

Journal Title: *Wide Screen*

Vol 1, Issue 2, June 2010

ISSN: 1757-3920

URL: <http://widescreenjournal.org>

Published by Subaltern Media, 17 Holborn Terrace, Woodhouse, Leeds LS6 2QA

“BHAGAT SINGH TOPLESS, WAVING IN JEANS”: MELANCHOLIA THROUGH MIMESIS IN *RANG DE BASANTI*

KSHAMA KUMAR

Abstract: How is history mapped on the topography of twenty first century India? It seems apt to study the idea through modern India's largest popular culture industry: Bollywood. This paper will examine the interaction between history and modern India in *Rang de Basanti*/*Paint it Yellow* (2006). The film employs history to understand the present. This paper, therefore, seeks to understand the different processes by which the film accomplishes this goal. It will involve a detailed study of the melancholia within the film which allows history and the present to co-exist. Temporal and spatial fluidity is afforded in the film through the mimetic process of the meta-drama, which will also then be studied to better understand the melancholic condition. The melancholic and the mimetic in the film, allow for an examination of the socio-political condition that the film seeks to represent. The film, this paper will argue also employs a critique of modern day governance. The paper will thus come full circle and examine modern day politics as a system of political history in action: pre colonial politics in a postcolonial world.

Rakyesh Omprakash Mehra's *Rang de Basanti* (*Paint it Saffron*, 2006), opened, paradoxically for a Bollywood production, not on the pull of its star, Aamir Khan, but the debates spinning off its controversial screenplay. It sparked off debates that percolated through main stream society, invaded socialist spaces and entered the blogosphere. Set in modern day India, it recreated the jean clad generation, with as much authenticity as the revolutionaries it pitted them against. The twist that sets it apart in commercial Hindi Cinema, is that it wasn't a biopic nor was it a straight arrow commercial success story. Indian cinema is not new to the biopic – everyone from M. K Gandhi to Subash Chandra Bose, have been enshrined in Bollywood.ⁱ Bhagat Singh and the revolutionaries who ushered in “Inquilab Zindabad” (Long live the Revolution) have been transformed time and again by everyone from Manoj Kumar to Bobby Deol and Ajay Devgan.ⁱⁱ *RDB's Wide Screen*, Vol 1, Issue 2. ISSN: 1757-3920 Published by Subaltern Media, 2010

contribution to the Bollywood canon, stems from the juggling it accomplishes with the different genres, time periods and story lines. The purpose of this paper is to understand the mechanics behind the film. This paper will try to unravel the screenplay through a three pronged theoretical study. Ranjana Khanna's *Postcolonial Melancholia*, Michael Taussig's *Mimesis* and Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics*. Each of the authors make a unique contribution towards our understanding of the film, and thereby, lend themselves to a study of the film as enacting and attempting to influence a social reality.

Before launching into an understanding of each of the concepts that will shape this paper and mapping the same on to the body of the film, it is important to understand the film as a phenomenon in its own right. The film flagrantly mixed two distinct sub genres – the film for the young generation and the patriotic film. It involved the usual paraphernalia of a college romance film: suitably vague campus, drinking, dancing and, what one reviewer called, the leading of a “vacuous life”, but with the added touch of martyrdom, self-sacrifice and a higher cause based on the young revolutionaries, Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqulla Khan. As discussed, Bhagat Singh has been a popular hero for Hindi cinema audiences. *RDB*, however makes a unique contribution. The film is not a biopic, but an alternate representation of a historical event; the events are not the focus of the film for it presupposes an inherited knowledge of the historical events. The film appropriates history to interpret the present, as Neelam Srivastava writes, “(*RDB*) rewrites, or rather restages, Indian nationalist history not in the customary pacifist Gandhian vein, but in the mode of martyrdom and armed struggle” (Srivastava 2009). Its unique contribution to the Bollywood canon lies in this ability to swing between the past and present. The film does not regurgitate standard issue patriotism explored in the aforementioned biopic(s). It instead concocts a unique blend of past and present: the past is not only showcased but is also employed to remodel the present. History has been packaged for a modern generation and the title of this essay borrowed from a reviewer, plays on the dual role of the film and its representation of a modern day *vision* of a historic figure (Chaudhary, 2006).

