Ethiopian Youth Perception of Bollywood A Study of Video Films Parlours in Bahir Dar and Nearby Areas

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ABSTRACT

Following the political transformation in Ethiopia and a relaxed and diversified foreign media import, Indian films have spiced the local audience's consumption. Video shops displaying Bollywood movies in cities' downtown area are now a common sight. The effects of mass communication and the media on the understanding, knowledge, opinions and behaviour of audiences have repeatedly fuelled academic concern and debate. This study has gone into the viewing perception of Ethiopian youth from humble background of films produced in India. The study conducted in seven video films parlours in Bahir Dar, Gondar and Debra Marcos employed observation, focus group interviews, and in-depth interviews to gather the data to know and understand the youth's viewing practices. The findings reveal that the young audiences though in environment and settings much different from theirs, actively and independently interpret the messages in light of the values, aspirations and concerns within their lives. The youths' responses show the audience are not passive, gullible entities vulnerable to manipulation. They bring their own needs and desires to make sense of media messages. This selective use of media vindicates the uses and gratifications theory where the audience exercise their choice and use media to gratify their needs. It also dispels fears raised by the media imperialists who predict domination of the Third World culture by the alien values.

Keywords: Bollywood, Consumers, Globalization, Third World, Cultural Imperialism

INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1980s there has been an unparalleled growth of global media. Michael Jackson's music can be heard and bought in every continent; African music is now available globally. In 1995 the music channel MTV was seen in 320 million households in 90 countries across five continents (Burnett, 1996). We no longer need to be in the same place to share major events. By breaking down barriers of time and space between people and nations, the media are creating one global family where differences are submerged in favour of what we share and have in common. McLuhan (1968) calls global media a liberating force, fostering equality and an engine for universal democracy. Disputing McLuhan's optimism, political economists lambast the imbalances and unequal distribution of the information hardware and software throughout the global village. Nkrumah (1965) wails 75 per cent of the world's landline telephones located in just nine countries; less than 10 per cent of the world's tele-traffic is in Africa, Asia and Latin America where two-thirds of the planet's population live. Western values, lifestyles and products prevail. The English language is the lingua franca of the world and US entertainment programs dominate global TV screens. Control of the media industries rests with a small number of firms (Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism, 1965).

The debate about the impact of global media also revolves around the question of identity - cultural, national and individual. Herbert Schiller (1969) argues the media and technology are a conspiracy by the US military-industrial complex for its economic, political and military domination of the post-war world. The cinema stories of Hollywood are loaded. Just listen to the cheers of an African audience as Hollywood heroes slaughter Red Indians. With the Wild West goes propaganda, in which the trade union man or the man of dark skin is cast villain, while policeman, the gum-shoe - the CIA-type spy - is the hero.

This reduces media globalization to "the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution, or content of the media in any country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any country without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected" (Boyd-Barrett, 1977:117).

Some scholars however, dispute the thesis of cultural imperialism highlighting Western influence on audience ignores the multi–directional flow of cultures in the contemporary world. We should not undermine the recipients' ability to engage with cultural products of the powerful nations and interpret them as per their individual experience. While media has an effect on audience, these are not immediate but the product of 'a cumulative build beliefs and values over a long period of time (Glover, 1984).

The effects of mass communication and the media on the understanding, knowledge, opinions and behaviour of audiences has been the primary focus of academic concern and debate.

"The modern communications media have become a major focus for research for the simple reason that they are central to organizing every aspect of contemporary life, from the broad patterning of social institutions and cultural systems to intimate everyday encounters and people's personal understandings of the world and their sense of themselves. We cannot fully understand the way we live now without understanding communications (Deacon et al.; 1999: 1)".

This study has examined the understanding and interpretation of Bollywood movies by the young viewers in Ethiopia in the light of different communication theories in the context of the complex global flow of media and culture. This paper expounded the active audience paradigm (Silverstone, 1990) in the light of the deliberations about the extent the audience is active, their interaction and consequent fallout. Unlike a convenient sample, the study on the impact and popularity of Bollywood movies was conducted among the youth from poor families in Bahir Dar and nearby places Debra Marcos and Gondar.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Strict censorship of media products during the Derg era limited both the number and type of Indian and Western movies' import into Ethiopia. "The Derg era brought a trend of strict censorship which limited both the number and type of movies

imported into the country (Deane et al.; 2004: 90)". The national television and the local cinemas exhibited media contents that reflected largely Marxist propaganda.

Following the collapse of the communist regime in the former USSR and many East European Nations (1980s) the socialist Derg regime in Ethiopia also evaporated. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power (1991) and freedom of expression, press freedom and media diversity were constitutionally guaranteed (Maria and Genamow, 2000).

One evident change of this political transformation was a relaxed and diversified films import; both Indian and Hollywood movies started coming liberally to Ethiopia. Post adoption free market economy, Indian films have spiced the local audience's consumption. Video shops displaying Bollywood movies now a common sight, facilitate that process. This study looks into how Ethiopian youth from the poorer sections of the society, receive Bollywood movies in downtown video-viewing houses. Rising from its humble origin in the silent era, Bollywood has since blossomed into a glamorous world of superstars and celebrated its 100 years in 2013. The year 2013 was a record breaking one for Bollywood at the box-office with three films - Dhoom 3, Race 2, and Chennai Express - grossing over 35 million US$. The industry production crossed 1500 movies during the year (CBFC, 2012).

In 1912 Bollywood alone was estimated worth 2.2 billion $. Indian media and entertainment industry is predicted to rake in revenues US$100 billion in 10 years time. Indians buy movie tickets worth 2.7 billion US$ annually, the highest in the world (Quereshi, 2013).

In Ethiopia, Bollwood movies are shown alongside Hollywood productions in Piazza theatres, such as the Cinema Ethiopia in Addis Ababa (Phillips: Ethiopia & Eritrea, the Lonely Planet, 2006). Shah (2007:10) says: "Today we are having seven working cinema halls only in Addis Ababa... Almost each and every Ethiopian likes to watch Indian movies and specially the latest movies which are not only much better than any other country's movie but much far advanced in every cinematic field".

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since childhood, Indian movies with family melodrama and fast dance movements, colourful costumes, and catchy music had gripped this researcher tight. Films a taboo in traditional Indian society, I slipped classes for cinema theatres. Walking into media for livelihood intensified the passion. Thanks to a decade long responsible position in the Indian Board of Film Censors in the Indian film city Mumbai, films grew into my staple diet with Bollywood producers and actors my professional customers. Landing in Ethiopia (2009) and finding Ethiopian youth crazy about Indian films hit my curiosity for a six - how and what sense these youngsters make out of an alien media material?

Cohen (1973) claims media broadcasts in accordance with their agenda, push people into certain kinds of issues. Media actors are powerful role models whose actions provide information on which individuals base their own behaviour. Media influence on people's attitudes is strong (Bandura, 1965). Why else companies and political parties would spend millions on advertising and enhancement of their image in media?

