

# Place in Recent Approaches of Indian Cinema

**Sara Radaei**

This article retrieved from the research project of “the interplay of Indian and Iranian Art” and a field research trip, which was organized in 2012 by NAZAR research center.

---

M.A. in Landscape architecture  
sara\_radaei@yahoo.com

---

## **Abstract**

Landscape is complex meaning that is always the center of attention in arts and cinema and emergence of artistic expression. From classical to contemporary cinemas, architecture and urban themes has a variety of attractions for filmmakers. Classic Indian cinema is more relevant to daily life and Director was only in the roll of witness of events and reality in urban scenes and had no struggle to perform at urban pictures. This cinema is still popular. But in the process of modernization affected by global developments, other approaches formed in Indian cinema. In the modern period, Indian cinema is not only indifferent to the city and the place scale of the film is more extensive and the cities became main port in story structure. here major part of scenes taken in outer space and place characters of films such as film’s geography become important So that if you remove the geography of film, becomes incomplete and unclear. Cinemas in this approach, have belongs to a particular urban location and a conceptual view of the surrounding elements. They are real or dreamy. Today Cinema of India in terms of the place interpretation has not fixed approach and generally transition from the stereotype and entering the modern period. This study is Fundamental research with qualitative \_ interpretation methods. Information required by this article has been collected through field observations, literature documents and authentic films. With presume fundamental relationship between cinema and the city, and dramatic relationship between urban space and cinema, the results of place study in Indian cinema can help create a fields for understanding the contemporary landscape and make evolving landscape.

## **Keywords**

Indian classic cinema, Idealistic cinema, Westernized cinema, Neo realism cinema, Urban landscape.

## Introduction

Cinema is considered as one of the fantastic realization in architectural and urban fields. Cinema is depend on architecture and landscaping in place, space and understands each of them. The cinema Narrates cultural and architecture elements, history of the city and surrounding of them with a variety type of media. Cinema imaginations have a profound effect on our understanding of the urban landscape, history, relations between cities and their inhabitants. Cinema can be illustrated landscape to Represent Dependence and separation, splendor and poverty, familiar and unfamiliar territory and a place of love or death.

Because cinema is an expression of the ideals of community and social developments, review cinematic approach of each society play an effective role in understanding the evolution of the concept of place and landscape from the perspective of their people. In India what makes all people with different beliefs and cultures, so close together is art of cinema that has emerged from the depths of their beliefs. This art with a visual language has effect on emergence of anything and their lives. Choose the location and placing is part of the art of this cinema to expression concepts such ugliness, beauty, and holiness that in various approaches have diversity of expression. In this study, these variations will be present; after reviewing the concept of place and landscape in classical and modern approaches in Indian cinema, that will be discussed the Sense of place and perception of landscape elements. Finally realities of Indian cities Landscape will be expressed based on field observations and Adjustment comparison in reflecting the realities of contemporary urban India in classical and modern approaches.

So four films were chosen as Representatives of four approaches: Devdas for classic, Sawaariya for idealistic cinema, Rock Star for Westernized cinema and Slumdog Millionaire for neo realism cinema.

## Hypothesis

Indian Classic cinema is entertainment cinema that urban places don't play effective roll in storytelling. Highlighting geography of films as part of the film and conceptualism in use of landscape elements is recent event in Indian cinema.

## Place in cinema

Location, is place where the story happens. Place has a great impact on imagination and after time is crucial factor to choose scenes. Place can be small building in a city, or a more general concept to include geographical and national boundaries. Image of cities in movie, reflect the spirit of the citizens of cities. Place could be has a unique position in some movies (Mardookhi, 2010). Place is much more than a decoration in story, sometimes shapes the worldview foundation of film (Kazemi, 2010). In architecture, place contains events, is a part of environment and sense of place is unique experience and understand of particular situation, Oriented person to a place with a sense of difference determines, and spatial understanding. Sense of place is influenced by the physical elements (Negin Taji, 2010: 25).

Element triggered different senses through the addition of concepts to place. In Classical and modern Indian cinema, architecture and urban elements selected for different concepts show sense of different place. This study focus on place perception of architectural and urban spaces in Indian cinema approaches. As love is the common element of Indian cinema from the classic period to modern, directors create place for this concept. The recent Indian cinema, have four general approach in regard to the place of film. Although most Indian movies are in the category of commercial films, drama, won prestigious awards and public interest were used as selection criteria.

