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

Lecture – 19 Bollywood Assemblages – II

Hello we will talk about the pleasures of Bollywood today; they are not confined to viewing films. To borrow Ashish Rajadhyakshas definition of Bollywood, today Bollywood refers not only to the visual text of the film, but it includes all those practices, centered on Bollywood, which like, fashions, song, dance, food, dancing, all the practices converging on Bollywood cinema, that contribute to the pleasure of watching films. And this has been so right from the very beginning, when people went to watch films; particularly diasporic viewers went to watch films, not to watch the film per se, but also to perform certain forms of sociality, which reminded them of home. So, the importance, the pleasures of Bollywood films, films today, have extended to include other pleasures mainly that was singing and dancing to Bollywood song and dance, but also life styles, fashions, and even food.

Let's look at some of these assemblages related to Bollywood cinema; I would be taking the case study of one particular space, mainly, Singapore, since I have conducted my field work there, to illustrate the forms of sociality, produced by Bollywood films in the present context.

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Assemblage

- In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation and segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomenon of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage. A book is an assemblage of this kind, and as such is unattributable(2004 4).
- Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia

I am, I am indebted to this theoretical concept, construct I have used as deleuze and Guattari's notion of assemblage, in their book, A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia, in which they talk which explained the idea of assemblage, and show the main point to be taken here, from here is, that the, the, the book is an assemblage today, rather than, because in a book, the lines of articulation and segmentarity, strata and territories, but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flows on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage. So, I have quoted from Deleuze and Guatarri to explain what assemblage means, how they define assemblage.

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Bollywood as Assemblage

Viewing Bollywood cinema as an assemblage, this
presentation examines the multiplicities of affects on
various bodies, spaces and media produced by popular
Hindi films in Singapore through the intersection of the
intensities of the Bollywood film with other intensities
(Deleuze and Guattari 2004). Interviews were
conducted for this essay in Singaporer between 13
October 2008 to 3 August 2009 with male and female
audience of all ages and nationalities in cinema halls,
clubs and community events. Research on the paper
was completed during my tenure in Asia Research
Institute between August 2008-July 2009.

And we would look at Bollywood cinema, as one such assemblage. Instead of the book we look at film, we look at the multiplicities of affects on various bodies, spaces, and media, produced by popular Hindi films in Singapore, through the intersection of the intensities of the Bollywood film, with other intensities. And interviews were conducted for this in Singapore, between 13 October 2008 to 3rd August 2009, with male and female audience of all ages and nationalities, and research was completed in between 2008 and 2009.

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Assemblage

• Particularly relevant in their description of the book as an assemblage is their emphasizing that "it has no object but only itself in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs" (2004 4). Their suggesting that instead of asking what a book means, "we will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with which other bodies without organs it makes its own converge" (2004 4) interrogates the referential function of signs. The relationship between 'collective assemblages' (2004 8) signals 'a break between regimes of signs and their objects' (2004 4). Deleuze and Guattari have also interrogated the expectation that art should imitate a reality outside itself and substituted the search for origins or roots with the concept of the rhizome, which "ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (2004 8).

So, this is based on my own field work. So, in particularly relevant in Deleuze and Gauttaris description of the book, as in an assemblage is the emphasizing that it has no object, but only itself in connection with other assemblages, and in relation to other bodies without organs. They are suggesting that instead of asking what a book means, we will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things. So, instead of looking at what a film means, in the context of cinema, which is what we normally tend to do, we, we need to ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things, does it does or does not transmit its intensities, in which other multiplicities it is own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what other bodies without organs, it makes it is own converge.

So, what are the other things with which it functions? As he said that, the forms of sociality, as in the case of my friend in Tanzania, who watched Mera Naam Joker thirteen times, it was the function that the film performed, rather than the film itself. The forms of sociality it performed, in relation with the production of Indianess or desiness in Tanzania, in connection with what are things, such as foods, such as dressing, ethnic. So, it is with this other, things the films transmits or does not transmit, transmit, it is intensities, and the multiplicities in which it is own are inserted.

