Death of the villain: neoliberalism and contemporary hindi cinema.

Mriganka Sekhar Sarma

University Grants Commission, New Delhi, India.

Abstract

Popular Hindi cinema is an important ideological apparatus which very often propagates official discourses. This becomes evident in its propagation of a complex discourse about neoliberalism. Many popular Hindi films of the 1990s with their grand settings and foreign locations celebrate the new neoliberal India. Another remarkable characteristic of these films is the absence of the villain. However, some popular Hindi films, though very few in number, show traces of anger against official discourses and expose the villainy of the culture brought about by neoliberalism. This essay is an attempt to explore this oppositional discourse through a study of Madhur Bhandarkar's two films, *Page 3* (2005) and *Corporate* (2006). The essay examines whether the oppositional discourse offers any real opposition to the hegemonic culture of neoliberalism or it merely constitutes increasingly sophisticated modes of producing consent to the hegemonic order.

Keywords: Popular Hindi cinema, ideological apparatus, discourse, neoliberalism, villain.

1. Introduction

Antonio Gramsci has asserted that the liberal democratic state maintains its hegemony by using both coercion and consent. Gramsci's concept of hegemony refers to the process of establishment and maintenance of an order that is acceptable to all classes while being under the control and serving the interests of the ruling classes. Louis Althusser translated Gramsci's terms, hegemony and domination, as ideological and repressive functions. Althusser elaborated a systematic theory of ideology as a process of interpellation of individuals as subjects. The constitution of the subject is effected by a process of socialisation undertaken by the principal ideological apparatuses of the state such as religious, legal, political and literary institutions. Ideological state apparatus is 'the form in which the ideology of the ruling class must necessarily be realised, and the form in which the ideology of the ruled class must necessarily be

measured and confronted' (Althusser, 1971, p. 185-186). This is to say that the institutions or apparatuses which serve an ideological function are the means of production of a consensus about the naturalness of the existing order. The state derives its legitimacy in civil society mainly through consent. Various ideological apparatuses help the state in this endeavour by propagating official discourses. Hindi Cinema may be read as one kind of important ideological apparatus. This becomes evident in its propagation of a complex discourse about neoliberalism.

The official discourse defends neoliberalisation mainly on the ground that it is a liberating force which provides equal opportunities to all. The 'India Shining' slogan, coined by the BJP government can be mentioned as an instance how the official discourse regarding neoliberalisation is propagated. Many Hindi films of the 1990s, such as *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun* (1994) and *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* (1995) with

Corresponding author : mrigankasekharsarma@gmail.com

their grand settings and foreign locations celebrate the new neoliberal India. However, there is an oppositional discourse as well which appears to challenge the official one. The oppositional discourse exposes the hypocrisy of the state's claims on neoliberalisation. The official discourse and the oppositional replies furnish the images, arguments and points of reference around which Hindi cinema's representation of neoliberalisation is organised.

2.   Objectives

This paper has primarily two objectives:

(i)   to explore the changes in the concept of villainy in post-globalisation Hindi cinema

(ii)   to explore the oppositional discourse on neoliberalisation and examine whether this oppositional discourse offers any real opposition to the hegemonic culture of neoliberalisation or it constitutes only increasingly sophisticated modes of producing consent to the hegemonic order.

3. Methodology

The present work is a socio-political study of contemporary Hindi cinema based on various approaches to popular culture. The paper refers to different theoretical perspectives while discussing contemporary Hindi cinema in general, and the concept of villainy in particular.

