionment with life. In the mining town, Vijay forms a bond with the workers and having witnessed their exploitation, initiates a struggle against the cruel mine owner, Dhanraj Puri (Prem Chopra). An upright engineer Ravi (Shashi Kapoor), a fiery journalist Anita (Parveen Babi), a wayward rogue Mangal (Shatrughan Sinha), an ebullient street hawker Channo (Neetu Singh), the mine’s medical doctor Sudha (Rakhee), and the compassionate truck driver Jaggaya (Parikshit Sahani) join Vijay to fight for justice for the workers, and to ensure safety at the mine and compensation for those affected by the disaster.

Chopra’s oeuvre of films is predominantly based on stories about bourgeois middle-class characters and human relationships. He mainly dabbled in action films in the 1970s, as he teamed up with Bachchan in *Deewaar* as director, and then produced and directed *Kaala Patthar* under the banner of his own production house. In *Kaala Patthar*, Bachchan is called Vijay[^32], the name he took on in all of his AYM films.

[^32]: Bachchan's AYM character named Vijay made his debut with the film *Zanjeer* (1973) and was repeated in a number of AYM films thereafter. In all his Bachchan films of the era, YRF made a concerted effort to present Bachchan as an AYM in two different modes—firstly, as Vijay the angst-
Dwyer (2002, p. 109) argues that Chopra’s *Kaala Patthar*, *Deewaar* and *Trishul* form a trilogy of sorts with Bachchan as Vijay, the industrial worker-hero as the protagonist.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Bachchan’s AYM character rarely participates in song and dance sequences (especially in the films of the 1970s), therefore, *Kaala Patthar*’s song and dance numbers feature the other main characters Ravi, Anita, Channo and Mangal.

YRF engaged Rajesh Roshan as music director and Suresh Bhatt as dance director; while the lyrics of the songs were penned by noted poet and lyricist Sahir. Keeping in line with the gritty realistic theme of the film about the struggles of poor mineworkers, Chopra only used five song and dance sequences in this film. This was a drastic change from earlier YRF films like *Kabhie Kabhie* and *Daag*, in particular, which contained at least nine-ten song and dance sequences filmed in scenic locations and on a lavish scale. Dwyer (2002, p. 111) also notes this difference:

Rajesh Roshan’s music provides hit songs, albeit fewer romantic numbers than one might expect, in the context of the gritty realism of the mine, these being largely confined to Ravi-Anita, the only two who appear in romantic locations, the other songs being mostly traditional wedding songs and Qawwalis and folk-based dances.

As I argued earlier, the secondary place of song and dance in the film and the reduction of romantic numbers was in keeping with the focus of the film on action sequences and narrative elements. Nevertheless, the few song and dance sequences

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33 In the only romantic song in the film “Baahon Me Teri” (In your Arms) Chopra uses his typical romantic duet, with Ravi and Anita wooing each other in picturesque locations and singing and dancing
that appear in *Kaala Patthar* aid the progression of the storyline, by capturing some momentous events or foregrounding the personality of a character through a musical interlude.

“Dhoom Mache Dhoom” (There is a Frenzied Euphoria) is positioned as a group victory dance of the community of mineworkers. The sequence appears in the story after the owners force the mineworkers to sign a document granting a bonus pay of three months while fraudulently paying them a bonus for only one month. When the mineworkers realise this, they get together and threaten to stop work if their demands are not met. Ravi Malhotra, the upright and honest engineer of the mining company, supports the workers in their fight. Initially Dhanraj Puri resists their demands, but he gives in when he realises Ravi’s power and the potential of the workers’ threats in jeopardising his company. Overjoyed with this victory over the mine owner, the mineworkers come together as a community to celebrate with the “Dhoom Mache Dhoom” song and dance number. They sing and dance:

**Chorus:**  
*Dhoom mache dhoom aaj ki raina bhor hue tak jaage jawani*  
Tonight, there is a frenzied euphoria that will keep the youth in us  
awake till the new dawn  
*Ho subah tak hum kahe ek kahani*  
We will tell this story till the dawn  
*Jhoomti dhadkanon ki zabani*  
Through the beating hearts

**Grassroots Folk Dance:**

in the rain. But here too Chopra desists from digressing into fantasy by filming the sequence in forests and fields near the mining area, thereby, keeping in line with the realistic mode of the narrative.
The sequence is filmed as an authentic community celebration with the whole mining township participating freely in the town centre. In contrast to a staged performance where there is a strict division between the performer and the spectator, folk dances in their original rural settings normally take place “in the central square of a village, a community hall, in temples or in schools, in the home or garden of the village head or a wealthy person, or just in the street” (Jairazbhoy 1985, p. 228). The dancers perform in an all-inclusive circular formation, which allows people to participate, or switch positions at will. The “Dhoom Mache Dhoom” sequence attempts to adhere to these conventions of folk dances as communal, inclusive performances.

Rajesh Roshan employed Indian folk and classical instruments with a Western orchestra and brass band for this song. Although the use of a Western orchestra or Western musical instruments is commonly found in Hindi films, the use of a brass band is quite rare. Here, the specific connotations attached to the brass band can elaborate how its use helps to underline the feeling and tone of the sequence as an authentic celebration of poor mineworkers. The brass band, which was first brought into India under British colonial rule, has now percolated into popular culture to become an integral part of the musical repertoire of everyday celebrations.\(^{34}\) While, one may think about classical Indian instruments when thinking about music in India, in reality classical instruments are mostly relegated to elite concerts or music schools. In the popular celebrations of everyday life, from wedding processions to political rallies, people use brass bands to play music. Noting this popularity of brass bands in India, Herbert (2000, p. 3) says:

\(^{34}\) Many Indians were soldiers in the British military under colonial rule in the 19th and 20th centuries. Soldiers in the military band were trained in these brass instruments. After their military service, many of these ex-soldiers started their own bands and played in social ceremonies and functions, most prominently at weddings.
The country which probably has most brass bands is India, where it has been claimed there maybe as many as 800,000 band players, but here the bands are collections of miscellaneous wind and percussion instruments, and the repertoire is partly remembered and partly improvised, rather than played from written music.

Drawing on the populist base of brass bands as the music of everyday life of the ordinary people, “Dhoom Mache Dhoom” cleverly uses the music of a brass band to complement this victory-dance as an authentic grassroots celebration.

The lyricist Sahir, an associate of Chopra for over 30 years\textsuperscript{35}, penned the lyrics of “Dhoom Mache Dhoom”. Sahir was a communist and the lyrics of this song reflect his passionate commitment to the workers’ struggle in real life (Anantharaman 2008). According to Gulzar (2003, p. 289), “A communist by political conviction, Sahir wrote some very patriotic songs.” Along with Hindi, Sahir uses the colloquial Bhojpuri dialect (a dialect related to the official Hindi language, predominantly spoken in rural and semi-rural belts in North India) especially for the rogue Mangal’s lines, to add a rustic flavour to the song. The lyrics also incorporate elements of folk humour and repartee in sections where Mangal attempts to woo the village belle, Channo.\textsuperscript{36} For example in the following two verses of the song, while Channo sings in Hindi, Mangal uses the Bhojpuri dialect.

Channo: \textit{Jab talak raat chale, pyar ki baat chale}

Till the time the night is there, only the talk of love is in the air

\textit{teri meri meri teri palken na jhapke}

\textsuperscript{35} According to Dwyer (2008, p.129), “when Yash came to Mumbai to see B.R [his elder brother, who was an established filmmaker] in his college vacation, when B.R was making Afsana, the only person he wanted to meet from the industry was Sahir.”

\textsuperscript{36} These types of songs, with the hero and heroine engaged in flirtatious teasing, are generically known as “chhed-chhad” (teasing or titillating) songs.
Therefore, yours and mine eyes shouldn’t even blink

\textit{Rang lehraate rahe, ang tharrate rhaen}

The colours are flying high, and the body is quivering with desire

\textit{Tapi tapi chehron se sholo si lapke}

The face is so hot that it seems like its inflamed with desire

\textit{Mangal: Hoo. toke tohri hi kasam, todd mat aur zulam}

Hey, I swear on you, please don’t torture me any further

\textit{hamka dai de anguthi nisaani, tori hogi badi meharbaani}

And kindly, give me a ring as your love’s symbol, I will be very grateful to you

With these elements of a communal setting, including dance formation, brass band music and rustic lyrics, the sequence attempts to create an authentic picture of the raucous bonhomie and earthy character of the mineworkers.

Suresh Bhatt, who was the dance director of all of Yash Chopra’s films in the 1970s, was recruited for this film too. With 180 films under his belt from 1957 to 1994, Bhatt was one of the most prolific choreographers of Hindi cinema and played a major role in influencing the direction of dance choreography. He utilised Indian folk and classical dance forms in films like \textit{Padosan} (1968), \textit{Aaya Sawan Jhoom Ke} (1969), \textit{Aan Milo Sajna} (1970); deployed Western dance forms like the “twist” in the 1960s in films like \textit{Bhoot Bangla} (1965), and dabbled in “\textit{Disco}” in the 1980s with \textit{Karz} (1980), \textit{Rocky} (1981) and \textit{Zamane Ko Dikhana Hai} (1981). His eclectic selection of dance forms—whether traditional Indian folk and classical dances or Western dance forms like jazz and \textit{Disco} or Arabic and Russian dance forms—was a
forerunner to the movement towards the hybridisation of dance in Hindi cinema that gave birth to “Bollywood dance” in the 1990s.

In “Dhoom Mache Dhoom”, Bhatt uses a mixture of steps predominantly inspired by traditional dance forms from India. There are references to folk dances like *Bhangra, Giddha, Lavani* and *Garba* and some steps from classical dance forms like *Kathak*. Some impromptu moves performed by certain characters reveal a hybridised form of Western *Disco* mixed with Indian folk dance, but overall the elements of folk dance dominate this sequence. I will begin by analysing the group dance of the main actors and background dancers to show how this mixture of folk dance forms is represented; and examine any discrepancies in this filmic representation from the traditional context in which folk dances are represented.

**The Group Dance:**

As noted above, “Dhoom Mache Dhoom” uses a mixture of Indian folk dance forms to depict the community celebration of the mineworkers. Bollywood generally utilises elements of folk dance forms, which are traditionally linked with communal celebrations and festivities, in order to recreate a feeling of communal harmony on screen. As Khokar (1987, p. 15) has noted communal dances in India are integral to all celebrations to “promote social cohesion, [and] dancing often pushes itself as a collective activity, pursued randomly or on occasions earmarked for it.”

This heavy influence of folk forms is used to recreate an authentic picture of the mining town. The mineworkers are depicted as recent rural migrants to this town. And to show that they are still deeply immersed in the folk culture they had left

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37 *Lavani* is a traditional song and dance form from the state of Maharashtra.
38 *Garba* is a folk dance form from the state of Gujarat.
39 *Kathak* is a classical dance form from North India, originating from a dance performed by female courtesans for nobility.
behind in their villages, the mineworkers incorporate folk dances into their routines. Moreover, the mixture of four to five forms of folk dance from different parts of India also portrays the industrial mining township as a recently constructed urban centre and a melting pot of different cultures that these migrants bring with them. But while folk dances are used to recreate the picture of an earthy, rustic communal celebration, one must note that the random mixing of disparate folk dances from various regions is also significant.

Another tangential point to be noted in this mixture of folk dances, which makes an almost disingenuous use of these forms, is the use of the Lavani dance considering that the narrative and language used in the film sets the story in the Hindi-speaking North Indian belt. The Lavani dance form is a folk form from the Western Indian state of Maharashtra and is part of the Tamasha tradition, a popular folk theatre form from this region that combines dance, music and drama. Lavani comes from the word Lavanya that means beauty. This folk form is a combination of both dance and music. The music of Lavani is mainly based on Dholak (double sided drum). Lavani has been noted as one of the founding influences on song and dance in the Mumbai-based Hindi film industry. As Sharon Lowen (pers. comm., 14 July 2008) states:

I believe that Lavani dance from Maharashtra has been the foundation of the so-called “Bollywood Dance” from the beginning, and it still is. I feel that anyone who sees Lavani, will notice the similarity and jump up to say, “My goodness, doesn’t that look like what see in Bollywood dance?” It’s cute, it’s sexy, it’s fast and it has got all the things that are the hallmarks of Bollywood dance.

It is apparent that the Lavani influence is very much present in this sequence too, even if it tries to recreate authentic folk dances performed by rustic mineworkers of the
North Indian belt.

The sequence begins with Channo leading the line of women dancers, while the men surround the dancing women in a circular formation. The whole community watches the dance in the makeshift dance arena surrounded by houses and trucks. Throughout the sequence, the men and women alternately form separate lines and then weave together into a unified formation. Apart from the mixture of disparate folk forms, this mingling of men and women in communal dance is another point where the sequence misrepresents folk dances, which hardly use mixed-sex dancing in their traditional forms.

Having noted these points about the utilisation of folk dance forms in the group dance and the ways in which they diverge from their traditional style, I will analyse the choreography of the dance steps performed by the four main characters in this sequence—Channo, Mangal, Ravi and Anita. The focus of the dance is actually on these individuals as solo dancers at the centre of the arena, while the community members’ dance with them in the background.

**Channo’s Dance:**

After Channo leads the womenfolk into the formation, the camera shifts its focus to her, as she starts a solo dance with the dramatic facial expressions and delicate hand movements borrowed from the classical North Indian dance of Kathak. With these delicate Kathak upper body gestures, Channo also uses the controlled, vigorous footwork used in the South Indian classical dance Bharatanatyam.\(^\text{40}\)

\(^\text{40}\) Bharatanatyam and Kathak are two of the eight classical dances of India. While Bharatanatyam is mainly performed in the South Indian regions, Kathak belongs to the Northern belt of India. Bharatanatyam is a reinvention of the Sadir temple dance of the devadasis (the temple girls) in the temples of South India. Kathak is a classical dance derived from religious dance performed in temples and royal durbars of the Rajasthani princely states in medieval India. As Devi (2002, p. 166) states, “The origin of Kathak dance is traced in ancient literature to the story-tellers, the Kathakas, who recited...
In the film, Channo is a local girl from the mining community and her demeanour and dress depict her as country belle. Given this characterisation, it seems quite odd that she does not dance a rustic folk dance but uses intricate hand movements and facial expressions borrowed from classical Indian dance styles that I have noted above. This discrepancy can be seen as a result of the choreographer digressing from the character of Channo to capitalise on the star persona of the actress Neetu Singh, playing Channo. Neetu Singh was a trained dancer and renowned in the film industry for her dancing skills. In many song and dance sequences from Bollywood films, it is quite common for actors to come out from under the mould of their characters and re-establish their individual star persona to capitalise on their established popularity. Therefore, in a group dance predominantly based on folk elements, the choreographer digresses into classical Indian dance styles to use Neetu Singh’s star persona. The country belle with her classical dance skills becomes the cynosure of the whole sequence as the camera lingers on her lengthy solo performance.

**Mangal’s Dance:**

In the film, Mangal is an outlaw brigand with no cultural refinement. Having escaped from a state prison, he is living in hiding in the mining township and working as miner. He slowly transforms from a selfish rogue into a committed member of the community. Mangal falls in love with Channo and finding this celebration an opportune moment to express his feelings, he attempts to woo her.

Mangal’s dance style is as rustic as it can be, with hardly any rhythm or poise. He jumps into the centre of the dance arena brandishing his belt, his trademark step as Kathas or stories from sacred Puranas and epics with expository gestures and dance.”
an uncouth rogue who cannot dance; by utilising the belt as a prop for the dance and as a symbol of his machismo he enters the dancing arena primarily to woo Channo. In order to gain Channo’s attention, he follows her and even attempts to imitate her graceful steps, but fails to do so. Then he resorts to simply standing by and nodding his head to the music. When an opportune moment arises again, he follows the dance steps of his fellow miners, happily joining in the circular group formation as the group’s dance sequence picks up again.

Here we can see how song and dance sequences are used to complement the flow of the narrative of the film, particularly with its drastically lessened number of song and dance sequences. First, the song and dance sequence depicts the major event of the worker's victory. Second, it works as a romantic situation for the three couples—Ravi and Anita, Mangal and Channo, Vijay and Sudha—to form their bonds.

**Anita and Ravi’s Dance:**

Anita (the journalist) and Ravi (the engineer) play the two urbane, elite characters that support and guide the mineworkers’ community. At the victory-dance, they too join in the celebrations. Ravi with his exuberant moves of an indecipherable, fused style and Anita with a more recognisable *Disco* influence, highlight the social background of their characters as educated, middle-class, urban dwellers. Their ease with Western dance styles and mannerisms is evident in this dance sequence and sets them apart from the rest of the group.

While the 1970s witnessed the prolific fusion of Western with Indian dance forms, here Chopra uses Western dance influences only in order to set these two characters apart from the mineworkers. This reference to Western influence in their
dance styles also serves as a more general social comment about the division between urban/English educated and rural/vernacular Indians which became quite apparent during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Sharma 2004, pp. 345-59). Thus, different dance styles are also used as props to aid the narrative by fleshing out the personality of different characters.

Jaggaya’s Dance:

Another character called Jaggaya, the truck driver, is a peripheral figure in the film. Shown as an upright, caring friend of the mineworkers, he is always there to support them in their troubles and is also their link to the big city from where he gets essential supplies for the town. He is depicted as a Punjabi Sikh, dressed in kurta (a long collarless shirt) and lungi (traditional garment worn around the waist) with a pagri (traditional Punjabi turban) on his head. These elements of costume make him stand out amongst the homogenous crowd of shirt and trouser wearing mineworkers. In keeping with his regional identity, Jaggaya dances in the typical male Punjabi folk dance style of Bhangra, with his shoulders jerking and arms outstretched.

While the emphasis on individually tailored dance with specific dance styles is used as a means to bring out the individual personalities of Mangal, Ravi and Anita, Jaggaya almost acts like a stereotypical mascot of Punjab, defined completely by his regional identity. This is perhaps explained by Chopra’s own Punjabi background and his proclivity for using Punjabi people, places and culture in his films (Dwyer 2002, Taneja 2010). And in this film, which necessitated the story to be set in the Hindi-speaking belt, he still manages to include a Punjabi character, albeit as a peripheral figure in the story.

These different examples show that “Dhoom Mache Dhoom” deftly tells
stories of the cultural difference between various characters through song and dance, making the dance style seem an intrinsic essence of a character’s personality and identity. Having made a note on how the individual characters are made to almost dance out their characters (so to speak), we can also make a larger point about the use of solo dance routines, as such. In folk dances, which are necessarily communal activities, there is very little focus on individual performers. In his observations of Indian folk dance forms, Khokar finds that in the group dance-oriented folk repertoire, solo dance performances are very limited. As Khokhar (1987, p. 21) claims:

A large number of participants composing a line, or column, moving straight on at times assumes the character of a slow, winding procession. The solo dancer, really speaking, has no place in folk and tribal dancing, though in ritual dancing it is the individual performer that counts. In dances of celebration and joy, however, a single dancer may sometimes detach himself or herself from the group, and egged on by the others, give a demonstration of virtuosity.

Khokar has rightly pointed out that solo dances are rare in folk dance forms, only limited to momentary lapses where an individual dancer may be egged on by the group to perform some special routine. In India, it is dance forms like *Kathak* and *Bharatnatyam*, belonging to the classical dance genre, which use solo dances. Even if “Dhoom Mache Dhoom” eschews the intermingling of Western and Indian dance forms, these solo dances again ring a false note against the sequence's purported theme of a rustic communal dance.

In light of this analysis, we can note how folk dances are used with some integrity in this sequence from a YRF film of the 1970s. The sequence observes the
specificity of each dance form and blends the different styles to create a conscious admixture to represent the town as a melting pot of recent rural migrants. Also, while the sequence mixes elements of classical and folk dances of Indian lineage in the solo sequences, the choreographer deliberately sets apart the Western dance influences, restricting them to the dance routines performed by the two urbanised characters.
Bourgeois Raas Lila: Folk Dance in a Middle Class Setting in “Rang Barse”

Continuing my analysis of the representation of folk dance forms in YRF films of the 1970s and 1980s, I will now move onto the song and dance number “Rang Barse” (It is raining colours) from Yash Chopra’s film Silsila, a legendary sequence which has almost become the soundtrack to celebrations of the Hindu festival of Holi across India since its release in the 1980s.

Silsila was an ambitious YRF project with a glittering star cast made up of the leading actors of the day—Amitabh Bachchan, Rekha, Jaya Bhaduri, Sanjeev Kumar and Shashi Kapoor. Unlike Kaala Patthar, which as I explained in the last section was an action-oriented social drama of the working class, Silsila explored romance and family drama in an urban middle class setting. Bachchan plays an offshoot of his AYM persona, not the industrial public hero of Vijay, but Amit, a brooding romantic who is trapped within the vicissitudes of his own private life. In this story, Amit is thrust into a personal moral dilemma when his brother Shekhar (Shashi Kapoor), an air force pilot is killed in battle. Shobha (Jaya Bachchan), Shekhar’s fiancé is not only traumatised by the death, but being pregnant with Shekhar’s baby, is haunted by the prospect of having a child out of wedlock. Amit is in love with Chandni (Rekha); but realising the dire predicament of depression, dishonour and potential suicide facing Shobha, marries her. Chandni is heartbroken by this turn of events and marries Dr. Anand (Sanjeev Kumar) in accordance with her family’s wishes. In a twist of fate, Amit and Shobha meet during a car accident and are admitted to hospital, where they are put under Dr. Anand’s care. This leads to a chance meeting between Amit and Chandni, who then embark on an adulterous affair. However, if Amit and Chandni are
adamant about pursuing their unfulfilled romantic desires in the face of societal hostility, then Shobha and Dr. Anand are equally firm in their resolve to salvage their marriages. Finally, this faith placed in the institution of marriage by Shobha and Dr. Anand wins over their life-partners, who return home to them, instead of eloping with their paramours.41

For *Silsila*, Yash Chopra experimented with a new music director duo called Shiv-Hari—composed of Shiv Kumar Sharma, the renowned *Santoor* (a classical North Indian stringed instrument) player and Hari Prasad Chaurasia, the distinguished flautist—both of whom were doyens of Indian classical music and were stepping into the Indian film music industry for the first time. Shiv-Hari’s music had a distinctive Indian (classical and folk) resonance in its melodies, and used classical Indian instruments—creating a sound that was different to the typical Western-style orchestra-oriented music, which dominated the Indian film music scene in the 1980s, especially for films based in urban settings.

This dominance of indigenous Indian musical elements could be attributed to the fact that Chopra gave the point of view of the film to Amit, who plays a romantic Hindi poet from North India with a deep interest in the culture of the region. When Amit sings his poems of love like “Dekha ek Kwaab” (When I saw a dream), “Neela Aasman” (The blue sky) and “Ye Kahaan Aa Gaye Hum” (Which wondrous land have we reached), the lyrics are poetic and the music is mellifluous. There is hardly any vigorous dance movements in these songs and the choreography focuses on intimate moments shared by Amit and Chandni—walking hand in hand, embracing,

41 *Silsila* created a lot of curiosity before it was released because of a real life scandal associated with the film. As Dwyer (1998, p. 193) corroborates: “A widespread rumour in Bombay is that Amitabh Bachchan and Rekha have conducted a longstanding affair, while he has remained married to Jaya Bhaduri. This film was made at what was said to be the height of their affair and [was] felt to depict their relationship.” But the audiences at the time rejected the adulterous themes of the film. Although *Silsila*’s failure saddened Yash Chopra, he still rates it as one of his best films (Dwyer, 2002). After its initial box office failure, *Silsila* has now gained accolades over the years as a cult classic.
gazing at each other in fairytale like settings of the tulip gardens in Holland, the misty green valleys of Kashmir or the snow-capped mountains of Switzerland. “Rang Barse” the sequence that is the focus of my analysis, makes the most prolific use of folk dance and music in the film. Given the obvious intention of the director to recreate a musical ambience with a decidedly Indian essence and minimal Western influence, I will examine how elements of folk dance are used in the sequence.

In the story, the “Rang Barse” sequence occurs at a social gathering where Amit, Shobha, Chandni and Dr. Anand celebrate the Hindu festival of Holi with their families and friends. It is during these festivities that Amit and Chandni let go of their inhibitions and make their feelings for each other apparent, much to the consternation of their spouses, who look on as hapless spectators to this illicit romance being played out in public. Amit's flirtatious misdemeanours are not just limited to his singing; he finally ends up embracing Chandni in public, an act forbidden for married adults by the norms of societal propriety in India.

Before I delve into my analysis of the song and dance sequence it is important that I provide a brief explanation of the mythological context of Holi to provide a better understanding of how folk rituals and dance forms associated with this festival are used in the sequence.

The romance of Radha and Krishna:

Holi is a Hindu festival set in the 12th month of the Hindu calendar at the outset of the spring season and is celebrated with much fanfare throughout India, especially in the northern, central and eastern regions (Chan, 2007). With a plethora of legends associated with the festival, Rinehart (ed. 2004, p. 136) has pointed out, “Though Holi is now primarily linked with devotion to Radha and Krishna, it is also a spring harvest
festival with obvious links to (the) agricultural calendar.” Amongst many mythologies about the origins of the festival, Holi is connected with legends about the romance of Lord Krishna with his consort Radha as well as the victory of the young King Prahlad over his demon-like father. However, the festive Holi ritual, where the whole community converges into a carnivalesque celebration to dance together and throw colours on one another, is predominantly linked with the story of the romantic play between Lord Krishna and his consort Radha. As Chandra (2007, p. 168) notes:

In the city of Vrindavan and Mathura, in North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, Holi is associated with (the) Hindu god Krishna and his companion, Radha. In this region, the birthplace of Krishna, Holi is celebrated over 16 days with colourful processions, folk songs and dances.

This mischievous play between people takes on various regional manifestations and has produced different customs across India. In Mathura, the ancient city believed to be Lord Krishna’s hometown, men and women form separate contingents in a mock battle of sexes and attempt to pour colours on each other. In the state of Haryana, women take up sticks to beat their son-in-laws in mock battle.

This raucous play is also enshrined in a genre of ritual dance called the Raas Lila, which emulates the play between Krishna and Radha. As Chandra (1998, p. 184) explains:

In all the stories of Krishna’s youth Radha is given the most prominent place and in dances known as Raas Lila dances. Radha is invariably shown dancing together with Krishna while all other cowgirls are only seen moving in circles around the two.
Many folk dance forms like Laiharaoba of the Meitei community of Manipur, the Jatra folk theatre of West Bengal and Orissa, Dandiya and Garba of Gujarat can be seen as different regional manifestations of the Raas Lila dance.

The “Rang Barse” song and dance sequence is also modelled on the romantic Raas Lila dance, Amit and Chandni take the centre stage in a flirtatious dance akin to Krishna and Radha and the guests mill round them like the gopis (cowgirls). The song and dance sequence starts with a close up of Amit drinking “Bhang”, a traditional cold drink laced with cannabis, which is often drunk as an intoxicant to begin Holi festivities. Looking longingly at his former lover Chandni, who is enticingly swathed in the colours that her friends throw at her, Amit breaks into song:

*Rang barse bheege chunar wali, rang barse*

The colours are pouring, and the woman with the scarf is getting drenched

*Are kaine maari pichkaari tori bheegi angiya*

Hey! Who has sprayed you with water that your bodice has gotten all wet

*O rangrasia, rangrasia, ho*

Hey! The colourful romantic, yes it is the colourful romantic!

*Rang barse bheege chunar wali, rang barse...*

In a semi-inebriated state, Amit openly flirts with Chandni. Realising Amit's intent, Chandni begins reciprocating his advances. The erotic, playful Raas Lila dance about the romantic tussle between Radha and Krishna is used to thematise the transgressive romantic play between Amit and Chandni. Hindi films have often used the festival of Holi to thematise eroticised situations to different ends.  

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42 Bollywood films like Akhir Kyoon, Kati Patang, Mother India and Mumbai Se Aaya Mera Dost
towards the use of this mythic legend of the Krishna-Radha romance in Hindi films, Pauwels (2008, p. 381) notes:

Sexual propositioning more or less willing milkmaids is a pervasive trait of Krishna’s behaviour. He finds more than one occasion to do so. The most obvious cover for such activities is the licentious festival of colours, Holi, when the Braj villagers compete to soak each other with colourful substances. In the chase, men may take some liberties with women, and Krishna is the arch-Holi player, not only drenching the milkmaids but also grabbing them and tearing their clothes. Small wonder that lots of Hindi movies use the excuse of Holi celebration for erotic display, often with explicit references to Krishna’s mythology, especially in the songs accompanying the images.

A celebration of erotic desire linked with the actual rite of Raas Lila, is used to thematise transgressive sexual desire in a modern bourgeois middle-class Indian setting whose conservative ethos places all credence on the institution of marriage and brooks no tolerance for illicit romance. Manipulating the playfully mischievous connotations of Holi as a carnivalesque festival, the filmmaker utilises it as a site for transgressive sexual attraction to complement the story of this film.

**Bawdy Folk:**

Once Amit stops drumming the traditional dhol (a large barrel drum that is slung around the neck to enable people to play and dance at the same time), the lyrics of his
The entire song continues in the above fashion, repeating the same playful lyrics with different variations, all of them taking pot-shots at the husband and talking about the licentious behaviour of the wife with her beloved. The song actually draws from folk songs of Northern India that are often riddled with licentious repartee, bawdy insinuations and tongue-in-cheek witticisms. Harivansh Rai Bachchan who composed the lyrics for the sequence was a renowned Hindi poet, deeply immersed in the literary traditions and folk culture of North India (like the character of Amit played by his son Amitabh in the film). The lyricist draws from his knowledge of folk songs to reconstruct a bawdy sequence highlighting middle-class sexual transgression. He also uses the local dialect of Awadhi from the state of Uttar Pradesh that is home to many such folk traditions and the Bachchans' ancestral home state. Noting this point, Dwyer (1998, p. 204) says, “The Holi song (rang barse) emphasises the north Indian feel of the film. In this song Amit appears as a real UP bhaiyya, singing the song again himself in a marked north Indian accent.”
The Folksy Star Persona:
Notwithstanding Amit's supposed interest in folk culture, the rustic folksy tone taken by the urbane educated romantic poet Amit in this sequence seems a little far-fetched. I would argue that this character switch had more to do with the persona of Bachchan as the star than the actual character of Amit in the film. While discussing the song “Dekha Ek Khwab” (I saw in a dream) from the film, Dwyer (1998, p. 200) points out, “The great love song of the film, is poetry ‘sung’ by Amitabh himself, rather than by a ‘playback singer’, representing the idealised lover.” Drawing on the audience’s knowledge about his actual personal heritage, the “Rang Barse” sequence appropriates the rustic Awadhi song to capitalise on Bachchan's star persona to appeal to the masses.

As planned by the filmmakers, “Rang Barse” went down so well with the audiences that the 1980s saw many offshoots from this song, where Bachchan lent his voice to folk-based sequences and performed them “out of character” to the role he was actually portraying in the film. Studying this phenomenon of the shift from mellifluous refined lyrics to folk songs, Mishra (2002, p. 153) also notes:

What we find in Bachchan is the appropriation of Indian folk songs rather than the carefully modulated lyric. Thus in Lawaris (1981) Bachchan adapts a well-known Indian folk song “Mere Angne Me Tumhara Kya Kaam Hai,” (Why are you here in my backyard?) commonly associated with Indian hijres (eunuchs).

In “Mere Angne Me Tumhara Kya Kaam Hai”(Why are you here in my backyard) from the film Lawaris (Dir. Prakash Mehra, 1981), Amitabh performs a comical version of the Swang folk dance, while singing a bawdy song appropriated from the
folk repertoire of the eunuchs\textsuperscript{43} of North India. Disowned by their families and marginalised by society, eunuchs form a separate community in pockets across India. They earn a living by singing and dancing at birthday celebrations, marriages and festive occasions. When eunuchs perform at these festive occasions, most people, especially women shy away from them, but in “Mere Angne Me” the guests at the party actively participate in the performance.

While the sequence underscores the narrative theme about the beginning of an illicit romance between Amit and Chandni, one can conclude that the song “Rang Barse” was primarily a vehicle for Amitabh's star persona.

