

## **Political and Cultural Dynamics in Bollywood and Nollywood Films: A Comparative Perspective**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Films are popularly believed to be reflection of reality as well as a representation of the societies in which they were produced. They are excellent windows into their societies of origin and could thus serve as good anthropological or historical documents containing data about socio-political events that have happened in their societies of origin. One of the multiple data one can extract/gather from films is the socio-cultural and political dynamics prevailing in the society in which the films subsist. This paper attempts to illustrate this thesis through a review of relevant Bollywood and Nollywood films. Specifically, the study hinges on a review of relevant selected films to show how Bollywood and Nollywood are a reflection of cultural and political dynamics in India and Nigeria respectively. The paper starts with a brief background which examines the extent to which Nollywood and Bollywood films could be considered a reflection of contemporary Nigeria and India. It proceeds to defining the concept of cultural and political dynamics, with strict respect to the Indian and Nigerian experiences. The paper ends up with an examination of how these cultural and political dynamics are reflected in relevant Bollywood and Nollywood films. It concludes that both Nigerian and Bollywood films reflect social and political dynamics in their societies of origin in the same way.

**Keywords:** Bollywood; Nollywood; Socio-Political Dynamics; Gender Relations; Ethno-Religious Relations; Social Reality; Culture.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Although a make believes, the filmic text subtly represents the society from which it originates. It reflects the society in which it subsists. In tandem with this, films in specific circumstances serve as valuable anthropological texts, or historical documents that can provide an amount of data (notably socio-cultural and political realities as well as historical facts) about the society that produced it (Endong 2018b). In line with the above mentioned position, and with close reference to Bollywood films, Harsh (2019) contends that the cinematic text should be viewed as a visual art of storytelling, which mirrors the contemporary society in which it functions. Harsh further explains that from emotional dramas to candy-floss romances to action-thrillers, cinema derives its sustenance, ideas and imaginations—what one may call its raw materials—from its surroundings. “The images cinema creates, surreal or tangled wave of deceit, need to be in sync with societal aspirations

and basic urge of humanity to recreate and have fun and entertainment” (Harsh, 2019: 14), Thus, it can be argued that films do not only tap into the social reality but also represent both a reflection and an “influencer” of this reality. This is clearly explained by The President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science, Tom Sherak, when he notes that:

Film is a reflection of society, both present and past. I think that film and its innovations sometimes [have] to catch up to society but sometimes it leads society too. Movies are stories, movies are people who come out with ideas about something they want to say, something they want to tell someone. Movies are a form of communication; and that communication, those stories, come from societies – not just where society is presently and what it’s doing now – but where society has been. It’s been that way for as long as movies have been around! (cited in Harsh, 2019: 48)

It could therefore be surmised that viewing a film may, to an extent, be equated with reading the society from which the film originates. Films actually provide tons of references to their societies of origin. One of such references is the political and social dynamics observable in the societies that produced them. In effect, by watching a film, one may gather a great amount of information about the political, economic and social dynamics in the country in which the film functions. This again is due to the fact that most film directors and producers tend – or always seek – to tap into their respective societies of origin in order to invest their productions with some amount of truth. Tom Sherak (2019: 49) explains films’ nature as a reflection of socio-cultural and political dynamics in their societies of origin. He contends that:

The world is changing now faster than you and I change our socks! It’s constantly changing, and that constantly changing world is going to induce more movie-making. [...] Movies have become a world-wide feature – and as it relates to what movies tell us. I don’t know that I knew as much about, for example, Cuba as I wanted to – I’m talking socially not politically. We (the Academy) sent an outreach program to Cuba, and believe me – we learnt SO much about society from their movies. I believe, personally, that movies allow people to be taken places they can’t get to on their own – be it travel, or culture, or learning.

Using relevant case studies, this paper seeks to show how Bollywood and Nollywood films are a reflection of cultural and political dynamics in India and Nigeria. The paper starts with a brief background which examines the extent to which Nollywood and Bollywood films could be considered a reflection of contemporary Nigeria and India. This background is important given the fact that any discussion on cultural and political dynamics in a filmic text implies seeing the filmic narrative under study as a reflection of the socio-political reality in its society of origin. After providing this background, the paper proceeds to defining the concept of cultural and political dynamics, applying it to the Indian and Nigerian experience. The paper ends up with an examination of how these cultural and political dynamics are reflected in relevant Bollywood and Nollywood films.

