Excerpt
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Introduction: *Bhakti* or *Ashiqi*?(1)

We are told that at the bottom of the untold past, a group of sorcerers met to create a tilism or magical world by using occult sciences to infuse inanimate matter with the spirits of planetary and cosmic forces.

In the tilism, the sorcerers exercised powers that defied the laws of God and the physical world. They created illusions, transferred spirits between bodies, transmuted matter, made talismans, and configured and exploited the Earth's inherent physical forces to create extraordinary marvels.

Once the tilism was created, the sorcerers named it Hoshruba. ('Of the Tilism called Hoshruba and the Master of the Tilism, Emperor Afrasiyab'. Jah 2009: xxxiv).

FROM QISSA KHWANI BAZAAR TO BOMBAY

The origins of three legendary figures of Hindi cinema have been traced to the narrow alleys of *Qissa Khwani Bazaar* [Market of Story-tellers], 'the liveliest part' of Peshawar (Ali 2013), casting an aura of Hindi 'film-i' romance, glamour and adventure on the fabled 'City of Flowers' or 'City of Grain' that serves as the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in modern-day Pakistan. 'Tragedy king' Dilip Kumar was born in Mohalla Khodadad; 'Baadshah of Bollywood' Shah Rukh Khan's father Taj Mohammad was born in Shah Wali Katal; and 'the showman' Raj Kapoor's ancestral house still stands in Daki Naal Bandi.(2) William Dalrymple, who has thrown considerable light on this 'erstwhile camping ground for caravans and military adventures' where 'bearded Afridi, Pashto, Tanoli, Shinwari tribesmen' still 'bargain with merchants from Samarkand, Bukhara and Afghanistan' (Dalrymple 2008), reports that 'the professional storyteller, or *dastango*, would perform nightlong recitations' of the *dastan* 'from memory' in the 'street of the storytellers' (Dalrymple 2008).

DASTAN, *QISSA* AND HINDI CINEMA

William L. Hanaway, who has made a close study of Persian dastans, describes them as popular 'orally recited' prose romances 'created, elaborated, and transmitted' by professional narrators called dastangos (Hanaway quoted in Pritchett 1991: 1). (3) Frances Pritchett ex-plains that 'the narrative genre' to which dastan and *qissa* 'refer goes back to medieval' Iran and adds that 'to these terms could be append-ed either "-go" (go), "teller," or "-khvan" (khvān), "reciter, reader," to refer to the narrators of the tales' (Pritchett 1991: 1). The terms das-tan and qissa, denoting specific genres in the original Persian, travelled to India in the eleventh century AD (Schimmel 1975: 204) and 'were used interchangeably, with the latter term predominating' and came to mean 'story' (Pritchett 1985: 1). The Perso-Arabic genres were indigenised though their incorporation of local practices that culminated in their co-option in Mughal narrative, visual and per-forming arts and the consequent emergence of an Indo-Islamic tradition of the dastan. Pritchett points out that, 'One narrative in particular, the Qissah-e Hamzah or *Dastan-e Amīr Hamzah* [DAH],(4)

became far more popular in India than it had ever been in its homeland' (1985: 1). She produces convincing evidence to demonstrate that it was narrated at the Qutabshahi court of Golconda in addition to being a favourite of the Mughal emperor Akbar who would narrate it him-self. With the demise of the last dastango Mir Baqir Ali in 1928, *dastangoi*, which had developed into an extremely sophisticated tradition in North India, became extinct. However, as Dalrymple maintains, 'the story [dastan] had had huge influence, not least on Indian drama and cinema, as well as on the development of the Urdu and Persian novels, early versions of which were often derived from the *dastans*' (2008).**(5)** Philip Lutgendorf agrees that a reader of the *Hamzah* would notice 'similarities of its repetitive episodes, its themes of love, honour, and heroism, as well as its sheer scope and narrative profligacy, both to earlier Indian genres and to the dastan-like narratives of popular cinema' (2006: 247). Mahmood U. R. Farooqi, who has recently revived the ancient art of dastangoi**(6)** in India, names Hindi cinema as one of the descendants of the Persian derived performing art (quoted in Mita Kapur 2012).

Farooqi and others trace the dastangoi influence on Hindi cinema to its immediate predecessor, the Parsi theatre, the last in the line of company theatres which began in the middle of the 1880s. Kathryn Hansen's examination of the staging of *Indrasabha***(7)** in Wajid Ali Shah's court in 1855 and of the Parsi theatre that emerged soon after confirms its Urdu antecedents (Hansen 1992, 2005). In his Introduction to the translation of Muhammad Husain Jah's redaction of 'Tilism-e Hoshruba', Musharraf Ali Farooqi narrates how Mir Ahmed Ali and fellow dastangos Amba Prasad Rasa and Hakir Asghar Ali Khan of Lucknow reinvented the Persian dastan in the *lakhnavi* tradition by introducing local practices to produce a new and distinctively Indian chapter of the Dastan-e Amir Hamzah, which Ali credited to an imaginary dastango named Faizi in Emperor Akbar's court (2009:xii). This book borrows the title of that best known *daftar* or chapter of the forty-six volume Dastan-e Amir Hamzah called

'Tilism-e Hoshruba', or 'enchantment that steals away the senses', as a metaphor for the affect popular Hindi cinema produces in its audience.

