

**Globalization and Culture**  
**Prof. Anjali Gera Roy**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur**

**Lecture – 20**  
**Bollywood's Soft Power**

Hello. In this final unit, final unit of, on Bollywood cinema, as it is popular, as Indian cinema has popularly called today; we are going to look at the soft power of Bollywood the soft power of Indian cinema, which I call the magic of Bollywood at home, and abroad.

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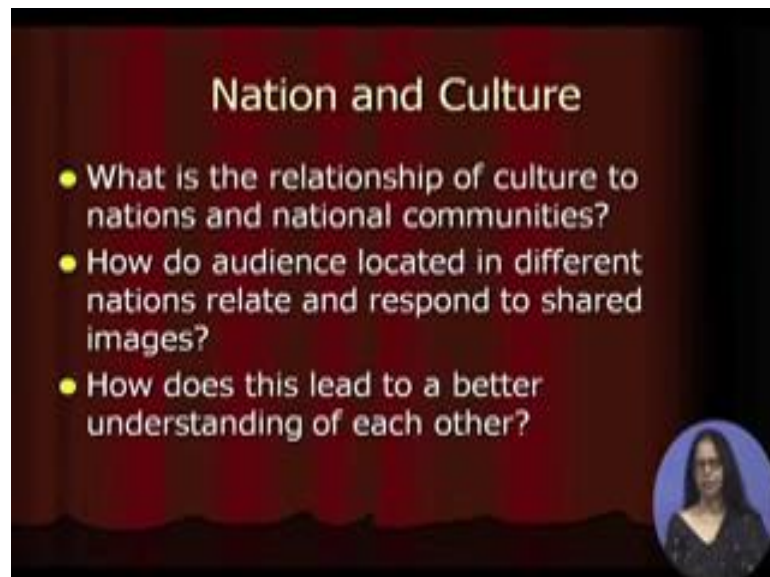
That is the title of my book of the same name, where I explore India's rising soft power through its culture, and use Bollywood as an example.

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So, the magic of Bollywood examines Bollywood, as the prime instrument through which Indian soft power is projected throughout the world, with a view to understanding the role that culture plays in relations between multicultural, multiethnic nations, and societies.

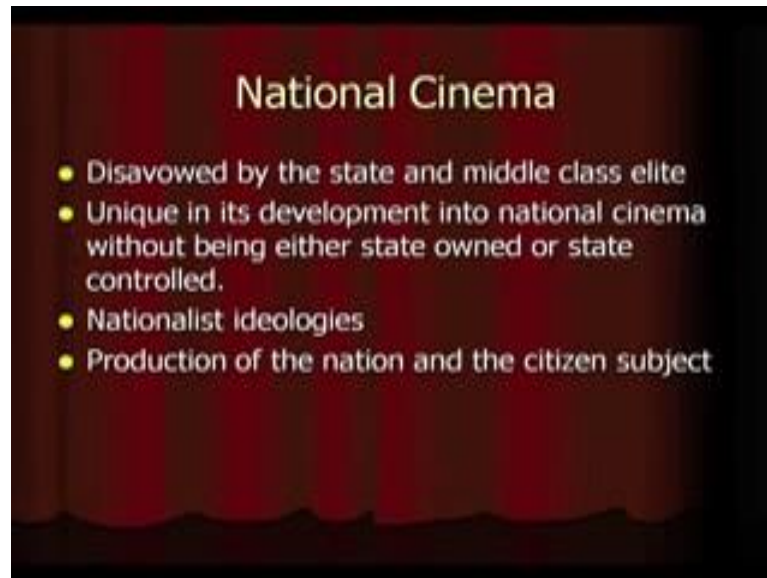
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What is the relationship of culture to nations and national communities? How does audience located in different nations relate and respond to shared images? And how does

this lead to a better understanding of each other. These are the questions I would try to explore.

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The important aspect of Indian cinema is that, it is a national cinema, but unlike other national cinemas, it is unique in its development into national cinema, without being either state owned, or state controlled. And interestingly this disavowed cinema, a cinema which was disavowed by the state, and the middle class elite, until recently, became a complicit in the propagation of nationalist ideologies, as Madhav Prasad has brilliantly brought out in his book, Ideology of the Hindi film, and became an important instrument in the production of the nation and the citizen subject of modernity.

