

Abstract

This thesis explores the depiction of Southern Indian cultural identities in mainstream Bollywood and South Indian films, focusing on how these portrayals reflect regional, national, and cultural dynamics. The study intends to answer two research questions: How does mainstream Indian Cinema (Bollywood) represent South India's cultural identity, and how do South Indian movies represent the South's cultural identity? It plans on doing so by investigating how Bollywood, often criticised for presenting a North Indian-centric view, contrasts with South Indian cinema's approach to representing its own culture. By analysing a selection of films from both industries, this research examines how these portrayals have evolved over the past decade in response to changing societal attitudes and cinematic trends. The analysis employs theories from Cultural Studies, including concepts of Othering, Subaltern Studies, and Essentialism, to understand how cultural identities are represented and perceived. The chosen films represent a range of portrayals, from stereotypical to more nuanced, providing insights into how these industries address and sometimes perpetuate cultural stereotypes. This thesis reveals the complexity of Bollywood's portrayal of Southern India and highlights the authentic, often more respectful representations found in South Indian cinema. By comparing these different cinematic approaches, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of cultural representation in Indian cinema.