

Economic Liberalization in the Eyes of Cinema: Reflections of Economic Changes in the Era of Indian Economic Liberalization in Guru Movie (2007)

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Abstract

The economic reforms of the 1990s marked a significant transformation in India's film industry, particularly influencing Bollywood's thematic and stylistic dimensions. This era gave rise to what is now termed 'multiplex cinema' or 'new Bollywood,' characterized by its appeal to the urban middle-class through innovative storytelling and aesthetic innovation. This shift in cinema paralleled the broader societal shifts towards embracing technological advancements and a burgeoning media landscape. These changes also altered character portrayal in Bollywood, transitioning from rich merchants as villains to symbols of commercial success, reflecting evolving societal values towards economic prosperity. Furthermore, traditional notions of masculinity and nationalism were reinforced in film promotional materials, underscoring Bollywood's role in promoting consumerism. This paper analyzes the 2007 film "Guru" by Mani Ratnam, utilizing a narrative analysis to explore its depiction of economic liberalization's impact on India. The film follows protagonist Gurukant Desai from his humble beginnings to becoming a powerful business magnate, highlighting the themes of entrepreneurship, ambition, and ethical dilemmas. Through a detailed examination of key scenes and character dynamics, the paper reveals complex perspectives on economic growth, corporate ethics, and the personal costs of success, presenting 'Guru' as a compelling reflection on India's economic changes.

Keywords: Bollywood, Economic Liberalization, Guru Movie, India

1. Introduction

The economic liberalization of India, initiated in 1991, marked a watershed moment in the country's history, ushering in an era of profound economic and social transformation. This shift from a closed, centrally planned economy to a more open, market-oriented system not only reshaped India's economic landscape but also had far-reaching implications for its cultural industries, particularly Bollywood [1]. As India's premier Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai, Bollywood has long served as a mirror to society, reflecting and often influencing social norms, aspirations, and cultural values. The impact of economic liberalization on this influential medium has been both extensive and multifaceted, altering everything from thematic content and narrative styles to production methodologies and global outreach.

The pre-liberalization era of Bollywood was characterized by a tightly regulated environment that significantly constrained the industry's creative and economic potential. Limited access to foreign investment and technology, coupled with stringent

government controls, resulted in a cinema that, while rich in cultural specificity, often lacked the technical sophistication and global appeal of its Western counterparts [2]. Films of this period predominantly focused on social issues, family dramas, and romantic narratives that resonated with domestic audiences but had limited international appeal. The financial and bureaucratic hurdles of the time not only restricted the production quality but also confined distribution largely to domestic markets, with only marginal outreach to the Indian diaspora abroad.

The economic reforms of the 1990s catalyzed a dramatic transformation in the Bollywood landscape. The liberalization policies, which included opening up the economy to foreign direct investment (FDI), dismantling the 'License Raj', and reducing trade barriers, had profound implications for the film industry [3]. These changes facilitated an influx of foreign capital, expertise, and advanced technology into Bollywood, revolutionizing film production, distribution, and exhibition. Hollywood studios and international investors began collaborating with Indian filmmakers,

bringing not only financial resources but also global production standards and marketing strategies. This infusion of capital and know-how resulted in a significant upgrade in production quality, with state-of-the-art equipment, sophisticated special effects, and advanced post-production facilities becoming increasingly accessible to Bollywood filmmakers. The liberalization era also coincided with rapid technological advancements in the film industry globally [4]. The advent of digital technology, computer-generated imagery (CGI), and enhanced sound and editing techniques allowed Bollywood to produce films with production values that could compete on the international stage [4]. These technological innovations not only improved the visual and auditory experience for audiences but also expanded the creative possibilities for filmmakers, enabling them to tell more complex and visually stunning stories.

One of the most significant impacts of economic liberalization on Bollywood has been the industry's increased global reach and influence. The relaxation of trade barriers and the growth of digital distribution channels have enabled Bollywood films to penetrate markets far beyond India and its traditional diaspora audiences [5]. Indian films are now regularly distributed and screened in countries across the world, from North America and Europe to the Middle East, Africa, and East Asia. This globalization of Bollywood has not only generated additional revenue streams but has also facilitated greater cultural exchange, elevating the status of Indian cinema on the world stage and influencing global popular culture in unprecedented ways.

