

# Bollywood films on Children: Semiotic analysis of mise-en-scene elements.

TANVEEN ASLAM KAWOOSA,(First Author)PH.D, Mass communication, AMU.

Prof Afrina Rizvi (Second Author)

Department of Mass communication, AMU.

There are startlingly few academic accounts of children films in Hindi cinema more generally, historical or contemporary. Only few academicians have theorized childhood in Bollywood cinema. Through the analysis of child centric Bollywood films, the present study thus attempts to fill the gap.

Hindi film representation of children has to some extent changed in line with changing national and social ideals. In post-colonial nation-state, children in Bollywood cinema existed as metaphors for nationhood and social development. The films like *boot polish*(1954),*Ab dilli door nahi*(1953) which details poor children passionate struggle to survive and care for each other in face of the economic and social adversity, are laced with social injustice and developmental issues .

In the 1990s with a political push towards deregulation and liberalization of media, significance of developmental messages diminished.Children appeared intermittently as devices in few commercial hindi films.Forinstance,little anjali in *kuch kuch houta hain* unites her father with his lost love;as an pretext for adult violence *utrak Sharma* plays tara's half-Pakistani son in film *Gaddar*.In many other films child actors are replaced by young adults who act out a mime of a very particular type of childhood.Forintance,films like *koi mil gaya*.In these types of films role of child actors appear marginal. They did not dominate the narratives.

Nevertheless, many India film directors, on the other hand, have started making films on marginal childhood reflecting child-centric vision. Many films made during 2000s reflect this vision.

The metaphor for orphaned, marginal, deprived childhood resurfaces in the contemporary Hindi cinema with innovative cinematic techniques. The contemporary films on children made during 2000s reflect the themes which were common in the previous periods of representation especially during post-colonial period of India. Through the works of Rakesh Omprakash Mehra,Santosh Sivan and their contemporaries, the developmental messages are now finding their space in Hindi cinema.

While there is no denying that in commercial Hindi cinema especially in many hits of 1990s, child actors did not dominate the narratives. Films of 2000s appear as a radical break with the previous years of representation.

The focus of this study is on child-centric movies wherein, children appear as the main protagonist dominating the narratives. The present study is not focusing on the movies where child performers representation is marginal usually depicting the early life of heroes and heroines in poverty or destitute as typical in many Hindi commercial films. The researcher has analysed few films based on mise-en-scene elements while also taking into consideration indexical metaphors or connotative meanings of these elements.

**Methodology:**

**Qualitative study:** The study is qualitative in nature using semiotic analysis of mise-en-scene elements. Qualitative methods produce a large amount of detailed information about a smaller data that results in rich understanding but reduces generalizability. (Creswell J.W, 1998)

Qualitative researcher uses inductive method. Unlike quantitative research, hypothesis are not developed prior to the study. 'In contrast, data are collected relevant to some topic and are grouped in to some appropriate and meaningful categories; explanations emerge from the data' (*Wimmer and Dominick 2011:119*)

Semiotic analysis is a key element to understand and decode the significant visual messages used by the media in order to generate the meanings that refer to the socio-cultural and personal associations in the second level of signification which is connotation. Semiology can be applied in the context of media to analyse any media texts

The French term 'mise-en-scene' means 'Putting in the scene', films, television programs, etc(Bouzida,2014). or 'everything you see on the screen'. Mise-en-scene has its roots in theatre and is one of the key components within film language. 'For the student of film, the useful definition might be 'the contents of the frame and the way that they are organised' (Gibbs 2002: 5). Mise-en-scene is an important part of film syntax and contains wealth of meanings (both denotative and connotative) which can become important subject of film study. For the purpose of study the researcher has used following elements of mise-en-scene for analysis.

Location/settings

Lighting

Camera movements

Colour:

Props

Characters/Acting

Costume

The other parameters for film study will be indexical metaphors, symbols, gestures and sound effects.

**Semiotic analysis of mise-en-scene elements in film Stanley Ka Dabba(Stanley's tiffin box)**

Film: Stanley Ka Dabba

Direction:Amole Gupte

Duration:96 min

Year of release:2011

Genre: Drama

Language : Hindi

Brief Summary of film:

‘Stanley ka Dabba’ is a delightfully simple story about a young intelligent school who is also a storyteller in his own right.This fourth-grader Stanley(Partho Gupte) becomes popular among his friends studying at Holy family school in Mumbai for his innovative stories.

