

*Producing*



*Bollywood*

INSIDE THE  
CONTEMPORARY HINDI  
FILM INDUSTRY

TEJASWINI GANTI

**Producing BOLLYWOOD**



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HINDI FILM INDUSTRY

Tejaswini Ganti

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***For my hero,***

Vipul,

***and our two stars,***

Saahir and Siddharth



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## **A Day in the Life of a Hindi Film Set**

When family members visited me in Bombay during my fieldwork in 1996, they were curious and excited to see a film shoot, or “shooting,” as it is more commonly referred to in India. Afterward, they invariably complained about the repetition, tedium, and boredom they experienced while observing the shoot. They asked, “How do you do this every day? Don’t you get bored?” I was also asked some variant of these questions by a number of people in Bombay who had had the opportunity to observe film shoots in the city.<sup>1</sup> Given that my dissertation was to be an ethnography of film production, film shoots were the most logical sites to begin my research. As my research progressed, I realized that film shoots not only yielded information about specific production practices, but also many insights into the structure, organization, and social relations of the film industry itself. In this chapter, I present a detailed sketch of a typical day on a Hindi film set in order to impart the spirit and essence of the working style of Hindi filmmakers as well as to bring to light prominent characteristics of the industry’s structure and organization.<sup>2</sup> This typical day is a composite drawn from my observations of a variety of film shoots. Although the sketch is written in the present tense, it is not a timeless ethnographic present, but represents Hindi filmmaking of the late 1990s and the early 2000s. The sketch also provides the foundation for understanding the prominent discourses of change and progress that are addressed in chapter

seven, as well as how audiences are represented and discussed, examined in chapter eight.

The sketch illustrates some of the main features of the work culture of the film industry: the prevalence of face-to-face interactions; the significance of kinship as a source of talent; the set as a meeting space; the highly oral style of working; and the very visible manifestations of hierarchy. It also puts forth the flexibility—by which I mean the ability to make impromptu decisions, the capacity to adapt to uncertainty, and a willingness to change the course of action—that is characteristic of Hindi filmmaking. Additionally, it portrays conversations about audiences, commercial outcome, and Hollywood that are significant components of the industry's production-talk, which provides insights into the prevailing ideologies of production and self-representations of the industry. Finally, it depicts the presence of Hindu rituals, which have become incorporated into production routines, as well as the tremendous diversity—regional, linguistic, and religious—of members of the film industry.<sup>3</sup>

A Hindi film set is a very multi-lingual environment, with a fair amount of English spoken by principal decision makers, as well as code-switching between Hindi and English. For the sake of readability, however, I have presented all of the conversations in English and indicate with italics those sentences that originally occurred in Hindi, indicating with roman type those words that remain in English even when the conversation is in Hindi. In keeping with the idioms of Indian English, I maintain the use of Hindi honorific suffixes such as *ji* (sir/madam) and *saab* (sir), as well as words and phrases like *haan* (yes), *accha* (good, okay), and *theek hai* (okay, alright), because these are commonly employed in everyday speech. Since the terms used for the various crew positions and tasks on a film set in India differ from those used in the United States, I use local terminology and provide definitions when necessary.<sup>4</sup> The two chapters following this sketch analyze in depth the issues raised by the ethnographic material.

AMBA FILM'S PRODUCTION NO. 39: *MERA DIL  
AAPKE KADMON MEIN HAI* (MDAKMH; MY HEART  
IS AT YOUR FEET), DAY 1

It is the first day of the first shooting schedule of MDAKMH, produced by M. K. Malhotra, written and directed by Rakesh Chadda, and starring Vijay Khanna, the currently reigning matinee idol, and Sulekha, a recent Miss India pageant winner from southern India, who is being introduced in this film. During this schedule, a song and dance sequence celebrating



**FIGURE 8** Shooting floor, Film City, Goregaon (northwestern suburb of Bombay), 2005. Photo by the author.

*Diwali* will be shot in eight-hour shifts, over the span of two and a half weeks.<sup>5</sup> An elaborate set depicting the courtyard of a two-story *haveli*, a traditional Indian mansion, has been erected at Filmistan—a studio located in the northwestern suburb of Goregaon—inside one of their larger sound stages, which are called “shooting floors” in Bombay.<sup>6</sup> Consisting of an enormous free-standing concrete structure with no sound-proofing, air conditioning, or toilets, this particular shooting floor stands 95 feet high, 150 feet long, and 120 feet wide (Figure 8).

While the shift begins at 9:00 a.m., the art director, Shantanu Sen, arrives with his assistants by 7:30, in order to put the finishing touches on the set: decorating the arches around the courtyard with garlands of fresh marigolds, placing *diyas*—the small clay oil lamps traditionally used to illuminate homes during *Diwali*—in the numerous alcoves along the wall, and painting *rangolis*—colorful patterns used to decorate homes during festivals—on the floor. Around 8:30 a truck arrives with all of the lights, and workers start unloading the equipment, bringing it onto the set. Another van arrives with the camera and its attendants. The cinematographer, Satish Menon, reaches the set shortly thereafter with his assistants and begins the task of lighting the set. Workers place lights on stands in various corners of the set and overhead on the catwalk, while

one of Menon's assistants starts to take light readings. Meanwhile, the sound recordist sets up his equipment—a reel-to-reel tape player, a large speaker, and headphones—in one corner of the set.

By 9:00 a.m. the director, Rakesh Chadda, and the dance director, Tanaaz Khan, arrive with their respective assistants.<sup>7</sup> Two spot boys—men who do all forms of miscellaneous work on a film set—immediately bring chairs for Chadda and Khan, who nonetheless remain standing. Chadda says, “*Hey man, get me some tea: it will wake me up,*” Menon walks over to Chadda and starts discussing where he wants to place the camera for the first shot.

Khan interrupts, “Rikki, all of the background dancers are here today so we really should do that overhead crane shot first with everyone in the frame.”

“I didn’t hire the crane for today,” Menon interjects, “because I didn’t think we needed it today. I thought we were doing the tracking shots.”

Chadda asks, “Do you think we can get the crane for tomorrow?”

“I’ll have to check that it’s not already booked by another unit,” Menon replies. “You know there’s only one crane of that height in Bombay.”

“In that case,” Khan says, “let’s do the first *antara* [stanza] today. We can use all of the dancers today.” Then she turns to her two assistants, “Kabir, Sania, go get the dancers and start showing them the steps.”

While Khan’s assistants summon the background dancers, who have been lounging outside the set, an assistant director (AD) goes to the makeup rooms to inquire whether Sulekha has arrived and if she is getting ready. The actress is present, along with her mother and sister, and is having her hair and makeup done, but is also waiting for her designer to arrive with her outfits for the song. Another AD calls Vijay Khanna on his cell phone to find out if he is on his way to the set; he is informed by Khanna’s man-Friday that “*saab*” (sir) is still sleeping, as he was shooting for another film until 2:00 a.m.

While he waits for the actors to get ready, Chadda keeps himself busy with his cell phone—sending text messages to his friends and playing games. A man in his early thirties, with a thick manila file folder in his hand, approaches him tentatively.

“Rakesh-ji?”

Chadda, without looking up from his phone replies, “Haan? [yes]”

The man clears his throat and introduces himself, “*Sir, I’m Alok Sharma, I am Mrs. Mishra’s—Mrs. Mishra, your neighbor, they live on the same floor as you—I’m her nephew. I spoke to you on the phone concerning my script.*”

Chadda looks up, staring at the man for a moment. “Yes, of course,

please sit.” Realizing there’s no chair next to him, Chadda turns around and yells, “*Hey spot boy! Bring a chair here!*”

Sharma sits down and takes out a large sheaf of paper held together with staples and hands it to Chadda. “*Sir, I’ve written this screenplay, if you would read it . . .*”

Chadda interrupts, “Tell me the story in one line.”

Sharma clears his throat again, “It is about a woman’s struggle against the society.”

