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**DIASPORIC DESIRE IN THE SELECT HINDI CINEMA: PARDES & DDLJ**

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**DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.7747630**

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**Introduction:**

Today's Hindi cinema has undergone through distinctive phases as the country finds its place in a globalized world. Mass migrations and economic integration in the global economy produce a confused cultural space in cinemas; now Bollywood filmmakers must cater not only to audiences in India but also to Indians scattered across the diaspora. The result is the creation of a new genre within Bollywood: the diasporic film, which caters to the non-resident Indians or —NRI audiences. The present paper portrays the Bollywood's construction of the diaspora: its construction of the patriarchy system in the family, the desired NRI male and its representation of the NRI women as the allegory of the nation. A significant new development in the field of Indian family and kinship is the internationalization of the middle-class family. *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* and *Pardes* thematise the problems of transnational location in respect of courtship and marriage. The two films share a conservative agenda on the family, but differ in their assessment of the possibility of retaining Indian identity in diaspora. *DDLJ* proposes that Indian family values are portable assets, while *Pardes* suggests that the loss of cultural identity can be postponed but ultimately not avoided [1].

**The Desirable Male:**

The film *DDLJ* is a clear departure from original inflexible classifications of the NRI as either longing for the homeland or morally depraved: Shah Rukh Khan as Raj represents an NRI figure that has, to a degree, negotiated the straddle of being both Indian and English. Raj has adopted some —immoralll Western traits—which we first see when he tricks Amrish Puri's character Baldev, the main character's father and a migrant from India to London, into selling him beer; he flirts with Simran (Kajol), Baldev's daughter, and flaunts his sexual exploits to his friends. But Raj reasserts his Indian-ness to the audience in a

scene when a drunken Simran falls asleep in his bed and awakens wearing his clothes. Terrified, she asks what happened the night before. Raj reminds her that he is Hindustani and understands the value of an Indian girl's honor. Raj assures Simran, and more importantly an audience concerned about the translation of values across oceans, that he remains morally —Indian,|| and in doing so, immediately changes the story from an innocent love story to a love story infused with the traditional values of the homeland. Raj can be seen simply as self-sacrificing, and not as the victim of tradition, because as a male he holds the rein to the system of traditions. In making his choice to respect tradition he is a hero-figure, the NRI who has not only found prosperity in the diaspora but has maintained the essence of India within him abroad.

Though Kuljeet (the other male character) depicts absolute masculinity, he lacks the traits of the desirable man as he is not as modern or educated or flamboyant as Raj. This is reflected when Kuljeet, who accepts Simran as his bride, thinks of her as a future babe-conquest, drinks more beer than Raj, and hunts for the thrill of it. So, even though Kuljeet is Indian groomed, he doesn't have the attributes of the ideal Indian man. Hence, DDLJ suggests that Indian values are 'portable'. This is also reflected in real life with the Indian communities living outside India, for example in the US. When I had visited the States in 2011, my aunt took us to a temple in Ames, Des Moines. There what I observed was, that the Indians there were more into meeting regularly, taking care of the welfare of the temple, and performing every prayer service with proper devotion rather than just doing it for the sake of it, than when I visit a temple in Delhi. The first generation Indians who settled there were very much into this concept of forming communities and celebrating the Indian festivals as "one".

In *Pardes*, diaspora is portrayed as in 70's where the central conflict is between the nation and the West. The cultural space negotiated by DDLJ for the male NRI to easily exist in the economically and physically in the West but morally in the East is strained and threatened. The storyline revolves around Kishorilal (Amrish Puri), an immigrant Indian who has made a fortune in the States but whose heart yearns for India. His yearning is painfully obvious and drilled into the viewer's mind in an early set of conversations where he lauds the beauty of India, down to her very soil, and in the song sequence —I Love My India,|| in which he declaims, —I saw London, I saw Paris, I saw Japan...there isn't another India in the whole world.|| As in DDLJ, the site for negotiating the interaction between East and West

is through male-female relationship. Kishorilal asks for his Indian friend's daughter, Ganga, on behalf of his NRI son, Rajiv, saying —We NRIs need girls like her (Ganga) very badly (for our sons). We've pushed our kids so deeply in English books and manners that somewhere or the other even after seeing so much success we feel as if we're failures. This comment swiftly negates the economic value of traveling out of India to find one's fortune and instead berates the NRI for abandoning the moral center of the nation. Kishorilal is hardly an NRI— simply a businessman away from his country so the true male NRI narrative occurs through Rajiv and his foster brother Arjun. Arjun besides growing up under the same western influence as Rajiv, he doesn't forget his Indian roots, tradition and culture. Whereas Rajiv is lured to the opportunities and lifestyle in the States that he chooses not to trace his steps back to his Indian roots. This happens with most of the second-generation Indians living in the States. Since they have lived the American way of life, and do not know the Indian way of life, they do not have the want to get in touch with their Indian roots. Therefore, the loss of cultural identity (in this case for Rajiv) cannot be avoided.