The *dabbas* can be construed as an active narrative device born out of an urban cultural mesh and still made distinct in the metropolitan chaos.The dabbawalas constitute an expression of the Mumbai food system of distribution-a sustainable way of feeding the city.The tiffin box in Stanley ka Dabba designates itself as a trope for lost family and makes its presence felt more through its absence.

He never brings his tiffin to school and ends up having a daily feast with his caring friends. The Dabba that Stanley never brings to school raises curiosity among the audience and wrath of the Hindi teacher Mr.Verma at school.

No other than his English teacher Miss Rosie praises his creative abilities,wit, and humour.When her English teacher Miss Rosie spot him with a bruised face at the beginning of film,he concocts a story,much to her amusement. Moreso,Stanley also concocts imaginary stories of his food cooked by his fictitious mother.Sir Babubhai Verma(Amole Gupte),a voracious eater and inexplicable miser who is more talented in pilfering the kids' tiffins rather than teaching hindi.

One day this ravenous Hindi teacher comes late during lunch break and misses out on eating what he had earlier hoped to eat from the children’s tiffin.He comes to know that Stanley's friends share food with him. The Hindi teacher berates Stanley for not bringing his own tiffin.

One day Stanley's friends spot him roaming empty stomach outside the school during lunchtime. On being questioned, Stanley says his parents had gone to Delhi and there is no one to cook food for him. After hearing that students share lunch with Stanley. Mr verma warns Stanley to bring his own Tiffin or stop coming to school.

In the meantime, Stanley gets an opportunity to participate in inter school-musical concert wherein he proves his talent.His teachers including his principles appreciate his talent.

In the end audience comes to know that Stanley is orphan and works at his uncle’s restaurant who physically tortures him every day for remaining absent from the work during daytime.However,he is being helped by the cook of restaurant Akram who packs leftovers into his tiffin.The film ends with emotional scene wherein Stanley lights candle next to the photograph of his parents during bedtime.

The film carries subtle themes of poverty,for instance in one heart-rendering scene Stanley has been shown drinking lots of water to satiate his hunger.Further,one can also observe his conviction when he hides his hunger by telling his friends that he is going home to have hot fresh meal prepared by his fictitious mother.

There are certain flaws in the narrative structure of film.Since Stanley is a poor orphan,how can he afford to pay hefty sum of money as a school fee?This is not justified by the film director. Nevertheless,unlike typical Bollywood filmmakers, Amole Gupte’s has not made his work melodramatic by overdoses of

emotions. Rather, the pain and trauma have been marginalized to convey the messages of poverty, child labour, and brutality subtly in the film.

**Table:01**

**Setting /location as signifiers**

Signifier	Signified
Large buildings, classrooms, children wearing uniform, playground and various other signifiers.	School
Statue of the Holy family	faith
Untidy room, partly dilapidated walls, huge unwashed dishes, stoves, vegetables, cooked meals.	The kitchen of restaurant where Stanley washes dirty dishes of customers.

**Discussion.**

The selection of setting depends upon the choice of the director. Whether selected or constructed, historically authentic or stylized, setting can function in a virtually infinite number of ways. The manipulation of a shot's setting for narrative functions also implies that the setting may create "props". According to Andrew Dix, "settings are not merely inert containers of or backdrops to action but themselves charged with significance. At the most basic level, locations serve in narrative cinema to reinforce the plausibility of particular kinds of story,".

The film opens with a closeup shot of sunny morning streaks falling on the leaves. The shot cuts to a boy in school uniform entering the school. In next shots audience can see statue of Holy family and students playing in huge playground. These shots signify that the boy studies in Holy family school. The filmmaker used these signifiers not only to construct the outdoor environment of school but also to subtly communicate the life of the main protagonist.

The same boy with a bruised face joins his hands before the holy family statue in reverence. (see fig: 01) The boy is the first one to reach the school. He opens up the door of dark classroom and sets the date of calendar. Connotatively despite his personal agony or pain, he enlightens everything around him. He is a symbol of optimism. The boy is metaphorically equated with plant. Morning streaks fall on leaves of plant signifies that he needs proper nourishment and guidance for growth.

In the classroom sequence, he first interacts with his English teacher Ms Rossie who shows concern towards him. Though these syntagmatic shots director wants to reinstate that this teacher is a ray of hope in his life.