\textbf{Recreating Holi for the Masses:}

The folksy flavour of “Rang Barse” immediately found resonance with people across the country. Its popularity has continued to date and it is perhaps the most memorable cinematic Holi song and dance number in Indian cinema. It also gained this iconic status because the sequence cleverly adapted traditional folk elements of Holi festivities into a bourgeois middle-class setting, almost acting as a pedagogical video or film teaching people how to celebrate the festival in their urban homes while retaining its folk essences.\textsuperscript{44} While Bollywood films have been credited with the immense change in the way Holi is now celebrated, “Rang Barse” is the most

\textsuperscript{43} Eunuchs are known as \textit{Hijras} in India. Hildebeitel finds that while eunuchs have been considered impure for centuries, their presence at rituals of birth and marriage in India is considered auspicious. They perform songs and dances during celebratory occasions and get paid in return (Hildebeitel, 1985).

\textsuperscript{44} It is not only the filmmakers representations of Holi celebrations that have inspired general film audiences; ordinary people have also emulated the spectacular Holi celebrations of the Bollywood fraternity. The showman of Indian cinema, Raj Kapoor was the first person to organise spectacular Holi parties attended by Bollywood celebrities. Later on other celebrities, including Amitabh Bachchan and Yash Chopra, also followed suit. Singh (2007) notes, “Holi celebration at Big B’s [Amitabh Bachchan] bungalow, Pratiksha, is a much-awaited event. Almost everybody who matters in the film industry is invited. It’s a star-studded event, with exotic food, dance and lot of fun. Equally famous is the Holi Hungama organized by the biggest name in Bollywood today – Yash Chopra. He undisputedly holds the reins of Bollywood not only for his movies but also the Holi bash as stars and starlets vie with each other to get invited by him. After all a Yash Raj Film does a wonder to one’s career.”
important of such cinematic influences that help shape actual practices. The specific elements visualised in “Rang Barse”—of family and friends gathering together in a private group on their lawns (unlike public communal celebrations), dressing in white and drinking the cannabis intoxicant (a practice generally associated with mendicants and gypsies)—were all invented in this sequence and have now become standard practice for Holi celebrations in towns and cities across India.

The “Rang Barse” sequence ushered in this hybrid fusion of folk/traditional festive elements such as Raas Lila, the carnivalesque celebrations of drinking Bhang, and throwing colours, which have subsequently been used in many other films. Many Holi song and dance numbers have subsequently taken their inspiration from “Rang Barse”—like “Ang Se Ang Lagana” from Darr (1993), “Soni Soni Ankhiyon Waali” from Mohabbatein (2000), “Holi Khele Raghubeera” from Baghban (2003) and “Lets Play Holi” from Waqt: The Race Against Time. As Raheja (2005) notes:

Amitabh is justifiably famous for his Holi songs leading right up to his latest, Baghban's “Holi khele Raghubeera” in which the 62-year-old star matches steps with the ever-graceful Hema Malini. Of course, Amitabh's most famous Holi number, arguably the most cited Holi number came 20 years earlier in his Yash Chopra directed Silsila …Whether as a plot pivot or as a mood weaver, the Holi song is a perennial in our cinema. These songs have seeped into our imagination and their hold over our collective consciousness now runs as deep as the colours of Holi.

While interviewing some Hindi film viewers about the impact of this song on their perception of Holi, I found a unanimous affirmation of its influence among my respondents. Amrita (pers. comm., 7 July, 2008) from New Delhi said, “According to me it makes festivals more enjoyable and fun. When I think of Holi, I think of the
sequence in white salwar kameez and kurta pajamas and colours all around.” Kamal Gill (pers. comm., 9 July, 2008), an Indian-Australian based in Melbourne seconds Amrita’s opinion, “Ahhh, Holi - Rang Barse... I think Bollywood songs and dances have a huge impact on our festivals. These song and dance situations from Bollywood films give us an opportunity to relate films with festivals.” The mass appeal of the song has not faded even after three decades. The “Rang Barse” sequence is such an iconic song that it has almost become the soundtrack for Holi celebrations across India, played year in and year out at most social gatherings. From my personal experience as a news reporter with Zee News (a prominent Indian Satellite TV channel), I invariably found the song “Rang Barse” being played at all parties and social gatherings, while covering news stories on the day of Holi.

But, while transporting folk elements into middle-class settings to underscore a sense of continuity with established folk traditions, the sequence indelibly transforms their essence under Chopra’s directorial style. Chopra’s trademark style of filming his romantic stories on a lavish scale, that Dwyer (1998, p. 187) has called “glamourous realism”, somehow erodes the earthy, rustic flavour of the folk dance he uses here. Similarly, another song and dance sequence from the film that makes extensive use of folk dance elements but also re-appropriates them in a middle class context is “Sir Se Sarke”. In the “Sir Se Sarke” sequence, Shekhar and Shobha are singing a romantic duet about their impending marriage, while women in the background are dancing the Punjabi folk dances of Giddha and Kikli as part of a festive rite of fertility to bless a pregnant married woman. After this sequence Shekhar says to Shobha, “It is beautiful how a good ritual changes the meaning of life. The song that the girls are singing there has sanctified the relationship between a man and woman.” The folk dance is perceived as a repository of traditional values.
and holiness that will even sanctify a child conceived out of wedlock to an urbane outgoing young couple. In “Rang Barse”, Chopra transforms a ritualistic *Raas Lila* dance and bawdy folk songs into a modern tale of illicit romance, and a raucous communal play of colours into a sanitised private party of middle class people in white clothes throwing colours at each other on their private lawns.
Conclusion

In this early period of experimentation and hybridisation in song and dance in the 1970s and the 1980s, Yash Chopra proceeds with restraint when using folk dance forms in his films. Given his commitment to North Indian (mostly Punjabi) traditional forms of music or dance, there are strong resonances of folk dance forms in the “Rang Barse” and “Dhoom Mache Dhoom” sequences, which are employed in an attempt to recreate a faithful rendition of folk dance. In both examples, the folk dance forms are used in the context of urban or semi-urban Indian settings, as an attempt to recreate a connection with rustic life. However, with the folk dance forms transplanted into this context of urban life, there are some elements that are invariably changed in the process. “Dhoom Mache Dhoom” mixed folk dance forms of different lineages to characterise the mining town populated by recent rural migrants as a melting pot of disparate cultural influences. And “Rang Barse” translated elements of folk dance traditions associated with Holi to a bourgeois middle class setting to create a template for Holi celebrations, which has now been appropriated by audiences across India. In the next chapter, I will discuss the representation of folk dances in Bollywood films of the 1990s, to show the impact on representation of folk dance forms under the influence of globalisation, rapid economic development and the prolific growth of an Indian diaspora.
Chapter 5

Nostalgia for India:
Folk Dance in a Neo-traditional Era (1990s)

In this chapter, I will discuss the representation of folk dance forms in YRF films of the 1990s. Within the larger context of economic liberalisation, globalisation and mass migration there was a prolific rise in the role of diasporic Indian audiences as important players in the Bollywood film business during this period. Consequently, folk dance forms were cast in a spectacular mode to represent the glory of the Indian homeland by drawing upon the nostalgic sentiment for India among diasporic audiences and local audiences at home. In my close analyses of song and dance sequences from two YRF films of the era—*Lamhe* and *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, I will bring forth the various dimensions underpinning this scheme of the representation of folk dance forms as symbols of the idyllic Indian homeland. Once again, I will begin with a brief discussion of the wider social context of the era, which will provide the backdrop for the individual analyses that are to follow.

India in the 1990s—A Brief Context

The decade of the 1990s is considered a watershed in post-independence India. With a spate of policies of economic liberalisation launched by the Finance Minister Manmohan Singh in 1991, India embarked on a path towards drastic structural transformation. As Basu (2007, p. 146) notes:
The country’s notorious licensing system was dismantled, the mindless high import tariffs lowered and exchange controls eased. The gamble paid off. The economy turned around from the brink of major chaos and international debt default. And by 1994 the economy was booming.

This new direction of economic liberalisation opened up the somewhat insular, centrally planned, subsistence-oriented economy of India by easing government controls, opening markets to global corporations and boosting private entrepreneurship. This had a seismic effect on India's future as a nation, reviving the vibrancy of its socio-economic landscape and placing the nation firmly on the global map. India's interaction with the global economic network was buoyed by the arrival of many multi-national corporations in the country and the information technology revolution.

This restructuring of the economy also had an indelible impact on the Indian population. Large sections of this population attained a newfound International mobility—as workers moving abroad, as tourists with the financial capital to travel or as emigrants resettling in foreign countries. These people are officially known as Non-Resident Indians (NRIs).

With this increasing global mobility of the Indian populace in the 1990s, Bollywood cinema also adapted and responded to these changes. Not only did this era of increased global interaction bring new ideas and technology into the film industry, but also the tastes of a globalised Indian audience began to influence the stylistic and thematic elements of Bollywood films. To give an example, while foreign countries figured as exotic and spectacular locations in Bollywood films of the previous eras, there was a considerable shift in this trend in the films of the 1990s. Instead of being
portrayed as sites of fantasy and escapism that interrupted the narrative of the film, foreign locations were now depicted as actual places where diasporic Indians lived and worked. Another major effect of the reorientation of Bollywood cinema was a role reversal for India itself. India was now increasingly being depicted as a desirable location, specifically as the idealised homeland of a rich culture, family values and communal harmony.

It can be argued that this phenomenon of the re-invention of India as an idyllic homeland in the 1990s largely occurred due to the increasingly prominent presence of the Indian diaspora in the West, which was becoming a sizeable market for Bollywood films. As Virdi and Creekmur (2006, p. 136), “the Indian diaspora, strongly Hindu, nationalist, and comfortable in global consumer culture, not only took centre stage in the 1990s Hindi film narrative but is increasingly important to the film industry’s marketing calculus as well.” Mishra (2002, p. 236) concurs, “[the] diaspora of late capital has now become an important market of popular cinema as well as a site of its production.” Thus, the newfound importance of the diaspora to the Bollywood film business after 1995 was cemented by filmmakers realising the potential of this vast market, which had financial clout and a large demographic.

The media anthropologist Arjun Appadurai terms such uprooting of people from their home country to newer grounds as “deterritorialisation”. In a scenario of mass mobility under deterritorialisation, Appadurai notes that the mass media play an important role in helping displaced populations maintain their identity and connection with their homeland. Appadurai (1996, p. 8) substantiates the role of the mass media as the platform for such experiences:

Collective experiences of the mass media, especially film and video, can create
sodalities of worship and charisma, such as those that formed regionally around the Indian female deity Santoshi Maa in the seventies and eighties and transnationally around Ayatollah Khomeini in roughly the same period. … these sodalities are often transnational, even postnational, and they frequently operate beyond the boundaries of the nation. These mass mediated sodalities have the additional complexity that, in them, diverse local experiences of taste, pleasure, and politics can crisscross with one another, thus creating the possibility of convergences in translocal social action that would otherwise be hard to imagine.

Indeed, Appadurai’s (1996, p. 8) “community of sentiment” can be seen as operating within the filmmaking as well as the film-viewing process as they converge to create a collective fantasy about India as the idyllic homeland. Filmmakers capitalise on the desire of displaced diasporic audiences to connect with their homeland by creating cinematic fare that focuses on such issues; and film viewers partake in this fare to appropriate the images of the films to make sense of their individual experiences and to constitute their personal identities. As Appadurai (1996, p. 49) has noted, “deterritorialisation creates new markets for film companies, art impresarios and travel agencies, which thrive on the need of the deterrtorialised population for contact with its homeland.”

Analysing this dynamic at work in diasporic clusters in Fiji, Mishra (2002) concludes that Bollywood films often recreate this image of India as an idealised homeland in the minds of Fijian Indians. Drawing on concepts like Appadurai’s “mass-mediated imagination” and Fredric Jameson’s “nostalgia”, Mishra (2002, p. 247) finds that Indian cinema has been instrumental in strengthening this image of
India as the “glorious homeland” or the “golden sparrow”45 in the minds of the Fijian Indians and other diasporic Indians. Mishra (2002, p. 247) invokes Marie Gillespie’s work in her essay “Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change” on the reception of Bollywood films as a means of linking to the homeland across different generations of diasporic Indians:

For the older generation women (mothers and grandmothers), the VCR button brought the homeland into the family room. The viewing of Bombay [Bollywood] films mediates the cleavages between an estranged diasporic culture and an “integrative” home culture. For youths it functions as a mode of legitimizing one’s own existence in a culturally hostile nation-state. Even youths recognize their parents’ doomed attempts at artificially manufacturing a culture through film; they realize that these cultural “translations” are vital for the diaspora’s emotional and psychological well being (Gillespie 1995:87).

Bollywood filmmakers have frequently used the cultural and traditional mores of India as a tool to connect the Indian diaspora and urban Indians to their roots. Thus, one may conclude that if Bollywood films of the 1970s and 1980s like Mazdoor (1983), Lawaaaris, Desh Premee (1982), Khuddar (1982), attempted to connect migrant urban industrial workers with a fantasy of village life, then in the 1990s, representations of India as the glorious homeland in films like Pardes (1997), Taal (1999) and Yaadein (2001) capitalised on the nostalgia of the Indian diaspora to reconnect with their homeland.

45 Mahmud Ghazni, the founder of the Ghaznavid Empire in 997AD, who invaded India and raided rich Hindu temples for their gold, called India the Golden Sparrow. This legend of the “Golden Sparrow” has been used time and again in Hindi films through the decades (Upkaar 1967, Parab aur Paschim 1968, Des Pardes 1978, Hum Aapke Hain Kaun 1994, Hum Saath Saath Hain 1999, Main Prem Ki Diwani Hoon 2003, Veer Zaara 2004).
The nostalgic longing of the diaspora for their distant homeland has led to the reconstruction of new mythologies that celebrate India as the beautiful motherland. As Appadurai (1996, p. 6) notes, “Diasporas bring the force of the imagination, as both memory and desire, into the lives of many ordinary people, into mythographies different from the discipline of myth and ritual of the classic sort.” This mythography of India as the idealised homeland presents it as a unique country of familial harmony, cultural values, traditional mores and a rich historical past. This myth of the idealised homeland was underscored by the portrayal of India as a unique place of family values and cultural traditions, which were depicted as being lacking in the West through the perspective of diasporic Indians. As Rajadhyaksha (2008, p. 17) notes, “the revival of traditional music along with traditional values [in Bollywood films] is part of the conscious export of a commoditised Indian nationalism and a ‘feel good’ version of ‘our culture.”

These myths of idealised India may be structured through the nostalgic longing of the diaspora, but are not an exclusive perspective appreciated by diasporic audiences only. Even for audiences based in India, such nostalgic longing became a means to empathise with the longing of the diaspora, and in turn, gain a reinvigorated appreciation for India as the glorious homeland. As Dudrah (2006, p. 66) notes, “Bollywood represents an ideal India in the collective imagination, not the real problematised nation but the shared cultural fantasy of an idealised India that is constantly striven for.” These films may cater to a diasporic viewership, but the diasporic perspective becomes the overarching lens through which audiences at home also indulge in this fantasy of India. Mishra (2002, p. 260) succinctly captures this trend of the generalised use of diaspora-oriented themes for all Indian audiences when he says, “It is not that the diaspora is always the centre of the narrative, but its
experiences function as a site where, against all odds, Indian values are triumphantly maintained.”

The emphasis on celebrating India as an idyllic homeland was also loaded with the incumbent notions of family values and cultural traditions. This has prompted film critics like Raheja and Kothari (2004, pp. 120-22) to call the 1990s the “neo-traditional” era of Bollywood cinema. Such neo-traditional films, with their focus on depicting Indian customs and values, also served as a means by which displaced people could remain connected with the ethos of the homeland they left behind. Noting the use of “neo-traditional films” by diasporic audiences to maintain a link with the ethos of the distant homeland, Gopal and Moorti (eds. 2008, p. 33) argue, “Film viewing also served as a pedagogical tool for instructing the second generation in the cultural mores and ethos of the mother country.”

Current filmmakers like Karan Johar have continued to cater to the extraordinary rise in diasporic audiences. Drawing on a dance subculture of diasporic Indians in the United Kingdom, who experimented and fused Bhangra with Western dance genres in the 1980s, song and dance sequences like “Rock ‘n’ Roll Soniye” and “Where’s the Party Tonight” from Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna (2006), fuse folk dances like Bhangra, Dandiya and Garba with Disco. Given Chopra’s emphasis on folk dance forms, I shall now proceed to examine how the YRF films of the era utilise folk dance forms.

In this larger context of the rise of a diasporic perspective and a “neo-traditional” wave in Bollywood cinema in the 1990s, I find that the representation of folk dance forms in YRF films of the era is also aligned with the ethos of this “neo-traditional” era to reinvent India as an idealised homeland catering to the nostalgic longing of diasporic Indians. Folk dance forms used in YRF films of the 1990s are
presented in an ostensibly authentic form, without overt or noticeable use of foreign
dance elements or Western costumes in order to underscore their presentation as
symbols of authenticity. Yet, while the folk elements seek to reinforce such
authenticity on the surface, the performances of the folk dance forms within specific
sequences are indelibly altered. Using song and dance sequences from two major
YRF productions of the 1990s—Lamhe and Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, I will
discuss how forms of folk dance are utilised as symbols of authentic traditions of the
homeland, but in a form that divorces them from the contexts in which they are
traditionally performed.
Dancing the *Ghoomar* in the Rain: Diasporic Gaze and the Exotic Homeland in “Megha Re Megha”

As I explained earlier, the 1990s can be noted as the era when Bollywood cinema attempted to remould itself to cater to the globally mobile Indian. The YRF production *Lamhe* was a forerunner to this wave of diaspora-oriented films. The story of *Lamhe* revolves around Viren (Anil Kapoor) a scion of an aristocratic family from the state of Rajasthan, who is now based in London. On a visit to India to settle some property matters, Viren has a chance meeting with his neighbour Pallavi (Sri Devi), whom he instantly falls in love with. However, Pallavi loves somebody else and marries him, leaving Viren heartbroken. In a twist of fate, Pallavi and her husband meet with a fatal car accident, which kills the husband instantly and leaves a severely injured Pallavi, who dies after giving birth to a girl child. Viren is then entrusted with the upbringing of Pallavi’s child Pooja. He hands the girl over to his motherly governess Daija, who had also brought him up after his parents’ death. Viren returns to London and only comes back to India after 18 years and sees Pooja, who is now an adult and the spitting image of her deceased mother. It seems that Pooja has not only harboured an ardent desire to meet her guardian, Viren, throughout her childhood, she had also surreptitiously fallen in love with him over the years. When Pooja expresses her feelings to Viren, he is plunged into a moral dilemma about how to respond to the romantic overtures of the young woman. Finally, Viren relents to her desires, expresses his own love and marries her.

Talking about *Lamhe*’s bold storyline, Jha (2005, p. 76) remarks, “the incestuous undertone in the relationship between the middle aged man and his ex-flame’s daughter severely reduced this brilliant film’s viewership.” Though *Lamhe*
failed commercially (Dwyer 2002, p.163), it received considerable critical praise for treating the issues of sexuality and romantic love in a complex fashion, a significant departure from the typical boy-meets-girl storylines of Bollywood films.

In Lamhe, Chopra creates spectacular portrayals of the traditional splendour of India and cosmopolitan life in England to create an epic and stereotypical contrast of East and West. With such fairytale-like portrayals of East and West, Bollywood filmmakers attempt to exploit impressions of an imagined past of a “traditionally and culturally rich India” for diasporic Indians and the image of “modern, cosmopolitan life of the West” for local audiences. While the first half of the film explores the historic legacy and the natural beauty of the aristocrat’s homeland of Rajasthan, with its deserts and its palaces, the second half explores London’s cosmopolitan life and tourist attractions. Although, the spectacular portrayal of foreign locations has been a persistent element of Bollywood films, this style of depicting India on a panoramic scale as an exotic location was then quite rare. By portraying India in such a light, Lamhe sparked off a larger trend in this era to depict India in a nostalgic mode as an idyllic homeland of exotic culture.

It is within the first half of the narrative, showcasing the traditional splendour of India, that we see folk dance being used to underscore the larger theme of India as the idyllic homeland. In particular, I will examine the first song and dance sequence in the film, “Megha Re Megha”, where the heroine Pallavi performs a Rajasthani folk dance. But I find that while the Rajasthani folk dance is ostensibly used to recreate the authentic splendour of the homeland, elements of the folk dance are transformed in the film. In the following sections, I will analyse the changes that occur in this process of translating a Rajasthani folk dance into an exoticised and hybridised Bollywood song and dance sequence.
The “Megha Re Megha” song and dance sequence initiates the first half of the storyline and its focus on the splendour of the Indian homeland. It also marks Viren’s return to Rajasthan. In this sequence, Viren catches his first glimpse of the beautiful aristocratic lady Pallavi, with whom he instantly falls in love.

“Megha Re Megha” starts with a couple of verses in the colloquial Rajasthani dialect announcing the onset of the Hindu month of Saawan that marks the beginning of the rainy season in India. Provoked by the falling rain, Pallavi continues the refrain by singing about her romantic longing for her own beloved. The “Megha Re Megha” song and dance sequence, the title literally translating as “Rainclouds Oh Rainclouds”, borrows from a tradition of folk songs in North India which celebrate the onset of the rainy season in the form of songs of longing for the beloved. The atmosphere of the sequence also recreates the typical settings of Saawan festivities, with floral decorations and swings attached to trees.

The formation of the dancers and their costumes borrows from the Rajput dance of Ghoomar, prevalent in the state of Rajasthan. In this dance women twirl around in circles in the traditional Rajasthani attire of long skirts teamed with blouses called Ghaghra-Choli and Ghoonghat (veil). Pallavi is also attired in this form of dress, like the dancers in the background who twirl around in the Ghoomar style. The sequence takes place in the confines of the courtyard of Pallavi’s palatial home. In India, women of the high-caste Rajput clan traditionally perform their dances within a separate domain of female space contained within the boundaries of the house, and away from the male gaze.

The folk traditions of Saawan festivities and Ghoomar dance are reconstructed

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According to the Hindu Varna (caste) system, there are four social classes: Brahmanas (priests and teachers), Kshatriyas (warriors, administrators, law enforcers), Vaishyas (the agriculturists, traders), and Shudras (louperers and menial workers). The Rajput caste, which falls under the Kshatriya Varna, is predominantly a subclass of warrior people scattered around North Indian states, some of whom also have aristocratic lineages.
in this song and dance sequence to showcase traditional Indian culture. But I find that these ostensibly folk resonances are reconceptualised in multiple ways in this sequence, that divorcing these elements of folk dance from the traditional contexts in which they are performed.

**Ghoomar as a Token Folk Element:**
Firstly, while this sequence uses elements of the traditional Ghoomar dance prevalent in Rajasthan, the typical Ghoomar dance step of twirling in circles is relegated to the chorus line dancers at the back of the scene. Pallavi’s dance does not make any attempt to replicate the traditional Ghoomar steps at all. Instead, she follows the typical Bollywood form of stylised dance with elaborate hand gestures, sensual hip thrusts and dramatic facial expressions. Saroj Khan, the leading Bollywood choreographer of the 1990s, renowned for her sensuous and erotic choreography directed “Megha Re Megha”. In this sequence too, Khan includes some iconic steps typical of her other Bollywood routines; she incorporates dramatic hand gestures, vigorous hip movements and pelvic thrusts that are not seen in traditional Ghoomar performances. Thus, it becomes clear that the references to the Rajasthani folk dance of Ghoomar, in the costumes and the choreography of the dancers in the background of the scene, are merely used to create the ambience of a folk performance. The dance performed by Pallavi, which is the centrepiece of the sequence, just follows the typical choreographic contours of “Bollywood dance”.

**Saawan Ritual or Rain Dance:**
The festive settings of the sequence and lyrics of the song expressively invoke the imagery of peahens and rainclouds borrowed from folk songs of romantic love sung
in the rainy season of *Saawan*. But while the sequence invokes the tradition of *Saawan* festivities and folk songs, the mode in which the dance is actually performed creates a different image altogether. We see that the traditional custom of invoking the monsoons and the beloved in the folk songs of the *Saawan* season are conflated with a typical Bollywood “rain dance sequence”. These “rain dance” sequences in Bollywood films are typically performed by “a voluptuous woman, scantily clad, dancing soaking-wet in the rain, her sari clinging to her body, while she lip-synchs to the playback. Through the insinuating lyrics, her appearance and the mise en scène, a montage of sexuality is produced” (Gehlawat 2006). Pallavi is ostensibly performing an authentic folk rite of singing songs of romantic love in the rainy season, but she is actually performing a typical YRF rain-dance sequence at the same time– where the sensual dance movements are heightened by the falling rain, adding to her erotic allure.

These “rain dance” sequences have been often used in Hindi films by major filmmakers like Raj Kapoor. As Patil (2005) states:

Raj Kapoor made his heroines, like Zeenat Aman and Mandakini to get drenched in rain, in films like *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* (1978) and *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* (1985), to sensualise, sexualise, and eroticise their body through see-through dresses. There was nothing artistic about it, it was plainly an attempt to invite the male gaze.

But Chopra argues against the view that “rain dance” sequences in Raj Kapoor’s and his own films are purely a device to exploit female sexuality. Dwyer (1998, pp. 157-58) also concurs with Chopra to say, “none of these songs concentrates on the erotic aspects of the wet and the rain, although their presentation may be sensual, but on the joy of the rain and its incitement to celebratory song and dance.” Although filmed in a
tasteful manner, I find that Chopra still undoubtedly uses “rain dance” sequences to
depict the female body in a sensual and erotic manner. These “rain-dance” sequences
have been a recurring feature in most YRF films over the years—from Kabhie Kabhie
(1976), and Chandni (1989) to Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (1995)—and Chopra
has consequently been given the epithet of the “master of rain dance”.

The Erotic Spectacle of the Homeland:
In keeping with the cultural more relating to women (especially of the aristocratic
class) performing such ritualistic dances within the sanctity of their own private
space, the dance is performed in the courtyard of Pallavi's palatial home, without men
watching or participating in the performance. But the cultural norm and tradition of a
female space separated from the male gaze is transgressed to titillate the film viewer.
Ensconced on a nook in the high walls of the palace, Viren stealthily looks down to
watch the dance in the courtyard. The sequence is filmed from his perspective and the
audience becomes privy to the scene through the eyes of this male spectator. Taking
the place of Viren’s prying eyes, the camera becomes a voyeuristic device stealthily
trespassing into the women's private domain. The camera captures a high angle shot
of the women through the trees and then cranes down to provide a panoramic view
revealing them singing, dancing and getting drenched in the rain.

“Megha Re Megha” also acts as the introductory scene showcasing Pallavi to
the hero Viren, as well as to the general audience. In the world of the film it is
supposedly the character of Pallavi, an aristocratic Rajasthani lady, who performs the
dance in the courtyard of her home. But the performance itself is so divorced from the
homely, shy personality of the character Pallavi has displayed, that a Bollywood film
viewer would implicitly watch the sequence as the dance of the star Sri Devi who is
playing this character.

Sri Devi was so popular for her dancing abilities in Bollywood at the time that it was mandatory for her to perform a dance in all of her films, regardless of the requirements of the story. Thus, the sequence is actually an erotic spectacle, which provides a musical entree to the dancing star, through the sensual choreography of Saroj Khan. Pallavi’s physical beauty in this eroticised folk dance is conflated with the exotic spectacle of India. The male gaze of Viren on the beautiful female figure provides a parallel to the film’s parade of India’s beauty for its audiences. The palatial locations, colourful costumes and the dancing aristocratic woman supplement this imagery of royal India in all its splendour to construct a true spectacle for the audiences.

To conclude, elements of folk dance are utilised in “Megha Re Megha” to paint a picture of India as and idealised homeland through the spectacle of eroticised female dance. But these elements are consciously transgressed or transformed, such that the Rajasthani folk dance ceases to operate within its earthy and rustic context to become a glamourous, eroticised spectacle. Ghoomar dance is used tokenistically to create a folksy ambience. The traditional Saawan folk song and dance traditions are used to create a nostalgic picture of India for diasporic audiences as a land of romance, where women still pine for their beloved with the onset of the rainy season. But these elements are actually recruited to complement a typically eroticised Bollywood “rain-dance” sequence. Furthermore, the cultural taboo relating to the closing off a female dance from the male gaze is deliberately transgressed to add to this erotic spectacle.

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47 Saroj Khan is noted for her ability to impart an element of sensuality in all the Bollywood song and dance sequences she directs. Even when she uses traditional forms of dance, her choreographic style re-invents traditional dance forms to recreate erotic spectacles. Some of these folk-derived song and dance sequences, from films like Khalnayak (Dir. Subhash Ghai, 1993) and Beta (Dir. Indra Kumar, 1994), were quite controversial for their lascivious content and lyrics with double entendre.
Leaving London and Coming Home to Punjab: Punjabi Folk Dance in “Ghar Aaja”

In contrast to “Megha Re Megha”, the “Ghar Aaja” (Come Home!) song and dance sequence in YRF’s *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* is a ballad about an NRI returning home to the warm embrace of India. In this sequence, folk dance is used to portray the rustic warmth of the homeland that the NRI has come back to resettled in after leaving his home in the West.

Yash Chopra’s eldest son Aditya Chopra took over directorial duties for his first film *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (DDLJ)* released in 1995. Aditya’s film bore all the signature elements of Yash Chopra’s romantic films—exotic locations, an affluent middle-class demographic, elaborate song and dance sequences etc. But Aditya’s multi-layered storytelling and fast-paced editing gave the film a slick new look that was unprecedented in any of the earlier YRF films.

In most YRF films the protagonist either hails from or has ancestral roots in the state of Punjab. Undoubtedly, Yash Chopra’s own Punjabi background inclined him to focus on the people and culture of Punjab in his films. But with *DDLJ*, his son Aditya Chopra focuses on the stories of diasporic Indians with a Punjabi background.

Called a modern day romantic classic, *DDLJ* tells the love-story of two young United Kingdom-based Indians and was one of the first films that revolved entirely around the lives of the diasporic community. A sizeable majority of the growing Indian diaspora in the West have a Punjabi background, and they received these Bollywood films with Punjabi themes with considerable enthusiasm. This opened up a commercially valuable market for Bollywood films in the West. With the popularity of *DDLJ* to diasporic Indians in the West, YRF realised the tremendous potential of
the Indian diaspora as a film market and shifted its focus to give precedence to the tastes of these diasporic audiences (Dwyer, 2002, p. 191-3). YRF has followed the trend to such an extent that approximately 15 films out of the next 25 they produced after *DDLJ* feature Punjabi protagonists, often with diasporic connections.

The story of *DDLJ* revolves around the family of Chaudhary Baldev Singh (Amrish Puri) a conservative Indian who lives in London with his wife and two daughters. Having made the decision to marry his daughter Simran (Kajol) off to his best friend’s son in Punjab (India), he reluctantly allows his daughter Simran to fulfil her only wish to take a trip across Europe, before she commits to her wedding. On this trip, Simran meets Raj (Shah Rukh Khan), the heir of a rich Indian businessperson in the United Kingdom, has some misadventures and eventually falls in love with him. When Baldev overhears Simran confiding her feelings for Raj to her mother, the stern patriarch decides to leave London forever and go back to India to marry off Simran. On the other hand, realising his feelings for Simran, Raj goes to India to win back his love. At the preparatory celebrations for Simran’s wedding, Raj disguises himself as a friend of the bridegroom and tries to win Baldev's trust. After some conflict, Baldev finally relents to his daughter's wishes and allows Simran to follow Raj back to London with his wholehearted consent.

“Ghar Aaja” is the theme song of *DDLJ*, and recurs at four different strategic points to help set the mood for the entire film and underscore its narrative progression. Literally translating as “come home”, the “Ghar Aaja” sequence is used

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48 Within a few weeks of its release *DDLJ* became one of the most profitable films of the era. It also earned the record of being the longest running film in the history of Indian cinema, screening for more than 13 years in the Maratha Mandir theatre in Mumbai (Guha, 2008).

49 In an interview with Varinder Singh (2003), Chopra states, “my heart beats for Punjab and Jalandhar. It is where I was born and brought up. You can see the Punjabi spirit in me. I love to be here whenever I get a chance even if it is for shooting of a film.” After the immense popularity of *DDLJ*’s depiction of Punjabi life and characters in 1995, other Bollywood filmmakers have also consistently portrayed Punjabi tradition and culture in their films.
to beckon the London-based Baldev to return home to India, the land of tradition, family values and brotherly bonding. The first “Ghar Aaja” sequence appears at the beginning of the film when Baldev is reminiscing about his life in India and expressing his longing to go back home. The second time it appears is in the middle of the film, when Baldev finally reaches India. The next two segments focus on Raj and Simran’s love and appear in the film’s second half. The third “Ghar Aaja” sequence appears during the celebrations of the “Karwa Chauth” festival. The final sequence occurs on the eve of Simran’s marriage before the climax of the film, which finally brings Raj and Simran together. I will refer to these individual sequences as “Ghar Aaja “I”, “II”, “III” and “IV”.