The ‘vision’ or perception of the past and present will be the subject of this paper, but this vision shall be further studied within the theoretical framework of mimesis, melancholia and necropolitics. The film need not be studied only under the three mentioned concepts - it is not the intention of this paper to impose a tripartite structure – but each of the concepts grow organically out of the discourse on the film. Firstly, the mimetic nature

of the fluidity between the past and present, secondly, the melancholia that is symptomatic of such a transition between tempo-realities and finally, ideas on sovereignty that help understand the postcolonial melancholia extant in a postcolonial nation. The film spins these concepts into a screenplay, this paper will argue, and the theory is thus endemic to the film itself! This paper will therefore deconstruct *RDB*, as a process of melancholia in a postcolonial context. The use of the camera including its ability to facilitate mimesis, as an enabler in the process, will then be studied, following which Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics* will be analysed, as a concept that binds the two tempo-realities of the film (Mbembe 2003).

To start at the beginning, the paper will define these terms and will later contextualise the meanings within the screenplay of the film. However, to truly start at the beginning of a film's progress: the stills or photography is an interesting point to launch, for it begins the relationship between an audience and a film. A study of most of the stills for *RDB*, reveals that the film was initially sold on the basis of it being a film on youth culture. The stills seem to explore friendship more than the patriotic; the revolutionaries are not seen in the initial stills and neither the history. The film therefore seems to verily root itself in the present. The film nonetheless, and despite its initial USP, functioned closely on two images: turbaned Bhagat Singh of the past and the jean clad student of the present. The film was unique in its presentation of these two socio temporal realities, in that it not only juxtaposed these two images, but seemed to coalesce them into one. The two intertwining images are startling: one of a national leader and revolutionary, the second, a portrait of middle-class, young India in the twentieth century. The contrast was deeply challenging and yet intriguing as history was re-imagined. It jolted one out of the lethargy of postcolonial memory where history was assigned to the arena of classrooms and academia. Past and present congealed and the result was that the film opened a veritable Pandora's Box of questions, theories and opinions – Did history and the idealism of the freedom struggle have a place in the apathy of modern day India? How far removed was the current generation of the young from the youth of the past? Is apathy and corruption a nexus that cannot be broken unless we grapple with the memory of our violent history? It raised these and many other questions; it was discussed at length for the violence some felt it promoted, while also being praised for trying to make history relevant.ⁱⁱⁱ *RDB* had set off more debates than any other film in recent memory, for it explored history but also problematised inherited views of the freedom struggle.

The still photography functioned in another capacity: heralding the mimetic into the film. It captured a newly stylised Bhagat Singh, while also making a bold statement containing considerable shock value, for to involve Bhagat Singh in this image, is to contrast a political revolutionary with a present generation, who are considered to be both apathetic and hedonistic^{iv}. A discussion on the relationship between the politics of the present and the past is immediately and inevitably generated. The past entails a study of the revolutionary extremism that Bhagat Singh heralded, and the present an examination of the apathy of the young generation^v. Two extremes at once irreconcilable are contrasted, and in the process, they unleash a barrage of questions about modern society, violence, political apathy and historical recuperation. It questions each element: society, violence and apathy of the present by contrasting it with the idealism of the past. But is the young man of today more interested in getting drunk or helping change the order of society? The questions on the apathy and violence don't change, Mehra reveals present culture in all its banality and baseness, he, however seeks to find a solution in the past.