4.   Hindi cinema as popular culture

Stuart Hall's concept of popular culture negates the simplistic base-superstructure paradigm of orthodox Marxists as well as the pessimistic views of the Frankfurt School. The orthodox Marxists argue that popular culture has no autonomy and it is completely determined by the economic base. The Frankfurt School views that popular culture is ideological and it prevents the establishment of revolutionary consciousness. According to Theodor Adorno, one of the prominent Frankfurt School thinkers, the modern 'culture industry', especially popular film, creates social and ideological conformity by integrating the consumers 'from above' (O'Connor, 2000, p. 230). On the contrary, Hall's concept of popular culture is not one-dimensional. He is aware of the ideological aspect of popular culture as well as

its potential to offer resistance against the hegemonic order. Hall remarks, 'Popular culture is one of the sites where the struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged … It is the arena of consent and resistance' (Duncombe, 2002, p. 112). Both these aspects of popular culture can be found in contemporary Hindi cinema. The representation of neoliberalism in post-1990s Hindi film narratives turns out to be more diverse and complex than any simplistic reading might suggest, and it garners support for as well as offers resistance against the hegemony of neoliberal culture. This complexity in representation is evident not only in the thematic concerns of the films but also in characterisation, especially of the figure of the villain.

5.   The changing concept of villainy

The role of the villain in conventional, popular Hindi cinema was to threaten the moral order represented by the hero. For instance, in the 1950s and 1960s, smugglers repeatedly appear as villains; in 1970s, the villains include representatives of the state who are pitted against the 'angry' hero; in the late 1980s and early 1990s, anti-state figures become the new villains in Hindi cinema. But Hindi cinema from the 1990s, after the introduction of neoliberal policies in India, undergoes certain drastic changes. One of these important changes can be seen in the death or disappearance of the villain. In fact, Hindi cinema of the 1990s, one could go as far as to say, is characterised by the complete absence of the villain. Popular films of the 1990s, such as *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* (1995), *Dil To Pagal Hain* (1997) and *Kuch Kuch Hota Hain* (1998) do not have any identifiable villain. These films are about the new globalised Indian upper-middle-class. The potential threat represented by the villain is completely erased in these films. My central question is: why does this happen?

Attributes like over-ambition and competitive mind-set, earlier associated with the villain are no more considered as evil. Instead, the hero of the post-1991 Hindi films is worldly successful and emerges victorious not only in winning over the beloved but also in foiling the tricks of his rivals, often by using morally ambivalent means. Sriram Raghavan's *Johnny Gaddar* (2007) can be mentioned in this context. In this film, the protagonist (Neil Nitin Mukesh)

eliminates his friends one after the other just for the sake of money. Popular Hindi cinema, till the 1980s, is marked by the presence of iconic villains like Gabbar Singh (played by Amjad Khan) in *Sholay* (1975) and Mogambo (played by Amrish Puri) in *Mr. India* (1987). Like Dickensian villains, they are represented as grotesque and their ugly physical features are presented as the external manifestations of their evil nature. But in contemporary Hindi cinema, the forces of good and evil are no more presented in such black-and-white terms. The division between 'good' and 'evil' has become increasingly blurred. This change in Hindi cinema, symptomatic of the changing societal value systems, can be attributed to the neoliberal economic world order.

6.   Contemporary film narratives

'Anger', says scriptwriter Salim Khan, 'is a powerful human emotion that lends itself to creative possibilities' (Mazumdar, 2007, p. 1). Anger, revenge and urban subjectivity in popular Hindi cinema were most influential during the 'angry man' phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s, personified in the figure of actor Amitabh Bachchan. But this 'angry man' phenomenon completely fades away after the 1980s. Despite the fact that urban poverty and inequality have increased manifold after the introduction of neoliberal policies, the narratives of contemporary films are characterised by the absence of the poor. Since deprivation and marginalisation lead to anger, the poor are deliberately kept out of the contemporary film narratives. M. K. Raghavendra, a well-known film critic, is of the view that there is complete absence of social conflicts in popular film narratives of the 1990s. Instead, the emphasis of the contemporary films is on the spectacle of opulence. Raghavendra further argues that the withdrawal of the state after 1991 leaves cinema poorer in terms of subject matter (Raghavendra, 2008, p. 236-281). The 'creative possibilities' associated with anger are completely negated in contemporary films. However, there are some popular films, though very few in number, which show traces of anger against official discourses and expose the villainy of the culture brought about by neoliberalisation. Madhur Bhandarkar's films such as *Page 3* (2005) and

Corporate (2006) belong to this category of films which appear to have adopted an oppositional discourse on neoliberalism.