The “Ghar Aaja” song and dance sequences extensively utilise folk dances from the state of Punjab—the women’s dance of Giddha and the men’s dance of Bhangra—in varying degrees and at different points. To supplement this image of the “glorious homeland”, DDLJ uses the Punjabi folk dance forms of Giddha and Bhangra to create an image of the idyllic rural life of a Punjabi town. In his work on the cultural history of Sikh identity, Ballantyne (2007, p. 123) claims that folk dances like Bhangra have played an important part in the collective imagination of the diasporic Punjabi community (who predominantly follow the Sikh faith):

*Bhangra* has played an extremely important role in the articulation of both Punjabi and Sikh identities over the last four decades. It has been a prominent element in the creation of a Punjabi regional identity in the wake of partition: played a central role in the cultural life of diasporic South Asians in the United Kingdom: and functioned as a flexible expressive form that has connected the various Punjabi communities (both within South Asia and outside) into a shared, if highly uneven, cultural space. Equally importantly, *Bhangra* has been a powerful medium in the projection of Punjabi and
Sikh culture. Through *Bhangra* lyrics, stage performances, cassettes, CDs and MP3s, music videos, Internet discussion groups, and the press, visions of Punjabi history, Sikh identity, and the values of rural (especially Jat) Punjab have circulated widely in networks of cultural production and consumption since partition.

Chaudhuri (2005, p. 160) finds that this representation of idyllic Punjabi life has become quite repetitive in post-1990s Bollywood cinema:

Through their use of stars, traditions and rituals, Bollywood films feed NRIs’ nostalgia for their “motherland”. They construct an imaginary of mythical India; for example, *DDLJ* presents an idyllic, virtually pre-industrial rural Punjab, airbrushed and shorn of violent conflict.

But, even if the song has a Punjabi focus, this does not alienate non-Punjabi audiences but becomes a universal template for the nostalgic longing of Indians everywhere, regardless of their regional identities. In his close reading of films such as *DDLJ, Pardes, Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* and *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, Mishra (2002, p. 260) observes this malleability of Punjabi cultural elements and how they have overtaken Bollywood films with the rise in the profile of Punjabi diaspora:

First, the Punjabi ethos (Sikh and Hindu) is displacing the old North Indian Hindi ethos of Bombay [Mumbai] Cinema. It has been estimated that more than a million Punjabi speakers live abroad with a combined income equal to half the gross national product of the Punjab. The second is the way in which diaspora (and presumed narratives about them) function as the ideal space for the Indian spectator as well.
I will analyse the “Ghar Aaja” song and dance sequence in all four of its incarnations to discuss how elements of folk dance from Punjab are utilised to affirm the image of an “idyllic homeland” for a diasporic population. The neo-traditional tone of the film presents folk dance elements in a supposedly purist fashion, helping to recreate the romance of authentic village life in the Punjab. I will also attempt to examine the instances where folk dance forms have been hybridised and taken out of their traditional context.

“Ghar Aaja” I—From Grey London to the Mustard Fields of Punjab:

The first “Ghar Aaja” sequence is situated right at the beginning of the film and sets the tone for the entire story. As the credits roll, Baldev is shown standing in the centre of London against the sombre backdrop of Victorian buildings. But in his mind he is reminiscing about his life in India. The poignant lyrics of the song resonate in the background to reinforce these thoughts:

*Ho koyal kookein huuk uthaaye yaadon ki banduuk chalaaye*

A cuckoo snivels and wails, sparking off reminiscences of the past

*Baagon mein jhuulon ke mausam vaapas aaye re*

In the garden the season [Sawan] of swings has returned

*Ghar aaja pardesi tera des bulaaye re*

Come home, you the one who lives in a foreign land, your country calls

As the song continues to play in the background, Baldev walks to his workplace passing along a route that gives the audience a view of many of the major landmarks
of London (like Big Ben, Trafalgar Square and Hyde Park), even if they don’t represent a feasible geographic route. It is a common device in Hindi films to use a touristic gaze to conjure up major landmarks, to reconstruct spectacular images of foreign locations. The camera zooms-in to a close-up of Baldev as he closes his eyes and is transported into a fantasy about life back in his village in the Punjab. Baldev visualises a panoramic view of mustard fields in full bloom, with women dressed in traditional attire singing and dancing to the refrains of “Ghar Aaja”. Punjab is one of the richest agricultural states of India known for its sprawling mustard fields. Chopra has utilised imagery of mustard fields to depict the abundant agrarian life of Punjab in most of his films, and an approach he repeats in this sequence.

This fantasy sequence does not just bring forth images of agrarian abundance but creates cheerful images of the rituals and festivals associated with the harvest season to showcase the rich culture of the Punjabi farming community. In this fantasy sequence, Punjabi women enjoy the onset of the festive month of Saawan, running around the fields, dancing in circles and swaying their dupattas (scarves) in the air.50 The sequence recalls stereotypical images of women dancing in mustard fields to represent the rustic charm of Punjabi village life. The song beckons Baldev to return home:

*Is gaon ki anpadh mitti padh nahin sakti teri chitthi*

The illiterate village mud cannot read your letter,

*Yeh mitti tu aakar chuume to is dharti ka dil jhuume*

But when you will come and kiss this mud, then the heart of this land

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50 The colourful dupatta (scarves) that women wave while dancing in group formations is an important prop used in Hindi films since the 1940s to depict the unbridled joy of village women and the general convivial atmosphere of rural life. e.g. *Aan* (1952), *Naya Daur* (1957) and *Upkar* (1967).
will dance and sway.

These ebullient images of the brilliant yellow mustard fields of the Punjab, with smiling women dressed in traditional attire dancing the *Giddha*, are juxtaposed with the sombre grey surroundings of the London metropolis to reinforce Baldev’s longing for his home. Commenting on this clear juxtaposition of London with Punjab in the film, Dwyer (2002, p. 171) states:

> Yash Chopra cities are friendly homes for urban elites while here we have cold and anonymous London, an inappropriate location for romance, which flourishes in Swiss idylls but reaches a state of passion only in the rural Punjab. The nuclear family is the norm in London while the Punjab has the extended family and traditional hospitality, its field full of yellow mustard, a place appropriate for religious occasions and romance.

**“Ghar Aaja” II—*Bhangra* and *Giddha* Dance with Bollywood Gestures:**

The second part of the song appears when Baldev finally leaves London and relocates to India. Baldev and his family are aboard a train travelling to his village in the Punjab. The familiar strains of “Ghar Aaja” resume, intimating to the viewer that Baldev’s longing to be home has now been transformed from a fantasy into reality.51 The upbeat tempo of the song in this sequence reflects the joyous mood and sets the tone for the rest of the film, which is marked by the continuous festivities in Baldev’s hometown.

As the train passes through the lush fields of the Punjabi heartland, we see

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51 This song is not just a call for diasporic Indians like Baldev to return home. On another level it is a call from women to their menfolk settled abroad. Punjab has the highest number of men living outside of India, many with wives and families back home.
Punjabi men playing traditional Dhol (drum) and flute instruments while gyrating slowly to Bhangra style beats. They are dressed in the traditional Punjabi dress of Kurta (traditional knee length collarless shirt), Lungi (cloth worn around the waist), Pagadi (turban) adorned with Turla (a fan-like adornment) and Jugi (waistcoat). The womenfolk run alongside the train as it chugs into the town, with their dupattas (scarves) flying in the air. These people appear magically in the fields as if they were waiting to welcome Baldev and his family to the village.

To further reassure the returning son that the homeland he had longed for in his fantasy still exists in all its traditional glory, women dancing in the mustard fields sing:

\[
Pangat pe aayein mutiyaarein chham chham paayal ki jhankaarein
\]

The women still come to the riverbank, with their jingling anklet bells.

\[
Kheton mein laharaayein sarason
\]

In the fields the mustard plants are swaying.

\[
Kal parson mein bitein barson
\]

Days pass and turn into years.

In keeping with the lyrics, the women carry earthen pots near the riverbank to fill with water, gesture to the swaying mustard fields, and look towards the horizon through their dupattas as if to reassure the returning son that all these elements associated with idyllic village life still exist.

The elements of folk dance in this sequence are utilised to create an idyllic picture of authentic Punjabi rural life to welcome the NRI son home, but they are transformed in the process. When one examines the choreography of the dance
closely, it becomes obvious that the sequence does not wholly conform to the traditional style in which these folk dances are performed. The women who sing the song are purportedly dancing the Giddha in the fields, with their traditional gear and circular formation. But the choreography incorporates dramatic hand gestures into the women’s dance routines as they sing the lyrics, calling out to their beloved and petting the swaying mustard plants. They look longingly towards the horizon with their dupattas (scarves) spread out, and finally run alongside the train swaying their arms in the air, blending these typical elements from a “Bollywood dance” routine with those of Punjabi folk dance. This particular mode of using stylised hand gestures and dramatic facial expressions to enact the meaning of the lyrics is a vital feature of “Bollywood dance” called “adayegi” (enactment/acting). Thus, elements of the folk Giddha routine are used to reinforce an idyllic image of an unchanged rustic Punjabi life on the surface, but the actual choreography is superimposed and overshadowed by the typical dramatised style of Bollywood film dance in order to reinforce specific narrative themes.

“Ghar Aaja” III—Festivals of India:

The third section of the song does not have any vigorous dancing, but the movements of the dancers are choreographed to portray the rituals involved in celebration of the Hindu festival of Karwa Chauth52, where women fast for the well-being of their husbands or beloved. In the film, Simran does not wish to perform the ritual for the groom chosen by her father, and surreptitiously manages to consecrate her fast with her beloved Raj. The lyrics of the song explicitly spell out the rituals associated with

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52 Karwa Chauth celebrates the marital bond between a husband and wife and holds an important place in the Hindu social calendar. Women dress in their best clothes, fast for a whole day and pray for a happy marital life. The fast is only broken in the evening at the first sight of the moon, with blessings from their spouse (Verma, 2002).
Karwa Chauth.

_Haathon mein puuja ki thaaali aaye raat suhaagonwaali_

With worship plates in hands, the women pray on the festive night of _Karwa Chauth_ for their husbands’ love and devotion.

_Chaand ko dekhuun haath mein joduun karwachauth ka vrat main toduun_

I look at the moon; with folded hands I pray and end my fasting for this holy day of _Karwa Chauth_ (for my husbands’ wellbeing).

The choreography consists of women moving in group formations, praying to the gods and making ritualistic offerings in the water. They then look at the reflection of the moon in the water, and finally, break their daylong fast by drinking water offered by their husbands or fiancés. Noting this use of the festival in the sequence, Mishra (2002, p. 256) comments:

> In _DDLJ_ the Karwa Chauth is inserted into the wedding celebrations to bring “pure” Indian ritual of the homeland to the diasporic spectator. It is a predominantly Punjabi fast and not necessarily pan-Indian, which says something about the target audience of the (new) diaspora.

The festivities become an important motif in the film, stressing the aspects of love and loyalty to highlight the culture, tradition and life of the Punjabi community. Aditya Chopra was inspired by the family drama _Hum Aapke Hain Kaun (HAHK)_ produced by Sooraj Barjatya in 1994, which became an iconic film for its lavish and unprecedented presentation of Hindu weddings and ritual celebrations. On the cult
status that *HAHK* achieved among its audience, Dudrah observes, “*HAHK* is an enthralling film primarily because of its songs, music and dancing which aim to seduce the viewers and involve them in the festivities and trials of the on-screen family.” The success of *HAHK* was not just limited to the Indian subcontinent; it became immensely popular amongst diasporic audiences as well. As Desai (2004, p. 219) argues, “*HAHK* presents an idealised version of wedding practices that many viewers in South Asia and South Asian diasporas nostalgically associate with their own experiences.” *HAHK*’s phenomenal success resulted in Bollywood churning out a number of family-oriented films with a “neo-traditional” focus on family values and ritual festivities. In a similar fashion, Aditya constructed *DDLJ* as a “neo-traditional” film with a focus on traditional festivals and rituals. As Jha (2005, p. 132) observes, “it was a heady combination of traditional values and universal emotions packaged in a cosmopolitan gloss that made the film [*DDLJ*] a rage across the globe.”

**“Ghar Aaja” IV—Neo-traditional Values:**

In the final “Ghar Aaja” sequence, the song plays in the background as Raj and Simran are caught up in the emotional turmoil over whether to elope or wait for her father’s consent. While Simran insists that they elope, Raj insists that they must seek the family’s consent under all circumstances.

Bollywood romantic sagas had typically celebrated the triumph of romantic love over hostile circumstances, with lovers sometimes rebelling and even eloping against the wishes of their parents. Till the late 1980s, Bollywood films mostly followed the clichéd story of rebellious lovers in films like *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988) and *Tezaab* (1988). But in contrast to those Bollywood love-stories, *DDLJ* reflects the “neo-traditional” tone of its era and shows the protagonists pursuing
familial consent for their love at all costs. Even if they were brought up in cosmopolitan London, the protagonists, especially Raj who is depicted as a spoilt brat in the beginning, reveals his “traditional Indian values” under the veneer of a Westernised demeanour. As Chaudhuri (2005, p. 160) states:

DDLJ’s protagonists are second-generation British Asians Simran (Kajol) and Raj (Shah Rukh Khan). … Even when Lajjo [Simran’s mother] encourages Raj to elope with Simran, Raj decides instead to win the respect of her parents, only accepting the father’s authority to give away the bride. This is how Raj shows his Indian moral values, striking an iconic pose in his Harley Davidson jacket against a field of yellow flowers in Punjab; despite outward signs, we find he is still ‘Indian’ at heart.

The blogger called “Neo” (2010), sums up the “Indian values” that are promoted in these “neo-traditional” films for modern-day youngsters in the following way: “1. Respect your elders 2. Focus on education 3. Be family-oriented 4. Trust in the institution of marriage 5. Sacrifice.” As I have shown in the sections above these neo-traditional “Indian values”—specifically that of “respect for elders”, “belief in the institution of marriage” and “sacrifice for family”—are extensively depicted in DDLJ. Noting the conservative neo-traditional tone of the film, Dwyer (2002, p. 171) states:

The Yash Chopra banner and the youth of the media-shy director misled many into expecting a Yash Chopra romance. All the hallmarks were there but the young couple does not challenge the society’s prohibitions and taboos as their passion unfolds, nor do they resolve to live unhappily as Yash’s would. Instead, they persuade the harsh but well-meaning patriarchy to accept their love.
Initially, there is no dance in this sequence and the song plays in the background with lyrics that emphasise the feelings of the tormented lovers, bemoaning their separation. The camera captures their state of mental turmoil by inter-cutting to close-ups and mid-shots showing dramatic facial expressions. The dance commences during the last chorus of the song:

\[
O \text{ maahi re o achan weh weh jinduwa o sajana}
\]

Hey my lover, my dear soul mate, my sweetheart!

The dance at this point is choreographed as a typical hybridised Punjabi wedding dance popularised by “Bollywood dance”, mixing Bhangra and Giddha in an improvised folk dance routine. The women dance around in a circular pattern akin to the Giddha, and some of the male members also join the circular formation to accompany the women. Since the song and dance celebration takes place among family members, the film does not create a barrier between men and women in this dance. Nowadays, some communal folk dances, especially secular dance forms like Bhangra and Giddha, allow mixed-sex dancing, at times, as part of a celebratory dance. In such performances, “men and women dance together [and] they generally form separate lines, mostly facing each other. On occasions, a man and a woman may alternate in the formation (Khokar 1987, p. 21).”

Aditya uses this choreographic style of men and women weaving in and out in separate formations without any overt physical contact or sexual overtones. As Khokar (1987, p. 15), in the context of the North Indian communal dance forms observes, “Though these [kind of folk dance forms] allow free mixing of the sexes; they carry no marked sexual overtones.” The close embrace, so everyday in most
Western societies, is virtually absent. This particular respect paid to traditional values can also be analysed from the religious perspective; for example, the Sikh religion is against the mixing of sexes for dancing as it may lead to “evil thoughts in mind” (allaboutsikhs.com 2010). Thus, this segment reinforces the “neo-traditional” message of the film as the protagonists diligently adhere to their familial duty. Aditya also makes restrained use of mixed-sex dancing in adherence with the norms of the communal folk dances of *Bhangra* and *Giddha*. 
Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the ways in which the song and dance sequences “Megha Re Megha” and “Ghar Aaja” from two major YRF films of the 1990s employ elements of folk dance to recreate an idealistic image of India to play upon a collective nostalgia. These two sequences represent a broader trend in Bollywood films of the era, which utilised folk dance forms as authentic symbols of family values and cultural traditions of the homeland for audiences at home and abroad. Such a scheme of experimentation with folk dance forms in these “neo-traditional films” arose from the larger socio-cultural context in India, where the nation was attuning itself to the processes of economic liberalisation and mass global mobility. In “Megha Re Megha” a beautiful aristocratic woman performed a folk-derived dance in an eroticised Bollywood routine to create a fleeting exotic spectacle, and conflated the male gaze upon the heroine with a diasporic longing for the exotic homeland. In contrast, folk dance elements in “Ghar Aaja” were used to supplement the idyllic images of rustic Punjabi life. However, while the representation of folk dance forms in these YRF films allude to a collective nostalgia for the Indian homeland for diasporic and urban Indians, the earthy, common man connections of these folk elements are exoticised and glamourised to suit the desires of cinema audiences. In the next chapter, I will examine the ways in which the new cultural landscape, defined by satellite TV and American popular culture, of post-global India, has affected the representation of folk dance forms in the YRF films of the last decade.
Chapter 6

Dancing to the New Beat of Folk in Post-global India (2000s)

In this chapter I will analyse the representation of folk dance forms in song and dance sequences of YRF films from the 2000’s onwards. I will begin by examining the context of the cultural landscape of the 2000s, which was shaped by the increasing dominance of US-led popular culture. These new cultural influences were brought in by the network of global media conglomerates in a post-global India whose economy was thoroughly integrated into the globalised economic order. But I will argue that this ubiquitous presence of US-led global popular culture is better defined as a process of negotiation rather than as straightforward cultural imperialism. As part of this process of negotiation, Indian filmmakers appropriated global cultural influences to recreate cultural products with indigenised elements for local audiences. After establishing this broader argument of cultural negotiation, I will proceed on to my analyses of two celebrated song and dance sequences from the YRF films Veer-Zaara and Tashan to reveal the interesting ways in which folk dance forms are utilised and hybridised with Western (specifically American) popular culture.

India in the 2000s—A Brief Context

In the 2000s, the process of economic liberalisation begun in the 1990s had wrought pervasive changes in India. This decade saw a prolific rise in consumerism, with large sections of the Indian middle-class “expressing an insatiable propensity to
consume as a consequence of rising incomes and a greater variety of goods offered through an increased exposure to global forces” (Lakha 1999, p. 251). The entry of satellite television including content from global media conglomerates has also led to a drastically altered media landscape. These international satellite channels were not subject to Indian censorship laws. On one hand, some content on these satellite TV channels, like American soap operas with promiscuous sexual themes, scandalised Indian audiences. On the other hand, these slick new programmes, which were seen to be more entertaining than programmes on the state-run Doordarshan, immediately captivated audiences (Bhatt 2008, Kamalipour and Rampal 2001, Mehta 2008, Mishra 2002).

Talking generally about the ubiquitous global presence of American popular culture, Arjun Appadurai (1996, p. 30) argues that while Americans may dominate the field of global media content, they are not necessarily “the puppeteer[s] of the world system of images”. Appadurai (ibid.) finds that the flow of media content across the world is not only transnational in nature, but that the ubiquitous presence of American cultural influence in different cultural locations is better explained by processes of negotiation rather than long held conceptions of US-led cultural imperialism. Appadurai is also of the view that the dominance of American popular culture in different locations should not be construed as an indicator of passive consumption or blind imitation by audiences across the globe. While analysing “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” Appadurai (1996, p. 29) ascribes to Pico Iyer’s point of view that “if a global cultural system is emerging, it is filled with

53 Programs like Baywatch, Bold and Beautiful and Santa Barbara were often discussed in the news because of their overt sexual content. Recently, Fashion TV was banned by the Indian government in 2007 for 60 days and for 7 days in 2010, for showing semi-nude models (Sinha, 2010).  
54 Doordarshan is the national TV service run by the state-owned Prasar Bharati Broadcasting Corporation. It is one of the largest terrestrial networks in the world with a network of 1400 terrestrial transmitters that cover more than 90.7% of India's population. (http://www.ddindia.gov.in)
ironies and resistances.” To further examine on such processes of cultural negotiation, Appadurai (1996, pp. 1-28) develops the concept of “glocalisation”, where global cultural content is tailored to suit local audiences. Through such a pathway of negotiation, local cultural producers do not passively consume content brought in by globalised media conglomerates. Elements of that generic, homogenous content are accommodated, rejected or adapted to suit local audiences.

To give an overview of such a process of “glocalisation”, I will explore the example of MTV’s entry into India and the strategies it adopted to alter its global content to suit local audiences. In the 1990s, Music channels like MTV and Channel [V] began broadcasting to audiences in India, particularly English-speaking and Westernised urbanised upper and upper middle-class youths. However, this arrival of American or global pop culture followed some interesting paths of hybridisation in India. While Jack Banks in his book “Monopoly Television: MTV's Quest to Control the Music” (1996), has argued that American MTV works as the prototype for all other MTV flagships stations across the world, Indian analysts like Shanti Kumar (2005, p. 322) have contested his claim. According to Kumar, the Indian producers of pop music video channels recreated a hybrid format that mixed MTV’s global style with Bollywood content. In an insightful article on the indigenisation of MTV in India, Cullity (2002, p. 410) explains the processes of adaptation under which MTV’s global format was changed to suit local audiences. In the early 1990s, MTV-India focused on urbanised upper and upper middle-class Indians, but soon realised that the English-speaking audience constituted between merely five to ten percent of the national market. MTV realised that they would need to shift their focus from standardised American pop music fare to Bollywood film song and dance. This would give them access to vast Hindi-speaking audiences that constituted about 60% of the
national market. As Cullity (2002, p. 414) says, “MTV kept its Western format but indigenized (or localized) it to suit Indian middle-class tastes. The MTV brand is kept in place; the focus on youth culture is maintained but refitted to suit Indian tastes presented by Indian players.” This example of the indigenisation of MTV in India reflects the ways in which global content is tailored to suit local audiences.

Thus, a post-global India integrated into the larger global economic order, created a socio-cultural landscape thoroughly permeated by global cultural influences especially from America—whether they were consumed by local audiences in their original form as foreign products or in a modified indigenised form in their Indian reproductions. These global changes have also impacted the song and dance sequences. The following sections will explore two song and dance sequences from the YRF films *Veer Zaara* (2005) and *Tashan* (2008) to highlight the hybridisation and transformation of folk dance forms and how they negotiate global cultural influences in post-global India.
Love on Lodi: Legitimating an Indigenised Valentine’s Day Through a Bollywoodised Harvest Folk Dance

As Yash Chopra’s last directorial venture, the film *Veer Zaara* (2004) was released with much fanfare as an epic saga of romance between an Indian rescue pilot Veer Pratap Singh (Shahrukh Khan) and Zaara Haayat Khan (Preity Zinta), the beautiful daughter of a high profile Pakistani aristocrat. *Veer Zaara* received a phenomenal response at the box office in India and abroad. This tale of love between an Indian soldier and a Pakistani girl was a shift from the stereotypical representations of India and Pakistan as enemy states in films of the earlier decades. The film attempted to build on the public goodwill between the two countries at the time, as the Indian and Pakistani governments strove to forge an amicable relationship after a period of conflict. In the story the heroine Zaara, who is on a tour to India, meets with an accident when her bus falls off a cliff. Zaara is heroically saved by the rescue pilot Veer, who becomes besotted with Zaara from the moment he sees her. He helps Zaara complete the purpose of her tour to India, by taking her to her deceased governess's ancestral home to immerse the dead woman's ashes. In return, Zaara agrees to spend a day with Veer in his village. However, while dropping Zaara off at the Pakistani border, he is shocked to see Zaara’s fiancé waiting for her. Convinced of their mutual romantic passion, Veer goes to Pakistan to pursue Zaara; but is framed by Zaara’s fiancé as an Indian spy and incarcerated in a Pakistani prison. Zaara is made to believe that Veer is dead. To the dismay of her parents, Zaara breaks off her engagement, travels back to India and dedicates her life to the cause of educating girls

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55 India and Pakistan were involved in a bitter war in 1999 known as the Kargil War. The reconciliation process between the two countries began after the Kargil War, and culminated in the visit of the Pakistani President General Musharraf to India in 2001, for an Indo-Pak summit discussing peace, mutual cooperation and cultural exchange (Dixit, 2002).
in Veer’s village. Twenty-two years later, Saamiya Siddiqui (Rani Mukerjee), a Pakistani lawyer stumbles upon Veer’s case and vows to give him justice. Finally, Saamiya’s perseverance prevails, as she not only frees Veer from the prison but reunites the ill-fated lovers.

There are nine song and dance sequences in *Veer Zaara*, choreographed by Saroj Khan and Vaibhavi Merchant. For this film, Chopra utilised music composed about three decades ago by the Late Madan Mohan. This was part of Chopra's attempt to enhance the traditional feeling and tone of the film by recreating what he perceived as the old world charm of Mohan's traditional melodies. The choreography of the sequences also consciously eschews any form of Western influence in order to emphasise the traditional tone of the film. Five of these song and dance sequences are wholly based on folk dances from North India, primarily the Punjabi folk dance forms of *Bhangra* and *Giddha*. Three other sequences are romantic duets where Veer and Zaara sing and woo each other in scenic locations, in the mode of the typical YRF fantasy sequence.

The song and dance sequence that I will analyse in this section is the “Lodi” number, where the characters are celebrating the predominantly Punjabi harvest festival of Lodi (also called Lohri). Due to the explicit and extensive use of Punjabi folk dance and traditions in this sequence, I will explore issues relating to the hybridisation of elements of folk dance in the “Lodi” song and dance sequence.

**Glamourous Folk Life:**

The novelty of the posthumous use of music written by a legendary music composer and his old-fashioned melodies was promoted as a selling point of the film. The YRF collector’s edition DVD of *Veer Zaara* features the original version of Mohan’s music and how the original melodies were reworked for the film. Listening to the original tunes and comparing them with the newer recordings, it becomes evident that elements of Western musical instrumentation dominate the new compositions. Lohri (or Lodi) is celebrated on the 13th of January, which falls in the Bikrami month of Paush, according to the Hindu calendar.
In keeping with his proclivity for using Punjabi life and characters, Chopra depicts Veer as a person of Punjabi background and sets the sequence in a Punjabi village. The lyrics of the song are a mix of Punjabi and Hindi. Chopra also roped-in the popular Punjabi folk singer Gurdas Maan for the male vocals, lending an authentic feeling and tone of the Punjabi folk song to the “Lodi” number. The men and women are dressed in colourful costumes modelled on traditional Punjabi attire with men dressed in designer kurtas (traditional collarless long shirts) and women in designer kurtas and salwar or ghaghras. Though the film is supposedly set in a common Punjabi village, the costumes of the villagers in this sequence appear more like the richly embellished traditional Indian dress worn during festivals and special occasions by those from affluent homes. Instead of portraying his rural characters in ordinary clothes, Chopra dresses them in embellished and stylised costumes, in keeping with his tendency for creating a glamorous picture of Punjabi folk life. Wolter (2001) has argued that this introduction of glamorous costumes in Bhangra and Giddha dance has been a result of the recent rise in staged and film performances of these folk dance forms.

The “Lodi” song and dance sequence takes place near the start of the film when a muted romance blossoms between Veer and Zaara. Zaara agrees to accompany Veer for a tour of his village, where Zaara meets Veer’s parents Sumer Singh and Saraswati Kaur. They arrive as the village folk are preparing to celebrate the harvest festival of Lodi. Lodi is an important winter harvest festival in the North Indian peasant community, especially for people in the state of Punjab, who celebrate the festival with much gusto. Communities gather around a bonfire, sing and dance, and throw sweets, rice, wheat and sesame seeds into the bonfire to wish for a good harvest.
The mise en scène of the “Lodi” song and dance sequence focuses on four main elements—the bonfire and the two leading couples (Sumer-Saraswati and Veer-Zaara) in the foreground, the folk dancers in the middle, and the Gurudwara (a Sikh temple) in the background. But as the festive celebrations get underway, Zaara witnesses a strange ritual. A few men and women near the bonfire call out names and make romantic gestures to each other. She is quite perplexed by this strange scene and asks Saraswati about this custom. Saraswati tells her that their behaviour has nothing to do with tradition, and is instead part of a ritual initiated by Sumer Singh. Saraswati explains that when she was a young woman, people looked down on romances and marriages that were based on love matches. When Sumer and Saraswati fell in love, they faced resistance from all quarters, as they belonged to different regions and communities. With no clear option, Sumer asked Saraswati to marry him in front of the whole community on a Lodi day. And from that day onwards, this new concept of giving lovers a chance to choose their own life partners on Lodi, was initiated. If a man breaks a sugarcane stick for his intended in front of the bonfire, the woman may accept him by breaking a sugarcane stick in return or reject him by throwing sesame seeds into the bonfire.

This colourful new (and fictional) ritual has a resemblance to the celebration of Valentine’s Day in the West and through re-interpreting traditional rites of the harvest folk festival, this ritual tries to recreate an indigenised version of Valentine's Day. This indigenisation of Valentine's Day in the film gains significance if we consider the actual social context of the controversy surrounding the celebration of Valentine's Day in India. Many conservative groups like the Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal and more recently the Ram Sene, reject Valentine’s Day as a degenerate Western

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58 Ram Sene chief Pramod Mutalik warned that his men would roam the streets of Mangalore armed
practice and have been aggressively campaigning against its growing popularity, especially amongst urban youths across India. Discussing Bal Thackeray, the right wing Hindu nationalist leader of Shiv Sena, who is also the most famous opponent of the practice, Sandbrook (2003, p. 53) states:

The chief of Shiv Sena, Bal Thackeray, exhorted the people, through an article in the party mouthpiece *Saamna*, to shun the Western-inspired Valentine’s Day and its public admission of love as it was “alien to Indian culture” (Hindustan Times, 12 February 2001). He also forewarned fellow Indians that cultural squads would be dispatched to halt celebrations.

In an interesting shift in his stance, Thackeray has recently advised young Indians to look for an alternative to Valentine’s Day, by taking inspiration from Indian legends of great lovers like Heer-Ranjha, Laila-Majnu and Bajirao-Mastani (PTI, 2006).

Judging from the conservative tone of most of his films, we can argue that Chopra’s interweaving of a modern ritual of romantic love into the Lodi folk festival, almost seems like a nod in the direction of Thackeray's recommendation. This reinterpretation of specific folk rituals from the Lodi festivities is a good example of the novel processes involved in the indigenisation of global cultural trends in post-global India. As a festival associated with fertility, family values and communal harmony, this use of the Lodi ritual also complements the ideological message of the

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59 These Hindu right wing groups (such as Shiv Sena, Ram Sene and Maharasthra Navnirman Sena) have resorted to issuing veiled threats in the media, vandalising restaurants and outlets with Valentine’s Day décor and attacking revellers at the venues.
film for young lovers not to indulge in surreptitious illicit romance but pursue romantic love after rigorously seeking the consent of the whole community. We can argue that given the larger context of anxieties about Western cultural imperialism, folk tradition is used in this new ritual to create an Indianised Valentine’s Day. This new ritual becomes a means to legitimise modern social behaviour, like choosing one's own partner for marriage, in a form that is tailored to suit traditional and indigenous cultural norms.

Hybridising the Regional Culture of India:

The lyrics for the “Lodi” song is written in the format of the classic Boliyan (couplet) style of folk song—a mix of verses and limericks, which are sung solo, or in chorus, between male and women to create a mock battle of the sexes. The dance begins with Sumer and Saraswati taking the lead to sing:

Sumer:  
*Tere qurbaan jaavaan, teri marzi jaan jaavaan*

I will sacrifice my life for you; I will make every wish of yours true.

