

Gangubai Kathiawadi

Gangubai Kathiawadi is a 2022 Indian Hindi-language biographical crime drama film directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali and produced by Bhansali and Jayantilal Gada. The film stars Alia Bhatt in the title role, alongside Shantanu Maheshwari, Vijay Raaz, Indira Tiwari, Seema Pahwa, Jim Sarbh and Ajay Devgn.

The film is about Gangubai Kothewali, whose life was documented in the book *Mafia Queens of Mumbai* written by S. Hussain Zaidi. The film depicts the rise of a simple girl from Kathiawad who had no choice but to embrace the ways of destiny and swing it in her favour.^{[5][6][7][8]} *Gangubai Kathiawadi* premiered at the 72nd Berlin International Film Festival on 16 February 2022, and was released in theatres on 25 February 2022.

Gangubai Kathiawadi received widespread critical acclaim for its themes, direction, production value and Bhatt's performance. In its theatrical run, the film grossed ₹153.69 crore (US\$19 million) at the domestic box office and ₹209.77 crore (US\$26 million) globally emerging as a major commercial success.^[9] Numerous publications listed *Gangubai Kathiawadi* and Bhatt's performance in the film on various year-end best films and performances lists of 2022.^{[10][11]}

The film has received various accolades. At the 69th National Film Awards, *Gangubai Kathiawadi* won 5 awards, including Best Actress (Bhatt) and Best Screenplay (Bhansali and Vashishtha).^[12] At the 68th Filmfare Awards, the film received a leading 17 nominations and won a leading 11 awards, including Best Film, Best Director (Bhansali), and Best Actress (Bhatt).^[13]

Plot

In the year 1956, a 15-year girl named Madhu from Ratnagiri district is tricked and sold into prostitution by a pimp, into a brothel in Kamathipura, the red-light district of Bombay, the capital of Bombay State.

She is tortured by brothel madame Rashmibai for not consenting to become a sex worker. Unable to convince Madhu, Rashmibai approaches Gangubai, the most influential madame in

Gangubai Kathiawadi



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Sanjay Leela Bhansali
Screenplay by	Sanjay Leela Bhansali Prakash Kapadia Utkarshini Vashishtha
Story by	Hussain Zaidi
Produced by	Jayantilal Gada Sanjay Leela Bhansali
Starring	Alia Bhatt Shantanu Maheshwari Vijay Raaz Indira Tiwari Seema Pahwa Jim Sarbh Ajay Devgn
Cinematography	Sudeep Chatterjee
Edited by	Sanjay Leela Bhansali

Kamathipura to persuade the girl. Gangubai meets Madhu and tells her her own story in order to inspire her to embrace prostitution.

Born into an affluent family in Kathiawad, Ganga Jagjivandas Kathiawadi, the daughter of a barrister, aspired to become a Bollywood actress. At the age of 16 she ran away from home with her older boyfriend, Ramnik Lal, to Bombay, as he promised Ganga a film career under the tutelage of his aunt Sheela.

In reality, Ramnik was actually a groomer and a pimp & had sold Ganga to a brothel owned by Sheela ^[a] for Rs 1000, where she was forced into becoming a prostitute. There she changes her name to Gangu. While there, she befriends a fellow prostitute named Kamli. Gangu is valued by Sheela due to her beauty & wits.

At the brothel, Gangu introduced labour rights by advocating for prostitutes to observe days off from work once in a week. A local goon named Shaukat Abbas Khan visits the brothel, violently assaults Gangu (which leaves her hospitalised) as a part of his sexual fantasies & refuses to pay. Since Sheela refuses to take action against the man because she wanted to indirectly teach Gangu a lesson. Gangu goes to Shaukat's boss, mafia leader Rahim Lala for justice. A man of principles, Rahim Lala is horrified when Gangu shows him the bruises caused by Shaukat & at the same time impressed by Gangu's fearlessness. He declares Gangu to be his sister & brutally beats Shaukat when he again comes to solicit Gangu at the brothel. Gangu earns the adoration of the fellow prostitutes for her quest to seek justice & fear from Sheela due to Rahim Lala's backing for her.