7.   An analysis of *Page 3*

Bhandarkar's *Page 3* exposes the darker side of the glitz and glamour-based world of Mumbai's entertainment and culture industry as mediated through an increasingly corporatised and apolitical journalism. The film shows how the culture of neoliberalism changes not only thought processes but also lived value systems, consumption patterns, and even the very nature of such human desires as love and sexuality. These changes become more evident when one makes a comparison between the world, presented in *Page 3* and the world, portrayed in Hindi cinema before the 1990s. In pre-1990s Hindi cinema, family was used as a very important trope. Family relationships were central to constructing the nation in these film narratives. Manoj Kumar's *Roti, Kapada aur Makaan* (1974) can be mentioned as a classic example in this context. In this film, three brothers, Bharat (Manoj Kumar), Vijay (Amitabh Bachchan) and Deepak (Dheeraj Kumar) graduate from college against terrible financial odds. Due to unemployment and consequent poverty, Bharat accepts a job under the corrupt Seth Murli Ram, a businessman-cum-mafia. Meanwhile, Vijay joins the army and loses his arm in action. The youngest brother, Deepak joins the police force, discovers Bharat's involvement with the mafia, and is determined to arrest him. Vijay, however, who returns to the family as a war hero, is certain of Bharat's innocence and helps him expose the mafia. In the end, the three brothers together subvert the mafia's plan to detonate a bomb under a train carrying food supplies. Thus, the citizen-subject's relationship with the nation is modeled on filial relationships.

But the family, under the aegis of neoliberalism, changes shape in contemporary cinema. In her *Freedom and Destiny: Gender, Family and Popular Culture in India* (2006), Patricia Uberoi provides an interesting account of the representation of 'ideal' Indian family in a few contemporary Hindi films. Uberoi argues that as India globalises, and as the 'imagined economy' can no longer iconise the nation, the family is portrayed as the sole institution which can signify the unity, uniqueness and moral superiority

of Indian culture in a time of change, uncertainty and crisis (Uberoi, 2006, p.140-170). In post-liberalised urban India, the family as an emotional unit collapses, and it is reduced to an empty signifier of 'Indian culture' (read as Hindu culture) or a mere economic unit due to the pressures of modern life. Home no longer remains an emotional refuge. It is at best a half-way house. In *Page 3*, not even a single character has a meaningful and happy family life. Even the parents of Madhvi (Konkona Sen Sharma), the central character are shown only in a flashback scene. The scene shows a confident Madhvi leaving home for a career in Mumbai.

Page 3 unfolds the ruthlessness of high society through Madhvi, who as a journalist frequently attends parties to cover Page 3 stories. The glamorous world that Madhvi witnesses belongs to business tycoons, fashion designers and corrupt politicians. This world of the rich and the famous is actually a subculture that accompanies and sustains the ideals of neoliberalism. Human values like love, loyalty and trust are completely absent in this world. Characters who want a fulfilled family life also become victims of this culture. Tarun, the struggling model merely uses Madhvi to get media publicity. Anjali Thapar, a socialite commits suicide since her husband neglects and finally, betrays her. Hence, instead of celebrating economic liberalisation as an emancipatory force, this culture is vilified as a disintegrating one. Moreover, since home is considered as an extension of the nation in traditional Hindi cinema, the collapse of the family in Bhandarkar's neoliberal India can be considered symptomatic of the collapse of the nation. In *Roti, Kapada aur Makaan*, the reunion of the three estranged brothers can be equated with the restoration of order in the nation. But, in *Page 3*, there is no hope for such order. This lack of hope or pessimism implies a tacit acceptance of neoliberalisation as the unchallengeable reality, and with this acceptance, comes mute subordination to the hegemonic order.

