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## REVISITING PAN-INDIAN CINEMA

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### Abstract

This research paper critically re-examines the landscape of Pan-Indian cinema, particularly in light of the transformative success of South Indian films on the Pan-Indian stage, Departing from the conventional dominance of Bollywood. The study synthesizes insights from the 'Baahubalisation' phenomenon, scrutinizing its democratizing effects on the Indian cinematic landscape. Employing a methodological approach involving a critical review of existing perspectives on Pan-Indian cinema, the paper navigates the intricate interplay of viewpoints, cultural authenticity, and industry dynamics.

A key focus is the shifting dynamics in the recognition of regional cinemas, with specific attention to the influential role of South Indian blockbusters in reshaping the dominant narratives. The emergence of cultural authenticity as a central theme is explored with filmmakers representing regional identities on a global scale. The analysis also delves into nuanced shifts in industry dynamics, mainly through cross-regional collaborations that challenge established norms. Noteworthy is the acknowledgement of South Indian stars on a Pan-Indian platform, signifying a departure from previous oversights and recognizing the diverse talent contributing to the cinematic tapestry.

As a result, the study offers valuable insights into the evolving nature of Indian cinema and the impact of South Indian films on the broader Pan-Indian narrative. Future research avenues are proposed, including the exploration of streaming platforms' impact on audience preferences, an investigation into the convergence of technology and storytelling, and an examination of the ongoing transformation of the industry landscape. This critical review establishes a foundation for a comprehensive re-evaluation of Pan-Indian cinema and also attempts to trace the beginnings of pan-Indian narrative from the regional cinema in Indian cinema history, fostering a nuanced understanding of the changing cinematic dynamics in India and engaging stakeholders in an ongoing conversation that embraces the diversity of voices within the broader concept of Pan-Indian cinema.

Keywords: Pan-Indian Cinema, Pan-Indian South Cinema movement, regional cinema, cultural authenticity, Baahubalisation, Bollywood.

### Introduction

Regional Cinema of India has long been in the shadows, with its visible linguistic and cultural boundaries. While the Hindi cinema or Bollywood enjoyed a significant national presence due to its popularity, the multilingual Indian Audience, and the marketing mechanisms contributed to the Bollywoodization of Indian cinema, (Rajyadhyaksha, 2003). The discussion surrounding Indian cinema has predominantly centred on mainstream Hindi films, often referred to as 'Bollywood,' posited as the representative of the entire Indian film industry, constituting the notion of the 'national cinema.' However, this viewpoint neglects the vast diversity of

films produced in the South Indian languages and the many languages spoken in East and North-East India. Additionally, it prefers specific themes and perspectives in film theory and research (Kumar, 2013). Today, Indian cinema, with its kaleidoscopic array of languages, cultures, and narratives, stands at a crossroads of transformation with the newfound popularity and wide reception of South Indian films at the pan-Indian landscape.

At this crossroads, The conventional narrative, often dominated by the glitz of Bollywood, urges for a critical reevaluation. This research paper embarks on a journey to re-visit Pan-Indian cinema, critically reviewing the landscape through evolving perspectives and changing industry dynamics. The critical analysis draws insights from a synthesis of diverse perspectives and views encapsulating the nuanced shifts discerning from the analysis.

The trajectory of Pan-Indian cinema has been punctuated by a paradigm shift, challenging established norms, and embracing the rich tapestry of regional cinemas, which is no longer confined to the luxury of Bollywood with the success of the south Indian films at the Pan-Indian landscape, starting with the Baahubali series, with the mainstreaming media calling the effect as 'Baahubalisation' (Majumdar, 2022) exemplifying the transformative potential of South Indian blockbusters. The emergence of streaming platforms can be seen as a critical democratizing force, eroding traditional boundaries, and exposing audiences to a mosaic of regional and other international cinema, making significant changes to India's viewing culture (Tiwary, 2023). Further, Cultural authenticity emerges as a guiding principle in this re-examination, with the south Indian filmmakers showcasing regional identities globally. The recognition of South Indian stars on a Pan-Indian stage marks a departure from earlier oversights, affirming the diverse talent that contributes to the changing Indian cinematic landscape (Ramachandran, 2023). As the Industry adapts to these shifts, cross-regional collaborations redefine established hierarchies and challenge the longstanding dominance of Bollywood. This paper endeavours to unpack the implications of these collaborations and re-examines by exploring the intricate dynamics of cross-cultural exchanges within the Indian film Industry.

