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Short Review Paper Reflection of Rural Space Transformation in Bollywood Cinema: An exploratory study of the last six decades

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Abstract

This paper delves into the influence of Bollywood cinema as a mass medium on Indian audiences, using symbols and signs to convey meanings and create a Mise en scène of space, environment, and events. Through this medium, the cinema reflects viewers' social vision and merges imagination and reality. The study focuses on the changing pattern of the rural social landscape, which encompasses outdoor natural locations linked with a village, its culture, public amenities, residents, and social, economic, and political issues. The study analyzes the quality of the representation of rural landscapes over a decadelong period (1960-2022), with one iconic film story based on the rural landscape chosen from each decade. The analysis assesses the visuals that reflect the rural landscape and the challenges depicted within the story. This exploration not only provides guidelines for rural development policymakers but also examines the impact of cinema on the visual literacy and perception of audiences. The paper's detailed content analysis of the selected six films, one from each decade, will explore the idea of an Indian village and its portrayal through the language of aesthetics and cinema. By doing so, this study aims to provide insights into how Bollywood cinema influences the audience's perception of rural life and landscape, and how it shapes their understanding of social and economic issues.

Keywords: Bollywood films, rural landscape, Indian village, Visual literacy, Cinema.

Introduction

Films are the reflection of society and society is the social ecosystem made up of harmony between nature and human beings where people carry out various activities for their livelihood. Natural geographical structures and man-made constructions create a special space for society. This space is mainly divided in urban or rural landscape. Man-made infrastructure and living conditions of people determine whether it is an urban society or a rural one. Both these landscapes have their own signs and symbol¹.

They create unique visuals and from these visuals one can easily perceived and differentiate between urban and rural areas. Compared with other media cinema can come much closer to everyday life, and as such it can inform us about the understanding of village life. Cinema as an instrument for connecting senses and for expressing both abstract and real world represents spaces, ecosystem, geography, events, symbols, and signs, which informed as well as reproduce and reinterpret daily life for its audience.

Cinema is integrated procedure of both art and science; where artists give performance and this art form is created by using science applications like movie camera, lenses, lights and sound recording equipment. Cinematic technology as well as the skills of the theater is used in film production. *The mise- en scene*

method of the theater is adopted in it. Miss in scene is planning to recreate the phenomenon world into the cinema in a way. And mise en scene is the stage of filmmaking where by reflecting the society into cinematic world, the audience perceived the reality on the screen of the cinema. To create a scene according to the demand of the story, a landscape is prepared according to its plot and all the objects related to that specific space, which are props, are arranged to form a design or set².

The French term 'mise-en-scene' means 'Putting in the scene', films, television programs, etc. (Bouzida, 2014) or 'everything you see on the screen'. Mise-en-scene has its roots in theatre and is one of the key components within film language. 'ction³.

According to Andrew Dix, "settings are not merely inert containers of or backdrops to action but themselves charged with significance. At the most basic level, locations serve in narrative cinema to reinforce the plausibility of particular kinds of story⁴.

In the presented review article, an attempt has been made to understand the village landscape of India by analyzing the miseen-scene presenting the rural backdrop and its transformation of 'Hindi Bollywood' cinema.

This study explore show Bollywood's Hindi cinema has shown the change in the rural scene of India's rural environment in the last 6 decades in the films of village-based story. It has been analyzed so that an attempt has been made to understand the belief that films are a reflection of society.

The visual elements of Hindi movies of the sixties to twenty twenties have been reviewed considering the scenes shown on the village as the basis, in this way, in the period from 1960 to 2022, in about 60 years, in Hindi cinema, a miss en scene depicting the rural landscape of India. The changes that have taken place have been observed, analyzed and compared to the actual changes and mapped.

In early sixteen, the main means of livelihood of the village depended on agriculture and allied occupations and the farmer played a central role in the village. While the Zamindars (Landlords) owned large parts of the agricultural land, the livelihood of the landless laborers depended on wages for agricultural work on the Zamindars' lands. Before the Green Revolution in India, monsoon-irrigated farming, in the event of less rain or no rain, famine-like conditions would have been seen.

The yield of grains in the fields was controlled only by rain in the absence of proper irrigation facilities. In such a situation, it becomes a struggle for the farmers to provide food for the family, and in such a situation the role of the mortgagee and the debtor becomes very important. Pledging something in exchange for money was the central character of this process. Small farmers had something that they could mortgage was a piece of agricultural land. In return, they could get some immediate relief in exchange for money during this harsh time of life, and then that relief becomes an endless tale of struggle for a lifetime.