So, when we are looking at a film, we are looking at, at it in relation with, with other assemblages, such as the spaces within which they are inserted, such as the, the bodies with which they intersect, with which they converge. So, these interrogate the referential function of films. The relationship between collective assemblages of pronunciation, and that function directly with machinic assemblages, signals a break between regimes of signs, and their objects. So, it no longer confine the pleasures of watching Bollywood films, because the reasons for watching them in the diasporas have been different, not in terms of it is aesthetic merit, what if will means, what, what aesthetic strengths and weaknesses, how have we to appreciate a film in terms of it is aesthetic qualities, but what it does, what functions it performs, that becomes very important in the case of not only it is transnational circulation, but also in the functions it produces, for different groups of global viewers, and global fans of Bollywood films.

Now, Deleuze and Guattari, also have, have also interrogated the expectation, that art should imitate a reality outside itself, and substituted the search for origins or roots, with concept of the rhizome, which ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic

chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles.

So, let us look at the semiotic chains, that a rhizomic movement between films and all other pleasures were connected with them, that Bollywood films produced today, in order to understand the pleasures of Bollywood films.

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Tactile, Visual, Olfactory?

Sobchaks asked "what have we, as contemporary media theorists, to do with such tactile, kinetic resonant, and sometimes even taste-full descriptions of the film experience"? Focusing on "media as a contested production of sensation", Rai argues against such as an approach as his "focus on the body's affects modulated across these cultural and technological thresholds" is committed to "furthering ongoing explorations of the specific modes of address of Indian film genres as they articulate in feedback loop relations with active audience" (2009 4). "How does audiovisual technology circulate regimes of sings and sounds such that they seem to 'catch on' to the very bodies of newly globalized consumers", he asks(2009 3).

And Charles Sobchaks asked, what have we as contemporary media theorists, to do with such tactile kinetic resonant and sometimes tasteful experiences, descriptions of the film experience. We are not talking only about the pleasure of viewing a film, but also the tactile, the kinetic, or even the tasteful experiences of the film going experience. Those of us who have watched film in a theater, when theater going was the more preferred by most people, we recall with nostalgically recall the forms of sociality they perform, the entire environment that was created by the, by the, so called lumpen elements in theaters, who would whistle, hoot, who would clap, if they liked a particular part of the film, or dislike the certain part of the film, and that contributed the film viewing experience.

Now, where most of us watch films in the privacy of our homes on DVDs or even on laptops in the privacy of our bedroom, bedroom or sitting room that, that surrounding space which we had, when we watched film when film was a community, communal view experience has vanished. Creating, making the film, maybe film viewing experience is very different from what it was in the past, and I found that in the

diasporas, this tactile, kinetic and tasteful description, of film going still perform a very important role. Focusing on media as a contested or production of sensation, Amit Rai argues, that against such an approach as his focus on the body's affects, modulated across these cultural and technological thresholds, is committed to furthering on going explorations of the specific modes of address of Indian film genres, as they articulate in feedback loop relations with active audience.

So, the film has no meaning on it, on it is own, it is not meaning the audience construct of it, the forms of, the meanings that they make out of it, the, the functions to which the audience appropriate these films, are equally important in the film viewing experience today.

How does audio visual technologies circulate regimes of songs and songs, signs and songs, sorry signs and songs, such that they seem to catch on to the very bodies of new globalized consumers. So, I will not go into the assemblage, with the machinic assemblage, because that is another area altogether, but I confine myself to the forms of sociality produced by Bollywood films today.

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We have visited Jade theater and cineplex in Singapore, and as we crossed the road and we climb, we went up the escalator, as we approached the Jade theater, is a up market upscale boutique called Run Fab which markets, which stocks the latest Bollywood themed merchandize, and very often, invariably, in fact, I have found as viewers walked

to the theater, hooked on to the theater, particularly, particularly young women, as this merchandizes more female attire, stopped or posed to check out the merchandise on the way, on their way down to the theater.

