RESEARCH ARTICLE

ANCIENT INDIAN CONCEPTS AS PORTRAYED IN CONTEMPORARY WESTERN FILMS

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Manuscript Info	*Abstract*

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Historically, in the European imagination, India was a place that existed outside of history. The German philosopher G.W.F.Hegel wrote that India-with its psychology, religion, caste-system, and holy men - existed in a dream-like state. However, India, like every other place in the world, has never existed outside of history as an exotic dreamland. It has had itsown complex economic, social and political things going on regardless of whether the West was aware of it. India is a dream of the West. Being a maelstrom of human, social, and spiritual contradictions, India has always attracted many western filmmakers. In order to give a glimpse of its ancient concepts, complex reality and dynamism; the contemporary global view of filmmakers on the lifestyle and the diversity of this country has been proposed. Many westernfilmmakers, including those from France, have had a desire to express themselves; often with talent.The aim of this research paper is to bring forth their insight into life and culture of India. An analysis of how Westerners have stereotyped Indian concepts or accounted for the profound changes inIndian societyin their films has been done.

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Introduction:-
  "*Oh,   East   is   East,   and   West   is   West,   and   never   the   twain   shall   meet.*"
  (Rudyard Kipling, The Ballad of East and West).

    In his much-quoted verse above, Rudyard Kipling revealed something of the nucleus ofthe long-lived tradition of Orientalist thought. According to J. J. Clarke, the ambivalence of the West towards the East is age-old. The "rich cultures", "superior civilizations" and "ancient wisdom" of the Orient have inspired many Westerners, but on the other hand, the threats of its "monstrous mysteries" and "absurd religions" hailing from its "stagnant past" have abhorred at least as many. For many, the Orient has been a dominion of hordes and despots or spiritual mystics and exotic sensuality. Exaggeration and imagination together with a range of both positive and negative stereotypes connected to popular prejudices have been essential to theseviews. Encountering the East has been significant for the self-image of the West producing identities ranging from decadent European modernity to concepts of cultural, racial and moralsuperiority. (Clarke 1997, 3–4. See also Pieterse 1992 and Hottola 1999.)

In Western scholarly work the West is either implicitly or explicitly, but nevertheless rather uncritically, accepted into a dichotomous relationship with the East. In the case of India, Mary Douglas (1972, 12), for example, has claimed that India is "a mirror image" of Europe and thus, a totally opposite world to the West. Moreover, Louis Dumont imagined a modern Western society that – unlike India – aspires to rationality and was essentially individualist compared to the collectivist or holistic India (Dumont 1972; cf. Spencer 2003, 238–240 [1]). The

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Western imagery of the Orient makes the image of the Occident possible, and thus, produces a kind of imagined binary ontology. [2] However, Western Orientalism is said to distinguish from Eastern Occidentalism for its intertwined relationship with colonialism.

In this research article, imagining the essential elements of Indian society and culture or "being an Indian" vis-à-vis hegemonically Western - or specifically Anglo-Saxon - discourse about India, about representations of India and its people in Western media, especially in thefilms has been concentrated upon.

Our understanding about other cultures and nations around the world is often coloured by our memory of these places that we have received through mediated visual information (Mitra, 1999). Although numerous inter-related social forces might contribute to our perceptions of others, mass media portrayals undoubtedly play a very important role in influencing people's attitudes towards out-groups, especially when presented in very realistic ways in media such as films. Films play an important role in shaping ethnic and national identities, especially in the absence of much face-to-face interactions with these groups. They help to create and perpetuate national stereotypes. For example, it would not be surprising if many Americans learn about Africans through *Tarzan* films, about Arabs from movies such as*The Mummy*, about China in films such as *The Last Emperor*, and about nations such as Russiaand North Korea from *James Bond* pictures. As for India, films such as *Gunga Din*, *Jungle Book*, *A Passage to India*, *Indiana Jones: Temple of Doom*, *Around the World in Eighty Days*,*Gandhi*, *Octopussy*, and *The Man Who Would Be King* might have an impact on howmoviegoers in the West perceive India.

Depending on which films, TV shows or magazines they are viewing, Westerners may be left with contradictory impressions of India - as a nation with a thriving information technology industry, as a third-world nation overwhelmed by poverty and famine, or as a spiritual mecca with an exotic, mystical culture frozen in a more primitive time. When confronted with creating an Indian character, Hollywood leans towards the many stereotypes that have been so tragically established over the years. The result? – International audiences have come to associate all Indian people with these stereotypes. This daily stereotyping does not stem from social interaction, but rather from what they see of Indian characters on the big screen and on television. Over a period of time, through repeated exposure to the same or similar stereotypical depictions across films and across narratives in different media sites, we unintentionally and often unconsciously start accumulating these bits and pieces of informationabout the social group in such a way that we develop a quick short-cut reference for the socialgroup. Not surprisingly, when asked to recall the attributes of the social group, people might recall scenes, characters, lines, settings, and actors from various films in an attempt to grab whatever little information we can get to make quick judgments in interpersonal situations. Thus, it is crucial to examine what types of portrayals of various marginalized groups are presented within this medium.

