A Shared Past and An Ambivalent Future: The Dynamics Between the Pakistani and Indian Film Industries

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Abstract

Colonial India had a flourishing film industry with Bombay, Lahore, and Calcutta as its cultural and film centers, and artists collaborating across the sub-continent. However, the 1947 Partition of the Indian subcontinent led to the creation of the nation-states of India and Pakistan and the subsequent emergence of independent film industries of the respective countries. This paper investigates the emergence of Lahore as a film center after Partition and analyzes its shifting relationship with the Bombay film industry. It examines the migration patterns of artists in the two countries to understand how the shift in their career trajectories after Partition shaped the growth of the two cinemas. The Partition was followed by an extensive process of nation-building and identity formation, which required Pakistan to culturally distinguish itself from India, and emphasize its Muslim identity. This paper studies the nascent Pakistani film industry as a site of post-Partition anxieties. It analyzes how, in the early years of its existence, the Pakistani film industry struggled with trying to resuscitate itself after the material loss of the Partition, while simultaneously building a distinct socio-cultural identity through its films, to move away from the shadow of the Indian film industry. This discourse is present within contemporary Pakistani cinema as well. Despite this, the Lahore industry has seen a continued connection to Bombay through the creative collaboration of artists and the public consumption of Bollywood films in Pakistan. This paper emphasizes how Lahore and Bombay have existed as film centers in a single history and remain interconnected in various ways.

Keywords: Bollywood, Lollywood, Partition, Migration, South Asian History, Cinema History

Introduction

This paper highlights the shared past of Indian and Pakistani cinema by focusing on how the set of spatial, social, and political conditions created by Partition served to organize the Pakistani film industry around the nation-state. It traces the development of politicized religious identities since independence and argues that despite its attempts to detach itself from India, the Pakistani film industry has remained tied to the Hindi film industry in terms of artistic collaboration, film distribution, and consumption. This paper treats the Partition as an extended process that transformed the subcontinent in various ways, rather than a singular rupture that cut British India

in two and led to the birth of Pakistan. 1947 only marked the beginning of a long Partition, which was an extended process of nationalizing identities in both India and Pakistan (Zamindar 2). The Partition and subsequent migrations were a process that continued far beyond 1947 as the cross-border flow of people and goods remained constant until 1951 (Mian et. al 37). While 1947 can mark the creation of the nation-state of Pakistan, I contest that it does not necessarily mark the beginning of a new cinema. Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, and Lahore were all cities where film production and distribution were being carried out for years before the Partition. This paper looks beyond the Partition as simply as an event in history and instead focuses on the set of social, cultural, political, and economic conditions produced by it which then went on to shape Lahore and Bombay as emerging film centers of the two nation-states.

Lahore and Bombay Cinema Preceding the Partition

Communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims had become aggravated multiple times in the decades leading up to the Partition, but the extent to which these communal tensions permeated the film industry remains ambiguous. According to Mushtaq Gazdar, before the Partition, many in the Bombay film fraternity believed that once the British left, India would be divided into two dominions, but mobility between them would be fluid, and collaboration between artists would continue (21). However, when Partition manifested in the creation of two bounded nation-states, India and Pakistan, this signified a rupture conceptualized along religious differences. When the All-India Muslim League began mobilizing for Pakistan as a territorially distinct homeland, it mainly did so on the ideology of a nation of and for Muslims, locating it around a religious and a political identity (Zamindar 3). This identity was increasingly being realized in contrast to Hindu and Sikh identities and formed the basis of much of the communal violence that preceded the Partition. Pakistan particularly grappled with distancing itself from India and reframing the political identities along religious lines to cultivate a nationalist narrative that united its geographically, ethnically, and linguistically fragmented populous.

