

■ From South to South: Indo-Pakistani diaspora and recent cultural practices in Spain

Sílvia Martínez*

Abstract Until the 1970s, Spaniards emigrated in successive waves, looking for a job and a better life. Scarcely 30 years later, now fully integrated in the EU, Spain has become a receiver of immigrants from Latin America, Africa and Asia. This process has not been as progressive as in the UK, Netherlands or France. It was abrupt and parallel to a more general globalization movement. This situation provides new, interesting fields to observe phenomena related to music and immigration in Southern Europe. This study focuses on the changes that new citizens, especially those from Southern Asian countries, stimulate within Spain's musical market and cultural policies, taking as the main subject popular music and cinema from bollywood. Through the comparison of two extremely different cities as a paradigm of models of cohabitation, we can see how the diverse orientation of specific cultural and musical practices in this case, those within the bollywood 'microcosm', can alter the intercultural scene and paint different perceptions of the immigrant communities.

Keywords Diaspora, music, Spain, bollywood

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Watching bollywood far from home

The most widespread Indian popular cinema, known as Bollywood productions, has enjoyed an unprecedented boom in the West in recent years. It is a cinema - with associated musical products (video clips, music, dance, etc.) - that has a long-established consumer base within Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi diasporic communities now long settled in the USA, the UK, and Australia, among other countries. However a twist can be observed in recent times, when these audiovisual products and experiences have been involved in a progressive crossover that promotes their acceptance by collectives far removed from their origins. This analysis - the first part of a work in progress started some years ago - stems from observation of this crossover within some diasporic communities, specifically in the Indo-Pakistani colonies settled in Spain.

We must remember that although Bollywood films are fundamentally made for internal consumption across the 13,000 film theatres in India (where an estimated 15 million spectators gather daily), the industry does not ignore the more than 20 million ex-pats from Southern Asia. With one eye also on this faraway and international audience, a more forward-looking Indian cinema -with many stories set in foreign capitals - complements the range of classical character references with situations that reveal the dilemma between tradition and modernity that frequently confronts second-generation immigrants (Gokulsing and Dissanayake, 2004).

For individuals of the diaspora, the films and music surrounding them allow for management of nostalgia and continuity with the cultural habits of their origins. This means that the youth need not renounce modernity. If immigration and relocation to Spanish cities are essentially family-based, so too is Bollywood. These films offer the family nucleus the preservation of their language (Hindi/Urdu) within an entertaining context - recreating traditional aesthetics, festivals, traditions, rituals, and a framework for social and ethical values, both the more traditional and relatively modern products, although these are not exactly comparable to those of the Western model.

Beyond individual pleasure and the possibility of family leisure, Bollywood films bring ad hoc reference points to the different ethnic communities consuming them: for the Indians, they form part of the representation (absolutely unreal and idealized) of an immense, diverse, and fragmented country that needs to be portrayed as a unified nation project. Removed from this identification, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (like many Indians) perceive a route to modernity without the loss of their roots, one which seems to get all the tastes of the diaspora in one cultural product belonging to present, something seen as genuine and belonging to all of them. This does not, however, prevent the appearance of contradictions that are hard to explain. For example,

it is surprising that the political message in many Bollywood productions does not upset a large number of the Pakistani viewers. Some stories occasionally offer a tremendously simplistic and naive vision of political policies aimed at maintaining national cohesion, greater social justice, or inter-religious understanding in what is such a fragmented and diverse part of the world. And while much of this cinema tends to carry conciliatory interregional and Indo-Pakistani viewpoints, there are also an equal number of clearly anti-Pakistani stories, and openly xenophobic propaganda. How could there be such avid consumption of a cinema in which they (young male Pakistanis) are so unflatteringly portrayed (as idiots, ugly, perverse)? Obviously Bollywood productions are not seen as an entire whole but as single pictures, some better appreciated than others. Nevertheless, one of the most common answers, provided by the young people interviewed, is to swerve round political aspects of the story and characterisations by highlighting others, namely that 'the girls are gorgeous' and 'the music is great'. In this case, images of ethnic representation here are less important than the romantic story or the action or the special effects and, above all, they have less value than the musical numbers that make up the true attraction of the film. Furthermore, the youngest viewers identify themselves more with the young male character resident in New York or London (who are modern but who have not abandoned their roots) than with the hero born and bred in Bombay or Lahore.