Chadda interjects, “*Oh no, that is really clichéd! What’s new about that?*”

Sharma protests, “But sir, I haven’t finished: the woman is a journalist who goes to a village in Rajasthan to expose child marriage.”

Chadda retorts, “Is this a film or a documentary? How is this commercial?”

Sharma continues, “She falls in love with the local schoolteacher who is also trying to stop the practice.”

Chadda sighs and asks, “So the schoolteacher is the hero? Who do you have in mind for that role?”

“I was thinking that Vijay-ji . . .”

“You want Vijay-ji to do a heroine-oriented film?” Chadda interrupts. “You think the top star of the country will agree to play second lead to a heroine?”

“*That is why I thought, it will be out of the ordinary. Audience will see him in a new role,*” responds Sharma.

“Have you spoken with him?”

“*Ji nahin* [no sir],” Sharma answers. “I was hoping that after you read the script that you could speak to Vijay-ji about it, and if he likes it then he could speak with Malhotra-saab.”

Seeing the film’s producer, M. K. Malhotra, arrive, Chadda stands up, cutting short his conversation with Sharma, “*Theek hai*, [okay] I’ll have a look and get back to you.” The writer looks crestfallen and calls after him, “Thank you; my mobile number is on the title page of the script!”

“Duffer,” Chadda mutters to himself as he walks toward Malhotra and his two tall and lanky sons. “*Hello, Malhotra-saab, how are you?*” he asks, to which the producer replies, “*You tell me, Rikki, is everything alright?*”

Chadda answers, “*Absolutely fine, how do you like the set, it’s quite grand isn’t it?*”

“*The amount of money you made me spend on it, it should be,*” Malhotra retorts.

“*What to do, Malhotra-saab,*” Chadda rejoins. “*You know for our art director only the best materials will do!*”

While Malhotra and Chadda are conversing, spot boys place chairs behind them and rush off to bring another round of tea. Sitting down and taking a sip from his tea, Malhotra speaks to Chadda.

*“Rikki, meet my sons—the older one is Vikky, short for Vikram—he’s twenty-one years old—and the younger one is Lucky, short for Lakshman: he’s eighteen years old. Put them to work; make them your assistants.”*

Chadda responds, *“Of course, but both of them have so much presence, why don’t you have them become actors? I’ll direct that picture. I already have three assistants.”*

*“Yes, yes, I will do that, but right now they are young and immature, first they should learn a little bit about this field, if they’re not able to become stars, at least they can get into direction.”*

Without registering any emotion at Malhotra’s characterization of direction, Chadda shouts out for his chief assistant, “Sanjeev! Sanjeev! Where’s Sanjeev?”

Arif, another one of his assistants, rushes to Chadda’s side, “I think he’s outside, sir.”

“Well, go and tell him to come inside,” Chadda says firmly.

Arif dashes outside the set to find Sanjeev smoking a cigarette and texting on his cell phone. *“Sanjeev! Rakesh-ji is looking for you. He seems a little angry.”*

Sanjeev quickly stubs out his cigarette on the ground and hurries inside to where Chadda is sitting with Malhotra, “Yes, Rakesh-ji?” *“Saala! [idiot] When I call for you—you need to be within hearing range, got that?”*

*“Ji [yes],”* murmurs Sanjeev.

Chadda says slowly, “Anyway, this is Vikky and Lucky, Malhotra-*saab*’s sons, who are joining the direction team from today—why don’t you show them around the set, fill them in on the details, and catch them up with what needs to be done around here.”

Sanjeev, who had been assisting Chadda for the past four years, understanding his boss’s demeanor of resigned frustration, adds, “How about if they are in charge of costume continuity? We don’t have anyone doing that yet.”

Chadda turns to Malhotra and asks, *“Theek hai [Okay]?”*

Malhotra responds, *“Badiya [excellent].”*

Sanjeev turns to Lucky and Vikky and says, “Come with me, I’ll show you the set and get you the costume continuity notebook. We have to go upstairs.”

As they walk toward the staircase on the left side of the set, Lucky remarks, “I didn’t know that the balcony and stairs were real. I just thought it was all for show.”

Sanjeev responds, “It had to be real and sturdy because, in the opening of the song, all of the girl dancers will be at the balcony with Sulekha and then will follow her down the stairs.”

Once they’re upstairs, Lucky surveys the set below and exclaims, “Wow *yaar* [dude]! It looks really good from here! *Hai na*, [isn’t that so] Vikky?”

Vikky nods, “Yeah, Dad always demands the best.”

Sanjeev adds, “Our art director, Shantanu-*da*, is very good. So, you two are interested in going into direction?”

Vikky replies, “Not really, I actually want to be an actor, but Dad thinks that I need to be a little older before he launches me, so I’m just preparing now — you know, taking some acting classes with Namit Kishore, learning diction, training at the gym. Dad thinks that spending some time as an assistant will also be useful experience . . .”

Lucky interrupts, “I definitely want to be a director! Hopefully, I’ll get my chance to direct a film soon after Vikky *bhaiyya*’s [brother] launch, and then we can be a complete team — Dad as producer, me as director, and *bhaiyya* as star!”

From his vantage point, Sanjeev notices the Hindu priest entering the set. He tells Vikky and Lucky, “Let’s go down; *Punditji* has come.”

As the three walk back downstairs, Keshav, Chadda’s third assistant, comes up to Chadda and Malhotra and says, “*The priest has come for the prayer ceremony.*”

Chadda tells Keshav to fetch Sulekha from her makeup room. She appears, wearing a robe and large curlers in her hair, accompanied by her mother. Sulekha, her mother, Malhotra, Chadda, Khan, Menon, and all of their respective assistants gather in a corner of the set where the priest performs a Ganesh *puja* for the production to commence auspiciously.

During the *puja*, a short, balding middle-aged man with a paunch enters the set quietly. Malhotra’s production manager, Iqbal, notices him and motions to Malhotra. Malhotra turns and nods to the man and dispatches Iqbal to find a spot boy to fetch a chair and water for the visitor. Once the *puja* is over, Malhotra gets up off the floor and walks over to the visitor who has been quietly observing all of the activity on the set.

“*Agrawal-saab, what a surprise, what a surprise! How are you? When did you arrive from Delhi? Will you have tea, or a soft drink?*”

The visitor, Prakash Agrawal, a distributor from Delhi, is considering

buying the distribution rights of the film for the Delhi-U.P. territory.<sup>8</sup> “Tea without sugar; I came the night before last. So, the shooting hasn’t begun yet? Where are the actors?”

Malhotra replies, “They’re getting ready. Today they are shooting a big song, which I guarantee will top the music countdown shows as soon as the album releases. See how grand the set looks!”<sup>9</sup>

Agrawal retorts, “Yes, the set is nice, but does the film have a strong story? Audiences don’t come to the theater to see sets, they come for good stories.”

“Of course, this picture has a great story! It has great songs, big stars, and it will be shot in beautiful foreign locations—one outdoor schedule will be in Lick—” Malhotra turns to his production manager, “Hey, Iqbal, what is the name of that tiny European country?”

Iqbal answers, “Lich-ten-stein.”

Malhotra continues, “Aah yes, Lickenstein. Another schedule will be in Cro . . .”

Even before he has a chance to turn and ask, Iqbal pipes up, “Cro-a-tia.”

Without skipping a beat, Malhotra resumes, “Yes, Croshia—no one in India has ever shot at these locations before—it will be a completely new experience for the audience—to see such fresh locations! After all how often can you keep seeing the same Switzerland, England, Australia, America, you know?”

Agrawal continues, “The price you’re asking for Delhi-U.P. seems a bit high for an untested combination like Vijay and Sulekha. Also Rakesh Chadda’s last couple of pictures were flops.”