After Partition, the cultural production emerging from the Indian (particularly Hindi) and Pakistani national cinemas dealt with state-building and identity-formation, however at the same time, these cinematic traces were "indexical of acts of cultural mourning" (Sarkar 2). For instance, Bhaskar Sarkar analyzes how the mourning of the Partition is etched in the visual memory of both the cinemas (3). While an analysis of post-Partition screen texts is beyond the scope of this paper, there is utility in analyzing how Lahore, as a film center, emerged from the collective loss of the Partition. The years preceding the Partition were also marred by growing communalism, especially in Punjab. In July 1947, riots broke out in Lahore, and many cinemas and film studios were attacked and burned to the ground by violent mobs. This most notably included Shorey Studios and Pancholi Studios. In the 1930s, Dalsukh M. Pancholi had established Empire Talkies, a film distribution firm in Lahore, and went on to direct films after setting up Pancholi Studios (Gazdar 20). Shorey Studios had been established around the same time by Roop K. Shorey and the company dominated film production in Lahore under his supervision. Said describes how Shorey Studio was burnt down during the 1947 communal riots in Lahore where the studios became a target of angry Muslim mobs towards Hindu film makers

and cinema owners (594). News reports also stated that a film star (whose exact identity was not stated) was arrested for murder during the riots in Lahore's Kuchcha Shahian (Siddique, *Rustic Releases* 478).

In April 1947, *Filmindia*, a Bombay-based cinema magazine declared: "The Hindus are to blame for the present communal orgies. They are reaping what they sowed with their hyper-religiosity" (Sarkar 56). Such reporting by film magazines politicized the cinema's role in national life further, with the religion of artists becoming a subject of public discourse. Said describes the ways Muslim artists were discriminated against within the film industry, but also states that they avoided joining it themselves (592). Alamgir Kabir also notes how the exclusion of Bengali Muslims from cinema can be attributed to the fact that most production houses and cinemas in Calcutta were owned by Hindu and Marwari businessmen (29). Retrospectively, Pakistani film magazines have also reported discrimination against Muslim actors working in Bombay. For instance, an article published in 1977 in Pakistani film magazine *Nigaar* stated "The point is that an atmosphere was created for Muslims that gave them little choice but to bid adieu to their film lives in Bombay" (Siddique, *Meena Shorey* 26). While this may be an attempt to emphasize the need for a distinct Pakistani nation and subsequently a separate film industry, in contrast to these instances, the filmography of the years preceding the Partition demonstrate how the creative collaboration between artists, directors, and film makers of different religious inclinations and geographical backgrounds continued up till Partition. For example, Neecha Nagar/Lowly City (dir. Chetan Anand, 1946) was co-produced by a Hindu-Muslim team Chetan Anand and Rashid Anwar, the story was written by a Hayatullah Ansari, and the music was composed by Ravi Shankar. It featured actresses Zohra Sehgal and Kamini Kaushal, and actors Rafi Peer and Rafiq Anwar; thus its cast and crew represented a mix of religious identities. The film was released just a year before Partition and was the first Indian film to win at the Cannes International Film Festival. The film's production and release right before the Partition is indicative of how collaboration between artists from different religious backgrounds continued amid rising communal tensions between Hindu and Muslim communities.

Lahore as a film center hadn't been able to grow in the same way as Bombay, in terms of film production. In comparison with Bombay, film production in Lahore remained an unprofitable enterprise in the pre-Partition era (Gazdar 20). Lahore relied heavily on its cultural capital, accumulated through the presence of many aspiring young actors, writers, poets, musicians, and directors. In his biography, actor Pran recollects being spotted by scriptwriter Wali Mohammad at a *paan* shop in the red-light district of Heera Mandi in Lahore and later hired at the Pancholi studio (Siddique, *Rustic Releases* 481). Lahore was a site for discovering fresh, raw talent who typically moved to Bombay when they became popular. Bombay not only possessed advanced film technology, but it was also producing films in a variety of languages and for a range of audiences: Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi, and others. Many artists from Lahore and Madras would also opt for Calcutta, attracted by its sophisticated sound-ready film production facilities (Chatterjee 267). The similarity in career trajectories of many artists demonstrates that Lahore was a steppingstone to ultimately finding work in the Bombay film industry. Gazdar identifies the movement of artists between the two film centers as the "brain drain" that Lahore was

experiencing since before Partition (8). However, this movement of artists also explains why Lahore has always been viewed in comparison to Bombay.