The critical review presented here sets the stage for an in-depth re-examination of Pan-Indian cinema, engaging the stakeholders in a dynamic and ongoing conversation that recognizes the diversity of voices within this broader concept of Pan-Indian cinema and the evolving Pan-Indian South cinema movement. In doing so, this research seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the changing cinematic landscape in India.

## Historical Overview and Shifting Paradigms

Even though India was under Colonial rule when the Lumiere brothers invented the cinematograph in 1895 (Sklar & Cook, 2023), It did not take much time for the cinematograph to arrive in India; the inception of the Indian film sector traces its roots to 1896, when the renowned Lumiere Brothers showcased six silent films at the Watson Hotel in Bombay and in 1897, the same films were screened in Calcutta and Madras. Subsequently, in 1898, Hiralal Sen helmed "Flower of Persia," a production that established a precedent followed by filmmakers over the ensuing two decades (Hafeez & Ara, 2016). In 1913, Dada Saheb Phalke achieved a historic milestone by creating the initial full-length silent Indian film, produced in Marathi, and exhibiting it at Bombay's Coronation Cinematograph. This landmark event laid the groundwork for India's burgeoning commercial film industry. By 1920, the Bombay film industry operated at full throttle, churning out 27 feature films yearly. By 1931, this figure skyrocketed to an impressive 207 native films annually (Rajadhyaksha & Willmen, 2012).

During the 1930s, Indian cinema underwent substantial technological and stylistic transformations. Song and dance sequences became pivotal elements in popular Hindi cinema and regional language cinemas, including Bengali, Telugu, and Tamil language films, which often centered around themes of social protest. This era saw the emergence of three prominent film hubs: Bombay (Mumbai), known for producing Marathi and Hindi films; Calcutta (Kolkata), the hub for Bengali films; and Madras (Chennai), the center for Tamil and Telugu film production (Hafeez & Ara, 2016)

The 1930s and 1940s were a period of significant upheaval in India. The subcontinent grappled with the impact of the Great Depression, World War II, the freedom movement, and the calamities of the Indo-Pak partition. In this era, most Indian films tended to offer an escape from reality, though there were a handful of filmmakers who delved into relevant socio-political themes in their productions. In the 1940s, cinema in South India held a substantial share, accounting for nearly half of the country's cinema halls. Additionally, cinema began to be seen as a vehicle for cultural revitalization. (Hafeez & Ara, 2016).

The 1940s and 1950s witnessed a notable surge in both the production and popularity of Indian films. This era, often hailed as the golden age of Indian cinema by numerous film historians, particularly elevated the status of Hindi cinema. Additionally, Bengali and Kannada cinema experienced a noteworthy upswing. During this period, Indian movies garnered international acclaim, mainly due to the popularity of mainstream Hindi cinema and the emergence of parallel Hindi cinema led by Bengali filmmakers. The '60s and '70s became an era of big-budget movies with actors like Amitabh Bachchan, Mithun Chakravarty, Rajesh Khanna, and Dharmendra gaining popularity (manwani, 2015). In the regional Indian cinema, N.T.R. and A.N.R. dominated the Telugu cinema, M.G.R. and Shivaji Ganesan overlooking the Tamil cinema, Raj Kumar, Kalyan Kumar and Udhay Kumar gaining popularity in Kannada cinema and Prem Nazir, Sukumaran Nair dominating the Malayalam cinema with gangster movies becoming the mainstay of Hindi cinema (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 2013). While the actors gained popularity among the general cinema audience, The Bengali cinema filmmakers gained popularity for their parallel cinema in Hindi and Bengali during this era (Staff, 2021).

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a notable shift in the dominant genre of Hindi cinema towards romantic movies, which gained traction both within India and internationally, wooing overseas Indians. This period is often referred to as the onset of the Khan era in Bollywood, with Shahrukh Khan, Salman Khan, and Aamir Khan emerging as the most prominent actors in Hindi cinema, a status they continue to hold today (Bose, 2008). In the South Indian film industry, actors like Kamal Hasan, Rajini Kanth, Chiranjeevi, Mohanlal, and Mamooty rose to prominence, marking an era that also saw filmmakers like Mani Ratnam and Ram Gopal Verma (Mumbai Noir) (Tyrewala, 2012) receiving critical acclaim and commercial success for their independent films. Additionally, there was a surge in a new genre of overseas Indian films directed by N.R.I.s (Non-Resident Indians), exemplified by Mira Nair's "Salaam Bombay" (1988) (Wit, 2021).