Unfazed by Agrawal’s skepticism, Malhotra persists, “The combination of a superstar like Vijay Khanna and a new girl like Sulekha will set the screen ablaze I am telling you! And Rikki’s last two films? I didn’t produce them, but the problem was that those films were not promoted properly. Other producers don’t understand the importance of marketing. Those films were treated like stepchildren. I treat every film I produce as my own flesh and blood. Rikki is like my own son. All of his films with me have been hits. I have so much faith in this project that I am not even selling [the rights for] Bombay [territory]. I will be distributing the film myself in Bombay.”

Agrawal responds with, “The heyday of the love story is gone. Audiences have gotten bored with romance. Nowadays, they want action and comedy. All of the hit films last year were either action films or comedy films.”

Malhotra exclaims, “But this film is much more than a love story! It has everything—romance, drama, emotions, comedy, action. Just you wait and



see! It will appeal to everyone from six to sixty, from the front-benchers to the families!”

“Malhotra-saab, last year I had to bear so many losses and the market is tight nowadays, but our relationship goes back for many years which is why I have come to you today. Otherwise, distributors do not even want to offer an MG anymore and would rather distribute the film on a commission basis,” counters Agrawal.<sup>10</sup>

Malhotra responds, “Oh, Agrawal-saab, have you ever suffered a loss with any of my pictures? For a picture that will be released next year, the price is not high at all, in fact, when you take delivery, you will think it’s fifty or sixty lakhs less than what it should be!”

Agrawal and Malhotra continue their negotiations over the sale of the film’s distribution rights for a few more minutes until finally they both stand up, shake both hands, and Agrawal leaves the set. Malhotra looks very pleased and calls out after him, “I will definitely let you know when the first trial [screening] is of the film. You must come!”

By this time it is noon, and the star, Khanna, has still not arrived; Malhotra is becoming angry. “Rikki, where is that idiot? Who does he think he is? Just because a few of his films have become super hits, does it mean he can do whatever he wants? If this picture flops, will he return my money?”

Chadda tries to placate him, “Malhotra-saab, he just called a little while ago; he is very sorry; he will be here very soon.” Chadda looks at his watch and tells one of his assistants to announce to the crew to break for lunch. He turns to Malhotra, “Please come and have lunch with me, I have home-cooked food.” While the workers, dancers, and assistants eat lunch outdoors seated on the ground, Chadda, Menon, Khan, Malhotra and his sons retreat to a large air-conditioned room in a building adjacent to the shooting floor, where lunch has been laid out on a table. One of the spot boys serves lunch to everyone and leaves the room.

As Chadda is about to start his lunch, his cell phone rings. Looking at the caller ID, he announces to everyone in the room, “It’s Sunil calling about Vijay’s new release.”

Sunil Taneja was the editor of one of the industry trade magazines that collected information about the box-office performance of films, and he had called Chadda to inform him of the first day box-office report of Vijay Khanna’s latest film.

Answering the phone, Chadda says, “Haan, Sunil, tell me, what are the reports? *Accha*, Bombay is bumper? How about Delhi-U.P.? I see. *Theek hai*, keep me posted. Thanks, bye.” Chadda closes his phone with a

slightly troubled expression, “Vijay’s film, *Pyaari Batein*, is carrying mixed reports. It had a bumper opening in Bombay and Delhi City, but not so good in U.P., Bihar, or C.P.-C.I.” Turning to Malhotra, he asks, “Malhotra-saab, are all territories closed for our film?”

“Not yet, C.P.-C.I. is still open. Don’t worry Rikki, I’ll have buyers lining up for the film. *Pyaari Batein* is not a universal subject; there’s nothing in it for the masses or the interiors. I’m not surprised that it didn’t get a good opening all-India.”

Menon adds, “I heard *Pyaari Batein* was too much like *Mohabbat Masti*. That film was a flop. There’s no action in either film and you know action is always a safe bet in smaller centers.”

Chadda concurs, “*Haan*, that’s true, but Vijay doesn’t have the image of an action hero. The problem with *Mohabbat Masti* was that the romance angle between the hero and heroine was too different. People have to remember that this is *Hindi* cinema we are making and our audiences don’t accept everything. This isn’t Hollywood!”

Lucky, Malhotra’s younger son, adds, “My friend Jai went to see *Pyaari Batein* yesterday—first day, first show—and he said it was mind-blowing! It was too good!”

“Nowadays, Vijay’s films are doing much better in the overseas and the metros. Somehow, the interiors are not connecting with his films,” Chadda reflects.

Malhotra retorts, “*That’s because the Singhanias* [the film’s producers] *only make films for those territories. Rikki, not to worry, our film has universal appeal. Just you wait and see, all-India and overseas, masses-classes, everyone will love it!*”

Khan, who has been flipping through a film magazine during this exchange, pipes up, “Hey look here are photos of the *mahurat* of *Awaaz*—it was quite a fabulous evening! Jawahar Singh spared no expense after all he was launching his son, Rohit. I wonder how the film is going? You know the Singhs: they don’t talk about their films or show them to anyone from outside. You would think they were protecting the Kohinoor diamond!”

Vikky, Malhotra’s older son, answers, “I work out in the same gym where Rohit’s co-star, Amar Kohli, does, and seems that Rohit’s dad is not happy at all with the way the film is turning out. He’s thinking about getting rid of Suresh Gupta and directing it himself!”

“No way!” Khan exclaims.

“Wow! Poor Suresh,” Chadda chimes in.

The visibly surprised group is about to discuss this tidbit of gossip, when someone knocks on the door. Lucky opens the door and a short,

slight man enters the room, followed by a tall, muscular man in his mid-twenties. Chadda recognizes the first man and exclaims, “Jignesh-*bhai*, *what’s up? Why are you here?*”

Jignesh replies, “Rakesh-*ji*, I have brought someone to meet you and Malhotra-*saab*, allow me to introduce Tanuj Singh. He has come here from London, where he was studying acting.”

Singh steps forward and does an exaggerated *namaste* to everyone in the room—holding his palms together very straight and bowing his head slightly. Chadda and Khan appear amused by his gesture. Malhotra concentrates on his lunch. Chadda asks Singh, “*So you’ve come here from London to work in Hindi films, why?*”

Singh replies, “*I’ve been a big fan of Hindi films since I was a child . . .*”

Khan exclaims, “Oh so sweet, his Hindi has a British accent on it!”

Singh responds, “Actually I’m not from London. I studied acting at the Royal Academy in London.”

Chadda asks, “So now, do you know how to act?”

Singh replies, “I think so.”

Chadda retorts, “Either you know it or don’t know it.”

Singh hurriedly responds, “I do know how to act: I’ve done street theater; plays in college; worked with Alyque Padamsee; did Shakespeare in London.”

Chadda asks, “Do you want to work in films or in television?”

“Definitely films! My dream has always been to be on the big screen,” says Singh.

“Have you done any films yet or signed any?” asks Chadda.

“No, not yet,” replies Singh.

Chadda offers, “Word of advice—even if you haven’t signed any films, you need to talk about possibilities in a big way.”

Singh adds, “Actually, I have talked to some people about doing a role in Sunil Mehra’s next film.”

Malhotra finally looks up from his plate, and says to Chadda, “*Rikki, how long has that Mehra been planning his next film? It seems like he makes a film every ten years!*”

Jignesh pipes up, “*Accha, Rakesh-ji, Malhotra-saab, we’ll make a move. Tanuj has an appointment in town—since we were in the area I thought why not have him meet you?*”

Singh does another *namaste*, “Thank you for your time and it was very nice meeting you.”

Once they both leave, Malhotra turns to Chadda and says with a chuckle, “*Rikki, he seems more suitable for a villain than a hero.*”

Khan protests, “No Malhotra-*saab*, he was cute—in an ugly-ish sort of way!”

Khan then turns to Chadda and asks, “*Accha* Rikky, when you went to U.S. a few months ago, what movies did you see? Anything good?”

Chadda responds, “I saw *A.I.*, which was very interesting—very different than the typical Spielberg film, you know? I also saw *Memento*, which was great, but you know that kind of film would never work here. Our audiences would get thoroughly confused. I bought a lot of DVDs. I spend so much money when I go to the U.S.!”