## **METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This paper is based on the descriptive research design. By definition, descriptive research aims to systematically describe the fact or characteristics of a phenomenon, a situation or a population under study. It deploys observation, examination and documentation of a pattern of behavior without influencing it (Rillo & Alieto 2018; De Lima 2011). It also entails the examination or exploration of views and opinion related to a specific subject under study. In this paper the authors focused on a comparative perspective on the characteristics of the political and cultural dynamics in Nollywood and Bollywood.

The paper relied on three principal methods of data collection namely a critical exploitation of secondary sources, critical observations and a qualitative content analysis of relevant Nigerian and Indian films. The secondary sources considered for the study include journal articles, books, edited volumes, book chapters, encyclopedias and a number of relevant newspaper articles and online contents. The data collected through a review of secondary sources, critical observations and unofficial interviews were analyzed through qualitative approaches. In effect, the data were organized according to subthemes related to the central topic/title of the paper that is the political and social dynamics in Nollywood and Bollywood. These subthemes constitute or inform the different sub-sections of the subsequent part of this paper.

This paper is anchored in Stuart Hall's (1997) representation theory. According to this theory, representation is a process through which members of a specific culture or the media of mass media deploy language and signs to produce meanings. These meanings are never fixed or "real", but defined by society. This means that there is no true representation of people, places or reality in a media text, but there are multiple ways in which these people, places and reality can be represented. According to Hall, there are three approaches to understanding the representation process namely: reflective, intentional and constructive views (Talreja, Jhally & Patierno 1997). The constructive approach suggests that the signs used in the media to communicate specific ideas or concepts reflect reality. This approach hinges on the principle that language acts like a mirror to the world. The approach also feeds on the assumption that visual signs often have some relation to the physical form of the object they represent. This relation may sometimes be iconic.

The Intentional approach states suggests that the media imposes meanings to the world through the signs that they use to describe it (the world). The constructive approach on the other hand presents representation as a symbolic process. It suggests that the media – including cinema – construct meanings by organizing signs into a system. Thus, Hall's theory suggests that filmmakers try to "fix" meanings in their filmic texts. Their representations cannot be universalized as they may be contested. Analyzing the representation of something in films should not be about whether these films reflect or distort reality, as this implies there could be a single authentic meaning. Hall's theory rather suggests that filmic/media representation can generate many meanings. By meaning Hall mean what is included or excluded in the representation of something.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section addresses the four objectives of the paper. These objectives include (i) critically Bollywood and Nollywood films as reflections of the socio-political reality of contemporary India and Nigeria; (ii) Cultural and political dynamics in Nollywood and Bollywood;

## **BOLLYWOOD AND NOLLYWOOD FILMS AS REFLECTIONS OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL REALITY OF CONTEMPORARY INDIA AND NIGERIA**

Establishing the truth value of films as well as the extent to which they represent/reflect their societies of origin has always been subject to controversy. Many critics have out-rightly exclusively relegated films to fantasy and make belief; thereby excluding the possibility that films perfectly or moderately reflect reality. This group of critics have often partially based their argument on the myth that, dramatization, montage and the search for entertainment (which characterizes filmic production) are to some extent incompatible with truth-telling and authenticity (Peters, 2021). Nehu University professor Ranjini Majumdar shares corollaries as he notes that “cinema means entertainment. We can't expect directors to portray the hard realities of society. This is not the task of commercial cinema” (cited in Ishia 2019: 78).

Radical members of this skeptical school of thought have even gone to the extent of not seeing news media such as documentary films as “trustworthy” reflection of reality (Anderson 2018, ABC 2012). For such radical critics, documentary films involve a degree of gate-keeping which most often affects the documentary nature of documentary films. Gate-keeping in documentary film making enables bias and subtle distortion. In such a context, film cannot be said to really reflect the truth about a society. Contrary to this position, many other critics have defended the informative potential of films, arguing that films (including fictional ones) could, in some context, even stand as anthropological and historical documents (Joomuck & Srivastava 2024, Endong 2019, 2018; Shreya 2019). Gunning for one, notes that though it is possible that films may to an extent distort truth, they have the particularity of preserving gestures, gaits, rhythms, attitudes, and human interactions in a variety of situations. All these may only go a long way in teaching their viewers one or two things about the past and the present. Gunning adds that:

All historical evidence should be subject to skepticism. Historical documents, eyewitnesses accounts, and archeological objects all claim a direct connection to events or situations that historians evaluate and interpret. Film, however, offers a unique ability to reflect and resemble historical figures and events. A motion picture of Teddy Roosevelt does not simply claim to be related to the president and big game hunter, but to show what he looked like and how he moved. This is perhaps film's greatest attraction and seduction: by capturing images in time, it seems not simply to represent things but to make them present. Because of this ability to, in the words of one theorist, “mummify time,” some early audiences saw cinema as a defense against death. (Gunning cited in Endong, 2018b: 187)

The debate briefly visited above is reflected – or often seen – in Bollywood and Nollywood criticism. In effect, over three schools of thought have addressed the question of authenticity in Bollywood and Nollywood films. The first school of thought has rejected the thesis that these films reflect India and Nigeria arguing that they (the films) generally reflect only the subjective ideas or philosophies of their makers. They either misrepresent India and Nigeria or focus on a subjective and selective view of these two countries (Joomuck & Srivastava 2024; Shakuntala 2010; Sunera 2014; Tagar 2015; Shabistan 2017; Shona 2019). In line with this, Ishia opines that Bollywood films mainly depict Indian people's (particularly Bollywood filmmakers') desired versions of reality. As he insightfully explains, most Bollywood films tend to “take the viewer on an emotional rollercoaster ride, but because they are essentially fairytales, happy endings are always expected and granted”. He further buttresses his position with Indian film professor Madhaya Prasad's assessment of

Bollywood. According to his assessment, Bollywood films “influence people and society. But they depict a reality that has nothing to do with the viewers' reality” (cited in Ishia 2019, p.17). In the same line of thought, Mathur (2007) cites Indian poet Javed Akhtar as saying that: “The films certainly do reflect what is happening in [the Indian] society. But they reflect the desires, the hopes, values, and traditions [of the Indian peoples. Thus], they are not a real reflection but the dreams of a society” (Mathur, 2007:37).

A number of Nigerian critics have made similar skeptical readings of Nollywood films. Former Minister of Communication Dora Akunyili for example, has in several fora tasked Nollywood with misrepresenting Nigeria through the culture of over-emphasizing negativities. When wooing Nollywood filmmakers during the famous 2009 “Rebranding Nigeria” Campaign, she lamented that Nollywood filmmakers’ excessive focus on the negative facets of Nigerian cultures has tended to popularize only a one-sided portrayal of the Nigerian society. Under such conditions it will be unwise to regard Nollywood films as a perfect reflection of Nigeria. In tandem with Dora Akunyili’s worries/queries, many other skeptical critics have contended that Nollywood films tend to exaggerate anything negative about Nigeria, thereby distorting the Nigerian socio-political reality (Olugbenga & Fadipe 2017; Ovunda 2018, 2016).

Such a contention is negated or downplayed by a second school of thought which rather argues that although plagued with many technical faults, Nollywood films directly or indirectly reflect Nigeria and are relevant peepholes into the Nigerian political, social and economic life (Uwalaka 2018; Omega 2017). In line with this, Zina Saro Wiwa has pointedly argued that Nollywood films represent “A vision of Nigeria and Africa that has been wrested from the ideologies of foreign bodies and distributors that want to impose their own vision of Africa” (cited in Barrot 2009: 9). Similarly, Nordic Africa Institute guest researcher Olaoluwa (2018) observes that “predictable storylines and low technical quality characterizes many Nollywood film. At the same time, their themes accurately reflect Nigerian society” (p.109). A similar reading of Bollywood films has been made by a number of Indian critics. A case in point is Jodhaa (2016: 71) who contends that:

Art is a reflection of life, and Indian movies have utilized their spellbinding scripts to portray the diversity and highlights of Indian culture, time and again. India is a land of diverse cultures and traditions, and to understand the true beauty of this great nation you have to watch some of the blockbuster movies whose scripts teach a lot about the way of Indian life.