*Tohar baat maan jaavaan, teri soniye*

I will listen to all of what you say, my beloved!

Saraswati:  
*Haan! tenu main jaan-diyaan, khoob pehchaan-diyaan*

Hey! I know you and I also understand you very well.

*Milna jo mujhko haiga tujhko, sun le kuchh galaan meriyaan*

If you want my companionship then you need to heed some of my complaints.
While men profess their undying love, women playfully reject their advances, refuting their confessions as hollow claims and goading them into submission. The Boliyan verses are sung in accompaniment to Punjabi folk dances and have a rhythmic structure and end with some jubilant shouts. Sharma (2007, p.171) observes:

The verses of Tappe and Boliyan have their first and third line rhyme with each other while the second line is left loose. A peculiarity of these songs is the addition of some words which do not have any apparent relation or significance with the rest of the song but are added to rhyme with the end word of the verse… A few words like Balle, Balle, Hai Shava, Ho, Ho, etc., are added to the line of the ending verse.

But on hearing the language that Sumer uses throughout the song, it becomes apparent that he uses an indiscriminate mixture of different dialects. His verses often lapse into the Awadhi tongue, which is out of character with the rural Punjabi background of his character. Awadhi is the mother tongue of Amitabh Bachchan who plays the character Sumer. In these lapses into the Awadhi tongue, Bachchan’s star persona overtakes the song even as he pretends to play the Sumer character.

It is also interesting to observe that while the dancers are dressed in Punjabi attire to perform the Punjabi Bhangra and Giddha, Saraswati and Sumer hardly adopt these folk dance steps at all. Saraswati’s dance mostly uses the typical Bollywood style of adayegi (enactment), which involves dramatic facial expressions, and hand gestures borrowed from classical Indian dance genres. In “Bollywood dance” these dramatised dance steps are used to convey the meaning of the lyrics. In this sequence too, Saraswati enacts the content of the lyrics of her verses as she playfully harangues Sumer about his waywardness. On the other hand, Sumer’s dance consists of simple
movements as he hovers around Saraswati and occasionally lapses into his star persona, devolving into the signature Amitabh Bachchan dance combining his lanky gait with short steps and arms outstretched. The next few paragraphs of the Boliyan highlights the pledge by Sumer and the overall romantic mood of the song and dance:

Chorus:  
*Oye oye oye jind meriye, Haay haay haay, jind mereya*

Oh! My sweetheart, Oh! My darling!

*Lo aa gayi lodi ve, Bana lau jodi ve,*

Hey the festival of Lodi has arrived! Come lets form pairs

*Kalaayi koyi yun thaamon, na jaave chhodi ve*

Let us hold each other’s hand in such a way that we can never let it go.

*Choothh na boli ve, (oho!) Kufar na toli ve, (oho!)*

Don’t you lie… and spread false impressions,

*Jo tune khaayi thi kasmein, ik ik todi ve,*

All the promises that you made, you broke each one of them.

Saraswati:  
*Shaam hote hi naal yaaraan de roz da peena.*

The moment its dusk, you end up drinking with your friends everyday.

*Doobe sooraj toh banda vi doobe, hai ye koyi jeena,*

Once the sun drowns, you also tend to drown, is this a way to live?

Sumer:  
*Baat changi, hai ye teri, dhyaan rakhaanga*

Well! What you say is right, and I will take care of it now onwards.

*Aaj pee loon, boond kal se, main na chakhaanga*

I will drink today, but I promise from tomorrow I wont even taste a drop.

Veer:  
*Haan... jo ab shaam hogi toh seedhe ghar jaayenge... Haan haan haan*
Yes, from now onwards the moment its dusk, he will straightaway go home.

In the “Lodi” song and dance sequence, one witnesses a progression of Chopra’s mixing of men and women as couples in the Bhangra and Giddha folk dance form where traditionally mixing of the sexes during the dance was forbidden; In Silsila’s “Rang Barse” Amit is able to cross the forbidden zone and dance with Chandni during the Holi celebrations under the influence of intoxicant, whereas, in the song and dance sequence “Ghar Aaja” and “Mehndi Lagake Rakhna” from DDLJ there are various occasions where the men and women dance together, but these are mostly in the context of the family members and relatives. In “Mehndi Lagake Rakhna” song and dance, Raj picks up Simran to dance along with him, but soon they move back to their own space, respecting the traditional norm. Its only at the end of the song that Raj is shown going into the group of women to dance with them, but not before taking the blessing of Simran’s Grandmother, which may be construed as his taking permission from the elders before he move into the forbidden zone.

Chopra’s sensitively utilises folk dance forms in his films, especially keeping in mind the rural and urban context of folk dance forms. While Chopra showcases the mixing of sexes in full abandon during folk dance performance in the context of city culture in films like Hum Tum (2004), Fanaa (2006), Jhoom Barabar Jhoom (2007) and Aaja Nachle (2008); in the context of villages, Chopra tries to maintain certain restraint between the mixing of sexes, and generally starts with separate enclosures or domains for male and female dancers during folk dance performance for example in Kaala Patthar and DDLJ. While analyzing the change in the performative circumstances in Bhangra and the issue of men and women dancing together during
festivals like *Lodi, Baisakhi* etc., Ballantyne (2006, p. 151) argues that the performative traditions and dance form have shifted in recent years:

Its worth pointing out that in the past in most of the regions of Punjab group dances did not have men and women together, as the latter were confined to the four walls of their homes. They were forced to observe the *purdah* tradition by which they covered their face with *gund, dupatta* or veil. They were, however, permitted to witness the *Bhangra* and other dances of the menfolk but the menfolk were not allowed to watch the *Giddha, luddi, jago* etc. but now there has been a sea-change in such traditions. Both men and women come together to perform folk dances in the vicinity of modern villages and on the cultural platforms in the towns and the cities of Punjab. It is indeed a healthy trend in a state like Punjab where today men and women join together in all spheres of life to promote culture, education, agro-industrial economy, social welfare scheme etc. for the benefit of society at large.

Though initially the men and women are standing separately in “Lodi”, there is no taboo in moving from each other’s space to mingle and dance together. There is no forced separation between them because of the social pressure that is noticeable in “Mehndi Lagake Rakhna”, but not in “Lodi”. Despite the fact that the song is about a mock battle between the men and women, the romantic play between them is more evident. One can see that the love between Sumer and Saraswati is palpable and the romance between Veer and Zaara is taking shape during this song. The next verse of the song brings the men and women together to dance:

Chorus:  
*Oy Raanjhna, Mere Makhna*  
My lover, my buttercup!
Oy Dholna, Mere Sajna
My sweetheart, my darling

Jind Meriye Oy Heeriye Soniye O O O
My love, my life, my beautiful…

The women dancing Giddha move towards the group of men in the main arena, while the men respond by dancing with the women in pairs and take them to the sides of the arena leaving the centre stage for Veer and Zaara to dance together. Though Veer and Zaara are a bit taken aback by being the centre of attraction, Veer takes the lead and shows Zaara a particular hand movement, which Zaara smilingly emulates; the song and dance thus also works as a technique to establish the growing romance between Veer and Zaara. I will discuss the dance style of the two main couples Sumer-Saraswati, and Veer-Zaara in relation to the rest of the song:

Saraswati: Tenu Har Din Dekhdi Hoon Khedde Patte
I see you playing cards everyday!

Mujhse Pyare Tenu Panje Chhikke Te Satte, Kyun?
More than me, you love your card game, isn’t it?

Sumer: Taash Khelo, Ab Na Hogi Aisi Naadani
I will never make mistake of playing this game ever

Ab To Honge Do Hi Patte, Raja Aur Rani
Now there will be only two cards, a king and a queen

Saraswati: Jind Aye Meri Hogi Teri, Chhad Patteyan Di Dheriyaan
My dear, my heart will be yours if you give up these wretched cards

_Tenu Main Jaan Dian, Khoob Pahchan Dian_

I know you very well and understand your traits!

_Sumer and Saraswati’s Dance:_

The focus of the dance is on the interaction between Sumer and Saraswati. There are elements of choreographed dramatic gestures rather than dance between the two in most parts of the song and dance sequence. Saraswati’s dance mainly focuses on her enactment of Sumer’s waywardliness like getting drunk, betting and not paying attention to the needs of their home. Conversely, Sumer’s dance consists of simple dance steps that contain semi-circular movement around Saraswati and some _Bhangra_ steps with the menfolk. Amitabh Bachchan’s star persona dominates his character of Sumer while dancing and the dance moves of freestyle throwing of hands in the air, slightly bending forward with a nodding head movement, and taking small steps, are typical signature steps of Bachchan that is easily identifiable. At one point Sumer dances along with Veer and Zaara and all three perform a signature step of Amitabh Bachchan (that he has used in films like _Kabhi Khush Kabhie Gham_ and _Baaghiyan_).

It is interesting to observe that while the dance is designed in _Bhangra_ and _Gidha_ folk style, Saraswati and Sumer hardly get into the folk dance style till the second half of the “Lodi” song and dance. They both dance together with the group at the end. Saraswati dances _Giddha_ with the womenfolk, while Sumer performs _Bhangra_ with the menfolk. As the music peaks, the dance is designed as a climax where both the men and women group come together to dance a hybrid style of _Bhangra_ and _Giddha_ where Sumer-Saraswati, Veer and Zaara lead the group.
**Veer-Zaara’s Dance:**

“Lodi” is focused on Veer and Zaara in terms of dance. While Sumer and Saraswati are mostly engaged in verbal duel and dramatic gesticulations, Veer and Zaara provide most of the dance in this sequence. Veer dances as the lead dancer of the men’s group, while Zaara leads the women. During the chorus of the song, Veer and Zaara dance to *Bhangra* and *Giddha* with their group. But when it comes to musical interludes that are focused on them, they perform dance steps that appear to be a mix of folk dance steps with some classical dance elements from *Kathak* style.

Veer also acts as a backer for Sumer’s promise to Saraswati and while doing so, Veer joins Sumer and Saraswati in dramatic gesticulations. Veer and Zaara either are shown dancing together as a couple or as dance group leaders. Overall, the elements of *Bhangra* and *Giddha* dominate Veer and Zaara’s dance.

In a web discussion on the hybridized *Bhangra* dance form Walter (2001) observes that *Bhangra* and *Giddha* dance form have altered tremendously from their original form since 1947. She finds that the staged performances have made these dance forms a domain of the specialist dancers and has robbed the folk form of the element of belonging to the common people. While the dance movements of the chorus line dancers are typical *Bhangra* and *Giddha* steps, they are significantly accentuated with stylized movements, especially those that focus on the hip and upper body movement of the women. The manner, in which *Bhangra* and *Giddha* are integrated in the “Lodi” song and dance sequence, makes them look very folksy, but actually both *Bhangra* and *Giddha* lose its folk character and operate as a typical Bollywood dance.
Folk Dance as a Token Element:

It is quite interesting to note the extensive utilisation of “hybrid” dance elements in the “Lodi” song and dance sequence, especially when it seems to be a typical folk dance based song and dance sequence in the first look. What we see in this section is how a song and dance sequences that might look very “authentic” can be hybridized to such an extent. The manner in which Bhangra and Giddha are integrated in this song and dance sequence, make it look very folksy, but it becomes apparent on close analysis that the folk dance steps are only used intermittently within the group dance sections, acting to reinforce the rustic ambience of the song. Neither of the folk dance forms is integrated into the routine as the primary style of the whole dance sequence. Moreover, the dance steps that the female chorus line dancers adopt are based on typical Giddha steps, but are significantly accentuated with stylised movements involving pelvic thrusts and heaving chests, which are definitely not part of traditional Giddha dance choreography.

The use of Madan Mohan’s music to create ‘nostalgia’, setting a story of love between an Indian (Veer) and a Pakistani (Zaara) in context of village life and not urban life becomes a means to exploit the cultural and traditional features of North Indian. The representation of folk in YRF films seems to allude to the past, cater to the “nostalgia” of the diasporic community and the urban Indians, but the earthy and common man connection of the folk elements seems to be exoticised and glamourized by the filmmakers within the context of the likes and desires of the urban Indian and diasporic audiences.

In comparison with the other YRF song and dance sequence where folk forms like Giddha and Bhangra has been used for example, Kaala Patthar, Silsila, DDLJ and Veer-Zaara, one will find that the dance choreography bears certain resemblance,
even though there is a difference of almost 14-25 years of their making.

The main differences that I find in the representation of folk dance in relation to song and dance sequences of 1970s-80s like “Dhoom Mache Dhoom” and “Rang Barse” with the song and dance sequences “Megha Re Megha”, “Ghar Aaja” and “Lodi” of the 1990 onwards are:

• The filmic representation of folk dance forms in “Megha Re Megha”, “Ghar Aaja” and “Lodi” have become extremely glamourised and spectacular.

• In “Megha Re Megha”, “Ghar Aaja” and “Lodi” designer clothes have replaced the traditional costumes.

• The arena where the dance takes place often looks like a site of a carnival and the sets are mounted on opulent scale.

• The choreographic technique that is employed generally alludes to the folk form of dance, but mostly contains new choreographic steps and dramatic gesticulations to highlight the interaction that takes place between the male and female.

• There are more accentuated body movements (the focus is especially on hips and breasts) and dramatic exchanges that take place in the song and dance sequences of post 1990s YRF films, as compared to the YRF films of pre-1990s, such as Silsila and Kala Patthar.

Thus, it is evident that there is an extensive transformation of elements of folk dance in the “Lodi” song and dance sequence. This is somewhat surprising given the rustic image that it seems to exude. In the next section, I will focus on hybridization of song and dance sequence with that of the Western dance forms. I will use the song and dance sequence “Dil Dance Maare Re” from the 2008 film Tashan (Style).
Hinglish Style and Parodic Folk in “Dil Dance Maare Re”

“Tashan”, a colloquial term, whose etymology reveals no distinct lineage, is used in contemporary youth subcultures in India to roughly approximate the English word “attitude”. The title of this 2008 YRF film, Tashan – the Ishtyle, the Goodluck, the Phormoola is in keeping with the urban youth demographic that the film’s story revolves around. The subtitle that follows Tashan is again a tongue-in-cheek take on English words mispronounced or misused by yokels—Ishtyle (style), the goodluck and the Phormoola (formula). Directed by Vijay Krishna Acharya, Tashan is based on the misadventures of a group of young people living in a metropolitan city, immersed in the fast-paced urban culture of materialism, corporate greed and underworld crime in post-global India. Its subject matter reflects how the Bollywood cinema of the 2000s adapted to the cultural change occurring in a globalised India. One significant aspect of this shift was its attempt to tap into the large market of urban middle-class youth, more and more of whom are educated in English and immersed in the popular culture introduced by satellite TV. Mounted on a large scale with an impressive star cast of Akshay Kumar, Saif Ali Khan, Kareena Kapoor and Anil Kapoor, Tashan was an ambitious project for YRF. It was promoted with much fanfare as a youth film, but failed miserably at the box office. What seemed like a good ploy to attract the massive urban youth population across towns and cities in India backfired in its poor attempt to tap into the spirit of youth culture of India.

In the film Jimmy (Saif Ali Khan), a call centre executive, is approached by Pooja Singh (Kareena Kapoor) with a request to teach her uncouth English-obsessed boss Bhaiyyaji (Anil Kapoor) to speak English fluently. Actually, Pooja is in cahoots with Bhaiyyaji, a mafia don, and they plan to defraud Jimmy of all the details of the
wealthy clients he handles as a call centre executive. However, on the sidelines, Pooja tells Jimmy sob stories about being exploited by her boss; she convinces him to steal Bhaiyyaji’s money and flee to a foreign country with her. Pooja escapes alone with the money, duping both men. Bhaiyyaji sends Jimmy with his trusted gangster friend Bachchan Pandey (Akshay Kumar) to catch Pooja. The cat and mouse chase finally comes to an end, when Pooja and Bachchan, who turn out to be long-lost childhood sweethearts, recognise each other. With this change in situation, Bachchan rebels against Bhaiyyaji for Pooja’s love and Jimmy’s friendship; and the three win the battle against the underworld boss.

Making Hollywood Dance to Bollywood Song:

The song and dance sequence “Dil Dance Maare Re” appears in an interesting section of the narrative. Having nabbed Pooja, Bachchan and Jimmy are on their way back to the city, but Jimmy spots some police officers who are on the lookout for him. In order to escape the police officers they look frantically for some sort of disguise to hide themselves. They chance upon a foreigner, who is apparently a Hollywood film director travelling with his unit in the remote mountains of Ladakh to shoot a film called “Holy Widow”. Hoping that the film crew will give them cover from the police officers, Bachchan, with a gun in his hand, intimidates the Hollywood director to make them a part of a song and dance sequence of his film. The director shockingly responds that his film does not have any song and dance situation, to which Jimmy retorts “Dude, this is India, there is a song for everything”, thus intimidating the American director to film a song and dance sequence.

Jimmy’s comment can be construed in two different manners; first, as a self-reflexive comment on the Bollywood film industry and how it often includes song and
dance sequences in films with little rhyme or reason. Second, this also points to the awareness of the audience of Bollywood films regarding the escapist and detached use of song and dance purely for the pleasure of the audience.

This scene also makes an ironic comment on Western filmmakers, who tend to lapse into stereotypical notions about India in their films - conjuring notions of an exotic land with a pseudo-anthropological focus for Western audiences, as the title of the fictional film “Holy Widow” intimates. While the Hollywood film director goes off into remote regions on the fringes of the teeming Indian nation to capture such stories of an exotic India, these three unlikely characters burst in on the scene to breakdown this Western stereotype and introduce the realities of contemporary Indian life.

In addition, this scene points to a common topic of discussion with the inundation of Hollywood films in post-global India, as critics and audiences alike engage in a constant comparison of the two cinemas, especially concerning the utilisation of song and dance. Noting the cultural crossovers taking place between the West and Bollywood cinema, which are both beginning to fully acknowledge each other’s presence, Tyrrell (1999, p. 269) notes:

The process of cultural influence is working two ways; recent media attention suggests that Western audiences are beginning to become aware of the cultural importance of Bollywood, even if it remains aesthetically impenetrable Indian product, in its turn, is showing influence of new western collaborations, so that “parallel universes” are beginning to touch.

This particular two-way process between Bollywood and Hollywood has gained significant ground in the 2000s, where Hollywood films such as Moulin Rouge! and
Inside Man (2006) have taken inspiration from Bollywood song and dance sequences, and a few Hollywood stars have played cameo roles in various Bollywood films such as Sylvester Stallone, Brandon Routh and Denise Richards in Kambakkht Ishq (2009), Sarah Thompson in Raajneeti (2010) and Brande Roderick in Out of Control (2003). While, Bollywood stars such as Aishwarya Rai, Irrfan Khan and Mallika Sherawat have featured in various Hollywood films. The collaboration and negotiation between Hollywood and Bollywood film culture is taking place in various spheres of filmmaking from music, song and dance to film script and technology.

The Bollywood “Item” Number as an Indigenised MTV Music Video:
The proliferation of American culture has not only made Hollywood films strong contenders in the Indian film market, especially in the metropolitan cities, but MTV style music has also percolated into popular culture in India and created an urban youth subculture. Indipop arrived on the Indian music scene in the 1990s as a nascent pop music industry, outside the production circuits of Indian cinema, offering a hybrid fusion of Indian and Western musical traditions with stylish music videos inspired by American MTV. The satellite TV music channels were subsequently inundated with new Indipop singers like Alisha Chenoy, Baba Sehgal, Shaan, Adnan Sami, Sophie, Daler Mehndi and Sonu. Tracing the rise of Indipop with MTV’s entry into India, Kasbekar (2006, p. 162) notes:

International music now constitutes just 2 percent of all music on Indian television, with 98 percent devoted to Indian music delivered by young male and female DJs who speak “Hinglish”, a Hindi-English patois most popular with the young. The two channels have revolutionised Indian music and created a whole new genre of Indipop, sung in Hindi and English, and Hinglish.
The popularity of satellite TV music channels and the rise of Indipop alerted Indian filmmakers to the potential of music videos and music channels more generally as a medium. Filmmakers began shooting spectacular song and dance sequences with risqué themes, scantily clad dancers, eroticised dance movements, glamourous sets and large chorus lines of dancers, imitating the style of MTV pop music videos. Bollywood filmmakers also made use of fast-paced editing techniques, special effects and novel camera angles as they filmed starlets in spectacular, eroticised dance numbers. These song and dance sequences, which came to be known as “item” numbers, had nothing to do with the storyline of the film. As Roy (2010, p. 42) says, “an ‘item’ number is a dance sequence of raunchy movements and risqué lyrics with little relation to the plot line, which aspiring starlets use to debut in Bollywood.” The term “item” is commonly used by urban Indian males in colloquial language, to refer to a “good looking girl” in a derogatory manner.

By the end of the 1990s, “item” numbers became so popular that Bollywood superstars also began making cameo appearances in films as guest artistes. Filmmakers brought in these superstars to attract larger audiences and capitalize on their established fan base. These “item” numbers were shown on music entertainment channels, as risqué promotional music videos, months before the film was actually released. According to Remo D’Souza (pers. comm., 5 July 2009), “for an “item” number to be successful, it has to have good danceable music, signature steps for the actors (that can be easily imitated by the audience) and of course ‘sexy’ babes in the lead or at least as back-dancers.” By creating this genre of “item” number, filmmakers

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60 “Item” numbers were initially designed in way that had danceable music and ‘glamour’ and ‘tantalizing’ elements akin to music videos by utilizing starlets and models in skimpy clothes; as the ‘item’ numbers became popular for their risqué themes, seductive and glamorous representation, popular film stars were roped in to enhance the impact of “item” numbers to work as a promotional tool for the film (for e.g. Aishwarya Rai and Shahrukh Khan in Shakti: The Power 2002, Abhishek Bachchan in Rakht 2004, Kareena Kapoor in Don-The Chase Begins Again 2006, Ameisha Patel in Heyy Baby 2007).
adapted to the shifts in musical tastes and the structure of the media industry, helping
Bollywood recapture its place in the Indian music scene, and marginalising Indipop.

Closely analysing YRF’s films, it becomes very evident that YRF regards
song and dance sequences as integral parts of their films. Kunal Kohli (pers. comm., 5
July 2009), a prominent YRF film director states, “The films that I directed for YRF,
like *Hum Tum* (2004) and *Fanaa* (2006), had song and dance sequences that
essentially were part of the narrative. Yes, I do agree that there is a certain demand
and pressure of including “item” numbers; but then it depends on filmmakers how
they want to utilise these “item” numbers in the films.” Post-1990s, YRF has also not
been able to forego the allure of including “item” numbers in their more recent
films.\(^6\) In *Mere Yaar Ki Shaadi Hai* (2002) YRF featured Bollywood starlet Sahmita
Shetty in the seductive “item” number “Sharara Sharara”, while in the 2005 film
*Bunty aur Babli*, top Bollywood star Aishwarya Rai was roped in to perform an
“item” number “Kajraare Kajraare” along with Amitabh Bachchan and Abhishek
Bachchan; the phenomenal success of “Kajrare Kajrare\(^{62}\)” marked the shift in the use
of starlets to stars in Bollywood “item” numbers and soon many filmmakers started
utilising more than one “item” number in their films.

*Tashan* takes the “item” number fixation one step further, as all of the song and dance
sequences in *Tashan* are designed as “item” numbers. In addition to being a seductive
and sensuous attraction in the film, these song and dance sequences also worked as
promotional music videos for broadcast on music and entertainment television
channels. Two upbeat romantic ballads, one title song and two dance numbers, are
shot in exotic locations in India and Europe, these sequences look like music videos

\(^{61}\) YRF has featured at least one “item” number in all its films since *Mohabbatein* (2000).

\(^{62}\) The Web-site www.bollywoodtrends.com crowned “Kajraare Kajraare” as Bollywood’s number one
with titillating dances by Kareena Kapoor, Akshay Kumar and Saif Ali Khan, often supported by European and African dancers in the background. The fourth song of the film “Dil Dance Maare Re” is designed as such an “item” number too. The interestingly kinetic use of steadycam, crane shots, dollies and tracks enhances the whole mood of the dance routine as a frenetic, upbeat dance number.

“Dil Dance Maare”— Masala Bollywood Song and Dance in Music Video Style:
Shot in the picturesque backdrop of the Himalayan and Karakoram mountain ranges in the region of Ladakh, this song and dance sequence begins with a close-up of a police officer on the lookout for the three crooks, as he strains his ears to listen to the music coming from a distance. This prelude of the song and dance sequence serves to announce the entry of the three characters, disguised in blonde wigs and outrageous Western clothing. Pooja is dressed in a tight latex mini-dress, Jimmy sports a silver head-band, a polka-dotted black shirt, black velvet trousers and high boots, and Bachchan is dressed in crotch-hugging chinos and Rajasthani jootis (pointed leather shoes with elaborate embroidery from the state of Rajasthan). While Bachchan, Jimmy and Pooja wear these colourful western outfits in their blonde personifications, the American film crew members, who have been recruited as the chorus line dancers for the sequence, all wear highly stylised versions of traditional Indian outfits and accessories.

In terms of the song “Dil Dance Maare”, the music directors Vishal and Sekhar recreate their signature fusion style with no pretensions to authenticity or the adherence to any established musical tradition, Indian or Western.63 A blend of rock music generated by an electric guitar and drums with Punjabi Bhangra beats

63 Before starting a career in film music direction Vishal played in a popular rock band called Pentagram. Sekhar was a trained Indian classical vocalist, who had dabbled in pop music.
dominates the music of this prelude to the song and dance. The choreographer, Vaibhavi Merchant,\(^\text{64}\) employs Western and Indian musical instruments as props to highlight the musical fusion. The dancers in the background play Dhol (drums) and sway to the drumbeats in a style typical of the Bhangra Dholis (drummers). Bachchan vigorously beats the Dhol and Jimmy and Pooja pose with the electric guitar. This montage reinforces the explicit fusion found in the musical score. The prelude of the music ends with a montage of Pooja sensuously dancing like a cabaret performer, while Jimmy and Bachchan ham up their performance by playing a harmonium (a classical Indian musical instrument, often portrayed as the instrument of dowdy traditional characters in Indian films). While the Western orchestras has had a longstanding presence in the Bollywood music repertoire, this explicit nod towards the mixing of Western musical forms reinforces the dominance of American pop music and the extensive fusion taking place in contemporary India. As Dudrah (2006, p. 52) contends:

Music directors draw on a range of musical traditions and styles for their songs, from Indian classical and folk music, to, and increasingly so, western pop. This acts as a bridge between signifiers of tradition and modernity, so that western and traditional instruments are combined.

**Hinglish Lyrics of “Dil Dance Maare”:**

Sung by Sukhwinder Singh, Udit Narayan and Sunidhi Chauhan, the lyrics of the song use Hindi, Bhojpuri,\(^\text{65}\) and the English language. The song begins with Bachchan

\(^{64}\) Vaibhavi Merchant has been the leading choreographer for YRF since 2005. She has worked on more than 100 films, ten of which are YRF productions.

\(^{65}\) Bhojpuri is a regional dialect of Hindi, prominent in states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand in North India.
singing:

White white face dheke dil woh beating fast sasura jaan se maare re...

Looking at the lovely white faces, my heart is beating so fast that it’s killing me…

Oh very... oh very... Oh very happy in my heart dil dance maare re

I am very happy in my heart, and my heart is dancing

Dil dance maare dance maare

My heart keeps dancing and dancing

This melange of languages is in keeping with the broader trend towards “Hinglish”, a patois of English and Hindi, which is used by English-educated young urban middle-class Indians. Displaying a new confidence in their subculture, young contemporary Indians do not observe the previous strictures about speaking flawless English. Instead, they speak the patois Hinglish, to simultaneously assert their proficiency in English and negate their subservience to this colonial form.

Hinglish lyrics may have featured in a few song and dance sequences in Bollywood films in earlier decades, but Hindi and English were generally mixed with the intent to create a comedic effect. In songs like “Gentleman Gentleman” (Gopi, 1970) and “My name is Anthony Gonsalves” (Amar Akbar Anthony), the actors use a smattering of English in a humorous manner to caricature a person who speaks English to assert his superiority and refinement. The mass audiences of Hindi films at that time, who were either illiterate or not proficient in English, could identify with this country yokel attempting to show his literacy in English and subverting its elitist
connotations at the same time. In contrast to this use of Hinglish in earlier decades, its use in “Dil Dance Maare” reflects that Hinglish became an accepted language during the 1990s. It is now used extensively in films targeted at the urban youth population and as a matter-of-fact reflection of contemporary life. In his article “From Bollywood to Hollywood”, Trivedi (2008, p. 203) observes that the use of Hinglish in Bollywood films has arisen to reflect the use of this hybrid patois by English-educated urban Indians:

Now, Hinglish is used in Hindi films in all earnestness as reflecting realistically the language in which the Westernised upper and upper middle class characters normally speak. The extent and the nature of code mixing that goes on in metropolitan India between the local Indian language and English is accurately caught in some recent Hindi films.

In particular, alternative art house films of the 1990s, such as Kaizad Gustad’s Bombay Boys (1998), Dev Benegal’s English August (1994), and Split Wide Open (1999), and Nagesh Kukunoor’s Hyderabad Blues (1998). These films were part of a wave of young confident Hinglish films, which were seen as the cinematic counterpart of the emerging genre of Anglo-Indian fictional literature led by Salman Rushdie). Tashan does not fall into the category of this art house Hinglish cinema, but as a commercial Bollywood masala film in Hinglish language aimed at the the growing market of urbanised youth, it exemplifies the change in cultural scene in

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66 These remnants of a colonial obsession with the English language were often used humorously in Hindi films throughout the decades. In the song and dance sequence “Mr. Gentleman” from the film Gopi (1970), superstar Dilip Kumar wore a suit in a mock parody of a Westernised gentleman and sung, “He is Mr. Gentleman, who has come all spruced and groomed from London”. In another sequence from the film Namak Halal (1984), Amitabh Bachchan plays a rustic villager at a job interview in a five star hotel. When the manager tells him that a prerequisite of the job is literacy in English, Bachchan replies by saying, “I can walk English, I can talk English, I can laugh English, because English is a very funny language”.

post-global India. Culturally, the Indian Diaspora has made post-global India a global phenomenon and as Virdi and Creekmur (2006, p.138) point out that the presence of second and third generation diasporic Indian audiences has contributed to the wide use of Hinglish in Bollywood. Hinglish has now emerged as a significant force shaping the conception of major Bollywood films including *Jhankaar Beats* (2003), *Boom* (2003), *Mumbai Matinee* (2003), *My Brother Nikhil* (2005), *Pyaar Ke Side Effects* (2006), *Black* (2005), *Being Cyrus* (2006) all of which explicitly use Hinglish as their main language. In addition, after 2005 most Bollywood films revolving around stories of urban life tend to have more than 20 percent of their dialogue in English (such as *Kaal* [2005], *Jhoom Barabar Jhoom* [2007], *Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna* [2006], *Aaja Nachle* [2007], *Dostana* [2008], *New York* [2009]).

**The Parody of Folk Dance Forms for the MTV Generation:**

The “Dil Dance Maare” song and dance sequence also works as a titillating MTV music video, as Jimmy prompts Pooja to seduce Bachchan so that they can get him on their side and escape Bhaiyyaji’s clutches, and as such the third verse of this song and dance focuses on Pooja’s attempts to seduce Bachchan. Pooja’s dance is somewhat similar to an erotic dancer’s routine at a nightclub; she places her hands firmly on Bachchan’s chest, sensuously sways her hips and dances around him. The female dancers join Pooja and do some suggestive hip and pelvic thrusts directed at Bachchan. When Pooja kisses Bachchan’s cheek, he gets flustered and tries to run away from her. Jimmy gives Bachchan an alcoholic drink to help him ward off his inhibitions while dancing. Soon after, an intoxicated Bachchan, who had been ranting about his disinterest in women throughout the first half of the film, joins Pooja and starts getting in step with her dance to reciprocate her amorous advances. Bachchan
also performs a brief solo *Kathak* dance intermingled with some signature Bollywood steps including vigorous pelvic thrusts. Such “pelvic thrusts” were popularised by Govinda, one of Bollywood’s leading dance stars of the late 1980s and early 1990s (and often derided as vulgar). He takes off his shirt to flaunt his physique and embraces Pooja, as the two sing:

**Bachchan:**  
*Tohare dil ka theatre ma dil deewana booking advance maare re*  
My crazy heart seeks advance booking in the theatre of your heart

**Pooja:**  
*Aaaa... Humre dil ka theatre ma, dil deewana booking advance maare re*  
Hey! In my heart’s theatre your crazy heart seeks for advance booking…

**Chorus:**  
*Oh very ...Oh very happy in my heart, Dil dance maare re...*

For the “Dil Dance Maare Re” song and dance sequence, choreographer Vaibhavi Merchant deliberately utilises an indiscriminate mixture of dance forms with steps inspired by *Bhangra, Giddha, Lavani,* and *Kathak,* with cabaret and hip-hop style dancing borrowed from Western music videos. In order to reinforce the comical tone of this sequence Merchant makes Bachchan, Pooja and Jimmy dance in an exaggerated style to a ridiculous mix of Western and Indian dance steps, even inducing a hint of irony into their performance of this exaggerated fusion dance. By the end of the verse, the male background dancers, recruited from the white American film crew, join the female background dancers who sport *dupattas* (colourful scarves) in their hands, similar to the ones used in *Giddha* dances. They dance together in the background using the scarves as props, seated in rows akin to a traditional *Qawwali*
(Muslim devotional song) performance. In the end, they all perform a hybrid dance, which is based on an indiscriminate fusion of *Disco*, hip-hop and break-dance with *Bhangra, Giddha, Kathak* and other traditional folk forms.

