

Report on the Musical Presentation
The Pull of the Homeland: Music in Bollywood Cinema on the Indian Diaspora
by Ms. Nihaarika Sinha on 24 February 2021

CoHaB Indian Diaspora Centre (CoHaB IDC), University of Mumbai, had organised the webcast of a musical presentation on 'The Pull of the Homeland: Music in Bollywood Cinema on the Indian Diaspora' by singer and composer Ms. Nihaarika Sinha on 24 February 2021. The webcast held under CoHaB IDC's Diaspora Studies Series was chaired by Professor Anis Ur Rahman, bilingual poet, translator and literary critic.

Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha, Director, CoHaB IDC, welcomed the speaker, chair and the audience and introduced the topic for the webcast. She spoke about how the webcast on music in Bollywood cinema on the Indian Diaspora was an area in Diaspora Studies that has not been adequately researched. She further introduced Professor Anis Ur Rahman who chaired the session and handed over the proceedings to him.



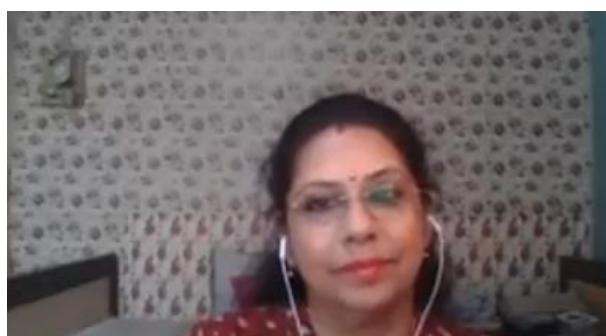
Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha

Professor Rahman began by mentioning how the event is yet an attempt to study a newer aspect of the Indian Diaspora and to expect the session to be a musical one as the presenter was also a composer and singer. He formally introduced Ms. Nihaarika Sinha and handed over the platform to her.



Professor Anis Ur Rahman

Ms. Nihaarika Sinha began by thanking the organisers for inviting her to give a presentation and Professor Rahman for introducing her and setting the tone for her talk. Ms. Sinha is a composer and singer and has learnt from the stalwarts of the music industry. She is also the Founder-Director of the Sadhana School of Music and conducts online-courses in Hindustani Vocal Music.



Ms. Nihaarika Sinha

Ms. Sinha began her presentation by talking about the concept of Home in Bollywood music and how it incorporates a variety of emotions. It could be a young girl leaving to go to her *sasural* (marital home) from her *maayka* (parents' home) or a young couple setting up home for the first time (the *gharonda*). She spoke of how home is an emotional construct in Bollywood and elaborated on how Bollywood music has treated this concept in films that focus on the Indian Diaspora. She emphasised the fact that in Bollywood, lyrics and music are intertwined and one cannot be spoken of exclusively of the other. Ms. Sinha interspersed her presentation with the actual singing of the songs she referred to in her paper.

She clarified how the term 'Bollywood' was initially not accepted by all, as it was considered not just pejorative but also indicated plagiarism of Hollywood films. However, over the years, global film critics and the industry have now accepted it. The term is also suggestive of the kind of films that are made in India today - films that appeal to the global audience, even to the ones with no colonial connection. Such films she said are also called 'Cross-Over cinema'.

Ms. Sinha then spoke about how Hindi/Bollywood films made in the past that had a moralistic and sometimes disapproving tones about the diasporics settled outside India, especially England during or after the colonial period. She made a specific reference to the film *Purab aur Paschim* starring Manoj Kumar in which the Indian hero was a model of Indian values and culture and was critical of the Indian diasporics and their lifestyle in England, where he had gone as a student. She sang the song - Hain preet jahaan ki reet sadaa, main geet wahan ke gaata hoon bharat ka rehne wala hoon bharat ki baat sunaata hoon....', which illustrated the point she had made about how such films magnified the positive aspects of India.

She went further back in history and also sang a song from the film *Kaabuliwala*, where a Pathan from Afghanistan in India is reminiscing about his homeland. She spoke of how 'Rabab', a traditional musical instrument was used in the song to convey the Kaabuliwala's feelings towards his homeland. Pathans from Afghanistan are examples of the diaspora into India rather than from India to other countries.

Following this, Ms. Sinha spoke about the Cross-Over Bollywood films starting from the 1990s, such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*. This film focuses on the Indian Diaspora in Britain who chose to settle down in the hostland towards the end of the colonial period. The film also deals with the dual life the second generation of this diaspora lives - Indian at home and British, outside. The film also deals with the father who although he lives in Britain has held on to his feelings about his motherland. The song 'Ghar aa ja pardesi tera Des bulaye re ...' deals with this nostalgia of the older generation.

Ms. Sinha sang the song beautifully followed by a rendition of a famous song - 'Chitthi aayi hain, watan se chitthi aayi hain ...'. This song from the film *Naam* depicts a young man's thoughts about the people he has left behind in India in search of better opportunities abroad. Here the Homeland is recalled with nostalgia and pain.

The next song she sang, 'Saawariyan, Sawariyan main to hun Bawariyan....' from the film *Swades* portrays the feelings of a typical Indian girl whom the returning Diasporic man listens to and conveys the values, ethics and lovability of the land he had left behind. The next two movies *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* and *Pardes* deal with the Indian Diaspora and their reaction to India. In the former, the elders in the film inculcate the right values in their children and keep the ethics of their homeland alive in the diasporic space whereas the latter dealt with the custom of going back to the homeland for a bride.

The recent film *Raazi*, too, was mentioned and although it is not strictly about the Indian diaspora, Ms. Sinha said she had included it in her presentation as the song 'Ae Watan Watan ...' deals with this longing for the homeland and represents the tragedy of political divisions.

Although Ms. Sinha's paper focussed on Bollywood films she mentioned how films in other Indian languages too focussed on the longing for homeland. She concluded her presentation by singing the famous song written in Marathi, by Veer Savarkar, the Indian nationalist, who had to seek refuge in France from the colonial British government. His song 'Ne majasi ne parat matra bhoomi

laa...' describes the pain, the nostalgia, and the longing for the motherland. This song brought in the additional aspect of Exile in the construct of Diaspora and how those in exile also pine for the Homes they have been forced to leave behind them as they seek refuge in foreign lands from various kinds of oppressions and dangers.

The presentation was appreciated by the audience. Professor Rahman in his remarks mentioned how this area needs more research and appreciated CoHaB IDC's efforts in organising the webinars in different aspects of the Diaspora.

The presentation was followed by a lively discussion with the audience. The webcast ended with a vote of thanks by Ms. Kirti Risbud, Research Associate, CoHaB IDC, University of Mumbai.



Ms. Kirti Risbud

You may view the entire webcast on the link given below:

[The Pull of the Homeland: Music in Bollywood Cinema on the Indian Diaspora](#)

Date: 24 February 2021
Place: Mumbai

Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha
Director, CoHaB IDC