

## Bollywood – India’s Cashier and Cultural Ambassador



In Las Vegas, the melting-pot of the world, there is a good chance that visitors will come across an American musician, wearing boots and a cowboy hat, strumming a guitar and singing out loud and clear, “ Mera jootha hai Japani, yeh pathloon Englsthani, sar pe laal topi Rusi, phir bhi dil hai Hindustaani” ( *My shoes are Japanese, my pant is English, my red hat is Russian, yet my heart is Indian*).

Seldom has a song like this one, from the 1951 Bollywood film *Sree 420*, captured the hearts of millions the world over. Overnight, it catapulted producer director and actor Raj Kapoor onto the world map and endeared the simpleton from India to millions abroad. The film revolved around love that could break socio-economic differences and was a super-hit in the erstwhile Soviet Union, East Asia, Africa, and Middle East. It was included in the All-Time 100 Greatest Films by Famous Publications. Other films from India that made it to the global charts include *The Apu Trilogy*, *Pyaasa*, *3 Idiots*, *Lagaan*, *Nayakan*, *Drishyam* and *Charulata*.

The yen for Bollywood films is not recent. A term used to describe Hindi movies from India’s film-making hub Mumbai, Bollywood’s *Dharti Ke Lal* was the first Indian film to have a commercial release overseas. It was released in the Soviet Union in 1949. *Aan*, was the first Indian film to have a worldwide release in 1952. With subtitles in 17 languages, the film was released in 28 countries including the United Kingdom, United States, France, and Japan, and earned considerable overseas revenue. Decades hence, Indian films continue to pull crowds around the world. Movies like *Mughal-e- Azaam*, *Guide*, *Sholay*, *Salaam Bombay*, *Dilwale*

Dulhaniya Le Jayenge, Kabhi Khushi, Kabhi Gham and Slumdog Millionaire to more recent films like Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga, Manmarziyaan and Uri, reflect the aspirations of an evolving society. This is true of powerful films in regional languages as well.

Valued at around US\$ 2.5mn in 2018\*, the Indian film industry is the world's largest producer of films. This figure is expected to grow to US\$ 3.21 by 2023.

Professionals associated with the movie industry are investing in India in different areas like financing Indian films, co-production, post production services, outsourcing special effects, recreating shooting locales, offering visual props and photographic equipment, offering high-end data storage solutions, establishing distribution channels, film exhibiting infrastructure such as multiplexes, investment in local content, etc

A great return on investment, Indian films, especially Hindi, Telugu and Tamil films sometimes generate an average of over 500 per cent of their original cost. The strong box office performance of the industry is encouraging, with growing overseas contributions, particularly because of the entry into emerging markets like China. India's regional film industry has also been faring well with its contributions of up to 45 – 50 per cent of box office revenues.

Overseas collections for blockbuster films have been huge. Bollywood film Sultan grossed \$24.2 million (₹161 crore) overseas, making it the sixth-highest-grossing Indian film in overseas markets. Dangal, the highest, grossed US\$ 118.4mn, while Bahubali 2: The Conclusion, a Telugu film dubbed in different languages grossed US\$ 60mn. With their socially relevant context and universal themes, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam films have also fared well in international markets.

Substantial demand for entertainment, increasing digital user base and healthy growth in the nation's economy have provided impetus to the domestic film industry. Other factors such as increasing revenues from digital rights - one of the fastest growing revenue streams and technology which is playing a critical role in adding value has made this industry attractive to investors. The fact that India has moved up the value chain by enabling VFX and cutting-edge animation services for complex, high- quality film projects for both domestic and international markets acts as yet another magnet. Joint production and co-production agreements have been signed with several countries like China, Korea, Italy, Germany, Brazil, France, New Zealand, UK, Poland, Spain and Canada under the guidance of this office.

Indian cinema has done much for building cultural relations between India and other nations of the world. The Indian diaspora abroad has played an important role in fostering the connect. With the Government also now taking a more active role in building the industry capabilities, Bollywood, and its regional compatriots are poised to make their presence felt even more, among international audiences.