The above mentioned review of Bollywood and Nollywood film criticisms reveals that each observer has his argument on the issue of Bollywood and Nollywood’s ability to respectively reflect the Indian and Nigerian socio-political reality. In view of this complex situation, it will be difficult to determine with surgical precision which of the two schools of thought should be given (greater) credence. Perhaps the wisest approach will be to “escape through the horns of the dilemma” by adopting a third and visibly neutral stance. Tom Sherak (2016) does just this, when he opines that films most often (re)present the perspectives of their directors/makers. These perspectives are their own contributions to burning socio-political debates. The movies are (subjective) perceptions which must be subject to skepticism and scrutiny. As he puts it filmic narratives are open texts when it comes to representing social or political reality. Some of them take sides and it is left to the viewer to agree or disagree with the content or the film directors/makers. Other movies take sides and “create a conversation, and that conversation can be in any area; be it political, social, or even within specific disciplines such as fashion. Movies can create controversy, and tell difficult stories. Movies have always either taken a side, remained central, or projected something

forward” (Sherak 2016). In line with Sherak’s position this author will argue that films arguably reflect reality. Through them, one may read the socio-political dynamics prevailing in their societies of origin. The following parts of this discourse will demonstrate this truism.

### **CULTURAL AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN BOLLYWOOD AND NOLLYWOOD FILMS**

Having revisited the debate on films’ ability to provide evidences about the social and political reality in their respective societies of origin, it is now time to show how Bollywood and Nollywood film reflect the political and cultural dynamics in Nigeria and India. For this to be done one will need a working definition of political and cultural dynamics.

### **UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS**

The term dynamics is generally defined according to two prisms: (i) [in]stability and (ii) interaction between variables/factors (Sterman 2000; Durlauf & Youth 2001; Iroegbu 2019). From the prism of stability, the term dynamics is construed as change. No doubt social scientist Bardach (2011: 1) remarks that “understanding dynamics means understanding change”. Going by this premise, he particularly defines policy dynamics (an aspect of political dynamics) as policy change which implies understanding “how to get from here to there in the political process”. Such a concern should thus be focused on “both policy-making and policy implementing processes”.

From the prism of interaction between given factors, the term “dynamics” is defined as the attitudinal outcome of interaction between active entities or human factors belonging to a given wider system. This system may be social, cultural or political. Going by this premise, Durlauf and Young (2001) define social dynamics (otherwise called socio-dynamics) as the behavior of groups that results from the interactions of individual group members. They further view socio-dynamics as the study of the relationship between individual interactions and group level behaviors. In the line of thought, Asmeret et al (2010) view political dynamics as the interplay between a number of political players or factors working within a specific system. Applied for instance to the issue of elections, political dynamics will be “the interplay between political leaders and voters, as well as endogenous and exogenous factors that impact the perceptions and goals of the electorate” (Asmeret et al, 2010). In line with the above mentioned definitions, this paper will view cultural and political dynamics as both changes and interplays between factors belonging the Nigerian and Indian cultural and political systems.

### **BOLLYWOOD AND NOLLYWOOD FILMS AS A REFLECTION OF CULTURAL AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN INDIA AND NIGERIA**

It must be acknowledged, from the onset that, the above mentioned sub-topic is clearly panoramic. Indeed, exploring cultural and political dynamics will entail the use of approaches that do not fall within the methodological preview of this paper. Also, it may not be possible to explore all the cultural and political dynamics prevailing in two countries in a paper like this one. In view of such complexity of the subject under discourse, it will be more expedient to focus on few aspects of cultural and political dynamics in Nigeria and India. These aspects will be those that will be examined in the next subhead of this paper. To therefore make out study more feasible, this author will delimit her focus to four sub-typologies of socio-political dynamics namely:

- i. Gender relations,
- ii. Religious dynamics
- iii. Rich vs poor relations (class systems) and
- iv. Ethnic relations

This delimitation is justified by the fact that the above sub-typologies of cultural and political dynamics are most often represented/portrayed in the films produced in both Bollywood and Nollywood, as shall be demonstrated in this section with the aid of relevant filmic productions. It is also important to underline the fact that it is hard to find a Bollywood or Nollywood film that explores all these dynamics, the author intends not to limit her case studies to a specific film. The treatment of each sub-typology will be done in the light of as all relevant and available film.