The restaurant's kitchen is a significant site in the film. It is a place which speaks volumes about the pathetic plight of Stanley. (fig:02) This place is known to audience but is hidden from the other characters of the film. It reveals that Stanley belongs to an uncounted workforce of children, who work without

wages. Formal schooling is an important signifier in the film. Children engaged in manual labour are irrevocably exploited that can be redeemed only through formal schooling. However, schools fail to recognize child as competent agents and are forced to live lives through childhood constructed by adults.



Fig:01

Table:02

**Lighting as signifiers:**

Signifier	signified
Sidelight	This type of lighting has been used with the character Stanley. The mystery of the bruised face of main protagonist is accentuated with sharp shadows of nose, cheekbones, and lips.
Top lighting	This is used to showcase photos of Stanley's parents in the end sequence. Top lighting usually appears along with light coming from other direction. (see fig:04)

**Discussion:**

Josef von Sternberg, one of the cinema's great masters of lighting, wrote that "the proper use of light can embellish and dramatize every object." The filmmaker has used very few special lighting effects. Instead shooting was performed in natural lighting. In certain scenes filmmaker has manipulated three-point lighting to showcase different moods of scene. Amole Gupte uses hard sidelight to sculpt the character's features. Note the sharp shadows and red bruises on the face of main character. (see fig 03)

The filmmaker has elevated the effect of practical lighting (lighting that is already on location) through motivational lighting. See fig:04 the lighting in this scene is motivated by lamp. Stanley lights candle in front of the photos of his parents before going to bed. The end sequence shows kitchen of *Daba* where Stanley works. Stanley lights candle in front of the photos of his parents before going to bed. This way director resolves the mystery of bruised face of Stanley. The audience comes to know that Stanley is orphan and works at his uncle's restaurant who physically tortures him every day for remaining absent from the work during daytime.





Fig: 03



Fig:04

Table:03

Colour as signifiers

Signifier	Signified
Hindi teacher is cast in dark shades	To show the character in negative shades. The given character is inexplicable miser who is more talented in pilfering the kids' tiffins rather than teaching Hindi.
Character Stanley's face in the red hue	Colour red signifies violence. It has been used to assist lighting in defining texture. Here it intensifies the bruised face of the character.(see fig:03)
Change in colours of costumes of Stanley from bright to dull colours.	Stanley wears bright multicoloured costumes during a musical concert. The scene then shifts to kitchen of restaurant where Stanley in pale brown, dull clothes washes dirty dishes of customers.

**Discussion:** Particular colours or tints can also be used to suggest (often through their association with the colours of the natural world) warmth or coldness, or particular emotions. The colour change supports development in the narrative action. In this case, it helps in unfolding the mystery of the main protagonist who often appears joyful but actually lives the life of child labourers.

#### Table:04

#### Important Camera movements and shots as signifiers

Frequent use of close-up shots.	In order to showcase the emotions and expressions of children.  Since it is shot taken at close range, it shows greater details.
Various tracking and point of view shots of Stanley in inspirational song (“we wish to do something great”).	The camera physically follows the main character just to increase audiences' curiosity.  Director wants us to understand the situation from the point of view of the main character.
Low camera angle shots of character Stanley	To give a sense of strong individuality.  These shots have been used when Stanley shows strong determination to participate in music competition.  Secondly when the main character joins hands before holy family in reverence in the opening sequence.

**Discussion:** The film has been shot on a DSLR Canon 7D so that children could manage to face the lightweight camera. The film opens up with close up shot of sunny morning streaks falling on leaves and tilts down to showcase the image of plant. Usually each scene in a fictional narrative film uses an establishing shot that enables the viewer to establish the spatial relationships between characters involved in the scene.

Like many contemporary filmmakers, the practice of establishing shot has not been followed by Amole Gupte. By omitting an establishing shot the viewer is put in the position of struggling to make sense of the relationship between the characters shown. The attempt of filmmaker is to develop curiosity among an audience.

In another shot, Stanley follows a kid and the camera starts to follow them in a song sequence. The camera shows us busy streets of Mumbai for short duration and dissolves to point of view shot of Stanley. (Point of view shot or POV refers to the view of the subject. It shows what a character is looking at. Technically, POV shots are placed in between a shot of a character looking at something and a shot showing the character's reaction).