The 2000s witnessed a significant surge in Indian cinema production, driven by the rising diaspora and advancements in cinematic technology, including the adoption of satellite projection. This period also saw an expansion into foreign markets. By 2013, India's contribution to the global film production landscape was substantial, accounting for over one-fifth of the total 7,610 movies produced worldwide (statistics, 2016) and became the fifth largest market for cinema after the U.S.A., China, the United Kingdom and Japan (Kiprop, 2018). Bollywood movies held the spotlight and garnered significant attention in India and internationally due to their widespread appeal. In contrast, regional cinemas such as Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada faced limitations primarily due to linguistic and cultural barriers. Until recently, successful regional films were often adapted and remade into Bollywood with a new cast and crew, as South Indian film actors lacked the pan-Indian Popularity and recognition except few.

Today, There are around 15 regional film industries based on their unique language and culture apart from the Hindi film industry, popularly known as Bollywood. The other film industries are Assamese, Badaga, Bengali, Bhojpuri, Gujarati, Kannada, Konkani, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Tulu film industries (Bansal, 2023).

### **Diversity in Frames: Tracing the Rise and Influence of Pan-Indian South Cinema in Indian Film Culture**

Some significant interventions by India's regional cinema have gained widespread recognition both within the country and internationally. One of the pioneering interventions and a counter-narrative to Hindi Cinema is the emergence of parallel Indian cinema led by Bengali filmmakers like Bimal Roy, Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, and Rituparna Ghosh, among others. The films directed by these Bengali maestros are often acclaimed as the pinnacle of Indian Cinema. An early instance of a regional film impacting Hindi cinema is "Bilwamangal" (1919), a Bengali film adapted from a play by Urdu playwright Agha Hashr Kashmiri. Produced by Madan Theatres Ltd., the film was later remade in 1932 by Calcutta's Giant Film Corporation, turning into a Madan Super hit. It garnered immense popularity when screened in Calcutta and Bombay, drawing full houses.

(Gooptu, 2013). During the 1950s, there was an early occurrence of releasing films in multiple languages, notably by New Theatres, which produced dual versions of its films in Bengali and Hindi-Urdu. This approach was also embraced by other Bengali studios like B.L. Khemka's East Indian Films. An exemplary film from this era is "Devdas," starring Saigal, which achieved significant commercial success and holds the status of an iconic Indian film. Over time, various directors have undertaken remakes of this classic. The production of films in Hindi-Urdu played a pivotal role in expanding the market for Bengal Studios, granting them access to a broader Pan-Indian audience and ensuring their viability well into the early 1950s. (Gooptu, 2013). During the same period, Satyajit Ray's *Pathar Panchali*(1955) brought global recognition after the film received the Best Human Document award at Cannes Film Fest in 1956 (Gupta, 20).

Early South Indian intervention into the Hindi Cinema is made by the Iconic south India Writer/Director K. Balachander, who made films primarily in Tamil and Telugu and also regarded as the Guru(Teacher) of the two most popular Pan-Indian Actors Rajnikanth and Kamal Hasan, who introduced them to the Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi Audiences. He remade his own Tamil and Telugu Super hit films in Hindi "Aaina(1977)" which is a remake of Tamil film "*Arangetram (1973)*", "Ek Duuje Ke Liye (1981)" starring Kamal Hasan, which is a remake of Telugu Film "*Maro Charitra*" starring the same actor, "Zara Si Zindagi(1983)" a remake of "*Varumayin Niram Sivappu*", "Ek Nai Paheli(1984)" a remake of Tamil film "*Apoorva Raagangal*" (Murthy, 2012).