In the film, this sequence is purportedly meant for the Hollywood film made by the kidnapped American film director. But in the Hollywood director’s film showcasing his view of the exotic Indian culture to the Western world, this number, with its exaggerated, tongue-in-cheek performances of folk fusion presents the folk dance culture of India in a “parodic” form. The fusion of Western influence with Indian folk and classical music, song and dance constitutes the essence of “Bollywood Dance”– for Indians it seems like a modern Westernised dance form, while for Westerners it is typically exotic, Oriental fare. This sequence from Tashan with its exaggerated blending of Indian and Western dance forms makes a parody of the basis of Bollywood Dance’s fusion. At the heart of this folk fusion song and dance filmed for an American film, is the parodic use of folk dance elements in a predominantly modern Western dance base borrowed from MTV music videos.

Folk dance forms were accorded some respectability when used in the 1970s and the 1980s to represent a connection with a fantasy of rustic life for an urbanising India, or as symbols of an idyllic homeland for the diasporic and local audiences in the 1990s. In this MTV music-video inspired “item” number of the 2000s, folk dance forms are used in an ironic, bastardised fashion as an exotic element to add to the frenetic fusion of Indian and motifs within a dance number. In contrast to the nostalgic mode in which folk dance forms were presented in the films of previous decade, this whole section on “Dil Dance Maare Re” highlights how folk dance routines are also utilised in a hybridised, parodic and exotic mode for song and dance sequence made for the MTV generation in India.
The “Remixed” Folk Song and Dance in Discotheques:

This hybridised, parodic and exotic rendition of folk dance forms in the “Dil Dance Maare Re” “item” number, also points to the larger issue of the inclusion of folk dance elements in raunchy upbeat dance numbers. Indeed, when the phenomenon of “item” numbers initially took off, Western dance elements from MTV music videos dominated these dance routines (such as in films like Ghatak [1996], China Gate [1998], Jung [2000], Kaante [2002]). Conversely, folk dance elements had little role to play in these risqué numbers. The “item” number “Chaiyyan Chaiyyan” from Dil Se... marked a turning point in the composition of their dance routines and musical score of Bollywood cinema. Based on a sufi (devotional Muslim music-dance tradition) song, “Chaiyyan Chaiyyan” featured Rajasthani folk dance forms like Ghoomar and Kalbelia, with Shahrukh Khan danced on top of a moving train with his female counterpart, Malaika Arora, in traditional Rajasthani attire, during a spectacular sequence became an iconic dance number. This sequence revealed the immense potential of folk elements to be translated into catchy dance numbers. With it the trend of utilising folk dance forms in “item” numbers was established. These days, folk-based “item” numbers rival the American pop music-oriented numbers, and even the most Westernised numbers include a folk dance step or musical note to appeal to audiences. In particular, the folk dance forms of Bhangra and Giddha from Punjab, and Garba and Dandiya from Gujarat, have come to dominate these “item” numbers.

Recently, there has been an increase in the use of rustic North Indian folk

67“Chaiyyan Chaiyyan’s” has also appeared in some Western productions. It was included in Andrew Lloyd Weber’s musical Bombay Dreams and also featured as the title song of Hollywood director Spike Lee’s film The Inside Man.
dance and theatre forms like Nachani, Tamasha, and Nautanki in Bollywood films to exploit the lascivious, titillating and lewd aspects of these dances. In the “item” number “Kajraare Kajraare” from Bunty aur Babli, Aishwarya Rai dances in a tantalising manner as a “nautch girl\textsuperscript{68}” to the beat of rustic Bhojpuri lyrics and music in a Nachani influenced dance, similarly in the song and dance “Babuji Zara Dheere Chalo” \textit{Dum}, 2003) model Yana Gupta dance raucously to the rustic song. These two numbers with re-interpretation of the titillating Nachni dance achieved cult status for their raunchy music and dance.

The emergence of folk dance based “item” numbers, or at least dance numbers with a significant folk musical influence, was a result of changing factors in urban youth culture. The decade of the 2000s saw the proliferation of Discotheque culture across urban centres, and beyond the major metropolises to which they were earlier restricted. Discotheques also began to receive the patronage of a wider demographic group beyond the Western-culture oriented elite classes of the earlier decades. As Bollywood music reinvented itself to cater to the needs of these new people entering the Discotheques, it created upbeat dance numbers with Indian influences that could be played there, leading to the popularity of folk-derived “item” numbers. Also, this reinvigorated form of fusion between the Bollywood dance numbers with indigenous influences, changed the brand image of Bollywood song and dance, making it equally trendy and desirable as Western dance numbers in the Discotheques. As Rachel Dwyer (2002, p. 160) comments:

\textsuperscript{68} Nautch Girls were young women trained in dance and etiquette to entertain men. The practice was popular during colonial times and was mainly patronised by men from the princely or noble classes. At the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century middle-class reformists began an “anti-nautch movement” to curb the practice and the elements of prostitution associated with it, dealing a severe blow to the nautch profession. See Caunter, H. & Daniel, W., 1836. \textit{The Oriental Annual, or, Scenes in India, Volume 3}: Edward Churston.
Hindi films became cool, even among the most Anglophile students at the elite colleges. They were mainly attracted by the music, which was no longer regarded as “naff” but as hip, and enjoyed alongside Western popular music. Gradually the films became fashionable among the middle classes and the elite.
Conclusion

Over the years, Bollywood song and dance sequences have appropriated folk dance forms. This chapter examined the utilisation of folk dance forms in films of the 2000s to highlight how they have negotiated the ubiquitous presence of American popular culture brought in by the globalised media networks of contemporary post-global India. The pathways of negotiation in the sequences analysed above, highlights two interesting and different modes in which such folk dance forms were used. The “Lodi” sequence re-invented a harvest folk dance and other rituals associated with it to create an indigenised version of Valentine’s Day. On the other hand, the “Dil Dance Maare Re” sequence created a hybridised parody of folk dance forms to reflect the contemporary urban youth subculture of India, now thoroughly immersed in American MTV-style pop music and Hollywood films.

In the last three chapters, I have traced the trajectory of the hybridisation of folk dance forms under differing cultural constraints over the decades through some landmark YRF song and dance sequences from each period. I presented those sequences as emblematic examples of the larger trends shaping the way in which folk dance forms were being appropriated and hybridised in each decade. In the second part of my study, I shall proceed to discuss the impact of Bollywood song and dance sequences, and its renditions of folk dance forms, on the performance of traditional folk dance by folk practitioners. In the next chapter, I will address the place of folk dance forms in India, a brief history of the “genre” and review the main questions relating to their present state under the influence of the mass media and popular culture. In the two chapters that follow the next chapter, I will present my analyses of the ramifications of the impact of Bollywood culture by using two case studies,
namely, *Bhangra* from the state of Punjab and *Chhau* dance from the state of West Bengal.
Chapter 7

The Impact of Bollywood on Indian Folk Dance Forms

In Chapters four, five and six, I analysed some famous song and dance sequences from YRF films to show how the representation of folk dance forms in each decade shifted with the increasing hybridisation of dance forms and the transformation of Hindi film song and dance into spectacle. In this part of the thesis, I will take this relationship between folk dance forms and Hindi film song and dance a step further, by analysing the impact of Bollywood song and dance on the performance of folk dances by traditional practitioners.

I argued at the start of my thesis that Arjun Appadurai's term “cultural flows”, denoting the exchange of ideas and traditions from one side to another, defines the relationship of cultural exchange occurring between folk traditions and Bollywood cinema. The selective appropriation and interpretation of folk dance traditions by Hindi films is representative of such a cultural flow. Drawing further from this idea, when Bollywoodised renditions of folk traditions permeate popular culture and affect folk practitioners' perception of their own dance forms and performances, such a process constitutes a “reverse cultural flow”. With a focus on such reverse cultural flows, this chapter will attempt to give a context to help address the changes or transformation (if any) that folk dance forms have undergone due to the impact of Bollywood film culture. It is evident that the majority of folk practitioners (especially from the “low” culture folk dance forms) are giving in to the lure of Bollywood-style dance in their practice—both as consumers of the popular culture dictated by
Bollywood and as performers seeking to entertain the wider populace that is thoroughly immersed in that film culture and that desires for traditional folk dance forms to offer a spectacular experience similar to cinema.

I shall begin with an analysis of the scant scholarly literature available on folk dance, to discuss issues relating to the place of folk dance forms in modern India and the larger socio-cultural factors that created folk dance forms as distinct genres in contradistinguishing to some other traditional forms which were gentrified as part of classical Indian culture. I will touch upon Bollywood song and dance's current dominance in popular culture, a factor that threatens to overtake many traditional folk forms. This area of study has been neglected in the existing research, by Bollywood specialists and ethnomusicologists alike. I will then proceed to examine issues relating to the impact of Bollywood song and dance on folk dance forms, in order to set up the context for the case studies that will examine those issues and questions.

The Folk Dance Forms of India at a Glance

Every region of India has its own unique set of folk dance forms – celebrating religious occasions, communal harmony, agrarian life, rituals of fertility and the key events of birth, marriage and death. As Kaeppler (in Bauman 1992, p. 196) contends:

Dance is created out of culturally understood symbols within social and religious contexts, and it conveys information and meaning as ritual, ceremony and entertainment. For dance to communicate, its audience must understand the cultural conventions that deal with human movement in time and space.
India has predominantly been an agricultural country, and most of these folk dance forms are related to rituals celebrating the harvests or invoking the gods for good weather. For example, *Bhangra* and *Giddha* dance are performed with great gusto during the harvest season of *Baisakhi*[^69] in Punjab, the *Chhau* and *Bihu* dance seasons are arranged as elaborate fairs, carnivals and dance competitions during the *Chaitra* festival in Eastern India (Devi 2002). As Shay (2006, p. 9) notes, “folk dances, in [the] true sense of the word are regional folk dances in those regions of the world with long-term peasant or tribal populations and performed as an integral part of these people’s life.”

Most of the folk dance forms of India have a history of more than 500 years and have been celebrated with great enthusiasm throughout the centuries. The audiences for folk dance are very much part of the whole process of performance making such dances an intrinsic part of the ritual life of a community. As Roy (in Lal and Dasgupta, 1995b, p. 11) contends, “Folk performances are not just [the] presentation of skills, of dance, music or song, but part of the life-function of the community. As such they are sacred, ideological, essential.”

After independence, the Indian government attempted to extend its patronage to all dance forms across the spectrum of traditional, ritualistic, classical and folk forms of the nation, as an endeavour to preserve its cultural heritage. For example, India's national academy of music, dance and drama, the Sangeet Natak Academi, was established in 1952 and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad founded the Indian Council

[^69]: *Baisakhi* or *Vaisakhi* marks the beginning of the Hindu and Sikh solar year and the new harvest season. *Baisakhi* also celebrates the foundation of the Khalsa (Sikh community) in 1699, by the Sikh guru Guru Gobind Singh on that day. See Ganeri, A. (2004) *Sikh Festivals Throughout the Year*, London, Franklin Watts.
for Cultural Relations (ICCR) in 1950\textsuperscript{70}. To provide an exhaustive list of all the folk dances in India would be difficult; not just because of the sheer number of folk dance forms found across India, but also because of the minute distinctions between some of the minor genres. Therefore, I will restrict my list to the most prominent folk dance forms across the country.

*Tippani* and *Garba* dances are from the state of Gujarat, performed by women and are associated with Hindu mythology relating to Lord Krishna and the celebration of fertility rites. *Bhangra* and *Giddha* dance forms come from the state of Punjab and are harvest dances performed by men and women respectively. The *Lahoor* and *Dhamyal* dances from the state of Haryana are also associated with rituals of agrarian life. *Kamandi* and *Theru Koothu* from the state of Tamil Nadu; *Chhau* dance from the states of Orissa, West Bengal and Jharkhand; *Dhalkhai* from Orissa, and *Taiyam* from Kerala, are folk dance forms associated with mythologies of warlike kings and gods, and which fuse dance with martial and acrobatic skills. Folk dance forms like *Maibi* (Manipur), *Nenaveli* (Kerala), *Kola* (Karnataka) and *Jatra Ghat* (West Bengal) are associated with the mysticism and magic of religious rituals. *Bihu* dance (Assam), *Kamsale* songs (Karnataka), *Kummi* folk songs and dance (Tamil Nadu), *Thabal Chongba* dance (Manipur) and *Tera Tali* of the Kamar tribe (Rajasthan) are known for their carnivalesque celebration of festivals\textsuperscript{71} (Banerji, 1985, Coorlawala 1994, Devi 2002, Claus and Diamond et al. 2003, Emmert et al. 1983, Khokar 1987, Schechner 1983, 1993).

\textsuperscript{70} See Web Site: http://www.iccrindia.net
\textsuperscript{71} Khokar briefly discusses the different folk, tribal and ritualistic dance forms prevalent across India; and their association with community, religion, rituals, magic and animism. See Khokar, M. (1987) *Dancing for Themselves*, New Delhi, Himalayan Books.
Reinventing Folk Dance Forms

While most of the dance forms that I enumerated in the last section are now seen as representative of the folk genre in the national lexicon of the dance history of India, there have been specific socio-cultural factors at work in shaping the genre of folk dance. One can look back into the recent history of the Indian nation to interrogate how folk dance as a genre, associated with rustic culture and a specific communal identity, was constructed as part of larger cultural upheavals. As Baumann (ed. 1992, p.40) has noted, “the symbolic construction of folklore remains [a] significant social force, energized by the dynamic processes of traditionalisation, ideology, social thought and the artfulness of everyday life.”

Peterson and Soneji’s landmark study of the transformation and reinvention of classical dance in South India is an example of such “symbolic construction” of folk dance as a distinct genre in modern India. Drawing their inspiration from Janaki Bakhle’s findings about the invention of “classical music” in modern India, Peterson and Soneji argue that the distinction between the classical œuvre of dance traditions and folk dances was only constructed in recent times. Bakhle (2005, p. 1) claimed that prior to the twentieth century, “there was no ‘classical music’ but that there were several different kinds of music [...] Music performed at the temple, the court, and at the homes of wealthy patrons, by performers from the hereditary communities and by professional court musicians (eds. Peterson and Soneji 2008, p.4).” Similarly, Peterson and Soneji retrace the history behind the classification of traditional dance forms that led to the creation of the “classical” and “folk” labels to demarcate different dance forms in India.

In the nineteenth century under British rule, the traditional patronage of music and dance by the Indian princely classes dwindled and dance was relegated to the
fringes of Indian society. In general, the British were quite critical of Indian dances, especially of some traditional temple dance forms that also operated as a mode of prostitution. Poor people of lower castes were forced to offer their daughters as Devdasis (maidservants of the gods) to the temples. These Devdasis were appointed to take care of temple premises, help out in ritual ceremonies and conduct song and dance performances in devotional services; but temple priests and other powerful men of the village often sexually exploited them. The colonial rulers were generally dismissive of this dance culture. With the taint of prostitution and female exploitation, they saw it as a social problem not a cultural tradition, no matter what its aesthetic merits (eds. Peterson and Soneji, 2008).

Consequently, the Indian middle-class under the British Raj also developed a very negative outlook towards dance. For the majority of Indians belonging to the higher castes or middle-class socio-economic strata, dance culture was a form of entertainment for people of lower classes and castes. The only acceptable forms of dances those performed in community celebrations, paying obeisance to gods and marking religious festivals within the domestic domain.

This middle-class aversion towards dance culture was particularly strident in its rejection of dance forms, which had women dancers performing for the pleasure of a male audience, like the dance of the tawaifs (courtesans) in North India and hereditary female temple dance performers in South India. This resulted in the antinautch (anti-dance) movement of the 1880s that continued till late twentieth century, especially in South India. As Singh (1997, p. 164) observes:

[Indian nationalist] Reformists were drawn mainly from missionaries, doctors, journalists and social workers. They urged the abolition of all ceremonies and procedures by which young girls dedicated themselves as divine prostitutes to Hindu
shrines, [this movement] was articulated in the first instance as an “anti-nautch movement”.

The anti-nautch movement also sought more respectable ways of including dance culture in wider social life. Reformists sought to abolish the undesirable practices of prostitution and female exploitation associated with these dances without losing their aesthetic traditions. The transformation of the erstwhile Sadir dance of the Devdasis into the now widely known and respected classical Tamil dance genre of Bharatnatyam was the handiwork of such reformist Brahmin nationalists. As Medhuri (2008, p.138) notes:

To legitimise the dance, both revivals idealized Sadir in the new name of Bharatnatyam; referred the dance to the textual history of the Natyashastra; affirmed the devotional and spiritual aspects of the dance; prioritized male teachers over and above Devdasi dancers. Both were desirous of reviving Bharatnatyam as a spiritual dance, freed from the taint of temple prostitution with which it had become associated.

Thus, the anti-nautch movement begun by the Indian middle class, such as this case of Madras Brahmans, paved the way for the birth of the “Indian national performing arts” with a few traditional dance forms like Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Mohiniattam and Manipuri reinvented as respectable classical genres. Thus, the middle-class and high-caste desire for establishing a gentrified and sanitised dance tradition, without the taints of prostitution or vulgarity, largely created these classical genres. These new ‘classical’ repertoires were constructed by submitting older forms to the process of “selection, sanitization and scientific
standardization” (eds. Peterson and Soneji 2008, p. 4).

But apart from these class concerns, the reformists were also driven by their protonationalistic zeal of reclaiming the past glory of Indian culture, which they perceived as having succumbed to decay in recent times. This re-invention was not merely a change of titles, such as the transformation of Sadir to Bharatnatyam, but a structural transformation within the dance as it sought to align itself with the nationalist agenda of the reformists – by modifying elements, recruiting historical legends and systematising disparate practices to create monolithic genres. As Janet O’Shea (2008, p. 167) argues:

The anti-nautch movement’s discrediting of dance meant that the revival’s performers needed to justify their practice of the dance form. Dancers responded to colonial criticism of classical dance and its performers, validating Bharatnatyam through reference to history and foregrounding specific elements of the past both choreographically and discursively. Bharatnatyam practitioners further located historical continuity in contrasting elements of dance performance.

By promoting the performance of these so-called classical forms of music-dance to recreate the glorious heritage of India, in concert halls and theatres, these nationalistic Brahmins recruited these dance forms within the ambit of nationalistic fervour.

Apart from the role of nationalistic fervour and class politics, Medhuri argues that the introduction of modern styles of performance also led to the creation of classical dance genres, as dance forms were moved from their traditional performance spaces in the village square or in the temple to the stage of the theatre. In her insightful study of Rukmini Devi, a Bharatnatyama guru, who was instrumental in the revival of the Bharatnatyam dance form, Medhuri (eds. Peterson and Soneji 2008,
To rescue a temple dance, under the threat of disappearance in the 1930s, Rukmini Devi projected a modern temple stage and offered it as an alternative allegorical structure to rescue the dance. The theatrical structure was redemptive in that it was able to rescue from oblivion an elaborate court and ritual repertoire, which could not be danced within the precincts of the Hindu temple because of its alleged association with temple prostitution in the 1930s.

Thus, one can assume that these varied factors at play in modern India—nationalist sentiment, middle-class reformations and the theatricalisation of dance—led to the creation of the classical genre of dance, as a distinct category from other traditions. As Peterson and Soneji (eds. 2008, p. 2) point out:

The process of colonialism, nationalism, and Orientalism invoke the concepts of tradition and modernity in an attempt to homogenize and differentiate, accommodate and marginalize. In the process of authenticating, they also demarcate boundaries, such as “folk” and “classical” and “private” and “public” (Chatterjee, 1996). Imagined traditions are thus created, and function as points of reference for locating religious and gender identities, forms of class politics and national narratives. Cultural performance becomes a practice used to envision and read possible pasts, in inventions of tradition that are inscribed in ideologies of power.

Within the cultural and political battle over tradition, some dance forms were professionalised and elevated to the status of classical dance, whereas others were relegated to the less respectable category of folk dance. As Roy (2009, p. 18) states:
Though the field of cultural and artistic production is normally seen as the site of struggle over the definition of art and culture, what is really at stake is the power of dominant forces to impose the dominant definition of art and the artist. Due to the virtual monopoly of artistic legitimacy enjoyed by certain castes, classes, and languages in the production of Discourse about art and culture in India, folk traditions have, no doubt, been recognized but only in relation to and supplementary to the Great Indian tradition.

The Bollywoodisation of Indian Folk Dance Forms

While there are many debates and discussions surrounding the issue of the impact of cinema on folk dance forms, there are very few scholarly writings available on this issue as such. Manuel (1993, p. 55) Mishra (2002, p. 2) Morcom (2007, p. 9) and Joshi (1999, p. 156) have raised the issue of the deterioration of folk culture due to the impact of Hindi cinema, but have not addressed the issue beyond that. While scholars like Ballantyne (2006), Roy (2009) and Dudrah (2002) have analysed Bollywood cinema’s impact on the Bhangra dance form; Peterson and Soneji (eds. 2008) have briefly analysed the impact of cinema on the classical and folk dance forms of South India. There are also a small number of other articles that peripherally touch on the issue of Bollywood cinema’s impact on folk forms. The impact on “low culture” folk music and dance somehow remains untouched in most of these scholarly works.

Without a doubt, folk dance forms face grave challenges from their appropriation, hybridisation and spectacular re-presentation in films. One may argue that there are some strands of these cultural forms that are protected as “authentic” representations, through professional dance groups patronised by governmental
agencies and non-governmental organisations. But are these ossified forms authentic when so cautiously patronised and preserved within elite circuits of official folk festivals. I argue that it is in the folk dances performed for mass audiences by grassroots performers, where one can really gauge the extent of the impact of Bollywood culture on folk dance forms.

The (mostly) inconsiderate, unsympathetic, incoherent and illogical use of folk dance forms in Bollywood song and dance sequences has led to some confusion about the performative norms of various folk dance forms. Barnouw and Krishnaswamy (1980, p.72) make a cursory note in this direction when they say, “while the influence of folk music and dance strengthened the film, it also had other effects. It meant an almost mortal blow to Jatras and other kinds of folk drama.” Whereas Roy (2009, pp. 4-6) finds that the Bollywoodisation of folk forms like Bhangra has also led to the vulgarisation of these folk dance forms.

Similarly, renowned classical dancer Sharon Lowen (pers. comm., 26 June, 2008) is alarmed by the large uptake of Bollywood cinema in the rural areas of India. Lowen finds that the folk and tribal dance forms of India are facing a huge threat because of Bollywood cinema: “the rampant imitation of Bollywood in folk dance forms like Chhau dance and Nagpuri dance is worrisome. There is a need of studying the impact of cinema on these folk and tribal dance forms.”

Unquestionably, Bollywood song and dance has affected folk dance forms across India in very many ways. My aim in the next two chapters is to investigate the ramifications of the “mortal blow” that has been dealt to two folk forms, Purulia Chhau and Bhangra. Bollywood song and dance elements seem to have taken over the traditional repertoire of these folk dance forms in terms of choreography, musical instruments, costumes and lyrical themes. Taking these two folk dance forms—as my
case studies in the next two chapters, I will provide detailed analyses of the “reverse cultural flow” that is taking place from Bollywood to Indian folk dances.

The study of both these dance forms provides contrasting examples of how trends generated by Bollywood popular culture have affected the production, distribution, consumption, reception and demand for these folk dance forms. From the early 1990s, *Bhangra* dance form has become the most widely utilised folk dance form in Bollywood cinema. Bollwoodised *Bhangra* has become so popular on radio play lists, music channels, nightclubs and social events, that the folk dance form has moved out from its regional domain of Punjab to become a key part of a “national” popular culture. On the other hand, *Chhau* dance, a martial, ritualistic folk dance form from Eastern India, has only occasionally appeared in local Kolkota-based regional Bengali cinema or on the official circuits of national/international folk dance festivals. This has led to the marginalisation of the folk form in popular culture, and the form has become has ossified in its “authentic performance at official folk festivals.

However, in spite of the stark contrast in the predicaments of these two dance forms or perhaps because of the differences, they act as comparative case studies to provide a sense or picture of the magnitude of the impact of Bollywood culture on folk dance practices. While *Bhangra*, as the most hybridised form of folk dance, has been threatened by its own popularity to become virtually unrecognisable from its original form, *Chhau* has become even more marginalised, as performers and audiences alike deliberately eschew its traditional norms of performance for Bollywood-style dance. I will now proceed onto a detailed analysis of this impact of Bollywood dance culture on the two dance forms of *Chhau* and *Bhangra* as they linger under the threat of extinction or complete cannibalisation.
Chapter 8

From Folk to Popular and Popular to Folk: Bollywoodised

Bhangra Dance

a. Bhangra at a Glance

The folk dance form of Bhangra originates from the region of Punjab in the Indian subcontinent. It has its roots in communal dances performed during the harvest festival of Baisakhi in the predominantly agrarian societies of the Punjabi region. Since the 15th century, Bhangra music and dance has been closely linked to the traditions and culture of the Sikh community of Punjab (ed. Clark 2007, p. 14). Singh (1999) on a Web Site devoted to Sikhism, points out that Sikh religion does not promote Bhangra and that it is mainly a part of Punjabi culture. But over the years Bhangra has become so closely associated so strongly with the Sikh community that it has now been classified as a “Sikh institution” (‘Sikh’ 2009).” An insightful article "What is the Sikh Attitude to Dancing" at sikh.com points out that folk dance forms like Bhangra and Giddha have no religious but only traditional and ritualistic connection with the Sikh community. It further clarifies that in Sikhism dancing with opposite sex is forbidden.

Nevertheless, while Bhangra began as a part of ritual celebrations at harvest festivities and was then appropriated for ritualistic and religious festivities, it is now performed on diverse occasions ranging from weddings to New Year celebrations.
Talking about the popularity of this dance form, a prominent English newspaper in Punjab, The Tribune (in Ballantyne 1999, p. 128), reports:

*Bhangra* dance, today, is no longer associated with the Baisakhi festival alone. On any festive occasion, say Lohri, betrothal and marriage ceremonies, the birth of a son, cultural and sports meets, (and) agricultural fairs, including cattle fairs, one can witness this dance.

*Bhangra* is a robust and virile dance performed by men and its corresponding dance form performed by women is called *Giddha*. The musical repertoire in the Punjabi folk dance form includes traditional instruments like: *Dhol* (a large barrel drum worn at the torso, suspended from the neck and beaten with a stick), *Tumbi* (a single string instrument), *Sarangi* (a multiple string instrument), *Sapera* (a wind instrument made out of dried gourd), *Chimta* (a pair of brass metal clamps), *Dafl* (a large tambourine), *Dholki* (a double headed drum beaten with hands) and *Damru* (a two-headed pellet drum). Describing the dance movements of *Bhangra*, Jacqueline Warwick (1996, p. 100) says:

*Bhangra* dance is highly energetic, with a rhythm that propels constantly forward, and there is a great deal of energy and elation in the movements. The footwork is generally simple, consisting mostly of jumping up. The torso is invariably held, with chest forward, shoulders back, very little bending at the waist and not very much movement in the hips. For the most part, the type of effort used involves quick time, direct focus and spoking movements, strong weight and bound flow.

A dance of exceptional vigour and physical movement, *Bhangra* is danced to the
rhythm of upbeat percussive music and enthusiastic shouts. As Khokar (1987, p. 44) describes:

Now erect, now squatting, now leaping, the men dance as fancy strikes them. They snap their fingers, do balancing tricks and indulge in acrobatic feats. They recite witty couplets known as bolis, and out of sheer exuberance mouth meaningless sounds such as hoay hoay. The element of [the] comic is introduced at times, with a dancer or two appearing in fancy attire and devising antics to excite good humour.

In the folk dance form of Giddha performed by Punjabi women, the women dancers thump their heels heavily on the ground and dance in a circular fashion while clapping their hands sideways, upwards and downwards. According to Singh (2008) on the Web site punajbi.net, these typical Giddha movements of thumping one's feet in the ground and clapping one's hands originated from ritualistic practices shaped by farming life:

Thwacking heel and toe against the earth is symbol of awakening and appeasing mother Earth. When the dance-action starts after the “boli” is over, first of all hands are bent towards [the] right-hand side and clapped towards the earth. Clearly it is a gesture of greeting the earth. Most of the actions of this dance are addressed to the earth. Based on these and many other dance traditions, it can be likely said that Giddha might have started from the rituals associated with worship of mother Earth. But slowly during the centuries-long cultural travel, this dance might have acquired mundane worldly colour.

The songs, to which Bhangra and Giddha are performed, vary from love poems to
folk ballads and mythic tales of valour (Courtney 2007, Kelly and Thind 2010). While discussing the structure of the songs used in accompaniment with the dance, Warwick (1996, p. 68) states:

The most prevalent song structure is based on a verse and refrain, call and response pattern, in which the first line is invariably repeated by a chorus, instrument, the same soloist, or another soloist. The chorus can thus participate in both the verse and the refrain of a Bhangra song.

b. Bhangra—A Modern Genre?

During the 1947 partition of British India into independent India and Pakistan, the region of Punjab was divided between the two countries, leading to the mass migration of Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan into India and Muslims from India into Pakistan (eds. Roy and Bhatia 2008). The new Indian state of Punjab vigorously promoted Bhangra in a bid to recreate its cultural heritage, which was fractured by the processes of colonisation and partition. As Ballantyne (1999, p. 128) observes:

In the wake of partition, Bhangra assumed new importance as part of the projection of “Punjabiyyat” and the regional government’s attempt to construct a coherent state culture that transcended the deep divisions that were laid so bare in the violence of partition. Within this context, Bhangra became a ubiquitous feature of the province’s culture within independent India.

Government-sponsored cultural organisations sought to promote folk dance among
the youth of Punjab and organised *Bhangra* festivals and competitions for this purpose (Ballantyne, 2006). According to Anjali Gera Roy (2009, p. 5):

Modern *Bhangra* is credited to the former Maharaja of Patiala who, impressed by the performance of the students at the Punjabi University adjoining his Palace, decided to showcase it as Punjabi dance at the first Republic Day Parade in Delhi.

*Bhangra* was the generic name given to this dance form, which actually subsumed and homogenised a number of dispersed folk forms, taken from all over the Punjabi region. David Courtney (2007) notes that there are many sub-genres of *Bhangra* dance—such as daankara, dhamal, gatka, Giddha, jhumar, julli, kikli, luddi and *saami*. Most of these sub-genres, including the female *Giddha* dance form, seem to have been subsumed under the umbrella of *Bhangra* dance.

Attempting to trace a history of the dance form, Kelly and Thind (2010) suggest that *Bhangra*’s existence dates back to 300 BC, but they do not offer any concrete evidence to support their claim. In contrast, Ballantyne (2006, pp. 127-29) finds that there is very limited information regarding the history of *Bhangra* before 1947. In agreement with Ballantyne's findings, Roy (2009, p. 5) further argues that while the dance may trace its roots back in ancient history, the coherent genre of *Bhangra* that we now know and regard, as a folk form representative of the people of Punjab was a recent creation:

The conservative gaze of folklore studies through which *Bhangra* is examined is essentially retrospective turning to an idealized past as the site for cultural and musical purity even though a hunt for origins might lead us to a category that never was.
Roy's argument echoes Grieg's general assertion relating to the cultural history of the rise of coherent performance traditions across the world. Grieg argued that the history of the formation of musical repertoires in any nation is characterised by the growth of folk traditions from smaller origins into larger forms leading to greater refinement and homogeneity (in Ling 1997, p. 206).

