

# Geography of Landscape and Bollywood Melodies

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**Abstract:** *Geography is a strange subject, you may think you know but still there is lot that needs to be known. To some, geography is the science that studies the lands, the features, the inhabitants and the phenomena of the earth whereas to others geography is a science—a thing not of mere names but of argument and reason, of cause and effect. This paper attempts to study the interconnection between Landscape (physical environment) and human interpretation to it. Landscapes in this context are defined as the song sequence's insertion into the film that invariably affects the viewer's sense of space and time. Music plays a role in producing landscape as a material setting comprising the physical and built environment; as a setting for everyday social relations, practices and interactions; and as a concept or symbol that is represented or interpreted. This production of landscape through music is shown to be a contested and ideological process, whereas the dynamic interrelationship between music and landscape suggests that music plays a very particular and sensual role.*

*Bollywood melodies have the ability to add layers of meanings through music to any visual depiction of landscape that often reworks the audience's understanding. This paper attempts to carve out such symbolic relation and interconnection between landscapes and the meaning attached to it. This is explained with the help of various agents like mountain, desert, lake, river, wind, clouds, sea, rain etc. The paper focuses on the fact that landscapes are significant in Bollywood because they focus on personal feelings. These feelings for landscape are not trifling but are develop from every aspect of individual's life experiences and the sense that landscapes pervade everyday life and experiences.*

**Key Words:** *Geography, Landscape, Bollywood, Melodies, Cinema.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Geography is a strange subject, you may think you know but still there is lot that needs to be known. To begin with, Geography is primitive; it starts with every child looking around making sense of the world what's this? What's that? Why is it this way? Why here? Even an adult takes it up, Geography remains terminally naive. How do dozens of farmers in India share water that runs periodically in the tiny ditch that irrigates their fields? (Wallach Bret, 2005). And a lot more around can be viewed but unexplained, forms the subject matter of geography.

Geography is the science that studies the lands, the features, the inhabitants, and the phenomena of the Earth. It literally means "to describe or write about the Earth". But Hughes, 1863, states that "*Mere names of places are not geography; know by heart a whole gazetteer full of them would not, in itself, constitute anyone a geographer. Geography has higher aims than this, it seeks to classify phenomena (alike of the natural and of the political world, in so far as it treats of the latter), to compare, to generalize, to ascend from effects to causes, and, in doing so, to trace out the laws of nature and to mark their influences upon man. This is 'a description of the world'—that is Geography. In a word Geography is a Science—a thing not of mere names but of argument and reason, of cause and effect.*"

This paper attempts to study the interconnection between Landscape (physical environment) and human interpretation to it. Landscapes in this context are defined as the song sequence's insertion into the film that invariably affects the viewer's sense of space and time. Music plays a role in producing landscape as a material setting comprising the physical and built environment; as a setting for everyday social relations, practices and interactions; and as a concept or symbol that is represented or interpreted. This production of landscape through music is shown to be a contested and ideological process, whereas the dynamic interrelationship between music and landscape suggests that music plays a very particular and sensual role.

## II. GEOGRAPHY AND VISUAL INTERPRETATION

Geography is a highly visual subject. Geographers pay great emphasis on the importance of visuals to substantiate examples about landscapes, places and process. Apart from maps, Geographers have shown keen interest in visual interpretation in last few years with some notable work carried out on Cinematic geographies (Aitken and Zonn, 1994; Clarke, 1997), Landscape art geography (Kinsman, 1995) and Place advertising (Burgess and wood, 1988) etc.

Geography has become accustomed to the visual interpretation “Where knowledge as well as many forms of entertainment are visually constructed and where what we see is as important, if not important, than what we hear or read” (Gillian, 2001). But there is little and only very recent attention paid to the effects of cinema as a means for the analysis of landscape and the ways in which its elements are understood by filmmakers and by the public itself.

Geographer’s interest in visual interpretation can be related to the broader contours of twentieth century philosophy that have challenged the dominance of visual culture and its implicit separation of viewer and viewed, subject and object or individual and world. There is range of moral and intellectual dilemmas posed by how we view the landscape and how this relates to individual and collective empowerment. The attempt to interpret visual has been characterized by the forging of interdependent links between the aesthetics of the visual (for example, symbolic content, colour, atmosphere and perspective) and wider social meanings.