While Hindu narrative and visual genres provided Indian cinema its iconography that facilitated the formulation of the sacral aesthetics of *darshan***(8)** and *dharma* (Mishra 2002), it was 'Urdu which provided a language for cinema' (Kesavan 1994: 248) and the Perso-Arabic narrative tradition of dastan or qissa inspired its plots (Lutgendorf 2006: 247). Despite the unmistakable trace of a strongly Islamicate strain in Hindi films, as identified by Kesavan (1994), the exclusive focus on Hindu performing and narrative arts, particularly the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, and the notion of dharma**(9)** (Mishra 2002: 15) in several studies of Hindi cinema has relegated alternative traditions derived from the medieval Perso-Arabic and the Turkic speaking world to the background (Lutgendorf 2006: 245). Hindi cinema's inherent syncreticism implicates the Islamic into the Hindu and the Sanskritic into the Perso-Arabic so deeply that it would be erroneous to isolate meta- principles based on any specific aesthetic or sacral tradition to define it. Tracing the disruption of dominant Hindu epic narratives by the Perso-Arabic qissa or dastan, this book argues that if the narrative conflict in the Hindi film is structured by the Hindu ethic of dharma or the gaze defined by the religious practice of darshan, the romance or the romantic sub-plot is invariably patterned according to the conventions of the Arabic qissa or Persian dastan, particularly the *Qissa-i-Laila Majnu*. As opposed to the lens of fantasy through which the illusionism of Hindi cinema has been traditionally perceived, the book suggests that tilism [enchantment] might provide a demotic frame-work for examining its magical universe.

GENEALOGIES OF THE *QISSA* AND *DASTAN*

According to Annemarie Schimmel, dastangoi dates back to the eleventh century AD beginning with the

Ghaznavid invasion (1975) and intersects with the transformation of the Persian into the Punjabi qissa (epic length verse romances) during the same period (Mir 2006). However, owing to the elision of their generic difference in Persia, the qissa and the dastan were conflated on the Indian subcontinent and understood to mean story in Urdu (Pritchett 1985: 1). Farina Mir has traced a complex genealogy of the qissa in Indian vernacular literatures to the Persian qissa (2006). She points out that qissa, used in north Indian languages to mean story, is of Arabic origin and is derived from qassa, to tell a story, to narrate. Used in Islamic literature to refer to tales told by popular religious storytellers, its meaning expanded over the years to allude to tales of non-religious character and the term qissa came to mean story in general. Similarly, the Persian lineage of the term suggests biography, usually the biographies of religious figures or pseudo-biographies such as the *Hamzanama*, which was disengaged from religion by the end of the second millennium to refer to stories in general and to romance in particular.**(10)** Citing Amir Khusrau's *Majnun Laila*, composed in the *masnavi* form, as evidence of the incorporation of qissa in the Persianate literary culture of the fourteenth century, Mir shows that these romances were gradually incorporated into Indian vernacular oral and textual traditions. She effectively demonstrates that several *qisse* were already circulating in Persian as well as Punjabi vernaculars by the seventeenth century, spawning a new genre that married the local with the extra local. This genre deviated from the masnavi rhyme scheme while introducing ta-les situated in the local landscape and social relations. Mir concludes that by the end of the nineteenth century, qisse became central to Punjabi cultural life owing to the immense popularity they enjoyed both in literary circles and as oral texts.**(11)**

Frances Pritchett defines qissa as stories derived both from *The Thousand and One Nights and Kathasaritsagar*, thereby locating them in the syncretic cultural space that existed at the village level in India until the end of the nineteenth century.

Pritchett (1991) testifies to the presence of qissa in *dakhani* Urdu**(12)** as early as the seventh century AD and argues that qisse and dastan survived in India largely as an oral storytelling tradition for centuries. But the written forms of qisse became available, according to Pritchett, only in 1780 after their publication by the Fort William College, whose Hindustani department included a *qissukhaun* [*qissa khwan*] (1985). Quoting Rāz Yazdānī, Pritchett shows that the Urdu qissa, that was now replaced by the term dastan, began in Delhi around 1830 (1985: 2). 'For about a century, from 1830 until 1930, *dāstān* narration (dastan goi) reigned in North India as an enormously popular, highly sophisticated "art of extemporaneous speech"', Pritchett concludes (1985: 3). The transcription of Urdu qisse began with the establishment of the Munshi Nawal Kishore Press in 1858 in Lucknow and the production of the forty-six-volume Dastan-e Amir Hamzah between 1893 and 1908. Pritchett is disheartened to discover that the flourishing qissa publishing business which she had meticulously documented in the 1970s was nearly extinct when she re-turned to India in the 1990s.

Although Pritchett was right about the oral narrative art of north India dying due to the seductive power of the Hindi film, her pessimistic view of the printed qisse as displacing the oral narrative tradition is not altogether accurate because they have been successfully incorporated as the narrative or lyrical component of Hindi cinema. Mahmood Farooqui, who has been trying to revive the traditional art of dastangoi, confirmed that 'these stories have influenced the earliest writers of Hindi cinema. The masses are therefore familiar with the plots and characters of these dāstāns' (Farooqui 2006b). He reiterated this in another interview when he said: '[i]ts modern day equivalent would be Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, or even Hindi cinema' (Farooqui 2006a). The imaginative fantasy, the dreamlike power of the narrator's vision, the 'eerie, sensuous elegance of the Enchantment' structured by magic that Pritchett identifies as the essence of the dastan

(1985: 4) appears to sum up the pleasures of the Hindi film.

