About the song Mile Sur Mera Tumhara (MSMT)

"**Ek Sur**" (transl. *One tune*) or "**Mile Sur Mera Tumhara**" (transl. "As our tune(s) merge together") as it is better known, is an Indian song and accompanying video promoting national integration and unity in diversity.

The concept for *Mile Sur* was developed in 1988 by Lok Seva Sanchar Parishad and promoted by Doordarshan (then India's sole TV broadcaster) and India's Ministry of Information.[1] The song was composed by Ashok Patki and arranged by Louis Banks, with lyrics by Piyush Pandey (then an account manager and presently the executive chairman and creative head of Ogilvy and Mather, India). The project was conceived by Suresh Mallik and Kailash Surendranath, was directed by Surendranath and recorded by people from all walks of life, including a supergroup of Indian celebrities—musicians, sports persons, movie stars, etc.[2]

The national integration video was intended to instill a sense of pride and promote unity amongst Indians, highlighting India's different linguistic communities and societies—India's unity in diversity, so to speak.[1]

Mile Sur was telecast for the first time on Independence Day, 1988, after the telecast of the Prime Minister's speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort.[3]

(from Wikipedia)

- The song was then remade in 2010 Phir Mile Sur(PMS). More than 60 known personalities, including actors Priyanka Chopra, Deepika Padukone, Ranbir Kapoor, Shahid Kapoor, Salman Khan, Shilpa Shetty, and Juhi Chawla along with other prominent personalities featured in the new version of the song.

1. How do these two media texts compare with each other? (Which one do you like better? Why? What are the similarities and differences between the two? What is the encoded message in the videos? Is there a difference between what is encoded in the first one as opposed to the second one, in your opinion? Are they open to different decodings? Do they reflect changes in sociocultural attitudes and values over the time in which they were made, or are they identical?)

The 1988 version almost sets the benchmark for what the promotion of national integrity and unity is supposed to be. Compared to the 1988, the newer one is more prone to criticism, much of which is genuine but is further exaggerated by the contrast with the 1988 version. I ended up liking the 1988 version more than the remake.

- The reason? The theatrical state of production in the newer version makes it appear very fabricated and ingenuine, almost as if carrying a facade—a product of the culture industry. This could be due to the inappropriate selection of Bollywood actors and actresses, movie producers, and industrialists, as well as the use of fake sets, lighting, makeup, etc. What I disliked the most were the parts where they were actually acting (more about this in answer 2). Not everything about the video is bad. The inclusion of

sportsmen (which was lacking in the original video) was something fresh and genuinely welcome.

- Speaking of similarities, I will try to look at the intention. Both of them tried to produce (or reproduce for the latter) material promoting national harmony and unity in diversity. Both tried to have mass appeal by including people from various cultures and ethnicities, backgrounds. Both had underlying themes of patriotism. It's just that it came out more naturally in the first video.
- Looking at the similarities and the intentions behind the video (or what my assumption is regarding the intention), I feel the same message is being attempted to be encoded in both readings. However, I feel when meaning is created on one end and being understood at the other end, the level of understanding between encoder and decoder, after communication has been completed, depends on how much encoder and decoder share the same 'code'. We share codes so often (thanks to mass media) that we no longer interpret. This gives birth to the dominant culture of order. When codes are shared so pervasively throughout a culture, people automatically interpret things in the same way, leading to a preferred meaning in society.
- Yet, ultimately, the encoder can only encode meaning to a certain extent, and it depends on the decoder to decode meaning in a way the encoder expected. The decoder is active, and this gives birth to negotiated or oppositional readings.
- I would like to base my opinions with an example of 'reality TV'. Reality TV is supposed to be symbolic of genuine and authentic behavior, where one is supposed to act in an unscripted fashion. However, the presence of cameras and recording devices can greatly influence the way one behaves. Here I would like to connect to the discussion we had after Aniket's presentation: **Surveillance vs the Idea of Surveillance.**
- So when it comes to decoding, while I know Big Boss is as fake as Never Have I Ever, the way I decode and interpret the volatility between Rubina and Rahul is different compared to that between Devi and Ben.
- While both songs are outputs of big production houses, post-editing factories, and huge monetary investment, on the fringe having reality TV and sitcoms (not in the literal sense) at its extreme, the original 1988 MSMT is closer to the former while the remake PMS is closer to the latter. It is this difference in sentiments that brings out the distinction in decoding (for me, personally).
- Also, one can see the difference in socio-cultural attitudes, merited to the difference of a period of 22 years between their recordings. While the original version showed people in their natural flora and fauna, and we can see the backgrounds unfolding, the newer versions, for the most part, focused on the person on screen and were shot in deliberately picked picturesque scenes and monuments. There were poses and out-of-movie gestures. It's almost as if they are representative of the movies being popular at the time. But movies themselves are a mirror to the socio-cultural backdrop of a country. While the older movies were about characters you could personally relate to, at least to a realistic extent, the movies post-2010 are almost Indian fairytales. This gradual change is conveniently represented in the two videos.