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We will not here go into this, since we have already spoken about the popularity of Indian cinema in the thirties, and the Indian diasporas in Fiji, West Indies, Malaya, fifties in south Asia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, Indonesia, the Middle East, Africa, Russia and beginning in the nineties the movement of Bollywood to Europe, North America, and Australia. What I am interested in is the, the impact that it had on not just in Indian diasporas, for which it was considered suitable entertainment, but the impact it had, the effect it had on other ethnic groups who got hooked to the pleasures of Indian cinema when it was exported to these countries, beginning in the nineteen thirties, the non Indian groups, the non Indian diasporas, and I am not talking about south Asians, but other ethnic groups.

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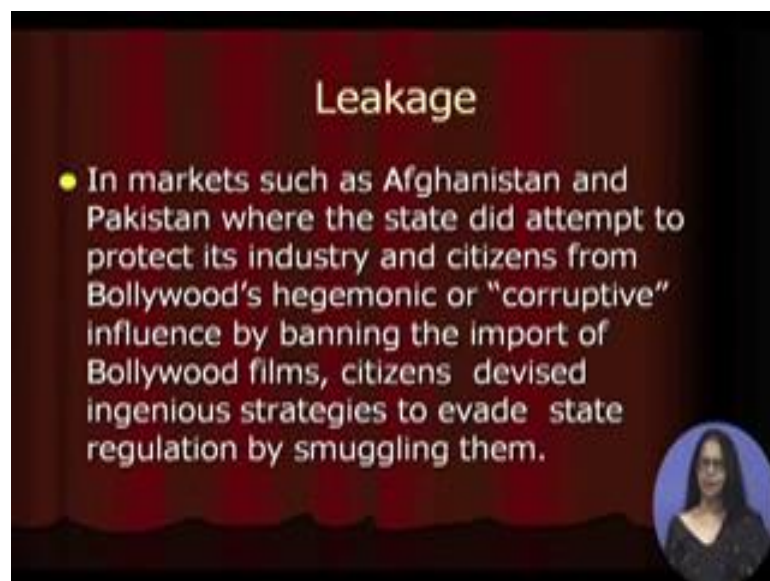
### Statist Intervention vs Independent Flows

- The Bollywood fixation of non South Asian viewers in Nigeria, Ghana, Malaysia and Thailand may be attributed to statist interventions that enabled the screening of Indian films in cinema halls and their virtual monopoly in these markets in the absence of a Hollywood incursion and the absence of a local industry.




So, the Bollywood fixation of non South Asian viewers in Nigeria, Ghana, Malaysia and Thailand, may be attributed to statist interventions, that enabled the screening of Indian films in cinema halls, and the virtual monopoly in these markets, in the absence of a Hollywood incursion, and the absence of a local industry. Since there was no local industry, no industry and a Hollywood had not made in-roads into these nations; Indian cinema virtually enjoyed a monopoly in these countries, and became part of the national imaginary of those nations as well such as, Nigeria for instance.

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### Leakage

- In markets such as Afghanistan and Pakistan where the state did attempt to protect its industry and citizens from Bollywood's hegemonic or "corruptive" influence by banning the import of Bollywood films, citizens devised ingenious strategies to evade state regulation by smuggling them.



So, in markets like Afghanistan, Pakistan, where the state did attempt to protect its industry and citizens, from the hegemonic or corruptive influence of Bollywood, by banning the import of Bollywood films, citizens devised ingenious strategies to evade state regulation, by smuggling them, particularly after in the seventies with the video boom, and the cassette culture.

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We met Awaara in Russia, we met Awaara in China, and we have also met Awaara in Turkey.

