Double Dialogues

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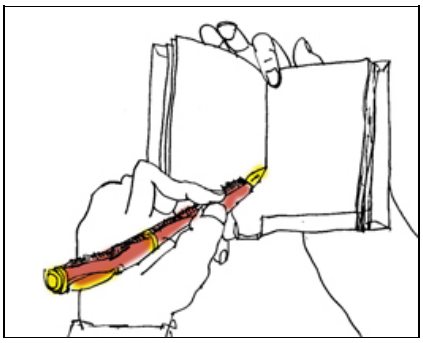
The Event, The Subject and The Artwork



Sholay: From Chaos to Super-Duper Event (in glorious 70 mm … with stereophonic sound).

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'Art is born out of an ill-designed world' – Andrei Tarkovsky (Russian filmmaker).

In Jean Paul Sartre's novel *Nausea* (1962) the protagonist, Antoine Roquetin, feels life and existence to be meaningless, a deep void or 'nothingness' which slowly threatens to consume him. This nothingness manifests itself physically in a sickening and strange sensation – nausea. But rather then being swallowed by this void and succumbing to feelings of loss and despair, Roquetin decides to write a novel, and nothingness inspires action. But the nothingness that Roquetin feels is actually 'something' – chaos – and the very act of writing and creating he engages in is an attempt to establish order, through art, to the chaos that is life.

We find these same tropes of 'chaos' and 'creativity' at work in Gilles Deleuze's answer to the questions 'what is an event?' and 'what makes an event possible?' (Deleuze, 1992). He writes, 'Events are produced in a chaos, in a chaotic multiplicity, but only under the condition that a sort of screen intervenes' (1992: 1), echoing Claude Levi-Strauss's explanation of what makes a historical event possible: as White puts it, 'confronted with a chaos of "facts", the historian must "choose, sever and carve them up" for the narrative purposes' (White, 1978: 55). Levi-Strauss concludes that a narrative – the historical event – can only be fashioned from the congeries of facts by the imposition of a 'fraudulent outline' (White, 1978: 55). The intersections in these thoughts are firstly the idea that what is called 'an event' emerges from chaos and, secondly, that an event is a text; it can have no existence other than as

a text – visual (painting, dance, film), narrative (written or oral), a monument or architecture. To put it in Derridean terms: There is no event outside the text. The 'chaotic multiplicity' that Deleuze refers to is the individual happenings and occurrences – the 'Many', the building blocks or morphemes of an event. Confronted with this chaos, an artist selects and fashions 'only the best combination of compossibles' (Deleuze, 1992: 1) into an artefact, the text – the 'One', the Event.

I find the concept of 'chaos' – and order – and the Deleuzean idea of the intervention of a screen especially useful to my discussion of a landmark event in Bollywood cinema – the 1975 film *Sholay* (Flames). Rachel Dwyer calls Bollywood cinema 'a unique repository of India's public imaginings, shaped by fantasy, nostalgia and desire' (2010: 384). Film is one way – perhaps the most important way – in which India makes sense of the teeming, heaving and chaotic multiplicity and the sprawling diversity of this tumultuous nation state. Salman Rushdie, who himself attempted to find a certain order within the chaos of Indian history in the literary event *Midnight's Children* (1981), describes Bollywood as 'Epico-Mythico-Tragico-Comico-Super-Sexy-High-Masala-Art' (1995: 148-149). Rushdie's description suggests that it is film of a particular kind that India has embraced. Having rejected realism, which is seen as part of a Western aesthetics, Indian filmmakers and film-consuming

public have embraced the *masala*. *Masala* literally means 'spice', but in aesthetic terms it names the mixing of comedy, tragedy, romance, melodrama, music, dance and the sacred and profane into the same pot. Bollywood is 'ordered chaos' or pastiche, Bedlam at its chaotic best.

