A study of the transnational journeys of British Asian music and musicians in the 21st century

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Abstract

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This thesis is an enquiry into the 21st-century journeys of British Asian music and musicians along with the networks of transnational Punjabi music production. Following the bloom and decline of the British Asian bhangra and Asian Underground scene, at the turn of the 21st century, we can witness a stream of return migration of musical artists from the United Kingdom to India. Now, there are a number of British Asian diaspora artists who work in the Bollywood and the Punjabi music industry and this raises interesting questions regarding the dynamics of cultural production between the homeland and the diaspora.

The thesis has two main aims: firstly, it seeks to re-evaluate the position of British Asian music in the 21st century in relation to the global South Asian cultural production, and secondly, it seeks to understand how the cultural industry of Bollywood engages with South Asian diasporas from the point of view of music.

I use mixed research methods, such as participant observation, interviews, and textual analysis of media reportage and social media presence to conduct a qualitative cultural studies analysis. In order to provide a more nuanced understanding of the systemic processes, I focus on three case studies in my thesis (Rishi Rich, music producer; DJ Frenzy, DJ; Hard Kaur, rapper) to highlight different key push and pull factors for the return migration process, such as nostalgia, gender, cultural remittances and the importance of Punjabiness.

By tracing the lives and careers of selected British Asian artists and their journeys to Bollywood and the Punjabi music industry, I suggest that we are witnessing a major transformation in the global South Asian cultural economy as Bollywood is gaining more visibility and it is becoming an increasingly attractive and lucrative industry globally and in relation to its diasporas.

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I would like to thank Birmingham City University for providing a home for this research. Their institutional and financial support allowed me to travel to India for fieldwork and to discuss my research at numerous conferences in the UK. I would also like to thank Punch Records, Birmingham for supporting me on my first ever journey to Mumbai in the framework of the Britain is Great industry conference in 2018.

I am very grateful to my family and friends for their support and faith in me. I would like to thank friends and colleagues at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, especially Dr Gergely Salát for believing in me from day one and accommodating my quirky research topics always. I would also like to thank Kanav Gupta for offering comments on so many of these chapters, very often on a last-minute basis. Last but not the least, I am immensely grateful to my family, especially to my mother and my fathers, without whose network of support, none of this would have been possible. I would like to dedicate this thesis to the loving memory of my grandmother.

Preface

There was one moment that I kept returning to in my memories as I was researching material online, in libraries, and travelling between Birmingham, Mumbai, Delhi and Chandigarh in my quest for interviews. This memory resurfaced even more forcefully as I wrote, drafted and redrafted this thesis. The memory was of a chance encounter with a prominent British Asian musician who suggested that I broaden my perspective and focus on the international dynamics of the British Asian scene, instead of focusing on the local developments. This suggestion then became the rudder that gave my thesis its direction. It is only fitting, therefore, that I begin this study by recounting this chance conversation. I would not call it an interview. Rather, it was more of a quick exchange of words about a topic that I had just started to immerse myself in. Nevertheless, this brief episode of ethnographic observation ended up shaping the course of this thesis, as well as my life in general, more than I could have imagined at the time. It took me some time to realise the significance of that encounter because events that followed unfolded in a rather unexpected way, a phenomenon that became a recurring pattern during the later stages of my work. Be that as it may, I think it is worth recounting the whole conversation in detail.

New vistas

It was a surprisingly sunny day in December 2017 as I sat in the office of Punch Records, a Birmingham-based music company that supported the initial stages of my PhD research. I was reading the chapter about the collapse of the British Asian music industry in Falu Bakrania's detailed ethnographic work (2013) on the British Asian club scene. This, of course, made me slightly anxious as my project was supposed to address British Asian music and identities. At this moment, a tall, very well-groomed British Asian man walked into the office with the air of someone who needs no introduction. He turned out to be PBN, a.k.a. Punjabi By Nature, a Coventry-based British Punjabi singer and music producer. He was there to see a colleague at Punch who also acted as his UK manager. I was introduced as the researcher-in-residence and was generously invited to their meeting, and I was given the opportunity to chat briefly with PBN about his experiences. I was slightly star-struck and taken aback by the sudden turn of events. I was still in the very early stages of my research when suddenly I found myself in the company of someone who was a walking, talking, breathing example of the phenomenon I hoped to study. I felt underprepared. I had no consent forms, no means to record the conversation, and also no good questions to ask. Moreover, I felt very shy. As a non-native speaker of English, I had problems

understanding his thick Black-country accent. As a non-Asian woman, I had difficulties explaining why I was interested in this topic.

Thankfully, PBN was quick to take the lead in the conversation. After a brief explanation of my position and my research goals, he interjected and said that my focus at that moment (British Asian female musicians) was not the direction in which the industry was headed. He suggested that I look at new vistas, the exact nature of which I would later reconstruct from the scribbles I jotted down in my notebook while he was talking to me:

> "There is no British Asian music scene anymore… All the Canadians and Americans are doing the same stuff; India is doing the same stuff. They have all the tech now, just cheaper, esp. with manpower. It's good to shoot music videos in Punjab, quality same, but cheaper. Can't aim to make British Asian music anymore, just good music. Everything has gone global now."

I was taken aback by this declaration and did not push further questions. Then I was promptly dismissed and was not able to take part in the actual meeting. My head was buzzing, and this brief interview raised more questions than it answered. However, this particular line of thought eventually prompted me to think about the potency of cultural transfers beyond borders. The way he talked about a "global Punjabi scene" instead of a British Asian or an Indian scene led me to think about the importance of Punjab and Punjabiness in a global and diasporic context and about the role identities play in this process. As he went on to describe how the Indian scene "has come up" and how there is a "lack of talent in general" in the British Asian scene, I started thinking that if the musicians themselves were looking beyond the limits of their immediate community and nation state, maybe it would be worthwhile for me to explore from an academic perspective the role of the musician within these broader horizons.

Later, I found that other important figures in the British Asian music scene shared this belief that their industry was becoming transnational. Producers, musicians, and promoters all thought that the days of national boundaries were over. In fact, the careers of many of these promoters and music industry professionals were a testimony to this new reality. I met promoters in Birmingham and London who used to organise British Asian club nights in the 1990s and 2000s but who were now busy organising concerts for Indian performers touring the UK and promoting Bollywood parties. I also met music executives in India who used to comb the UK

Asian market in search of new albums and cassettes to import to India but who were now taking pride in the leading role that India had assumed in cultural production. Changing flows and shifting centres were recurring themes during the research interviews that I conducted on the phone and in person, as well as at the industry workshops and conferences that I attended in the UK and India between 2017 and 2020. All of this reinforced my sense that PBN had correctly identified what was happening in the industry. Moreover, it got me interested in the place of the individual musician amidst these global changes. I wondered how musicians viewed such transnational shifts and how these shifts were affecting their careers.

In all of this, I noticed that a complex set of emotions was interwoven into the discourse about the transnationalisation of the British Asian music scene. The interviewees often expressed loving respect for a once-innovative scene and a certain longing to return to those lost times. The way PBN talked about the scene suggested that he had great respect for the industry that had once been an incubator of innovation, consistently producing unique sounds and outstanding performers throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s. However, there was also a tinge of sadness in his voice as he described how the British Asian scene had not kept up with its rivals in India and other diasporas and how the British-based industry had been integrated into a global soundscape of Punjabi-influenced South Asian music. At the same time, there was a sense of pride in his voice that he belonged to an international community of Punjabis, and he seemed genuinely happy about how well the global Punjabi musical community was doing.

His Punjabi heritage was important to him on a deep level. This was obvious not only in his chosen professional name, Punjabi By Nature, but also by the numerous tattoos he had that identified him as a Sikh of Punjabi origin. This mixture of nostalgia, pride and belonging that he expressed became a familiar trope during my later fieldwork. Indeed, many artists identified past events, trends and performers as points of reference that had impacted the ways they perceived themselves and the kind of music they made. These experiences led me to think about the importance that their emotions had had in shaping their careers and journeys. I later sought to incorporate a discussion of this influence in my thesis. I also started wondering about the effect of these global processes on individual musicians. Had the shift from a narrower British Asian market to a global Punjabi market impacted the way PBN was perceived? What did it mean to be a British Asian artist on the global market in the 21st century?

My brief conversation with PBN was definitive not only in the choice of my subject matter but also in determining the methodology of this study. The encounter also helped me anticipate some of the challenges I would face in my future fieldwork. How does one tackle the challenge of interviewing famous people? How does one explain the position of the researcher and her

research in such a way that adheres to the ethics guidelines, but that does not rob a free-flowing conversation of its spontaneity? How does a researcher differentiate herself from a reporter and glean information that is not already available in music magazines? Ideally, given the opportunity, I would have asked PBN questions about identity, feelings and trends; however, he did not show an inclination to discuss these topics. Rather, he preferred to talk about business. I also found it challenging to explain the difference between academic research and music journalism. In the light of later experiences, I was right to identify as a challenge maintaining the spontaneity of meetings, sometimes in the absence of preparation, while adhering to strict ethical guidelines. As I discovered, there was a big difference between an academic perspective and that of the music industry.

In summary, my chance meeting with PBN led me to take a closer look at the relationship between the diaspora and the homeland through the lens of music. This meeting also caused me to think about the role the past had in shaping identities and communities, as well as about the position of the individual within the framework of transnational processes. Moreover, it also raised questions about my positionality in these global and transnational flows, which I seek to elaborate on in the following chapters.

Transnational journeys of music and research

My conversation with PBN started me on multiple journeys, some intellectual, some physical, and some emotional as I grappled to understand contemporary British Asian musicians, their music, and the impact that the globalization of their industry is having on them. My intellectual journey started with the classic works of Dudrah (2001), Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma (1966), Bakrania (2013), and Roy (2017). I looked to them to help me understand how the British Asian music scene had changed since these authors had placed it on the map of cultural and popular music studies. I also wanted to see how British Asian musicians were interacting with other global players on the Punjabi music scene. As PBN suggested, I broadened my perspective, expanded my geographical imagination, looked at new connections, and considered some perspectives that I will discuss in the following chapters.

I also set out on a physical journey, as I sought to trace the paths these musicians had followed between the key centres of British Asian music production in Britain and India. I travelled to the major hubs of the transnational British Asian music network, the cities of Birmingham, London, Mumbai, Delhi and Chandigarh. I was based in Birmingham, the second-largest city of England and the mythical home of British bhangra. Birmingham's relationship both to the diaspora and to the homeland has shaped not just the imagination of my interviewees,

but also my understanding of the topic at hand. During the course of my research, I often travelled to London for gigs, parties and interviews, as London is the undisputed capital of music production in Britain, both mainstream as well as British Asian. In India, various metropolitan cities serve as hubs for the different, regional language entertainment industries. The largest of these is Mumbai, the home of the nationwide Hindi-language entertainment industry. Despite its geographical distance from the heart of Punjabi culture, there is a significant Punjabi presence in Mumbai, and Punjabis have influenced Bollywood music and film in a way that has put Bollywood on the map for Punjabi artists. The reason for this is that Mumbai is very much a cultural melting pot. Delhi, the nation's capital, and Chandigarh, the state capital of Punjab, both attract the major labels and music companies associated with the Punjabi-language entertainment industry. Since many British Asian musicians are Punjabi speakers, these cities serve as hubs in India for them, just like they did for PBN. In order to understand the way in which travel between these hubs may influence musicians and producers, during the three years of my research I incorporated travel into my methodology, and I spent as much time travelling between these locations as possible. This travel then shaped my perspective in different ways.

Living in a foreign land helped me better understand some of the emotional aspects of a diasporic existence that is the lived reality of my interviewees. I found that some of the experiences that migration and diaspora literature describe are relatable across time, nationality and ethnic difference. I felt in-between and out-of-place most of the time; yet my association with Birmingham turned out to be an important asset in more than one way, as this contributed to a shared sense of place and identity with my interviewees, who were otherwise very distant from me in terms of positionality, social status and identity. These travels also took me on a journey of identity. I had to figure out how a white, Hungarian, female academic studying India in the UK finds her place as she travels through these spaces and places. Growing up middle-class in a largely monocultural society, I never experienced racial or gender-related otherness first-hand. At home, I naturally blended in wherever I went. While I was conducting my research, I was usually the only white person at any given party, gig or industry event. The impossibility of remaining invisible and the resulting obstacles in the way of doing participant observation remained a constant throughout the research, regardless of whether the location was Birmingham, London, Mumbai or Chandigarh.

In a different, yet in its essence similar, setting, I was faced with the challenges that became manifest due to the difference in position between a novice researcher and a celebrity. How does an academic present oneself to a celebrity in an industry that values connections, glamour and money above all else? A PhD student has none of these tokens of status at her

disposal and is therefore in a disadvantaged position when it comes to accessing interviewees. Yet, a shared love for music and a common interest in industry developments between the researcher and the interviewee often acted as a social lubricant. This was especially true when a person like myself, an obvious outsider, expressed a passion and interest in the music that the interviewees were making. Nevertheless, being an outsider sometimes added a layer of complexity to the work. For example, there was a constant need for me to explain my academic interest in their music. Furthermore, it was impossible for me to blend in with the surroundings. On the flip side, my otherness often opened doors, and it also helped me see my positionality in a more objective light. I was constantly reminded to reflect on my "foreign" and "outsider" position, and this kept me on my toes intellectually.

Chapter 1
Introduction

This thesis is an examination of the way music and musicians move between global centres of culture. The research was conducted by looking at the way in which members of the diaspora related to their ethnic homeland, and it employed the methods of qualitative cultural studies research. In this thesis, I ask what kind of cultural, emotional and economic factors connect the diaspora and the homeland, and what role subnational identities play in creating and maintaining transnational connections. In this thesis, I discuss these themes in the specific context of the British-South Asian and Bollywood music industries. While building on scholarship in diaspora and cultural studies, as well as in the field of popular music and film studies, this thesis seeks to achieve two specific aims: (1) to re-evaluate the position of British Asian music in the 21st century; and (2) to understand how the cultural industry of Bollywood engages with South Asian diasporas in terms of music production. To this end, I locate the British Asian music scene within the global networks of Punjabi music in relation to the Bollywood cultural industry. I focus on the relationship between the British Asian and the Bollywood industries and suggest that the interaction between these has largely been enabled by the ethnocultural identity of Punjabiyat or Punjabiness, but it is influenced by transcultural processes.

The main strand of the investigation looks at the engagement of British Asian musicians with the Bollywood industry. I analyse different models of transnational careers through three case studies: (1) Rishi Rich, the music producer; (2) DJ Frenzy; and (3) Hard Kaur, the female rap artist. The artists in these case studies have negotiated the transnational nature of their engagement in different ways that are deeply influenced by gender and temporality. On a larger

scale, their respective positions are also influenced by global economic and cultural shifts, most notably by the growth of the Indian entertainment industry and the increasing entanglement of the Bollywood cultural industry and Punjabi culture. By working with two modes of inquiry – the industry and the individual – I seek to provide a picture that illustrates the dynamic between the personal and the global and to show how global cultural shifts impact individual careers, opportunities and identities. I analyse how global changes in taste and demographics can have an effect on music production, and I also seek to take into account the personal narratives of individual artists and how systemic factors, such as gender and geography impact this. By engaging critically with cultural products that are produced and consumed across the diasporas and the homeland, I seek to contribute to our understanding of the dynamics of cultural transfer between the diaspora and the homeland and its attendant political, economic and social dimensions.

This introductory chapter sets the scene for the thesis by briefly introducing the research context. I then state the questions that guided my research questions and articulate the aims of the study. Finally, I give a brief overview of the structure of the thesis by providing a chapter-by-chapter road map.

I. Research setting

This thesis sets out to understand the individual stories of certain musicians and their music who have been caught up in global changes, as well as the bigger economic, political and cultural forces at play behind these transnational shifts. Music and migration, and thus the musical cultures of the diasporas, have been of interest to ethnomusicologists since the 1960s (Baily and Collier, 2006: 169). British Asian music, music produced by the members of the British Asian diaspora primarily for the consumption of the British South Asian diaspora, similarly received much academic attention in the past. British Asian music, may it be bhangra, Asian Underground, R&B, reggae, rap or all the other genres that are often subsumed under the label ‘urban Asian music’ or ‘desi music’ (Kim, 2017) has been a field of possibilities for academics. British Asian music has a long history of academic writing, however, interestingly, it has primarily been investigated from the perspective of cultural studies as a cultural arena where diasporic identities are constructed and created and not through a perspective of musicology or popular music studies as a musical form.

Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that a great variety of musical forms and genres could be described as British Asian music, to the extent that Helen Kim suggested that instead of using the term British Asian music, we should talk about music that British Asians make (Kim, 2014).

After the ground-breaking contribution of Banerji and Bauman (1990), it was the monograph *Dis-Orienting Rhythms* (Hutnyk, Sharma and Sharma, 1996) that started the academic research into British Asian music. This was followed by theses and monographs by Rajinder Dudrah (2001), Tony Ballantyne (2006), Anjali Gera Roy (2010) and Falu Bakrania (2013) that discussed the lively contemporary British Asian music scene of the late 1990s and early 2000s. These academics wrote both about the predominantly working-class, Punjabi 'roots' music, bhangra, and the world music-influenced Asian Underground.

Researchers dealing with other diasporic music scenes, such as the South Asian American (Dietrich, 2000, Maira, 2002) and the Canadian South Asian music scenes (Warwick, 2008) pointed out that other diasporic music scenes considered the British Asian music scene as a leader in terms of musical innovation. British Asian musicians were creating sounds that no one had heard before and implemented innovative music-making and performing practices that were widely acclaimed. Artists, as well as researchers, were coming to the UK from the USA and Canada to be a part of the scene. Other diasporic music cultures, such as the American Desi remix culture or the Canadian DJ scene built on the innovations and practices that were first established within the UK scene. Moreover, Punjabi musicians, both in India and abroad, held the British Asian music scene in high esteem and considered it as a trend-setter (Roy, 2012, Schreffler, 2012).

However, when I began my research in 2017, I found two issues that needed to be addressed. Firstly, I found that the current academic literature reflects a historical state of the British Asian music scene and does not account for changes that have taken place since the 2010s. Secondly, there was also a lack of nuanced understanding in this literature of how British Asian music relates to the cultural industries of Bollywood. Although Bollywood is increasingly important both at home and abroad, and there is growing interest in researching its interaction with South Asian diasporas around the world (Mehta and Pandharipande, 2011; Dudrah, 2012; Roy, 2012), there is a paucity of research that discusses the dynamics of the cultural transfer between the diasporas and Bollywood. The Bollywood cultural industry, including but not limited to films, music, talk shows, websites etc., has the capacity to connect people across nationalities and cultures. Consumers of Bollywood might be Indians across different regions of India, members of the Indian diasporas scattered around the globe, or researchers from different cultural backgrounds like myself. Over the course of the past twenty years, many studies have looked at the reception of Bollywood in various diasporas and helped contribute to our understanding of the various meanings of Bollywood for diasporic viewers (Dudrah, 2001; Banaji, 2006; Desai, 2006).

However, diasporic communities are not only consumers of the cultural products of Bollywood, but in many cases, they are actively involved in the creation of these products. Yet, researchers have not looked into the diasporas' active involvement in Bollywood's creative industries, even though there are many possible threads to unravel. With respect to British Asians, research has been done on how they perceive and consume Bollywood (Dudrah, 2001, Banaji, 2006, Kraemer, 2016) but no focused study has been conducted on how diasporic South Asians contribute to the cultural production of Bollywood.

British Asian musicians have been drawing on Bollywood music in various ways. For example, they often sample and recreate Bollywood tracks. At the same time, Bollywood has also been incorporating the cultural products and cultural producers of British Asian music. As the case studies in this thesis suggest, the two scenes are increasingly intertwined and there is much to unpack here. First, we should look into the ways in which British Asian musicians interact with the Bollywood cultural industry, and secondly, we should look into the greater implications of this process in terms of diaspora and homeland relations. By looking at the phenomenon of British Asian–Bollywood relations, we can witness how the increasing mobility of people, cultural artefacts, and ideas, as well as the complexities of transnational exchanges make it increasingly hard to separate cultural production along the lines of diaspora and homeland, or of national identity more broadly.

A key aspect of this entanglement is ethnocultural identity. All artists in the case studies consider themselves Punjabis, which places them in a unique position in relation to transnationality. While tracing their heritage to the geographical territory of Punjab, which is now divided between Pakistan and India, historically Punjabis have been a very mobile ethnic group. They have been migrating within and outside India for a long time, creating a web of subnational and transnational identities in the process (Schreffler, 2012). Music has played an important part in forming their local and transnational Punjabi identities to the extent that Anjali Gera Roy has come up with the term 'BhangraNation' to describe this imagined community. Roy's BhangraNation is separated by national boundaries and histories of migration, but united by Punjabi music, epitomised by Bhangra in this case (2012: 111). On account of their Punjabi roots, all British Asian artists in this thesis can be considered as a part of this BhangraNation, with its attendant possibilities and complexities that I will discuss through the course of this thesis.

One key issue that needs to be highlighted here is that this imagined Punjabi musical community seems to organise itself around geographical hubs or nodes that function as central locations of cultural production. Whereas the Punjabi homeland has always been central to the imagination of the global Punjabi community, periodically other centres appear as well. These

new hubs attract the attention of the global Punjabi music community on account of their innovative musical practices, such as the incorporation of new sounds, rhythms, production techniques or performance practices. However, these other hubs are not stable and seem to change with the flow of global processes, such as demographic movement. A pronounced example of this is the case of the United Kingdom and British Asian music. As many scholars have argued (Banerji and Bauman, 1990; Schreffler, 2012 etc.) the impact that British Asian music has had on the sound and performance of Punjabi music has reverberated across the globe both among the diaspora and in India. We shall look at this phenomenon in greater detail later on. However, as mentioned in the preface and elaborated in the following chapters, there now appears to be a shift, whereby the UK seems to have lost its central position in the music industry to India and other diasporas. This thesis, therefore, addresses a trend in which diasporic artists are now gravitating towards India, more specifically towards the Bollywood music industry, which is based in Mumbai. This does not mean, however, that the golden age of British Asian music is about to disappear without a trace. Being British Asian and relating to the distinctive British Asian sound seems relevant for these artists, in the same way that being Punjabi matters to them. This shows how nostalgia towards the homeland and towards earlier achievements in Punjabi music continues to exert a powerful influence over British Asian musicians such as PBN. In order to understand these processes, I have structured my research around three research questions that I will explore in the next section.

In light of these existing academic lacunae, and of the increasing globalisation and mobility of diasporic people, it is important to address these questions and understand the ways in which India and its global diasporas are interacting and contributing to the creation of a culture that is increasingly influential both in India and in other parts of the world. Moreover, in addition to larger processes, such as the corporatisation of Bollywood and its conscious outreach to overseas markets, there are often very personal aspects that motivate artists to migrate either temporarily or permanently to the land of their ancestors. These stories are often missing from industry-level explanations (Kavoori and Punathambekar, 2008, Rai, 2009, Mehta and Pandharipande, 2011) of musical and business trends. Why do diasporic South Asians aspire to work in Bollywood? Why is Bollywood invested in working with diaspora artists? What is the meaning and value of being a diaspora artist in Bollywood? How do global, local, and ethnocultural identities figure in this exchange? These are all questions that are very relevant at the beginning of the 21st century and yet have not been discussed in detail until now. This thesis hopes to start filling this gap and focus on one aspect of this relationship: the relationship of British Asian musicians and Bollywood by answering the three questions that I introduce in the next section.

II. Research questions and aims

In order to achieve my research aims and re-evaluate the role of the British Asian music in the 21st century and to understand how the cultural industry of Bollywood engages with South Asian diasporas in terms of music production, I proceed to explore the dynamics of the British Asian-Bollywood-Punjabi relationship. To do so my thesis is built around three key research questions and objectives that interrogate the dynamics of British Asian-Indian musical production in the 21st century.

1. In what ways does the contemporary British Asian music industry figure in the global networks of South Asian cultural production?

The first question in this thesis looks the historical change in the British Asian scene and seeks to understand the importance of the rising economic and cultural role that the modern Indian entertainment industry plays for the diaspora. Although several studies (eg. Banaji, 2006, Gopal and Moorti, 2008) have focused on the consumption of the cultural products of the homeland in the diaspora, by answering this question, I seek to understand how the diaspora contributes to cultural production in the framework of music. Although Gayatri Gopinath had called for the dislocation of the 'homeland' as the source of diasporic creativity and argued for the acknowledgement of diasporic locations as separate and not subordinated centres of cultural production (Gopinath, 2005: 295) this claim needs to be re-evaluated since the beginning of the 21st century. In contrast to a clear-cut separation between "diasporic" and "homeland" creativity, it now appears that the 'homeland' has returned to occupy a central position, at least in the production of music.

This thesis will look at the shift in the centre of gravity that has taken place in the world of Punjabi music and entertainment. In India, the Hindi film industry has metamorphosed into the world-class entertainment industry that we call Bollywood (Punathambekar, 2013). Bollywood productions are now exported across the globe, and Bollywood has almost become synonymous with contemporary Indian culture abroad. In order to maintain its place of primacy within the Indian cultural universe, Bollywood became a cultural melting pot, drawing on a number of successful regional, ethnic, and overseas sources for inspiration and contributions. Often, it has been innovative practices developed in the diaspora that has helped Bollywood stay relevant and competitive in the face of global competition.

Yet, at the same time Bollywood has embraced these new influences, it has tried hard to maintain its loyal audiences and keep its most successful producers. It has done this by constantly

referring back to earlier, golden periods of films and music and by maintaining other nostalgic connections. As I suggest throughout the thesis, the intersection of the need for fresh takes and innovative practices with the need to maintain a connection with the past and with pan-Indian culture has provided important opportunities for British Asian artists wishing to work in Bollywood. In my Literature Review chapter, I will go into detail how the diasporas have a special cultural value in Bollywood, and that this could be conceptualised as a type of transcultural capital (Meinhof 2019) that both opens up opportunities and poses certain challenges for British Asian artists. As I have already suggested, the Punjabi ethnocultural identity has also created its own set of factors that I discuss in detail in the case study chapters that talk about ways in which Bollywood invites, incorporates and reshapes diasporic music and musicians.

2. What are the push and pull factors that enable diaspora artists to work in the Bollywood music industry?

In answering this question, I seek to discover what push and pull factors are involved in the transnational migration of British Asian musicians. By push factors, I mean factors that motivate British Asian musicians to quit the British Asian music scene, or de-emphasise their involvement with it, and focus on India instead. In contrast to the conclusions reached in the studies undertaken in the early 2000s and cited above, when I began my research in 2017, I found that most British Asian artists and tastemakers, such as radio presenters and influencers, echo PBN's sentiments, which I related in the Preface. They are nostalgic about the earlier successes of the British Asian music scene, but they suggest that the hub of global Punjabi music is not Britain anymore. This thesis investigates the economic and emotional implications of this shift, real or perceived, for British Asian musicians, vis-a-vis Bollywood.

I seek to investigate this on two levels: the industry and the personal level, as I acknowledge that it is often a confluence of both factors that impact life choices, and exclusively focusing on either of those levels would oversimplify matters. Zooming in to the individual level, I seek to understand the economic and emotional pull and push factors that motivate particular British Asian musicians to participate in the Bollywood music industry and in turn for the Bollywood industry to work with them. This question is closely connected to the third research question, enquiring about the impact of emotions and sociocultural factors, such as generation, gender or ethnicity on the individual, that I shall unpick shortly.

Pursuing the industry-level enquiry in order to throw light on the pull factors — that is, the factors that draw British Asian artists to Bollywood — I also investigate the relationship between the Indian diaspora and Bollywood. I look especially at the Indian economic and cultural policies

in place since the 1990s that have served to reconnect the diasporas to the homeland. Bollywood films have played an especially important role in mythologising the figure of the diasporic Indian in public culture (Desai, 2006: 125), and now Bollywood is more visible and demonstrates more economic viability than ever. I build on the understanding of pro-diaspora policies in India and pro-diaspora narratives in Bollywood films and employ a cultural studies lens and cultural industries perspective. In doing so, I seek to understand why Bollywood wants to incorporate diasporic talent and what kind of economic cultural remittances are at play in the process.

In order to accomplish this, I use the above-mentioned concept of transcultural capital outlined by Ulrike Meinhof (2009) that suggests that diasporic musicians may derive cultural capital from their cultural and social connections both in the homeland and in the diaspora. This unique capital then provides them with a special position. They can serve as cultural intermediaries who can benefit from their involvement with both the homeland and diaspora scenes and who can contribute to cultural remittances between the two places. I examine this in the context of British Asian musicians and their transnational careers while taking into consideration Jayson Beaster-Jones' (2015) concept of cosmopolitan mediation. Beaster-Jones suggested that cosmopolitan mediation is in fact the modus operandi of the Bollywood music industry, insofar as Bollywood music draws its inspiration from a variety of musical sources but mediates it through its own system of aesthetic preferences to create a uniquely identifiable cultural product despite its fluidity.

3. In what ways do sociocultural factors such as ethnicity, gender, and generation impact upon the relationship between the cultural production of the homeland and the diaspora?

One of the key themes I investigate is the impact of ethnocultural identity on the relationship between British Asian artists and the Bollywood industry. Looking at the intersection of Punjabiness and Bollywood is important for two reasons. Firstly, Bollywood has always had a certain Punjabi cultural ethos thanks to its dominant filmmakers, themes and cultural leanings, but this Punjabiness has recently come to the fore in its music, as well. Secondly, this relationship is relevant on account of the Punjabi ethnocultural identity of the artists in the case studies. Rishi Rich, the music producer in the first case study, DJ Frenzy the subject of the second case study, and Hard Kaur, the first female rapper and subject of the third case study are all of British Punjabi background. In this thesis, I investigate how this particular aspect of their identity, together with their resulting cultural knowledge has played a role in their Indian careers, as well. I look into the ways in which their Punjabiness played a role in relation to musical innovations within the global Punjabi music scene, or in relation to the transnational networks that came into being through the

shared sense of being Punjabi, or in belonging to the BhangraNation, in which nostalgia and memories also had an important role to play.

It is important, however, to keep the investigation mindful of intersectionality. Apart from ethnocultural identity, other factors could also have an impact on the ties between the cultural production of the diaspora and homeland. Such factors could include the gender politics of the British Asian and the Bollywood industry. Moreover, there could be a question of personal histories, emotions, generational differences; there could be different modes of engagement with the homeland based on the different attitudes and cultural knowledge that different generations in the diaspora have.

Using these questions to guide my research, the thesis seeks to understand the dynamic relationship between Bollywood and the South Asian diaspora and suggests that music is an important field of cultural production in which questions of diasporic and homeland identities and transnational relations play out. Moreover, the thesis explores how the British Asian music scene fits into the wider cultural landscape of South Asian cultural production. The thesis thus contributes to the fields of migration studies, since it analyses homeland-diaspora relations within the creative industries of the 21st century and popular music studies, as it traces the role of transnational identities in music production and their relations to the concepts of nostalgia and innovation.

III. Thesis roadmap

Having introduced the background and the main directions of the research, I now provide a brief overview of the structure of the thesis. The thesis consists of seven chapters, the latter three of which offer case studies (Rishi Rich, DJ Frenzy, Hard Kaur).

- Chapter 2 is a literature review in which I set up the academic and theoretical context of the current research, drawing on writings in ethnomusicology, popular music studies, diaspora studies, film studies and cultural studies. I provide a theoretical overview of migration studies dealing with the return of the diaspora to the ethnic homeland. I then review the history of the British Asian music scene and locate it in the transnational context. I explore the transnational and cultural politics of Bollywood music and discuss the relevance of Punjabi music and culture in the context of the research.
- In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodology of my thesis and my positionality as a researcher. I discuss the analytical framework of my thesis at length and discuss the concepts of transculturality and ideas of the past. I also make a case for the thesis's use of geographical

imagination as I identify the various real and imagined geographical locations where this thesis is set and has been written and weave it into a web of interconnected transnational locations. I devote detailed attention to how I incorporated these travels into my thinking by following the example of Clifford (1997), who argued for taking into consideration the importance of 'routes' as well as 'roots' in anthropological research and in a thesis that deals with travel and transnational mobility of subjects and researcher. This is a subtopic that needs some attention here. I reflect on the methods of data collection and analysis and talk about the fieldwork I undertook. My position as a white, Hungarian researcher who is located outside of the music industry and outside of the South Asian community posed its own set of difficulties and possibilities and I write about how I negotiated these power relations.

This is followed by three case studies that respond to different aspects of the research questions, but which are connected by the thread of transnationality and throw light on different aspects of the British Asian-Bollywood connection.

- Chapter 4, the first case study, discusses the career of Rishi Rich, a British Asian music producer who currently works in Bollywood. The chapter reflects on the golden age of British Asian music and cultural remittances. This chapter mainly addresses the first research question, pertaining to the various ways in which the British Asian music industry has become embedded in global South Asian musical networks. Through looking at shifting centres and margins, I make a case for the hegemonic position of the Bollywood music industry as I discuss how the British Asian music industry changed from a site of innovation to a site of consumption. This case study also reflects on the second research question as it examines the role that gender and ethnicity play in establishing a trend and in the evolution of Punjabi masculinities
- Chapter 5, the second case study, continues on the theme of nostalgia and innovation and discusses how two British Punjabi DJs, Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy, negotiate their identities in the light of historical developments of the changing centres of cultural production. This chapter seeks to further illustrate the temporal shift that has happened in terms of diaspora-homeland cultural production. This chapter also addresses the third research question that concerns the role of ethnicity in building connections across borders and nationalities, as it draws attention to the importance of Punjabiness as a point of connection between homeland and diaspora and argues for the diaspora's importance in contributing to the growing importance of Punjabi culture in Bollywood music.

- Chapter 6 focuses on the second and third research questions discussing emotional and economic factors, as well as ethnicity, gender and class, as it considers the career of Hard Kaur, a British Asian female rapper, who played a prominent role in the Bollywood music industry on account of the transcultural capital that her position as a diasporic female rap artist provided. The chapter analyses the gender politics of the British Asian and Bollywood music industries in relation to innovative musical practices and diasporic subjectivities.
- Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by summarising the findings of the thesis in relation to the research questions and acknowledging its limitations. It also provides an outlook on other diasporas' engagement with the Bollywood music industry and proposes further directions for research.

IV. Conclusion

In this introductory chapter, I explained my motivation for undertaking this research: the need to understand an under-researched area of cultural flow between diaspora artists and the cultural industries of the homeland in a British Asian Bollywood context. I then discussed my research questions which seek to understand the ways in which British Asian music and musicians interact with the Bollywood industry, and how various factors, such as nostalgia, innovation and transcultural capital have had an impact on this relationship. I am also interested in the role that the Punjabi ethnocultural identity of the British Asian artists that I mentioned play in the Indian entertainment industry, where Punjabi culture plays an increasingly important role. However, I have also suggested that intersectionality is important, and gender, class and caste influence individual careers in the light of structural difficulties.

By addressing these questions, this thesis seeks to contribute to cultural studies, popular music studies and migration studies more broadly, and to the literature on British Asian music and the Bollywood cultural industry more specifically. Examining this topic contributes to our understanding of the British Asian music scene as it concerns a contemporary phenomenon of musical travels from the diaspora to the homeland. This is a phenomenon that has been overlooked for the most part in academic literature. This study could also throw light on larger processes of shifting hubs in the global cultural industries, especially in terms of cultural transfers between the homeland and diaspora. This thesis also advances our understanding of diaspora-homeland cultural production as it will allow us to investigate how the diaspora contributes to producing the culture of the homeland, in addition to existing research, which focuses on how it consumes it.

Chapter 2.

Literature review

In this chapter, I seek to place the research that has been done on certain transnational British Asian musicians and on their movement between India and Britain within the broader scholarly understanding of migration and music. My aim is to provide an overview of the existing literature on diasporic migration back to the homeland, in particular on the music and migration of contemporary artists on the British Asian music scene. The following literature review is organised along thematic lines, with each section highlighting a major theme in the dissertation. The three large thematic sections are 1) migration, 2) diasporic music and 3) transnational Bollywood. I will bring to the fore the most salient debates from the fields of migration studies, ethnomusicology, popular music and film studies, and cultural studies and show how they have illuminated the dynamic relationship between the British Asian and the Bollywood music industries.

I. Migration

In this section, I summarise the research findings on the economic and cultural factors that have enabled diaspora artists to work in Bollywood. Firstly, I provide a theoretical overview on ethnic return migration, the field of migration studies that looks at second and later generations of diasporic communities that return to the homeland of their ancestors. I look for cues in order to form a theoretical background that can be implemented to discuss the careers of British Asian returning musicians.

Secondly, I discuss the changing cultural and economic politics of India with regards to migration and diasporas. Tracing the historical developments that took place after the economic reforms helps us understand how Indian society has come to value transnational migration. India has been reimagining itself as a global power that views its diasporas as an important asset in its foreign policy aims. What is even more relevant for this research is the fact that in certain sectors, such as IT and entertainment, India has been seeking to reverse the process of brain drain and attracting talent from the diaspora back to the ancestral homeland. I also discuss the ways in which Bollywood has played an important role in valorising transnational migration and building the image of the Non-Resident Indian as a cultural intermediary who commits cultural remittances to the homeland. This history, and its accompanying attitudes, have had a direct effect on the

careers of the artists discussed in the case studies. I also call attention to the fact that there has been no systematic academic inquiry on the topic of British Asian diasporic return. The following overview is necessary to understand some of the challenges and possibilities that come to the fore when diaspora artists return home and which I raise as prominent issues in the case studies that follow later in this thesis.

Global journeys

When discussing the travelling music and travelling musicians that are at the heart of this research, we should first consider the nature of their journey; for it is by no means a linear or one-way journey, nor is it one restricted to travel between Britain and India. Thanks to digital technology, the music produced by British Asian artists can now be enjoyed across all continents and through many cultures. The travelling artists often perform not only in well-known diasporic locations, such as New York, Toronto or Dubai, but often are also contracted to perform at private events across the globe in places such as in Morocco, Thailand, and Brazil.

However, the global popularity of these musicians and their music is often facilitated by their journeys to the homeland. These often function as nodal points in their global journeys, and it is often their association with India that then enables them to reach out to audiences around the globe. It is in India that they contribute to film soundtracks which are then distributed by the Bollywood entertainment industry to audiences around the globe. It is also in India that they meet managers and event planners who facilitate their tours and performances in different parts of the world.

In addition to the geographic bond that they form with their ancestral homeland, they also develop a special emotional and cultural bond. It is this bond that then creates many of the various push and pull factors that lead to the flow of people between the diaspora and the homeland and that results in diasporic musicians' engagement with the homeland. In the following section, I provide a brief overview of the literature on diasporic return migration in general, and in particular on the return of the Indian diaspora to India. A proper survey of this field will help address some of the important questions that are raised in my study.

Relevant themes in return migration research

The phenomenon of diasporas returning to their ancestral homeland, either permanently or for shorter periods, is a familiar theme in migration studies, where it is usually referred to as ethnic return migration. The concept of ethnic return migration (Tsuda, 2013), reverse transnationalism (Jain, 2019), or second-generation return migration (Reynolds, 2008) denotes a process that

‘refers to later-generation descendants of diasporic peoples who “return” to their countries of ancestral origin after living outside their ethnic homelands for generations’ (Tsuda, 2013: 172). Although the aforementioned journeys of British Asian musicians could be classified as a very specific case of labour migration rather than as a classic case of return migration, they nevertheless remain a species of ethnic return migration. As such, an examination of these British Asian migrations is justified within this field; for they are a response to the same individual, systemic and cultural stimuli as the more classic return migrations. It is, therefore, instructive to place this particular research within the broader field of migration studies, as it wields important insights into the challenges and possibilities that returnee musicians face.

By looking at theories of diasporic return, we can assert that the reasons for ethnic return migration can be manifold and are highly context dependant. The reasons can be economic, as we can see in the case of Brazil and Japan (Tsuda, 2013), political and historical, in the case of the Jewish diaspora returning to Israel after World War 2, or cultural and social, as in the case of the Caribbean diaspora leaving the UK, where they felt marginalised a result of their race and cultural background (Reynolds, 2008). In most cases, the reasons for return are most often a mixture of push and pull factors. Push factors often include racism and structural inequality in the natal home country, which is an especially salient factor in reverse migration from the developed to the developing world. Reynolds (2008) discussed Black British women returning to the Caribbean to escape anti-Black racism. Talking about pull factors, transnational lifestyles and family ties with the ancestral home country can be considered an important pull factor, where returnees are motivated to spend more time with their extended families or elderly loved ones. Economic incentives offered by the ancestral home country can also be important, as it is in the case of India, where Sonali Jain’s research has shown that the growing IT sector has acted as an important economic pull factor for return migrants moving to India from the US (Jain, 2019: 651, Jain 2013: 898).

These studies can direct this enquiry in relevant ways by prompting us to think about the kinds of push and pull factors that impact on British Asian musicians in this context. For example, in my case studies, which focus on the ethnic return migration of second- and later-generation British Asian musicians, I also seek to investigate the push and pull factors of the politics and cultural economy of the British and Indian music industries. Have the racial dynamics of the British music industry, one that often marginalises British Asian music and its heritage (Khabra, 2012), pushed British Asian artists toward India? Conversely, has the development and globalisation of the Indian entertainment industry been a pull factor for some musicians in the

same way that the growth of the Indian IT sector has drawn many IT professionals of Indian origin back to their ancestral homeland?

In terms of analytical considerations, it is important to point out that return is not a uniform experience for everyone. While criticising the existing methodologies of diaspora research, Avtar Brah suggested that "[a]ll diasporic journeys are composite in another sense too. They are embarked upon, lived and re-lived through multiple modalities: modalities, for example, of gender, 'race', class, religion, language and generation" (Brah, 1996: 80). We can differentiate between generations, such as first, one-and-a-half (children born in the homeland but moved early on with the parents), second and later generations. There can be significant differences in the way in which members of subsequent generations experience return migration (Tsuda, 2019: 200). Whereas the bulk of return migration research has focused on the return of the first generation, there is less literature on the return of the later generations. Research in this area would be more relevant for this thesis. However, an important takeaway from the kind of research that calls attention to generational difference is that these positions often play a defining role in terms of the knowledge, cultural experience and social networks that returnees possess in the ethnic homeland and the new country (Conway and Potter, 2009:3).

First-generation returnees, those who were born and potentially even brought up in the ancestral country and who moved away later on in life, usually have deeper ties with the homeland. Later generations born and brought up in the diaspora often have a more limited relationship. Frequently, their first-hand experiences are restricted to visits while on vacation and can be affected by the lack of language skills or extensive peer networks outside of the family. On the other hand, second-generation immigrants often feel more at home in their family's adopted country than do their first-generation immigrant parents (Jain, 2013). Nevertheless, sometimes, such as in the case of Puerto Rican second-generation immigrants returning to Puerto Rico from New York, returnees manage to create a unique space for themselves in which their diasporic experiences count as cultural remittances. They are able to put the diaspora in the position of bulwark in the reinvigoration of their national culture (Flores, 2010).

Another factor that must be considered when assessing migration patterns is the role of emotions. Here again, we can see that different generations are impacted differently by the prospect of returning to the land of their ancestors. The emotional attachment towards the homeland displayed by members of different generations is very much shaped by their various life experiences. In many cases, the myth of return is ever-present, and a feeling of nostalgia fuels the desire to return. However, in the case of later generations of the diasporas, the myth of return is often only a narrative, and there are no actual plans of returning on account of a variety of

economic, political and cultural factors (Al-Rasheed, 1994: 199). In her study of first-generation Gujarati migrants who returned to India from London, Ramji found that despite the mythic longing for the homeland, oftentimes returnees discovered that they also longed for their new homelands, as well. As a result, many ended up returning to their countries of birth (2006: 647). Despite the divergent expectations and the difficulties of actual return, the persistent narrative of the myth of return often plays an important role in giving birth to a variety of nostalgic narratives and modes of cultural production. These can result in recreating the sounds of the homeland or maintaining the ancestral language as the language of cultural production. However, it is not only generational differences that make the expected and lived experiences of the returning diaspora varied and different.

Avtar Brah conceptualised the different attitudes towards the ancestral and natal homelands in a way in which she suggested that the ancestral homeland is 'a mythic place of desire' that different generations across the diaspora have very divergent individual relationships to. A reason for this difference could lie in the fact that the relationship and the resulting emotional, economic and cultural bonds are mediated by a variety of individual factors, such as knowledge of, or an interest in, the ancestral culture, as well as structural factors, such as racism or identity politics (Brah, 1996: 189–190). For subsequent generations, it is cultural differences and different social attitudes that can result in difficulties, as Tsuda has shown through the case of Japanese Brazilians returning to Japan. These returnees often lack language skills, and they are accustomed to a different lifestyle than the one they find back in Japan. Adapting to the strict Japanese norms of behaviour frequently makes it hard for them to integrate (2013).

These are important aspects to consider in the framework of this research, as well. In this study, it will be particularly important to keep in mind potential generational differences and their impact on cultural knowledge, as well as mediated memories towards the homeland. Keeping these questions in mind assists me in answering the second research question, which inquire about the push and pull factors for British Asian musicians.

The return of the Non-Resident Indian

As we have seen in the previous section, migration and return migration can be stimulated and influenced by a variety of factors, some of which have to do with the interplay of economic and cultural policies. In the following subsection, I summarise the conclusions reached in those studies that analyse the economic and policy context of return migration to India, and I suggest ways in which these findings are relevant for my research. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of research on the ethnic return migration to India, possibly because state-encouraged ethnic return

migration to India is a relatively recent phenomenon. Even though return migration of Indians from the UK to India was a significant issue after WWI and in the following decades (Williams, 2013: 7), however, this did not elicit government-level responses. Unlike other Asian countries, such as China or South Korea, the Indian state did not encourage return migration until the early 2000s (Upadhya, 2013: 145).[1]

Much of the academic literature on this topic focuses on the role that the economic liberalisation has played in encouraging return migration. The Indian state decided to build on its economically successful overseas communities and incentivise them to invest in India. Writings mostly focus on the emerging sectors, such as IT, finance, pharmaceutics and biotechnology, where India became especially keen on encouraging 'reverse brain drain' or 'brain gain.' It made a concerted effort to lure its foreign-educated population to resettle in India (Upadhya, 2013: 145). Academic research on the topic has looked primarily at the phenomenon of 'brain gain', the return of first-generation IT workers and entrepreneurs to globalising Indian cities, such as Delhi, Mumbai or Bangalore (Upadhya, 2013, Kumar et al., 2014, Sabharwal and Varma, 2016). That has prompted me to think about the importance of metropolitan hubs in attracting the diaspora.

An important finding is that Indian economic and cultural policies have played a large role in determining whether members of the diaspora return or not. The economic liberalisation and the subsequent development of certain industries have created a technological boom in India and have made India a land of opportunities with the potential to attract members of the diaspora (Kumar, 2014: 269). But this economic progress in itself might not have been enough to spawn return migration if it were not for the accompanying change in the cultural politics and policies of the Indian state. During the second half of the 20th century, a conceptual shift took place in India, and the Indian government began to promote a symbolic return of the Indian diasporas, in which the overseas migrant who had left forever was recast as the NRI, the Non-Resident Indian, who was residing abroad but who was still an integral part of the Indian nation.[2]

The appeasement and appreciation of the NRI consisted of a variety of policies such as providing the members of the diaspora with a status that equals quasi-citizenship, even though they held citizenship in another country, as well as setting up dedicated bureaus and departments

[1] The lack of incentive towards facilitating return migration had its roots in the centuries-old tradition of viewing overseas migration as an irreversible and final act. Most of the reasons for this stem from beliefs in Hinduism, however, post-independence politics also did not break with this tradition and maintained that the diasporas should now form a part of their new countries (Amrute 2010).

[2] As the main reason for this change was to attract overseas capital and expertise, the focus was on the wealthier diasporas living in the UK and US and not on the diasporas that came into being as a result of indentured labour (Hercog and Siegel 2011: 10)

to facilitate their administrative issues. A variety of symbolic gestures was also introduced, such as initiating the *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas*, a day dedicated to overseas Indians, or establishing programs whereby Indian children of the diaspora could travel to the homeland. Xavier argued that this shift was based on a mutually beneficial exchange in which the Indian economy received financial capital from the diaspora in forms of remittances and investments in exchange for cultural capital, acknowledging and celebrating overseas Indians for their transnational success while claiming them as members of the nation (Xavier, 2011: 41). This had the double effect of benefitting the Indian economy while also reinforcing the Indian identity of the diasporas. Members of the diasporas started acting as representatives of Indian culture abroad.

With regards to return migration, researchers have also looked at the way in which return NRIs (RNRIs) have contributed to the Indian economic and social development. It is well understood how economic remittances have contributed to the home economy. However, research into remittances that cannot be measured in economic terms is still quite rudimentary. Authors have mentioned experience and work culture as important social remittances (Kumar et al., 2014), but they have so far failed to explore these avenues in any depth. In her ethnographic work, Purnima Mankekar observed that RNRIs are appreciated on the Indian labour market on account of their Indian background and transnational knowledge. She wrote that RNRIs are "perceived as mediators, they were identified as bringing together the "cultural knowledge" and "technical knowledge" necessary to set up operations in India. On account of their transnational sojourns and their return, India became more than a 'place of past' and it became a 'place of future" (Mankekar, 2015: 27).