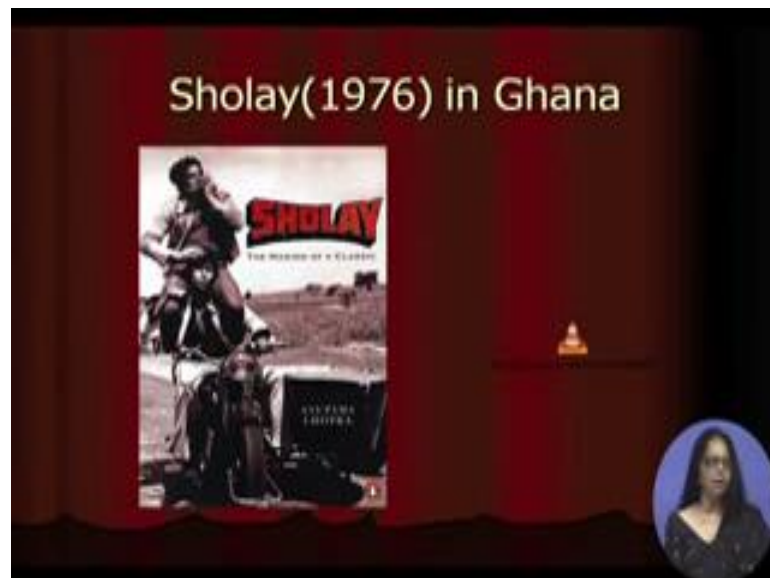
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Now, let us meet Mera Naam Joker in Tanzania, by listening to an interview by a former. So, she's. So, what she is saying is, this is the presence of a large Malayali community in in, in Tanzania, during this time, and I missed that part where she talks about, how they would go to watch, they would go to watch films in open air theater in Tanzania, where he would meet with other Indian communities, and she watched Mera Naam Joker 13 times, not because she wanted to watch the film, but because, because of the forms of sociality that the film produced, by getting the Indians together.

But what interested me was that along the barbed wire, or the boundary wall of the open air theater, where Indians would be watching these films, and celebrating and performing these community events and affirmations of community, there would be an entire audience of Africans, of local tanza, African people, who would be watching the same films from outside the boundaries, even though they could not follow the dialogues or they could even not for listen to, hear the dialogues, these, these groups of people, on the periphery, would be watching the same films, and this is how we are talking about the seventies. They acquired the taste for Indian films with this still indulge in, even today.

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And now we move to Ghana, in around the same years, but this time we do not have a diasporic person, not a person of Malayalies origin, but we have person of African, black person from Africa, who shares his experience of having watched Sholay in a theater. So, here was that, we also need to see that, there's a difference between the more elite

response, and here we have the very informed, sophisticated analysis of Sholay, given by someone who is a part of the educated elite of Ghana, as was the previous person of Indian origin, of Malayali origin, but the responses apart from this class dimension, we find that there is, there are different reasons why people seem to appreciate, why they do appreciate Bollywood films, Hindi films, in different parts of the world.

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And now we move on to Singapore and we meet young couple we met, again. And we have them singing for you. So, here we see the uses and abuses of Bollywood in different parts of the world where, this gentleman is singing. Kuch Kuch Hota Hai the young couple here we met in Jade cinema yesterday.

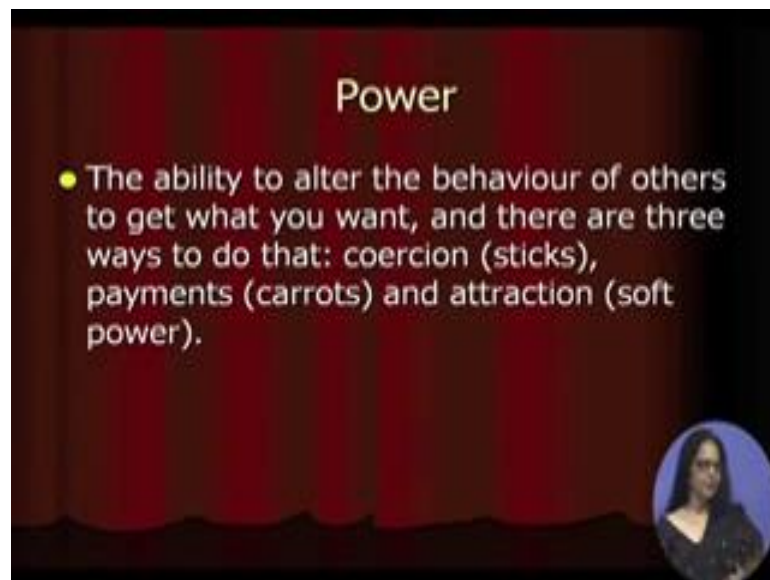


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And now I move on to Joseph Nye's idea of soft power. His idea which he developed in his book, *Bound to Lead*, the changing nature of American power in 1990, which he developed further in *Soft Power*, the means to success in world politics.