The economic reforms also precipitated a shift in the business models and professionalization of the Bollywood industry. The entry of corporate studios, both domestic and international, brought a more structured and corporatized approach to film production and distribution [6]. This professionalization extended to various aspects of filmmaking, including financial management, marketing strategies, and distribution networks. The industry saw the emergence of more sophisticated audience research, targeted marketing campaigns, and strategic release planning, all contributing to the overall growth and sustainability of Bollywood as a global entertainment powerhouse.

Perhaps most notably, the post-liberalization era witnessed a significant evolution in the thematic content and narrative styles of Bollywood films. As India's economy opened up and its middle class expanded, films began to reflect the changing aspirations, challenges, and lifestyles of a rapidly modernizing society. Themes of globalization, urbanization, consumerism, and cultural hybridity became increasingly prevalent [7]. Films started to address more complex and contemporary issues, including economic disparities, social mobility, gender roles, and the tension between tradition and modernity. The portrayal of characters and settings evolved to offer more nuanced and realistic depictions of urban life and modern relationships, moving away from the often simplistic and melodramatic narratives of the past. This thematic shift is exemplified by films like "Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge" (The Brave-Hearted Will Take the Bride) (1995), which captured

the experiences and aspirations of the Indian diaspora, blending traditional values with Western lifestyles in a way that resonated with global audiences [8].

Similarly, "Lagaan" (Land tax) (2001) showcased Bollywood's newfound ability to produce historical epics with high production values and international appeal, garnering an Academy Award nomination and global critical acclaim [9]. The "Dhoom" (Blast) franchise (2004, 2006, 2013) epitomized the new, globalized Bollywood, with its high-octane action sequences, glossy production values, and cosmopolitan settings that could rival Hollywood blockbusters [10]. The transformations brought about by economic liberalization have not been without their criticisms and challenges. The increased commercialization of cinema has led to concerns about the homogenization of content, with critics arguing that the focus on producing formulaic blockbusters for maximum profit has come at the expense of artistic integrity and cultural authenticity [11]. There are ongoing debates about the marginalization of independent and regional cinema, as well as the potential erosion of traditional Indian values in the face of Western cultural influences.

Moreover, the economic disparities that have widened in the wake of liberalization have also found reflection in Bollywood's content and industry structure. The economic liberalization of 1991 brought about significant economic growth in India, but it also exacerbated income inequality, particularly between urban and rural populations, as well as between different social classes. Bollywood, being a key cultural medium, has mirrored these disparities in several ways. In terms of content, many films have highlighted the stark contrasts between the affluent and the impoverished. For instance, films like *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) and *Gully Boy* (2019) depict the struggles of characters from economically marginalized backgrounds striving for social mobility within an unequal society. These films address themes of poverty, aspiration, and the often-limited opportunities available to the economically disadvantaged, providing a reflection of the widening economic gap in India post-liberalization.

Additionally, the structure of the Bollywood industry itself has evolved in a way that reflects these disparities. With the influx of foreign investment and the professionalization of the industry, there has been a shift toward producing high-budget films that cater to the tastes of the urban middle and upper classes, often sidelining stories that focus on rural or working-class struggles. Independent and regional cinema, which might better represent these marginalized voices, has often struggled to compete with the financial power and distribution networks of mainstream Bollywood films. The commercialization of Bollywood has further reinforced this focus on profit-driven, mass-market entertainment, sometimes at the expense of more socially conscious, lower-budget films [3,12].

While some films have tackled these issues head-on, critics argue that much of mainstream Bollywood continues to cater primarily to urban, middle-class audiences, potentially neglecting

the realities and concerns of India's vast rural and economically disadvantaged populations. As Bollywood continues to evolve in the 21st century, navigating the complexities of a globalized, digital age while remaining rooted in Indian cultural contexts, it stands as a fascinating case study of the far-reaching impacts of economic liberalization on cultural industries. This leads us to the central question of this research: "How has the portrayal of socio-economic disparities in Bollywood cinema evolved in response to the economic liberalization policies initiated in India in 1991?"