Globalization brings people closer despite geo-linguistic barriers, which are also being undermined continuously by the process itself. Globalization is a "social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding (Waters, 1995:3). Tomlinson (1999: 107) quoting Canclini (1995: 229) talks about the concept of "de-territorialization" as the cultural

outcome of globalization. It depicts "the loss of the 'natural' relation of culture to geographical and social territories, where there is no longer necessarily any connection between identity and locality".

Ethiopia, as part of this world–wide trend of influence, is subject to this situation that can be exemplified by the increased flow into the country and consumption by the local audience of foreign-produced cultural materials of the media. It is becoming

more common than ever to see one little video shop after another in every town in the country, not to mention the major urban centres, displaying Bollywood movies.

About media influence on audience, scholars have used phrases like "ideological imperialism", and "economic imperialism" (Matterlart, 1994) "cultural dependency and domination" (Mohammadi, 1995; Link, 1984); "communication imperialism" (Sue-Nam Lee, 1988); "cultural synchronization"(Hamelink,1983); "structural imperialism" (Galtung,1979); "media imperialism" (Boyd-Barrett, 1977).

Boyd-Barrett (1977:117) defined "media imperialism" as "the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution, or content of the media in any country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any country or countries, without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected".

Many scholars however, have felt that the term cultural imperialism looks better suited to capturing the complexity and diversity of power relations witnessed among nations of the world. Giving exaggerated emphasis to Western media's influence on local audience Boyd-Barrett ignores the multi–directional flow of cultures in the contemporary world and the "multiplicity of forms taken by power relations among various cultures" (White, 2001).

This study examines the use and interpretation of Bollywood movies by the young viewers in Bahir Dar and nearby places Debra Markos and Gondar in order to deliberate the varied media thesis in the context of the increasingly complex global flows of media and culture.

1.4 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The overwhelming popularity of foreign media products in Ethiopia requires us to understand this cultural trend within the context of mass communication theories dealing with media influence.

This study probes into the psychological process of the young low income class in the country. Owning a television set is still a luxury in Ethiopia. Informal video-viewing houses in cities like Bahir Dar and Debra Markos are spaces where these youth interact with foreign movies. The researcher is curious how meaning is produced from the viewing experience through a friendly discussion; what impact and analysis grow from such inter-cultural message conveyed in an alien language.

The central issue is: what in Bollywood movies fascinates and rapports with the lives of youth from humble family background in Ethiopia; what meaning they extract from the Bollywood movies and how they relate them with their live experience.

Specifically, the questions proposed are:
♦ What facinates youth from humble family background to view Bollywood movies?
♦ What sense do they make of their Bollywood movies viewing experience?
♦ How relevant they feel, the Bollywood movies are to their social conditions?
The research explores the ways the audiences decode the message during this trans-cultural communication in Ethiopian context.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Communication and media studies being a recent phenomenon, not much work has been done in the field in Ethiopia.

Going to the cinema hall after purchasing a ticket worth 40 Bir is what poor can hardly afford. Little is in sight studying and analyzing media consumption habits of youth from poor family backgrounds; focus generally has been on students readily

available on campuses, schools or institutions easily accessible. Insight into the cross-cultural media reception by a marginalized section of the society is significant and an issue of concern. The revelations have potential for landmark additions to the existing theories and works in media studies.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

This study explored what interpretation Ethiopian youth from humble families make of Bollywood movies and what use they make of that experience. Qualitative approach directs us through "interpretation that helps make sense of equivocal communication" (Griffin, 2006). The researcher adopted qualitative methodology for this study. Qualitative research design's various data collection tools include in-depth descriptions and understanding of the consumption pattern and its interpretation (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and observations were the basis of this study to analyze the crucial perspective of the viewers.

Snowballing the sample, viewers were asked to suggest and recommend other youth with identical experience. Consenting kids from each viewing house formed part of the focus group discussions. Other willing, articulate and enthusiastic participants were interviewed in depth. Attempt was made that participants in individual interviews were different from those who participated in FGDs. This was to have maximum opinions and views on the subject.

Five video houses in Bahir Dar and one each in Gondar and Debra Marcos were selected. All video places were where largely the poor reside. Beside observing 206 youths watching films inside the seven video houses, the researcher had in-depth interaction with 59 viewers, and seven FGDs involving 52 persons. In spite of attempt to the contrary, two participants in Bahir Dar remained common.

1.7 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

All interviews and FGDs were conducted in Amharic that helped in "the crucial task of asking questions cross-culturally" (Fontana and Frey, 1994) and were translated into English. Utmost attempt was made to translate the exact sense of the respondents' discourse.

Thematic coding that represents "(a) loosely inductive categorization of interview or observational extracts with reference to various concepts, headings, or themes" (Jansen, 982) was used while analyzing the data. The categorization covered and answered the research questions.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Trough out this study, the researcher remained heavily dependent on interpreters and helpers because of his poor knowledge of the local language and insufficient understanding of the subjects' background.

Some may doubt representative character of the sample drawn by using this method. It is submitted that qualitative approach uses samples "as illustrative of broader social and cultural processes, rather than strictly and generally representative" (Deacon et al., 1999). This paper gauged the impact Bollywood films have on the audiences' global perception vis-à-vis their own world with stress on a thick description rather than generalization. The time and resource constraints confined this study to Bahir Dar and close by areas only.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since 1980s there has been an unparalleled growth of media products all over the world. Thanks to television there is no longer the need to be in the same place to share major events, the trial of former US football star O J. Simpson in Los Angeles or Princess Diana's funeral in London. McLuhan (1964) termed 'global village' to describe this phenomenon. Electronic

communications are producing an environment where people are 'involved with and responsible for each other'. McLuhan sees the global media as a liberating force, fostering equality and acting as an engine for universal democracy.

Giddens defines globalization "as the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (1997: 19).

Waters defines globalization "as a process in which the constraints of geography on local and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding" (1995: 3).

2.2 MODERNISATION CONCEPT

In the 1950s and 1960s some theorists examined media role in the process of economic and social development. Many countries in Africa and Asia obtained their independence. They sought to build their economies and the social, cultural and political infrastructures. It became enshrined in academic theory and research that these countries have to demolish the traditional structures and attitudes that characterised their societies and modernise. Lerner (1958), Rogers (1983) and Schramm (1964) fleshed the media role in modernisation process.

2.2 CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

The modernisation theory however, was challenged when some researchers alluded to the increased social inequality, technological dependency and economic domination of poor regions by multi-nationals. Citing Schiller (1991), Strelitz wrote: "... the context for the development of 'media-cultural imperialism' ... is the modern world capitalist economy – with its single market organized by the global market imperatives of the American and the West European – controlled multinational corporations" (2005: 51).

Many leaders of the newly independent African countries protested 'modernization' a US design to culturally dominate the world. The cinema stories of Hollywood are loaded. The end product of cultural imperialism is supposed to be the domination of one culture by another alien culture.
Along with the Wild West goes a propaganda; the trade union man, the revolutionary, or the man of dark skin is generally cast as the villain, while the policeman, the gum-shoe, the Federal agent - the CIA-type spy - is the hero (Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism! 1965).