The landless pageants who do not have any means other than physical labor related to any work, they migrate to the cities in the hope of wages. The beginning of education system in the village had just begun; the equal situation was with the health care facilities, the people of the village depended on Vaidya (traditional practitioner of Ayurveda) or traditional-ritual diagnosis and cure. The other basic needs like water, road and electricity system was at its initial stage and the priority of such facilities should be in small cities and towns instead of villages. The flow of information inside the village was either radio transistors or gossip of a person who had come from the city on the chaupal or other social gathering spaces.

During this study, on the basis of government statistics, reports and other study materials, the outline of the rural region can be reached by projecting the general Idea of India. In every era Hindi cinema represents the social relevant issues in a very different narrative style. In the past six decades Bollywood Hindi cinema has played a significant role portraying rural background, and propagating various phenomena such as globalization, westernization, urbanization and modernization in India.

According to the cultivation theory (George Gerbner 1969): Cultivation theory (also known as cultivation analysis) was introduced by Hungarian-born American professor George Gerbner in the 1960s as a means to examine the influence of television on viewers (Gerbner, 1969). Later, the American screenwriter Larry Gross expanded and developed the findings of Gerbner.

This theory suggests that those who are exposed to media interpret social realities according to how such realities are portrayed in the media. An example of cultivation theory is television's ability to stabilize and homogenize views within a society. Children who watch commercial TV have notably more sex-stereotypical views of women and men than children who don't watch commercial TV. During the initial stage of research, the possible impact of exposure to violence on the viewers of television programs was of particular interest.

According to the researchers in this study, we learn to understand the actual transformation taking place in the rural scenario of India are based on research & news articles, annual and survey reports published by the Government of India and other organizations were studied as secondary sources. Besides the Mise en scene of the village-based Hindi movies produced in theses decades have intensely reviewed. Films included like: Do Bigha Zameen (1953), Parakh (1960), Manthan (1976), Tulsi (1985), Pipli Live (2010), Dangal (2016), Babli Bouncer (2022) were critically studied as secondary sources⁵.

In this study, following model has been made by considering the Mis-en Scene from movies and combining the signifiers of its used visual elements with the index made keeping in mind the concept of rural development.

The proposed conceptual Index is composed of six domains as given below- i. Economy, Employment, Basic amenities & Infrastructure, ii. Education, iii. Health, iv. Communication & connectivity, v. Environment, vi. Culture and Behavioral change.

Scrutinizing Mise en scene from seven films produced in the years 1953-2022, this paper offering a description of how rural landscape have been represented within Hindi films, one that reflects changing National concerns and priorities. Drawing from screenshots, plot summaries, and dialogues and employing a partial content analysis (Krippendorf, 2012) during the study nine films have examined in ascending production year⁶.

Overview of the Hindi Films

Table-1: Do Bigha Zameen, Directed by Bimal Roy, 1952.

Signifiers from Mis en Scene	Transformation Index
Bumpy dusty roads Bullock cart	Transportation

Mud houses and huts, No toilet,	Infrastructure &
Community water space; well, pond.	basic amenities
Traditional agro tools. Crop pattern, Farmers plowing the	Economy
fields, Expecting rain from monsoon. No cash earning source other than	Employment
agricultural activities. Land lord Debtor. Labor migration	Banking
Oil lamp Electricity	
Children engage in grazing field with Education; primary education	
Illness treatment by homemade remedy	Medical & Health
Folk dance, music, Traditional attires;	
Dhoti Kurta, Turban. Household	Cultural
utensils; Clay and metal.	Social -Behavioral

Signifiers from Mis en Scene.	Transformation Index	
Bumpy dusty roads Bullock cart, *Cycle, *Car.	Transportation	
Mud houses and huts, No toilet Community water space; well, pond.	Infrastructure & basic amenities	
Traditional agro tools Crop pattern, Farmers plowing the fields, *Small grocery and tea shop. Land lord	Economy Employment	
Debtor. Labor migration	Banking	
Oil lamp, *kerosene lamp	Electricity	
*Children in private primary school	Education; primary education	
Illness treatment by homemade remedy, *a medical practitioner in village	Medical & Health	
Folk dance, music, *radio Traditional attires; Dhoti Kurta, Turban. *Trouser, shirt and coat. Household utensils; Clay and metal.	Cultural Social -Behavioral	
*Post-man, radio	Communication	

Table-3: Manthan, Directed by Shyam Benegal 1976.

