

The Manifestations of Liberalization on Bollywood Cinema of the 1990s and Early 2000s

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Abstract

This article will look into the significant manifestations of the Economic reforms of the 1990s on Bollywood cinema of 1990s and early 2000s. By doing so the article aims to establish the relationship between the changing economic scenarios of the nation and the reformation of the aesthetics in the Bollywood industry. With a focus on the various realms of camera technology, fashions, and marketing, this article will highlight the transformation of the Bollywood cinema in the light of economic reforms of the 1990s. By looking at the various elements constituting the technical aspects involved in the making of a film, the article aims to establish the fact that a change in the socio-economic realm of the nation is very well visible and represented in the films. A change of narrative is presented in the article with a focus on the process of economic reforms by looking into the more technical realities of the process on the silver screen of Bollywood. The article will end with the establishment of the global identity of both the Bollywood industry and the Indian economy.

Keywords: Bollywood, Cinema, 1990s, Camera, Fashion, Economy

Context

The Indian economy was in a state of crisis in the early 1990s. The economy developed a disparity between public income and spending for many years. This resulted in both fiscal and payment imbalances, both internally and externally. It triggered a severe economic downturn. The Gulf crisis in late 1990 further impacted the scenario. Throughout this period, India also experienced political turmoil. These events impaired the resilience of the Indian economy, rendering it unable to withstand domestic and international disruptions with high inflation rates. The government was unable to sustain monetary and fiscal operations under such circumstances. The Government was compelled to implement economic reform measures, including liberalization, privatization, and globalization, together referred to as the LPG model or Economic Reforms, in India². Economic reforms, often known as the New Economic Policy, referred to all the financial changes implemented by the Government of India from July 1991 to promote overall prosperity in the Indian economy. Government policies pertaining to foreign investment, commerce, industry, foreign currency, fiscal affairs, and other areas were modified.

The collective term for all these modifications was called the new economic policy. This can also be understood in terms of the shift to a more non-socialist form of planning and

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² Shukla, Devesh. 2019. "Liberalization and Its Effect on Hindi Cinema." *JETIR1903649 Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research* 6 (Volume 6, Issue 3). <https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR1903649.pdf>.



governing bodies. Liberalization of the economy included eliminating unnecessary regulations and constraints for free trade. Efforts were undertaken to provide an ideal economic climate that facilitated the seamless operation of industrial and commercial businesses, enabling their contribution to the overall economic and social growth. The reforms sought to carry out two changes: procedural and legislative. The procedural changes included the processes for licensing imports, foreign investment, and local investment. The legislative changes involved the revocation of obsolete laws and the establishment of many regulatory agencies. The procedural and legislative modifications were intended to alter the formal norms regulating economic interactions significantly.

Economic liberalization was a substantial break from the preceding economic planning system when the state exercised control over the market. The objective of economic reform was to liberate the market from government regulation. It aimed to emancipate the market from centralized economic planning, the prevailing influence of the public sector, and arbitrary limitations. The process of economic liberalization had a considerable impact on the relationship between the state and the market, which in turn affected the planning process. The approach significantly changed the economy's strategic planning and economic integration.

Privatization and disinvestment improved efficiency and competitiveness in several sectors, including the Bombay film industry. The industry saw all sorts of new themes and aesthetics regarding foreign investment, technological upgradation, branding, and a more global reach for a much broader population.

In May 1998, the Indian government gave Bombay Cinema the "industry" status³. This was a very different and transformative government move as the two sectors often found themselves on opposite sides. Despite Bombay's significant growth as a hub the government did not consider filmmaking an essential economic activity or a crucial part of shaping national culture. As a result, the cinema industry did not get the same benefits and assistance that other forms of media, like radio and television, got. Harsh taxes, licensing, and censorship laws characterized the state's attitude toward the film industry. Granting industry status to filmmaking in 1998 was, in essence, a deliberate action taken to impact film finance. The government presented the move as an effort to eliminate illegal cash in the film industry, particularly those associated with crime syndicates, and to promote the adoption of open financial standards. In a broader sense, this period of reform also gave rise to a discussion about "corporatization," which refers to a series of adjustments seen as essential for the film industry to move away from its perception as a dysfunctional "national" cinema and establish itself as a worldwide media business. The need to corporatize the film industry became increasingly apparent due to the remarkable expansion of other media sectors in India, such as television and telecommunications, and the rise of an internationally competitive IT and software services sector throughout the 1990s⁴. The reflections of these reforms in the erstwhile environment of economic liberty and openness were felt by the newly formed Bollywood industry in many ways which had a very wide range from camera technologies to fashion. Although the industry was always connected to the outside world and had a

³ Punathambekar, Aswin. 2013. *From Bombay to Bollywood: The Making of a Global Media Industry*. New York: New York University Press.