The conflict between the country and the city, and the glorification of village life are recurrent themes in Hindi cinema till the 1980s. In this context, Raj Kapoor's *Shri 420* (1955) can be mentioned as an example. The narrative of this film revolves around Raj (Raj Kapoor), the protagonist, who journeys from small-town Allahabad to the big, bad city of Bombay,

where he succumbs to the trappings of wealth, glitter and latent treachery. Towards the end, he recovers his lost integrity, and in the last frame, leaves the city with his beloved, Vidya (Nargis). But the complete opposite happens in *Page 3*. Gayatri (Tara Sharma), a struggling actress gets sexually exploited, attempts to commit suicide and goes back home, but comes back again ready to compromise with her integrity. In the last scene of the film, Gayatri, drinking a glass of wine, says to Madhvi, 'I had no other way. But I have no regrets'. Thus, the film attempts to show through the character of Gayatri at what cost middle-class people become a part of the new consumerist culture.

The culture of neoliberalisation has completely changed social value systems. Human achievement has nothing to do with honesty or integrity. It is money which determines one's success in life. The conversation between the newspaper-editor (Boman Irani) and Madhvi is important to understand these changes in the value systems. The editor scolds Madhvi for writing five hundred words on a painter. In reply, Madhvi: 'Sir, this man has spent his whole life painting'.

The editor: 'But what is his achievement?'

Madhvi: 'What is the achievement of an NRI like Hiren Sanghvi?'

The editor: 'He has money. He has bought the entire page. So, I wouldn't have written more than two-fifty words for a painter whose achievement is zero (in terms of money)'.

This scene is of immense significance since it shows the position of art in the neoliberal consumerist society. The socialite lady, who writes about 'nothing except sex' (*Page 3*), is more successful and famous than the poor painter, who 'has spent his whole life painting'.

Working-class characters, such as car drivers and peons of corporate office, are the stock characters in Bhandarkar's films. In *Page 3*, the car drivers satirically comment on the adulterous nature of their bosses. But these characters have no role to play in the main action of the films, except being a part of Bhandarkar's didactic modes. Bhandarkar focuses only on the middle-class characters and how they get corrupted by the evil influences of the culture brought about by neoliberalisation. In *Page 3*, the car drivers are portrayed as detached observers of the corrupt neoliberal world. Instead of showing the impact of

liberalisation on the working-class, Bhandarkar seems to imply a simplistic proposition that the poor are honest. But this moral homily leads nowhere. The honesty of these characters provides some emotional satisfaction to the audience. But except that, it serves no purpose. As has been already mentioned, the poor are deliberately kept out of the contemporary film narratives, since the anger of the working-class has the potential to appear as a threat to the dominant class. Bhandarkar's didacticism neutralises that threat.

Page 3 shows the breakdown of the Indian family value system and exposes the 'liberal', commodified relationships. Bhandarkar holds the Western influences responsible to a great extent for this breakdown. In the film, there are a number of 'white' people associated with the globalised rich due to the integration of the Indian economy with Western economies. Most of the time, these people are shown drinking wine at parties organised by socialites. In an important scene, Ramesh Thapar, the businessman and some of his 'white' friends are caught red-handed by the police, while sexually abusing children. In another scene, the police led by the officer, Bhonsle arrest a number of young boys and girls at a bar for taking drugs. Bhonsle says to one of the arrested girls, 'Try to be a good Indian first, then be Western'. This kind of assertion of 'Indian' identity comes close to Hindu nationalist discourses, and shows the way in which 'Indian culture' returns as a signifier of conservatism. The local is valuable as a site for resistance to the global, but it is completely implicated in the global given the pervasive nature of neoliberalism. Fundamentalism is no answer to globalisation. It is equally hegemonic and violent. Moreover, Bhandarkar's critique of neoliberalism is restricted to individuals. He shows the corrupting influences of the new culture on the middle-class people (usually women). But he never questions the state that has embraced a form of capitalism predicated entirely upon the exploitation of the poor and the production of the ruthless, immoral middle-class subjects he ostensibly intends to critique. Instead, he only shows the middle-class characters including the sensitive ones succumbing to that form of capitalism.