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And he defines power as the ability to alter the behavior of others, to get what you want. There are three ways to do it coercion, payments, and attraction, which is soft power.

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Now, what is soft power? He opposes soft power to hard power, and call soft power the ability to get what you want, or to or without ordering others to do, rather, I do not know why this has got, the ability to get what you want others to do through attraction rather than forcing them to do what you want, and its less transfer, less transferable, less coercive, and less tangible than hard power.

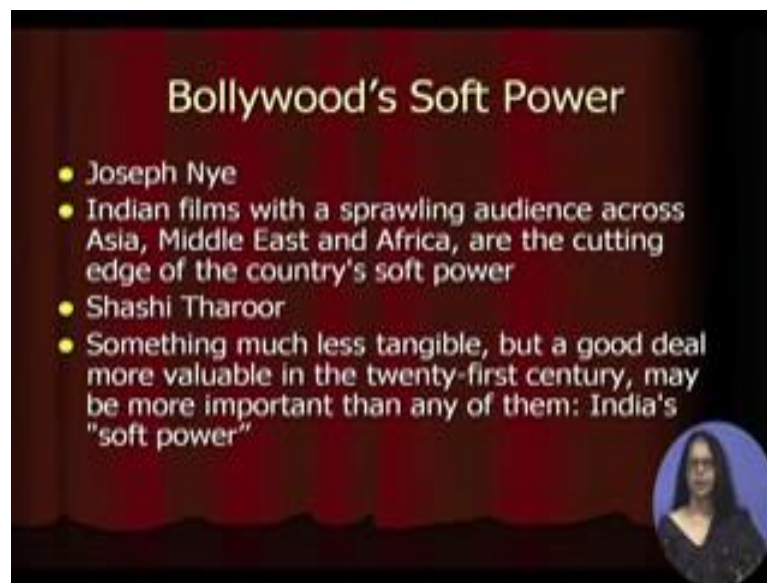
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Now soft power resources according to Nye include intangible power resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions, and it is based on cultural attraction, and it has an

important role ideology, for instance when we talked about American soft power, we were talking about how this ideology of consumption or freedom and liberty, or the caplets ideology has an intrinsic, intrinsic appeal for certain people in the world, and he thinks, it is got a very important role to play in international relations.

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So, now using Nye idea of soft power, we find that Indian films have us, with a sprawling idea. Nye himself mentions this when he says Indian films with a sprawling audience across Asia, Middle East, and Africa, other cutting edge of the countrys soft power. This is what he says. So, he does mention, India in Indian films, in his understanding of his explanation of what is a soft power is. And then we have Shashi Tharoor, in his earlier opposition his he is no longer in the ministry, but in his official position, he made this lecture, he delivered a lecture in which, he, he announced that some thing much less than tangible, but a good deal more valuable, in the twenty first century may be more important than any of them Indian culture, which is India's soft power, he compared to hard power, and he said what is important is India's soft power.

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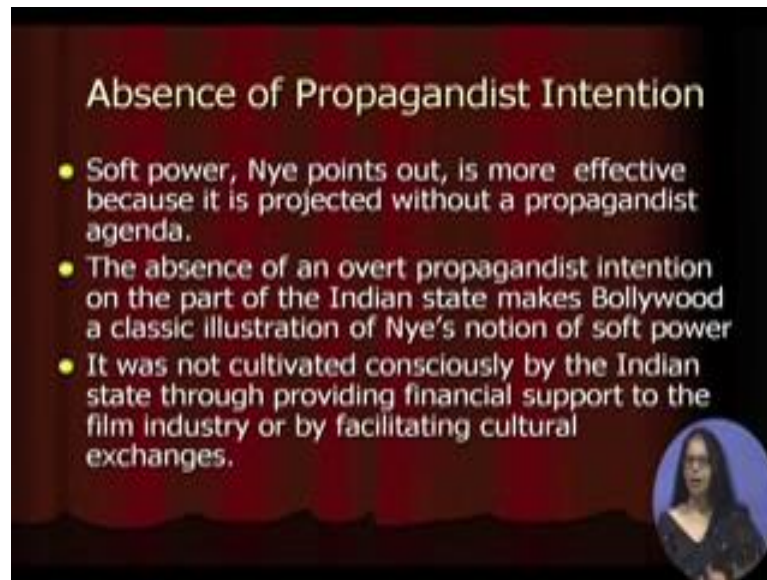