⁴ Metaxas, Theodore, Eleni Bouka, and Maria-Marina Merkouri. 2016. "Bollywood, India and Economic Growth: A Hundred Years' History." *Journal of Economic and Social Thought* 3 (2): 285–301. <https://doi.org/10.1453/jest.v3i2.746>.



significant global base which made it one of the most popular film industries of the world way before the economic reforms, the process of liberalization, privatization and globalization provided the cinematic world of India with an ease of doing business with the world, with less taxes and more liberty to collaborate, invest and invent new trends and new identities both for the industry and for the nation as a whole. The two realms of Economic reforms and Bollywood combined together gave very interesting outputs which were mutually beneficial.

Camera Technology

Camera technologies in the cinema world have always evolved from one pattern to the other. While looking at the Indian scenario, the early 20th century marked the beginning of the industry's journey with cameras. *Hiralal Sen* introduced the Royal Bioscope in 1903, making it the first of its kind in the commercial theaters of the country. The Bell & Howell company came up with the metal camera which was named Model 2709 in 1911. This brought a new shift in the market with four lens turrets and a viewing system which offered more precise framing. The next shift in the camera technology was brought by the Kodak X-Back coating. Its processing and stabling capabilities enhanced image quality in the industry. The Eastman Kodak Company brought about a significant change in motion pictures in 1923 with the launch of KODAK Cine Safety Film, a 16mm reversal film. In addition, they introduced the first 16mm CINE-KODAK Motion Picture Camera. The smaller film format, explicitly designed to be cost-effective and easy to carry, quickly became popular among amateur filmmakers as a practical substitute for 35mm film. The novel chemical composition of 16mm film significantly enhanced its size and economic usefulness. The new film was made from a non-combustible acetate plastic base, a safer alternative to the flammable cellulose nitrate used in 35mm film. The 16mm reversal film did not provide negatives while shooting but a positive camera copy. For the first time, the process of filmmaking became as simple as directing the camera and capturing the image. Post-independence camera work in cinema was dominated by the Konvas 35mm camera with its reflex features and shutter aperture of 155°. Further inventions in the field took place in the decades of 1970s and 1980s with the coming of Paillard Bolex 16mm and Aaton LTR 16mm movie cameras. Both cameras added to the existing filming aesthetics of the industry with better audio-video synchronization and a better toleration for heat alongside underwater shooting. The most distinctive feature which held back the industry in the pre-globalized economy was the high amount of import tax which was imposed upon the equipment and created several hurdles for the production houses to source them, hence they preferred the final editing and refining of the whole reel abroad with better apparatus and lower costs. The best example of this was the iconic film *Sholay*, which was edited in London. By doing so, the production saved money while also getting better quality shots and cuts. With the coming of economic reforms, this process was eliminated as the import duties were relieved and the technologies became very accessible making the production easy and cheap, which opened new gates for new ways of marketing and also gave impetus to the Indian production houses to venture abroad by setting up offices and branches, as seen in the case of *Yash Raj*.

With liberalization, camera work in Bollywood went to a different standard. With global collaborations between Indian Production Houses and major international media companies like Sony, Disney, and Canon, the filming aesthetic began changing. This was complemented by the coming of the cellphones and worldwide access to all sorts of video entertainment

through the internet. The collaborations between the production companies and the media houses involved a digital evolution in the films of the '90s. This is evident from the use of Arri 435 and 435ES Cameras of Germany. With the liberalization process, import of these technologies alongside the other cinematic elements made the films more advanced and digitally sound. For instance, the invention of the electronic shutter and the MOS technology enabled the shutter angle to be adjusted electronically and used without interruptions to shoot silent scenes in a film sequence. These themes could be observed in the iconic films of the 1990s. For instance, the collaboration between *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* production house *Yash Raj Films* and their later collaboration with Sony made it more marketable⁵. It gave it a more transparent lens to portray the storyline. A similar case was with the 1993 film *Baazigar* and its 360-degree club shooting and song sequence. These technical advancements made the flawless shooting of the action sequences of films like *Ghayal* possible⁶. For instance, the truck chasing scene in the movie, alongside the other live-action scenes, clearly showed a difference in the frame and the quality of the shot. This shift could also be seen in the fight scenes of the film, which involve multiple camera angles, instant zoom-ins, and live fight visuals⁷.

Another film to consider in this aspect was the 1991 thriller *100 Days*. Although the film featured more changing aspects of the 90s scenario than just the evolution of the camera, the film's night visuals are definitely marking a shift with respect to the camera work, frame placement, exposure levels, and the positioning of the camera in various mirror scenes⁸. Films like the 1998 comedy *Gharwali Baharwali* showcased multiple layers of transformations taking place in the industry. The critical aspect with respect to the film's camera work can be seen in the elaborate dance sequences of the film, the use of autofocus, and the top-to-bottom camera sequences, which showcased the industry's significant shift in cinematography.