BHAKTI OR *ASHIQI*

South Asian film scholars' examination of Indian epic, narrative, visual and theatrical traditions underpinning the cinematic text has gone a long way in elevating Hindi cinema from a 'bad copy' of Euro-American cinema to an alternative cinematic genre with a distinctive visual and narrative grammar, revealed to have been derived from diverse indigenous ancient and modern sources (Rajadhyaksha 1987; Chakravarty 1993; Prasad 1998; Vasudevan 2000/2001; Mishra 2002). Ashish Rajadhyaksha, in his essay 'The Phalke Era', was the first to call attention to the Hindi film's continuity with Indian epics by viewing Dhundiram Govind Phalke's *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) as a visual translation of the epic narrative (1987). In 'Hindi Cinema through the Ages', arguing that Indian cinema's storytelling devices came from mythological ones, Saibal Chatterjee traces them to the epic traditions of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* and the cinematic idiom to the ancient Sanskrit treatise *Natyashastra* (Chatterjee 2003). Sumita Chakravarty, in her book *Nationalist Thought in Popular Hindi Cinema*, foregrounds the centrality of the two epics in thematic conflicts and narrative conventions in Hindi films (1993). Viewing Hindi cinema within the framework of national cinema like Chakravarty, M. Madhava Prasad reveals the co-option of the epic narratives within the ideological construction of the Hindi film (1998). Vijay Mishra goes as far as to claim that all Hindi films were different versions of the *Mahabharata* (2002).

In addition to locating its narrative origins in Sanskrit epics and myths, these pioneering scholars have also formulated an indigenous aesthetic for Indian cinema predicated on Hindu religious practices (Geeta Kapur 1987; Rajadhyaksha 1987; Srinivas 1996; Prasad 1998; Mishra 2002). Geeta Kapur's notion of frontality in Indian visual arts has been applied by several scholars, including Kapur herself, in their analysis of cinematic texts in the formulation of a mystical aesthetic for Hindi cinema (1987: 80). Rajadhyaksha's borrowing of her concept of frontality in his analysis of the mythological and saint films of the Phalke era and the gaze of Hindi cinema (1987) was given a specifically Hindu slant through its formalisation in Prasad's concept of darshan (1998: 75), an aesthetic that has been largely accepted, even if critically in some, in studies that followed (Vasudevan 2000; Mishra 2002; Jaikumar 2006). Mishra, in *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire*, took the analogy further in his translation of Lacanian desire into Hindu religious practices by elucidating the *dharmic* principle, which he regards as 'the grand syntagmatique' of Hindi cinema in relation to the *Mahabharata* (Mishra 2002: 15). The iconography of the temple, gods and deification is reiterated by Ravi Vasudevan in his foregrounding of the imagined Hindu subject of the Hindi film (Vasudevan 1996: 63), and in S. V. Srinivas' examination of fan cultures in the South (Srinivas 1996). As a consequence, Hindu religious imagery employed to describe the subject, effects, gaze and spectatorship of the Hindi film has become completely naturalised in the analyses of Hindi cinema over the years.

While existing studies of Hindi cinema engage in great depth with the ancient legacies of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and with more recent ones like Parsi theatre and calendar art, their privileging of its Hindu Sanskritic sources produces a homogenous discourse of indigeneity. Their emphasis on Sanskrit narrative and aesthetic traditions in the theorisation of Indian cinema has been interrogated for its globalising sweep. A clear genealogical shift has been visible since the publication of Mukul Kesavan's essay 'Urdu, Awadh and Tawaif: The Islamicate Origins of Hindi Cinema' in which he argues that 'while the house of Hindi cinema has many mansions, its architecture is inspired by Islamicate forms' (1994: 246). He borrows the term 'Islamicate' from Marshall G. S.

Hodgson, who was 'driven to invent' the term to *'refer not directly to the religion, Islam, itself, but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves, and even when found among non-Muslims'* [italics mine] (Hodgson 1974: 59). Philip Lutgendorf, in 'Is There an Indian Way of Filmmaking?', questions 'grandiose claims' made by film critics about the classical tradition and especially about the two Sanskrit epics constituting 'the great code' of popular filmmaking which is re-iterated by filmmakers (2006: 229), and 'corrects certain imbalances and omissions' in this genealogical material by 'presenting material (for example, on the Indo-Islamic romance tradition)' that has been omitted (2006: 230).

Rachel Dwyer attributes film scholars' privileging of the Hindu Sanskritic lineage of Hindi cinema to the prominence given to the mythological in India 'as its founding genre and because of Phalke's eminence (and the survival of so much of his output)' (2006: 14). She points out that 'many other genres were popular during the silent period in Bombay including the stunt or action film, the historical, the Arabian Nights Oriental fantasy and the social' (Dwyer 2006: 14). Similarly, in their book *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema* (2009), Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen trace the Islamic connection 'to beginnings of cinema' (Verjee 2009) and assert that 'in early cinema, historicals (Sultanate and Mughal) were very popular, so too were oriental films or Arabian Nights fantasies' (ibid.).

Rosie Thomas complicates the widely circulated triumphal nationalist tale about a Hindu mythological as the first Indian film and Phalke's anointment as 'the founding father of Indian cinema' (Thom-as 2014: 8) by suggesting the possibility of an earlier *Arabian Nights* fantasy called *Alibaba and the Forty Thieves* produced by Hiralal Sen that has 'been mostly either quietly ignored or dismissed' for 'the past hundred years' as '"just" a film record of a Bengali stage hit' (Thomas 2014: 31–32). Thomas speculates about the intriguing im-plications of a 'confusingly cultural-hybrid tale from the Arabian Nights, set within an Islamic fantasy world' (2014: 9) being considered Indian cinema's foundational text. Interrogating the elevation of the Hindu mythological as the earliest Indian film and the privileging of socials subsequently, Thomas has underlined the need for 'a nuanced picture of India's earliest films and filmmakers' that 'represents the true balance between mythologicals, stunts, fantasies and other genres within that early history' (2014: 3) and called for 'a reassessment of B- and C-circuits throughout Indian history'. Her pioneering work attempts to redress the imbalance in Indian cinema histories by telling 'Indian cinema history through the fantasy film' (2014: 3) and by tracing the history of the *Arabian Nights* fantasy film from Hiralal Sen's *Alibaba* and *Gul-e-Bakawali* in the silent era and *Alam Ara* in the era of sound to the B- and C-grade costume and fantasy films like *Hatimtai* in the 1950s. Following the history of Indian cinema from below, Thomas argues that the B films of the 1950s and 1960s 'were arguably the place where the idealized Nehruvian "nation" became messy and porous' (2014: 16) and 'embodied a somewhat different vision of nationalism and modernizing India from that of the mainstream elite' (Thomas 2014: 17).

