



Institute of Chinese Studies

# WEDNESDAY SEMINAR

*Manufacturing Indian Films  
Resonate with Chinese  
Audiences: Translation of  
Culture, Translation of Mind*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Speaker :

**Suvro Parui**

7 May 2025

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**Speakers:** Dr. Suvro Parui, Associate Professor, Amity School of Languages, Amity University, Gurugram.

**Chair:** Mr. Madhurendra Jha, Assistant Professor, Department of Chinese Studies, Doon University, Dehradun.

**Date:** 7 May 2025

**Venue:** Zoom Webinar

- The seminar offered a detailed exploration of cultural diplomacy through cinema. Dr. Suvro Parui outlined the evolving relationship between Indian cinema and Chinese audiences. He framed his talk around five broad themes: cross-cultural communication, co-production and national identity, localisation and cultural globalization, cultural translation, and the function of film in diplomacy.
- Dr. Suvro Parui highlighted the intricate relationship between culture and translation, describing it as a mechanism for bridging societies with distinct languages, values, and histories. He argued that translation is not merely a linguistic exercise but a cultural process that facilitates people-to-people connection. He outlined how cultural nuances like rituals, beliefs, and idioms challenge literal translations, and yet, enhance mutual understanding when effectively adapted.
- The speaker traced the evolution of the concept of "cultural translation" to its emergence in the 1980s, and positioned it as a response to increasing global encounters among ideologically and socially diverse populations. He defined it as the adaptation of traditions, inscriptions, and institutions into formats acceptable across societies, especially in an era of rising identity politics.
- Dr. Parui identified several core reasons behind the popularity of Indian films in China, which included strong content-driven storytelling, social values, star appeal, audience reviews, and cultural connection. He noted that Bollywood films offer

Chinese audiences an alternative to Hollywood-style entertainment by prioritising collectivist ideals and emotional narratives, both of which strongly align with traditional Chinese cultural expectations.

- Dr. Parui also linked cinema to the broader framework of soft power. He referred to China's improved ranking in global soft power indices but also highlighted the fact that India's film industry, especially Bollywood, serves as a key cultural export that strengthens India's global image. Citing Joseph Nye and other scholars of soft power theory, he underlined cinema's potential to build transnational rapport in ways that formal official diplomacy cannot.
- The speaker provided a chronological account of Sino-Indian cinematic exchange, noting early successes such as *Awaara* in the 1950s. However, he observed that political shifts, including China's opening-up post-1978, altered the dynamics of cultural imports. Although Indian films briefly declined in popularity due to Hollywood's entrance into China, there was a resurgence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through relatable stories and popular actors like Aamir Khan.
- The talk also illustrated how the rise of streaming platforms and Chinese 'subtitlecommunities' have made Indian films more accessible to Chinese audiences. Dr. Parui noted that Chinese youth increasingly engage with Bollywood through music, dance, and online communities, reflecting a bottom-up cultural exchange process. These developments have also contributed to the increasing visibility of South Indian cinema in China.
- Themes of women empowerment (*Dangal*, *Secret Superstar*), critiques of the education system (*3 Idiots*), and familial values were cited as crucial to Indian cinema's success in China. Dr. Parui noted how these stories evoke universal emotions, creating a pan-Asian appeal. He also observed that Chinese audiences appreciate protagonists who overcome adversity, a narrative archetype common in Indian films.
- In conclusion, Dr. Parui asserted that Indian cinema represents a "translation of culture and mind", a two-way process that not only makes Indian culture intelligible

to Chinese viewers but also reshapes Indian storytelling to meet global sensibilities. He argued that cultural translation deepens mutual understanding and enhances transnational solidarity, thereby shaping both national image and global consciousness.

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