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So, the Bollywood viewing experience is now implicated with the pleasures of not just watching the film, but also off dressing like a ones, ones the kind of Bollywood based merchandize, that circulates today, for instance you have a poster of Kal Aaj Kal here, and you have a outfit's from the film, worn by the star of the film, being marketed, being stocked in the sub market boutique, where young women can dress in the manner their Bollywood their favorite Bollywood stars dress, and one can also choose the DVDs of, one can also buy accessories to match the outfits.

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But the most important aspect, in which the, the Bollywood assemblage, the pleasures of Bollywood films, even before the cult for Bollywood films per themselves began in the west, it was Bollywood song and dance, that denigrated Bollywood song and dance, which was decried in earlier views of Bollywood as lowbrow commercial cinema, it is the song and dance which was the first to have won audience in the western world, and many who did not understand the Indian languages, or who could when the films DVDs of the films were still not subtitled in the in English, or in their language, they would still participate in the pleasures of watching, of dancing to Bollywood dances, by performing ah, by emulating the dance movements of, of their Bollywood stars.

And you can see that, Bollywood music video itself creates the space, particularly in the song and dance sequences, not only in the, very often in the club sequences, we find the lead actors being surrounded by ah, we find the lead actors being surrounded by white dancers, and that enables the white audience to insert themselves into the space of Bollywood cinema, and also to actively participate in the space of dance, and of dance in clubs located in global cities all across the world.

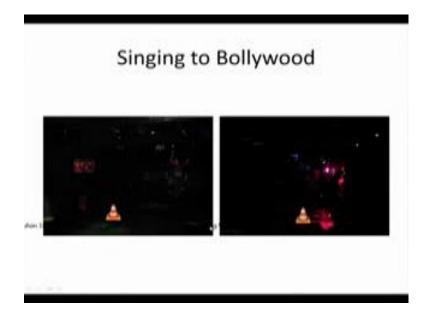
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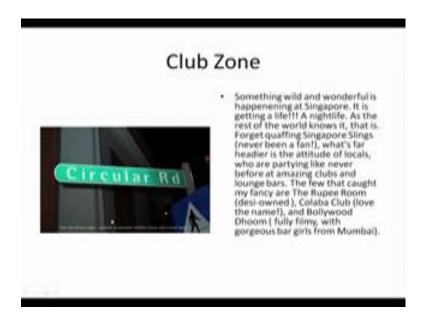
I take you to one such night in Singapore, a Bollywood night in Singapore, which was hosted during the festive season of Diwali in the in a very up market night club, called forbidden city in the Clarke Quay area, and the Bollywood nights, this Bollywood night was a Bhangra cum Bollywood night, which had one of the very popular figures in Bollywood music in the, on the Bhangra scene namely.

A UK based music producer called Rishi Rich, who started his career with producing Bhangra albums, and made his name through, through recording JShawn psychonic album, Mein To Tere Naal Nachana, but move was, quickly appropriated by Bollywood film makers, and many of his songs, many of the songs produced by him, have featured in, in a number of Bollywood films, and here we have them being accompanied by Veronica, the singer of one of his one of his vocalist, who also performed in a film called Hum Tum, and the presence of Veronica on the dance floor in this club electrified the scene, and DJ the Rishi Rich himself, is at the turn table sampling the music, and veronica is dancing to his, to, to the tunes composed by him.

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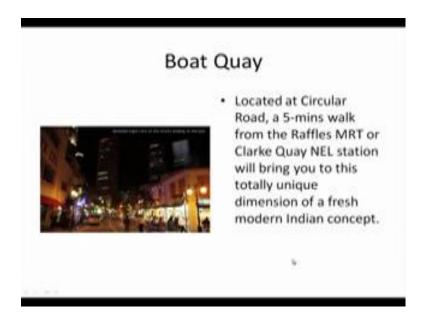
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And then we move on to a Bollywood song, where people sing to Bollywood songs, but from Clarke quay which is in rather up market area in Singapore, I take you to circular road the clubs zone, in circular road, which is something called different from the earlier clubs, and the nights, night which was held in forbidden city. In this club zone we find a number of clubs, not just an occasional live performer from usher from UK, but we have recorded music being performed in these clubs in the club zones, and the, the club itself, somebody, a blogger has reported, something wild and wonderful is happening in Singapore, it is getting a life, a nightlife as the rest of the world knows, that is, forget