The arguments about cultural imperialism became politically bogged down in the debate about a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1980 UNESCO produced the MacBride Report, which documented the state of international news and information, and put forward some tentative suggestions for a new information order. The Anglo-Americans, Western governments and much of the Western media opposed and argued these proposals infringed on the free flow of information.

2.4 GLOBAL INTEGRATION

New media technologies such as satellites and the Internet represent a big leap forward in the media capacity to bring people closer, assimilation and even hybridisation. According to Bierhoff (1996), media technologies today are producing qualitative changes in global communication. Globalisation theorists such as Giddens (1998) argue technological developments undermine the established political and economic control by enabling smaller organisations and individuals to challenge the globally dominant organisations. Calling this cultural influences and values mix 'hybridity', New media have allowed diverse 'alternative' and 'radical' voices to be heard (Gandy, 1998).

2.5 NEW MEDIA RESEARCH

The 'new audience research' is seen with David Morley and Charlotte Brunsdon's study of the audience for BBC TV news magazine Nationwide in 1978. The two examined the context of media consumption to determine the meaning people took from their interaction with the program. Morley concluded that meaning is the outcome of the interaction between the

audience and the text. Findings also showed people from the same socio-economic background could generate different interpretations of the output.

Active audience theory by the early 1990s opened up new ways of thinking about text-audience relations. Audiences are no longer passive, gullible entities easily manipulated by the media. Turner (2003:39) referring to Morley's study on the Nationwide audience feels: "The text was 'dethroned'; it lost its determining authority, its ability to determine how it would be understood by its readers" (2003: 91). This recognition of the audiences' power "has shown a variety of ways in which people receive and interpret messages" (Rantanen, 2005: 95). How audiences generate meaning and enquiry into media effects indicates their creativity. Audiences interpret media messages and their ability is determined by a range of individual, social and cultural factors. This view challenges the cultural imperialism theorists "often saturated with American" ways of living, destroying peoples' culture at the local level (Branston, 2000: 61).

2.6 THE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

Cultural imperialism view of cultural domination and homogenization has come under attack from ethnographic media researchers, too. Watson (2003:77) defines ethnography as "…an approach to the exploration of audience use of media that has had a considerable impact up on the way we decipher response". Thompson (1995: 172) says that the media imperialism thesis "...fails to take the account of the fact that the reception and appropriation of cultural phenomena are fundamentally hermeneutical processes in which individuals draw on material and symbolic resources available to them, as well as on the interpretive assistance offered by those with whom they interact in their day-to-day lives, in order to make sense of the messages they receive and to find some way of relating to them".

According to Fiske (1992) the object of ethnographic study is the way that people live their culture. Media ethnography introduces the need to redirect the emphasis away from cultural texts to people and thus studies the diversity of meanings that people derive from texts as part of their lived culture which is highly characterized by subjectivity.

Silverstone (1990:175) says the plurality of the audience "involves both a sociology and a psychology, and in their interrelationship, an understanding of the dynamics of the process of mediation. When we theorize the plurality of the audience, we should look beyond the familiar sociological differentiation such as gender, class, subculture, etc." This notion of the audience plurality calls for the need to view the complexity of the audience both at the social and individual level.

The move away from the notion of the passivity of the audience to the idea of active audience started in the1950s and 1960s with uses and gratifications research. Among the various scholars whose works introduced a breakthrough in terms of lifting up the plausibility of active audience theory, Tamar Liebes and Ien Ang conducted research in an attempt to illustrate the various ways in which domestic audiences respond to Western media (White, 2001: 2). Their work is geared to hold that cultural imperialism does not look to exist and that textual meanings are poly-semic.

Emrakeb (2005) examined the complex ways that Ethiopian youth, embedded in the Ethiopian lower class economic formation, use media texts as part of their own ongoing attempts to make sense of their lives. The attraction of the action movies for the Ethiopian youth is rooted in their daily lived reality. Further, the video houses as a shared male cultural space screening romantic and action films have created a marginal youth identity with emphasis on the notion of masculinity. The attraction of action movies has created a youth culture with differentiated meanings for different social categories in the Ethiopian society.

2.7 FILMS PRODUCTION IN ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia is a land with a long history and more than 80 rich ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups (Sempson, 2013). Renowned for its distinctive Christian tradition and association with the Ark of the Covenant, Ethiopia offers the most dramatic scenery of unsurpassed grandeur: Simian Mountains National Park, Lalibela's unique rock-hewn churches, the spectacular Blue Nile Falls, the Great Rift Valley, the Danakil Depression, imperial castles, monuments of an ancient civilization linked with the legend of the Queen of Sheba.

Ethiopia's remarkably rich linguistic and cultural diversity includes tangible and intangible heritage, traditional and modern cultural expressions, languages, and centuries old know- how in handicrafts production (UNDAF Report, 2011).

Ethiopia's cultural industry is perhaps one of the oldest in the world and is exceptionally diverse. The other intangible heritage of Ethiopia is equally rich with exceptional varieties including ceremonies, festivals, celebrations, rituals, and other living expressions (ibid.).

Kindeneh (2014) says cinema came to Ethiopia only three years after the world's first film was projected in Paris on 28 December 1895 by the Louis Lumiere brothers. The screening occurred at the palace during Emperor Menilek II reign. The first cinematic artefacts to Ethiopia came in 1898. A French journal 'Annals d'Ethiopie' (1898) claimed a Frenchman from Algeria brought the cinematic artefacts to Ethiopia, and sold it to the Italian minister Ciccodicola who gifted it to Emperor Menilek (Arefayine, 2006)". Before the first public film screening in Ethiopia in 1909-1910, the majesty watched films in palace almost for above a decade (Pankhurst, 1968).

The year 1923 is the possible year for the first cinema house owned and built by Ethiopians. A French historian Merab, in his 'Impressions d'Ethiopie (1922) mentions there was a film house called 'Pate' owned by M. Baicovich from 1909 - 1910. People though stunned by this magical invention, soon turned indifferent.

Richard Pankhurst (1968), in 'Economic History of Ethiopia' says that the project attracted only temporary interest, and was soon abandoned. Kindeneh (2014) holds the powerful and influential clergy intensely opposed cinema and associated the medium with the devil's work. Encyclopedia Aethiopica, Vol. I (2003), initially dubbed cinema houses 'Ye Seytan Bet' (House of Satan), a definition which well suited the technological "devilry" of the cinematographically combined images and movement.

The first Ethiopian movie *au de Menilek* was made in 1909 by a French man, Charles Martel (Chris, 2004). An important phase in the history of Ethiopian films was a short 16 mm black and white film produced by Tedla screening Empress' Zewditu's 1917 coronation (Arefyine, 2006).

Production of films in Ethiopia continued during the Reign of Hailesselassie I. At his coronation in November of 1928, a film showing Empress Zewditu crowning Taffari Makonnen as King and Heir to the Throne of Ethiopia was very popular. Then followed documentary films on different issues featuring historical sites and developmental activities. During their occupation (1936 to 1941) the Italians exploited the medium through the glorification and promotion of their culture and politics. Italians also built movie houses in Addis Ababa, Dessie, Dire Dewa and Jimma (Kindeneh, 2014).