Expanding upon Bhangra's legacy as a folk tradition with a hybrid history, Roy (2009, p. 5) cites an interesting incident that further emphasises the futility of analysing it as a monolithic tradition. When Khalsa College Jallandhar’s Bhangra team from the Indian state of Punjab visited Lyallpur (now Faisalabad in Pakistan), the Pakistani audience vigorously objected to the performance. Their consternation was understandable since the modern Bhangra that these college students presented was an amalgamation of movements from several Punjabi dance genres based on Sialkoti Bhangra (a dance genre belonging to the town Sialkot), and was very different from any pre-independence form of the dance.

Indeed, the Bhangra dance that we now know is composed of multiple crossovers and fusions that have occurred between its many sub-genres since 1947. I also agree with Roy that it is more fruitful to examine the legacy of this hybridisation and the subsequent consolidation of the practice as a coherent genre in recent years, rather than relying on classificatory distinctions based on movement, speech or tunes to break down this new fusion in search of an original form of the dance.

Modern Bhangra has amalgamated numerous fusions over long periods of time, making the categorisation of fixed codes and a unified history futile. However, I shall use this “reinvented” post-colonial Bhangra, which emerged as a coherent practice as a result of post-independence cultural activities in the state of Punjab, as
representative of the folk dance form. I wish to explore how the modern post-colonial
genre of *Bhangra*, which was patronised by the government and the Punjabi people,
has now been affected and transformed by the impact of Bollywood films and popular
culture in recent years.

c. *Bhangra*: The Beginnings of a Pop Music Industry

*Bhangra* began to make forays into the pop music industry as early as the
1980s in India. Punjabi folk singers like Gurdas Maan were recording and producing
music in Delhi or Punjab, outside of the usual circuits of the Indian entertainment
industry that were dominated by the Mumbai-based Bollywood filmmakers (Manuel
1993, p. 68). Many folk dance groups also began to perform to this new *Bhangra*
music. But this pop industry was a localised phenomenon restricted to audiences in
Punjab or the Punjabi-speaking audiences in North India. Roy (2009, p. 10) notes that
the dominant contribution of these *Bhangra* singers was the introduction of music and
lyric writing as an integral part of the craft:

Though Punjabi verse, from *kissa sahitya* to the *kavishari*, has taken great delight in
setting poetry to music, the majority of *Bhangra* genres are primarily dance genres,
*nritta* [dance], interrelated by the *dhol* [drum] beat rather than *geet* or song [...] the
Gurdas Maan phenomenon of the eighties was produced by the welding of dance and
music with poetry.

Around the same time, a younger breed of diasporic Punjabi musicians in the United
Kingdom were also experimenting with *Bhangra* and incorporating elements of
reggae, hip-hop and Disco into its musical structure to create an upbeat fusion Bhangra that could therefore be played at nightclubs. Dudrah (2002, p. 197) notes that the predominant influences creating this fusion from Bhangra were black musical genres and some British pop influences:

British Bhangra is a genre of British popular music fusing Punjabi lyrics and the beats of the Indian drum, the dhol, with other Black music and British pop sounds, producing an urban anthem and commentary about the lives of its British South Asian audiences.

According to Paganoni (2006, p. 233), this strand of British Bhangra with its fusion of traditional and Western styles was dramatically different from the folk Bhangra forms, or even the reinvented pop music forms of Bhangra in South Asia. Deepak Khazanchi was the first UK-based musician and producer to spark off this trend of fusion and the use of Western musical instruments in the Bhangra musical repertoire (Ballantyne 2006, p. 132). These musicians drew from the eclectic sources at their disposal and used modern Western musical instruments to create a novel fusion form of Bhangra. As Paganoni (2006, p. 233) argues:

[Bhangra] is an original reinvention mixing old and new sonorities as well as Eastern and Western instruments (dholki, sitar, tabla, tamboura alongside guitar, bass, keyboards) with the support of new musical technologies and techniques, such as sampling, i.e. ‘the transfer of sounds from one recording to another’ which allows ‘contemporary musicians unprecedented access to the global memory banks of recorded sound’.
Ballantyne also notes that this new genre of *British Bhangra* saw the uncoupling of *Bhangra* from its almost singular connection with agrarian life in its original folk form. The British fusion artists re-conceptualised the *Bhangra* genre as an innovative form with an emphasis on lyrics through which musicians could express their ideas and emotions (Ballantyne 2006, p. 131). Noting this transformation of *Bhangra* into a vehicle of self-expression for the artists, Dudrah (2002, p. 18) also states:

> Lyrics together with an eclectic repertoire of international music styles opens up possibilities in which listeners are able to use and make sense of British *Bhangra* in a process of self-realisation which is locally constituted but with a global frame of South Asian reference in mind.

The *British Bhangra* artistes began including themes of communal identity, politics and issues relevant to the lives of diasporic Punjabis. Talking about the issues that were now beginning to dominate *Bhangra* songs, Ballantyne (2006, p. 142) says:

> A central feature of these new lyrical concerns has been an increase in the reflections upon migration, the loosening of community bonds in the diaspora, and a longing for the “homeland”.

This vibrant new genre of *British Bhangra* also managed to make forays into mainstream British culture. This was part of a wider phenomenon of a greater visibility of South Asian cultural influences in British popular culture, where, As Ballantyne (2006, p. 147) notes, “South Asian cultural forms were increasingly assimilated into the aesthetics of British middle-class life. By 1995, *bindis, mehndi,*
and South Asian food and fashion had become extremely prominent in British youth culture as a whole."

By the late 1990s India also opened up to the phenomenal influence of British Bhangra. The trend began with the release of the album Bollywood Flashback by Bally Sagoo in 1995 who was renowned in British Bhangra circles for his fusion of deep bass lines borrowed from hip-hop and black urban music with Punjabi rhythms and melodies. Describing the album, Ballantyne (2006, p. 147) says:

Bally Sagoo’s 1995 Bollywood Flashback underscores the continued interdependence between Bhangra and filmi music along with the reconfiguration of this relationship within the increased desire of Western entertainment multinationals to “penetrate” the markets of South Asia and its various diaspora.

The album was very well received in India, helping to inscribe the trademark of British Bhangra on the Indian musical landscape. Then, British Bhangra broke from its somewhat niche classification as Black Bhangra72 and repackaged itself in terms of a populist Bollywood-style music culture to gain greater commercial success through this crossover. The arrival of this reformed British Bhangra, invigorated the nascent Bhangra pop music industry established by local singers in India; this led to a phenomenal rise in the public profile of the Bhangra pop music industry. As Dudrah (2002, p. 219) notes:

With the popularity and influence of British Bhangra pulsating in India, musical exchanges have taken place between ‘legendary’ artists of the Punjab and with bands

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72 As black musical genres like reggae and hip-hop influenced the formation of the new global Bhangra style, it was initially known as “Black Bhangra”. See Ballantyne, Tony. Between Colonialism and Diaspora: Sikh Cultural Formations in an Imperial World. Delhi, Ranikhet: Permanent Black Himalayan, 2007.
in Britain. On one hand, male artists from India like Gurdas Maan and Hans Raj Hans, who have been folk artists for the last fifteen years, began touring Britain with much success. On the other hand, Bhangra became the dominant genre in Indipop with the combined presence of local and diasporic artists.

Fusion Bhangra became an important genre in the nascent Indipop industry made up of musical artists and producers outside the Bollywood film industry. Music channels like MTV and Channel [V], which had created this generation of Indipop musicians, were also instrumental in popularising these hybrid Bhangra pop stars in India. This nascent pop industry was also attempting to build on the pre-existing culture of Hindi music albums and audiocassettes in order to carve a niche for musicians outside the film industry. As Ballantyne (2006, p. 150) notes:

The sale, duplication, and circulation of cassettes has played a key role in linking new diasporic and Punjabi Bhangra traditions: in 1996, for example, it was possible to buy the work of artists such as Alaap as well as Bally Sagoo and Apache Indian in stalls in Simla, Chandigarh, Amritsar, and Delhi.

With slick packaging, danceable tunes and modernised beats, Bhangra pop music began to permeate popular culture across India. This juncture marked the creation of Bhangra as a commercially viable and aesthetically vibrant pop music industry.

I. Disco-Bhangra

As I noted in my section on the various dance-styles in Hindi films in Chapter three,
the decade of the 1980s saw the rise of Western dance-based films in India, specifically, Hindi films that were influenced by *Disco*. These Hindi films imitated contemporaneous Hollywood films like *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), *Grease* (1978) and *Staying Alive* (1983). But this was not necessarily a great period for dance as an art form in Hindi films. Bollywood film dance was in a state of limbo; it lacked direction in modernising Indian dance forms and was reduced to aping Hollywood films. In the late 1980s, the vibrant genre of *Bhangra* pop provided ideas and insights to Bollywood filmmakers about how to reinvent Indian dance forms for a new age. Realising the immense potential of such new forms of fusion, filmmakers tried to appropriate the style of fusion *Bhangra* into their films. Filmmakers like Manmohan Desai, Prakash Mehra, Feroz Khan, Subhash Ghai and Yash Chopra began to introduce this newfangled fusion in their films as *Disco-Bhangra*. One early example of this crossover, albeit an awkward one, was a song and dance sequence from the film *Ganga Jamuna Saraswati* (1988). In this sequence, Ganga (Amitabh Bachchan) a truck driver asks a group of dancers to help him woo Jamuna (Minakshi Seshadri). The two contingents of dancers (one a folk *Bhangra* troupe and the other a Westernised *Disco* group) try to convince Ganga to follow their individual styles. Ganga devises an ingenious solution to the dilemma by suggesting that they do a “*Disco Bhangra*” by mixing the desirable elements of each style. Dressed in a costume imitating Michael Jackson's black suit and steel mesh glove from his music video *Bad* (1987), Bachchan looks quite ridiculous as he sings:

*Pyar Ki dhun sunata hoon dance naya dikhata hoon... Disco Bahngra...*

I will make you hear the tune of love, and perform for you a new dance form… *Disco Bhangra*…
This Bollywood attempt at fusing Bhangra with Disco was different from the use of the folk forms in the earlier decades. Due to the dominance of Punjabi filmmakers in the Bollywood film industry, Hindi cinema has a history of using Bhangra sourced music-dance for communal folk-based dance sequences or depictions of Punjabi life. While the example of the “Disco-Bhangra” sequence did not set great aesthetic standards for such a fusion. Subsequent Bollywood films in the 1990s appropriated fusion Bhangra with great success. While Bhangra always had favourable support in Hindi cinema, it was Bollywood’s reappropriation of this reinvigorated Bhangra pop genre in the 1990s that made Bhangra such a force to be reckoned within the Bollywood song and dance industry. According to Dwyer (2000c, p. 180), “the Punjabis have continued to dominate the industry as producers, directors and male actors, inscribing their culture as the national culture of India.” It was after the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 that many migrant Punjabis settled in the Indian metropolises, and some of them found employment in the film industry, which was facing a severe shortage of technical and creative manpower.

The intrinsic qualities of Bhangra dance as an upbeat dance genre, which were further heightened through its modernisation by pop musicians, contributed to the rise of Bhangra and cemented its successful crossover into “Bollywood dance”. Now a Bhangra song and dance has become a de rigueur element in almost all Bollywood films, and hybrid/fusion Bhangra artists like Bally Sagoo and Rishi Rich from Britain have been composing music for Bollywood films and performing at live concerts in towns and cities all over India. This juncture marks the culmination of Bhangra’s

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73 During the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, Punjabi music (especially Bhangra) was prominently used in Hindi films by music directors like Ghulam Haider, Shyam Sunder, Bhagatram, Husnlar, Feroze Nizami, and Hansraj Behl (Ballantyne, 2006). In addition, filmmakers like Raj Kapoor, B R Chopra, Vijay Anand, and Manoj Kumar who had Punjabi background also fervently used Punjabi song and dance in their films.
journey from a marginal folk form to an indispensable dance genre of Indian popular culture.

Another key element introduced by these British Bhangra pop stars was the use of hybrid lyrics melding Hindi, Punjabi and English, a trend that has also been taken up by Bollywood films at a prolific rate. Bollywood films have progressed further from the occasional use of English in their songs, to a frequent use of Punjabi and English language. A survey of recent Bollywood films revealed that among the ten top-grossing films of 2007, nine of them had these so-called “Hinpunjlish” song and dance numbers, for example, “Dupatta Tera Nau Rang Da” (Partner, 2007), “Mauja Hi Mauja” (Jab We Met 2007), “Uncha Lamba” (Welcome 2007), and “Nachle Ve” (Ta Ra Rum Pum 2007). In 2008, seven of the top ten hit films had “Hinpunjlish” song and dance numbers.

To conclude this section on Bollywood's appropriation of Bhangra and its transformation into the foremost folk dance influence on “Bollywood dance”, I would like to cite an instance that encapsulates its global popularity. In 2004, the British-Punjabi filmmaker Gurinder Chadha (famous for Bend It Like Beckham, 2002) released a film simultaneously in English and Hindi. The English language version was called Bride and Prejudice and the Hindi version was called Balle Balle Amritsar to LA. With its allusion to the Bhangra cheers of “Balle Balle” that resonate across the globe from a city in Punjab to Los Angeles, the title of the Hindi film truly captured the globalisation of the Bhangra folk form. From its humble roots in the towns and villages of Punjab, this example captures the culmination of the journey that modern Bhangra had accomplished with its entry into the realm of popular culture.

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culture. Aided by the growing profile of “Bollywood dance” on the global cultural scene, and the large Punjabi diaspora in the West, Bhangra has now made its presence felt on a global scale. This journey began with the consolidation of Bhangra as a viable pop music form; but was taken to stratospheric levels among Indian audiences with the full-scale incorporation of Bhangra into Bollywood films from the 1990s onwards.

II. Modernised popular Bhangra and Folk Performers

In order to explore the impact of Bollywood song and dance sequences on Bhangra folk dance forms, I will analyse three different performances. The first is a performance by a professional troupe at a wedding party in New Delhi; while the other two are Bhangra dance performances by folk groups at a fair in Chandigarh, Punjab. I will present my findings at these two different performances to examine how the Bollywoodised Bhangra renditions and Bollywood song and dance in general have affected the performance of the dance by folk performers.
Performing the Folk Dance I:

Jatt Boys Bhangra Group, New Delhi, 8 January, 2008:

On a cold winter evening in Delhi, I drove down to a Bhangra performance by a professional troupe called Jatt Boys Bhangra Group. The performance was to be held at a friend’s wedding celebration in a farmhouse on the southern outskirts of Delhi.

“Jatt” is the name of an ethnic group from the Punjabi region, but it has more recently been valorised in relation to a sense of pride of belonging to the agriculturist community of Punjab. The name of the folk troupe, “Jatt Boys”, affixing “Boys” with this assertion of ethnic identity, seems like a nod to Western pop boy bands like the Backstreet Boys, Boyzone and Boyz II Men emphasises the modern nature of the group and their hybrid Bhangra style.

In keeping with the trend of the ostentatious display of wealth, which is common to most contemporary North Indian weddings, the stage was decorated to the hilt. On the right-hand side of the stage there was a giant screen on which the performance was to be projected live; on the left, there was a fully illuminated and raised platform for guests to dance on. Eight male dancers, attired in the traditional Bhangra dress including Pagadi (Turbans), Kaintha (Necklace), Turla (Adornment on the Pagadi), Kurta (a traditional shirt), Jughi (waistcoat), Lungi (a long loincloth tied around the waist) and Rumal (scarves tied around the fingers), entered the stage.

As the lights for the service were dimmed and colourful stage lights were switched on, the beat of Punjabi Dhols with the sound of Algoze (Punjabi flute), Chimta (Brass metal clamps), Dafli (a percussive tambourine without the bells) and Tumbi (a plucked, single string instrument) took over. They danced to the music, showed their individual acrobatic skills, organised in different formations to the shouts of “Balle
Balle” and “Shawa Shawa”, while jumping in the air.

However, it was surprising that other than the traditional instruments being paraded on the stage, one could distinctly hear the sound of Western musical instruments. I looked around the stage for the musicians using the modern instruments, but none of them made their entry on the stage. But the beat of an electronic drum pad and the sounds of shakers and cymbals generated from a synthesiser could be heard in the background. It became apparent that those musicians were playing their instruments behind the stage and surreptitiously complementing the traditional musical instruments being played and paraded on the stage.

The next dance involved a show of masculine prowess through the use of a traditional prop called Gandasa or Khunda, a long stick decorated with various adornments. The men danced vigorously to the music of a Bhangra pop song called “Putt Jattan De” (Sons of Jatt), eulogising the land of Punjab and its patriotic sons like Bhagat Singh and Udham Singh, who fought for India's freedom. The movements were more vigorous than the last performance and the dancers displayed their acrobatic skills with much fanfare. The group organised themselves into various formations and showcased their skills with the Gandasa (see fig. 1). They danced and formed pairs to show their martial prowess in mock combat.
The third performance was by a group of women who took centrestage to perform the Giddha to the tune of a Punjabi folk song, “Mera Laung Gawacha” (“I have lost my nose-ring”), which has been used and re-interpreted by many pop artists. In this performance, they played a version of the folk song created by the pop artist Hans Raj Hans. Unlike the traditional rustic Giddha dresses, these women were attired in heavily embellished designer salwar suits (a long woman's shirt with loose pants),
more akin to the dresses sported by Bollywood filmstars in films like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* and *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham*. The steps they used in the routine were also similar to a typical “Bollywood dance”. On pointing out that the costume of the group seemed different from the traditional folk attire of Punjabi women, one of the dancers of the group, Manpreet Kaur (pers. comm., 8 January 2008), informed me that nowadays dancers only wore the real ethnic *Bhangra/Giddha* dance costumes at government sponsored heritage programmes. At commercial performances, dancers emulated the costumes worn by Bollywood stars.

I also spoke to Sonu, a dancer as well as the manager of the group, about the use of pre-recorded music in the last performance. Sonu (pers. comm., 8 January 2008) said:

> Because of the cost of hiring musicians, my group prefers to play Bollywood or *Bhangra* pop songs. If the client makes a request for exclusive folk performances with original music, then we hire musicians. Anyhow, we find that at weddings, birthdays and private parties, people mostly want to hear Bollywood *Bhangra* or pop *Bhangra*. Therefore, we avoid hiring musicians.

Sonu also added that they also have a few folk songs exclusively recorded for the group by folk musicians, so that they can cater to an unexpected demand for “authentic” folk numbers at a performance. Thus, his folk troupe mostly performed their dance to an assortment of pre-recorded film and folk music, in place of having actual musicians, which is a part and parcel of the traditional *Bhangra* repertoire.

The women who completed that second performance stayed on the stage and were soon joined by male dancers. From thereon, the guests began making requests to the group to perform some Bollywood numbers. The dancers performed these
Bollywood numbers with great gusto, and the audiences, clearly preferring these Bollywood *Bhangra* numbers joined, in the performances. Thus, began a long night of Bollywood *Bhangra*, after what now seemed like a few token performances of folk *Bhangra*.

When I raised the question of mixing folk *Bhangra* with Bollywood numbers, a dancer, Sanjit Singh (pers. comm., 8 January 2008), replied, “people get bored watching folksy performances and prefer peppy numbers that they can dance to with the performers on the stage.” He argued that because Bollywood style music-dance is the most popular form in the country, one could not ignore it at any performance, whether it is a folk dance performance or a pop concert. He added, “Even, if you go to nightclubs in five-star hotels, you find that Bollywood *Bhangra* is more popular than English songs.”

The change that traditional *Bhangra* was undergoing was evident in the performance by Jatt Boys *Bhangra* Group. Observing this performance, I realised that even in these professional dance troupes, which were supposed to be dedicated to *Bhangra* dance, the all-pervasive reach of fusion *Bhangra* propagated by Bollywood had left its mark. I left the venue, pondering over the futility of expecting a real folk performance at a wedding celebration.
Performing the Folk Dance II:

Singh Bhangra Party, Chandigarh, 13 January, 2008

I was unsure if the example of the commercialised Bhangra I had seen in Delhi was only one side of the picture. So I decided to travel to a fair organised to celebrate the Lohri/Lodi harvest festival in Chandigarh, the capital of Punjab, to see some Bhangra performances. One of my friends from Delhi, Sarabjeet Singh, a Sikh Punjabi, agreed to accompany me to Chandigarh. Sarabjeet said that a family relative of his was also going to be performing at the festival. Knowing that the performance was to begin at 8:00 p.m., we reached the venue at around six in the evening to watch the festivities at the fair. The atmosphere at the fair was quite lively with rides and games. There were stalls selling food, ethnic souvenirs, toys and clothes. One could hear Bhangra folk music, fusion Bhangra pop, and Bollywood music blaring from different corners of the fairground.

There was a special stage set up for the dance performances. As the first performance was set to begin, the announcer made an adulatory speech about how Bhangra was the pride of Punjab and how it had familiarised people around the world with its culture. She made a conscious note saying that all the dance groups set to perform on this stage were going to showcase authentic Bhangra in all its traditional glory.

The first group to perform was my friend's group Singh Bhangra Party, an all male group that had also performed at many national and international folk dance festivals. Their performance was to be a form of Bhangra based on dance movements and sword fighting inspired by the Sikh martial art called Gatka. Twelve dancers entered the stage one by one, dressed in their traditional attire. My friend's relative
Gurjit led the dancers, whereas the Dholi (drummer) led the musicians. As announced, the group was following set routines from traditional Bhangra. It also used a traditional musical score with five musicians playing the Algoze (Punjabi flute), Dhol (double-barrel drum), Iktara, Dafli (tambourine) and Chimta (brass clamps) (see fig. 2). Each dancer used a sword as his prop to perform the Gatka and display his skills at swordsmanship. With consistent and rhythmic footwork, they twirled and twisted, jumped in the air and swayed the scarves attached to their fingers. The dancers then moved to pick up the Saap, a traditional prop made of a wooden criss-cross designed in the shape of two snakes entangled with each other. They played with the prop, opening and shutting it, and melded those movements deftly with the dance. The audience was spellbound with their display of vitality; their dance, sword-fighting and acrobatic skills were all well coordinated, highly energetic and beautifully executed.
The next performance was a *Bhangra* dance piece by a group of university students. The performance began on a slightly different note from the way in which traditional folk dancers usually make their entry on the stage. Generally, *Bhangra* dancers enter the dance arena only after the musicians start performing. But in this performance male dancers assembled in the centre of the stage forming two rows in silence. Then they stood motionless at arms length from each other with their heads down and their legs wide apart. This tableau of the dancers standing in readiness for the performance immediately reminded me of a similar style used by American pop groups beginning
their performances in music videos or concerts. Beginning on a low note the drumbeat slowly built its momentum to reach a crescendo. The stage lights lit up in a synchronous manner with the growing drumbeat and the dancers slowly raised their heads and began their dance. The coloured revolving lights overhead added to this ambience of a pop music concert.

After about a minute of this introductory routine, the lead singer started singing a folk song, “Gabru Punjab De” (Macho Men of Punjab), based on a eulogy celebrating the bravery and virility of Punjabi men. The dance in this performance was exceptionally vigourous and frenetic. The dancers leapt from side to side in a coordinated fashion, jumped up high and fell down on their knees, challenged each other to mock combat and shifted their positions intermittently. Then, they formed pairs where one dancer jumped up on shoulders of another and the pair stood upright in an acrobatic routine that is part of the traditional Bhangra dance repertoire. Thereafter, the performance took the form of a dance-drama with the performer singing and motioning to the Pagadi (Sikh turban) as a symbol of Punjabi pride and valour. It seemed that regionalist sentiment and Punjabi cultural identity brought in by the introduction of lyrics into Bhangra by pop artists had now percolated into folk performances. Folk dancers on the ground have now accepted this harvest folk dance as a symbol of Punjabi regional identity. And these university students were staging this form of contemporary Bhangra as an assertion of Punjabi identity.

For the next performance, the musicians changed the tune of the music and the singer started to sing a romantic song, “Mukhde Da Tere Jawaab Nahi Soniye” (Your Beauty is Exceptional, Girl). Four pairs of girls and boys dressed in traditional attire entered the stage. They performed a different version of Bhangra called Jindua, which is a unique folk form derived from folk ballads about the romance of two
lovers who are about to be separated. The two lovers sing alternating stanzas accompanied by chorus singers. According to the Real Folk Cultural International Academy (RFCIA, 2009), “Jindua originates from folk song culture, but nowadays it is performed with the dance steps and singing by couples for expressing their feelings about each other.” According to Gurjit (pers. comm., 13 January, 2008) Jindua is a folk genre indigenous to Punjab; however, in recent years, its performance has been significantly attenuated by the use of elements from Bollywood romantic duets (see fig. 3).

Fig 3. Punjabi folk dance performers posing after the Jindua dance. (Photograph by Vikrant Kishore)

It was only in the Jindua performance that I felt the overt influence of “Bollywood dance”. This performance not only used mixed-sex dancing in its routine, the movements, facial expressions and gestures seemed to imitate dramatised gestures, romantic duets and signature dance moves from different Bollywood song and dance
sequences.

As we were about to exit the fair, Gurjit invited me to watch some performances taking place at the other end of the fairground. His nephew was participating in a programme dedicated to fusion Bhangra dance, one of the main highlights of the fair. As we reached the other side of the fairground, the party had already begun and the speakers were blaring with a remixed Bhangra song by Malkit Singh, one of the progenitors of Bhangra fusion music in Britain. The stage looked like a set for a pop concert, with its shimmering curtains, extensive use of lasers, ultra-violet lights and smoke machines. The dance group members on the stage were all dressed in Western outfits. They performed a mix of Bhangra and hip-hop dance routines to songs by Bhangra pop artistes like Daler Mehndi, Bally Sagoo, Jazzy B., Jasbir Jassi and Sukha. The young spectators in the audience danced alongside the performers, like at a pop concert. The audience kept asking for more performances and the revelries continued until late in the night.

As the night drew to a close, I felt that I had seen all the different sides of Bhangra folk dance in one evening—some performances striving to adhere to their traditional repertoire and some incorporating Bollywood dance elements intermittently in their folk routines. Finally, there was also a last performance on a separate stage across the fairground which sought to break out of all traditional boundaries by emulating the style of pop fusion.
III. The Ramifications of Bhangra as a Popular Form

a. Spectacularisation and Professionalisation:

After the performance, I asked Gurjit the leader of Singh Bhangra Party about the reason for his group's attempts to eschew Bollywood elements in their performance. He (pers. comm., 13 January, 2008) replied, “In our group we strive to perform authentic traditional Bhangra. While all the dancers in our group are trained performers, we also have real jobs. We don’t just dance for money. Our main concern is to protect our rich heritage.” He further added:

In the last few years there have been a lot of groups who claim to perform traditional Bhangra, but they only do so to get exposure in international folk festivals, in the USA, Britain, Canada and Australia, where there is a sizeable Punjabi community that wants to see their traditional Bhangra and not fusion or Disco Bhangra.

Gurjit was pointing to the trend of the professional Bhangra performer that has emerged as a result of Bhangra’s transformation into a popular form. As Roy (2009, p. 20) notes, “Bhangra artists, ever since the emergence of the professional Bhangra performer, have been implicated to different degrees in the field of Bhangra commerce.” Pandey (in Roy, 2009, p. 20) elaborates that with the development of Bhangra groups as professionalised troupes, “the traditional tribes of performers like the baazigars, bhands, mirasis, naqquals, nachchars, tamki-walleh, nobatwalleh, and dhadhis, who would perform across towns and villages across Punjab, has been eliminated.” The demise of these different tribes of folk performers has been cemented with urbanisation, modernity and the transformation of Bhangra into a pop
Indeed, the pop music industry which has been responsible for the phenomenal rise of Bhangra in popular culture, has also been the main reason behind the professionalisation of the folk form. As Gurjit states, “With so many Punjabi music channels these days, every villager who can sing and dance a little, dreams of producing a music album and becoming a pop star like Daler Mehndi or Bally Sagoo.” Sonja Walter (2009) blames this trend of towards professional Bhangra troupe or the Bhangra pop star for the loss of the folk base and orientation of the dance form:

I understand a folk dance to be a dance where “folk”, i.e. common people belonging to a particular cultural community can participate. Therefore, it is necessary that the people are familiar with the dance steps. Regarding the present Bhangra performances [especially designed for stage] this criteria is not fulfilled. The dancers on stage are specialists.

The insertion of Bhangra into the wider popular culture has also taken Bhangra away from its traditional context of performance as a communal harvest dance and modified it to suite the aesthetic templates of romantic duets or solo dances. This has meant that in Bollywood films and music videos alike, Bhangra is more often performed as an eroticised glamourous spectacle than as a communal dance. Roy (2009, p. 16) notes that this process of spectacularisation began with the “splitting of the participative group in the performer and the audience and the separation of the performance space from that of viewing” and “reaches its zenith in the camera’s voyeuristic gaze in the music video.”

Indeed, the spectacular gaze on the Bhangra performer has led to the inclusion
of mixed-sex dancing and female dancers in revealing clothing in these routines, elements which are mainstays of pop music videos and Bollywood song and dance culture. This is even true if the dancers in live performances, recorded music videos and films, dress in traditional attire to assert their Punjabi cultural identity. In her article “Categorically Vulgar”, while tracing the shift in the performative circumstances of Bhangra from folk to popular, Roy (2009, p. 4) astutely deconstructs such an act of parading traditional attire in films and music videos as another element of the spectacular regime of popular culture, where the Bhangra dancer performs a spectacle of rustic ethnicity for modern urbanised audiences to enjoy:

With vision having become the most privileged human sense in “the society of spectacle” and with the mediatised image ruling the globe, the music video’s specularity reifies the Bhangra body even in situations where Bhangra is consumed as an aural text.

Thus, a serious after-effect of the relocation of Bhangra from the ritual space of communal life to popular culture has been the professionalisation and spectaculariation of it as a folk form. With such a crossover, it seems futile to lament the loss of Bhangra's authenticity, since not only have the rules of the game changed but the field where the game is played has also shifted. As Roy (2009, p. 20) observes, “Once Bhangra consents to enter this sphere, it is forced to subscribe to the rules of the game it has opted to play, irrespective of how unfair or humiliating the rules might be.”
b. Dancing Bhangra—Performing Identity

Indian popular culture has now inscribed Bhangra as the signifier of Punjabi, especially Punjabi Sikh identity. Yet, its fragmented history through the ages (which I briefly touched upon in the first section of this chapter) not only reveals its origins as a dispersed and heterogenous folk form, it also becomes apparent that the dance form was performed in the Punjabi region by Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs alike. Roy cites the appropriation of Bhangra from Mirasis (a class of Muslim performers who have virtually disappeared from public sight in the recent decades) by Jatts in the consolidation of Jatt identity as one event in this alignment of the form with communal identity (Roy 2009, p. 9). Bhangra has now become a site for the production of cultural identity privileging Jatt or Sikh identity as the embodiment of the spirit of Punjab.

While tracing the cultural politics of Sikh identity, Ballantyne (2006, pp. 126-59) also studies the shifting performative traditions, social contexts and cultural politics behind the construction of Bhangra in the consolidation of Punjabi, especially Sikh, identity. Similar to Peterson and Soneji’s (eds. 2008) argument about the creation of a classical oeuvre in India in the wake of middle-class nationalism, Ballantyne also explores how the inclusion of Bhangra culture into the fold of nationalism gave the dance a communal connotation that was not a part of its original repertoire as a folk harvest dance. In his chapter “Displacement, Diaspora, and Difference in the Making of Bhangra”, Ballantyne (2006, p. 123) claims:

*Bhangra* has played an extremely important role in the articulation of both Punjabi and Sikh identities over the last four decades. It has been a prominent element in the creation of a Punjabi regional identity in the wake of partition; played a central role in
the cultural life of diasporic South Asians in the United Kingdom; and functioned as a flexible expressive form that has connected the various Punjabi communities (both within South Asia and outside) into a shared, if highly uneven, cultural space. Through *Bhangra* lyrics, stage performances, cassettes, CDs and MP3s, music videos, Internet discussion groups, and the press, visions of Punjabi history, Sikh identity, and the values of rural (especially Jat) Punjab have circulated widely in networks of cultural production and consumption since [India’s] partition.

