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RESEARCH ARTICLE

UBIQUITOUS STARDOM- HOSTING OF POPULAR REALITY TELEVISION SHOWS BY BOLLYWOOD STARS

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores and reviews extant literature and seeks to critically engage in a discourse analysis of the practice to engage popular cinema stars to host television shows. Media convergence and rise of celebrity culture has allowed for an expanded scope of circulation for stars and celebrities within trans national global mediascapes. Popular film stars hosting reality shows and television programmes opens up a new site for iconization. It may be seen a deliberate ploy to render the star power to attain an intimate neighbourliness as the aura invested persona ruptures the boundaries of separation upheld by the silver screen to enter domesticated interiors of everyday routinized life .Exploding the aura and the myth that surrounds stardom, the commodified and visually consumable star power of a consumerist world is mobilized as purveyors of commodity culture. It often thus becomes a market-driven imperative to draw upon the star power in a realist re-incarnate.

INTRODUCTION

The seamlessness in flowing image of the star , is no longer containable within the sinews of filmic narrative and seeks an amplification in other spheres-either being cast as saleable commodity by "image-managers" of brands or by the star themselves benefitting from their own "image" by utilizing and exploiting its financial potential in their own business ventures like film production and IPL cricket league's team ownership etc.. Scholarship on stardom allow us to acknowledge that star is not exclusive to film and is constituted within a larger cultural frame and its dynamics. Whether it is static or dynamic (advertising) or not, representations of stars in the larger public domain beyond films accord an ubiquity to the star's presence and therefore to establishes the iconicity of stars and an exploration of the extra filmic terrain reveals that how without consent, choice agency or volition of the people the star attracts our gaze and attention in myriad ways. One such is the star beyond the scripted diegetic role of cinema and propagandist endorsements to host reality television shows. This is the closest popular interface of the star with the public domain with the star presence being intrusively flowing into private domestic space.

This televised tryst with the more banal ironically reaffirms the star value much against the earlier perception of eroding the magical aura.

Televised Stars (beyond Films0- A Seamless flow within Global Media Complex of Bollywood: Star aura and credulous viewing of otherwise fictional cinema produces a leakage between the cinematic and political democracy (as in voting behaviour)is further extendable to the larger public sphere of the extra-cinematic. Miriam Hansen's differentiation of the diegesis and discourse, as cited, are the two levels at which stars 'work -and thisprovides an understanding of the star as a separate parallel commodity. (Srinivas 2009 p 136) Richard Dyer's notion of stardom and star image as cited. correspond to the view of stardom as a composite whole constituted of star character, star persona and star image. While the first two components allow the star to coalesce with diegetic character and a certain typecasting over a period of character acting the third component, i.e. the star image validates the presence of star charisma and star's influence beyond cinema. This is the public domain that draws from cinematic persona and performance and disseminates this image within a mediated sphere for public consumption.

Star image as the third moment of star production is a commodity manufactured and marketed by corporate players in the entertainment-media enterprise, it extends the star value of the actor and is thus enacted into the extra cinematic sphere. The raw materials for this star-commodity are the physical attributes of the actor, his or her behaviours, and tastes in fashion, which are drawn on to create products and services that are marketed by a secondary network of celebrity media enterprises – fan magazines, newspapers gossip columns, celebrity radio, and television shows. These are coupled to the film industry in a web of mutual financial dependency. The strategies deployed are basic to film industries worldwide: organising public appearances and interviews with the star on broadcasting networks, mailing autographed photos of the star to fans, and marketing the star's photographic image through a range of merchandise'. (Jacob, 2010 p 119-120). Films stars today cannot help being cast by what Jacob calls. 'The networks of subsidiary industries spawned by the cinema industry advertisements, publications, and other consumer goods-that also helped to produce a continuum in the complex relationships between film fame, charisma and political fortunes' (Jacob 2010 p. 188).