Hansen has attributed the naturalisation of Urdu as the register of romance in Hindi cinema to the migration of Urdu *munshis* and poets to Bombay before and after the Partition of 1947 (Hansen 1992: 81) and to their co-option, first in Parsi theatre and subsequently in the film industry, as scriptwriters, lyricists and directors. Dwyer and Patel speculate that the change in Hindi films of the 1930s might have been partly due to the shift in cinema from being just a visual to an audio-visual medium with the addition of sound, in particular the creation of a musical cinema where songs **(13)** and melodramatic dialogues soon established themselves as a major 'attraction'. But they are of the view that these changes were taken from Parsi theatre, which 'drew on a rich repertoire of fantasy and historical romances from the Persian Shahnameh and Indo-Islamic romances as well as

Shakespeare and Hindu mythologies' (Dwyer and Patel 2002). Tracing a link between the decline of Parsi theatre and the emergence of what they call the 'Islamicate film', they ascribe the latter to the migration of talent from Parsi theatre to the Hindi film.**(14)** Bhaskar and Allen, too, relate the transformation of the range of expressive idioms to the coming of sound, which they believe led to the emergence of the Muslim Social in the 1940s and its transformation into the dominant gen-re in the 1960s (Bhaskar and Allen 2009).**(15)** Dwyer traces the Urdu invasion of Hindi cinema back to the end of the silent era and the birth of the talkies, arguing that the coming of sound to Indian cinema meant that Hindi cinema needed stars with the right accents (Dwyer 2006: 101). As the first talkie *Alam Ara* (1931) demonstrates, when the Hindi film began to speak, it spoke not in Hindi but in Urdu, which was not surprising in view of Urdu's dominance as the official language during the British Raj. However, it continued to speak in Urdu even after the propagation of a Sanskritised Hindi via state-owned media such as All India Radio (AIR), Doordarshan and educational institutions. Due to the dominance of Urdu writers and poets in Bombay cinema, the Hindi film continues to serve as the syncretic space destroyed by the partitioning of the nation in which Hindi and Urdu, Hindu and Muslim are deeply implicated with one another.

Hiralal Sen's unreleased *Alibaba and Forty Thieves* (1903) and Ardeshir Irani's *Alam Ara* (1931), separated by nearly three decades, gesture to a different pre-history of Indian cinema that has been erased in the construction of a unitary history of national cinema (Gera Roy 2010). If one were to advance the history of Hindi cinema to *Alibaba and Forty Thieves* or to begin with the history of sound films, it would foreground the qissa and dastan tradition derived from *One Thousand and One Nights*, the *Panchatantra* and the *Jataka* tales, which produces a syncretic history of a genre. Instead of focusing on the specifically Islamic influence on the theme, genre or song and dance of Hindi films, it

would be more appropriate to explore an alternative aesthetic of the Hindi film that emerged from the other dominant Great Tradition on the Indian subcontinent, namely the Perso-Arabic.

The generic distinction between India's first silent film and talkies foregrounds differences other than those between the mythological/saint film and romance. This pre-history is grounded in the gap between the visual and the aural, Hindu religious iconography and Parsi theatre, Sanskrit and Perso-Arabic, Hindu and Muslim, bhakti **(16)** and *ashiqi*. While the mythological framework of the silent film de-manded a Hindu iconography, sound returned it to the speech com-munity of Urdu and the qissa/dastan tradition. Not discounting that Hindi cinema reveals visible traces of both classical and folk narrative and performative traditions of India, 'The Indian Talkies inherit-ed its basic structure from Urdu Parsi theatre and so the talkies start-ed with Urdu. Even the New Theatres in Calcutta used Urdu writers' (Javed Akhtar quoted in Kabir 1999: 50). If the silent era reproduced a bhakti aesthetic through the expression of divine love, the talkies inaugurated the genre of romance structured by the secularisation of the Perso-Arabic tradition of ashiqi that has provided the idiom of romance in Hindi cinema for nearly a century. Although mythological and saint films of the silent era were dominated by a Hindu iconography, legitimising their Hindu readings, the release of the first talkie *Alam Ara* by a Parsi director, Ardeshir Irani, introduced a disjuncture in the Hindu tradition of filmmaking. When Wazir Mohammed Khan sang the first song of Indian cinema *De de khuda ke naam par* in the garb of a *faqir* [mendicant] in Irani's film, the subcontinent's syncretic *sufi* heritage was re-affirmed.

Defining the legacy of the Islamicate Empire 'as a shorthand for the impact that the practice of the Islamicate state and its ruling elite had on the colonial middle classes' and 'for the cinema they made', Kesavan points out that 'Islamicate culture bequeathed to Hindi cinema much more than a medium and a vocabulary; it provided it with the

images of a good life, a model of the man about town, a stereotype of cultivated leisure and the ingredients for rentier decadence' (Kesavan 1994: 251). Borrowing Hodgson's notion of the Islamicate culture, Bhaskar and Allen maintain that 'from its very inception Bombay cinema, via the influence of Parsi theatre, has been informed by Islamicate culture and the Urdu language, the Persian love stories of Laila-Majnun and Shirin- Farhad, poetic forms such as the *ghazal* and the masnavi, and song traditions such as *nazms*, *ghazals* and *qawwalis*' (Bhaskar and Allen 2009: 3). In an essay 'Bhakti and Ashiqi in Hindi Cinema', Gera Roy throws light on the Perso-Arabic lineage of Hindi cinema by focusing on the concept of ashiqi as defined in the *Qissa-i-Laila Majnun* (Roy 2010).