This paper seeks to address this question through a comprehensive analysis of Bollywood films produced in the post-liberalization era, with a particular focus on their depiction of economic and social disparities. By examining changes in narrative themes, character portrayals, and visual representations of wealth and poverty, we aim to uncover how Bollywood has reflected, critiqued, and potentially influenced societal perceptions of economic inequality in a liberalized India. This investigation will not only provide insights into the evolving relationship between cinema and socio-economic realities but also contribute to broader discussions about the role of popular culture in shaping public discourse on critical social issues in the context of rapid economic change.

2. Literature Review: Economic Transformations in India within the Realm of Bollywood Cinema

Economic liberalization in India, initiated in 1991, has had far-reaching effects across various sectors, including the cultural domain. Bollywood, India's prolific Hindi-language film industry, has been significantly influenced by these economic changes [1]. This literature review delves into the extensive body of research on the economic reforms in India and their portrayal in Bollywood movies, highlighting how economic transformations are reflected in the themes, narratives, and production practices within the industry. This review synthesizes findings from various scholarly sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intersection between economic changes and Bollywood cinema.

Economic liberalization in India, often referred to as the 1991 reforms, was a response to a severe balance of payments crisis. The reforms aimed to transition India from a protectionist economy to a market-driven one, involving deregulation, reduction of trade barriers, and liberalization of foreign investment policies [1]. The impact of these reforms has been widely studied, with scholars highlighting significant growth in GDP, increased foreign direct investment (FDI), and a surge in entrepreneurial activities. [13]. One of the primary outcomes of economic liberalization has been the substantial economic growth and structural transformation of the Indian economy. Researchers have documented the shift from an agrarian economy to one dominated by services and manufacturing [14]. This shift has had profound implications for employment patterns, urbanization, and income distribution. The rise of the middle class, fueled by economic growth, has been particularly noteworthy, leading to increased consumerism and changing lifestyles [15]. Globalization, facilitated by economic liberalization, has led to greater integration of India into the global economy.

This integration has resulted in increased cultural exchange, with significant implications for Indian society and its cultural products, including Bollywood films [16]. Scholars have noted how globalization has brought in new ideas, values, and cultural practices, influencing various aspects of Indian life [17]. The themes and narratives of pre-liberalization films often focused on social justice, romantic escapism, and familial values, reflecting the socio-economic context of the time [2]. Post-liberalization, Bollywood has experienced a notable shift in themes and narratives, influenced by the broader economic and cultural changes. The portrayal of globalization and modernity has become prominent in Bollywood films post-liberalization. Films such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (The Brave-Hearted Will Take the Bride) (1995) and *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (Sometimes Happiness, Sometimes Sadness) (2001) depict characters navigating the tensions between traditional Indian values and Western lifestyles [8]. These films reflect the experiences of the Indian diaspora and the increasing influence of Western culture on Indian society [5]. The rise of the middle class and increased consumerism are recurring themes in post-liberalization Bollywood. Films such as *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* (You Only Live Once) (2011) and *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani* (Youth is Crazy) (2013) showcase the aspirations and lifestyles of affluent urban Indians, emphasizing themes of personal freedom, career ambitions, and leisure travel [18].

These narratives highlight the changing economic landscape and the growing emphasis on individualism and material success. Urbanization and its associated social changes are frequently depicted in contemporary Bollywood films. Movies like *Swades* (Homeland) (2004) and *Wake Up Sid* (2009) explore the experiences of individuals in rapidly urbanizing environments, addressing issues such as migration, generational conflicts, and the quest for identity [19]. These films reflect the socio-economic transformations brought about by urbanization and the challenges of adapting to new social realities. Economic disparities and social inequalities continue to be significant themes in Bollywood cinema. Films such as *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) and *Gully Boy* (Street Boy) (2019) highlight the stark contrasts between the rich and the poor, addressing issues of poverty, social mobility, and the struggle for economic empowerment [12]. These films underscore the persistent challenges of economic inequality in a rapidly growing economy.

Economic liberalization has also transformed the production and distribution practices in Bollywood. The liberalization policies facilitated the entry of foreign investors and multinational corporations into the Indian film industry. This increased investment has enabled Bollywood to produce high-budget films with advanced production technologies and international collaborations [3]. Hollywood studios such as Warner Bros. and 20th Century Fox have co-produced Bollywood films, bringing in capital, expertise, and global distribution networks. Technological advancements in film production and distribution have had a significant impact on Bollywood. The adoption of digital technologies, computer-generated imagery (CGI), and

advanced sound and editing techniques have improved the quality of Bollywood films, making them more competitive on a global scale [4]. These technological innovations have also facilitated the production of visually stunning films with complex narratives and special effects. The globalization of Bollywood has expanded its reach to international markets. Bollywood films are now distributed and screened in countries around the world, catering to both the Indian diaspora and global audiences [6].