Signifiers from Mise- en Scene	Transformation Index
*Vehicle moveable muddy road, horse cart, *Cycle, *Car, *Jeep, *Train station nearby	Transportation
*Brick houses and huts, No toilet. Community water space; well, pond.	Infrastructure & basic amenities
*Milk grower, milk checking in scientific method. *Small grocery and tea shop Land lord Debtor. *Cooperative society system	Economy Employment Banking

*Reverse labor migration.	
Oil lamp, *kerosene lamp, *Electric bulbs, Switch	Electricity
*Children in private primary school *Government primary school	Education; primary education
Illness treatment by homemade remedy, *a medical practitioner in village. *Veterinary Practice	Medical & Health
Folk dance, music, *radio Traditional attires; Dhoti Kurta, Turban. *Trouser, shirt and coat Household utensils; Clay and metal. *Awareness programs	Cultural Social - Behavioral
*Post-man, radio, vernacular newspapers, film projection	Communication

 Table-4: Tulsi 1985, Directed by Verendra.

	T C ···
	Transformation
	Index
*Vehicle moveable muddy road, horse cart, *Cycle, *Car, *Jeep, *Train station nearby, *Tractor trolley	Transportation
*Brick houses and huts, Community water space; well, pond. *Hand pump	Infrastructure & basic amenities
*Post Green revolution, *fertilizers, *fodder cutting hand operated machine. *Small grocery and tea shop. *Sewing Machine *Government Jobs-Army, Police, Railway. Labor migration	Economy Employment Banking
*kerosene lamp, *Electric bulbs, kerosene stove	Electricity
*Children in private primary school *Government primary school	Education; primary education
Illness treatment by homemade remedy, *a medical practitioner in village. *Veterinary Practice, *Primary health center-ANM visit	Medical & Health
Folk dance, music, *radio, *loudspeaker	Cultural
Traditional attires; Dhoti Kurta, Turban.	Social -
*Trouser, shirt and coat. Household utensils;	Behavioral
Clay and metal. *Awareness programs	
*Post-man, radio, newspapers, film projection	Communication

Table-5: Peepli [Live], 2010, Directed by Anusha Rizvi,Mahmood Farooqui.

Signifiers from Mis en Scene	Transformation Index
*Vehicle moveable muddy road, *Cemented path, *Cycle, *Car, *Jeep, *Train station nearby, *Tractor trolley, Motorcycle, Scooter, Public transport.	Transportation
*Cemented and whitewashed house*Brick houses and huts, *Makeshift toilets Panchayat Ghar. *Framer co-operative structure. Community water space; *Hand pump, water supply plastic drum	Infrastructure & basic amenities
*Post Green revolution, *fertilizers, *fodder cutting hand operated machine	Economy

*Government ration shop, grocery and tea shop. *Sewing Machine. Various	Employment
government rural development schemes *Loan facilities from Bank. Labor	Banking
migration	
*solar panel, *Electric bulbs, Cooking Gas cylinder	Electricity
*Children in private primary school	Education;
*Government primary school	primary education
Illness treatment by homemade remedy, *a	Medical &
medical practitioner in village. *Veterinary Practice, *Primary health center-ANM visit	Health
Folk dance, music, *radio, *loudspeaker	~
Attires; *readymade pant, jeans, T shirts, Sari and footwear. Household utensils;	Cultural Social -
*Plastics and metal, aluminum, *Pressure	Behavioral
cooker. *Awareness programs. *Political	
Identity	
*Mobile Phone, *TV radio, newspapers	Communication

Table-6: Dangal, 2017, Directed by Nitesh Tiwari.

Dangal 2017 Signifiers from Mis en Scene	Transformatio n Index
*Charcoal and bricks road, *Cemented path, *Cycle, *Car, *Jeep, *Train station nearby, *Tractor trolley, Motorcycle, Scooter, Public transport.	Transportatio n
*Cemented and whitewashed house*Brick houses and huts, *attached Toilets, Panchayat Ghar, Private school building, *Framer co-operative structure. Water tab supply, Hand pump, mobile tower	Infrastructure & basic amenities
*Post Green revolution, *fertilizers, *fodder cutting hand operated machine *Government ration shop, grocery and tea shop. *Mobile phone and repairing shops *Sewing Machine. Various government	Economy Employment
rural development schemes. *Government Jobs-Army, Police, Railway. *Choice based other job opportunities in private sector. *Loan facilities from Bank	Banking
*solar panel, *Electric bulbs, Cooking Gas cylinder	Electricity
*Children in private primary school *Government primary school. *English medium private school in nearby area.	Education; primary education
Illness treatment by homemade remedy, *Veterinary Practice, *Primary health center-ANM visit. *Chemist shop, Private clinic.	Medical & Health
Folk dance, music, *radio, *loudspeaker Attires; *readymade pant, jeans, T-shirts, Sari and footwear. Household utensils;	Cultural Social - Behavioral

*Plastics and metal, aluminum, *Pressure	
cooker. *Social awareness programs	
*Women & Girl empowerment	
*Mobile Phone, *TV radio, newspapers,	Communicati
internet, social media.	on

Table-7: BabliBouncer, 2022, Directed by MadhurBhandarkar.