2. If you had to evaluate them in terms of how they are composed, the choice of representations, the platform/s they are available in—any aspect of how they are produced and circulated (music, camera angle, choice of performers, performers' acting/singing skills, etc.)—would you consider them effective/successful? What are the criticisms (if any) that you have? What will, in your opinion, improve their effectiveness?

- The content that leaves a bad taste in the mouth when watching the remake is their voice of representation and method of production. Continuing from answer 1, now the original also had actors, and I do understand the reason for having actors. It's because they have mass appeal, the same reason why we have them as brand ambassadors. Who else will be better than them when it comes to getting a message across? However, the difference in methodology is striking. While the original video had solely natural backdrops, the remake has all sorts of monuments and purposely chosen scenic places that look inconvenient to be at. This inconvenience wakes one up from the cognitive dissonance and makes one realize how fake the second video is.
- For the first video, I can easily imagine myself in any of the locations. They are public beaches, river banks, foothills; nothing out of pocket as such. The only popular icon is the Taj Mahal, which is easily recognizable. Compare that to the remake;

Playing musical instrument on top of a roof

Too much facial focus

“Filmy” Unnatural gestures

Clearly Scripted Interaction

Prepared Sets (no way the people in the background were minding their own business and Mrs. Shethi decided to show up)

Artificial illumination + Salman Khan re-enacting his personal of Sally Bhai in a wife-beater (I am assuming that is not how he usually used to dress at that time)