Table:05

**Important Costumes as signifiers**

Character Stanley in uniform	The boy goes to school
The same boy in partly filthy pale and dull undershirt at restaurant.	Signifies his class, his victimhood.



Fig: 05

**Discussion:**

The costume has a wide range of importance in the composition of character. Costume is a structured set of signs replicate with connotations. Clothes index national identity, class allegiance, gender position, social status, etc,” (Dix 2010, 16).

Throughout the film, we observe main protagonist Stanley in school uniform perhaps it is a deliberate attempt of filmmaker to hide his real identity, his social status. The truth is revealed near the end of film when the boy in shabby clothes is forced into arduous physical work by his uncle at restaurant.

The director used Iyers outfit to represent the strict science teacher. Similarly, the outfit and makeup of English teacher match her joyous nature. Director has kept balance between costume and makeup with the character to achieve realism.

Table:06

**Acting/characters as signifiers**

<b>Stanley</b>	Signifies multiple childhoods. The one that he deserves and the other that is depriving.
<b>Mr Verma</b>	Gluttony, as personified in Mr Verma, symbolizes the corruptive and capitalist forces that seek to crush or abolish the rights of the proletariat.
<b>Ms Rossie</b>	Symbolizes hope for children, moral policing.



Through his grotesque gesture of eating or robbing from others ‘tiffin’, Amole Guptae has beautifully manifested a symbolic class struggle that marginalizes the weak.(see fig:06)



(Fig: 06)

Partho Guptae as Stanley has strongly portrayed the two contrary states in the character’s life, one as family-less and famishing and the other as fulfilling.(see fig:05 and fig:03)

The time he spends in school provides him relief from the violence at the restaurant. The only solace in a restaurant being his cook Akram who packs the leftovers as his next day’s tiffin.To some extent he looks and behaves in a manner appropriate to his character’s function in the context of the film. Divya Dutta has shown good performance, as Ms Rossie.She speaks up against injustice in the school and makes Mr Verma ashamed of his acts.

**Table: 07**

**Important Props as signifiers**

Tiffin box as a prop	Emblematic marker of family and happy parenting

The word ‘tiffin’ means the lunch box that stores the home-made food that is carried either by the person concerned or delivered by agents like dabbawallas to the person for whom it is meant.



**Fig:07**

Traditionally such lunchboxes are usually circular to form a tiered cylinder with three or four stainless steel compartments, sealed with a tight-fitting lid and firmly side clipped to avoid spillages with a handle on top for carrying. The separate compartments serve the purpose of thali that accommodates main course meal.

Food, as Roland Barthes writes, “is a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behaviour”. (Barthes 29).

### Table: 08

#### Indexical metaphors as signifiers

Morning sun rays falling on the plant	Nourishment for growth.
Food in Tiffin box as an indexical metaphor	Lost family

**Discussion:** Stanley often concocts imaginary stories of his food cooked by his fictitious mother. Connotatively food in the tiffin box acts as a trope for lost family and makes its presence felt more through its absence in the film. In the film's opening frame as the Stanley enters the school, the shot dissolves to morning sun rays falling on the plant. It signifies connotatively that the main protagonist Stanley needs proper nourishment and guidance for growth.

## 2. Semiotic analysis of Hindi film *Mere Pyare Prime minister*

**Film:** Mere Pyare Prime minister

**Direction:** Rakesh Omprakash Mehra

**Duration:** 1 h 44 min

**Year of release:** 2019

**Genre:** Drama

**Language:** Hindi

### *A brief summary of film*

‘Mere Pyare Prime minister’ is a salutation used by slum boy in his letter addressed to the Prime minister. Made by Bollywood film director Rakesh Omprakash, who is also famous for his works *Rang de Basanti*(2006) and *Bhag Milka Bhag*(2013), the film explores pressing issues like open defecation, gender bias, sexual assault, and enormous disparity between rich and poor.

Highlighting social issues, the filmmaker’s intention is to move audience out of their pleasant life and acquaint them with the harsh realities of slum-dwellers. The film also emotionally binds the audience in the story of mother and a son.

The film opens with a dark screen and sounds of women from slum area making bawdy jokes. The shot then cuts to place of drug traitor where children are watching item songs. The traitor uses children to sell off drugs. The initial sequences make it unfit for children to watch the movie.