In other fields, inroads have been made into the study of social and cultural remittances. For example, Flores (2010) has examined how Puerto Ricans returning from New York contributed to the music and dance culture of Puerto Rico. Likewise, Cingolani and Vietti (2019) have shown how Moldavians returning from Italy have started a variety of community projects in their homeland. To my knowledge, no similar research has been undertaken in the Indian context. Nevertheless, the literature surveyed above is significant for this research as it shows what might be expected of India's relationship with its diasporas.

This can prompt us to think about the possibility of a confluence between the Indian state's newfound appreciation for its diasporas and the British Asian scene's interest in participating actively in the cultural production of the homeland. While we must keep in mind that India's diaspora policies emphasise the added value that the technical and financial knowledge and skills of the diaspora can bring to the table. Although these specific aspects are less relevant in relation to diasporic musicians, we could also start thinking about conceptualising the cultural knowledge

of the diasporas (comprising of hybrid cultures typical of the diaspora) that could play a similar role. This cultural knowledge can be considered an asset that perhaps results in a positive perception of the diaspora in the homeland and could lead to the diasporas to be considered as attractive.

The (lack) of British Asian diasporic return

Now that we have discussed some of the ways in which India's outreach towards its diasporas and the diasporas' attitudes towards return have been treated in the relevant literature, it is time to look more specifically at the British Asian community. British Asian ethnic return migration, the particular focus of the present research, has attracted almost no academic attention (Ramji, 2006). Moreover, some, such as Kaveri Qureshi (2014), have contested whether there is any intention of return at all, and whether British Asians are lured by the myth of return. She found that for many British Asian young people the points of reference in identity-building were not the original homelands of India and Pakistan, but rather the iconic British Asian areas of the UK, such as Southall and Birmingham. If there was any myth of return, it was directed towards British Asian localities and not toward a temporally and geographically distant homeland. She argued, therefore, that British Asians tend to return to the metropolitan British Asian centres in search of identity, rather than to overseas ancestral homelands. This argument is relevant for this research for two main reasons: firstly, it testifies to the strength of British Asian culture and identities in the 1980s and 1990s, the period that is often associated with the heyday of British Asian music. Secondly, we can read her study an important piece of evidence documenting that there were times when diasporic return did not hold the attraction for the British Asian diaspora as it does now.

As Gayatri Gopinath has pointed out, researchers should not examine diasporas simply in relation to their ancestral homelands, nor should they seek only to identify the ways in which members of diasporas endeavour to preserve their ancestral culture. Rather, they should also examine the new and innovative ways diasporas produce culture and identity in the new homeland. Key thinkers, such as Homi Bhabha argued (1994) that diasporas develop their own hybrid cultures that are different from both the cultures of the ancestral home country and the country of birth. Kaur and Kalra (1996) further argued that when examining diasporic cultures, India should not be taken as a point of origin, because diasporic communities have developed their own cultures and individual relationships with each other that did not necessarily develop through South Asia (1996: 255). Similarly, whereas older studies tended to emphasize the ways in which diasporic communities tried to remain authentic to their ancestral roots (e.g. Baumann and Banerji, 1990), more recent studies have shown how these communities have a way of

constructing a new identity for themselves through their cultural production (Dudrah, 2001, Huq, 2007, Daboo, 2017).

These points, especially Homi Bhabha's views on hybridity, are made in many of the writings about British Asian music that I discuss later and that provide the immediate scholarly context for my work. In this thesis, I focus on innovations in terms of music production, music aesthetics and performance practices that arise from Bhabha's diasporic third place. Homi Bhabha suggested that the diasporas find themselves in a place that is between the culture of the coloniser and the ancestral culture and they can productively use this space to create a new culture, specific to the diaspora. These findings have played an important role in establishing the diasporas as unique cultures in their own right by proving that diasporic cultures are more than derivatives of their home cultures. My research then takes us further to address the phenomenon of British Asian artists working in the Bollywood cultural industry. Understanding British Asian cultural production as a result of its specific diasporic position is a key element when it comes to understanding British Asian cultural production. However, I am interested in going further and looking at how the diasporic cultural industry has influenced that of the homeland. Earlier research focused on the individuality and innovative nature of diasporic culture, but it failed to expand its view and look at how this cultural production has contributed to cultural remittances and how it was perceived in the home country.

What we can deduct from the survey of the literature is that return migration is far from being a universal experience and generational differences have special importance, as these can impact a wide variety of factors, from cultural knowledge to interest in the homeland. Moreover, push and pull factors, discussed in the framework of the second research question, are viewed quite differently by members of the first- and second-generation return migrants. However, the policies and cultural politics of the Indian state, investigated in the framework of the first research question, have also played a crucial role in facilitating return, both on a symbolic level, by embracing the overseas diasporas and establishing the role of the RNRI as a cultural intermediary, as well as on a practical level, by facilitating return through programs and schemes. There is a relative paucity of research with regards to intersectionality, and the issue of cultural remittances remains to be investigated.

II. Diasporic music

British Asian music, may it be bhangra, Asian Underground, R&B, reggae, rap or all the other genres that are often subsumed under the label "urban Asian music" or "Desi[3] music" (Kim, 2017)

[3] 'Desi' is a colloquial term stemming from Hindi that denotes people of South Asian origin. It is often used in the diaspora to describe members of the South Asian diaspora across national or ethnic origins.

has been a field of possibilities for academics. British Asian music has long been the topic of academic writing; however, for the most part, it has been investigated from the perspective of cultural studies as a cultural arena in which diasporic identities are constructed and created. Little attention has been given to British Asian music from the perspective of musicology or popular music studies. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that a great variety of musical forms and genres could be described as British Asian music, to the extent that Helen Kim suggested that instead of using the term "British Asian music", we should talk about music that British Asians[4] make (Kim, 2014).

Most of the literature on British Asian music has followed the academic direction of focusing on hybridity in relation to diasporic cultures discussed in the previous section. The main focus of this literature has not been on the music's connections to the sounds of the Punjabi or Indian homeland, but more on its later developments in the UK, and scholars have argued that British Asian music is in fact, "a very British sound" (Katrak, 2002: 82) as a result of its interactions with other local musical forms. The studies of British Asian music have also been impacted by the racial politics of Britain, and, until very recently, the most dominant academic discourse has followed the lines of belonging and identity. I will discuss this in more detail in the following sections.

The unique qualities of British Asian music are relevant to this thesis; however, it is not the main focus. As I am interested in the interaction between the British Asian and Bollywood industries and in the factors that enable British Asian artists to work in Bollywood, it is important to have a broader scope, one that has the potential to account for transnational developments. In order to find answers to the questions posed about cultural remittances and about the factors that enabled British Asian artists to cross over to Bollywood, we need to look into the discourse around the hybridity and Britishness of British Asian music, to understand how this can function as an asset on the Indian market.

To this end, in this chapter, I first discuss the academic discourse around the specificity of British Asian music in relation to other diasporic musical forms and to the geographical context of the UK. However, we also must consider British Asian music's role in the larger circuits of global South Asian music production. Therefore, I proceed to broaden the perspective and place British Asian music within the global framework of transnational Punjabi music flows. In doing so, we can locate British Asian music at the crossroads of national and transnational processes,

[4] This claim seems to have been substantiated by Claire Alexander and Helen Kim who argued that by the end of the 2000s, British Asian music incorporated so much of other cultural elements that the tag of 'British Asian' only denoted the ethnicity of the creators rather than the sounds produced. They brought the example of Jay Sean, who performed R'n'B music in English under a British stage name, who in spite of these, was still qualified as part of the British Asian music scene (Alexander and Kim, 2014:358)

which provides a starting point for unpacking its role as a cultural remittance and an asset for transnational British Asian musicians.

"A very British sound"

Early studies of British Asian music, such as the work of Sabita Banerji and Gerd Baumann (1990), looked at bhangra, a very specific British Asian musical genre, through the dichotomy of tradition and modernity, and it argued that the goal of diasporic music-making was to recreate the sounds of the "lost homeland."[5] Their focus on tradition and modernity was manifest in describing bhangra's audiences as caught up between the worlds of their first-generation immigrant parents and mainstream British society; therefore, these authors were mostly looking at diaspora youth by focusing on their relationship to the homeland.

However, young British Asian scholars soon started to contest this approach, as well as the orientalising tendencies of the British press, and they called for a radical shift in the way people thought about the relationship between identity and music. Their own experiences growing up in Britain and their interactions with the British Asian music scene and its politics deeply influenced their positionality. The book *Dis-Orienting Rhythms* (Hutnyk, Sharma and Sharma, 1996) argued that British Asian youth of various backgrounds related to bhangra in more complex ways than previously imagined. The authors sought to dislocate the primacy of the homeland in discussions about British Asian music. They echoed Bhabha's call that attention be given to hybridity, a call that we discussed in the previous thematic section of this literature review. They argued that British Asian music should be viewed as a cultural form in its own right and not discussed in relation to Punjab or India. Later studies also placed great emphasis on the modes of music consumption and on the accompanying youth cultures, as well as on their political significance in the racial politics of Britain.

In the context of this research, the most important stream of literature is that which brings to the fore those particular features that make British Asian music unique in one sense or another. As mentioned in the previous discussion on diasporic cultural hybridity, this became the new focus through which British Asian music was examined.

In the following section, I review the literature that considers hybridity in the context of British Asian music and that seeks to understand it through an analysis of its most innovative

[5] This narrative tends to appear in popular culture as well. Bobby Friction, the creator of the BBC's "Pump up the Bhangra" documentary (2018) stated that "Bhangra was created in the foundries and factories of Britain by homesick workers." This geographical determinism was further elaborated by connecting the origins of bhangra to the fields of the Punjab, the natural cycle of nature, harvest and change of seasons, and later to its connection the foundries of the Midlands, where cold weather, and industrial sounds are cited. However, this approach is rarely present in academic accounts.

practices. Critically evaluating the literature dealing with British Asian music, we can identify three areas in which innovative practices were documented and analysed: 1) innovative sounds, 2) innovative practices around the production and consumption of music, and 3) hybrid identities. In the following section, I examine each stream and suggest that these streams are interconnected and stem from the cultural geography of British Asian music.

The innovative sound of British Asian music has been of interest to researchers for several generations; however, it was Rajinder Dudrah who first conceptualised the historical trajectory of this unique sound in a cogent way. He termed the first period of British Asian music 'Old Skool Bhangra'. This music was distinct from that of the homeland because of its innovative sounds, such as its fusion of folk bhangra with a variety of Western genres, such as pop, disco, reggae, and Hindi film music, and it was performed live during the period from the late 60s to the early 90s. 'Post-bhangra' is a DJ-oriented period in British Asian music that makes use of the technological innovations of sampling, fusing and hybridising sounds. These DJs often built on the work of the previous generation of 'Old Skool Bhangra' but used computer technology (Dudrah, 2007: 18). Other authors, such as Rupa Huq (2007) and Gayatri Gopinath (2005) also defined British bhangra as a uniquely British form of cultural production, and they looked at the ways it interacted with a variety of other diasporic forms of expression present in Britain, most notably forms of African and Caribbean music. Bhangra, and certain British Asian performers, most prominently Apache Indian, became cultural staples that illustrated the postcolonial, multicultural British music scene (Lipsitz, 1994, Back, 1995, Taylor, 1997, Asher, 1999, Cooper, 2004).

The innovative sounds are, of course, inseparable from the various innovative means of production, performance, and consumption. such as the incorporation of Western instruments to play Punjabi music and also breaking with traditional South Asian performance traditions. British bhangra musicians were very often self-trained and many of them started their musical careers as young adults or adults, as opposed to the traditional training of performing musicians in South Asia, who study music in a formal setting from childhood (Ballantyne, 2006: 146). The detachment of musical performance from sacralised events and social occasions was perceived as a democratising effect that was partially a result of the new environment of the UK (Schreffler, 2012: 347). It was also often mentioned how this merger of the invented tradition and local sensibilities resulted in a musical culture that was used to build and maintain community ties and ethnic identities (Bennett, 2000: 103). Live music performed at daytimer parties, community events and other venues served this purpose (Schreffler, 2012: 348). These music practices created a musical culture that was created, performed and enjoyed differently than in

contemporary Punjab. As Gibb Schreffler has pointed out, developments in the diaspora were quite separate from what was happening in the motherland of Punjab, there was not much in terms of direct musical connections or awareness (2008: 349). As a result of the cultural geography of Britain, there were other aspects, that were borrowed from Black British culture that could possibly have had an important impact.

The incorporation of Western instruments, such as the keyboard and drums, into Punjabi folk music was a British Asian phenomenon that resulted in a different and new sound (Farrell, 1999: 213). British Asian musicians also created new stage looks, and performing artists developed images that expressed their hybrid cultural background (Dudrah, 2016: 498), as we shall see in the case study chapters that follow. Carla Maier described (2020) the processes of music-making as transcultural sound practices, in which British Asian musicians incorporated a vast array of technological and musical innovations in their music. In fact, Ashley Dawson had already drawn attention to the fact that British Asians have been world-leading in drawing on technological innovations related to culture. He demonstrated this claim by referring to the fact that British Asians were the world's first mass video audience for Bollywood films (2005: 170). Maier emphasised the importance of digitalised modes of production in this period, that combined sampling and lyrical performance (2020: 27).

In terms of musical innovation, much of the transcultural sound practices involved incorporating Western and non-Western (South American, African, etc.) musical elements into British Asian music. Much of this practice can be traced back to the cultural geographies of British Asian cities, where communities of different cultural backgrounds lived in close proximity. As British Asian music production traditionally took place in well-known cultural melting pots, such as Birmingham and London, this geographical position facilitated cultural exchange and cross-pollination across different cultures. As a result, British Asian music culture has incorporated a variety of musical and performance practices that were borrowed from mainstream music, such as instrumentation or sartorial choices and as a result, created a product that was distinctly Punjabi, yet closer to mainstream pop music than traditional bhangra or Bollywood music as it increasingly incorporated Black musical forms, that are considered 'cool' globally. Apache Indian's music in relation to the surroundings of Birmingham and its interactions with other non-white groups in the city was especially notable (Cooper, 2004), as well as fusions of British Asian and other Black musical styles, such as hip-hop (Goldsmith and Fonseca, 2013).

These new musical forms and innovative performance practices were consumed in a new environment, as well. The importance of clubbing in British Asian music cultures is well-

documented in academic and popular literature. In fact, some of the club spaces, such as the famed 'daytimer' parties are celebrated as the locations where British Asian youth culture was born. Gerd Baumann and Sabita Banerjee (1990: 146), two of the first authors to write about British bhangra, made mention of how these bhangra parties took place during the daytime hours and attracted a large number of young people. The cultural significance of daytimers is attested to by the numerous nostalgic narratives in contemporary accounts of the history of bhangra. One such account is the 2018 BBC documentary, *Pump Up the Bhangra*, in which one-time participants related how they bunked school and slipped away to these parties from under the watchful eyes of their parents. Rajinder Dudrah documented some of the most important clubs and venues across the Midlands (2011), while Andy Bennett's analysis of bhangra nights in Newcastle (1997) reminded readers that bhangra nights have different meanings in different towns, depending on whether the local Asian community is quite small, or whether they took place in major cities such as Birmingham or London. Falu Bakrania (2013) tackled questions of gender and class in bhangra clubs and documented the birth and demise of the Asian Underground, a middle-class, multi-ethnic, club-based subculture that defined itself in opposition to the sometimes violent and deeply ethnic bhangra scene that had strong working-class overtones. Other authors, such as Rajinder Dudrah (2001) and Richard Zumkhawala Cook (2008) wrote about the possibilities of renegotiating the lyrics of Bollywood and bhangra songs on the dance floor by ways of 'subversive pleasures' (Dudrah, 2001: 150).

Consuming this music also led to the formation of new kinds of identities. While still focusing on the rebuttal of the culture clash narrative, Rajinder Dudrah moved on from questions of ethnicity to those of class and gender cleavages, and he argued that the focus of attention should be placed on how British Asians form their identities in relation to bhangra music (Dudrah, 2002: 366).

Of course, these aspects are interconnected through the spatiality of Britain, since most of these innovative sounds and practices result from the proximity and cross-pollination of different cultures. As we see in the case studies, many British Asian musicians have fond memories of their Caribbean neighbours and the musical culture they imbibed because they lived alongside each other. Therefore, some research has sought to position British Asian music within the wider geographical framework of Great Britain. Rajinder Dudrah, for example, looked at the role of Birmingham in British Asian bhangra music (2001), while Laura Leante (2010) and Andy Bennett (1997) looked at diasporic communities and bhangra music in London and Newcastle, respectively.

This is not a unique case for British Asian music, as it has been argued in the context of various genres that the local soundscapes, comprising of already existing musical genres, available instruments, etc. impact upon the ways in which musicians conceive of the world around them and the types of music they produce. Scholars have also examined the ways in which the underlying social themes are connected to the specific localities (Bennett, 2004: 3). In this sense, their diasporic position, their exposition to different styles and technologies could contribute to innovative musical and technological practices. Locating British Asian music within the cultural geography of Britain and looking at its incorporation of various innovative practices is important in my thesis, as well.

In my case studies, I examine how these aspects contribute to the transnational journeys of music and musicians. I build on this body of literature in the case study chapters to understand how British Asian music came to be an asset that could contribute to the transnational mobility of artists and music and function as a cultural asset. However, in order to understand how British Asian musicians and music have been received in India, we must direct our attention to the larger picture in which British Asian music is positioned.

Apart from being an important part of the British soundscape, British Asian music and especially bhangra music, have also been important in the global circulation of Punjabi music. As a result of these historical shifts, changes and innovations, bhangra, and especially British bhangra have come to be considered the most 'modern' Punjabi musical form. As Nicola Mooney has asserted: bhangra is "charged with modernity - whether it is the instrumentation, recording, remixing, linguistic forms or images, the videos, the transnational status of the lyricists, singers, performers or the diasporic locations of modernity (2008: 111)." It has also been viewed as an epicentre of global Punjabi modernity, and in some senses, even of global Indian modernity, as bhangra became a basis for remixes that brought together a wide variety of diasporic South Asians across the globe. The importance of British Asian music as the place of musical innovation, and the torchbearer of South Asian diasporic musical cultures was reinforced by Sunaina Maira (2002) and Jacqueline Warwick (2000) who discussed the seminal role of British Punjabi music in the development of global South Asian remix culture. Anjali Gera Roy pointed out that these innovative practices resulted in the perception of British Asian music as 'cool' (Roy 2011: 762), which had a great impact on its return to India, a topic I further discuss in the following sections of this chapter.

British Asian music and other diasporas

In addition to viewing British Asian music as a marker of belonging in Great Britain, some scholars have also emphasised the importance that British Asian music has played in connecting South Asian diasporas around the world. The works that I discuss below situate British Asian music as a nodal point amongst various South Asian diasporas. By looking at the relevant debates in this field, we can situate British Asian music in relation to Punjabi music in India in order to explore its global and transnational relationships. This helps to provide a starting ground for the first research question, that looks into the relationship between British Asian music and South Asian music production globally.

Writing about the music culture of the South Asian community of Chicago, Gregory Dietrich argued that the music of the diaspora plays an important two-fold role in transforming space. He pointed out that firstly, through an intricate web of semiotic signs and sounds, the music evokes connections for the members of the diaspora to the (imagined or literal) 'homeland'. Secondly, music also connects different diasporas, as music trends travel between the various diasporic locations and create a sort of musical network among South Asian diasporas around the globe (2000, 35-36). Serving as a more specific example, as Warwick (2000) and Maira (2012) pointed out, British bhangra travelled between the diasporas and, in so doing, pollinated a variety of diasporic music scenes across the globe, such as those in America and Canada. Warwick describes how the Canadian South Asian music scene was comprised of DJs who remixed British Asian music. Maira also notes the pollinating role the British bhangra scene played in the development of the New York Desi remix scene. Contemporary journalistic accounts also testify to the wide reach of British bhangra music. In 1999, Billboard magazine reported on the global reach of bhangra and declared that the diaspora was deeply influenced by British Asian music. 'Observers note that the U.S. bhangra and Indipop explosion could not have taken place without the core of British acts and that the potential for its development in America could be hampered by the lack of large, concentrated Asian communities' (Bessman, 1999), echoing a popular opinion amongst British Asian industry professionals.

These inter-diaspora developments had academic reverberations as well. Gayatri Gopinath called for the re-evaluation of the hierarchical relationship between the nation-state and the diasporas and argued that we should pay more attention to vertical relationships and intersections between different diasporas (Gopinath, 2005: 295). Other academics have also started to re-examine the connections between the several Indian diasporas. For example, Kaur and Kalra, in the seminal *Dis-Orienting Rhythms*, came up with the concept of Transl-Asia:

> "Global media and telecommunications, and the flow of sound structures divorced from their place of manufacture, have provided for a greater interconnectedness and interdependency for minority groups. To begin the exploration of this phenomenon, we propose the imagined spatial arena of Transl-Asia not as a fixed area of the world but rather a continuous movement of imagined and actual arenas. To a greater or lesser extent, South Asia is one of the many reference points of Transl-Asia, but not necessarily its originary location. Our contention is that the understanding of diaspora privileges a place of 'origin', that is of an unchanging and stable nature, whereas the term 'Transl-Asia' is intended to prioritize the notion of space, which 'highlights histories of domination and the production of difference and hierarchy, as well as imaginative social practices' in its various locales (Axel 1994: 17). We do not wish to replace the notion of origins with something else, namely, the 'space' of localized post-migrant cultures as in 'Br-Asian', but to note the interactive dynamics between 'place' and 'space'."
>
> (Kaur and Kalra, 1996: 223)

The other concept that we have already looked into is Anjali Gera Roy's idea of the BhangraNation (2012). Roy suggested that music, and specifically bhangra music, has the capacity to connect the various diasporas through digital technology. Her '[…] contention is that the self-fashionings in BhangraNation cross-national, linguistic and religious boundaries to converge on cultural contiguity' (Roy, 2012: 112).

Key points, such as the importance of technology, globalisation, and the connection between diasporic cultures appear in both the Transl-Asia and the BhangraNation hypotheses; however, there are important differences between the two concepts. Whereas Transl-Asia is an all-encompassing term that can accommodate various positionalities and subjectivities across the diasporas and homelands with regards to the broad term of culture, the concept of the BhangraNation was a concept specifically coined in connection with transnational Punjabi identities. BhangraNation might encompass different citizens of different states, and practitioners of different religions, but those who are a part of the BhangraNationam all share a common sense of Punjabiness or Punjabiyat. As Anjali Gera Roy later argued in her book *Bhangra Moves: From Ludhiana to London*, music connects diaspora communities through bhangra's positionality as a transnational entity and as a global culture that consolidates transnational Punjabi identity across all these locations (Roy, 2017: 18).

The two key aspects to take away from this are the transnational potential of British Asian music and its importance for a sense of shared Punjabiness. However, Schreffler suggests that these two aspects are interconnected, as bhangra has its roots in Punjabi folk music and dance, but its routes have been many and diverse. Indeed, the history of bhangra is intertwined with the history of Punjabi migration. Large-scale Punjabi migration has taken place both on the subcontinent, mostly in the framework of post-Partition movement between East and West Punjab and later in the rural-urban migration within India, and transnationally, as many Punjabis migrated to the UK, East African countries, and to North America as well (Schreffler, 2012: 333). These Punjabi immigrants took their musical cultures with them and created new and innovative musical forms in their adopted homes.

In my case studies, I seek to explore whether the semiotic signs and sounds mentioned by Dietrich have had an effect back in the homeland as they have in the diasporic locations, and in what ways can Bollywood and Punjab be considered a part of the BhangraNation. Thoughts about the transnational successes of British Asian music are reflected throughout my case studies as the artists constantly reference the history of the British Asian scene. As I discuss later in detail, this often serves as a source of nostalgic pride and as a point of reference for future endeavours. Similarly, expressions of the importance of Punjabiness are omnipresent in the thoughts and words of the subjects of my case studies; therefore, a deeper look into the perception of British Asian music as Punjabi music follows.

British Asian music and Punjabiness

As scholars cited in the previous section, such as Anjali Gera Roy and Gibb Schreffler have emphasised, the importance of Punjabi identity and the appreciation of Punjabi culture is an important thread that connects various Punjabi diasporas around the globe. Hence, we need to examine the significance of Punjabiness for British Asian music. As all the music producers and artists who appear in the case studies identify as British Punjabi, in the following section, we are first going to look at literature examining the global significance of Punjabiness and then at the more local constructions of Punjabiness in music produced in India.

Although Kaveri Qureshi reminds us that ‘British Punjabi’ is by no means a stable identity and in different contexts, different facets of one’s identity come to the fore, such as ‘Asian’, ‘Indian’, ‘Jatt’, ‘Sikh’, ‘Peterborian’ etc. (Qureshi, 2014: 163) being British Punjabi is an important common defining factor for all the artists in the following case studies. Whereas my case studies also investigate the intersectionality of identities, especially along the lines of gender

and generation, it is still important to review the literature that discusses the importance of Punjabi identities in a global diasporic, as well as an Indian context.

Punjabi identities have been examined in a wide variety of scholarly settings, but most often in relation to migration and cultural geographies. The forced migration that accompanied the violent partition of India and Pakistan attracted much academic attention (Talbot and Singh, 1999, Singh and Thandi, 1999, Kaur, 2006, etc.), as did the later outward migration from the subcontinent to Europe (Qureshi et al., 2012, Rajan et al., 2016) and North America (Basran, 2003, Mooney, 2006). Even internal migration within India, more specifically the rural-urban migration has attracted scholarly attention (Tatla, 2004, Oberai et al., 1984). Migration patterns have often been examined in the framework of music, as migration has had an important effect on Punjabi music, as Gibb Schreffler has pointed out in his essay 'Migration Shaping Media: Punjabi Popular Music in a Global Historical Perspective' (2012). In another article, he also suggested that Punjabi music is an important forum for identity building and for maintaining cross-diasporic, transnational connections.

> 'Music is one of many realms that distinguishes Punjab as a cultural area. Given its importance, music is a mode through which Punjabis display their identity. Vernacular music and dance of Punjab both embody regional characteristics of the Punjab and index change in its society over time. The stories about Punjabi identity that are narrated through music evoke images which Punjabis use to particularise their ethnicity both within the Punjab and in diasporic communities around the globe.'
>
> (Schreffler, 2004: 197).

This mode of identity display through music, as well as identity construction in relation to music, have been demonstrated in various case studies, as well. Rajinder Dudrah has shown how British Asian youth make sense of their experiences of being diasporic Punjabis through the language and sounds of British Asian Punjabi music (2013). Similarly, C.S. Bal has looked at third-generation Punjabis in Singapore and their experiences with bhangra. Here, British, urban bhangra worked as a marker of the ethnocultural identity of Punjabiness that helped Punjabi youth – unable to connect to the larger 'Indian' identity - to construct a sense of Punjabiness in an environment that was not conducive to this (Bal, 2009: 189).

Anjali Gera Roy suggested that the reason behind the transnational relatability of bhangra music is rooted in the fact that its sonic world draws not only upon the memory of the undivided Punjab, but it expands on it for the global Punjab (Roy, 2017: 12). Ananya Jahanara Kabir went further than this and conceptualised the British Asian diaspora as the 'third Punjab' modelled after the 'first' and 'second' Punjab were separated by the Partition and now belong to Pakistan and India. She thought of this space and Punjabi music as having the potential to reconstruct a pre-Partition sense of composite Punjabiness and to reconcile the Pakistani and Indian Punjabi diaspora (Kabir, 2018). In her view, Punjabi music has the capacity to overcome historical trauma and to reconstruct a Punjabi identity that has not existed since the Partition, if it ever actually did exist. Although exploring the implications of the Partition falls beyond the scope of this thesis, Kabir's study shows the important role music can play in creating and reconstructing identities.

Many authors view Punjabi music as a central point of connection between the home and the diaspora. According to Tony Ballantyne, new media has transformed space and subordinated geographical distance, resulting in a heightened awareness of the cultural production between the music scenes of the Punjabi diaspora and the Punjabi population in the home country (2006: 151). Gibb Schreffler has argued that we should view the heightened connectivity and simultaneous awareness of a global Punjabi culture as the birth of the "virtual Punjab". Punjabis in India (or anywhere else) can now forge transnational connections without travelling the globe. Hence, one can identify as a Punjabi regardless of one's geographical location. Schreffler suggests that this transnationalisation of Punjabi culture is visible in the music world in the collaborations we can now see between artists situated in different parts of the world, as well as in the travel of musical styles and in the way technology has impacted global music consumption (2012: 337).

These observations are relevant for this research because they help locate British Asian music within the broader transnational networks of Punjabi music production, and they show how important Punjabi music can be in forging and maintaining relationships across the globe.

India-British Asian relations

Advances in technology and the development of an effective global communication system were key factors in the rise of the transnational Punjabi identity. During the early period of British bhangra, there was not much of a relationship between the music scene of the homeland and that of the diaspora. As Schreffler pointed out in his analysis of the standardisation of bhangra in the UK and India, until Malkit Singh arrived in the UK in the mid-1980s, there was limited knowledge in Britain of the music industry in Punjab (Schreffler, 2012: 349). Anjali Gera Roy further elaborated on the historical separation of the two scenes. On the basis of her comparative analysis, she argued that the British Asian and the Indian Punjabi bhangra were two separate and

distinct entities with different appeals and audiences (Roy, 2017: 170). She suggested that while the importance of bhangra in the diasporas was in how it helped create living hybrid identities, in India it lay more in its ability to reassert regional and ethnic identities (Roy, 2016).

Within the territory of Punjab, bhangra was viewed differently in urban and rural communities, which became even more pronounced with the rise of Daler Mehndi. Mehndi's rise was a critical moment in the shaping of a new Punjabi identity. After the end of the insurgency in Punjab, which coincided with an economic upsurge, the introduction of Mehndi's upbeat, celebratory music came to signify a new regional identity, along with the consumption-driven lifestyle of the Punjabis. Mehndi became an all-India sensation and achieved considerable success in Bollywood. He also garnered attention from the academic world. Anjali Gera Roy argued that through the figure of Mehndi, Punjabi music became 'the pan-Indian celebratory idiom'. His music became a staple in clubs and at weddings all across the country. Perhaps because he simplified the language and musical structure of traditional bhangra music, Mehndi made Punjabi music popular amongst a wide variety of audiences, and he provided visibility for the region and served as a representative of its musical culture (Roy, 2010: 37).

He was, however, criticised by many in Punjab for lacking Punjabi cultural authenticity, which could have been constructed by belonging to the rural Punjabi areas or by using Punjabi as the language of music (Schreffler, 2012: 352). The rural Punjabi audiences preferred less urban-focused performers along with genres that they perceived as more authentic. They did not welcome the process which put Daler Mehndi and his kind of Punjabi music in the centre of national attention. Schreffler criticised what he termed as the 'global Punjabi discourse' for subsuming more local and thus more 'authentic' and localised Punjabi musical and dance forms. He argued that 'due to its breadth and generality and its emphasis on the cosmopolitan' this discourse essentialises Punjabi traditional culture (Schreffler, 2014: 67).

With the help of modern technology, British Asian bhangra also grew in popularity among the more urban and transnational audiences in India. Although some songs of the British Asian band Alaap had been used in Punjabi and Hindi films in the 1980s, it was not until the 1990s that British Asian artists started to gain greater visibility in India through the artistry of Bally Sagoo, the British Asian DJ and producer who hosted his own TV show on the Indian Star TV channel (Ballantyne, 2006: 132-149). Anjali Gera Roy suggests that there was a confluence in which the rising national visibility of the regional musical within India merged with currents from the golden age of diasporic music-making. This new current had a strong influence on the music industry in India. Roy characterised British bhangra as a 'boomerang' that returned to the subcontinent. She emphasised that British Asian music, and more so its North American remix

versions that became popular in India in the early 2000s, were re-formulated, re-packaged and re-sold to Indians according to American sensibilities. The consumers of diasporic music in India were not so much rural Punjabis as they were middle-class North Indian youth, who were eager to embrace this new take on South Asian modernity. As she put it:

> 'Urban middle-class Indian youth schooled to reject anything traditional, vernacular, and folk as 'native', embraced folk music with alacrity when it 'returned back' as American popular from Britain across music television and the internet. Generation X, keen to keep up with global sonic trends, was more than willing to lap up Punjabi peasant fare so long as it was packed by transnational music giants as world music or American popular music.'
>
> (Roy, 2012: 227)

If we were to use the language of migration studies that we discussed in previous sections, we could consider the returning Punjabi music as a cultural remittance from the diaspora to the homeland. However, if we were to look for its contribution to identity building, as we examined the role of British Punjabi music in the formation of diasporic identity, we could perhaps think about what the consumption of British Punjabi music in India tells us about alternative models of being both global and South Asian at the same time.

Interestingly, despite the apparent popularity of British Asian music in India, academic accounts of British Asian music barely mention this phenomenon. This is even more noteworthy given the British Asian music industry's obsession with greater visibility. Perhaps, it is instructive if we think about whether this means that in terms of power relations, India was not considered an important enough market to merit their attention. We can detect a similar blind spot in academic studies of Bollywood cinema. As Monika Mehta pointed out, although Bollywood was popular in the former Soviet Union and the Arab world until recently these markets have not received as much attention in Anglophone markets (2019: 172). This should prompt us to think about the value that we associate with that particular market and its role in the world's entertainment industry, a point that we shall revisit in the course of later chapters. Although it is certainly important to keep in mind how rural Punjabi communities might perceive the hybrid musical forms emanating from diasporic communities around the world, and it is also important to be mindful of the possibly alienating impact that bhangra's global spread has had on the way this music is produced and consumed for certain audiences, my concern in this thesis is not to

investigate questions of authenticity or origins, I am more interested in the factors that enabled British Asian artists to participate in the cultural economy of Bollywood.

III. Bollywood film and music in a globalising world

In this section of the literature review, I survey two relevant fields of academic study that help us place the transnational journeys of the British Asian musicians in context. Firstly, I discuss literature that analyses the increasingly global audiences and production processes of Bollywood film and music. Secondly, I focus on the relationship between Bollywood and the diasporas, both in terms of representation and of production.

Bollywood and globalisation

The transnationalisation and globalisation of the Bollywood entertainment industry have become an extremely popular academic topic, as a number of publications, such as *Bollyworld* (Kaur and Sinha, 2005), *Global Bollywood* (Kavoori and Punathambekar, 2008), *Bollywood and Globalization* (Bhattacharya, Mehta and Pandharipande, 2010), *Bollywood Travels: Culture, Diaspora and Border Crossings in Popular Hindi Cinema* (Dudrah, 2012), *Travels of Bollywood Cinema* (Roy and Huat, 2012), *The Magic of Bollywood: at Home and Abroad* (Roy, 2012) have all focused on this phenomenon. On account of its enormous appeal in India and the diasporas, Bollywood cinema and its auxiliary industries have been considered a transnational cultural form for at least the past thirty years. For example, Kalra and Kaur were already discussing Bollywood as a global phenomenon in the middle of the 1990s when they were arguing for Transl-Asia as an analytical category (Kalra and Kaur, 1996: 222).

Since then, the popularity of the topic has only grown. Numerous monographs have traced the global reach of Bollywood cinema. Much of the research has focused on the ways in which members of the Indian diaspora consume Bollywood and fashion their identities vis-a-vis Indian culture as portrayed by Bollywood. Researchers have focused both on the core territories of Indian migration, such as the UK and Canada (Dudrah, 2006, Banaji, 2006, Hirji, 2010, Kraemer, 2016) as well as on newer territories, such as Germany and the Netherlands (Vandevelde et al., 2016, Brosius, 2005, etc.).

Scholars agree that a key moment in the global journey of Hindi cinema was the economic liberalisation and the subsequent corporatisation of the film industry, which resulted in the birth of the Bollywood entertainment industry (Ganti, 2016, Kavoori and Punathambekar, 2008, etc). This economic liberalisation not only changed the focus of the Indian state's economy from heavy industry to that of a consumer economy, but it had a far-reaching impact on its mediascape as

well. For example, one can observe how the beginning of satellite programming and advertising has led to dramatic changes in the way people think about the world and their place in it (Mazzarella, 2003). The transformation of Hindi cinema from a backwater into an industry leader we know as modern Bollywood coincided with the change in the relationship between the state and the diaspora communities. These two parallel developments had a profound effect on the way films were produced and consumed (Kavoori and Punathambekar, 2008:4). Bollywood began to place a new emphasis on the diasporas, creating narratives about them and catering to their tastes in order to encourage film consumption in overseas territories. I pick up on this aspect in the next subsection, as this is directly relevant for my case studies. This change in strategy clearly affected the perception of the diasporas in the homeland, and it opened up new opportunities for diasporic artists who chose to return.

An even more relevant aspect for this study is the development of the Bollywood music industry. The relationship between Bollywood films and music is unique from a variety of perspectives. For one thing, the integral role of songs in the narrative was for the longest time one of the defining features of popular Hindi cinema. As a result of this entanglement, the film and music industries are also interconnected. Perhaps it is for this reason that much of the literature on Bollywood music also employs a film studies perspective and looks at the narrative role of songs in films (Dudrah, 2006), or their role in promoting films (Sarrazin, 2014) or their mode of production within the framework of the film (Morcom, 2007).

There has been significant interest in the global aspects of Bollywood music and dance. Research has mostly focused on two facets of this: firstly, the global journeys of music; and secondly, the global influences on Bollywood music-making. As Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti argued in their introduction to the book *Global Travels of Bollywood Song and Dance*, Bollywood music has always been global in its reach. It has attracted audiences outside of India for a long time, and it has been viewed as an ambassador for Indian culture. More relevant to this study is the long history Hindi film music has of incorporating global music trends, often by employing people with global tastes (2008: 6). As Greg Booth has shown in his chapter "That Bollywood Sound", Western music was already influencing Bollywood music directors back in the 1940s. Although many of these people were not familiar with Western music themselves, they employed Goan and Parsi assistants who understood jazz and Western instrumentation (2008: 91). In a similar vein, Biswarup Sen argued that very often, it was relative outsiders who contributed the most to the development of Hindi film music. Sen cited R.D. Burman, Kishore Kumar, and A.R. Rahman as examples, all three of whom were positioned outside of the mainstream of contemporary Hindi film music. Burman and Kumar lacked classical training at a time when light

classical music reigned supreme, and Rahman had a distinctly South Indian and Western musical orientation. In the long run, their different experiences and approaches enabled them to create sounds that were later considered revolutionary (Sen 2008).

According to Beaster Jones, these processes have been described in various ways, such as "[…] Westernization (Kartomi and Blum 1994), hybridity (Dutta 2013), flows (Slobin, 1993, Appadurai, 1996), and cultural imperialism (Tomlinson 1991)" (Beaster Jones, 2015: 10). The term that Beaster Jones uses to denote the process of incorporation of an array of musical forms and genres is "cosmopolitan mediation". He described this practice as cosmopolitan mediation as one in which directors translated non-film musical genres into the established sonic and stylistic vocabulary of film songs. In this way, the end product, the film song, would display some similarities with the original genre or style, may it be flamenco or *qawwali*, but it would also follow the conventions and sensibilities of the cosmopolitan taste of filmmakers (2015: 8).

All of these studies reveal various ways in which Bollywood has been incorporating music and involving people with different experiences and approaches in order to create different and new sounds. Looking at this mode of engagement can be instructive when looking at a similar process with the diaspora artists of the case studies, who also possess a kind of cultural and musical knowledge that sets them apart from other musicians and artists in the Bollywood industry.

Bollywood and the diaspora

Continuing this examination of how Bollywood has incorporated outsiders in its production of culture, we now turn our attention to some of the ways in which Bollywood has consciously sought to incorporate the Indian diaspora. As we have seen from the preceding review, the academic literature on ethnic return migration is quite limited; however, there is some literature on the cultural depiction of return migration. Earlier, I differentiated between real and symbolic acts of the Indian government in order to reintegrate the diasporas into the fold of the nation, either in the form of encouraging return migration or by pursuing a narrative that suggested that they are valuable parts of the nation even though they reside outside of India. According to Sareeta Amrute, this happened through the reformulation of Indian identity: allowing Indians to be transnational but also be loyal and maintain emotional and economic ties to the homeland (Amrute, 2010: 132). This reformulation of national identity enabled the globalisation of middle classes and the outward flows of migration, as it set the diasporic lifestyle as an example to be followed. The economic success of the global Indian diasporas became a model for urban Indians in the homeland (Ray, 2013: 86) At the same time, this broader conception of identity allowed for the reincorporation of the diasporas back into the national imagination. One of the arenas in

which this discourse played out the most visibly and in the most relevant way for this research was in the cultural industry of Bollywood.

As Jigna Desai and Rajinder Dudrah pointed out, beginning in the 1990s, Bollywood films started presenting new and different pleasures, and they painted a picture of India that was more affluent and was populated by an upper class that often included diasporic characters (Desai and Dudrah, 2008: 12). Following this, many authors dealt with the effects that this shift had on the representation of different classes on the film screen. India was often depicted as a land of opportunities in films and on TV, but this brightly shining future was only available for the upper classes and upper castes, whereas the less fortunate were much more anxious about this shift towards consumerism (Mankekar, 2015: 24). Moreover, Ganti suggested that it was not only the poor who received less and less visibility in Bollywood cinema but India itself. Many of the films were now set in the diaspora and revolved around the lives of the members of the diaspora (Ganti, 2016: 257).

The vast literature discussing the depiction of NRIs in Bollywood cinema (Desai, 2004, Dudrah, 2012, Kraemer, 2016, etc.) mostly agrees that whereas diasporic Indians were initially portrayed as having been corrupted by the West, they soon came to be seen as role models to be emulated. Following the policy shifts discussed in the sections about migration, the early 2000s saw the emergence of the NRI genre in Bollywood cinema. Films in this genre focused on the transnational lives of overseas Indians and epitomised their success and lavish lifestyles.[6] Lucia Kraemer took this thought further and suggested that Bollywood films have not only reshaped how the Indian nation is depicted but have also stretched the borders of the country to incorporate diasporic locations into the symbolic territory of India. Films are often set in the UK, where characters seamlessly make their home, conduct business meetings in Hindi, or teach their children the Indian anthem (Kraemer, 2015: 53) According to Purnima Mankekar, these modes of depicting Non-Resident Indians visualize an enticing concept. Firstly, they "deterritorialise" NRIs. They are compatriots who do not belong to any one geographic location. At the same time, they are idealised and are shown to have a deep, heart-felt connection to India. She also suggested that as a result of this mode of portrayal, Indianness has become a portable asset and Indianness was defined not by geography, but by customs, loyalties and feelings (2015 36). This is especially insightful when thinking about the perception of the return of diasporic musicians, as the display of "customs, loyalties and feelings" can establish them as a part of the nation.

[6] However, it is important to point out that Bollywood's depiction of the NRI lifestyle often stands in contrast with the lived realities of the diasporas, and British Asian protagonists in Bollywood films are very different from actual second-generation British Asians (Kraemer, 2016: 55).

What is even more important for my present study is that, according to Desai and Neutill, NRIs in Bollywood films tend to act as intermediaries between India and the West. The two authors argued that the depiction of the NRI in Bollywood can be interpreted as 'reflect[ing] the interconnected hopes, fears, and anxieties about diaspora's key role as a catalyst and conduit for the transnational flows of capital, technology, and culture between India and the global north (Desai and Neutill, 2013: 234).' We can thus notice, that although the field of film studies uses a different vocabulary than does the field of migration studies, both make some of the same observations and both emphasise the role that the diaspora has played in bringing innovative cultural practices to the homeland. However, it is important to point out that Desai and Neutill also emphasise that NRI figures do not uncritically copy Western practices, attitudes and cultures. Rather, they act as cultural translators or intermediaries who transform these practices to fit the Indian context.

A classic example of such a figure is Shahrukh Khan's Mohan in *Swades* (2004, dir. Ashutosh Gowariker). Having returned from the United States to India, he introduces electricity into his village. He does so by adapting Western technology to the local possibilities. This moment shows how the transfer of technology from the West can be adapted by an NRI who is familiar both with Western technology as well as the practical reality back in India. The NRI indeed plays the role of a catalyst who puts his skills and knowledge to use in order to bring change and prosperity to his homeland. Post-liberalisation Indian society and its mediascape has shown a special interest in this role. As Mankekar showed in her 2015 book *Unsettling India: Affect, Temporality and Transnationality*, the consumerist turn that was reflected in television and film had a deeply unsettling quality, and it was indeed necessary to have an example of how to remain Indian while engaging in transnationality and consumerism. Providing such a model through the figure of the diasporic Indian was an important step in accomplishing this.

The way in which the diaspora is depicted in Bollywood films addresses the emotional aspect of the economic relationship between the diaspora and the homeland. The consistent way in which Bollywood films portray the NRI as a blend of Western and Indian values, skills and knowledge has also influenced the perspective of real-life returnees. Mankekar has written about the portability of Indian identity, and Kraemer has discussed how the new Indian identity has come to incorporate foreign landscapes. Thus, we can see how diasporic artists can claim an Indian identity, and yet possess knowledge, skills and aspirations they have gained from their Western lives. Positioning the NRI as a model within the channels of popular culture has proven to be influential on various levels.

IV. Conclusion

This thesis seeks to understand the dynamics of British Asian cultural production and in the framework of the Bollywood music industry along with three broad research questions that I have introduced in the introductory chapter. Firstly, I am interested in the way British Asian music is positioned in the global network of South Asian musical production and consumption. In the literature review chapter, we looked at its potential role as a cultural artefact that can connect South Asian diasporas around the world, as well as playing an important role in the global geography of Punjabi cultural identity. Secondly, I am looking at push and pull factors that enable the transitioning of British Asian musicians to the Bollywood music industry. We have located British Asian music in the debate around global Punjabi identity, as the Punjabi cultural roots of many artists might have opened a window, as well as the position of the diaspora and the cultural politics of the Bollywood industry could have contributed to this shift.

In the first section of the literature review, I provided the context for the present thesis, mostly through the perspective of migration studies. I focused on India and its diasporas, and I discussed three broad themes: Firstly, I offered an overview of migration studies literature on return migration and suggested that instead of looking at India solely as a sending country in the 21st century, it is important to look at diasporic return, as well. I pointed out that it is important to look at diasporic return through an intersectional perspective, that takes generational difference into perspective because this can greatly impact the push and pull factors that motivate migration.

Secondly, I pointed out that over the past thirty years scholars in the field of cultural studies have made the case that diasporas should be studied as separate entities from the homeland. They suggested that research should be focused on the uniqueness of diasporic cultures, as well as on their political and activist role in their new homelands. However, in order to address the questions raised in this study, we must look at the position of diasporic communities from a broader perspective. While accepting the argument of the uniqueness of diasporic cultures, we must also observe how this uniqueness works in its relationship to the culture of the homeland. I showed that a very limited amount of research has been done on return migration to India. Nevertheless, it is clear that the symbolic gestures and policy decisions of the Indian state have played an important role in attracting Non-Resident Indians back to India. I called attention to the fact that research on social and cultural remittances is a fairly new field, but we should look into these aspects in more depth if we want to understand the cultural importance of return migration.

Thirdly, I discussed some of the findings of film studies, the one area of research that also identified returnees and NRIs as cultural intermediaries, as Bollywood often portrayed foreign-returned Indians as mediating technological and cultural flows between India and the West.

In the second thematic section of this chapter, I discussed the aspect of diasporic cultural production most relevant for this thesis: diasporic music-making. I examined the vast literature on British Asian music from the perspective of innovation that I discussed in terms of new sounds, identities and performance practices and I sought to locate this in the framework of cultural geography. Many of the key texts on British Asian music have sought to look at British Asian music in a specifically British context, instead of within a broader diasporic cultural formation. While acknowledging the political and academic importance of reasserting this specificity, it is more important for this research to trace the links between the British Asian music scene in the UK and its perception and reverberation elsewhere, most importantly in other diasporas and in India.

I attempted to show that bhangra music, as well as British bhangra, have continued to resonate with their Punjabi origins. As this thesis investigates how, and in what ways, British Asian music participates in the cultural economy of India, it is important to look at the connections that British Asian music has managed to develop around the world with other diasporic communities and with Punjab itself. In order to fully tease out the importance of transnational connections, I suggested that we should embed British Asian music within the framework of global Punjabi musical developments. In doing so, we can start to unravel the importance of a global Punjabiness, in the framework of the BhangraNation and virtual Punjab. It is important to note that the British Asian diasporic music-making played a leading role amongst the diasporas and contributed to the development and flourishing of individual scenes. Punjabi music connects the Punjabi diasporas around the globe, both with each other, as well as with the homeland, and often it has helped in creating or amplifying diasporic identities.

In the third part of the literature review, I focused on Bollywood's global reach and looked at the impact globalisation and transnationalisation had on its cultural productions. Firstly, its practices were increasingly Westernised, and transnational innovations were incorporated that had repercussions on the way music was produced. Secondly, the new narratives put the figure of the Non-Resident Indian in the centre of attention. This development is relevant for us in unpacking the role of the NRI and RNRI in popular culture.