### III. LANDSCAPES AND MELODIES

It is typical, especially in some types of cinema like Bollywood (Indian Cinema) to give a certain degree of relevance to the landscape or at least to find a backdrop that lends itself to either give importance to the psychological characteristics of the characters or to provide a context which increases the drama of the plot. Besides Bollywood melodies, there are several ragas that draw upon the rich cultural heritage of folk music and its relation with originating landscape. There is “Mand” based on the folk music of Rajasthan; “Pilu” from the Hindi heartland of plains and “Pahadi” from the mountains of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal and Uttarakhand. There are other ragas also, but the three mentioned above excel in giving a classical expression to the pristine beauty of folk music deriving its roots from landscape.

Many scholars and audiences identify the melody sequence and its interruption of the narrative as the quintessential characteristic that distinguishes Bollywood from other cinema traditions (Ganti, 2004). Bollywood melodies have the ability to add layers of meanings through music to any visual depiction of landscape that often reworks the audience’s understanding for e.g. Love songs have typically been shot in scenic locations that are often far away and sometimes entirely unrelated to where the rest of the narrative of the story unfolds, exemplifying what LalithaGopalan (2002) has called the “dream sequence.” The song sequence in many films provides a particularly stunning diversion from the narrative by moving to picturesque locations. The landscape displayed in Bollywood melodies directly affects the ability to bridge the spatial gap between locations in India and diasporic locations. As the song sequence blurs the distinctions between real and diasporic space, it inevitably blurs the natural identity of the characters featured within them (Bhattacharjya, 2009). Thus, the film sequence plays an integral role in establishing the characters based on the landscapes.

In Bollywood melodies, the landscapes representation is highly symbolic. Mountains as according to their formation and physical attributes provide a sense of strength, courageousness, confidence, perseverance and bravery. They stand tall and strong and inspire to have high ideals and values, demonstrating strength of character and progress in the journey of life. Therefore, they are represented with this psychological attitude in numerous Bollywood melodies for example in “*Yehhoslakyesejhuke, yeharzookyekeruke, manzilmushkiltokhya*” (Dor, 2006) where the actress is accumulating strength to save her husband, the background shown is mountainous inspiring her to be determined and pumping courage in her veins. Similarly in other melody “*Kandho se miltehaiKandhe, Kadmo se kadammiltehai*” (Lakshya, 2004), the plot shown is on the war front and soldiers are boosting strength to achieve victory that is as difficult as the mountains itself.

Lakes give a sense of peace, tranquility, integrity gratitude and beginning therefore most romantic songs are pictured near lake side ranging from “*Tarifkarukyaukijisnetumhebanaya*” (Kashmir ki kali, 1964) and “*Mausamhaiashiquana*” (Pakhiza, 1972) etc. It is also, evident that song sequences in the movie disrupts the main theme and take audience to a different “created” space that is in correspondence to the landscape for example, “*chupke se sun, iss pal kidhuniss pal me jevansara*” (Mission Kashmir, 2000). The plot is about terrorism but this melody creates a different space altogether. Most of these melodies are shot on lake sides and reflect contentment towards their partner.

River and waterfall symbolize time and life that changes gradually. Rivers are attributed with enrichment, perseverance. These elements are represented with dynamism. Therefore, the melodies in transition are shot with this background. For example “*Waqtharnesabehtajaraha*” (VeerZara, 2004) and “*Haste Haste katjayeraste, zindagiya hi chaltiraha*” (KhoonBhariMaang, 1988) and “*Nadiyachale, Chaleyehdhara*” (Safar, 1970). “*Bade aachelagtehai*” (BalikaBadhu, 1976). Rivers flow hundreds and thousands of miles, and nourish the land along the way. The land becomes richer because of the river flowing by it thus, rivers in Bollywood melodies are demonstrated in the

similar way. In addition, rivers never flow in a straight line – they crisscross the landscape and find the best path to reach their destination. Similarly, rivers instigate the need to be prepared to navigate through life's challenges and stay on the course until one attains the goal.

Sea shore is reflective of muddle and explanations to the answers of life. Some people gaze upon it and think they have found the reason of sorrow while others gaze it to find peace with tomorrow. Therefore, in Bollywood there are varieties of song that are shot with sea in the background ranging from "Tu hi re..." (Bombay, 1995) that is symbolic of love, longing and hope while "Tanhai..." (DilChahtaHai, 2001) demonstrates situation of sorrow. Sea shore symbolizes a place of healing where the salt cleanses and the sun embraces in its warmth. The ocean heals the heart, mind, and soul. As stated by Anonymous (n.d.) "At the beach, life is different. Time doesn't move hour to hour but mood to moment. We live by the currents, plan by the tides, and follow the sun".