Partition, the Lahore Film Industry, and Artists Crossing Borders

The losses incurred during Partition by the production studios in Lahore characterized the initial struggles of Pakistani cinema. Apart from infrastructural and financial losses, the loss of film personnel deeply affected Lahore, especially when it lost the Pancholis, the Shoreys, and the Kardars; filmmaking families who had built the local industry but then chose to migrate to India after their studios and offices in Lahore were burnt down. Muslim filmmakers such as A.R Kardar and Mehboob Khan both visited Lahore in 1947 but observed that it was unparalleled to Bombay's film industry and eventually chose to settle there instead (Gul 49). The popularity of most of the artists who migrated to Lahore was waning in comparison to their colleagues who had chosen to settle in Bombay. The migration patterns during the Partition were disadvantageous to Lahore, however, they were not governed by religious identities in the way that might have been expected. Filmmakers and artists were confronted with the decision to either remain where they are or migrate, and their motivations for either choice were complicated and diverse. Yusuf Khan, popularly known as Dilip Kumar, decided to stay in India despite his brother Nasir Khan's initial decision to pursue his acting career in Pakistan. In his autobiography, Kumar recounted his father's response to the news of the Partition: "His first spontaneous reaction to those who urged him to go to Peshawar and hold on to his properties was: We will remain in India and die in India" (24).

On the other hand, Noor Jehan, who was at the time a rising star in Bombay, migrated to Pakistan with her husband, director Shaukat Hussain Rizvi. Noor Jehan belonged to Kasur, a small city south of Lahore which ultimately would be situated in Pakistan after Partition, and so she decided to move closer to her hometown, stating "*Jahan paida hui wahin hi jaungi*" ('I will go where I was born') (Gul 47). After migrating first to Karachi, Noor Jehan and Rizvi eventually settled in Lahore, claiming the vacant, burnt, and vandalized Shorey studios as evacuee property and re-establishing it as Shahnoor Studios (Gazdar 25). "According to Shaukat, whatever he owned was spent on the studio's repair and renovation" (Gul 51). While many artists considered moving to Lahore, its bleak prospects as compared to Bombay had discouraged them. Those, like Rizvi and Noor Jehan who took the leap of faith, also suffered monetary losses and struggled to find their footing in the film industry again for several years.

Muslim artists who had been popular in Bombay and had chosen to migrate to Lahore, like Noor Jehan, Khursheed, Ghulam Haider were often anxiously inquired about by readers who wrote letters to magazines such as *Filmindia* (Sarkar 100). The popular anxiety among audiences was characterized by their favorite celebrities no longer being part of the Indian film industry. While many of these artists were readily accepted in Lahore and rose to fame relatively quickly, some artists' career trajectories were heavily impacted as they navigated the Partition. Actress Meena Shorey, born Khurshid Jahan in a Muslim family, married Hindu filmmaker Roop. K Shorey, migrated with him to India, and converted to Hinduism. However, in her biography she

characterizes her conversion as merely ceremonial, stating that she still believed in Islam (Siddique, *Meena Shorey* 45). When she migrated to Pakistan in 1956 and divorced Roop. K Shorey, her career ended, despite once being regarded as the "top comedienne of the Indian screen…second only to Raj Kapoor in the hierarchy of comedy artistes" (Siddique, *Meena Shorey* 45). In her biography, Meena wrote, "Till the time I awaited a Pakistani citizenship, most people here (film industry of Lahore) hoped that I would return to India" (Siddique, *Meena Shorey* 46). The ambivalent religio-cultural identities of artists like Meena Shorey challenged the ideological underpinnings of Partition which had necessitated a binary between Muslim and Hindu, and also divided actors along these lines. This is evident in the way artists were characterized as Hindus and Muslims in film magazines, for instance, "Shahid Lateef and Ismat Chugtai, the director and the writer respectively of *Arzoo/Desire* (1950), were criticized for their lack of understanding of the institution of Hindu marriage" (Sarkar 101). Such journalism, in both India and Pakistan, reduced these artists to their religious identities and their citizenship papers.