A changing theme of 'fast cinema' with gripping action and suspense was grasped by the 1992 film *Khiladi*. With respect to its camera sequence, the film presented carefully executed and shot action sequences owing to the new camera technology and shutter speed, alongside the audiovisuals, which helped create the aesthetic of an actual 'action' film⁹. The 1994 film *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* marked a major shift in the cinematography of Bollywood¹⁰. It became the first Asian film to use Cinemascope with an aspect ratio of 2.55, shifting from the earlier ratio of 1.85, making wide-angle shots easier and improving the shot quality¹¹. The decade's iconic film was *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*. The film influenced many aspects of everyday life of the erstwhile generation of young people. However, one of the underrated aspects of the film is how it showed the technological and cinematographic developments that were taking place. For

⁵ "DDLJ Making of the Film Part 1 | Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge | Aditya Chopra, Shah Rukh Khan, Kajol." n.d. [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7pLRr2QROg&si=O5zzC3fCw37C4jyo). Accessed April 27, 2024. <https://youtu.be/R7pLRr2QROg&si=O5zzC3fCw37C4jyo>.

⁶ "Sunny Deol Action Scene #Ghayal." n.d. [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPMlpgBhs8Y&si=CMFHFQ5ueGWqOGHJ). Accessed April 27, 2024. <https://youtu.be/MPMlpgBhs8Y&si=CMFHFQ5ueGWqOGHJ>.

⁷ "Ghayal Full Movie: Sunny Deol | Amrish Puri | Blockbuster Hindi Movie | Meenakshi Sheshadri." n.d. [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tu4gF2quguY&si=O6fL7wkBBHL_In09). Accessed April 27, 2024. https://youtu.be/tu4gF2quguY&si=O6fL7wkBBHL_In09.

⁸ "100 Days (1991) Full Hindi Movie | Jackie Shroff, Madhuri Dixit, Laxmikant Berde, Moon Moon Sen." n.d. [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QozHJbU3o24&si=xIGjyaniz4MDWmFb). Accessed April 27, 2024. <https://youtu.be/QozHJbU3o24&si=xIGjyaniz4MDWmFb>.

⁹ "Khiladi - Part 11 | Akshay Kumar | Ayesha Jhulka | Deepak Tijori | Best Bollywood Movie Scenes." n.d. [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFDzWtRHJcU&si=LPPFYsq_fvgFLCTq). Accessed April 27, 2024. https://youtu.be/IFDzWtRHJcU&si=LPPFYsq_fvgFLCTq.

¹⁰ Sundaram, Nandhu. 2019. "25 Years of Hum Aapke Hain Koun...! How the Movie Sparked a Profound Shift in Bollywood." *CNBCTV18*. September 5, 2019. <https://www.cnbctv18.com/buzz/25-years-of-hum-aapke-hain-koun-how-the-movie-sparked-a-profound-shift-in-bollywood-4301971.htm>.

¹¹ "Making of Hum Aapke Hain Koun | Directed by Sooraj Barjatya Starring Salman Khan and Madhuri Dixit." n.d. [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vnZ8d7wBeY&si=HBQDqY4Ie2yNtmVv). Accessed April 27, 2024. <https://youtu.be/9vnZ8d7wBeY&si=HBQDqY4Ie2yNtmVv>.



instance, there is a shift to an anamorphic lens alongside the Dolby digital sound¹². This shift highlighted the change in the aspect ratio to 1.85: 1 and 2.35: 1, along with a higher resolution and wider field of view on a narrower sensor¹³.

Each frame and camera movement weighted onto it, and the romantic college sequences of the *Dharma Universe* are definitely getting more pleasing and realistic to the eye with the new camera and sound technology, which showed a larger picture of the changing situations and located the film on a more globalized perception. The next film to showcase the changes of the ongoing trend was the 1997 film *Pardes*. With themes ranging from local to global, the film touched upon the multiple themes of change that the country was going through in the 90s. However, the film's camera work was an integral part of that. With wide-angle shots of iconic places in India and the West, the film took a different path toward cinematic aesthetics by portraying the various destinations with respect to their top and on-surface portrayals with a little bit of CGI, which was not on the best level. However, the heritage and natural cinematography of the movie are lost in its foreign narrative despite these shots being the true reflection of the shifting camera and technological aesthetics in Bollywood¹⁴.

The same year, another *Yash Raj Films* represented significant shifts in the Bollywood camera aesthetics. *Dil to Pagal Hai* was marked with significant pop-culture shifts in terms of dance and fashion; however, the film itself went ahead and represented a shift from its predecessors with its new musical theme and the use of this theme in creating a new sense of camera and cinematography. For instance, the film included multiple songs with multiple camera angles, multiple lighting, and numerous set locations within a single musical number, which was part of a bigger theme of the film being a musical. With the multiple layers of shooting and multiple shifts in camera settings, the film definitely added to the shifts that the industry was witnessing under an open economy, Western influences, and new genres in film¹⁵.

The last films that showed a change in camera work before the coming of HD in Bollywood were the 1999 film *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* and the 2000 film *Mohabbatein*. While both films were based on the popular romance genre of the time, they successfully showed the changing trends in cinematography. For instance, *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* had many scenes that were shot in the difficult terrains of Rajasthan, and there were multiple locations in which the film was shot¹⁶. The film's camera work showed great adaptability to the desert and the moonlight conditions, considering the technology being infused through liberalization. This made it possible for the film to be shot in different situations with the same reel and the same aesthetic. The film showcased a significant shift from its predecessors like *Baazigar* in terms of shooting the wide-angle shots with more clear frames and a better sense of focus.

