



## THE ROLE OF THE INDIAN CINEMA IN PORTRAYING THE INDIAN CULTURE TO THE ARAB WORLD WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO YEMEN

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### ABSTRACT

*Culture refers to the patterns of thoughts and behaviour of people. It includes values, beliefs, rules of conduct, and patterns of social, political and economic organisation. These are passed on from one generation to the next by formal as well as informal processes. Culture consists of ways in which we think and act as members of a society. Thus, all the achievements of the group life are collectively called culture. For a country like India, which is a multicultural society, it has a rich and various distinguished culture. This culture is being transferred to different countries by different means among which the Indian cinema appears as one of the most influential means, and it has its impact on such countries. The Indian cinema “Bollywood” has its popularity all around the world and many of its products have been translated into many languages. Arabic is one of the languages that many Indian films, movies and series were translated to. Thus, they invade the Arab world and carried with them the Indian culture. They influenced a large number of people particularly in Yemen which is the focus of the current study. The current paper is an attempt to highlight the influence of the Indian series on the Yemeni people with special reference to the series of “The Warrior Queen of Jhansi “. It is directed by Director Swati Bhise . And was translated into Arabic The Warrior Queen of Jhansi traces the life of Rani Laxmibai, and her journey of becoming an icon for women all across the world. The director’s daughter, Devika Bhise, will be seen essaying the role of Rani Laxmibai..The paper will highlight the influence these series left on the Yemeni society and the image that it depicted about different aspects of the Indian society such as food address, weddings and different cultural activities.*

**Keywords:** Indian Cinema, Culture, Bollywood, Yemen.



## INTRODUCTION

Cinema in general is a strong weapon that has the capacity to penetrate the borders and cotenants and deliver the message that the film makers want to. It is an effective tool that carry the culture of different nations and show it to the people in an interesting way. It is through cinema that people in different parts of the world come to know in an enjoyable manner about even the minor details of the culture of other countries and nations. It portrays, documents and reflects the culture in a clear and easy way to the audience in the rural and urban areas around the globe. Unlike other forms of art, films are created solely for mass distribution. Every member of every audience can witness the real thing reflected through the cinema. It reflects a clear picture about the society around us and about the other societies and cultures. Cinema produces numberless of films and movies that capture the attention of the people all over the world. It is an effective weapon that travels around the globe with no limitations. In this regard, Istiak Mahmood agues;

*Cinema is the most complex and powerful art form in the present world. It can help us to better understand our own lives, the lives of those around us and even how our society and culture operate. They can shed light on political and spiritual matters too and can provide catharsis and perspective and may open our eyes to new ways of thinking, feeling and pursuing our lives. (Istiak)*

Cinema has witnessed a great shift from a simple ordinary into a modern and well equipped cinema that offers attractive work. Technology has played a significant role in the cinema and its products. It also helps it to reach everywhere in a modern show. Thus it carries with it the cultures of our society and the societies around the world. In this aspect, Sellam Philippine argues;

*During the last fifteen years, mobile cinema has sparked new interest in the cinema and development sectors. Taking cinema out of conventional theatres and bringing it to the people by transporting screening equipment on trucks, bicycles or trains and setting up ephemeral cinemas in the public space. Widening the diffusion of local films can provide strong incentives to a region or a country's cinematographic industry and stimulate the production of independent films on socially conscious themes. ( Sellam)*

Indian cinemas is prominent in all aspects. It is considered one of the most widely spread cinemas all around the world. This it carries with it to the world the Indian culture that is a multi and rich one. In the current paper, a brief hint about the India cinema and its role in portraying the Indian culture. A brief explanation will be given about the series (Queen of



Jahnseeey ) that was translated into Arabic. The role that these series played in portraying the Indian society and culture to the Yemeni society will be highlighted.