Chapter 3
Methodology

In the methodology chapter, I seek to provide a framework for the research that can account for the flows of culture and people between the homeland and the diaspora in a meaningful way. As this thesis is an inquiry into the travels of musicians and music, I use the concept of travel throughout this chapter in a variety of ways. Thinking about travel as a method has allowed me to reflect on a variety of key themes in my dissertation, such as the mainstream–margins, centre–periphery, insider-outsider dichotomies and the context-dependency of transcultural capital. Moving forward, in this chapter, I aim to achieve three goals. Firstly, I elaborate on some key concepts that inform my research. I seek to conceptualise the transnational and transcultural nature of the journeys, musicians and music, while taking into account the homeland-diaspora dynamics. To this end, I use the concept of transcultural capital to describe the processes that enable the musicians to cross-cultural and national borders. I suggest that we read transcultural capital in conjunction with the representation of the NRI that we investigated in the Literature Review chapter and propose that we should view their music as a cultural remittance. I also reflect on the various relationships that scene participants have towards the past of the homeland-diaspora relationship and the past of South Asian music., and South Asia more generally. Secondly, I show how I designed and executed my research that comprised of various aspects of social media research, textual analysis as well as fieldwork in the conceptual framework of travel as a method. Finally, I discuss my positionality and how it affected my research design and research output.

I. Concepts and ideas

In this section, I discuss two key symbolic themes through which I examine journeys in space and time. I first discuss the concept of transculturality in order to understand the meaning and implications of the journeys of people and cultural products. In order to capture the complexities of the transnational careers between the diaspora and the homeland and to establish a theoretical framework that allows for transcultural processes according to different contexts, I first discuss why using the framework of transculturality is useful in this context. Secondly, I discuss the possibilities and limitations of using the concept of transcultural capital and how we can tailor it to the needs of this research. Thirdly, I propose to read music as a cultural remittance to capture its importance in negotiating transnational journeys between the homeland and the diaspora.

In the second half of this section, I focus on travel through time in the form of nostalgia. Throughout the thesis, I suggest that the history of South Asian cultures matters, and the different attitudes towards this past impact greatly on the ways in which music is produced, consumed and understood.

People and sounds between cultures

Transculturality, as a different way of looking at global processes in culture, has been set up in opposition to interculturality and multiculturality (Marotta, 2014: 90) The term "transcultural" in the broader sense has been used to discuss cultural formations that cross-cultural boundaries. This term firstly accounts for the way in which cultures react to each other internally, and result in the creation of hybrid cultural identities. Secondly, it can refer to a process in which cultures come into contact externally and influence each other in various ways. Most importantly for this research, Wolfgang Welsch has used this term to denote identities of individuals as well. He suggested that now that individuals are exposed to a wide range of crosscutting cultural formations that shape their identities beyond the identities that had been traditionally understood in terms of national identity, it is important to consider cultural identities in terms of transculturality. Moreover, he suggested that "transcultural identities comprehend a cosmopolitan side, but also a side of local affiliation" (Welsch, 1999: 207). We can use this framework to unpick the various threads that make up the identities of British Asian musicians travelling between the homeland and the diaspora. I find this concept useful, as it allows for the complexities of diasporic cultures in the homeland, and diasporic journeys to the homeland, when read in conjunction with literature around global Punjabiness, discussed in the literature review chapter. Thinking about Anjali Gera Roy's transnational BhangraNation (2012), we can also read it as a transcultural entity, incorporating a variety of cultural influences according to the geographic locations of its members. Conversely, when considering the artists involved in this thesis, it is impossible to discuss their identities, emotions and affiliations along the lines of national identities, such as Indian or British, but if we read their identities as transcultural, crossing through British, Asian, Indian and Punjabi cultural contexts, we can get closer to understanding the various elements that intermingle and result in transcultural sounds and identities. This means that employing a transcultural perspective can account for cultural relationships between the homeland and the diaspora and other places, accommodate for the various global South Asian musical influences of the artists in the case studies, but also the musical influences they received as a result of being based in the multi-ethnic cities of the United Kingdom.

If we wish to capture how these transcultural identities function across borders, we can turn to the concept of transcultural capital introduced by Ulrike Meinhof (2009). Transcultural capital is a term often used in migration studies to describe the complex ways in which transnational artistic careers can be read in the framework of Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital (Meinhof, 2009, Hope, 2011, Gabriel, 2017, etc.). Bourdieu suggested that the basis of all relations in society is capital. However, he argued that in addition to economic capital, there are other important types of capital that we should consider, such as social capital, which includes networks and connections and the individual's place and status in society. Social capital is based on social, cultural and economic structures of society but the individual can draw on this to advance his or her position (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 119). Cultural or symbolic capital is a set of skills, tastes, mannerisms, etc. that an individual acquires through being part of a certain social class, as a result of the interaction of the natural and acquired cultures (Robbins, 2005: 23).

Meinhof and others suggested that in the 21st century, it is worthwhile to look at these concepts in the framework of transnational journeys. Ulrike Meinhof and Anna Triandafyllidou suggested that in the case of transnational migrant musicians, the intersection of their social and cultural capital leads to the creation of economic capital. Based on this understanding, they created the term "transcultural capital" to describe the ways in which migrant musicians draw on their web of relationships throughout their journeys between the diaspora and the homeland, as well as make use of their cultural knowledge, technical skills and socio-professional networks to make a living and build a career. (Meinhof & Triandafyllidou, 2006). These are important aspects to examine in relation to British Asian musicians as well, as their transcultural identities, knowledge and network have the potential to influence the way they cross-cultural and national boundaries. Thinking about the careers of British Asian artists along the lines of this concept and looking into the kind of social and cultural capital they possess and how this works throughout their transnational journeys is an important thread in the following chapters.

However, if we look at the literature dealing with transnational stardom, one of the key issues that authors grapple with is the context-dependency of star texts (Littler, 2011, Beltran et al. 2014), and there is good reason for us to believe that the star text and the celebrity discourse around these artists might be very different in the United Kingdom and in India. Thinking along the lines of the literature review, while keeping in mind the context-dependency of social capital, we should perhaps consider how belonging to the British Asian music industry could be understood in terms of social capital. How does having the relationships of a diaspora music industry influence the careers of artists? For example, what does it mean to be a popular music producer in a marginalised "ethnic" industry in the UK or to be a somewhat marginal music

producer in the mainstream music industry in India? How can we make sense of Punjabiness in terms of cultural capital? As we have seen, being Punjabi means something very different in the British entertainment industry, where it means belonging to the ethnic industry with all its limitations and possibilities. Being a Punjabi artist in India, however, means being part of a culture that is increasingly represented and is becoming part of the mainstream culture of India.

Another aspect to add to this framework is the cultural value of the NRI in India. As we have discussed some aspects of the portrayal of the diasporic Indian in popular culture (Mankekar, 2015) and the importance that the Indian state allows for diasporic communities (Amrute, 2010), this could have a potential effect on the way the artists' transcultural capital is created and perceived in India. In the literature review chapter, we have seen how authors, such Desai (2004), Dudrah (2012), Kraemer (2016), et al. conceptualised the NRI as a cultural intermediary, a person who is able to acquire new skills in the natal homeland and bring them back to the ancestral homeland. In the previous paragraphs, I suggested viewing the process in the framework of transcultural capital to account for the different contexts and the role of the individual. In this section, it is time to turn our attention towards the methodological framework that can help us understand the cultural products that these travelling musicians create. I suggest that we look at this question through the framework of cultural remittances and view the music of the returning British Asian musicians as an essentially transcultural product, that bears the mark of the hybrid cultural influences of the UK British Asian scene and is read and consumed in the context of the Bollywood creative economy. As Beaster-Jones has shown in terms of music specifically (2011), Bollywood itself is a hybrid cultural sphere and incorporates many local and transcultural forms of expression and is open to global sounds and influences, as long as they go through the process of cosmopolitan mediation.

In order to capture the extent of these cultural dynamics, we should also focus on the cultural product, as it arises out of the intersection of the social and cultural capital of the cultural producer and it is an important factor in creating transcultural capital. As we have briefly discussed in the literature review chapter, Juan Flores has created the concept of cultural remittances to describe "the ensemble of ideas, values, and expressive forms introduced into societies of origin by re-migrants and their families as they return "home," sometimes for the first time, for temporary visits or permanent resettlement, and as transmitted through the increasingly pervasive means of telecommunications" (Flores, 2010: 16). In his view, cultural remittances that consist of innovative practices in terms of culture as a broad term, have an important potential in the home country. Although other scholars have not conceptualised the phenomenon in such a coherent way, there are other examples of diasporic cultural return, either in the form of returning

musicians or the music itself, and diasporic musical innovation influencing tastes and trends in the homeland, as it happened in Nigeria, Japan or klezmer music in Europe (Slobin, 2012: 105) or rai music from Paris returning to Algeria (Baily Collyer, 2006: 172). In a similar vein, diasporas have been often considered as a locus of innovation in music research, for example, the development of various new genres of kirtan singing have been identified in the Sikh diaspora (Purewal and Lallie, 2013).

Nevertheless, there are also limitations to this concept. As Kezia Page argued: "[t]ypically in economic discourse, remittance is viewed in terms of a dependency syndrome in which the sender occupies a position of sovereignty and the receiver as the dependent "other" consumes these goods without reference to any project of sustainable development. Economic discourses of remittance perpetuate centre-margin hegemonic discourse by presenting remittance as a one-way street where the diaspora is implicated in positions at the centre." (Page, 2011: 11) This could mean that the diaspora is prioritised in this discourse, however, as we have seen, the process is not so simple. Innovation might have originated in the diaspora but throughout the thesis I suggest that the very idea of centre and periphery is changing, and India has started to occupy a central position in terms of cultural production. However, I seek to add another temporal layer, look at what happened after the return of the cultural remittance and I suggest that it is a building block in accumulating transcultural capital. I have already shown examples of research that considers the innovative aspects of British Asian music in terms of sounds, music production, performance and consumption practices. Now, it is time to consider this aspect from a transcultural perspective. As I later show in the thesis, certain sounds and musical practices came into being as the diasporic artists were rooted in certain geographical locations, which enabled them to draw on their transnational cultural heritage, the musical technology and culture that surrounded them and create cultural formations that had not existed before in quite this way. Throughout the thesis and in the various case study chapters I seek to understand how British Asian music and musicians have been incorporated into the cultural industry of Bollywood and their cultural products conceptualised as cultural remittances play an important role in this.

Travelling in time: using nostalgia as a lens in the thesis

This thesis is contemporary in its focus, as most of the artists discussed are active participants on the scene as of 2021. However, an important thread running through the thesis is the undercurrent of history that is connected to the present through the emotive ties of nostalgia. Although originally, looking at nostalgia as a point of connection between the homeland and the diaspora was not part of my methodological approach, I have gradually become mindful of the potential

relevance of the concept. Most of the field interviews that I have conducted started with a reference to the past: attitudes were varied, as some interviewees recounted the glorious days of 'the scene' with pride or with sadness, some talked about the pioneers of bhangra with respect or with slight disdain, and some saw their own contribution as being 'game-changing' compared to the previous developments. In any case, the past has been an important element of all conversations and the interviews related to nostalgia either in a reaffirming or in a critical way. I suggest throughout the thesis that this relationship to the past often impacts on the ways in which the musical and transnational journeys pan out, therefore looking at the concept of nostalgia with academic rigour and its usage as a heuristic tool is needed in the current thesis. In the following section, I outline the methodological approach that I use to explore the artists' relationship with the past. Firstly, I outline the capacity of nostalgia to build and nurture communities through time and space, and most relevantly for this thesis, across national boundaries. Music growing out of a community of sentiments (Appadurai, 1996) and crafted on a common understanding of the past can become a cultural remittance eagerly consumed by homeland audiences as well. Similarly, by projecting an understanding of the past that is approved by wide sections of society can result in the creation of transcultural capital. However, we should avoid the pitfall of treating nostalgia as a monolithic entity, as there are different approaches towards the past that can be radically different based on generational differences and individual attitudes and thus, I proceed to discuss the ways in which our understanding of nostalgia should be nuanced and differentiated.

A community of sentiments

Although the study of nostalgia originates from the field of psychology, it has taken on an important role in other disciplines too. In this thesis, I mostly draw on the ways nostalgia has been used in cultural studies and popular music studies, however, it is worth tracing the term's development in other fields as it is instructive for this enquiry as well. The word 'nostalgia' itself means a longing for home, and it was coined to describe the mental state of homesick soldiers. Initially, nostalgia was considered a mental illness with a spatial connotation (Adams 2014). Later, it took on a temporal dimension as well and was understood as not only a longing for previous places but for previous times as well. What is common in both aspects is the sense of loss: a longing for a lost place or lost time (Dwyer 2015: 8). Music can be seen as a vehicle to remember specific feelings, moments or periods in one's life. As Michael Pickering wrote: "Songs seem to evoke memories more powerfully than written prose because of their combination of rhyme and rhythm, tempo and timbre, and, at least in partial alignment with this, we remember particular songs or tunes because of their importance to us both in time, at specific junctures of

our lives, and over time, as we rove back and forth over the past and rework its meanings for us in an ever-changing present" (Pickering, 2018: 191). The relevance of the temporal and spatial aspect comes to the fore in Chapter Five and Six, where we discuss British Asian artists' longing for lost times of success, for example, the lost glory of the golden age of British Asian music, or lost places of origin, such as Punjab. These emotional ties can play an important role in their self-perception and music, as they might seek to recreate the sounds of lost times and places, or in some cases through a more critical approach to negative nostalgia and the past, they might seek to find a clear break with these musical traditions.

These experiences underline what Svetlana Boym, the pre-eminent theorist of nostalgia has pointed out, that instead of disappearing, nostalgia has become ever more important in society and culture. She wrote 'Somehow progress didn't cure nostalgia but exacerbated it. Similarly, globalization encouraged stronger local attachments. In counterpoint to our fascination with cyberspace and the virtual global village, there is a no less global epidemic of nostalgia, an affective yearning for a community with collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world' (Boym, 2001: xiii-xiv.). This fragmentation, which is also a part and parcel of diasporic experiences, is often sought to be cured by nostalgia, a tool that can build social relations and can serve as a bridge between past and present (Adams, 2014). Collective nostalgia has a capacity to build communities and ground individuals in their identities, especially so with national identities that are thought to be lost as a result of globalisation and global migration (van der Hoeven, 2018: 238). We could understand this in the framework of the "community of sentiment", a term that Arjun Appadurai has created to describe a group of people who "imagine and feel things together," that keeps communities together across national borders based on similar emotions or other common factors (Appadurai, 1996: 196).

This is especially relevant in the music industry, where musicians and producers use nostalgia to build collective identities or reinforce a sense of belonging to communities that are felt to be under threat (Van der Hoeven, 2018: 244). We can pinpoint certain elements of British Asian music that work towards this aim, such as retaining Punjabi, as the language of the music, or the use of the typical bucolic images of bhangra music, also reinforce a longing towards the long-lost place and time of Punjab, often despite the gap between the artist and the homeland both in terms of time and space.

Nostalgia can be a powerful drive in marketing and the Bollywood music industry takes full advantage of successful periods of Hindi film music. Old Bollywood songs are often used as background music in various advertisements, as research has shown that this is an effective way to drive sales of unrelated products as well (Chou, Singhal, 2017). Bollywood also uses

'evergreen' film songs in a self-referential way: earlier, successful film songs were often recycled in new productions in the form of remakes or remixes, which are cheaper and faster to produce, as well as constitute a lesser financial risk on account of the financial viability of nostalgia. As Jayson Beaster-Jones has shown, nostalgic associations with a certain personality are also strong in the Bollywood music industry, like in the case of *Veer-Zaara*, where the soundtrack comprised entirely of previously unheard compositions of the late music director, Madan Mohan became a blockbuster on account of this association (Beaster-Jones, 2009: 425). The importance of nostalgia associated with certain singers or musicians manifests as the driving principle behind talent hunt shows, where the participants are expected to sing Bollywood evergreens in the specific style of the original playback singer (Jhingan 2012: 131). Throughout the chapters, I explore how nostalgia manifests itself in the UK and in India and whether it can have economic and cultural significance.

Critical pasts

Despite the enormous capacity of nostalgia to create and maintain ties within communities, ideas of the past are multifaceted and have a capacity to impact individual experiences differently. Critical theorists have used the term nostalgia in a pejorative sense, seeing nostalgia in popular culture as a sign of society's failure to face reality and find refuge in the past (Adams 2014).

This critical and dismissive approach towards the past is significant in the thesis on many accounts because in the first two case study chapters, I make the claim that the perception of the past can impact attitudes that in turn influence music-making practices. Positive or negative perceptions of nostalgia are, therefore, key in music production. Positive nostalgia is respect towards the history of music that can be definitive in delineating what kind of music is being made now. For example, evergreens in Bollywood. These contribute to building a community and define what musical community is based on, what the understanding is.

However, as I already noted in the literature review chapter, it is important not to gloss over generational differences in the diaspora, as people of different generations can have vastly different cultural knowledge and attitudes. Similarly, nostalgia is also a layered concept and can have different implications for various generations and perhaps we could presume that diasporic nostalgia, as well as ties to the community of sentiment, weakens with subsequent generations. However, Marianne Hirsch has shown that nostalgia can also be intergenerational and does not need to hark back to one's own experiences (2012). She coined the term of postmemory, which specifically serves to denote the feelings of nostalgia towards events, places, or a historical time

on behalf of later generations towards the places and times witnessed by their ancestors. This is a mediated memory inherited from parents and grandparents and can have a powerful effect on later generations' life. Ananya Jahanara Kabir used the term "diasporic postmemory" in the South Asian context to describe how the members of the British Asian diaspora of various national origins relate to the tragic event of Partition and she showed how real these mediated experiences feel, even generations removed from the original traumatic moment (2004). I suggest that if we broaden the scope of the concept and include memories other than traumatic experiences, we can productively engage with the term to understand the relationship of later generations of British Punjabis, such as DJ Frenzy to Punjab and Punjabi culture. Of course, for many the diasporic post-memories of Punjab can be traumatic, as they can relate to a sense of separation or even the trauma of Partition, however, we can broaden our understanding to incorporate other experiences as well when analysing the emotional relationship of South Asians living in the diaspora towards the homeland of their ancestors and also towards earlier times that they have not personally lived through. This remoteness does not necessarily weaken the emotional ties, however through its mediation through elder relatives' and community narratives, it perhaps makes it different from first-hand experiences. I am especially interested in the role of diasporic postmemory with later generation DJs, who utilise the musical heritage of Punjab and India in their music and thus cater to the common sentiments between the diaspora and the homeland and derive transcultural capital from this shared knowledge.

However, ideas of the homeland itself are fragmented and contested, especially, in the context of Punjab. This is important in understanding the relationship between Punjabi music and identity, as roots and routes have been an important aspect in the development of Punjabi identity for a long time. Ruptures caused by rural-urban migration, the Partition and transnational migration gave rise to idealistic constructions of the past, belonging and community. As a result of these processes and later anti-Sikh violence by the Indian state during the 1980s and 1990s, for many Punjabi Sikhs the concept of 'homeland' in fact is not defined in terms of national identities along borders but in an overarching sense of Punjabiness and a hyperlocal connection to the ancestral village. As Anjali Gera Roy has pointed out, one of the important fields in which this plays out is music, whereby authenticity in Punjabi music is connected to the *pind*, the ancestral village and pre-capitalist, pre-industrial past, uncorrupted by the city or the West (Roy 2017: 50). As Nicola Mooney has argued, nostalgia in fact comes necessarily in the wake of modernity that unsettles time and place and makes fixed identities, homes and memories elusive. Therefore, nostalgia for Punjabi communities often means a longing towards an idealised time and culture that never existed in reality (Mooney 2011: 175).

Moreover, there are dominant narratives about the meaning of being Punjabi and nostalgia towards the Punjab, and this is related to economic and caste power. It is usually the idealised perspective of the Jatt caste, a Hindu or Sikh group with disproportionately large landholdings, that is propagated in popular culture (Taylor, 2014: 280). It has been widely noted that Punjabi music and British Asian bhangra music contain references to the Punjabi countryside and agricultural work which often goes hand in hand with references Jatt men. The hypermasculine nature of the Jatt man is often valorised despite the problematic caste angle that disregards power relations and structures of oppression (Roy, 2015). The celebration of Jatt identity within popular Punjabi culture, including Bhangra performances, deploys what Nicola Mooney refers to as the 'rural imaginary.' This is a set of performance practices ad a web of references that seeks to recreate the ties to the farmland and agriculture in order to reverse the loss of home as a result of urban and transnational migration. Furthermore, Mooney explains that the 'rural imaginary' plays a crucial role in reinforcing the sense of being Jatt as synonymous with being Sikh and being Punjabi through 'strategies of autophony, laying claims to land and landscapes and social value attached to landownership' (2011: 104).

These notions are relevant in the transnational context as well, as the Jatt community is the most prominent one of the migrating groups. Their privileged caste position is linked to their economic position as well. Their original relationship with the land is the one that we have discussed above: emotional and nostalgic, recalling their erstwhile privilege. This relationship is often maintained by still owning land and palatial NRI homes in Punjab (Taylor, 2014: 283). Their privileged position also enables them to migrate abroad, where then the same power relations in the diaspora that was there in the homeland, privilege and inequality is reproduced.

Nostalgia in the thesis

In order to grasp this lingering sense of past in the thesis and its very practical and marketable ramifications, I explore the ways in which various kinds of nostalgia are present on the British Asian music scene, varying between the origin of all nostalgias, the nostalgia towards Punjab to the nostalgia on the British Asian music scene towards earlier periods of the British Asian music scene. Many artists and producers fondly remembered the heyday of British Asian music – either as the heyday of Old Skool Bhangra or the post-bhangra period, especially towards those periods that were rooted in innovation and brought mainstream attention or strong community response. These multi-layered experiences that are rooted in the past, form a bridge towards the present, in which the nostalgic memory of the golden ages of British Asian music lives on. This can be observed on the level of discourse but also on the material level. Nostalgia is sometimes evoked

through presenting the material aspect of the past, such as in the case of the 'Soho Road to the Punjab' exhibition, or re-enacting past practices, such as organising daytimer parties with the same performers as decades ago. The BBC Asian Network regularly organises 'bhangra legends' themed events, where the erstwhile pioneers of the scene perform. This can result in a certain mediated nostalgia as well: British Asians in their thirties and forties are often nostalgic about the early bhangra bands Alaap and Heera who also grew out of a certain nostalgia towards the Punjab. These events are usually sold out and testify to the marketing power of nostalgia. This is also underpinned by the fact that certain well-respected members of the British Asian music scene still make a living from the repetitive usage of their repertoire.

However, we should also look into the contextual nature of British Asian music and British Asian musicians in terms of geography and in terms of age and gender as well. As the case studies explore, nostalgia can be very different in the case of a middle-aged music producer recreating his earlier tracks over and over again, as opposed to a young DJ playing Punjabi folk music from the 1970s. Similarly, the geographical context of nostalgia can be very different: In Britain, being nostalgic about British Asian music can reinforce a longing towards a more cohesive and active British Asian community or a Punjabi ethnocultural group. In India, it can symbolise a longing towards Britain or a mainstream acknowledgement of the global Punjabi community.

II. Research design

Methods of collecting data: travel as a method

Throughout the course of the research, I have used qualitative, mixed methods to collect and analyse my data. Keeping in mind the limited length of the research period as well as the thesis, I have decided to have three in-depth case studies that should cover different aspects of music-making as well as transnational travel. This approached seemed even more befitting considering that Negra and Holmes argued that case studies can be a good approach to discuss such intangible, ephemeral and transient phenomena as the concept of celebrity (Negra and Holmes, 2017: 10). As I was interested in the diversity of experiences and push and pull factors, I have decided to include three artists that are active in different fields of music production and have different experiences in terms of gender and belong to different generations. I have decided to include Hard Kaur, a female rapper, belonging to the 1.5 generation, Rishi Rich, a music producer from a twice-migrant family, and DJ Frenzy, a DJ belonging to the third generation of British Asians. This sample has allowed me to look at different generations, different genders,

different classes, different musical genres and different career trajectories. As I was interested in the process of crossing over from the British Asian to the Bollywood scene, I focused on successful stories of crossover, however, I also discussed factors that made this transition harder or unsuccessful in some cases. The careers represented in this thesis cover a wide array of successes and challenges and therefore by looking into the careers of these particular artist, we can observe a wide cross-section of the British Asian music industry.

I kept monitoring their media presence and artistic careers by following them on various social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram), the methodological and ethical considerations of which I elaborate on later. I also focused on their reportage in Indian and British media over the course of the three years of the research. I was looking for posts and interviews that talk about their careers in India and in Britain and indicators about their feelings, approaches, goals and achievements, to understand the push and pull factors I outlined in the research questions. These approaches have left me with very different amounts and quality of data, as there are great differences in the ways in which the artists use their social media accounts and how they interact with the press. There were periods when certain artists, for example, Hard Kaur posted a lot on social media and then later suspended her accounts and has not been posting ever since. On the other hand, DJ Frenzy gives interviews very rarely but maintains a steady presence on social media. Rishi Rich mostly posts about his private life and friends, therefore his social media presence is not too relevant for this thesis. In order to be able to move beyond these limitations and be able to ask the questions that were relevant for my research, I decided to try and interview the artists. This seemed even more relevant, as Avtar Brah argued that there is no blanket definition for return migration, and the attitudes, goals and journeys of individual returnees can be very different, depending on specific personal circumstances (Brah, 1996: 189-190).

Capturing transnational flows

In the literature review, we have already seen the importance of cultural geography as the demographical structure of cities can result in the creation of new sounds and new soundscapes (Dudrah, 2011). When thinking about the relationship of places and journeys in between, it is useful to think about Ulrike Meinhof and Nadia Kiwan's argument that in the times of globalisation and in the context of the transnational networks of migrant musicians, we should look at spatial hubs, that are specific geographic locations which "bundle" and "focalize" global flows of people, capital and culture. In other words, there are specific regions or cities that function as central locations in music production at any given time. Importantly, Meinhof and Kiwan point out that some of these hubs are situated in the global South, and unless we broaden

our perspective beyond the erstwhile imperial capitals of the North, we will not be able to account for the movement of music and musicians (Kiwan, and Meinhof, 2011, 5, 8). These theoretical concepts are useful in the context of British Asian musicians too, as my research also looks at translocal and transnational artists, whose journeys and cultural presence on both scenes can be better comprehended with the adoption of this model that conceptualises transnational production and consumption with a focus on the musicians and their relationship to places.

It is important to consider the positionality of British Asian artists in India and in Great Britain simultaneously, because the contextual nature of their celebrity text has the potential to inform their perception and career trajectories in both places. Their cultural capital, accumulated in one location can have relevance in the other one as well, resulting in transnational cultural capital but it has the potential to have a different resonance in India, and perhaps also in different locations in India. Therefore, I sought to incorporate travel in my methodology. As I have been following global and transnational journeys of musicians and music, it was only befitting for me to travel as well. Travelling and getting to places informed my understanding of issues as transculturalism formed an essential part of my inquiry and as I have suggested, different contexts can change power relations and meanings. Although my travels were different than that of the artists, because I was not following ancestors as the musicians did and I did not seek to migrate for longer stretches of time, my mobility was prompted by the same forces: I was looking for nodal points and centres of music production. As already mentioned, my research was primarily based in Birmingham, but I have travelled frequently to other locations of academic or cultural relevance in the UK, most prominently London. I also frequently travelled to India, where I participated in a trade conference in early 2018 in Mumbai, and later visited Mumbai, Chandigarh and Delhi on research trips in 2018 and 2019.

Throughout these key locations of British Asian music production and consumption, I was looking for opportunities for interviews and participant observation through the framework of multi-sited ethnography. While proposing a methodological toolkit for analysing music business from a cultural studies perspective, Lorenz Grünewald-Schukalla argued that while multi-sited ethnography is good to investigate cultural production throughout the ages or in various locations, it is impossible to spend prolonged periods of time with one organisation or in one location and therefore the levels of immersion are going to be different than with traditional ethnomusicological researches. In addition, the music business tends to work on an ad hoc basis, which does not allow for sufficient preparation or recording of the meetings (Grünewald-Schukalla, 2017: 126). However, engaging in multi-sited ethnography in the framework of this research posed significant challenges from a conceptual and a practical aspect. As Aswin

Punathambekar noted when researching the transnational reach of the Bombay media industry, multi-sited ethnography in this case means more than working at multiple sites at the same time. Rather, it means recognising the difficulties of defining a particular field site for understanding the operations of media industries like Bollywood (Punathambekar, 2013: 18). I sought to overcome this challenge by making a conceptual difference between personal level narratives that I traced through the interviews and national and global level changes that I analysed by looking at historical, political and social developments and attempted to connect the two levels by reading the personal narratives in the framework of larger changes.

Interviews

In order to capture the personal narratives involved in the migration process and allow space for the "lived experience" (Gray, 2003: 29), I decided to conduct semi-structured face-to-face interviews with all three artists. This posed a number of challenges from a logistical and methodological perspective. Firstly, access to these artists was not always very straightforward. Anna Morcom interviewed most of the key players in the Bollywood music industry of the early 1990s and observed that "[t]hese people were famous and/or very rich, were far more important than me, and were also very busy." (Morcom 2007, 21) Eventually, Morcom's work was facilitated by her acquaintance with Yash Chopra, arguably the most important person in the Bollywood industry. However, her emphasis on the difficulties of access and the importance of networks is key in understanding the apparent bias in the study of Bollywood cinema, that prefers to analyse the end products from a cultural studies or visual anthropology perspective as opposed to analysing the process of production from a cultural industries perspective, because contacting and meeting artists is not easy.

I had no such connections in the music or film industry, however, I could take advantage of the artists' involvement with the "virtual Punjab" and their active social media presence. I managed to set up meetings with all the key artists by contacting them via their social media profiles. I interviewed Rishi Rich in August 2018 in Mumbai, with DJ Frenzy in December 2018 Chandigarh, and with Hard Kaur in 2019 in Mumbai. All of my key interviews happened face-to-face and followed a semi-structured format. I had prepared by looking up as much information on the artists that I could find and finding the gaps in my understanding that would be crucial in understanding the push and pull factors in their careers and their career and personal context.

Nevertheless, as Holstein and Gubrium have pointed out, interview narratives are always co-created by the interviewee and the interviewer (2016: 68). This meant that my presence and positionality impacted how the interviews went and I found that the majority of the

methodological challenge was connected to the use of language and terminology. I had to be careful to phrase my questions in a way that is not overtly academic because that can be very counterproductive. In one instance, I asked one of my interviewees how the move to India has impacted his "identity". He had no answer to the question, but it caused a tangible discomfort in our conversation. Moreover, what I found to be a greater challenge than the environmental disturbances was to find a balance between the academic approach and the approach of the artist. A similar challenge has come up in dealing with business insiders, whose language is also quite different from academics and artists and is usually centred around success. With regards to questions of anonymity, there were two opposed perspectives on the part of interviewees. Most company representatives were happy to share their insights, which were often quite critical and personal, but sometimes they made it explicit that these views are "off the record" as it would compromise their position in the company. The other corporate position was when instead of a personal meeting and personal views, I was offered the opportunity of conducting an email interview, where I could send my questions and would get the company's official position as a response. Both approaches posed challenges in different ways: whereas the first approach offered deep insight and new information, I was not allowed to quote and reference it. The second approach was transparent and quotable, but rarely contained new information, and the contents could have been accessed by consulting company websites and official statements.

Whenever I received consent and permission, I aimed to record all the conversations on a phone recording app, however, sometimes the environment was not conducive to recording, for example when the interview took place at a bar or a wedding. There, I had to contend with taking written notes on my phone or in a notebook and trying to sketch down the rest of the information upon arriving home from the interview.

These interviews have given me an entirely different perspective on the research. I have gained a deeper, personal insight, however, it also exposed me to certain ethical considerations about the personal lives of public personas, that I discuss later.

Virtual travels

Another new and important way of travel for artists and music is through the online space. Looking at this aspect is not new with regards to Punjabi culture, as Gibb Schreffler and Anjali Gera Roy have both written about the importance of virtual spaces in creating virtual audiences, that Schreffler termed as "virtual Punjab" (2012: 337) and Anjali Gera Roy as "BhangraNation" (2012: 111). Since the time of writing the importance of the online presence of the artists and music has only increased and the travel of cultural artefacts has become more widespread.

Therefore, I seek to look into the online cultures of South Asian music production and consumption as well. As I am interested in the confluence of personal histories and global processes, I have been looking at the social media profiles of the artists in order to get a sense of their online self-representation. As I found that most of the artists that I was looking at were actively managing their own Instagram and Facebook profiles, I focused on these platforms. While examining these platforms I used the technique of "listening on social media" (Crawford 2009: 528), which Karen Patel has further developed. In doing so, I have been browsing on the social media profiles of the selected artists but without interacting with them. This constitutes a form of participant observation, where the researcher gauges a sense of the participants' online personas and their context (Patel, 2018: 65).

I have also made extensive use of YouTube. It functions as an important archival resource, moreover, the comments and views can be important pointers in understanding the reach and popular perception of the cultural products and artists. YouTube serves as a digital archive of popular culture according to Arthurs et al. serving as a "repository of popular culture, creating a diachronic archive over time as well as synchronically expanding in its scope" (2018: 3). Trainer wrote that despite earlier expectations of YouTube becoming a culture-sharing platform, where users consume each other's content and create communities based on this, the reality is that most of the users consume content produced by professional artists, who use the platform "as promotional tools, creating their own channels with which to share content, and as an archival tool for promotional material, music videos, and recordings of live performances" (Trainer, 2015: 72), and this is the aspect that I focus on in this research.

In each chapter, I provide a close reading of one or more cultural products produced by the artists discussed in the case studies. In doing so, I used the toolkit of textual analysis to approach the music and the videos as texts to be read. From the conceptual perspective, this is relevant as I have made a case for music and star texts to be considered as cultural remittances and I sought to focus on the end product as well. From the methodological perspective, this is justified by Phillipov's argument, who claimed that it is important to use textual analysis in popular music studies as empirical research methods like interviews and ethnography might not be able to capture those experiences that are out of the reach of such methods (Phillipov, 2013: 211). By reading the aural and the visual in these music videos, I seek to place these in the larger cultural processes of diaspora-homeland cultural relations, mostly the representation of the NRI or RNRI in cultural texts. The approach of using textual analysis in popular music studies has been criticised by many for disregarding lived experiences and projecting the critic's own experiences onto the imagined audiences (Bennett, 2002). In order to view the text as "both a

product of particular social, cultural and historical conditions and as an agent in circulation" (Gray, 2003:14), I sought to balance this by also engaging in more empirical methods, such as interviews and ethnography, that I discuss in the next subsection.

III. Ethics and positionality

Ethics

As much of my primary data is derived from face-to-face interviews and social media research, there have been a number of ethical challenges that this research has had to face. The most significant one concerns anonymity and privacy. It is standard practice across all academic fields to anonymise research participants in order to protect their privacy (Robson, 2017: 195) However, the core interviews I have undertaken were with celebrities and anonymising interviews with celebrities is not necessarily conducive. However, media coverage of celebrities' careers often lacks empathy and is often presented just to get more views or clicks and as Negra and Holmes have shown, gender also plays a role in this, as female celebrities are under more scathing criticism than male celebrities (Negra and Holmes, 2013: 7).

It is my utmost attempt to try and avoid these narratives, however, it also puts me in a position that is not easy to navigate. The dark side of celebrity is an integral part of the careers of every artist and since we have claimed that it is not only global economic and cultural flows but also individual decisions and circumstances that prompt transnational journeys, the private lives of celebrities with its possible issues of family problems, traumas, addiction, burnout, etc. should belong to the discussion. Through personal interviews and personal relationships, the researcher is sometimes exposed to these aspects, however, I do not find it ethical to refer to these aspects of the case studies. I acknowledge the limitations that this approach puts on the research, however, I do not refer to issues and problems that I have learnt throughout the personal interviews only and I believe that have been communicated towards me unintentionally.

When it comes to the ethics of social media research, I faced similar challenges. As Basset and O'Riordan called for a context-sensitive revision of human subject-based Internet research they argued that "[t]he Internet is not simply a virtual space in which human actors can be observed: it is a medium through which a wide variety of statements are produced" (Bassett and O'Riordan, 2002: 234). For this research, this means that I am not so much interested in non-celebrity users' private lives or identities as expressed on the celebrities' social media profiles, but I am more interested in the ways in which the celebrities create and produce their own images on social media, in addition to how they interact with their fans. However, in order to anonymise the fans who have become a part of my research without their knowledge or consent by interacting

with the celebrities' posts present in the public domain, I shall anonymise them, in case I include their comments or interactions in this research in any meaningful way and I intend to do the same in the case of screenshots of videos and social media posts where the usernames of the users commenting or liking the post are visible.

My research complies with the BCU Research Ethical Framework and has been evaluated by the BCU Ethics commission. It involves human participation, all the interviews conducted were preceded by signing an informed consent form, where the interviewees could decide whether they are happy for the interviews to be recorded and to be referenced later on. Most of the interviewees have been participating in their official positions or as celebrities, therefore anonymity was rarely requested, however, wishes to be anonymised have been respected throughout the research process.

Positionality: the travelling researcher

As described above, during the course of my research, I have used mixed methods to gain primary data, and in the following chapters, I will talk more about how this information has been utilised. However, at this point, it is necessary to discuss one of the methods in depth in relation to ethics and positionality, because it opened up a variety of questions around these. Andy Bennett has called attention to the fact that ethnographic fieldwork on youth culture and/or popular music often lacks critical reflection on the role of the researcher, the relationship between researcher and research respondents, and the possible impact of the latter on the nature of the research data produced. (Bennett, 2002: 456). I have been conducting multi-sited ethnography at music-industry-related events, and interviews with various members of the British Asian and Bollywood music industry. Whereas these experiences have been invaluable for me in getting a deeper understanding of the practicalities of the music industries, they provided me with a very specific perspective on it – one which is influenced by my positionality as an outsider to the United Kingdom, India, British Asian and Bollywood music and the music industry in general.

This aspect should be considered in relation to debates in ethnomusicology about the role of the researcher vis-à-vis his or her position to cultural insiders. Ethnomusicological literature differentiates between "insider" and "outsider" views on musical cultures, whereby the "insider," usually a member of the musical community under scrutiny is seen to be able to provide a perspective that the culture has of itself in its own terms, while the "outsider" brings a comparative and universalist approach, that is less biased because of the lack of emotional attachment to the culture itself but is also restricted in the depth of understanding because of the lack of the sufficient engagement. Although this view is very much grounded in the history of

Western ethnomusicology and its connections to the colonial modes of knowledge production, it is still relevant from the ethical point of view as it draws attention to the inherent power imbalance of the Western researcher seeking to understand a non-Western musical culture on his or her own terms (Nettl, 1983: 150–153). Being mindful of the dangers of cultural appropriation and misrepresentation, I have tried to follow Bruno Nettl's approach, who advocated that ethnomusicologists should follow a collaborative approach and be mindful of the fact that they are discussing a culture in which they will always be an informed outsider at best.

In the process of doing interviews and participating in events, I have also been prompted to reconsider my own identity in the light of how I was perceived by the interviewees as a racialised, engendered, novice researcher and my relationship to British Asian and South Asian culture. The fact that I am a white, Eastern-European woman, who nevertheless has a history of personal and academic engagement with South Asian cultures has impacted deeply on my research in a variety of ways. My positionality of an outsider to the British Asian music industry could be conceptualised on three levels, firstly, on the level of being a student and not someone from the business industry, secondly, on account of being a young woman, and thirdly, on account of my race and ethnicity.

A novice academic in the music industry

The most tangible aspect of my outsider status was felt in relation to my status as a PhD student vis-à-vis the music industry. As my research focuses on industry developments and the careers of stars, the people targeted for my interviews were famous and busy, which stood in stark contrast with my status as a novice researcher who lacked the necessary social capital to gain easy access to the scene. These power dynamics heavily impacted my access to key members of the scene. Clashing calendars rescheduled interviews and disregarded inquiries prompted me to put less emphasis on interviews than was originally planned and led me to devise other methods to gain primary data, such as media analysis. The interviews that eventually took place were very similar in the sense that they took on a performative aspect, whereby I had to assert my position as a relative insider and a competent researcher vis-à-vis the interviewees, who were established, senior members of the British Asian music industry. My interviewees often assumed that as a non-British, non-Asian woman, my understanding of South Asian culture would be very limited and took the responsibility upon themselves to introduce me to the world of South Asian popular culture. The dynamics of gender, race and ethnicity have all impacted upon the way interviews were conducted, and the negotiation of these factors took up a significant amount of interview time and also led to emotional stress.

An example of such a situation was my participation in a music trade mission to Mumbai in February 2018. This trade mission was aimed at promoting relationships between the Indian and the British music industries and as a result of this, later that year, I was a delegate for a music conference and networking event also held in Mumbai. Being a member of the delegation brought a complex array of advantages and disadvantages. At designated networking events, I was able to meet representatives of the biggest Indian music companies – who immediately lost interest in me upon learning that I am not their British counterpart, but primarily a researcher.[7] Nevertheless, the ethos of the Indian music industry strongly encourages personal meetings, so I managed to set up meetings with music company representatives. These personal meetings were usually quite informal and informative, especially, after I managed to display my familiarity with the cultural context by making appropriate sartorial choices, speaking Hindi and demonstrating my knowledge of the area of research by referring to key composers, songs, films, etc. The discussions were further facilitated by the fact that I repeatedly failed to assume the often-valorised position of the neutral interviewer (Rapley, 2004:19) – my passion for Hindi film music and South Asian popular culture often surfaced. These moments could help me overcome challenges and establish goodwill.

Another challenge that ethnographic fieldwork has posed was its roots in Eurocentric anthropological narratives that do not acknowledge the privilege of the researcher and look at the interviewees as subjects (Clifford, 1997: 187). Early on in my research, I have faced this issue when I was talking to one of my interviewees about "doing fieldwork" in reference to conducting interviews about their histories. My interviewee was puzzled upon hearing that anyone would refer to discussing his life in terms of fieldwork and from then on, I sought to mitigate this conceptual difference by clearly differentiating between the global and the personal level.

Gender and race

My positionality as a young, white, Hungarian woman has impacted significantly the ways in which I conducted fieldwork and on the ways in which my environment perceived me both in the UK and in India. Consequently, both of these factors, namely my gender and my race have had a similarly important role in my access to the field and my consequent experiences. Therefore, it is important that I provide some reflections on how the intersection of my gender

[7] In fact, this posed some other ethical questions, as at the point of the music mission, I was loosely associated with a music development business in the UK. However, it had been made explicit to me that the particular creative company had no interest in forging ties with the Indian music industry. Yet, I had their business card and was very often mistaken for their representative with powers to make decisions and the question whether to correct this misunderstanding or not was quite a difficult one.

and race shaped this research and provide an insight into how we can place this within the broader framework of literature.

Judith Okely has pointed out how "the biological sex and perceived 'race' of the fieldworker were often the first bodily markers of identity for the people in whose group or society the anthropologists came to live" (2007: 66). The music industries both in India and in the UK are similarly male-dominated environments and indeed, as soon as I step into any kind of South Asian music industry-related event, may it be a party, a gig or a music industry conference, my appearance sets me apart as an outsider. This has been true on both scenes, but my gender impacted more on the ways I travelled and conducted fieldwork in India.

Travel as a method has historically been a male and upper-middle-class activity (Clifford, 1997: 197), and for good reason, as doing fieldwork as a single woman can pose dangers that would not be present for male colleagues (Gifford and Hall-Clifford, 2008, 26). Travelling to India means transitioning into a different social world, where the presence of a young, single, white woman is read in a different light as it would be in Europe, as white women are often perceived as sexually available and promiscuous, which often leads to unwanted advances from men (Delaney, 2013). This impacted the way I gathered my data. Even though I would have ideally liked to do fieldwork in clubs and parties, I found it too risky and desisted from doing this, therefore limiting the scope of my research in a significant manner.

In different settings, my gender as a female researcher has also had its advantages. In some cases, especially in conducting interviews with other women, this was most definitely an asset. For example, during my in-depth interview with Hard Kaur in 2018, she repeatedly exclaimed that she would not have given me an interview had I been a man. Conversations happening in the ladies' washrooms or the shared sense of male domination on the scene also establishes a talking point between me and other women.

The other factor that intrinsically affected the way I gathered and understood my material was my positionality as a white, non-British researcher. Much of the literature on British Asian music production has been written from this insider's perspective. Rajinder Dudrah (2001) and Rupa Huq (2004) were fans or organisers of events, which facilitated their access to other scene participants; whereas for Bakrania, who came from the United States to research British Asian music, it was her family relationships and her racial identity that enabled her to take up an insider position in the British Asian music scene. By contrast, my outsider position was undeniable throughout the research, as I am a very visible and audible outsider both in India and in the UK, however. This position has posed opportunities as well as difficulties.

India, as a post-colonial nation has a troubled relationship with whiteness and Britishness, and in certain situations my whiteness, but non-Britishness created confusion. In other situations, it was considered a privilege and an asset, where I perhaps seemed more important than I really was. In conjunction with the institutional support of an overseas university perhaps opened doors that would not have been open to PhD students from an Indian university. There were other situations, where my whiteness and non-Indianness and my consequent outsider position posed challenges. At times, it has led interviewees not to take me seriously because of my position as a student, or it has prompted interviewees to assume that I have no prior knowledge on the subject of South Asian culture, which often resulted in only gleaning superficial answers or dismissive statements.

Another aspect that I found challenging was that I often was the only white person in the room at industry events or parties and I found it hard to blend in. My visible otherness had the advantage of sensitising me towards feelings of marginalisation on the basis of race that I have often encountered when British Asian cultural producers described the racial dynamics of mainstream British culture that set them apart as outsiders on account of their skin colour. This otherwise not would have been less tangible for me having grown up in a largely monoethnic and monocultural society, where I indubitably belonged to the majority.

Transcultural capital

Apart from race and gender, one area which I was prompted to reflect upon substantially was my own transcultural capital in the framework of this research. Even though I remained an outsider as a result of my occupation, power position, race, ethnicity and gender, I still accumulated transcultural capital in surprising ways. During the course of the research, I found that my association with Birmingham and the UK more generally has changed my perception vis-à-vis the artists that I interviewed. I met all three artists featured in the case studies in India (two of the interviews were conducted in Mumbai and one of them in Chandigarh) and the fact that I had also travelled to India established a certain connection between the interviewees and me. Even though I am not British, but I have lived and worked in Birmingham, which is the hometown of two of the three artists. This connection established a rapport, which was further enhanced by our shared position of the "participants of British Asian music scene in India." We shared a sense of knowledge and appreciation towards the history of the British Asian music scene and towards the UK in general. When DJ Frenzy was talking about clubs in Birmingham, I knew the places that he meant and when Rishi Rich was talking about his fondness for certain British dishes, I could relate to it, which helped to create a sense of familiarity. Although there were huge

differences between my interviewees and myself in standing, popularity, wealth, etc., the interviewees and I also shared a sense of being relative outsiders in the Indian music industry as well. I elaborate on the concept of mainstream and margins more in the following chapters, but I suggest throughout the thesis that the incorporation of these artists into the Indian music industries has not been a seamless and uncomplicated process and although their position as the RNRI is respected and valued, this is still a notion that sets them apart as outsiders. Moreover, my genuine interest in South Asian culture, my position as a fan of British Asian and Bollywood music and my knowledge of the Hindi language have helped me in other situations, where it signalled my appreciation of the cultural context. The passion for music shared by my interviewees and me has also opened up new spaces where the classical ethnographical positions of the insider and outsider could be reconsidered, and the necessary rapport was established as a result.

Therefore, concepts elaborated above for the theoretical framework, such as nostalgia and transcultural capital were relevant in these interview situations as well. My transcultural capital as a person associated with the United Kingdom gave rise to a sort of intimacy that was further reinforced by a sense of nostalgia and the shared knowledge of the British Asian music scene between the interviewees and myself.

IV. Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced the main concepts that enable me to analyse how and why British Asian artists participate in global music scenes both in Bollywood and in the world of Punjabi music. I proposed to read and research this phenomenon within the conceptual framework of travel that includes both physical, as well as emotional and temporal journeys.

In terms of physical journeys, I proposed to use the framework of Ulrike Meinhof (2009) of transcultural capital to make sense of the journeys of the artists undertake and I suggested that we should view this as a context-dependent phenomenon. I suggested that we read transcultural capital in the framework of larger sociocultural processes, such as the change in perception of the NRI. I order to conceptualise the music that plays an important role in accumulating cultural capital, I suggested using the concept of cultural remittances coined by Juan Flores (2010).

With regards to emotional and temporal journeys, I suggested that the role of nostalgia in a globalising and fragmented world could perhaps be understood as an important point of connection that bonds the diaspora and the homeland together, and looking at music and musicians to unpick these issues can be a productive arena. However, we should keep in mind that generational differences might be present and therefore should pay special attention to diasporic postmemory, both in music production and music consumption. However, a thread that

I wish to explore throughout the thesis is related to the way in which nostalgia and cultural remittances come together and contribute to creating transcultural capital for the artists present on the British Asian music scene and look at the opportunities that this can create.

In terms of my own positionality and ethics, I also conceptualised my research in the framework of travel. I discussed the ways in which I complied with BCU ethics guidelines. Then, I proceeded to reflect on my positionality as prompted by Bennett (2002). I have discussed my outsider position as an academic and a white woman in a South Asian-dominated, masculine scene and the opportunities and challenges I faced as a result of these aspects and the ramifications this held for the research. Finally, I used the concept of transcultural capital to reflect on my own position as a travelling researcher based in the UK and how this established a connection between me and my interviewees on account of our shared sense of knowledge and nostalgia.