And now let me talk about India's soft power, the question we have anecdotal evidence of the popularity of Indian films, in different markets across the world. And this, these anecdotal evidence are now being corroborated by serious research, by researchers who are compiling data on the popularity of Indian films, and authenticating it through interviews to the ethnographic works, such as Bryan Larkins work on the, on the, in Benin, in Shakuntala Rao's work on in Russia, we have evidence coming from different parts of the world, about and more concrete data on how many people, in this context I was mentioned the work on Sinigar. Sinigar which is very interesting case, because it did not have Indian diaspora, and yet Indian films gained popularity in Sinigar, among a group called Hindu feels, who are in love with all things Indian, including Indian dancing, Indian films, and cuisine, Indian dress and so on. And that was a very unusual example of the popularity of Hindi films, or Bollywood films in a nation, which did not have an Indian diaspora.

Now, we are not sure about what is the percentage of, when we say we talking about India's soft power, and we talking about Bollywood as called Indian films or Bollywood films, as constituting India's soft power, which the former prime minister grudgingly expressed in his one of his lectures, that this disavowed culture of India, this disavowed culture cinema of India, is now part of India's attractiveness to the rest of the world. The state is forced to take notice of it, surely because of the power that films have, for a number of ethnic groups across the globe. But one is still not sure what is the percentage

of Bollywood share in the global market. We are aware, we can certainly say that it is the source of an attractiveness of a Bollywood films to certain groups, it certainly constitutes, it is very attractive to certain groups, but can this attractiveness translate into soft power, it is another question altogether.

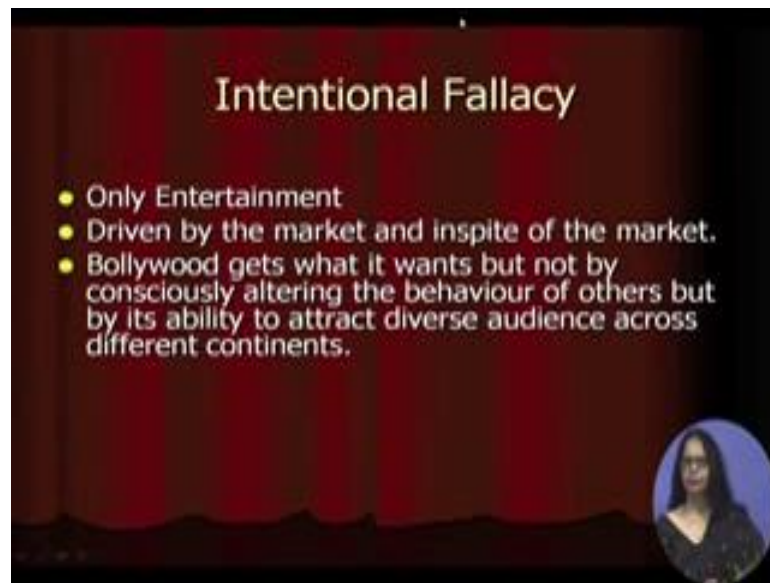
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Now, soft power as Nye points out is more effective because it is projected without a propagandist agenda. The absence of an overt propagandist intention, on the part of the Indian state, makes Bollywood a classic illustration of Nye notion of soft power, because this was not something which was cultivated consciously by the Indian state, through providing financial support to the film industry, or by facilitating cultural exchanges. It might have done in to a limited extent, but the focus of the Indian state has been on the promotion of Art House cinema in film festivals, or festivals of India and.

