

Will 'Love Story 2050' be Bollywood's special effects coup?

Hindi filmdom's most ambitious futuristic sci-fic - "Love Story 2050" - seems set to up the standards of special effects in the country, with a reported budget of Rs.500 million propping it.

Transformation of [Mumbai](#) into a super-futuristic metropolis, modelled on Shanghai, robot, teddy bears and an energy-blasting fight scene are some of the visual treats awaiting viewers when the film by director Harry Bajewa goes on the marquees on July 4.

Introducing Harman Baweja opposite star actor Priyanka Chopra, "Love Story 2050" is heavy on special effects and gizmos and may just be the impetus needed for filmmakers in India to invest in the country's own sprouting industry.

Even as India is emerging as the destination of choice for Hollywood studios to outsource their animation and special effects jobs, domestic film studios have been treading cautiously and are only now warming up to pumping big monies into the digital sphere.

Hindi filmmakers have for long shied away from investing huge sums on special effects and instead preferred to park most of the film's budget for remunerations of stars. As a result, though the country has the wherewithal that meets international standards, films churned in Bollywood suffer from tacky effects and graphics.

In fact, the Oscar-winning special effects for "The Golden Compass", the Hollywood blockbuster that took \$370 million at the box office last Christmas, were put together in India.

Increasingly, post-production movie work - everything from complex digital effects such as the talking armoured polar bears in "The Golden Compass", one of which sported a fur coat with seven million individually rendered hairs, to basic colour grading, making sure shades stay consistent throughout a film - is steadily migrating from traditional centres such as Los Angeles to low-cost locations on the sub-continent.

Nasscom, the Indian IT industry lobby group, estimates that the global animation market will be worth about \$80 billion by 2010, and is targeting it as a prime source of future outsourcing revenues as more film work is shifted to India from the US and Europe.

Yet, Indian filmmakers form a very small portion of their clientele. The budget of "Love Story 2050" may sound high enough, but it is not.

"It is impossible to match the kind of standards that our counterparts from the West have set. It all boils down to the budget at the end of the day and with the kind of resources we work with, even though we may hire the best team out there, you can't expect results on the same lines," says a candid Harman.

Nevertheless, the Indian filmmakers are hoping to ripe a good harvest from film merchandise and sale of rights to mobile and gaming companies to recover costs.

"Love Story 2050" features a fully animatronic robot teddy bear which was created by Oscar winner John Cox, who also worked on "Babe" and "The Host". It also features a female robot. Similarly,

airborne fight sequences will lead to spin offs like video and mobile gaming.

If India is to become more than just outsourcing sweatshops that sketched, painted and digitised ordered content, fully indigenous innovative breakthroughs are the need of the hour. And this can only happen if creative minds join hands with technical talents and create a fully Indian version of "Babe".

With the growth in the outsourcing model reaching a plateau, big players claiming ownership of their products is the need of the hour as this co-production yields multiple sources of revenue from merchandising to licensing.

Kids lapped up Hrithik Roshan starrer 'Krrish', which was loaded with special effects.

All eyes are now set on "Love Story 2050". Come Friday and both the film as well as the digital worlds will be hoping for audiences to embrace "Love Story 2050", its hero and its lovable teddy bear - Boo.

Priyanka Khanna (© IANS / India eNews)