Over the years many film events have caught both the resident and diasporic Indian's imagination but none bigger than *Sholay*, a super-duper (keeping in style with the Indian filmic tendency for hyperbole and exaggeration) event in Indian film history. The film made box-office history, running at one Delhi theatre, the Minerva, for five years. Individuals of the 70s generation as well as the generations that followed were entranced, and *Sholay*'s dialogue became remembered and religiously recited. So strong was *Sholay*'s hold on the imagination of the Indian masses that in 1999 BBC India declared it the 'Film of the Millennium' (Chopra, 2000: 3). Numerous spoofs of the film were made in the decades following its release, including one in 2000 called *Malagaon Ka Sholay* (Sholay of Malagaon) by a Sheikh Nasir (affectionately called the Dada Shaheb Phalke of Malagaon), a video parlour owner of Malagoan, an impoverished backwater in Maharashtra's Nashik district (Ansari and Handa, 2011). This paper will discuss why *Sholay* has been such a landmark event in Hindi film history, keeping in mind the Deleuzean idea that the 'Many' – chaos, the disjunctive diversity – leads to the creation of the 'One' – ordered chaos – only through the intervention of a screen.

Indian cinema consists of four broad streams: the numerous regional cinemas (Punjabi, Gujarati, Bhojpuri, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam etc.), the popular Hindi cinema or Bollywood, centred around Mumbai, the art or parallel cinema associated with the likes of Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatek, Shyam Benegal, Govind Nihilani, Adoor Gopalkrishna, T. V. Chandran and the films made by the Diaspora, namely Mira Nair, Deepa Mehta and Gurinder Chadha. About 800 films are produced in India each year, but figures alone do not explain the scope, which is now global, and influence of films on the Indian. Vijay Mishra says that one can only comprehend '[the value of film] as cultural capital' by understanding 'the way in which [it] has invaded all aspects of popular culture' (2002: 2). He explains that although 'there is something artificial about the culture that Bollywood constructs – a culture that is built around a (male) North Indian Hindi-speaking subject', it is (using Sudhir Kakar's phraseology) 'the major shaper of an emerging, pan-Indian popular culture' (Mishra, 2002: 3). For Mishra '[Bollywood] cinema seems to have transcended class and even linguistic difference by emphatically stressing (the words of M. L. Raina) "the myths on which the Indian social order survives in spite of changes"' (2002: 3-4). And for Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Hindi cinema, 'In its scale and pervasiveness … has borne, often unconsciously, several large burdens, such as the provision of influential paradigms for notions of "Indianness" [and] "collectivity"' (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, 1999: 10). For Indians, whichever patch of earth they call home – Fiji included –, 'cinema [reinforces] … myths of an ancient land still basking in its epic glory' (Mishra, 2002: x).

Hindi cinema has generally reached the West through the art of the Bengali auteur Satyajit Ray, who worked mostly from the ordered texts of Rabindranath Tagore and Bankim Chandra. In general Western viewers found the Bollywood *masalas* that 'offer a three-hour multi-course banquet of emotional flavours, encompassing slapstick comedy, romance, violent action, social and family melodrama … half dozen or so song-and-dance sequences [and numerous digressions that lead to cul-de-sacs] … indigestible' (Lutgendorf, 2007). For long Western scholars – and scholars in general – considered Bollywood a plebeian art form incompatible with high theory, but scholars such as Rachel Dwyer, Slavoj Žižek, Mira Reym Binford, Philip A. Lutgendorf and Vijay Mishra now see Bollywood as a form demanding rigorous, scholarly engagement. This chaotic melange of song, dance, comedy, and melodrama, is now being seen as a genre unto itself, or as Vijay Mishra (2002: 32) says, using a term from Christian Metz, a *grandesyntagmatique*, with conventions as recognisable and distinct as those of Kabuki or Noh theatre. But while Bollywood now inspires and influences, other forms have influenced and created Bollywood itself.

One of the strongest influences in the shaping of the genre has been Hindi mythology. Since the release of India's first feature film in 1913, the silent movie *Raja Harishchandra* by Dadashaheb Phalke, Indian cinema has invoked India's mythology and ancient culture, with the two great foundational texts of Hinduism, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, forming the basis of many Hindi films. There are religious films like *Jai Santoshi Ma* (Hail Mother Santoshi, 1975) but even in secular films mythology exerts a very strong influence in terms of style, story and theme. Such is the case of films like *Souten* (The Other Woman, 1983), *Karan Arjun* (TRANS 1995) and *Rajneeti* (Politics, 2010), which was a re-telling of the *Mahabharata* using a contemporary political context à la Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1993). The Bollywood love of pastiche can itself be traced back to the use of mixed form in the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and Mishra writes that 'The literary evidence everywhere demonstrates a delight in mixed forms, a kind of restless generic permutation – "what is not here is nowhere else to be found" … [T]he Mahabharata and the minstrels in the Ramayana of Valmiki