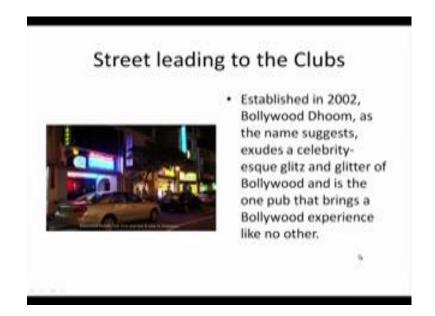
quaffing Singapore slings, what is far ahead here is the attitude of locals, who are partying like never before, at amazing clubs, and lounge bars. The few that caught my fancy are the Rupee Room, Desi Owned, Colaba Club, love the name, and Bollywood Dhoom, fully filmy with gorgeous bar girls from Mumbai.

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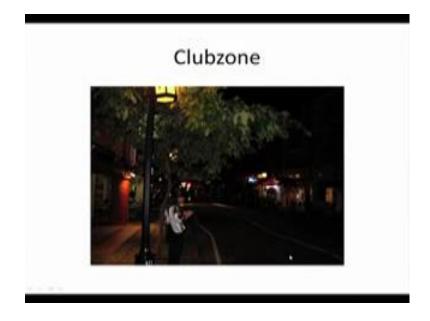
So, as one enters the, the, the club zone, this is Boat Quay, as supposed to Clarke Quay, located at circular road, a five minutes walk from the raffles MRT or Clarke Quay, NEL station, will bring you to this totally unique dimension of a fresh modern concept, because this entire road is, is lined by clubs, named after famous Bollywood films, like Krrish Dhoom and so on.

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And I will take you to one of these clubs, which is called Dhoom, established in 2002, Bollywood Dhoom as the name suggests, exudes a celebrity-esque, glitz and glitter of Bollywood, and is the one pub, that brings Bollywood experience like no other.

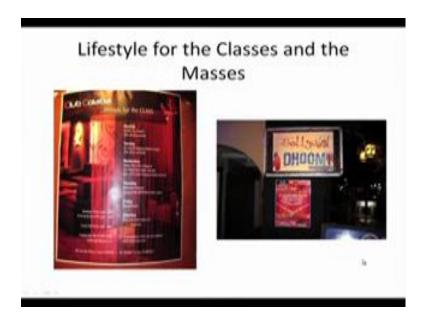
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And across the road in the club zone, we have other clubs. So, just opposite Dhoom, is the Club Colaba, which is a more up market club, but one finds that [Laughter] the club is incidentally owned by the same person, but it differs according to the clientele it gets. (Refer Slide Time: 19:07)

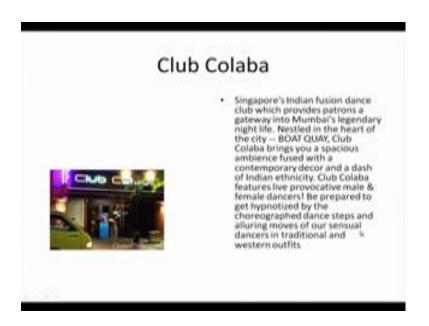


Club Colaba is a more upscale club because the cover charges, it is used by Singaporean youth it is the lifestyle of the classes, the Singaporean youth usually frequent this club, to celebrate Bollywood nights on certain days of the month, as we can say, see, this is during Christmas time, and lot of these nights are being held, the cover charge is fifteen

on Wednesdays, and on Saturdays when you have a resident DJ, or visiting DJ the cover charge goes up further, and because of this it is able to maintain it is exclusivity.

