Title: Bollywood's periphery: child stars and representations of childhood in Hindi films

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Introduction

The three research questions which I explore in this chapter ask: How do international accounts of children's role on screen and child performance in other cinemas relate to ones which focus solely on Hindi cinema? How have relationships between family, class and nation been woven into the fabric of Hindi films and played out in the lives of child performers via depictions of childhood? And, what bearing does socio-economic change in the form of the de-regulation and liberalisation of media markets in India have on depictions of childhood and trajectories of child stars in Hindi cinema? These are the questions which my discussion of the psychosocial and ideological construction of childhood and children in and around Hindi films. Ultimately, I argue that as there is a connection between the way in which representations of children and childhood on screen have taken on new cultural and symbolic meanings, and sociological evidence suggesting that the economic investment in and value of middleclass children in India has risen. To explore the three research questions and reach this conclusion, I use a purposive sample of excerpts from public domain interviews with and about child performers in Hindi films, collected from the trade press, film magazines, newspapers and documentaries over the past twenty years, and discuss the work of scholars who have conducted thematic and discursive textual analysis of representations of children in Hindi films from the 1950s to the present.

It is possible to situate the discussion of child stars in Hindi cinema at the intersection of literature examining the connections between discourses of childhood, national/cultural

contexts, and their symbolic or material representations. There is a body of nuanced, insightful writing on childhood and children – both male and female – in particular in British, French, Japanese, Chinese, Iranian and Australian cinemas, and Hollywood (cf. Donald 2005, Lury 2010, Sadr 2002, Olson and Scahill 2012). While much of this film studies literature works with psychoanalytic concepts such as 'trauma' and 'collective unconscious' which are assumed to have universal applicability, it also calls on insights from poststructuralist conceptualisations of ideology to draw attention to the connection between social and cultural discourses about childhood, historical environments, and representations of children and childhood on screen. The conceptual tensions between psychoanalytic analyses of children's symbolic role and ideological readings of children's changing value are particularly interesting for an analysis concerned both with representation and with children's commodification as stars.

Pointing towards a universal rather than particular role for children on screen, Lury directs us towards the ways in which depictions of children in cinema reveal 'the strangeness of the world in which they live' (2010, p.14) and 'offer opportunities for transgression', for reflection on 'what can and cannot be said' (2010, p.6). Such an understanding is clearly evident in Sadr's (2002) evaluation of children's positioning in post-revolutionary Iranian cinema. Against a backdrop of sexual and gender repression and the banning of sexuality, singing and dancing in what had been a highly melodramatic cinema industry, children appear in many Iranian films as playful or cynical metaphors for Iranian national 'character' and history. They reveal the vicissitudes of political and bureaucratic repression through the minutiae of everyday interactions.

Lury includes a chapter which pays attention to the tensions inherent in the role of child actors – as vulnerable workers who have to perform themselves acting childishly, or at least in seemingly natural child-like ways, in order to facilitate a star persona. Her concern,

however, is not with the manner in which the political environment of the United States constrains the structures of Hollywood narrative and carves out particular roles for children on screen. It is with performance, the incongruity of performing an aspect of oneself, one's childishness, while disavowing performance.

What Sadr's study calls attention to, which many other studies do not, is the intricate connection between industry norms and constraints, political contexts, genre and the position of children as actors in film and in society. The same political conditions which enclose Iranian girls within bounded domestic or relational spaces and position boys as pious trainees for control of families, perversely create a need for their presence qua children on Iranian screens. He shows how the fetishisation of innocence in discourses of childhood is put to use as a trope to establish the legitimacy of child actors' accounts of the society they inhabit. Their questions about power and authority may be critical civic questions, but child actors can be forgiven for asking, where adult actors and adult citizens may not be. Taking its cue from the sorts of strategic displacement of national discourse onto the figure of the child identified in the literature reviewed here, this chapter examines the complex articulation of socioeconomic and representational context, star role and discourse around childhood in Hindi cinema.