## Classic cinema: cinema without city

This cinema has been exaggerated Sentimentalism and simple narrative style. Music, color and glossy locations attract audience to this cinema. Usually locations in this cinema have objective concepts in Indian traditional and religious life such wealth. Also story and landscape have a relationship that removal or modification into landscape doesn't hurt the story.

In other words landscape and city aren't part of the story but actor play the main roll in film. Because of the classic cinema focused on Indian family and culture, home is important as the place. Place is rich or poor home and untouched nature in this cinema. In this approach, background is beautiful spaces in Kashmir or Mounds cities such as Darjeeling (Mo-

hammad, 2010: 13).

Devdas (2002) directed by Sanjay Lila Bhansali is an example of classical cinema in the last decade based on a Hindi tragic romance. The simple narrative of extremism love between Paro in middle-class and rich Dave. As they love not worthy to Maharaja Aristocracy, finally doomed to separation. Bhansali in the film artistically pictured objective concepts.

Film locations are two adjacent houses, and not



Figs. 1&2. Illustration of glory and wealth place in interior scenes (Devdas).

Source: [www.ecfs.org](http://www.ecfs.org) .[www.shahrukhkhan.org](http://www.shahrukhkhan.org).

outside of them; One Dave palace (Devdas) and other is Paro simple home (Parvati). Windows of two homes connected simple and majestic life. The scenes are theatrical and surreal. Director use dances, clothes, music, light and color to enhance the atmosphere and sense of place (Rashid Zade, 2002). Red pavement, clothes and red stained glass has been used to intensify the spirit of the Hindi space and show wealth, power and passion. Color and glamor of space fascinate the audience. Devdas named as red (Figs. 1&2).

We can see the intensity of the sharp colors of the spectrum and red decorations in the splendor moments display splendor. But in romance moments that were away from the materiality, the room shown with Smooth melodies, blue color and light, Colorful Expression of feeling and wealth. Stair is element that frequently seen in film. In palace Palace, use as magnificent expression, but in every scene moving on it, shows mania or love climbing Summarily to get to the last moment of romantic love. In the final chapter, Dave patient, and failed, is on holy Ganges River. Ganges River is place for Needy and Desirous people, so has always been interest in a classic cinema. The only light conceptual placing is checkered floor of Devdas palace.



This type of flooring is common in Hindi palaces. Showing checkered flooring in the second that Paro entering into the palace and then in the next scenes, leaving home by Dave with slow Crawling on checkered flooring of the palace, slow royal game that Paro comes into play in Beginning of the film and pawns like Devdas, driving out of the game. Unlike the classical approach, that have a very strong Hindi sense, two-dimensional approaches due to the evolutions of global communication, location and concept are different from the classical approach. In this cinema, Location is considered as a quality matter such other elements of the film, not only support the story and spacing, but also express the characters.

### Westernized cinema: fascination to Western life

Abundant capital of Indian commercial cinema in recent years, led to the evolution of Hindi films geographical. Mostly location was shooting in outer space and on a larger scale spatial of the house. These places are generally very bold urban landscape and they are part of film, but they are not the existent reality in India.

Locations shooting in predominantly affluent and modern neighborhoods of cities in India or countries like France, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand and South African. Among the films that are part of their locations, and not all of them are shooting in a foreign country and have adhered to the formula Hindi films (colors, dancing, singing, etc.) that were more successful works projects than they are shooting all location in non-India (Shokri Azar, 1998: 28).

Rock star is a 2011 Indian romantic drama film directed by Imtiaz Ali. Director fascinated by the beauty of Prague and Italian concerts, so a large part of the shooting locations are taken in these Places. Unlike most internal locations in Devdas, this film is shooting in outdoor. Scenes locations have been taken in Hindi and European urban space. First part of shooting are in Indian places such as Kotla IGI airport, Greater Kailash, Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah, Mubarakpur and Connaught Place (The modern urban Faces places of India) and the second part are taken in European locations. Here Place goes beyond the borders of India and have been spread to other countries.

In this location displacement the low belonging is seen. The film begins with a scene in a big concert in Verona, Italy, spending romantic moments

on roof dominates to the city, Musical performance in paved streets and Large Square with European atmosphere has built Modern Love and Western-Hindi film. The film ends with the beginning scene (Figs. 3&4).

As the cultural landscape of India is a collection of cultural and religious concepts, attributed to elements and geographic spaces, represent to People and society understanding geographical Locating of their culture. In the classical period, due to geographical constraints, the local culture of the films was more Index (Thakur, 2010: 29).