Until 1974, American and Indian movies were popular in the country. After the revolutionary outburst of February 1974 against monarchy, the military dictatorship Derg nationalized the existing commercial cinema halls and extreme censorship of movies was practiced; only Russian films having a communist message were allowed (Deane et al.; 2004)".

However, during the Derg period in terms of quality and content a number of films were produced. A film produced by Haile Gerima (1976) titled *"Harvest Three Thousand Years"* featured the bitterness of the life of the peasantry under the feudal system. Haile made seven films including *Sankofa* (1993) and *Imperfect Journey* (1994). There were also films produced by Ethiopians such as *Guma (Vendetta),* and *Hirut.* The film production section under the ministry of culture and sports affairs, produced another film entitled "3002" (Kindeneh, 2014).

Ethiopian film industry's focus on production of documentary films continued with the establishment of Ethiopian film centre in 1978. The centre merged with the Ethiopian Film Corporation (EFC) as per Proclamation No.306/1986(7). The EFC produced 27 documentary films and two feature films entitled *Behiwot Zuria* and *Aster* (Survey Study of Culture and Media in Ethiopia, February, 2003). During the period of the Haile Selassie and Derg many films produced by Ethiopian filmmakers projected 'nostalgia along the lines of social changes' (Pfaff, 2004). Haile Grime's Harvest: 3000 Years (1976) and Imperfect Journey (1994), Salem Mekuria's Deluge (1995), and Yemane Demissie's Tumult (1996) is a project to revise the foundational narrative of a 3000 years Solomonic Ethiopia in light of the experience with feudalism and a failed revolution and their legacies.

According to Masresha (2009), the film sector in Ethiopia gained momentum in 1985   when films production started in Amharic language and simultaneously accessed to the audience via CDs.

Eskedar (2013:10) however, says the heightening number of films produced in Ethiopia was not accompanied with the quality and technical skills of film production. "Unfortunately, even though Ethiopian cinema history started early, the film industry in the country has failed to progress in a proper manner. The Ethiopian film industry started to boom in the last 10 years, although it has little quality of the storylines".

Ethiopian film producer, director and actor Astor Bedane in an interview (Ethiopian Herald, 2015) also lamented that many film producers are making films just to please cinema hall owners. She attributed the increasing number of film viewers to exaggerated advertising (Aster Bedane, 2015). Kindeneh (2014) says the governors and rulers during different times were instrumental in shaping the geographical, cultural, historical, religious, and all aspects of the country. That probably explains, the film art and technology though introduced to Ethiopian almost as equal as to Europeans, is in its infant stage.

2.8 INDIAN FILM INDUSTRY

The name "Bollywood" is from the Indian film city Bombay (Mumbai) and Hollywood, the centre of the American film industry (Randeep, 2008). Raja Harishchandra (1913) by Dadasaheb Phalke, was the first silent feature film made in India. By the 1930s, the Indian film industry was producing over 200 films per annum. The first Indian sound film was Ardeshir Irani's Alam Ara in 1931(ibid.).
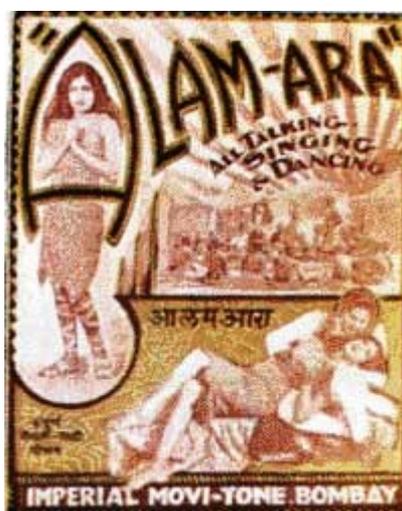
Poster first Indian sound film, Alam Ara (Quereshi: Bollywood in 2013)

For the Indian film industry as for the country, the 1930s and 1940s were tumultuous. India was buffeted by the Great Depression, World War II, the Indian independence movement, and the violence of the Partition. Many filmmakers tackled tough social issues, or used the struggle for independence for their plots (Hindi Cinema: Encyclopaedia Britannica: 136).

In 1937, Ardeshir Irani of Alam Ara fame, made the first colour film Kisan Kanya. Soon, he made another , a coloured version of Mother India. But colour became a popular feature only in the late 1950s; romantic musicals and melodramas the staple fare (http://wwwmovies.indinfo.com/tales/history.html).

Rising from its humble origin in the silent era, Bollywood has since blossomed into a glamorous world of superstars and celebrated its 100 years in 2013. Indian film productions match the ever-swelling audience for the fantasy escapist world and long running time entertainment (Robinson, 1981).

The Indian film industry production crossed 1500 movies during 2012 (CBFC). Quereshi (1913) says, the year 2013 has been a record breaking one for Bollywood at the box-office with three films - Dhoom 3, Race 2, and Chennai Express - grossing over 35 million US$. In 1912 Bollywood alone was estimated worth 2.2 billion $. Indians buy movie tickets worth 2.7 billion US$ annually, the highest in the world. The Indian media and entertainment industry is predicted to rake in revenues US$100 billion in 10 years time.

Historically, Hindi films have been distributed to some parts of Africa, largely by Lebanese businessmen. Mother India (1957) continued playing in Nigeria for decades. Larkin (2002) holds Indian movies gained ground so as to alter the style of Hausa fashions; songs have also been copied by Hausa singers and stories have influenced the writings of Nigerian and African novelists. Stickers of Indian films and stars decorate taxis and buses in South Africa, while posters of Indian films adorn the walls of tailor shops and mechanics' garages there (Balchand, 2004). In African countries like Ghana, Botswana, Somalia, Tanzania, and Kenya many Indian movies rose in popularity despite the lack of Indian audience, an alien culture, based on a religion wholly different, and a language unintelligible to the viewers. Larkin (2002) explains this due to some similarities between the cultures: wearing turbans; the presence of animals in markets; porters carrying large bundles, chewing sugar cane; youths riding motor scooters; wedding celebrations, etc.

Tied with traditions, Indian movies show "respect" toward women; women were modestly dressed, men and women rarely kiss, and absence of nudity. Indian movies also allowed a new youth culture to follow without such ideological baggage as "becoming western" (Larkin: Bollywood Comes to Africa, 2002).

Several Bollywood personalities have camped in the continent (Africa) for both shooting movies and off-camera projects. The film Padmashree Laloo Prasad Yadav (2005) was one of many movies shot in South Africa. Dil Jo Bhi Kahey (2005) was shot almost entirely in Mauritius (Balchand: Lalu Prasad At Home, 2004). Classic Bollywood actors like Kishore Kumar and Amitabh Bachchan have enjoyed popularity in Egypt and Somalia (Baru, 2013).

The market of the mainstream commercial films has grown "wherever Indian cinema has a large following - the Caribbean, Fiji, East and South Africa, UK, US, Canada, the Middle East" (http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Culture/Cinema/cinema.html).