Finally with the interest in cultural and musical consumption habits, we must not overlook the fact that consumer habits today amongst the young allow for a product fragmentation that was previously unthinkable, one that often renders the narrative and characters irrelevant. Despite the fact that films are still on the long side (an average of two to three hours), current technology for reproducing and copying (including DVD 'burners' and Internet, the core of the piracy industry) mean easy extraction of the music (as video-clips) from the context of the narrative, to be distributed in a re-packaged form (DVD that contain only the musical routines are very popular). This is one consumer tendency that easily deactivates the political, ethical, and romantic drive of stories, isolating the musical, erotic, and festive elements.

Different cities, different communities: two opposite settlements in Spain

In Barcelona, a city with a large Pakistani immigrant population, a few years ago we began to see the huge rise and success of everything related to Bollywood (films, thematic restaurants, dance courses, etc). It therefore occurred to us to think that if this happened here, in another Spanish city such as Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, with a very large, well-settled Indian community, the situation would be similar or even more visible. We therefore started a comparative ethnographical fieldwork to document a multiple and heterogeneous musical experience which will allow us to explore intercultural situations and processes occurring in two different cities. So, for this paper, we must understand how such very different scenes grow from one single production, and what appropriation strategies the main players have used.

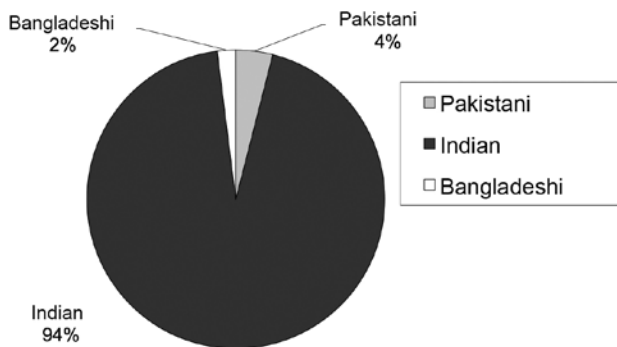
Any social group, whether or not it is immigrant, is never homogenous: we cannot expect each community to be an integrated whole, to speak with one voice and to sha-

re common experiences. Nor can we expect the people making up each community to have the same views and expectations of their new homes, or the same attitude towards forming associations, and so on. Bearing this in mind, we can sketch a minimum sociological profile based on the statistical data available to us.

In Spain, the immigrant population is estimated to be around 10-12% of the whole (6.3% are legal residents), though their arrival is concentrated on recent times and contrasts with the historical emigration flow of the Spanish population, a key demographic feature of the post Civil War period (1939 onwards) until the onset of democracy (1976). The largest proportion of immigrants comes from the various countries of Latin America and from Morocco (whose immigrants, for historical and cultural reasons, do regard Spain as a priority destination). Immigrants from Asia (primarily Chinese, Philippines, and Pakistanis) make up no more than 7% of total foreign residents in Spain, so this is really a minority presence within the whole. The oldest significant Asian settlers in Spain are the Indians who settled in the Canary Islands, arriving after Indian colonial independence (1947), pioneers from Hyderabad (in Sindh, now in Pakistan), Ahmadabad (Gujarat), and Bombay. They set up businesses in import-export, tailoring, photography, retail/wholesale stores, jewelry, high-class furniture, textiles, and others, forming the most important Asiatic collective in Spain in 1975 (Beltrán and Sáiz, 2002: 18). About 25% (five years ago it was more than 45%) of Indian residents in Spain (now some 16,000 people) live on the islands, mainly Gran Canaria and Tenerife.

This is nowadays the largest colony after that in Catalonia, but they have been in the Canary Islands for a long time, and some of their families for several generations in Spain. These include a balanced proportion of ages and sexes, and they have long-standing institutions representing them (such as the 'Club Indostánico', founded in the 1970s).

Figure 1 - Diaspora Indo-Pakistanis in Canary Islands



Source: Anuario Estadístico de Inmigración (2007)