Vijay Mishra's view of Amitabh Bachchan as a 'parallel text' help us to take our conception of stardom beyond films in popular Hindi films. (Mishra, 2006 on Bachchan) The star text paradoxically is essentially a creation of filmic discourse, mostly films acting as vehicles of star performances. The films draw on images of the star in other films to give them roles as national icons of beauty and desire, presenting them as utopian beings. The circulation of this image in other media allows them to maintain visibility beyond the brief moment of performance and enables the creation of a star persona. Indian television is an ideal medium for this, screening the star's earlier films, video clips of film songs and interviews. The star image is also perpetuated by the film and lifestyle magazines which tell, or claim to tell, of their off screen exploits' (Dwyer 2002 p 94). The image building of star goes beyond diegetic scope and extra-filmic texts contribute to the same. This extra-cinematic text intersects with nation's political and economic discourse and are veritable sources of nation's social history, albeit unofficial. Observing the social political and historical relevance of extra cinematic texts on star's multiple engagements, both private and public alike, Viridi observes a close reliance on social texts beyond films records must. Reading them as the parallel to films, star texts offer a wealth of information about cultural politics, particularly about a particular period – in this case, India's post-independence years. This methodological innovation is in reaction to the exigency of the situation – the emptiness of official archives – and draws upon the domain of the popular to read the popular. Print media purports to reveal the truth about the lives of the stars and it is shaped by its own conventions but suffers particular constraints (Viridi 2003, p 137). This is not to seek the disjunctiveness of the extra cinematic sphere instead to examine the coalescence from the extra cinematic sphere, that is, the public arena outside the cinema industry where knowledge and information about cinema circulates in a range of media formats. (Jacob 2010 p 3). Media convergence may be cited as one of the most important reasons for which the extra-cinematic has acquired eminence and allowed for the amplification of the intra-textual universe spilling beyond films.

Unlike earlier stars whose fame and status was largely contingent on box-office return no longer is valid. (Bose 2006 p 30). The star images spill across in other spheres of the media and his/her engagement besides being lucrative for the media patrons and star himself/herself, allow the star-image to be exploited for profitable returns by media producers and companies and also expand the possibility for people to familiarise themselves with the star image independent of film viewing. Thus promotional tools from radio, to Internet, to print media are appropriating the cinematically devised charisma. The star image beyond films, while often in continuity with the cinematic persona or in conjunction with the filmic performance is different as a mode of representation before the audience and as means of access to them. Unlike the conventional theatre bound spectatorship which enables a more attentive transfixed gaze and privileges viewership access to the screened spectacle, in the case of the extra-cinematic encounter communicated by other media- it is mostly static images that are more fleeting (Jacob 2010 p. 228).

Jacob argues that the widely spread images of celebrities and political leaders is in agreement with the cultural and religious conventions where the 'iconic' divine is understood to be fluidly omnipresent and capable of multiple forms and locales of existence. As Jacob says that the devout Hindu, the icon is an embodiment of the divine, not merely a visual representation, and involves an extensive range of interpretations of divine manifestation which is legitimised under Hinduism's emphasis on individual perceptions, its absence of formal organization and coercive power, and its lack of theological stricture. Such wide latitude for variation and modification, opens up a religious space that, in popular Hinduism, allows for a fluid comprehension of divinity in several forms. This allows to understand the translation of the star power and the godly aura that Indian film celebrities and political leaders widely command. (Jacob 2010 p 251) Jacob's contention lead us to see how a star's multiple casting across films and beyond in several popular sites and registers allow to illustrate the ability of them to appear in plural incarnates or avatars. The iconicity, popularity and pervasive presence of the star is connivingly reinforced in wide range of extra cinematic space and engagement of the star within it. The importance of the extra cinematic. I argue his in the fact that it negotiates with the pre-investedness of the star's image and every such instance act as accretions to his image. These are presentations before the public gaze and each occasions add to the evolving publicness of the image. The (pre) investedness of these symbols means that their every public instance has the potential to form an incarnation: a seed crystal of actualization. The value (or devaluation) of an image is evidently linked to the extent to which its investment (or disinvestment) is performed within the public gaze (Jain 2007 p 159).

