



Chinese fans celebrating Bollywood Movie -Dangal's release in China | Image:
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Aamir Khan released his film 'Dangal' around the at the time of border standoff in Doklam and scored smashing records in China's Box Office. Suddenly, the Chinese stopped worrying about border issues and showed their love for a Bollywood superstar - **Tom McGregor***

Is it time for the emergence of India as a much more powerful nation with deep influence in global affairs, international economy and demonstrating a strong diplomatic and military presence for Asia and the rest of the world? By taking a closer look at Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his efforts to establish a 'Mighty India,' one can conclude that Delhi appears poised to stand tall on the world's stage.

But is India ready for showtime or will Indian glory fade as it has done so many times before when there had been a new change of governments, corruption grew more rampant or other unexpected challenges had come into play? Although India remains in flux, there's one element that provides eternal hope to the Indian spirit.

The glitz, glamour and all that dazzles in Bollywood, home base for India's film industry, has continued to shine brightly and has captured the hearts of Indians by producing over 2,000 movies annually. In earlier generations, Bollywood focused on films that were filled with actors and actresses singing and dancing while wearing colourful traditional Indian wardrobes, but it has evolved by producing gritty action-packed and crime-themed movies.

Yet the evolution continued as Bollywood produces films depicting real-to-life drama that hit audiences with an emotional impact. The films, known as Hindi, highlight a striking social message, which inspires viewers to reflect more on current societal conditions.

The new trend in Bollywood for powerful story-lines and tear-jerking acting hold a strong appeal for many Chinese, who are flocking to watch such films. Last summer, the movie 'Dangal' had grossed over US\$194 million after its first two months of release in [China's](#) box office.

Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan has a loyal fanbase in the country, who can lay claim to having millions of followers on China's Social Media sites, such as Sina Weibo. He stays in touch with them by embarking on annual publicity tours in the country every year since 2015. The Chinese have been dubbed him, "Uncle Aamir."

Aamir Khan's soaring popularity in China that speaks volumes as a major diplomatic achievement in world affairs. The two great nations in Asia - China and India - have long remained at odds as the geopolitical and economic rivals have been seeking greater influence over the continent and the world at large. In recent decades, Beijing appears to have surpassed Delhi in the international power play games.

China's imminent rise to glory began with the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping announcing a reform and opening up policy in 1979 to spark new momentum for the economy ushering in free-market reforms and welcoming a wave of FDI (foreign direct investments) to encourage the Chinese to try to get rich.

Meanwhile, India, a neighbour to China, has not enjoyed similar success in its economy in the past four decades. But PM Modi is taking the right steps to place India on the path to a stronger and richer nation. And in regards to soft power, a country promoting its culture to support international dialogue and exchanges, India has often been more successful than China.

A number of factors are at play here. India supports democracy, greater human rights and individual liberties for its citizens, while China seems more concerned with social and political stability.

But what makes India stand out is its film industry. Bollywood has depicted Indian culture and not afraid to shine a light on the dark side of its people as well, which explains why action films with plots about crimes and corruption demonstrate how Indian society is adapting to rapid industrialization and modernization.

Urban developments do bring more wealth to a country, but along with it comes deeper societal ills, such as higher crime rates, break up of traditional family values and other

disruptions.

Accordingly, Bollywood has set the tone for helping audiences better understand the fast-paced changes in India's contemporary society, but every Bollywood film has a happy ending, which gives hope to one and all.

Bollywood appeals to the Chinese since Indian film-makers are keeping it real about our world, but they show how there's still light at the end of every tunnel. When the Chinese watch a Bollywood flick they wake up to the harsh realities of life but come to terms with that when there's a happy ending.



India-China Rock of Peace | Image: HT

Bollywood's rising success in China's box office will likely result in improved bilateral Sino-Indian relations as well. When a fierce border standoff had ensued on the Indian Sikkim-China's Tibet Autonomous Region border last summer, rumours were swirling that both the Chinese and Indian armies were preparing for an imminent war, while diplomatic ties were crumbling to dangerous levels.

Nonetheless, Aamir Khan released his film 'Dangal' around the same time and scored smashing records in China's Box Office. Suddenly, the Chinese stopped worrying about border issues and showed their love for a Bollywood superstar.

**Tom McGregor is a commentator for CCTV.com based in Beijing*

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