In Ethiopia, Bollywood movies entertain in Piazza theatres, as the Cinema Ethiopia in Addis Ababa (Phillips, 2006). Shah in the Advent of Indian Cinema in Ethiopia (2007) says Indian movies have been popular in Ethiopia for above 50 years. During later half of the 19th century, when Indian naval ships visited Massawa port (now in Eritrea), the Ethiopian public were entertained with the first 16 mm black and white movies from India.

Films like Mother India and Disco Dancer were popular among the elderly and the young. Often the audience were seen coming out of the cinema houses wiping tears from their eyes; at times the cinema authorities had even to call the police forces to control the audience commotion as the crowd denied entrance tickets, went wild breaking into the cinema halls (Lorenze & Florian, 2010).

Shah (2007: 12) says: "Post Derg lift on the ban, the first film shown was Bobby, a family drama and the first day it was house full. Today you can watch the latest releases in Addis Ababa. Actors and actresses such as Amitabh Bachchan, Shahrukh Khan, etc. are on the lips of the Ethiopian spectators."

Popularity of the Bollywood movies in Ethiopia is evident from a statement of an Ethiopian Airlines' passenger: "During my 16-hour flight of the Ethiopian Airlines from Washington to Addis Ababa, they had an Indian channel with many movies. There were hardly any Indians in the plane, except me (Nayeem on Facebook: 7.02.2015)."

At a symposium held in Addis Ababa *Cinema Now: Here and There*, during the Indian Film Week organized by the Indian embassy in association with the Ethiopian ministries of culture, tourism, trade and industry (26 October - 02 November 2007), many eminent Ethiopian filmmakers including Tatek Tadesse, Surafiel Wondimu and Berhane Negussie talked about the impact Indian films like Mehboob Khan's legendary *Mother India* and Yash Chopra's *Waqt* made on them. Renowned screenplay writer Tesfaye Mamo (from Filmmakers Association, Ethiopia) talked about historical aspects and prospects of the film industry in Ethiopia. "Impact of Indian Cinema on Ethiopia", a documentary produced by the Ethiopian Television screened during the seminar, telecast interviews with filmgoers. The documentary also featured many video parlour owners who said they had better turnout for Indian movies than for Hollywood films. The seminar screenings of award-winning Indian films drew crowds. The films included *Massey Sahib*, *Train to Pakistan*, *Vastupurush*, *Shubho Muhurat*, *Baghban* and *Manthan* (Embassy of India Archives, Addis Ababa).

Ethiopia's State Minister of Culture and Tourism Tadelech Dalecha in her keynote address desired the Ethiopian film industry to draw the best practices from Indian film industry and termed the event "a platform for exchange of ideas among various stakeholders in the film industry" (ibid.).

3. DATA DESIGN AND PRESENTATION

This study qualitatively analyses the practice of watching Indian movies in poor areas of Bahir Dar, Debra Marcos, and Gondar, involvement of the viewers, and the interpretation they make of the films in general. Data were collected from respondents using observation, interview and focus group discussion methods. These were analyzed through researcher's observations, and viewers' description and interpretation.

The researcher attempted to explore

    a.   what fascinates youth from humble family background to view Bollywood movies?
    b.   what sense they make of their Bollywood movies viewing experience; and
    c.   how relevant they feel, the Bollywood movies are to their social conditions?

The study was done in seven video houses: five in Bahir Dar and one each in Gondar and Debra Markos. Beside observing 206 youths watching films inside the seven video houses, the researcher interviewed 59 individuals and had seven FGDs involving 52 persons. Attempt was made that the people selected for personal interaction were different from the participants in FGDs so that more and more reactions could come. However, two participants in Ashu Video (Bahir Dar) remained common to both the in-depth interviews and FGDs.

The people for both FGDs and individual interactions were selected randomly on the basis of their willingness to participate, their frequency of visits, and also their belonging to humble background.

4. DATA PRESENTATION

What struck the researcher was the identical nature and environment around all the video houses though situated in different areas of the cities and the viewers who also looked belonging to the humbler section of the society.

Though in the main city, the location of all the video houses looked outside the town with old mud houses around. Surroundings were slum looking with filthy waste objects spilled all over. It was a tough job moving about not to talk of passing hours for the study. Viewers too, looked hailing from labour and poor class families. None during informal chat said

his parents had a regular job or had a concrete house. They confessed they could not afford to pay commercial rates charged in the city's cinema hall. Each viewer paid one EB. The owners of the Bahir Dar-based video houses Super DSTV Films and Pool House (Amar Dessale) and the Ashu Video (Assenafi Mihretie) said that the charges of one EB for every screening were very low compared to of the local Hyper Cinema. That helped people from the labour class to entertain themselves.

All the houses had a fixed schedule for Bollywood movies screenings. Indian films were translated into Amharic. Owners of the seven video houses said that majority of viewers preferred translation as that helped them comprehend the films better. On average 100 viewers visited every day, estimated Tibebu Damtew (owner, Diba Video Parlour). The researcher observed the norm roughly applied to all other houses, too.

The parlours' attendance was dominated by males between 11 and 30+ age group. Out of 216 persons involved in the process only five were girls. Owners and some viewers explained it was a taboo for girls to visit video houses. At times some males made obscene comments. The researcher observed the atmosphere inside was visibly male centric where youngsters chewed 'chat', smoked heavily, took alcohol, and at times even used foul language. FGD participants (Ashu Video) said in their culture females are not to enter video houses. If a girl does, the society takes her a bad mannered street girl. Males during screenings smoked and consumed alcohols that made girls uneasy.

Assenafi Mihretie, Owner (Ashu Video House, Bege Terra, Bahir Dar)

Films were advertised by putting up posters. One of the posters at a video house below the movie's title mentioned: "yekewete yefeker action beamaregna tergume" meaning "very interesting and popular Amharic translated film".
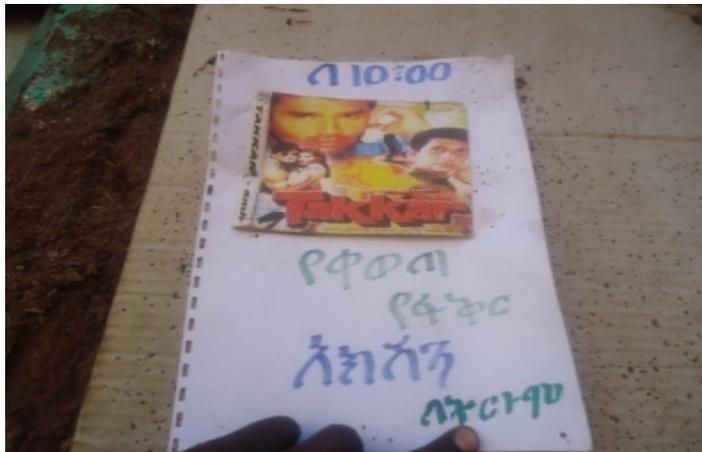
A film poster outside Ashu Video House, Bega Terra, Bahir Dar

During selection, the researcher took care that the participants interacted individually as well as in FGDs had been seeing Indian films for long.