The use of digital platforms and online streaming services has further enhanced the accessibility and visibility of Bollywood films globally, contributing to the industry's growth and international recognition. The entry of corporate studios and the professionalization of film production and distribution have transformed Bollywood into a more organized and structured industry [3]. This professionalization includes better financial management, marketing strategies, and distribution networks, which have contributed to the overall growth and sustainability of the industry [10]. The establishment of film schools and training institutes has also improved the skill set of professionals in the industry, leading to higher production standards. The commercialization of Bollywood cinema has led to concerns about the homogenization of content. The focus on producing commercially viable blockbusters has sometimes resulted in formulaic and repetitive narratives, with an emphasis on star power and marketability [11]. This trend has raised questions about the artistic quality and diversity of Bollywood films, with independent and regional cinema often being marginalized. The increasing influence of Western culture and values in Bollywood films has sparked debates about the cultural impact of globalization. Critics argue that the adoption of Western lifestyles and consumerist values in Bollywood cinema may erode traditional Indian values and cultural identity [7].

The portrayal of modernity and globalization in Bollywood films reflects the complex and often contentious process of cultural exchange and adaptation. Despite the economic growth and prosperity depicted in many Bollywood films, issues of economic inequality and social injustice remain prevalent. Scholars have highlighted the need for Bollywood to address these issues more critically and to provide a more nuanced portrayal of the socio-economic realities of contemporary India [12]. Films that explore the struggles of marginalized communities and the challenges of social mobility play a crucial role in raising awareness and fostering social change. Punathambekar's work (2013), *From Bombay to Bollywood: The making of a global media industry*, offers a comprehensive analysis of how economic liberalization transformed Bollywood from a national cinema to a global media industry [20]. The author argues that the post-1991 era saw a fundamental shift in how Bollywood operated, both in terms of production practices and market orientation. Punathambekar examines the emergence of new institutional structures, such as multiplexes and corporate production houses, which reshaped the industry's economic landscape. One of the key contributions of Punathambekar's work is his analysis of how liberalization affected labor practices within Bollywood.

He notes that the influx of foreign capital and the corporatization of film production led to a more professionalized workforce, with specialized roles and a greater emphasis on technical expertise. This shift had significant implications for how films were made and, consequently, for the content that was produced. Punathambekar also explores how economic liberalization facilitated Bollywood's global expansion. He argues that the opening up of the Indian economy allowed Bollywood to tap into new markets, particularly among the Indian diaspora. This global orientation, in turn, influenced the themes and narratives of Bollywood films, with an increasing number of stories set in international locations or featuring Non-Resident Indian (NRI) characters. Ganti's *Producing Bollywood: Inside the contemporary Hindi film industry* (2014) provides an ethnographic study of Bollywood in the post-liberalization era. Ganti's work is particularly valuable for its insider perspective on how economic changes have affected the day-to-day operations of the film industry.

One of Ganti's key observations is the tension between creativity and commerce that has become more pronounced in the liberalized era. She notes that while economic reforms have brought more financial resources into the industry, they have also led to increased pressure for commercial success (Ganti 2014). This pressure, Ganti argues, has influenced creative decisions, leading to a preference for 'safe' formulaic films over more experimental or socially conscious cinema. Ganti also examines how economic liberalization has affected the power dynamics within Bollywood. She observes that the entry of corporate studios and the rise of multiplex cinemas have shifted power away from individual producers and stars towards corporate entities. This shift, she argues, has had significant implications for the types of films that get made and how they are marketed and distributed. Another important contribution of Ganti's work is her analysis of how globalization has influenced the aesthetics of Bollywood cinema. She argues that the desire to appeal to a global audience has led to changes in visual style, narrative structure, and even dialogue, with an increasing use of English and a more 'international' look and feel to many films.