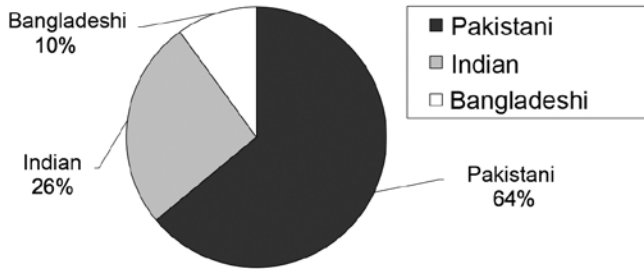
Fieldwork in Las Palmas shows that consumption of Bollywood films is one of the key cultural practices in a large part of this Indo-Canary community. The films are obtained by downloading from Internet, bought on trips to India, sent by relatives and friends, or they are watched on satellite TV (mostly on Zee TV). The latest cinema and the musical products extracted from these form part of the daily private soundscape. I would underline 'private' because there is scarce cultural exchange between the Indian colony and the rest of the Canary Islanders. This perception that they 'live in their own world' does not come from any lack of sociality (a large part of the colony runs or works in the many shops and businesses open to the public in cities) but rather the distance from which they are perceived and from the lack of opportunities to promote exchanges.

Bollywood cinema and music in its entirety is here a private, unshared activity: there are hardly any shops where one can buy films or CDs, nor leisure venues for listening or dancing to a regular menu of *bhangra* or bollywood sounds. In search of an answer to this isolation, it seems that no member of the Indian diaspora understands the potential attraction that this music, with its mix of exoticism and modernity, exerts on people in other places in Spain.

In stark contrast to the Canary Islands situation is the one in Catalonia, the Spanish region with the highest number of registered immigrants (ahead of Madrid) most of whom live in the capital, Barcelona. However, we are still only speaking of a proportion of around 15% of the central city's population (1.5 million inhabitants). Barcelona became one of the favorite destinations of the Indian diaspora that chose to leave the Canary Islands for mainland Spain from the seventies onwards (other settling points were Madrid, Valencia, and Malaga, in smaller proportions), and their demographic pattern was repeated there. To this we must add a sizeable Sikh community that arrived halfway through the 1980s as political refugees from the conflictive situation in India. The Indians living in Barcelona, besides Gujaratis and Sindhis as in the Canaries, are mainly Punjabis: middle and upper class people, owners of businesses controlling the clothing industry coming from Kashmir. What really stands out in Barcelona is the huge Pakistani community of more than 15,000 people (almost 60% of all the Pakistanis resident in Spain).

Pakistanis began to arrive at the end of the 1970s, coinciding with the toughening of entry into the UK but the diaspora has grown rapidly over the last decade, aided by networks set up by the first residents to settle there. Like the Bangladeshi community, far smaller in Spain with hardly 5,000 people, but also very concentrated in Barcelona, the Pakistani community is male-dominated (80% are young men) and it is focused in the Ciutat Vella district. The main part of this neighbourhood is no longer a marginal one but one whose high immigrant concentration makes it 'ill thought of'. This is a reflection of a recent immigration pattern (men arrive before their families) made up of small business owners, traders and unskilled workers.

Figure 2 - Diaspora Indo-Pakistani in Barcelona



Source: Anuario Estadístico de Inmigración (2007)

With its high proportion of youth, the usual nucleus of the community is a unit consisting of a single father with young sons. Therefore, it is a masculine universe, youthful, concentrated in the city centre, and with enough spending power to lead to greater use of public space and a growth in demand for leisure away from the home. We think that this is one of the keys to the visibility of its principal cultural and leisure product: Bollywood cinema.

In Barcelona, private and *petit comité* consumption of Bollywood cinema (just as we have seen in the Canary Islands and other cities) has turned these films and their musical extracts into a recent source of many other activities: from big star bollywood and lollywood concerts to screenings in cinemas (unheard of in the rest of Spain). The soundtracks and video clips from the films make their way to dance floors, forming a key element in secular party activities for a part of the Indo-Pakistani community and recently Spaniards are also joining in.

Pakistani diaspora in Barcelona: If nobody knows me, I can reinvent myself

Some of main characteristic of the Indo-Pakistani diaspora in Spain is shared with other cases in which an immigrant group remains established in non-priority countries (as might be the UK or USA in this case). New citizens in these situations do not share a common idiom with old ones, nor even a colonial past, and they count frequently with relatives and friends living in other countries with an important and rooted diaspora. As with all diasporas, immigrant communities of specific nationalities settled in one country keep their close ties with compatriots making up communities in other countries (Beltrán and Sáiz, 2002:13). This is particularly significant in this case: although part of a family may live in Spain, its emotional and socio-economic dependence is centered in the multipolar transnational network it belongs to, where the specific place of origin plays a major role the city, the region, etc. As a frame of reference for our observation, we can turn to the theoretical paradigm of transnationalism, which encompasses immigration in the new framework of worldwide

