



Received: 01-02-2025
Accepted: 11-03-2025

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

A Study of Socio-cultural Images of Non-Hindi People in Bollywood Movies

Navale Abhishek Harishchandra

Department of English and P.G. Research Centre, Sangamner, Nagarpalika Arts, D.J. Malpani Commerce and B.N.,
Sarda Science College (Autonomous), Sangamner, Maharashtra, India

Corresponding Author: Navale Abhishek Harishchandra

Abstract

This study explores the socio-cultural representation of non-Hindi-speaking characters in Bollywood films from 1970 to 2024, focusing on their roles, cultural markers, and audience perceptions. Despite India's linguistic and cultural diversity, Bollywood cinema, dominated by Hindi narratives, has historically portrayed non-Hindi-speaking individuals in stereotypical or secondary roles. Using qualitative content analysis, this research examines selected films across decades, identifying patterns, trends, and transformations in these portrayals. Anchored in Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony and Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model, the study reveals how Bollywood reinforces or challenges cultural hierarchies through its narratives. Findings suggest that non-Hindi-speaking characters are

often relegated to minor roles, depicted as comedic figures, or associated with antagonistic traits, perpetuating cultural biases. However, recent years exhibit a gradual shift toward more nuanced and inclusive representations. The study highlights the significant impact of these portrayals on audience perceptions, shaping attitudes toward India's linguistic and cultural diversity.

This research emphasizes the need for Bollywood to adopt authentic and respectful representations, promoting inclusivity and fostering unity in India's multicultural society. The findings contribute to broader discussions on cultural equity in media and underscore the responsibility of cinema as a medium of social cohesion and representation.

Keywords: Socio-Cultural, Non-Hindi People, Images

Introduction

Literature is a reflection of society; it mirrors whatever happens in man's life. In a broader sense, if we consider cinema as one of the literary genres, it mirrors man and society. Hindi cinema, popularly known as Bollywood shows Indian life and society. It has become a part of the culture. In the early 20th century, Bollywood became a center of entertainment. It started showing the socio-cultural images of both Hindi and non-Hindi people in India. Bollywood, having its base in Mumbai, has become a powerful medium of representing the central idea or social conditions in front of the audience and shapes cultural narratives, perspectives and public perceptions in India. Bollywood movies emphasize on the Hindi speaking character and these central character centers of attraction in Bollywood movies but in the present study, the researcher studies the socio-cultural images of Non-Hindi people in Bollywood movies. Non-Hindi people, in this context, are individuals whose primary language is not Hindi. They are the Indians who speak other Indian languages such as Marathi, Kannada, Tamil, and Bengali, etc. as their primary language. The aim is to study socio-cultural images of non-Hindi characters who are shown in Hindi movies. Through the analysis of the select Bollywood films from 1970 to 2024, this study will identify trends and transformations in the representation of non-Hindi people, ultimately advocating for more inclusive and respectful portrayals that recognize India's rich cultural diversity. Accordingly, it will present the conclusions about the research.

Aim and objectives of the Study

This study aims to uncover whether these representations are appropriate, stereotypical, or biased and to promote more comprehensive and respectful representations of India's diverse characters in Bollywood cinema.

Objectives

1. To analyze the socio cultural images of Non-Hindi people in Bollywood movies.

- To identify the social, financial and portrayal of Non-Hindi people characters.
- To study how different genres, such as drama, comedy, action, and romance, influence the portrayal of non-Hindi characters.
- To examine the impact of these portrayals on audience perceptions and attitudes towards non-Hindi speaking communities.

Hypotheses

- In the Bollywood movies non-Hindi characters are always shown in minor roles such as servants, vendors, etc.
- In the Bollywood movies non-Hindi characters are presented as comic or funny characters.
- Most of the antagonists or villains shown in Bollywood are often represent non-Hindi people.