In Hindi films, while the representation of children as devices to highlight adult desires and trauma persists, the roles of children as metaphors for the nation or 'truth-tellers' to family/community power appear to have been replaced. From the 1990s onwards, this replacement takes the form of celebrations of precociousness, cuteness and an infantile, consumerist, extended adolescence. These latter traits were not the hallmark of most child roles between the 1950s and the 1980s. In those decades, different Indian governments were still nominally committed to an economically and religiously inclusive national imaginary,

quasi-socialist principles, and modernist development that encompassed both rural and urban populations (Parmeswaran 2004, Sen 2011, Derné 2014).

The following section delineates the role and position afforded to child stars in the Hindi film industry of the 1940s, 50s and 60s. In the penultimate section I return to the literature on Hindi film representations of childhood to builds a case which suggests a gradual but steady exclusion of representations of working-class childhood and ideals of economic justice from the popular cinematic oeuvre. The conclusion considers the star role of the child actor in terms of representation, pointing to the connections between the increasing exclusiveness of child performance, and the staging of a new consumer childhood nested in neoliberal and religious chauvinist narratives typified by the new Bollywood.

Changing position of child stars

Daisy Irani was famously quoted in the *Times of India[1]* as saying 'Honey and I had no childhood, no education. We didn't go to school. We were pushed into acting by our parents. By the time we grew aware of our predicament, our childhood was gone. We made a lot of money, but got none of it. Our mother blew it all up, but no regrets.' The Irani sisters are only two of scores of child performers from the 1950s onwards who recount their experiences of child labour in the film industry[2]. Dilip Ghosh's public interest documentary, *Children of the Silver Screen* (1990) contains several accounts of gruelling exploitation of child performers by film studios and rapacious, ambitious parents. Public domain interviews[3] suggest that actress and costume designer Sarika's mother created two identities for her, one female, Baby Sarika, and one male, Moppet Suraj, to cater to the market for both male and female child performers; she hardly sent Sarika to school, a practice which left the young actress virtually illiterate at age eleven; her mother also controlled her finances, even when she came of age

and received plaudits for her acting. Worse still, while Daisy and Honey Irani's mother reportedly hit them or pinched them to make them cry on set for sequences which needed to be filmed, Sarika's mother – her sole parent after her father abandoned the family – was physically abusive both on- and off-set, even physically assaulting her daughter in front of fans[4]. Public domain accounts of these child performers' lives in the trade press, magazines, newspapers and film journals, such as those cited here, while potentially sensationalised for the consumption of the film-loving public, and drawing on misogynist tropes of independent or enterprising women as 'bad mothers' are also consonant with the manner in which even middleclass children in India of the late 1970s and 80s were viewed as akin to parents' property (Chattopadhyay, 2011). These accounts of the punishing regime of child labour on set for child performers fit with sociological evidence (Chattoraj & Kejriwal 2012, Nieuwenhuys 1994, Sriprakash 2013) of widespread corporal punishment of children and long hours of study at school or labour in fields, restaurants and factories.

The list of highly successful child performers who struggled as adult actors includes Ratan Kumar, the vivacious boy star in 1950s hit *Boot Polish* (Prakash Arora 1954), Master Romi, who thrilled audiences in films such as *Footpath* (Zia Sarhadi 1953) and *Ab Dilli Door Nahi* (*Now Delhi is not far*, Amar Kumar, 1957); Baby Naaz, Honey and Daisy Irani. These names may mean little to those with scant knowledge of Hindi cinema, but between the 1950s and the 1980s, all were feted for their *naturalness* in roles as desperate, neglected, resourceful, or pert children. My analysis of the texts of reviews from the time shows that children had a primarily sentimental appeal to adults, and that it was their ability to depict suppressed emotion, their 'abnormal maturity' in representing children, the implication being that *to act as a child* while at the same time *being a child* which was viewed as a startling achievement. Arguments about why their careers as actors faltered in adulthood and were curtailed range from the notion that having accepted the girls as children with no sex appeal (often in fact