Chapter 4

'I have been building a brand for myself in India without knowing it': The Rishi Rich Project and the role of nostalgia and innovation in building transcultural capital

The first case study looks at Rishi Rich, or Rishpal Singh Rekhi, the pre-eminent music producer, who is in the process of transitioning from music production on the independent scene in the UK to becoming a music director for Bollywood films in India. Rishi Rich's work is associated with the golden age of the British Asian urban sound. When Rishi Rich moved to Mumbai in 2016, he was very surprised to see how well Indian audiences were acquainted with his music. At the height of his career in the early 2000s, he was focusing on nurturing the British Asian urban Asian music scene that he had created. At this stage in his career, he gave a few performances in India, and his artist collective, The Rishi Rich Project, recorded some tracks used in Bollywood films. Little did he know that during these years, he was, in his own words, 'building a brand for [him]self in India without knowing it'.[8] Yet, this following in India, which seemed of less consequence at the time, enabled him to reinvent himself as a Bollywood music producer in Mumbai.

The demand for the 'Rishi Rich sound' in India, fifteen years after its heyday in the United Kingdom not only provides an interesting case study of an involuntary transcontinental cultural spill-over, but I suggest that this is a testimony to the existence of a larger process within the dynamics between the homeland and the diaspora, and one that suggests that shifts have taken place in the flows between the global hubs of South Asian cultural production. By looking at this process, this case study addresses the first main research question, which enquires about the role of contemporary British Asian music and musicians in the global networks of South Asian cultural production. through the perspective of mainstream and margins.

This study investigates the kind of push and pull factors that facilitated Rishi Rich's transition from Britain to India within the framework of cultural remittances. I also look at the possible relationship between innovation and nostalgia in facilitating transnational cultural capital. In order to address this issue, I first analyse the innovative musical style and oeuvre of Rishi Rich and The Rishi Rich Project. I also identify performance practices relating to gender and masculinity that could be considered innovative based on Bhabha's understanding of the

[8] Rishi Rich on Talking Music with Kirti, 2018. [radio interview] JioSaavn.

diasporic third culture (1994). Then, I proceed to look at the industry-level changes that facilitated Rich's transition from the British Asian scene to that of Bollywood and suggest that his transcultural capital was rooted in his earlier success as the pioneer of urban Asian music. I read this phenomenon in the framework of the cultural representation of the NRI as a cultural interlocutor and innovator (Desai and Neutill, 2013).

I. Rishi Rich, the pioneer of urban Asian music
New sounds and horizons

When I visited Rishi Rich in his studio in a hip locality of Mumbai, I felt as if I had taken a trip to London in the early 2000s. Once I passed the guards and entered the studio, all the pictures, memorabilia, posters, vinyl records referred to the golden age of British Asian music and featured Rishi Rich and his friends prominently. Even Rishi Rich himself had not changed much since he was the face of the "urban Desi scene". I was immediately fascinated by this dissonance: if he is still so attached to the British Asian scene emotionally, then what is he doing in Mumbai? When I asked him about this, he became quite pensive:

> "I still represent the UK scene, I still have my roots there. Every time I release something, the media gets behind me. Every time I go back, I do interviews with friends in the Asian media. But everybody understands that I did what I could. It was time for me to break out. I still do work in the UK, if I'm asked to do a UK release only, I will. I love the UK scene, even though it has gone up, gone down, changed a lot ever since I've started. I think it's not as exciting as it used to be. Lots of new artists are coming up, it's very tough now When I started in the scene, the whole Indian music scene around the world looked up on the UK as what's going on in the UK because the stuff coming out of there was amazing." [9]

Indeed, much of the literature about the British Asian music scene considers the early 2000s as a period of success on account of its innovative sounds and the mainstream attention it received from the British music industry and press (Bakrania, 2013, Saha, 2020, etc.). Rishi Rich was a central figure on this scene as a result of his skills as a music producer and his unique sound that evolved as a result of his background and upbringing. Born in Croydon, South London to

[9] Personal interview with Rishi Rich on 27 August 2018 in Mumbai.

twice-migrant Punjabi parents who reached the United Kingdom via Kenya, Rishi Rich has been producing and recording music since his teenage years. He will tell you that, one of the most important influences on his later style was the fact that he grew up on a mixed diet of music that ranged from R&B and hip-hop to Mohammad Rafi and *kirtans*. Combining the knowledge he gained from his education in computer science with his long-standing interest in music, started recording and producing music at a relatively young age. By the early 2000s, he had become the most emblematic figure of that era of British Asian music, as he was not only a producer but also a talent scout who could provide exposure for upcoming talent.

I suggest we read these musical influences and output in light of the academic debates around innovation on the British Asian music scene that I highlighted in the literature review. As I pointed out in the literature review, there are three interconnected areas in which British Asian music was most innovative: its creation of new sounds; its formation of new identities; and its performance practices. In the following section, I outline the contribution of Rishi Rich in each of these areas and claim that it was these contributions that turned his music and his star persona into a transcultural phenomenon that can be read in the framework of cultural remittances.

Rishi Rich's productions from this era have evolved from the "diasporic third space" of Homi Bhabha (1994), as the music is grounded in the unique environment and historical period of London of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The early 2000s was a period of innovation on the British Asian music scene and accordingly, it received attention from mainstream audiences. This attention was aided by the national politics of the UK, in which the ideological project of "Cool Britannia" and initiatives like the 'Indian summer' provided greater visibility for British Asian and Indian cultural products (Saha, 2020). This period was characterised by more mainstream visibility for British Asian musical styles, and it also drew more attention from scholars who began to question some of the long-held popular discourses about British Asian youth and British Asian music. These scholars were interested in how British Asian artists incorporated other musical styles, such as hip-hop (Goldsmith and Fonseca, 2013), into their own. Individual career trajectories were examined from a localised perspective — most notably Apache Indian's music in relation to his Birmingham environs and its interactions with other non-white groups in the city (Cooper, 2004).

Like Apache Indian, Rishi Rich was also very much influenced by the environment in which he created his music. He incorporated the popular genres of the soundscape of London, such as R&B, hip hop and garage. He also referred to his South Asian musical heritage, either in the forms of samples borrowed from Bollywood films or Punjabi songs, the use of South Asian instruments, such as the *algoze* or the *dhol*, and occasionally the insertion of Punjabi or Hindi

lyrics. His music also had high production value, thanks to Rich's IT background and his skills in his well-equipped recording studio. As a result of his upbringing in the diaspora, Rishi took advantage of the opportunity to invest in good quality software and computers, tools of the trade that would not have been so easily available in pre-liberalisation India. The way in which Rich created a hybrid of cultural elements, together with his innovative style of production, established him as a producer who could make a new kind of British Asian music that would be considered "as good as mainstream music" (Juggy D, 2018 BBC AN) but with a specific Asian flavour. Rishi Rich's music was fresh, uncomplicated, and was as close to mainstream musical styles as possible while retaining some of the spice of South Asian culture and its musical influences. I will elaborate on this in the next subsection.

As mentioned in the literature review, mainstream attention has always been important in the discourse around British Asian music, and Rishi Rich is widely considered the one who grabbed that attention with what he labelled his new genre of 'urban Asian' music. One of the defining moments of this new genre was the establishing of The Rishi Rich Project by Rishi Rich in 2003 when he signed Jay Sean and Juggy D, two aspiring British Asian singers. That same year, they released the track '*Nachna tere naal*/ Dance with you', which reached number 12 on the UK singles chart. This then led to The Rishi Rich Project performing on The Top of the Pops. Their performance on national television gave the group, and its 'urban Asian' style, a much wider audience. Moreover, it was widely celebrated as the "arrival" of British Asian music on the national music scene. (Bakrania, 2013:40). Rishi Rich went down in history as a person who could — to use the parlance of the British Asian music industry — take British Asian music to the 'next level'. As a result, Rich became an iconic figure in the British Asian music industry.

In addition to achieving this success, Rishi Rich also facilitated the creation of a new, cool and urban identity for South Asian youth, one fashioned along the lines of mainstream youth culture, but retaining a sense of its South Asianness. The videos that accompanied The Rishi Rich Project's songs all portrayed the artists as popular, cool young men and women, living successful lives in the midst of multiracial company. The men could easily seduce beautiful women. They all enjoyed financial comfort, drove expensive cars, and lived life to the fullest. The 2004 Jay Sean - Rishi Rich song, 'Eyes on You', also included British Asian cityscapes and showed how British Asian boroughs in London served as the centre of "cool" activities.

In summary, Rishi Rich's music created a new sound, look, and identity for British Asian music. It was considered innovative enough that Rajinder Dudrah termed this scene and age 'post-bhangra', where 'post' is both a temporal marker to signify that this is a period that followed the heyday of British bhangra, and also a qualitative signifier that shows that music created during

this era is sufficiently different from its predecessor to be considered a different genre (Dudrah, 2002, 2011), despite retaining elements of its bhangra roots. I suggest that Rich's innovative practices and the success of his music make it possible to view his music within the framework of cultural remittances and that these remittances have contributed to his transcultural capital and success. Nevertheless, this proximity to mainstream attention in Britain also acted as a push factor in the long run, a thread I pick up after a detailed look at some of the innovative practices within The Rishi Rich Project.

'Nachna tere naal'/'Dance with you': a close reading of the aural and visual text

In order to get a more in-depth picture of the image that Rishi Rich and his artists projected and of the unique sound that they created, let us turn our attention to the lyrics and video of Rishi's first great mainstream success in the UK, the bilingual "*Nachna Tere Naal*/Dance With You". In the following analysis, I will focus on those aspects of Rishi Rich's music that could be read as innovative based on the previous discussion. In doing so, I seek to underpin my claim that Rishi Rich's music could be considered as a cultural remittance that contributed to his transnational career and his later transition to the Bollywood scene. The reason for focusing on this particular text is that it not only displayed important innovations but also established a new genre and earned Rishi Rich his place within the mainstream. A key aspect of the song's success was its new sound combined with the new identity that Rishi Rich created by drawing on his diasporic third culture heritage. Rich fused layers of identities and sounds to create a new and unique cultural product.

Both the music and the video fused diverse cultural elements. The product then had the ability to speak to multiple audiences. There is an inherent duality in both the music and the video that is personified by the juxtaposition of Juggy D and Jay Sean and can be heard and seen in each aspect of the music and the video. The song employs bilingual, English-Punjabi lyrics, and it intersperses an R'n'B sound with Punjabi instruments and multiracial video sequences. The song is easy to consume for those who are not acquainted with British Asian music, as it is mostly sung in English, but contains just enough Punjabi influences to signal its difference.[10] Yet, it follows certain conventions of British Asian music-making so as not to alienate those looking for more traditional content. This duality is also reflected in the music video that communicates the image of young, urban musicians who are at ease in the multiracial, multicultural British society and projects an aspirational model of belonging for young South Asians around the globe.

[10] Whether the mainstream audience finds the production 'exotic' enough is an important feature of all successful crossover tracks and artists according to Cepeda, who analysed the crossover success of Ricky Martin (Cepeda 2008).

The overall sound of the song, which came to define the "urban Asian" musical style, can be described as building on the conventions of contemporary R'n'B music, peppered with Indian stylistic elements. The track is based on steady, programmed beats combined with a repetitive, pop-influenced melody. Its hook is provided by the Indian flute, the *bansuri*. In order to provide a more pronounced 'urban' feel to the track, it samples city noises, such as sounds of sirens and vehicles. The vocals also show the double influence of certain urban trends common in the music of African American origins and Punjabi music.

Jay Sean represents the urban influence, while Juggy D represents the Punjabi connection. After Rishi Rich introduces the two singers in a manner familiar from hip-hop tracks, the vocals are divided between Jay Sean and Juggy D. Jay Sean sings mostly in English, in a melismatic style, typical of contemporary R'n'B singing, but he also has a lengthy rap portion. When Juggy D sings, he follows the high-energy performance tradition of Punjabi folk singing, and his lines are exclusively in Punjabi. The lyrics complement each other, as both the Punjabi and the English words are an attempt to woo a woman. Thus, British Asian youth found it easy to relate with performers who wished to have good music to dance to while also wanting to express their romantic desires in both languages. This combination of elements played an important role in the moulding of a new kind of British Asian identity. At the same time, Indian audiences who used English as an aspirational language could identify with the desire to express themselves in a bilingual manner. Moreover, since most of the song is sung in English, the mainstream, Anglophone audience could also understand the gist of the song.

Figure 1: Screengrab from Nachna Tere Naal

The music video, which projects a multi-cultural multi-ethnic audience, not only for itself but for British Asian music in general, advocates for the widespread appreciation of British Asian culture and its commensurability with 'cool' forms of mainstream youth culture. The presence of Juggy and Jay, whom Rishi Rich recruited, lends credence to the idea that British Asian culture is a natural subset of mainstream British culture. This can be deduced from the composition and behaviour of the diegetic audience in the music video. The onlookers in the video, the racially diverse but mostly black and brown men and women, encourage Juggy and Jay as they dance in the middle of a circle. While multicultural in its outward appearance, the scene also reminds Punjabi audiences of the traditional festivities in which the men dance together and playfully compete with each other on the dance floor. Later, the onlookers also join in, but they imitate the Punjabi dance moves, hence placing Punjabi dance moves on the map of urban dances. They then fuse the Punjabi steps with breakdance, demonstrating the compatibility of Asian moves with the established genres of street culture. The Indian elements of the song do not prevent the diegetic non-Indian audience from appreciating and participating in, the music. Instead, they find it is something to appreciate and emulate. They are even in awe of Abbas Farid, the famous British Pakistani freestyle footballer who joins the crowd and entertains them with his skills.

Juggy and Jay remain in the centre of attention, and they represent people from different worlds and orientations but who are good friends. They enjoy parties together, chase women together, and when there are no women to lavish their attention upon, they do not mind dancing with each other. This behaviour showcases a model of homosociality that can resonate well with non-Asian British, British Asian and Indian audiences. Male friendships are important in British society, and one often sees all-male groups socializing together in clubs and pubs. In Indian and British Asian communities, often same-sex friendships are the only acceptable mode of social interaction young people are permitted. Male-female friendships are normally discouraged by families or communities. Moreover, male-to-male friendships often termed as *yaari* or *dosti* have been valourised in Indian popular culture, especially in Hindi cinema. This form of friendship is often depicted as deeper and truer than heterosexual love, and sometimes it slips into unspoken territories that lie beyond friendship. In Indian popular culture it is not unheard of for two male friends to be attracted to the same woman, and to pursue her becomes a pastime that friends do together (eg. *Dostana*, 2008, dir. Taran Mansukhani; *Gunday*, 2014, dir. Ali Abbas Zafar). We can see some traces of this in the epitome of Indian homosociality, the song '*Yeh Dosti Hum Nahi Todenge*' song from *Sholay* (1975, dir. Ramesh Sippy). In this song, Amitabh Bacchan and Dharmendra take a liking to the same woman, yet they also enjoy spending time and dancing together as two friends. We can see an example of this in the music video of 'Dance with you'.

There, both Juggy and Jay pursue the same British Asian woman, but they end up dancing more with each other than with the woman, thus displaying this familiar form of homosociality.

This dance could also be interpreted as displaying the two models of masculinity that Juggy and Jay represent and which can exist alongside each other. Jay Sean is lean, sleek and dreamy-eyed, and is reminiscent of the singers of contemporaneous boy bands such as the Backstreet Boys. Juggy D, on the other hand, is short, stocky, and presents a more playful and rakish image. The juxtaposition of the 'urban poster boy' and the Punjabi *munda*, or lad, could show an intent to cater both to those members of the British Asian diaspora who prefer mainstream pop music and the modes of masculinity associated with it, and to those who prefer the traditional Punjabi musical style and masculine ideal associated with it. The music and the video certainly suggest that these two models are not mutually exclusive and that if fused well, they can prove attractive even to outsiders.

Through this analysis of '*Nachna tere naa*l' we have seen the features of Rishi Rich's music that I hold key in terms of innovation. He created a new hybrid sound that was both in line with contemporary mainstream tastes, and that incorporated diasporic Punjabi elements. Moreover, through the visual depiction of the members of the British Asian community, a new identity was also suggested, one that placed itself in the centre of the narrative. The mainstream appreciation of the song by the multi-ethnic crowd in the video, as well as by the music world outside of the video, heightened the prestige of Rishi Rich, who was able to frame the British Asian music industry, and by extension the entire British Asian community, as urban, cool and something to be proud of. This was in connection with the new type of masculinities represented by Juggy and Jay. The result of Rich's creative effort was a new understanding of what it meant to be young and British Asian.

The song also had the potential to be popular in India, especially in Punjab, as it resonated well with Indian ideas of modernity, transnationality and Punjabi masculinity. As Gill (2012) has argued, whereas Punjabi ideals of masculinity are comprised of many different streams, one of the most defining features is its transnationality and the fact that Punjabi men can move with ease in rural, urban and transnational environments. The song and music video of '*Nachna tere naa*l' provide an example of this and showcase how the traditional and modern masculinities can coexist and can be viable models for contemporary British Asian youth. The following section analyses the aforementioned models of masculinity displayed by Jay Sean and Juggy D, and it demonstrates how these served as a foundation for later developments in British Asian music. By showcasing the importance of this development, I argue that by discovering Jay Sean, Rishi Rich

contributed towards the making of a new, more mainstream, but still Desi, pop star, the creation of which was also part of Rishi Rich's achievement.

New Asian pop stars around the globe

In this section, I further analyse the image of Jay Sean and Juggy D through a close reading of their star image and music. They were an integral part of Rishi Richi's artist collective, The Rishi Rich Project. Although, as discussed in the literature review, the traditional South Asian *guru-shishya parampara*, or teacher-disciple relationship, is not one usually seen in the world of diasporic or pop music production (Schreffler, 2012: 347), The Rishi Rich Project functioned in a similar way. Artists associated with The Rishi Rich Project became the voices for Rishi Rich's compositions. At the same time, The Rishi Rich Project functioned as an incubator for many British Asian singers, such as Jay Sean, Juggy D, H Dhami, Veronica Mehta and Mumzy Stranger. As Rishi Rich did not consider himself primarily a performer, he sought to surround himself with artists who could perform his compositions. Therefore, the network of friendship and professional collaboration that led to the establishment of this artist collective was mutually beneficial for all involved. The music and the carefully crafted images of the young artists that were part of the Rishi Rich Project were influenced, curated and shaped by Rishi Rich, a fact emphasised by the attachment of his name to the project.

The music and image of The Rishi Rich Project are therefore closely associated with Rishi Rich and, as I later suggest, they played an important role in contributing to Rishi Rich's transcultural capital. In this section, I seek to show how this innovative music and conscious development of a new image signalled a shift in the way British Asian music and identities presented themselves to audiences. This, in turn, thus contributed to the way in which the global Punjabi world viewed British Asian music, As we saw in the literature review, this turned out to be a most important development. In order to throw light on the possibilities of new identity formations in the British Asian, as well as in the global South Asian context, I read Juggy D and Jay Sean's star persona in the framework of global Punjabi identities. At the same time, I pin it against the historical context of global South Asian cultural developments. As I show, Jay Sean could be considered as a new kind of Asian pop star, and one whose influence is visible today, Indeed, after looking at contemporary artists, such as Mickey Singh and Arjun, we can consider, the music and image of Juggy D and Jay Sean to be quite innovative, and we can see how it contributed to the perception of Rishi Rich's music within the framework of cultural remittances.

The discovery and promotion of Jay Sean, a new-age Asian pop star, is an important aspect of Rishi Rich's image as a creator of the 'urban Asian' sound and image. This aspect is

bound up with popular ideas of gender and performance; for, ideas of gender and sexuality often stand at the heart of debates about community identity. If we take a closer look at the historiography of British Asian music, it becomes clear that the British Asian music industry had a fraught relationship with ideas of masculinities. The image of masculinity most often projected was one deeply intertwined with questions of ethnicity, such as 'What does it mean to be Punjabi in the entertainment industry?' and 'Is there such a thing as being too connected to the culture, or not connected enough?'

Questions regarding ethnic authenticity and the performance of masculinity were raised very early in the history of British Asian music. Rajinder Dudrah, for example, documented and analysed the costumes and stage appearance of some of the early bhangra bands, such as Achanak and Heera and drew attention to the direct connection between the traditional costumes worn for bhangra competitions in post-Partition Punjab and the costumes worn by Alaap were costumes based on the flamboyant dress of Indian bhangra teams but fused with the disco-influenced costumes of Bollywood heroes (Dudrah, 2016: 198). However, this orientation was short-lived and soon became unfashionable and seen as outdated. According to Falu Bakrania's research, the stylistic choices of the early pioneers of British bhangra were dismissed by later generations on two counts: firstly, for being too feminine (stylistic choices inspired by the erstwhile disco-era: white trousers, permed hair, sequined shirts, etc); and secondly, for looking too rural (the derogatory term used here was '*pindu'*, villager) (2013: 46).

Consequently, Falu Bakrania identified two archetypes in British Asian music that enjoyed community support. She termed these the 'cultured hard boy' and the 'lad-like boy band'. Her example of the 'cultured hard boy' look was Panjabi MC, who demonstrated a familiarity with black culture, but who focused on his rootedness in his own culture. The 'lad-like boy band' resembled traditional bhangra bands in its setup and music but sported a mainstream image in its physical appearance and sartorial choices. Bakrania argues that British Asian male artists were in a difficult position, as they were expected to be traditional but not too traditional, as that was perceived as too feminine. These were the two types of artists who could achieve this balance. Eventually, this status quo was challenged by newcomers such as Apache Indian and Bally Sagoo, who emphasised their different musical aspirations with the help of their sartorial choices. They followed the contemporary fashion trends that were influenced by mainstream British fashion and black culture. The latter was very visible in the image crafted by Apache Indian, who performed reggae music, wore dreadlocks, and liked to dress up in the colours of the Jamaican flag. However, it must be pointed out that the appropriation of Jamaican culture to this extent alarmed some members of the British Asian community, and Apache Indian was considered

ethnically inauthentic — someone who had obscured his roots in order to receive mainstream attention. Although The Rishi Rich Project also produced something of a fusion of cultural elements, it remained true in essence both to the traditional Punjabi *munda* and to the sleek urban Asian man. By maintaining this duality, it could appeal to a wide range of tastes both in the UK and in India, as well as achieve some visibility in the British mainstream. In the following section, I examine the kinds of masculinities represented by the members of The Rishi Rich Project.

Juggy, the Jatt

Between Juggy, Jay and Rishi, the male members of The Rishi Rich Project, it was Juggy D's appearance and star persona that drew on a fairly traditional perception of Punjabi masculinity and could be categorised as "the cultured hard boy". Juggy would wear hoodies, sneakers and jeans, and he would sport a spiky hairstyle reminiscent of the popular urban sartorial styles of the time, and which did not allude to his ethnicity or religion. Juggy did not wear a Sikh turban or any kind of ethnic apparel. Nevertheless, his preference to sing in Punjabi and his singing style aligned him with earlier traditions of male Punjabi singers both in the UK and in India. Moreover, his star persona and his lyrics allude to earlier representations of Punjabi men, who were often conceptualised along the 'martial race' narrative in the British colonising narrative, and the 'hardy cultivator' narrative in the Indian national imagination. Although all of these perceptions have different roots, they all left their mark on the ways in which Punjabi men perceived themselves and on the ways in which they were perceived by others both in India and abroad.

This type of masculinity, one that emphasises 'violence, aggression, courage, emotional restraint, toughness and risk-taking' (Roy, 2015: 168), also has caste connotations, as these qualities are often associated with Jatt Sikhs, the dominant caste of Punjab. Jatt Sikh masculinity and identity is a hegemonic concept that is often referenced in songs and popular music, especially bhangra. Nicola Mooney has shown that as a result of the internal and international displacement of Punjabis, referencing Jatt identity subsumes a system of nostalgic connotations related to agriculture, rootedness, and power, 'the essence of being Punjabi' (Mooney, 2008: 104). The performance of Jatt identity is often also associated with violence, and contemporary Punjabi music videos often valourise the Jatt gangster, as well (Sharma, 2019). Juggy D would often refer to his Jatt identity in his lyrics (for example, in the lyrics of 'Billo'), although at this stage of his career, expressed violence was not present in his oeuvre.

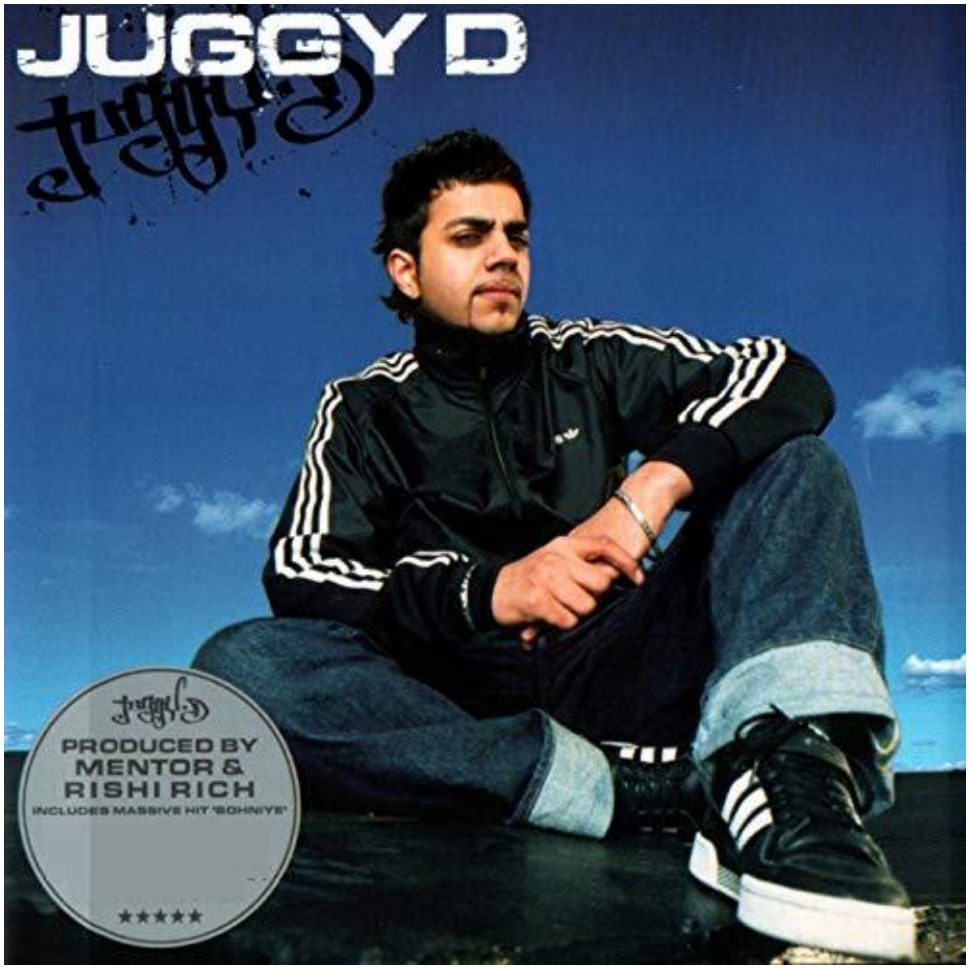

Figure 2: Album sleeve of Juggy D's debut album 'Juggy D' (2004).

According to Anjali Gera Roy, the image of the Punjabi "rudeboy," which draws its inspiration from Sikh folk culture and historical experiences, has been enhanced by its contact with the machismo of black rappers (Roy, 2016: 172)[11] who wear expensive sneakers, branded hoodies, and who often define their masculinity through the objectification of women. Since women often perform the role of accessories in the discourse of Punjabi masculinities, the synthesis of these two versions of masculinity came rather naturally. Bhangra lyrics often depict women as property that needs to be acquired and then protected from other men.[12] Yet, as Gill has pointed out (2012), the construction of Punjabi masculinity often happens with the exclusion of the Punjabi women in Punjabi films. In order to construct Punjabi masculinity, women are sidelined and made invisible. Even the songs that praise the beauty of certain women are performed in their absence. In contrast, the song '*Nachna tere naal*' puts a heavy emphasis on

[11] Anjali Gera Roy has argued that the resulting hypermasculine image that fuses Punjabi and black masculinities can be understood as a reaction to the marginalising, racist tendencies in Western societies as a way of resistance against emasculating stereotypes (Roy, 2016: 172).

[12] The chart-topping track by Panjabi MC, '*Mundiyan ton bachke*' is a case in point. It warns a young woman to stay away from men in a patronising manner.

the physical attributes of the woman who is to be conquered and owned by Juggy and/or Sean. This object of their desire is very visible in the music video, whereas traditional Punjabi cinema would have sung about the woman *in absentia*. It is true that for Juggy and Sean, the female object of the song remains just that — an object. She has no agency, and the emphasis throughout the song and the video is on the desire of the men. The song speaks of their physical prowess and virility. In this game, we can see Juggy D perform the role of the transnational Punjabi *munda*. He moves with ease in the urban British landscape and wears Western clothes, yet his style of singing echoes that of traditional bhangra. He sings in a broad voice in stark contrast to the way in which Jay Sean sings, and he performs bhangra steps and behaves in a way Punjabi men traditionally relate to women.

Jay, the Asian lover

Whereas Juggy D's stage image was a continuation of the rowdy, boisterous Punjabi male stereotype, reinforced by the language of his singing and his off-stage persona, a stereotype familiar on the Punjabi music scene as the tough guy, Jay Sean represented innovation both in his artistic image and his musical style. Jay Sean cultivated the image associated with the "new men", and we can observe striking similarities between his visual style and that of members of contemporaneous popular boy bands in the US and UK. American boy bands, such as *NSYNC and The Back Street Boys were immensely popular at the turn of the millennium. It was no coincidence that Jay Sean looked and behaved very much like a member of one of these bands. The Backstreet Boys, for example, cultivated a well-groomed and sensual image that was aimed at their adolescent female audience. They often appeared in their music videos with unbuttoned shirts, or even shirtless, and they started a fashion of marketing their bodies along with their music. By the late 1990s, other bands and artists across the Anglo-Saxon world were following this trend (Takahashi, 2014: 59).

Jay Sean's lyrics contained more references to emotions and were often directly addressed women; yet, his music often objectified women and reduced them to commodities to be acquired and owned. This approach reflected the dominant attitudes towards women in contemporary pop music and music videos. This approach was not universally appreciated, however, as it also served to stir up gender debates and discussion about the controversial relationship between the 'new man' and the 'new lad'. Whereas both ideals of masculinities defined themselves in relation to the expression of emotions and in their relationship to women, propagators of the "new man" argued that men can also be caring and gentle, and they argued that the relationship between the sexes should be more equal. Some went so far as to argue that men can also be sexual objects to

be looked at with pleasure. The 'new lads' positioned themselves in opposition both to second-wave feminism and to the "new men." They were extremely misogynistic and homophobic, and they argued that men should be real men. (Gill, 2003: 46–47). The effects of this binary thinking can be traced in contemporary pop music, as well. Boy band' lyrics often expressed great emotion and claimed to have women's interests in mind — yet they were overtly sexual in their lyrical imagery, and spoke of women as little more than objects of desire. Their idea of a relationship seldom encompassed the concept of equality. Rather, theirs was one based on domination and predation; women were often portrayed as a commodity to be owned (Takahashi, 2014: 58).

We find evidence in support of this claim not only in Jay Sean's metrosexual image but in the manner in which his lyrics address women. For example, in his hit song 'Eyes on you' (2004), he makes implicit and explicit sexual references that frame the woman as little more than an object of desire and that speak about the insatiable sexual appetite of the singer in a way that reminds the listeners of the contemporary bubble gum pop boy bands and Latin lovers.

"It's about time to get rowdy
Know I wanna work that body
Come, work it over here
You can be my brown-eyed beauty
And I bet you see right through me
You can do anything to me
Oh-oh, You're so beautiful tonight anything is possible
But you know I just can't get enough."

The song is firmly grounded in the British Asian context, with its address to a "brown-eyed beauty ", video shot in Southall with shop windows of Asian tailors and other vendors clearly visible in the background, and appearances by other members of The Rishi Rich Project, namely Rishi Rich and Juggy D. Jay Sean is also seen walking up to a stand and checking out a stall selling films of Hrithik Roshan, the metrosexual Bollywood hero of the early 2000s, perhaps a hint that he personifies the type of masculinity represented by Hrithik Roshan. The melody also appeals to a wider range of BAME communities as it features the hook of the Persian-language song '*Boro Boro*' (2004) by the Iranian-Swedish singer. Arash.[13]

[13] '*Boro Boro*' was a chartbuster throughout Europe that year, and it was featured in the Bollywood film, *The Bluffmaster* (2005, dir. Rohan Sippy) the following year.

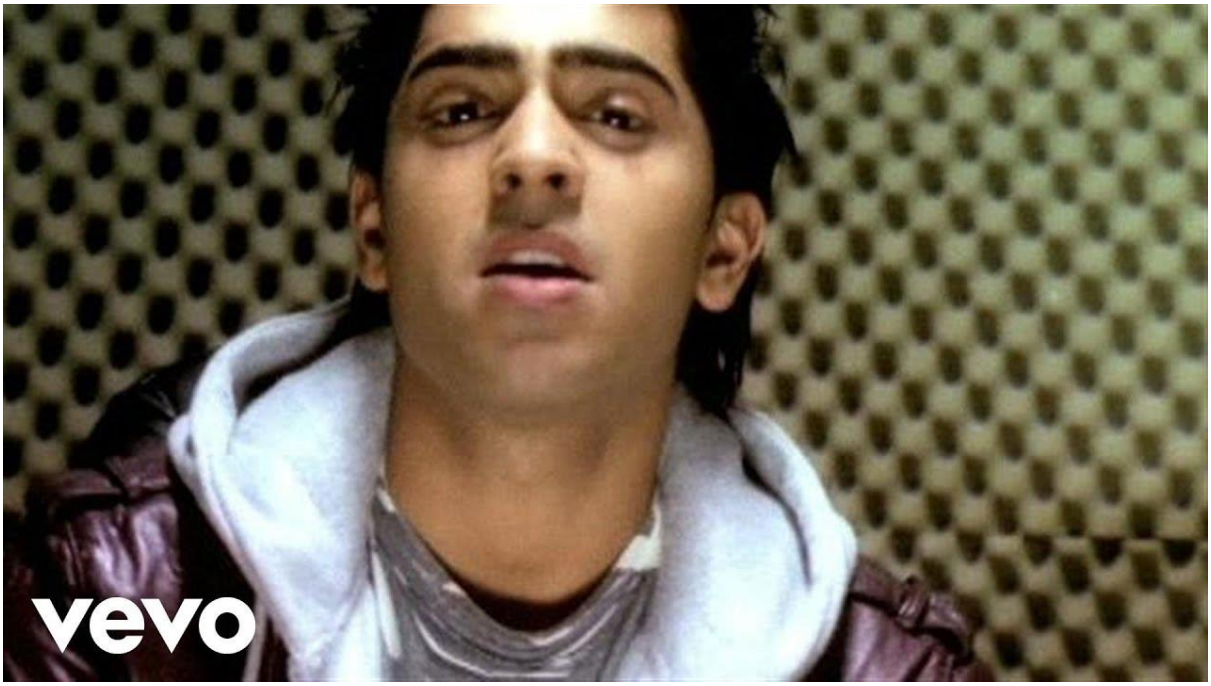

Figure 3: Screengrab from ‘Eyes on you’ by Jay Sean.

Interestingly, the video also seems to confront the two dominant ideas of masculinity within the same frame. At the end of the track, two avatars of Jay Sean get into a fight over the right to approach the woman featured in the music video. One of the Jays is the carefully groomed and styled Jay, whose look is complete with red highlights in his hair. The other Jay is dressed in less carefully chosen urban apparel. In the course of the battle, the stylish Jay sings the R&B-pop melody of the song, and the other Jay responds in the language of hip-hop. However, metrosexual R&B Jay dismisses urban, hip-hop Jay by singing “if it weren’t for me you wouldn’t be on this track in the first place.” This could be interpreted as a clear break with earlier modes of masculinities as well, in which Jay declares that those singers who do not keep up with current trends do not get to have their own successful careers. They can only feature on the tracks of others. Yet, if we consider Gill’s argument about the inherent transnationality of Punjabi men, we can argue that the ease with which Jay Sean moves in a variety of settings is still not very far removed from the ideals of the ideal Punjabi man.

We should also set Jay Sean’s image within the historical context of the developments in global South Asian culture, especially the developments in Bollywood. At the same time, Jay Sean was making this video, Bollywood was also in the process of popularising a new kind of metrosexual male star, such as Hrithik Roshan. His hairless, well-sculpted body that he liked to show off in complicated dance sequences involving little clothing, offered a new depiction of masculinity to Bollywood’s audiences. Although Bollywood still used homosexuality as a source

of humour (eg. in the film *Dostana*, 2008, Tarun Mansukhani) appearances and behavioural patterns that would have been earlier considered as androgynous or feminine, then began to be considered sought-after qualities. (Gehlawat, 2015: 105).[14] Although the sexualisation of male bodies was a lot more evident in Bollywood cinema than in Jay Sean's stage persona, it is still important to see that the representation of men was changing in India, as well. Consequently, the expectations towards other South Asian icons began to evolve.

Even Jay Sean had to adapt in order to keep up with this trend. He made an effort to build up his muscles to complement his sleek, urban look. In the early years of his career, he sported highlights in his stylised hairstyle that matched his suits and shirts and gave him an elegant, refined but stylish appearance that set him apart from the British bhangra artists performing in bhangra competition outfits and from the urban Punjabi *munda* wearing their jerseys. Jay Sean emphasized his physical appearance and acknowledged that his good looks played an important part in his marketing strategy. In his single, 'Stolen', he sings about the pain he experienced as an underappreciated partner in a relationship, (which he later avenged by cheating on his partner). Both the music and the song lyrics fit into contemporaneous mainstream musical trends. As usual, Jay Sean sang the song in R&B style in English, wearing a designer suit with a fashionably unbuttoned shirt without a tie. His hair is carefully stylised into an asymmetric hairdo. He is shown living in glamour and moving with ease in luxurious surroundings, riding in a limousine, attending a film premiere, etc. The only thing that set the song apart from other mainstream music videos and that marked Jay Sean as being of South Asian heritage[15] was the fact that the music video featured Bipasha Basu, the Bollywood actress. She played the role of his partner, who was a Bollywood celebrity in the music video, as well. She spoke to Jay Sean in Hindi, which he understood; although, he replied to in English, thus establishing his transcultural position.

[14] The depiction of the Bollywood hero changed so much that stars who had already had an established image had to change their appearances to fit the mould. Case in point is Shahrukh Khan's performance of '*Dard-e-Disco'* in *Om Shanti Om* (2007, dir. Farah Khan), for which he had to develop a muscular physique (Gehlawat, 2015: 105)

[15] His racial identification is complicated by his adopted stage name, 'Jay Sean' that does not hint at his British Asian origins as his birth name, Kamaljit Singh Jhooti does.

Figure 4: Screengrab from the single 'Stolen' (2004).

More importantly, however, the music video established Jay Sean's image as a heartthrob, something previously unseen on the British Asian music scene and something that was a novelty in Indian popular culture, as well. After the demise of the Indipop scene of the 1990s, the popular music scene in India had been dominated by Bollywood music, and the few artists who had maintained a presence outside of Bollywood projected a very different type of masculinity than the one Jay Sean embodied. Sonu Nigam, for example, was more in the traditional image of a South Asian male singer. His singing style conformed to established norms heard in most Hindi films, and his image was also more of a Platonic lover than was the Westernised image of Jay Sean. The discovery, promotion and popularisation of Jay Sean by Rishi Rich created an archetype of masculinity that has since become a defining feature of diasporic music-making. The masculinity of this nature is closest to what Ajay Gehlawat termed the metrosexual Bollywood star who dances well, pays attention to his body and is thoroughly sexualised (2015: 104).

In order to underpin the importance and innovative nature of this development, I suggest that we look at three contemporary diasporic artists, Arjun, Mickey Singh, and Zack Knight, who are still under the influence of Jay Sean's archetype. As we have seen in '*Nachna tere naal*', Jay Sean and Juggy D juxtaposed two different kinds of masculinity available for British Asian youth: Jay Sean represented a contemporary metrosexual, while Juggy D was a more of the traditional Punjabi hard boy. The song, together with its two competing images of masculinity, still serves as a role model in diasporic music-making. The most recent example of this duality is the song

‘*Tingo*’ (2019) by Arjun and Mickey Singh. It is interesting to observe how the song follows many of the conventions established by ‘*Nachna tere naal*’. The song is focused on the physical attributes of a desirable woman, the music video is set in a multi-racial environment, showcasing white, black, and brown women as objects of desire, and it stars two male singers who represent a similar scope of masculinity as Jay and Juggy: Arjun Coomaraswamy, the British Sri Lankan singer and Mickey Singh, the Punjabi singer from the United States. Arjun has established himself as the emotional heartthrob, and he has a huge following among teenage girls in the diaspora. His tall, lean figure and muscular physique combined with his sartorial and stylistic choices make him comparable to a younger Jay Sean. His stage image and social media persona are more in line with mainstream images of male beauty than South Asian ethnic features. His image reflects the metrosexual idea of beauty with a toned, clean-shaved body that is put on display with deep cleavages and shirtless images. His image, which he cultivates with his songs, is mostly that of an urban chocolate boy. All of his original songs have English lyrics that speak of his passion for girls or of his interest in partying, thus clearly focusing on a specific demographic of young Anglophone South Asian women.

Figure 5: Screengrab from Arjun Coomaraswamy’s Instagram profile. (12 August 2020)

Mickey Singh, on the other hand, represents more traditional, Punjabi masculinity with the self-named urban Punjabi style. He prefers to wear sneakers, hoodies, baseball caps, and urban outfits. He also often posts about his physical fitness routine but he has built a bulkier physique

and has several tattoos. He often posts about cars and performing bhangra routines and most of his songs are in Punjabi.

Figure 6: A screengrab from Mickey Singh's Instagram profile. (13 August 2020)

Arjun and Mickey Singh's collaboration, 'Tingo' also displays this duality. Here, Mickey plays the more traditional Punjabi male. He sings in Punjabi, performs bhangra steps, and is of a bulkier, stockier build. In contrast, Arjun is lean, urban, and sings in English. Although this is only one example, the juxtaposition of the Punjabi *munda* and the urban British Asian has worked in other contexts as well, most notably in another Arjun song, called 'Suit suit' in which he collaborated with Guru Randhawa, an up and coming Punjabi singer. Bollywood has also seen fit to pair the urban British Asian and Punjabi *munda* on many occasions, as it did in the 2017 film *Hindi Medium* (dir. Saket Chaudhary).

The care and attention that these artists give to their appearance in terms of physical fitness, style, grooming and the way they then present themselves on social media platforms is a key element in the nurturing of their public images. All of them post frequently on Instagram and Facebook, and often they share images that are not strictly related to their musical output. For example, they may post pictures of themselves in their 'outfit of the day', which was carefully chosen to enhance their styled images and showcase their physical features. If one looks at the comment sections beneath these images, one will see that most of the fan interaction is about the style and the desirability of these artists. Also, fans very often express their romantic or sensual attraction towards these artists. For example, Instagram user _iamrima_ commented, '[…] you

make my heart go tum hi ho...' under the picture of Arjun that you can see above. The comment referred to one of Arjun's big romantic YouTube hits, a cover of the Bollywood hit, '*Tum hi ho*' (from the film *Aashiqui 2*, 2013, dir. Mohit Suri). Since the lyrics mean 'only you' and the lyrics and video express great passion, it is most likely that _iamrima_ was trying to express her romantic desire for Arjun via this comment. Based on my study of social media and on my fieldwork experience at various festivals and melas where these artists performed, I have to conclude that their audience is primarily comprised of British Asian adolescent and teenage girls. These young women see these artists firstly as style icons and sexual objects. The artists' music seems to be of secondary importance. Like Jay Sean, these artists do not wear ethnic clothing or emphasise their ethnic origins in any way. Their music also follows the mainstream musical trends in the same way that the Arjun-Mickey Singh collaboration was deeply influenced by Afrobeats. Most often it is only the language of their music that sets them apart from mainstream Anglo-Saxon pop music. Mickey Singh and Zack Knight frequently sing in a mixture of Punjabi and English. Arjun sometimes mixes words like '*habibi*' into his lyrics that are directed towards his BAME listeners, and sometimes he collaborates with artists like Guru Randhawa, Tulsi Kumar or Vidya Vox, who sing their portions in Punjabi, Hindi or Tamil.

The fact that this type of male image is still popular not only in the diaspora, but also in the homeland leads us to believe that Rishi Rich, being the creator and leading force behind this whole genre, has earned a significant amount of transcultural capital. Indeed, he is perceived as an innovator both in the diaspora and in the homeland, and he is given credit for creating a globalised, mainstream and hip identity that remained in touch with South Asian roots, and yet also attracted mainstream, non-Asian audiences.

II. Rishi Rich, the Bollywood music producer

In the previous section, I discussed the new urban Asian music pioneered by The Rishi Rich Project and the new models of British Asian masculinities, and I showed how these have had a long-standing effect on the British Asian and the global diasporic music scenes. In the following section, I also suggest that these developments provided credentials for Rishi Rich as a musical innovator. I will then proceed to analyse The Rishi Rich Project in the framework of cultural remittances by showing that he had a considerable effect in India during the heyday of The Rishi Rich Project. I also place this period in the cultural history of diaspora-homeland relations and circle back to the concept of the NRI as a cultural innovator mentioned in the literature review. In doing so, I propose to read the figure of Rishi Rich in the context of these

cultural and historical shifts. I provide a close reading of two Rishi Rich songs '*U-n-I*' and '*Dil Mera* (One Night)' that were produced for Bollywood projects. Through this analysis I will suggest that these texts frame the members of The Rishi Rich Project as diasporic innovators. Finally, I will suggest that spearheading The Rishi Rich Project, considered to be a cultural remittance, contributed to the creation of Rishi Rich's transcultural capital. It was this capital that then enabled him to make the transition to Bollywood fifteen years later. In order to underpin this claim, I provide a close reading of Rishi Rich's crossover track, '*Mere dil mein*' (2017) and discuss the strategies employed in making and advertising the song in order to invoke nostalgia by referring to Rishi's earlier hits like '*Nachna tere naal*'. This allowed Rishi Rich to exploit the transcultural capital he had earned earlier, and it enabled him to establish a new, transnational phase of his career.

The Rishi Rich Project in India

During the early 2000s, Rishi Rich produced some songs for Bollywood films. His first production was a collaboration with Juggy D and Veronica Mehta for *Hum Tum* (dir. Kunal Kohli), a romantic comedy produced in 2004 by the leading banner Yash Raj, Yash Chopra's production company. The song was titled 'U-n-I' (*Mere dil vich hain hum tum*). The music stood out from the rest of the soundtrack, which had been composed by the duo of Jatin and Lalit, but it was very typical of Rishi Rich's UK hits. The lyrics were written in a mixture of English, Hindi and Punjabi. This was unusual in Bollywood at the time, as traditionally, the use of English was secondary to the use of Hindi and Urdu (Viswamohan, 2011). It was, however, the trademark of The Rishi Rich Project. The music video focused on Veronica and Juggy, who were seen dancing in front of a house in Mumbai, but it also featured shots of the lead couple, Saif Ali Khan and Rani Mukherjee, along with other nameless couples who were markedly less cosmopolitan than the performers of the song. Rishi Rich also made a cameo appearance in the video, most likely to reinforce the fact that it was the Rishi Rich Project performing this song. Although *Hum Tum* was not warmly received at the time, with many people criticising the soundtrack as a lukewarm copy of other recent efforts by Jatin-Lalit (IndiaGlitz, 2004), Rishi Rich's track was seen as a novelty and it became a standalone hit. At the time, audiences thought it was radically different from the rest of the soundtrack. Eventually, however, both the music and the soundtrack became classics (Khurana, 2014).

Figure 7: Screengrab from the music video 'U-N-I' (Hum Tum, 2004, dir. Kunal Kohli)

A year later, The Rishi Rich Project made a self-referential appearance in the 2005 film, *Kya Kool Hain Hum* (dir. Sangeeth Shivan, music dir. Anu Mallik), which reinforced their transnational star status in India. Rishi Rich, Juggy D, Jay Sean, and Veronica are seen performing the song called '*Dil Mera* (One Night)' in a fancy nightclub which the protagonists of the film are visiting. The music video creates a self-referential frame for the singers as they enter the club as superstars surrounded by white, overly sexualised dancers and supported by advanced stage technology. They ascend onto the stage in the midst of fireworks, and they perform the song that is primarily in English, with only some of the background lines in Hindi, a trademark of The Rishi Rich Project. The theme of the lyrics is also quite unusual. Jay sings about a one-night stand, which goes well with the adult themes of this particular film, but which might have been considered morally transgressive in the early 2000s. The diegetic audience, comprised mostly of young, Westernised Indians and white women are clearly affluent enough to be in this nightclub, and they have come to see these particular singers. Jay Sean sings to the women in the crowd, and whenever he bends down to touch the hands of his fans, the crowd goes crazy. Veronica and Juggy D support him by providing vocals and rap in Hindi and Punjabi respectively, while Rishi Rich plays the keyboard. The music follows the time-tested formula of The Rishi Rich Project: the base is provided by the remix of an old Hindi film song, fused with a programmed table beat on which Jay Sean sings his soul and R&B influenced lines about conquering a woman. The

simple hook is sung by Veronica and there are portions when Juggy D raps in Punjabi inserting emphatic sounds, such as '*balle balle*' and '*brah*' that are normally a part of bhangra performances, hence keeping up the transnational Punjabi credentials of the team. The performance emphasises the star status of the performers while displaying a broad spectrum of transcultural cues.