In Super DS TV Films and Pool House, the persons chosen for individual interviews (aged 13, 17, and 21 and two 18) were in school excepting the one 21-year old studying engineering (II year). They had been watching Bollywood movies for long. Getaneh started watching while he was in grade seven, Mohamed when in grade three, Girum from grade six, Getnet four

years before, and Syed the last eight years. Girum admitted he skipped classes to see films and excessive viewing of movies damaged his education. He failed to pass grade 12 examination though he had secured 1st rank in class up to grade six.

 The researcher observed a common feature that the viewers watched the films with interest, seriousness and in silence. While watching the film, audience hardly moved; everybody watched attentively. The only disturbance were some late comers who after settling themselves in dark asked viewers next to them though in whispering tones, about the events shown before they arrived. At times they laughed together and commented on some action or comic scenes. Sometimes they went wild when the hero hit the villain for a six. At times, viewers expressed loud visible disgust over some rape scenes or brutal murders involving children, women, or the handicapped.

Another observation to note was the video parlours viewers though from different houses, had a common look. Socially they predominantly belonged to working and labour class.

When asked why they watched and what in Bollywood movies fascinated them, one common reply was Bollywood movies attract, entertain and educate them. According to some respondents, Indian movies teach how to sacrifice themselves for their country, family, friends, and how to live a better life, respect others and love friends.

In Ashu Video House, one viewer Yordanos stated: "In addition to entertainment, movies teach me what I have to be, how to love, hate, revenge, and be a famous person". Workinhe had a utilitarian motive: "In addition to entertainment, I use movies to learn language".

Alemu and Fassil stated that movies teach "how to respect our culture, family, and religion, as well as our parents and friends". Surafel was mixed when he said: "Ethiopians learnt how we could respect our culture, but the way youngsters sometimes model the act and style of stars led to cultural disconformities". In Diba Video Parlour, from the five persons individually interviewed, three interviewees explained that the Bollywood movies fascinated them as the issues raised in their story line have proximity to the real world and to their lives. The conflict between the rich and the poor and ultimately the poor emerging victorious appealed to them emotionally and they themselves felt vindicated. Biniam gave the example of Tatek an Ethiopian film maker, who said the latter's film Taju was inspired by the Indian films. "Tatek confessed that

Bollywood movies usually raised issues that spine round the poor and the rich", said Biniam. The three explained that the movies portray the philosophy of different individuals providing reasons, and so help the viewers in developing their reasoning skill. Two of the viewers held that the music the Indian films played has varied purpose such as introducing their countries as a tourist destination and their culture. They explained that the way Indians make love and the loyalty of lovers shown fascinated them as their own. Biniam also stated he himself fell in love after he began watching the Indian movies: "I used to love my neighbourhood girl Salem but did not know how to convey the message. Later I picked up a popular song from a Bollywood movie 'Apenjeye'." In Terefe House (Bahir Dar) one common answer by all the five participants in individual interaction was that they watched the movies because that gave them pleasure, happiness, and satisfaction. The flow and treatment of the story kept them happy and satisfied.

Habte an orphan living on street having no family, added the Indian movies gave relaxation from the boredom and pains as his real life was full of struggle.

Viewers watching in attention (Super DSTV Films and Pool House, Bahir Dar)

He said he valued Indian films as they emphasized family love between brothers, between brothers and sisters and between mothers / fathers and sons. Asnaku admitted he forgot all his problems and sufferings when he watched how Indians helped each other and put premium on family life. On what in Bollywood movies rapports with their lives, the respondents (Ashu Video) largely referred to the dressing and dancing styles and culture. Yordanose commented: "Globalization did not much affect the Indian culture. They respect and use their own cultural costumes that are what I like most and help me to ask myself where I am". Surafel liked the dancing style over all and said he imitated and performed Indian dances. In Super DSTV Films and Pool House (Belay Zeleke, Bahir Dar), Getaneh, Girum and Getnet said by watching the movies they felt refreshed and relaxed enjoying good time after their daily routine. Seid said he learnt new things and got mental satisfaction; he also got inspiration how to improve his society and remove evils like corruption. Yet another (Mohamed) said he got understanding and knowledge about Indian social life and learnt more how they help the poor people and how they can transform their country. Gitaneh stressed on three benefits he derived: knowledge, relaxation and new information. Two said they derived pleasure from watching Indian love stories.

FGD in progress (DSTV Films and Pool House, Bahir Dar)

On how they were exposed to Bollywood movies and what related to their life, two FGD members Aderajew and Mengistutwo admitted that Indian family life is very interesting and one of them added that Indians respect elderly people and they are strongly honest in their ideals. Shikur Nurie admired distinctive Indian love stories. He added Indian films educate him how to communicate with people. Yohannes and Getaneh eulogised Indians' efforts to help people. Yohannes said: "We get knowledge how we can develop our working culture and help each other". He liked their eating and drinking together and spending time happily. Mohamed said: "The way Indian people live with tolerance can be a model for us and Ethiopians have to learn from them". He praised compassion of Indian people and lauded their rule of law and accountability.

All the five individual interviewees and the FGDs participants held it is difficult to see such things in the Hollywood films where actors and actresses run their own cars and sophisticated buildings, a dream for them. They distinguished that the Bollywood movies revolve round the lower class people and show rationale of the theme and effect of the story which makes the story acceptable to them. All the interviewees stressed that most Bollywood movies have relationship with their social conditions. The activities in the Indian films are performed in their society too, like worshiping, traditional medicines, etc. Yibeltal explained that Ethiopian society is dedicated to their religion and the Indians, too. Dawit likened Ethiopian women carrying pot to fetch water from rivers to shown in Indian films, too.

The viewers were unanimous that Indian films empower them by offering real experience how to overcome poverty. Adane and Abay said that the Bollywood films most times stress on efforts made to overcome poverty trough hard work. The people in India giving priority to elders was a feature that viewers found similar to Ethiopians'. Getnet and Sewasew explained that Ethiopian society has respect for grey hairs; they stand up when elders come and give them priority in taxi or city buses.

In Mulat Indian Video House (Behind Blue Nile Hotel, Bahir Dar) three viewers said they watched Indian films to spend time, especially after long school hours and studies. One of them felt relaxed that refreshed his mind. One mentioned that he got mental satisfaction and learnt new things from it; for example he got a better understanding how to act against corruption in a united way. One of them stated people can become knowledgeable from the social life of Indians and learn more how they can help the poor people. One raised development issue and said: "We can learn from the movie how they can change their

country into a developed country with unity". Still another added that he was watching movies not only to spend time but also to get new information. Two of them mentioned watching love stories gave them pleasure. Four boys came from extremely poor families. Two of them did not have family and house and lived on street. Solomon Abay, Mehari Gebre and Habte Sisay were grade 8. Chale Asmamaw (grade 7), and the other two boys are not going to school. Six of them live around the movie house in kebelle 06. They said they watched the Indian movies because the movies gave them pleasure and made them forget their slogging and distress. Also, as most of the movies last three hours it helps them remain away from the drudgery of their life for long.