In this context, the current analysis attempts to examine the nature of portrayals about India and its people, especially the ancient Indian concepts, as presented in films produced in the West.

Portrayals of India in Western Narratives
Prior research on portrayals of India reveals patterns of subordination and oppression discussed in the larger context of Third World countries in general. The history of stereotypicalrepresentations of India largely dates back to colonial rule in India when the narrative accounts and photographic illustrations by missionaries, anthropologists, and government officials focused on depicting Indians as savage and uncivil simple folks (Merchant, 1998; Narayan, 1997). Historically, Europeans portrayed themselves as representing liberty, equality, progress,change, and dynamism in such accounts. In contrast, India was depicted as unhistorical, caught up with traditions—static, inert, or in a process of decline. Indian nationalists did not defy suchstereotypical depictions but used them instead as an anchor to justify their fight for freedom from European control. That is, they argued that Western settlers were an interruption to the traditions and values of the glorious ancient Indian past. However, even after more than 50 years of independence of India from European colonizers, post-colonial narratives of India created not just in Europe but also in North America continue to use similar themes of White, Caucasian, Western supremacy (Mitra, 1999; Shome, 1996).

On one hand, the depictions that focused on depicting India in condescending ways dealt with "clashes of civilizations" where Western characters "saved" India from ancient religious practices such as voodoo and sorcery, natural disasters such as floods and epidemics, as well as social injustices such as sati and poverty (Mitra, 1999; Shome, 1996). On the other hand, there has also been a tendency for certain films produced in the West to depict India in a dream-like, utopian manner where India is often represented as the land of milk and honey where

overindulgences, excesses, and vices are an integral part of the culture. The use of such types of seemingly positive stereotypes has also been referred to as the cultural riches approach that seemed to portray India as a virgin unexplored land waiting to be enjoyed by Westerners without acknowledging any anti-colonial sentiments (Narayan, 1997).

With respect to the types of character roles assigned to Indians, such imperialistic discourses portray the Orient as either child-like or demonic. Specifically, prior research suggests that Indian adult characters take on villainous, anti-Western roles whereas Indian children are presented as innocent and pro-Western (Shohat & Stam, 2014; Shome, 1996). Such distinctions suggest the presence of an imagined new India that would break out of its traditional past and embrace Westernized progress. According to Mitra (1999), the main motivation for the stereotyping of Indian characters in Western films is to create a distinction between Western and non-Western characters. Therefore, the images of peoples from India focus on skin colour, dress, and physical characteristics that serve to create this contrast.

The current study contributes to this literature by systematically analysing portrayals of India and its people, especially the ancient Indian concepts in films made in the West (United States and/or the United Kingdom, Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand). In particular, it examines whether the films repeatedly associated India or Indian people with certain concepts, deep-rooted in Indian traditions and culture, including status of women, religious practices and beliefs, spiritual enlightenment, festivals, language, diet, leisure activities, poverty, and so forth.

Corpus
For this research paper, the films produced in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe especially France, Canada, Australia and New Zealand that involved India as one of the primary locales and/or have Indian characters in their plots have been selected. Since the current study focuses on representation of ancient Indian concepts in contemporary western films, thus, the films released from 1930 to 2015 have been included for analysis. Film scholars have stated that the 1930s was when the West started turning toward other locations in the third world for their film narrative plots (Mitra, 1999). Therefore, it was decided to go as far back as 1930. The appendix lists the films that have been selected randomly for this study.

Key Ancient Indian Concepts portrayed in Western narratives
The key concepts of Ancient Indian history and culture that have been portrayed by contemporary Western filmmakers in their films include: stereotypical leisure activities, status of women, festivals, language, diet, religious practices and beliefs, spiritual enlightenment, and state of poverty and misery of the Indian populace. Most of these notions have been stereotyped by the Western media.

How is India portrayed by the Western media?
Western Media, be it cinema or television, both seem to be obsessed with the portrayal of India and Indians.

In the western narratives, India as a country is often shown to have a climate which is uncomfortable for the Westerners. During the analysis, it was found that the sun was often talked of in terms of a foe capable of bringing great harm and therefore something that Westerners in particular should protect themselves against. For example, in *Wee Willie Winkie*, a British general instructs his soldiers that in India "the sun can kill a man just as surely, just as swift as a naked bullet." Similarly, in *Le Tigre du Bengale* and *Le Tombeau Hindou*, Sperling kept making remarks about the heat and soaring high temperatures and how could Indians possible live in such a climate.

It was common to find portrayals of dirty roads, dusty streets, unclean waters, overflowing sewers, marshy streets, and spoilt foods apart from the presence of garbage, depictions of noisy locales or overcrowded places (especially bazaars, trains and stations) in scenes depicting India in these films made by Western filmmakers. Apart from such visual depicters of pollution, there were also several characters that made verbal references to pollution. For example, in *Wee Willie Winkie*, a British sergeant reprimands a British boy thus:"How many times have I told you that in India everything has to be sterilized - the food you eat, the water you drink?" and at another time, a young American girl is told: "Don't eat any fresh fruit, don't drink any water from the spoils, don't ever go out of the Army gates. Keep out of the sun."