While conceding to the significance of extra cinematic and the fluidly mobile star signified in a wide range of extra concentrate spaces covering the public domain, it needs to be added that how the 'cinematic' too has its expression beyond the space of both public and private exhibition. Bollywood as a cultural repertoire is mobilized variedly in multiple sites through discursive practices. Bollywood is more of a style, an ensemble of signs, codes, meanings inscribed on other elements of our cultural lives like fashion, clothes, dance, music food, decor etc (Rajdhyaaksha 2009 p 51-52)

The presence of Bollywood no longer contingent on revenue returns of films or its financiers but on consumption of its wide range of cultural products that renders it independent of exhibition and its earnings. The translation of the 'Bollywood phenomena into a cultural discourse no longer containable within diegetic limits but as site for discussive appropriations popular use and consumption. Bollywood as a separate popular culture domain beyond films and independent of statist control naturalizes the extra cinematic engagements of popular stars like Shah Rukh in advertisements private/public performances, sports etc. With Bollywood, creating its own territory or a tradition of popular culture, drawing from films, and making incursions into areas beyond films like dance, music, food etc. lead to a permeation of Bollywood or "Bollywoodization". This overwhelming Bollywoodized influence was more than often mediated through star bodies and star image or star presence act as veritable carriers of Bollywood Culture.

The translation of Bollywood films into other cultural spheres was enabled only through a proliferation of media outlets and avenues that disseminated it to various corners of the world. In other word as per Rajadhyaksha Bollywood is a 'product of globalization' (ibid p 70) Today, it is a producer of culture commodities of which film is only one and therefore the role that film plays is a key sub-set in its overall self-definition' (ibid p 83) Rajadhyaksha's view of Bollywood as an assemblage of popular culture paradoxically dilutes the boundaries between cinematic and extra cinematic and stars effectively allow in diffusion of such boundaries through their multiple roles in films and beyond. Rajadhyaksha's argument find its resonance in Vasudevan's view of film scholarship exploring richer possibilities of looking at the various component practices that surrounds film making. Vasudevan notes that film studies has started moving away from film spectator relationships to the vista opened by other realms of image and sound based entertainment. (Vasudevan 2010, p 11-12). Film making and various aspects of entertainment and aesthetic forms are conjoining to constitute the extra cinematic. Its primary function is to provide a launching pad, mis-en-scene and seductive allure to mobilize the spectators into a wide spectrum of consumer desire. Above all this cinema is subject to corporate investment, regulation and diversified investment profiles in an entirely novel way' (ibid p 392-393). Cinema thus become a component in the larger commodity complex, it emerge as a culture institution by aligning with a consumer orientation and leads to an overall suborientation of the cinema to wide spectrum of culture industries that has elaborated itself and is to be seen in large gamut of media constellation (ibid 397). Such a view makes cinema and other aspects of culture industries and popular entertainment a composite whole rendering it almost natural for star as a fluid signifier to straddle from one from to another media form within the larger constellation.

Bollywoodization is inextricably related to globalization. Globalization has been a great propeller of change in India's history of media and entertainment. This opened up proliferating opportunities for Bollywood to popularize itself globally, as a cultural complex in forms beyond films. This expansive mode of Bollywood under the aegis of global capital and media convergence has opened up avenues for stars' extra-cinematic performance in areas like television, sports, ads. etc.

The post-global influx (and travel) of multinational capital and cultural apparatuses has had a visible effects of Bollywood. The regional avatars of syndicated television shows have involved Bollywood stars (Bhattacharya-Mehta, 2011 p 13). Shah Rukh for instance hosted 'Kaun Banega Crorepati' (an Indian vision of 'Who wants to be a Millionaire'). The growth of post-global media in India argues Bhattacharya has been invariably connected to Bollywood in some form on the other (ibid p. 13). Compared with traditional culture, modern culture, Rojek argue is super-dynamic where genres come and go in tremendous speed. In genres that have become internationally popular are television in reality shows where 'existing fame is magnified and repositioned. More interestingly people plucked from the rank and file are elevated, however temporarily into stardom. The suspension of the ... between celebrity ascendance and the audience exposes questions about the nature of fame and the 'docility' of consumers. Reality T.V. operates by staging improbable combinations of people in confined situations and recording the results'. (Rojek, 2007. p. 13).