*Bhangra* music and dance have been appropriated as a symbol of the culture of the Punjabi homeland, especially during the displacement of the Sikhs into India at the time of partition and the re-settlement of Sikhs in various other parts of the world. After the 1960s, the prolific migration of Punjabis to the West, especially Britain, created a large Punjabi diaspora, which played its role in again recruiting *Bhangra* as a cultural prop for Punjabi Sikh identity. As Ballantyne (1999, p. 131) contends:

With the resulting consolidation of the migrant Punjabi family and the foundation of community groups, the building of new gurudwaras and mandirs, and the proliferation of weddings, British Punjabi social life increasingly emphasizes family activities (as opposed to the hypermasculine culture of the early migrants) and the maintenance of “tradition”. Within this revivified social scene, *Bhangra* emerged as a key marker of tradition by embodying the transplantation of the rural culture so central to Punjabi regional identity.

The economic clout of these diasporic Punjabis and the hold that Punjabis maintained on the Bollywood film industry led to the proliferation of *Bhangra* in popular culture. As I have demonstrated in the earlier chapters, Yash Chopra, a Punjabi himself,
blatantly elevated Punjabi culture and identity in his films and *Bhangra* served as a musical extension of this glorification of Punjabi identity.

Soon people in states across India were dancing to Bollywood *Bhangra* numbers played on radio, music channels, *Discos*, nightclubs and at festive occasions. It is quite odd that, given the regionalist denomination of *Bhangra* and the overt allegiance to Punjabi identity it expresses, that these Bollywood *Bhangra* sequences should be so widely embraced by Indians of all creeds. The trans-regional appeal of *Bhangra* has emerged as a direct result of the prolific growth of diasporic Indians, who danced to *Bhangra* numbers at nightclubs, community events and revel in the dance as an Indian folk form regardless of their regional identity. As Roy (2009, p. 10) has noted, “*Bhangra*’s current domination by an urban working class, and rural *jatt* fraternity does not exclude the participation of other classes, castes, sects and ethnicities either in its production or consumption.” Indeed, in this commoditised form *Bhangra* has moved out from its regional domain and become symbolic of a “national” popular culture. Perhaps it is both the proliferation of *Bhangra* as an upbeat pop genre and its preoccupation with issues of identity, that makes it an amorphous dance form that can operate with ease between its allegiances to regional or national identity.

c. The Transformation of a Folk Form into a Popular Form

While this chapter has highlighted the transformation of *Bhangra* into a contemporary popularised and commoditised form under the auspices of Bollywood cinema, Ballantyne (2006, p. 155) notes that this crossover of *Bhangra* into the domain of popular culture has not been without conflict: “Sikhs are uneasy about the
musical innovations and new forms of sociability that have emerged around Bhangra since the 1970s”. This anxiety about the erosion of the traditional form of the dance amongst some Punjabis has in turn led to demands for folk dancers that eschew any form of fusion. As Ballantyne (2006, p. 141) states:

A strong desire for “traditional” Bhangra over the new styles of Bhangra fashioned in Southall or Handsworth was often an important element of this stress on cultural continuity, especially among older Punjabis or in towns with smaller South Asian populations.

There has been a divisive line drawn between proponents of fusion Bhangra and purists seeking to uphold traditional Bhangra, an issue so clearly dramatised in my own fieldwork when I encountered the performances at the two ends of the fairground. Given the divisive stance between these two camps of complete fusion or adherence to authenticity, how can we describe the situation that the dance form is now in? In my opinion the predicament that Bhangra is currently in is an important juncture in its fluid history of cross-fertilisation. After its constitution as a homogenous genre through the fusion of its sub-genres in post-independence Punjab, this process of cross-fertilisation is now taking place on a larger scale in a globalised, mediatised landscape. In a cultural ecology defined by the mass media, this face of contemporary Bhangra has been shaped by its circulation, distribution and consumption within a popular culture industry led by Bollywood cinema. In my opinion, the transformation of a folk form into a popular form is perhaps the most succinct and conclusive way to explain Bhangra’s current predicament. At the end of this study into the impact of Bollywood on Bhangra, I would like to reiterate my argument about this transformation of a folk form into a popular one by quoting once
more from Roy (2004, p. 4):

The brand image created for *Bhangra* by the music industry plays on its generic ethnicity, rusticity, and folk antecedents. *Bhangra* is able to penetrate both the national and global popular musical sphere because of its special positioning as the nontecnologised sound of a peasant culture and society uncorrupted by modernity. Even *Bhangra* hybrids, which mix synthesizers with traditional instruments like *dhol* and *tumbi* work by the play on the contrast between the modern and the traditional, the pristine and the mixed, the rural and the urban.

*Bhangra* works as the symbol of all that is traditional and rustic, while also operating with dexterity within the commercial interests of popular culture, making the ultimate testimony to its conflation of the folk and the popular.
Chapter 9

Purulia Chhau: The Bollywoodisation of a Folk Form

I. Purulia Chhau Dance—A Legacy of Cultural Fusion

Purulia Chhau is a martial dance drama, mainly based on stories derived from Hindu mythological texts like the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas\(^\text{75}\). Also known as the “dance drama of the gods”, it is performed by men who impersonate mythological characters of gods and demons by wearing elaborate masks and enacting the story in a performance tradition that melds dance, acrobatic routines and martial arts. Chhau is prevalent in regions across the present-day states of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkand in Eastern India. At present there are four prominent styles of Chhau dance\(^\text{76}\): Purulia Chhau and Jhargram Chhau from the state of West Bengal, Seraikela Chhau from Bihar and Mayurbhanj Chhau from Orissa. All these dance-styles of Chhau use masks, except for the Mayurbhanj style, which uses colours on the faces of the performers instead of masks. My expertise lies in the Purulia style of Chhau also known as the Manbhum\(^\text{77}\) style, and it is this variant of the dance form that I will be using as my case study in this chapter.

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\(^{75}\) *Puranas* are Hindu religious texts about the history of the universe, its formation and destruction, tales of Hindu kings and gods, as well as the description of Hindu cosmology and geography (Garg, 1992).

\(^{76}\) Different styles of *Chhau* dance are named after the region to which they belong. *Chhau* dance of the Purulia district of West Bengal, which is composed of virile acrobatic moves, is known as *Purulia* or *Manbhum Chhau*. The dance from the town of Seraikela in Jharkhand district, which is quite lyrical and poetic in nature, is known as the *Seraikela Chhau*. (Emmert et al. 1983).

\(^{77}\) The present area of Purulia in the West Bengal state and its adjoining regions were under the state of Bihar, and the district was known as Manbhum before the reorganisation of the state in 1956. (For more details on Manbhum See Coupland, 1911).
Scholars have sought to clarify the origins of Purulia *Chhau* by exploring the etymology of its name. There are disparate opinions on the origins of the word *Chhau*; some scholars argue that it is taken from the Oriya (the language spoke in the state of Orissa) word *Chhau* (attack), while others say that it comes from the Sanskrit word *chhaya* (shade) or Mundali word *chhak* (ghost). But most scholars agree about the martial origins of the dance in ancient India (Emmert et al. 1983). Singhdeo (in Emmert et al. 1983) suggests, “*Chhau* dance is based on the basic techniques of the *pharikhanda* style of dance. *Phari* is the ‘shield’ and *khanda* is the ‘sword.’ According to my father Vijoy Kishore (pers. comm., 18 July, 2007)\(^{78}\), the word *Chhau* has been derived from the word *Chhauni*, which means military camp. In the middle ages, Hindu kings of the region maintained these *Chhauni* or military camps of soldiers to protect their borders against enemies and to conduct military expansion into new territories (eds. Emmert et al. 1983).

During peacetime, the soldiers in these camps practised their military skills and martial arts as preparatory drills for possible combat as well as a form of entertainment. They performed feats of martial prowess by devising challenges, like jumping from extreme height when trapped, freeing themselves from chains, fighting with sticks without weapons, etc. Special performances and occasions were earmarked for these displays of military training, developing into the more ritualised choreography of elaborate dances of acrobatic skill and martial prowess (Kishore 1987, Mahto 2003).

As a folk form that originated in the dance of these tribal belts of Eastern India, populated by tribes like the Munda, Bhumij and Oraon various scholars have

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\(^{78}\) My father Vijoy Kishore has worked with *Chhau* dance groups for almost 30 years, as a bureaucrat in charge of the cultural heritage of the region and as the founder of the non-govermental organization, National Institute for *Chhau* and Folk Dances (NIFCD).
suggested that Purulia *Chhau* dance has ancient tribal roots (Bhattacharya 1983, Emmert et al. 1983, Mahto 2003). Mahto (2003) finds that it was the amalgamation of Hindu elements into the original tribal dance over many centuries that gave birth to the *Chhau* dance form. According to Mahato (2003, p. 59):

If we study the very stances and gaits of the dance we find that six local dance forms had been incorporated in *Chhau* dance namely Natua/Firkel/Parikhanda dance, a martial art of the region; *Nachni*, the dance form of the lasya or erotic; Kirtan or Vaishnav’s mass prayer songs and dance; Majhi Nach or the dance of the Santhals, Mundas and Ho [tribals] of Jharkhand, which is a collective dance form of the males and females; Danr Nach or Kathi Nach of the Kudmi, Deswali, Gaur and other indigenous people; and Karam dance a ritual dance of the Ho/Horo-Mitan indigenous people of Jharkhand.

A look at the history of Purulia *Chhau* reveals a series of cultural fusions dictated by the socio-political constraints of different times, and which brought about transformations in its content, presentation and ideological purpose. It reveals a fluid history of continuous cultural adaptation like the folk dance form of *Bhavai*. As Swati Joshi (in Ray 2009, p. 373) states, “the Bhavai folk form has been extremely fluid as it has constantly responded to existing and changing social pressures.”

To begin this history, we must go back to 650 AD when King Chechanga of Suisa (Manbhum) ruled the region. His reign gave rise to a martial society and led to the formation of a class of warrior-people called the Paika. As Kishore (1987, p. 5) observes, in 960 AD, Gopal Pal, a local Hindu king along with his Paikas (warriors) attacked the tribes around the neighbouring regions of Manbhum (presently a contiguous area shared between the states of Jharkhand, West Bengal and Orissa) and
subjugated them. Gopal Pal’s domination of this area led to a hybridisation of the tribal dance cultures dispersed across the region with the acrobatic and martial arts skills of the Paika warriors. This new hybridised dance came to be known as *Paika* dance, which became quite popular during the 13th and 14th centuries AD. *Paika* dance served two different functions, first as a form of entertainment and art, and secondly as a tool for the Hindu rulers to display the might of their warriors and intimidate the local tribes (Kishore and Sahoo 1986, Kishore 1987).

The process of transformation of this dance form continued into the 16\(^{th}\) century, when *Paika* dance entered into the realm of storytelling and was performed to the epic martial dramas of Hindu mythologies. This led to the formation of a new dance form called *Natua*. *Natua* dance adapted *Paika*’s martial dance to tales from the Hindu epics of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, in order to appease the Hindu kings and chieftains and to put the art form in the service of Hindu religious ideology. These Hindu mythological stories were then performed with the help of wooden masks to represent gods and demons. This phase of transformation brought a ritualistic and religious dimension to the dance that dominates it till date (Bhattacharya 1972; eds. Emmert et al. 1983; Kishore and Sahoo 1986).

The martial dances of *Paika*, and the religio-martial dance drama of *Natua*, were not the only precursors that played an important role in giving Purulia *Chhau* its present identity and form. Another dance form called *Nachni*\(^{79}\) also played a significant role. *Nachni* dance has its roots in the early fifteenth century Vaishnava cult, which celebrates, through music and dance the Hindu god Vishnu, his various incarnations and the romance of Lord Krishna (an incarnation of Vishnu) with his

\(^{79}\) Chakravarti mentions that *Nachni* dance is an integral part of the Manbhum culture, and this regional form of *Nachni* is different from that the ones practiced in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (Chakravarti, 2001).
consort Radha. This dance was practiced exclusively by women, who mostly belonged to the lower castes of Hindu society. Purulia Chhau dance derives its female gait and sensuous element of Lasya\textsuperscript{80} almost entirely from the Nachni dance, thus, adding to the virile Tandava dance movement of the Paika and Natua dance (Bhattacharya cited in eds. Emmert et al. 1983; Chakravarti, 2001; Kishore 1987).

Soon Jhumur music became a part of the repertoire of Purulia Chhau dance, bringing in new musical instruments like Shehnai (an Indian wind instrument resembling the oboe), Dhol (Barrel drum), Dhumsa (large kettle drum) and Bansi (Flute). Bhattacharya (in Emmert et al. 1983) attributes the addition of wind instruments like Shehnai to the Muslim influence in the region, before which the dance was only performed to percussion instruments. The Muslim influence resulted from the expansion of the rule of the Mughal emperor Akbar in the region in the late 16th century, when the area of Manbhum was brought under the Mansabdari\textsuperscript{81} system (Kishore and Sahoo 1986). Cultural exchanges accelerated interactions between local chieftains and Muslims. The chieftains patronised Muslim musicians in their courts and the Paika warriors who performed these martial dances were brought under the fold of the Mughal Empire and given the duty of guarding the forts in the region (Coupland 1911).

The British Raj banned the Purulia Chhau rituals of Shiva Gajan and Bhakta Ghora in 1864. They perceived the self-torture committed with swords, knives and fire by the warriors as an expression of their virility, valour and devotion to the gods, to be a barbaric practice. Though it did not end the practice of Purulia Chhau dance, it

\textsuperscript{80}There are different interpretations of tandemva and lasya, but roughly speaking tandemva refers to a wrathful dance and lasya to an erotic dance (Bose, 1991).

\textsuperscript{81}Akbar, the Mughal Emperor of India, introduced the Mansabdari system creating a social hierarchy of officials to govern his empire and strengthen its administrative structure. Under this system, every officer was assigned a rank (mansab). The lowest rank was 10 and the highest was 5000. Princes of royal blood received higher ranks. Towards the end of Akbar’s reign, the highest rank a noble could attain was raised from 5000 to 7000 (Chandra, 1997).
certainly shifted the focus of the dance from physical strength and martial valour to the more aesthetic aspects of drama, music and dance (Bhattacharya 1983, Kishore 1986, Mahto 2003).
II. Exploring the Impact of Bollywood on Purulia *Chhau* Folk Performances

**Performing the Folk Dance III: Hindu Gods Dance to Western Music**

Purdah Village, June 25, 2007: To explore the impact of Bollywood films on *Purulia Chhau* dance I travelled to Purulia district to watch a performance and conduct interviews with the dancers, musicians and the audience. The district of Purulia is one of the most economically backward areas in the state of West Bengal, with vast swathes of its rural hinterland deprived of proper roads or electricity. Though my destination of Purdah village in Purulia district was only about 125 kilometres from my hometown Ranchi (the capital of Jharkand state), it took me almost 4 hours to reach there because of the bad roads and stormy weather. The schoolteacher of the village Banshidhar, who was also a leader of the *Chhau* dance group from the village, guided us to the arena where the performance was to be held. It was an open arena next to the Shiva Mandir\(^2\) (temple), the centre of all religious and social activities in the village.

We sighed a breath of relief when the rain stopped on our arrival at the arena. I began to wonder about the lighting arrangements at the arena, since the villages here have no electricity. As it was primarily my need to film the performance under good lighting that necessitated arrangements for electricity, I became the main contributor for the lighting facilities hired to illuminate the arena. Two large noisy diesel-run

\(^2\)In West Bengal, especially in Purulia district there is one Shiva temple in every village. These Shiva temples act as a place of worship, a social hub and a meeting area for the whole village.
electricity generators were hired from the nearby town of Purulia and placed at the far end of the fairground, to keep the noise at bay. The recently introduced practice of organising Purulia *Chhau* performances late at night, starting around 11:00 p.m., had introduced this practice of hiring diesel generators for electricity. Notice how tubelights are attached to bamboo poles in the photograph below (see fig. 4).

Fig. 4: A shot of Purulia *Chhau* dance competition in the makeshift dance arena, Balrampur, West Bengal. (*Photograph by Vikrant Kishore*)

Considering the unpredictable weather of the day, I wondered if rain would dampen the spirit of the villagers. But I was wrong, around 400 to 500 people from Purdah and other nearby villages had gathered to see the performance by 9:00 p.m. Soon the atmosphere was charged up, as the musicians started playing some folk songs to set the mood for the performance, while the dancers got dressed. At the showground, ropes tied around bamboo posts barricaded the circular arena separating the performers from the audience. Three groups were to perform that night, each of them
named after the leader of the dance group. The first group led by Guru Banshidhar Mahato was from Purdah village, the second group led by the renowned Padma Shree awardee Guru Nepal Mahato and Guru Lalit Mahato was from Adabana Village and the third group was a newly formed group led by Ganesh Karmakar of Dumurdih village. The event was also an example of the growing popularity of Chhau dance competitions between village dance groups, drawing huge audiences from remote villages and small towns from the neighbouring states of Jharkhand and Orissa. These kinds of Chhau dance competitions can normally draw an audience of 500-1,500 during the non-festive seasons and upto 4,000-5,000 during the festive season of Bengali New Year and Shiva Gajan.

**Purulia Chhau Rituals:**

Purulia Chhau dance starts with six main rituals—Dhumal Bajna, Daharua, Akhara Bandana, Sabha Bandana, Udan Bhajana and Ganesh Bandana—which act as a prelude to the main performance. In the first ritual of Dhumal Bajna, the dance groups offer their prayers to gods and the various accoutrements like musical instruments, masks and costumes that are to be used in the performance, after which they begin a ceremonial procession from the village to the dance arena. In the second ritual of Akhara bandana, the musicians pray to the Akhara (stage) for a good performance. Thereafter, they initiate the ritual of Sabha Bandana (audience worship), where the musicians and performers offer their thanks to the audience for their patronage and ask for their cooperation for a successful performance. In Udan Bhajana the musicians enter the spotlight as they play their musical instruments as loudly as

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83 Padma Shree awardees Guru Nepal Mahato and Guru Lalit Mahato are considered to be the doyens of Purulia style of Chhau. They are both members of National Institute for Chhau and Folk dances, and have represented India in various folklore festivals in more than 20 countries. Guru Nepal Mahato and Guru Lalit Mahato are famous for their pairing as Kirat-Kiratin (tribal man-tribal woman) dancers.
possible, with thundering beats of the Dhumsa and Dhol drums and the shrill calls of the Shehnai and Bansí. This continues for around 20 minutes to ensure that everyone in the village hears the announcement and anybody left behind makes his way to the performance. Finally, the ritual of Ganesh bandana pays obeisance to Lord Ganesha, to seek the blessings of this Hindu god of good fortune with the head of an elephant, who is invoked at the start of any venture or occasion in Hindu tradition.

b. Change in Musical Repertoire:

On the far left side of the arena, there was a platform made for musicians and on the far right end there was an opening in the barricade for the dancers to enter. This trend of setting up a platform for the musicians is a recent phenomenon, especially in such grassroots performances in villages. The practice seems to have begun due to the introduction of the electronic synthesiser as a musical instrument in the folk routine. Since synthesisers require electricity and a connection with the loudspeakers, the musician needs to sit in a stationery spot to play it. This seems to have evolved into the practice of musicians sitting as a team, almost like an orchestra in the background. This is a major change from the earlier Chhau practice, where musicians would enter the centre of the arena and dance around with their musical instruments. As the time for Udan Bhajana arrived, the musicians began playing the instruments zealously and some of them began circumambulating around the dance arena, but the synthesiser player had to stay put in his place. In the photograph below, we can see the musicians sitting around the person playing the synthesiser, who is also the central figure in the band.

The music played during the ritual also seemed quite different from the traditional Jhumur music to which Chhau is performed. The musician playing the
synthesiser added reverb, echo, and “shaker” effects to the traditional melodic structure. Most of the villagers seemed spellbound by the instrument and the musician's talent in churning out such sounds from the synthesiser. Many of them crowded around him and children tried to squeeze in closer to see this exotic instrument (see fig. 5).

Fig. 5. The synthesizer player draws the maximum attention among the Purulia Chhau musicians and is often treated like a star. (Photograph by Vikrant Kishore)

I had never seen a Chhau dance group using a synthesiser until this performance. With this incident, I was also reminded how in 2003 a musician in my group tried to convince me about the need to buy a synthesiser. The group members chimed in with his request and said that the addition of this new instrument would add to their performance and popularity, making them a formidable team in all competitions.

After the performance, I asked some performers about the instrument. Viren Kalindi (pers. comm., 26th June, 2007), a Chhau dancer endorsed the synthesiser generated music and said, “I love dancing on the synthesiser music. The Shehnai
music is too shrill. When the same music is played on synthesiser it makes it more danceable.” Akul Machchuar, who had been with Guru Nepal Mahato’s group for more than 25 years and also worked as a freelance musician for festivals and wedding occasions said that almost 80 percent of Chhau dance groups of the area (roughly around 300-350) had bought synthesisers (pers. comm., 26th June 2007). Akul complained that the inexperience of the musicians with the new instrument as well as the recruitment of out-of-town musicians who were unfamiliar with Jhumur music led to dissonance in the music. He said:

Most of the times, the synthesiser players are hired from the town. They are not an integral part of the dance groups and therefore, they are not well versed with the Chhau musical notations. So they play whatever suits them, which is mostly popular film numbers. Our own musicians have not mastered the instrument as yet, and thus there is hardly any coordination between the synthesiser and traditional instruments.

A Nagara (a massive barrel drum) player from Nepal Mahato’s group, Ganesh Mahato (pers. comm., 31st June, 2006) was quite vocal about his concerns regarding the overall standards of Chhau music, which he perceived as being under threat by such changes in the traditional repertoire. He said:

The synthesiser has become the main attraction of the show, and the public treats the synthesiser player like a star. When connected to the loudspeakers, it is so loud that it drowns our powerful nagaras, resulting in a competition between the synthesiser player and other musicians, to create the loudest sound to attract attention, even when the routine requires mellow music. This destroys the essence of our music.
Indeed the volume of the synthesiser was turned up so high with the amplifiers, the sounds of other musical instruments were drowned. Notice the amplifier and speakers for the synthesiser behind the musicians in the photograph below (fig. 6).

Fig. 6. Chhau musicians performing the ritual of Udan Bhajana. (Photograph by Vikrant Kishore)

In addition, Mahato complained that the introduction of such modern instruments had also paved the way for groups to experiment in fusing Bollywood music with Jhumur. Mahato (pers. comm., 31st June, 2006) stresses:

Another thing that really worries me is the growing influence of western beats instead of traditional talas\textsuperscript{84}. The Kolkata (capital city of West Bengal) based Chhau groups are the main culprits behind mixing such sounds and making the traditional music impure. They started the trend of modelling Chhau music

\textsuperscript{84} Tala is a term used in classical Indian music to refer to rhythmic patterns and beats in musical compositions (Bose, 1991).
on film songs and it has now spread into groups in other regions. Now, if we

don’t incorporate these modern elements, we are not paid well.

But, Kartik Mahato, an aficionado of Chhau dance seemed to support this trend of

fusion music. He (pers. comm., 26th June 2007) said, “I like the synthesiser music as it
can produce music like the songs we hear in the films.” On the other hand, Akul
Machchuar said that although he was not an avid Bollywood film follower and
preferred to play traditional Jhumur music, the demand of the audience at Chhau
performances also drove him to follow current Bollywood hits. Machuar (pers.
comm., 26th June 2007) expresses:

It is the popularity of film song and dance that is affecting our traditional style of
dance as well. Now when we go to perform Chhau, people are expecting something
new. They want it to be like a spectacle out of some film. It creates a pressure people
like us who are dependant on Chhau as a livelihood. We need to sustain the interest of
the audience to make sure that they keep coming back for our performances.

c. Beginning of a Spectacle:

As the final ritual of Ganesh Bandana began, the dancer wearing the Ganesha mask
entered the dance arena and stood in a posture imitating the god, quivering his
shoulder (chamak) and gesticulating with his hands. Chatterji (2004, p. 43) finds that
this kind of worship of Ganesha, to invoke his blessings to make the event auspicious,
is a recent interpolation in the Chhau dance repertoire. Soon a man attired as a Nachni
dancer, (the sensual, adulatory dance performed by females, I noted in the first section
of this chapter) entered the dance arena to offer prayers to Ganesha. Generally, it is
not a solo Nachni dancer, but the dancers from the main performance who conduct this rite.

Although, Chhau had historically derived some of its choreographic elements from the Nachni dance, particularly for the depiction of its female characters, a Nachni dancer never participated in the performance. Seeing this Nachni dancer without a mask, in a dance tradition that is entirely built around masked characters playing gods and demons, detracted from the performance even before it began. To further compound this disruptive tone, the Nachni dancer began a solo dance in the centre, flaunting some accentuated hip gyrations to the frenzied beats of theme music from YRF’s 2006 film Dhoom 2, amidst loud cheers from the crowd. Finally, he bowed his head to the god in a token gesture of obeisance in a ritual that was actually meant to be dedicated to worshipping Ganesha.

As the dancers of the main performance waited in the sidelines, I could see them standing in their costumes, which seemed to have become even more elaborate than the costumes I had once worn. Although, the history of Chhau shows evolution of its theatrical costume through the ages, and I was aware of the modernised costumes used in dance groups, the ones worn in this performance seemed to have surpassed all levels of ostentation.

The three photographs (figs. 7, 8 and 9) below demonstrate the difference between the mask and costume style of late 1980s and early 2000s. The filmic influences on the costumes of Chhau dance were quite evident, as multi-coloured saris with embellished embroidery and ornate decoration soon replaced single-coloured saris.
Fig. 7. Chhau dancer displaying the late 1980s style of mask of Goddess Durga, embellished with feathers. (Photograph by Vikrant Kishore)

Fig. 8. Chhau dancer displaying the present (2000s) style of mask of Goddess Durga, which is decorated with plastic materials, instead of feathers; note how a CD is used as the centrepiece of the crown to add to its exoticness. (Photograph by Vikrant Kishore)
By mid-20th century, the most prominent change in Chhau dance was the introduction of light papier-mâché based masks in place of the old uncomfortable wooden masks. The mask makers stylised these papier-mâché masks with ornate embellishments and intricate paintwork (Bhattacharya 1983; eds. Emmert et al. 1983). Kishore (1987, p. 25) points out that by late 20th century the area of Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal were undergoing rapid urbanisation, primarily due to the wealth of natural resources (like coal and iron ore) in the region, which are being mined till date. It was this wider context of urbanisation and industrialisation that played an important role in introducing significant changes in the Purulia Chhau repertoire. The local Bengali films and to some extent Hindi films, with their portrayal of Hindu gods in ornate dress and headgear impacted the style of masks and costumes used in Purulia Chhau Dance, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, when it began to be staged professionally for urban audiences in theatrical productions.

It was a night of too many startling “disclosures” for me, as a student of
Chhau, a researcher and a filmmaker. I had known that Chhau had undergone some changes due to the influence of popular culture. But, the main performance was yet to begin; and at the end of that performance, I would be quite astounded by the transformation wrought by the impact of Bollywood films on the traditional form of Chhau dance.
Performing the Folk IV: Bollywood Dance in a Mythological Repertoire—Mahisasur Mardini

Mahisasur Mardini is one of the most popular dance dramas from the Purulia Chhau repertoire. It is taken from Devi Purana and tells the story of the victory of the goddess Durga over the demon king Mahisasur. One of the main reasons for its popularity in the region was its depiction of the might of goddess Durga, the most venerated goddess of female power in the Bengal region. In the story, the demon Mahisasur begins terrorising all the gods in heaven. Shiva, one supreme god of the Hindu divine trinity sends his sons Ganesha and Karthik to contain Mahisasur’s tyranny. When they are both defeated and sent back, the divine trinity of Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu unite together to create a female emanation of their power called Durga to stop the demon king. Bequeathed with the blessings of all gods, armoured with ten arms full of weapons and a lion as her carrier, Durga finally annihilates the demon king Mahisasur.

The music stopped briefly before the main dance performance of Mahisasur Mardini began. Then, the drummers start beating their drums ferociously and the Shehnai players sounded a shrill war cry. Soon the dancer playing Ganesha walked into the arena with an elephant mask on his face and began pacing up and down to the drumbeat on a ferocious hunt for Mahisasur. The first ten minutes were devoted to Ganesha’s wrathful solo dance in search for Mahisasur. He displayed his acrobatic skills—running around, jumping up, falling down on his knees, doing a somersault, turning backwards and forwards on his heels—much to the amusement of the

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85 Mahisasura Mardini is a story taken from the Devi Purana, which describes the killing of the Asura King Mahisasura by Goddess Durga. The Hindus consider Durga as the divine mother, an incarnation of Shakti (Mother Goddess) (Bhattacharyya 1983; Kumar 2006).
audience. Suddenly the *Shehnai* player announced the entry of Shiva's other son, the robust warrior Karthik, the Hindu god of war and he took the centre stage as Ganesha walked about in the sidelines. Karthik also danced in a similar fashion but with a more serious presentation of his virile acrobatic skills and swordsmanship. Ganesha, soon rejoined Kartik, and they both continued their display of valour in unison, leaping up and down, swirling and spinning in the air with great dexterity (see Fig. 10 and 11).

Fig. 10. Kartik displaying his acrobatic skills in the dance drama Mahisasur Mardini.

*(Photograph by Vikrant Kishore)*
I was so engrossed in watching their breathtaking acrobatic skills, which were quite impressive given the fact that they were wearing heavy costumes and masks that I had almost forgotten to notice the loud noise of synthesiser music. But this was soon to be interrupted when the musicians began playing a Bollywood film tune and the two dancers joined in to dance some Bollywood routines. Ganesha began gyrating his hips and swaying to the music, akin to Hrithik Roshan’s\textsuperscript{86} trademark style. Karthik squatted on the ground and began rotating his legs around his shifting hands, in the style of Bollywood heroes imitating American break-dance. Even that whole sequence seemed like a scene from a Bollywood dance film or an American music video, where street dancers challenge each other to show off their prowess. If Karthik

\textsuperscript{86} With the success of his debut film \textit{Kaho Na Pyaar Hai} in the year 2000, Hritik Roshan established himself as a dancing sensation and a Bollywood superstar.
would do a somersault, so would Ganesha; if Ganesha could do some pelvic thrusts like Hrithik Roshan, Karthik would show his break-dance moves.

Then the demon king Mahisasur entered the dance arena, challenging both of them to fight with him. The dance became more energetic and acrobatic to portray the confrontation. Mahisasur easily dodged the menacing leaps of Ganesh and Karthik, showing his superior physical agility to the audience. If Karthik flipped once in the air, then Mahisasur flipped thrice; if Ganesha somersaulted twice, Mahisasur somersaulted four times. Ganesha and Karthik seemed to be no match for the physical and martial prowess of the demon god and were soon defeated by him. Then these two defeated gods prayed to lord Shiva for help; Shiva entered the dance arena, performed his *raudra tandava*\(^{87}\) dance and assured them that Mahisasur would soon meet his end.

Shiva’s exit from the dance arena was followed by the grand entry of Goddess Durga riding a lion into the dance arena. As she scanned the arena for Mahisasur, she noticed Ganesha and Karthik coming towards her; Durga bestowed her blessings on them, and then broke into a form of *raudra tandava* standing atop her lion in the centre of the arena. Hysterically pacing up and down to the heavy drumbeat, Durga shook her trident forebodingly (with her other eight arms holding various other weapons, attached at the back). As Durga performed her dance; one could notice a Bollywoodesque sway in her hip movements, resembling the sensual *latkas* and *jhatkas* (gyrations and thrusts) popularised by the dancing superstar Madhuri Dixit\(^{88}\), that seemed mismatched with the original wrathful *raudra tandava*, the dance of death. The synthesiser also began to churn out different sound effects like rumbling.

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\(^{87}\) *Tandava* is the dance of Lord Shiva. There are two main styles of Tandava: Raudra and Ananda. Shiva performs Raudra Tandava when he is angry and this dance can lead to the destruction of the world; whereas, Ananda Tandava is a blissful immersive dance (Kramrisch, 1994).

\(^{88}\) Madhuri Dixit is a prominent Bollywood actress of the 1990s, who was known for her seductive dance moves, generally referred to as “Latkas and Jhatkas” by the Indian film press.
thunder and lightening, which imitated the background score of a typical Bollywood suspense thriller.