Both Punathambekar and Ganti's works provide valuable insights into how economic liberalization has reshaped Bollywood at multiple levels - from industry structures and production practices to narrative themes and aesthetic choices. Their research complements the existing literature by offering detailed, empirically grounded analyses of the complex interplay between economic policies and cultural production. These studies also highlight some of the contradictions and tensions that have emerged in Bollywood as a result of liberalization. While the industry has become more globalized and professionally managed, there are concerns about the impact on creative freedom and the representation of diverse Indian realities. Both authors note that while Bollywood has gained in terms of global reach and financial resources, there are ongoing debates about whether this has come at the cost of cultural authenticity and social relevance. Incorporating these works into our literature review strengthens our understanding of how economic liberalization has impacted Bollywood, particularly

in terms of industry structures, global orientation, and the tension between commercial imperatives and creative/social concerns. These insights will be valuable in analyzing how the portrayal of socio-economic disparities in Bollywood cinema has evolved in response to India's changing economic landscape.

The economic liberalization of 1991 has had a profound impact on India, transforming its economy and society in significant ways. Bollywood, as a major cultural industry, has been deeply influenced by these economic changes. The themes, narratives, and production practices in Bollywood cinema reflect the broader socio-economic transformations brought about by liberalization and globalization. While the increased investment, technological advancements, and global reach have benefited Bollywood, the industry also faces challenges related to commercialization, cultural impact, and social inequality. As Bollywood continues to evolve, it remains a dynamic and multifaceted reflection of India's economic and cultural landscape. In conclusion, this literature review has elucidated the profound influence of economic liberalization on Bollywood, highlighting shifts in themes, narratives, and production practices that mirror the broader socio-economic transformations in India since 1991. The integration of global influences and technological advancements has not only expanded Bollywood's horizons but also brought to the fore the complexities of India's rapidly changing social fabric. Amidst these cinematic and cultural shifts, socio-economic disparities remain a persistent theme, portraying the evolving challenges and aspirations of contemporary Indian society.

This leads us to the research question: "How has the portrayal of socio-economic disparities in Bollywood cinema evolved in response to the economic liberalization policies initiated in India in 1991? This paper seeks to address this question, aiming to offer deeper insights into the role of film as a reflective and constitutive medium of societal values and transformations, thereby providing a richer understanding of the interplay between cinema and socio-economic realities in post-liberalization India.

3. Case Study: The "Guru" (2007) Movie

Released in 2007, "Guru" is a Bollywood film directed by Mani Ratnam that intricately weaves together elements of biography, drama, and socio-economic commentary. Set against the backdrop of India's economic liberalization in the 1980s and 1990s, the film portrays the journey of Gurukant Guru Desai, a determined and ambitious villager who rises from humble beginnings to become a tycoon in the Indian business world. Starring Abhishek Bachchan in the titular role and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan as his wife, Guru explores themes of entrepreneurship, ambition, ethical dilemmas, and the socio-political landscape of post-independence India. Reasons for selecting "Guru" (2007) as case study of this paper are as follow:

3.1 Context of Economic Liberalization

The narrative of Guru unfolds during a transformative period in India's history marked by economic liberalization reforms initiated in 1991. These reforms dismantled the License Raj, reduced

bureaucratic hurdles, and opened up the Indian economy to global markets [1]. Against this backdrop, the film depicts Guru's relentless pursuit of success amidst the shifting socio-economic dynamics of the time. His journey reflects the aspirations and challenges faced by individuals navigating the complexities of a rapidly changing business environment.

3.2 Themes and Narratives

Guru intricately explores various themes that resonate with the era of economic liberalization. It delves into the tension between ambition and ethical compromises, as Guru navigates the thin line between entrepreneurship and ethical boundaries [3]. The film also addresses themes of perseverance, determination, and the quest for social mobility in a society undergoing profound economic and cultural transformation [18].

3.3 Cinematic Elements and Cultural Representation

Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Mani Ratnam, Guru employs rich cinematic techniques and compelling storytelling to bring Guru's journey to life. The film's narrative structure not only chronicles Guru's rise to prominence but also examines the personal and societal costs of his ambitions. Through its portrayal of relationships, political intrigue, and business rivalries, Guru offers a nuanced exploration of power dynamics and the impact of economic policies on individual lives [19].