#### **Patriarchal System:**

It is observed that any decision concerning the family is taken by the male-head as he is believed to be infallible and it is his prerogative to decide what's good or bad, right or wrong for the family. It's like \_he' is the ultimate and final authority. In DDLJ, two scenes between Simran and her mother illustrate the inscription of patriarchy in the film. The first occurs once Simran is engaged to the Indian man whom she has never met. The match is arranged by her father and she accepts the match, accepting her faith along with it, while even defending it to a baffled Raj. Also Simran's mother tell her to forget about the man she loves as her father would never allow it and cites an example from her own life when she had to make sacrifices as a daughter, sister and wife at different junctions in life. This is one of the only places in the film when we are permitted to hear the voice of a woman, but though she speaks up against tradition, she silences herself and begs Simran to re-submit herself to the order of patriarchy. The second scene occurs when her mother changes her mind and grants permission for Raj to take her daughter away and give her the freedom she never had. Raj is humbled by her gesture but pointedly ignores it, holding out for Simran's father, Baldev, to provide his blessing. Again, DDLJ reinforces the patriarchal authority of the Indian diasporic family. The voice Bollywood gives to the diasporic women does not rupture the dominant narrative of patriarchy. Similarly, in *Pardes*, its Ganga's father who decides her marriage to Rajiv without her consent. It's also shown when Kishorilal, after being warned of

Arjun and Ganga's closeness, tells Arjun to leave the city and let Ganga rely on Rajiv. In many parts of India, both urban and rural, there exists such patriarchy system wherein the male-head of the house makes the decisions for the women of the house. His position at the dining table reflects his stature in the house. Though the women has agency, she is willingly giving it to the —manll of the house. For example, when a daughter wants to go out, she has to take the permission of the mother, who tells her to ask the father. So here the mother is willingly giving up her agency to the father.

### **Allegories of the Nation:**

In *Pardes*, Ganga's character is undeniably an allegorical one, representing the purity and holiness of the nation, which is also reflected in her name which she shares with the holy and pure Indian River Ganges. In *DDLJ*, Baldev's control is central to his mission to keep Hindustan alive in London, which has depended on and is manifested in his ability to control his daughters. At the core of Raj's Indian values lies the notion that Indian women remain the property of man, which is demonstrated by his insistence that irrespective of Simran's own desires he will accept her only if and when her father places her hand in his [2]. Thus in diaspora, the women (in this case Simran and her sister) are the keepers of the culture and threat to the woman are threat to this culture. The role of the male NRI is the protector of this (keeper of) culture. When Rajiv takes Ganga to the Las Vegas hotel room and attempts to have sex with her before marriage, this potential violation of her purity threatens the purity of the nation. Thus the women can only be represented as a metaphorical and allegorical figure, as the nation in *Pardes* or as the representative of ideals of Indian femininity in *DDLJ*.

### **Conclusion:**

*DDLJ* treats diaspora not as a place of total moral depravation where the Indian spirit dies but as a potential new cultural space in which Indian values can be transported and negotiated by a willing NRI [3]. While *Pardes* implies one who has never been physically in India, inside the borders of India, fails to be an Indian. Raj in *DDLJ* is the epitome of the mantra —*phir bhi dil hai Hindustanill* while Arjun in *Pardes* is essentially Indian in values and action. Both Raj and Arjun are the perfect amalgamation of western plus Indian traits. While the male NRI can be Indian at heart and live in the west, the diasporic women are treated by Bollywood as the allegory of the nation abroad. In the imagination of Bollywood both the male and female NRI remain beholden to the Indian nation representations. The only difference being that the male NRI figure is evolving to become a transitionally

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cosmopolitan figure while the female NRI figure retains her purely allegorical persona, as the nation, as a ideal women, and as a vessel through which India could remain with the male NRI as he embraced the diaspora.

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