9 years after she entered into the flesh trade, Gangu is made the madame of the brothel by other prostitutes after Sheela's death. From then on, she is referred to as Gangubai ^[b], and goes on to become a powerful figure of Kamathipura. 3 years have passed since then.

Gangubai initially tries to dissuade Madhu from returning home by narrating incidents of women who escaped sex trafficking being killed by their own relatives in the name of saving the family honour.

However when Madhu remains steadfast in her decision of not entering into prostitution, Gangubai (who saw the reflection of her own past in Madhu) frees her from the brothel and sends her back home safely.

Gangubai decides to stand as a candidate in the presidential elections of Kamathipura against the incumbent, a hijra named Raziabai who has won unopposed for the last 2 years & is renowned for ruthlessness. Gangubai utilises her act of kindness in saving Madhu for electoral propaganda against Raziabai. Raziabai tries to intimidate Gangubai to make her drop out from the elections but Gangubai refuses. With the help of Rahim Lala, Gangubai arranges for the illegal sale of alcohol from her brothel in order to raise money for her election campaign & the living standards of the prostitutes under her control. Raziabai secretly tipped off the local police about this, but they were unable to gather evidence against

Music by	Songs: Sanjay Leela Bhansali Background Score: <u>Sanchit Balhara</u> <u>Ankit Balhara</u>
Production companies	Bhansali Productions <u>Pen India Limited</u>
Distributed by	<u>Pen Marudhar Entertainment</u>
Release dates	16 February 2022 (<u>Berlinale</u>) 25 February 2022 (India)
Running time	154 minutes ^[1]
Country	India
Language	Hindi
Budget	₹100 crore ^{[2][3]}
Box office	<u>est.</u> ₹209.77 crore (US\$26 million) ^[4]

Gangubai, who swiftly took things under control by bribing the local inspector-in-charge. After this incident, Gangubai worked quickly to erode Raziabai's support base by broadcasting Bollywood movies in her part of Kamathipura free of charge with the help of one of her clients for the entertainment of the prostitutes in order to prevent them from attending a meeting where Raziabai was about to deliver a speech. Raziabai mocks Gangubai's attempts by stating that defeating Raziabai is as impossible as bringing a marriage procession to Kamathipura. So Gangubai arranges for the marriage of Roshni, the virgin daughter of a fellow prostitute named Kusum (who didn't want her daughter to become a prostitute & had attempted to protect Roshni from her clients' gaze by keeping her locked away after sedating her with opium) with a Muslim tailor named Afsaan Razzaq, whose uncle used to sew clothes for her. Afsaan & Gangubai were in love with each other, but Gangubai convinced him to marry Roshni instead by stating that as a sex-worker, she can't marry anybody. She also convinced Afsaan's disapproving uncle & aunt to accept Roshni as their niece-in-law by paying a large dowry. The arrival of Afsaan's marriage procession^[c] was a huge spectacle, previously unheard of in Kamathipura. All of this contributed to Gangubai winning the elections by a huge margin. In the role of Kamathipura's president, she advocates for civil rights of prostitutes. While in office, Gangubai gets to call her family via telephone for the first time in 12 years and finds out that her father has died and her family has not forgiven her for running away. Gangubai pushes forward the concept of prostitutes enjoying holidays by calling for the celebration of Navaratri in Kamathipura, accompanied by lights, festive decorations, music & garba (which she enjoyed while living in Kathiawad) and voluntarily refraining from business on the 9th day of the celebrations^[d].

After the celebrations are over, Gangubai is informed by Rahim Lala that a local Catholic girl's school situated near the red-light district has started a campaign to evict prostitutes from the area over concerns of the school's students falling under the bad influence of sex-workers, & taking advantage of the campaign a local builder wants to demolish the brothels & construct skyscrapers on the land. Gangubai protests, stating that the school is barely 40 years old while the history of prostitution in Kamathipura dates back to at least a century & once evicted, the 4,000 prostitutes of Kamathipura will have nowhere to go. Rahim Lala accordingly intimidates the builder's agent from forcibly evicting the prostitutes and warns Gangubai to prepare herself to be sued and brought to court.