Other perspective includes "Zindagikyesihaipaheli" (Anand, 1971) and "Ekpyaarkanagmahai, maujokiravanihai, zindagi aur kuch bhinahiteri-merikahanihai" (Shor, 1972) which exhibit its characteristics as silent, intriguing and mystically defining life.

Wind is symbolic of movement; whispering or singing is associated with it. As depicted in "Kyu Hawaa aajyugarahihai" (VeerZara, 2004), "Thandihawa kali ghata" (Mr & Mrs 55, 1955) and "Hawao ne yehkaha, fizaon ne yehsuna" (Aapmujhe aachelag nelage, 2002) and "Sawankamahina, pawankareshor" (Milan, 1967). All these melodies are of different paradigm in Bollywood but representation of the natural element i.e. Wind is more or less common all across.

Thundering and Lightening in Bollywood are representatives of fear, sorrow, shock and dramatization. They provide context which increases the drama of the plot. As revealed in songs like "Der na ho jayekahi der na ho jaye" (Henna, 1991), "Saansalbeli" (Arakshan, 2011). These are associated with bringing change in the story line of the movie and provide dramatization within fraction of time. Others include tracks like "Badalyugaraj tahaidarrkuchesalagatahai." (Betab, 1983) and "Kattenahi Katte din ye raat" (Mr. India, 1987) are the songs churned out by Bollywood, starting with thunder and lightning blasting away making the setting perfect for a best-selling sensual Bollywood songs and dance routine.

Rain is symbol of wait, joy and prosperity especially in India which receives monsoon, where the rains are much awaited. For e.g. "Kale megha, kale meghapaanito hbarsao, bijlikitalvarnahibundokebaanchalao" (Lagaan, 2001) where the sight of clouds, jubilant villagers and the way the song rises to a crescendo – all working together to cast a spell on the viewers. It is almost as if the song really caused the Gods to shower down some rain-relief for the parched earth. Similarly the songs "Barso re megha, meghabarso re" (Guru, 2007) and "Koi ladki hai" (Dilto hPagal hai, 1997) rains are symbolic of joy and delight. Whereas "Boondon se baatein" (Thakshak, 1999) is beautiful song capturing the loneliness of a girl who is sharing her thoughts with the raindrops.

Clouds in Bollywood songs speak of clouds that are full of ecstasy, replete with tears, touched by nostalgia and coloured by romance. "Sawanke badlounse jakaho" (Rattan 1944), "Rang bhare badal se..." (Chandani, 1989), "Diwanahua Badal" (Kashmir ki Kali, 1964). Also supported by Rabindranath Tagore: "Clouds come floating into my life, no longer to carry rain or usher storm, but to add colour to my sunset sky."

Desert landscape in Bollywood is representative of hardship, loneliness that captures imagination and stretches beyond horizons. As represented in popular melodies like "Tadap..Tadapkeissdil se" (Hum Dil de chukesanam, 1999) and "Dil gun gunkare" (Rudali 1993). It is also characterized by its qualities like magical, mysterious and mirage filled menacing as in (Paheli,

Plains are representation of prosperity, nationalism and hardwork, they are represented of agricultural fields, settlement in the form of villages where majority of India resides. They provide identity to India. Eg. "Gharajapardesiteradeshbulaye re" (Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge, 1995). "Yehjodeshhaiteraswadeshhaitera, tujhehaipukara" (Swadesh, 2004).

"National identities are co-ordinated, often largely defined by 'legends and landscapes'; by stories of golden ages, enduring traditions, heroic deeds and dramatic destinies located in ancient or promised home lands with hallowed sites and scenery...Landscapes, whether focusing on single monument or framing stretches of scenery, provide visible shape; they picture the nation." (Daniels, 1993).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Thought, some viewers skip the song sequence to avoid the apparent loss of meaning of the storyline but, at the same time, an increasing number of Bollywood viewers regularly view song sequences independently of the film. Song

sequences offer a combination of appealing music, compelling lyrics, picturesque locations, elaborate costumes; pleasing choreography, virtuosic dancing, and favourite film stars regularly command viewings on their own. Thus, landscapes are significant in Bollywood melodies because they focus on personal feelings. These feelings for landscape are not trifling but are develop from every aspect of individual's life experiences and the sense that landscapes pervade everyday life and experiences. Therefore, one can conclude that landscapes are infused with meaning and feelings created by individual or a group and melody is a text where each individual creates multi layered meanings of landscape.

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