In reality, so many of these artists' cultural identities were defined by the work they had collaboratively produced before Partition. Dilip Kumar, for instance, "embodied a crisis of identity" (Sarkar 77). He entered the Bombay film industry in the years preceding the Partition and despite being a Muslim, had taken on a Hindu screen name to ensure his marketability. Similarly Mahjabeen Bano, a Muslim actress, also took on the Hindu screen name Meena Kumari and chose to stay in Bombay after Partition. While the impact of their Muslim identity on their acceptability among audiences' remains unclear, the level of popularity and stardom they both enjoyed in the Hindu-majority nation challenges Pakistan's naturalization of the Muslim religious identity as a necessarily Pakistani identity. Moreover, collaboration between artists from different religious, regional, and cultural backgrounds continued even after Partition. Like Meena Shorey, actress Sheila Ramani had also migrated from Sindh, Pakistan to India during the Partition with her family. She had become popular in India through her role as dancer Sylvie in *Taxi Driver* (dir. Navketan, 1954). However, she came to Pakistan in 1955 to film *Anokhi/Unique* (dir. Sheikh Latif, 1956). While the film was a commercial failure, Sheila rose to fame through the song *Gari ko Chalana Babu* ('Drive the Car Mister'). Apart from Sheila, Timir Baran, an Indian music producer, co-scored the music of the film along with music producer Hassan Latif (Bali). *Anokhi* is an example of how even after the Partition, the cross-border collaboration between artists continued until the 1965 war.

Cinema as a Nationalist Project

In the wake of Partition, Pakistan was dealing with the refugee crisis, financial issues, an armed conflict in Kashmir, and the death of its founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1948. Amid all of these crises, films weren't a top priority for the state, which partly explains the dismal government support given to filmmakers. Beyond this, many in the government were disinterested in cinema's role in the newly found "Muslim" homeland. According to filmmaker W.Z. Ahmed, in 1949 "the Ministry of Industries issued an amusing notification stating, in principle, Muslims should not get involved in filmmaking. Being the work of lust and lure, it

should be left to the infidels'" (Gazdar 24). Despite the state's antagonism, artists and intellectuals remained concerned about the future of Pakistani cinema. In 1949, prominent Urdu writer Saadat Hasan Manto, who had worked for many years in the Bombay film industry, wrote about his deep concern regarding "Hindi cinematic power" and whether the Pakistani film industry will ever be able to recover from its losses and compete with India. Manto had migrated from Bombay to Lahore in 1948. In the same year, he wrote "Pakistan's share of everything is meager. The [film] industry is practically non-existent, its future unclear" (164). The Partition necessitated that Lahore was viewed in comparison to Bombay, as it shouldered the responsibility of heading the national cinema of Pakistan.

On the other hand, scholar and literary critic Hassan Askari viewed Pakistan as a "Muslim cultural homeland" and emphasized the role of artists and intellectuals in building on this vision of Pakistan (Farooqi 120). Dass highlights how "pointed out the potential in using Pakistani cinema as a tool to convene and unify the masses across language, ethnic and cultural divides" (14). For Askari, cinema could carry out the task of reimagining Muslim cultural identities and unifying citizens across the country. Askari's view on using cinema as a tool to further the nationalist project foreshadows how Pakistani cinema soon became a focal point for nationalist anxieties. These fears were crystallized around the need for a Pakistani identity within cinema, which was to be distinct from India and yet should be able to compete with it. However, to do so, Pakistan struggled to come out of India's shadow. Pakistani films continued to be produced, and they continued to be defined in relation to India, as they were released in both countries. Online film magazine *PakMag* referred to Pakistani Urdu-film *Shahida* (dir. Luqman, 1948) as the "first film to celebrate silver jubilee in India" (Siddique, *Archive Filmaria* 204). The term "silver jubilee" indicated that a film had completed a 25-week run in the cinemas (Gazdar 32). Thus the film's success was measured by the way it was consumed in India, rather than by Pakistani audiences. The underlying assumption behind celebrating the film's success in India is that it distinguishes the national publics in India and Pakistan (Siddique, *Archive Filmaria* 204).