Lucky asks, “What did you buy?”

Chadda replies, “So many I can’t even remember! I bought a lot of classic films to add to my collection that I didn’t have before, like the *Godfather* trilogy that got reissued with all of the special features. I bought *Jurassic Park*, *Independence Day*, *Twister* . . .”

Vikky interrupts, “Oh man, the special effects in Hollywood are mind-blowing! They are so realistic! We could never do that here!”

Malhotra interjects, “*They don’t think of stories anymore in Hollywood, they just think of sequences of special effects and put some story on top.*”

“There are good special effects in India, like in *Hindustani* and *Kaalapani*—those were so real, they looked like English films,” asserts Menon.

Malhotra concurs, “*Just imagine, those were South Indian films—so much money was spent. The South is leading us in technicians and music. They are very dedicated. They take more risks and when they spend money, they do it with conviction. Look at the track record of the director who made Hindustani! What a track record! Gentleman, Kaadalan, and Hindustani—all super hits! Just amazing!*”

Just then the door opens and a short portly man wearing glasses walks in. Malhotra cuts short his comments and exclaims, “*Debu-da! How are you? Where have you been all these days? I was trying to reach you but something is wrong with your mobile!*”

Debojit Das, a veteran screenwriter, settles himself down on an empty chair and says, “*I had gone to Kolkatta for my niece’s wedding and you know how it is in a house where a wedding is taking place—absolute chaos! Hello, Rikki, Tanaaz; how is everybody?*”

Everyone nods and reciprocates Das’s greeting. Chadda smiles and says warmly, “*So Debu-da, from the twinkle in your eye, I can tell that you have something good for us.*”

Das chuckles and says, “*Ah Rikki, your father used to say the same thing to me. What a great director he was. If he were here today, he would have been very proud of you!*”

Malhotra chimes in, “A great director and a great friend! I remember when we both came to Bombay together from Delhi — what days those were — sharing a room in Prabhadevi . . .”

Before Malhotra can continue with his reminiscing, Chadda cuts him off, “Debu-da, do you have something to narrate for us?”

Das says, “Of course, I have a subject for a light romantic comedy” and launches into his story: “See, the hero is a total debauched guy — drinking, womanizing — and his girlfriend is this tart. His parents are dead, but he lives with his grandparents — who are millionaires — and they won’t give him any of his inheritance until he marries a respectable girl. So he and his tarty girlfriend find some girl who dances in a bar and hire her to play the part of his wife, but that girl is smart also; she doesn’t just want a lump sum, but a percentage of the inheritance. He and the dancer show up at his grandparents’ place pretending to be married. When he asks for his money, the grandparents say not until the firstborn — now they have to fake a pregnancy also!” At this twist in the story, the room bursts into laughter.

Pleased with the reaction, Das continues, “When the girlfriend is getting worried about the hero getting too involved with the dancer girl, he reassures her that he’ll get the money and just dump her. Now the dancer overhears this and decides to teach him a lesson. She takes grandpa to a restaurant to show how the hero is hanging out with the tart girlfriend rather than being at home with her. So the grandparents kick the hero out and transfer the property to the dancer and fictitious child. That is the basic story.”

Everyone starts laughing and praising Das. Khan exclaims, “Mind-blowing Debu-da! It’s been so long since such a light, fun film has been made, right Rikki?”

Chadda reflects, “Yes, for a film like this casting is really important because there has to be really good chemistry between the hero and the heroine . . .”

Malhotra interjects, “Debu-da you’ve done it again! What a great story! Music should be by Amar-Prem and lyrics by Saahil-saab. You know who’ll be perfect for the part of the boy? My nephew [sister’s son] Rajiv — he’s ready, and we were just waiting for the right subject for his debut. Can you narrate to him tomorrow?”

Das replies, “Of course; I have time tomorrow.”

Malhotra turns to his younger son, “Lucky, dial Micky’s number, let’s see if he’s free. He should be — he’s done with college, so nowadays he only goes to the gym all the time.”

Lucky dials the number and speaks to his cousin first, “Hello, Micky-bhaiyya? It’s Lucky. Yah, I’m at Filmistan with Papa and he wants to talk to you.”

Malhotra takes the phone and says, “Hello, Micky-beta [son], how are you? . . . I’m here with Debojit Das . . . Yes, the writer. He just narrated to us a brilliant subject and you’re perfect for it. Do you have time for a narration tomorrow? . . . Perfect! Come over at eleven o’clock . . . Yes, at home. Accha, beta. Give my regards to your parents . . . Bye.”

Hanging up the phone, Malhotra turns to Das and says, “Excellent, Debu-da. We’ll meet tomorrow at home.”

A beaming Das stands up and says, “Okay, Malhotra-saab, we’ll meet tomorrow. Bye Rikki, say hello to your mother. Bye-bye everybody.” Everyone in the room responds, “Bye Debu-da!”

While Malhotra, Chadda, and others are finishing their lunch, Khanna arrives—followed by his man Friday, Raju, who is carrying his clothes—and without a word goes directly toward his makeup room, where a journalist from the new film magazine *Filmi Duniya* had been waiting outside since ten o’clock to conduct an interview.

The journalist stands up and tries to approach Khanna, “Vijay-ji, I’m from *Filmi* . . .” but Raju stops her.

“Sir is busy, he has to get ready for the shoot.” After a few minutes, Khanna’s personal makeup man enters the room, followed by Raju.

As soon as the break is over at one o’clock, Khanna emerges from the makeup room, dressed in a cream-colored silk brocade kurta, and goes to the set. He is followed by the makeup man, Raju, and the journalist. There, Khan begins to demonstrate the choreography for the song. She first shows Khanna his part without music, counting out the steps, “Okay, Vijay—see here, you come forward—one, two, three, four—and then sideways—five, six, seven, eight—got it? Let’s try with the music.” Khan picks up a microphone to communicate with the sound recordist, who is out of view behind a screen on the opposite end of the set, “Bharat-ji, start the music—*pehle antarey se* [from the first stanza]—give me a few beats lead.” When the music begins, she performs the steps alongside Khanna. They go through this routine a few more times, and then Khan looks around, “Where’s Sulekha? She’s not ready yet?” Khan sends one of the ADs to inquire about how much longer Sulekha will take to get ready. She tells Khanna, “Vijay, let’s run through this a couple of times. I’ll do Sulekha’s steps now and you practice yours.” After a few more rehearsals, Khan tells Khanna, “*Theek hai* [That’s fine]; take a break. We need Sulekha to continue.”

Khanna sits down and motions to Raju, who has been standing in the background watching his boss the entire time. “*Raju, give me the phone and matches.*” Raju immediately hands over Khanna’s cell phone and holds out a pack of Marlboro Lights with one cigarette pulled out slightly for his boss to remove. Khanna takes the cigarette and holds it out in his left hand for Raju to light, meanwhile he sends a text message on his phone with his right.

Raju clears his throat and says, “*Sir, that woman from the magazine is still here.*”

Khanna looks up from his phone, “*Kahaan [where]?*” He then notices the journalist standing to the left of him in one of the arches framing the courtyard. He tells Raju, “*Oh, I forgot! Bring her here.*”

Raju walks over to the journalist and says, “*Sir is calling you.*”

When she reaches Khanna at his spot near the center of the set, he apologizes, “I am so sorry to keep you waiting. Please sit. It is always so busy on the first day of a schedule! What’s your name?”

“Malini.”

Before she can say anything further, Khanna flashes his famous smile and says, “Ah, lovely name! Tell me Malini will you have some tea or a Pepsi? It’s quite hot, cold is better, no?” Turning to Raju who was waiting attentively nearby, he orders, “*Bring a Pepsi for the lady.*” Turning back to Malini, he asks, “Now tell me, which magazine are you from?”