But Westernized modern cinema communicate with cultures developed countries, Without border location to the farthest European cities, western clothing and showing of modern life or the imita-



Fig. 3. remove Hindi signs and attraction into the western areas in Rock Star. Source: hamaraphotos.com

Fig. 4. Romantic sense of height with good background in non-Hindi movie (rock star), PSource: Author, 2010.



tive issues of western cinemas, and showing Cultural Landscape became weak (Figs. 5&6).



Figs.5&6. Crash and New York (Bollywood, 2012), fascination to landscape and Western city in commercial Indian cinema. Source: [cash.2012bombybo.blogspot.com](http://cash.2012bombybo.blogspot.com)· [new-york-bollybrains.blogspot.com](http://new-york-bollybrains.blogspot.com)

### Idealistic Cinema: Indian Utopia

Indian cinema is the place to lessen the stress of daily life and hardship and also is a gateway to fantastic world (Mohammed, 1994: 13). This cinema did not just entertainment, and has had attempts to Showing Indian thoughts and feelings. In idealistic approach by away from classical and westernized cinema, the story formed in Indian ideal life and city. Space and place in this cinema, have abstract, and dreamy nature. Sawaariya means “beloved” drama (2007), directed by Sanja Lila Bhansali, is an example of idealist cinema.

The non-Hindi novels not welcomed In India, so when them transformed to Hindi mood became welcomed (Shekari Azar, 1996). This Hindi film based on the interpretation of Dostoyevsky white night story. Unlike Devdas, film has backed away from Hindi nobility. Here the city is important But not as City in Westernized cinema. Here author’s dreamy city is made. Sawaariya is most as a space



film. Director taken audience and characters away from ordinary space to utopia and narrates the story there; where is not city or village (Zandi, 2011). Time is not known. Audience with characters goes beyond time and space, to a world that is beyond normal life. In first scene shows a view of the city that is not at all similar to Hindi cities. Waterways around the city, passing through the buildings, remember legendary Venice. Buddha statue and some building with bulbous dome in foreground are the only signs of belonging to Indian city. Houses are very simple, uniform and away from Indian nobility (Fig. 7).

Because Bhansali was looking for making place more dreamy and Poetical so use painting and inspired by the work of artists such as Frederich Arthur, William Louis, Fred R Wagner, He tried to city seems beautiful, vitality and lovely (Bhansali, 2007). More shooting scenes are getting at night and in ex-

ternal space. Lights are used for spacing first time in Hindi film (Ibid, 2007).

Blue light, enhances the cold and sense of dreamy space. Here, all space and object are dark and just an actor is under light. Feelings are symbolization with landscaping objects. In climax of the film's emotional moments, climate change to windy, rainy or snowy. In Indian belief rain clears sins of man (Shekari Azar, 1996: 26).

Bhansali made his ideal world with Lake, streets crowded with shops and paved roads, lots of lights and neon signs and walls filled with paint (Fig. 8). Town atmosphere is dark and combined with blue, like the color of Krishna, Goddess of Love or Sawaariya. Blue color in Sawaariya is opposite warm colors, especially red in Devdas; color in Devdas Expresses objective concept of wealth and poverty but in Sawaariya Expresses love and feelings around the subjective concept.

Fig. 7&8: Saawariya, dreamy and ideal love city. Source: www.saawariyafilm.com.



Most scenes are taken in one location. In This location, there are square with pool in center, river and the bridge on it in one side of river and hotel and Gulabji R.K bar (city club) on the other side; One side are love, dreams, life and other side is material and temporary life (Raj place in moments of desperation). Clock tower dominated to all of them. Raj to express his interest to Sakina invited her not in restaurant or cafe but in clock tower. The best place in city is clock tower where Raj goes there when he is happy. Sakina sees the city beautiful from top of tower. This Dominant place, is ex-