here is nowhere else to be found" … [T]he Mahabharata, and the illustrious Ramayana of Valmiki declare that their epic "is replete with all the poetic sentiments: the humorous, the erotic, the piteous, the wrathful, the heroic, the terrifying, the loathsome and the rest'" (2002: 5).

K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake mention three other influences on the style, form, themes and narratives of Bollywood: Sanskrit drama or *asnatya* (dance-dramas); traditional folk theatre of India – the Yatra of Bengal, the Ramlila of Uttar Pradesh, and the Terukkuttu of Tamil Nadu; and Parsi theatre, which 'blended realism and fantasy, music and dance, narrative and spectacle, earthy dialogue and ingenuity of stage presentation, integrating them into a dramatic discourse of melodrama' (2004: 98-99).

The influence of Hollywood and Americana (music and dance) on Hindi cinema has been apparent since cinema was in a nascent stage in India. Indian film and music directors have regularly been accused of lifting film stories and musical tunes from Hollywood films and American musicians, and Bollywood lives

as a mélange of styles and forms which captures the rhythms, ebbs, flows and many moods of the Indian psyche and nation. It exists, above all, as the chaotic multiplicity that is India. For a nation of such diversity, plurality and colour the *masala* genre is the most fitting genre for such pandemonium. But Bollywood takes the chaos (the many) and imposes some form of order (the one). It takes the quotidian grind and turns it into the fantastic and otherworldly, such that, as Rachel Dwyer puts it, the past is not just a heterochronia – a different time – but a heterotopia – a different place (2010: 386).

Though Bollywood churns out hundreds of these *masala* films each year only a handful find success at the box-office. *Sholay*, with its audacious use of new technology, the inability of the producers to stick to schedule – and budget – and the very novelty of the script, which was a yoking together and suturing of seemingly disparate forms, styles, narratives, character traits, myths, metaphors and themes, was tipped for failure by critics from the beginning. But it defied all odds not only to become the biggest box office hit of all time, but 'the ultimate classic … [a] myth' (Chopra, 2002: 3). Before looking at the reasons for the film's success, one must look at the various influences on the film.

One of the key influences has been the spaghetti western of Sergio Leone, to which *Sholay* was said to give a distinctly Indian turn, causing many critics to label it a curry western. In fact the massacre of the Thakur's family by the villain Gabbar Singh has shades of Sergio Leone's *Once Upon A Time In The West* (1968) as well as John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956). It is also apparent that the Akira Kurosawa classic *The Seven Samurai* (1954) may have inspired, as both films see villagers hire a group of mercenaries to rid their lands of ruthless bandits. There are little moments from the film that have been borrowed/inspired by other works: the friendship of Jai and Veeru, the hired mercenaries, is an inspiration from *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969); tossing a coin before making a decision came from Gary Cooper's *Garden Of Evil* (1954), and the double-sided coin used by Jai is similar to the coin used by Marlon Brando in *One Eyed Jacks* (1961). The character of the villain, Gabbar Singh, though modelled on a real-life bandit by the same name who was famous in the villages around Gwalior in the 1950s, was reworked around the character of the Mexican bandito played by Gian Maria Volonte in *For A Few Dollars More* (1965), while the jailor character played by Asrani was inspired by Charlie Chaplin's take on Hitler in *The Great Dictator* (1940). Yet for all the vast influences that have shaped *Sholay* the film is not a copycat but an original.