Mohabbatein, on the other hand, had very different aesthetics. The most striking part of the film's camera work was the inclusion of aerial shots of the expensive outdoor location of the

¹² "Making of Kuch Kuch Hota Hai." n.d. Wwww.youtube.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwCGUtxikm0>.

¹³ "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (1998) - Filming & Production - IMDb." n.d. Wwww.imdb.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0172684/locations/>.

¹⁴ "Pardes Full Movie 4K - परदेस (1997) - Shah Rukh Khan - Mahima Chaudhry - Amrish Puri." n.d. Wwww.youtube.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. https://youtu.be/Ba97yuMu-aY?si=0TuJFpsGnIlt_pUC.

¹⁵ "The Dance of Envy | Instrumental | Dil to Pagal Hai | Madhuri Dixit, Karisma Kapoor." n.d. Wwww.youtube.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. <https://youtu.be/PV9mK4igJng?si=ryQkhoAoPPPiOHGy>.

¹⁶ "Ajay Devgn & Aishwarya Rai's Emotional Scene | Bollywood Movie | Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam." n.d. Wwww.youtube.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. <https://youtu.be/ibKgqKYhwic?si=IDKp0Vwd5OWbu0JI>.

film set in the UK alongside the coverage of the actual set of the film in a wide angle while also covering the different themes of the multiple subplots which were being portrayed in the film in the same. The film's camera represented a very diverse shift in the cinematography of Bollywood films as, for the first time, multiple subplots with varying storylines and effects were portrayed in mainstream cinema¹⁷. This shift can be understood with respect to the erstwhile liberalization changes.

Marketing and Advertising

Advertising and marketing of the films marked a key factor in determining the success of the whole production. When it came to gaining popularity through unique elements, the Indian film industry went way back to the Lumière brothers. They used print media as a way to advertise their work and gained popularity. The Indian version of advertising was witnessed by the populace through various means of bullock cart advertisements and film booklets. Iconic films such as *Raja Harishchandra* shifted the realm of advertising to print media which involved photographic advertising. Major shift came with the arrival of audio, the new theme was art deco was introduced in the films of 1940s. A classic addition to the advertising was the post- independence addition of the press book which were seen in films like, *Humayun* and *Chandralekha*. This was supplemented with the bi and trilingual posters of the 1950s in classical films like *Mother India*.¹⁸ The film's booklet was also a pioneering piece which debuted photographic visuals from the film rather than oil painted visuals as seen before. With the beginning of foreign shoots for songs and various sequences of the films in Bollywood in 1960s and 70s, there were several changes which the posters and advertising of the films saw. For instance, the inclusion of the foreign locations and exotic lifestyles in the posters alongside the adaptations from the aesthetics of Hollywood. Films like *Sangam* and *Bobby* from these decades clearly represented these themes in their posters and in the aesthetic of their marketing. The late 1970s and 1980s became more about advertising through star power and bold messages in the posters and booklets. This could be seen in films like *Sholay* where star power and bold textual visuals were shown in the poster in the backdrop of a visually strong story. This was also the time when vivid brush strokes with oil paint were utilized for the making for the posters which gave impetus to the strong visual aesthetic of the marketing and advertising aesthetic of the films.¹⁹

Film advertising underwent a transformation starting in the early 1990s. As more money was allocated to campaigns, the entire process became more sophisticated. The first major transformation in the field of marketing was seen in through a shift in the style of production of posters for the films from the preceding two decades. With the coming of new and advanced printing technologies which became readily available with opening of the economy, the earlier over-painted montage posters were replaced by images characterized by simplicity and beauty. The advent of computer-aided design further changed image creation. By inputting photographic stills into the computer, altering them on the screen became possible.

¹⁷ "Making of the Film | Part 4 | Mohabbatein | Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Aishwarya Rai." n.d. Www.youtube.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. https://youtu.be/9D5NVQr_gyg?si=11FrH3A8MXWaZ4yy.

¹⁸ Dwyer, Rachel, and Patel Divia. 2002. *Cinema India*. Rutgers University Press.

¹⁹ Manash, Pratim, and Goswami. 2017. "Bollywood Film Posters: A Study of Changing Trends." <https://www.amity.edu/gwalior/JCCC/pdf/JCC-Journal-December-2017-78-84.pdf>.