## **GENDER RELATIONS**

One observes that both India and Nigeria have large female populations. In spite of these strong female demographics, women remained seriously marginalized at the social, political and corporate spheres within these two countries (Sunera 2014; Shruti 2014). Women's representation in key sectors such as the media, private entrepreneurship and governmental services remains low in both countries. This has been so despite various waves of pro-women activism in both countries (Chaudhuri 2022; Bisht 2019). It should be noted that feminist/womanist paradigms such as the women affirmative action, the Women in Development concept and women empowerment have been strongly advocated in the countries. However, various forms of women marginalization and patriarchy remain strongly perceptible in the two countries. There have been cases of women who have exhibited impressive and exceptional social and economic upward mobility particularly in the domains of entrepreneurship, research and administration in both countries. However, most sectors remain dominated by men.

The place of the woman continues dominantly to be at the kitchen. They are mainly relegated to inferior social and political roles in both countries. Illiteracy rate continues to be high among female while most parents (particularly in the rural areas) continue to prioritize the education of male children. According to a report published by Oxfam (cited by Punch 2017), "One in 10 children in Nigeria does not reach their fifth birthday, and more than 10 million children do not go to school. Sixty per cent of these are girls". Similar indexes are observed in India (Buckley 2015: 106).

Thus, cultures, tradition and religious beliefs strongly encourage male domination in both countries. Mentalities have started changing but such change is very slow and mainly observed in urban regions within both countries. An institution in which women are seriously marginalized in both countries is marriage. In India, this marginalization seems more pronounced. One illustration of this woman marginalization in marriage is seen in the prevalence of arranged marriage in the country. According to a 2012 Study by UNICEF, over 90% of marriages are arranged in India. This practice (arranged marriage) which has for years prevailed in the country, is observed even in urban regions where greater cultural liberalism could be expected. Thus, the forces of modernity have not so much change mentalities as regards gender relations in the context of marriage. Arranged and forced marriages are similarly observed in Nigeria. However, they tend to be dominant in the northern part of the country as well as in rural areas. The prevalence of arranged/forced marriages in the Northern part of Nigeria is, in part, due to the prevalence of Islam in this region. Islamic doctrines (as inspired by the Quran) dictate that women are secondary to men. The institution of forced or arranged marriage most often involves a patriarchal figure (the father or male guardian) who imposes his choice on a young girl (his daughter).

A number of Bollywood and Nollywood films have sought to represent the above mentioned Indian and Nigerian realities. In his film titled "*Parched*", Leena Yadav initiates a conversation on gender relations in modern India through a frank criticism against old age-ridiculed traditions such as forced/arranged marriages, male child preference and male

domination in the marriage among other sexist cultures. The film chronicles the lives of four women subjected to a plurality of backward traditions prevailing in an Indian village. The film shows how Indian women are made to be dehumanized by the patriarchal strictures and structures of their rural society. Similarly, Tabu's *Astitva*, brushes issues such as male chauvinism and marital abuses against women in India. The film narrates the life of a woman, Aditi who is severely punished for a moment of weakness that leads her to commit her "ek hi bhool" (adultery). Meanwhile, the sin, if committed by her husband is let go off. Aditi in the film is made to brave this patriarchal social stricture.

The same indexes of gender inequalities (socio-cultural dynamics) are shown in Nollywood films. Vaughan Richards' drama titled *Outspoken* for instance, casts a searing spotlight on the issue of child brides, a culture which remains perceptible in the Nigerian society in spite of modernism. If films such as *Outspoken*, Keni Adetiba's *The Wedding Party* and Michael Belo's *The Meeting* show the various ways in which women are marginalized and relegated to secondary roles in almost social institution in Nigeria, other movies such as Chidebere's *Abuja Ladies* seek to show how women fight to fight such patriarchal strictures in the Nigerian society. *Abuja Ladies* in particular is a film which recounts the life of a group of women who are more powerful than their husbands and who dedicate their lives to acquiring more power over each other. The film also shows the struggles of these women towards enjoying powerful careers in life.