The bazaar forms a unique and fascinating location for Western film-makers as an "urban jungle" that is crowded not with trees and undergrowth but people, shops, and animals. The bazaar also becomes a place where "spectacles" and "mysteries" such as sword-eating, rope-walking, snake-charming, fire-walking, and the like take place.

Rural areas have been depicted in scenes in India rather than in the West. Also, towns/ villages in India remained much more unidentified and unnamed than the Western locations. When they were named, Indian places were more likely to be given fictitious names, mostly using ''-pur/pore'' as a suffix. For instance, Ranchipur is the setting for *The Rains Came*; Tantrapur is where *Gunga Din* supposedly take place, Eschnapur is where *Le Tigre du Bengale* and *Le Tombeau Hindou* were shot, while Rajpore is one other such non-existent town created for the films. Amongst the real urban locales, Calcutta in India; and London and Paris in the West were the most frequently occurring featured cities.

Yoga is one of the most ancient traditions of India. With the coming of New Age spirituality and industry, people in the West developed a fascination with the spiritual side of India and ideas such as yoga and ethnic chic clothing. But the yoga practiced in the West is not the centuries-old tradition that is practiced in India. They are very different. The Western media often seem to focus on going to India for spiritual enlightenment as does Patrick Swayze in *La Cité de la Joie*, the characters of *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, Julia Roberts in *Eat Pray Love*.

Furthermore, at some point in recent history, India cornered the market on spirituality. Perhaps starting with Vivekananda in the late 19th century, many Indian gurus have become famous on an international level. Their teachings were strikingly different from either the Protestant work ethic or traditional Catholic theology that had dominated Western concepts of spirituality for so long. Everything about Indian spirituality (and therefore India) seemed different, deeper, more mysterious, and perhaps better. So, in the recent fashion of the Julia Roberts' quasi-mystical vehicle *Eat Pray Love*, when someone sets off on a world tour and needs a stopover to help discover her 'true self', there is really only one option: India. The focus of Liz's spiritual practices is chanting difficult scriptures and focusing on her daily meditation (difficult for Indians and outsiders alike).

Eat Pray Love is apparently the best-known modern movie that carries the theme of India being the spiritual epicentre. The film is about Liz Gilbert, a successful woman who leaves her life in New York for a three-stop worldwide tour: Italy (to learn to eat), India (to learn to pray), and Bali (to learn to love). Liz's India experience is quite fenced-in, but more in the hippie style rather than the expat 'gated community' style. She spends her entire stay at the internationalized ashram of a famous guru. She ventures out occasionally for a meal, but never interacts with any other part of India. Her Texas mentor, Richard, tells her, "Don't touch anything, other than yourself". She interacts almost exclusively with other expats during her time in the country. In the book, when describing the village, she says, "Outside the walls of the Ashram, it's all dust and poverty."

In the film, *La Cité de la Joie*, an American surgeon Max Lowe (Patrick Swayze), after losing a young patient on an operating table in Houston travels to India to, as he says, "find enlightenment".

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, a comedy about the English retirees in India, is another such example. When Great Britain is not working for these people as their pension pots collapse and their children and partners disappear into the horizon, the cast goes to India, and amid the teeming multiplicity of the country, the same characters suddenly seem utterly self-involved. "India, like life itself, is what you put into it," says Dame Judi's character, with heart-crushing banality. The country becomes an orientalist backdrop for personal growth for each character.

To portray the exoticness, it has been found that a greater proportion of scenes devoted to featuring birds and animals were set in India as compared to Western countries. Images of actual animals often appear as part of the natural jungle, as urban beasts of draught, and as modes of transportation. Verbal discussions about birds and animals often revolved around hunting, sport, food, and diet. Animals commonly sighted in films about India were elephants, snakes (especially cobras and pythons), tigers, horses, scorpions, panthers, cheetahs, buffalos, cows, monkeys, camels, rats, pigs, bears, lizards, turtles, owls, monitor lizards, jackals, vultures, vampire bats, insects (mosquitoes, beetles and other bugs), crocodiles and alligators. For example, a young lady (Shirley Temple) visiting India for the first time in the film *Wee Willie Winkie* has several questions about the fauna in India. She asks her friend, "How do you keep mosquitoes from biting your knees?" and "Have you driven a buffalo before?" In the films *Le Fleuve*, *Le Tigre du Bengale* and *Le Tombeau Hindou*, we came across snakes. *Le Tigre* and

Le Tombeau also had portrayals of tigers, elephants and crocodiles.