It enabled seamless overlaying, placement side by side, resizing, enlarging, and adjusting the color contrast of images and text with relative simplicity.²⁰

In order to understand the changes that the process of economic liberalization brought to the industry it is necessary to analyze the films of that era. For instance, the 1995 classic *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* marked the beginning of the trend to produce posters on glossy sheets using computer software, which resulted from the technical exchange that the country was experiencing due to the economic reforms. Furthermore, the film's posters were based on multiple perspectives and focused on showing the film's multiple locations and different themes. The three different posters showcased the changing fashion trends with clever marketing strategies and branding for the first time in the industry while still going back to the traditional ways of style in some instances. Hence, the posters maintained a balance of representation, keeping in mind the larger economic transformation the country was going through.²¹

Another film which had many layers of impact upon the industry and the marketing sector in general was the 1994 classic, *Dil To Pagal Hai*. Brand placement emerged as a crucial tool for the advertisement and marketing of films in the 90s due to increased exchanges and economic liberty. The practice of placing products in films took off with the film and featured brands such as Pepsi, killer jeans and Levi's. The film marked the beginning of the long tradition of sponsorships and commercial deals which in the later decades begin to be associated with actors.²² The film was one of a kind and was identified by its unique genre and its distinctive posters which had stills of the actors dancing or with microphones or portraying the love triangle amongst the characters. The most unique feature of the film's marketing was the element of dance in a competitive perspective which became a selling point for the film. The display of bold musical aesthetics and a strong visual appeal could be seen in the posters of the film which were able to convey the message of the film with the help of new print and display technologies courtesy of the economic reforms.

While the 1997 film *Pardes* dwelled into the subtle transition of image-to-image differentiation in the film poster from the clumsy montage of the 70s and 80s to computer-aided technology on one hand, the poster highlighted modern affluent lifestyles and new images of new India, thereby pushing representations of India into the 21st century. A very important theme in the marketing of films of the 90s revolved around the tagline and story which involved a foreign location or a plot set outside India. This theme directly resonated with the erstwhile trend of migrations and appealed to the diaspora while also increased the reach of Bollywood as a whole.²³

The 1997 film *Gupt* which is often regarded as a cult classic, was a classic example of the creative imagery and aesthetic being portrayed through the poster. The marketing aesthetic of the film was quite dark and suspenseful while also portrayed various stills from the film itself.

²⁰ "The Art of Bollywood Poster Painting." n.d. Www.youtube.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. https://youtu.be/DEE9oIhzHhs?si=j_cOniANGSsrLyx

²¹ Dwyer, Rachel, and Patel Divia. 2002. *Cinema India*. Rutgers University Press.

²² "Where Is Your Jeans? | Comedy Scene | Dil to Pagal Hai | Shah Rukh Khan, Madhuri Dixit, Karisma." n.d. Www.youtube.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. <https://youtu.be/dB5sxB0ol30?si=kfkpYeTEl1mOTw8n>.

²³ Manash, Pratim, and Goswami. 2017. "Bollywood Film Posters: A Study of Changing Trends." <https://www.amity.edu/gwalior/JCCC/pdf/JCC-Journal-December-2017-78-84.pdf>.

This was combined with the inclusion of leather jackets in the poster, which later became a marketing tool for the movie for its modern, trendy, and edgy image.

This trend continued with the 1998 classic film *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*. With multiple brand collaborations and sponsorships, the film inspired fashion trends which then had a prolific impact on the market and led to a complete transformation of the fashion and branding in the country. The film raised the standards of product placement, branding, marketing and had an extended impact upon the trends of that time. This was done in the film through an elaborate showcase of multiple aesthetics of athleisure, bold printed shirts, and, most importantly, loud branding. The GAP jackets, Polo shirts, Speedo jerseys, and DKNY tracksuits alongside luxury brand monograms, including Louis Vuitton's iconic LV and Gucci's GG. Together, these created a new trend of consumerism and reshaped the Indian fashion sense with a virtual incorporation of style into it. The film took full advantage of the erstwhile situations to frame its larger narrative and influenced the nation's lifestyle through its branding and fashion aesthetics.²⁴ As a film marketing source, product placements reached their zenith with the 1999 film *Taal*. With a complete 10-second-long product placement of Coca-Cola, the film's marketing aesthetic expanded the realm of branding and collaboration for the industry. However, it did receive some backlash.

The 2000s began with the already existing product placements and the increasing role of marketing and branding in the success of Bollywood films in India and abroad. The classic 2000 film *Mohabbatein* became the stepping stone for many marketing tools for the industry in the new century. For instance, the film's production included large sums of money and had a significant share of the marketing and branding into it. About ₹100 million was spent on production out of the total budget of ₹130 million. The film started many trends in the industry, out of which the high-end productions and advertisements were just the beginning.

The film's promotion started on the initial production day, with continuous capture of photographic stills throughout the filmmaking process. The process of creating the posters began twelve weeks ahead of the film's release. A total of twelve posters were made for the film. They consisted of eight one-sheet designs with a print run of 250,000, one four-sheet design with a print run of 15,000, and three six-sheet designs with a print run of 30,000.

The distributors got their lobby cards, booklets, and one-sheet posters four weeks before the release. Larger displays were done on the billboards with the help of distributors. Local distributors were free to choose between purchasing these products or hiring hoarding painters.