With this barrage of attention from one of India’s top film stars, Malini’s frustration at waiting for five hours in the heat dissipates rapidly, “*Filmi Duniya [Film World]* — it’s a new magazine started by Sunita Tandon, who used to be the editor of *Starz*. We would like to feature you on our inaugural cover. I think Sunita-ji had called and spoken to you about it?”

“Of course, of course, Sunita is a dear friend. Anything for her,” responds Khanna.

Malini continues, “I’d like to take your interview for the cover story . . .” Khanna cuts her off.

“Of course, of course, definitely. We can do it right now. Go ahead, ask me.”

As Malini takes her notebook out and starts fishing for a pen in her bag, Khanna exclaims, “*It’s about time!*”

Malini looks up. “Sorry?”

Khanna gestures toward the entrance of the set. Sulekha has just walked into the set with her mother, sister, and dress designer, Rita Chandra, in tow. They walk directly to where Chadda, Khan, and Menon are seated, in front of a video monitor near the camera. Chandra starts

apologizing profusely, “So, so sorry to keep you all waiting Rakesh-ji, my tailor master fell ill and then I had to special order the silk for the *ghagra* [long full skirt] from Italy, you know, because you cannot find this shade of blue in India, so everything took much longer than planned!”

Chadda shrugs her off and tells Sulekha, “We’re shooting the *pehla an-tara* [first verse] first, okay?” He calls out to Vijay who is seated farther away, “*Accha* [okay], Vijay, ready?”

Khanna who was speaking to the journalist, stands up and says, “We’ll continue after I give this shot, okay?” and walks toward the group. Khan takes them both to a less crowded area of the set so that she can supervise their rehearsal. Khanna and Sulekha rehearse their dance steps together a few times. As a trained *Bharatanatyam* dancer, Sulekha picks up the routine quickly.

Chadda asks Khan, “*Okay, shall we do a take?*”

Khan nods her approval, “*Haan* [yes], let’s do it.” She calls out to her assistants who are standing right behind her, “Kabir, Sania, get the dancers in position.”

Chadda tells his assistants to inform Menon that they are ready. Arif rushes to Menon, while Sanjeev starts announcing loudly, “Quiet! Quiet, please!”

The actors and dancers get into position; the lights are switched on; Chadda and Khan take their seats in front of the video monitor; and Menon sits behind the camera, which is placed on a trolley. Sanjeev roars once more, “QUIET! TAKING!”

Khan speaks into the microphone, “Start sound! Roll camera!”

Keshav holds up the clapboard in front of the camera, quickly says, “*Mera Dil Aapke Kadmon Mein Hai* song three, shot one, take one,” and then sounds the clap.

When Khan says, “Action!” Menon’s assistants on either side of him slowly push the camera on a track toward the background dancers arrayed in the center of the courtyard. As the music swells, the group parts in the middle, revealing Khanna and Sulekha dancing side by side.

After two measures of music, Khan, with her eye on the monitor shouts, “Cut it! Good job!” She turns to Chadda, who had been watching the whole sequence along with her on the monitor, “Rikki, what do you think, good, no?”

Chadda answers, “Mind-blowing! Print this one.” Behind one of the arches, a spot boy breaks a coconut to celebrate the first shot of the day and pieces are distributed to everyone on the set.



Malhotra, who watched the shot seated under an archway to the right of the camera, takes a piece of coconut, looks at his watch, and mutters to Iqbal, “*Wow, they took the first shot so quickly? It’s only about to be three o’clock. If they keep going at this rate, my grandchildren will be able to come to the premiere!*”

Munching on the coconut, Khan tells Chadda, “*Let’s take one more as a safety.*”

Chadda responds, “Okay, but not too many extra takes, you know how Malhotra is *kanjoos* [miserly] about spending money on [raw] stock. Who would think on such a big film that we have to measure our stock?”

After one more take of the same sequence, the camera and lights have to be positioned differently for the next shot, and it is time to give the workers their tea break, so Khanna and Sulekha decide to retreat to their respective makeup rooms, which are air-conditioned, unlike the set. The dancers, who don’t have makeup rooms, step outside the set for their break, as it is close to 100 degrees Fahrenheit inside when the lights are on. Khanna asks Malini, the journalist, to accompany him to his makeup room so that they can finish the interview. As he is exiting the set, he encounters Malhotra who is on his way out as well.

“*Hello Malhotra-saab, did you see the shot?*”

Malhotra replies, “*It was absolutely great! The two of you will be an amazing pair onscreen! Okay, Vijay, I’m off, come home sometime, Mrs. Malhotra keeps asking about you.*”

During the tea break, another producer, Vinod Lakhani, arrives at the set with his assistant in order to speak to Khanna about acting in a film that he is producing. Discovering that Khanna is in his makeup room, Lakhani decides to wait for him. He tells a spot boy to bring a couple of chairs outside the set and waits there for Khanna. After the tea break, Arif is dispatched to the makeup rooms to inform the actors that they are needed on set. He knocks on Sulekha’s door first, “Ma’am, shot is ready,” and then on Khanna’s door, “Sir, shot is ready.” Sulekha walks out of her room first with her mother and sister. Khanna leaves his room a little later, along with a couple of his friends who dropped by to visit with him.

As Khanna walks toward the entrance of the set, Lakhani approaches and greets him, “*Namaste Vijay-ji.*”

Khanna replies, “*Lakhani-saab, how are you? I have to give this shot; I’ll be just a minute. Are you fine here or you can also sit inside. Will you have tea or a soft drink?*”

Lakhani answers, “*I’m fine right here. I don’t want anything. Thank you.*”

Despite his answer, once inside, Khanna still dispatches a spot boy to serve tea to Lakhani and his assistant, who drink it readily. He also makes a spot boy bring chairs and tea for his friends.

Keshav asks Arif, "*Who is that with Vijay-ji? Someone important?*"

Arif replies, "*No man, they're his hangers-on/sidekicks, but even a star's hangers-on start taking on the airs of a star.*"

The second shot is of a close-up of Khanna singing the first line of the *antara*. After a couple of rehearsals, they decide to shoot. The music begins, and the camera with a zoom lens slowly tracks toward Khanna, who lip-synchs, "*Amavas mein chaand nikla mere dil mein jalaya diya* [The moon (a reference to his love) has appeared on this dark night, lighting the lamp in my heart]."

"Cut!" shouts Khan. Turning to Chadda, she says, "What do you think?"

He nods and says, "*Accha hai*. [It's good.] Let's print it."

The third shot is an extreme close-up reaction shot of Sulekha responding to Khanna's declaration. Her line, "*Meri rooh ki gheraiyon mein teri awaaz goonjey* [Your voice echoes in the depths of my soul]," proves difficult for her to lip-synch, as she barely speaks Hindi. After several rehearsals, Khan and Chadda decide to film. During the filming, Sulekha stumbles over the word *gheraiyon* (depths). They try again and then she fumbles over the word *goonjey* (echoes).

After ten takes, Khan says to Chadda, "*Rikki, we have to do something else. How much longer can we keep doing this? It's a simple line, but she doesn't know Hindi. If this is the case today, then what will we do for the rest of the shoot?*"

Chadda responds, "*Haan, she needs a lot of coaching. We'll put Arif on it. Anyway, we will dub her voice for sure—obviously we won't use her voice. We can't change the lyrics at this point after the song is already recorded. Why don't we pull back from the extreme close-up and shoot her through a row of diyas [clay oil lamps] to get a diffuse effect, and then we won't notice her mouth movements so much?*"

Khan says, "But all of the *diyas* are on the wall; how would we do that?"

Chadda thinks some more, walking around the courtyard. "What about if she has a *diya* in her hand? The part of the line that she has trouble with—we shoot the *diya* and then zoom out to a medium close-up of her singing the rest of the line, you know, like that song in *Devdas*?"<sup>11</sup>

Khan says, "That would work, then we would have to make sure that she can hold that *diya jagah jagah* [everywhere] for the rest of the *antara*."