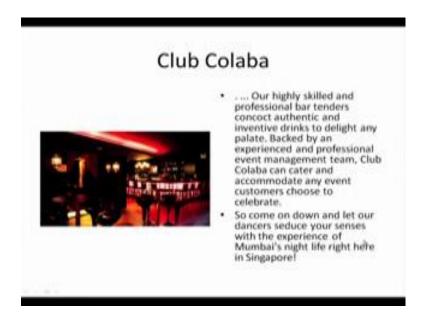
As a manager of the club pointed out to me, that we do not have the riffraff coming and visiting our club, because our club is largely for, for the up market youth. We have a high cover charge, and we restrict entry except to the youth who come here to entertain themselves on the weekend. Youth from wealthy families, she emphasized the Sindhis and the Sikhs, who formed the more elite group of old Indian Diaspora, in Singapore, and it is this group which frequents Club Colaba.

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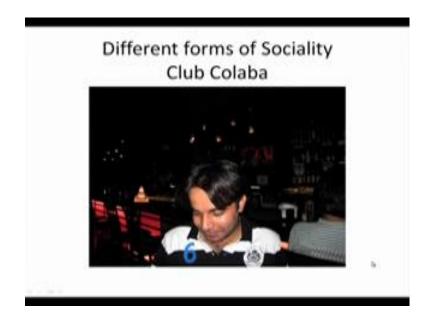
As supposed to that, we have Bollywood Dhoom, which is just across the road, and which I understand is a kind of, let us first look at Club Colaba, Singapore's Indian fusion dance club, which provides patrons a gateway into Mumbai's legendary night life. Nestled in the heart of the city, Boat Quay club Colaba brings you a spacious ambiance fused with a contemporary décor, and a dash of Indian ethnicity. Club Colaba features live provocative male and female dancers, be prepared to get hypnotized by the choreographed dance steps, and alluring movements of our sensual dancers in traditional and western outfits.

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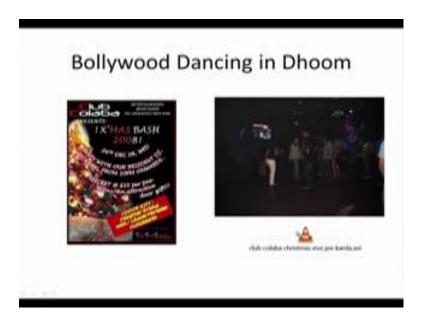
And it is also, it is a lounge bar. So, it has ah, it offers other pleasures. such as professional bar tenders who concoct authentic and inventive drinks, to delight any palate, backed by an experienced and professional event management team, Club Colaba can cater and accommodate any event customers, any event or customers, choose, event that customers choose to celebrate. So, this is from club Colabas website, it invites you to come down and let it is dancers seduce your senses, with the experience of Mumbai's night life right here in Singapore.

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And we see different forms of sociality in Club Colaba being performed.

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I would have to copy these and play them for you because they do not seem, seem to be playing from here. Let me see if I can open it, because I had some clips from here. So, here, rather Sindhi and Punjabi youth, the manager said, who performed here, who come here to shake a leg on the weekends.

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The Club Colaba, Sindhi and Punjabi youth, who frequent the club, you can meet them here, and Bollywood dancing in Dhoom. So, as supposed to the Christmas party, which

was being held in Club Colaba, on a New Years eve, we have these young people who have congregated outside Club Colaba, to enjoy the party.

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But if we move on to Dhoom, it is a different world altogether, because it is a different form of sociality which is being performed in Dhoom. In Bollywood Dhoom, you will step into sensually exotic setting and layered with a slick sophisticated touch. This modern Indian theme establishment exudes the glamour and gilts' of Bollywood, with it is trademark sensational music and exotic dancing. Bring your group of friends, buddies or even by yourself, for a great evening to chill and unwind, and prepare to be hypnotized by the rhythmic and graceful dance moves of beautiful dancers in traditional dresses, especially for flown in from mystic India.