Nationalist Anxieties in Pakistani Film Production

Due to the Partition, Lahore also lost the cinematic momentum it had managed to gather in the 1940s. Siddique's analysis of archival evidence from newspapers and film magazines traces Lahore's evolution as an increasingly profitable center of film production in the mid-1940s (*Rustic Releases*). She further describes how after Partition, Lahore moved from the peripheries of film production to eventually became the center of film production in the newly founded Pakistani state. In the initial years after the Partition, relatively few Pakistani films were released, creating a gap that would be filled by the distribution of Indian films. Indian films were financially more viable and were more popular with audiences, arguably due to their technical superiority and visual quality. Kabir writes, "the first decade of film production in Pakistan was marked by low annual output, with Urdu and Punjabi as the key languages. It became common wisdom that the Punjabi films produced during 1948–1954 did much better than their Urdu counterparts because there was less Indian competition in the regional market" (52). While Urdu films produced in Bombay were received well among Pakistani audiences, Punjabi films

produced in Lahore were also proving to be successful. Since East Punjab had no film center, Lahore was able to emerge as a center for Punjabi film production (Siddiqu, *Rustic Releases* 479). Punjabi films performed better commercially than the Urdu films produced in Lahore. For instance, *Pheray/Rounds* (dir. Nazir Ahmad Khan, 1949) was Pakistan's first Punjabi film. It ended up having a 25-week run in cinemas and became a Silver Jubilee film (Gazdar 32).

However, producers and directors who were investing in Urdu films in Lahore remained concerned about their inability to compete with Indian films. Pakistani filmmakers met with the government in 1949 to ask for greater assistance in developing the national film industry by banning the distribution of Indian films for five years (Gazdar 24). However, they were met with strong opposition from film distributors whose livelihood depended on the distribution of Indian films in Pakistan. In 1954, many well-reputed artists such as W.Z. Ahmad, Shaukat Husain Rizvi, Saifuddin Saif, and Sibtain Fazli, etc. mobilized to stop the release of the Dev Anand starrer *Jaal/Trap* (dir. Guru Dutt, 1952) in West Pakistan (Khalid). While protesting outside the Regal cinema, some film artists were also arrested. The demand was ultimately accepted by the government and a film-to-film exchange agreement was made with India—with separate quotas for East and West Pakistan. The *Jaal* agitation was the first public demonstration that reflected the nationalist anxieties within Pakistani cinema. Dev Anand, the hero of the film, was from the Narowal district (on the Pakistani side of the border) and had studied in his youth at Government College, Lahore, yet his past in Lahore was subsumed by his identity as an Indian actor and as a Hindu, and he was thus othered by the Pakistani film community.

The support for protectionism can be understood through the sense of injustice experienced by artists in Pakistan, who found themselves with very little resources and in competition with their better-equipped Indian contemporaries. However, at the same time, Pakistani distributors of Indian films resisted this restriction on Indian films because it severely impacted their business. In this way, the consumption of Hindi films had varied material implications for the Pakistani film industry. While the *Jaal* protests embodied nationalist anxieties and posed a threat to collaboration between artists across the border, the fact that the film was illegally imported into West Pakistan through the quota of East Pakistan represents the incongruity between the assertion of nationalist sensibilities and the enchantment with films from across the border. As Sarkar and Mukherjee describe, "the conceptualisation and the enactments to ensure the culmination of a transcendental modern spatial paradigm called Nation were interrupted by a non-modern essence of community" (21). The Partition had led to the creation of two territorially distinct nation-states, spatially and politically displacing communities to create citizens. Despite this, a sense of community between the film centers of Lahore and Bombay —invoked by the memory of a common language, culture, and filmic style—prevailed even after Partition. Even when films weren't the collaborative effort of Indian and Pakistani artists, the popularity and consumption of Indian films in Pakistan reified the common tastes and sensibilities of the Pakistani and Indian audiences. This also explains how the demonstrations against *Jaal* were not only borne from the insecurities of Pakistani producers but were also reflective of the wider struggles of the Pakistani state to instill a sense of nationhood within its citizens, which necessitated it actively distance itself from India.

