

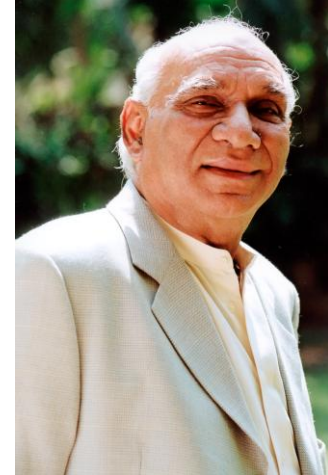
# Q&A with Yash Chopra

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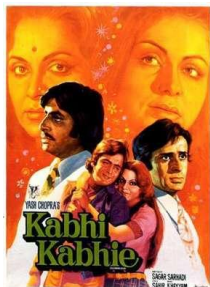


## Speaker biography

**Yash Chopra**  
**Film Director & Producer**  
**DLit (University of London)**



Yash Chopra is one of the most charismatic and powerful directors in the Indian film industry, his name synonymous with the glamour of the romantic film and a certain style of beauty within Indian culture. Born in Lahore in 1932, he moved to Bombay in 1951 to join the film industry as an assistant to his older brother, BR Chopra, he has the unique achievement of directing hit films over more than five decades, from *Dhool ka Phool* (1959) to his most recent, *Veer Zaara* (2004). Yash Chopra has directed some of the classic movies of Indian film history, whether in his favourite genre, the romance, such as *Kabhi Kabhie*, or in other genres such as the urban gangster in *Deewaar*, and the revenge drama *Trishul*.

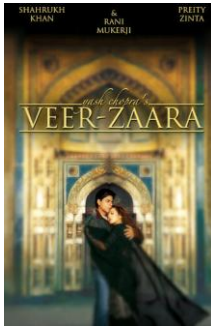


Yash Chopra has been a major producer since 1973 (Yash Raj Films), consolidating his success in the 1990s with a series of huge box office hits including *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, directed by his son, Aditya Chopra. The Chopras have changed the system of film production in India, building their own studios and hiring around five young directors on contracts to produce films which can be associated with the Yash Raj style.

Yash Chopra has created a unique visual aesthetic in his romantic movies which he calls 'glamorous realism'. This is manifested in his locations, sets and the way he presents his stars; instantly recognisable, it has been frequently imitated, notably his trademark shots of misty valleys, snow-capped mountains, lakes and rivers, women in chiffon, and fields of flowers. The music of Yash Chopra's films, from love songs and poetic laments to the latest dance sounds, has provided some of the greatest hit songs of modern India. His films deal with the rich and the glamorous but raise serious questions about love and happiness and how these are partly the work of fate but also depend on the effort of the individual and the family, who are required to act selflessly. The films often touch on dark and serious issues of duty and desire but in the context of a robust moral framework and of forgiveness and humanity.



Yash Chopra has worked with many major figures of the Indian film industry. One of his closest associations is with the Hindi megastar Amitabh Bachchan, with whom he has worked for more than three decades in films such as *Deewaar*, *Trishul*, *Kala Patthar* and *Silsila*, which have defined the latter's screen image. Yash Raj films also have been closely associated with the current box office king, Shah Rukh Khan who has played the hero in Yash Chopra's own directed features for more than a decade.



The media talk about 'the Yash Chopra woman', the image of the modern and traditional Indian women. Many of Hindi cinema's greatest female stars (Sharmila Tagore, Hema Malini, Rekha, Raakhee, Jaya Bachchan, Sri Devi, Madhuri Dixit) have worked in his films in much sought after roles which give more prominence to the female star than most contemporary directors. Yash Chopra has worked with major writers, notably the lyricist Sahir Ludhianvi, a leading Urdu poet; Salim-Javed and with Javed Akhtar as a lyric writer.

Yash Chopra has proved to be a tireless innovator within a mainstream tradition of Indian cinema. Influenced by great directors such as Raj Kapoor, advised by figures such as BR Chopra and Mehboob Khan, he created his own style of film making. His own legacy can be seen in the films of younger directors such as Karan Johar and Aditya Chopra.

Yash Chopra is a household name in India where he has won many major awards for his films, including the prestigious DG Phalke Award, presented annually by the national government to one person in the Indian film industry for lifetime achievement. In recent years his production house has swept the awards ceremony so he has refused to accept any more as Best Director. He was awarded the civilian honour of Padma Bhushan in 2005. Proud of being Punjabi, Yash Chopra loves London and has been one of the pioneers of filming in the UK.



For further information, see SOAS' Professor Rachel Dwyer's book, *Yash Chopra, World directors' series* (London: British Film Institute/Berkeley: University of California Press/New Delhi: Roli Books 2002), and [www.yashraffilms.com](http://www.yashraffilms.com).

## **Professor Rachel Dwyer** **Professor of Indian Cultures and Cinema, SOAS**

Rachel Dwyer is Professor of Indian Cultures and Cinema at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). She took her BA in Sanskrit at SOAS, followed by an MPhil in General Linguistics and Comparative Philology at the University of Oxford. Her PhD research at SOAS was on the Gujarati lyrics of Dayaram (1777-1852). She teaches undergraduate and postgraduate courses in cinema and supervises PhD research on Indian cinema.



Professor Dwyer's main research interest is in Hindi cinema where she has researched and published on film magazines and popular fiction; consumerism and the new middle classes; love and eroticism (of the wet sari and of the kiss and saying 'I love you'); visual culture (sets, locations and costumes); and is currently working on religion and secularism. She has written a book about one of the great figures of the Hindi film industry, Yash Chopra, with whom she has worked for several years.

She has published nine books, several of which are on Indian cinema. She has recently completed *Beyond the boundaries of Bollywood: the many forms of Hindi cinema*, co-edited with Jerry Pinto (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2010) and is currently writing *Bollywood's India: Indian cinema as a guide to modern India* for Reaktion Books, London. She edits two book series on South Asian cinema: one with Oxford University Press, Delhi, the other with Indiana University Press.