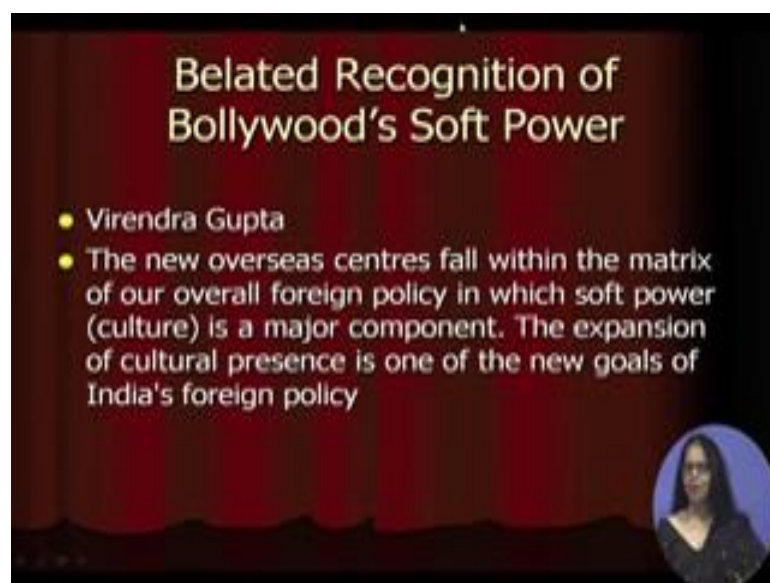
So, on rather than commercial cinema, but they must have been some promotion by this state during, during the fifties and sixties, which explains the film stars, or the popular film actors Raj Kapoor and Nargis Dutt, accompanying the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru to Russia, and they becoming household means in Russia. So, they must have been some intervention, some encouragement by the state, but we do not do not have concrete figures.

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So, this idea of the intentional fallacy, of imposing Indian cultural values or South Asian cultural values on the rest of the world, is demystified by the idea of, in, Indian commercial cinema, Hindi commercial cinema, has only entertainment, because Indian commercial cinema is driven by the market, and its attractiveness is through the market, and inspite of the market. So, Bollywood gets what it wants, not only by consciously altering the behavior of others, but, by its ability to attract diverse audience across different continents, mainly by its soft power.

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So, this belated recognition of Bollywood's soft power came from Virendra Gupta, who says, that the new overseas centers fall within the matrix of our overall foreign policy, in which soft power culture is a major component, and the expansion of cultural presence is one of the new goals of India's foreign policy.

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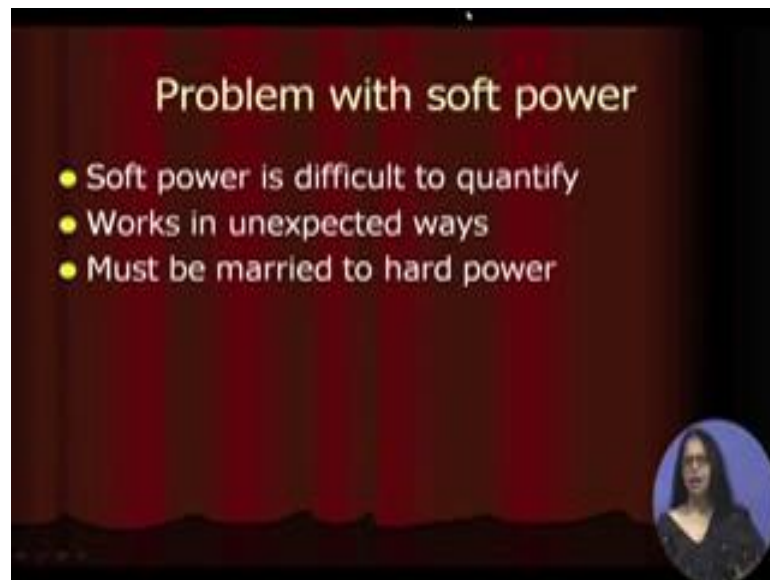
Now, who is watching Bollywood films, and where? Due to the unconventional dissemination media and exhibition spaces, through which Bollywood films continue to invade unimaginable spaces, official figures on their distribution and screening, cannot serve as reliable guides, for the projection of their soft power. So, if you were to look at the abysmal quantitative figures, data, on how many people are watching Bollywood films, and what was export of Indian films over the, over nearly a century, we would not really get the right figures, because as we have seen that Indian films lead through unofficial channels, channels which were not supported by the state, and which were not formal, and which lie on the cusp of legality and illegality.