Figure 8: Screengrab from the song 'Dil Mera (One night)' (Kya Kool Hain Hum, 2005).

I suggest that this performance should be read within the broader framework of the cultural history of diaspora-homeland relations. As discussed in the literature review chapter, the early 2000s was the period in which the role of the diasporic Indian as the cultural innovator was established. A notable example of this narrative is the film *Swades* (2004, dir. Ashutosh Gowariker), in which the protagonist of the film is depicted as an RNRI who returns to the homeland and contributes to its development with the help of his Western upbringing and knowledge. As Desai and Neutill argued, the depiction of the NRI in Bollywood can be interpreted as "reflect[ing] the interconnected hopes, fears, and anxieties about diaspora's key role as a catalyst and conduit for the transnational flows of capital, technology, and culture between India and the global North (Desai and Neutill, 2013: 234)." Moreover, these films depicted diaspora Indians as living the future of India abroad, in the sense that they have already arrived at the level of modernisation, industrialisation and Westernisation that would also be

desirable for India in the future, while retaining their Indianness through their cultural connections to their homeland (Punathambekar, 2016: 37).

I suggest that we should evaluate the presence of The Rishi Rich Project in Bollywood in the early 2000s in this light. This seems evident in the way in which the members of The Rishi Rich Project are portrayed as harbingers of a hybrid cultural identity who embody identities "between India and the global North" through their music, use of language and their images as stars. Their involvement with the Bollywood entertainment industry should be read in conjunction with the contemporary cinematic portrayals of NRIs, and the sound of urban Asian music, as well as the cultural product of The Rishi Rich Project, should be read in the framework of cultural remittances. The innovative sounds, use of language and ways of performing were coming to Bollywood through the involvement of the NRI who is known to travel across and between the worlds of India and the global North with ease. I suggest that this mode of depiction signifies a moment in the cultural politics between the diaspora and the homeland when the diaspora came to be seen as the locus of innovation. However, as Kezia Page has reminded us, this dynamic of a sender and receiver also presupposes a hierarchical relationship between homeland and diaspora (2011: 11), which perhaps was no longer the case between India and its diasporas.

'*Mere Dil Mein*': The Rishi Rich sound in Bollywood

Despite the popularity of the group and their music, at first, they did not take their Indian market too seriously. As their film songs became hits and their presence was required for shoots and promotions, they flew back and forth between Mumbai and London as required; however, Rishi remained quite busy with his projects in London and did not give much thought to shifting his base to Mumbai. In 2010, he collaborated with music director Anu Malik on the ill-fated live-action animation film, *Toonpur Ka Superhero* (2010, dir. Kireet Khurrana), but his Bollywood career did not go any further until he permanently moved to Mumbai. When I asked him how he viewed their success on the Indian market in the early 2000s, he was quite frank.

> "We weren't thinking much about the Indian market, because it was bubbling in the UK. We were happy if we heard that the tracks were popular out here and we toured a couple of times as well. But we never released anything as such, it was mostly the DJs playing our stuff because people were looking at the UK and music has a way to travel."

(Rishi Rich, personal interview, August 2018 Mumbai)

When discussing the more direct push factors for his migration from the UK, in an interview with Bobby Friction on the BBC Asian Network in October 2018, Rishi said that

> "I had reached a glass ceiling in the UK. I was getting bored with my own music and was like what am I doing here I'm not really doing anything and this was my opportunity to get away from it and just work on music not worry about the scene."
>
> (Rishi Rich 2018, BBC Asian Network)

I suggest that we should read these quotes in their historical context and think about what it means in terms of diaspora-homeland dynamics. The period in which The Rishi Rich Project served as a cultural remittance in the homeland coincided with the heyday of British Asian music in the UK. It was a time when there was hope that British Asian music would hit the charts and enter the mainstream of British pop music. However, what followed was the decline of the British Asian music scene that Falu Bakrania has documented (2013). The British Asian music industry reached a stage of stagnation, which Rishi Rich described as "reaching a glass ceiling" in the same interview. This led to a shortage of opportunities for performers and producers alike. As I have indicated in the introduction of this chapter, I read this as the increasing marginalisation of a scene that was hoping to cross over and reach mainstream attention. Although Rishi Rich had become the defining figure of the British Asian scene, the scene itself did not cross over and thus Rishi Rich had become a central figure in a marginal industry.

However, the early 2000s brought about change in many aspects of Bollywood film- and music-making. The industrialisation of Bollywood picked up momentum by 2005-2006, according to Aswin Punathambekar, who claimed that by this time, the Indian state had come to understand the economic and soft power potential of the Indian media industries, and it had decided to embrace and support it throughout a variety of economic and cultural incentives (Punathambekar, 2016: 48). The increasing orientation of the Bollywood industry towards profit led to a seachange in music production, as well. One of the most significant developments in this field from the perspective of this research was the emergence of the multi-composer soundtrack.

The process of music production in Bollywood is rather unique. In contrast to non-Indian cinemas, in Bollywood diegetic music is more important than background score or the 'film

score' in Bollywood parlance. Usually, there is a music director in charge of the entire project of composing songs and background score and who is sometimes also involved in production work. Traditionally, there were several assistants, arrangers, and producers working under the director. They were in charge of the technical details, such as rehearsing with the orchestra, recording the music, etc. but all this changed with the corporatisation of the Bollywood entertainment industry. In order to cater to wider audiences and maximise profit, it became common to engage additional music composers for specialised pieces and then to create multi-composer soundtracks. The new model usually works either by 1) retaining the music director who still composes most of the film songs, but hiring one or two additional guest composers responsible for specific tracks[16] or 2) employing a music supervisor who decides on the overall musical direction of the project, but who sources existing tracks or hires composers.[17] This newer model has opened up an avenue for less experienced or new music producers on the scene, such as Rishi Rich.

Even though working on multi-composer soundtracks means that the music composer receives less creative control over the end product, the artist is still involved in the creation of a product that reaches wide audiences. Moreover, along with the globalisation of the Bollywood industry, this audience is exponentially growing. Therefore, the transition of Rishi Rich from being a central figure on the marginalised British Asian market meant that he became a slightly marginalised figure in a music industry that is increasingly becoming mainstream. However, the picture is more nuanced by Rishi Rich's position of the RNRI, the cultural innovator. In 2016, Rich was approached by director Mohit Suri and asked to compose a track for his upcoming film *Half Girlfriend*. Suri also asked Rishi Rich to move to Mumbai while he was working on the project. When Rishi Rich was asked during a radio interview why Suri had invited him to participate in this project, Rishi Rich said that in his opinion it was because of the unique and innovative style of his music combined with his musical heritage.

[16] An example of this model is *Chennai Express* (2013, dir. Rohit Shetty), where the majority of the songs were composed by the composer duo Vishal-Shekhar the promotional party song 'Lungi Dance' was the work the rapper, Yo Yo Honey Singh.

[17] An example of this is *Gully Boy* (2019, dir: Zoya Akhtar), in which Ankur Tewari, the music supervisor, was commissioned with acquiring tracks from gully rappers (Grazia 2019). This is a significant shift from the earlier established practices, where the music director was the most dominant force of the creative process and thus the multi-composer soundtrack is criticised by many established composers who see it as a marketing ploy that compromises the integrity of the whole project. Some composers, such as Amit Trivedi find multi-composer arrangements so unacceptable that they disassociate themselves from any project immediately once it turns out to be a multi-composer album (Singh 2017). However, multi-composer albums have indubitably opened up avenues for new voices in Bollywood music who would otherwise have had lesser chances of securing a platform for their music. The prime example of this trend is Tanishk Bagchi, the infamous 'remix king' who is usually commissioned to recreate classic Bollywood hits for modern audiences (while also being widely criticised for it).

> "There's still no one to do that sound, people openly admit that we can't do that R'n'B, hip hop Hindi and bhangra, qawwali kinda thing, my music is still getting me into that independent and Bollywood world."
>
> (Rishi Rich 2018, BBC Asian Network)

Rishi Rich clearly believes that the foundation for his current success was laid by his previous work ('there's still no one [...]'). It is also helped by the fact that his fusion sound remains unique. It would seem he views his music as a form of cultural remittance that arose out of his unique position of growing up in the hybrid third space of the diaspora. In the following section, I provide a close reading of the song '*Mere Dil Mein*' and suggest that the way in which the song was conceptualised, shot and marketed, reveals that the narrative around Rishi Rich as a cultural innovator returning to India was consciously manufactured and promoted for this song.

The way the idea of cultural remittance was produced within the song can be noted both on the aural and visual levels. On the aural level, Rishi Rich's presence is made audible by a variety of markers, the most obvious of these being at the beginning of the track, where he announces that 'This is the Rishi Rich beat', much like he did in the other song when he announced Juggy and Jay. The melody is based on one of Rich's older compositions, a song originally sung by British Asian singers Mumzy Stranger and Veronica Mehta. The track, therefore, is not only an emulation of the golden age of the urban Asian sound, but in fact an original piece from that period repurposed for the film. The continuity is audible, not only from use of a similar type of beats and programmed music, but from the voice of Veronica Mehta, the same female vocalist who sang the original version. This harkens back to the days when The Rishi Rich Project was a British Asian enterprise, and when its sole female voice was that of Veronica Mehta. At the same time, it also serves as a reminder of Rishi Rich's earlier Bollywood songs.[18]

The lyrics will remind listeners of previous Rishi Rich hits. The song is also a bilingual composition in which the two languages, English and Hindi (which would be intelligible for Punjabi speakers), are in conversation with each other. It differs, however, from the previously

[18] As a result of the very specific expectations towards Bollywood music composers who usually have to compose for song situations where both the male and female lead are present, many of such songs are duets. Rishi also wrote duets for his earlier Bollywood songs and he consistently hired Veronica as the female singer. The nostalgic associations with The Rishi Rich Project and Rishi's earlier Bollywood films were strengthened by the fact that Veronica never had much visibility outside of the Rishi Rich Project, therefore her voice is mainly associated with Rishi Rich's music.

analysed track in that here the speakers are of different genders: the male singer talks about the impossibility of separation from the female singer in Hindi, whereas the female voice refutes these claims and insists on going their separate ways in English. Also, there is no overlap in meaning between the Hindi and English lyrics in this version. One would assume, therefore, that it is aimed at an audience that can understand both languages and make sense of them both. Here, there is no impetus to make the product easy to consume for those who are not members of the cultural in-group. The new Bollywood market is large enough to make this unnecessary. Rather, the Bollywood music makers want instead to appeal to a wide section of South Asians, primarily in India but also overseas in the diaspora. Rishi Rich, the erstwhile pioneer of the urban Asian sound was an obvious candidate as someone whose repackaged cultural remittance could become a strategic selling point in a pan-Indian market.

Pritam, one of the most successful Bollywood music directors, paraphrased the filmmaker Mukesh Bhatt, when he said the recipe for success in Bollywood is to "Make the new sound familiar and the familiar sound new" (Singh, 2017). This approach explains why Rishi Rich was invited to take part in Mohit Suri's project in 2015. His "urban Desi" sound was quite familiar in India as a result of his earlier club hits, and it was easy for audiences to recognise the style of his production. Bollywood could build on this sense of familiarity and at the same time could also capitalise on the fact that this sound had been popular in the world of South Asian culture. Using this familiar sound in an unfamiliar environment was probably tempting for filmmakers as it was likely seen as a safe gamble, one similar to the remixing and recreation of Bollywood evergreens.

Figure 9: Arjun Kapoor and Shraddha Kapoor, the protagonists of Half Girlfriend (2016, dir. Mohit Suri) in a still from the music video 'Mere dil mein'.

The way in which the song is visualised also takes advantage of Rishi's 'global' and 'urban' credentials as it shows a summary of the development of the male protagonist from an uneducated, Hindi-speaking village boy (Arjun Kapoor) to a cool hero on par with the urban, English-speaking Westernised heroine (Shraddha Kapoor). The culmination of this process takes

place at Times Square in New York City, a place that symbolises the globalised aspirations of much of Bollywood's audience, and a space that could have been occupied by Rishi Rich, Jay Sean and other British Asian artists back in the early 2000s but which of late has also become accessible to subcontinental tourists and audiences. The carnivalesque scene features the Westernised heroes and Rishi Rich, the producer himself, claiming the square, arguably a symbol of global capitalism, for a Hindi film song. The appearance of Rishi Rich in the song picturisation is key, as it is very rare for music producers to appear in their videos. However, the fact that Rishi, one of the early symbols of the global, urban, cool South Asian aspiration is visible and audible in the track confers Rishi's urban credentials to the end product.

The earlier discussion of Rishi's mainstream success is relevant here since he himself was an example of how an artist with South Asian roots could successfully enter the mainstream of the urban Anglo-Saxon musical world while retaining some referents to his South Asian culture. By employing the aural and visual markers that referred back to Rich's earlier hits, those marketing the song to a new Bollywood audience reinforced Rishi Rich's role as a transcultural mediator as they drew upon the cultural capital that he had established. In fact, the marketing strategy for the track explicitly billed it as the return of Rishi Rich to Bollywood (see for example Kameshwari, A. 2017: *Half Girlfriend* song '*Mere Dil Mein*': "Rishi Rich is back with a foot-tapping number starring Arjun Kapoor, Shraddha Kapoor"). Even though the song was not included in the film, it was widely used for promotional purposes. Thus, it allowed Rishi Rich to remind audiences of his earlier reputation and to prove that he was still the one person who could create his signature sound that was so popular in the early 2000s. The fact that the song was not included in the final cut of the film was testimony to the stylistic difference between the rest of the soundtrack and the Rishi Rich song.

Rishi Rich's music was well-known in India during the peak of his UK career, and his music made it easy for him to re-enter the Indian market that he had previously entered via The Rishi Rich project and through the sporadic compositions he had written in the early 2000s for films such as *Hum Tum* (2004) and *Kya Kool Hain Hum* (2005). The importance of the cultural remittances and of the musical innovation that is attributed to Rishi Rich's unique composition style can be recognized in Rich's reflections on his work on '*Mere dil mein*' and by the way in which the song was marketed as 'Rich's return to Bollywood'.

So far, I have suggested that in the case of Rishi Rich, it is important to view innovation and cultural remittances side by side, as his earlier innovative practice led to a marketable nostalgia that enabled his successful entry into the Bollywood music market. However, it is time to turn our attention to the transcultural capital that he established as a member of the global

Punjabi diaspora. In addition to his Rishi Rich Project days and his career as the leading British Asian music producer, he also had the opportunity to hone his music production skills in the United States, an opportunity that provided him with cutting-edge technical know-how (knowledge of using different software, larger scale, more expensive equipment, etc.), and, more importantly, the aura of a world-class artist, a status that significantly boosted his transcultural capital. As Rishi himself expressed:

> "Film producers treat me differently because they see me as someone "international", who has knowledge of Indian music, who has training. You know, sometimes directors don't even know what they want, they just want something different, so they come to me. 'You were born in London, lived in America, you will give us something different.' Not many people out here would be as international as me and I bring all that knowledge to the table. Even if I'm doing a sad song, the drums and beats will be different, influenced by R&B, hip-hop..."
>
> (Rishi Rich, personal interview, 2018 Mumbai)

Rishi Rich clearly attributes his success, at least in part, to the 'difference' he gained growing up in the diaspora, where he was exposed both to Western music and to Indian music and from being considered 'international'. He also gives credit to the nostalgic forces in Bollywood that value his experience in creating a certain kind of fusion music that combined Punjabi musical influences with R&B. This is music closely associated with his Rishi Rich Project days. In the highly technical and competitive world of Bollywood, he has found it to be an asset to have a transnational experience. This experience helped establish his reputation as a tech-savvy innovator. As we saw earlier, being tech-savvy and innovative are two qualities often associated with Western diasporic communities.

It is important to note, however, that this was not the first time Bollywood looked to music producers in the diaspora to revive feelings of nostalgia. In this regard, Biddu Appaiah, usually known as Biddu, was a forerunner of Rishi Rich. He was the first music producer of the diaspora who established a second career in Bollywood after enjoying earlier success in the United Kingdom. Although Biddu was born and brought up in Bangalore, India, he established himself as one of the foremost composers on the northern soul music scene in England in the 1970s (Chester, 2012). A decade later, he was approached by Feroze Khan, the director of the film *Qurbani,* and was asked to compose music for the film, which he did by recreating his signature

disco sound. Biddu recruited the British Pakistani Nazia Hassan to sing the song '*Aap jaisa koi*'. With the success of the song, Biddu became associated with the disco sound that reached India a decade after it had peaked in the West. Biddu remained a successful Bollywood music producer, but he is also credited with giving birth to the Indipop movement in the early 1990s (Sen, 2008: 98-99).

III. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have suggested that the transition of Rishi Rich from the British Asian to the Bollywood scene is a result of interconnected personal factors and industry developments that can be read in the larger framework of the global South Asian cultural industries. A key concept that I responded to throughout the chapter was Falu Bakrania's discussion of the mainstream with regards to the British Asian music scene (2013) as I sought to read Rishi Rich's career in reference to this. Firstly, I discussed the innovative practices that helped Rishi Rich and The Rishi Rich Project develop a new sound and image that drew from Homi Bhabha's diasporic third space (1994) and allowed British Asian musicians to believe in the potential of a sustained breakthrough and mainstream visibility in the British music industry. Nevertheless, as the British Asian music scene remained insular, and Rishi Rich felt trapped by a "glass ceiling". Here, we can see a clear example of the interconnected nature of personal and global push and pull factors that motivate migration.

However, his earlier reputation as an innovator has enabled him to transition onto the Bollywood scene. Even though he has not reached the same prominence on the large Bollywood music market, as on the limited size British Asian market, the Bollywood industry is still evolving and Rishi Rich could occupy the position of the RNRI, as the innovator (Mankekar, 2015). Changes that took place in the Bollywood music industry worked in Rishi Rich's favour. As a result of the new multi-composer system, he could easily contribute to multiple soundtracks and widen his reach in Bollywood. He could also capitalise on new musical trends that were tangentially related to his 'urban sound'. This would not have been possible without the earlier cultural remittance of The Rishi Rich Project and his ensuing transcultural capital. His self-referential nostalgia allowed him a second iteration of his career on the basis of his original moment of innovation, a moment that was considered ground-breaking not only in the UK but also in India. Thus, he was able to build up transcultural capital based on the conjunction of innovation and nostalgia — his innovation and Bollywood's appetite for nostalgia.

To support this argument, I conducted a comparative analysis of the Rishi Rich Project's greatest hits and Rishi's later Bollywood songs to show that the continuation of the 'Rishi Rich

sound' was a prerequisite for his work in Bollywood. The key factor in his transition was indubitably the cultural capital he had earned as the creator of a modern sound and of an image of young British Asians that resonated well in the wider global South Asian population. He unknowingly became a youth icon among the aspiring young urban middle classes in India, a status on which he could later build when the centre of musical innovation in the South Asian cultural sphere shifted from the United Kingdom to India. I suggested that by creating the image of the Asian pop star and by producing urban fusion music, The Rishi Rich Project created an aspirational model for those young Indians in the early 2000s who were looking for new, globalised identities that would enable them to be Indian and urban at the same time. The Rishi Rich Project, an ensemble of young, urban, hip, yet still South Asians, became a brand in itself, both in the UK and in India. He was able to 'return" to India as the familiar face of the urban Asian sound. His music and his personality evoked nostalgia in filmmakers, as well as in many film consumers who had grown up during the peak of his British Asian years.

This transcultural spillover testifies to the impact that a diasporic culture can have on the culture of the home country. It also calls attention to the proximity and permeability of the boundaries between the cultural industries of the two. Building on nostalgic associations towards India in the UK and on nostalgic associations towards the UK in India, Rishi Rich's career demonstrates the existence of an emotional relationship epitomised by a fascination between the diaspora and the homeland. We should remain mindful, however, beyond the push and pull factors that an individual artist might feel, there are also global movements that must be taken into account. Indeed, in recent years there has been a power shift between the diaspora and the homeland, whereby the centre of cultural innovation has shifted from the diasporas to India. Having analysed this shift, I suggest that nostalgia is an omnipresent and significant trope in this relationship; however, the direction of this nostalgia has changed along with the direction of migration. While earlier generations of British Asian artists were nostalgic towards their lost homeland, and this impacted deeply on their cultural production, now the dominant driving force in cultural production is Indian audiences' nostalgia towards earlier periods of global South Asian musical trends.

This case study has thrown light on how this process was influenced by innovation, as well as by nostalgia towards this innovation in later years. It is also important to keep in mind that this transnational movement was sparked by the changing dynamics between the homeland and diaspora. The once-innovative nature of diasporic culture later became a commodity in the homeland through the marketing power of nostalgia in its new cultural economy. Whereas the early 2000s was a time in which the cultural production of the British Asian diaspora was held in

high esteem and was considered as a trailblazer throughout the global South Asian population, the centre of production has now shifted to India, where Bollywood is now attracting artists from the former centres of production. We can thus view the mainstream – margins dichotomy in geographical dimensions as well, if we consider Rishi's move from London to Mumbai. He seems to have been following the currents of music production and shifted according to the changing centres. While he was involved in trying to get the British Asian scene to break into the mainstream industry, he was based in London, but with the growth of the Bollywood entertainment industry, he shifted to Mumbai. London and Mumbai thus changed positions in relation to the mainstream and the margin.

Chapter 5
Mixing the legends – capitalising on nostalgia in diasporic Punjabi remix culture

Figure 10: DJ Frenzy on stage in Chandigarh, December 2018.

When Harbhajan Mann leaves the stage, it's already half-past one. DJ Frenzy was supposed to come on stage at ten, there is a two and half hours delay at least. The winter nights in Chandigarh are incredibly cold, and no matter how expensive and fancy the wedding is, the female guests are only wearing silk saris and lehengas. The men keep warm with generous amounts of whiskey and rum. There is an open bar, of course, the families clearly want to show the Chief Minister of Punjab and all the other illustrious guests what true Punjabi hospitality looks like.

When DJ Frenzy comes on stage, I overhear two women discussing that he is the one who played at Virat Kohli's wedding. He really hit the jackpot with that wedding. It was covered around the world, and so he became an overnight

sensation. Since then, many couples have wanted to show that they can afford the same entertainers as the captain of the Indian cricket team and a Bollywood star. Frenzy said that this couple had Diljit Dosanjh perform at the engagement ceremony. I thought Diljit lived in Canada, but if I come to think of it, Frenzy also lives in Birmingham., so I guess it just makes inviting them more prestigious. I wish I could have attended the *sangeet* as well…

As Frenzy starts playing his first mix, and the voices of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Chamkila and Kuldip Manak fill the cold December air, people immediately get back on the dance floor at once. One-dollar notes are thrown in the air, hands are up in the air and there is soon a bhangra competition of sorts between the groom's relatives and the bride's relatives. There really is a "frenzy" amongst these people, these songs are classics for sure, but now they are danceable, modern classics. But what hasn't changed is that these songs are Punjabi through and through. I guess it's more than just the fuss about the Virushka wedding, Frenzy really knows what brings people to the dance floor.

(Research vignette, participant observation of DJ Frenzy performing at a wedding in Chandigarh, December 2018)

In this chapter, I focus on the career of DJ Frenzy, a contemporary British Asian DJ from Birmingham who built up a global following that spanned the BhangraNation, the Punjabi musical community around the world. The above excerpt from my research diary describes an event that epitomises some of the processes that I seek to highlight in this chapter, specifically the way in which the perception of the past, nostalgia, and Punjabiness intersect to create transcultural capital. Although DJ Frenzy followed in the footsteps of earlier, globally successful DJs, such as Bally Sagoo and Panjabi MC, by mixing Punjabi music with Western pop, his engagement with the history of Punjabi music is different in important ways from that of his predecessors.

After I interviewed DJ Frenzy in Chandigarh and then listened to the recorded conversation over and over again, I was struck by the fact that he constantly and persistently used the term "Punjabi music" to describe his own music and "Punjabi people" to describe his audience both in the UK and in India. This sets Frenzy apart from most of those who went before him. Before Frenzy came on the scene, most British Asian artists referred to themselves, or their music, as "Asian." For example, even though Bally Sagoo was of Punjabi origin and he remixed Punjabi language music, he typically used the label 'Asian' for himself and his music, even though he too

was a British Punjabi DJ from Birmingham, who had reached transnational fame – albeit twenty-five years earlier.

Although both Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy hailed from Birmingham and remixed old Punjabi music, they had starkly different attitudes towards making music. In order to examine the confluence of the personal and the global, I look at their personal histories and seek to locate these within the broader history of the music industries. I suggest that an important factor in explaining the difference between the music they made is the difference between how Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy viewed the past of Punjabi music.

In order to shed light on this point, I will first discuss the career of Bally Sagoo with the help of a close reading of some of his seminal songs. I will pay special attention to the use of nostalgia in his music and suggest that he had a dismissive attitude towards the past. Then, I will proceed to analyse DJ Frenzy's engagement with the past and suggest that he used nostalgia in a different and reaffirming light in order to manufacture transcultural capital. I suggest that his relationship to Punjab through Punjabi music mediated through diasporic postmemory (Hirsch, 2012). This supposition challenges the belief that later-generation members of the diaspora have looser ties to their ancestral country of origin. I suggest that DJ Frenzy consciously went against this trope and derived transcultural capital from his deep knowledge of Punjabi culture, despite having been born and raised in the diaspora. This claim will be supported by an examination of his music and how it appealed to nostalgia and played with existing nostalgic tropes in Punjabi music and culture.

It is particularly interesting to look at the very different ways in which DJ Frenzy and Bally Sagoo approached the past, as this has the potential to challenge the often-made claim that the newer generations of the diaspora tend to have weaker emotional ties towards the homeland (Jain, 2019, Tsuda, 2019). Indeed, I believe the evidence will show that the change of attitude that took place during the twenty-five years that separated the emergence of Bally Sagoo and that of DJ Frenzy occurred within a framework of larger cultural shifts. While arguing that in DJ Frenzy's case terminology concerning "Asian" and "Punjabi" matters, I will tease out the importance of this subtle change of perception. I will call special attention to the ways in which the perception of Punjabi culture changed globally, and especially in Bollywood, during that time frame. The cultural value attributed to Punjabiness also changed accordingly. This change necessitates a re-evaluation of our understanding of generational differences and attachment.

This chapter contributes to answering the first research question, that inquired about the relationship of the contemporary British Asian music scene to the global South Asian cultural production. In the framework of this case study, I seek to approach this through a cultural

geography perspective. In the introductory chapter, I suggested that there might be some changes happening with regards to global nodes and centres, whereby India is in the process of acquiring a more central position. In this chapter, I elaborate on these shifts and changes while seeking to place them in a historical dimension.

I. Bally Sagoo: from Birmingham to Bombay

Bally Sagoo was born in Delhi but grew up in Birmingham, where he was a member of a first-generation immigrant Punjabi family in a multicultural environment. He became well-known around the world in the Punjabi diaspora with his 1990 remix of Malkit Singh's 'Hey Jamalo', a Sindhi folksong that he mixed with 1980s-influenced synthwave loops and turned into a thoroughly modern song with a rural edge. Bally Sagoo soon became a household name across the global Punjabi diaspora. He signed with Oriental Star Agencies in Birmingham to release bhangra mixtapes, remixes of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan qawwalis and evergreen Bollywood songs. His success in this area then landed him a contract with Sony Music, which saw him as a potential crossover star, one who could build on his popularity in the diaspora, and who also had the potential to break into the newly emerging Indian market. Sony also wished to tap into the growing market of the globalising Indian middle classes. The strategy was to frame him as the moderniser of Bollywood music, who on account of his knowledge of cutting-edge technology and Western upbringing could breathe new life into well-known tracks Bollywood tracks (Ballantyne, 2008: 147).

Although Bally Sagoo was born in Delhi and only moved to Birmingham in his childhood, he always emphasised how disconnected he felt from his Asian heritage, and he claimed that he had limited knowledge of Indian culture and music.

> "I was a typical example of someone who didn't know what Asian people were about. I was too much into Western society business. My friends were mainly black and I didn't have many Asian mates because of, talking fifteen years ago you know, we didn't have funky Asian music, you know... Asian music was the kind of gushy records that my dad plays at home, that are just crackling and you can't hear the vocals, there is no drum beat and it's always got this dramatic string drawn all over it, and I'm like, 'I can't relate to that'. I'm watching Top of the Pops 'cos that show is the in thing. I want that music and I want to hear those records that I'm listening to in the clubs. I wanted that kind of beat, but I was completely forgetting

> about Asianness. Then all of a sudden, things just changed, I just got so much into it and my mates were like 'my god Bally Sagoo's doing Indian music'. They couldn't believe it, it was like the talk of the town, 'cos I was so much heavily into black music. But I'm glad I went through that stage 'cos that's why I can make my music."
>
> (Bally Sagoo cited by Dhar and Housee 1993: 83)

This perspective refutes the claim that 1.5 generation immigrants are necessarily more closely connected to their ancestral culture. Moreover, it prompts us to consider the importance of representation and the societal value of culture. During Bally Sagoo's teenage years, young Indian audiences around the world often looked at Hindi film music as outdated. As we have seen from Bally Sagoo's words, in the UK, South Asian music from the homeland and the diaspora was measured against chart music and other Western musical genres, and after the economic liberalisation of 1991, this became true in India, as well. The arrival of cable channels and the availability of the products of the American and European music and film markets led to the belief that the products of Indian popular cinema were of inferior quality (Beaster-Jones, 2015: 147). Similarly, British Asian bands were considered 'uncool' by many British Asian young people on account of the band members' age, sartorial choices and stage appearances. The fact that many bhangra bands were comprised of middle-aged, non-professional musicians, who wore sequined shirts and who followed the outdated fashions of an earlier Bollywood era made them unattractive to young people who were more interested in falling in line with mainstream British youth culture (Bakrania, 2013: 47). Also, as Bally Sagoo pointed out above, the growing popularity of Black music and Black youth culture played an important role in forming the tastes of young British Asians. We have seen similar narratives in the cases of Rishi Rich and Apache Indian, where the cultural geographies of their respective cities mattered significantly, in addition to their proximity to different diasporic cultures. Both factors impacted their musical environment and worldview, but in different ways (Dawson, 2006: 162). Consequently, we can posit that Bally Sagoo viewed the musical past of the British Punjabi community through the lens of these social attitudes. This musical past signified by "gushy records" and "dramatic strings", did not hold much appeal to him and his generation. It was seen as something old-fashioned, not in step with the future, and definitely not something to be reproduced or revived.

In the following paragraphs, I will look at how this dismissive approach impacted his music-making approach. In the process, it will be important to call attention to the fact that the title of his breakthrough album alludes to a potentially critical perception of the past. The album

was called '*Bollywood Flashback*' (1994) and it contained remake tracks of music by R.D. Burman, the legendary Hindi film music director of the 1970s and 1980s. Although Burman was considered as one of the most innovative composers in the history of Hindi film music, one who drew on a variety of musical genres from rock to jazz, Bally Sagoo thought his music sounded outdated. By calling the album a 'flashback', Sagoo acknowledged the existence of a musical past, but he clearly indicated that he was viewing it from a contemporary perspective. He was looking back at the past only for a moment only, a flash. 'Flashback' is a reference to the past, and its connotation can be slightly negative. I suggest that Bally Sagoo's appreciation of nostalgia, or lack thereof, reflected the general attitude toward it prevalent at the time and that he sought to locate the diaspora in modernity.

This same attitude was evident when Sony signed Bally Sagoo, who they expected would be popular on the world music market as well, and they marketed him as a global icon of hybridity who can merge the essentialised notions of East and West and reach wide audiences (Dawson, 2005: 168). In fact, Sagoo's first album with Sony, *Bollywood Flashback* (1994) was quite successful. Moreover, it made the old Bollywood hits accessible to bigger audiences, but for new and different purposes. Sagoo's music became a staple in clubs and on dance floors around the world. The song '*Chura Liya'* even earned play on BBC Radio One during the daytime hours, where it was interspersed with British and American mainstream pop music, something that would have been unthinkable with the original Bollywood music. The track became very popular in India as well, where it was featured on the two newly established satellite music televisions, Channel V and MTV.[19]

Bally Sagoo's tastes and approach to music-making were deeply influenced by his personal circumstances first of living in the multicultural city of Birmingham, where he was exposed to a variety of cultural crosscurrents, but also by the zeitgeist of contemporary opinions about South Asian cultures that were not considered to be on par with contemporary British youth culture. As mentioned above, Bally Sagoo's perspective was indicative of the diasporic listening practices of his age, as was his approach towards music-making. I suggest that he engaged with South Asian music from this perspective and sought to modernise and Westernise Bollywood music in order to accommodate it to the dominant tastes of the time. His work, therefore, should be understood within the framework of these social attitudes.

[19] Moreover, the success of the album also landed Bally Sagoo a host spot on MTV India, that further elevated his standing (Zuberi 2001: 208, 209). He later ventured into Bollywood music production as well, he produced the music of the 1999 film Kartoos (dir. Mahesh Bhatt) alongside Anu Malik and Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and he also worked with Amitabh Bachchan and they recorded a CD together, called 'Aby Baby (1995).

When discussing the success he enjoyed in India in the early stage of his career, he said that his popularity, and that of his music, lay in the fact that

> 'they've just never heard stuff like that. I was out there in Mumbai at this film awards they have (…), I was just playing these records and all these film stars went wild. All these songs are all of a sudden sounding different to them. Because they are obviously used to the original or whatever, I mean when they hear it as a different style, they go wild because don't forget they haven't heard half of the stuff we do here, and some songs haven't reached out there.'[20]

This statement alludes to a way of viewing Hindi film music and his own, Western-influenced, hybrid music in a hierarchical way, whereby his music surpasses "the original or whatever." He seems to Moreover, this excerpt also provides insight into the ways in which Bally Sagoo viewed his own transcultural capital.positions himself as a mediator and interlocutor, one who was firmly anchored in the musical trends of the West, especially with regards to various types of very popular black music, while being marginally acquainted with Bollywood and Punjabi music. As a result of this position, he was well-positioned to mix (quite literally) the two worlds in the studio. His own diasporic return happened with the intention of modernising Bollywood and Punjabi music by bringing it closer to Western sensibilities. He capitalised on his own Western musical tastes and used his position as a British Punjabi to draw on the 'visual and aural archive' of Bollywood films, which Dawson argued is the role of Hindi films in the life of British Asian youth (Dawson, 2005: 162).

His music arose from the diasporic third space and the cultural geography of Birmingham, where he grew up listening to primarily black musical forms. In his mixes, he essentially translated Punjabi folk music, devotional *qawwali* and Bollywood music into the language of Western popular music. This was then packaged and returned to the Indian audiences, who apparently, went "wild" upon hearing the reinterpretation of evergreen songs.

In the previous chapters, we looked at the importance and the cultural value of evergreens on the Indian market. These evergreen songs form the basis of understanding of what Hindi film music should be like, but, to a certain extent, they are also open for reinterpretation within

[20] Bhangra Tube: Bally Sagoo RARE interview (Bhangra and Bollywood)' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwqmN6GXg10 Uploaded: 13 October 2017, last accessed: 18 February 2021.

acceptable limits that often form the basis of disputes.[21] There, Bally Sagoo's position both as the diasporic Indian and as the NRI in the position of the cultural interlocutor, allowed him to take up the role of the moderniser of old Bollywood and bhangra classics. If we look at one of his most popular songs, '*Chura Liya'* from the 1994 album, '*Bollywood Flashback*', this modernising aim becomes even more evident. Here, we can discern innovative practices on both the aural and the visual level, as it fundamentally changed the sound of a classic song and repackaged its visual representation to conform to the expectations of contemporary youth culture in Britain,

The song was a recreation of the 1973 song of the same title, sung by Asha Bhosle and Mohammad Rafi, originally from the film *Yaadon Ki Baaraat* (1973, dir. Nasir Hussein). The original song is a duet between Mohammed Rafi and Asha Bhosle, but Bally Sagoo only focused on the female part of the duet for his recreation. The original, high-timbre vocals of Asha Bhosle that talk about the yearning of a woman for a man who has stolen her heart are imitated by Reema Dasgupta. Her style of singing is quite similar to that of Asha Bhosle, but the tempo in the new version was slowed in order to achieve an even more dramatic and dreamlike quality, especially with the added female choir in the background. This style of singing is very typical of female Bollywood singers following Lata Mangeshkar (Asha Bhosle's sister) but is very different from that of contemporary popular singers in the West. Therefore, the use of these vocals gives the track an eerie and otherworldly quality, which is heightened by the Hindi lyrics, which make the song sound even more exotic for a Western audience.

Bally Sagoo juxtaposed Reema Dasgupta's high-pitched voice with that of Cheshire Cat, a Birmingham reggae artist, whose English lines punctuate the dreamy flow of the song. In the original song, the focus is on the vocals, and an ensemble comprised of fiddles, a trumpet, guitar and drums performs in the background. In Sagoo's version, the classical Bollywood instrumentation is replaced with a basic reggae beat. The tempo starts slower than in the original version, but then it picks at Chesire Cat's prompt calling for "rhythm". The result is that the final product sounds very different from the original, both in its tempo and in its instrumentation. The Western and hybrid elements invigorate and modernise the song for a younger generation. It is not just the audio that communicate Sagoo's desire to create something new and modern. The visuals also establish a clean break with the past. In the original video, Zeenat Aman and Dharmenda, two of Bollywood's most famous Hindi film actors from the 1970s, profess their love and desire for one another in the framework of a semi-public performance. Bally Sagoo's music video runs on two parallel levels which correspond well with the dual nature of the aural

[21] A contemporary example is the debate about Tanishk Bagchi's remixes with opinions ranging from "Dear Tanishk Bagchi, You Can Remake A Song But Will Not Always Be Able To Remix The Soul" (Dorade, 2020) to "Tanishk Bagchi doesn't care for the 'remix king' label: 'I am making music for millennials' (Ghosh, 2019).

text. In one thread, we see a succession of intimate scenes, where a scantily clad young Asian couple engages in an exchange of sensual glances, suggestive touches, and that showcase physical desire in various subtle and not so subtle ways. This mode of portraying physical desire would be quite transgressive when considered in the moral framework of Hindi cinema. Even now, on-screen nudity and the display of physical affection are still largely limited (Chatterjee, 2017: 52). This display of passion in such an explicit way was quite ground-breaking.

The other thread is reminiscent of a "behind the scenes" video, whereby we are shown snippets of Bally Sagoo creating the music in his studio and a pool hall. He is surrounded by a group of his collaborators and friends, who are mostly white and Black but not South Asian.

Figure 11: Screengrab from the music video of 'Chura Liya' (1994)

The two threads are connected through the figure of Bally Sagoo. It turns out that the romantic scene with the couple was just part of a dream he had as he fell asleep on his turntable. In the couple segment of the video, Sagoo played the role of a voyeur, observing the intimacy between the couple. But Sagoo himself is also portrayed as an object of desire with frequent cuts to shots of his eyes, lips and hands. In the other scenes, he was the centre of attention and in the middle of the crowd. Perhaps one way to read the duality of the voyeur/centre of attention is to see Bally as an outsider in the racially exclusive Asian segment of the video and as one who feels more at home amid diverse crowds that represent the width and depth of British popular culture. While Sagoo keeps an eye on the Bollywood romance, he reformulates it in such a way that non-Asians, such as Cheshire Cat or his black friends in the video, can also engage with it. He could

also be read as the NRI, the cultural interlocutor, who connects the two worlds of South Asia and the rest of the world in this setting (Desai and Neutill, 2007).

This visual narrative, therefore, also allows us to see Bally Sagoo as a cultural interlocutor who has access both to the racially exclusive, intimate and closed Asian scene, as well as to the multiracial, public, Western scene he was familiar with in Birmingham. This, in turn, contributes towards establishing Bally Sagoo's role as a cultural intermediary. His transcultural capital was derived from his position as an innovative music creator, one well-versed in the contemporary Western popular genres and who is capable of creating a musical form that corresponds to contemporary music trends, yet at the same time a represents a trace of Bally Sagoo's South Asian cultural heritage.

To sum up my observations to this point, Bally Sagoo viewed Bollywood evergreens and Punjabi music, in general, as outdated musical forms in need of modernising. He did not seek to recreate the sounds of the lost homeland; rather, he sought to create something new. He wanted to make music in tune with contemporary trends in British popular music. He did this by drawing inspiration from a Bollywood of years gone by, but with the help of new technology and innovative music and performance practices, he created something quite different that appealed to the modern tastes of a new generation. His efforts should be read in conjunction with his relationship to the past of Punjabi music. Bally Sagoo emphasised how disconnected he was from his Asian heritage, and he claimed that he had limited knowledge of it. However, we must consider that this song and video, as well as Bally Sagoo's career as a whole, came along at a historical moment when both diasporic and Indian youth were searching for new, globalised identities. His perception of British Asian and Bollywood music as outdated was related to the lack of representation and previous examples of the successful multicultural fusion of styles on the British Asian scene in which he had grown up. Moving from the personal to the global and transnational level, I suggest that temporality was an important factor in the success of his career. Sagoo came along at a time when the post-liberalisation Indian market was just starting to develop and Mumbai had not yet become the kind of global entertainment capital it is now.

Be that as it may, Sagoo, by means of his music and the success he enjoyed over the course of his career, certainly helped change the perception of South Asian music of his contemporaries, both in the UK and in India. This was a result not only of his sound but also of the transnational nature of his career. He was able to earn transcultural capital by virtue of his geographic position. In doing so, he was able to project a diasporic British Asian identity that was grounded in mainstream British youth culture and at the same time able to recreate old favourites to suit the tastes of contemporary youth culture.

He also contributed to the change of this history, and he became a role model that enabled future generations to participate in the creative economy with more pride. The importance of this moment in the history of British Asian music is even more notable when we look at the career of DJ Frenzy, the other British Punjabi DJ from Birmingham who arrived on the scene 25 years later. By the time Frenzy made a name for himself, the dynamics between the cultural production of the British Asian diaspora and the homeland had changed fundamentally.

II. DJ Frenzy: travelling through time and music

DJ Frenzy was born and brought up in a third-generation British Punjabi family in Birmingham, in the post-Bally Sagoo and Asian Kool-era. DJ Frenzy, who started remixing music in the early 2000s, grew up listening to his father's collection of Punjabi folk songs from the 1970s and 1980s. Perhaps because of this, he felt that even the popular British Asian performers, such as Jay Sean and Rishi Rich, were not "Punjabi enough" for him. He also had a strong urge to familiarise his friends with the musical culture of Punjab. Hence, he started remixing and fusing Punjabi music with Western elements.

After spending his teenage years making mixes in his bedroom and performing in local pubs and clubs, in 2015 he decided to quit his day job and pursue a professional career in music. He set up a YouTube channel and started actively building up a profile via other social media platforms. With the help of digital technology and his internet presence, he built up a following across other diasporic locations, as well as in India. He soon realised that he had a large following in India. When in 2017 he was asked to play at the wedding of Bollywood superstar Anushka Sharma and cricket captain Virat Kohli, he achieved overnight global visibility. As the Bollywood wedding of the year was bathed in media attention from around the globe, his celebrity status became global.

Frenzy has been touring in Punjab and Delhi on a regular basis since 2017. He has also made appearances in other cities with sizeable Punjabi populations, and he has become a popular DJ at lavish Punjabi destination weddings. Although the 2020 coronavirus pandemic has made the future of large gatherings, such as club nights and weddings, uncertain until then Frenzy had maintained a temporary, circular pattern of migration. This is a touring pattern sustained by periodic, or seasonal, market forces in the UK and India: namely, increasing demand in India in the winter, as winter is the wedding season in India, and greater demand in the UK during the summer since summer is the wedding season in England. He can divide his time according to the demand.

At first glance, DJ Frenzy appears to have much in common with Bally Sagoo. Both grew up in Birmingham and share the same ethnic and cultural background. They both chose the same art form, and both of them have made a name for themselves remixing Punjabi music. However, a closer look will reveal a marked difference between their career trajectories, their aspirations, and even between the ways in which they make their music. When asked why he began making music, DJ Frenzy said:

> 'Lots of Asian youth don't listen to Asian music anymore, they listen to whatever is in the charts. That was kind of the reason behind why I started what I was doing. Lots of my family, my cousin, my younger siblings are more interested in what their friends are listening to and they kinda lost that attachment to Asian music. So, I thought if the only way for me to get their interest back is to merge the two genres, then…'
>
> (DJ Frenzy, personal interview, December 2018, Chandigarh, India)

When set in contrast to Bally Sagoo's self-confessed ignorance of his Punjabi musical heritage, Frenzy's desire to reconnect his generation with their roots is rather startling. Whereas Bally Sagoo did not find old Indian records very appealing, DJ Frenzy said was disappointed in his generation's interest in popular chart music. Consequently, that was why he set out on a mission to reintroduce his peers to the type of Punjabi music that he considered authentic and important.

This case study challenges some of the findings of migration studies that have argued that later generations of immigrant families have weaker cultural ties to their ancestral culture (Jain, 2013, Tsuda, 2019). This point is particularly interesting in the light of the dominant discourse of academic literature on British Asian music in the early 2000s (Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma, Huq, etc.). These texts argued that British Asian music allows British Asian youth to express their hybrid identities with the help of a multitude of similarly hybrid cultural forms. Furthermore, Kaveri Qureshi argued, that the myth of return does not exist among British Asian youth, who consider British Asian cities as the original homeland (2014). In the light of this case study, we can perhaps challenge this point by adding a historical dimension and suggesting that this perception might more dynamic. DJ Frenzy's account questions this narrative and challenges these established ideas of culture and identity, because he rejects these hybrid identities as "not Punjabi enough" and wishes to return to the original homelands of Punjab. I suggest that to make sense of this phenomenon, we have to look at it from two different angles. Firstly, we can look at

it from the angle of Frenzy's personal motivations. Secondly, we can look at it from the angle of the broader cultural changes that influenced the perception of Punjabi culture in the UK and India.

When talking about the personal level, it is instructive to think about the concept of diasporic postmemory which was introduced by Marianne Hirsch (2012). Hirsch argued that memories of a historical period, or an event, for those generations that do not have the first-hand experience of that particular event are always mediated through the experiences of earlier generations. Although in most cases, this results in the sort of detachment that Jain (2013) and Tsuda (2019) have described, DJ Frenzy formed a different relationship to his Punjabi cultural heritage as a result of his particular family history.

> "My grandparents came to the UK in the early sixties (…), I'm like a third generation, so technically, I shouldn't be as connected as I am. But I think it had to do with the fact that while growing up, I used to hang around older people (…). Just chilling with my dad, listening to the music that he was listening to, interned this thing in me. I don't remember listening to English music, it was always Punjabi or Bollywood. At the age of 13, when I went to high school, that's when I figured out what other people were listening to. I tried to introduce my friends to what I was listening to, but some of them didn't understand the language, some said that all of it sounds the same. Even my friends who come from a Punjabi background, they weren't listening to Punjabi music. So, I used to be the guy who made mixtapes and tried to educate them."
>
> (DJ Frenzy, personal interview in December 2018)

This exposure to a version of Punjabi music history established by a person of authority, Frenzy's father, shaped Frenzy's understanding and appreciation of canonical Punjabi music. His ideas of Punjabi music were mediated by diasporic post-memory, and he imbibed the musical taste of elder generations around him. Because of the love of Punjabi culture that he inherited from his parents, we can discern a certain sense of anxiety in his words related to the loss of this culture. He claims that younger generations cannot appreciate the nuances of the music or understand the language. As Gibb Schreffler has argued, stories about Punjabi identity are often narrated through music (2004: 197); therefore, anxieties about the loss of understanding Punjabi music could also be read in the framework of anxieties regarding the loss of Punjabi identity.

It is noteworthy that instead of aligning his own tastes to fit in with his peers, he took on a civilising mission to familiarise his Asian peers with Punjabi music. This is in line with Van der Hoeven's argument, who suggested that nostalgia is evoked and utilised in the music industry by musicians and producers to build collective identities, or to reinforce a sense of belonging to communities that are felt to be under threat (2018: 244). It also suggests that Frenzy had a robust and self-confident identity of Punjabiness.

Frenzy puts his Punjabi identity on display in a variety of ways, both in his music and his performance practices, as I elaborate shortly. A significant aspect of his performance of Punjabiness is connected to the aforementioned idea of an authentic past and a canonical construction of the history of Punjabi music. Such a connection with the past is often approached by evoking a sense of nostalgia. As we have seen in the methodology chapter, nostalgia directed towards an idealised and timeless Punjabi past is a powerful emotional force that can connect both British Punjabis as well as Punjabis living in India or elsewhere. Therefore, DJ Frenzy's knowledge of Punjabi folk music of the 1970s and 1980s is an important point of connection with that past, and it invests him with a sense of authentic knowledge. Many of his mixes on YouTube seek to build a bridge between the past and the present of Punjabi music, and by producing these, he also inserts himself into the history of Punjabi music-making. For example, if we look at his mix called 'Legends Frenzy Vol. 1. (feat. Manak, Chamkila & more) Punjabi Folk Mix' on YouTube (uploaded 31 March 2017) where he remixed folk singers of the 1970s and 1980s and gave it a new sound by adding electronic beats, we can see that the majority of the users laud him for the respectful way in which he uses the old songs he shows for the way in which he brings the old traditions back to life. One of the top comments reads: "sick love chamkila and im a teen my dad listens to all folk music i salute u." and "This is amazing… real feel for the traditional music in a new concept, sounds sick!"