After the matter reaches court, Gangubai walks into the school principal's chamber in order to get the children from her brothel admitted into the school. She offers 5 years' fees for all 8 girls on the spot and suggested that providing education to children born to prostitutes but abandoned by their biological fathers so that they can choose careers other than prostitution is a better way to abolish sex-trade than evicting prostitutes. The girls are enrolled in front of a journalist from the 'Bombay Urdu Times', Mr. Hamid Faizi, who was present there & is sympathetic to the cause of education for the children born in brothels. However, after Gangubai leaves, the children are beaten by the nuns and thrown out of the school on their first day. Faizi thus decides to publish Gangubai's interview regarding the campaign to evict prostitutes in the newspaper to support her cause. At the same time, Kamli falls ill after giving birth and dies, so Gangubai takes in Kamli's child, Pammi. After the interview gets appreciated by the readers, Faizi arranges for Gangubai to deliver a speech at a feminist meeting held on Azad Maidan. In her speech, Gangubai points out the inherent misogyny of the society which labels prostitutes as immoral but not the men who visit them. She states that while politicians talk about ending discrimination in the country along lines of caste, creed, colour & religion, prostitutes who actually follow these ideals in real life while giving their services face discrimination & have been pushed to the margins of the society. She then states that by satisfying the sexual appetite of anti-social elements & unfaithful husbands, prostitutes play a vital role in decreasing domestic & sexual violence against other women in streets & households, but their contribution goes unnoticed. She also says that she will continue to fight for the right of prostitutes' children to receive an

education and for prostitutes to be given respect in society. After her speech goes viral, Faizi arranges for Gangubai's meeting with a local politician in her brothel. In exchange for providing support in the upcoming elections, Gangubai asks the politician to make the school authorities withdraw the petition from the court by his influence. However, the politician initially refuses, saying that the school authorities had filed a PIL to the Supreme Court in this matter. Gangubai agrees to provide support to the politician after he assures her of arranging her meeting with the Prime Minister.

Gangubai goes to New Delhi to meet with the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru & requests him to legalize prostitution in the country, but Nehru refuses. Gangubai then describes how people who indulge in trafficking girls into prostitution go unpunished, while the innocent girl is victimized throughout her entire life, how prostitutes, who face discrimination while availing the basic civic amenities like buying subsidised food from ration shops, availing treatment from government hospitals, getting financial service from banks & availing justice from law-&order agencies like police stations and courts, were now on the brink of homelessness due to the campaign against them & how children of prostitutes were being denied the right to avail education. After discussion, the Prime Minister eventually agrees to set up a committee to investigate the status of prostitution in the country & block the brothels of Kamathipura from being vacated. As prostitution becomes legalized while making trafficking of girls & soliciting sex illegal^[e], Kamathipura celebrated its continued existence, thanks to Gangubai Kathiawadi. The film ends by saying, "To cry was her destiny, but to smile was her nature. Gangu wanted to become a heroine, but this wretched girl became an entire cinema by herself."

Cast

- Alia Bhatt as Gangubai Kathiawadi, a female mafia don and madame of a brothel in Kamathipura (character loosely based on Gangubai Kothewali)
- Ajay Devgn as Rahim Lala, a mafia don of South Bombay of Afghan origins & Gangubai's sworn brother (character loosely based on Karim Lala)^[14]
- Shantanu Maheshwari as Afsaan Badr-ur-Razzaq, a tailor from Calcutta who came to Bombay for learning the trade from his uncle.
- Vijay Raaz as Raziabai, a castrated male sex-worker of Kamathipura
- Indira Tiwari as Kamli, a prostitute who became Gangu's best friend & worked in the same brothel
- Seema Pahwa as Sheela, the madame who purchased Ganga
- Varun Kapoor as Ramnik Lal,^[15] a pimp who pretended to be in love with Gangu & then proceeded to sell her into prostitution.
- Jim Sarbh as Journalist Hamid Faizi
- Rahul Vohra as Prime Minister (character based on Jawaharlal Nehru)^[16]
- Anmol Kajani as Birju, Gangubai's butler
- Prashant Kumar as Badri, Sheela's (& later Gangubai's) henchman
- Raza Murad as the builder's agent
- Chhaya Kadam as Rashmibai, a fellow madame of Kamathipura
- Mitalee Jagtap as Kusum, a prostitute who became Gangu & Kamli's friend and worked in the same brothel as them.
- Pallavi Jadhav as Rama, a prostitute of Kamathipura
- Kruti Saxena as Nimmi, a prostitute from Kamathipura
- Sonal Sagore as Banno, a prostitute from Kamathipura
- Lata Singh as Lata, a prostitute from Kamathipura