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So, the symbolic importance of Indian films, we can say, far exceeded the number of films exported even in the 50s.

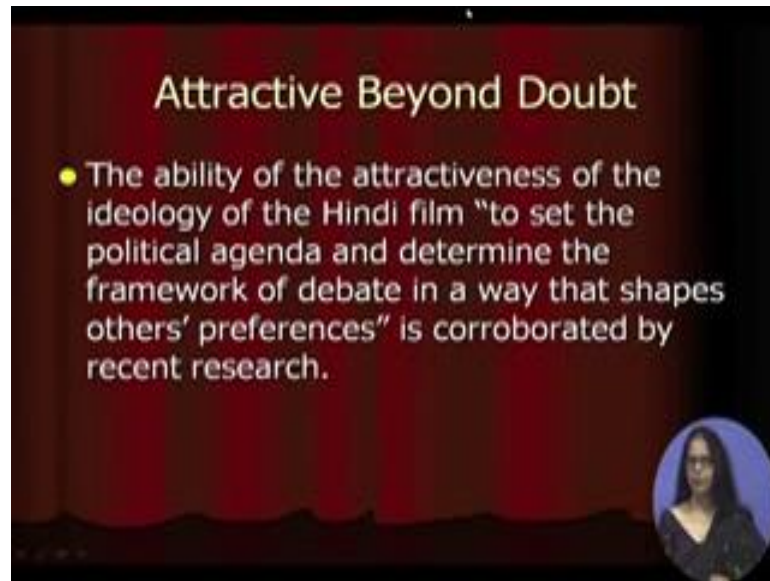
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And how is this. So, problem with what is the problem with soft power? Soft power is difficult to quantify, and it works in unexpected ways, it must be married to hard power.