Another south Indian director who attracted the Pan-Indian attention is Mani Ratnam, a director in Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi cinema, made noteworthy contributions to the Pan-Indian narrative, particularly in the 90s. His movies, including *Nayakan* (1987), *Geethanjali* (1989), *Roja* (1992), and *Bombay* (1995), resonated with audiences across India, transcending linguistic and cultural confines. Ratnam's often multilingual films surpassed their original linguistic contexts, addressing universal themes that connected with people from various regions. While cultivating a Pan-Indian appeal, Ratnam remained dedicated to cultural authenticity, intricately infusing local flavours, traditions, and aesthetics into his narratives. This approach made his films relatable and resonant for audiences with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Ratnam's films featured innovative techniques, cutting-edge visuals, compelling storytelling, impactful music, and collaborations with diverse talent from various regional and Hindi film industries. This resulted in a distinctive blend that contributed to a diverse yet cohesive cinematic experience. Globally, his films *Roja* (1992) and *Bombay* (1995), gained significant recognition on the Pan-Indian stage (Vasudevan, *Cinema and Territorial Imagination in the Subcontinent: Tamilnadu and India*, 2010),

Another noteworthy south Indian filmmaker who contributed to the Pan-Indian Narrative is Tamil writer Director S. Shankar. His films often have multilingual releases in different parts of the country, starting with *Barathiyudu*(1996), starring Kamal Hasan in the lead, who is well-known in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi cinema; the film was released in Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam with the same name which proved to be a huge box-office success and later Dubbed in Hindi with few changes and renamed as *Hindustani* which became a commercial success at the Hindi Box-office too. Later, he made films such as *Anniyan*(2005), *Sivaji: The Boss*(2007), *Enthiran*(2010) and *2.0*(2018), which became a massive success at the box office and echoed with the pan-Indian Audience. His films explored themes that have a universal appeal, addressing social issues and technological advancements in society (ETimes, 2023). His narratives resonated with a diverse audience, contributing to the Pan-Indian Narrative.

### **Beyond Boundaries: The pan-Indian South Cinema movement and its Impact on Indian Cinematic Narratives:**

One of the early significant contributions to the Pan-Indian narrative is Mani Ratnam's "Roja" (1992) an early regional film that surpassed linguistic and cultural boundaries, enjoying remarkable success on the Pan-Indian stage. The film's presence in multiple languages and its emphasis on Tamil and Kashmiri identities prompt reflections on regional and national identity matters. The film's triumph lies in its capacity to acknowledge that regional histories have frequently been a stumbling block in the formation of a unified Pan-Indian identity. By acknowledging regional distinctiveness and its interactions with the broader national framework, the film effectively establishes a rhetoric of transcendence (Vasudevan, 2011). S. Shankar's "Sivaji: The Boss" (2007), featuring superstar Rajnikanth in the lead role, maybe an opulent blockbuster. However, with its portrayal of an entrepreneur-technocrat protagonist challenging a corrupt bureaucrat-politician alliance, the film mirrors certain facets of the evolving Indian economy. It exudes a sense of confidence from the South in an industry largely

influenced by Hindi cinema and reaches out to a pan-Indian audience (Vijayabaskar & Wyatt, 2007). Although these films did gain the interest of a Pan-Indian audience, they stood as singular instances or independent cinematic endeavors. Later films were not able to duplicate or take advantage of their triumph, which prevented them from evolving into a widely recognized cinematic trend or movement. The prevalent dominance of Bollywood is a widely debated topic today. The ascent of regional cinema from south India has prompted a reevaluation of the concept of "Bollywoodization," steering towards a more comprehensive Pan-Indian cinema narrative, particularly exemplified by the emergence of Pan-Indian South Cinema movement.

### **Baahubalisation Effect and Revisitation of Pan-Indian Cinema:**

A new chapter in the Pan-Indian cinematic narrative was heralded by the release of "Baahubali: The Beginning" in 2015 starring Prabhas in the lead and directed by S.S. Rajamouli (Rajamouli, 2015). This cinematic venture captivated regional, Hindi, and Indian diaspora audiences through its stellar cast, breathtaking action sequences, grandiose visuals, and a narrative rooted in Indian epics set in a mythical period of the past. The film's extraordinary performance at the box office in India and internationally demonstrated its universal appeal. The film premiered on July 10, 2015, initially produced in Telugu and Tamil, and subsequently released in dubbed versions of Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada, Odia, Bhojpuri, Marathi, and Bengali languages (Srivastav, 2023). "Baahubali: The Beginning" introduced several pioneering elements that transcended linguistic boundaries, reshaping the narratives of South-Indian cinema, and contributing to a broader Pan-Indian cinematic experience.

