



Research Paper

Prevalence of Colonial Hangover in Bollywood Movies with Primary Focus on Queen and English Vinglish

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Abstract

Bollywood is undeniably a powerful force in India. Bollywood's influence is so widespread that it affects and reflects Indian identity, art, history, social issues, and politics. When it comes to the infatuation with the white world, Bollywood has always played a vital role in portraying that it is still suffering from the effects of colonialism. This research paper looks into the post-colonial elements that are presented in the Bollywood movies with a particular focus on Queen and English Vinglish. While both the movies on the surface reflect on the idea of women's emancipation and liberation but if looked closely it also shows how the effects of colonialism still vibrate through the minds of the people. This paper attempts to look at these movies from the post-colonial aspect and not the conventional feminist approach that is usually taken into consideration.

Keywords: *Bollywood, colonial hangover, hybridity, women emancipation, language power, the Western world*

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I. INTRODUCTION

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "colonialism" comes from the Latin word "colonia," which means "farm" or "settlement," and refers to Romans who settled in other countries while maintaining their citizenship. Not only did France preserve Western dominance in Africa, but the United Kingdom also did so in Asia. The British colonized most Asian countries and made them their colonies. Colonialism involves unequal relationships between the colonial power and the colony and often between the colonists and the indigenous peoples. During the colonial period, which lasted from the 16th to the mid-twentieth centuries, European nations came to supremacy and used mercantilism to establish colonies in Asia, Africa, and America, European nations used mercantilism to establish colonies in Asia, Africa, and America.

The Indian subcontinent was Asia's largest British colony, and as a result, the Indian subcontinent's society is rich with post-colonial indicators. Post-colonial remnants were later shown not just in literature, but also in cinema, with several films from the Indian Subcontinent depicting post-colonialism. The term "postcolonialism" is crucial for a better understanding of colonial impacts. Since the 1970s, literary critics have used the term "postcolonial" to describe the various cultural consequences of colonialism on cultures and societies. One can utilize postcolonial theory as a tool to find the weak point and examine it thoroughly because it is a tool. Although the postcolonial theory is no longer relevant, it might nonetheless help to make these links visible in today's reality. One continues to sing a song about white people or the white world and feels privileged in certain ways because our perspective is still colonial. The world as a whole is post-colonial. To comprehend the repercussions of colonialism on a deeper level, one must be familiar with post-colonialism. Literary critics use the phrase to describe the various repercussions of colonization on various nations and cultures. Even after so many years of independence from colonial domination, postcolonial theories remain vital. This is because the people's thinking is still colonial, and they are constantly looking for an opportunity to sing a song about white people or the white world and be proud of it. Movies are one of the most popular forms of entertainment, and they frequently depict many people's daily lives. It also can sway people's opinions.

Bollywood is undeniably a powerful force in India. It is a source of pride for many Indians, as well as diplomatic soft power, according to Shashi Tharoor. Bollywood's influence is so widespread that it affects and reflects Indian identity, art, history, social issues, politics, and unrealistic love aspirations, among other things. Bollywood has also been recognized for assisting the Indian diaspora in maintaining ties with their homeland. However, in a newly independent country, the question arises as to what function this strong kind of media plays in building a national identity. Again when it comes to the infatuation with the white world, Bollywood

has always played a vital role in portraying that it is still suffering from the effects of colonialism. English Vinglish and Queen are the two films that will be discussed in this paper. The fundamental goal of both films is to raise awareness of women's empowerment, personal progress, and freedom. However, when the same causes are examined from a post-colonial perspective, it becomes clear that the people's minds are still dominated by whites. Though physical independence has been attained, there is still a long way to go mentally.