However, the essay cannot proceed without a careful consideration of each of these terms: 'melancholia', 'mimesis' and 'necropolitics.' Freud in his work on *Mourning and Melancholia* defines, "melancholia as a profoundly painful dejection [...] and a lowering of the self-regarding features" (Freud 1953: 143). Melancholia for Freud is the "loss of an ideal" and that loss leading to a process of disenchantment and self-critique. Freud further explores mourning as a process of "declaring the object to be dead and offering the ego, the benefit of continuing to live." (Freud 1953: 160). Melancholia, in this essay, will be examined as a process of self-critique due to a "lowering" of self-esteem, but, more importantly, it will also be studied as as a state of 'non-mourning'. Melancholia therefore is a repetitive cycle of grieving (Freud 1953: 145). However, as the essay is engaging with a product of a postcolonial nation, this essay will employ Ranjanna Khanna's work on melancholia, *Post Palliative: Coloniality's Affective Dissonance*, as a primary text (Khanna 2006)

While mimesis has been discussed and defined by philosophers from Plato to Benjamin, the understanding of mimesis within the context of this essay is through Michael Taussig's work on mimesis: *Mimesis and Alterity* (Taussig 1993). However, Homi Bhabha's work on mimcry provides an interesting way of ingress into the concept and the film. Bhabha writes, "Mimcry is [...] a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power.[...] [It is] also the sign of

the inappropriate [as it] poses an immanent threat to both ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers” (Bhabha 1994: 86). Bhabha’s quote on mimicry helps establish the boundaries of discussion, as the mimicry involved in *RDB*, shall be evidenced as not a mime of the coloniser but of the struggle of the colonised. It is instead mimicry of a past, seen to be irrelevant in the present. The mimicry is of historical processes and conditions. The mimicry of the historical is actualised through the continuity of the state as a sovereign, but a sovereign constructed on Mbembe’s definition of sovereignty. Mbembe employs Hegel’s “bipartite concept of negativity” and Foucault’s theory on “biopower” to define sovereignty as a form of necropolitics or the politics of death (Mbembe 2003). The essay will therefore study the mimesis of characters, state structures and language, as an effect of the melancholia inherent in a world ruled by the principles of necropolitics.

Filming the Theory

One of the questions, the film seeks to address is the difficult relationship between the present generation to its past, which has been at once violent and idealistic. Khanna points out, “The impossibility of completed digestion of the past, and its calm production of novelty, manifests itself in constant critique” (Khanna 2006: 1). She uses an interesting notion of digestion, which in its completed state is the end result of mourning, ensuring a secure relationship with the past. The present, according to such a study would, therefore, be of a healthy relationship forged on the basis of an acceptance of a history at once volatile and violent.^{vi} However, on close reading, the opening epigraph is a clear statement on the melancholia that encompasses any and all discussion(s) of history: “If yet your blood does not rage, then it is water that flows in your veins. For what is the flush of youth, if it is not of service to the motherland” (Mehra 2006). The verse opens the cinematic sequence in a dual capacity: for the film now begins as one of the protagonist, Dj, says, “[with]one foot in the past and one foot in the future” (Mehra 2006). The past is in the verse lettered in every book on the history of the country, and the present finds its voice literally, through the voice of Aamir Khan, who reads the epigraph. Khan plays the character of Azad and his modern day avatar, Duljeet Singh or Dj. Is it therefore the voice of twenty-first century Dj or Azad of the 1930's? The film chooses to leave that question unanswered. It could be either and that is the conundrum the viewer faces at every moment,

as the past and present are constantly made to spar for attention. The audience is then entwined in this melancholia as temporalities become permeable. The temporalities are permeable because of the repetitive cycle that Freud defines as a symptom of melancholia (Freud 1953: 150).

The film opens with scenes of the past in the execution of the leaders of the revolutionary movement: Bhagat Singh, Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqulla Khan and Rajguru. The past is ingrained at once in the audiences' consciousness, not the least because of the sepia images that are jolted out of view with the advent of the twenty first century and colour.^{vii} The film, by opening with the past, roots itself in the history of the country: it remains as the genesis of the story. The next scene serves to reiterate the same but within a modern context: McKinley's diary in the twentieth century. The film constantly juxtaposes the present with the past and vice versa. This constant movement between two temporal spatial worlds is afforded because of what Khanna defines as the "critical agency" of melancholia, where the present is not just crippled by the past but they are both involved in the same cycle. The "critical agency" develops as the past is not completely digested, some part of it remains to be carried forward (Khanna 2006: 3).