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Now, I found out that these dancers flown in from mystic India, were actually euphemism for the so called dance bars in India, and when the dance bars shut down in Mumbai, all the dancers move to Singapore, and found a more respectful way of earning a living. Now I was, I was lead into Dhoom, by my enthusiastic Chinese intern, who I had asked to, who I had requested to cover the Christmas eve night, I had sent her to Club Colaba to interview the manager, and the early guests, before I could reach there, but she had been more assiduous, and before I arrived there, she was she told me in a very excited fashion, that she had found not only Club Colaba, but she had been she had been working hard and she discovered many more clubs.

Dhoom, Krrish, this is what she told me, Prof. I found so many other clubs, and I even went inside. Now this young woman, eighteen year old young student of n u s who was assisting me, in my field work, led me to the dance bar called Dhoom. It was her description which made me suspects that it was a dance bar, but I did not quite realize, until I accompanied her, led by some Indians who invited me to go and check it out. When she said oh she went into Dhoom, and she found beautiful Indian women in saris, dancing, and middle, middle aged men sitting in a row, my, I, I got extremely suspicious, when I heard this description, but she was extremely excited, that she could see beautiful, girls in beautiful saris dancing.

In Bollywood Dhoom, you will step into a sensually exotic setting, and layered with a slick sophisticated touch, this modern theme. So, this is what it calls itself, and you can see the club goers outside, and we could not take pictures, we can see it is a very hazy picture, from the main arena. Garish interiors, smoky surrounding, self like eighteen year old swaying seductively to a loud Bollywood music, wealthy men generously showering money on dancers, the sights and sounds were familiar, nearly identical. The setting is not that of a dance bar in Grant road or Tardeo, but of one in Singapore's up market entertainment district, Boat Quay, while the moral police clamped down on the infamous hotspots of Mumbai, dance bars have been thriving in this part of the world. Around thirteen such bars have set up shops in Singapore, three in Malaysia, and one in Jakarta, according to one report.

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And here we have the beautiful girls, be prepared to be embraced by exotic dancers; they have flown in from India.

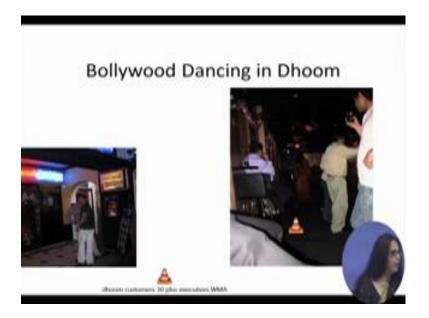
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And be entertained, dancing in beautiful saris, and the manager, the partner in Bollywood Dhoom, says, we prefer to bring in girls from dance institutes, and even ask for resumes to be sent in. Bar owners have a wide range to choose from, and occasionally things get uncomfortable, sometimes mothers urge us to select their daughters. So, some owners, so how this old dance bar culture is organized in Singapore, as supposed to India, where it is more informal, and it is a forbidden pleasure.

I wanted you to, be, we have been to Bollywood, Bhangra nights earlier, and we have seen the kind of sociality that they see song and dance performs in diasporic settings, but there are many spaces of these song and dance, and different forms of sociality, which are produced in alternative dance spaces, for instance, the difference between the dance space of Club Colaba, or the Rishi Rich night, which had a Singapore South Asian, largely south Asian, but also other Singaporean youth, performing their desi identity, or the ethnic identity, through dancing to Bhangra and to, to Bollywood music, in all the Rishi Rich night, and in Club Colaba. Here we have a different form of sociality being produced, but not, but very different from the kind of sociality the dance bars produce, in Indian settings. I will come to that in a minute.

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So, these young men outside Dhoom, and then so called middle aged, middle aged men, sitting inside Dhoom.

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I would if I could, I am sorry I cannot play this, I have to copy them, and play them to you to show that, even though the dance that is performed is the same, the, the pleasures that the dancers the club goers, go, get, after going to Dhoom is very different from the pleasures that a dance bar offers. I will summarize what the Dhoom customers who are largely around the age of thirty, thirty plus, they were not middle aged, that they

were around thirty, and most of them were middle level executives, young men who were working in Singapore, young Indian men working in Singapore, and would not know what to do on their weekends, they would miss home. And most of them confided that the reason why they came to Bollywood to Dhoom, is they came they came here to listen to Bollywood songs and dance, and perform the kind of sociality that was possible in India, not in the regimented and regulated space of Singapore.