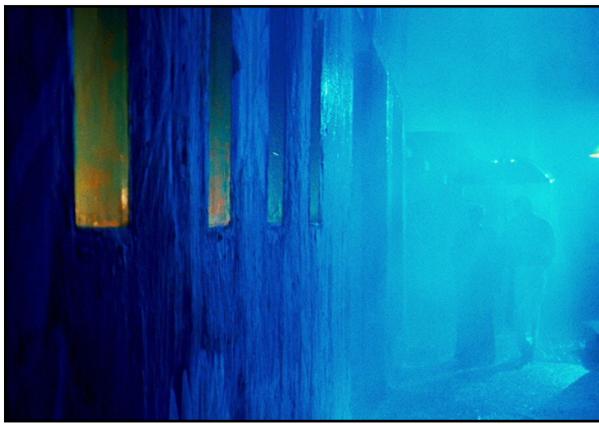


Fig.9. Poetic Alleys in the love city.  
Source: www.saawariyafilm.com

trema of relax and enjoy the beauty of the city. Raj and Sakina first date, is on the bridge in the beginning of first night (connect two lives). Bridge on Calm River has no name and address. This river is not same to holy Ganges River in Devdas but is Deaires River that raj and sakina are float on it in deferent scenes. After spending the night in a boat on a river (river of dream) the first night became ends with crossing through narrow alleys decorated with lotus flower (being alive through love); as it seems all cities imagery for their romantic date. Streets in This City have character in worthy of love. Peacock and lotus motifs that we see in many scenes are Indian popular holy motifs and injects Hindi mood to film (Fig. 9).

The bridge is waiting place. Start and end place of friendship not only link two sides of the bridge is also linked to the people world, like Raj and Sakina or iman and sakina, waiting and glaze to river and moon (Figs. 10&11).

In Sawaariya ideal city is not similar to Indian city but the characters and decorations create Hindi mood. Showing house in splendor and wealth in Devdas, never seen in Sawaariya. All houses is simple and in one level. Sawaariya for narrative Separates audiences from India and enter them in another world that all the streets are the same and there is no poverty or no noblesse.

Fig.10. Bridge on the River, the most important place in film and story. Source: www.saawariyafilm.com



**Neorealism cinema: city the main part of film** in the modern era of Indian cinema along with commercial and entertainment cinema is India's premier and thoughtful, which is called neorealism cinema. This cinema has believable and realistic look at Indian life and city. In This cinema without idealism, developing and bold emotions, Images express paid in full, quite realistic as exists and not as the director desire. Cites are an integral part of the stories that given identity and specific mood to stories. The role of the city is sometimes so highlighted that the whole story defined around it. They generally pictured sharp class differences. 1950s was the golden period of Indian cinema that intellectuals and realistic cinema has emerged (Mohammed, 1994: 13). The films stories adapted from the original Hindi literature, native life and social differences. Satyajit Ray, Shyam Benegal, Mrinal Sen were few directors who were opposed to the dominant in com-

mercial cinema and looking thoughtful cinema (Kamandi, 1992: 37). But since this cinema has no popular attractions, colors and entertainment so couldn't find a place among the Hindi audience and By far the most serious issues focus on fiction issues. APO (Ray, 1955) Out of attractions colorful commercial cinema pictured problems, Poverty and the realities of life in Indian society. This film won best document human drama in Cannes Festival 1956 (Mohammed, 1994: 14), but was met with enthusiasm Hindi audience. The lack of public interest in this cinema Gradually Due to neglect of Directors to this approach until "Slumdog Millionaire" (2008) produced by Danny Boyle British-Irish director (Pishevar, 2007). However this film Produced by cinema in outside of India but This film and appreciated it, relying on the collective memory of the Indian audience, after year's reformed again Indian realistic approach.

Fig.11. character and location Being on and define character by using place. Source: www.saawariyafilm.com.



Opposite of utopia that was pictured in Sawaariya, is Boyle's really devastated city. Bedouin tents and slum dwellers living, neighboring both high and down class, Slums and rich neighborhoods in cities like Mumbai, is a landscape raised from Economic contradictions (Figs. 12&13).



This society has a complex system of caste system on the basis of a specific class order (Minator, 2011). Urban realities narrated by flashbacks.

Film explains in Form of documentary class differences in marginal layers of Indian society. Film events are in modern India.

The difference illustrated between two lives one Technological and quiet life of Wealthy minority and poor living in Majority. To transfer social concepts such as poverty and inequality inevitably benefit from urban locations.

Film Locations are in impoverished areas of Mumbai and social inequality become understandably with choice of locations in these sectors. Especially Mumbai India Decor of Competition scene is showcasing facade that extreme poverty and class difference which lies behind modern appearance. In these images we know better than any documentary reality of life in India.

Jamal and his brother's life in Lowest and dirtiest neighborhoods of Mumbai, shows social inequality. In Slumdog Millionaire there is no news from romance Alleys in Sawaariya. Mumbai poor Alleys are routes that hero passes them frantically.