playing the role of little boys in films), the women could not be seen as sexual or romantic objects in later life; that the men were permanently cast in the film-going public's mind as somewhat immature, linked to their boyhood success. Some of these explanations are plausible and, indeed, even supported by the testimonies of adults who were child stars. Notably, Daisy Irani who always played young boys recollects: 'Suddenly I grew up and the offers stopped coming …I was entering puberty people could make out that was a girl'[5]. Patricia Holland (2004, p.15) makes the argument that '[c]hildhood poses a challenge to the hard-won stability of adulthood … behind many an attractive picture of a child lies the desire to use childhood to secure the status of adulthood'. In Holland's view, representations of children are both alluring and challenging for adults because they play with an open signifier, attempting to fix a boundary between child and adult, but also undermining that boundary through adult viewers' regression, nostalgia and desire. She notes that this ambivalence around representations of childhood persists because 'the relationship between childhood and adulthood is not a dichotomy but a variety of fluctuating states, constantly under negotiation' (2004, p.16). So, not only did these actors not 'make it' as stars in adulthood, many of them were not treated as stars in childhood and certainly not as celebrities: they often endured long working hours, lack of food and unfair labour practices. Since payment for each role they played was exceedingly low, for parents who were aiming to make a living from their children's acting, there was a push to take on more and more roles. Take V. Gangadhar's profile of Salma Baig, (Baby Naaz), for instance:

> Naaz was born into a family obsessed with showbiz. Her father tried his luck in the
> film industry, but was not much of a success. Her mother pushed her into films and,
> very soon, Naaz was *the family's sole earning member.* At the age of six or eight, she
> was taken to the studios daily where her mother coaxed producers and directors to
> give her a chance.[6] (emphasis added).

Of course, there are exceptions or at least figures who perceive themselves as exceptions – for instance Kiran Sachdev (Baby Tabassum), who describes her exciting childhood, inspiring parents, and film roles that made her reputation for the next sixty years[7]. But in general, despite their heavy workloads and the phenomenal public acclaim for some of their performances, these child performers of the 1950s and 60s were frequently criticised in the entertainment press of the time for making 'star-like' demands, wanting to play on set, climbing on the shoulders of technicians, refusing the take repeat takes seriously, or asking to be given sweets.

The social profile of child performers in the 1970s was already beginning to change, with more economically secure parents either themselves in the film industry or a profession, mentioning their children to directors for bit-parts to get them noticed, but not depending on them as breadwinners. Practices changed rapidly from the 1980s onwards with notions of 'launch' and 'over-exposure' playing a part in shaping child performers' trajectories into star careers. Hrithik Roshan, now forty-one, who debuted at the age of six and was carefully protected by his film industry parents, is a megastar, and still making box office hits; and Urmila Matondkar, the little girl in *Masoom* (*Innocent* Shekar Kapoor 1983) who became the sexy temptress in *Rangeela* (*Colourful* Ram Gopal Varma 1995) with surprising ease (having played the role of an abused child artiste in the flop film *Mast* 1989) are both notable success stories. It could be argued that, with a prescient sense of the manner in which the child performer as star-commodity might conflict with their value as adult or adolescent fetish and star object, Roshan and Matondkar's adult managers/parents made conscious decisions about when to withhold and when to launch their 'product'. However, I suggest, if we historicise the story of such successes, it is evident that a new formal relationship between child stars and the industry was already beginning to emerge in line with globalising trends amongst India's middle classes (Brosius 2010).