- Ekta Shri as Ekta, a prostitute from Kamathipura
- Abhirami Bose as Abhirami, a prostitute from Kamathipura
- Chum Darang as Chum, a prostitute from Kamathipura
- Baldev Trehan as Afsaar's uncle
- Jahangir Khan as Shaukat Abbas Khan, a sadistic client who hurts Gangu
- Faiz Khan as Liaquat, Rahim Lala's henchman
- Rakesh Bhavsar as Jugnu, a man who tried to molest Gangu when she led a group of her fellow prostitutes to watch cinema in a nearby theatre while observing a day off from work.
- Roshan Chatterjee as Pinku, Raziabai's henchman
- Huma Qureshi as Dilruba, a Qawali singer (special appearance in the song "Shikayat")^[17]

Production

Development

The news about an adaptation of one of the chapters of Hussain Zaidi's book *Mafia Queens of Mumbai* first came out in June 2017 with Priyanka Chopra attached to star as the leading character.^[18] The film's earlier title was *Heera Mandi*.^[19] In March 2019, Chopra confirmed that she was working on a project with Bhansali, who also confirmed that he was making *Gangubai Kathiawadi* with Chopra.^[20] However, in September 2019, media reported that Alia Bhatt, who was supposed to do a different film, titled *Inshallah*, by Bhansali was going to replace Chopra after *Inshallah* got shelved.^[21] Principal photography begun in Film City, Mumbai on 27 December 2019.^{[22][23][24]}

Casting

The film marks the Hindi cinema debut of television personality Shantanu Maheshwari, who portrays Gangubai's boyfriend Afsaan.^[25] and TV actor Varun Kapoor to debut as the grey role of Ramnik Lala.^[26]

Filming

Production was put on hold in March 2020 due to the lockdown ordered by the Indian government owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, when the film was 70% complete.^[27] Bhatt resumed work on 6 October 2020, and Ajay Devgn who is playing a cameo joined sets on 27 February 2021.^[28] The film was wrapped up on 26 June 2021.^{[29][30][31]}

Soundtrack

The film score is composed by brothers Sanchit Balhara and Ankit Balhara, while the songs featured in the film are composed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali with lyrics written by A. M. Turaz, Kumaar and Bhojak Ashok "Anjam".^[32] The Hindi version of the chours singer includes Tarannum Jain, Dipti Rege, Aditi Pradhudesai, Aditi Paul, Kalpana, Ruchna, Pragti.^[33]

All music is composed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali

Hindi Version

<i>Gangubai Kathiawadi</i>	
Soundtrack album by <u>Sanjay Leela Bhansali</u>	
Released	18 February 2022 ^[32]
Recorded	2021
Studio	Sonic Bliss Studio

No.	Title	Lyrics	Singer(s)	Length
1.	"Meri Jaan"	<u>Kumaar</u>	<u>Neeti Mohan</u>	3:58
2.	"Dholida"	Kumaar, Bhojak Ashok "Anjam"	<u>Janhvi</u> <u>Shrimankar</u> , <u>Shail Hada</u>	2:59
3.	"Jab Saiyaan"	<u>A. M. Turaz</u>	<u>Shreya Ghoshal</u>	4:07
4.	"Shikayat"	<u>A. M. Turaz</u>	<u>Archana Gore</u>	4:09
5.	"Muskurahat"	<u>A. M. Turaz</u>	<u>Arijit Singh</u>	4:37
6.	"Jhume Re Gori"	<u>Kumaar</u>	<u>Archana Gore</u> , <u>Tarannum Jain</u> , <u>Dipti Rege</u> , <u>Aditi Pradhudesai</u>	2:50
Total length:				22:40

The Telugu version of the chours singer includes Sahithi Komanduri, P. Sathya Yamini, Harini Ivaturi, Aswhini Chepuri, V. Pavani.^[34]