Jamal look at to city from top of the tower but his look to city is different from Dave in Devdas (waiting to meet beloved) Raj in Sawaariya (happy and

Figs. 12&13. sharp Class conflict neighboring with upper classes and stripped in one place. Photo: Sara radaei, 2010.



enjoy the moment) or Jordan in Rock Star (Sorrow of love). His dominance over the city is not romance or enjoying the moment.

He looks regretfully to city that neglected poor people like him (Figs. 14&15); City has contributed ru-

ins for Jamal among the colorful towers for others. Soon after, the appearance films in this approach such Peepli Live (2010) by Anusha Rizvi Attracted the public's attention and finally this cinema gain to new spirit.



Fig.14. Dominate on town and the sense of regrets and sadness in Slumdog Millionaire. Source: cinscreen.com

Fig.15. India's poor and desolate Alleys where Slumdog Millionaire played. Source: mypreciouscheris.blogspot.com



## Conclusion

In modern era of Indian cinema classic decorative small-scale places, replaced to urban places that solved and became part of the film. So that understanding the place and story have a reciprocating relationship. Unlike the classic movie glamor that attract Hindi audiences, idealist Cinema have a romantic interpretations from elements of urban and Westernized outside of India goes toward cinema without boundary, and Globalization and this Way will leads to the loss of identity. So along with the general formula is observe in all Hindi films, multiculturalism and intellectual freedom leads to several streams in Indian cinema. Therefore cannot be attributed main currents of thought in each approach to the whole of Indian society but generally Place in Indian cinema projects is evolving from decorated space and patched to the story Toward a functional space in dramatic role.

Thus, although in these approaches places and the city become important, realistic cinema regardless from the Indian cinema rules stand against westernize of Bollywood, and show correctly image of contemporary India. Realist cinema that came to life again with non-Hindi cinema Society has changed with nostalgic sense to the place and benefit from sense of place, and with Picturing the facts removing social differences and take effective steps to improve the image of Indian cities.

## Reference list

- Bhansali, S. (2007). *Perspective on Saawariya* (Abstract). Available from: <http://www.planetbollywood.com/displayArticle.php?id=110607084124> (Accessed 14 May 2012).
- Kamandi, F. (1999). Negahi gozara be gerayeshha-ye cinema-ye hend [A quick look at the trends in Indian cinema]. *Keyhan*, 10(4): 36-38.
- Kazemi, R. (2010). *Ahamiat-e makan va joghrafia dar revayat* [Importance of space and geography in the narrative]. available from: <http://adambarfiha.com/?p=4221>
- Mardukhi, D. (2011). *Amuzesh-e moghadamati-ye cinema* [Preliminary Training Cinema]. available from: <http://dlermardokhi.mihanblog.com/post/345>.
- Mohammad, Kh. (1994). Indian cinema. Safaai majid aldin. Translated to Persian by Safaee, M. *Iran Unesco*, (225): 12-15.
- Minator, A. (2012). *Manzar-e motazad dar hend; forsat ya tahdid* [Contrasting Landscape in India Opportunity or Threat ](abstract). Available from: [nazaronline.ir/fa/pages/?cid=1783](http://nazaronline.ir/fa/pages/?cid=1783).
- Negin Taji, S. (2010). Place and sense of place. *Journal of MANZAR*, 3(13):24-29.
- Pishah Var, N. (2008). *Negahi be milyuner zagheneshin* [Take a look at on Slumdog Millionaire, praised as Movie year], Hamshahrionline. Available from: <http://www.hamshahrionline.ir/news.aspx?id=75634>
- Radfar, M. (2010). *Makan yani amniyat va faza yani azadi* [Place means safety and space means freedom], Available from: <http://www.artna.ir/fa/3232>.
- Rashid Zade, Gh. (2003). Gam be gam ba divadas [Step by step with devdas]. *Cinema review magazine*, (38&39): 74&75.
- Shokri Azar, E. (2001). Indian cinema has no competition in the country. *Cinema and theatre magazine*, 4(25): 26-31.
- Thakur, N. (summer, 2010). The Indian Cultural Landscape and its Protection & Management through Cultural & Historic Urban Landscape Concepts, *journal of Landscape Architecture*, (28): 24\_29.
- Zandi, M. (2011). [zandicinema@gmail.com](mailto:zandicinema@gmail.com) subject: *Indian cinema's leading directors and most important of them*. sended answer to [scaler\\_sr@yahoo.com](mailto:scaler_sr@yahoo.com).