Religious rituals, superstitious beliefs, magic, and sorcery have been presented in Indian settings. The central theme of films such as *Gunga Din*, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, and *The Deceivers* revolves around a murderous Indian religious cult called ''thuggee''. Thuggee are shown as worshippers of Kali, the Hindu Goddess associated with destruction and sorcery, who would kill to please her. In *Gunga Din*, the thuggee religious sect is introduced as ''the most fiendish band of killers that ever existed'' and a religious order honoring "Kali—the Goddess of blood." Symbols related to black magic such as blood, skeletons, voodoo dolls and fire were used to portray Kali as an evil, terrible, powerful force who casts a spell on her followers. Other Indian religious practices depicted were sati, idol worship, cow worship, snake worship, tree worship, and river worship. For example, in *Le Fleuve*, women worshipping the Pipal tree are seen. Also, people are often seen offering milk to snakes as a religious custom. Furthermore, magical spells, sorcery, and witchcraft were depicted using symbols such as blood, voodoo dolls, skulls, and skeletons. Fire worship was typically depicted by the use of fire-torches, lamps, fire cauldrons, and burning grounds for worship. Religion-related persons and gods that were depicted were Kali, Krishna, Shiva, Buddha, holy saints in saffron robes - topknot - beard meditating under trees and priests in temples. Images of Hindu weddings, dancing with incense/fire, doing "namaskar" gesture as prayer, golden temples, and statues and chanting of Sanskrit Hindu hymns were depicted in such scenes. Superstition regarding months of the year and the auspiciousness of seeing certain animals figured in some of the films.

Scenes with stereotypical leisure activities (rope-walking, scorpion-eating, sword- swallowing, fortune-telling, snake-charming, henna painting, pot painting, tiger hunting, polo, cricket, minarets and temple architecture), which are an important part of Indian heritage and tradition, have been shown in significantly large numbers in the Western films. In *Chutney Popcorn*, for instance, henna-painting is repeatedly used as a visual reminder of the Indian ethnicity of the lead role character. The film *Le Fleuve* opens up in the hands of women decorating the floor with *Rangoli* designs using rice flour – a tradition in India since ages. In films like *The Man Who Would Be King*, *The Jungle Book*, *Le Fleuve*, and *Wee Willie Winkie*, a series of images of fortune-telling, scorpion-eating, sword-juggling, snake charming and the like are used to define an Indian bazaar. In *Un + Une*, for instance, a sadhu stood up, holding his genitals behind him. Then a man goes up behind the sadhu on the stick, adding several tens of pounds of pressure on his persecuted genitals. In *Le Fleuve*, Melanie is seen painting the pots. In one of the James Bond films, *Octopussy*, the most 'Indian' scene is an exciting chase in souped-up auto rickshaws through an Indian bazaar filled with fire breathers, hot coal walkers, sword swallowers, snake charmers, and a man lying on a bed of nails – all things the British would have believed existed on every street in India. Like *The Temple of Doom*, there is also the obligatory gross-out scene where Bond is served a stuffed sheep's head and the villain eats the eye.

Another pertinent question to ask: How Indian magic caught the imagination of the West? To tell the story of Indian magic is to hold a mirror to India's religious traditions, its society and culture. Magic permeated the Vedic period, Sufis and yogis staged miracle contests to see whose *jadoo* was more powerful, Buddhists and Jains resorted to spells and incantations to win philosophical debates.

Evidence of magic was found almost everywhere: in the verses of Atharva Veda, the stories of Somadeva and the poet Dandin's descriptions of Pallava society with its statues of Kama - the god of love, and his consort – Rati, making erotic sounds - to name just a few.

The pantheon of India's street magicians - *jadoowallahs, tamashawallahs, jadugars, madaris, mayakaris, maslets, qalandars, sanpwallahs, sanperas, katputliwallahs, bahurupis, peep-showwallahs*, the list goes on – ranges across creed and caste. Stronger than religious ties is their association with the *barah pal*, the brotherhood of twelve, an ancient collective of strolling players that includes jugglers, snake-charmers, animal handlers, puppeteers, ventriloquists, storytellers, impersonators and acrobats.

Indian fortune-tellers were in great demand in ancient Rome. The Tang emperors of China employed Indian alchemists who peddled secret formulas that promised longevity and sexual prowess. After watching the tricks of conjurers, the 6th century sage, Sankara, used their principles to explain the concept of *maya* or illusion.

In the late 1810s, a South Indian named Ramo Samee started performing in America, Europe and England, becoming one of the most famous magicians of his day. Within a few decades, continental conjurers were blackening their faces and performing the Basket Trick and levitation acts. In 1813, the enterprising captain of an East

India man docked on the Thames with a troupe of jugglers. Their appearance at Pall Mall would change the face of Western conjuring forever.

In December 1899, London's Strand Magazine declared in its typically unequivocal tone, "Ask the average man for what India is most celebrated, and chances are ten-to-one that he will ignore the glories of The Taj Mahal, the beneficence of the British rule, even Mr Kipling, and will unhesitatingly reply in one word, 'Jugglers'."

By the time professional Indian magicians with their Western-style routines and matching outfits, began travelling to Europe and America in the early 1900s, they found the market flooded with the likes of Samri S Baldwin, "The White Mahatma", and Gustave Fasola, "The Famous Indian Fakir". Even Harry Houdini started his career posing as a "Hindu Fakir".

PC Sorcar's 1960s showbiz extravaganza started with the ritualistic drawing of a mandala on the stage and the lighting of an oil lamp before a portrait of Goddess Durga. Dressed as a mock maharajah, India's most famous magician then presented a programme that had more bling than a Bollywood movie but was an authentically Indian as chicken tikka masala.