All lyrics are written by Chaitanya Prasad

Telugu Track listing

No.	Title	Singer(s)	Length
1.	"Meri Jaan - Telugu"	<u>Neeti Mohan</u>	3:58
2.	"Dhole Ra"	<u>Uma Neha</u> , <u>Saketh Komanduri</u>	2:59
3.	"Chelikaade"	<u>Deepthi Parthasarathy</u>	4:07
4.	"Sukhamulone Untu"	<u>Kalpna Raghavender</u>	4:09
5.	"Navvunu Aapaku"	<u>Vijay Prakash</u>	4:37
6.	"Aadene Pori"	<u>Sahithi Komanduri</u> , <u>P. Sathya Yamini</u> , <u>Harini Ivaturi</u> , <u>Aswhini Chepuri</u> , <u>V. Pavani</u>	2:50
Total length:			22:40

Release

Theatrical

Gangubai Kathiawadi had its premiere on 16 February 2022 at 72nd Berlin International Film Festival,^{[35][36]} at the Berlinale Speciale Gala Section.^{[37][38]} The film was released in cinemas on 25 February 2022.^[39] Earlier, the film was scheduled for release on 30 July 2021 but it was postponed due to the rising cases and second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.^[40] It was then scheduled for worldwide release in theatres on 6 January 2022 but to avoid clash with S. S. Rajamouli's *RRR*, the release has been changed to 18 February.^[41] Later, the date was pushed back by a week to release on 25 February 2022.^[42]

The film was released in Hindi along with the Telugu-language dubbed version.^[43]

Home media

<u>Genre</u>	<u>Feature film soundtrack</u>	
Length	45:20	
Language	Hindi & Telugu	
<u>Label</u>	<u>Saregama Music</u>	
<u>Sanjay Leela Bhansali</u> chronology		
<i><u>Malaal</u></i> (2019)	<i>Gangubai Kathiawadi</i> (2022)	<i>TBA</i>
Official audio		
<u>Gangubai Kathiawadi - Full Album</u> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ird4ZadXxFs) on <u>YouTube</u>		

The film is now streaming on [Netflix](#) from 26 April 2022.^[44] In June 2022, the film became the most-watched Indian film on [Netflix](#).^[45]

Reception

Critical response

Gangubai Kathiawadi received critical acclaim with major praise directed towards the performances (particularly Bhatt, Raaz, Maheshwari, Devgn and Pahwa), music, production design, cinematography, storyline and Bhansali's direction.^{[46][47][48]} On the review aggregator website [Rotten Tomatoes](#), the film holds an approval rating of 91% based on 22 reviews and an average rating of 7/10.^[49]

Sushri Sahu of *Mashable* gave the film a rating of four and a half out of five stars and wrote "Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Gangubai Kathiawadi* starring Alia Bhatt, Ajay Devgn and others is an absolute crowd-puller."^[50] Mugdha Kapoor Safaya of *DNA India* gave the film a rating of four out of five stars and wrote "The film's narrative is such that you will empathise with Gangu, root for her and cheer for her with every small victory, but never pity her."^[51]

Jagadish Angadi of *Deccan Herald* gave the film a rating of four out of five stars and wrote "Alia Bhatt as Gangubai is exceptionally brilliant. The linear storytelling effectively highlights multiple conflicts of Gangubai."^[52] Wendy Ide of *The Observer* gave the film a rating of four out of five stars and wrote "The hard-hitting story of a sex worker who rises through the ranks of 60s gangland Mumbai is powered by a magnetic performance from Alia Bhatt".^[53]

Ronak Kotecha of *The Times of India* gave a rating of three and a half out of five stars and wrote "With whatever is packed into this drama, there are enough moments that will draw you into this world where nights seem endless and the lights never fade."^[54] Saibal Chatterjee of *NDTV* gave the film a rating of three and a half out of five stars and wrote "The visually sumptuous character study, more baroque than 1950s Bombay, is at once sweeping and intimate".^[55] Tushar Joshi of *India Today* gave a rating of three and a half out of five stars and wrote "*Gangubai Kathiawadi*'s camera work, background score and dialogues are the three pillars that take it from being just another gutsy biopic to a film that creates a massive impact. Gangubai is a solid risk for both Bhansali and Alia. A risk that pays off beautifully for both the director and his muse".^[56]