So what made *Sholay* such an iconic filmic event? Obviously it had all the ingredients – action, romance, song, dance, melodrama, and seduction – that audiences expected. The dialogues were memorable, etched on the minds of the filmgoers for a lifetime. The characters were real but at the same time larger-than-life. There was also the novelty aspect – some ideas and developments were new to the Indian cinema-going public, such as the choreographed action sequences, the unique camera-work, the aestheticization of violence and the use of stereophonic sound. But it all began with the script and the skill with which the writers brought the chaotic multiplicity together and imposed order, balance and harmony, making *Sholay* iconic and groundbreaking. This idea of order and harmony operates on two levels in the script: firstly in terms of its composition, which was a symphonic unit where all the elements worked in perfect harmony; and secondly in the themes of order and harmony which permeate the story. Like Hindu mythology where the concepts of harmony and disharmony are important motifs, all the elements within the film are in perfect harmony. This also brings the film into accord with the many other successful Bollywood films containing motifs of order/disorder/harmony/disharmony/a sense of oneness/nationhood – *Mother India* (1938), *Border* (1997) and *Kranti* (Revolution, 1981).

Sholay initiated two very important turns in Bollywood film history in relation to the position of the scriptwriter and the approach to scriptwriting. Salim Khan, one of the writers of *Sholay*, said that in Bollywood in the 1970s 'Heroes, directors, producers were the *zamindars* [landowners] and writers

Bollywood in the 1970s' Heroes, directors, producers were the *zamindaars* [landowners] and writers were the scheduled caste' (Anupama, 2000: 18). This position was unacceptable to him and his writing partner Javed Akhtar, and they met up with director Ramesh Shippy to express their dissatisfaction. Their plea was heard. This, Anupama Chopra explains, was an 'unprecedented development' in Hindi cinema, where the writer became more recognized and influential in the filmmaking process' (2000: 18).

This important development in scriptwriting must be understood in the context of the radical difference in the way in which Hollywood and Bollywood screenwriters approach their craft. For the Hollywood screenwriter, the script is an organic artefact where the elements such as character, structure, etc. are put together tightly, usually following the classical design suggested by Aristotle. But a Bollywood writer's approach is piecemeal. A story is sketched out, scenes are written and bits of dialogue put together: observe carefully the credits in a Bollywood film and one will see 'Script' and 'Dialogue' as separate elements. But the *Sholay* script was tightly written, an organic whole, with order and balance. Structurally the film is contained by a frame-narrative within which there are three short narratives told in flashback. All elements of the script worked in a harmonious relationship to tell a good story and tell it well.

One of the key elements of the success of the film has to do with the skilful handling of character design by the writers. The characters in *Sholay*, from the protagonists Jai, Veeru and Thakur to the villain Gabbar Singh, and from the peripheral characters like the Jailer, Soorma Bhoplai and Sambha to Dhanno the mare, are part of national folklore, 'familiar in something of the way that Ram and Sita are' (Anupama Chopra, 2000: 3). Even in the development of the characters, one finds harmony, which is a *raison d'être* of the script. Chopra points not only to harmony but also a symmetry in the script relating to characterisation:

> As character graphs were plotted, symmetries fell into place without effort. The entire structure of the film is dominated by doublings, by symmetrical pairs of opposites. The prime mover of the story is a Thakur [landowner]: principled, upright, spotlessly clean, with a clipped style of talking. His nemesis is a daku [dacoit]: amoral, sadistic, dirty and gregarious. There are two friends: one, a flirtatious extrovert, and the other a sardonic introvert. There are two women: one a colourful, uninhibited, jabbering *chhamakchhalo* (belle), and the other a silent lady of the lamps. (2000: 25-26)

But rather than simply being a fable of the battle of two eternal types, good and evil, a Manichean dualism can be found in all the major characters. One finds moral ambivalence or duality in the two buddies and hired guns, Jai and Veeru, who are petty/small time criminals who have spent time in most jails around the country. But Thakur sees good in them and in the end their actions justify the Thakur's faith in them, restoring order to the world. Thakur is a model police officer, family man and landowner, neat and cleanly dressed, but isn't squeamish about using brute force to exact revenge – in the original version of the film, Thakur crushes Gabbar to death with his nail-studded shoes. In the revised version, however, Thakur leaves the fate to the authorities, again restoring a sense of morality and order.