Indian magic caught the imagination of the West. To research the history of Indian magic is to be taken down some unexpected pathways. Discovering that a European child had either been abducted or found abandoned and raised to be a dancer in a troupe of jugglers, recalled reports of children being reared by wolves in central India - reports that would become the basis of the story of Mowgli in Rudyard Kipling.

Similarly, the archives illuminated the darker side of India's magical history. After being recruited by corrupt or incompetent impresarios for great world fairs and exhibitions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, hundreds of jugglers, acrobats, dancers and musicians were abandoned in cities such as London, Brussels and Berlin, forcing the India Office to arrange for their repatriation.

And then there was the story of Amar Nath Dutt, who was duped into going to New York by a curry cook posing a s a prince from Baluchistan. After being dumped on the streets of Queens, he dabbled in conjuring, joined Madame Cama's revolutionary cell in Paris and was sent back to America to be trained as a bomb maker. He ended up using his pyrotechnic skills to bring dazzling Indian deceptions to the Western stage as Linga Singh, becoming the best famous Indian magician of the 1920s and 1930s.

As regards the status of women and children, Indian women and children have been portrayed as victims of abuse in a number of films produced in the West. They were often shown as being victims of a socio-religious-cultural system. For example, *The Autobiography of a Princess* portrays the following discussion:

> Princess: "Ours wasn't a backward state. Not compared to others." Cyril Saab:
> "There were worse."
> Princess: "Much worse. When you think of Tadpur, child sacrifices, so many cases of Sati, we hardly had any Sati at all."

Similarly, in *Le Fleuve*, the protagonist explains the arranged marriage of an Indian girl: "Then her father told her that she must marry a man of his choice...that's the ancient custom." In this film, Harriet, an English girl, talks about how Indian parents are disappointed when they have a baby girl because they need to arrange a dowry. In *La Cité de la Joie*, the main Indian character, Hazari, says several times how important a duty it is for a father to save money of his daughter's dowry. Similarly, in *Around the World in Eighty Days*, the British lead character Phileas Fogg saves an Indian princess from sati just like Indiana Jones in the film, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* saves starved children from bonded labor in the clutches of an evil cult. In the films *Le Tigre du Bengale* and *Le Tombeau Hindou*, we see hot he obsession of the men folk (The Maharajah, his step brother, Harold Berger and other men) with Seetha (a cabaret dancer who has been promised into marriage with the Maharajah of Eschnapur), who performs these sensuous dance sequences from time to time, and ultimately ends up being the femme fatale is seen. In *Eat Pray Love*, Liz befriends Tulsi, a seventeen- year-old Indian girl who is depressed because she is bemoaning her upcoming arranged marriage. This continues the myth of this archaic, authoritarian system oppressing teenagers who deserve their freedom. However, anyone who has spent time with a large group of young Indians knows that this is far from the truth. Not only are most Indian families quite accepting of their son or daughter's preferences, many young Indians actually prefer that their parents find spouses for them.

Among scenes that portrayed poverty in these films, a significantly greater proportion of Indian populace represents this segment. Scenes with poor people were usually depicted as a backdrop as part of the crowd in Indian streets and as helpers in British colonial quarters in India. Beggars, famine-stricken people, homeless, tramps, slaves, servants, manual labourers, subsistence farmers, petty vendors, and fisher folk constitute this class. Poor people were defined as those who wore rags, tatters, worked as labourers, beggars, slaves and vendors, and lived in huts, temporary shelters or in the wild. On the other hand, upper class people were those who wore expensive clothes in silk, jewellery, lived in palatial homes (e.g., palaces and mansions), and could afford several luxuries like big feasts, servants, and so on, and, middle- class persons were those who could afford casual clothes that are in good shape (not tattered),live in houses or apartments, and have a reasonable but not luxurious lifestyle. However, in films such as *La Cité de la Joie*, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, and *Black Narcissus*, poverty forms an important part of the plot itself. In such films, the Western characters (often missionaries) are portrayed as "good Samaritans" who save the poor and wretched in India. Apart from actual depictions of poverty, there were also many discussions amongst characters about poverty. For instance, in *Foreign Body*, there are references made to poverty by using phrases such as "thousands sleeping in the street" and "the black hole of Calcutta." In general, the Indian characters are seen residing in stereotypical places (such as the wild (especially jungles), on the streets (homeless), huts, temporary dwellings, palaces, temples, caves, and dens) whereas majority of the non-Indian characters reside in non-stereotypical places such as houses, apartments, mansions, schools, and garrisons. In *La Cité de la Joie*, for example, the central character, Hazari, and his family are shown living in the streets, slums and in dilapidated huts while Mowgli from *The Jungle Book* spends almost his entire life living in the wild jungles of North India. On the other hand, in *Un + Une*, Samuel being the Ambassador stays in the Embassy, Antoine lives in a beautiful modern apartment in Montmartre whereas Indians are shown living in streets and Amma, a divine character is shown living in an *Ashram* [3].