3.4 Impact and Legacy

Upon its release, Guru received critical acclaim for its performances, direction, and thematic depth. It resonated with audiences for its portrayal of a self-made entrepreneur navigating the complexities of India's economic liberalization. The film's enduring legacy lies in its ability to capture the essence of an era defined by rapid economic growth, social change, and the aspirations of a new India [10]. In conclusion, Guru stands as a cinematic testament to the transformative impact of economic liberalization on Indian society, encapsulating the spirit of entrepreneurship, ambition, and the ethical dilemmas faced amidst changing times. Through its compelling narrative and evocative storytelling, the film continues to resonate with audiences, offering insights into the socio-economic fabric of contemporary India.

4. Narrative Analysis

The analysis of Guru is supported by narrative analysis, which is employed to examine how the film constructs and conveys its themes. Narrative analysis is particularly suited to exploring the portrayal of complex socio-economic issues, as it allows for a detailed examination of character development, plot structure, and thematic elements. Through this framework, the study dissects the depiction of economic liberalization and its impact on entrepreneurship, ethics, and societal values within the film. The narrative of Guru is examined in relation to four key areas.

4.1 Context of Economic Liberalization

The film's backdrop is the economic reforms of the 1990s, and through narrative analysis, the study explores how Guru portrays the opportunities and challenges presented by liberalization

policies.

4.2 Themes and Narratives

The film's thematic focus on ambition, ethical compromises, and social mobility are analyzed within the broader context of India's evolving economic landscape.

4.3 Cinematic Elements and Cultural Representation

The use of cinematic techniques—such as non-linear storytelling, symbolic imagery, and character development—are examined to understand how they enhance the narrative and reflect the socio-economic environment.

4.4 Impact and Legacy

Finally, the study considers the film's long-term influence, particularly how it resonates with contemporary audiences as a reflection of India's post-liberalization growth and societal changes.

This theoretical framework not only provides a structured way to analyze the film but also strengthens the argument that *Guru* serves as a cinematic lens through which the complexities of India's economic transition can be better understood.

5. Justification for Selecting *Guru* (2007)

The film *Guru* (2007) by Mani Ratnam was chosen as the focal point of this study because of its nuanced portrayal of India's economic liberalization and the entrepreneurial journey of its protagonist, Gurukant Desai. Set during the transformative period of India's 1990s economic reforms, *Guru* provides a rich narrative that parallels the socio-economic changes brought about by the dismantling of the License Raj and the liberalization policies. The protagonist's rise from humble beginnings to a business tycoon symbolizes the new opportunities available in a more open and market-oriented economy. This makes *Guru* an ideal case study for examining the intersection of entrepreneurship, economic policy, and societal change within Indian cinema.

By focusing on *Guru*, this study aims to explore how the film reflects key aspects of India's economic transition, particularly in terms of ambition, ethical dilemmas, and socio-political challenges that individuals and businesses faced during that era. Moreover, the film's cinematic representation of these themes allows for a deeper understanding of how Indian cinema, especially Bollywood, engages with national economic transformations. For these reasons, *Guru* (2007) has been selected as case study of this paper.

6. Plot Analysis

Directed by Mani Ratnam, *Guru* (2007) is a compelling narrative that chronicles the rise of Gurukant Guru Desai, a determined and ambitious villager who transforms into a formidable business tycoon amidst the backdrop of India's economic liberalization in the 1980s and 1990s. The film opens with a young and ambitious *Guru*, played by Abhishek Bachchan, arriving in Bombay (Mumbai) with dreams of becoming a successful entrepreneur. Despite his humble beginnings, *Guru* possesses an unwavering

belief in his abilities and a strong desire to defy societal norms. He starts small by establishing a cloth manufacturing business, facing initial struggles and skepticism from established businessmen and his own family, including his wife Sujata, portrayed by Aishwarya Rai Bachchan.

Guru's determination and business acumen soon propel him to success. He expands his business empire rapidly, leveraging opportunities presented by India's economic reforms. The narrative captures *Guru*'s strategic maneuvers, innovative thinking, and bold decisions that lead to exponential growth in his textile business. Along the way, *Guru* navigates ethical dilemmas, brushes with legality, and confronts political adversaries who challenge his ascent. As *Guru*'s empire grows, so do the complexities of his personal and professional life. The film delves into the ethical compromises *Guru* makes to sustain his success, testing his relationships and principles. His confrontations with moral dilemmas, legal battles, and media scrutiny threaten to unravel everything he has built. Yet, *Guru* remains resolute, driven by his vision of transforming India's business landscape and empowering others like him.