But *Sholay*, I believe, is primarily the story of Gabbar Singh, the ruthless dacoit. Gabbar was the most memorable of all the characters because he had the best bits of dialogue, the most memorable one-

liners, the main being '*Kintne admi the'* (how many men were there?), the line that I, and children of my generation, chanted in Fiji, India and the Diaspora. Although Gabbar is evil incarnate on screen, in another incarnation – on the small screen – he became the affable promoter of glucose biscuits and toothpaste. Audiences everywhere have a love-hate relationship with him.

Something must be said of the Radha character played by Jaya Badhuri (now Jaya Bachan). She is Radha, Krishna's consort, but she carries within her the Manichean self of Radha and Sita. As Mishra explains,

> While Sita is fundamentally religio-epic, going back to the Ramayan, Radha is 'vernacular' or local. Against Sita who does not have referential freedom – she is closed, fixed, immutable, existing only in endless replays of sameness and foregrounds through her iconic presence the primacy or efficacy of the religious – Radha's presence enables the typically Indian concept of life as play, as a game, as lucid, to surface. (2002: 79)

When we first meet Radha, she is already a widow; quiet, calm and fulfilling her role with Hindu dignity and piousness – Sita. But in an earlier incarnation, when she lived in the village of her father she was Radha – playful, gregarious and her life was full of colour. But her world becomes colourless twice: once with the death of her husband and next with the death of Jai. She thereby reinforces the idea of

piety associated with Indian women and as prescribed by the religious texts.

Whereas in the vast majority of Bollywood films, minor or peripheral characters are usually stock characters, types rather than individuals, in *Sholay* even the minor and peripheral characters were crafted with meticulous care and given memorable lines. There is the jailor played by Asrani, who became immortalised with the line '*hum angrez ke zamane ke jailor hai'* (I am a jailor from the time of the British). Jagdeep the actor became forever associated with Shoorma Bhopli, the Muslim lumber-trader. Even the characters from Gabbar Singh's gang (Kalia and Sambha) have become part of folklore. There is a story of how an immigration officer in New York waved actor Macmohan, who plays Sambha, through because he had seen *Sholay* and recognised him as 'The man on the rock with a gun' (Chopra, 2000: 4).

On its first week of release, *Sholay* was declared a box office flop. Critics called it a 'dead ember' (Chopra, 2000: 161). In the third week, the film did one of the most amazing turnarounds in Bollywood film history. Ramesh Sippy, the director, who was in a state of depression with the knowledge that *Sholay* had bombed, was deeply baffled by this change in fortune. Then he, like others, realised the reason for the turnaround – the reaction to *Sholay*'s dialogues were extraordinary. Not only were theatres packed to capacity, the audiences were participating in the film by reciting every line of dialogue as the film progressed. The dialogues – from one-liners to entire chunks from the different scenes – took a hold on the imagination of the film-going public. Polydor Records decided to capitalise on this by releasing a fifty-eight minute record of selected dialogue.

The record proved to be very popular and the company 'couldn't keep up with the demand as records flew off the shelves' (Chopra, 2000: 170). It is difficult to think of any other film in Hindi cinema history whose dialogues have been memorised not only by the first generation of film watchers but also by subsequent generations. Anupama Sharma says:

> Sholay's dialogue has now become colloquial language, part of the way a nation speaks to itself. Single lines. Even phrases, taken out of context, can communicate a whole range of meaning and emotion. In canteens across the country, collegians still echo Gabbar when they notice a budding romance: '*Bahut yaarana hai'* [they seem enamoured with each other]. The lines come easily to the lips of Indians: '*Jo dar gaya, samjho mar gaya*' [he who is afraid, has already died], '*Ai chhammia*' [oi! woman!], '*Arre o Sambha'* [oi! Sambha!], '*Kitne aadmi the? '* [how many men were there?], '*Hum Angrezon ke zamaane ke jailer hain*' [I have been a jailer since the time of the British]. (2000: 4-5)

To explain this appeal of *Sholay*'s dialogues let me introduce an idea from Mikhail Bakhtin:

> There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and boundless future). Even *past* meanings, that is those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) – they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context). (1986: 170)

This is perhaps what happened to the dialogue of *Sholay*. Created some 37 years ago – although all beginnings have prior and multiple beginnings – it found its way into the future in a boundless dialogic context; and with each moment of re-utterance was made anew. Every generation that watched *Sholay* adorned it with new meaning.