All 16 nationwide distributors of *Yash Raj* Films were accountable for advertising inside their respective regions, which included street publicity, local displays, and the decoration of film settings. Television advertising and paper publicizing were used alongside 'Soft' promotion, which involved broadcasting brief trailers ten times in a single day on several stations. The film's music was released two weeks later to allow the music companies to maximize their profits and for the audience to acquaint themselves with the songs. Due to the widespread accessibility of cassette recordings, the booklet skipped the lyrics. The television advertising campaign began two weeks before the release, resulting in trailers airing up to six times daily on a single channel during prime viewing hours. During the film's screening, the promotion

²⁴ "Fashion Face-Off: The Stunning Styles of Kuch Kuch Hota Hai #Fashion." n.d. [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/rqQTDROYATM?si=GZrlsn_J-5-VIKEA). Accessed April 27, 2024. https://www.youtube.com/shorts/rqQTDROYATM?si=GZrlsn_J-5-VIKEA.



persists through newspaper ads replicating the poster designs and providing information about local time slots. The advertising endeavors created a Design Cell for the first poster campaign for the film. The large-scale posters featured photographs of all eight primary characters or the three couples, whereas the smaller posters highlighted various aspects of the film. Three of the focused on the two professors portrayed by the lead actors, *Amitabh Bachchan* and *Shabrukh Khan*. The animosity between them is highlighted through their facial expressions, posture, and attire, which again showed the tremendous amount of change in the aesthetics of marketing in Bollywood through posters with the coming of new technologies and economic reforms. *Amitabh Bachchan* was consistently depicted wearing black, maintaining an upright posture, and displaying a serious look, while *Shabrukh Khan* was portrayed wearing light colors, adopting a relaxing stance, and playing the violin to convey his sensitive disposition. The posters prominently featured an orange maple leaf extracted from a moment in the film and used as a symbol for the movie. The film's promotional efforts encompassed an additional mode of advertising, namely the *Yash Raj* website. The company was an early adopter of this emerging technology and saw its potential as a platform for worldwide visibility and made the film the first of its kind to be promoted through a website which was made possible due to the technological upgradations brought by the economic reforms.²⁵

Fashion and Styling

Fashion and cinema have always been complementary to one another, the Indian cinematic universe is no exception to this. However, it has had its own unique journey with humble beginnings alongside self-styled outfits to having big brand collaborations and shaping new trends in fashion. Beginning with the post-independence era of the 1940s were mostly centered around the legendary actress *Nargis*. Breaking from the contemporary local trends, the actress followed global trends. She brought a wave of femininity and minimalism into the fashion industry, which also inspired the country's trends. Her aesthetic included short hair, long dresses, and almost no jewelry, with a simple saree representing elegance. Her most iconic contribution to the fashion of her times was the white top/shirt tucked in with black trousers, and this look became a must-have for women in their 40s and 50s. The fashions of the 1950s were lavish, often drawing inspiration from traditional Indian clothing. This was done to resemble the magnificence of the narratives shown on the movie screen. The film industry's elegance became closely associated with silk saris, royal jewels, and lavish lehengas. Western fashion and hair designs influenced the 1960s aesthetic. On the screen, male individuals were shown wearing a combination of traditional Indian attire and well-fitting clothing. Women often styled their hair in neat buns, while pearl jewelry was frequently worn. Wide-leg trousers, traditional Indian sarees, and flared sleeves were also trendy. Although influenced by Western inventions and adaptations, the traditional Indian fashion style flourished in the 1960s with the release of *Mughal-e-Azam*. This historical drama was among the costliest films of that decade, as seen by its intricate sets, lavish clothes, beautiful jewelry, and high-definition makeup. In the film, each attire worn by the main character, *Madhubala*, was adorned to convey a majestic appearance, especially in the famous song *Pyaar Kiya To Darna Kya*, which included a high-waisted kameez paired with a full-length skirt in red and light blue. The appearance was enhanced by adding a Mughal-style headdress and ornate jewelry. Each *Madhubala* costume item was carefully selected to create a realistic atmosphere. Footwear was specifically sourced

²⁵ "Mohabbatein Movie Full Explanation Story Line Budget Production Start Cast Box Office Collection." n.d. Ww.youtube.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. <https://youtu.be/Z8GnqcW8WfM?si=hrhkapt2DY2zSJAnY>.

from *Agra*, and artisans from *Kolhapur* crafted crowns. Jewelry was obtained from *Hyderabad*. In addition, the *angrakhas* worn by *Saleem* and his father, which had clashing colors with a waistcoat, were particularly remarkable²⁶. In the 1970s, fashion and the cinema industry in India as a whole started engaging in both on-screen and off-screen experimentation. The films showed Western attire, including crop tops, oversized spectacles, bikinis, maxi skirts, jumpsuits, and platform shoes. The use of bold and adventurous colors and designs was prominent, with polka dots particularly noteworthy. This could be best seen in the aesthetics of *Zeent Aman*. However, a very important distinction between these west inspired outfits and the later developments in fashion was that the former were completely constructed by costume designers and actors themselves in order to portray a certain aesthetic while the later was a development of collaboration and works of professional fashion designers who worked to create the outfits of the film which was a clear indication of the changing times and economic integration.

With the liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s and the advent of globalization, Bollywood costume designers gained access to a broader range of fabrics, designs, and international influences. The fashion industry began to play a significant role in costume design, with collaborations between top designers and filmmakers becoming common. Costume designers like *Neeta Lulla*, *Manish Malhotra*, and *Sabyasachi Mukherjee* became mainstream with their designs, which perfectly blended Western and Indian aesthetics and left an indelible mark on Indian cinema²⁷.