Chale said: "In many Indian movies, wives fast for their husbands and respect them. While watching films I imagine myself in the husband's position and enjoy the film events as if they are for me." Mehari said: "I sometimes imagine myself the actor in the movie with a happy family forgetting that I am an orphan and have no family". Solomon said: "While I am

completely lost in viewing a romantic film, I imagine I'm the lover. For a moment I forget I'm too poor to afford a girl friend." Romantic movies are most viewers' first choice. They adore actors like Aishwarya, Salman, Sharukh, Priyanka, Amir, Hritik, Rani, and Kajol. For three of them, romantic films are their choice as they thrill them.

While generally all the viewers praised Indian films for the entertainment and some inspiring features, the viewers were conscious of social features and rituals that separated them from Indian way of life. In DS TV Films and Pool House some viewers pointed out, in India when somebody died family usually wears white clothes. In Ethiopia people wear black clothes. In Ethiopia dead are buried; in India they burn and throw the ashes in the river. Indian and Ethiopian youth also differ. Indian youth stick to their culture. But Ethiopians copy others. The FGD members also criticized some of the Indian customs. Indian women cannot be separated unless the husband died; a widow cannot not re-marry though a husband or a widower can. "Indian culture is biased against women", said one FGD participant to which all nodded in agreement. One mentioned Indians only promote their culture. They did not try to mix other cultures even if there are globally significant cultures. One interviewee pointing out lack of variety said most Indian movie stories are love stories; no adventure movies like in Hollywood. This makes films' themes stereotyped and without suspense. One FGD participant also remarked that movies of India are too long, and at times get boring. They were highly critical of the South Indian films that they said promoted pointless violence.

While in general all the viewers praised Indian films for the ideals depicted in them, they remained aware that films are basically for entertainment and not for copy cat. On being asked what meaning or sense they made of Bollywood movies in particular and of their viewing experience in general, Workinhe (Ashu Video House) said "though their content and theme is good but action movies are usually exaggerated". Fassil spoke: "As we know our film industry is still not fully developed, we entertain ourselves by watching Bollywood movies". According to Surafiel and Alemu: "Unlike the past, now we are turning our eyes to our movies because our authors and artists are learning more from Bollwood movies, and it helps our movie to jump ahead". Yordanose cautioned: "We must care for the impact the movies create. People create conflict and harm others based on what they negatively imitate from the movies. Therefore, professionals have to think about the consequence of the message that the movie transfers, and when and where it should be released."

FGD participants in DS TV Films talking of the differences in the two cultures said, both India and Ethiopia are working to develop their countries and their agricultural practices are similar. But they opined that the Indian work culture is holding the Indians fast compared to Ethiopians'. Fassil said: "Socially and in food habits, the two differ as Indian food is bread and vegetables, ours is "Enjera.'' Surafele said: "In India when a person dies, the body is put on fire, but in our country, we bury the dead in his / her religious place". Yordanos referred to the marriage ceremonies: "Indian bride and bridegroom rotate fire seven times as they believe that they will re-born seven times. In our wedding ceremony, females wear "*vello*" or sometimes dress called "*tebeb*", but in India there is "saree" for females and "dhoti" for males. And, they use colour on their forehead called 'sendur'unlike our women".

Alemu added: "In India the female or bride's family give gifts to bridegroom and his family. In Ethiopia, "telosh" or "macha" comes from the bridegroom's family". Worknihe declared that "in both cultures, there are different religions, such as Christian, and Muslim, and others". Worknihe also stated the difference in greetings: "Our greeting 'selamnew' differs from Indians' "nemeste". In Terefe House, three of the interviewees said they saw no relationship between Ethiopian and Indian lives. But two of them said there are similarities in the nature of the two countries' people. Indians' sense of hospitality, respect for others, culture, way of living resembled Ethiopians' though there are some minor customary differences like in marriages, disposing of the dead, clothes dressed on occasions, etc. "While we wear white clothes on Timkat, Indians wear white for funerals", Asnaku contrasted. In Terefe House all the five individual interviewees told the researcher their first choice was to see Indian action movies followed by romantic ones. In Bollywood films quality, selection of actors, acting style, direction, and technology were superb and Ethiopian film makers as well as actors had a lot to learn from them. All the five at the same time said there were certain features of Bollywood movies they did not like. Yeshiwas criticized excessive melodrama. "There is too much of crying specially by ladies, in Indian movies", he said. Biniyam felt disgusted with some incredible superman like action scenes, excessive music, and unconvincing romantic feats by heroes to win over their love beside absence of lip to lip kissing in Indian films.

On being asked whether the Bollywood movies have any meanings to their lives four of the five respondents explained the identical situations of the disparities and differences between poor and rich people portrayed in the Bollywood movies and the struggle to come out from poverty. The culture reflected in the movies appeared close to them like respecting the elders and,

affectionately loving mothers in the family who are tender and dutiful. "The love Indians have for their families and others impact our lives", said Habte.

Bahiru an FGD participant in Ashu Video House stated: "Though I can't understand the language, I always want to watch Indian movies to entertain myself, and to know about their culture." Rahel, Eyeruse and Elshaday watch Bollywood movies because the movies help them to entertain themselves after their study and also to learn what is good and bad, to do what is good and to reject what is bad. Befekeru (13) said: "I need to relax. Only playing a ball may not be enough for me. I have to see films and learn what is going on around". In addition, he stated seeing Bollywood movies was cheaper than seeing Ethiopian films. For Habtea and Wasihun it was entertainment combined with convenience: "We come to the film house to entertain ourselves and also to chew chat and smoke cigarette with our friends. The isolation makes it easy for us to hide chat chewing and smoking habits from our parents."

On What in Bollywood movies rapports with their lives, the participants said after they watch Bollwood movies, they try to imitate and use things in their life that appeal to them more. Bahiru stated: "It teaches me what will be the consequence if I harm others, so I don't want to do it." He gave an example from his own life how he was inspired to love a girl after seeing an Indian movie. "I fell in love with one girl, wanted to talk to her and started going to her home regularly. However, one day her father saw me and threatened to shoot me if I came again to meet her. Since he was serious like we often see in Indian films, I stopped but all the same persisted meeting her outside her house". According to Wasihun, watching movies helped him be a true lover and patriot. Raheal confessed: "It helps me to tell my friends against the evils like early marriages and not giving education to females." Eyeruse, said: "I like the dressing and hair style of the Indian actresses." For three participants (Elshaday, Habtea, and Befekru), what matches with their life is, Indians' respecting family, friends, and others, creating peaceful interaction with others, and how to be successful.

Bahiru and Habtie opined that Indian movies are the base for some Ethiopian movies like Aladankushem and Sesset. A girl participant Raheal felt most movies are too long and thus waste time and affect her study. Further, as the content of all romantic films is almost the same the end is predictable. She also felt that action and tragedy movies sometimes are exaggerated. According to Eyeruse ,Elshaday,and Befekru, though movies are good for teaching good habits, they are also playing a role in teaching cruelty, conflict, revenge, stealing, and using drugs. On how they related Bollywood movies to their social conditions, FGD members in unison stated: "Both Ethiopian and Indian cultures are affected by globalization. In most Indian movies, artists are dressing Western style. Ethiopians especially youngsters, are doing the same. All these are the result of message that disseminates from movies. But other social conditions such as respecting others are good and common for both the countries".

