

Can Hindi Cinema be a source of Indian History?

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ABSTRACT

This paper is based on my PhD research which relating to how History – the subject is represented among Hindi Films. Although my thesis did not cover on this topic entirely as I was also dealing with culture theory, film theory and historical theories along with how women representations, nationalism and so on were portrayed in the selected films which I had chosen for research. In this paper, I wish to ask one very controversial question - Can cinema be viewed as a source of History? I will say Yes, it can; and this is what I will argue in my paper. One can say that documentaries and art cinema have always been considered as important visual sources of History, not just in India but across the globe. But I intend to study, the not-so authentic cinema. We are all aware of *Masala Bollywood* (Hindi cinema most popularly known as) films – which are, like most global film scholars put it, (Hindi) film stars dancing around trees and imaginary landscapes in colorful attire – I would say, these periodical dramas can also be seen as a source of Indian History – in fact they are by the million viewers out there in and out of India. This paper is an attempt to challenge some stereotypical global views not just about Indian culture, but also about Hindi films. I will not look into the other regional cinemas in India as the paper will become very vast and I believe, they are a topic of study in their own. It will also look into the world and new challenges faced by the academic subject of History.

Keywords: Bollywood; Indian culture; social patterns; popular culture; Indian society