In the final act, *Guru*'s journey comes full circle as he reflects on his accomplishments and the sacrifices made along the way. The film concludes with *Guru*'s enduring legacy as a visionary entrepreneur who revolutionized the Indian business world. His story resonates beyond personal triumphs, symbolizing the aspirations and challenges of a nation undergoing profound socio-economic transformation. *Guru* intertwines thematic depth with cinematic prowess, showcasing Mani Ratnam's adept storytelling and Abhishek Bachchan's compelling portrayal of *Guru*. The film uses flashback sequences, symbolic imagery, and a non-linear narrative structure to enhance the emotional and thematic resonance of *Guru*'s journey. Themes of ambition, perseverance, ethical ambiguity, and the impact of economic policies are woven intricately into the fabric of the storyline, offering audiences a nuanced exploration of entrepreneurship and societal change.

Guru stands as a poignant testament to the transformative power of ambition and resilience in the face of adversity. Through *Guru*'s journey, the film not only celebrates individual triumph but also critiques the moral complexities and societal repercussions of rapid economic growth. As a cinematic masterpiece, *Guru* continues to captivate audiences with its compelling narrative, profound insights, and timeless relevance to the evolving socio-economic landscape of contemporary India.

7. Analysis: *Guru* (2007) Movie and its Portrayal of the Indian Economy

Released amidst critical acclaim in 2007, *Guru*, directed by Mani Ratnam, stands as a cinematic exploration of ambition, entrepreneurship, and the socio-economic transformations in India during the 1980s and 1990s. The film revolves around the journey of Gurukant Guru Desai, portrayed by Abhishek Bachchan, as he rises from a determined villager to a pioneering business magnate. Set against the backdrop of India's economic liberalization,

Guru intricately weaves together personal ambition with the broader narrative of national progress and societal change. Guru unfolds during a pivotal period in Indian history marked by economic reforms that dismantled the License Raj and opened up the economy to global markets. This backdrop is crucial to understanding Guru's entrepreneurial journey, as it showcases the opportunities and challenges presented by liberalization. Guru's character embodies the spirit of a new era, where individuals like him could rise from modest beginnings to challenge established norms and build vast business empires.

The film portrays how Guru leverages the newfound economic freedoms and policy changes to establish himself in the textile industry. His strategic thinking, innovative approaches, and willingness to take risks reflect the entrepreneurial spirit unleashed by economic liberalization. Guru's journey resonates with real-life stories of self-made entrepreneurs who capitalized on the liberalized economy to achieve unprecedented success, contributing to India's economic growth and global competitiveness [1]. Central to Guru are the themes of ambition and ethics, which intersect as Guru navigates the complex terrain of business and politics. The film explores the moral dilemmas faced by Guru as he makes decisions that blur the lines between right and wrong in pursuit of his goals. His conflicts with legal authorities, business rivals, and personal relationships underscore the personal sacrifices and ethical compromises often associated with ambitious pursuits in a competitive environment [3]. Moreover, Guru's success story is not merely individualistic but also symbolic of larger societal aspirations. His rise challenges traditional hierarchies and inspires a generation of aspiring entrepreneurs to dream big and push boundaries. The film's portrayal of entrepreneurship as a catalyst for socio-economic change aligns with broader narratives of India's emergence as a global economic player post-liberalization, where innovation and risk-taking became crucial drivers of growth [10].

Mani Ratnam's directorial prowess shines through in Guru, with the film employing a blend of narrative techniques to enrich its storytelling. The use of flashback sequences, non-linear narrative structure, and symbolic imagery enhances the emotional depth and thematic resonance of Guru's journey. These cinematic elements not only engage the audience but also underscore the film's commentary on the complexities of ambition, power, and societal expectations in a rapidly changing India [19]. Furthermore, Abhishek Bachchan's portrayal of Guru is pivotal to the film's success, capturing the character's evolution from a determined young man to a shrewd businessman with sensitivity and conviction. Aishwarya Rai Bachchan's performance as Guru's supportive yet conflicted wife, Sujata, adds emotional depth to the narrative, highlighting the personal sacrifices made in pursuit of entrepreneurial success.