This breakthrough in the Pan-Indian Narrative leading to a cinema which homogenized the Indian cinema landscape that appealed to the regional and Hindi audience alike. The success of Baahubali: The Beginning is reinforced by the Baahubali2: The Conclusion(2017), these films are made on a budget that the south film industry has never heard of, it had a multilingual release across the country and abroad becoming the highest Box-office success, especially Baahubali2: The Conclusion which is till date the second all-time highest grosser of Indian Cinema after Daangal(2016) directed by Nitesh Tiwari starring Aamir Khan. The stupendous success of the Baahubali series stirred the National and regional media as it is a feat that no regional film has achieved. The success of these films broke the resistance and led to several Pan-Indian films from the South turning into a **pan-Indian South cinema movement** with a sizable number of Pan-Indian South films releasing each year. The effect of the Baahubali series on the Indian Cinema Landscape is enormous and often termed by the mainstream media as the "Baahubalisation Effect." Moreover, its impact on Bollywood as the "Baahubalisation of Bollywood" (Majumdar, 2022), which is, in a way a counter-narrative to the Bollywoodization of Indian Cinema (Rajadhyaksha & Willmen, 2012) and the phenomenon needs a revisitation of the Pan-Indian Cinema in the light of the pan-Indian South cinema movement as the Pan-Indian films from south India, namely the Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and recently Malayalam film Industries finding its foot with the Regional and Hindi film audiences alike across India and abroad. The rich tapestry of Indian cinema continues to enthrall audiences in which the recent pan-Indian South Cinema finds a unique place, offering a glimpse into the soul of a nation that expresses itself through cultural authenticity, larger-than-life characters, advanced cinematic technique, and innovative storytelling, among others.

### **Methodology**

An extensive examination of scholarly articles, books, films, and critical commentaries related to Pan-Indian Cinema was initially undertaken. A systematic literature search was then conducted across academic databases, film archives, and pertinent repositories to identify sources that made significant contributions to the discourse on Pan-Indian Cinema. In establishing inclusion criteria, emphasis was placed on selecting sources that offered comprehensive insights into the historical, cultural, and industry-specific aspects of Pan-Indian cinema. Priority was given to recent works reflecting contemporary scholarship and critique. Sources providing a critical perspective on the evolution of Pan-Indian Cinema were given precedence. Non-English language sources were considered if English translations or summaries were available. Exclusion criteria were applied to remove redundant or outdated material, ensuring a focus on critical analysis. Sources lacking relevance to the critical examination of Pan-Indian cinema were deliberately excluded.

Pertinent details from the chosen sources, encompassing main arguments, critical stances, and contextual particulars, were methodically retrieved—the data extraction process aimed to encompass a range of opinions and critical viewpoints evident in the literature. A thematic analysis method was utilized to classify and amalgamate the extracted information. Central themes, critical arguments, and recurring perspectives were discerned. This systematic approach facilitated the structuring of the review article into cohesive sections, enabling a methodical presentation of critical insights (Library, 2023). An additional comparative examination was conducted to juxtapose various critical viewpoints concerning Pan-Indian Cinema. Comparisons were drawn across different time periods, regions, and cultural contexts to identify changing patterns and persistent challenges. This method aimed to offer a nuanced comprehension of the manifold critiques present within the domain.

Critical viewpoints unearthed through thematic and comparative analysis were incorporated into the narrative of the review article. Every section of the review integrates a blend of various critical perspectives, offering a thorough summary of the discussions revolving around Pan-Indian Cinema.

Ethical considerations primarily centred on appropriately attributing ideas and critiques to their respective authors. Complete citations and acknowledgements were included to ensure adherence to academic integrity and intellectual honesty. The methodology acknowledges certain limitations inherent in the review process, such as potential bias in the selection of source material and the ever-evolving nature of critical discourse. The exclusion of specific non-English language sources may present a constraint on the inclusivity of the review.

### **Critical Perspectives on Pan-Indian Cinema**

Ravi Vasudevan's work *The Melodramatic Public* (Vasudevan, *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and spectatorship in Indian Cinema*, 2010) is intricately entwined with examining melodrama and spectatorship. Vasudeva's work offers a distinctive perspective on the emotional involvement of audiences with Indian Cinema, transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries across various regions of India, particularly in Hindi, Bengali, and Tamil Cinema. Vasudevan highlights the emotional impact that melodrama imparts to Indian cinema, considering it a vital element that goes beyond linguistic and cultural confines, rendering films accessible and relatable across diverse regions. He delves into the concept of spectatorship, emphasizing how popular cinema, often melodramatic, fosters a shared emotional experience among the audience. This viewpoint is crucial in understanding how pan-Indian cinema operates as a medium that cultivates collective emotional responses.