The Significance of Urdu in Bombay and Lahore Cinema

The consumption of Bombay's films and songs in Pakistan's popular culture can be understood by looking at Hindi and Urdu as mutually intelligible registers of the same language (Rahman 3). Over time, Hindu and Urdu have come to be associated with religious identities. There have been various theories intrinsically linking the birth of Urdu to Muslim culture. In reality, many Muslim communities within the Indian sub-continent did not and do not speak Urdu. At the same time, many Hindu communities spoke Urdu fluently. For instance, the Urdu ghazal was enjoyed as a cultural artifact in North India by elite and well-educated Hindus and Muslims alike (Rahman 157). After Partition, Urdu was declared the national language of Pakistan. It was celebrated as the language of Muslims, necessitating its separation from Hindi along ideological lines and ignoring its rootedness in the heterogeneous culture of the Indian sub-continent. Urdu was employed in service of the ideology of Muslim nationalism on which Pakistan was premised. In reality, the main differentiation between Hindi and Urdu remains limited to formal registers and script. This explains why there has been no linguistic impediment to the movement of films and people across the Indo-Pak border.

While Bombay and Lahore produced films in many languages, the films produced in Hindi/Urdu (and to a certain extent Punjabi) served as a major point of connection between India and Pakistan. After Partition, many Urdu poets and writers such as Firaq Gorakhpuri, Kaifi Azmi, Majaz, Sahir Ludhianvi decided to stay in Bombay and work in the film industry. For instance, Kaifi Azmi penned the lyrics of the commercially and critically acclaimed film *Pakeezah/Pure* (dir. Kamal Amrohi, 1972). Such artists continued to share great camaraderie with fellow progressive writers Saadat Hasan Manto, Josh Malihabadi, Faiz Ahmad Faiz who had decided to migrate/stay in Pakistan. Many artists who were working in the Pakistani film industry after Partition had spent formative years of their careers working in Bombay cinema, and vice versa. Urdu continued to be used widely in both Indian and Pakistani films produced even after Partition. For example, the famous playwright Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj, wrote the stage drama and the cinema screenplay of *Anarkali*, which was then adapted into the Pakistani film *Anarkali* (dir. Anwar Kamal, 1958) and subsequently the Indian film, *Mughal-e Azam/The Great Mughal* (dir. K. Asif, 1960), which eventually became one of the most widely celebrated films of Indian cinema (Dadi 482).

Rahman writes that even now "although the official language of the songs in Indian films is said to be Hindi, it is closer to the Urdu end of the linguistic spectrum than Sanskritized Hindi" (157). The continued use of Urdu within Bombay cinema challenges the notions of "purity" within these languages and questions the necessity of separating Hindi and Urdu. "Although news bulletins and other official programs in India are in Sanskritized Hindi, entertainment is in popular Hindi-Urdu" (298). Contemporary Urdu writers and poets from India such as Javed Akhtar and Gulzar enjoy fame and appreciation in both India and Pakistan for their songs, many of which have become a part of Pakistani popular culture and are widely celebrated. In this way, the use of Hindi-Urdu in Bombay cinema and its wide consumption in Pakistan has been a point of common culture that has sustained over time.