## Indian Cinema (Bollywood):

One of the wonderful, extraordinary film factories in the world is the Indian cinema (Bollywood). It has gain its popularity all around the world due to the various amazing products that it produces in different forms, about various topics and through different languages. It is classified as the toper cinema in the world in terms of the size of its production that is about more than one thousand per year. This large production in a high quality attractive manner enables the Indian cinema to be the empire of cinema in the world.in this regard, Eleni, Bouka; Marina, Merkouri Maria-; and Theodore, Metaxas stated:

*The Indian film industry, especially Bollywood, has made a significant progress, especially during the last two decades. The history began nine decades ago, when the insecure film production converted into a faceted and huge economic empire. Today, it is the biggest film industry in terms of the film production size. There have been produced almost 27.000 films (more than 1000 per year) and thousands of short movies so far. Having been established as a highly qualified industry, the famous India cinema has made a great progress almost in all parts such as infrastructure, finance, marketing and distribution. ( Eleni, Marina and Theodore).*

The history of the Indian cinema and its development during different periods is so long and since it is not the concern of our paper, a sketch only will be highlighted about it. The history of the Indian cinema goes back to the nineteenth century when the first films were shot and launched in 1896 by Lumiere Brothers and were shown in Mumbai. This production influenced many actors and pushed them towards the field of film producing. One of those famous persons is the photographer Harishchandra Sakharam Bhatavdekar. He was so much influenced by the Lumiere Brothers' production that he ordered a camera from England. Then he recorded his first film in Mumbai in 1899 which was the first film in motion picture in the Indian film industry. Then a new shift of the Indian cinema started in 1913 when Dadasaheb Phalke who is considered the father of indent cinema realised the first full length film under the title (Raja Harishchandra). The silent film was a commercial success and it was showed not only India but also internationally. It was screened in London in 1914. Then he directed more than twenty films from 1913 to 1918. Then numerous companies emerged in the early 1920s and many films were produced. Thought this era formed the commencement and the growth of the Indian film industry, the fast and great shift started with the birth of Bollywood. In 1931, The first ever talkie 'Alam Ara' by Ardeshir Irani was screened in Bombay and it



was the first sound film in India. It was directed by Phiroz Shah. It formed a new phase in the history of the Indian cinema. During the 1930s and 1940s many eminent film personalities such as Debaki Bose, Chetan Anand, S.S. Vasan, Nitin Bose and many others emerged on the scene. With the independence of India, the Indian cinema flourished and the road was paved for producing numberless of films either in Mumbai, Calcutta or in different regions. In this regard, Guru, Sapna and M.Prabhudev argue:-

*The first Indian talkie film Alam Ara was produced in 1931 by Ardeshir Irani. During this period, 249 Tamil films, 134 Bengali films, 89 Telugu films, 87 Marati films and 9 Kannada films were produced. Prominent films of this period include - Bhakta Prahlada (1931), Kalidas (1931), Chandidas (1932), Indra Sabha (1932), Poorna Bhagat (1933), Devdas (1935), President (1937), etc. Madras city also grew well as a prominent film making centre in South India. In the beginning, a good number of mythological, historical and social films were produced in the country. ( Guru, Sapna and M.Prabhudev)*

The period from 1940s to the 60s is classified as the golden age of the Indian cinema. It is the era in which Indian cinema was flourished and its products were widely spread. In this period the, Paralle cinema emerged. It was a great shift of the Indian cinema that appeared in the state of west Bengal and it was the source of more than a quarter of the films produced in India. Then the period of the Classic Bollywood (1970s–1980s) started in which many films from different regions were produced and screened in various languages in different parts of the world. The last era called the new Bollywood period that started in the 90s and continued up to date. It is the period that Indian cinema dominated not only India but also different parts of the world including Yemen that is the area of our study in this paper.

The Indian cinema is as rich as the Indian culture. So, the multicultural Indian society is a rich source for the Indian cinema which plays a major role in portraying it to the world. The Indian culture that is one of the oldest cultures in the world was known to many people in the earth due to its diversity and also due to the absence of a tool that can carry all such rich heritage to different parts of India and to the world. With the emergence and development of the film industry, the citizens of India as well as of the world, found themselves surrounded with the Indian movies, films..etc. Repellently, writing about the Indian cinema is writing about a great empire that produces more than a thousand film that classifies it to be the largest film factory in the world.