While acknowledging the universality of melodramatic conventions, Vasudevan also recognizes cultural specificities. His critical perspective involves understanding how melodrama is adapted to mirror diverse cultural nuances in different regions, as exemplified in Mani Ratnam's *Roja* (1992) and *Bombay* (1995), contributing to the pan-Indian character of cinema. Examining melodramatic narrative conventions becomes essential in comprehending why specific storytelling styles resonate with audiences across linguistic and regional boundaries. Vasudevan's critical exploration extends to the diasporic Indian audience, illustrating how melodramatic elements connect audiences within India and those in the diaspora, fostering a shared emotional experience.

The theoretical exploration of film form, particularly in the context of melodrama, enhances our understanding of how cinematic language is utilized to create a Pan-Indian experience. Vasudevan's critical lens involves analyzing how filmmakers manipulate film form to evoke specific emotional responses from a diverse audience. His perspectives also touch on the political and social dimensions of Indian cinema, examining how melodrama serves as a vehicle for addressing socio-political issues, contributing to a shared Pan-Indian Discourse. Furthermore, his critical viewpoint challenges the notion that language is a barrier to understanding and appreciating Indian Cinema. Expanding these perspectives on Pan-Indian Cinema entails recognizing how melodrama, as a narrative form, enables a broad audience to connect with the story's emotional core, irrespective of language differences.

Another critical perspective discussing pan-Indian cinema notions is Ashish Rajadhyaksha's "Bollywoodization of Indian Cinema" (Rajadhyaksha & Willmen, 2012). His critical examination of Pan-Indian cinema is situated in the context of Bollywood's influence and dominance, offering a perspective that elucidates the shifts in India's broader cinematic landscape. Specifically, he delves into the impact of Bollywood's narrative and aesthetic conventions on regional cinema. The crux of his perspective revolves around the assertion that Bollywood, with its distinct narrative styles, production values, and star-centric approach, has not only taken the lead in Hindi cinema but has also extended its influence on regional industries, thereby contributing to a pan-Indian cinematic landscape. Rajadhyaksha's viewpoints emphasize the homogenization of film aesthetics, a crucial aspect for understanding the evolution of a Pan-Indian cinematic language that transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries.

His critical lens focuses on the economic and cultural repercussions of Bollywood's dominance of regional cinema, scrutinizing how it shapes production, distribution, and exhibition practices at a Pan-Indian level. Additionally, he explores how Bollywood's storytelling conventions, characterized by larger-than-life narratives, romantic themes, and family dramas, influence regional cinema. Understanding these conventions becomes vital for comprehending the Pan-Indian nature of narratives that resonate with a diverse audience. Rajadhyaksha recognizes that regional cinema doesn't passively adopt Bollywood's conventions; instead, there is a complex negotiation and response by regional industries to Bollywood's influence. Elements like the star-centric approach, the Bollywoodization phenomenon, the broader process of globalization, and cultural hybridity contribute to creating a Pan-Indian cinematic identity that incorporates elements from various linguistic and cultural traditions.

The article "The 'Baahubalisation' of Bollywood" delves into the transformative influence of successful South Indian blockbusters, particularly Baahubali, on the Indian film industry. It underscores how the Southern wave is reshaping Bollywood, erasing regional distinctions. Integrating streaming platforms and dubbing practices is pivotal in creating a unified Indian market. The marketing strategies employed by Southern filmmakers, reminiscent of Marvel Studios, challenge the traditional methods of Bollywood. Collaborative efforts between Southern and Bollywood producers signal a noteworthy shift in the industry. The article raises questions about the prospects of smaller films in the face of mega-blockbusters. It concludes that, in an era marked by abundant choices, the success of films hinges on the quality of content, effective marketing, and astute packaging. Adaptation is imperative for Bollywood to thrive in the evolving Pan-Indian cinematic landscape (Majumdar, 2022).