So, here they could led their hair down, they could do whatever they wanted, which they could not do in other spaces in Singapore. So, it was not the ah, titillating pleasures of the dance bar, that are contended in India, but a very different forms of this feeling of home, just by listening to Bollywood songs and dance, in all male group, which brought these young executives together, to the space of the dance bar.

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And we conclude by the pleasures of food, by visiting a Bollywood based, Bollywood theme restaurant in Suntec city, which is called Bombay café. It is this, this is there are several branches of this, in Tanjong Katong, this Bollywood themed restaurant is like a breath of fresh air, so is one of the customers. On the outset, this two storey shop house sports bowl colors, refreshing combination of pinkish purplish shade, juxtaposed, against the elegance of black. Then come close and personal indoors with big names in Bollywood with the likes of old favorites, like Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra and new favorites like Amir Khan, Amir Khan, Shah Rukh Khan and Kareena Kapoor and true to

it is Made in Bombay theme, this vegetarian restaurant, serves an authentic and popular array of Bombay street side food. Just as segments of Bombay Bollywood movies are shot overseas to titillate viewers; Bombay cafe also prides itself on serving a fusion of Indian dishes, incorporating Chinese western and local taste.

The decor is to put it mildly, garish the pink and the black theme was a bit too pink for my Ms liking, but I did like the fact that they have screens showing Bollywood movies, having read about Pani Puri on the traveling hungry boys blog, it was something I definitely had to try well except, it is called Gol Gappa six dollars plus, plus, plus here, but it is really the same thing, so how the pleasures of watching Bollywood films, are articulated to the pleasures of food, in this Bollywood themed restaurant, because together they produce the feeling of home.

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And once again I take you back to Jade, because as you, as you enter the Cineplex, you are, you have to find your way through this, food, food bar, which is called Chaat on the Roll, and it promises to sell you Chaat from Chandni Chowk to, Chowk to Chowranghee.

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So, before you enter the, the Cineplex you, you are confronted with the, you are confronted with the on factory pleasure of Indian street food, which already prepares you for the film viewing experience. You can pickup, pickup a Chaat on the on a Roll from here, before entering the cinema hall and have a grab a quick snack, before you enter or on your way back you can pickup some food, and that creates your entire desi evening, you checkout Bollywood fashions along the way, and go back satisfied.

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Now, this pleasure of watching Bollywood films, is not restricted to spaces like Jade, but I found similar nights in Germany, and here is a Bombay boogie night, with the white dancer and some Goris who were at the party. I will quickly play a, a video from some of these parties before I conclude, let me see if I can play the links, which are not, which do not seem to be playing earlier, let us, let us go to Dhoom. So, the, the middle aged men sitting on a stool, are not visible, because we smuggle in their camera, without, without letting the owner see what we were smuggling in, and let us go to Club Colaba. So, you can see how, the, the pleasure of dancing to Bollywood films, in one space is altogether different from that another, another dance space of Dhoom, where a woman is performing for the pleasure of middle aged men.

And ah, more interestingly it was that when I watched the same video, in the same song in Dhoom. So, this was Club Colaba, and the DJ telling us how the idea of Bollywood nights emerged and who was dancing to Bollywood nights, and in these spaces.

And now let us move to the thirty plus customers of Dhoom, to find out why they come to these clubs. Is it for the prurient pleasures of? So, as you can see that, it is not the, the, the gangsters and the middle aged men, who frequent dance bars in India, but thirty plus executives who are there just to produce the feeling of home, and I conclude with this dance space in Canada, and the performance of the same, of a similar song of a Bollywood dance in a party in Canada. So, Bollywoods pleasures are no longer confined

to the pleasures of viewing films, they articulated to several other pleasures, such as those of singing, dancing, of food, of fashions, in the way that Rajadhyaksha explained Bollywood cinema today, or the meaning of Bollywood today.