Chadda chuckles, "*Whenever she can't get a line, we'll take a close-up of the lamp.*"

Khan bursts into laughter. “You’re too much!”

Chadda walks over to Menon to inform him of the changes. Menon says, “If you want me to shoot a *diya* then I’ll have to change the lighting set-up.”

Looking at his watch, Chadda says, “Change the lighting set-up quickly; the shift is almost over.”

Meanwhile, Khanna has stepped outside the set to meet with Lakhani. As there are only two chairs, Lakhani’s assistant stands up so that Khanna may sit.

Khanna asks, “*So Lakhani-saab, what brings you here?*”

Lakhani responds, “*I’ve got an excellent story and you are perfect in it.*”

Khanna inquires, “*Do you have the script? I don’t have time to hear a narration right now. After this shoot, I have to go to Aradhana [name of a recording/dubbing studio] to dub for a film.*”

Lakhani responds, “*If you like the idea, then I’ll get the script written!*”

Khanna retorts, “*Oh Lakhani-saab, those days are over! Nowadays I don’t agree to do a film that doesn’t have a bound script.*”

Lakhani replies, “*If you want a script, remember that English [language] picture, Notting Hill? It’s something like that.*”

Khanna stifles a groan, “*Now I’d like to do roles that are slightly different from my usual ones.*”

Lakhani persists, “*Please think about it—the money is good—there are some NRI investors from the U.S. and Canada. You can get a lot more than your standard remuneration.*”

“*How much more?*” asks Khanna.

“*Currently you get 30 million, right? You can easily get 40 or 50 million.*”

Khanna says, “*Okay, I’ll think about it. When are you thinking about beginning production?*”

Lakhani answers, “*July ya [or] August.*”

Khanna does a double-take, “*What, that quickly! How is that possible! It’s already February! Anyway, I don’t have any dates for the next two years; I’m doing four movies.*”

Lakhani says, “*It will get made very quickly; everything will get completed in one or two schedules! The entire shoot will take place abroad and will be in synch-sound so it’s just a matter of 30 or 40 days. Think about it; you can spend the monsoons in Canada and the U.S. with your family, maybe do some stage-shows; think of it as a vacation on our expense.*”

Khanna stands up and says, “*Okay, I’ll see what I can do, I’ll have my secretary try to juggle my dates around, and I’ll give you a reply in a few days. Very well, goodbye.*”

Lakhani stands up and folds his hands in departing. While Khanna walks toward the set, Lakhani and his assistant leave the studio. As he enters the set, Khanna hears Chadda say on the microphone, “*Accha* [okay] everybody, pack up!” Khanna turns around and walks toward his makeup room to change; he then leaves for the dubbing studio where he has to dub his dialogues for a different film.

At the end of the shift, all of the workers who receive a daily wage, such as spot boys, background dancers, lighting assistants, and various others line up outside the shooting floor, where Malhotra’s production manager, Iqbal, and an assistant have set up a table with a ledger. Iqbal’s assistant hands each worker his or her daily wage along with conveyance—money for transportation costs—in cash that Iqbal dispenses from his briefcase. Each worker then signs the ledger to record the receipt of payment. Chadda and his assistants pile into his car to go to the music studio, where the last song of the film will be recorded later that night. Khan and her assistants take off to another film shoot that Khan is choreographing. After Iqbal finishes paying all of the daily workers, he and his assistant take the magazine of exposed film to the lab for processing. The camera is packed up by its attendants and taken back to the offices of Sai Arts—the production company that rented it out for the shoot. After everyone leaves, one of the studio guards locks the entrance to the set.

Entertainment, the president of FICCI asserted in his opening remarks, “The entertainment industry in India has historically grown in a somewhat unstructured manner, and if I may say so without much government support or incentive” (<http://www.bisnetworld.net/ficci/march-frames-lodha.htm>).

## Chapter Two

1. Tarun Kumar and Asha Mehta are pseudonyms.
2. From the mid-1990s, Hollywood films began to be dubbed into Hindi and some other Indian languages and released in a wider scale theatrically, but even then foreign films occupy a small percentage of domestic box-office. “Proportion of Gross Box Office collections of foreign films lies between 5 and 10 percent of total GBOC of all Indian films. Outside of the United States, India is probably the strongest local film market in the world” (Kheterpal 2005: 10). Shroff is probably referring to video and laser disc as media to watch Hollywood films in the 1980s — as the reference to *Top Gun* would suggest — the media technologies and the fact that these films would not have been dubbed or subtitled in Indian languages points to the circumscribed nature of such consumption.
3. Shroff’s family has been involved with the film industry for two generations: Shroff’s grandfather started a film financing business and then his father, Shyam, and uncle, Balkrishna, transformed that company into a film distribution business. Shroff then added exhibition to the company’s portfolio in 2001.
4. The ubiquity of the term “cool” globally makes it notoriously difficult to define. The use of the term as a form of slang to denote a certain style and attitude has its roots in African American jazz culture of the 1920s. For the history and evolution of the term see Moore (2004), Pountain and Robins (2000), and Nancarrow et al. (2002).
5. See Ganti (2002) for an earlier instantiation of this point.
6. Johar had been shooting his film, *Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna* (Never Say Good-bye) (2006) for three months in the New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut area. Ranjani Mazumdar, who was teaching a class on Indian cinema — at the time through the NYU Cinema Studies department — had organized the trip for her students. I thank her for including me in this excursion.
7. *Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna* shoot at the Sleepy Hollow Country Club, November 18, 2005.
8. *Himmatwala* (The One with Courage) (1983), directed by K. Raghavendra Rao, starring Jeetendra and Sri Devi, was a big box-office success and can be seen as starting this particular trend.
9. For example, the directors Mani Rathnam and Shankar, and actor/director Kamal Hasan, have often been hailed as cinematic pioneers and are held in highest regard by members of the Bombay industry and film press.
10. This perception appears to be a longstanding one. I came across an interview with Telugu director K. Vishwanath in the July 3, 1982, issue of the trade magazine *Film Information* where the writer introduces the director as an anomaly: “K. Viswanath baffles you. He is a maker from South — where loudness and crudeness are the order. Even the ‘bests’ like Dasari and Rama Rao are hardly aesthetic, but K. Viswanath is a highly sensitive director” (Kathuria 2007 [1982]: 11).
11. See Mankekar (1999) for a discussion of the motivation behind this policy move and its impact.
12. Actually this issue has not been studied in great depth as to why filmmakers with-

held the sale of domestic video rights. Pendakur (1989) explains it as the Indian film industry's shortsighted position. He asserts that the "film industry must be blamed for having created an adversarial relationship with the emerging video business. Instead of treating home video as a source of new revenues, Hindi film producers took an "untenable" stand" (Pendakur 1989: 73). The issue is more complicated than that, however, given the fragmented nature of the industry, which I will examine in greater detail in subsequent chapters. During the period Pendakur refers to, and until the mid-2000s, distributors served as the main source of capital and finance for filmmaking. It would appear that distributors would be the ones against the sale of video rights, rather than producers. From reading the trade press of the early years of the advent of video (1982–84), it is apparent that dissension existed—there are strong statements by distributors threatening boycotts of producers who sell domestic video rights and denials by producers about having sold said rights. Producers started selling domestic video rights in 1984, and "officially" from 1987 onward. Videocassettes of films were released simultaneously with their theatrical release. The disagreement between producers and distributors over the sale of rights has continued till this day with the issue of satellite rights and telecasts. Distributors have always wanted to be able to have a longer period to exploit films theatrically, whereas producers have an incentive to sell the satellite telecast rights much earlier.