An attempt to break down the pan-India film is made at the CII Dakshin Conference by the top producers from South India who made films like Kantara(2022) and K.G.F. series and other pan-India films from South India documented by Ramachandran in this article "Top Producers Break down Idealized concept of a Pan India film at CII Dakshin conference" by Naman Ramachandran (Ramachandran, 2023) The exploration of the changing terrain of Indian Cinema, particularly the notion of "pan India films," is illuminated by the insights provided by leading producers during the Dakshin South India Media and Entertainment Summit. "Pan India film" conventionally refers to films produced in South Indian languages (Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam), subsequently dubbed into Hindi and other regional languages, and released nationwide and in diaspora markets. Producers from prominent entities like Hombale Films, Sathya Jyothi Films, Studio Green, and Seven Screen Studios shared critical perspectives, shedding light on the factors contributing to pan India films' success and definition.

The discussions underscored the significance of having South Indian stars with nationwide recognition as a pivotal factor in achieving pan-Indian appeal. This recognition, a substantial budget and compelling content broaden the film's appeal. Contrary to the notion of casting stars from different film industries as the sole criterion for a pan-India film, the producers emphasized that the decision is deeply rooted in the film's success within its regional market, suggesting a proven formula rather than a mere casting strategy.

The producers rejected the idea of a fixed formula for creating a pan-India film, asserting that trust in the story, a substantial budget, and the involvement of A-list talent are indispensable elements. Effective marketing and a robust distribution network were highlighted as crucial for elevating a film to a pan-Indian level. The discussions also emphasized the importance of maintaining a local flavor and cultural authenticity in pan-India films. Instead of emulating Hollywood, the producers advocated for showcasing the richness of South Indian culture

to a global audience. This emphasis on cultural identity aligns with the notion that films rooted in regional authenticity are more likely to resonate with local and national audiences.

The critical perspectives shared by the producers at the conference underscored the multifaceted nature of pan-India films. Recognizing South Indian stars, a compelling storyline, a substantial budget, and a commitment to cultural authenticity are critical components for success. These elements collectively shape the evolving landscape of Indian Cinema, contributing to a homogeneous narrative that transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries.

### **Comparative Analysis:**

The critical analyses presented in the works mentioned above offer a dynamic spectrum of perspectives on Pan-Indian cinema, shaped by temporal, regional, and cultural influences. A comparative examination exposes nuanced shifts and varied viewpoints, emphasizing the imperative for reassessing Pan-Indian Cinema.

Earlier criticisms predominantly revolved around the dominance of Bollywood, sidelining the richness inherent in regional Indian cinemas. The recurring theme of Bollywoodization underscored the standardization of narratives and aesthetics. Recent analyses signify a departure from Bollywood-centric perspectives, exemplified by the success of South Indian Blockbusters, challenging traditional viewpoints as observed in the "Baahubalisation" phenomenon. The conventional critiques gravitated towards Bollywood as the representative of Indian cinema, eclipsing regional diversity, often leading to the oversight of regional film industries. Contemporary analyses highlight the ascendancy of South Indian cinema, disrupting Bollywood's dominance. The triumph of Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam films fosters a more inclusive Pan-Indian narrative, dismantling regional barriers and Bollywood resistance.

Recent perspectives recognize the fusion of cultural elements in Pan-Indian cinema, celebrating the coexistence of diverse linguistic and cultural traditions as a strength that contributes to a distinctive cinematic identity. Contemporary critiques stress the importance of maintaining cultural authenticity, favouring films rooted in regional identity that showcase cultural richness over earlier tendencies to emulate Western Bollywood styles. The globalization of content through streaming platforms exposes audiences to many regional films, fostering a more inclusive cinematic environment. This, coupled with dubbing practices, blurs regional boundaries, necessitating a reevaluation of Pan-Indian Cinema.

The success of Southern blockbusters at the Pan-Indian level challenges the conventional Bollywood-dominated narrative, prompting a reexamination of the constituents of Pan-Indian Cinema. Producers are now venturing into cross-regional collaborations, indicating a shift in industry dynamics—the renewed emphasis on authentic cultural representation challenges earlier inclinations to prioritize Bollywood-centric narratives. Producers advocate for the global showcasing of regional cultures, contributing to a more inclusive Pan-Indian cinematic landscape. The critical discourse on Pan-Indian cinema encompasses several overarching themes that shed light on the evolving dynamics of the Indian film industry.