Contemporary Pakistani Cinema's Relationship with Indian Cinema

Pakistani cinema continues to contend with religio-cultural anxieties, particularly regarding collaboration with Indian artists and consumption of Indian films. Over the past twenty years, since Pakistan's last war with India in 1999, there have been a series of cinematic collaborations between the two countries where Indian actors have featured in Pakistani films. Veteran Indian actor Kirron Kher was the main protagonist in *Khamosh Pani/Silent Water* (dir. Sabiha Sumar, 2003) and Naseeruddin Shah in *Zinda Bhaag/Run For Your Life* (dirs. Farjad Nabi and Meenu Gaur, 2013). Popular Indian comedian Johnny Lever appeared in a comic role in *Love Mein Ghum/Lost in Love* (dir. Reema Khan, 2011), and the late Om Puri played a key role in *Actor-in-law* (dir. Nabeel Qureshi, 2016). Pakistani actors have also been working in Indian films. Mahira Khan starred as the main female lead in *Raees/Rich* (dir. Rahul Dholakia, 2017) while Fawad Khan appeared in *Kapoor & Sons* (dir. Shakun Batra, 2016) and *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil/Oh Heart It's Tough* (dir. Karan Johar, 2016). Other famous Pakistani actors such as Javed Sheikh, Mawra Hocane, Humaima Mallick, Mikaal Zulfiqar, Imran Abbas, Meera, Veena Malik, have also acted in Indian movies. This collaboration has not been limited to actors as many Indian technicians have also worked on Pakistani films. Since editing facilities are limited in Pakistan, much of the post-production work of a film has to be outsourced (Khan 9). Pakistan's official submission to the 2018 Oscars, *Cake* (dir. Asim Abbasi, 2018), was edited by Aarti Bajaj, an Indian film editor. *Dobara Phir Se/Once Again* (dir. Mehreen Jabbar, 2014) was also edited by an Indian editor, Dipika Kalra.

While successful and established artists from Pakistan have sought opportunities to work in Bollywood, others such as Shaan and Syed Noor have been blunt and vocal on the importance of promoting Pakistani films and rejecting "Indian influence" ("'Now you know why there are borders'…"). This sentiment also heightened in response to rising far-right elements and populism in India. After a terrorist attack in the Kashmiri town of Pulwama, India in February 2019, pressure from Hindutva groups threatened Indian filmmakers and producers to stop working with Pakistani artists ("Pulwama attack: Total ban on Pakistani actors" 2019). Soon after, in March, Pakistani film distributors also ceased to show Indian films in Pakistani cinemas. Both countries have historically banned the consumption of the other industry's films during wartime as well. These bans have usually been reciprocal in nature, with Pakistan banning Indian films in response to bans on Pakistani films and artists imposed by the Indian state and film distributors. Despite this, Hindi films, songs, and television serials continue to have a wide and enthusiastic following in Pakistan and are accessed through pirated and informal channels even when blocked in officially sanctioned domains. Khan argues that "perhaps this embrace of Bombay cinema is connected to cinematic narratives in which Pakistanis hear a similar language and see people wearing the same clothes and participating in parallel rituals" (70). The cultural similarities between North Indian and Pakistani cinema explain why Bollywood films are so popular in Pakistan. The song and dance sequences, especially, are consumed beyond the cinema, at weddings, parties, restaurants, and in other spaces, because they resonate with Pakistani audiences and occupy a unique space within popular culture. Due to these films, Indian artists also enjoy significant fame in Pakistan. This explains why many brands in Pakistan such

as Q Mobile, Veet, Firdous Lawn, and others hire Indian actors as brand ambassadors for their advertisements.

Despite shutting down Indian films to perform solidarity with popular nationalist sentiments, most film distributors concede the importance of Indian films to Pakistan's film industry business and distribution. Speaking about the ban on Indian films by the Pakistani state in 1961, Shahzad Gul, Chief Executive Officer of Evernew Studios in Lahore said, "our industry lost its competitive edge and its creativity" (Khan 17). He noted that rather than increasing indigenous film production, Pakistani filmmakers would go to Kabul to view Indian films and later plagiarize them (Khan 17). While Pakistani film production is increasing in recent years, it continues to make a fraction of the revenue that Indian films make. Cinema owners are dependent on Indian films to ensure that they can cover their costs and that the business remains profitable. Film distributor and exhibitor Nadeem Mandviwalla stated that "no-showing of Indian films always affects business, and it will remain that way. The reason is that a majority of the audience watches either Pakistani or Indian movies" ("Is the Ban on Indian Films Affecting Footfall in Cinemas?" 2019). Additionally, the low rate of film production in Pakistan and the closure of cinemas since March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in severe financial losses. As an employee at Lahore's IMAX cinema reported: "Our cinema houses used to be crowded when we showcased English and Indian films. When Indian films got banned, Hollywood movies filled the gap. Now, even English films are not available, so there is no incentive for cinemagoers anymore. It's a sinking ship" (Asif). The financial losses created due to the ban on Indian films have been further aggravated due to the pandemic and subsequent closure of cinemas.