Figure 12: Screengrabs of the comments on DJ Frenzy's channel (12 August 2020)

This suggests that both the content of his music and the manner in which he remixes it, establish him as a proud Punjabi. His music demonstrates a sense of cultural authenticity, and he is seen as a cultural insider on account of his broad and encompassing knowledge of Punjabi folk music. As discussed earlier, cultural authenticity in the framework of Punjabi identities is often rooted in the microlocality, the *pind* and the idea of a pre-industrial, pre-migration, idealised past (Roy, 2017: 50) which is often depicted in the folk culture. Therefore, demonstrating his familiarity with folk culture and folk music creates a link with this idealised, nostalgic past and contributes to his transcultural capital.

Not only does DJ Frenzy display his authenticity aurally, but he also demonstrates it visually in his performances, as well. As mentioned earlier, in 2018 I had the opportunity to attend a wedding where DJ Frenzy was the star performer. It was a lavish Punjabi wedding that took place in the garden of Sukhvilas Oberoi, an ostentatious five-star hotel close to Chandigarh that had been hired in its entirety for the exclusive use of the wedding guests. Frenzy played a long set, complete with a light show and a presentation of music videos in the background. His performance at the wedding was saturated with cultural codes of Punjabi masculinity, which he reinforced by his occasional announcements and interjections in Punjabi. At one point, he even left the DJ booth, which was placed in the centre of the stage, to come forward and perform some bhangra steps. He also does this in many of his music videos. It is a demonstration of his familiarity with bhangra dancing. His skill, which he developed as a member of a university bhangra team, never fails to elicit an enthusiastic response from the audience, and it establishes him as a real connoisseur of Punjabi culture. The tradition of competitive bhangra dancing started in post-Partition Punjab and served the purpose of reinforcing Punjabi identity. Eventually, it led to the formalisation of bhangra dancing (Schreffler, 2012). Bhangra dancing serves a similar purpose in the UK, and by participating in it, Punjabi youth can showcase which team best preserves the traditional ways of dancing and dress. DJ Frenzy's performance of his bhangra dancing skills, therefore is a sign of his Punjabiness and his membership in the global BhangraNation.

I suggest, however, that the way in which DJ Frenzy relates to classical Punjabi music is influenced by more than just his personal history and personal preferences. It is also the result of larger processes, in which the role of Punjabi music has been re-evaluated. I suggest that in the twenty-five years that set Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy apart, the Punjabi cultural identity became more robust and gained greater standing both in India and around the globe. In the next section, I will add another layer to our understanding of nostalgia in the context of Punjabi music: nostalgia for the innovative and globally successful periods of global Punjabi culture.

Punjabi is the new black?

As I proposed at the beginning of this chapter, I seek to locate DJ Frenzy's stronger identification with Punjabiness at the intersection of personal history and cultural change. In this section, I will attempt to show how the cultural value of Punjabiness changed during the years between the peak of Bally Sagoo's career and the beginnings of DJ Frenzy's career, and I will suggest that Punjabiness acquired a greater degree of cultural value both globally and in India. The cultural value it has come to enjoy in India is also connected to the way in which Bollywood cinema began to portray Punjabi identities, and the way in which Bollywood cinema has come to occupy a stronger position globally.

As mentioned earlier, DJ Frenzy grew up during the period of the golden age of British Asian music, a period that we looked at briefly in the previous chapter, especially in terms of the mainstream and the margin. The previous chapter focused more on music production practices. Now, however, it is important to elaborate on wider developments on the British Asian DJ scene; for the success and visibility of this scene contributed in important ways to the robust sense of Punjabi identity that DJ Frenzy possesses. The 2000s, when British Punjabi DJs such as Bally Sagoo and Panjabi MC achieved mainstream visibility in the global music market, established the British Punjabi DJ scene as a global centre of innovation for Punjabi music. Panjabi MC's track, '*Mundiyan ton bachke'*, sampled by Jay Z was celebrated across the industry and throughout the media as the moment of arrival for British Asian music (Bakrania, 2013). In the end, this moment of fame did not lead to the anticipated spill-over effect and did not result in sustained visibility for the British Asian music scene as a whole. Yet, throughout my conversations with industry specialists and artists, Panjabi MC's breakthrough moment was a constant point of reference. Many considered this to be a moment of pride, a moment of hope, and a goal for the future as well. This moment and the era it signifies should be considered a focal point when thinking about the role that emotions have played on the British Asian music scene, as it evokes a sustained feeling of nostalgia.

Although clubbing and remixing in India is still an under-explored area of research, Anjali Gera Roy has written about the revival of dancing as a social activity in India and how British Asian dance cultures played an important role in this revival (2011). Similarly, Jacqueline Warwick (2008) emphasised the impact that British Asian DJs had on the emerging Canadian Desi club scene, and Sunaina Maira (2012) has looked at the origins of the South Asian American club culture in the United Kingdom. Based on my personal experience and my conversations with music industry professionals in Bombay and Chandigarh, Punjabi music has played an important

role in producing danceable music in clubs, and there is now a robust popular music market in the Punjab. Whereas at the beginning of the 1990s, Bollywood music dominated the Indian music industry, recent years have seen the quick rise of the Punjabi music industry, which is now the second biggest in India after Bollywood (Bhatt, 2018). Some of the most iconic Punjabi performers (eg. Diljit Dosanjh, the Punjabi singer-actor superstar) have become global icons for Punjabi youth in India and abroad. This can be explained from an economic and cultural perspective. As we have seen, the Indian music industries benefitted from economic liberalization policies and became more open and technologically developed. However, it is also important to note that the taste of Indian audiences has changed, and the Bollywood film music industry has become more open to diasporic and Western cultural influences (Booth, 2008: 107).

Moreover, the perception of Punjabiness within India has changed with the increasing positive exposure that Bollywood has given to a certain aspect of Punjabi culture. This is very much intertwined with the new importance given to the NRI and the diaspora. Jyotika Virdi has argued that Bollywood cinema, which is often understood as the national cinema of India, represents Indian culture as a specifically upper-class, upper-caste Hindi speaking nation that disregards the internal tensions, cleavages, differences and fissures of Indian society (Virdi, 2003:9). However, Vijay Mishra has argued that this tendency is changing, and a "Punjabi ethos" is becoming more dominant in Bollywood (Mishra, 2002: 260). Much of the literature argues that the reason for the rising prominence of Punjabi culture in Hindi cinematic narratives is related to the importance of the Punjabi diaspora and the transnational marketing possibilities. This harkens back to the previous section in which we discussed the cultural and economic value of the diasporas (Mishra, 2003: 260). Mooney suggested that Bollywood films often place Punjabis at the centre of the narratives as they are often considered models of progress, status and wealth, both in India and in the diaspora. (Mooney, 2008: 111).

With the ascendancy of influential Punjabi filmmaking dynasties, such as the Chopras and the Johars, Punjabis became even more prominent in the filmmaking process. Punjabi-centric narratives have become quite dominant with the establishment of the NRI genre. Most of the iconic NRI films of the late 1990s and early 2000s, such as *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995, dir.: Aditya Chopra), *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001, dir.: Karan Johar), *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998, dir.: Karan Johar), *Kal Ho Na Ho* (2003, dir.: Nikhil Advani) featured affluent and influential Hindu Punjabi characters, who belonged to the privileged layers of Indian society both at home and abroad. Srijani Mitra Das claimed that focusing on the "delights, modern aspirations and traditional values" of Punjabi characters on screen is, in fact, a way for Punjabi filmmakers to overcome the trauma and violence of the Partition. She suggested that the majority of the most

successful ventures produced by the dominant film studios, Yash Raj and Dharma Productions, could be best described as "Khatri dramas", in which the heroes, who are upper-class Hindus belonging to the Khatri community embody values celebrated in the "New India", such as conspicuous consumption and transnational mobility (2006).

Moreover, these transnational lives seen on screen can be read in conjunction with the transnational aspirations of the post-liberalisation Indian middle classes. As Kajri Jain has suggested, '[the] Punjabi Hindu family has become a privileged site for exploring both the tensions of transnational living and the fast-paced social changes occurring within India after liberalisation' (Jain, 2010: 41). Ananya Jahanara Kabir claimed that as the "Punjabi aesthetic" is a seductive aspect of Indian culture, this is also the image that has been exported in the works of diaspora filmmakers such as Mira Nair, who aims films like *Monsoon Wedding* (2004:179) at diasporic and non-Indian audiences who might see Punjabi culture as the normative culture, or as a goal that one might aspire to

Another sector of the Bollywood cultural industry in which authors have observed a growing Punjabi presence is the Bollywood music industry. Tony Ballantyne has shown that Punjabis have had an influence on Hindi film music for a long time, but mostly through the work of those music directors and composers who worked for Hindi cinema, such as Feroz Nizami and Ghulam Haider, who composed both for Hindi and for Punjabi films (Ballantyne, 2006: 127). In addition, some of the legendary early actors and singers were of Punjabi descent, like K.L. Saigal, Noor Jahan, Shamshad Begum and Mohammad Rafi (Schreffler, 2012: 341). However, as Anjali Gera Roy has shown, Punjabi music has become ubiquitous in Bollywood cinema with the rise of Daler Mehndi and his brand of music, which she has labeled bhangrapop. She, in fact, went on to suggest that "[b]hangra's popularization has deconstructed the Hindi national hegemony by inserting a regional culture into the popular space of the nation, thus opening a path for other marginalized regional cultures' (Roy, 2012: 230). Elsewhere, Anjali Gera Roy argued that the reason for the dominance of Punjabi music can be accounted for by the fact that it is easy to dance to bhangra music. As a result, Punjabi music has become a pan-Indian phenomenon and no longer serves merely as a regional marker. Its exclusive regional ties were weakened by the use of simplified Punjabi lyrics that were intelligible for wider Hindi-speaking audiences, while its music was adapted to fit the expectations of the Bollywood format (Roy, 2010: 36, 42). Nilanjana Bhattacharjya went further and argued that in Hindi cinema, Punjabi music has come to stand in for Indian national identity in the diaspora. It is seen as a more contemporary and cool Indian identity than other ethnicities, such as Gujarati (Bhattacharjya, 2008).

The Punjabi diaspora played a crucial role in this development. For example, Alaap, the London-based bhangra band, contributed to the soundtrack of multiple Hindi films, such as *Dil* and *Hatya* (Ballantyne, 2006: 132). And while Anjali Gera Roy has connected the rising importance of Punjabi music in Bollywood to the emergence of Daler Mehndi, Jayson Beaster-Jones has credited Bally Sagoo with playing an important role in making Punjabi remix music accepted in India. He made the argument that Bally Sagoo's success changed the perception of the Indian middle classes towards remixes. Previously, they had viewed remixes as 'truck driver music' only worthy of the attention of the uneducated classes (Beaster-Jones, 2015: 157). Interestingly, Bally Sagoo himself was of the opinion that remixing bhangra in the 1990s was less financially viable than remixing Bollywood, as Bollywood music was a pan-Indian cultural product, and one not limited to Punjabi audiences (Zuberi, 2001: 209). With the Punjabification of Bollywood, the Bollywood music market was opened wide for performers of Punjabi music, including British Punjabi artists. DJ Frenzy was a good example of this phenomenon., Frenzy, while talking about other British Asian artists interested in making the jump to Bollywood, said:

> '[There's this perspective that] if you made it to Bollywood, then you made it. I never looked at it in that sense. I would be more than happy to do it but it's not my ultimate target. A lot of people moved out [to Mumbai] to make that happen because there is so much money in that industry that if you made it, you are sorted for life. But I was trying to look at the bigger picture. My aim is more global. Going back to the Punjabi MC track, where it is still being played everywhere over the world, it was even playing in this club I walked into in Thailand. Obviously, you feel proud to hear that. But you also get the feeling that if this guy made it, I can make it too. If someone's aim is to get into Bollywood it's fair but I think it's a stereotypical way of looking at things.'
>
> (DJ Frenzy, personal interview in December 2018)

As a result of the shifting cultural tides mentioned in earlier chapters, Punjabi identities have received more attention both in the UK and in India, and in the light of this history of representation, it was easier for DJ Frenzy to identify as Punjabi than it was for Bally Sagoo

twenty-five years earlier. A certain, unproblematic representation of Punjabi culture[22] has gained prominence both in India as well as in the diaspora.

The importance that DJ Frenzy placed on his Punjabi identity can perhaps also be deducted from the way in which he creates his music, which is quite different from the method that Bally Sagoo employed. In order to analyse Frenzy's process, I draw on the work of Richard Zumkhawala-Cook who theorised that remixing in a diasporic environment 'acknowledges the listening practices of diasporic South Asians, but also integrates these familiar chord progressions, lyrics, and beats with locally familiar sounds and the consumptive patterns of "cool" within youth culture' (Zumkhawala-Cook, 2008: 325). Earlier. we saw that Bally Sagoo sought to create mainstream tracks by modernising Punjabi and Bollywood music. DJ Frenzy, on the other hand, turned British and American pop music into Punjabi music. The 'acknowledging of diasporic listening practices' is evident in both cases; however, Sagoo and Frenzy employed different diasporic listening practices. Sagoo sought to accommodate his music to mainstream tastes, whereas Frenzy built on a more self-confident knowledge of British Asian and Punjabi music, which he then enhanced with elements borrowed from the mainstream pop culture. Frenzy catered to feelings of nostalgia for the proud past of Punjabi music, as well as of pride in the present of the global Punjabi music scene.

These two approaches were rooted in the personal histories of the two artists and were nestled in greater global processes. Sagoo wanted to open up Bollywood music for non-Asian audiences by modernising its sounds, whereas DJ Frenzy's desire was to make Punjabi music popular again amongst British Asian youth by mashing up Punjabi songs with mainstream songs.

A good example we can use to underpin the claim that DJ Frenzy approaches music-making from a Punjabi perspective is one of his most popular YouTube tracks, his 'Shape of You Bhangra Mix', a mash-up of two very popular songs at the time, the UK chartbuster 'Shape of You' (2017) by Ed Sheeran and the Punjabi pop hit, 'Do you know' (2016) from the Punjabi pop star and actor, Diljit Dosanjh. The bhangra beats of the Punjabi song are layered over the English lyrics throughout the whole song; therefore, the pulse of the song is consistent throughout and fit

[22] The ubiquitous (mis)representation of Punjabi culture has not been appreciated by all. Virinder Kalra, for example, has been very critical about Punjabis' representation in Hindi cinema. He wrote, 'In the broader cultural domain, Punjabiyat is (ab)used in different ways, for example, in the bedazzling, commoditised world of Bollywood movies, Punjabis are sometimes represented through the valorisation of upper caste/class Khatri business families, marginalising Sikhs and Dalits and sometimes through the figure of the male, turbaned, bearded Jat Sikh. This latter hypermasculine figure comes in the form of the bhangra dancer, the warrior and ultimately the Indian soldier' (Kalra, 2014: 184). Lucia Kraemer has also criticised the representation of overseas Punjabis in Hindi cinema, arguing that the stories about the success and economic prowess of the diaspora are not representative of the struggle that real immigrant communities in Britain have to face (Kraemer, 2016: 52). Anjali Gera Roy's grievances are specifically about the music. She suggests that Punjabi music, and especially bhangra music, has been decontextualised and has become generic dance music (Roy, 2010: 42).

for dancing bhangra. However, the characteristic pluck of the Ed Sheeran song is audible throughout the Punjabi portions, and together they create a unified sound. This unity is reinforced by the common narrative arch of the two lyrics blended for audiences who understand both Punjabi and English, as both songs are confessions of a man in love. Sheeran and Dosanjh both talk about their infatuation for a woman. This infatuation is underscored by music videos that feature the singers proving their masculinity in different ways: Sheeran learning how to fight and Dosanjh buying expensive vehicles. Both the songs and the videos are mashed up into a coherent unit, the main characteristic of which is that the mix is very suitable for bhangra choreographies. In fact, many bhangra choreographies have been uploaded onto YouTube in response to this remix. By February 2021, the track had been viewed more than 8.7 million times, and viewers from India, Pakistan, ad England had made remarks in the comments section.

Making mixes for the virtual Punjab

Another important means by which DJ Frenzy has connected to the Punjabi world, and one that has greatly facilitated his transnational career, is social media. In the literature review, we discussed Anjali Gera Roy's concept of BhangraNation and Gibb Schreffler's idea of the virtual Punjab which binds together members of the Punjabi diaspora, regardless of their geographical location. DJ Frenzy's ability to employ innovative technological practices and make effective use of social media promotions to elicit fan interaction exemplifies the ways in which this virtual Punjab is constructed and inhabited.

DJ Frenzy understands the necessity of marketing himself on social media, and he is aware that most of his fans discover him on YouTube or follow him on Instagram, and so he seeks to engage with his fans online. He maintains a presence across all social media platforms: he uploads his videos on YouTube, he posts about his gigs and new productions on Instagram and Twitter, and he shares 'behind the scenes' snippets of his professional and personal life, such as travel pictures, food pictures, and pictures of celebrities that he meets along his journey on Snapchat.

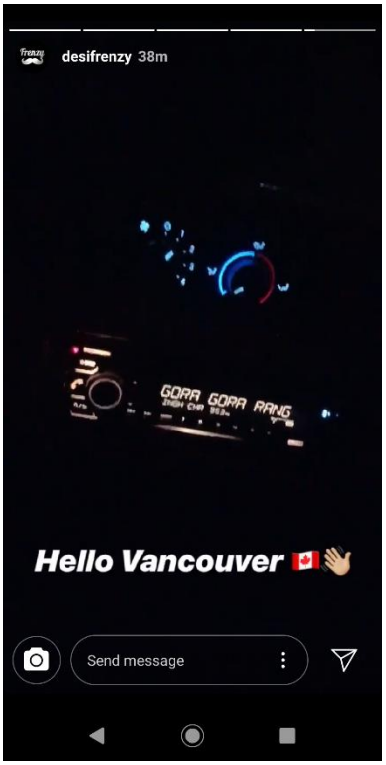

Figure 13: A screenshot of DJ Frenzy's Instagram story. (13 November 2020)

He creates his music and his videos, and he promotes himself via his social media accounts that he himself manages. His social media presence has allowed him to create a new space that transcends physical distance and has enabled him to reach new audiences. Social media has been essential in DJ Frenzy's expansion into India as well. During our interview, he showed me how artists like himself can keep track of the geographical location of their followers. As both Instagram and YouTube, arguably the two most important platforms, have this feature, it was easy for him to see when his songs were gaining significant traction in India and how his popularity there exploded in the wake of the Virat Kohli – Anushka Sharma wedding. Ever since he has kept a close eye on the music trends of the Punjabi music industry and has 'tailored' his mixes to the audiences' expectations by choosing songs that are popular in the region.

Indeed, DJ Frenzy has shown great savvy in his use of social media. To Frenzy, these platforms have become more than places where he can market his products and consciously created brand. He has also become embedded in a relationship of sharing, tagging and reposting with other celebrities, through which he continues to gain more social media capital. This then further helps him expose his music to newer audiences and gives him even greater credibility when he is acknowledged by the original artist.

> 'Artists like Diljit [Dosanjh] picked up on some of my remixes and shared them as well and pushed it out to his audiences. Other artists, such as Guru Randhawa

did the same. Most artists have been very positive about my remixes. Most of these artists are India-based so that helped that momentum that I was trying to create.'

(DJ Frenzy, personal interview in December 2018)

Having the original performers acknowledge and share his work with their followers has not only helped him broaden his own base, but it has also given him a sense of authority and has established him as a member of the BhangraNation and a part of the global circuit of Punjabi music. The fact that he was able to post a picture of himself posing together with Diljit Dosanjh on his Diljit Dosanjh remixes established him as an insider and as someone who is allowed to recreate these tracks with the blessings of the artists involved.

Figure 14: DJ Frenzy and Diljit Dosanjh. Source: DJ Frenzy's public Facebook profile.

Moreover, Frenzy has shown adeptness at using social media platforms to remind audiences of his successes and to generate even greater demand for his live performances by referring to previous collaborations or acknowledgements. From time to time, he shares so-called 'memories' on Facebook and Instagram, which are posts that had already been shared before. These usually concern particularly successful events or collaborations. Sharing images of himself DJing at a celebrity's wedding or alongside the superstars of Punjabi music and cinema further establishes his standing as an authority and reminds potential new clients of his prestigious clientele.

Figure 15: A screenshot of the 'Valentine's Frenzy' mix from YouTube

Frenzy's social media strategy has been quite effective, as his target audience is very active on social media. Being present on all major social media platforms has, indeed, proven to be a good way of staying engaged with his audience. In addition to this, he actively keeps in touch with his fans and encourages their loyalty by prompting them to enter competitions and ask or answer questions. This not only keeps audiences engaged, but it also provides him with an additional source of income (from advertisements) that those DJs, who only focus on wedding and club performances do not have. Moreover, his presence on a wide range of social media platforms gives him access to the virtual Punjab, the global diaspora of Punjabis connected in the online world, and it provides him with new audiences that are not necessarily located in the same place as he is but who might be interested in buying his music or inviting him for a tour or a wedding event, as happened when he was invited to Dubai, Thailand, and Australia.

Another important aspect of DJ Frenzy's career has been the constant transnational travel that has taken him across the globe to all major Punjabi diasporas, as well as to India regularly. However, it is not just his presence in the virtual global Punjabi community, nor his international travel that has helped build his brand. The fact that the Punjabi cultural industry has become more robust in the past decades is the main reason why DJ Frenzy has had the opportunity to travel the world to take on high-profile gigs.

It is clear that Punjab has become more central in the geography of making Punjabi music around the globe. Whereas the hubs of British Asian music used to be London, Birmingham and other UK locations, the British Asian music industry now looks to Chandigarh and Delhi, the

centres of Punjabi popular music production, and Mumbai, the centre of the Hindi entertainment industry. Even though these locations lie far from the UK and are situated in the ancestral homeland of India, they are increasingly important for British Asian artists, in regard both to music production and to its consumption. The geographical distance is mitigated by the emotional connection between the diaspora and the homeland and by economic opportunities both on the industry and the individual career levels. British Asian musicians are finding more and more economic and artistic opportunities in the growing Indian market of music consumers. There is also a growing appetite for transnational, diaspora-home collaborations in India.

On a broader systemic level, Anjali Gera Roy has shown us that globalization has disrupted many of the old, hierarchical structures and has created new centres, often to be found in the global South. Some of these have replaced the old, imperial centres, which she illustrates with the example of bhangra's return to, and subsequent flourishing in, India. (Roy, 2010: 11).

III. Conclusion

In this chapter, I sought to bring together personal and global histories to account for changes in the music industry. I looked at the personal histories of two transnational British Punjabi DJs, Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy and sought to place their career trajectories in larger histories of Punjabi music. Although Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy both grew up in Birmingham and share a common ethnic and cultural background, as well as the same chosen art form, and both of them have made a career remixing Punjabi music, they approach their music with very different goals and aspirations.

Their careers are reflective of broader socio-cultural processes in the music industries of the diaspora and the homeland of India. Bally Sagoo hailed as the first British Asian DJ to have achieved a successful international career, remixed Punjabi and Bollywood music with Caribbean dance music. His musical style was very cosmopolitan and aimed to popularise South Asian music among mainstream audiences as well. DJ Frenzy, on the other hand, has had no such aspirations. He has taken mainstream elements and used them to popularize classical Punjabi folk music for an explicitly Punjabi audience.

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that the careers and creative output by artists such as Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy were the product of a complex relationship between their personal histories, the degree of connectedness they felt with their ethnic heritage, and a more general nostalgic longing within the South Asian world. Bally Sagoo's musical tastes were shaped in the multicultural city of Birmingham at a time when South Asian culture was not well-represented in the musical mainstream. This resulted in a lack of connection with his South Asian heritage.

Therefore, he viewed Punjabi and Bollywood music as inferior and in need of modernising. Moreover, at the time he was coming into his own as a DJ, he had little nostalgia for classical Punjabi culture. On the other hand, Frenzy's relationship with the past was nourished by his father's love of Punjabi music. His relationship with Punjabi culture was mediated by a different kind of diasporic post-memory. For Frenzy, Punjabi music and culture was something respectable, and it became his mission to reintroduce members of the diaspora to their Punjabi past.

Moreover, important changes in the global perception of Punjabi music and of the Indian entertainment industry in general also played a significant role in their different career trajectories. When Bally Sagoo was at the peak of his career, there was much criticism within the South Asian world (especially within the British diaspora) of the old-fashioned performers and their unprofessional production networks (Falu Bakrania, 2013). Punjabiness was not necessarily considered an asset at that time. However, twenty years later Frenzy found himself in an altogether different position. By then, Bally Sagoo, Panjabi MC, Rishi Rich and other performers had created a certain respected aura for Punjabi music. In terms of remix culture, Bally Sagoo was perhaps the one most instrumental in changing the tide of perception with regards to South Asian culture. This could be said of him both globally as well as within the British Punjabi remix culture. Following the golden age of British Asian music, Punjabi culture garnered more attention and favour in India, as well. This was primarily through the growing influence of Bollywood, which had started to valorise a certain version of Punjabi identity. Although DJ Frenzy has not participated in the Bollywood industry directly, the cultural capital he has earned by means of his Punjabiness, together with the connections he forged with key Punjabi celebrities, have been instrumental in the success of his career.

This cultural shift had a major impact on the ways in which Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy earned their transcultural capital. Bally Sagoo's transcultural capital was built on his role as a cultural interlocutor, the innovative NRI, who created cultural remittances through his access to technology and modern sounds. DJ Frenzy, on the other hand, accumulated his capital by belonging to the global Punjabi world. He has been able to appeal to the new sense of nostalgia (fanned by Bollywood) towards Punjab by showcasing his deep knowledge of the Indian Punjabi music scene of the 1970s and 1980s. His intimate familiarity with the music and artists of this period have given him an aura of cultural authenticity unmatched by any other current performers (Schreffler, 2004) Moreover, Frenzy has been able to capitalise and build on the ground-breaking work of the previous generation of British Asian DJs. He has been able to draw on the nostalgia towards their work, as well. By reworking classical Punjabi folk music, he has built capital

through drawing on sentiments of nostalgia. He has also challenged the claim that later generations of the diaspora are further removed from the culture of their ancestors, a claim that Bally Sagoo's career seemed to support. Perhaps DJ Frenzy was the exception to the rule; however, he turned the situation into an asset. He showed that despite belonging to a later generation, he was well-equipped to translate Punjabi music from the past into a form that was pleasing to a younger audience.

Like Bally Sagoo, DJ Frenzy also took advantage of technological innovation. In addition, he also makes effective use of social media to engage with the audiences of the virtual Punjab around the world. Via his social media and music sharing platform profiles, he reaches audiences in the UK, India, Pakistan and various diasporic locations without the intermediation of labels or any agents of the formal music industry. This has given him more autonomy over the music that he creates, and it allows him to tailor his music to specific audience demands as he sees them fit. All of this has helped him develop a transnational market for his music.

The careers of Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy highlight two very different phases in the history of British Asian music, and they also reveal larger systemic processes that have taken place since Sagoo first achieved success. During Bally Sagoo's heyday, the British Asian diaspora in the UK was playing a leading role in cultural production within the global South Asian world. Even Indian audiences in the homeland looked to British Asian artists for inspiration. Meanwhile, British Asian artists had their eyes on the mainstream British market. More recently, however, the British Asian music scene has fallen into decline, while the market in India has started to boom, thanks in large part to certain government policies and to changes that have occurred in Bollywood. As a result, British Asian artists have started to look back at India for inspiration. Indeed, the development of India, and especially the Punjabi music industry, has made it an alluring market, even for diaspora artists. By contrasting the lives and musical journeys of Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy, I have endeavoured to show that their particular stories are indicative of the broader shifts that have occurred on the British Asian music scene.

This case study has also emphasised the importance of the cultural geography aspect of homeland-diaspora relations in terms of cultural production in reference to the first research question. Bally Sagoos's thinking about geographical centres is illustrative of how global centres change. For example, during the 1990s, he was considered an innovator, and the centre of innovation from his perspective was the city of Birmingham in the UK. Consequently, Bally Sagoo only made sporadic trips to the homeland. DJ Frenzy, on the other hand, has travelled to India frequently and regularly. As the importance of Punjab and Punjabi identity has been resuscitated, the idea of Punjabiness has assumed a more important place in the hearts and minds

of artists like DJ Frenzy. At the same time, the centre of South Asian musical creativity has shifted from the British Asian music scene to the homeland of India.

Chapter 6

‘Kill it in a man’s world’: gender at the intersection of the British Asian and Bollywood music industries

This chapter investigates the career of Hard Kaur, the only British Asian female artist who built a sustained presence in the Bollywood music industry. Throughout this chapter, I discuss the trope of the RNRI as the cultural intermediary through the lens of gender. I examine the ways in which Hard Kaur has created transcultural capital out of her position as a female artist from the diaspora and could transgress established norms of behaviour in the Bollywood music industry on account of her diasporic position. I read this phenomenon in the larger framework of diaspora-homeland relations and the changing dynamics of the South Asian creative industries. Therefore, this chapter approaches the first research question, the relationship of the British Asian music industry and the global South Asian music production through the aspect of gender. I am interested in whether Hard Kaur’s gendered position influences her relationship between the two industries.

In response to the third research question, I investigate how her diasporic position enabled her to navigate between two male-dominated music industries, the British Asian and the Bollywood scenes. I discuss how she created cultural remittances by pioneering a new genre, that opened a unique position for her. I explore how this resulted in the creation of transcultural capital, and how her position as a member of the global Punjabi diaspora contributed to this. I trace how these factors impacted her from the perspective of the Bollywood music industry that was eager to incorporate new sounds and performers. I also suggest that we should understand the concept of transcultural capital as highly context-dependent as I look at the ways in which her position as a 1.5 generation immigrant and a woman has affected her positionality on the British Asian music scene, and how the context of return migration to India has changed this position. Throughout the chapter, I am interested in how the intersection of personal histories and global trends, such as international: UK-India, and regional: Punjab-India cultural relations played out in shaping the career of a diaspora artist, who became popular in the homeland.

After providing a brief introduction to Hard Kaur’s career, the chapter first discusses the gender dynamics of the British Asian scene. I then proceed to discuss the intersection of personal and global histories through the perspective of Hard Kaur’s aspirations and careers. I then move on to discuss the gender dynamics of the Bollywood scene, and look at the challenges and opportunities that female singers face. I emphasise the peculiarity of the Bollywood music industry in the sense that it is intertwined with the Bollywood film industry and then locate the

cultural changes that enabled the entry of new voices and new personalities into the Bollywood music industry. I then look at factors contributing to Hard Kaur's transcultural capital, such as her position as the innovative RNRI, her Punjabi cultural identity and the new genre that she pioneered. Finally, I discuss the similarities between Hard Kaur's and Rishi Rich and Bally Sagoo's career, who were similarly innovative artists but were perceived differently as male artists, and I suggest that transcultural capital is gendered.

I. Gender on the British Asian music scene

> 'Look at us now, it feels so good. At that time all the girls my age were, "Well, we are getting married next year but ain't nobody will marry you." And I was like, "Who the fuck wants to get married anyway? I've got a fucking tune coming out next week! That's way more important." And they were like, "Whatever, that's not how life works." And look at us now. I don't get this mentality, it's like a fucking Ekta Kapoor serial.'[23]

When Rajinder Dudrah was writing about the contemporary British Asian scene in 2007, he devoted an entire chapter to upcoming female talent. He mentioned Sasha, Sabina, Shabnam, Amar, Hard Kaur, Mona Singh, Veronica Rouge and Ms Scandalous among others (Dudrah, 2007: 56). However, twelve years later, most of these once-promising women are not active or visible on the music scene anymore. The lack of female artists is echoed by the lack of academic attention. On the music production and consumption side, Rajinder Dudrah noted discriminatory practices against women in the music industry but expressed hope about an imminent change (Dudrah, 2001: 202). Falu Bakrania talked about the experiences of female clubgoers on the two most important British Asian music scenes the bhangra and the Asian Underground club circuit (2002). However, the monograph did not discuss female performing artists as she argued that because there are only a 'few and relatively unknown women artists in the bhangra and AU scenes' (Bakrania, 2002: 21), it is more productive to look at women as consumers of this type of music. Apart from these academic ventures, there have been interviews with successful female DJs on the bhangra scene like DJ Ritu and Radical Sista published by Dhar and Housee (1996) and Huq (1996) respectively. These interviews, though lacking in academic rigour, are useful

[23] Hard Kaur, personal communication, 2019. Hereafter if not stated otherwise, all quotes come from the January 2019 interview with Hard Kaur.

entry points into the investigation of a complex phenomenon through their acknowledgement of the hardship Asian females face in the music industry. The current chapter, therefore, aims to bridge this gap in academic literature and in addition to tracing Hard Kaur's career across the music industries of the diaspora and the homeland, chart some of the structural problems that women in British Asian music industry face.

During the early 1990s, Sangeeta, a talented young bhangra singer from Leicester was hailed as a "gamechanger." She won a variety of Asian industry prizes, produced a CD together with Kuljit Bhamra, the acclaimed music producer and it seemed sure that many more will follow her on the road to fame. However, instead of changing the gender dynamics of the British Asian music scene, she too disappeared from it. She married and settled down and it took me two years to find anyone on the scene who could provide me with any kind of contact to her. These dynamics seem to be part of a recurring phenomenon.

The British Asian music scene is not alone in displaying a gender bias, as it has been argued that it is harder for women to be successful performers on other music scenes as well (Bayton, 2006, Katz, 2006, O'Shea, 2008, etc.). There are, however, structural reasons that have hindered the entry of women on the British Asian music scene, such as the fact that bhangra the most popular British Asian musical form is rooted in traditionally male-dominated musical genres, that the conservative attitudes in the community, where girls were traditionally not encouraged to pursue careers in performing arts (Housee and Dhar, 1996: 87), and that women have usually not had equal access to spaces of music performance and consumption (Bakrania, 2002).

British Asian music has drawn much of its inspiration from bhangra, deriving from a traditional Punjabi folk music and dance genre which used to be performed by all-male bands and dancers celebrating the harvest and the Punjabi new year. Traditional bhangra performances were considered the display of force, virility and masculinity (Roy, 2011: 95). Bhangra dancing also served as an important marker of regional identity in Punjab and later as an ethnic marker in the diaspora, reinforcing the hypermasculine image of Punjabi culture that had implications for performers too (Ballantyne, 2006: 130). As British Asian bhangra bands often sought to evoke certain nostalgic associations, most of them comprised male members only. *Giddha*, the traditional female dance and music form of the Punjab did not become similarly rooted in the diaspora.

This led to a gender imbalance in access to training and technology, as it was usually young men who were mentored by established artists and producers. The question of access was further complicated through the involvement of family networks. Upcoming artists found it easier

to join the scene if they already had family members in the industry, but this could also have impacted negatively on those, who did not have similar connections. Falu Bakrania showed that women were traditionally considered the bearers of tradition and cultural authenticity and their behaviour impacted greatly on the standing of the entire community (2015:6), which had the potential to impact the involvement of women in performing arts in the diaspora. Leaving the private sphere, the traditional purview of femininity was seen as especially threatening amidst fears of Westernisation and loss of cultural identity (Bakrania, 2015: 18). As Mohinder Kaur Bhamra, one of the early female vocal performers in the UK pointed out, public musical performances by women were only encouraged in a spiritual setting: her early experiences of public singing come from the gurudwara (Purewal, 2012: 152).

Whereas the perception of classical arts has changed, which are now usually seen as wholesome and spiritual, that also work towards establishing stronger ties with the community, popular music was not considered an appropriate career choice for a girl from a respectable family. Although Mohinder Kaur did sing folk songs and Punjabi *geet*, she was always careful to remain respectable, never to sing songs that could have been considered morally problematic (Purewal, 2012: 152). The fact that performances sometimes happened late at night, involved the consumption of alcohol and possible free mingling of males and females, often increased the suspicion of the community about the dubious nature of performing arts.

In addition to historical prejudices, some of these fears and restrictions were grounded in the gendered nature of the spaces of British Asian music production and consumption. Bhangra nights have been identified as hypermasculine and violent spaces, where female performers or club-goers frequently still find themselves in a difficult position. In addition to safety, another main concern about the involvement of women in music-making and performing was the perception that girls who make music would be less desirable on the marriage market in their refusal to conform to traditional gender expectations (Dhar and Housee, 1996: 85).

According to industry experts and scene participants that I had informal chats with throughout the course of the research, this perception has changed with time and it is now more acceptable for Asian girls to try their hand at making music. However, they still have a shorter period than men to prove their merit and they are expected to revert to assuming traditional gender roles if their artist careers do not work out as imagined (BBC AN, 2017). Achieving quick success on the scene is hampered by audience demands, who fear that women are not capable of performing music with the same energy and virility as males (Dudrah, 2007: 54, 58) and male artists are still booked more often and paid more for live events (Dhanoa, 2019). Women are usually expected to sing Bollywood songs and ballads, which are considered softer and more

feminine but also do not necessarily involve creating new content. A good example of this career trajectory was analysed by Rajinder Dudrah who described the short-lived career of Sameera, a young British Asian female artist. Her album, although produced in a professional manner and high quality, failed to make a mark on the market because the audience simply did not want to hear about a woman, who performed bhangra. She was booked less frequently than her male counterparts and if booked, she earned less (Dudrah, 2007: 54, 58).

'You doin' hip-hop? Even Asian boys don't do it, what will an Asian gal do?'

In addition to these culture-specific limitations, female performers of the British Asian music scene have to face other obstacles that are present on other music scenes as well, such as limited access to female mentorship and the associated difficulties of being mentored by senior male musicians, which can result in women feeling uncomfortable because of the patronising attitudes of the male mentors or the proximity in which they have to work with them – leading many to choose alternative training options as opposed to choosing mentors (Katz, 2006: 585). An alternative avenue in other, traditionally male-dominated scenes for women was to achieve a status where they are perceived as 'one of the boys', on account of their musical proficiency (O'Shea, 2008: 58). In the following section, I seek to throw light on the personal history of the artist's career and place the challenges that she faced in the larger history and cultural dynamics of the British Asian community in Birmingham and women in music, more generally.

Hard Kaur was born in 1979 as Taran Kaur Dhillon in Kanpur, India but relocated to Birmingham with her family in her early childhood. She grew up in the racially and culturally diverse environment of Handsworth, Birmingham and as a result of the exposure to hip-hop music there, decided to pursue a career in rapping. After a prolonged and eventually unsuccessful period of struggle in the mainstream hip-hop world in the UK, her first hit was her Hindi-language collaboration, '*Ek glassy*' with the British Asian hip-hop group, the Sona Family in 2005, where she rapped in Hindi for the first time. The song became very popular in India and in 2007, the Bollywood music directors, Shankar–Ehsaan–Loy invited her to create a hip-hop track for the film, *Johnny Gaddar* (Khan, 2010). From then on, the number of her performances and work assignments in India increased until she moved to Mumbai. She continued to work in Bollywood, performed all over the country, and became a nationwide celebrity by participating in reality celebrity shows and acting in films. She is now credited with being the first female Indian rapper and the artist, who established hip-hop as part and parcel of Bollywood film soundtracks (Ghosh, 2010). Despite her subsequent success in the Bollywood music industry, she is very vocal about

her initial struggles on the British Asian scene and reflected upon this often during the course of our conversation.

> "Oh, the Asians? They hated me in the beginning, but now, that I'm successful, they claim that I'm a Punjabi too… This is how it works, first, they dismiss you 'cuz they don't get you. 'Why are you doing black people's music? You a hoe? Nobody will marry you.' [...]They want me to act like a girl but when they need me, they want me not to act like a girl and to be 'hardcore.' And what does that even mean to act like a girl?! If you a rapper, you a prostitute. If you a mehndi artist, you a prostitute [in the eyes of the community] […] So from day one, I decided to fuck up my own reputation. I didn't want to be all clean, all perfect… I'll go to a function with no makeup, I'll be drunk if I want to be. If I'm a hoe already then I might as well do whatever the fuck I want...."

As the interview quote testifies, she was repeatedly warned that this lifestyle does not conform to the expectations of the community. Similar attitudes have been documented in other immigrant communities as well, as Reynolds (2008) has shown that Caribbean women in the UK often felt the brunt of similar expectations. However, she had faced other backlash from the British Asian community from Birmingham on account of generational differences. Whereas by the 1990s, the British Asian community in Birmingham was well-established and many children in school were second or third-generation British Asians born and brought up in the UK, she was a so-called 'freshie', a first-generation immigrant. She was often teased at school for not speaking English. In addition to this, after the premature death of her father in India, Hard Kaur's mother had been supporting the family by running her own mehndi-business, which was also considered a transgressive practice in the traditional community, that according to Hard Kaur placed her on par with prostitutes.

In the face of these odds, Hard Kaur then pursued a different model of femininity, outside of the purview of the traditional expectations, by publicly pursuing performing arts, in a genre that was considered transgressive. I suggest that moving beyond the level of personal histories, we should read this phenomenon in the broader context of gender and class in the UK. Falu Bakrania wrote extensively on the construction of morality among working-class British Asian women as it played out in club settings. She claimed that working-class British Asian women

often pursue a confrontative attitude, often bordering on aggression, that could easily be considered on par with Hard Kaur's observations about her own reputation. Falu Bakrania explained aggressive behaviour as an attempt to preserve cultural authenticity in a context that is considered transgressive. She claims that the act of clubbing in itself was considered transgressive and immoral, therefore the clubbers' aggressive attitudes were a way to subvert these perceptions and preserve their status of respectability. (Bakrania, 2013: 156). Similarly, whereas Hard Kaur acknowledges that her image is not 'all clean and perfect' and also claims agency in creating this image, she still projects herself as a loyal woman, who works for the community. She seems to justify her transgression of the expected mould by voraciously defending herself, according to the British Asian working-class female sensibilities as described by Bakrania.

Another layer that adds to her perception as transgressive with regards to the expectations to "act like a girl" was her association with hip-hop, a black music form. Whereas during her childhood and teenage years British Asian households usually listened to Punjabi or Bollywood music, she became interested in rap music that was considered usually seen as alien ('black people's music'), masculine ('even Asian boys were not doing it') and subversive in the community. Even though African and Black British musical influences had been present in the work of male British Asian artists and producers – case in point are Apache Indian's Patois-language songs or Bally Sagoo's remixes – British Asian appetite for hip-hop was quite small. Although as Ballantyne has pointed out (2006: 138), Afro-Caribbean culture was fashionable among the younger generations of the British Asian diaspora during the 1980s, as it seemed 'cool', this trend was deeply gendered. Although young Punjabi men appropriated certain elements of Afro-Caribbean fashion, mannerisms and music, it was not similarly easy for Punjabi girls to follow suit.

As Sunaina Maira Marr argued, young South Asian women who associated themselves with African American culture were often considered promiscuous and on the brink of "ethnic betrayal" by adopting black and Latino styles (Maira, 2008: 48). This is particularly interesting in the light of the previous case studies, where Rishi Rich and Bally Sagoo both benefitted enormously from drawing on their multicultural environments and the soundscapes of London and Birmingham. During the course of my research, I have not come across any references or opinions that would have criticised these male artists for incorporating non-South Asian elements in their music. Even if this narrative would exist, it is most certainly not a part of their self-identification and do not refer to this like Hard Kaur does. Therefore, we can posit that the fear of cultural mixing is gendered in this aspect as well.

Hard Kaur's reaction followed the reaction documented by O'Shea and sought to become 'one of the boys' (2008: 58). She adopted a tough, masculine image in her image and behaviour. She took the stage name Hard Kaur, which references her ethnic origins, as Kaur is the surname traditionally given to Sikh women, while 'Hard Kaur' is homonymous with the quality and approach of being 'hardcore', traditionally a masculine trait. She has been cultivating a low-key physical appearance that purposefully pre-empties the claims that she wants to go forward in life through her beauty (Deepak, 2016), thus subverting the traditional association prevalent in the popular psyche that female beauty and musical talent go hand in hand (Dunbar, 2011: 174). Moreover, she has been showcasing other traits that are usually associated with male participants of the British Asian scene, such as being loud and aggressive, and consuming alcohol openly. She invested years honing her skills until the point where she felt that she will not be judged on account of her gender since her skills would vouch for themselves. A similar coping mechanism, whereby females confine their endeavours to their private sphere until their skills make their gender irrelevant has been recorded in other spheres as well (Wolfe, 2012), but it did not bring the awaited success to Hard Kaur. Her confrontational attitude posed a number of obstacles as the British Asian music scene had traditionally been quite small, and where the production and distribution of music happened through personalised networks (Banerjee, 1988: 212). According to her, as she did not come from a musical family, did not have the necessary social or cultural capital and did not have a mentor, this already put her in a difficult position as the industry tended to rely on personal relationships. This was exacerbated by her irreverent approach towards the members of the community and her transgressive behaviour, which often resulted in the cancellation of shows and collaborations.

After a period of struggle in the British Asian music scene and the mainstream hip-hop world, she was offered the opportunity to transition to the Bollywood music scene. She was quick to take the opportunity that offered to turn her disadvantages into advantages. Her position as an Indian-origin female performing artist, who grew up in the West among a variety of non-Asian musical influences but still retained an 'Indian touch' (Rao, 2002: 1) enabled her to capitalise on these aspects and circumvent the gender-specific expectations that female Indian performing artists had to conform to.

I suggest then that the insularity of the British Asian music scene and its male-dominated nature contributed to Hard Kaur's transition to the Bollywood music industry as a push factor. As there was a lack of representation of women in British Asian music in general, but especially in hip-hop, Hard Kaur was discouraged from pursuing this type of music. On account of established gender roles and the belief that women should conform to traditional expectations of

respectability, she could not take up the role of the cultural innovator like Bally Sagoo or Rishi Rich did. Although she pursued a similar line of innovation as Bally Sagoo or Rishi Rich, as she pursued a type of music that had been largely absent from the British Asian music scene and she engaged in the corresponding performance practices, she was not lauded as an innovator, like her male counterparts. As she did not receive opportunities to perform, she was pushed to look for other markets and audiences, which coincided with Bollywood's search for new sounds and identities.

II. Bollywood music and gender

> 'In England, they hate each other and don't care, they have the chip on the shoulder attitude. In India, we work together because there is a scene, even though we kinda' hate each other. And anyhow, in England how far a brown girl can go? I got tired of not gettin' the respect there and puttin' up with all that shit. I get that respect here, it's cool.'

As opposed to British Asian music, the Bollywood music industry has always needed female singers. The reason lies in the intricate intersection of Hindi cinema and film music: Hindi films feature multiple song sequences that are sung by playback singers and picturised on the characters of the film. Actors and actresses lip-synch and perform dance choreographies to these songs, which usually forward the narrative in a variety of ways.[24] As songs are performed by male and female characters alike, this demand gives a constant source of work to female playback singers too. However progressive this might seem, this close association is, in fact, a double-edged sword for female singers because the same power dynamics and pressures that plague the film industry, are present in the music industry as well. The Bollywood film industry is extremely male-dominated, and it prefers the foregrounding of men both in its production and narratives and the female singer's repertoire is limited by the less extensive and less diverse roles that women play in Hindi cinema (Thomas, 2017).

[24] For an insight into the academic debate around the various functions of the song sequence within the narrative, refer to Dudrah, R. 2006. Bollywood: Sociology Goes to the Movies. Delhi and London: Sage Publishing.

The Bollywood music industry has been extremely difficult for aspiring artists as they would have typically needed family connections or powerful mentors to enter the industry (Booth, 2019: 259). However, it has been recorded on other music scenes as well that if there are not many established female scene participants who could provide mentoring, young women might feel uncomfortable as a result of the patronising attitudes of the male mentors or of the proximity in which they have to work with them (Katz, 2006: 585). The association of young women with senior, powerful male mentors can be especially problematic in the eyes of Indian society that valorises chastity and the segregation of genders outside of familial relations.

In addition to the perceptions of society, comes the very real problem of the power imbalance between a male mentor and a female mentee. The recent #MeToo movement in India exposed a variety of ways in which leading music directors and established singers have abused their position of power and influence. According to the testimonies of female artists, these men took advantage of the aspirations of young women in a variety of ways that led to considerable mental and emotional distress, and sometimes even destroyed their careers (Indian Express, 2018).

In addition to these issues, the music recording process has also changed and is even more challenging now for upcoming singers to break into the industry. The currently popular multi-composer and multi-singer soundtracks only allow singers to sing scratches instead of full songs on the albums, leading to less exposure and hindering singers and composers on their way to an established position. Moreover, the laxity of copyright laws and lack of royalty payments make it hard for performers to earn a stable income from playback singing only. Performing artists then must go on live tours and perform at weddings in search of income instead. In addition to leading to lifestyles that are incompatible with traditional expectations of settling down and having a family, performing at such gigs might be physically dangerous as well, as alcohol consumption often leads to the audience throwing bottles and other objects on the stage (Shetty, 2017).