Human trafficking, foetus killing, selling unborn foetus, mafia racket, prostitution, forcible maiming—all are the part of Calcutta's life as depicted in *La Cité de la Joie*. Children were maimed and compelled to beg. Those children whom Nasser rescued as they were about to be run over by a lorry while begging, were given a life of child-labour in exchange with a life of child beggar. They were made work from dawn to late night for the barest income and without proper food and clothing. Women like Meeta, who had nowhere to go as her family had abandoned her, had to beg on the railway station. Anouar, a leper had no other alternative but to beg to earn his living. Even the neighbours Hasari had at the pavement sent their children for begging. And in the process of time Hasari and his wife also decided to send theirs for begging. The girl of their neighbour, Maya belongs to the beggar's racket. Begging racket is one of the stereotyped images of India. Maya, the beggar girl with 'green eyes' and the vivid descriptions of the beggar's racket find their reflection in the film *Slumdog Millionaire*. The brutal maiming of children, begging to rich foreigners, and crime have become integral part of the Western depiction of India. It was frequent on the streets of Calcutta where so many people were condemned to suffer the worst degradation in order to simply survive. Ultimately, these beggar girls are dragged towards prostitution and involved in other illegal activities.

As far as the lead roles in the films are concerned, the non-Indian characters played the important lead roles as compared to Indian characters. Also, there were more male characters than female ones in the films included in this corpus. However, the gender divide was much more pronounced amongst Indian characters as compared to non-Indian characters with slightly more male characters that were Indian. Moreover, the Indian characters were depicted in stereotypical occupations such as hunters, farmers, thieves, magicians, priests, prostitutes, homemakers, unemployed people and labourers (such as servants, cleaners, fanners, water- bearers, petty vendors, tourist guides, mahouts, and snake-charmers) whereas the Westerners occupied positions of importance such the Ambassador, architect, professor, police agent, etc. In talking about the state of employment, the main character Ram Das in *Foreign Body* comments that "Calcutta was bulging at the seams with unemployed men". Several films show Indian servants sweeping the floors, working in the garden, tending to horses, carrying luggage on the head, bowing and saluting, serving food, and doing manual labour in the sun as a back-drop to the main narrative.

What came across most obviously in these Western narratives was the lack of Indians. For example, In *Eat Pray Love*, aside from Tulsi, there are no other Indian characters. The boyfriend who led Liz to the guru is white. The monk/priest who leads the devotional sessions is white. Liz's roommate is white. Richard from Texas is extraordinarily white. All this is not too far from reality at international ashrams, where outsiders tend to stick around.

Without stretching the connection too far, one couldn't help comparing *Eat Pray Love* to *Octopussy*, where the only Indian roles of any significance are the Sikh bodyguard, Gobinda(the 'henchman' role like Jaws or Oddjob), and a cameo feature from Vijay Amritraj, the famous Indian tennis player from Chennai (who actually does a great job before his character is killed off). The only other Indian roles are of typical, poorly trained assassins. Thus, a man/woman on a mission, surrounded by beautiful people of the opposite sex, interacting almost entirely with foreigners in India. In both movies, India is merely a new backdrop or a reason for a quick wardrobe change. In regards to spirituality, India is a place where you come to be enlightened, but the people are secondary. Again, this is a major lesson for outsiders coming in – don't just focus on the scenery; the secret of India is in its people.

However, the Indians we meet in *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* conform to a peculiar genre – they are just so obliging, in their uncomplicated ways, that instead of giving us a tour round the promised riot of colour and noise, the film presents a curiously old-fashioned, colonial form of cultural anaesthesia.

The Hundred Foot Journey is another such Western narrative. It's an unusual recipe that mixes together tandoori masalas with foie gras. In this film, the opening of a new Indian restaurant in the south of France, a hundred feet away from a famous one Michelin starred eatery nearly causes an all-out war between two culturally different establishments in the same trade.

In this film, we come across another ancient Indian practice of using spices. Spices and herbs (for example. black pepper, cinnamon, turmeric, cardamom) have been used by Indians for thousands of years for both culinary and health purposes. Spices indigenous to India (for instance, cardamom and turmeric) were cultivated as early as the eighth century B.C. In this film a blustery North Indian family plays loud music and carries around a suitcase filled with spices their dead matriarch made. Moreover, when the Kadams open their restaurant in France they have trouble getting customers, so the head of the family decides to dress himself and his daughter in traditional Indian garb; still another way to attract Westerners by being "exotic."

Additionally, in one of the scenes in this film, Mr. Kadam (Om Puri) sees a serious photo of his son and says, "He looks like a bloody terrorist." With both these remarks, he destroys, in a poignant and comical way, stereotypes like the poverty of all Indians and terrorism associated with those with brown skin. Playing with Western stereotypes of South Asians in order to display their ludicrousness was incredibly refreshing.