### RELIGIOUS DYNAMICS

The two countries are multi-religious entities. While Christianity, Islam and Animism prevail in Nigeria, Hinduism (to which over 80% of the population adheres) and Islam constitute the main religious faith in India. Religion in both countries has most often been the base of various forms of social injustices. In Nigerian for instance, the Sharia Law which prevails in the Northern States of the country is often time applied in cases involving Christians dwelling in the north. This often happens irrespective of the fact that the latter's faith is different. Also, religion also often conditions voters' choices during elections. Voters most often tend to prefer candidates whose religious faith is same with, or innocuous to theirs. Furthermore, popular myth of complete Islamization of Nigeria has persistently fueled a climate of suspicion between Christian and Muslim communities in the country.

Similarly, in India, religion is still a strong factor determining people's choice of a spouse. Ishia (cited in Joomuck & Srivastava 2024) notes for instance that it is still very rare for Hindus, who make up 80 percent of the population, to marry Muslims who comprise 16 percent of Indians. Thus, religious discrimination remains a social reality in both countries. In Ayesha Takia's *Dor*, viewers are made to see how the Indian society is still not very supportive of collaboration between Hindus and Muslim. In the films, two women one Hindu and the other Muslim, collaborate towards a specific target; but their collaboration is soon questioned and resisted by various social forces. Similar religious intolerance is seen in the multiple Nollywood productions which directly or intrinsically castigate ancestral worship (animism). Helen Ukpabio's *Echoes of the Ancestors* for instance, seeks to establish the supremacy of the Christian God and His power to save and protect over beliefs in ancestral spirits, deities, necromancy and secret confraternities. In the film, Ukpabio shows how it is becoming more and more difficult for Nigerian Christians to get married or make sincere friendship with members of animist movements. Ukpabio's even tends to support the somehow fundamentalist/radical idea that Nigerian Christians should have no fellowship or link with Nigerian animists. This "aphorism" is popular in Nigeria, particularly in the south of the country.

Furthermore, Nigeria and India are very religious in nature. The strong influence of religion in the two societies has fuelled questionable cultures such as false prophet businesses, the commoditization of gods and religious fanaticism. In Nigeria for instance, excessive/exclusive emphasis is often placed on (misguided) religion as a means to achieve upward financial and social mobility. With this, religion has often been exploited by (fake) prophets to exploit gullible masses. A similar situation prevails in India where religion has over the years become a very lucrative business for many. This religious character of India is particularly exposed in Akshay Kumar's *OMG! Oh My God*. Kuma's film taps into the Indian social reality, particularly the aspect that, religion has progressively become a business for many in the society. Without being preachy and boring, the film ultimately teaches the audiences how one should not look for God in idols and be blind-folded by those who try to play with people's emotions in the name of God. Nigerian replicas of *OMG! Oh My God* are just so many. One of such replicas is Chima Ozioma's *The Fake Prophet* in which a man makes a pact with devilish powers in view to acquiring supernatural powers. He usurps the titled of Man of God, opens a church and runs this ministry as a money-making business by charging enormous subtle fee for any spiritual service he renders to the needy who patronize him.

### **RICH VS POOR RELATIONS**

In both countries, the gap between the rich and the poor is still wide. According to a report published by *Business Today* (2019), India's top 1% of the population holds 73% of the wealth while 67% of the country's citizens, comprising the country's poorest half, have seen their wealth rise only by 1% each year. Similarly, Oxfam (cited by Femi 2018) has in 2018 ranked Nigeria lowest in rich-poor bridging gap. Class consciousness is still prevalent in both societies. In effect, the India society is still very hierarchical in nature. Even though the caste system was abolished in the country since 1950, people continue to relate with other members of the society according to caste. The wave of modernism and openness that has characterized the country since the beginning of the 1990s have not really changed this trend: social barriers between people in the society continue to exist.

Bollywood film *A shoot Kanya* immensely tap into this reality as it deals with the social position of Dalit girls advocating for serious change of mentalities in India. The story portrays a love story of a Brahmin Boy and a Harijan (Untouchable) girl, a love story which due to social differences between the two lovers, is only bound to abruptly end. At the time when Indians continue to discriminate on the basis of their caste, this movie visibly aims at teaching Indians in particular and audiences in general how every human being is equal and love knows no boundaries. Subtle decimation based on social status (level of income) equally prevails in Nigeria; a number of Nollywood films have decried it. *Swap Phones* for instance recounts the story of Akin (a young boy from a very wealthy family) and Mary (coming from a very modest home) who fall in love but cannot see the love story grow because of their social differences. Their families are not in support of their union.