Meanwhile, Mahisasur had surreptitiously entered the arena and began to attack the goddess Durga. As the Dhumsa and Dhol players beat the drums hard to capture the frenetic battle, I could make out the sythesiser and Shehnai players belting out a version of the Bollywood song “Pardesi Pardesi” (“Foreigner! Foreigner!”) mixed with the jhumur music, even at such a key moment in the drama. A fierce battle ensued between the two, as Durga ran amuck after Mahisasur, who tried to put up a brave fight but lost after a battle of 15 minutes. The hysterical war music came to an end and calmer melodies took over, as Durga tranquilly performed her dance of victory and other gods and goddesses joined in to pay her homage for restoring peace in heaven. The final posture of Durga standing atop her lion with her trident driven into the heart of Mahisasur on the ground, while surrounded by all other gods and goddesses, formed a tableau, which imitated the iconography of Goddess Durga that has been influenced by poster art of the 19th century. While analysing everyday visual culture in India, Chatterjee (2006, pp. 100-2) finds that migration of villagers into urban areas in the 19th and 20th century saw:

People from the same village or language group gathered in their adopted towns and cities to form bhajan mandalis or religious singing groups in front of the framed images of gods. The mode of worship also changed significantly with the growing need to worship in the privacy of one’s own home. This contributed to the popularity of poster images.

This performance by Banshidhar’s group, was followed by the two other dance groups led by Guru Nepal Mahato and Ganesh Karmakar respectively. I could find
similar elements inspired by Bollywood films and music in their performances too, confirming my conviction about the pervasive influence of popular culture on this folk form.
III. The Ramifications of Bollywood Dance on Purulia Chhau

a. The marketing of Chhau Performances as VCD Films, Bollywood Style:

Investigating the impact of Bollywood culture on Chhau dance, I realised that its influence was not restricted to performances in villages; some enterprising dance groups were marketing the Purulia Chhau dance dramas as VCD/ DVD films. The aspirations of village performers to take Chhau to a larger audience had inspired them to produce Chhau films. This could be easily accomplished, given the ease of recording a dance performance on video cameras and availability of local market for VCDs/DVDs that sell for a minimal sum of 20 to 50 rupees. The popularity of Chhau dance VCDs modelled on the Bollywood style of storytelling is growing among urban and rural audiences. Amateur producers may produce and market their VCD on a shoestring budget, between 5,000 to 50,000 rupees (approximately around US $100 to $1,000), and if they do not make returns on the sale of the actual product, it acts as promotional video for their dance groups. As NICFD dance group leader Lalit Mahato (pers. comm., 28 July, 2007) told me:

Although most groups do not get much return out of the video sales, they do end up getting bookings for shows. The VCDs of my dance group are available everywhere from villages to neighbouring cities like Kolkata, Ranchi, Jamshedpur and Dhanbad. We also have a branch in Canada recording our music CD89 that is sold internationally.

I watched more than 20 of those Chhau dance VCDs which were produced for the

89 CD title: Folk songs and Dances from India: A collection of Chhau & Nagpuri song & dance from Bihar. Performed by Chhau and Nagpuri music dance group of National Institute for Chhau and Folk Dances. Produced by ARC Music Production Int. Ltd. www.arcmusic.co.uk
rural market. Almost all the VCDs had a similar presentation style. One of the *Chhau* movie VCDs that I analysed closely was titled *Parasuramer Matri Hatya* (The killing of Parshuram’s mother) like a Bollywood suspense thriller. The front cover of the VCD displays a collage of the *Chhau* performers; the back jacket of the VCD prominently declares it “a unique collection of *Chhau* Nritya picturisation” with details of the dancers, musicians and the crew (see fig. 12).

![VCD cover](image)

**Fig. 12.** VCD cover of the video performance of *Parasuramer Matri Hatya* in the Purulia *Chhau* style.

Given the staged nature of the dance, the film ignores most of the rituals associated with *Chhau* performance and begins straightaway with *Ganesh Bandana* (invocation of lord Ganesha). In contrast to the *Chhau* dance repertoire, which is entirely based on dance movements, the film was dramatised as a play of dialogues.
between the characters (utilising voiceover) mixed with song and dance sequences and action sequences. This shift could be attributed to the influence of the typical drama and song and dance format of Bollywood films as well as a prominent Bengali folk drama called Jatra\textsuperscript{90}. Unlike traditional Chhau, which is only performed to instrumental music, the film also had the dancers performing to pre-recorded songs sung by playback singers, like Bollywood song and dance sequences.

The story of this dance drama revolves around the wrath of the sage Jamadagni against his wife Renuka. Sage Jamadagni is gifted with the power of omniscience. One day, when his wife returns home late from the river, he sees that she was engrossed in watching Chitraratha (a celestial being) romancing with his consorts in the river. In the next sequence, Jamadagni accuses Renuka of having impure sexual thoughts, and asks his four sons to kill their mother. They refuse to do so, and the sequence is marked with feverish exchange of high-pitched dialogues between the father, mother and sons, dramatised in the typical melodramatic style of a Bollywood film. The drama then progresses into a song and dance sequence, highlighting the dilemma of the mother and the four sons like a typical Bollywood routine, which use song and dance to highlight the mood of a situation.

Then, the 5th son Parshuram makes his entry. Jamadagni asks his last son Parshuram to kill his mother and the disobedient brothers. This starts another round of melodramatic exchanges between father and son. Parshuram requests forgiveness for his mother and his brothers, but Jamadagni refuses to relent. Hapless Parshuram proceeds to fulfil his father's command and kills all his brothers in a battle and subsequently kills his mother too. But Parshuram is full of remorse for his murderous acts. In the end, the story is resolved when Jamadagni is pleased with Parshuram’s

\textsuperscript{90} Jatra is a folk drama tradition from Bengal and Orissa, which uses music, drama and dance as an integral part in its storytelling format (Roy, 2003).
obedience and love for his family and brings back his mother and brothers to life.

Apart from the indiscriminate structuring of the dance-drama in the format of a Bollywood film, the most troubling aspects of this performance were the masks and costumes of the performers, which completely misrepresented the characters. The masks of Parshuram's brothers were modelled on demons, instead of sages or warriors. All the masks were made of plastic, making the players look hideous. Among the three wives of Chitraratha only one was wearing a mask, while the other two without masks performed as Nachni dancers who danced in the sensual Bollywood style. Also, the Nachni dancers had flowing scarves on their wrists, quite similar to the Bhangra and Giddha dancers of Punjab, and wore Ghaghra-Choli (long skirt and blouse, which is North Indian attire) instead of a saree. It seemed as if Punjabi culture that dominates Bollywood films had crept into Chhau as well.

b. Imagined Selves in the Bollywood World:

The impact of Bollywood culture on Chhau seemed to be all pervasive, from the live performances to recorded films. Even the fairground at the live performance with its food vendors, had peddlers selling posters of famous Bollywood stars and different Hindu gods. At the fair, the admiration of the people for Bollywood stars rivalled their veneration for the Hindu gods, as they bought posters of both varieties. Dwyer and Patel (1998, p. 192) find this penchant for the posters of film stars among the Bollywood film audiences something close to the culture of darshan (worshipping) of Hindu Gods; and they term this process of viewing and acquiring posters of film stars by the audiences as a process of “secular darshan”. Seeing the stalls of posters at the fair, I was reminded of my visit to an elderly Chhau musician Lambodar Kalindi's home (see fig. 13). The walls of his mud hut were plastered with posters of
Bollywood filmstars and cricketers in addition to that of Hindu gods and goddesses.

In spite of his age and his respected position as one of the foremost proponents of Chhau culture in the country, he also followed Bollywood stars.

Fig. 13: Purulia Chhau musician Lambodar Kalindi’s hut decorated with posters of Hindu gods, Bollywood stars and Indian cricket stars. (Photograph by Vikrant Kishore)

I interviewed another Chhau performer about the lure of Bollywood culture. Twenty one year old young dancer Viren, had travelled with me to Europe for some folk dance festivals in 2006 and was an avid fan of Hindi films. A fan of filmstar Hrithik Roshan, Viren (pers. comm., July 28, 2007) apologetically disclosed that sometimes he enjoyed showing off Hrithik style moves during his Chhau performances. But he added that the village youngsters really enjoy watching him perform those moves. Viren confessed that he had a group of around 10-15 friends who followed film culture closely and tried to model themselves after their favourite stars. I instantly recalled seeing posters of Bollywood film stars pasted with those of Hindu gods and goddesses on the wall of Viren’s mud house. Viren informed me that he now had an enviable collection of posters of his idol, actor Hrithik Roshan, and planned to buy a
pair of torn jeans that Hrithik had worn in a film. But on second thought, he laughed and said that the villagers might call him a beggar, if he wore torn jeans.

Bollywood cinema fans the imagination of people, creating an image of a modern national identity that people in these far-flung villages want to be a part of. They negotiate their identities with the images of modern India they see on screen and try to transfer that minimal experience of identification into their lives, by modelling themselves after filmstars. Appadurai had argued that “imagined selves in a mass-mediated world” is a result of “imagination” which has been dislocated from its earlier context of localised grounded community of one's physical existence to the imaginary communion given to distant people through mass media “as a property of collectives that is fuelled by the mass media (Appadurai 1996, pp. 2-10).”

Viren also said that watching films was the passion of his life and he watched at least one movie a day on VCD/DVD when he was not performing. The VCD/DVD boom is facilitating the reach of Bollywood films into rural areas of India like never before. Villagers now have access to films on a daily basis, without having to make the tedious journey to theatres located in towns. Though satellite television has still not penetrated the rural market in the region, the absence was compensated by this VCD/DVD culture; and all the satellite channel programmes, regional and Bollywood films can be easily hired or purchased on VCDs or DVDs.

c. Dereliction of Purulia Chhau in Popular Culture

The predicament that Purulia Chhau is presently facing is in stark contrast to the case of Bhangra that I described in the last chapter. The journey of Bhangra in modern times showed the evolution of a relatively dispersed folk genre into the most
prominent folk form in popular culture. On the other hand, the ancient dance of Purulia *Chhau* with its elaborate mythological repertoire and presence across vast swathes of eastern India is hardly recognised outside regional audiences or professional dancing circles, because of the lack of its representation in popular culture, especially Bollywood films.

Many factors combine to create this state of affairs, the most deep-seated of which is the socio-economic one. Despite the wealth of the region in natural resources and agriculture, systemic problems have kept vast sections of the population in these areas of Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal in dire poverty. Without the market base to appeal to the commercial interests of Bollywood cinema, the people and art forms of these regions have been neglected. Bollywood filmmakers only seek to produce films that will sell to its target audiences, resulting in the neglect of large swathes of Indian cultural life. Bollywood filmstar Manoj Bajpayee, who trained in *Chhau* dance as a drama student was quite vocal in his disapproval of the opportunistic nature and lack of aesthetic quality and moral integrity in Bollywood films. Bajpayee (pers. comm., 29 June 2008) said, “Bollywood has never had morality when it came to entertainment… Most filmmakers are catering to the elite, upper middle-class Indians and the diaspora of wealthy Punjabis and Gujaratis.”

Indeed, as I noted in the introduction chapter to this thesis, I can only recall that lone song and dance sequence from *Yaarana*, where elements of Purulia *Chhau* dance were used in a Bollywood film. Although, regional Bengali cinema has sometimes depicted Purulia *Chhau* in its films, the limited reach of this medium has meant that the dance form was far from gaining recognition in the popular imagination of the nation at large. Choreographer Remo D’Souza has attempted to make a film on the dance to get greater recognition for Purulia *Chhau*. D’Souza (pers.
Purulia *Chhau* is one of the most impressive dance forms I have ever come across. I wanted to use the *Chhau* dance style in my choreography, but then simply using it in a Bollywood fusion dance would be an injustice to the dance. That is when I began planning my dance-based film *Lal Paharer Katha*\(^91\) (The Red Hill Story, 2007) based purely on traditional *Chhau* dance, although I must admit that it is only a small regional Bengali film.

Apart from these larger structural reasons governing the film industry, there are some intrinsic issues in the aesthetic features of Purulia *Chhau* dance, which also resulted in its dereliction in popular culture. In keeping with its typical song and dance sequences of romantic love or communal celebration, Bollywood choreographers look for dance styles that can complement such themes; and folk forms like Purulia *Chhau*, which have a martial, mythological and acrobatic repertoire hardly suffice its requirements. As a Bollywood choreographer, Sharon Lowen (pers. comm., 26 June, 2008) noted, “Bollywood has a tendency to utilise a folk dance form that can lend itself to group dances or romantic duets.” Also being a masked dance drama, with set parameters of performance, it is not as conducive to fusion, unlike *Bhangra* or *Dandiya Raas*. Further, as a dance form with sacred connotations solely performed to Hindu mythological tales, it does not lend itself well to secular interpretations like most other folk dance forms of *Lavani*, *Bhangra*, *Koli* and *Kalbelia* which are secular in nature.

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\(^91\) With *Lal Paharer Katha* (2007), Remo D’Souza’s made his debut as a film director. D’Souza has worked as a dance director in more than 100 Bollywood films. *Lal Paharer Katha* is the story of a *Chhau* dancer Manohar (Mithun Chakraborty), who adopts a physically challenged boy Felai, left by his father to die in the woods. Manohar teaches Felai *Chhau* dance in order to make him overcome his physical problems and turns him into a *Chhau* dance expert.
Thus, there is a definite divide in terms of the use of folk dance forms in Bollywood cinema, leading to marginalisation of some folk forms in popular culture. Purulia *Chhau* is a dance practiced largely by the lower-caste Hindus and tribal groups, hardly the target demographic of Bollywood's commercial interests; and it also fails to translate itself into film dance sequences of romantic duets, club numbers or celebratory dances.

In a country, where popular culture is dominated by the pervasive influence of Bollywood films, this marginalisation of Purulia *Chhau* has distanced performers and audiences from the folk form, because they lack positive images of *Chhau* culture in media with which they can identify. As Lalit Mahato (pers. comm., 28 July, 2007) noted, “These days youngsters prefer dancing in the *Disco* style that they watch in the movie hall or on television. Youngsters want to look like the film stars, and therefore it is natural for them to aspire to sing and dance like them.” Reflecting Lalit's opinion, 23-year-old Gaur Mahato (pers. comm., 28th July 2007), who had been working as a domestic help in Ranchi from childhood, expresses:

> Watching Purulia *Chhau* performance in the village used to be fun when I was a child, but then I became tired of watching the same performances over and over again. Recently I have started watching Purulia *Chhau* again as the dance groups are experimenting with a lot of interesting things. At the last Bengali New Year in Purulia town, the group had a full orchestra, elaborate lighting and even some women dancers in their group. It was fun to watch.

**d. Stuck Between Demands of Authenticity and Extinction:**

Was Purulia *Chhau* crumbling under the pressure of the popular culture? From my
initial concerns and its quite naïve angst about the loss of a tradition, I have now realised that the question was about the pressures of urbanisation and modernity under which the Purulia Chhau dance was changing. Although, I still have misgivings about the rampant incursion of Bollywood inspired elements into its dance repertoire, I now have a more comprehensive grasp of the predicament that a folk form like Purulia Chhau faces under the impact of mass media, like Bollywood films. Bhangra had taken the route of transforming itself from a folk form into a popular form under the impact of film culture. But the predicament facing Purulia Chhau was different, revealing a diametrically opposite picture to the case of Bhangra, and I shall further expand on that issue in this last section to conclude my analysis of Purulia Chhau dance in the age of mass media.

The change that Purulia Chhau was witnessing under the impact of films and broader popular culture is being resisted by a few “purists”, who want to safeguard Chhau’s 19th century traditional form. I must admit I am also a part of that camp, running an NGO like National Institute for Chhau and Folk Dances dedicated to the promotion of traditional Chhau practice. My father, Vijoy Kishore had set up the NGO in order to support these folk dance forms, which were grossly marginalised a few decades ago. He told me the story of his association with Chhau, when it was an unrecognised dance form practiced in remote villages. He (pers. comm., 28 July, 2008) said:

Although I began with Seraikela Chhau, I associated myself with Purulia style of Chhau as it was more vibrant and advanced than any other style. The performers were mainly poor illiterate peasants who didn’t even speak Hindi and hardly moved

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92 When I stress the period of 19th century, I do it on purpose, since traditional Chhau consolidated into its present form during the early 19th century.
out of their villages.

It was only when government-run cultural organisations like Sangeet Natak Academy and Indian Council of Cultural Relations intervened in the 1970s, that Chhau was recognised as an important folk dance form. They began promoting Chhau dance groups and sponsoring them to travel to various national and international festivals.

After 2003, I involved myself with the international programming of my father’s NGO, touring festivals in India and abroad to showcase Purulia Chhau. In all these festivals we strictly follow traditional Purulia Chhau style, excluding any “non-traditional” or “foreign” elements. On asking Akul, a dance group member, about the difference between our dance performances and those that included Bollywood elements, he (pers. comm., 28 July, 2008) said, “I know you won’t let us do any of this Hindi-film dance in our performances, especially abroad. But here in the villages, if we don’t give in to these new elements that the audiences love to watch, all the group members who depend on Chhau for a livelihood won't be able to earn enough to sustain themselves.” Viren, my respondent who had earlier spoken gleefully about the Bollywood influence in his life, also turned quite defensive when asked about the influence of Bollywood on Chhau. He (pers. comm., 28 July, 2008) said, “Bhaiya [brother] I love my Purulia Chhau culture, and I don’t want it to be overtaken by filmy style; but we don’t have much choice, if we try to retain our originality then people in the village don’t like to see the same stuff, they want something different.” Viren’s passionate outburst reiterated an answer that I had heard repeatedly from other folk performers. They wish to preserve their cultural heritage, but the changing consumption habits of audiences and the lack of patronage forces them to adapt to these demands for a Bollywood style Purulia Chhau.
Their words kept echoing in my head; both respondents were right in pointing out the problems that Chhau practitioners have to face due to the changing tastes of an audience immersed in Bollywood film culture. Government organisations like Sangeet Natak Academy and Indian Council of Cultural Relations may promote “authentic” dance groups in folk festivals across India and abroad. But I feel that this kind of selective patronage is of little use. Only a handful of the dance groups, which have “mastered” the art of performing “authentic” traditional performance for national and international folklore festivals, are registered with these organisations. Thousands of grassroots Purulia Chhau dance groups lack the patronage and support of these organisations and have to cater to the demands of the audience.

Cherif Khaznadar (pers. comm., 9 June, 1999) lamented the threat that Purulia Chhau was facing under the onslaught of modernity and mass media, and argued for the need to promote mass-education to raise people's pride in their cultural heritage. Vijoy Kishore (pers. comm., 28 July, 2008), on the other hand, feels that it is quite futile to blame the impact of films, given the prolific growth of electronic media and its impact on every aspect of social life. He feels that if people want to retain pride in their traditional folk dance, selective patronage of some exclusive groups by the government will not deliver results. Instead, popular support must rise from the masses, especially from the middle class and working class people of the region. Purulia Chhau must be able to translate itself into a vibrant and viable cultural entity capable of capturing the imagination of the masses through the popular culture of the region. These two different opinions, suggesting possible ways in which Purulia Chhau can overcome its present situation of division into camps of purists and hybrids, the threat of extinction and rampant hybridisation, highlight the precarious predicament of Purulia Chhau under the onslaught of Bollywood film culture.
Conclusion

Combining fantasy, spectacle, glamour and eroticism, song and dance sequences constitute an indispensable element of Hindi/Bollywood cinema. Whether as part of the narrative or a break from the narrative, song and dance sequences contribute to the overall storytelling form and entertainment value of Hindi/Bollywood cinema. Apart from being an indispensable element of the content of a film, these song and dance sequences also form an important part of the business of Hindi/Bollywood cinema. Not only are these song and dance sequences utilised as promotional tools to market Bollywood films, the sales of music albums now accounts for almost 75% of the revenue earned by the Hindi film industry (Ranade 2006, Morcom 2007). Further, Bollywood film song and dance permeates popular culture and everyday life in India—played on TV and radio channels, at private celebrations and in public places.

However, in spite of its prolific size and impact on popular culture, Hindi film song and dance has only received cursory scholarly attention. Generally perceived as a populist art form with little aesthetic merit, it seems that this disdain for Hindi/Bollywood film song and dance has also resulted in the scholarly neglect of the field as well.

While scholars have noted the recent growth in the popularity of “Bollywood Dance”, as it makes its presence felt globally; I have argued that we need trace how this genre has evolved from the early days of hybridisation, a form that took hold of Hindi films in the late 1970s. I have shown that the late 1970s marked a crucial juncture in Hindi film song and dance with prolific experimentation occurring in the fusion of folk with Western dance forms and the transformation of song and dance
sequences into glamourous spectacles. This is in contrast to earlier decades, where distinctions between the lineage and context of different dance forms were observed with caution. I argued that this trend towards folk fusion can be attributed to the arrival of *Disco* culture in Hindi cinema in late the 1970s and early 1980s. It was this *Disco* culture that paved the way for the indiscriminate fusion of Indian folk dance and Western dance forms within a modernised and glamourised framework. It was only in the 1990s that the global rise in the profile of the Hindi film industry, and the expansion of its commercial interests outside of India, led to the rechristening of Hindi film song and dance as “Bollywood dance”, and brought this pre-existing fusion dance form onto the global stage.

The role of Bollywood song and dance as an important aspect of Indian popular culture is the larger issue with which my study is aligned. But, given my background as a folk performer, I have specifically chosen to examine the relationship between Bollywood song and dance and folk culture in India. In this thesis, I have argued that Bollywood films and Indian folk dance forms are constantly feeding on each other. On the one hand, Bollywood song and dance recreates rhythms, dance forms and musical structures borrowed from indigenous music-dance traditions. On the other hand, the ubiquitous presence of Bollywood song and dance has affected the practice of these folk dance performances.

I have argued that Arjun Appadurai’s concept of “cultural flows” —denoting the exchange of ideas and traditions from one site to another—can help define this relationship of cultural exchange occurring between folk dance traditions and Hindi films. By addressing this complex web of cultural flows—examining the appropriation of indigenous folk dance forms in films over the last few decades and the appropriation of Hindi film song and dance by folk practitioners—I have
described this relationship between folk dance forms and Hindi film song and dance.

In my examination of the utilisation of folk dance forms in Hindi film song and dance sequences, I have shown that the increasing hybridisation of Hindi film song and dance from the 1970s onwards led to the transformation of traditional elements of folk dance—the context of performance, style, choreographic elements, music and costuming. To allow a comprehensive study of this trend towards the transformation of folk dance forms in Hindi film song and dance, I undertook a close textual analysis of some important song and dance sequences from the films of the prominent production house Yash Raj Films. Utilising the YRF films *Kaala Patthar*, *Silsila*, *Lamhe*, *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, *Veer Zaara* and *Tashan* as representative examples, I showed how folk dance forms have been utilised and transformed in song and dance sequences over the last three and a half decades.

Many film critics view the 1970s as the low point of Hindi cinema in terms of the quality of its song and dance sequences. This was partially a result of the downfall of romantic musical films and the rise of action-oriented films heralded by Amitabh Bachchan’s persona as the “Angry Young Man”. Nevertheless, the 1970s also marked significant changes in terms of the representation of folk forms in Bollywood cinema. It was in the 1970s that folk dance forms were not only depicted in rural locations but also frequently shown in the context of a rapidly urbanising India. The shift of the performative context of folk dance forms to these urban locations resulted in the first major trend towards the hybridisation of folk dance forms. I used song and dance sequences from two YRF films, *Kala Patthar* (1979) and *Silsila* (1981), to outline the ramifications of this trend of folk fusion in urban contexts. I argued that the sequence “Dhoom Mache Dhoom” from *Kala Patthar* consciously mixed different folk dance forms within the group dance of the
mineworkers, depicting the mining town as a melting pot of cultural influences brought about by the influx of rural migrants. In the second example exemplifying this movement of folk dance to an urban context, I demonstrated that “Rang Barse” sequence from Silsila translated elements of the folk dance traditions associated with the festival of Holi to a bourgeois middle-class setting. I showed how elements of folk dance associated with the Holi festivities were glamourised by the use of Amitabh Bachchan and Rekha’s star personas creating a template for Holi celebrations that have now been appropriated by people across India.

If in the 1980s, Hindi films predominantly used Indian folk dance forms to represent aspects of rustic life for people in an urbanising India, the 1990s saw folk dance forms being used as symbols of the “homeland” for a growing audience of diasporic Indians in the West. I examined this trend towards the representation of an idealised homeland, neo-traditionalism and the diasporic imagination, through two YRF films of the era, Lamhe (1991) and Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (1995). In my analysis of the “Megha Re Megha” sequence from Lamhe, I have shown how folk dance forms are used in an eroticised fashion to create a seemingly traditional dance, that is superimposed with elements of exoticism and glamour, and conflates images of the dancing heroine’s physical beauty with that of the Indian homeland.

In the “Ghar Aaja” sequence from Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (1995), I showed how the use of folk dance from Punjab in the creation of an image of the homeland as a place of familial harmony and communal bonhomie, plays upon the sentiments of diasporic Indians. I examined that the extensive use of Punjabi folk dance forms like Bhangra and Giddha in the different segments of the sequence, and how these are used to highlight different aspects of this fantasy of an idyllic Punjabi homeland—of agrarian abundance, and that is suffused with traditional values and a
In the 2000s, popular culture in India was defined by an unprecedented exposure to the Western media, global mobility, the liberalisation of the Indian economy, consumerism and the changing tastes of middle-class Indians. Inundated by the influence of international music channels and the ubiquitous presence of American popular culture brought in by globalised media networks, the use of folk forms in Bollywood films of this era took on new guises. But media anthropologists like Appadurai have argued that in place of the unidimensional concept of American cultural imperialism, processes of “glocalisation”, of interpreting global influences in a local context, better capture the cross-cultural flows that define the contemporary world. In keeping with this argument of “glocalisation”, I too have sought to explain the continued presence of folk dance forms in Hindi films as part of a larger strategy of re-interpreting global influences in a local context.

Analysing the use of folk dance forms in sequences from two YRF films, of this period, *Veer-Zaara* (2005) and *Tashan* (2008), I explored some of the interesting ways in which folk dance forms are used to navigate the ubiquitous presence of United States-led global culture. I examined how the “Lodi” sequence from *Veer-Zaara* re-invented a harvest folk dance, and other rituals associated with it, to create an indigenised version of the Western cultural celebration of Valentine’s Day. However, while using *Bhangra* and *Giddha* folk dances to create an authentic image of the harvest dance, traditional gender divisions are overturned. Through an analysis of the song and dance sequence “Dil Dance Maare Re” from *Tashan*, I provided insights into the use of “item” numbers in contemporary Bollywood cinema, and examined them as a legacy of MTV music video culture. I also argued that “Dil Dance Maare Re” created a parody of folk dance forms for a youth culture inundated
by American MTV style popular music and Hollywood cinema.

In my analyses of these YRF song and dance sequences, I have explored the dominant trends underlying the appropriation of folk dance forms in Bollywood song and dance sequences since the 1970s. Indian folk dance forms have been exoticised, glamourised, fetishised, eroticized and hybridised in various ways in each of these sequences. By employing close textual analysis and conducting interviews with people associated with the Bollywood film industry, I have examined the larger trends (such as hybridisation) underpinning the use of folk dance forms in modern Bollywood films.

In the second part of this thesis, I examined the impact of Bollywood song and dance, as well as its renditions of folk fusion, on traditional folk dances performed by folk practitioners. While the selective appropriation of folk dance traditions by Hindi films is representative of broader cultural flows from folk dance to cinema, the appropriation of Bollywoodised “renditions” of these forms can be called a “reverse cultural flow”.

By taking Purulia Chhau and Bhangra dance as my case studies exemplifying this “reverse cultural flow”, I employed the methods of reflexive ethnography, interviews, direct and participant observation techniques, to investigate Bollywood’s impact on grassroots practitioners’ performances of “traditional” folk dance forms. Through personal interviews and group discussions with various folk dance performers, musicians, troupe leaders and audiences, I examined the challenges faced by folk culture as a result of the popularity of Bollywood song and dance. Perceived as being modern and fashionable, audiences also find “Bollywood dance” more entertaining than folk dance forms, which they often reject as being archaic. The preference for Bollywood song and dance fare amongst audiences has created a
pressure on folk dance performers to offer entertaining, spectacular and glamorous productions that are similar to Hindi films. Folk practitioners have relented to the lure of Bollywood-style dance in their practice, both as consumers of the popular culture dictated by Bollywood and as performers seeking to entertain a wider populace that is thoroughly immersed in Hindi film culture.

A majority of the groups popularly practicing Purulia Chhau and Bhangra dance (i.e. outside the official circuits of folk festivals), have extensively appropriated elements from Bollywood films. This impact of Bollywood cinema is immediately evident in changes in musical instrumentation, costuming, accessorising, dance movements, choreography and stage settings. Furthermore, transformation of these folk dance forms into professionalised, events staged by performers who are separate from the audience has also changed the communal participatory context in which traditional folk dances occur.

I used the case study of Bhangra to outline how the transformation of a folk form into a popular one, under the influence of Hindi films, has created a genre of Bhangra fusion that is virtually unrecognisable from its traditional base and form. From the early 1990s, Bhangra dance has become the most widely utilised folk dance form in Bollywood cinema. Bollwoodised Bhangra has become so popular on radio play-lists, music channels, in nightclubs and at social events, that the dance form has moved out from its regional domain to become a key part of “national” popular culture. In contemporary Bhangra performances I noted the use of pre-recorded cassettes, dance choreography based on Bollywood song and dance, and the overturning of traditional gender divides between male and female performance.

In my case study of Purulia style of Chhau dance, I examined a very different example of the immense impact of popular culture on a folk dance form. Unlike
Bhangra, which seems like a victim of its own popularity, Purulia Chhau has been completely marginalised by popular culture. A martial, ritualistic folk dance form from Eastern India, it has only occasionally appeared in local Kolkota-based regional Bengali cinema. This marginalisation of the folk form in popular culture has led to a divide within Purulia Chhau dance practice; it is either practiced with complete disregard for tradition or in ossified performances within the elite folk festival circuits. Looking at grassroots performances to gauge the impact of Hindi film culture on Purulia Chhau folk dance, I explored how the traditional dance repertoire has been engulfed by the influence of Bollywood song and dance. I showed the ways in which the choreography of this “dance of the gods” has been overtaken by “Bollywood dance” steps, how the traditional Jhumur music has been influenced by Bollywood film music, and how, in recorded performances, this martial dance drama has taken on the form of melodramatic Hindi film with spoken dialogue and song and dance sequences.

However, in spite of the stark contrast in the predicaments of these two dance forms, or perhaps because of these very differences, I have used them to conduct a comparative case study to gauge the magnitude of the impact of Bollywood culture on folk dance practices. Through these case studies, I have shown two instances of the undeniable impact of Bollywood song and dance sequences on folk dance forms. While Bhangra, as the most hybridised form of folk dance, has been threatened by its own popularity to become virtually unrecognisable, Purulia Chhau has become even more marginalised, as performers and audiences alike deliberately eschew its traditional norms of performance for Bollywood-style dance.

To conclude, I would like to say that my experiences as a Purulia Chhau dancer and as a filmmaker provoked my initial concerns about the changes affecting
folk dance forms, but it was through this study that I gained an in-depth understanding of the issue. This thesis paves the way for future research into folk dance forms, specifically the Purulia style of Chhau. Presently, I can see two distinct fields of study that could be further pursued in future research.

The first field of study veers towards more pragmatic issues, and relates to the safeguarding of artefacts of “intangible” cultural heritage like Purulia Chhau dance. This would require a comparison of the two camps of the “purist” folk festival circuit and “grassroots” folk performances. This would pave the way for a further analysis and study the institutional factors that can be deployed to help address the much-needed revitalisation of traditional Purulia Chhau in grassroots performances. I would also like to seek out alternative means of cultural curatorship through which these artefacts of intangible cultural heritage could be preserved.

The other line of enquiry stems directly from one specific aspect touched upon in the present research relating to the impact of Bollywood film song and dance on folk practitioners. I have noted that folk practitioners often voiced their pride in traditional folk dance, while simultaneously confessing their preference for Bollywood song and dance. Further, while it was obvious that they were quite enamoured with Bollywood song and dance, when queried about its negative impact on their dance practice they instantly assumed a more defensive position that professed their helplessness in the face of public demand. Employing a more interactive ethnographic study focussed on these folk practitioners, I would like to pursue this issue further to study the nature of their responses, as well as their motivations for imitating Bollywood song and dance.
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