I want to turn my focus to important moments in the film that demonstrate the concepts of chaos and harmony, the idea of an imagined community and the appeal to nationhood. These are mythical ideas that go back to the foundational texts of Hinduism, and India's artistic artefacts have been built around them. In fact the very nation-state of India has been built around a myth – the myth of national oneness. The idea of national oneness is a recurring motif in Bollywood cinema. As Mishra says 'For all its melodramatic design, for all its detachment from the "real," Bombay Cinema is self-consciously about representing, in the context of a multicultural and multi-ethnic India, the various disaggregated strands of the nation-state – political, social, cultural, and so on' (2002: 65).

The first scene that demonstrates these concepts at work is the one where the body of Ahmed, the Imam's son, comes back to the village slung on a donkey, after his murder by Gabbar Singh. The villagers, oblivious to the donkey meandering its way through the village, carry on with their daily chores

villagers, oblivious to the donkey meandering its way through the village, carry on with their daily chores. The scene, which consists of a montage of shots of different individuals at work – a blacksmith, a handloom worker, and a washerwoman –, reinforces the prevailing harmony and order in the village. At another level this montage can be interpreted as a metaphor for an imagined harmony of the nation. Here one gets the microcosm view of the nation or the nation in miniature with the citizens carrying on with the quotidian grind. But the screen establishes a sense of order and the different sounds from people at work, which would otherwise be cacophony, become rhythmic, almost poetic. Once the villagers become aware of the cargo of death, this order, rhythm and harmony are shattered.

Imam, a Muslim, is led by Basanti to his son's body, which carries a letter from Gabbar threatening worse retaliation if Veeru and Jai are not surrendered to the dacoits. As Imam weeps over his dead son, the villagers angrily tell the Thakur that they cannot make any more sacrifices and that the hired hands must surrender themselves to Gabbar; a debate ensues over nonviolence versus fighting back, and the motifs of communalism, sacrifice and India as 'Mother' are clearly displayed. The Takur firstly tries to motivate the mob by saying that he would rather die with dignity then live in shackles – ironic coming from the Thakur who is part of the landowning class and to whom most of the village peasants are shackled.

At this point I need to invoke the words of Benedict Anderson who says that the nation is an imagined community because,

> regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible … for so many millions of people … [to] willingly die for such limited imaginings. (1983: 7)

The Thakur's plea for communal solidarity resonates with the Imam, who shames the villagers by asking Allah why He didn't give him more sons to sacrifice as martyrs for the village. The pleas of a landowner (historically the exploiter of the masses) and a Muslim (in other discourses enemies of the state) prevail and the disaggregated strands 'are reaggregated around an idea – that of the Mother' (Mishra, 2002: 65). As the narrator of Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Moraes Zogoiby says, 'motherness is a big idea, maybe our biggest: the land as mother, the mother as land' (1995: 137).

In *Mother India* (1938) the actress Nargis makes a similar appeal to a sense of primordial oneness and ancestral longings when the villagers are fleeing the village due to a famine. Again it is a Muslim – Nargis – who is making the call. Such calls resonated at a deep level with the Indian, and evidence of this is the popularity and box-office successes of patriotic films such as *Border* (1997), *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (Rebellion: A Love Story, 2001), *Kranti* (Revolution, 1981) and *Lagaan* (Land Tax, 2001). What Mishra says in relation to *Amar, Akbar Anthony* (1977) is also true of the scene of the arrival of Ahmed's body into town from *Sholay*: '[it] celebrated the nation-state under the sign of an enlightened dharma … as allegory, it demonstrated the underlying origins of all Indians – one mother but different beliefs, a variation on Savakar's original version of Hindutva' (2002: 203). Geeta Kapur's words also ring true here: 'the primary function of myth is to define and sustain the specific identity of a community, its investigation occurs at points of historical crisis when this identity is embattled' (1987: 79).

The massacre of the Thakur's family is the other scene which plays out the entanglement between order/harmony and chaos/disorder. Everything about that scene suggests order and harmony – from the framing and composition of the shots, the movement of the camera, the placing of the individuals within the frame, the shots from the Thakur's son's gun, fired at regular beats, the movement back and forth of the swing in a very rhythmic way, the affection that exists between sister-in-laws and the affection between servant and master. And this harmony is again broken by the forces of destabilization – Gabbar Singh and his men.