### **The Warrior Queen of Jhansi:**

The warrior queen of Jhansi is a series that was directed by the famous indian director Swati Bhise . And was translated into Arabic it was showed in more than five hindered series. Each



series is of twenty five minutes. The Warrior Queen of Jhansi traces the life of Rani Laxmibai, and her journey of becoming an icon for women all across the world. It portrays a real story of a feminist brave fighter who fired the first bullet of the first revolution against the British occupation in 1857 that was represented by the East Indian Company. The film tells the story of Rani Laxmibai. She was married in the age of fifteen years old to the king of the state of Jhansi Maharaja Gangadhar. After her marriage, she gave birth to a boy and the boy was declared as the next heir of the kingdom. Unfortunately, the boy passed away in the age of then the British colonializers refused to admit him as the legitimate heir of the throne. After the death of her husband, she refused to live the life of widowhood like other ladies in her time. She took the responsibility of the city of Jhansi. Rani Laxmibai decided to revolt against the British occupation. She was trained to use the sword and fight until she became a skilful warrior. Then she trained a number of Indian ladies on fighting. She took many battles against the British colonization and freed her land from their occupation. Later, they prepared for a major battle in which queen of Jhansi was martyred.

### **Indian Culture Portrayed by the Series of Jhansi :**

Cinema is a reflection of the society. It is the mirror that reflects a clear picture about the society. India realized this fact early and started to translate its cinema production into different languages one of which is Arabic. Furthermore in 2008, India launched a special channel that produces the Indian films that are translated into Arabic. The channel is called “Zeei Aflam”. In 2012 a new channel was called “Zeei AL-Waan” was established for the same purpose. The result is a wide spread of the Indian culture which results in attracting a large number of the Indian culture lovers to visit India.

Thought the series “The Warrior Queen of Jhansi” is a historical one, it attracts the attention of many people and reflects a picture about India and its culture. The large number of the series that is more than five hundred series covered various topics of the Indian society. Some of which are as follow:

1-It gives a clear picture about the Indian tradition such as clothes, food and dance. The clothes that different characters wear reflects the tradition Indian culture clothes such as Punjabi and Saree. Indian cinema in general and the series of Jhansi in particular have their impact on the Yemeni society. Ladies loved such clothes so they buy them. Moreover, Saree became the dress of the bridegroom instead of the Yemeni traditional clothes. So, the Indian market has been flourishing in Yemen and many markets are available only for Indian clothes. The Indian cinema in general and the series of Jhansi have its impact on the Yemeni kitchen. Many Indian dishes and sweets attracted the attention of the Yemeni people and became available in the Yemeni kitchen and for the Yemeni occasions. The Indian dance is also one of the fantastic things that attracted the Yemeni youth. Many started to imitate it.



2-It also portrays a picture about the different religions in India.

3- It reflects a picture about the cast system. In the wedding ceremony of Rani Laxmibai, one lady who is from lower class touched the bride, the mother of the king scolded her saying “how do you dare to touch the queen. She won’t be pregnant”.

4-The series reflects a clear picture about the way Indians celebrate their marriage. Some people in Yemen started to imitate the Indian marriage ceremonies either in the uniform of the bride and bridegroom or in dancing and other activities.

5- The series give a bright view about the Indian women. They are brave, strong and patriotic. Unlike other series, these series portrayed the Indian women as a brave warrior who fight for the dignity and freedom of her country. When the queen of Jahansi Rani Laxmibai, was asked while she training some women on how to fight, she was asked “will they fight like men?” she answered “No, they will fight better than men.”

6- The way that the occupation look at the Indian people was also portrayed in the series. The look at them as backwards and uncivilized people. There is a common view that the British or the western people in general have about the Middle East countries. They always repeat the slogan “the white people are created to civilize the rest of the world”.

## CONCLUSION:

Cinema is the mirror of the societies. It is through the cinema that people all over the world come to know about the cultures of other countries and nations. Thus, it plays a significant role in reflecting a clear picture about the societies. The Indian cinema (Bollywood) is the best representative of the rich Indian culture. Indian cinema is a bright name that has a long history. It started early particularly in the year 1896. Then it was developed and flourished. Its development history was divided into five stages namely: Silent films, Talkies, Golden age Classic Bollywood, and the new Bollywood period. The recent situation witness a drastic and huge growth of the Indian cinema. It became a dominant one not only inside India but also all over the world. It became an empire that produces the largest number of films and movies. Furthermore, Special channels were established to address special audience. For example, Zee AL-Waan and Zee AFlaam are two channels that are established for the Indian movies and films that are translated into Arabic. The result is a direct influence on the Arab citizens in general and Yemenis in particular. The warrior queen of Jahnasi is an example. It conveys a clear image about the Indian society. It has its impact on the Yemeni society in different aspects such as food, clothes, marriage ceremonies, and dance.



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