Research Methodology

Data collection

Using the qualitative research method, the present study will carry out the analysis of the portrayal and representation

related to the non-Hindi characters in Bollywood movies. The research will analyze a selected sample of films to study founded portraits of non-Hindi people characters in Bollywood movies, and narrative structures related to non-Hindi characters. The primary source of data collection will be watching movies on YouTube and secondary source of data collection will be movie reviews and related articles and books.

The researcher proposes to study 2 movies from each decade from 1970-2020 and latest movies. The sample will consist of approximately 12 to 14 movies. The selection will include movies that have prominently featured non-Hindi characters or Indian cultural settings, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of diverse genres and narratives. This sample size is selected to identify patterns and draw meaningful conclusions while being manageable within the study's time and resource constraints.

The data with the various information specified in the methodological section is presented in the table below.

Movie Details (1970 to 2020)

Table 1: List of Indian cinema's relevant to non hindi people

Movie Name	Director	Music Director	Released Year	Non-Hindi Character	Occupation	Portrayed Language
Padosan	Jyoti Swaroop	R.D. Burman	1968	Mehmood as Master Pillai	Teacher	Tamil Speaker
Bombay to Goa	S. Ramanathan	R.D. Burman	1972	Mehmood as Guide	Guide	Hindi
Maine Pyar Kiya	Sooraj Barjatya	Raamlaxman	1989	Bhagyashree as Suman	Homemaker	Hindi
Ek Duije Ke Liye	K. Balachander	Laxmikant-Pyarelal	1981	Kamal Haasan as Vasu	Lover	Telugu
Krantiveer	Mehul Kumar	Anand-Milind	1994	Nana Patekar as Pratap	Activist	Hindi
Saajan Chale Sasural	David Dhawan	Nadeem-Shravan	1996	Govinda as Shyamsunder	Singer	Hindi
3 Idiots	Rajkumar Hirani	Shantanu Moitra	2009	Omi Vaidya as Chatur	Student	Hindi-English
Gadar: Ek Prem Katha	Anil Sharma	Uttam Singh	2001	Sunny Deol as Tara Singh	Worker	Hindi
Chennai Express	Rohit Shetty	Vishal-Shekhar	2013	Deepika Padukone as Meenamamma	Tamil Guide	Tamil
OMG – Oh My God!	Umesh Shukla	Himesh Reshammiya	2012	Paresh Rawal as Kanjibhai	Shopkeeper	Hindi

Explanation of the Table

The table presented is a structured overview of Bollywood movies from different decades, starting from 1970 to 2020, which portray non-Hindi characters in significant roles. It highlights the socio-cultural representation of these characters and their integration into the narratives of Hindi cinema. Each movie is contextualized by its release year, director, music director, and the specific non-Hindi character portrayed, along with their occupation and linguistic identity.

The table includes films across various periods to trace the evolution of socio-cultural representation:

Period (1970-1980):

Movies like Padosan (1968)^[1] and Bombay to Goa (1972)^[3] showcase characters like Mehmood portraying a Tamil-speaking teacher and a Hindi-speaking guide, respectively. These films utilized non-Hindi characters for comedic relief, which reflects the socio-cultural stereotypes prevalent during this period.

Period (1980-1990):

Films like Maine Pyar Kiya (1989)^[4] and Ek Duije Ke Liye (1981)^[5] portray non-Hindi characters with a deeper emotional and cultural connection. For instance, Kamal Haasan as a Telugu-speaking lover in Ek Duije Ke Liye

emphasizes the struggles of inter-linguistic relationships, highlighting the cultural divides in Indian society.

Period (1990-2000):

This era includes movies such as Krantiveer (1994)^[6] and Saajan Chale Sasural (1996)^[7], which portray non-Hindi characters in roles of activism and humor, respectively. These films subtly address social issues, but non-Hindi characters were still often used for specific, sometimes stereotypical purposes.