Indeed, children's position within the film industry has changed yet again in the years since India's push towards deregulation and economic neoliberalism. One documented aspect of media liberalisation in India, has been a de-stigmatisation of the role of child performer. Rather than holding auditions with a few dozen children recommended by friends, employees or acquaintances of the producer/director or simply casting a child familiar through a local social network, films with key child roles now reportedly audition hundreds of children, all carefully groomed by dance and acting academies, hot-housed and accompanied by eager middleclass parents. While paid a fraction of their adult counterparts, and still working on chaotic sets, Indian child actors can now hope to become celebrities, perhaps eventually stars, via careful management of their image, curriculum vitae and commodity value, though not all do. Eight year old Darsheel Safary, who played dyslexic schoolboy Ishaan Awasthi in *Taare Zameen Par* (*Stars on Earth* Aamir Khan 2007*),* caused a sensation in 2009 when he refused a 'Best Child Actor' award, stating that he was the star of the film and should have been judged alongside every other actor, adult or child[8]. This sense of self-conscious valuing of particular child performances arguably marks a paradigm shift from the 1950s and 60s, when without scripts, and with parts of films produced in isolation from each other, it was not easy for parents or child performers to have an overall sense of what role a child would be asked to play within a film; or of their comparative market worth, which did not seem to rise even with high box office returns from particular films. Occasional Hindi films such as *Stanley Ka Dabba* (Stanley's Tiffin Box 2011), the moving and humorous story of a working-class orphan who, through ingenuity, charm and talent manages to become popular in the milieu of a middleclass convent school, are exceptions that make the absence of poorer child characters in contemporary Hindi films all the more stark. In fact, Stanley the eponymous hero in *SKD*, is played by Partho Gupte, the director's son, and as suggested in research by Aarthi Gunnupuri[9], this draws attention to the increasing marginalisation of children from working

class backgrounds as performers in Hindi films. Individualised explanations for star success or failure do not adequately reflect the diverse and changing social and historical contexts inhabited by child actors: they ignore the increasing commercialisation of middleclass education and family ambitions, as well as shrinking space for representing discontent, and social cohesion, beyond the market and religious nationalism (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase 2009, Sen 2011, Srivastava 2009). The following section explores interpretations of representations of childhood in Hindi films since the 1950s with a view to reconnecting micro-level analysis of child performers' experiences with purportedly major shifts in India's national self-representation through cinema.

Representation of children on screen 1950s, 1980s, contemporary

In the introduction, I highlighted the articulation of discourses on nation with representations and conceptualisations of childhood and children's role. Sadr's work on Iranian cinema in particular called attention to the highly symbolic and ideological role of child actors against a backdrop of adult censorship and political surveillance. So how do these accounts of children's role on screen and child performance in other cinemas relate to ones which focus on Hindi cinema?

There are startlingly few academic accounts of childhood in Hindi cinema or Indian media more generally, historical or contemporary. Even the ones that exist – Corey Creekmur (2005), Saayan Chattopadhyay (2011) – concentrate on boyhood and family, with girls absent. Nevertheless, these accounts do offer insight into potential linkages between off screen discourses about childhood, family and national identification, and on-screen representations of children-as-metaphors for citizens: this echoes analysis of other national cinemas. Chattopadhyay writes that 'discourse on childhood in India underscored the fact that

the family was envisaged as a realm that played the most valuable task of shaping the individual's life' (2011, p.139). In line with this, seniority was and continues to be respected; fathers were disciplinarian, and assumed to be the supreme authority; sacrifice and duty were expected of all children and women, with girl children confined to the domestic sphere; and boys associated with the nation and its place in the world. In India's post-independence period during the 1950s, '[t]he boy turned out to be the reservoir that could be used to pursue the most daunting national aspirations' while in the 1970s and 1980s 'the metaphor of orphaned, marginal, deprived boyhood … and correspondingly vengeful male protagonists are parts of the mirror of the postcolonial nation state' (2011, p.145).