The action unfolds in one of Mumbai’s unnamed slum. The slum is replete with people trying to eke out living on the bare minimum. The slum dwellers have to face the challenge of scarcity in water supply and

absence of toilet. The women folk use the cover of night to relieve themselves. Sargam (Anjali Patil) and all her female counterpart face same problem. The main protagonist of the film is 8-year old boy Kahnu.

The central character Kahnu dons many roles, peddling drugs, selling newspapers and toys at traffic signals in the busy streets of Mumbai. His mother does embroidery work to support herself and her only son.

The tragedy erupts when on the night of Holi Sargam moves towards railway track to relieve herself. On her way back she is raped by the same police officer who moments before has saved her from molestation by a drunken neighbour. His campaign for toilet begins when he realises the danger his mother faced while relieving herself in darkened public places because there is no toilet in the slum.

His homegrown attempt to make a makeshift toilet for his mother ends in a sludgy mess. Thus he sets on journey to search a person authorised to build a toilet for them.

The filmmaker has used children to convey the serious issue that humans of all ages are forced into public humiliation by an uncaring municipality and local government.

The showcase of women cutting bawdy sexual jokes, kids watching item song or other sexual overtones reveals that film is replete with adult stuff thus making the film unfit for children to watch. The children dominate the narratives of the film as central protagonists and not as audiences.

### Semiotic analysis of mise-en-scene elements

#### Table:09

#### Setting/Location

#### Location as signifiers

Signifier	Signified
A cluster of makeshift huts made of rags, packing boxes, stretched drum, mud and bricks.	Squatter settlements of poor people. Signifiers of poor life
Various other signifiers like open defecation; People waiting in a long queue to fetch a bucket of water.	People living under sub-standard conditions. Lack of basic amenities like sewerage, drainage and protected water supply.
Magnificent buildings, cars, busy roads	Place of rich people

### Discussion

In Mehra's film settings acquires central position both in narrative and cinematic structure. Although the choice of location by Mehra does not come under the category of Italian neo-realism because the filmmaker has used natural location with minimum alteration.

The film nevertheless is partially realistic. The director has chosen natural settings of Mumbai's slum area to convince the viewers that whatever they are watching can really happen in real life. The slum colony is constructed with messy housing system made of rags and other objects. The filmmaker has constructed the image of a slum with makeshift huts made of rags and some other signifiers of poor life. Slum-dwellers typically inhabit marginal locations such as river bank, steep slopes or dumping ground. In spite of these signifiers of poor life, the filmmaker has used some elements of stylization in location. For instance, the recreation of Gandhi's statue in the slum colony which occurs as recurring leitmotif. According to Mehra, 'Gandhi was warrior on sanitation issues'. Furthermore, there are certain unrealistic features in film as well like hutment of character Sargam appears colourful and vibrant.

The filmmaker has also shown through locations that there is the low purchasing power of slum dwellers in formal land markets when compared with high market group.

The filmmaker contrasts the images of shabby and ramshackle slums with the images of clean roads, multi-storied buildings, shops, cars in order to illustrate the divide which exists between rich and poor.

**Table:10**

**Lighting as signifiers:**

Signifier	Signified
Under lighting or bottom lighting used to illuminate character Sargam's face	Enhances the frightening mood of the character after she is raped
Side lighting to illuminate character's face	Contradictory feelings
Chiaroscuro lighting	This technique adds depth to the scene.

The filmmaker has used both natural and artificial lighting to confer more meaning to the narrative.

In the aftermath of the tragic incident that struck sargam, she locks herself in a room. Her joyous son acts like a jester just helping her mother to come out of that horrifying incident. The filmmaker has used side lighting to illuminate character Sargam's face to suggest her contradictory feelings.

On the one hand, she is unable to cope up with this tragedy; on the other hand she wants to live happy life with her son and the boyfriend Pappu. Chiaroscuro lighting is the mixture of light and dark mostly used in noir film. Chiaroscuro is an Italian term and this technique was initially used by 15<sup>th</sup>-century renaissance artists in their paintings. Later on this technique was adopted in photography and cinema. The filmmaker has used this technique when Sargam is raped by a local policeman. The given lighting is used to detail the dark sides of law enforcement agencies.