13. Mark Liechty (2003) discusses a very similar narrative emerging from the same set of circumstances taking place in Nepal.
14. The article quoted a housewife from an affluent neighborhood in New Delhi asserting, "After a really long time, we have a movie that is different. I am really fed up of the crass violence in today's movies. *Lamhe* is a film that you can see with your family without being embarrassed" (Khanna and Dutt 1992: 68).
15. *Masala* is a Hindi word that means a blend of spices, but has frequently been used to describe popular Hindi films, denoting their unabashed goal of entertainment as well as the inclusion of a variety of narrative and aesthetic elements: songs; dances, comedy, action, romance, and drama. *Nautanki* is a form of traditional musical theater originating and performed in northern India—in the present-day states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. For a detailed history and study of this form, see Hansen (1992).
16. His surprise and statements evoke in a peculiar way Ravi Vasudevan's argument about Hindi films doing well and being popular in "transitional societies" (1995).
17. The standard length of Indian films ranges from 150 to 165 minutes. In 1996, producers and directors told me how exhibitors prefer such running times for the sake of standardized exhibition practice, which divides the screening day into four shows: at 12:00, 3:00, 6:00, and 9:00 p.m. (or at the half-hour). HAHK's length necessitated a readjustment of the standard exhibition times, either from four shows to three, in which case the distributor compensated the exhibitor for the revenue lost from the reduced number of shows, or if keeping four shows, then starting the first show of the day as early as 10:00 a.m. The film was later re-released with two more songs, which increased the running time to 205 minutes. The advent of multiplexes did away with the standardized exhibition times that for decades had marked the experience of seeing a film.
18. HAHK is a story of two families: one with two sons, Rajesh and Prem; and the other with two daughters, Pooja and Nisha. Rajesh and Prem's uncle, who has been their guardian and parental figure ever since their parents died many years

before, arranges Rajesh's marriage to Pooja, the daughter of his old college buddy, thus transforming a friendship into kinship. The main narrative focus of the film, however, is the unfolding of a clandestine (to the families) love story between Rajesh's younger brother, Prem, and Pooja's younger sister, Nisha. Pooja discovers their love and is ecstatic that her sister will marry into the same family, and hence join the same household, as Rajesh, Prem, and their uncle (who never married) live together as a traditional Indian joint family. Unfortunately, before she can spread the good news, Pooja suffers from an untimely accident and dies suddenly. Rajesh's uncle and Pooja's parents decide that Nisha should marry Rajesh, so that his infant son will have the benefit of a mother's care. Fortunately, Rajesh discovers his brother's and Nisha's love for each other in time, and Prem and Nisha are married and presumably live happily ever after.

19. The word *crore* is derived from Sanskrit and is used in Indian English. One *crore* represents 10 million.
20. Until *HAHK*, filmmakers, in order to minimize their losses from piracy, released the videos of their films at the same time as their theatrical release. The producer/distributors of *HAHK* withheld the videos and went to great lengths to stave unauthorized circulation of their film. I will address *HAHK*'s unique release and distribution strategy in chapter eight.
21. See Derne 2008; Deshpande 2005; Ganti 2004; Inden 1999; Kapur and Pendakur 2007; Kazmi 1999; Mazumdar 2007; Uberoi 2001.
22. I want to remind readers that I am discussing the dominant trends in filmmaking, but such trends do not preclude other types of films from being made, especially given the prolific nature of the Hindi film industry. For example, the fascination with the world of organized crime and gangsters, which has had a long history in Hindi cinema, also gained prominence in the late 1990s. The representations of mafia bosses and their gangs changed from the glamorous, Westernized, and sanitized representations of earlier Hindi films, however, to grittier and more ethnically and regionally specific portrayals, a trend that began with Mukul Anand's *Agneepath* (Path of Fire, 1990), which became a standardized feature of the genre after the critically acclaimed and modestly successful *Satya* (Truth, 1998) by Ram Gopal Varma. While Varma's films and aesthetic style could definitely be regarded as "cool" by viewers and scholars, his self-proclaimed iconoclastic position within the industry (furthered by both critical and media representations of him) associate him with a more conventional understanding of coolness—of rebellion, opposition, or defiance to authority. My discussion of coolness, however, points to how the category of cool within Hindi filmmakers' own discourses is about becoming culturally mainstream and socially desirable within a more elite social world.
23. One can argue that this trend goes as far back as *Devdas*—the film based on Sarat Chandra's novel of the same name—and the enduring popularity of this narrative. Even *Awara* (1951) is an example.
24. See the Rajshri Productions website, <http://www.rajshriproductions.com>.
25. For a detailed discussion of the emergence, development, and growth of multiplexes in India, see Govil (2005) and Athique and Hill (2010).
26. The panel was titled "Urbane themes, gloss, and technical savvy topped with high-end pricing: is Hindi cinema increasingly the preserve of NRIs and multiplex audience?" It was organized by the film weekly *Screen* as part of its 58th anniversary celebrations. The panel was comprised of directors Kabir Khan, Sujoy Ghosh, and Sooni Taraporewala, as well as distributor Shyam Shroff (Pillai 2009).

27. *Awaaz* is a pseudonym.
28. Kumar's reference to "cross-over films" was another generic designation that gained purchase in the industry after the global success of South Asian-themed films made by diasporic filmmakers like Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* and Gurinder Chadha's *Bend It Like Beckham*. Although both of these films were made by diasporic South Asians living and working outside of the Bombay film industry, their success opened up new imaginative horizons for some Hindi filmmakers in terms of thinking more specifically of a global audience, hence the label, "cross-over."

### Chapter Three

1. Although the international press kept referring to Kapoor as a "Bollywood star," he would not be regarded as a "star" by audiences or industry members. Kapoor was mainly known for his roles as villains and comic sidekicks and never as a leading man.
2. See Chaudhury (2005), Sanghvi (2005), Venkatesan (2005).
3. According to some news reports, the actresses Kapoor named were Rani Mukherji, Aishwarya Rai, and Preity Zinta; the producer/directors were Yash Chopra, Subhash Ghai, and Yash Johar. Not all of the media outlets chose to divulge these names.
4. Susan Seizer (2005) also discusses the issue of managing stigma in her ethnography of special drama artists in Tamil Nadu.
5. On the emergence of middle-class identity see Chatterjee (1993), Joshi (2001), Mosse (1985), and Strathern (1992); on contemporary formations of middle-class identity see Liechty (2003), Mankekar (1999), and Skeggs (1997).
6. I thank Bambi Schieffelin for suggesting this particular analytical framework and reintroducing me to Goffman.
7. During my first stint of fieldwork in Bombay, films were never shot from start to finish in one continuous shooting schedule, but rather in increments—sometimes a schedule would be as short as two days or as long as three weeks. Due to the constraints of my own funding schedule, I was unable to participate as an assistant for the entire length of the production process.
8. For a discussion of the stigma attached to the performance of Hindustani (North Indian classical) music see Bakhle (2005); for Carnatic (South Indian classical) music see Weidman (2006); and for theater see Banerjee (1998), Hansen (1992), and Seizer (2005).
9. This was not such an unusual occurrence, since in many folk performance traditions in India men played the parts of women.
10. Viewing them as cultured and refined women, nobility would frequently send their sons to the best-known courtesans for training in etiquette, manners, the art of conversation, and the appreciation of literature, poetry, and other arts. Compared to prostitutes, a courtesan had more control over her body and sexual activity, often entering into a monogamous relationship with her patron. The patron would provide for any children he had with his courtesan, and the children would carry on the profession into the next generation—boys being trained as accompanying musicians and the girls in all of the arts of their mother (Oldenburg 1991).
11. As women holding property and wealth, courtesans were seen as an integral part of the ruling elite the British were trying to displace. Many of the native rulers



in India were portrayed by the British as decadent and unable to govern properly. The British waged campaigns against courtesans to reduce their influence by taking over their property, discrediting their patrons as immoral and debauched, and using many of the women as prostitutes for British soldiers, which stripped the women of their cultural function and exposed them to sexually transmitted diseases (Oldenburg 1991).