Gauri Shinde wrote and directed the film English Vinglish, which was recently released in the year 2012. Shashi Godbole, the film's protagonist, is a simple woman with very low expectations. She is the ideal wife and mother, but her main flaw is her inability to communicate well in English. As a result, she is subjected to a great deal of ridicule and disgrace from her own family. She then travels to New York to attend her sister's daughter's wedding, where she enrolls in a spoken English class to learn the language and, eventually, raises an English toast at the wedding. Queen, directed by Vikas Bahl, is another film that is discussed in this piece. Rani, the film's protagonist, is described as a shy Punjabi girl who is straightforward and honest. For her honeymoon, she had a fantasy of seeing Paris and Amsterdam. When her groom rejects her just before their wedding, she resolves to go on her honeymoon alone to Paris. Her lonely path led to liberation, and she eventually discovered her new self, who is full of confidence and optimism. Both films appear to be more about individual independence and emancipation, notably the liberation of women when viewed on the surface. However, Bollywood, being one of the most important movie industries in India, is a thrilling region of study to recognize the socio-cultural views of the latest India. My paper might be cognizant of the conversion function of Indian girls. It might argue the alternative is simply superficial or the Indian girl has been a hit to barter with and undertake the patriarchal social structure. These a couple of problems might be mentioned with unique reference to 2 of the cutting-edge Bollywood films, namely, English – Vinglish, and Queen. The cognizance of those films is due to the fact each deals with the emancipation of girls. Sashi, the imperative person of English - Vinglish, no matter going through all types of humiliation in her circle of relatives and sooner or later getting to know English her incapacity to talk in English is one of the number one motives for her being ridiculed in her circle of relatives comes again to her circle of relatives on the end. Queen showcases a one-of-a-kind form of emancipation in which Rani, the main girl of the movie, being dumped with the aid of using her fiancé, comes to a decision to head for her honeymoon experience all with the aid of using herself and recognizes herself anew.

The primary objective of this paper is to understand and reflect how the feminist theme of women empowerment is used to hide the colonial hangover that prevails over the Bollywood movies by bringing out several post-colonial elements.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Prevalence of the colonial hangover in Bollywood movies with a primary focus on the movies English Vinglish and Queen.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

All cultural assertions and systems, according to Bhabha's theory, are formed in a realm he refers to as the "Third Space of Enunciation." Cultural identity inevitably forms in this ambiguous and conflicting environment, according to Bhabha, rendering the claim to a hierarchical "purity of cultures" impossible. According to him, recognizing this ambiguous area of cultural identity might aid us in overcoming the exoticism of cultural diversity in favor of recognizing the empowering hybridity within which cultural difference can work, rather than the exoticism of cultural diversity. The 'in-between' space bears the weight and significance of culture, which is why the concept of hybridity is so significant. In post-colonial rhetoric, hybridity has been used to refer to simple cross-cultural 'trade.' Bhabha developed the concept of hybridity from literary and cultural themes to explain the evolution of culture and identity in settings of colonial hostility and unfairness. Hybridity, according to Bhabha, is the process by which the colonial governing authority attempts to transform the colonized's identity into a novel universally accepted framework but fails to produce something familiar but new. Bhabha claims that the validity and authenticity of any essentialist cultural identification results in the emergence of a new hybrid identity or subject function from the interweaving of components of the colonizer and colonized. Bhabha is very aware of the dangers of identity fixity and fetishism in binary colonial wandering, claiming that "all forms of the style of existence are always in a method of hybridity." The assertion of a shared post-colonial condition like hybridity has been seen as part of discourse analysis' tendency to dehistoricize and delicate cultures from their temporal, spatial, geographical, and linguistic contexts, leading to an abstract, globalized concept of the textual that obscures the specificities of specific cultural situations. This paper helps to understand the cultural hybridity that is presented in both films.

Mahuya Bhaumik discusses in her work how Bollywood, as one of India's largest film businesses, is a fascinating field of research for understanding the socio-cultural viewpoints of today's India in her work. The focus of the paper is on the changing role of the Indian lady. It debates whether the transformation is purely cosmetic or whether the Indian woman has succeeded in negotiating with and challenging patriarchal social

structures. These various concerns are highlighted in particular about two recent Bollywood films, *English-Vinglish* and *Queen*. The focus of these two films is because they both deal with women's emancipation. Despite experiencing humiliation in her own family and eventually learning English despite her inability to speak English being one of the key reasons for her being mocked in her family, Sashi, the central character of *English-Vinglish*, returns to her family at the end. *Queen* depicts a distinct type of independence in which Rani, the film's leading heroine, after being rejected by her fiancé, decides to go on her honeymoon journey alone and rediscovers herself. These two films show how women's roles are evolving, and they no longer require a man to save them from danger or console them when they cry. She is a strong, independent woman who never forgets her roots. Both films raise provocative concerns regarding the status of women in contemporary India and are used as lenses to look through the numerous layers of India's gendered society.

This piece of work is important for this paper as it helps to understand how the theme of women's emancipation has been used by Bollywood to hide the stereotypical colonial attitude attached to Indian society.