Engagement of popular stars like Shah Rukh Khan in popular television (reality) shows allows him to recast his image and popularity vis-à-vis the ordinary people. These shows bring him closer to the people (audience) and herein a kind of 'routinization of charisma' is noticed where the otherwise myth and aura of the star is differently used in bringing them close to the ordinary. Such shows according instant stardom to ordinary render "stardom" closer to reach. Conversations of the star, with the participants in T.V. Shows like Kaun Banega Crorepati (KBC) in an easy endearing style, defying all that sets apart the star from the ordinary acquires new meanings for the millions aspiring for fame and mobility.

Rather than reflecting reality, 'Reality TV reflects how rituals of behaviour designed to convey reality are performed for TV transmission and consumed in consumer culture...' (Rojek, 2007. p. 15). The engagement of stars in endorsement campaigns sees them mobilise star power to provide consumer items and commodities. But this is not confined to consumer items alone, he is part of such shows where simulated reality is transmitted for its images to be consumed Reality shows are veritable audio-visual sites of consumption where like advertisements star power is used. There is no difficulty in recognizing that television is a global phenomenon in its production dissemination and viewing pattern and even grows every day. The phenomenal growth of television market worldwide needs to be seen as integral to globalization. Barker urges that television may be considered to be global in terms of:

- The various configuration of public and commercial television that are regulated, funded and viewed within the boundaries of nation states;
- The technology ownership programme distribution and audiences for television that operates across the boundaries of nation states;
- The world-wide circulation by television of similar narrative forms and discourses. (Barker, 2002. p. 134).

In addition to globalization of television technology, Barker notes the synergy and convergence in global television in the context of wider transformations in the communication industries. Technological progress and coupled with market changes has contributed to the convergence (or erosion of

boundaries) between organizational sectors and thus the creation of global communication giants' (ibid). This synergy convergence and de-regulation is particularly important in terms of its impact in India following post-liberalization. The global circulation of stars is therefore more of a television mediated and televised representation. This involvements in reality show, television-interviews and chat shows advertisements and films shown in television render him globally known and recognizable. These programmes are part of growing globalization or transnationalization of local and national programmes. And despite an early dominance of U.S. controlled media. a growing number of nations are producing an increasing proportion of their own programming and indeed, there has been a distinct move towards regionalization of markets on the basis of shared language, culture and historical trade links and that there are a number of 'geo-cultural markets emerging' Further, these markets are not necessarily bounded by geographical space but involve Diaspora populations distributed world-wide. (Barker, 2002, p. 138). Globalization of local/regional television programmes are channels that facilitates trans nationalization of celebrities and stars as true for Shah Rukh Khan also. It is also one of the most popular means beyond films, that allows Diaspora to gain visual access to the star. A new conception of the family as one the key areas of reading and of cultural codification of TV is beginning to leave behind the trite unrealistic conception of the relation of TV and family – with TV as the corrupter of family traditions and philosophy that attributes nothing more than entertainment function to television. The mediation that daily life of family exerts on television is not, however, limited to reception. It is present in the discourse of television itself. Beginning with family as the space of close relations and proximity, television carries out two key functions: one is simulation of contact and rhetoric of direct communication.

