

## Konferenz „Ressourcen des Entscheidens“

### Mrinal Pande (Münster): Narratives of Love and Marriage in Bollywood films

#### Abstract

This paper explores the question if and how different forms of Indian marriages – ‘choice’ or ‘love marriage’ and marriages ‘arranged’ by kin – can be viewed as construals of decision-making in popular Bollywood films. Focussing on representations of marital negotiations in Bollywood cinema, I compare narratives of two popular films: A (*Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* 1999) and B (*Queen* 2013). The plots and characters of both stories address processes of matrimonial decision making. The filmic imaginings emphasize representations of material assets as well as social and cultural considerations of status, norms, family values, parental expectations and obligations, that the protagonists draw upon as ‘resources’ in the process of achieving or rejecting impending marriage decisions.

Film A depicts matrimonial negotiations as a strategic family decision shaped by familial traditions, norms of caste and religious community, bodily attributes such as appearance (beauty/fairness etc.), age, and other forms of symbolic capital (e.g. education). But it also formulates a possibility to defy family values by the bride-to-be. The film foregrounds her ‘right to choose’ her partner herself. It thus engages with questions of power, agency and notions of gendered selves entailed in marital decisions: is marriage a matter of individual emotions or of collective well-being? Film B takes these considerations further by showing how the protagonist ultimately resists getting married altogether. The film takes off from the situation of a prospective bride excited about her impending arranged-cum-love marriage which, however, is cancelled last minute by the bridegroom-to-be. Through the motif of the journey, a transformation of the self of the protagonist is shown which results in her subjective decision not to get married at all. I look at the ways in which Bollywood captures conflicts between ‘traditional’ values of family status and ‘modern’ imaginations of individuality by focusing on representation of differing resources mobilized by “the family” and “individual female selves” in the process of arriving at a decision – for or against this/that husband? For or against marriage?

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