Furthermore, in these western narratives, Indian characters are portrayed speaking Indian languages (such as Hindi) and in accented Indian English while the Western characters on the other hand, spoke Western English, French but hardly any Indian languages. Sometimes Indian characters actually spoke in gibberish nonsensical language that was meant to represent an Indian language. Indian characters were also more likely to be showing talking in broken English and heavily accented English. For example, in *Stiff Upper Lips*, the British Uncle not only imitates the Indian accent but also says that non-verbal signs like "wobbling the head from side to side" are a part and parcel of Indian English. Similarly, in *The Party*, the Indian character called Bakshi talks in an exaggerated heavily accented Indian English with peculiar choice of words and grammar (e.g., "I want to be going to...", "I am not understanding you"). In T*he Foreign Body*, an Englishman says to the Indian character: "I guessed you were Indian when you telephoned. I could always tell by your voice." What is interesting is that at times non- Indian characters are seen trying to adapt to Indian culture by using verbal and non-verbal signs. For instance, In *Un + Une*, Anna, the Ambassador's wife is seen using Hindi words, "*Vo kalakar hai*", "*Namaste*" etc. Similarly, in *Le Fleuve*, Harriet's father, the owner of a jute factory, is seen speaking Hindi at times in the bazaar, "*bahut bada hai, chotta do*", "*yeh theekhai"*.

Festivals constitute another ancient Indian tradition that the Western filmmakers have vividly portrayed in their films. The West shows that for Indians the festivals are kind of escapades from their yearlong drudgery. The otherwise penniless Indians are not ready to spend money for necessities like health and hygiene, medicine, education etc. But they can go to the extent of any extravagancy if there is any religious festival. Unlike the Western humanistic concept of religion, India has ritualistic religion which drains already empty pockets of the poor Indians. Indian festivals and different celebrations mark the moment of joy in the wretched life of the city dwellers. But each spirit of Indian festivity brings home an incident of sorrow.

For instance, in *La Cité de la Joie*, as the Muslim festival of the celebration of the birth of Mohammed starts, the suffering of the little child Sabia increases. The whole 'Ananda Nagar' and the city at large have no worry at the

suffering of the Indian child. When Ananda Nagar was rejoicing the festival, Sabia was dying silently suffering from disease and malnutrition which seems to be the fate of most of Indian children. But Stephen is the only person who is concerned about this loss. He raises question to god, "Was the child's sacrifice really indispensable?" (Lapierre, 1985) But according to the narrator, Christ suffered in the suffering of the child. The hero of the West, the saviour, the martyr Stephen who came to Indiato 'suffer' alongside the wretched Indians, looked at the death of Sabia as Christian martyrdom.While the whole city was callous enough to look away from the suffering of its dwellers, Stephen was the only one who felt the pain.

By juxtaposing death alongside the Indian festivity, Lapierre (the author of the novel *The City of Joy* of which the film is an adaptation) brings out a grim satire on the Indians. At the time of Diwali, as the city was engrossed in riotous gambling and merrymaking, Selima was asked to sell her unborn foetus for two thousand rupees. Finally, on Diwali Selima loses her child as well as her life in an illegal set up of operation.

Even the exaggerated zeal among the Indians to give offerings to their god is highlighted. This occurs irrespective of social standard. The basic fear and superstition that pervades Indian mind compel the poorest of poor to bring offerings, even if they have very scanty to eat. From this zeal to appease the God and Goddesses the Indians can sacrifice eventhe only morsel they get after days of starvation.

Similarly, in *Le Fleuve*, there is a representation of Diwali, Holi, and traditions such askite flying at the arrival of spring.

Yet another ancient concept that the films produced in the West seem to be portraying vigorously is the concept of vegetarianism. India has a long tradition of vegetarianism.Vegetarianism simply avoids eating animals. There is all the considerable institutional support for vegetarianism – compulsory vegetarian menus on certain days on Indian railways, bans on eggs in school meals in Madhya Pradesh, periodic closure of and regular raids on abattoirs. Moreover, in 1919, Mahatma Gandhi faced a dilemma. Gandhi's dilemma was that he was byinclination a vegan before the concept existed. It is a sign of how genuinely radical veganism is, even in the one country with long traditions of vegetarianism and proscriptions against animal slaughter. India might seem to offer ideal grounds for the growth of veganism. There isa major political support against animal slaughter, abattoirs are almost suffocatingly regulatedand there are shops, apartments, neighbourhoods and even whole towns which are entirely meat- and egg-free.

In his book, *How To Create A Vegan World*, Tobias Leenaert points out that the number of those identifying as occasionally vegetarian or vegan is 10 times the size of the purists. He points out to how a wider consumer base, even if they are only part-time vegans, has led to greater availability of vegan foods in shops and restaurants, which benefits the purists and makes it easier for others to become vegan.

Being vegan is not just easier now, but even aspirational with many prominent vegan celebrities. As always, the entertainment industry is in the forefront of trendy diets, with MileyCyrus, Ellen DeGeneres and Liam Hemsworth all counting as long-term vegans. Vegans now include business leaders, politicians, and even sportspeople like Venus Williams and Virat Kohli – a powerful counter to the old norm of meat being essential to strength.

The estimates of how many US consumers identify as vegan range from 1% to 6% - which might seem small, until you consider this is a country where McDonald's beef burgers and Kentucky fried chicken were long seen as defining foods. In fact, iconic burger chains like*White Castle* (made famous by the *Harold & Kumar* film, starring Kal Penn) now offer veganburgers. Vegan food is now increasingly described as delicious – not least because of the use of many products familiar to India, like green jackfruit and banana flowers. In December 2018,McDonald's takes Indian, *'McAloo Tikki'* burger global, by introducing it in the American menus.