Beyond its narrative and cinematic achievements, Guru provides a lens through which to examine the relationship between Bollywood and the Indian economy. As one of India's most influential cultural industries, Bollywood often reflects and shapes societal narratives, including those related to economic development and social

change. The success of films like Guru, which delve into the complexities of economic liberalization, underscores Bollywood's role as a mirror to the nation's aspirations, anxieties, and evolving identities [6]. Bollywood's portrayal of entrepreneurship and economic themes has evolved over the decades, mirroring shifts in India's economic policies and global integration. Pre-liberalization films often depicted narratives of social justice, family values, and rural-urban divides, reflecting the socio-economic realities of a protected economy. In contrast, post-liberalization Bollywood has embraced themes of globalization, urbanization, and individual aspiration, mirroring India's transition to a market-driven economy [2].

Films like Guru exemplify Bollywood's ability to engage with complex economic themes while entertaining audiences. By humanizing the impact of economic policies through compelling narratives and charismatic characters, these films contribute to public discourse on issues such as wealth creation, inequality, and the ethical dimensions of business practices. They also play a crucial role in shaping popular perceptions of entrepreneurship and economic success, influencing societal attitudes towards risk-taking, innovation, and wealth creation [18].

While Guru celebrates entrepreneurship and individual achievement, it also raises critical questions about the darker side of economic progress. The film's portrayal of ethical dilemmas and moral compromises underscores the challenges faced by individuals navigating a competitive business environment. Guru's confrontations with legal authorities and media scrutiny highlight the complexities of balancing ambition with ethical integrity, resonating with contemporary debates on corporate governance and corporate social responsibility [7]. Moreover, the film's depiction of political corruption and bureaucratic hurdles reflects enduring challenges within India's business landscape, despite economic reforms. Guru's battles with entrenched interests and systemic barriers reveal broader socio-political tensions that continue to shape India's economic trajectory. This nuanced portrayal adds depth to the film's narrative, offering viewers a critical perspective on the realities of doing business in a rapidly changing society.

8. Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the portrayal of socio-economic disparities in Bollywood cinema, with a specific focus on the impact of India's economic liberalization policies as reflected in the film Guru (2007). The key research question guiding this study was: "How has the portrayal of socio-economic disparities in Bollywood cinema evolved in response to the economic liberalization policies initiated in India in 1991?". Through a narrative analysis of Guru, the study demonstrates that Bollywood's depiction of socio-economic themes has evolved significantly since the 1990s. The film illustrates the rise of entrepreneurship in post-liberalization India, capturing the ambition and drive of individuals like the protagonist, Gurukant Desai, who embodies the opportunities presented by economic reforms. However, Guru also delves into the ethical dilemmas and personal costs of such ambition, presenting a nuanced portrayal of the moral

compromises associated with economic success. The findings of this study highlight several key points:

Entrepreneurship and Opportunity: The film vividly portrays the entrepreneurial spirit encouraged by economic liberalization, with Guru symbolizing the transformative power of economic reforms on individual ambition and societal advancement.

Ethical Ambiguities: Guru addresses the moral conflicts faced by individuals striving for success in a liberalized economy, offering insight into the challenges of balancing ambition with ethical integrity.

Cinematic Reflection of Social Change: Through its rich cinematic techniques, Guru reflects the broader socio-economic transformations taking place in India, making it a valuable representation of the era's economic realities and societal shifts.

In conclusion, Guru serves as a compelling example of how Bollywood has responded to the socio-economic changes brought about by economic liberalization. The film's focus on entrepreneurship, ethics, and societal challenges provides a lens through which we can understand the evolving relationship between cinema and socio-economic realities in post-liberalization India. This study contributes to broader discussions on the role of cinema in reflecting and shaping public discourse on economic transformation.

Ultimately, the story of Bollywood's engagement with India's economic liberalization is not just about changes in cinematic content or industry structures. It is a testament to the power of popular culture to reflect, critique, and potentially shape societal values and aspirations. As India continues its economic journey, the evolution of its cinema will remain a fascinating lens through which to view the hopes, struggles, and transformations of a nation in flux.

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