Mukul Kesavan argues that 'the relationship between Hindi cine-ma and the Islamicate culture is a subject larger than the Muslim social as a genre or the stock Muslim characters that live in Hindi films' and that 'Urdu, Awadh and the tawaif have been instrumental in shaping Hindi cinema as a whole' (Kesavan 1994: 255). While agreeing with Kesavan that 'forms and idioms of the Islamicate cultural imaginary have been constitutive of and permeate Hindi cinema as a whole', Bhaskar and Allen assert that 'they are most intensely realized in the distinctive Islamicate inflections of the larger genres of the Historical, the Courtesan and the Social, to yield subgenres' that they name 'the Muslim Historical and the Muslim Courtesan film along with the genre of the Muslim Social' (Bhaskar and Allen 2009: 3). While examining Hindi cinematic history through the lens of fantasy, Thomas points out that the *Arabian Nights* fantasies, orientals, historicals, costume and stunt films continued to enjoy huge popularity despite their demotion to the B- and C-circuit in the 1950s and 1960s and that the fantasy mode was carried over in the masala films of the 1970s (Thomas 2014).

This book unravels the Perso-Arabic lineage of Hindi cinema that has been relegated to the background by following and complicating the syncretic Islamicate trail that has been revealed in the

studies mentioned above. Through tracing the cinematic reinscription of formulaic conventions of the Indo-Islamic qissa and dastan that disrupts the dominant Hindu Sanskrit epic narrative and the 'grande syntagmatique of *dharma*' (Mishra 2002) and darshan (Prasad 1998), it proposes that Hindi cinema be viewed as a cinema of enchantment. Following Thomas's argument that the *dastanic* genre and tropes are directly borrowed in the structure and narrational form of Orientalist genres of the silent period and the stunt film and costume dramas that continued to be popular into the early and later sound periods, this book explores the continuity of these features in the 'masala' film of the 1960s and 1970s. But it also demonstrates that despite the absence of overt fantastic features of the dastan in the modern forms of the historical and the social, they exhibit strong generic, narrative, visual, musical affinities of the qissa and dastan. It claims that not only 'Urdu, Awadh and the tawaif', which have been identified by Kesavan (1994) as an integral component of the Islamicate cultural tradition, but also Islamic metaphysical concepts underpinning the Arabic qissa, Persian dastan and the Urdu ghazal have been synthesised with Hindu mythological and religious concepts in almost all genres of Hindi cinema, except perhaps the mythological and devotional.

To avoid the dangers of a monolithic theory of Hindi cinema that is generically varied and historically layered, the term 'Hindi cinema' has been employed in this book to denote popular Hindi commercial cinema produced in Bombay or Mumbai, and primarily engages with the films from the 1960s to 1980s while cross-referencing Hindi films of the 1950s and the 'Bollywood' films that have emerged since the 1990s. In particular, it refers to the strange concoction known as the 'masala film', which is routinely prepared by mixing ingredients such as song and dance, the comic sub-plot, fight scenes, costumes, happy endings in the right proportion to ensure a film's success at the box office.**(17)** It contends that although new Bollywood films

beginning in the mid-1990s significantly differ in their subject, content, and address from mainstream Hindi films be-tween the 1960s to 1980s, they continue to invoke their formulaic conventions, even if with a parodic intent. In attempting to isolate Hindi cinema's generic debt to the Perso-Arabic tradition, this book does not dwell on the transformations in its basic template necessitated by alteration in modes of production, distribution and consumption. Instead of drawing on the received grammar of film theory, it borrows from the film industry its own jargon to examine its ideas of storytelling, time, space, characters and language.

THEY DO IT DIFFERENTLY IN THE CINEMA OF ENCHANTMENT

The twin tropes of darshan and dharma same here derived from Hindu religion and philosophy have been effectively employed to elucidate the structure, movement and gaze in Hindi cinema and to con-struct an alternative aesthetic for Indian, not only Hindi, cinema (Rajadhyaksha 1987; Prasad 1998; Mishra 2002). Darshan and dharma have undoubtedly served as an ingenious critical category that have been borrowed without reservations for eliciting illuminating readings of individual films as well as for founding a theory of Indian cinema. However, the overwhelming dependence of film scholars on the twin concepts has resulted in the production of a hegemonising rhetoric that has prevented the emergence of competing concepts and theories. Their exclusive focus on the Hindu performing and narrative arts, particularly the epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, has relegated alternative traditions to the background. While acknowledging the contribution of the dominant Hindu Sanskritic and other narrative traditions to the shaping of popular Hindi cinema and sensitive to the dangers of formulating monolithic theoretical constructs, this book aims to explore alternative narrative influences that have governed storytelling in Hindi films, particularly the Perso-Arabic legacy

of the qissa and dastan that has been erased or marginalised in the construction of Hindi cinema as national cinema.**(18)**

Agreeing with Kesavan that the Hindi film, 'the last stronghold of Urdu in independent India, its lost haven in a sea of linguistic bigotry' (1994: 246), the opening chapter demonstrates the syncretic heritage of Hindi cinema. Through its retention of Urdu that resembles spoken Hindi, the Hindi film remains one of the last significant spaces in which the eclectic *ganga-jamuni tehzeeb* [composite culture], that prevailed in the Indian public space until the end of the nineteenth century, continues to survive. The dominance of Urdu in Hindi cinema has been explained through the large-scale migration of Urdu munshis [clerks, writers, accountants] to Parsi theatre from north India following the withdrawal of royal patronage and the cross-border migration of Urdu writers and actors from Lahore to Bombay after the Partition of India in 1947. Since the writers as well as actors were more conversant with the Urdu language and culture, Urdu became the preferred idiom of Hindi cinema. The preference of Urdu terms over Hindi ones in the translation of key concepts of Hindi cinema such as *ishq* [love], *waqt* [time, destiny], *izzat* [honour], *daulat* [wealth], *qanoon* [law] and so on naturalised Urdu as the lingua franca of Hindi cinema. Despite its displacement by 'all kinds of Hindi', over the years (Trivedi 2006), Urdu continues to serve as the register of romance and intense emotion in Hindi cinema even in the present.

