

**Ritual, Romance, and Royalty:  
Bollywood Remakes of Hindu Femininity**

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***Abstract:***

Bollywood has always played a central role in brokering the connections between the Indian nation state and the diaspora. However, the twin forces of neo-liberalization and Hindu nationalism amplified Bollywood's soft power and accelerated its function as a symbolic resource for diasporic identity. Using the term "mediatization" I track ways in which Bollywood facilitates the performance of a Hinduized femininity predicated on neoliberal ideologies. First, I analyze the mediatizations that have transformed the once limited, regional *Karva Chauth* ritual into a pan-Indian celebration that allows diasporic women to enact a desirable and consumable Hinduized femininity. Second, I examine how film watch parties and cosplay practices in the diaspora use the film *Padmavaat* (Bhansali, 2018) to stage Indianness as naturalized, lush, and empowering forms of Hindu femininity. By unpacking such diasporic mediated performances and practices, I demonstrate how Bollywood is strategically deployed in the construction of a globalized Hindu femininity that seamlessly incorporates religion and culture with lifestyle discourses. Furthermore, I argue that such constructions of Hindu femininity allow the muscular, aggressive ideology of Hindutva to be softened and circulate uncritically in the diaspora.

***Keywords:*** Diaspora; Hindu Nationalism; Bollywood; Femininity; Gender; Mediatization; Cosplay; Soft Power.