In the film this peculiar agency of melancholia is aided by the process of mimesis. Mimesis receives imminent ingress into the screenplay afforded by the introduction of Sue McKinley's role, as a documentary film maker. She functions as a reminder of the past, ensconced within the pages of her grandfather's diary, and a personification of the mimetic process in action. Sue McKinley functions as the camera herself, for, as Michael Taussig writes, "histories enter into the mimetic faculty and vice versa" (Taussig 1993:14). Mimesis functions as an opening into the old world of idealism but it is also a way of ingress into the present. Sue facilitates the process, as Dj morphs into Azad and the sepia tinted past emerges into the present world. "I saw them then, like they had leapt out of the pages of grandpa's diary" (Mehra 2006). The voice-over emerges, just after her introduction to the protagonists of the film, who will eventually essay the role of the leaders within the meta-drama. The characters of Sonia, Karan Singhania, Aslam Khan, Sukhi and Dj are thereby transformed instantaneously into the leaders from the past: Durga Vohra, Bhagat Singh, Ashfaq, Rajguru and Azad respectively. It is from this scene that the mimesis enters the present day lives of our protagonists to crescendo at the climactic moment.

History has entered the present day lives of what are ostensibly representatives of the hedonistic and apathetic youth of the day. History has most importantly entered through the mimesis afforded by the camera and Sue. The characters not only physically transform, but key scenes from the nation's independence struggle are played out: Jallianwala Bagh (1919), the Kakori train robbery (1925), the 'Simon go Back' agitation (1928) and the murder of Saunders in 1928 (Chandra 1989: 113). All the events are played out in the present, in front of the camera, but they find a resonance much later in the film. The sepia images cut through the colours of the present, but the transition isn't inorganic as the people remain the same. The characters change - Bhagat Singh and Karan are two different individuals for example, but by both characters being played by R. Siddharth Narayan - cinematic continuity is, therefore, preserved. The screenplay however is extremely self-conscious as the continuity is not only for the purpose of cinema, but also a move towards enhancing the mimetic quality already entrenched. The mimetic truly emerges as *tour de force* behind the movie in ironically one of its deleted scenes. The scene is a rehearsal for Sue's documentary where Karan and Dj practice a few lines. In the scene, each of the protagonists' unconsciously succumbs to the mimetic process and slip between temporalities without a conscious realisation of the act.

Sonia (On the phone with Ajay): The shooting is going great. You know, I feel some sort of a change in me. I feel strange.

Karan (Addressing Dj as Azad): I just remembered *Panditji*, we don't have your address. God forbid, if something happens to you. The party will take the responsibility of taking care of your mother and father.

Dj (Rehearsing addressing Karan as Bhagat Singh): I work for the party and not my parents. You don't have to worry bout them! Rat poison is very cheap, buy some for *Mitro* and end her pain forever. [Emphasis is mine] (Mehra 2006).

Dj slips, and instead of addressing Azad's parents, remembers his own in the present: Mitro. Mimesis in the scene involves a slip in language, but it also then opens the canvas for the climax, when the incumbent Defence minister is shot in retaliation for the 'murder' of Ajay Rathod (Mehra 2006). And in the assassination of the incumbent Defence minister, the violence rehashed, brings back the past thereby involving the characters,

meta-characters and the audience, in the melancholia of never escaping. Violence and history seep back through the mimetic lens of the camera to now take hold of the present (Taussig 1993 :14)

Mimesis in this instance exposes the audience to the melancholia of a repeated cycle of violence, as in the assassination of the Defence minister we see startling resemblances to the assassination of Saunders by the revolutionaries (Mehra 2006). A superficial examination of minute details, as for example, the cycle chain being repaired in both scenes, allows us to draw these parallels. However, in establishing continuity between the meta-drama and the film, the screenplay consciously evokes memories of the past as the present unfolds. In order to truly unpack the import of Khanna's statement, we need to situate her idea on the "constant critique" as a symptom of melancholia, within the body of the film. The constant critique, I seek to propose, is in the criticism levelled against the independent state that replaced the colonial, sixty years after independence. In the scene where Sue first glimpses this morphing of present characters into representatives of the past, there follows a discussion on the state of the present day politics, which proves especially helpful in understanding Khanna's concept on self critique, which finds its roots in what Freud defined as "self-reviling" (Freud 1953: 143):

Ajay : I'm proud of my country.