Chapter Three *'Qissa-i-Laila Majnun and Romance in Hindi Cinema'* argues that the dharma aesthetic of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* is disrupted by the trope of ishq as defined in the qissa of Laila-Majnun in the romance plot. Tracing the journey of the qissa from Persia to North India and Bombay over several centuries, it argues that the qissa has been appropriated as the idiom of pure romance in Hindi cinema since the silent era in preference over the alternative Hindu trope of Radha-Krishna. It demonstrates that the cinematic conflict in Hindi cinema emerges as a result of the conflicting

demands of ishq and dharma. The disruption of the dharmic principle through the hyperbolic language of ashiqi in the Hindi film shows the deep implication of the Islamic in the Hindu. The chapter argues that while dharma forms the overarching principle of Hindi cinema, the provision for extended romance and courtship in narrative and song and dance sequences in the typical masala film facilitates the insertion of the Perso-Arabic trope of ishq in the feudal family melodrama. However, unlike *Udhri* poetry, which elevates *pak ishq* that is pure, unburdened and unsullied by the union of lovers or domesticity, Hindi cinema integrates ishq within the social economy of the Hindu family through juxtaposing the competing pressures of ishq and dharma in the narrative conflict; this conflict is resolved usually by the valorisation of ishq as a higher form of dharma in tragic romances, or by its expansion through the inclusion of the lovers' filial obligations in others.

After tracing the influence of the *Qissa-i-Laila Majnun* on the plot and characters of Hindi cinema, Chapter Four locates the origins of its stereotyped characters, often denigrated for their lack of development, in the two-dimensional characters of the dastan who exist only to fulfil a function. The handsome *shehzadas*, *paris, divs* and *ayyars* of the dastan reappear in the shape of incredibly handsome heroes, impossibly beautiful heroines, villains, vamps and comedians of Hindi cinema. The function of the characters is to polarise the moral conflict between good and evil through their reenactment of the dastan trope of the prince releasing his kingdom or people from inhuman monsters. The description of the Hindi film heroine fits that of the houris in Persian texts. Like the houris, the heroine of the Hindi film is a virtuous seductress who titillates through her innocence. She is contrasted with the seductress vamp who is represented as a Zu-leikha-like character who leads men astray by displaying her body, thus reenacting the opposition between the faithful *Mihr Nigar* and selfish *Asman Pari* in the Dastan-e Amir

Hamzah. The most important character in the dastan, the ayyar, is reborn in the Hindi film as the comedian whose role is to aid the hero in his romantic and/or heroic quest in addition to providing comic relief through wit and trickery.

Chapter Five, 'Ajeeb Dāstān Hai Yeh [It is a Strange Tale Indeed]: Storytelling in Hindi Cinema' engages with the way stories are told in Hindi cinema. Attributing its verbosity to the influence of storytelling traditions such as the dastan, it attempts to tease out the difference between *sunna* [listening] and *rachna* [drawing; creating] in the das-tan's reinscription within Hindi cinema. It demonstrates that Hindi cinema's fragmented structure that has been connected through the syntagmatique of dharma is loosely arranged in a paratactic fashion following that of the dastan. Further, it attempts to construct a morphology of the Hindi film through its being structured by the defining features of the dastan such as *husn-i-ishq* [beauty and love], *bazm* [love], *razm* [warfare], *ayyari* [trickery] and *tilism* [enchantment]. It demonstrates that the formulaic plot and conventions of the Hindi film have been broadly derived from the dastan. The appeal of its formulaic plots that reiterate familiar tropes for its audience lies in the pleasure of repetition and detail rather than suspense and originality. In proposing the plot of Hindi cinema as being structured by the laws of possibility rather than those of causality as in the dastan, it suggests an alternative mode of telling stories in which the pleasure of infinite expansion far exceeds that of originality through the device of *dastan rokna* [stalling the dastan].

Chapter Six '*Waqt ki Har Sheh Ghulam* [Everything is Subject to Time]: Time in Hindi Cinema' expands the cinema's disregard of the laws of causality predicated on a homogenous, logical, disenchanted time through the invocation of an untranslatable temporal otherness in which the time of Persian mysticism is incorporated in the Hindu notion of time. The chapter connects Hindi cinema's violation of the logic of cause and effect by providing a glimpse of an enchanted world in which human

action is determined by *kismet* or destiny. The central argument of the chapter is that Hindi cinema articulates an alternative temporality that interrogates the homogenous, clock time of the West. Although the Hindu cyclic time and the theory of *karma* form the overarching framework within which events occur, Hindi cinema's preference for Urdu terms for time such as *zamana*, waqt and *hal* embed it within the cosmological time of Persian mysticism. The notion of a personal time or waqt governing human destinies is demonstrated as dominating the universe of Hindi cinema. While the karma theory is invoked to explain sorrow or happiness in the present life, events occurring in the empirical world are elucidated through the Perso-Arabic notion of *zaman*. Love is viewed as transporting the lover into a mystical moment called hal experienced by sufis during which the distinction between past and the future is dissolved. Finally, Hindu cyclic time is articulated to the repetitive time of the *ta'ziyeh* in the idea of reincarnation.