exchange of people, capital, goods, technologies, ideology, and cultures. Classical categories of citizenship, race, ethnicity, class, gender, and identity still serve for analyses of present-day societies, but they are molded to take in research into immigration within the contemporary phase of the growing globalization of capitalism, offering us clues as to how to define, describe, and explain the rise of transnational bonds in diverse migratory communities. All that allows this recent Asian diaspora in Spain to develop cultural practices with a twofold reference: firstly, the cultural context of their origin (in all its diversity and complexity), and secondly, according to the habits and values prevalent in those referenced immigrant communities which provide them with clues and models for their development in the new cultural context (different from the environment in which the diasporas arrived to priority-destination countries develop). Despite settling in unfamiliar territories, these diasporas enjoy the advantage brought by the multiplication of reference points and strategies for negotiating their establishment, as well as less visibility as an immigrant community. This generally leads to less hostility from the host society (it is well understood that if immigrants are not great in number, our tolerance of them is greater) and to fewer pre-established clichés, allowing them to explore alternatives in their representative role as a new collective.

We also know that music is a powerful vehicle within the migratory experience, both for laying roots in the new territory and, potentially, for intercultural exchange. Immigration is accompanied by types of music which, when heard far from home, undergo a change of perception and meaning. There are other kinds of music that are found and adopted by immigrants (Bohlman, 2002:115). Others are created in the intercultural space, which like modern cities, are perfect for incubating the mix. If immigration is basically an urban phenomenon, we cannot ignore the way in which relations take place between musical experiences (in this case cinematic-musical), ethnicity, and the urban experience.

One of the hypotheses of this work is that the success of Bollywood music and the leisure activities it generates is due, in part to its bringing an alternative sound image to the long-held cliché of the region of India and Pakistan. Basically represented by classical (Hindustani and Carnatic) and religious (Qawwali) music, the main stereotypes exploited by the world music sector, Bollywood music means immigrants from South Asia project an image of themselves that is just as exotic as the former but with an interesting added value. This is a cultural manifestation and 'para-folkloric' music that takes over from the fossilized clichés of nineteenth century folklore, bringing in an orientalist exoticism combined with the experience of urbanity and modernity (could we call it 'neo-folklore'?). For the Indo-Pakistani population residing in Spain, Bollywood is definitely creating new forms to display ethnicity, but in ways that are more in tune with the 21st century and the metropolitan and urban contexts in which we move. If folklore, as García Canclini notes, is a '*mechanism of selection, and even invention, projected towards the past to legitimize the present*' (1989: 204), it seems clear that these diasporas select their materials largely from among the images and sounds of Bollywood. Behind this is surely the fact of a shorter time settling in, as well as widespread ignorance on the part of the host society, which lessens the effect of pre-established clichés. If cultural and musical practices provide situations for nego-

tiating concepts like 'modern', 'traditional', 'own', 'authentic', etc., young Pakistanis living in Barcelona, as opposed to those long-settled communities in the Anglo-Saxon countries, have a broader margin to explore alternatives in their representative role as a new collective.

That might explain their frequent presence as 'insiders' in the discotheques and clubs where Bollywood parties are run, their activity teaching Bollywood dances everywhere, or playing in Bhangra bands, and even their business as Bollywood-blockbuster sellers. This happens in the informal and private market that has been growing and disseminating through neighbourhoods where a clear majority of immigrant population comes from these countries. A discreet and non-legal distribution net of video-clips, films and music nests in telephone calling centers, food stores, hairdressing saloons, and all kinds of stores managed by Pakistanis and targeting not just Asian immigrants.

Figures 3, 4 –Bollywood party at Sweet Café (Barcelona) September 2006



Trying to explain the Bollywood success beyond the diaspora

Beyond the small, private screen, the appetite for Bollywood in Barcelona has been satiated for years through semi-clandestine screenings in the city's cinemas. Since 2001, Pakistani businessmen have run 'secret' screenings in some of the city's central picture houses, screened at the end of normal sessions (mostly after midnight). The latest releases were imported from the UK (preferably the same week in which the new film hits the Indian cinemas), and they were projected in a single session that was discreetly advertised within the community (posters in Urdu/Hindi in Ciutat Vella, ads in newspapers targeting immigrants, etc). They were enormously successful but offer little profit due to the cost of hiring the cinema, and because distributors asked a minimum four-week rental price for the films, making it very difficult to break even from a single screening. In 2007 two businessmen in the city (one Indian and one Pakistani) turned round the ruinous cinema-renting formula to set up a film theatre with permanent programming, called 'Maldà Bollywood'. It seems evident that