Karan: Really, what exactly are you proud of? The poverty?

Aslam: No, he's proud of the unemployment

Karan: Or are you proud of the corruption?

Ajay : No country is perfect, Karan; we have to work to make it perfect.

Karan: Tell you what Ajay; you go on trying to make this country perfect, once I get into a college, I'm pushing off to America, nothing is ever going to get better in this dump (Mehra 2006).

The interaction between the three protagonists helps locate Khanna's argument on critique, as corruption is ostensibly regarded as the reason behind the other problems of poverty and unemployment. It is a critique of the self and helps locate it within Freud's corpus as well, for one of the symptoms of melancholia is to critique the ego that engendered it (Freud 1953: 143)^{viii} But this conversation is more significant as it conveys the cynicism and apathy of the 'youth', which the epigraph sought to address. Ajay is dismissed and it is the apathy and disenchantment of Aslam and Karan, who don't believe

in charge that becomes the dominant voice. The apathy is due to disillusionment with the state and its inherent corruption. The film self-consciously constructs this image of apathy through the mimesis of Karan, from the cynical non-believer into Bhagat Singh, the idealist and staunch supporter of the freedom struggle. The mimetic is taken on further when after Ajay's death, Karan transforms into a Bhagat Singh-esque figure prepared to go to any length for a definite cause.^{ix} Corruption, therefore, lends itself to the violence perpetuated at the climax, as the apathy is shaken out of its reverie with the death of Ajay. Corruption, in the film, is the cause of the violence in the present, where as in the past it is the preservation of a subjugated population.

The violence is endemic to both societies; sovereignty and the state are the only other constants. The two states however are very different: colonial and post-colonial. Sovereignty thereby presents itself as the only common denominator but Mbembe's ideas on Necroploitics reveal the link between the two states. Mbembe writes that sovereignty is "the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations" (Mbembe 2003: 14). Sovereignty, according to Mbembe, is not only necropolitical or the power over life and death, but also the power to control the quality or materiality of lives. This power is directed against that section of the populace that threatens, as Bhabha writes, the immanent knowledge structures of a society (Bhabha 1994: 86). In the film, the characters affect the status quo: for the colonial state the threat is against the preservation of the colonial enterprise and for the modern Indian nation it is the preservation of lucrative corruption. Mbembe's theory helps deconstruct the scenes of torture with the running voice-over of the British commanding officer's diary entry, "Breaking a man, bit by bit... they said it would get easier with time. It never did. The torture went on for some time" (Mehra 2006). The state perpetuates violence on the political prisoners to extract information, the goal above and beyond is the preservation of the colonial state. McKinley is not the key agent in this scene but the state, the "they" he refers to as the force compelling him to act. The state is responsible for the violence it engenders and sustains.

Mbembe's view on material death of the populace helps deconstruct scenes from post independence India. Two scenes prove significant for our understanding of his concept. The first is Karan's conversation with his father where the father tries to push him towards being ambitious, through a comparison between them and the state of affairs in poverty stricken India: "Every second there is someone born in the gutters of this country.

Nobody cares about them; neither the government nor their God.”^x The people and their livelihoods become subservient to the whims of the state, the state which has thus far been introduced purely as corrupt, nurturing the interests of those who run the machinery. The state guards the annals of material health and in order to survive one has to either be corrupt or apathetic.