Though *Page 3* exposes the villainy of the neoliberal culture, the means adopted by the 'good' characters to counter that culture can also be questioned. Bhonsle, the police officer is contrasted with the corrupt Assistant Police Commissioner. The latter spends his time training film heroes how to handle guns and attending their parties at night. On the contrary, Bhonsle tries to eliminate the evil forces like drug dealers and child traffickers from the society. But instead of punishing the guilty through legal means, he resorts to encounter killings. Vinayak Mane (Atul Kulkarni), the crime reporter defends Bhonsle's actions by saying: 'Some problems can be solved in this manner only'. But this justification is really questionable. Though the 'virtuous' characters act with good intentions, the use of illegal means, such as encounter killings brings them closer to the villains. Hence, the conflict between the good and the evil is not carried to its logical extreme in *Page 3*.

8.   An analysis of *corporate*

Bhandarkar's *Corporate*, a sort of sequel to *Page 3* is a more direct critique of the evil consequences of neoliberalisation. The film questions the wisdom of the state machinery which implements neoliberal policies. Moreover, *Corporate* shows the complete ruthlessness of the corporate world which does not allow anyone to exhibit even the slightest amount of human emotions like love and sacrifice. The film is bitterly critical of the Government of India's disinvestment and privatisation policies. These policies are not guided by sound economic principles but by the whims and fancies of corrupt political leaders. It becomes evident in the evil machinations of central and state Finance Ministers in the film. *Corporate* shows that one of the most serious concerns associated with privatisation is corruption. When the state Finance Minister announces the government's decision to privatise one of the Public Sector Undertakings, the corporate houses, especially Sehgal and Marwa Industries start their manipulative politics. The Finance Minister initially plays the corporate giants against each other, and finally sells the Public Sector Undertaking to Marwa after taking a huge bribe. In his *Globalisation and its Discontents* (2002), Joseph Stiglitz says, 'In contrast to what it was supposed to do, privatisation has made matters so much worse that in many countries today privatisation is jokingly referred to as briberisation' (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 58). The film realistically brings out the bonhomie between

political and corporate leadership. Corporate houses help political leaders by financing their election campaigns. In return, they get unfair benefits from the economic deals of the government. The narrator (Atul Kulkarni) sarcastically says, 'We do not know whether the politicians need the industrialists or the industrialists need the politicians'.

Corporate houses have nothing to do with ethical behavior since they are driven only by profit. Sehgal Industries sets up a new plant of soft drinks and decides to launch it within a very short period of time despite the fact that the soft drinks are contaminated by pesticides. When the board members and managers of the company point out this fact and the health hazards associated with it, Vinay Sehgal (Rajat Kapoor) defends himself by saying, 'What difference is it going to make? Thousands of people die every year in India drinking dirty water'. Thus the desire to earn more profits and cause losses to rival companies gains ascendance over concerns for common people. Stiglitz rightly says that corporate houses 'are completely guided by profit motive, and environmental and labour issues are of little concern to them' (Stiglitz, 2002, p.19). More importantly, instead of acting as an watchdog over the workings of the multinational companies, the state provides adequate support to the ransacking activities of these companies. In *Corporate*, the state Finance Minister orders an enquiry against Sehgal Industries not on his own initiative. A legal case is filed against Sehgal only when his rival, Marwa (Raj Babbar) approaches the minister and makes a complaint. However, Marwa's action is not based on any concern for the common people. It is merely based on personal vendetta.

Neoliberalisation has undermined the national sovereignty of many countries, especially developing ones. Foreign direct investment comes only at the price of undermining democratic processes. This crisis of sovereignty faced by the neoliberal state becomes evident in *Corporate*. An American company, Friscon International, ties up with Sehgal Industries. But due to the legal case filed against Sehgal, both companies suffer heavy losses. Finally, the Finance Ministers are compelled to intervene due to the pressures of the foreign company, and all legal cases against Sehgal are dropped. The scene where the CEO of Friscon threatens to withdraw his company's shares from India

is a significant one. The CEO says to the Central Finance Minister, 'If you do not allow us to do business here, we are going to leave India. After us, all the foreign investors, one after the other, will withdraw their shares from your country'. This scene makes it clear that the government has to compromise with its independent policies to integrate the national with the global economy.