Simulation of contact entails all those of mechanisms through which TV specifies its mode of communication organized around the 'phatic function'. This function of concentration around interpersonal relations is important because of the dispersion of attention in the intimate daily life of the private home in contrast to the personal isolation and concentration of attention in the public atmosphere of darkened cinema. The emphasis is not upon psychological dimension of the experience but on the perspective of cultural anthropology viz the eruption of the world of fiction and the world of show business entertainment into the routine of daily life. Given the contrast between these two worlds, intermediaries emerge in the formats of TV to facilitate the transition from daily reality to the fictional world of the entertainment of spectacle. Thus, television provides two basic models of intermediary the personality who is somewhat distant from the fictional world of popular entertainment – the 'master of ceremonies anchor person or host and the colloquial tone'. (Barbero 1993 p 216-217). Keeping in view the kind of communication that TV forges and the contact simulated through the mediation of the intermediary host, brings to give the kind of de-escalation the star personalities engages in from being a distant figure of aura to someone who appeals to the family as the TV host. This rhetoric of direct address, Barbero argues involves devices that organize the space of TV around the axis of proximity and magic of seeing in opposition to film dominated by distance and magic of seeing. Films as archetype of transfigured realities despite drawing spectatorial involvement and fascination provided in close-

ups of personalities, film spectators are kept at a distance. In contrast to the space of the film, so alluring precisely for its distancing, the space of the TV is dominated by the intimacy of seeing, with a proximity constructed by means of montage that is sustained on the basis of a real or simulated direct shot. The experience of TV watching produces a sense of immediacy that also characterize daily life. The practice of TV watching allow spectators to gain proximity to the characters and events and through a discourse which makes everything familiar and transforms even the most strange or distant objects into something very close - (Barbero ibid P 218). When Shah Rukh and stars like him come to TV and hosts programmes rupturing their distance and aura into a simulated contact some of direct address and familiarity – brings the star closer home. It poses of something like 'routinization of starry charisma'. Instead of playing a role the star as himself engages himself in a more direct, realist communication circuit. Through 'TV's neighbourliness' (Hermes 2005 p 9) the star forges a link with a large number of people in a more direct mode of communication privileged by his position as a host or anchor of the programme of TV show. Bringing home into private space of the home, the public image of the star at a particular time in a specific programme sees him invading our everyday routine life. It leads to a certain privatization of the public image of the star in shows like KBC where he directly engages in a communication with the family audience and participants (on the set itself. Television programmes broadcast by privately funded channels allow for what is an independent social space that is outside state monitoring and control (Berger et al. 2002 at p 28) where stars like Bachchan and SRK in reality programmes communicate and address a cultural citizenry (Hermes ibid).

Shah Rukh's anchoring in T.V. shows like Kaun Banega Crorepati after his attainment of stardom is different from his acting as a young T.V. actor in mid-80's in serials that became quite popular with the audience all over the country. Notwithstanding, this hiatus bound to both time and his status, what remains is how he is mediated via the small screen and invades the private/domestic space. Like the television and its awful omnipresence of communication the star becomes for the people a household name. Invested with this power of communication circuits, into which people are drawn the star acts as a vehicle – making incursions into people's mind and interior space. Television rendering the star ubiquitous makes him a tool to draw in the glamorous discourse of stardom into people's private life, where he is not an actor but after many years arrive on the screen as a star (Docker 1994 p 104).

CONCLUSION

Stars invested with an aura and magical attraction are explored beyond diegetic scope of films in a more realist way through popular television shows. This deployment is reinforced by the logic of rendering the star as a purveyor of consumption goods as in propagandist endorsements or advertising campaigns. This allows for greater promotion of the programme through sponsorships of various companies investing in these televised programmes. The convergence of media and the emergence of Bollywood as a cultural aggregation creates a seamless tapestry of visuality that no longer holds the divide of the silver screen against other

forms of media. The pervasive, permeating and ubiquitous presence of the star reproduces and reinvents variety of avatars for media texts. Television and its privatized mode, its embeddedness within a familial domesticated locale is a calculated appropriation to explore a more personal and dialogic relation with people and fandom in particular. Attributing a closeness, an acquaintance and a privileged personal intimacy creates a closer and accessible bridge with the star. According a constructed ordinariness to the otherwise glamorized icon forges an interface with the people. The casting of stars in televised avatar contrary to the perception of undermining their magic allows a popularly acclaimed site for the star to speak interpellatively and accedes a performativity beyond the scripted.

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