



# Copycat Bollywood: Where it is not Plagiarism

Professor Anjali Gera Roy  
Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur

Thursday 26 June at 4:00 pm  
Richardson 6N4

Against the large scale dismissal of the Hindi film as a poor copy of the Hollywood film and the charges of plagiarism that deflect original creativity, if any, this presentation draws on the Persian category of *naqqal* to elucidate the play in Hindi cinema as against Bhabha's celebrated notion of colonial mimicry to propose an aesthetics of the copy that structures Hindi films commended as Indianization at its most charitable and dismissed as a ludicrous imitation at worst. Through tracing this lineage, the talk aims to fill up a lacunae in studies of Indian cinema that have focused largely on its Hindu/Hindi mythical, narrative, visual heritage with a token acknowledgement of its Perso-Arabic roots through the lip service paid to Parsi theatre thus directing attention to the eclectic North Indian sources of Hindi cinema combining Sanskritic and Perso-Arabic Great Traditions with *prakrit* Little Traditions such as *nautanki*, *swang* and *naqqal* popular in the North Indian states. Whether copy is denigrated as unoriginal or valorized as creative, the myth of origins and the cult of authenticity underlying the systematic redemption of the copy looks back to an aesthetic tradition with its roots in a Platonic suspicion of mimesis and art being denounced on grounds of its being three times removed from reality as a copy of a copy. Against the Platonic understanding of art as copy in this theory of mimesis, the notion of art as reembodyment rather than a copy presents a novel way of analyzing the aesthetic of the copy animating the Hindi film.

---

Anjali Gera Roy is Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. She is author of *Bhangra Moves: From Ludhiana to London and Beyond* and editor of *Magic of Bollywood: At Home and Abroad, Partitioned Lives: Narratives of Home, Displacement and Resettlement*, and *The Travels of Indian Cinema: From Bombay to LA*. Anjali also guest edited a special issue of the journal *South Asian Diaspora* and has published numerous articles that have appeared in journals such as *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, *Sojourn*, *South Asian Review*, *Atlantic Critical Review Quarterly*, *Popular Music*, and *Journal of Postcolonial Studies*.



Media, Film and  
Communication