The second example, the scene in which Karan and the rest surrender on live media for murdering the defence minister, is another form of state sponsored violence. “A defence minister is supposed to safeguard a nation. Not sell it. Who will stop them? Men like the minister aren't just above the law..they control it, use it against us” (Mehra 2006). The state is no more above the law and by opposing this ‘sale’ of a nation, Karan and the rest set themselves against the state thereby threatening the status quo. They threaten its sovereignty and it retaliates with violence. The scenes that follow the confession for example, resonate with the command “I want no survivors.” The radio command, from an arm of the state: the police, is perhaps a Bollywoodesque move towards the melodramatic but it nonetheless captures the moment conclusively. The state thereby, sanctions the murder of unarmed students, in a move that uncannily reflects the colonial state's policy.

Mbembe's argument is significant in the context of melancholia as, there is no recuperation for the characters that are pursued by the state/states. It is a repetitive cycle, and the camera captures the process brilliantly towards the end of the film, where Jallainwalla Bagh is re-lived. The paper self-consciously employs the word ‘re-lived’, as the scene is crucial to understand the idea of the melancholic within the film. Jallianwalla Bagh is seen by many to be the turning point in India's struggle for freedom and it is attributed for the rise in revolutionary nationalism (Chandra 1989: 110). The turning point in the film is the death of Lieutenant Ajay Rathod due to corruption in the Ministry of Defence. The scene uses these two moments within the film and its meta-drama effectively, by comparing General Dyer and the Defence Minister, as representatives of the state. We, therefore, see both figures alternatively issuing the command to shoot unarmed civilians. Violence is unleashed on the innocent celebrators of Baisakhi and Ajay alternatively, a move in which Jallianwalla Bagh is transposed with the present. The two different states are united in quite a revolutionary way, as the repetitive cycle of violence is unleashed on the country. Mbembe's idea on sovereignty comes together in this scene with Khanna's theory on melancholia, as an impossible digestion of a violent past, whilst Taussig's concept of history entering the mimetic, facilitates the process. Violence is aided in its

incarnation through time by, “melancholia’s critical agency” (Khanna 2006: 1). The temporality of melancholia aids the mimetic process in the film. The camera can move through history and arrive at the present with similar problems, as they have never been addressed when the time was nascent: the moment of independence.

Conclusion

Does the film offer any solutions within its body for the questions it seeks? The concluding part of this paper will examine the film and the idea of historic recuperation. The film constantly looks at the past for answers to the present turmoil; lessons from history are set forth as solutions for the future. How successful is the film in achieving that purpose within the body of its text? The only definite instance of a form of recuperative redemption is brought forward in the ideal of communal harmony as exemplified by the relationship between Pandey and Aslam. In our introduction to the protagonists, the scene unfolds with communal tension in the air, as Pandey counters Aslam with “Keep quiet, *salla* Pakistani” (Mehra 2006). *Salla* is a vituperative adjective equivalent to bloody or swine.^{xi} But in addressing him as Pakistani, he not only insults Aslam but seeks to ‘other’ him. As the movie progresses however, the process of miming Bismil, a more secular historic figure, ensures a change within Pandey as well. For example, after the violent end to a peaceful march, Pandey apologises to Aslam for the way he treated him. But more important to note is that the realisation dawns only after his idea of a ‘normal’ society based on *Hindutva* is shattered, with the complicity of the leader of his party in the process of violence.^{xii} The climax also sees the two characters dying together holding hands while the leaders they mimed in the documentary, Ashfaq and Bismil smile sanguinely (Mehra 2006). The past is constantly treated as the answer for the present problems of communal unrest and it is the only strand that is reconciled to a satisfactory degree.

The film is undoubtedly a victim of the melancholia that it sought to represent as even the one instance of recuperation remains incomplete. The real cause is never studied and the main perpetrators, the right wing parties represented by the leader of Pandey’s party, survive. Violence returns into the present as the melancholia continues. The final message of the film - change for the better, as a way forward into the future - is also diluted, as the protagonists, who fight for change, are murdered. The figures that fight for a better future are murdered in the historic past and the present by a state that wants all to

conform. The future seems the only space in which this cycle of melancholia can be broken and in that perhaps the film does bring about a change.