Prathap Nair of *Firstpost* gave a rating of three and a half out of five stars and wrote "Written by Bhansali and Utkarshini Vashishtha, it flips the narrative by handing out extraordinary concessions to the female lead at its heart, not entirely a frequent occurrence in Bollywood".^[57] *Bollywood Hungama* gave the film a rating of three and a half out of five stars, writing: "The Alia Bhatt-starrer *Gangubai Kathiawadi* is a powerful saga and is embellished with terrific moments and a career best performance by Alia Bhatt. At the box office, it has bright chances to score with the multiplex and female audiences".^[58] Stutee Ghosh of *The Quint* gave the film a rating of three and a half out of five stars and wrote "*Gangubai Kathiawadi* is a Sanjay Leela Bhansali canvas and a complete Alia Bhatt show".^[59]



Bhatt's performance as the titular character garnered acclaim, winning her several awards, including the [National Film Award for Best Actress](#)

Sukanya Verma of *Rediff* gave the film a rating of three and a half out of five stars and wrote "Something in Alia has surely changed after *Gangubai*. Her entire performance is about proving to herself and not to the world what she can do, feels Sukanya Verma".^[60] Sanjana Jadhav of *Pinkvilla* gave the film a rating of three and a half out of five stars and wrote "Alia Bhatt and the cast performances, Bhansali's visuals and a sneak peek into this brutal world makes it a definite watch".^[61]

Devesh Sharma of *Filmfare* gave the film a rating of three and a half out of five stars and wrote "SLB has again given us a film which keeps us glued to our seats for close to three hours".^[62] Shubhra Gupta of *The Indian Express* gave the film a rating of three out of five stars, writing, "Sanjay Leela Bhansali's latest is the kind of old-fashioned dialogue-heavy, sentiment-on-sleeve film which Bollywood is forgetting how to make".^[63]

Monika Rawal Kukreja of *Hindustan Times* wrote "Alia Bhatt...has given a superlative performance as Gangubai".^[64] Anuj Kumar of *The Hindu* wrote "This is easily Bhansali at his best as he has been able to marry craft with content; here, he attempts a *Pakeezah* for the millennials and almost succeeds".^[65] Sonia Dedhia of *News18* wrote "Alia Bhatt practically disappears into the character of Gangubai Kathiawadi. There's a hard-to-miss intensity in her eyes, and tenacity in her voice".^[66]

Year-end lists

The Guardian featured her portrayal in their listing of the best big-screen performances of all time.^[10] Wendy Ide of *Screen Daily* named Bhatt's performance in the film as the best performance of the year 2022.^[67] Mark Kermode of *The Guardian* listed Bhatt's performance in the film as one of the ten best performances of 2022.^[68] Subhash K. Jha of *Times of India* listed Bhatt's performance in the film among the top five acclaimed female performances of 2022.^[69] Sukanya Verma of *Rediff* listed Bhatt as one of the top female performers of 2022.^[70]

Sanyukta Thakare of *Mashable* listed Bhatt as one of the top female performers of the year.^[71] Santanu Das of *Hindustan Times* listed Bhatt's performance in the film as one of the best Indian film performances of 2022.^[72] Sakshi of *News24* listed Bhatt's performance in the film as one of the best Indian film performances of 2022.^[73]

Ananya Jain of *Indiatimes* listed Bhatt's performance in the film as one of the best Indian film performances of 2022.^[74] *Man's World* staff listed Bhatt's performance in the film as one of the best Bollywood female performances of 2022.^[75]

Subhash K. Jha of *Firstpost* crowned *Gangubai Kathiawadi* as the best Hindi film of 2022.^[76] Anupama Chopra of *Film Companion* ranked it as the third best Indian film of 2022.^[77] Shubhra Gupta of *The Indian Express* listed it as one of the best films of 2022.^[78]

Deepa Gahlot of *Rediff* listed it as one of her top movies of 2022.^[79] Aparita Bhandari of *Paste* listed it as one of the ten best Bollywood movies of 2022.^[80] *Times of India* listed it as one of the best Bollywood films of 2022.^[81] *The Financial Express* listed it as one of the highly acclaimed content-driven films of 2022.^[82] Corinne Sullivan and Jasmine Ting of *Cosmopolitan* listed it as one of the twenty best Bollywood movies of 2022.^[83] Allan Hunter of *Screen Daily* listed it as one of the ten best films of 2022.^[84] Siddhant Adlakha of *Vulture* listed it as one of the five best Indian films of 2022.^[85] Shomini Sen of *WION* listed it as one of the best Hindi films of 2022.^[86] Anuj Kumar of *The Hindu* listed it as one of the best Hindi films of 2022.^[87]