Creekmur (2005) fleshes out cultural perspectives embedded in cinematic techniques such as a specific type of edit he describes as a 'maturation dissolve' (the dissolve following a childhood sequence and preceding the first shots of a protagonist as an adult). According to Creekmur, the 'maturation dissolve' is 'a temporal leap maintaining continuity of character' (p.355) and suggests that the past is always painfully, even traumatically, present:

> ' … childhood in Hindi cinema is generally staged as a primal scene projecting the adult protagonist's identity, actions and fate. Characters in Hindi films are persistently wounded yet driven by their childhood pain, drawing a direct causal – and conscious chain between the suffering of youth and the acts of adulthood. (2005, p.350)

In Chattopadhyay's argument films of the 1990s appear as a radical break with the previous periods of representation where male children in particular bore the burden of a nationalism laced with the Nehruvian visions of social justice and collective development (also cf. Brosius 2010, Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase 2009). *Boot Polish* (1954) and *Ab Dilli Dur Nahi* (1953) which detail poor children's passionate struggles to survive and care for each other in the face of economic and social adversity, are often cited as examples of that vision. Instead,

post 1991 with the political push towards de-regulation and liberalisation of the media, 'the neoliberal hero has no history' (2011, p.148). With newly allowed foreign direct investment in television, satellite channels multiplied by the month, and with this burgeoning the national censor board's control, and the contours of media content, changed. The significance of development messages on national television diminished; fun-loving, fashion-conscious adolescent heroes of American and European series and sit-coms were ever more present on Indian screens. Hindi films increasingly 'portrayed what can be considered an infantilized male protagonist who is oblivious of his own past' (2011, p.148).

Creekmur concurs that the representation of young heroes in 1970s Hindi cinema demonstrates a certain regression from the calm empowered and footloose heroes of the pre and post-independence cinema who both as children and adults did not shy away from quests, risks and journeys; however, he disagrees with the view that this occurs in periods that connect mechanistically to the nation's distance from colonisation. Rather, he suggests, some Hindi films centring on particular stars – such as Amitabh Bachchan – were always interested in childhood as a source for adult trauma. Thus in the 1970s when the loss of parents and siblings, poverty, humiliation and hunger became a staple of heroic construction, Creekmur suggests this was not a complete break but a continuation and deepening of a psychoanalytic undertow in previous Hindi films where the erstwhile histories of the Indian nation, and everyman heroes, are intertwined. This account has much explanatory purchase, but does not emphasise strongly enough the implications of this refusal to dwell on trauma for the roles available to child actors and the significance of childhood on screen.

The recent trend towards adult protagonists who behave in what might be thought of as juvenile ways – falling over, stammering, sucking on lollipops, dressed in dungarees and other accoutrements of teenage fashion – has led to a further resistance to representing childhood for and in itself. In many hits of the 1990s and thereafter child actors are replaced

by young adults who act out a mime of a very particular type of childhood – making friends, fighting shyness, learning to dance, roller-blading through their bedrooms, which are piled from floor to ceiling with stuffed toys, train sets, the accoutrements not just of childhood, but of urban, Western, middleclass childhood. They exchange chocolate, play practical jokes, discover the erotic and the romantic across a line that looks like the border between childhood and adolescence familiar in Hollywood movies, but cannot be, as they are evidently in a form of extended adolescence that is unrelated to their physical maturity.

Indian directors have started making films about childhood or even marginal childhoods which are influenced by the Iranian and French new waves' child-centred vision (Santosh Sivan's *Halo*, Ashvin Kumar's *The Little Terrorist*; Vishal Bhardwaj's *Makdee*, Aamir Khan's *Tare Zameen Par*, and Amole Gupte's *Stanley Ka Dabba*). However, apart from *Tare Zameen Par*, none of these films had much box office success as films fielding mainly adult actors. They attracted mainly urban audiences, particularly in mall cinemas, and amongst young downloaders. While children still appear intermittently as devices in a few commercial Hindi films – go-betweens for adult lovers (a role epitomised by Sana Saeed's character *little* Anjali in *Kuch Kuch Hota Hain*, who unites her father with his lost love), the comic jester who foresees romance or disaster (Kunal Khemu, delightful sidekick 'Raju', who chaperons the adult lovers in *Raja Hindustani* during their burgeoning romance), the pretext for adult violence (Utraksh Sharma who plays Tara's half-Pakistani son in *Gaddar: ek Prem Katha*) or adult quests (Parzan Dastur, in *Parzania*, representing the actual story of a boy missing the anti-Muslim Gujarat pogroms of 2002), they are not protagonists with much autonomous agency.