to allow this kind of activities, it is vital to use the transnational networks mentioned before, which offer infrastructures and personal relationships to develop these projects. In the Cinema Maldà the screenings, which have English subtitles, were attended by young Pakistanis and a very few Spaniards who found out about them through friends or neighbours. The initiative, after ambitious remodeling of the film theatre, did not start well. The two partners, the hotel owner Shankar Kishnani (investment partner) and Zulfiqar Ali Shah, the owner of a video club and film distributor (who was to take care of the programming), broke up their company agreement shortly before the launch. Unfortunately, the bad programming (instead of first showings, they put on old second-rate films, with much cheaper copies) and the discrepancies between the project's partners led the cinema to be closed a few months later.

Beyond the Maldà experience, more popular oriented, there is an 'upscale circuit' going round Barcelona: the occasional screenings dedicated to Bollywood by the Barcelona Asian Film Festival, screenings at Casa Asia (an institutional initiative for the promotion of business and cultural projects with the Asia-Pacific region), or cineforums for cinephiles organized, amongst others, by the Club Masala (a privately funded project founded in 2002 by Sheri Ahmed, a young British Pakistani active in promoting Bollywood related activities in Barcelona). In these cases, those frequently attending include Spanish or European Community citizens and the events have a far more intellectual tone (and sometimes a touch of snobbery) in which the exotic and kitsch aspects of the productions are highly valued.

However, these small cinema experiences can not explain alone why Barcelona is now full of schools that teach Bollywood dances, of the success of the restaurants or parties with Bollywood shows, or why Sharuk Khan's (one of the greatest stars of that cinema) tours have included Barcelona since 2004.

Why a huge success? Obviously because he has also managed to catch the attention of the local population, not directly related to the Indo-Pakistani diaspora. What is the perception of local consumers, who have no historical or emotional links to South Asia, when they come across their films and music, accepting Bollywood aesthetics rapidly and progressively? Without a doubt, one of the keys is that they are presented with a new and alternative dance music, in other words, not Latin, not Anglo-Saxon. On one hand, some people relate it to the exotic component of belly dancing, which has been so successful for years in Spain. On the other hand, the ease with which rhythms are assimilated, which are catchy despite often being complex, are appreciated because of their relatively sophisticated composition and sound production. We think that the best Bollywood music productions very cleverly combine some of the resources used in various genres distributed on the 'World Music' label, especially those more closed to popular music. That is, the use of typical local sounds (sitar, tabla, typical high female voices) and melodies (patterns close to some ragas) over westernized harmonic patterns, which makes listening and accessibility easier, and this could be one of the clues to their success.

But it is not only the sound factor that pulls in the listener (in this case the enormous differences between the Barcelona scene and that of other Spanish cities would not

be justified). Undoubtedly, another of the key factors is the infrastructure the city's immigrants have been able to create. The interest they have in generating intercultural spaces, generally with an economic-business background, has been noticeable in recent years.

The sensation is that of a truly enterprising community (far from the import-export possibilities offered by an open port such as that of the Canary Islands) that sees that there is money to be made in culture. It is evident that the practices that enabled cultural exchange work much better when they are designed by the immigrant community, itself (and even better if the specific drive comes from diasporas long-settled in other Western countries) and if they are open to a local public. As opposed to initiatives set up by local authorities and institutions, with their excessive weight of unreal, celebratory diversity (see 'multicultural parties'), immigrant initiatives, as long as they are taken within a context of a minimum economic welfare and social acceptance, seem to get more to the heart of urban leisure needs.

Another question, which we must leave for future papers, is to establish whether this music will ever blend with other kinds of music in the city, and if we are to have new sounds as has occurred with salsa, rai, cumbia, and other rhythms that have found their way into the city's musical productions. Nowadays some popular bands as Ojos de Brujo, the emblem of the so-called 'Raval Sound' uncomplicatedly mix the local rumba rhythm with bhangra and rap, overlapping flamenco guitar and palmas with tabla or violins very 'Bollywood style'. Only time will tell if the Bollywood scene dies out as a mere passing fad or if it manages to establish itself and grow in other Spanish cities and probably other Southern European countries in which the Indo-Pakistani community constitutes a small diaspora.

Figure 5 - CD Techarí by Ojos de Brujo (2006)



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