12. For a rich and engaging exposition of the anxiety around actresses' social and class background in the 1930s see Majumdar (2009).
13. The adjective of the western state of Maharashtra; actually in her autobiography, Khote, whose maiden name was Laud, mentions that her family "originally" belonged to Goa and the elders spoke Konkani at home. Khote grew up in Bombay, however, and mentioned that Marathi and English were spoken at home.
14. The film was *Farebi Jaal* (Web of Deceit), and Khote appeared in it for about ten minutes (Khote 2006).
15. Khote had agreed to act in the film out of economic necessity, because her husband's family had lost all of their wealth by speculating in the stock market and she was trying to supplement their meager income; however, acting in a film caused her to lose her main source of income as a private English tutor. She subsequently joined Prabhat Studios and acted as the lead in a number of Marathi and Hindi films. Due to her elite social background, Khote's presence in the film profession has always been remarked upon in film histories as anomalous for her time.
16. An obvious exception was the actress Shobana Samarth, popular in the 1940s, and her two daughters, Nutan and Tanuja, who both became actresses in the 1950s and 1960s.
17. For example, Rishi Kapoor's son became an actor in 2007, while his daughter was married in 2005; Dharmendra's two sons, Sunny and Bobby, became actors, while his daughters from his first wife have nothing to do with filmmaking. Sunil Dutt's son, Sanjay, is an actor while his two daughters are not. Amitabh Bachchan's son, Abhishek, is an actor, while his daughter, Shweta, is married into a prominent business family, the Nandas who are related by marriage to Raj Kapoor as well. Raj Kapoor's daughter, Ritu, married Rajan Nanda and their son, Nikhil, is married to Shweta Bachchan.
18. Mussoorie is a town in the foothills of the Himalayas in the state of Uttarakhand. Her first film was *Kurbaan* (Sacrifice) (1991), in which she played opposite Salman Khan.
19. Beauty pageants have been an important source of actresses for the contemporary film industry since the 1970s: Zeenat Aman, Juhi Chawla, Aishwarya Rai, Sushmita Sen, Lara Dutta, Priyanka Chopra, Neha Dhupia, and Tanushree Dutta are all Hindi film actresses who were former beauty queens.
20. Chatterjee 1989, 1993; Joshi 2001; Mayo 1927; Sangari and Vaid 1989; Sarkar and Sarkar 2008; Singer 1972; Sinha 2006.
21. Imran is a pseudonym.
22. I discuss the dominance of face-to-face interaction and personal relationships, along with kin and social networks in shaping the structure and work culture of the film industry in chapters five and six.
23. For an interesting parallel, but in a very different context see Seizer (2005) and her discussion of the attempts at respectability by Tamil special drama artists in southern India.
24. Mukherji is not Muslim; while I can't comment on how widespread the practice is

- of industry women donning *burqas* to avoid being noticed in public spaces, it is a common feature of actors' anecdotes about being able to see films with the general public.
25. Rai has been seen in British and American productions such as Gurinder Chadha's *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), Paul Berges's *The Mistress of Spices* (2005), Doug Lefler's *The Last Legion* (2007), and Harald Zwart's *The Pink Panther 2* (2009).
  26. I had been spending time at photographer Rakesh Shreshta's studio observing photo shoots of film stars for a variety of English-language film magazines; Rai's shoot was a pretty elaborate affair with multiple outfits and, unlike others, it was not commissioned by a magazine. Shreshta decided on his own to take photos of Rai and then sell them to film magazines.
  27. Dixit comes from a Maharashtrian Brahmin family whose immediate and extended members consist of highly educated professionals settled in the United States. Dixit married a U.S.-based Indian doctor—also of the same caste and regional background—through an arranged marriage and she resettled in California and then Colorado.
  28. Aditya's father, Yash Chopra, has been one of the most consistently successful producer/directors of the Hindi film industry for over four decades. Aditya's late uncle, B. R. Chopra, was also a well-respected producer and director in the industry.
  29. The "training" that Dutt is referring to involved taking lessons in horse-riding, Hindi and Urdu diction, dancing, and fighting.
  30. Whistling Woods divided its curriculum into eight disciplines: acting; animation; business of film and television; cinematography; direction; editing; screenwriting; as well as sound recording, design, and music production.
  31. The catalog I obtained during my visit in 2006 listed the tuition fees both in rupees (for Indian residents) and dollars (for NRIs and expatriates). The annual tuition for NRIs and foreigners ranged from \$7,500 to \$13,750, depending on the course of study and year of study; for example, the first year of the screenwriting program cost \$7,500 while the second year cost \$10,000. In terms of the fee structure for Indian residents, the most current information on WWI's website lists total costs for their two-year programs in cinematography, direction, editing, producing, screenwriting, and acting, ranging from 750,000 rupees (screenwriting) to 1.3 million rupees (direction), plus a 1 million rupee security deposit. Additionally, a 10.3 percent service tax is levied upon the tuition amount (<http://www.whistlingwoods.net>).
  32. Sridhar Kumar is a pseudonym.

#### Chapter Four

1. Back in 1996 even some scholars, both foreign and Indian, could not fathom what I could learn about Indian cinema from observing the production of films rather than analyzing the finished product. I remember being asked, "Do you learn anything interesting from visiting the sets?" Of course such attitudes have changed in the scholarly community, both with the increase in media ethnography and with shifts away from a text-centric approach in film studies.
2. The material is drawn from my observations of film sets and shoots in Bombay in 1996, 2000, 2005, and 2006, as well as in the United States in 2001 and 2005. The conversations are a combination of actual speech and my rendering of the

discussions that took place on a daily basis during my fieldwork. The characters are based on actual individuals but do not correspond directly to any one person in particular. The events all took place but not necessarily in the same day or on the same set. With the exception of the names of the production spaces, all of the names in the sketch—of the film, the production company, and the people—are completely fictitious. My intention with this strategy is to protect the identities and privacy of my informants, most of whom are celebrities—or quite well known—within and outside India. Given the high profile of the Hindi film industry and the tremendous media attention it garners, a simple use of pseudonyms could still tip off the identity of people and films to those who are familiar with this world.

3. I tried to represent some of this diversity in the vignette; for example, Malhotra, Chadda, and Khanna are Punjabi; Das and Sen are Bengali; Sulekha is from Andhra Pradesh; Menon is from Kerala; Lakhani is Sindhi; Sharma is from U.P.; Arif, Iqbal, and Khan are Muslim; and Jignesh is Gujarati.
4. For example, terms such as gaffers, grips, best boy are not commonly used in Bombay.
5. Diwali or Deepavali is often described as the “festival of lights.” It is a very important pan-Indian Hindu festival that takes place in the lunar month of *Karthik*, falling between late October and early November.
6. Filmistan is not a pseudonym, but the name of a production facility which used to be a studio in the traditional sense in the 1940s and '50s.
7. Dance director is the term used for choreographers in Indian filmmaking.
8. The system of Hindi film distribution will be explained in chapter five.
9. Malhotra and Agrawal’s entire conversation would be in Hindi. Any English words—other than “film,” which has become so incorporated into Hindi that its endings [*filmein*, *filmon*] suit Hindi grammatical structure—which would occur naturally in their conversation are not italicized.
10. MG stands for “minimum guarantee,” which will be explained in the following chapter.
11. *Devdas* is an actual film, and here the filmmakers are referring to the 2002 version, starring Shah Rukh Khan, Madhuri Dixit, and Aishwarya Rai, directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali. Based on the 1917 Bengali novel by Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, the story of *Devdas* has been a favorite of Indian filmmakers since 1928, and there have been numerous filmed versions of the story in a number of Indian languages over the years.

### Chapter Five

1. During my dissertation defense I was told that my chapter about the importance of kinship as a structuring organizational principle in the industry was not revealing of the production practices in the industry and why had I not defined all of the various occupational roles in the industry? For example, what does an executive producer do? At that time of my initial research, there was no executive producer category in the Hindi film industry.
2. I thank Faye Ginsburg for coining this phrase.
3. Sippy’s first production was *Sazaa* (Punishment, 1951).
4. BIG pictures produced eight films, but as co-productions. UTV produced five films solo and two others as co-productions. Yashraj produced three films solo.