Period (2000-2010):

Movies like 3 Idiots (2009)^[8] and Gadar: Ek Prem Katha (2001)^[9] reflect a shift in representation. For example, Omi Vaidya as a Hindi-English speaking student in 3 Idiots adds depth to the role of non-Hindi speakers in a competitive academic environment. Gadar: Ek Prem Katha highlights the cultural resilience of Sunny Deol's character.

Period (2010-2020):

Films like Chennai Express (2013)^[10] and OMG – Oh My God! (2012)^[11] continue to integrate non-Hindi characters into mainstream narratives. Deepika Padukone as a Tamil-speaking guide in Chennai Express celebrates cultural diversity, while Paresh Rawal's character in OMG portrays a Hindi-speaking shopkeeper facing philosophical dilemmas, symbolizing India's socio-cultural complexities.

The table not only categorizes these movies but also provides insight into how Bollywood has historically portrayed non-Hindi individuals. It reveals evolving patterns in representation—from comic stereotypes to more nuanced characters—indicating Bollywood's gradual progression toward acknowledging India's cultural and linguistic diversity. This analysis aligns with the research goal of studying the socio-cultural images of non-Hindi people in Bollywood, offering a foundation for discussions about inclusivity and cultural representation in Indian cinema.

Findings of the Study

1. **Dominance of Stereotypes in Early Portrayals:** Non-Hindi-speaking characters in Bollywood films, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, were often depicted as comedic, secondary, or exaggerated figures. For instance, Mehmood's Tamil-speaking character in *Padosan* (1968)^[1] and *Bombay to Goa* (1972)^[3] highlight how cultural differences were used for humor, reinforcing stereotypes rather than promoting understanding.
2. **Shift Toward Depth and Inclusivity:** From the 2000s onward, there has been a noticeable change in the representation of non-Hindi characters. Films like *Chennai Express* (2013)^[10] and *3 Idiots* (2009)^[8] present these characters in more meaningful roles, emphasizing their cultural identity without ridicule and portraying them as integral to the narrative.
3. **Impact on Cultural Narratives and Audience Perception:** The portrayal of non-Hindi-speaking characters significantly influences public attitudes toward India's linguistic diversity. While earlier films reinforced cultural hierarchies and biases, recent portrayals have begun fostering awareness and acceptance of cultural differences, encouraging a more inclusive view among audiences.
4. **Role of Genres in Shaping Representation:** Different genres dictate how non-Hindi characters are portrayed. Comedies like *Saajan Chale Sasural* (1996)^[7] often use exaggerated cultural traits for humor, while romantic dramas like *Ek Duuje Ke Liye* (1981)^[5] and action films like *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (2001)^[9] explore cultural conflicts and highlight the struggles of inter-linguistic relationships and social dynamics.

Conclusion

This study highlights the evolving portrayal of non-Hindi-speaking characters in Bollywood films, reflecting the industry's progression from stereotypical depictions to more nuanced and inclusive representations. While earlier films often reinforced cultural biases, recent narratives showcase a growing recognition of India's linguistic diversity and the importance of respectful representation. Bollywood's role as a cultural influencer underscores its responsibility to promote inclusivity and celebrate the country's multicultural identity, shaping audience perceptions and fostering unity in India's diverse society.

References

1. *Padosan*. A Glossary of Literary Terms: Abrams, M.H., Harpham, Geoffrey, 1968.
2. Watch on Archive.org
3. *Bombay to Goa*. Watch on YouTube, 1972.
4. *Maine Pyar Kiya*. Watch on YouTube, 1989.

5. *Ek Duuje Ke Liye*. Watch on YouTube, 1981.
6. *Krantiveer*. Watch on YouTube, 1994.
7. *Saajan Chale Sasural*. Watch on YouTube, 1996.
8. *3 Idiots*. Watch on YouTube, 2009.
9. *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha*. Watch on YouTube, 2001.
10. *Chennai Express*. Watch on YouTube, 2013.
11. *OMG – Oh My God!*. Watch on YouTube, 2012.