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The soap operas fulfil the social need some people had for companionship as heavy television viewing over time brings people's views of the world closer to one another (Brundson et al., 1978). The viewing cultivates a commonality of perspective among otherwise different groups with respect to overarching themes and patterns found in many programs. This study found the video houses a shared cultural space for the poor youth spending time together also indulging in some socially condemned practices: chewing chat, smoking cigarettes, and consuming alcohol.

Television plays a 'homogenising' role by its tendency to erode traditional differences amongst divergent social groups (Gerbner et al., 1992). Holding the media provide diversion in different ways, McQuail (1987) said, users find relief from the constraints of routine and help to escape from their worries and personal problems and thus, have emotional release. In this study, the researcher noted while the interviewees knew that Indian films had exaggeration of emotions and lacked realism, they kept viewing and enjoyed them. This wilful active involvement challenges "the determining authority of the movies as texts" propounded by the cultural imperialism thesis (Turner, 2003: 91). No longer did the media manipulate the public; now viewers, listeners and readers could do what they felt like.

The uses and gratifications approach to media assumes that people's values and interests, are pre-potent and people selectively fashion what they see and hear to these interests. According to Fisher (1987), people actively use the media for their own purposes and can articulate them; and despite the variations in their use of the media, it is possible to identify some basic patterns in their uses and gratifications from the media. Also, different people have varying emotions, feelings and tastes and are affected quite differently by the same media content (Perse, 2008). Not everyone is going to cry at the end of a gloomy

movie; some may never watch the movie because they abhor particular actors or the story theme. Even some of those who watch the movie may dislike it, and some may go to a movie mainly to convoy someone. Still others may be profoundly affected by the movie. Making disparate meanings, the viewers under this study actively interpret the messages from the movies by analysing them in light of their living world. They draw their own subjective meanings on the basis of their culture and values native to them.

The viewers conceded that viewing films provided them relief like escaping their daily routine, removed isolation, etc. This shifts the focus from what the media do to people to what people do with the media. The situation shifted from audience being used by the media to audience using the media and the effects of the movie rest with the powerful individual audience member. The researcher finds this close to the media uses and gratifications approach that assumed the audience put their own needs and desires in using and interpreting media messages.

Ethnographic theorists define symbolic distancing one of the ways how local consumers actively appropriate global media products in light of their practices and culture. All the interviewees confessed that irrespective of religious and ritualistic differences in Indian and Ethiopian ways of living, Indian films appealed to them and they felt drawn by emotions aroused by close family relationships like mother-son, brother-sister, dancing during festivities, social bonds, friendship, etc. Themes like rich-poor conflict, eradication of corruption, etc the viewers found very close to their own living experience. This discursive pattern of making sense made them feel drawn to Indian way of life and even make comparison with the European way of living projected by the Hollywood films.

Global media images provide a resource for individuals to think critically about their own lives and life conditions (Thompson, 1995: 175). This study shows how the viewers actively analysed what they saw on the silver screen with their own life experiences. This wilfully distancing themselves though being aware of the reality vindicates Morley (cited in Strelitz, 2005: 118) that "the essentialist approach to the globalization of the media is not an accurate description of consumers' experience". Such active use of global media enables the local audiences "gain some conception; however partial, of ways of life and life conditions which differ significantly from their own" (Thompson, 1995; 175).

The cultural or media imperialism thesis holds that traditional culture in many parts of the world is being battered out by the indiscriminate dumping of large slick commercial and US media products (Tunstall, 1971). Just listen to the cheers of an African audience as Hollywood heroes slaughter Red Indians to understand the effectiveness of this weapon. Along with the Wild West goes an incessant barrage of anti-socialist propaganda, in which the trade union man, the revolutionary, or the man of dark skin is generally cast as the villain, while the policeman, the gum-shoe, the Federal agent - the CIA-type spy - is the hero (Nkrumah's book Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism! 1965).

It can be argued that the cultural imperialists assume a direct correlation between what people see, hear and read and act; texts, no matter where or by whom they are consumed they are consumed, will have uniform meanings. The interaction with viewers in this study proves the media could not simply sway them.

Theories like the cultural imperialism and hypodermic needle concepts ignore the influences that intervene between the messages from the media and the attitudes people hold. They also deny the audience capacity to interpret, discount or distort the media messages they receive, ignoring that people engage with media messages from their own ideas, prejudices and preconceptions. People are assumed incapable of countering media's impact, passive sitting ducks lacking the mental capacity to analyze media messages (Perse, 2008). A magical media message is believed to create in behaviour change irrespective of the age, gender and predispositions of audience. This study proves that people are not the passive and impressionable entities but individuals who could 'interpret what they saw and heard in line with their own established beliefs' (Gitlin, 1978).
Curiously, the viewers held largely identical uniform views and opinions about the issues raised. The researcher found visible agreement with views one expressed; no dissenting expression or statement. However, their making meaning out of the films though broadly similar was not exactly fixed. Different people narrated different experiences, knowledge and backgrounds to the process of unravelling meaning.

6. CONCLUSION

This researcher finds even though aware of and spelling out various shortcomings, improbabilities and cultural variations, the viewers generally find the Indian movies close to their heart and compatible with their emotions. The subjective meanings and sense they make by relating and contrasting the Indian ways of life and also rejecting many inconsistent with their values, dismisses the alarms raised by the cultural imperialists threatening extinction of the culture and values prevailing in the Third World.

This study also found the video houses assuming a shared cultural space for the poor youth spending time together also indulging in some socially condemned practices: chewing chat, smoking cigarettes, and consuming alcohol. Many also gratify their needs like relief from isolation, escaping their daily routine, etc. The effects of the movie thus resting with the powerful individual audience, the focus stands shifted from audience being used by the media to audience using the media; from what the media do to people to what people do with the media. This is in line with the media uses and gratifications approach where the audience put their own needs and desires in using and interpreting media messages; people's values and interests are pre-potent and people selectively fashion where and how to serve them.

6. SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY

What is 'authentic' and 'traditional' about cultures is a matter of scholastic debate. While accepting the media have an effect on their audience, these are not immediate but the product of a cumulative build up of beliefs and values over a period of time (Gitlin, 2002). This study amply shows that cross-cultural interaction does not mean the old practices and beliefs are eradicated. As the new is born within the old, the traits of one mode may overlap. Most local cultural practices have 'traces of previous cultural borrowing or influence' that have become assimilated and naturalised (Thompson, 1990). At the same time, culture is always in process of change as outside influences keep shaping and reshaping it.

With the increased flow and consumption of foreign produced cultural and media material, Ethiopia in keeping with the world wide trend, must also be undergoing the homogenization and hetrogenization consequences of globalization. It will be worth quantifying at micro level how intense and effective these forces are and how the country is coping up with these challenges from within and without.

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