### **INTER ETHNIC RELATIONS**

Nigeria and India are multi ethnic countries. While Nigeria numbers more than 350 ethno-linguistic communities (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2019), India is home to close to 15 ethnic groups. Dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria include the Hausa-Fulani (in the North), the Yoruba in the South-Western part of the country and the Igbo (in the South-Eastern part of the country). In the India experience, three ethnic groups are dominant. The most dominant of these group is Indo-Aryan. Constituting over 72% of the Indian population, it includes Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Konkani, Marathi and Punjabi. The second

most dominant is the Dravidians (constituting over 25% of the population, this group includes the Kannadiga, Malayali, Tulu, Tamil, and Telugu) and the host of minor ethnic groups (constituting 3% of the population) (Stuti 2023; Joomuck & Srivastava 2024, Sousa 2019).

Although the different ethno-communities cohabit in peace in both countries, their relations and interactions use to be tensed. Repeated ethno-religious conflicts in the middle belt of Nigeria (particularly in the city of Jos) constitute a clear evidence of this observation. Furthermore, ethnicity has sometimes been the base for discrimination in the political, social and employment realms. For instance, the concept of non-indigenes in Nigeria has often caused educational establishments (particularly tertiary educational institutions) to grant preferential treatment to “sons and daughters of the soil” (people belonging to the State where the institution is based) and to discriminate against people from ethnic groups located outside the State (popularly called “non-indigenes”). Also, the ethnic origins of candidate in an election often determine the choice of voters, hence the prevalence of ethnic-politics in Nigeria. Similarly, ethnicity-related issues often condition social and political interactions in India. Muni (2016) notes for instance how there use to be conflicts between ethno-religious communities in India. He notes that, one of the commonly accepted characteristics of the spectrum of ethnic diversity in India is that, “there is no subordinate dominant pattern between the ethnic groups. However, the patterns of conflicts and contradictions between ethno-communities often vary along scales of time and place. Thus, as far as social and politico-cultural dynamics are concerned, there are a number of similarities between Nigeria and India.

The above situational is reflected in a variety of Bollywood and Nollywood movies. Bollywood films such as *Bombay* (1995), *Gadar* (Revolt, 2001), *Veer Zaara* (Veer and Zara, 2004) or *Jodhaa Akhbar* (Jodhaa and Akbar, 2008) vividly show how it is still difficult for Hindus (who constitute 80% of the Indian population) to get married to members of other ethno-religious communities. These films broach various taboos prevailing in the Indian society as well as stereotypes which ethnic groups often hold onto whenever they are interacting with members of other ethnic groups. In the same way, many Nollywood films show ethnic-related taboos in the Nigerian society. Kunle Afolayan’s *Omugwo* (2017) for instance takes a close look at relationship between Igbos and Yoruba’s. It tells the story of two mothers-in-law from two different cultural backgrounds who, simultaneously take the initiative to “take care of” their newly born grandchild, but soon see their efforts hampered by the fact the lack a strong affinity. Their relations are characterized by cultural clashes and tempers flare. In a similar film titled *The Meeting* (2012), Mildred Okwo show how ethno-cultural discrimination often affect the Nigerian civil service. The film actually presents the adventure of Makinde (a Yoruba man), who is sent by his company to secure the signature of a Minister on a contract he is been given. Instead of the one-day trip he had envisaged, Makinde becomes the unwitting hostage of a bribe-taking secretary (who happens to be an Igbo) and the Nigerian patronage system. The secretary’s unfriendly attitude towards Kehinde is principally informed by her tribal sentiments.

## CONCLUSION

This essay has sought to show how a number of Bollywood and Nollywood films reflect cultural and political dynamics respectively in India and Nigeria. The essay has particularly focused on four sub-categories of politico-cultural dynamics namely gender relations, poor-rich relations, ethnic relations and religious relations. It has shown how these sub-categories of socio-political dynamics in Nigeria and India are reflected in specific films. The

observation one may make in the light of the films reviewed in this analysis is that both Nollywood and Bollywood films respectively reflect the Nigerian and Indian reality. Facts and myths prevailing in both societies provide film directors with the necessary raw material for filmic productions. Viewing these films is to an extent equitable with reading the Nigerian and Indian society.

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