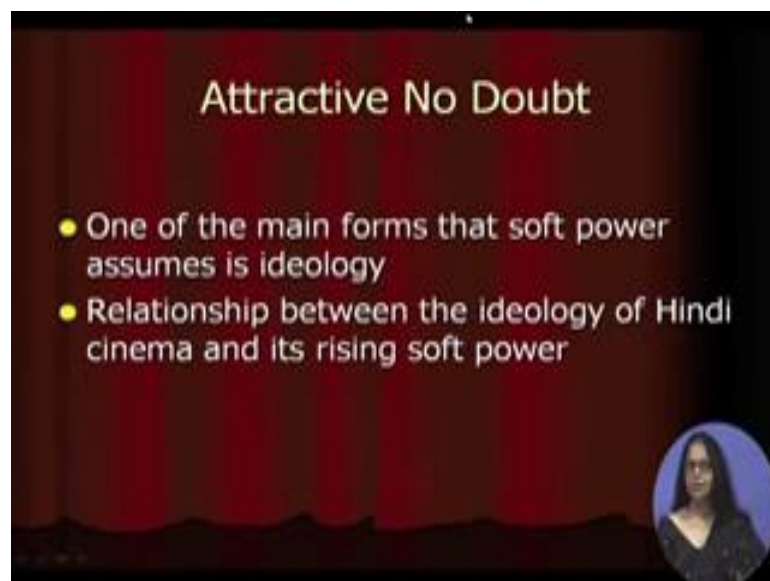


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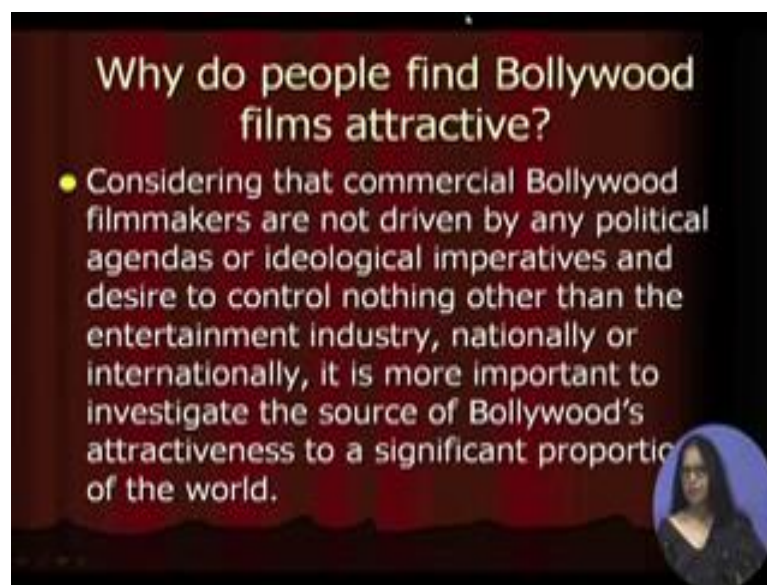
So, its Indian films, we can say our attractive beyond doubt, the ability of the attractiveness of the ideology of the Hindi film, to set the political agenda, and determine the framework of debate in a way, that shapes others preferences is corroborated by recent research, such as Bryan Larkins research, who are in parts of Africa among the Hausa youth, Muslim Hausa youth in Africa, who seem to prefer Hollywood Bollywood films to Hollywood films, because it gives them a template, a model for forming what Larkin calls parallel modernities.

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Moderinities which are not shaped in conjunction with the modernities projected in American, or western modernities, showcased or, underpaying the Hollywood film, but other kinds of modernities, which may be emulated by people in post-colonial world, such as Nigeria or even Pakistan, where there is a descent identification, in identification, while Muslim youth in the Pakistan, would dis-identify with the Hindu ideology of the Hindi films, they still identify with the with the kind of modernity, which marries tradition, traditional values with modern western values, they would identify with this to form a new form of Pakistani modernity.

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So, one of the main forms that soft power assumes is ideology, and we can look at the relationship between the ideology of Hindi cinema, and its rising soft power. It is attractive no doubt, but why do people find Bollywood films attractive? Considering that commercial Bollywood filmmakers are not driven by any political agendas or ideological imperatives, and they desire to control nothing other than entertainment industry, nationally or inter, internationally, is more important to investigate the source of Bollywood's attractiveness, to a significant proportion of the world's population.

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So, why are different people attracted to Bollywood films? Hausa youth in Nigeria to form parallel modernities, as Larkin pointed out, to the identification with the modernity projected in Indian films, while they might dis identify with the Hindu ideologies, the muslim youth in Pakistan for instance, and we have another set of people. So, beginning with the attractiveness of Indian films, for Hausa youth in Nigeria, we move to the attractiveness of Shah Rukh Khan films, in, or new Bollywood films particularly Shah Rukh Khan films in Germany, because of their exotic appeal, because of the techno nostalgia of post industrial societies such as Germany for rustic, rustic cultures which are depicted, often depicted in many of these films, or more so, for the attraction of Hindu family values in nations, where family values are breaking down.

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Can attractiveness translate into soft power? Now that is a question I leave you with. The inability of films to intervene in international relations, have they really, have they really changed? Has soft power, has the attractiveness of Indian soft power to, of soft power of Bollywood films to Pakistani youth, have really improved the relations between India and Pakistan, though, that is the aspiration on both sides of the border, have they really ended cross border terrorism? Have they, there seems to be a contradictory trend. So, what needs to do, is to marry soft power with hard power, which Nye calls defines as smart, smart power, in the modification of his original idea of soft power.

Now, I leave you with another, we conclude with this. So, we have fifteen year old Koma, and her sister 13 year old Elu, in a shrine. So, these teenage souvenir sellers in a shrine in Bali, who shared with the, the German counterparts, their love for Shahrukh Khan, they believe he is extremely handsome, and they also know all the names of all the film, Hindi film actors. So, there is a class divide, there is a regional divide, from the global north we moved to the global south, but the, what is common is the love for Shahrukh Khan in, in about people of different classes, genders, nationalities across the world from Koma in Bali to Michelle in Australia, and young women in Germany, all seem to be big fans of Shahrukh Khan. Will this really translate into soft smart power, we do not know, but Bollywood films are certainly attractive to a larger number of people in the world.