In his book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon examines how a racist society encourages black people to aspire to be white but then suffers major psychological difficulties as a result of their inability to do so. Fanon investigates the interplay of race, language, and culture. Language, according to Fanon, allows people to enter a culture, thus when someone speaks French, they are adopting the French culture. When Black people speak French, however, they are constantly reminded that they will never be completely French. They are said that, unlike people from other white European countries such as Germany or Russia, they lack a polite language of their own. Language is utilized in this way to make Black people feel uncivilised and without a past. As a result, Black people who have been told they are inferior may develop an inferiority complex and seek to "superior" themselves by becoming white. Fanon returns to this ambition to become white in his works about interracial relationships between black and white people. Black women may take a white boyfriend to gain access to a white culture with more advantages and privileges, according to Fanon. Similarly, Black men may regard white women as cultural gatekeepers, and marrying a white woman gives the impression of marrying all of the beauty, education, and income that whiteness in racist countries entails. However, because Black people can never forget their race, running from their race is also a form of self-flagellation. This results in a loss of feeling of self, as well as the ability to act in the world. It is critical, according to Fanon, to recognize that Black people do not feel inferior by nature. Racism, which asserts that whites are superior to Blacks and provides whites with economic benefits, is to blame for this feeling.

This idea is crucial for this article since there are various times in both films that can be linked to what Fanon has discussed.

Endlessly Green's essay is primarily about the Bollywood film *English Vinglish*. While it is a well-known film, Green delves into its flaws, specifically how it subtly illustrates the aftermath of colonialism. She opens her piece by discussing how the film built its way to popularity by reflecting on the lives of a woman on her quest to discover herself while also striving for self-improvement. By beginning her piece with a good comment, she draws the reader's attention to her remark that the film also displays a concealed idea of Indians being colonized indefinitely. She goes on to add that it's not the protagonist or the script that's the problem, but something else entirely. She also points out that the portrayal of self-elevation is a product of colonialism, from which Indians have never been able to recover, despite many years of independence. Even though the country contains so many languages and dialects, the worship of the foreign white language appears to never cease. Her entire post raises various problems concerning so-called "self-elevation," which reveals the community's overall backwardness. Through her work, she raises the topic of whether speaking English elevates those whose first language isn't English. Because the protagonist of the film could not communicate fluently in English, she was subjected to criticism not only from the outside world but also from her family members, who were supposed to be proud of the lady she was and her abilities. Because *English Vinglish* is one of the research paper's key films, it's important to understand the criticism it's received. This article is a significant secondary source since it serves to frame the idea of how the film portrays colonialism's aftermath in general.

Megha Trivedi's article is about postcolonialism, and she utilizes four Bollywood films to illustrate her point: *Queen*, *Rang De Basanti*, *English Vinglish*, and *Lagaan*. She begins her paper by discussing colonialism before going into detail on postcolonialism. Her goal is to let her readers comprehend how colonialism persists and how it is reflected in Bollywood. She also briefly mentions the thinkers who have provided useful knowledge on postcolonialism. While her thesis discusses four films, this study will concentrate on only two, *Queen* and *English Vinglish*. Trivedi begins his analysis of the film *Queen* by providing general information about the film, such as the actor and director. It also summarises the plot briefly, and she then discusses various incidents that demonstrate the influence of colonialism in some way. She paraphrases sentences from the film and explains how she believes this reflects a postcolonial element. She also discusses how the film depicts Islamophobia and Xenophobia on various occasions. Trivedi seeks to bring out how the film employs the premise that a woman can only achieve her independence in a white country, and that freedom only implies adapting to western society. Trivedi's assessment of *English Vinglish* is substantially shorter, and she begins by

providing background information about the film. Before getting into the facts, she gives a quick description of the story, which depicts the life of a humble woman and her path to empowerment as she goes from being unable to communicate in English to raising an English toast at a wedding. She points out how the film used several tropes to obscure the colonial legacy, but it eventually emerges.