Some specific issues that only concern playback singers are rooted in the close association of the Bollywood film and music industry. Playback singers are sometimes not given due credit for their achievements because of the level of associations that stars have with specific songs. The extent of this association is clear from the fact that various streaming platforms, such as Gaana.com or JioSaavn.com offer playlists based on the actor who performed the song. One can thus find Salman Khan or Katrina Kaif playlists, even though they were only performing to the song, not singing it.

In spite of these difficulties in playback singing, this is still virtually the only aspect of Bollywood music production where women are involved, as there are very few female music

directors, composers or lyricists involved in the production of the music.[25] This is best demonstrated through one of my own experiences. When I participated in the largest music networking event of 2018 in Mumbai, I was eagerly looking forward to the panel which was entitled 'Women in Music'. Eventually, the panel was quite eye-opening, but not in the way I had previously expected. Although all the other panels of the conference were well-attended, there was no substantial audience for this one and the organisers later told me that it was very hard to populate it at all because of the lack of women in the Bollywood music industry. In the end, the panel was quite representative of the industry, as it featured the only female lyricist, Munir Kausar, the only female composer, Rachita Arora, one of the few film musicians, Merlin D'Souza and playback singer, Rekha Bhardwaj. The discussion did not go much further than remarking the paucity of women working in the industry, however, all panellists claimed that talent has no gender and those, who are sufficiently talented will break through.

Whereas this is a claim put forward by Hard Kaur as well, this claim should be critically examined, especially in the light of news media coverage on female musicians, that tends to focus on their relationship to male directors. Rachita Arora, who composed for the Netflix original series *Sacred Games* (2018, dir. Anurag Kashyap and Vikramaditya Motwane) and *Mukkabaaz* (2017, dir. Anurag Kashyap), is most often asked about how it feels to work with these male directors (Singh, 2018, Monteiro, 2018). This alludes to deeper, structural problems in the music industry that are unlikely to change, unless the structural inequality of the Bollywood film industry changes.

In addition to these technical difficulties, Bollywood cinema and hence the Bollywood music industry has held an uneasy relationship with gender and morality. There was a dichotomy of female roles based on patterns of behaviour, clothing and morals, and preference was given to the chaste Indian heroine over the eroticised, Westernised vamp who was pushed to the edges of the narrative and had the sole function of being an entertainer (Gehlawat, 2015: 6). This mode of portrayal necessarily impacted the music industry, where voices of female singers were similarly type-cast and only those singers could stay in the industry whose voices conformed to these stereotypes (Srivastava, 2004: 2022). The voice of the heroine was mainly associated with Lata Mangeshkar (Srivastava, 2004: 2022) who has maintained a virginal and stern image. Her star

[25] Interestingly, the beginnings of Bombay cinema were quite different in this respect. Nasreen Munni Kabir mentions some exceptional stories of female involvement, such as the career of Saraswati Devi, the first female music director, who although born as a Parsi, had to change her name in order to avoid her community's anger over her joining of the film industry (Kabir, 2001: 142). It has to be noted though that she was classically trained, and all of her compositions show classical inclinations (Sen, 2008: 92), which is in line with the early middle-class, nationalistic views on the relationship between women and performing arts. In addition to her, there were a couple of other female music directors and composers such as Jaddanbai, the mother of the film actress Nargis, but on account of her involvement with courtesan culture, she too had to retreat to the background (Vanita 2018: 17).

persona was that of a pious, respectful, middle-class woman, who performed this identity in a variety of ways. She always removed her shoes before entering a recording studio as if she were entering a temple and would have never performed songs that were erotic or suggestive in their lyrics (Kabir, 2018: 19). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Lata's voice was complemented by the voice of her sister, Asha Bhosle, who was mainly singing for the character of the Westernised woman, the vamp or the courtesan. Her biography as the 'fallen woman' who ran away from home to marry an older man only to divorce him later, played a role in this association. Her personal status and the moral judgement associated with her voice limited her possibilities and led her to sing for fewer and less respected roles for a while (Beaster-Jones, 2015: 105).

The dichotomy of these two voices and the associated moral dimensions dominated Hindi playback singing for a long time and limited the possibilities of female playback singers because they could only get parts if they could reproduce these stylistic conventions. However, the construction of femininity changed in Bollywood cinema during the 1970s and 1980s, heroines were freer to express their sexuality, and these moralising associations also loosened. During the early 2000s, a more refined and complex approach was put forward both in terms of female leads and playback singers. Now the characteristics of the vamp and the heroine are not so easy to set apart as heroines can sing cabaret songs, traditionally the purview of the vamps and even the item number is taken up by respected and mainstream actresses. This led to a shift in the preferred voice of playback singers as well, as the categories of the virgin and vamp were not sufficient categories anymore. Starting with Sunidhi Chauhan, female playback singers started to distance themselves from the vocal tradition of the Mangeshkar sisters and by diversifying their techniques, they could reflect better on the more complex on-screen representation (Gehlawat, 2015: 53).

Another trend that impacted the possibility of incorporating new voices was the appearance of the individual pop star in Bollywood as well, which could be traced to the previous era of Indipop or independent pop. Indipop artists were consciously building up their star personas, largely independent from films. An aspect of this individualisation was captured through the conceptualisation of their music videos, in which the artists themselves played a central role, were usually depicted as singing their own lines and did not engage actors to lipsync for them. The connection between their voices and physical appearances was clearly established and as Peter Kvetko argued, this should be understood as providing an alternative to playback singers but also to Western pop, which was not considered relevant enough for Indian audiences (Kvetko, 2004: 149). Indipop included a variety of musical genres, ranging from the 'hip-hop' of Baba Sehgal to the bhangra pop of Daler Mehndi, so the term referred to the mode of production,

as Indipop songs were independent of films. Indipop artists, most of them associated with the label Magnasound, released so-called private or non-film albums. Jayson Beaster–Jones claimed that this phenomenon could be interpreted in the framework of the neoliberal era where the widespread penetration of satellite television enabled artists and labels to build a marketing strategy that distinguished Indipop from film songs. (Beaster-Jones, 2015: 161).

One of the most successful Indipop performers was Alisha Chinai, lauded as the first pop star of India, whose reputation has not been matched by any other female performers and only by few Indipop stars. However, her career was in flux between playback singing and non-film singing. Before she became popular with the Indipop song 'Made in India', she had been working as a playback singer for a long time, and this is where she returned after her Indipop career collapsed due to her conflict with established music director Anu Malik, whom she accused of sexual misconduct.[26] Interestingly, even though she managed to build up an individual artist persona and was dubbed as the Princess of Indian pop, this did not filter through into her Bollywood appearances and she remained a traditional playback singer there. Because of her non-film artist persona, she could be viewed as a precursor of Hard Kaur. However, something was missing in Alisha Chinai's case that did not make this filtering through complete. I would argue that the main difference between Alisha and Hard Kaur in this sense is the latter's diasporic position and the subsequent transcultural capital.

I suggest that the broader context of Bollywood music production in the late 2000s could be considered as an opportune moment for Hard Kaur to transition. The necessity for female voices in Hindi cinema, as well as the broadening scope of acceptable femininity could be considered a pull factor for Hard Kaur. Viewed side by side with the push factors in relation to the rejection on the British Asian scene, she could capitalise on her position of being a 1.5 generation NRI brought up in the UK.

III. Hard Kaur in Bollywood

I suggest that Hard Kaur's opportunity to work in Bollywood was grounded in her transcultural capital, which she accumulated as a result of being a diasporic artist and being

[26]Alisha Chinai and Anu Malik worked together in a number of projects during the 1980s and the sexual abuse that Anu Malik allegedly committed against Alisha Chinai underscores the problematic nature of male-female mentor-mentee power dynamics. The Indian media tag lined Alisha as the "original #MeToo girl" because she of the landmark nature of her accusations and the restraining order that she got against him. However, this still cost Alisha her career. Later, when Alisha Chinai reappeared in Indian media, she was criticised for reuniting with Anu Malik. During the 2000s they sang songs together and they were co-judges on the Indian Idol talent hunt show, until Anu Malik was removed by Sony Entertainment on the basis of sexual harassment allegiations (The Times of India 2018).

Punjabi. As the previous section has shown, there were a variety of changes related to gender perceptions that enabled Hard Kaur, who noticeably differed from traditional models of femininity in both the diaspora and in India to establish herself in the Bollywood music industry. However, there were other contributing factors in terms of tastes and influences, such as the previous career models of Indipop artists and the 'Punjabification' of Bollywood and the Indian entertainment industry, that I have discussed in the previous chapter in detail, that help her find work in Bollywood. Similar to DJ Frenzy, Hard Kaur has constructed her off-screen persona in terms of Punjabiness. In addition to this, her lyrics often referenced her ethnic origins too and she could tap into the larger networks of mainstream Punjabi culture and ethnicity. Moreover, she could contribute to cultural remittances through her association with hip-hop, which was an innovative musical form at the time. This should be viewed in conjunction with the advent of a new film song genre, the hip-hop party song of which Hard Kaur was an early proponent. In order to have a more in-depth look at these aspects, we now look at two of her crossover tracks, '*Ek* glassy' (2006) and 'Move your body' (2007)

'*Ek* glassy'

Although '*Ek* glassy' is an independent record and was produced in the UK, the music video shares many similarities with the later party songs in Bollywood cinema, which suggests that Bollywood directors could have seen it as an inspiration. It is set in a nightclub and places Hard Kaur in the centre of the narrative both visually as well as aurally. The beat of the song is a repetitive hip-hop beat that is interspersed with occasional burping and the sounds of ice cubes falling into an empty glass during the preparation of a drink in accordance with the theme of the whole song: drinking. The vocals start with Hard Kaur declaring "E-yo, ge'ing mashed up right now, all my alcoholics in the house, yeah" and continues with her describing various aspects of drinking, while the male members of the Sona Family provide her with repetitive background vocals, often repeating what she had already said.

Figure 16: Screengrab from ‘Ek glassy’

The song situates itself in a specific British Asian context through a variety of textual and visual markers. The lyrics are in a mixture of English and Hindi/Punjabi, which describe various aspects of drinking, such as what kind of drinks they are having (”Laga’, laga’, Johnny Walka’”), how someone has gotten too drunk and they are about to get sick (”Hold up, somebody’s gonna puke, n I don’ wanna fuck up ma brand new shoes”) to the plans of hooking up with other drunk people at the club. The lyrics refer to some phenomena stereotypically associated with British Asian party culture, such as drunken brawls at bhangra parties (“Punjabi style, always cause a fight now”) or daytimer parties happening without the knowledge or permission of the parents (“Betta’ keep one eye on the front door/ 'Cause you're at the club and your parents don't know/ Movin’ back to the bar, betta’ take it slow if don’t get to change your clothes”).

The music video is set in a club populated by a British Asian crowd, and Hard Kaur is at the centre of the whole video, at times supported by background dancers wearing hip-hop apparel, at times surrounded by the Sona Family. Throughout the many outfit changes, she wears feminine party clothes, such as tank tops, miniskirts with high heels and jewellery but she acts in an assertive manner, she picks fights and knocks over a man who tried to take advantage of her, thus emulating the model of female partygoer that Bakrania (2013) describes. The song and the video thus portray her as someone who transgresses normative expectations of femininity: she wears revealing clothing but protects herself from preying men, she drinks openly and leads a group of men to follow suit. She is also coded as a British Asian woman by code-mixing English and Punjabi and referring to specifically British Asian experiences. This also frames her as a woman, who possesses the cultural capital of a cultural insider, associated with language skills and familiarity with the cultural context. However, she is also framed as a woman, who is not bound by the expectations and traditions of society and is able to assertively place herself in the middle of the party.

During my interview with her, Hard Kaur told me that the creation of the track was more like an act of defiance in which she made fun of the culture that does not allow British Asian women to enjoy themselves and openly consume alcohol. In order to satirise this attitude, she was scantily clad and explicitly addresses the pleasures of a night out. However, the irony was mostly lost on the audience. It was celebrated as a track of liberation instead and it achieved cult status in India, establishing Hard Kaur as an innovator who exemplifies a new kind of femininity that was created in the diaspora but was also attractive for consumers in the homeland. The fact that '*Ek* glassy' became a party anthem in India according to Hard Kaur came as a surprise to the creators. However, I suggest that we can read this phenomenon in the broader framework of changing identities and a search for global identities with an Indian inflection. The trope of the NRI, who is allowed to enjoy the transgressive pleasures of a Western lifestyle outside of the strict social world of India, often portrayed in Bollywood narratives could have also contributed to this perception. Moreover, as Lucia Kraemer (2016) has pointed out, the disparity between the reel and real lives of Indian diasporas was not a well-established fact in India. Therefore, without an in-depth knowledge of the sexual politics of the British Asian music scene, this could have seemed like a blend of Punjabi and Western party culture that is all-encompassing and empowering. Whatever the reason behind the popularity of the song, it played a key role in Hard Kaur's transition to the Bollywood scene, as it is visible from the aural and visual similarities of the two songs.

'Move your body'

Hard Kaur's first Bollywood song was 'Move your body' from *Johnny Gaddar* (2007, dir. Sriram Raghavan), composed by the trio Shankar-Ehsaan and Loy, who are considered to be more susceptible to new musical influences and they actively seek out new voices to incorporate in their films (Beaster-Jones, 2012: 163–164), for which the inclusion of Hard Kaur can be a good example. The song had an innovative sound and the inclusion of a female rapper was an innovation, which could perhaps account for the special role that she played in the music video as well. Her song was featured during the end credits of the film and it marked a departure from established traditions of playback singing, as instead of providing her voice to an actress, Hard Kaur makes an appearance in the music video itself. As we have seen earlier, the previous generations of playback singers, especially female singers, such as Lata Mangeshkar, have traditionally maintained low visibility and their star persona was that of the humble playback singer for the big stars. Yet here, Hard Kaur, who is the protagonist of this music video, lip-synchs to her own voice and performs choreography with background dancers.

Figure 17: Still from ‘Move your body’

The music video is quite similar to the ‘*Ek* glassy’ video, as both videos show a trendy party environment, in which consumption of alcohol and free-spirited entertainment is abundant. She is similarly the sole female focus of attention while her collaborators, the Sona Family in ‘*Ek* glassy’ and Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy in ‘Move Your Body’ revolve around her and support her performance. Her role is to motivate people to get on the dance floor in both tracks, which she does in a mixture of Hindi and English call words. Her outfits comprise miniskirts and tank tops, moreover, some of the dance moves are also replicated in the music video.

I suggest that these similarities are not accidental and in fact, the filmmakers wanted to capitalise on the earlier popularity of Hard Kaur with the ‘*Ek* glassy’ song and music video. Her transcultural capital that was generated in the wake of her success with the track enabled her to be known in her own right, as Hard Kaur, the rapper and not as the voice of a famous actress, therefore it was important for the creators of the track that they emphasise that this is the performer of the ‘*Ek* glassy’ track. In order to evoke these associations, the ‘Move your body’ music video was shot in a similar vein to ‘*Ek* glassy’. This reference to the popular previous track seems to underpin the assumption that she could cross over because of the success of the former and that the music directors wanted to capitalise on her individual fame.

Her later tracks followed a similar mould: a later, similar venture was ‘*Zaalim Dilli’* (*Dilliwali Zaalim Girlfriend,* 2015, dir.: Japinder Kaur) where she collaborated with the Canadian Punjabi artist, Jazzy B and it showcases many similarities in the approach to picturisation. I suggest that this iterative mode of portrayal created a firm link between Hard Kaur and the emergent genre of the Bollywood party song. This association helped to frame Hindi-English-

Punjabi hip-hop as a cultural remittance through the figure of Hard Kaur, which established her as the female rapper RNRI. In the following section, I suggest that the way in which Hard Kaur introduced a new genre of the female rapper-led party song into the Bollywood music repertoire, contributed greatly to her transcultural capital.

IV. Hard Kaur and cultural remittances: the introduction of a new genre

I suggest that the fact that Hard Kaur could be considered the harbinger of a new genre in Bollywood, contributed largely to her transcultural capital. As an RNRI who introduced a new genre that at that time was only produced by her established her as the to-go person for hip-hop tracks in Bollywood films. In terms of innovation, Hard Kaur is considered to be the first hip-hop artist to perform in Bollywood. The genre of hip-hop had been present in India before her as well, however, it had been very different. Baba Sehgal, the Indipop artist is credited as the first person to rap in Hindi, however his popular tracks '*Thanda thanda pani*' (1992)[27] and '*Main bhi* Madonna' achieved popularity based on their humorous value.[28] He was briefly involved in Hindi cinema as well quite brief but if we take a look at his song '*Aaja meri gaadi men baith ja*' (1998, *Miss 420*, dir.: Akash Deep), we can observe that the rap portions serve as an extension of the dialogue and the end result is a mixture of sung and rapped lyrics, an in-between creation between a song and the dialogue, quite different from its later form.

However, rap soon became a staple of Bollywood films, as a result of reasons extraneous to the film music industry. Around the early 2000s, a number of hip-hop artists became popular in the global South Asian diaspora. Bohemia, a Pakistani-American rapper is credited with creating the genre of Punjabi rap (Ghosh, 2019). His first album, *Vich Pardesan De* ('In a foreign land') came out in 2002 and became popular around the globe, and was critically acclaimed. In 2002, Hard Kaur delivered her 'Move your body' song and soon, the Punjabi-infused Hinglish party hip-hop tracks became a necessary part of Bollywood film soundtracks. Musically, they often bear influences of club or trance music but recently, there has been an overlap with the spread of remixed or recreated songs. In recent years, several filmmakers have decided on incorporating remixes of earlier hit songs in their film soundtracks. Very often a way to recreate these songs is to include a small rap portion in them, and this gives a steady amount of work to the rappers of Bollywood. Recent examples for this trend include the '*Humma* song' from *O.K.*

[27] The track was a Hindi language recreation of the track Ice ice baby from Vanilla Ice, inspired by Queen's Under Pressure. Although the tradition of 'borrowing' from other artists and tracks and the ensuing complexities of intellectual property rights falls beyond the remit of the current discussion, it is worth considering that this borrowing could be one of the reasons why Baba Sehgal is not considered a rapper among the hip-hop community that traditionally valorises authenticity.

[28] Personal communication with Atul Churamani, former A&R manager of Magnasound, the label that launched Baba Sehgal in India. Interview took place in August 2018 in Mumbai.

Jaanu (2017, dir.: Shaad Ali) that featured Badshah in a remix of the original A.R. Rahman track of '*Humma humma*' from *Bombay* (1995, dir. Mani Ratnam); or '*Dil chori*' from the film *Sonu ke Titu ki Sweety* (2018, dir. Luv Ranjan) where YoYo Honey Singh rapped over Hans Raj Hans' classic '*Dil chori sada.*' These recreations save time and money for filmmakers, as they do not have to commission entirely new songs and as these songs are already considered evergreen, it is very likely that the recreations will be quite popular as well (Ghosh, 2019).

These songs are usually featured within the narrative in the framework of a party or club scene or during end credits, depict an upscale club environment, where the protagonists of the film are shown imbibing various substances and engaging in amorous and flirty activities with each other or the extras, who are very often Caucasian women. These videos often project an aura of transgression and excess, they depict partying as a promiscuous and transgressive act, which often stands in contrast with the everyday moral codes of India. If we were to assess Hard Kaur's presence in these scenes, we would be hard-pressed to find established precedents for this kind of representation. Especially in terms of established modes of femininity in Bollywood cinema, that for a long time varied between the virtuous heroine and the Westernised vamp, whose moral downfall was imminent. Whereby heroines have only recently started to partake in such activities, the figure of the vamp has participated in songs set in bars or parties, Hard Kaur's image does not align with either of these figures. She does not display the seductive charm of the vamp, as she is more assertive and masculine. She personifies a "one of the boys" image, who drinks, parties, and has a good time.

This difference is also exemplified by a break with the established lip-synching traditions because Hard Kaur is shown singing her own lines, there is usually no actress to lip-synch to her music and therefore she is represented as Hard Kaur, voice and image. As discussed earlier, this is a clear break from previous traditions of playback singing and I would argue that it came about as the result of influences of Indipop and of new performers, who have their own fanbase outside of the film world. Typical examples of the rapper's appearance can be seen in '*Talli'* in *Ugly aur Pagli* (2008, dir. Sachin Kamlakar Khot), where Hard Kaur appears in the crowd and performs her own lines and encourages the people present in the nightclub to enjoy themselves. This is in stark contrast with the playback singers of the song, Anu Malik, Anmol Malik and Mika Singh, who do not appear in the picturization and remain playback singers in the traditional sense. The fact that she appeared in these videos as herself was not unprecedented, however, I would argue that she began the trend of the rapper appearing in the music video, which is now the norm when it comes to YoYo Honey Singh, Badshah, Raftaar and other rappers, who followed Hard Kaur.

Unlike traditional songs that were picturised on actors and did not show any of the performing artists, Hard Kaur's songs have featured her as the artist and were featured during end credits, used as background score or as semi-diegetic music, where the actors are seen lip-synching the songs, but it is clear that the music is coming from the PA system of the party venue. Her voice also set her apart from previous singers, as her deep, throaty timbre, which is easily mistaken to be a male's voice, is opposed to the mellifluous, classically trained voices that were audible before. This way, her voice, which was unique in itself, eluded connections to any of the typical female characters of the narrative. She was not a trained singer who could have reproduced any of the already existing styles and forms on the palette of Bollywood female singers, but her knowledge of hip-hop enabled her to create a brand new idea of women in music, attaching this idea to a new genre.

Although these factors, such as performing a new kind of femininity and being represented in a different frame set Hard Kaur apart from established performance traditions, there are certain aspects that frame her as a part of South Asian performance traditions. While bringing the fresh sounds of hip-hop music, Hard Kaur's Hindi and Punjabi language skills established a connection with the Indian audiences and placed her within the broader tradition of performance culture, therefore music directors were eager to incorporate her tracks (Sen, 2018). The importance of language in the multilingual context of India should not be underestimated, especially because bilingual Hindi-English or Punjabi-English speakers have a much higher social capital than those who only speak the indigenous languages or English. In a slightly different context, Tejaswini Ganti wrote that 'language and linguistic competence become sites for the elaboration of distinction, the performance of cultural capital, and the enactment of new hierarchies within the Hindi film industry' (Ganti, 2016: 120). Indeed, proficiency in English is important in the industry, because it can demonstrate socioeconomic status and access to good education, but if this is not coupled with a good command of the Hindi language, the actor or singer is not able to participate in the industry whose output is still in predominantly Hindi. As a result of her cultural capital of being a 1.5 generation diaspora artist, Hard Kaur is equally comfortable in both English, and is thus able to connect to global and globalising audiences who wish to see an internationally accessible position, as well as in Hindi and Punjabi and can connect with local audiences while demonstrating her cultural knowledge. The language of her songs also created an in-between feeling, as most of the song lyrics were written in a mixture of Hindi, English and Punjabi, which further referenced her origins and her position, that defies easy categorisation, except for that category that she created for herself.

Hard Kaur's transcultural capital stemmed from her position of being an Indian woman who grew up in the United Kingdom, and Punjabiness could have played an important role in this. As the British Punjabi community has played an important role in revolutionising both the Punjabi and the Bollywood music scenes, she could capitalise on these earlier associations. However, even though the Bollywood music industry was eager to incorporate new, international sounds into its repertoire, it was also important that audiences can relate to these innovations as Indian audiences still demand Bollywood films and music to have a certain 'Indian touch' to them (Rao, 2010: 1). Hard Kaur herself was familiar with the musical styles of England and could bring a new, Western style into Bollywood music, but she was at home with the Indian cultural context and audience expectations too. Yet, she was radically different from all the female artists who preceded her in the Bollywood industry, so she could create her own place in the industry.

As we have seen before, identification as Punjabi can result in occupying a privileged position. Her identification with the 'cool' Punjabiness came to the fore on multiple occasions, but never in such a pronounced manner as in the 2011 film, *Patiala House* (dir.: Nikhil Advani).[29] Here, in addition to contributing to the soundtrack, she also acted in the film. The film was centred around a British Asian family divided on the question of how to approach white British society. She played the role of a shy British Punjabi girl whose dream was to become a rapper but on the insistence of her strict father, is forced to sing kirtans instead. Although this was far removed from her actual personal story, the way that Hard Kaur performed two identities of the shy, obedient daughter and the defiant rapper symbolised well her position as a member of the diaspora and had the potential to reinforce her star text extraneous to the film as an RNRI.

[29] During the year 2019, Hard Kaur has established herself as an activist for the cause of the independent Punjabi state, also known as Khalistan. (Singh, 2019). The reasons behind this are most likely connected to her repeated confrontations with the governing Indian political party, the Bharatiya Janta Party.

Figure 18: Hard Kaur, as the obedient daughter in Patiala House

Figure 19: Hard Kaur, as the rapper in Patiala House.

Her public self-identification as a Punjabi and a British Asian in this film is particularly noteworthy, in the light of the first interview quote that I inserted, where she exclaimed "Oh, the Asians? They hated me in the beginning, but now, that I'm successful, they claim that I'm a Punjabi too…" This would suggest that her transcultural capital works in a reverse way as well. Her success in Bollywood could have led to the accumulation of transcultural capital in the UK. Her career in the rising cultural centre of Bollywood could have resulted in the British Asian music scene's re-evaluation of their position vis-à-vis Hard Kaur. This could be read in the larger framework of British Asian-Bollywood relations and could reinforce the claim about the shifting dynamics of the scenes.

V. Conclusion

Throughout the chapter, I suggested that Hard Kaur managed to create a musical and artistic space for herself in the Bollywood music industry on account of the confluence of her

individual biography and wider, industry-level developments. Growing up in Britain, she became familiar with the genre of hip-hop, which was not yet popular in the Asian community in England nor India. As a result of this, she was conceived as not authentic enough by the British Asian music industry. This was connected to established gender roles and the fear of cultural inauthenticity (Bakrania, 2013). Moreover, the British Asian music industry has traditionally been male-dominated, as the prevalent genres are extremely masculine in their origin, mode of performance, and lyrical content. In addition to this, traditional expectations about gender roles restricted the possibilities of female artists. This was further exacerbated by the lack of established female producers or artists who could be instrumental in facilitating access to the scene for other women. The result of this is the relative absence of successful female artists in the industry and it is only through several exceptional circumstances that one can circumvent these issues. The avenue Hard Kaur has taken was to resort to a different genre and to embark on a transnational journey which took her to the Bollywood music industry, hungry for new sounds with the 'Indian touch'. Here, we can witness the confluence of push factors, that discouraged her participation in one scene and pull factors, that motivated and enabled her to cross over to the other one.

Interestingly, the same traits arising from her personal biography and her personal motivations were viewed in a completely different light on the British Asian scene versus in Bollywood. Although she was considered to be a "freshie" upon her arrival to Britain and subsequently teased and bullied for the lack of her English skills and thick Indian accent, the same positionality of being a 1.5 generation immigrant was perceived in a very different light upon her return to India. Coming from a first-generation immigrant family, she was a native speaker of Hindi, Punjabi and English, which enabled her to rap in multiple languages and speak to wide audiences in the subcontinent too. Whereas the British Asian scene rejected her as a result of her involvement with hip-hop in the UK, the unique nature of this interest was considered to be an asset in the Bollywood industry. Moreover, her Punjabi identity was debated as a result of her interest in Black musical forms in the UK, but it was her very Punjabi identity that contributed to her success in Bollywood, that was interested in Punjabi sounds and culture. This suggests that cultural remittances are context-dependent and can change according to changing cultural circumstances. An important addition to our theoretical considerations is the fact that her success in India impacted her standing in the United Kingdom as well, where now she is known as a Bollywood star. This can prompt us to reconsider the direction of cultural remittances. In this context, we can posit that cultural remittances are not linear, but go both ways. Cultural remittances flow from the homeland to the diaspora as well, especially, once the cultural industries of the homeland become robust.

Even though Hard Kaur's career is emblematic of a variety of processes going on in the Bollywood music industry, such as the slow change in the construction of femininity, the opening up towards diasporic voices, and the incorporation of successful non-film genres and performers, it should be noted that Hard Kaur has not recorded for a Bollywood film for two years. This absence is most poignant in the case of Gully Boy (2019, dir. Zoya Akhtar) for which many leading hip-hop personalities were consulted. The film is celebrated as conscious hip-hop's entry into Bollywood and is often contrasted to the party hip-hop previously done by YoYo Honey Singh, Badshah, and implicitly, Hard Kaur. Hard Kaur was omitted from the list of people consulted for the film and according to her, she does not want to venture into Bollywood where she finds no scope for self-expression.

This might be a result of the different life expectancies of male and female stars, whereby YoYo Honey Singh can return to the music scene after battling various kinds of addictions for years, but such a return does not seem to be possible in the case of Hard Kaur. Especially so that the genre that she had established for herself, seems to be appropriated by men, such as Badshah, YoYo Honey Singh and Raftaar. Although we have witnessed the absolute lack of relevance of Rishi Rich's age to the discussion and academic analysis, we would perhaps be right to posit that it is different in her case. As Negra and Holmes have shown, female celebrities are often scrutinised with relation to ageing either if they choose to resort to plastic surgeries to stay young or for not resorting to plastic surgeries and "letting themselves go", as the body of the female celebrities is seen as a locus of their commercial value (Negra and Holmes, 7). More specifically, Bollywood has been well-known for its ageism. Rachel Dwyer has pointed out on many occasions how the age gap in the Hindi film and the celebrity industry favours young women, whereas men's age does not matter (Dwyer, 2020). Whereas women working behind the scenes can bypass this ageism and can aspire to become icons and legends, like Asha Bhonsle or Lata Mangeshkar, this does not seem to be the case with Hard Kaur, who does not seem to have been able to draw on any kind of nostalgia towards her earlier hits.

Nevertheless, the career of Hard Kaur and her positionality as the diasporic female singer should be viewed as an important moment in the intersection of the cultural industries of the homeland and the diaspora as she seems to have opened up opportunities for following generations of diasporic female singers. Subsequently, a number of female performers from various South Asian diasporas, such as Jasmin Sandlas from the United States, Shirley Setia from New Zealand, and Jonita Gandhi from Canada have also been incorporated into the Bollywood music industry on account of their transcultural capital. They could draw on similar experiences as children of first-generation Indian immigrants, who grew up listening to Hindi and Punjabi

music and speaking heritage languages. However, they also picked up Western musical education (Shetty 2017, 2018), which provided them with additional value for the Bollywood industry that valorises fresh sounds and tries to incorporate new, cosmopolitan influences but necessitates the presence of the 'Indian touch.'

Chapter 7

Conclusion

In conclusion, I elaborate on some of the findings of this thesis that have emerged through bringing relevant literature from migration studies, film studies, cultural studies and popular music studies in conversation with my three case studies. I situate my reading of the intersection of the British Asian music scene with the Bollywood music industry within the broader framework of cultural exchange, diaspora, and migration and contribute to our understanding of British Asian musical identities at the turn of the century. Then, I discuss the contribution of this thesis to the larger field both in terms of knowledge and methodology. After summarising my findings in response to the research questions, I also dwell on some limitations of this thesis, especially in terms of its scope and span. Finally, I suggest further directions in which this research could be taken or the intellectual possibilities that it opens.

Findings

Through this thesis, I have sought to understand the position of British Asian music and musicians in the 21st century in the increasingly globalising South Asian popular music circuit, by focusing on the cultural exchange between the diaspora and the homeland. The first aim that I laid out at the beginning of the thesis was to re-evaluate the position of British Asian music in the 21st century in relation to South Asian cultural production happening around the globe. In order to understand the place of British Asian music within the global South Asian soundscape, I placed the historical developments and the current processes on the British Asian scene against the backdrop of the cultural industry of Bollywood. By doing so, I sought to understand how the cultural industry of Bollywood engages with South Asian diasporas from the point of view of music.

Tracing the lives and careers of selected British Asian artists and their journeys to Bollywood has allowed us to witness larger trends in the global South Asian cultural economy. I have argued that a major transformation is underway in the ebbs and flows between centres of South Asian cultural production. Bollywood is gaining more mainstream visibility and its growing global importance is tied into processes of change in neoliberal India in terms of economy and policymaking. India is now considering its diasporas an asset and seeks to reintegrate them into the national family, a process that has ramifications for popular culture. As Bollywood is becoming an increasingly attractive and lucrative industry globally, its relation to

Indian diasporas has changed both in terms of representation and business. More stories are focused on the diaspora, and filmmakers consider the Indian diaspora as consumers. Although the importance of Bollywood's relationship with the Indian diaspora has been claimed by many scholars who discussed the importance of Bollywood in shaping ideas of India in the diaspora, as well as ideas of India in the diaspora (Rai, 2009, Mehta and Pandharipande, 2011, Dudrah, 2012, etc.), this research has attempted to fill the gap in our understanding of how the diaspora contributes to the production of Bollywood.

Towards this end, I looked at the transcultural journeys of British Asian musicians who follow patterns of circular, temporary migration and return to India, the land of their ancestors, for shorter or longer periods to participate in the creative industries of Bollywood. Although many scholars (Dudrah, 2001, Banaji, 2006, Kraemer, 2016) have looked at the consumption of Bollywood films, music and other cultural products among diasporas, this thesis attempted to examine the involvement of the diasporas in the production of Bollywood music. I sharpened my focus on the individual journeys of some musicians and their music, caught up as it is in global cultural changes as well as the larger economic, political and cultural forces that determine these transnational shifts. By using the theoretical framework of travel, both in terms of physical travel, as well as emotional journeys across time and continents, I sought to understand the motivations of these journeys, while reflecting on my own position as a travelling researcher. I chose my case studies to highlight different positionalities and career paths and show the various ways in which the British Asian music industry is connected to Bollywood. I used mixed research methods, such as interviews and textual analysis of media reportage and social media presence to conduct a qualitative cultural studies analysis. I structured my research around three main research questions, which, along with the findings, I summarise below.

1. In what ways does the contemporary British Asian music industry figure in the global networks of South Asian cultural production?

By taking into consideration the evidence of existing scholarship (Bakrania, 2013, Alexander and Kim, 2014) as well as the responses of my interviewees both in the UK and in India, I have suggested that the British Asian music scene has significantly changed since some of the seminal research on the subject was written (Dudrah, 2001; Leante, 2004; Roy, 2012; Bakrania, 2013;). It is getting more difficult to conceptualise the British Asian music scene independently of the global processes of South Asian pop music cultures, as the British Asian scene is increasingly becoming a part of the global South Asian soundscape. There is a greater flow of cultural

products, as well as cultural producers between the diaspora and the homeland. As such, the already robust cultural industry of the homeland is becoming more important for the diaspora and they look to India in search of new-old markets.

Bollywood has become especially important as the dominant tastes of the industry have become more aligned with the musical world of the British Asian diaspora. While the creators of post-liberalisation Bollywood films and music have shown a proclivity for incorporating global and regional influences in their narratives and music (Beaster-Jones, 2015), recent years have seen a considerable rise in the Punjabi musical influence in Bollywood film music, and as we have witnessed throughout the chapters, many British Asian cultural producers draw on their Punjabi cultural heritage while creating music. As such, Bollywood and by extension, Mumbai, have emerged as an important point on the map of the Punjabi music industry, of which the British Asian music industry is a part of. Besides, Bollywood has also made conscious efforts to woo the diaspora through its narratives and even tried to sell its products among the diaspora as well as non-Indian audiences.

In addition, as my research interviews and case studies have shown in the previous chapters, the increasing globalisation and professionalisation of the Bollywood music industry have made India an attractive destination for diaspora artists. This has enabled the increasingly transnational Bollywood industry and the shrinking British Punjabi music industry to overlap and create an atmosphere in which diaspora artists travel to India to work in Bollywood.

I suggest that there are three key aspects through which we can make sense of the shifting dynamics: 1) mainstream and margins in terms of cultural production, 2) centre and periphery in terms of cultural geography and 3) multidirectional flows between the cultural industries. Looking at the collected data through this conceptual framework can help us structure our thinking about the transnational flows of music and musicians across the diaspora and homeland in the following ways:

1) Mainstream and margins in cultural production:

> Throughout the chapters, I argued that British Asian music was not only the centre of diasporic musical innovation throughout the globe during the period of the 1990s and early 2000s (Maira 2002, Warwick 2000, etc.) but it was also expected to cross over and receive mainstream attention in Britain and elsewhere (Bakrania 2013). If the dreams of industry professionals would have come true, and British Asian music would have ended up being considered on par with chart music, that could have had important economic and social ramifications. British Asian music could have become

more viable financially, and British Asian culture could have become a more visible part of British culture as well. Two of the artists featured in the case studies, Rishi Rich and Bally Sagoo were keen on making this crossover happen. They worked towards this goal through a specific set of skills and sounds arising from their positionality in diasporic third space and cultural identities. However, when this crossover did not happen, there was suddenly a feeling of "glass ceiling" (Rich, 2018) and the ebbs and flows of the global South Asian music production started to flow in a different direction, that gradually started attracting cultural producers as well. Even though British Asian music did not become a part of mainstream British culture, Bollywood was receiving more attention both in the UK as well as globally. As a result of this, Rishi Rich, as well as other cultural producers were moving in a direction, whereby they were acting as somewhat marginal and liminal actors in an industry receiving more mainstream attention instead of remaining a central figure in a marginal industry.

2) Centre and periphery from a cultural geography perspective:

Throughout the thesis, I have suggested that this shift between margins and mainstream was accompanied by a shift in the perception of the geographical centre and the periphery of South Asian cultural production. Whereby previously, it was the diaspora located in the West that was considered the locus of innovation, this centre has now shifted to India. I made the case that now, it is India and more specifically Mumbai, that plays a central role in South Asian cultural production around the globe. To support this claim, in Chapter 5, I conducted a comparative analysis of the careers of two Birmingham-based British Punjabi DJs set apart by 20 years in time who have had very different perceptions of their Indian audiences and markets. Whereas for Bally Sagoo Indian audiences and the Indian market seemed peripheric, DJ Frenzy considers India to be the heartland of music production. Bally Sagoo saw himself as a UK artist from a diasporic background, but for DJ Frenzy, Punjabi identity and his Punjabi musical heritage are quintessential for his self-perception. DJ Frenzy positions himself as Punjabi and he seeks to reassert his authentic Punjabi identity through a variety of cultural markers in his star image as well. The different approach towards markets and cultural geographies is also visible in terms of actual journeys to the homeland: whereas Bally Sagoo was firmly established in the UK and only visited

and toured India occasionally, for Frenzy, travelling to the hubs of the Punjabi music circuit in India is a regular occurrence and he engages in a to and fro between the two countries.

By elaborating on the different approaches of Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy towards global centres, I sought to demonstrate that a conceptual shift is underway. Whereas Bally Sagoo perceived Mumbai and India as the periphery, where innovation only reaches with the help of the RNRI, this image has changed. For DJ Frenzy, Punjab is the authentic homeland, the cradle of musical productivity. I suggested that we should read this case study in the broader geographical dimension of the BhangraNation. Now the centre of innovation in the BhangraNation has shifted from the UK to India, which has a visible impact on the journeys and identities of musicians, as demonstrated in Chapter Five.

3) Multidirectional flows between the diaspora and the homeland

In Chapter Six, I investigated the direction of flows between the cultural industries of the UK and India by looking at the career of Hard Kaur. Her perception in the UK was fundamentally altered by her success in India. This impact could mean that the dynamics of the Bollywood cultural industry matter in the UK as well. This suggests that the flows between the diaspora and the homeland are not unidirectional, thus complicating our understanding of the direction of flows. Although I argued that the diasporic position of British Asian artists contributes to their career in India and that their music is a cultural remittance flowing from the diaspora to the homeland, this finding complicates this proposition. The change in Hard Kaur's perception suggests that the prestige of the Bollywood industry has grown in the UK and has bearings on the dynamics of the British Asian industry too.

In sum, we can deduct that the dynamics of the global South Asian cultural production have changed. However, I do not suggest that the UK scene would be less important or formative, but it has come to play a different role altogether. Instead of being a contemporary source of inspiration, we could consider it to be a historical point of reference and a source of pride for earlier achievements. It is firmly established as the South Asian music scene that has gotten the closest to crossing over the mainstream and produced a modern, innovative Asian sound. However, it is not only the cultural geography of music production and consumption that has

changed, it is also important to consider how the dynamics of production have come to inhabit the virtual space as well. We have seen the importance and relevance of the "virtual Punjab" in the second case study as it provides an audience for DJ Frenzy.

2. What are the push and pull factors that enable diaspora artists to work in the Bollywood music industry?

Throughout the thesis, I have been looking for factors that motivate British Asian artists to leave the UK scene and to engage more deeply with the Indian market and perhaps even shift to India. During the course of the research, I realised that in order to unpick and critically evaluate the web of motivating factors, I need to take a multi-layered approach that can account for systemic and personal factors. I conducted analysis on global, transnational, national and subnational levels while also including the personal narratives of migration. Personal motivations and circumstances, such as Rishi Rich's or Hard Kaur's troubled personal-professional lives in the UK contribute substantially towards determining the patterns of migration. In order to maintain consistency with the focus on the personal next to the global, I turned this into a methodological consideration as well. One of the major methodological lessons I have learnt during this research is that push and pull factors cannot be viewed in separation, they should be viewed in conjunction as they complement each other. In order to reflect on these personal reasons in a critical manner, throughout the thesis I have pursued a narrative that contained my personal experiences as a travelling female researcher as this impacted the ways in which I collected my data and the way I have read these interviews, life stories and careers. I discuss these aspects in detail later, but it is important to mention these here as well. My position as a lone female researcher posed some restrictions on my access to the field, as considering my personal security often meant that I could not do extended fieldwork in club settings. However, my position as a woman has also enabled me to build a rapport with female artists and clubgoers based on shared solidarity.

However, the case studies also pointed to larger, structural reasons for migration, such as the decline of the British Asian music scene, which was a push factor for musicians. Following Bakrania's research (2013) that also discusses the significant shrinkage of the British Asian music scene against its initial success, I took this cue further and looked at what happened after the completion of her research. Based on my interviews with industry professionals in India and the UK and my analysis of patterns of South Asian music consumption in the UK, we can conclude that the British Asian music industry provides fewer opportunities for artists than it used to. At the same time, the the growing presence of Bollywood and the increasing importance of Punjabi music therein seems to provide an opportunity for British Punjabi musicians to change their vistas

and look towards India in search of larger audiences and economic gain. This was clearly visible in the case of Rishi Rich, who felt that he had reached a "glass ceiling" in the UK and felt compelled to look for new markets.

Systemic issues concerning the gender politics of the music scene could also be conceptualised as a push factor. In the third case study, I suggested that for Hard Kaur a significant push factor was the insularity and the male-dominated nature of the British Asian music industry. Her musical and performance practice innovations were not encouraged or accepted on the male-dominated British Asian music industry that only allowed women to perform certain genres of music and modes of femininity, and she felt pushed out of the scene. In conjunction with the changes of the Bollywood music industry, that was looking for new sounds and performers, that acted as pull factors, this facilitated her transition from the UK to the Indian scene.

When it comes to pull factors, we should mention the introduction of pro-NRI policies by the Indian state, that had ramifications for the labour market as well. Sonali Jain (2013, 2019) and Carol Upadhya (2013) have called attention to the process of "reverse brain drain." They argued that the state policies easing access for NRIs to the Indian job market, as well as the quick development of the Indian IT sector resulted in the return of many highly trained NRIs from the diaspora to India. Moreover, the pro-NRI policies appeared in terms of cultural politics as well, showing the diaspora as an aspirational model. Having assessed the evidence presented in the case studies, we can propose that the policies of the Indian state, as well as the shift in the cultural policies resulted in a similar reverse brain drain in the entertainment industry as well. The globalisation, professionalisation and the possibility of a wider reach of Bollywood that Punathambekar discussed (2013) are attractive for diaspora artists both on a personal, as well as a professional level.

Another pull factor that I identified was nostalgia, and I defined its use in this thesis following the works of Boym (2008). Nostalgia ties the artists into an affective community of transnational Punjabi musicians. Although using the lens of nostalgia was present throughout the thesis, I sought to provide a nuanced picture of nostalgia. I have identified a primordial nostalgia towards the music and culture of Punjab. This could motivate the artists to preserve their Punjabi cultural heritage and to engage in the circuits of Punjabi music production. This was especially relevant in the second case study that discussed the careers of the DJs Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy. By repackaging old Punjabi classics both DJs built on the affective quality of nostalgia that connects them and their audiences to the ancestral lands and culture of Punjab. I suggested that nostalgia was especially relevant in the case of DJ Frenzy, as his relationship to Punjab and

Punjabi music is mediated through diasporic postmemory (Hirsch 2012) that challenges the belief that later-generation members of the diaspora have looser ties to the country of origin. I suggested that DJ Frenzy is consciously going against this trope and derives transcultural capital from his deep knowledge of Punjabi culture despite having been born and brought up in the diaspora. I supported this claim by analysing the remix aspect of his music and how it manufactures nostalgia and plays with existing nostalgic tropes in Punjabi music and culture. On the other hand, I suggested that Rishi Rich has created a different, self-referential kind of nostalgia, one that harked back to his earlier innovative practices of creating an urban British Asian sound. Rishi Rich's transnational career between London and Mumbai is interesting for a variety of reasons but in this chapter, I have focused on the shifting dynamics of the diaspora and homeland in terms of cultural transfer. Whereas the early 2000s was a time in which the British Asian diaspora held prestige and was considered as a trailblazer throughout the global South Asian population, the centre has now shifted to India, attracting artists from the previous centres as well. However, the earlier global popularity of the British Asian urban scene has not disappeared without any trace. Nostalgic feelings towards the music and youth culture of the early 2000s are still present in India as can be discerned from Rishi Rich's 'second coming'. His reinvention as a Bollywood music producer received a positive response from audiences and critics alike and Rishi Rich went on to receive offers to compose and produce music for other Bollywood projects, thereby vindicating his strategy of building on nostalgia.

However, it was not only the diaspora artists who constructed nostalgic narratives, drawing on the community of nostalgia was also a strategy that the Indian state employed. This thesis suggested that music is one of such avenues through which the NRI is recast as the part of the Indian nation. The Bollywood industry has been actively seeking to incorporate the cultural production of the diasporas, while recasting it as a part of the Bollywood cultural industry. This process can be tied to larger economic and cultural processes through which India engages with its diasporas: fetishizing, reclaiming and recasting them as part of the globalised Indian nation. One way in which this can be discerned is through the incorporation and repackaging of British Asian music as Indian cultural products and by drawing on the creative potential of British Asian artists who can produce music that is familiar, yet innovative. They can tap into generational nostalgia towards a homeland and also towards a nostalgia towards the British Asian music scene that had a global relevance in South Asian diasporas. Moreover, with the recalibration of Punjab and Punjabi culture in Bollywood, they could reinvent themselves from 'British Asian' to being 'Punjabi' and take advantage of their transcultural capital. Moreover, working from the diasporic position adds to this aspect. Expanding on the findings of existing scholarship, I have suggested

that we are witnessing a process in which the NRI is reincorporated as part of the Indian nation through music. This reincorporation happens at a symbolic by repackaging and reclaiming British Asian music as Indian cultural products, as seen in the incorporation of Rishi Rich's earlier tracks in Bollywood films or by labelling British Punjabi Hard Kaur as the 'first female Indian rapper'. At a physical level, this happens by attracting British Asian musicians to India to participate in the cultural economy as global Indian musicians.

In order to unpick the complexities of the artists' diasporic position, I have turned to Ulrike Meinhof's concept of transcultural capital (2009). This helped explain how being part of the diaspora and having a dual cultural heritage, as well as a network of connections in both countries play a key role in enabling the transition between the diaspora and the ethnic homeland. I have located the transcultural capital of the artists in their position of being part of the British Punjabi diaspora. As a result of this unique positionality, they possess cultural knowledge that bridges two cultures, British and Punjabi, that are globally known and sought after. Throughout the case study chapters I suggested that the transcultural capital of these artists is tied into the perception of the Non-Resident Indian and the Returning Non-Resident Indian as the nodal point between East and West and a source of innovation and cross-pollination.

However, taking Meinhof's idea one step further, I suggested that this transcultural capital should by no means be understood as uniform across time and space, it is highly context dependent. As we have discussed the significant difference in Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy's approach to making music, I suggested that this is tied into larger processes of identification, whereby Bally Sagoo self-identified as "Asian" and DJ Frenzy self-identifies as "Punjabi". I sought to show how Bally Sagoo 's transcultural capital was derived from his position as the NRI, and DJ Frenzy positioned himself as a member of the Punjabi musical community. I argued that the context of transcultural capital is sensitive to time: in the 1990s, Bally Sagoo could capitalise on his position as the NRI, whereas in the 2010s, DJ Frenzy could derive more from his position of being part of the global Punjabi community. Throughout the third case study chapter, I looked at how gender influences transcultural capital. I suggested that Hard Kaur's transcultural capital is deeply impacted and shaped by her gender. Whereas male innovators, such as Bally Sagoo and Rishi Rich were considered by the British Asian music industry as pathbreakers on account of their knowledge of Black and mainstream musical forms, Hard Kaur was criticised as being "inauthentic" for doing the same. However, in the context of the Bollywood music industry, her diasporic positionality trumped her gender. Her transcultural capital resulting from the high

cultural prestige of the NRI in the Indian cultural imagination and policymaking allowed her to pursue her chosen artform without the restrictions that she perhaps otherwise would have to face.