If the representation of time in Hindi cinema challenges linear, homogeneous, disenchanted time as reflected in the causality of modern Western narratives, it also produces a space that is altogether enchanted. Chapter Seven 'Filmistan' addresses the utopian space of Hindi cinema, which is a world of dreams that shuts out all troubles, and traces its escapist orientation to the escapism of the dastan that constituted the prime source of the genre's appeal. Contesting the widely held view of the space of new Bollywood films as a fabricated, designer space that moves the Hindi film out of real locations, it maintains that space in Hindi cinema has always been constructed and organised in a dyadic fashion; it does not exist in any real space but has a heterotopic dimension that resembles the space known *as alam al-mithal*, the world of analogies or *alam al- khayal*, the world of imagination. It demonstrates that the division of space is patterned after Persian cosmological space through its binary divisions of *jannat* and *jahannam*, the city and the country, and the slum and the mansion. The description of jannat

as a green expanse in Persian texts is translated into the mountains, rivers and lakes that form the visual backdrop of romance in the Hindi film. On the other hand, the de-scription of jahannam is literally reproduced in the habitation of the villain in Hindi cinema. If the mansions of the rich approximate the description of the Sheesh Mahal in *Anarkali* (1922), the slums are aesthetised versions of real slums. The city-country dyad forms an-other important opposition—if the city is the metaphor of modernity, the village is the signifier of tradition and innocence. The concept of the cinema of attractions has tended to conflate types of cinema that may be considered divergent. The construction of an orientalist anti-mimeticism to elucidate Hindi cinema's turn from reality by invoking the non-mimetic order permeating Indian performing arts can homogenise what are in fact disparate performative traditions. The consensus among folklorists that folk genres should be defined in relation to structural features has led to a confusion between the specific differences between the related genres of fairy tale, fable, legend and folktale. Even though fantasy and fairy tale are generically discrete, Sudhir Kakar conflates the two categories in comparing them to Hindi cinema. Whether or not the modern idiom of fantasy or the postmodern one of magic realism used to describe the Hindi film or the dastan is appropriate for defining a premodern genre or not is another matter. Neither magic realist nor hyperreal, nor conforming to postmodern Western categories invented to interrogate modernist investment in mimetic realism, Hindi cinema borrows the tilismic mode of representation to construct an enchanted space that suggests that the world itself is an illusion. The concluding chapter therefore proposes that Hindi cinema should be viewed as a cinema of enchantment.

NOTES

1.	This chapter draws on 'Bhakti and Ashiqi: The Syncretic Heritage of Hindi Cinema' by Anjali Gera Roy, which first appeared in *Studies in South*

Asian Film and Media 2(1) in 2010, and was subsequently published as '*Qissa* and the Popular Hindi Cinema', in *Storytelling in World Cinemas. Volume 2: Contexts*, edited by Lina Khatib, in 2013. New York; West Sussex: Wallflower Press Book, Columbia University Press.

2. Hindko, the language Dilip Kumar speaks and is also spoken by Shah Rukh Khan's family, was the language of Hind, the sixth province of the ancient Persian empire. It is rumoured that Dilip Kumar would address Raj Kapoor as *laale* [the Pathan term for Hindus] who would respond by affectionately calling him *laale di jaan* [the Lala's life]. Percy Sykes, drawing on Herodotus, states that, 'we find that out of the twenty provinces into which the Persian Empire was divided, six practically composed what is the Afghani-stan of today' (Sykes 2014). 'Hindko is the term locally used to cover the heterogeneous northern dialects spoken in the hilly areas above the Salt Range', which includes the districts of 'Abbottabad, Haripur, Mansehra, At-tock of Pakistan, while there are a substantial number of speakers of Hindko in cities like Peshawar, Nowshera, Swabi, and Kohat of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan and both parts of Kashmir' (Shackle 1980). Hindko speakers are sometimes also referred to as Punjabi Pathans because many of those who consider Hindko as mother tongue in Peshawar and Kohat are Pashtuns by origin (http://en.wikipedia.org/ wiki/Hindko_dialect).

3. 'He mentions five as the principal ones surviving from the pre-Safavid (i.e., fifteenth century and earlier) period: those which grew up around the adventures of the world-conqueror Alexander, the great Persian king Darius, the Prophet's uncle Hamzah, the legendary king Fīroz Shāh, and— an interesting counterpoint—a humbly born trickster-hero named Samak the Ayyar. Only a few translations of these texts into Western languages have ever been made' (Pritchett 1991: 1).

4. The *Dastan-e Amir Hamzah* deals with the adventures of Hamzah ibn Abd al-Muttalib, a historical figure who was the Prophet's paternal uncle. While *Hamzah* might have been historical, the magical and romantic adventures of the tale were appended during the gradual transformation of the historical tale into a secular romance.

5. Dastan had a huge influence on the development of the Hindi novel as well, particularly on the writings of Devakinandan Khatri's *Chandrakanta* (1888).

6. Dastangoi is defined as the narration of dastans by professional story-tellers in the kehwa khane or tea shops of Persia, which became extremely popular in India.

7. 'Urdu theatre grew out of a spectacular production of *Indrasabha* ("The Heavenly Court of Indra"), an operatic drama written by the poet Agha Hasan Amanat and produced in 1855 in the palace courtyard of the last nawab of Oudh, Wajid Ali Shah' (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2011).

8. *Darshan* (Sanskrit: auspicious viewing), also spelled darshana, in Hindu worship is the beholding of a deity (especially in image form), revered person, or sacred object. The experience is often conceived to be reciprocal and results in the human viewer's receiving a blessing (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/ topic/151828/darshan.

9. *Dharma*, Sanskrit *dharma*, Pali dhamma, is a key concept with multiple meanings in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. In Hinduism, *dharma* is the religious and moral law governing individual conduct and one of the four goals of life, to be followed according to one's class, status and station in life (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). Vijay Mishra argues that 'a transcendental principle of dharma (the Ultimate Hindu Law), a decentred notion of genre, and a mode of heterogeneous manufacture combine to create the sentimental melodramatic romance that is Bombay Cinema' (2002: 14).