Caller: No matter what you do, this country will never change. It has no future.

Karan: No country is perfect; we have to make it better. Join the military, administrative service and the police. Become a part of the political system. This country will change...We will change it. (Mehra 2006)

The lines try to herald a change, which seems to be weakened by the instantaneous transformation, visible in the response of students from all over the country. The end is extremely melodramatic as the students all seem to believe that this one incident, of a couple of students dying, will energise an entire country. But the end to the melancholic can only happen in the future; a future in which the mimesis will have to be followed through by the audience. Studies on the social impact of the film, evidenced in media reports on various contemporary cases, reveals that candle light vigils have been carried forth from the film into the arena of the real.^{xiii} The violence as a repetitive effect of melancholia might undergo a change in the future if the audience participates in a similar kind of mimetic process. A strong *demos* might counteract the necropolitics in power.^{xiv}

About author: Kshama Kumar is a postgraduate student at the University of Leeds, studying Postcolonial Literature and Culture. Her research interests include Postcolonial Cinema from South Asia, Senegal, Nigeria and Pakistan, South Asian Popular Culture and Postcolonial Eco-Criticism. She is currently working on representations of water and water conflict in South Indian cinema and is engaged in the study of Kannada and Tamil cinemas. Contact: kshama.kumar@gmail.com

NOTES

ⁱ Films on Gandhi - *Gandhi, My Father* (Feroz Abbas Khan 2007), *Maine Gandhi Ko Nahin Mara* (Jahnu Barua 2005), *Hey Ram* (Kammal Hassan 2000), *The Making of the Mahatma* (Shyam Benegal 1996), *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* (Rajkumar Hirani 2006). Films on Subhash Chandra Bose - *Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose* (Hemen Gupta 1966), *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: The Forgotten Hero* (Shyam Benegal 2005)

ⁱⁱ Manoj Kumar, Bobby Deol and Ajay Devgan starred as Bhagat Singh in *Shaheed* (S. Ram Sharma 1965), *23rd March 1931: Shaheed* (Guddu Dhanao 2002) and *The Legend of Bhagat Singh* (Rajkumar Santoshi 2002), respectively.

ⁱⁱⁱ For more read http://www.tehelka.com/story_main16.asp?filename=hub021806We_dont.asp and http://www.tehelka.com/story_main25.asp?filename=essay01132007_p14-17PF.asp

^{iv} Bhagat Singh aka Karan Singhania and the others are seen in this image with their arms stretched out towards the sky, topless and clad in jeans : <http://calcuttaglobalchat.net/calcuttablog/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/rang-de-basanti.jpg>. [accessed, January 2010]

^v For more read on the period of Revolutionary Extremism and Bhagat Singh read: Bipan Chandra, 'Bhagat Singh, Satyapal and Revolutionary Terrorism', *India's struggle for independence* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1989) 104-36 Also: Hartosh Bal's critique of the politics of the film and the disingenuous comparisons between the aimless present generation and the dedication of leaders of the independence struggle at: Hartosh Bal, 'We Don't No Revolution', *Tehelka*, http://www.tehelka.com/story_main16.asp?filename=hub021806We_dont.asp (2006) [accessed, January 2010]

^{vi} For more on the history of the struggle for independence read: Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence* And for more on the violence in the film predicated on the past read: Neelam Srivastava, 'Bollywood as National (ist) Cinema: Violence, Patriotism and the National-Popular in *Rang De Basanti*', *Third Text*, 23(2010), 703-716

^{vii} I don't wish to analyse the historical advent of colour on celluloid in Bollywood, the statement is just a reflection on the efficient use of sepia and colour to portray the two eras.

^{viii} For another interesting perspective on melancholia and its functioning in modern societies, read: Gilroy, Paul, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?*,(Oxford: Routledge,2004).

^{ix} In the scene, Karan's reaction is particularly interesting as in reply to Aslam's question, "I thought we didn't have anything in us which would make us fight for something", he replies, "I thought so too, until now.