**Table:11****Colour as signifier**

Holi colours	Happiness, joy
Blood stained and bruised face of character Sargam	Physical brutality of sexual violence Connotation: Attack on the honour of woman.
Colourful hutment of Sargam	Brightness, happiness (which is a contrast to her real situation)

Colour plays an important role in the transformation of Kanhu's mother. Her skin turns from the red colour of Holi to a colour of blood as she is raped on the same night by police officer. On the night of Holi, she wore a dark yellow and red sari; as everything about her life was bright. Red signifies the colour of love and passion; Yellow stands for happiness.(see fig:01)

Sargam shares tenuous romantic relationship with Pappu (played by Neetesh Wadhwa) and dances with him in celebration of Holi festival. Among the dark and dull hutments in dingy by lanes of slums, the character Sargam's hutment looks colourful and vibrant. Orange curtains, dash of green and orange hues on the wall signifies brightness which is quite contrasted to her life. These codes used by filmmaker are out of context as she is the only rape victim in the colony.

Fig:01





**Table:12**

Camera movements, shots as signifiers

Track and dolly shots in an initial sequence of film	It involves physical movement of the camera. The camera is mounted on some sort of equipment to get a smooth and stable shot.  Camera physically follows the subject.  These shots are used to introduce the audience to the slum dwellers colony.
Extreme long shot of moving train alternated with tight close-ups of Kanhu	Signify deep focus shot  The long journey set by Kanhu
Pan and tilts	The camera scans space horizontally while remaining stationary mounted on tripod.  Director has used these cinematic codes to mimic common, everyday movements.
Low-angle shots	It makes the subject look strong and powerful

**Discussion:**

Instead of classical panoramic shot to establish the scene, the director has used tracking shots to take the audience virtually along the spaces inhabited by slum-dwellers.

Extreme long shots of moving train traversing a large distance, in vast depth of field, are alternated with tight close-ups of Kanhu looking out through train window. This deep focus shot increases emotional and aesthetic depth in the mise-en-scene. (see fig:02)

Close-up shots provide more space to actors to put the acting skill in front of camera unlike in theatre. Kanhu is situated in extreme foreground, right of frame, accentuating the depth of field. The close-up shot reveals emotional details of the character. Here Kanhu sets on a journey and he has left vast space behind. Despite being kid, he is mature enough to share the responsibilities of his mother. An earnest child, travelling to a seat of power in Delhi to get justice for her loved one.

Low-angle shots have been used in several places to showcase the strength of the children who campaign for this social issue.(see fig:03 )

Low-angle shots of Kanhu and friends at a steep slope against the background of Mumbai city, while constructing makeshift toilet makes them appear more powerful and strong.

Fig:02



Fig:03

**Table:13**

**Costumes as signifiers**

Signifier	Signified
The cheap fabric of Cotton sari and salwar kameez with intricate design pattern	Traditional dress of Indian women belonging to different religious groups. Hindu usually wear sari and Muslims are fond of kameez salwar.  The fabric signifies the economic class of the characters in slum.
Woman dressed elegantly	A wealthy woman of the city
Dark and dirty pant shirts wore by slum boys	Underprivileged class of people

**Discussion:**

In the semiotics of Roland Barthes and his followers, each piece of clothing signifies meaning. Costume exists as structured set of signs replete with connotations. It indicates class, national identity, gender position, emotional and psychological status. (Dix2010,16).The filmmaker has used both stylised and natural costumes in the film. In certain scenes costumes can be matched with their narrative contexts.For instance on the occasion of Holi, slum dwellers wore colourful clothes signifying joy and happiness.

Mehra while staying away from his typical Indian mainstream dresses constructs his desired unbounded social and cultural space. He uses sari,salwar suit,shirt –pant for his various characters to signify any place of Indian society as the site of his story. Clothing of the characters remains an effective signifier of the socio-economic condition of the character.

**Table:14****Acting as signifiers**

Character Young boy Kanhu	Playful and mature who understand the emotional trauma of her mother and pledges to change her life
Character Sargam	Caring mother vulnerable( she is unable to protest against the perpetrators who are none other than law enforcement agencies)
Character Pappu	A gentleman who supports Sargam in her odd times.

Facial expressions of the actor become the main criteria for the judgement of his or her acting.Facial expressions of character Sargam played by Anjali Patil are natural doing justice to her role as mother and a rape victim living in poor conditions. When she faces sexual violence she reflects the pain but no melodrama which is typical of Indian commercial films.