Corrupt moral values are the offshoot of industrial capitalism, and hence, cruel and exploitative industrialists are very often represented as villains in popular Hindi cinema. In popular films, such as *Zanjeer* (1973), *Namak Haraam* (1973), *Deewar* (1975) and *Kaala Patthar* (1979), the working-class hero challenges and exposes the employers, factory owners and capitalist bosses. *Corporate* also presents the industrialists Sehgal and Marwa as villains. But, unlike the earlier films, *Corporate* is characterised by the absence of the 'good' nationalist hero. The film does not have even a single character who identifies with and fights for the exploited and marginalised masses. Even those characters who evoke the audience's sympathy cannot be termed virtuous in the real sense. The sensitive characters either unquestionably become a part of the corrupt corporate world or mutely accept their subordination to that world.

Hindi films till the 1980s portray the nationalist hero's anger and his stiff resistance to the anti-national acts of the villains. But in *Corporate*, there is no such hero to provide resistance. The film, at best, has some sensitive characters. However, unlike the subaltern hero of the 1970s and 1980s, these characters fail to offer any meaningful resistance, since they themselves are a part of the corrupt neoliberal world. Nishigandha Dasgupta (Bipasha Basu), the female protagonist works as an executive in Sehgal Industries. Despite an unhappy past, she becomes a successful executive of Sehgal Industries. However, her success in the corporate world is not due to any inherent virtue, but because of her ability to take part efficiently in the manipulative politics of the corporate world. She manages to get all the secret information regarding the future policies of Marwa Industries through a spy. She even steals a key project from the laptop of the CEO of Marwa Industries. When Riteish (Kay Kay Menon), her love-interest terms this stealing as

'naughty', Nishigandha defends herself by saying, 'Yes, naughty, but with a cause'. However, this 'cause' is far different from the one for which the hero of the 1970s' Hindi films fought. The subaltern hero fought for the downtrodden and, more importantly, for the nation. In *Corporate*, the cause of the protagonist is for private profit. Nishigandha tries to raise a faint voice against Vinay Sehgal's decision to launch the contaminated soft drink in the market on ethical grounds. But Sehgal completely silences her by saying, 'It will be better if you do not talk about ethics. Is it ethical to steal someone's project?' The CEO of Sehgal Industries also resigns in opposition to Sehgal's decision to launch the contaminated soft drink. But this opposition is merely at the individual level, since the CEO promises not to disclose the fact about the contaminated soft drink to anyone. Unlike the films of the 1970s and 1980s, which portray the 'angry man', *Corporate* silences even the faint voice of opposition, and hence, ends on a completely pessimistic note. Bhandarkar may prefer the word 'realism' to pessimism to describe his film, but this kind of 'realism' negates the possibility of a social revolution which can challenge the hegemonic order.

Thus, the division between 'good' and 'evil' is completely blurred in *Corporate*. Bhandarkar's critique of the neoliberal state gets subsumed within the larger picture of neoliberalisation as spectacle. All human beings are portrayed as pawns. Hence, there are no heroes or villains in his films. Bhandarkar seems to suggest that no one can be free from the corrupting influences of the culture brought about by neoliberalisation. So, in Bhandarkar's films, one can find a tacit acceptance of neoliberalisation as the inevitable reality, instead of an active and purposeful engagement with it. It shows how most cinematic productions are caught in the logics of neoliberalisation. In the process, villainy of neoliberalisation gets naturalised and finally erased.

9.   Conclusion

Both *Page 3* and *Corporate* make up the comfort zones of neoliberalisation – 'the rich also suffer'. Both the films celebrate the sufferings of the rich, and universalise the experiences of the liberalised world. Indeed, the rich seem to suffer a lot more than the

poor do, since the mishaps of the rich are continuously highlighted, propagated and aired in the films. *Page 3* has only one scene which shows for a few seconds the miserable condition of the poor who live in the outskirts of the city. *Corporate* does not have even a single scene portraying the real conditions of the poor. The appropriated discourse of the globalised world assumes itself to be a 'forerunner of collective understanding, and remains too self-engrossed to take into account the experiences and perspectives of the world majority' (Hasnain and Patnaik, 2006, p. 5-8).