It is important to consider the positionality of British Asian artists in India and in Great Britain simultaneously. The contextual nature of their celebrity can inform their perception and career trajectories in both places. The cultural capital, accumulated in one location can have relevance in the other one as well, as we have seen in the case of Hard Kaur's Bollywood fame impacting on her standing in the UK. These contexts and intersections take us one step forward from Meinhof and Triandafyllidou's theory of transcultural capital. For them, transcultural capital means that cultural capital is capable of crossing borders. In this research, I seek to make sense of how the meaning of this cultural capital changes in different contexts and how this is influenced by the travel between the home and the diaspora.

Another key term in making sense of the cultural journeys between the homeland and the diaspora was cultural remittances. Although Juan Flores used cultural remittances to describe how diasporic artists reinvigorated the culture of their home countries (Flores, 2010)., I used the term to describe the value that the diasporic position of the British Asian artists brings to the table. I made a case for considering the relevance of British Asian music as cultural remittance on account of the importance of the innovative sounds and performance practices of British Asian artists in facilitating their transition to Bollywood. It is then not only the figure of the diaspora artist that carries the prestige of transnationality but also the cultural product. Here, the first case study featuring Rishi Rich is of special relevance, as throughout the chapter, I suggested that by creating innovative musical and performance practices, Rishi Rich accumulated a significant amount of cultural capital that he could use when transitioning to the Bollywood music industry. To substantiate my argument about innovative musical practices, I built on the literature discussing the sonic world of the golden era of British Asian music (Bakrania, 2013, Maier, 2020), and conducted textual analysis of his songs that used new, hybrid sounds and rhythms. I traced these practices back to Rishi Rich's life history of growing up surrounded by the multicultural soundscape of London. I also suggested that the packaging and marketing of these songs through visual cues in the music videos amplified the aura of novelty and innovation. I also suggested that Rishi Rich and his group, The Rishi Rich Project have reinvented British Asian masculinity and created the concept of the British Asian pop star that contributed to the high global esteem of the British Asian music scene. As his music, image and style were consumed in India in the form of cultural remittances, this image of an innovator and pioneer of the golden age of British Asian music contributed to his transcultural capital.

Similarly, innovative performance practices and sounds have also contributed to the career of Hard Kaur in the third case study. She managed to capitalise on her association with rap, a musical form that had not yet become widespread and popular in India. Yet, her knowledge of the Indian cultural context and her felicity with the Hindi and Punjabi languages allowed her to engage with the Bollywood music industry in a way that would not have been possible for a complete outsider, as attested to by her success on the Bollywood music scene.

We can also establish that cultural remittances are not one-way, and that they work in conjunction with transcultural capital. Hard Kaur asserted that she was completely disregarded on the British Asian music scene and only started to gain traction once she established herself on the Bollywood music scene shows that transcultural capital is not limited to a process whereby the diasporic, innovative position of the artists is appreciated. It also works the other way, success in the homeland can accumulate transcultural capital for the artist in the diaspora.

However, this could also be related to the way in which the British Asian and Bollywood industries relate to each other. Perhaps the evolution of Bollywood into a cutting-edge, global industry contributed to the way in which these processes work. According to Purnima Mankekar, these modes of depicting Non-Resident Indians visualize an enticing concept. Firstly, they "deterritorialise" NRIs, who are compatriots who do not belong to any one geographic location. At the same time, they are idealised and are shown to have a deep, heart-felt connection to India. She also suggested that as a result of this mode of portrayal, Indianness has become a portable asset and Indianness was defined not by geography, but by customs, loyalties and feelings (2015 36).

This is especially insightful when thinking about the perception of the return of diasporic musicians, as the display of "customs, loyalties and feelings" can establish them as a part of the nation. If we look at the transcultural capital that British Asian musicians attain by being a part of the coveted diaspora, and if we keep in mind the earlier observations about shifting hubs, we can investigate how these two factors align to create a need for cosmopolitan mediation. While economic considerations and matters of taste and popularity certainly play a role in cosmopolitan mediation, it is also something grounded in emotion. It draws on nostalgia and also builds on the promise of new and exciting cultural configurations. This could be viewed in parallel to the push and pull factors for British Asian musicians to join the Bollywood industry. By looking at these economic and cultural factors, we can come to a better understanding of the push and pull factors that influence British Asian artists' decisions to migrate to Bollywood, as well as the forces at work in the constant reshuffling of global cultural centres.

3. In what ways do sociocultural factors such as ethnicity, gender, and generation impact upon the relationship between the cultural production of the homeland and the diaspora?

The major finding that emerged in my thesis with respect to homeland-diaspora relations was that the concept of the "homeland" should be understood in a more nuanced way. This early conceptualisation was complicated by the nuances of the term 'homeland' itself, as most artists I interviewed were second, even third generation British Asian musicians and expressed their identity primarily as British and Punjabi, but not as Indian. It was therefore necessary to move beyond the domains of global and national as I discovered the central role that other identities played in connecting these musicians with their homeland. I have identified this link as Punjabiness that could be considered as both a subnational as well as a transnational identity (Schreffler, 2012). Whereas Anjali Gera Roy has already theorised how Punjabis around the world are connected by their identification with Punjabi music (2009), I extend a temporal and geographical dimension to her argument, by suggesting that there are shifts and changes within this global Punjabi musical community and that there is a dynamic relationship between the cultural production of the various diasporas. While the British Asian music scene was considered a hub of innovation in the 1990s and early 2000s on account of its innovative musical and performance practices, attested to by its popularity among North American diasporas (Maira, 2012), throughout this thesis I have suggested that it has yielded this primacy to other hubs of innovation, some of which are in India, mainly in the Punjab and in Mumbai. As a reference point for creating music, Punjab has always remained important, other hubs, especially Mumbai, have gained in significance in India.

I looked at Bollywood's tendency to put the culture and customs of Punjab in the foreground of its output. In doing so, I suggest that the representation of Punjab in Bollywood cinema cannot be read simply as an attempt to highlight regional cultures and identities. Rather, it should be viewed within a broader context and read as an attempt to tap into a new global pan-Punjabi identity. As I suggest in my study, this attempt to identify with a global Punjabi culture has had a major impact on cultural production not only in Bollywood, but in the diasporas around the world. As I have demonstrated, the trend of using Punjabi music and valorising Punjabi identities has had implications for British Punjabi artists, as well. Given this trend, British Asian artists now find their diasporic Punjabiness to be a distinct asset. I have suggested that the process of transition from the British Asian scene to the Bollywood music industry was aided by the Punjabiness of the British Asian artists that I study. Ever since Vijay Mishra's 2003 observation that Bollywood is becoming a symbol of Punjabiness more than being a unifying North Indian cultural identity, Bollywood has increasingly embraced Punjabi culture, especially in terms of

music. In the case study chapters I highlighted how all of the artists produce Punjabi language music that also showcases Punjabi musical characteristics. This has enabled these tracks and artists to avail of the opportune moment of Punjabi music's popularity in the Bollywood creative industry.

However, it is important not to paint a monolithic picture of Punjabiness, as the issue of gender and generation plays an important role in the formulation of diverse Punjabi identities. The question of generation is important as it plays a key role in nurturing transnational connections, such as in the case of DJ Frenzy. Gender comes into play in a significant way in two of the case studies, Rishi Rich and Hard Kaur. The case in point for Rishi Rich was a key collaborator of his, Jay Sean. A new kind of masculinity that was represented by Jay Sean was further removed from the stereotypical Sikh machismo of the earlier British Punjabi music scene. This was closer to the masculinities of contemporaneous metrosexual global icons, such as the Backstreet Boys and Ricky Martin, or the new generation of 'metrosexual' Bollywood celebrities, such as Hrithik Roshan. I have analysed the ways in which Jay Sean appropriates tropes associated with bubble gum pop music and Latino masculinities. In accordance with these global changes, Jay Sean brought in a sort of metrosexual British Asian masculinity that appealed to those audiences who wished to see British Asian artists following in the footsteps of mainstream pop icons while appealing to the globalised notions of Punjabi identity and retaining a certain Indian touch. I suggested that by signing him and producing music for him, Rishi Rich helped to introduce a new kind of masculinity to the British Asian music industry which left a lasting impact, one that he could capitalise on later.

In the chapter discussing the career of Hard Kaur, I have explored gender and gendered positions within Asian music in the UK as well as in India and I claimed that her position as a diasporic woman enabled her to occupy a niche position in India. Her image, as a female rapper has not provided her with many opportunities on the bhangra-centric British Asian music scene, but her identification with a British working-class female toughness as well as the hip-hop femininity was more readily accepted in the Bollywood industry on account of her diasporic position. Whereas the Bollywood music industry till date has a rigid way of constructing and presenting female voices and female singers, Hard Kaur could transgress these boundaries by the virtue of her diasporic background.

In summary, throughout my thesis I have argued that the British Asian artists belonging to the privileged community of the NRIs, who are cultural insiders with greater opportunities than Indian artists from the subcontinent itself, it is plausible to suggest that this could have opened up an avenue for British Asian artists to participate in the Bollywood music industry. Throughout

the case studies of the thesis, I suggested that the discussed artists, who in this sense could be perceived as NRIs from an Indian perspective, have played a similar role in the cultural industries, and have acted as cultural brokers who bring Western cultural capital to the Indian entertainment industry. I have suggested that transcultural capital plays an important role in each of the case studies, however, there is nuance in exactly how this plays out. Transcultural capital should be examined within the framework of cultural policy and politics, it is context-sensitive as the following examples show. Rishi Rich's mode of transnationality is different from the other two case studies. Thus, whereas Hard Kaur's transition was a result of Bollywood's growing willingness to incorporate different modes of diasporic femininity and her association with the new musical genre of hip-hop, while DJ Frenzy could seamlessly enter the globalised ethnic Punjabi musical community, Rishi could monetise his earlier position as a pioneer and take advantage of the economic value of nostalgia. Hard Kaur's transcultural capital was based on the factor of novelty and innovation, as she brought a new musical style and became its foremost proponent. With Bally Sagoo and DJ Frenzy, we saw the importance of nostalgia, as both of them build on nostalgic feelings towards a long-lost Punjab for diasporic or urban Punjabi audiences. Rishi Rich, on the other hand created a combination of the two aspects of innovation and nostalgia. Due to his international acclaim as an innovator, he managed to create a system of self-referential nostalgia that enables him to recreate, refashion and resell his own innovations to a market prone to nostalgia.

This thesis thus falls into the broader category of research on second-generation return migration of British Asians to the ethnic homeland of India, although a very specific type that is borne out of the specificities of the British and Indian creative industries. Throughout the thesis I have mostly focused on the ways in which cultural factors, such as cultural identity intersect with larger shifts in the cultural economy of India and the UK, such as the changes regarding the perception and regulation of NRI migration, changes in the value of the Punjabi ethnocultural identity, as well as emotional categories, like nostalgia, as well as changes in the cultural economy, such as the decline of the British Asian music scene and the transnational growth of Bollywood.

I consider the main contribution of this thesis to be a provocation that calls attention to the gap in our understanding of the role of the diaspora in the cultural production of the homeland. The intersection of industry developments and on-screen representations, however, poses its own methodological challenges. Although both of these aspects are well-researched, a major methodological issue that has arisen was the need to work with two different toolkits and modes of analysis. Even though Bollywood has come to represent the NRI community as the beacon of

progress, it is difficult to understand whether and how this impacts on the real life perception of RNRI artists. In order to address this issue, I combined global and personal narratives, as well as a variety of methods from cultural and film studies. I sought reflect on my position as a non-Asian, non-British researcher, which is a unique subjectivity, bringing its own challenges and opportunities.

In addition, I sought to contribute to the body of literature that discusses the representation of Punjabi culture on screen and in the creative industry in Bollywood. Although this is a topic that invites significant popular attention, its academic exploration is still outstanding.

Limitations

Most of the limitations of this research have to do with the position and capabilities of the researcher. Although I have made every effort to understand as much of the Punjabi, Bollywood and British Asian music scenes as was possible, these are geographically distant and densely populated scenes and therefore it was not possible to become equally familiar with all of these in person. There are many hopeful journalists and academics waiting to conduct interviews with the most prominent actors on these scenes and being a novice researcher did not put me at the beginning of the waiting list under any circumstances. I am not a musician or a music industry professional, I am also not British Asian, Punjabi or Indian and will therefore always remain an outsider, albeit a considerably well-informed and interested one. Although the positionality of the foreign academic has given me advantages in terms of prestige, I still could not provide many music industry professionals with any perks, such as providing exposure that a music journalist could provide or facilitating access to gigs or new audiences that a music industry professional could, that would have facilitated my access to the scenes. However, as I have mentioned in the case study chapters, my position of being based in Birmingham and being present in India at the times of the interviews often facilitated my conversations with British Asian artists working in India as it created a certain amount of similarity in our positions. In this sense, I could draw on the community of sentiments when it came to sharing the experience of being an ‘expat’ from Birmingham in India.

Another limitation that has to do with the format of a PhD thesis is the question of length and depth. This thesis could by no means provide an extensive overview of all three scenes, and by focusing on the convergence of British Asian, Bollywood and Punjabi music and musicians, I hoped to give more depth to the analysis. In order to be able to demonstrate my ability to analyse cultural phenomena in detail, I decided to focus on three artists only. This is also a result of my experience of being able to understand an individual career and perspective better after having had a personal meeting and interview with the artist, and these were the three artists that I had the

most meaningful encounters with. If the project could have continued longer and could have incorporated more fieldwork, I would have broadened the scope by gaining more insight into the moment of the broader British Asian music scene converging with the Bollywood music scene. Exploring the patterns of music consumption of British Asian music in India and research into the clubbing culture of India could have given an important understanding of the on-the-ground reality of British Asian music in India, especially given the absence of extant literature on the topic, but this could be the topic of an entirely different PhD research and therefore, it was not possible to include much of the observations that I made in an academically grounded manner.

To discuss the theme of the case studies further, although I have tried to avoid giving this impression, this thesis might have suggested that there is a seamless integration happening between the British Asian, Bollywood and Punjabi music scenes. This is by no means the case and there are many tensions and conflicts of interest that often result in aborted careers and less successful transitions. Although the three artists whose careers I discussed in detail signal a larger shift in the cultural economy of Bollywood, there are also many, who were less fortunate. One example could include Raj and Pops, aka Tigerstyle, a Glaswegian Sikh music producer duo, who achieved considerable visibility on the Bollywood music market as well and contributed to a number of high-budget soundtracks. However, they recently retired from music-making claiming that their transnational work style became unsustainable. Tigerstyle started their career as DJs while studying at university and soon they were mentored by Punjabi MC and they collaborated with a number of British Asian performers in addition to releasing albums (Roots 'n' Culture 2016). They started getting involved in Bollywood music production as the changes in music production enabled remote work and not needing to be based in India to contribute to film music soundtracks. Their transcultural capital, history of fusing Punjabi and hip-hop music and technological prowess led them to collaborate with a number of leading Bollywood music composers since 2008 when they remixed the songs 'Bas Ek King' and 'Bhootni Ke' from the film *Singh is Kinng* (2008, dir. Anees Baazmi). They worked with Pritam, one of the leading music directors on successful films, such as '*Love Aaj Kal'* (2009, dir. Imtiaz Ali), *Ajab Prem Ki Ghazab Kahaani* (2009, dir. Rajkumar Santoshi) and later also did a remix for '*Bedardi Raja*' for Ram Sampath (Delhi Belly, 2011, dir. Abhinay Deo), then collaborated with the Meet Bros for '*Chittiyaan Kalaiyyan*' (Roy, dir. Vikramjeet Singh, 2015). In terms of remixing, they usually created a Punjabi remix version of the item song or dance numbers, but they also often produced or programmed beats for other types of Bollywood songs as well. They also produced music for big artists on the Punjabi music scene, such as Kanika Kapoor, Kaur B or Jaz Dhami and Miss Pooja.

However, the competitiveness of the Bollywood production system and the rising demand of music directors put them in a difficult spot. In an interview they explained that '[m]usic directors are constantly sending different songs to different programmers to see what kind of vibes they can get, and they tend to go with whoever comes back with the strongest kind of demo.' Although this kind of work method keeps producers constantly busy, as 'there is always little bits of tracks flowing in between here and Mumbai', the economy of such labour is very precarious. This kind of engagement leads to working without getting the actual job in the end and it might not be a sustainable way of life. As a result, Raj and Pops decided to take up day jobs and cut back on music production. In an interview with Bobby Friction on BBC Asian Network (27 August 2019), Raj disclosed that it was the lack of financial security that prompted the decision. He said:

> 'It became more challenging to sustain a livelihood of just working on music since the scene has gravitated towards India. If your earnings are mostly coming from India it is getting difficult to get money back to the UK, so artists start to base themselves in India for six months one year or whatever it takes.'

As this quote shows, the shrinking of the British Asian market, the shift of production to India that we have already discussed at length in the bulk of the thesis, as well as the restrictive economic policies, that did not come to the fore with such force, make it hard to keep on working in the Bollywood industry from abroad. Although in previous interviews they mentioned that they have a support system comprising of other British Asian and Punjabi artists and music professionals working in Mumbai (DesiBlitz 2015), the lack of their physical presence seems to have contributed to the end of their career there. According to them, both the informal and the formal economy of the Bollywood music industry disadvantages people working from overseas as restrictive government policies reduce the wages of overseas workers.

However, the real problem is the lack of presence. Juggy D expressed similar views in 2009 when he said 'We had big hits in Kya Kool Hain Hum and Hum Tum, but the biggest mistake we made was that we went back to the UK. People were trying to reach us but we were inaccessible. But people still recognise us and know our names. It's just that we lost out on a huge chunk of the market and of course, a lot of cash! [...] This time, I'm going to be here throughout' (Taneja 2009). Although the strategy does not seem to have worked out for Juggy D, as his big return to India was never really big but it highlights an important lesson in Rishi Rich's career: it is not enough to preside over transcultural capital and the potential of nostalgia, one must be physically present on the scene in order to make a lasting mark.

Consequently, it could be argued that the technological revolution in music composition and music production has democratised music production as producers can contribute to soundtracks regardless of their physical location and their access to large-scale orchestras as long as they have access to software and technology, however, reality seems to contradict this assumption. Economic policies and the importance of informal networks in the Bollywood industry limit the possibilities of artists who are not based in India and more specifically, in Mumbai. By exploring the reasons and implications, this discussion questions the limitations of transcultural capital and argues that in the current homeland-diaspora dynamics it is not enough to be an innovative music producer based in the diaspora. Ironically, with the increasing globalisation and growing involvement of transnational actors in Bollywood music-making, the necessity to be physically present in Mumbai has become vital. The thesis could however not go into detail with less successful attempts at crossing over, as I was looking to understand the ways in which British Asian music is produced and consumed within the Bollywood industry, and therefore including cases like this would have taken me over the word limit of the thesis.

Further directions for research

This thesis has focused on British Asian artists in Bollywood and the Punjabi music industry, however, it is important to see that similar patterns are currently underway in other diasporic locations as well. Sidhu Moosewala, a Canadian singer is currently one of the most popular Punjabi singers both in India and abroad (Singh 2019). He often returns to the Punjab to tour and he could be considered as the newest face of global Jatt aspirations. Jasmin Sandlas, the Punjabi-American singer is one of the few women who could make a mark in both the Punjabi as well as the Bollywood music industry, her concerts are very popular both in Punjab and she also cultivates the myth of return in her social media posts. The Punjabi diaspora in Canada is especially relevant in terms of global taste-making and the intersection of the global BhangraNation and the Canadian scene would necessitate its own field of research, but it would be very relevant as it would seem that Canada is replacing the UK as the Western hub of innovation.

Apart from looking at the involvement of other diasporas in the Punjabi music industry, the Bollywood creative industry could also serve as fertile ground for research. The Bollywood music industry attracts a growing population of diaspora artists, who move to Mumbai and draw on their transcultural capital to establish themselves. Jonita Gandhi from Canada, Raja Kumari from the USA, Shirley Sethia from New Zealand are all successful playback singers by now, and there would be scope to look into how their in-between position between East and West,

homeland and diaspora plays into their self-perception, image and reception in India. Perhaps they symbolise what twenty-first century Bollywood is looking for: a certain familiarity with Indian performance traditions, languages and culture - while being equally comfortable with Western music culture. Their careers could offer further insight into how ideas of globalisation and the changing social, political and economic landscape between India and its diasporic communities play out in the music industry.

It is not only the Bollywood music industry, but the film industry as well that attracts diasporic South Asians. Some of Bollywood's most popular actresses come from a diasporic background. However, it is important to notice that there are no diasporic male stars, suggesting that there is a gender aspect worth investigating in this case. These diasporic actresses, such as Katrina Kaif, Nargis Fakhri and Sunny Leone are also perceived to represent a different kind of femininity in their star image and their film roles than non-NRI actresses. The most prominent diasporic actresses are Katrina Kaif and Sunny Leone, both of whom were born outside of India but became famous in Bollywood despite their lack of Hindi language skills. Whereas Katrina Kaif initially portrayed women born and brought up in the diaspora who were reinitiated into Indian culture by the hero (Namastey London, 2007, dir. Vipul Amrutlal Shah; Jab Tak Hai Jaan, 2012, dir. Yash Chopra), Sunny Leone's sexualisation as a result of her earlier career in the adult entertainment industry led to her typecasting as an item girl and to perceive her as a sexualised object of desire. Looking at the reasons for their journeys to Bollywood both on the screen as well in real life could be a further important avenue of research in order to understand the dynamics of the post-liberalisation entertainment economy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I hope to have contributed to the understanding of how the diasporic British Asian music industry interacts with the increasingly globalising Bollywood music industry by looking at the example of the journeys of British Punjabi musicians from the UK to India. I suggested that their return to India is empowered by the dynamic relationship between diaspora and homeland. The transcultural capital of the diaspora enables its members to inhabit a special space that encompasses both the diaspora and the homeland, and potentially other diasporic spaces as well. These artists are in possession of transcultural capital that is accumulated as a result of their in-between position, extensive cultural knowledge and their embeddedness in both scenes. Their movement is defined by time and space. It happens in the 21st century and it is conditioned on the confluence of economic and cultural factors concerning the UK and India, such as the withering of the British Asian music scene and the rising importance of India as the centre of

global South Asian cultural production. Both temporally and spatially, nostalgia plays a key role in connecting the diaspora to the homeland. Ethnicity plays an important part too, as all musicians discussed in this thesis are of Punjabi ethnicity and many of their possibilities are created by the importance of Punjabi culture in current South Asian cultural production. I have used nostalgia and innovation as a lens to look at the incorporation of diasporic music and musicians, while acknowledging that other factors, such as gender, class, caste and ethnicity are also embedded in this. I combined textual analysis of interviews, media reportage and social media presence with multi-sited fieldwork to provide an account of real and imagined places of cultural production and transnational musical journeys. As I have suggested throughout the thesis, this is a timely moment to undertake this research, as the earlier writing on British Asian music should be re-examined and re-evaluated in view of larger processes, such as the reshuffling of the global centres of South Asian cultural production. It is also important to look at the meanings of Punjabiness in Bollywood music as it seems to be a steady trend.

These contributions are meaningful because they fill a gap in the literature: no author has looked at the relationship between the cultural industries of the Indian homeland and the British Asian diaspora through this perspective before. This is relevant, as I have shown throughout the chapters that there is a relationship waiting to be theorised and traced. Moreover, I suggested that my findings help us understand a moment in the global history of entertainment where local and global identities of Punjabiness come together and play a significant role in the way culture and cultural prestige are depicted in Bollywood. Throughout the chapters, I argued that the diaspora has played an important role in making the Punjabi ethnocultural identity reach prominence in India and around the globe. This research sheds new light on the cosmopolitan nature of the Bollywood music industry and its increasing fascination with South Asian diasporas (Mehta, Pandharipande 2010) as it looks at the incorporation of diasporic creativity in the Bollywood industry. Examining the ways British Asian artists are incorporated in this industry can help us better understand the hybrid position of British Asian artists, who embody Western and Indian musical influences and connections at the same time.

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Appendices

List of interviews conducted

Date	Interviewee	**Format**
3 February 2018	Tanvi Asher (Business Head, Truly Musical LLP	Personal interview
8 February 2018	Anurag Rao, founder of Canvas Talent	Personal interview
10 February 2018	Mikey McCleary, composer	Personal interview
13 February 2018	Emiway Bantai (Mumbai)	Personal interview
9 April 2018	Sumit Bothra, former head of Blue Elephant (London)	Personal interview
21 May 2018	Mukhtar Dhar, former promoter, programmer (Birmingham)	Personal interview
27 August 2018	Rishi Rich	Personal interview
12 August 2018	Atul Churamani, former A&R manager of Magnasound	Personal interview

12 December 2018	DJ Frenzy	Personal interview
9 January 2019	Hard Kaur	Personal interview
10 January 2019	Kiranee Dhanoa, A&R Universal Music India	Email interview
29 August 2019	Alokananda Dasgupta, composer	Phone interview
12 March 2019	Sangita, singer	Phone interview

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Pre-print draft

'Kill it in a man's world': Gender at the intersection of the British Asian and Bollywood music industries[i]

Julia Szivak

Oh, the Asians? They hated me in the beginning, but now, that I'm successful, they claim that I'm a Punjabi too… This is how it works, first they dismiss you 'cuz they don't get you. 'Why are you doing black people's music? You a hoe? Nobody will marry you.' [...]They want me to act like a girl but when they need me, they want me *not* to act like a girl and to be 'hard core.' And what does that even mean to act like a girl?![ii] (Hard Kaur, personal interview, 2019)

No matter how successful she has become in India, her initial struggle in the United Kingdom still evokes vivid memories in Hard Kaur. When we met in an upscale North Mumbai bar, India's first female rapper had just returned to India from Birmingham, her childhood hometown. As she was recounting her experiences of being a female performing artist in the British Asian and Bollywood music industries, I understood that her experiences are typical of the gender and sexual politics of these respective scenes. However, her career also provides an interesting contrast to traditional career trajectories in these industries – primarily on account of its transnational nature. As an artist of the diaspora who became popular in the homeland, her transnational career was partly a product of her personal biography. It has also been influenced by the storied dynamics of cultural relations between the UK and India, as well as

Punjab and the rest of India, in which British Punjabi artists, such as Hard Kaur have played an important role.

Hard Kaur was born in 1979 as Taran Kaur Dhillon in Kanpur, India, but relocated to Birmingham with her family in her early childhood. She grew up in the racially and culturally diverse environment of Handsworth, Birmingham, and as a result of the exposure to hip-hop music there decided to pursue a career in rapping. After a prolonged period of struggle on the British Asian music scene and in the mainstream hip hop world, the turning point in her career was her collaboration *Ek glassy* with the British Asian hip hop group the Sona Family in 2005, where she rapped in Hindi. Despite its place of production, the song became a hit in India and in 2007 music directors Shankar-Ehsaanp-Loy invited her to produce a hip hop track for the Bollywood film, *Johnny Gaddar* (Khan 2010).

From this point the number of her performances and work assignments in India increased and she moved to Mumbai, the entertainment capital of India. Along with her work in Bollywood, she performed all over the country, participated in reality shows, acted in films and became a nation-wide celebrity. She is now credited with not only being the first female Indian rapper, but also the artist who established hip hop as part and parcel of Bollywood film soundtracks (Ghosh 2019). As a result of her popularity in India, her appearances on the British Asian music scene have increased, and she now regularly performs at British Asian festivals and weddings. She has been dividing her time between the UK and India, performing and recording music, as well as developing artists in both places.

Hard Kaur's artistic journey seems even more special because achieving lasting success on the male-dominated British Asian scene has been close to impossible for women, while female artists who did not fit a very specific set of aesthetic and behavioural expectations were side-lined in the Bollywood music industry. In spite of the challenges, she has been present on both the British Asian and the Bollywood music scenes for more than twenty years. Throughout

the course of this chapter, I argue that this is a result of a variety of interrelated factors that are connected to gender politics of both scenes and the transnational aspect of her career. Despite Kaur's non-conventional decision to pursue hip hop, it is somewhat ironic that it was her refusal to fit in to established genres and related modes of femininity which led to her subsequent breakthrough. As a female, British Asian rapper, she could not quite fit in the bhangra-dominated British Asian musical landscape or the mainstream hip-hop scene. It was, however, the same factors that in India made her a unique phenomenon in the eyes of the Bollywood music industry that was eager to incorporate new sounds and performers. I argue that the key factor in the success of this transition was her transnational, diasporic position. Building on the traditionally vibrant cultural exchange between the British Asian diaspora and the audiences of the homeland of India, she could capitalise on greater mobility and technological developments of the twenty-first century and achieve a status of transnational stardom.

Her career exhibits the characteristics of other transnational musicians, who 'are able to exploit the possibility offered up by the contraction of time and space to lead a near simultaneous existence across multiple spaces, across different localities and nations,' where the key feature of these experiences is that they are 'constitutive rather than exceptional' (Meinhof 2018: 463). In fact, her success in India impacted on her standing on the British Asian music scene, where, previously shunned, she is now considered as a Punjabi performing artist. I argue throughout this chapter that this is the result of her transcultural capital (ibid 2018: 468), a mixture of cultural and social capital that derives from her position of being at home in both the diaspora and homeland. This contributes to her ability to translate her successful transnational career into economic capital. In support of this argument, the chapter traces Hard Kaur's artistic journey from Britain to Bollywood through ethnographic material and an analysis of news media coverage, and thereby looks at the challenges of female participation on both scenes and the possibilities that the intersection of the two offers.

Gender on the British Asian music scene

Look at us now, it feels so good. At that time all the girls my age were, 'Well, we are getting married next year but ain't nobody will marry you.' And I was like, 'Who the fuck wants to get married anyway? I've got a fucking tune coming out next week!

That's way more important.' And they were like, 'Whatever, that's not how life works.'

And look at us now. I don't get this mentality, it's like a fucking Ekta Kapoor serial.[iii]

(Hard Kaur, personal interview, 2019)

British Asian music – produced, performed and consumed by members of the British South Asian community – is not an easy territory for women. Most successful performers, producers, and music industry professionals are male, and the lack of women on the scene is mirrored in the lack of academic attention to this phenomenon. The public and academic discourse around British Asian music has largely been celebratory in nature (clearly demonstrated in the UK documentary *Pump up the Bhangra* 2018) and the gender politics of the scene has not been explored thoroughly. The most extensive monograph on gender and British Asian music, *Bhangra and Asian Underground: South Asian Music and the Politics of Belonging in Britain* by Bakrania (2013) did not discuss female performing artists, stating that this was because there are only a 'few and relatively unknown women artists in the bhangra and A[sian] U[nderground] scenes' (Bakrania 2013: 21), while adding that it is more productive to look at women as consumers of this type of music. The current chapter therefore aims to bridge this gap in academic literature and, in addition to tracing Hard Kaur's career across the music industries of the diaspora and the homeland, to chart some of the structural problems that women in the British Asian music industry face.

The British Asian music scene is not alone in displaying a gender bias, as it has been argued that it is harder for women to be successful performers on other music scenes as well

(see, for example, Bayton 2006, Katz 2006, O'Shea 2008 and the other chapters in this volume). There are, however, three main factors that hinder the progress of females in British Asian music specifically: the origins of British Asian music in traditionally male-dominated musical genres; the conservative attitudes in the community where girls were traditionally not encouraged to pursue careers in performing arts (Housee and Dhar 1996: 87); and girls not having equal access to spaces of music performance and consumption (Bakrania 2013).

British Asian music has drawn much of its inspiration from bhangra, deriving from a traditional Punjabi folk music and dance genre which used to be performed by all-male bands and dancers celebrating the harvest and the Punjabi new year. Traditional bhangra performances were displays of force, virility and masculinity (Roy 2011: 95) and as British Asian bhangra bands sought to evoke certain nostalgic associations, most British Asian bhangra bands comprised male members only. This led to a gender imbalance in access to training and technology, as it was usually young males who were mentored by established artists and producers. This often happened through family networks as well. Scheffler (2012: 347) has pointed out that a major difference between the trajectories of the Punjabi folk music scene in India and in the UK diaspora was that diaspora musicians did not belong to hereditary musical lineages or castes like they did in India. Despite this, British Asian musical families – like the Bhamrahs, where the father Kulwant was the lead singer of the band, Apna Sangeet, and the son, Dipps is a presenter and DJ on BBC Asian Network, or the exceptional case of Parv Kaur, the first female *dholi* in Britain, daughter of Balbir Singh, *dhol* player of the band Bhujangy – still came into being.

However, the women members of these families, and South Asian girls in the diaspora in general, were discouraged from pursuing performing arts as women were traditionally considered to be the bearers of tradition and cultural authenticity (Bakrania 2013: 6). On account of its historical trajectory that blurred the boundaries between performing and

prostitution in India (Vanita 2018), the involvement of women in performing arts continued to be considered immoral in the diaspora, especially as it involved leaving the private sphere, which was the traditional purview of femininity (Bakrania 2013: 18). As a result, music – especially popular music – was not considered an appropriate career choice for a girl from a respectable family. The fact that performances sometimes happened late at night, potentially involved the consumption of alcohol and possible free mingling of men and women, often increased the suspicion of the community about the dubious nature of performing arts.

In addition to historical prejudices, some of these fears and restrictions were grounded in the gendered nature of the spaces of British Asian music production and consumption. Bhangra nights have been identified by researchers such as Bakrania (2013) and Dhar and Housee (1996) as hypermasculine and violent spaces, where female performers or club-goers frequently still find themselves in a difficult position. In addition to safety, another main concern about the involvement of women in music-making and performing was the perception that girls who make music would be less desirable on the marriage market in their refusal to conform to traditional gender expectations (Dhar and Housee 1996: 85).

According to industry experts and scene participants, this perception has changed with time and it is now more acceptable for British Asian girls to try their hand at making music. However, they still have a shorter period than men to prove their merit and they are expected to revert to assuming traditional gender roles if their artist careers do not work out as imagined (‘The Future of British Asian Music’ 2017). Achieving quick success on the scene is hampered by audience demands, who fear that women are not capable of performing music with the same energy and virility as males (Dudrah 2007: 54, 58). As Kiranee Dhanoa, a British Asian female performing artist, who now works in India as an Artist and Repertoire specialist for a major label noted in an email interview with me in 2019, male artists are still booked more often and paid more for live events.

Interestingly enough, this does not hinder female performers from Punjab to the same extent – either in India or in the British Asian diaspora. Recordings of Surinder Kaur (1929- 2006), a singer who had been instrumental in giving birth to modern era of Punjabi folk singing (Schreffler 2012: 343) have always been extremely popular in the diaspora. Similarly, contemporary female singers, such as Miss Pooja, Jenny Johal and Nimrat Khaira from Punjab or Jasmine Sandlas from the US Punjabi diaspora, are frequently booked for live performances in melas and weddings, the traditional spaces of live music consumption in the British Asian context.

Hard Kaur's career, too, bears testimony to the presence of the hurdles described above. She however pushed back against the community's moral judgement, breaking with the prevalent gender expectations by choosing a career in the performing arts. An alternative avenue for women in other traditionally male-dominated scenes was to achieve a status where they are perceived as 'one of the boys' on account of their musical proficiency that transcend boundaries of gender (O'Shea 2008: 58). In addition to striving for equality in terms of skills, Hard Kaur also adopted a tough, masculine image. This includes her stage name, which while referencing her ethnic origins, as Kaur is the surname traditionally given to Sikh women, is also homonymous with the quality and approach of being 'hard core', which is traditionally associated with masculinity. She has cultivated a low-key physical appearance that purposefully pre-empties the claims that she wants to go forward in life through her beauty (Deepak 2016), thus subverting the traditional associations of female beauty and talent going hand in hand (Dunbar 2011: 174). Moreover, she has been showcasing other traits that are usually associated with male participants of the British Asian scene, such as being loud and outspoken, and consuming alcohol openly. She reflects on the prevalent expectations and her subsequent decisions in the following way:

If you're a rapper, you're a prostitute, if you're a mehndi artist, you're a prostitute[iv] [in the eyes of the community] […] So from day one, I decided to fuck up my own reputation. I didn't want to be all clean, all perfect… I'll go to a function with no makeup, I'll be drunk if I want to be. If I'm a hoe already then might as well ..... (Hard Kaur, personal communication, 2019)

Her confrontational attitude posed a number of obstacles as the British Asian music scene had traditionally been quite small, and the production and distribution of music occurred through personalised networks (Banerjee 1988: 212). This often resulted in cancellation of shows and collaborations. Another issue that led to her marginalisation was her unusual choice of genre. Whereas during the 1990s Asian households usually listened to Punjabi or Bollywood music, she became interested in rap, which was considered alien ('black people's music'), masculine ('even Asian boys were not doing it') and subversive. Even though African American and African-Caribbean musical influences had been present in the work of male British Asian artists and producers – case in point are Apache Indian's Patois-language songs or Bally Sagoo's RnB-infused remixes – British Asians' appetite for hip-hop produced within the community was quite small. As a result, there was no other Asian performing artist, and certainly no female artist who was successful pursuing the genre within the community. Additionally, as Hard Kaur noted during our conversations, within the mainstream hip hop world, Asian artists were marginalised as their ethnic origins were not considered authentic enough.

Nevertheless, Hard Kaur stuck to the genre as it was intricately intertwined with her own marginal position in the Asian community. Being a 'freshie,' a first-generation immigrant with weak English language skills, she was not accepted into the fold of British Asian communities in school and was more closely associated with Black British and Caribbean

school groups, who were heavily invested in hip hop culture. She learned English through hip-hop lyrics and subsequently decided to become a rapper. In spite of her firm decision, she spent years honing her skills to the point where she felt that she would not be judged on account of her gender and her skills would vouch for themselves. A similar coping mechanism has been recorded elsewhere, whereby women confine their endeavours to their private sphere until their skills render their gender irrelevant (Wolfe: 2012). Her skills, however, did not bring Hard Kaur the success she had hoped for. After a period of struggle in the British Asian music scene and the mainstream hip hop world, she transitioned to the Bollywood music scene. She was quick to take the opportunity that offered to turn her disadvantages into advantages. Her position as an Indian-origin female performing artist, who grew up in the West among a variety of non-Asian musical influences, enabled her to circumvent the gender-specific expectations that female Indian performing artists had had to conform to in the Bollywood music industry.

Bollywood music and gender

> In England they hate each other and don't care, they have the chip on the shoulder attitude. In India, we work together because there is a scene, even though we kinda' hate each other. And anyhow, in England how far a brown girl can go? I got tired of not gettin' the respect there and puttin' up with all that shit. I get that respect here, it's cool. (Hard Kaur, personal communication, 2019)

In contrast to the almost exclusively male domain of British Asian music, the Bollywood music industry has always been in need of female singers. The reason lies in the intricate intersection of Hindi cinema and film music. Hindi films feature multiple song sequences that are sung by playback singers and picturised on the characters of the film. Actors and actresses lip synch and perform dance choreographies to these songs, that usually forward the narrative in a variety

of ways (Dudrah 2006). As songs are performed by male and female characters alike, this demand provides a constant source of employment for female playback singers too. However, there are deep, structural imbalances in the Bollywood music industry that result from its close association with the film industry. The Bollywood film industry is male dominated, and it prefers the foregrounding of men both in its production and narratives. This is visible throughout the production process, where it is the male 'hero' of the film who gets signed first because the enormous amount of star power male Bollywood actors possess will impact on the popularity of the film. To this end, films tend to focus their narratives around the male characters whereas females have traditionally played a supporting role (Ganti 2016: 264). The female singer's repertoire is limited by the less extensive and less diverse roles that women play in Hindi cinema (Thomas 2017). Female roles traditionally were categorised as the eroticised, Westernised vamp or the chaste Indian heroine (Gehlawat 2015: 6). These modes of portrayal impacted upon the music industry as well, where voices of female singers were similarly typecast and only those singers whose voices conformed to these stereotypes could stay in the industry (Srivastava 2004: 2022).

Moreover, access to the Bollywood music industry has been extremely difficult for aspiring singers as they would typically have needed family connections or powerful mentors to enter the industry (Booth 2019: 259). However, as has been recorded on other music scenes, if there are not many established female scene participants who could provide mentoring, young women might feel uncomfortable as a result of the patronising attitudes of the male mentors or of the close proximity in which they have to work with them (Katz 2006: 585). The association of young women with senior, powerful male mentors can be especially problematic in the eyes of Indian society that valorises chastity and the segregation of genders outside of familial relations. In addition to the perceptions of society come the very real problems resulting from power imbalances between a male mentor and a female mentee that have

recently been exposed by the #MeToo movement in India. According to the testimonies of female singers, leading music directors and established singers have abused their position of power and influence and taken advantage of the aspirations of young singers in a variety of ways that led to considerable mental and emotional distress (Indian Express October 11 2018). In addition to these issues, the music recording process has also changed and it is even more challenging now for upcoming talent to break the industry. The currently popular multi-composer and multi-singer soundtracks only allow singers to sing so-called scratches, or small portions of a song instead of full songs on the albums, leading to less exposure and hindering singers on their way to an established position. Moreover, the laxity of copyright laws and lack of royalty payments make it hard for performers to earn a stable income from playback singing only. Performing artists then must go on live tours and perform at weddings in search of income instead. In addition to leading to lifestyles which are incompatible with traditional expectations of settling down and having a family, performing at such gigs might be physically dangerous as well, as alcohol consumption, which is rampant at such live music venues, often leads to the audience throwing bottles and other objects on the stage (Shetty 2017b).

In spite of all these challenges, the Bollywood music industry is still very lucrative for young singers and it has recently become more penetrable. As the construction of femininity shifted in Bollywood cinema towards a less polemic and more accommodating approach with regards to female sexuality, the moralising associations of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ women have also loosened. This resulted in the Bollywood music industry opening up for a wider variety of female voices in the early 2000s (Gehlawat 2015: 53). In addition to the more nuanced approaches to the portrayal and perception of femininity, economic considerations also played a significant role in the inclusion of new voices. During the late 1990s, a number of non-film albums, commonly labelled as belonging to the Indipop genre, achieved considerable success on the Indian music market. The Indipop artists, such as Alisha Chinai, Shaan and Daler

Mehndi were not the invisible, low-profile singing voices of famous actresses and actors any more but had their own star persona and were celebrities in their own right. The Bollywood music industry was eager to incorporate these new sounds and new performers who rose to fame in an unprecedented way (Beaster-Jones 2015: 146, 154). It is plausible that the fact that Hard Kaur also became famous in her own right through *Ek glassy* and not via the traditional Bollywood route also impacted on the way she was incorporated into Bollywood music and represented in film soundtracks.

Hard Kaur was radically different, and represented another approach to femininity, to the previous playback singers who could be categorised as voices of 'good' or 'bad' women. Even though her brazen attitude and suggestive lyrics did conform to the traditional audio- visual registers of the vamp, her approach marked a departure. While the vamp had always sought to seduce the male hero, Kaur most often presented a casual, almost deliberate indifference to engaging in such an exercise. In her Bollywood music videos, she goes clubbing, consumes substances, dances and raps in order to enjoy life on her own terms. She does not live to entertain men. In fact, her behaviour undermines traditional gender expectations and behaviour. Whereas drinking alcohol is traditionally understood to be the privilege of men, in Bollywood music videos usually represent the consumption of alcohol by women as a way to lose their self-control and to be more easily approachable for men. In her music videos, Hard Kaur, on the other hand is shown drinking and partying, but not in order to lose her moral inhibitions. She is shown drinking because she likes to have a good time and does not believe that women should adhere to different codes of conduct than men.

This break with expectations of behaviour might stem from her own personal history but its acceptance in the music industry could be explained by her position as a woman coming from the diaspora. Her choice of musical genre, her sartorial choices and her behaviour all identified her as an emancipated, modern and highly Westernised woman. However, her

physical appearance, the way she referenced Punjabi culture and spoke the vernaculars of the country established her as Punjabi and Indian. Her position as a member of the diaspora served to not only bridge certain cultural contradictions between the UK and India, but to also to carve a niche out for herself in the Bollywood music industry as a result of her transnational position and transcultural capital. While she was familiar with the musical styles of England and could bring a new, Western style into Bollywood music, she was also acquainted with the Indian cultural context and audience expectations. This fit in well with what music directors and film producers were looking for in relation to film soundtracks in the early 2000s.

After India's economic liberalisation in the 1990s, the Bollywood music industry has been increasingly eager to incorporate new, international sounds into its repertoire, while ensuring that audiences should be able relate to these innovations. Indian audiences demand that Bollywood films and music have a certain 'Indian touch' to them (Rao 2010: 1), which can stem from familiar musical instruments, rhythms, language, lyrics, cultural codes, or cultural references in terms of music. The Indian diaspora, and especially the UK Punjabi diaspora, has always played an important role as a transnational influence, when it came to musical innovations that still had this certain 'Indian touch' to them. It has been argued that the British bhangra revolution had a profound effect on the development of the Punjabi music scene in India (Schreffler 2012: 352), as well as the UK and US-origin South Asian remix culture having a deep effect on the nascent Indian club scene and on the Bollywood music scene. Following the example of Bally Sagoo, Apache Indian, Jazzy B, Rishi Rich, Jay Sean and other male British Asian performing artists who became popular in India as well, Hard Kaur was also in the position of bridging diaspora and homeland by bringing together Western musical genres with Punjabi cultural references. This catered to the growing appetite for dance music among Indian audiences in the wake of music television and club culture (Beaster-Jones 2015: 154).

While bringing the fresh sounds of hip hop music, Hard Kaur's Hindi and Punjabi language skills established a connection with Indian audiences and placed her within the broader tradition of performance culture, therefore music directors were eager to incorporate her tracks (Sen 2018). As she was radically different from previous female singers both in terms of musical genre and star persona, her film songs also did not conform to earlier categories of female songs: she did not perform the songs associated with the chaste heroine, nor the vamp but was mostly performing the novel category of the party hip hop songs. Unlike traditional songs that were picturised on actors and did not show any of the performing artists, her songs featured her as the artist and were featured during end credits (*Move Your Body* [Johnny Gaddar, dir. Sriram Raghavan, 2007], *Laung da Lashkara* [Patiala House, dir. Nikhil Advani, 2011]), used as background score (*Kaara Fankaara* [OK Jaanu, dir. Shaad Ali, 2017]) or as semi-diegetic music, where the actors are seen lip synching the songs, but it is clear that the music is coming from the PA system of the party venue (*Char baj gaye hain* [F.A.L.T.U., dir. Remo D'Souza, 2011]). Her voice also set her apart from previous singers, as her deep, throaty timbre, easily mistaken for a man's voice, is diametrically opposed to the mellifluous, classically trained voices that were audible before. This way, her voice, that was quite unique in itself, eluded connections to any of the typical female characters of the narrative. Coupled with her song lyrics, which were written in a mixture of Hindi, English and Punjabi, Kaur was able to create a unique position for herself with her unique career trajectory serving as a backdrop to the evocation in the audience of something which defied easy categorisation but was self- created and defined. Subsequently, a number of female performers from various South Asian diasporas, such as Jasmin Sandlas from the United States, Shirley Setia from New Zealand and Jonita Gandhi from Canada have also been incorporated into the Bollywood music industry on account of their transcultural capital. They could draw on similar experiences as children of

first-generation Indian immigrants, who grew up listening to Hindi and Punjabi music, speaking heritage languages but also picking up Western musical education (Shetty 2017a, 2018) that provided them with additional value for the Bollywood industry that valorises fresh sounds and tries to incorporate new, cosmopolitan influences but necessitates the presence of the 'Indian touch'.

Conclusion

Kill it in a man's world... better than the rest. Determined in
my mind so I know what my future is,

('Kattey', Hard Kaur 2011)

Having traced Hard Kaur's artistic journey through two very different, although similarly male-dominated, music scenes, it can be argued that she managed to create a musical and artistic space for herself in the Bollywood music industry on account of her own personal biography and transcultural capital. Growing up in Britain, she became familiar with the genre of hip hop, which was not yet popular in the Asian community in England nor in India. As a result of this, she was conceived as not authentic enough by a British Asian music industry that has traditionally been male dominated, as the result of the prevalent genres and production structures. However, the exceptional circumstances of the Bollywood music industry being hungry for new sounds with the 'Indian touch' and the privileged place of the UK Punjabi diaspora in Indian popular culture enabled her to build a transnational career. Nevertheless, the gender politics of the two scenes remain crucial to the current discussion. In addition to charting the gender politics of two interconnected musical scenes, it is important to locate Hard Kaur an as exceptional figure on both scenes, not only in terms of music or image but also in terms of professional aspirations. In spite of her successful

Bollywood trajectory, she remained a relative outsider to the film music industry in the sense that she has been maintaining her presence on the independent music scene as well. Her success in India impacted on her standing in the United Kingdom as well, where now she is an established member of the British Asian music scene, but still the only well-known female artist on the scene. Interestingly, even though on multiple occasions she spoke about the difficulties of being a female performing artist in the British Asian music industry, she is not looking to mentor females specifically, as to her 'talent has no gender as ain't nobody better than me, no man or woman.'

The chapter also sought to demonstrate how transnational capital can subvert established structures and open up new opportunities, while making a case for looking at personal histories within larger, industry-wide discussions. Hard Kaur's artistic journey, which is also a product of her personal biography, should be read within the context of the process of the diaspora and homeland coming into closer cultural contact than ever before, transforming and moulding the perceptions and aspirations of both. The tensions of modernity, authenticity and belonging in the context of gender which are played out in Hard Kaur's career are indicative of larger processes within the relationship between diasporic and homeland artists that can contribute to discussions about identities negotiated through musical idioms.

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