### **Synthesis of Critical Thoughts**

The critical evaluations presented in the works mentioned above offer diverse perspectives on Pan-Indian cinema, influenced by temporal, regional, and cultural factors. A comparative analysis unveils nuanced shifts and diverse viewpoints, underscoring the necessity for a reevaluation of Pan-Indian Cinema.

Historically, critiques primarily focused on the dominance of Bollywood, neglecting the cultural richness of regional Indian cinemas. The recurring theme of Bollywoodization highlighted the standardization of narratives and aesthetics. Recent analyses indicate a departure from Bollywood-centric views, exemplified by the triumph of South Indian Blockbusters, challenging traditional perspectives, as seen in the "Baahubalisation" phenomenon. Traditional critiques often positioned Bollywood as the quintessential representative of Indian cinema, overshadowing regional diversity and leading to the oversight of regional film industries. Contemporary analyses spotlight the rise of South Indian cinema, disrupting Bollywood's hegemony. The success of Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam films contributes to a more inclusive Pan-Indian narrative, breaking down regional barriers and challenging resistance from Bollywood.



Recent perspectives acknowledge the amalgamation of cultural elements in Pan-Indian cinema, celebrating the coexistence of diverse linguistic and cultural traditions as a strength that contributes to a distinctive cinematic identity. Current critiques emphasize the importance of preserving cultural authenticity, favouring films rooted in regional identity that showcase cultural richness over earlier tendencies to mimic Western Bollywood styles. The globalization of content through streaming platforms exposes audiences to various regional films, fostering a more inclusive cinematic environment. This, coupled with dubbing practices, blurs regional boundaries, necessitating a reevaluation of Pan-Indian Cinema.

The success of Southern blockbusters at the Pan-Indian level challenges the conventional Bollywood-dominated narrative, prompting a reassessment of the constituents of Pan-Indian Cinema. Producers are now exploring cross-regional collaborations, signalling a shift in industry dynamics. The renewed emphasis on authentic cultural representation challenges previous inclinations to prioritize Bollywood-centric narratives. Producers advocate for the global showcasing of regional cultures, contributing to a more inclusive Pan-Indian cinematic landscape. The critical discourse on Pan-Indian cinema encompasses several overarching themes that illuminate the evolving dynamics of the Indian film industry.

## Conclusion

The critical review of Pan-Indian cinema reveals significant findings that underscore the dynamic evolution of the Indian film industry and the intricacies surrounding a unified cinematic identity. Traditional perspectives were predominantly Bollywood-centric, overlooking the richness of regional cinemas. Contemporary shifts celebrate the diversity of regional cinemas, challenging Bollywood's dominance and recognizing the distinct identities of South Indian languages—Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam. Criticisms often centred on the 'Bollywoodization' of narratives and aesthetics, emphasizing homogenization. The ascendancy of South Indian blockbusters, characterized by 'Baahubalisation,' challenges conventional views and prompts a redefinition of Pan-Indian cinema.

There is a growing emphasis on cultural authenticity, with filmmakers and producers acknowledging the significance of showcasing regional identities globally. Industry stakeholders adapt to these shifts by exploring cross-regional collaborations, challenging Bollywood's traditional dominance in the Indian film landscape. The evolving discourse underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of Pan-Indian cinema, moving beyond simplistic categorizations and recognizing the diversity within the broader concept. The review suggests several future research avenues, including exploring the impact of streaming platforms on audience preferences, the role of cultural authenticity in global representation, and the implications of cross-regional collaborations.

The intersection of technology and storytelling emerges as a crucial aspect of future exploration, offering new possibilities for narrative experimentation and audience engagement. The critical review portrays Pan-Indian cinema as a dynamic and evolving entity shaped by changing perspectives, industry dynamics, and global influences. The findings highlight the complexity of the cinematic landscape, inviting further research and exploration into the multifaceted nature of Indian cinema.

Critical perspectives on Pan-Indian cinema present a narrative of transformation and diversification, prompting future research to navigate the intricate relationship between regional and national identities, the impact of technological advancements, and the industry's responsiveness to changing audience dynamics. The evolving nature of Pan-Indian cinema invites scholars to participate in an ongoing and dynamic conversation, contributing to a deeper understanding of its cultural, social, and cinematic significance.

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