10. Focusing on one particular *qissa*, Farina Mir shows how the romance tradition was refined by the Persian poets Gorgānī and Ansari and was perfected by Nezāmi by borrowing from both Persian and

Arabic *qisse*, leading to the evolution of a new poetic *masnavi* or epic poem in rhymed verse. Mir contends that Persian and Arabic romances travelled to South Asia with court poets, merchants, traders, sufis and mendicants in the medieval period, and were incorporated into the oral and literary traditions (2006).

11. *Majnun Laila's* Indian connection is established by a Rajasthani leg-end that has it that Laila and Majnun, originally from Sindh, sought refuge in the Rajasthani village of Sriganganagar before breathing their last, and a two-day fair held there annually in June is attended by lovers and newlyweds to commemorate the legendary lovers.

12. *Dakhani* arose as the Muslim court language of the Deccan Plateau around 1300 AD in ways similar to Urdu. It is defined in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as a variety of Urdu that 'shows more affinity with eastern Punjabi and Haryanvi than with Khari Boli, which provides the grammatical structure of standard modern Urdu' (http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/150019/Dakhani).

13. English translations of all Hindi film songs and dialogues cited in the volume are by Anjali Gera Roy, unless mentioned otherwise.

14. However, Iqbal Masud argues that 'the Muslim ethos in Indian cinema was not represented by "Muslim" artists alone' and points out that 'a host of non-Muslims like Sohrab Modi, Guru Dutt or Shyam Benegal can well claim to be part of the "Muslim" ethos of north India' (2005).

15. The Muslim Social is a genre in Hindi cinema popular in the 1950s and 1960s that portrayed and critiqued Islamicate culture. Allen and Bhaskar have divided it into two categories: 'classic Muslim socials' that depict the famed nawabi culture and focus on upper class/elite Muslim families, and 'new wave Muslim socials' that portray the socio-economic travails of middle-class Muslim families (Bhaskar and Allen 2009: 91–92). Lawrence Babb and Susan Wadley mention that Urdu poetry and musical genres commonly associated with Islam were an integral part of the Muslim Social (Babb and Wadley 1998: 151).

16. 'A path to achieving salvation through loving devotion to a particular deity, open to all persons irrespective of sex or caste' (Free Online Dictionary). Bhakti (devotion to a deity constituting a way to salvation in Hinduism) is defined as a 'Southern Asian devotional movement, particularly in Hinduism, emphasizing the love of a devotee for his or her personal god. In contrast to Advaita, bhakti assumes a dualistic relationship between devotee and deity' (Webster).

17. Although the culinary term masala was first applied by film critics to refer to the films of Manmohan Desai, who successfully exploited the formula in the 1970s and 1980s, the mixing of genres—action, comedy, romance, musical, melodrama that defines the genre has been in use since the 1950s and persists till date. Not only 'feudal family romances', as M. Madhava Prasad describes the films of the 1950s (1998: 30–31), but also new Bollywood films of the 1990s invariably fall back on the time-tested formula of six songs, romance, side comedy, fight and melodrama that characterises the masala film. Masala film is not interpreted here only to refer to the genre Manmohan Desai is believed to have inaugurated in the 1970s but the entire gamut of films that display a similar mixing of genres.

18. *Qissa* and dastan that have a specific lineage in Persian tradition have been conflated in India to refer to story in general.

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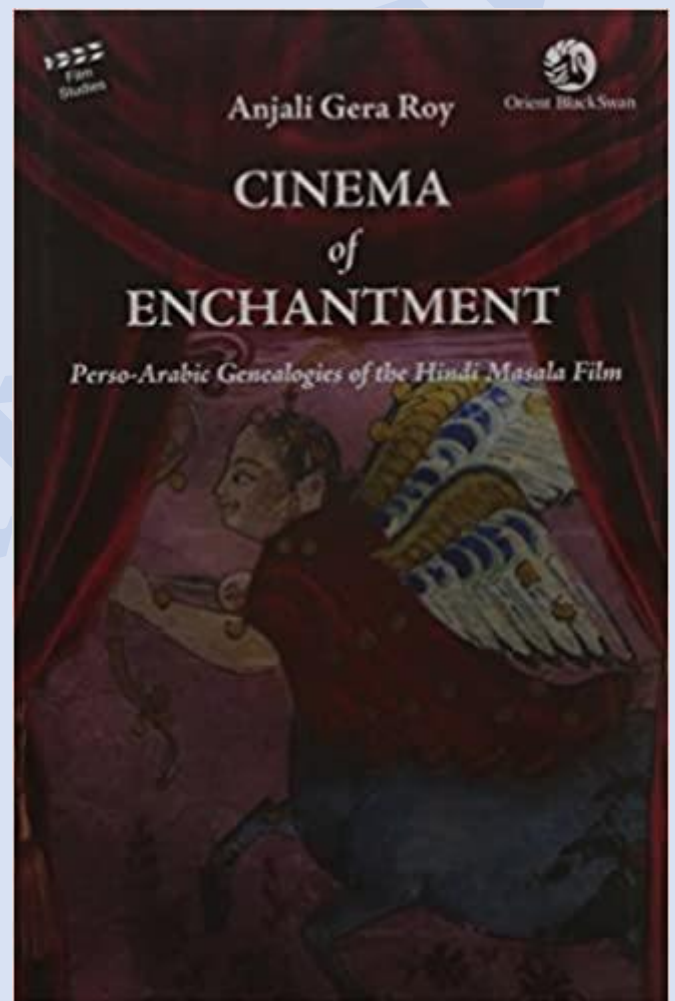
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