In popular Hindi cinema, the nation is constructed not only through anti-imperial rhetoric and invocations of the grandeur of antiquity but also through the dangers represented by the figure of the villain. Villains are fashioned by public discourses on what imperils the nation. The real threat to the Indian nation, especially the underprivileged sections of the nation, at the moment is neoliberalisation, but middle-class success stories, quick access to money, power and fame make a hero of this villain. Contemporary Hindi films, including the ones I have discussed in my essay, have failed to articulate in clear terms the villainy of neoliberalisation. There are various reasons for this failure to identify the real villain. Profit maximisation prompts the film industry to play it safe by not straying from the dominant ideological current. In his *Ideology of Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (1998), M. Madhava Prasad uncovers the nature of the nexus between economic, ideological and political forces that shape cultural production in India. Prasad argues that the film texts which reach the audience as finished products are made possible not only by 'cultural' factors, but also by the mode of production that prevails in the industry, and in the society in which that industry operates (Prasad, 1998, p. 29-51). The Hindi film industry has been one of the main beneficiaries of neoliberalisation in the sense that most contemporary films, with their foreign locations, globally consumable heroes and heroines and sub-titled prints, derive huge profit from multiplex audiences, both within India and abroad. Hence, one cannot expect contemporary Hindi films to offer direct and radical critiques of the ideology of neoliberalisation.

Jyotika Virdi rightly says, 'Discursive conflicts, a prominent feature of popular culture, rarely provoke

radical ruptures in dominant discourse. Rather, they deflect or reconstitute hegemony' (Virdi, 2003, Preface). Instead of portraying the real villain, that is, neoliberalisation, contemporary popular Hindi films have deflected villainy to some individuals, who themselves are the products of the neoliberal culture and, what is worse, these villainous individuals are barely distinguishable from the heroes and heroines in neoliberalisation's morally ambivalent and ambiguous universe.

References

Althusser, Louis, 1971: 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', *Lenin and Philosophy,* Monthly Review Press, New York.

Duncombe, Stephen, ed., 2002: *Cultural Resistance Reader*, Verso, London.

Gramsci, Antonio, 1971: *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, Ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Lawrence and Wishart, London.

Hasnain, S. Imtiaz and B. N. Patnaik, ed., 2006: *Globalisation: Language, Culture and Media*, Pearl Offset Press Pvt. Ltd., Delhi.

O'Connor, Brian, ed. 2000: *The Adorno Reader*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Prasad, M. Madhava, 1998: *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

Raghavendra, M. K.,2008: *Seduced by the Familiar: Narration and Meaning in Popular Cinema*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

Stiglitz, Joseph,2002: *Globalisation and its Discontents*, Penguin Books, New Delhi.

Uberoi, Patricia,2006: *Freedom and Destiny: Gender, Family and Popular Culture in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

Virdi, Jyotika, 2003: *The Cinematic Imagination: Indian Popular Films as Social History*, Permanent Black, New Delhi.

Films Cited

Corporate (Madhur Bhandarkar, 2006).

Deewar (Yash Chopra, 1975).

Dil To Pagal Hain (Yash Chopra, 1997).

Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge (Aaditya Chopra, 1995).

Hum Aapke Hain Kaun (Sooraj Barjatya, 1994).

Johnny Gaddar (Sriram Raghavan, 2007).

Kaala Patthar (Yash Chopra, 1979).

Kuch Kuch Hota Hain (Karan Johar, 1998).

Mr. India (Shekhar Kapur, 1987).

Namak Haraam (Hrishikesh Mukherjee, 1973).

Page 3 (Madhur Bhandarkar, 2005).

Roti, Kapada aur Makaan (Manoj Kumar, 1974).

Sholay (Ramesh Sippy, 1975).

Shri 420 (Raj Kapoor, 1955).

Zanjeer (Prakash Mehra, 1973).

❑ ❑ ❑