Nidhi Gupta of *Vogue India* listed it as one of the best Bollywood movies of 2022.^[88] *Scroll* staff listed it as one of 2022's best and most memorable releases in cinemas and on streaming platforms across different languages.^[89] Meenakshi Shedde of *Mid-Day* listed it as one of the top twenty best all-India films of 2022.^[90]

Box office

Gangubai Kathiawadi earned ₹10.50 crore (US\$1.3 million) at the domestic box office on its opening day. On the second day, the film collected ₹13.32 crore (US\$1.7 million). On the third day, the film collected ₹15.30 crore (US\$1.9 million), taking total domestic weekend collection to ₹39.12 crore (US\$4.9 million).^[9]

As of 14 April 2022, the film grossed ₹153.69 crore (US\$19 million) in India and ₹55.56 crore (US\$7.0 million) overseas, for a worldwide gross collection of ₹209.25 crore (US\$26 million), recovering its budget and emerging as a commercial success.^[9] The film grossed over ₹209.77 crore (US\$26 million) worldwide, becoming the fifth highest grossing Hindi films of 2022.^[91] *Bollywood Hungama* and *Box Office India* stated that the film's box-office verdict of a "hit".^{[92][93][94][95]}

Impact

Gangubai Kathiawadi is credited as one of the films which has revived the movie business post COVID-19 pandemic.^[96] It is considered as an *ice-breaker* for Bollywood since it was the among few Hindi film to pull audiences back to the cinema halls after the pandemic.^{[97][98]} *Bollywood Hungama* noted that *Gangubai Kathiawadi's* commercial performance has given the much-needed hope to the industry that the box-office in the near future would fire up even more. They also noted Bhatt's ability to shoulder a film on her own and stated, "Actresses often are not able to do so and need the help of a male actor to get audiences to cinemas. Alia, on the other hand, stands out and she doesn't need any hero's support. Without a male actor, she has managed to deliver a film that's all set to enter the ₹100 crore club and that speaks volumes".^[94]

Additionally, *Bollywood Hungama* further noted that, there's a belief that the cinema-going audience primarily consists of males. As a result, testosterone-driven films aimed at men would have a high chance of succeeding and fairer sex can't make a film a hit. However, *Gangubai Kathiawadi's* box office performance proves that even women audiences can take the film into the 'hit' or even the 'super-hit' zone.^[94] Bhatt's look in *Gangubai Kathiawadi* inspired Malaysia's Northern Haute Couture Fashion Show 2022.^{[99][100]} *Deadline Hollywood* noted that *Gangubai Kathiawadi* proved to be a "rare-breakout" for a female-led Bollywood feature.^{[101][102]} Actress *Bhumi Pednekar* credited *Gangubai Kathiawadi* for encouraging her to do female-lead films.^[103] Cultural professor *Rachel Dwyer* referred *Gangubai Kathiawadi* as Bhansali's version of 1972 cult classic, *Pakeezah*. She drew parallels between Bhatt's and *Meena Kumari's* character and wrote, "Gangubai may be seen as a version of Sahibjaan/ Pakeezah, who finds herself in the great modern city of Bombay/Mumbai rather than in the courtly world of the then Hindustan, just as Meena

Kumari was a heroine of the post-Independence cinema, the way Alia Bhatt is of today's post-Bollywood".^[104] *Outlook* magazine called *Gangubai Kathiawadi* a modern-day classic and credited it for setting the stage for a shift in audience's taste.^[105]

Accolades

References

Notes

- a. brothel madames are euphemistically referred to as aunts in India
- b. 'Bai' is a honorific suffix added to the names of Hindu women in western India meaning 'lady'
- c. In India, it is customary for the bride's side of the family to organise the marriage ceremony & the groom must come to the bride's house with a marriage party to attend the ceremony
- d. considered holy by Hindus
- e. through the passage of the Immoral Traffic (Suppression) Act that year

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