III. DISCUSSION

Typically, Bollywood films are about heroics, in which a guy saves and comforts a female character and assumes responsibility for all difficulties. The lead part in the majority of popular Bollywood films is played by a male superstar. However, recent developments in Bollywood show a minor shift away from traditional films and toward a new type of female-oriented cinema. *Queen* is one such film that has revived my trust in high-quality filmmaking. *Queen* is one of the few Bollywood films that manages to tell a realistic plot while yet entertaining the viewer. Vikas Bahl directed *Queen*, a 2014 Indian comedy-drama film. Rajkumar Rao (Vijay) and Kangana Ranaut (Rani) performed supporting roles in the film. The story revolves around a young woman named Rani, who is dumped by her fiancé one day before her wedding. Rani, who is portrayed as a simple girl from a traditional Punjabi family, instead of pouting, decides to go on her honeymoon alone. The film's charm resides in its depiction of genuine and clear emotions. The video depicts everything from a scared girl in a foreign nation to a strong girl who fights back when someone tries to mug her. Unlike other films in which a strong woman is categorized with one set of attributes and a sensitive heroine with another, *Queen* demonstrates how a woman can be both powerful and soft depending on the scenario. The film gently highlights the gender divide that exists in Indian society. Because her partner does not want her to work, a well-educated woman forgoes a fantastic career chance. While the film does a fantastic job of depicting the reality in India, where many girls forgo their careers to support their families, it also captures the passion of a true Indian lady who battles injustice. The transformation of a simple child who is clueless about the outside world into a brave, street-smart woman who travels to other nations is undoubtedly the film's centerpiece. However, a closer examination reveals that the film is surrounded by various post-colonial aspects. The central topic of the film is that a woman travels to a faraway place in search of happiness and freedom from life's cares. The notion that a foreign white land can bring solace to an Indian woman that her own country cannot is unquestionably a result of colonialism. She chose to go to Paris alone for her honeymoon after splitting up with her husband. As a result, the fact that our dream destination is invariably a place in the white world rather than an African country reveals our inner desire for the white world. When she arrived in Paris, she met another girl named Vijaylaxmi. Mulatto is Vijaylaxmi's character. Mulatto is a term used to describe children born to one white and one black parent. Vijaylaxmi introduced herself that she is a mix of Hindi, French, and Spanish. Her mother was French Spanish and her father Hindi. Vijaylaxmi also has a white baby boy named Riky, who was born to her boyfriend rather than her husband, making her a single parent. As a result, it symbolizes the desire for a white life partner. Rani's grandma also assures her that she will meet a white man in Paris and that she will be able to settle down with him. It repeatedly emphasizes the yearning for a white groom. Even today, when a girl's family is looking for a spouse, an NRI is always the first choice. This is similar to Fanon's *Black Skin, White Mask*, which claims that women want to marry a white man to settle down with privileges. The same thing happens in this film, which is portrayed through Vijaylaxmi's character. Furthermore, the film depicts the anxiety that people have when they think of Pakistanis or Muslims in general. It's known as 'Islamophobia.' Muslims are stereotyped as people who would never be able to assimilate into Western societies or as people who have been socialized to be aggressive. The same scenario happens in the movie when Vijaylaxmi asks Rani if she is from Pakistan because she is struggling to conform to the western world's culture.

The idea of postcolonialism pervades the entire film. Another instance is when Rani was wandering around the Eiffel Tower and was startled by a black man whose identity was portrayed in such a way that it appeared to be scary. This frame appears to work in a variety of ways. She slept outside in the hotel until another black man came to tell her she needed to sleep inside. She was terrified and began shouting, and two other people came to protect her. So it's "Xenophobia," which refers to a fear of the unfamiliar, not of humans in general, but specifically of black men. Oleksander, a white man, was the first person Rani allowed to sleep inside the room, indicating that she solely trusted that white man and no one else. As a result, it demonstrates racial discrimination in the white world, which is a result of colonialism. Furthermore, all of Rani's concerns are resolved in Paris and Amsterdam, not in India. Movies seem to glorify white culture in such a way that it appears to be so good that characters like Rukshar and Vijaylaxmi have settled there for their freedom. The film is also about cultural hybridity, in which people from many countries are shown together, thereby portraying various civilizations. They all live together and try to adjust to western life, regardless of where they come from. The adulation of the West persists, and Bollywood appears to be emphasizing this concept even more.