A significant shift in the 90s was the expansion of the whole costume and make-up department in the industry with personal hair stylist, makeup crew, and personalized fittings by the global brands, which were then collaborating with the film industry for their marketing. This marked a shift from the industry being wholly based on stylists or actors who were either developing their designs or adapting the existing designs from the West. The coming of liberalization helped the industry make direct contact with global fashion trends, and the designers further made this aesthetic more accessible and more personalized for the industry as well as for the common public. Branding was a crucial part of fashion in the 90s, and its reflections in fashion were the most visible with a more open market and a global approach.

The second half of the decade saw the rise of trends such as crop tops, miniskirts, and denim overalls gaining popularity as fashionable styles. Sportswear gained acceptance as appropriate attire for casual daytime occasions. To understand the decade's fashion trends, it is essential to scrutinize the films and designs that distinguished themselves from those of the previous decade²⁸. The 1994 film *Dil To Pagal Hai* was groundbreaking in many ways, as it also introduced the iconic Bollywood style that we recognize today. Manish Malhotra, the leading designer, obtained the Western outfits for the film from different retailers in India and abroad. This was the first time this had been done for a film, and it continued throughout the decade, coinciding with the introduction of international brands in Bollywood. The film's fashion approach was characterized by a sporty and minimalistic style, with sheer kurtas and a diverse

²⁶ "Nargis Dutt's Birth Anniversary: 8 of the Bollywood Icon's Best Style Moments." Swirlster.ndtv.com. June 1, 2019. <https://swirlster.ndtv.com/style/nargis-dutts-birth-anniversary-8-of-the-bollywood-icons-best-style-moments-2238542>.

²⁷ Dwyer, Rachel, and Patel Divia. 2002. *Cinema India*. Rutgers University Press.

²⁸ "100 Years of Bollywood - Fashion in Bollywood - 1990'S - 2000'S." n.d. Wwww.youtube.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. https://youtu.be/Es-6kFYe9ME?si=3g4kOiPfToumT_Ka.



combination of materials and colors. The athletic patterns were extensively adopted from DKNY²⁹.

The film demonstrated a harmonious blend of originality and influence, as shown by the poster featuring the contemporary fusion of lehenga choli and metallic skater dress. Both of this aesthetic were industry inventions resulting from their increased attention. In addition, the film showcased metallic Co-Ord outfits and the use of fitting kurtas paired with matching churidars. The film popularized the leather and punk style and the sleek black three-piece suit for males. *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* emerged as a pioneering force in shaping fashion trends. The film showcased the cultural disparity between the two main characters via the use of crop tops, pearls, and a noticeable contrast. The poster showcased a distinct contrast with the use of a tangerine lehenga, a black leather jacket, a bucket hat, boots, and Levi's pants. The poster also accurately depicted the evolving trends in men's fashion. For example, the typical visual style of the male protagonist combining leather jackets with Lennon spectacles and a mostly denim look with checkered shirts established the foundation of men's fashion in the 90s, along with the addition of New York-inspired hats. The film revolutionized women's fashion by popularizing the combination of skirts and boots while also introducing the trend of oversized blazers. It served as a source of fashion inspiration for the general public by collaborating with the global trends and making them more accessible to the public through brand deals³⁰.

The 1998 film *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* had a larger impact on the fashion and styling of that time. Some of the trends in the film are still running in the fashion world, and they highlight how influential and impactful the film was in shaping the trends. For starters, the film broke many barriers regarding representation and aesthetics. The normalizing of miniskirts and a departure from the traditional and conventional dressing norms was one of the shifts the film represented and shifted to a more chic and modern fashion aesthetic to be normalized in the industry and the nation as a whole³¹. Another crucial shift was the adaptation of the tomboyish-athletic aesthetic in women's fashion, which the film popularized through baggy jeans, sneakers, oversized t-shirts, and dungarees. A more substantial impact of the film was related to the popularization of branded apparel as a symbol of status and sophistication. It transformed Indian fashion and shifted it towards valuing branded outfits as a sign of affluence. Other than the attires of the film, it had styling elements ranging from hairdo to accessories, which also shaped the lifestyle of a generation. For instance, the female protagonists' straight hair, the blunt cut with headbands, and the metallic jewelry worn by the male protagonist.

The epitome of fashion and style aesthetic can be seen in the 2000 film *Mohabbatein*. All the individual characters showcased a different style, and the film inspired the fashion trends to take the narrative forward. Although many aspects of the fashion in the movie are an extension of what was already done in the previous decade of the 1990s, these aspects achieved a different dimension in the film due to its unique aspect of being a high school

²⁹ Khan, Zeba. 2021. "Evolution of Fashion in India through Bollywood's Leading Actresses: India Independence Day Special." WION. August 14, 2021. <https://www.wionews.com/photos/evolution-of-fashion-in-india-through-bollywoods-leading-actresses-india-independence-day-special-405379>.