In a rare article on children in Hindi horror films, Meheli Sen uses the figure of the child in these films to speculate on the ways in which films reproduce social anxieties associated with political and economic change. She maintains that the figure of the child 'enables [a]

dissolution of modernity…. the films situate pernicious energies within children, rather instrumentally, in order to mount critiques of the larger ideological terrains they inhabit' (2011, p.202). Sen bases her argument on a wider discussion of the ways in which India's swift transition from a highly regulated economy to deregulated neo-liberalism has affected different groups of India's populace differentially. Sen describes how

> Children in the subcontinent bear markers of caste and community in their names. [with a] massive number of children who live amidst poverty in the subcontinent… child labor laws are openly flouted, and a large number of these children also participate in unorganized sectors such as domestic labor and in hotels, spas, small-scale restaurants, tea-shops, and so on (Gathia, Pandey). Children of middle and affluent classes are burdened in a different sense: as India pursues its global economic policies … [and] fervent ambition translates into brutal school curriculums and sadistically demanding institutions of higher education. Academic expectations from children of the middle classes are so excessive that almost every year thousands of children commit suicide under parental and social pressure for scholastic excellence. (2011, p.200)

Other studies which do not necessarily make an explicit link to film narratives confirm work cultures of long hours, the need for lower middleclass women and men to work in order to ensure that they can pay fees and their children can attend exorbitant tuition classes, as well as a growing sense of children as consumers who want and need things like houses, consumption in malls, and technology (Beteille 2002, Fernandes & Heller 2006, Srivastava 2009). Ganguly-Scrace and Scrace (2009: 168) describe this as a pervasive sense of middleclass unease about globalisation, media, and consumption; it can be seen to crystalise around the figures of children and youth. My research with children in India extends and confirms these interpretations (Banaji 2013, Banaji 2015), demonstrating the intricate

connections between contemporary middle and upper-class disavowals of responsibility towards the social collective, and the will to insulate middleclass children – boys in particular – from the hardship of working children's lives.

The victim-returning-as-monster is another common but complex trope in some film genres, and most particularly horror. Echoing arguments around the use of children in Japanese horror (Lury 2010) which delineate ghost children as a form of embodied social guilt, Sen suggests that the economic precarity and cultural angst felt by many adults in neoliberal India is embodied in the unbalanced, traumatised, neglected and undead children of new horror films. But in relation to Hindi films, there is a danger of overstating this case. Horror is still a marginal genre; and children populate only a small minority of Hindi horror films. Their unsettled spirits can of course be read in ideological and psychoanalytic ways as 'the return of the repressed', but my audience research (Banaji 2014) suggests the problems with assuming that all adult audiences decode and interpret them in this manner. Notwithstanding the exceptions considered in this section, most prevalent representations of childhood in mainstream Hindi cinema today sidestep inequality, injustice and trauma.

Conclusion

Boys, and childhood, in Hindi films, have been theorised by the relatively few scholars who have considered them as ideologically and symbolically represented to express and reinforce dominant values within the specific national, caste and religious milieus of pre and post-liberalisation India. They have been seen as a barometer of middleclass India's relationship to marginality and conformity, rather than as devices for non-threatening dissent as in Iranian cinema, or to encourage a revisiting of national trauma, as in the case of Japanese cinema. Hindi film representations of children can, then, be described as at least partly having

changed in line with changing national and social ideals and visions. These range from the inclusive post-independence imaginary when citizens from all walks of life were encouraged to sublimate their individual desires to those of the new Indian state, to the predominance of urban consumerism of today.