One can also read this binary of chaos and harmony in the Holi – festival of colours – scene. The villagers get together in communal harmony to celebrate Holi. There is of course song and dance to celebrate the ancient festival as an affirmation of the continuity of tradition but also as a marker of a minor victory over the forces of evil – Gabbar Singh's gang. Hindus dance with Muslims, friends with foes and strangers with strangers. I quite like what Laurel Victoria Gray in 'Hooray for Bollywood!' has to say about the song and dance routines in Bollywood cinema: 'Perhaps the popularity of Bollywood resonates with our desire for tribal identity, our dreams of a global village where everyone miraculously knows the same songs and dances'. What Mishra says about the village in *Mother India* – that 'rural India continues to function as a sign of cultural continuity' (2002: 82) – is also applicable to *Sholay*. The same primordial oneness and pastoral harmony is found in Mehboob Khan's (maker of *Mother India*) *Aurat* (Woman) [1967] 'where peasants sing folk songs and celebrate Hindu festivals, notably Holi'

(Mishra, 2002: 73). The pastoral harmony in *Sholay* is broken by the arrival of Gabbar Singh and his gang. Gabbar Singh again represents a force of destabilisation of the communal harmony that exists in the village as well as a threat to time-honoured traditions. But later when the Thakur's hired hands get their own back, order is once more restored.

The final narrative within the film is the Jai-Radha relationship. As previously mentioned, Radha is widowed early as a result of Gabbar Singh's atrocities. From the moment of Jai's arrival there is a silent magnetism between the two. Jai finally openly declares his love for her and the progressive Thakur goes against tradition and agrees to the match, saying '*Kab tak hum apne aurato go bhand ke rakhege*' (how long will we shackle our women to these oppressive traditions). The Thakur's words and his decision threaten to cause a disturbance in the ordered universe of Hinduism but the death of Jai ensures that parity and harmony is restored, that the long-standing Indian tradition (codes of Dharma) that the widow shall not marry is maintained. Just like in *Mother India* where Nargis must shoot her son Birju (Sunil Dutt) because he had subverted codes of dharma, Jai's death ensures that long-standing and immutable dharmic laws are maintained.

Gilles Deleuze: 'Events are produced in a chaos, in a chaotic multiplicity, but only under the condition that a sort of screen intervenes'

> The 'chaotic multiplicity' / the 'Many'
> A train rolls into the station.
> Shatrugan Shina favourite to play role of Jai.
> Lobbying by Dhamendra gets Amitabh the role of Jai.
> Months away from shooting, Danny Denzopa pulls out of Sholay.
> Production goes over budget.
> Production goes over allotted time.
> Gabbar Singh massacres Thakur's family.
> Sailm and Javed demand recognition as writers.
> Jaya Bachan returns to set with husband Amitabh. Bachan pregnant.
> First week the Indian trade magazines declare film a flop.
> Second week hardly 2 or 3 people stood for tickets.
> Thakur hires two thugs to hunt down Gabbar Singh.
> Censor Board demands ending changed so that Gabbar Singh is not killed by Thakur, a former policeman.
> A boy waits in line with his dad, mum and sister at the Raiwaqa A Cinemas, Suva, Fiji, amongst the teeming multitudes.
> The same boy cries at the end when one of the heroes, Jai, is killed.
> An official enquiry to see how two trains were on the same track during shooting.
> The 70mm print is deliberately held up by customs officials on premier night so a 35 mm print is shown.
> The stereophonic track recorded in Twickenham.
>
> Sailm-Javed want Amjad Khan to be replaced as Gabbar because they feel his voice is too soft.
> The two mercenaries catch Gabbar Singh but one dies in the process.
> People wade through knee-deep water to see.
> Extortionists threaten to burn the set of *Sholay* if they are not given 20,000 rupees.
> Veeru and Basnati leave for the city on a train.
> The one / the event
> *Sholay*: super-duper event in glorious 70mm … with stereophonic sound.

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Return to Contents

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