While Indian films are seen as a threat by some Pakistani artists, they are considered necessary for growth and survival by distributors. "Mirza Saad Beg, a manager at Cinepax, the country's largest theater chain, explained that Pakistan needs to produce and release at least one or two movies every week for theaters to break even" (Zaidi). Similarly, Rafay Mahmood, a film journalist, estimated that since a 'good film' runs for approximately two weeks in the cinema, Pakistani cinemas need to show at least 26 new films a year to remain afloat. However, the Pakistani film industry has only been producing 12 to 15 films annually, most of which don't draw large numbers in the theatre unless they are released on Eid. Mahmood further said that "the Indian film industry is crucial for sustaining the Pakistani box office" ("Bollywood Ban May Hurt Pakistan More than India"). Even after approximately two years, the ban on Hindi films continues in Pakistan, with most people either pirating Indian films or watching them on streaming platforms such as Netflix. This tension reflects the deeply entangled relationship between the two film industries.

Conclusion

Indian films continue to inform Pakistan's popular culture in various ways. This challenges the notion that cinema necessarily needs to be organized around a national imagination that excludes other forms of culture. The shared past of Pakistani and Indian cinema, and the continuous

consumption of Indian films in Pakistan through formal and informal means, cannot allow for the creation of what some demand as 'pure' Pakistani cinema. In theory, such a homogenized version of Pakistani cinema would seek to represent only those religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups that are subservient to the wider nationalist project. This has entailed particular kinds of domination by Urdu over other regional languages, a policy that the Pakistani state had promoted since it declared Urdu the national language of Pakistan. Thus, the national curriculum, radio, and television have emphasized Urdu as well, and excluded Bengali, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, etc. communities from official domains, at least at the federal level. The Pakistani state, by imposing a "meta-narrative of an undivided nation on the populace" has perpetrated an erasure of the cultural diversity it contains (Ali 502).

The typical understanding of the past and future of Pakistani cinematic memory views the emergence and evolution of the Pakistani film industry through an overly simplistic nationalist lens. Tracking the growth of Lahore as a film center after Partition, amid the Pakistani state's evolving project of nation-building centered on religious nationalism, explains the complicated relationship between Indian and Pakistani film industries. Acknowledging the strong linkages between the two industries also necessitates a study of the shared past of Indian and Pakistani cinema, and the post-Partition nationalist anxieties that have long governed the Pakistani film industry's approach to India. A shift in this approach would allow the Pakistani film industry to remain favorable to any form of creative collaboration with the Hindi film industry. However, given the current political tensions between the two countries, the future of any form of significant cross-border engagement remains uncertain.

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Ae Dil Hai Mushkil/Oh Heart It's Tough (dir. Karan Johar, 2016)

Anarkali (dir. Anwar Kamal, 1958)

Anokhi/Unique (dir. Sheikh Latif, 1956)

Arzoo/Desire (dir. Shahid Lateef, 1950)

Cake (dir. Asim Abbasi, 2018)

Dobara Phir Se/Once Again (dir. Mehreen Jabbar, 2016)

Jaal/Trap (dir. Guru Dutt, 1952)

Kapoor & Sons (dir. Shakun Batra, 2016)

Khamosh Pani/Silent Waters (dir. Sabiha Sumar, 2003)

Love Mein Ghum/Lost In Love (dir. Reema Khan, 2011)

Mughal-e Azam/The Great Mughal (dir. K. Asif, 1960)

Neecha Nagar/Lowly City (dir. Chetan Anand, 1946)

Pakeezah/Pure (dir. Kamal Amrohi, 1982)

Pheray/Rounds (dir. Nazir Ahmad Khan, 1949)

Raees/Rich (dir. Rahul Dholakia, 2017)

Shahida (dir. Luqman, 1949)

Zinda Bhaag/Run For Your Life (dirs. Farjad Nabi and Meenu Gaur, 2013)