Signifiers from Mis en Scene	Transformati on Index
*Charcoal and bricks road, *Cemented path, *Cycle, *Car, *Jeep, *Train station nearby, *Tractor trolley, Motorcycle, Scooter, Public transport.	Transportatio n
*Cemented and whitewashed house*Brick houses and huts, *attached Toilets, Panchayat Ghar, Private school building, *Framer co-operative structure Water tab supply, Hand pump, mobile tower	Infrastructure & basic amenities
*Post Green revolution, *fertilizers, *fodder cutting automatic and other agro based machines. *Animal husbandry, Cash crops farming. *Government ration shop, grocery and sweet bakery- cake shops. *Barber and	Economy
beauty parlor. *DJ and wedding photography studio. *Mobile phone and repairing shops. *Sewing Machine, Various government rural development schemes *Loan facilities from Govt. and private	Employment Banking
Bank *Solar panel, *Electric bulbs, Cooking Gas cylinder. *Fridge, *electric fan, *cooler, *puncher and cycling repairing shops. Petrol pump and cooking gas agency nearby.	Electricity
*Children in private primary school *Government primary school. *English medium private school in nearby area. Higher education institutes near by	Education; primary education
Illness treatment by homemade remedy, *Veterinary Practice, *Primary health center-ANM visit. *Chemist shop, Private clinic. *Nursing home or Hospital nearby.	Medical & Health
Folk dance, music, *radio, *loudspeaker Attires; *readymade pant, jeans, T-shirts, Sari and footwear. Household utensils; *Plastics and metal, aluminum, *Pressure cooker. *Social awareness programs *Women & Girl empowerment	Cultural Social - Behavioral
*Mobile Phone, *TV radio, newspapers, internet, social media.	Communicati on

Observations

It is worth noting, in the last few years, that India's villages have undergone and are undergoing a massive transformation with fast-falling data rates, and e-governance solutions taking centre-stage, it is amazing how communities are seeking to transform their lives. Also, one thing that hardly gets reported is how rural communities have a better grasp of the benefits of government schemes as opposed to people living in cities. This is due to the enterprising effort of a number of civil servants at the grassroots level⁷.

The bottom line is that what constitutes life in an Indian village shifts from place to place, from state to state. "Bharat" comprises not just those villages which have absolutely nothing at all, but also comprises those villages which have managed to acquire traditional markers of privilege. If we can accept the diversity of views and cultures in India as a way of life, it is certainly worth thinking about why we always harp on a homogeneous standard for talking about the "backwardness" of village life⁸. The Economic Survey 1999-2000 acknowledged that the overall employment growth in agricultural sector declined from 2.75 per cent in 1972-78 to 2.37 per cent in 1988-94, even while the survey reiterated that the higher growth of the economy could be sustained only if agriculture and the allied activities grow at an average annual rate of four per cent (Economic Survey 1999-2000)⁹.

As more than half of the population in India lives in villages, therefore the education system in rural area also plays a significant contribution in the growth country.

Whenever there is talk of a village, a sense of a relaxed, calm, comfortable, simplistic atmosphere emerges in the mind. The scenes of green fields, farmers plowing the fields, bells tinkling around the necks of the cattle, elders chatting in the gurgle of hookah on the chaupal start coming true Farmers singing folk songs in the fields, mud houses and huts, bumpy dusty roads, bullock carts moving slowly, chow pals frozen in the cool shade of trees, women filling water on the panghat (pond) and small nudes playing in the mud.

Earlier, as soon as the village was mentioned anywhere, all the scenes used to get imprinted on our vision. But today this picture of villages is changing. Folk songs are no longer heard in the fields and in the streets of the villages. The place of folks has now been taken by the modern songs of films. Mud houses are being converted into pucca houses Bullock carts have been replaced by buffalo-buggy and tractors.

In India the five-year plans made for the development of the country only after independence, first five-year plan introduced in 1952, in this initial outlines were being made for the agriculture sector and rural development., it was mainly to reduce the agricultural dependence of India's population, so in the first five-year plan, emphasis was laid on the development of industries¹⁰.