Conclusions:-

The India of these movies matches the tourist brochures: brilliantly colourful, vociferously chaotic, shabby streets, and markets dense with effervescent crowds - and scrubbed very clean. This is profoundly photogenic India: it satisfies the need for an exotic pulsating backdrop. It corresponds with the concept 'image theory', which maintains that 'theworld is a psychological or distorted representation of objective reality residing and existing inthe mind of the individual... that image is a mental representation of an object or place' (Schlehe, 2013; 499). Images foster

depiction of a place into the potential retiree's mind, creating a particular aesthetic expectation. In these films, the vision is of 'a traditional India, a mystic India, and a regressive India', unmodernized, downplaying or ignoring any other features, including economic development. As Jain notes, there is a 'troublesome disparity between what India is and what audiences perceive it to be' (Jain, 2015; 91). Poverty is cast as innocent, picturesque and cheerful. The emphasis is on India as a place of inferior technologies which reinforces the colonialist values (of most of the films) overall.

In summarizing the results, it appears that depictions of hot, polluted, mostly rural in nature locales (e.g., bazaars, palaces, huts, jungles, caves, and temples filled with animals) and traditional modes of transport (such as hand-rickshaws and elephant rides) are much more often represented in scenes located in India rather than in the West. Depictions of religious practices(such as nature worship and sorcery), abuse of women and children (such as sati and dowry), and people engaged in stereotypical leisure activities (such as snake-charming, fire-walking, rope-walking) were also more likely to be featured in Indian settings rather than non-Indian settings in these feature films. Characters portrayed as poor, having traditional occupations (such as hunters, magicians, and dance girls), living in stereotypical places (such as huts and jungles), and speaking exaggerated accented English were more likely to be Indian as compared to non-Indian. In short, the above findings suggest that a definitive pattern of stereotypical portrayals of India appears in films made in the West.

Overall, the imagery of India seems to be created to make clear-cut distinctions to emphatically categorize it as an out-group. Such biased portrayals are not limited to specific movies but repeat themselves across narrative. Therefore, these stereotypical portrayals are not reflections of the idiosyncratic preferences of individual creators of media content but seem to be a part of the larger societal meanings and myths existing in the West about "Indian-ness." Existence of such shared cultural stereotypes as opposed to individual stereotypical beliefs makes it easier for people in power to discriminate against out-groups in ways that are legitimized by social institutions and eventually leading to institutional prejudice. Therefore, mediated cultural stereotypes may shape the collective consciousness of negative prejudicial attitudes of Western audiences towards India as a whole.

Also, it is possible that negative stereotypes in media serve as a means of downward social comparisons in order to boost the self-image of Western audiences. Such comparisons have implications for social justifications that could be provided for cultural imperialism of the West by establishing Indian peoples as inferior and incompetent who need to be civilized. It also suggests the kinds of prejudicial feelings of paternalism and pity that could be seen as appropriate toward inept subordinates. Further research needs to explore the relationships between cultural stereotypical traits and emotional feelings toward out-groups.

These perceptions and evaluations in turn are likely to impact the ways we act towards with these people in real-life encounters. Thus, in a global space, while interacting with the flesh-and-blood persons from around the world, we may also be responding at a less conscious level to the cultural memories that we already have of these groups of people. Therefore, given that mediated experiences often colour one's perceptions and feelings about a stereotyped group, an increased awareness and critical media viewing skills may be useful. Future experimental research needs to be conducted to examine how exposure to stereotypical mediacontent might influence perceptions and feelings of western (U.S. and European) audiences towards people living in third world countries such as India.

With the increased availability of Western media products in third world countries, it is likely that even viewers belonging to the stereotyped group might reconceptualize their own identities based on their encounters with media portrayals of their group in the dominant culture. In other words, stereotypical depictions in mainstream media might dictate what are expected and acceptable behaviors by members of target groups, especially in terms of interpersonal interactions with members of other groups (Armstrong et al., 1992; Ford, 1997; Mastro & Tropp, 2004). Such imagined identities then influence what is the acceptable social norm for behaviors, dress, and other cultural symbols for the minority group. Adherence by minority group members to these stereotypical roles further strengthens the notion that the stereotypes are accurate.

 "Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet," Kipling's verse started in the beginning paper. However, Kipling continues in a hopeful manner which could one daybe accepted also in the study of India.
>   *But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,*
>   *When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!*

Endnotes
1. See also Gewertz& Errington 1991 for general imagined dichotomy of East and West inanthropology,includingMargaret Mead'sOccidentalism.
2. Atthesametimeitbecomesmoreobviousthatthetwopartsarelessdistinguishablebecauseof reasons like globalization with interconnecting phenomena like large labor movements,globalmarkets, ethnictensions,diseases etc. SeealsoCarrier (ed.)2003.
3. Ashram is a place where a group of Hindus live together away from the rest of society, ora place where Hindus can go in order to pray. Cf. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary&Thesaurus © CambridgeUniversityPress.

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