Child actor Kanhu(played by Om Kanujiya) performance is also natural. The bus journey of Kanhu with his friends to Delhi suggests his metamorphosis from childhood experience to adulthood. In the earlier scenes his mother takes care of him.Now he sets on journey to help her poor mother.There was need to put more efforts to showcase meticulously this transformation. Nevertheless the filmmaker has attempted to express the essence of film through realistic acting and dialogue.

**Table:15****Props as signifiers**

Statue of Gandhi	Gandhi is a recurring motif in film. It is complex image where Iconic, indexical and symbolic values are all present.  Connotative: a symbol of hope and peace
Plastic bucket of water	Symbol of personal hygiene.

**Discussion**

A prop is an important element of mise-en-scene, adjunct with a setting that performs “settings” functions of substantiating narrative, signalling genre and revealing character (Dix 2010, 14). The filmmaker has done minimal alteration in the settings to create props. Statue of Gandhi as a symbolic prop in slum colony signifies that the great leader of nation fought for the basic rights of poor people. Connotatively the statue is also an epitome of ‘hope’ and inspiration in the life of poor people that their circumstances will change someday. It is this value manifested in the character of boy Kanhu who desires to build a toilet for her mother who was sexually assaulted by a local policeman.

A prop carries distinctive meaning within the film narrative. “Prop’s inanimate properties are just as useful as the human actor to show psychic status” (Arheim 1957, 143). The Gandhian statue, water pot, train are used by Mehra in his film as props. The bus journey of Kanhu with his friends to Delhi suggests his metamorphosis from childhood experience to adulthood. In the earlier scenes his mother takes care of him. Now he sets on journey to help her poor mother. The filmmaker did not put much efforts to showcase meticulously this transformation.

**Table:16****Indexical metaphors used in the film**

Dried upstream littered with garbage in slum	Sub-standard life of slum-dwellers.  The river or stream which is genesis and sustaining the force of an entire civilisation has dried up due to negligence of both people and government.
Statue of Gandhi	Warrior on social issues  Symbol of hope.
Rain	The aspect of nature which bring cheer as well as sadness in world

Kanhu makes makeshift toilet for her mother; however, the structure gets dismantled and washed away in rainfall. His attempt to make a makeshift toilet for her mother ends in a sludgy mess. Thus he sets on journey to search a person authorised to address this social problem.

### Conclusion:

The films analysed revealed that children dominates the narratives of Hindi cinema. There is no denying that in many commercial Bollywood films childhood representation has been marginal especially in the immediate aftermath of deregulation and neo-liberalism in India. However, the trend of Bollywood keeps on changing with changing audience perception and needs. In the phase 2000s, childhood experience of marginalized society dominated the narratives of Hindi cinema.

Contemporary Bollywood films on children are the blend of realistic and stylish elements. Bollywood films are rich in cinematic techniques like cinematography. They use less metaphorical and symbolic elements to convey the meanings.

In Hindi films on children, settings acquire central position both in narrative and cinematic structure. Although the choice of location by Hindi filmmakers does not comes under the category of Italian neo-realism because filmmakers have used natural location with minimum to maximum alteration.

Nevertheless, the film is partially realistic. For instance in '*Mere pyare prime minister*, the director has chosen natural settings of Mumbai's slum area to convince the viewers that whatever they are watching can really happen in real life. The slum colony is constructed with messy housing system made of rags and other objects.

In Hindi films there is an element of stylization in settings, though not predominantly present. The element of stylization is created with the use of lighting techniques and cinematography.

It is important to note that the sense of realism recreated in films cannot be deciphered only through locations, but all the other elements of *mise-en-scene* work together to generate meanings. Take for instance use of lighting in film. The filmmaker has used both natural and artificial lighting to confer more meanings to the narratives. Chiaroscuro lighting is a peculiar feature of Hindi films. Chiaroscuro lighting is the mixture of light and dark mostly used in noir film. Debates about acting remain peripheral to the articulation of substantive theories about spectatorship, authenticity and realism. In Hindi films even if acting is performed by trained actors they try to be less melodramatic.

There is no denying that absence of neo-realistic elements pushes the Bollywood films towards more stylish cinema, except in case of films like "Mere pyare pm" It can be said that these film directors are influenced by Italian neo-realism and their films shows an small attempt to reflect the reality.

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