Conveniently Standing in the middle of a water body with artificial drizzle

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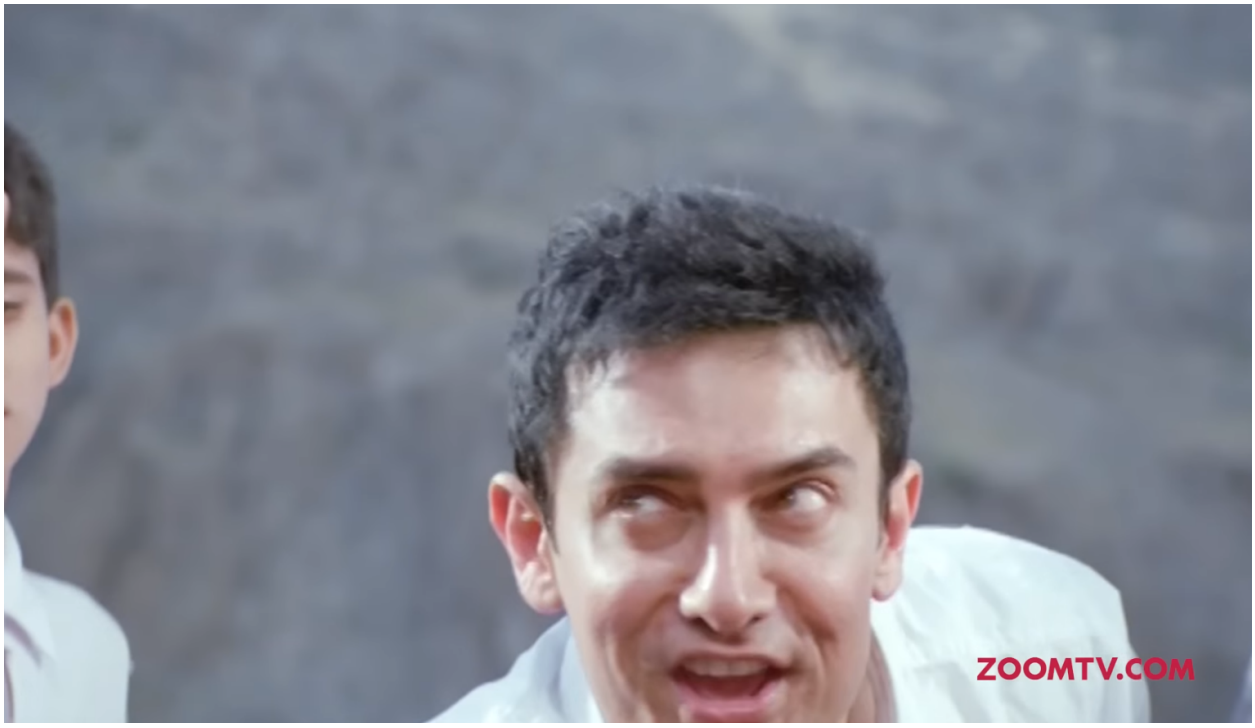

Aamir Khan re-enacting the teacher from ‘**Tare Zameen Par’**

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The points given with their visual examples exhaustively sum up the dichotomy of ideology in both videos. Please note that this criticism is valid in light of comparison with the original MSMT. My entire point is, that if these actors are acting so evidently (from Shahrukh's pose to Aamir acting goofy), how can I feel that their message is genuine?

3. Is it important to study media texts like these? What is the function of the videos? Are they important or irrelevant when we discuss a society/culture and its day-to-day functioning?

Digging into media texts like these is crucial when diving into the sociology of media. Media texts like these; an original and an attempted remake act as cultural snapshots, giving us a peek into the norms, values, and vibes of a society at that point in time, and how they evolve over time.

So, what's the deal with these videos? On the surface, at least with regard to the encoded meanings – they're shouting out messages about national identity, unity, and all that patriotic jazz. They're basically shouting, "Hey, this is who we are, and this is what we're about!"

They even by themselves are part of the bigger conversation(even in the absence of copy counterpart) – it's all adding to the cultural story we're telling ourselves. They're like time capsules. Compare the 1988 version with the newer one, and you'll see the evolution – not just in how movies are made, but in what society is vibing with at different times. It's like a journey through our cultural history. Surely yes, I have had a somewhat rejected-negotiated reading of the newer artifact; the opinions are my own. The newer version was made with the 'culture industry formulae' that were proving to be functional at that point in time.

In a nutshell, studying such media texts is about unraveling the tangled web of media, culture, and society.

4. Finally, what theoretical premises from the course readings do you find particularly relevant while discussing the videos? Explain the relevance of each in a sentence or two.

Culture Industry and Mass Production: The second video through and through, felt like a very glorious affair; conforming to "popular" aesthetics of a Bollywood movie.
Freedom of decoding: While both videos are encoded very similarly, they leave very different tastes in mouth.

- There were other theoretical premises like ISA and of Myth. Even when exploring the theme of 'Unity in Diversity', certain sections are left out in both~ the section of the underprivileged, the poor, the not-so-culturally-well-to-do, the not-so-popular cultures of Uttar Pradesh and the Pahad and Bihar.