³⁰ "Everything Simran Wears in Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge (DDI) Me Simran Ke Sabhi Outfits) BOLLYWOOD." n.d. Www.youtube.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. https://youtu.be/lcGAXUMTAE?si=zaW_i4kfiNsw6B8e.

³¹ "Every Outfit Rani Mukerji Wore in Kuch Kuch Hota Hai 🤍💎💅." n.d. Www.youtube.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. https://youtu.be/MP03aXRCDRM?si=ORu21hr_IJGk6_fj.

romance. Hence, a shift was made to include the aesthetics of the erstwhile fashion along the lines of a high school narrative.

Recurring Y2K fashion was a constant aesthetic theme that involved inspiration from the erstwhile technical crisis of the United States. The film featured many aspects of this style with bright jean vests and colorful upper wear worn by one of the male protagonists. Apart from the use of vests, the film featured jackets which followed along the lines of the same aesthetic with bright colors and a loose fitting with a polyester appearance.

Furthermore, the use of certain Y2K glasses can also be seen in the film; although paired with a different aesthetic, the glasses marked a shift from the earlier trends and offered a newer edge through the mix of two distinct aspects of fashion. Varsity fashion was also one of the aspects of the film's fashion, with the use of hoodies and the same themed caps. These elements further marked a shift from the previous decade's simple aesthetics and another. The film took another turn to take inspiration from the last decade with leather jackets, cargo, and checked shirts. However, the film took these themes differently through the creative play by pairing them with the new aspects of the Varsity fashion and the Y2K trend. Vintage clothing was a new addition to the film's fashion, and it introduced the elements of loose pants with the classic V-neck sweater paired with blazers. This trend is prevalent even today. Branding of denim was another element of the trends captured by the film, and this introduced the whole culture of denim in the country with jeans and jackets. Given the context of international brands coming to India, this opened new gates for the market and inspired the nation's young generation³².

The styling of *Shah Rukh Khan* in the film also began a few trends. For instance, the sweater over the shoulder and the rimless glasses with a center partition of hair marked the endless aesthetic of men's fashion. A uniform accessory displayed in the film's male counterparts was the cross-body bags, which suit the high school aesthetic of the film on one hand while also giving it an edge over the basic bag. This also marked the beginning of the trend of styling bags differently and paved the way for exploring this element of aesthetics.

In the case of the fashion of the female protagonists, the common theme of Y2K was followed with elements of sports bras and a shift from the tomboyish-athletic aesthetic of the 90s to a more feminine athletic aesthetic. With the use of bright colors and cropped outfits, the film inspired the decade's fashion.

For instance, using crop jackets and matching tops alongside thin eyebrows and subtle makeup combined with straightened hair and bell-bottom pants presented a new image of fashion and styling in Bollywood. Combining the best elements of the preceding decade and the latest trends, the female characters presented a wholesome female aesthetic in fashion. For instance, stringy kurtas with pop-colored blouses alongside the classic lehenga choli marked a perfect mix of innovation, adaptation, and collaboration. This was combined by the

³² "Mohabbatein Cast- Outfits|Bollywood Style| the Ruby's Way." n.d. Wwww.youtube.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. <https://youtu.be/s2GZCFbQ5hg?si=6BM1c4sCOucfw8E>.



variety of heels, from belly flops to kittens to stilettos³³. Overall, the film gave a decent kickstart and set the benchmarks for the fashion game in the industry³⁴.

Conclusion

The process of economic reforms had widespread impacts on the society and economy of the country. Bollywood was no stranger to this change and had its own journey with the process of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization. This journey was proof of the interconnection and interdependency which the two fields of economy and the cinema industry had with one another. Economic reforms completely changed this dynamic and made both, the Bollywood industry and the economy, more global and affluent in such a way that there was a change of narrative in both fields. Although the cinematic universe of India had a much-developed sense of aesthetic and identity way before these reforms, what changed was the ease of doing things in the field of technology, exchange and catching up with the world. This can be seen with the narratives of camera technology which existed in the country both in terms of domestic powered camera technologies and imports from abroad. However, the process of economic reforms made imports easier and even opened gates for much advanced collaborations in the field of production and led to a very crucial shift within the realm of cameras and production technology. Similar themes can be noted with the fashion and advertising trends in the industry which were making global appearances even before the coming of the reforms but lacked the finesse and paid a hefty price in the taxes of functioning in a closed economic set-up. Globalization brought the world of computer aided technologies and world-famous brands to India which was earlier constrained. These new additions helped the industry develop further in the backdrop of a newly opened economy, which was also reflected in the themes and narratives of the films of the time period.

³³ Khan, Zeba. 2021. "Evolution of Fashion in India through Bollywood's Leading Actresses: India Independence Day Special." WION. August 14, 2021. <https://www.wionews.com/photos/evolution-of-fashion-in-india-through-bollywoods-leading-actresses-india-independence-day-special-405379>.

³⁴ "Mohabbatein Cast- Outfits|Bollywood Style| the Ruby's Way." n.d. www.youtube.com. Accessed April 27, 2024. <https://youtu.be/s2GZCFbQ5hg?si=6BM1c4sCOucfw8t8E>.