^x For more on the economic position of post independent India read: Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India: Development and Participation*, (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2002)

^{xi} Urban Dictionary, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=salla>. [accessed January 2010]

^{xii} Hindutva loosely interpreted can be described as a form of right wing politics designed on the principle of India or Hindustan for Hindus. For more read: Christopher Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*,(Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007)

^{xiii} For more on these cases and the impact of the film read: Shoma Chaudhury, 'Sleeping Idealists', *Tehelka*, http://www.tehelka.com/story_main23.asp?filename=hub031806Sleeping_idealists1.asp.(2006) [accessed January 2010] ; Shoma Chaudhury, 'Is This Only Protest Theatre?', *Tehelka*, http://www.tehelka.com/story_main25.asp?filename=essay01132007_p14-17PF.asp. (2007)[accessed January 2010] ; Shoma Chaudhury, 'Matchstick Men And Monkeys', *Tehelka*, http://www.tehelka.com/story_main41.asp?filename=hub280209Matchstick.asp. (2009) [accessed January 2010]

^{xiv} The people or commons of an ancient Greek state, *esp.* of a democratic state.

Etymology: 1831 *Westm. Rev.* Jan. 245 The aristocracy have had their long and disastrous day; it is now the time of the Demos. Oxford English Dictionary Online,

http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50060686?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=demos&first=1&max_to_show=10 [accessed January, 2010]

REFERENCES

Bal, Hartosh, 'We don't need no revolution!', *Tehelka*, Retrieved from, http://www.tehelka.com/story_main16.asp?filename=hub021806We_dont.asp (2006) [accessed, January 2009]

Bhabha, Homi K, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', in *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 85-92

Chandra, Bipan 'Bhagat Singh, Satyapal and Revolutionary Terrorism', *India's Struggle for Independence* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989)

Chaudhry, Shoma, 'IS THIS ONLY PROTEST THEATRE?', *Tehelka*, Retrieved from http://www.tehelka.com/story_main25.asp?filename=essay01132007_p14-17PF.asp. [accessed, January 2009]

Chaudhry, Shoma, 'Matchstick Men and Monkeys', *Tehelka*, Retrieved from http://www.tehelka.com/story_main41.asp?filename=hub280209Matchstick.asp. (2009) [accessed, January 2009]

Chaudhury, Shoma, 'Sleeping Idealists', *Tehelka*, Retrieved from http://www.tehelka.com/story_main23.asp?filename=hub031806Sleeping_idealists1.asp.(2006) [accessed, January 2009]

Chaudhury, Shoma, 'Bhagat Singh topless, waving in jeans' *Tehelka*, Retrieved from http://www.tehelka.com/story_main16.asp?filename=hub020406Bhagat_Singh.asp (2006) [accessed, January 2009]

Dreze, Jean and Amartya Sen ed. *India: Development and Participation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Dwyer Rachel and Chris Pinney, ed., *Pleasure and the Nation: the History, Consumption and Politics of Public Culture in India*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Freud, Sigmund, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *A General Selection from The Works Of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by John Rickman (London / Bradford: Hogarth Press, 1953) p.142-60

Jaffrelot, Christopher, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*, (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007)

Khanna, Ranjana, 'Post Palliative: Coloniality's Affective Dissonance', *Postcolonial Text*, 2 (2006)

Mbembe, Achille, 'Necropolitics', *Public Culture*, 15(2003)

Mehra, Rakeysh Omprakash, *Rang de Basanti* (2006)

Srivastava, Neelam, 'Bollywood as National (ist) Cinema: Violence, Patriotism and the National-Popular in *Rang De Basanti*', *Third Text*, 23(2009), 703–716

Taussig, Michael, *Mimesis and Alterity*, (London/ NewYork: Routledge, 1993)

Websites

<http://calcuttaglobalchat.net/> [Poster Image]

www.oed.com [Online Dictionary]

www.urbandictionary.com [Online Dictionary]

www.youtube.com [Video]