While children have never dominated the narratives of Hindi cinema and while, on the whole, they continue to be marginal, the nature of their marginality has changed. Where once it was common for child performers to depict children who lived in humble circumstances, to embody the early lives of heroes and heroines in poverty, or to represent destitute or lower middleclass orphans – implicitly aligned with most audiences' own realities in postcolonial India, and with the idea of a collective experience – it is now rare to find a Hindi film with a reflexive depiction of childhood in working-class or lower middleclass households. Hindi film directors who take commercial risks by centring their films around child protagonists tend to touch on intergenerational and wider social conflict only in tangential ways. They thus lose some of the piquant social critique which is an integral part of Iranian new wave representations of childhood.

Child performance in Hindi cinema, whether in relation to stardom or celebrity, is notable through its absence in analytical studies of the medium. This chapter has demonstrated that salient differences emerge in the experiences of generations of child performers in Hindi cinema over the past sixty years. While some child performers in the 50s and 60s did become famous for their representations of iconic or prototypical child characters, and were much adored by the film-going public of the day, early child performers did not enter the industry with the aim of becoming stars, either as children or as adults. Parents acting as managers were often more concerned with the income generated through repeat performances, and the content of particular roles were of no great consequence. Individual performances were hit

and miss; child-like authenticity was something that emerged rather than being prescribed by directors.

Increasing professionalization and remuneration of adult actors relationships' with producers and directors, as well as the increased use of writers and scripts, has trickled down to the world of child performance. Formal auditions now co-exist with informal social networks, and child performers are hot-housed by ambitious parents in advance of auditions. Payments are proportionately higher; and parents of child performers weigh up the worth of their child as a star against that of the potential future star their child could become. An examination of these changes, alongside the changing roles and representation of children in Hindi cinema yields some fascinating parallels. So is there evidence that these changes in the on and off-screen roles afforded to children by Hindi cinema are linked in some way?

While the causality between these parallel phenomena is complex and requires detailed and extensive investigation, the evidence does suggest that older films too represented major areas of ideological tension, and issues in need of critique; and contemporary directors do sometimes tackle issues of sexuality or mental health that were left unquestioned previously. I have suggested in this chapter that changes in India's media landscapes in the decades following economic deregulation may be a factor that connect – and even go some way towards explaining – changes in the status of child performers and representations of children.

The imagining, production and marketing of child and adult stardom in a systematic manner and the exclusion of imaginaries about working class childhoods share a common backdrop: the increasing commodification of performance, the lessening of cinema's role in nation building and its increasing use in neoliberal nation-branding. Both ideological and psychoanalytic readings of the changing role of children in Hindi cinema and of child stars in

the industry suggest that while India as inclusive, egalitarian postcolonial project has been shown to recede as a cinematic narrative, and children as signifiers and metaphors for historical understanding and egalitarian bonds have less and less place in Hindi cinema's imaginary, my analysis indicates that poor children become exceptional on screen and their use of entrepreneurship and creativity to overcome metaphorical or real difficulties is represented sentimentally. The premium on speaking publicly as a child on any issues unrelated to consumption, and on becoming a child actor, is rising to new heights; and while some poor children continue to be used as performers, only the children of the rich and super-rich have the potential to become stars in such a cinema, or maintain celebrity in such a society.

Acknowledgement

Notes

[1] http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/bollywood/news/Honey-and-I-had-no-childhood-Daisy-Irani/articleshow/15881873.cms

[2] http://www.filmibeat.com/bollywood/features/2008/child-actors-victimised-240108.html

[3] http://www.dnaindia.com/entertainment/report-childhood-trauma-1285632

[4] http://www.hindustantimes.com/entertainment/girl-interrupted/article1-571742.aspx

[5] http://cineplot.com/daisy-irani-memories/

[6] http://www.rediff.com/entertai/sep/20naaz.htm

[7] 'I've had the privilege of remaining a child all my life, whereas others lose their childhood in their teens. I continue to be known as Baby Tabassum. I feel my childhood has spread into

the 60-odd years that I've spent on this earth'

http://www.santabanta.com/bollywood/17903/they-still-call-me-baby-tabassum-even-today/

[8] (http://www.filmibeat.com/bollywood/features/2008/child-actors-victimised-240108.html

[9] http://www.deccanherald.com/content/88652/no-childs-play.html

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