The rural backdrop shown in the film Do Bigha Zameen and characters seem to reflect this reality: dependency on traditional way of farming. The protagonist of the film is utterly dependent on traditional agriculture system in the village, for survival, the farming is dependent on monsoon conditions for irrigation. There was no organized structure for money loans except by mortgaging the land to moneylenders for daily expenses in extreme conditions like drought¹¹.

There was no other way but to migrate to the city for wages to repay the loan of the mortgaged land. By this time, factories had started to be built around the village.

India's Second Five Year Plan (1956-1961): It was again primarily a strategy of industrialization, which hoped to succeed by imitating robust industry linkages.

The concept of democratic decentralization for assigning development responsibilities to Panchayati Raj Institutions was also advocated by the Balwantrai Mehta Committee¹².

In 1960's Parakh movie had witnessed of many phenomenon signifier in Mise- en scene designing under communication and connectivity's index; postman, radio, cycle, car as well as private primary school master, kerosene lamp. Apart from the traditional attires of the villagers, coat, pants and shirt are visible. It was a transition to adding new objects to the rural ambiences¹³.

The movie *Manthan*, directed by veteran Shyam Benegal, narrates the story of the Indian farmer, it portrayed glimpses of Alternate Economy and Cooperative movement in Villages. By these decades of century the effect of India's Green Revolution and White Revolution was visible on rural India. Fertilizer for farming and other facilities started dispersal through farmer service centers.

In the *Tulsi film* of 1985, made on rural background, along with basic education, the rural population started getting employment opportunities in government sectors; army, police etc.

The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) commenced eradication of poverty as its primary aim. NREP, RLEGP, TRYSEM, DWCRA, IRDP—were strongly emphasised. The strategy adopted was to move simultaneously towards strengthening infrastructure for both agriculture and industry.

90's Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization (LPG) gradually included rural market and consumer chain. Apart from agricultural machineries, there were clear transformations in living conditions and habits of rural existences¹⁴. The application of science such as fodder cutting or flour grinding machine made its hold in many traditional work activities, instead of the light of oil lamp electric bulbs started illuminating the houses¹⁵.

After year 2000 in shadows of technical and digital advancement of 21^{st} century, there was an unprecedented change in the rural landscape of India, and its reflections are

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clearly visible in films like *Peepli Live* of 2010, *Dangal* of 2017 and **Babli Bouncer released** in 2022¹⁶.

In *Peepli Live*, the decades-old debt problem of the farmers and the pain of the rural small farmers under its burden are exposed. Banks have replaced local landlords as loan providers, but the complication of loan recovery remains the same. In India, the tendency of farmers to commit suicide due to non-payment of loans and other has been in the limelight. *Peepli Live* adds a new element that Electronic news media industry to incorporate rural landscape based issues in its format for sensational news for TRP¹⁷.

Dangal and **Babli Bouncer** set new paradigms in the rural setting in terms of gender bias and women empowerment in the form of girls making their own choices and careers. In these films many radical changes are visible in the rural areas not only geographically but also ideologically and behavioral. Apart from the miss in scene of films, changes made the villages of India on the real ground as well¹⁸.

Conclusion

This study is an attempt of mapping last six decades Hindi Bollywood films based on the visual elements of the rural environment composed in the frames and juxtaposing the assessment of the situation of the rural areas of India in the real ground at that time, through the study of the reports, research article and other documented materials of the government ministries and other agencies engaged in rural development.

Scenes from these movies exposed the essence of rural setup in Hindi cinema and how directors have designed Mise en scene during different time periods. By shadowing narrow down leitmotifs and portrayals of rural landscape, this study provides a portrait of how infrastructure and social chemistry of rural India have manifested in Bollywood Hindi films.

.In these films many radical changes are visible in the rural areas not only geographically but changes also seen in ideology and behavior pattern of rural population. Apart from the miss in scene of films, changes made the villages of India on the real ground as well.

The recent changes which occurred in Indian villages are: i. The growth of non-farming Activities, Growth of consumerism in rural India, ii. Growing urbanism in rural India, iii. Growth in the circulation of labors, iv. Globalization of rural agriculture, v. Increase of Farmers suicide, vi. From Green- white revolution to Smartphone revolutions.

It is cited that cinema is not only an art form but also film industry, whereas an art form it stretches an open space for the imagination and creative expressions to the director of the film. also, the primary motivation of cinema is to fulfill the commercial drive force to box office by keeping focus on entertainment of the consumers, consequently, the nexus of artistic imagination with reality is accepted which is mostly seen in mainstream Bollywood Hindi cinema.

After evaluating indicators, the primary conclusion derived out of this research study that the reflection of the contemporaneous socio-geographical scenarios of rural backdrop is clearly visible on the miss in scene of Hindi films reviewed during the research.

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