Gauri Shinde wrote and directed *English Vinglish*, a 2012 Indian comedy-drama film. In classic Bollywood flair, *English Vinglish* handles the contentious matrix of gender, class, race, and nationalism, ironing out unevenness in a basic but not sloppy manner. Because Shinde pours so much heart into the story, the head

frequently wanders off to take a well-deserved break. If the head is not permitted to take a break, English Vinglish may appear to be betraying the very cause it is railing against. In postcolonial nation-states, the colonizer's language has risen to the status of a "weapon," subjugating and even supplanting vernaculars. In Sri Lanka, for example, the English language is referred to as Kaduna, a Sinhalese term that means "weapon." Knowledge of English inherently confers cultural capital on individuals who can speak, read, and write the language; a clear hierarchy develops, in which non-English speakers frequently feel overwhelmed by those who are at ease speaking, reading, and writing in the language. Indeed, pleas for a complete rejection of the colonizer's language have resonated across postcolonial nation-states, but to little avail. The English language's all-pervasive force is difficult to overcome, and it has proven to be invincible.

English Vinglish is inspired by the ongoing battle between English and the vernaculars and tells the story of a middle-class housewife's tireless efforts to master the language to gain respect from her husband and children, who never miss an opportunity to mock her lack of English knowledge. Shashi Godbole is correct in associating English proficiency with achieving honor and self-respect. While Shinde is slightly critical of the English language's omnipotence, the greatest irony is that people who can speak, read, and write English are automatically credited with the ability to appreciate the film. In other words, by projecting Shashi's regular dissatisfaction as something to sympathize with, Shinde mistakenly assumes an English-speaking audience that would not relate with her but would root for her with the self-distancing pity that they generally save for the underdog. Non-English speaking audiences, on the other hand, would struggle to enjoy the picture because much of the humor would be lost on them. This is precisely how English Vinglish transforms into a film for the English-educated urban bourgeoisie, mocking its cultural hegemony to strengthen it.

English Vinglish also represents a shift from British Raj to American imperialism, as well as the growing prominence of English as a weapon in the global globe. The overpowering consumerist temptation that drives the middle class insane, cultural ghettoization in a foreign nation, and America's salad bowl of multiculturalism are all perfectly intertwined into the story, which appears to be about a woman's self-esteem search. The film makes a powerful case against nationalism, first by dissolving national boundaries in the English classroom, and then by exposing the family's coercive dimension, which is typically regarded as a safe refuge for emotional security. Shashi's final statement is a witty parody of the family and its well-known love and security discourses. The gay English instructor intervenes in the overpowering heteronormative atmosphere, creating some discomfort for the homophobic Salman and Eva, but, to his surprise, when he goes through a break-up, he receives the most sympathy from an Indian housewife. In the true spirit of liberal democracy, the film promotes everyone's peaceful coexistence, yet, like other Hindi films, at least most mainstream Hindi films, it ends up placing too much faith in it. The motto is to feel good. And somewhere out there, the Western world is held up as the ultimate emblem of happiness worth pursuing. Again, cultural hybridity is well-represented in this film, as people from many places come together to learn the language that is fundamentally required to exhibit themselves.

The films Queen and English Vinglish have a similar approach, yet they are not identical. Women's empowerment and freedom are important themes in the films. If this is taken into consideration, the film Queen's climax is also successful. In the climax, Rani is discovered, having been abandoned by her fiancé due to her simplicity and Indianness, and then approached again while on her voyage of independence. Queen showcases a different kind of emancipation where Rani, the leading lady of the movie, being dumped by her fiancé, decides to go for her honeymoon trip all by herself and recognizes herself anew. In the end, Rani is able to walk away from him, demonstrating her mental freedom. In contrast, Shashi raises a toast in English yet stays true to her roots in the movie English Vinglish's climax. However, this study has focused on the impacts of colonialism, which are still present in India, and how every entertainment sector, albeit subtly, represents it. Both the movies generate thought-provoking questions about the status of women in present India and can be employed as lenses to see through the multiple layers of the gendered Indian society.

IV. CONCLUSION

The themes of female empowerment and independence run through both Queen and English Vinglish. While this is a significant element in both films, they also have a traditional colonial aftertaste. Even though the country has come a long way, the concept that the white world is superior appears to have gotten ingrained in people's thinking. Postcolonial theories will continue to be relevant until the world accepts white dominance. While these films attempt to instill power in women in society, they appear to overlook the need of instilling the true concept of freedom and independence. Bollywood attempts to instill the idea of freedom through these films, but it remains trapped in the clutches of colonial power in some way. This work successfully elucidates all of the postcolonial themes that have been subtly stated in the movies. However, if one looks closely, the same features tend to reveal society's prevailing worldview.

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