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Features

## Hindi-Dubbed Korean Dramas: Yay or Nay?

We watched King the Land in Hindi to see if the dub works for the show



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It is beyond odd to hear the phrase “Toh kya main koi joker lagta hoon? (Do I look like some kind of a joker?)” coming out of South Korean singer-actor Lee Jun-ho's mouth. Welcome to [King the Land](#), the Hindi edition.

Regional audio dubbing has a bit of a bad rep. Not only does it take you out of the world of the original story, but rarely do the voice-overs match up to the acting and general quality of the source product. Case in point: even as Netflix's massively popular Korean show [Squid Game](#) (2021) got rave reviews, viewers who watched it with the English dub came away feeling thoroughly underwhelmed, almost as if they'd watched a different show entirely. Closer home, the dubbed versions of the [Ponniyin Selvan](#) films sounded awkward and clunky compared to the Tamil original.

Hindi-dubbed [K-dramas](#) are by no means a new phenomenon. They are widely available on platforms like MX Player, Amazon miniTV, and even [Netflix](#). However, [King the Land](#) is the first show to be dubbed while it is airing in South Korea. Netflix India delayed the release of [King the Land](#) by nearly a month, ostensibly because the Hindi audio was being made available. The show has since been among Netflix India's most-watched shows. At the time of writing this, [King the Land](#) is second on the list, right behind the critically-acclaimed [Kohrra](#).



Im Yoon-ah as Cheon Sa-rang

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The Hindi dub for this romance between a rich hotel manager (Lee Jun ho as Gu Won) and his employee (Im Yoon-ah as Sa-rang) has been done by Aradhana Films, official dubbing partners of Netflix. Aradhana Films have localised a host of major international films, shows and franchises, from Marvel to Disney. Only four out of the twelve episodes currently available on the platform have been dubbed so far.

Once you get over the jarring pronunciation of Korean names — Cheon Sa-rang becomes “Chhan Saarang”, Gu Won becomes “Guvan” — Hindi turns out to be a surprisingly easy adaptation for K-drama scenarios. The translated conversations sound more or less natural, and the voice actors are able to capture the feel of the original dialogue. Farhan Patel nails Gu Won’s long-suffering disdain for the world, laced with a note of vulnerability. He gets some genuinely hilarious lines, like “Humne hotel khola hai, dharamshala nahi khola hai (we’re running a hotel, not a roadside inn)” and “Saare gadhe mere hi kismat mein hai (I’m stuck with all the fools).” Shagufta Parveen voices Sa-rang and Gu Won’s scheming step-sister Hwa-ran is played by Shagufta Abrar Shaikh in the Hindi dub. Koushik Siddhanta as Won’s loyal secretary No Sang-sik feels like a perfect match, thanks to the voice actor’s comic timing. In comparison, the dubbing for the more minor characters sounds stilted.



Lee Jun-ho as Gu Won

The Hindi translation of King the Land's dialogues has made an effort to lend some local flavour to the show. So for instance, slang like "yaar" and

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"shaana" are included. One minor character, who has a gangster vibe in the original, speaks in tapori-style Mumbaiyya Hindi, saying lines like, "Aye beta" and "Apun tere se baat kar raha hai (I'm talking to you)." We also get gems like "Lo, natak shuru iska (there she goes again)" and "Tumhare paas tameez ka ढ़ bhi nahi hai (you don't have even the p of polite in you)." Less palatable and more laughable are the overcautious tweaks to the food mentioned in the show: beef gimbap becomes "meat" gimbap, and pork cutlet becomes "cheese" cutlet.

Still, the Hindi dub often feels closer to the intent of the original dialogue than English subtitles. A significant advantage for the translators is the use of formal and informal speech, which is a significant part of how Korean society is organised. When characters in a K-drama use banmal (informal speech), English subtitles often struggle to reflect the distinction between casual and formal. Hindi, on the other hand, can indicate this more smoothly, with its various registers of formality. Depending upon the speaker's position in the social hierarchy, "you" would be "aap", "tum" or "tu", for example. When Sa-rang in the original audio calls Won's secretary "oppa" — a term of endearment that translates to "elder brother" and is used by women for older men — the English subtitles simply use his name (Sang-sik), whereas in Hindi, "bhaiyya" loses much less in translation.

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A still from King the Land

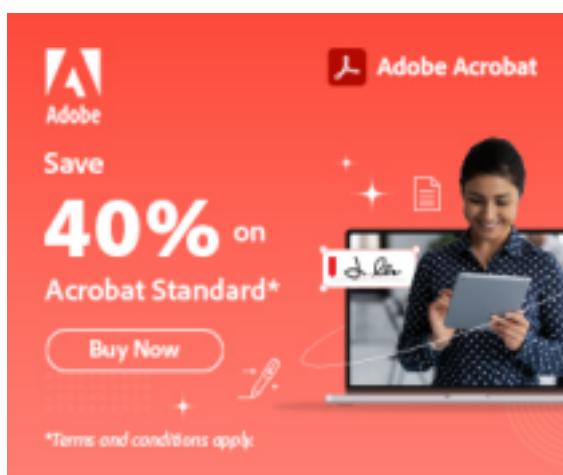
There are inevitably some misses. For instance, we don't have a word for "chaebol" — the Korean word technically translates to "plutocracy" and is used to refer to the uber rich — so the Hindi dub variously translates it to "raees" (opulent), "shehzada" (prince) and "laat sahab" (aristocratic brat). At one point "snob" is inexplicably translated to "gawaar" (unsophisticated). There's also a scene in the first episode in which the audio abruptly reverts to the original when Sa-rang speaks in Mandarin and Japanese, giving us Yoon-ah's voice momentarily.

Overall, the Hindi dub of King the Land is much better executed than previous attempts, particularly the hastily done dubbing we've seen on platforms like MX Player. Given that English subtitles often struggle to convey the nuances of Korean speech and language, Hindi dubs may serve the Indian audiences for [K-dramas](#) well. If King the Land is a sign

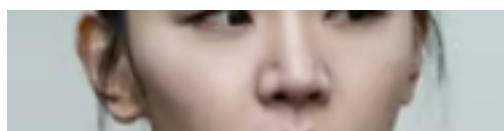
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that Netflix is ready to invest in dubbing K-dramas in Hindi (and maybe even other regional languages?), Indian shows might need to up their game.

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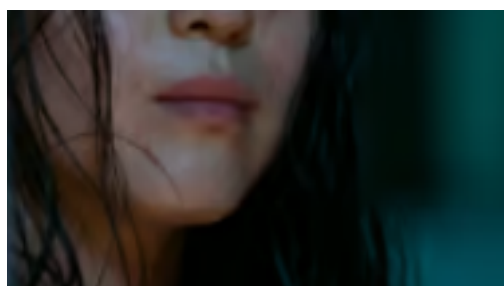
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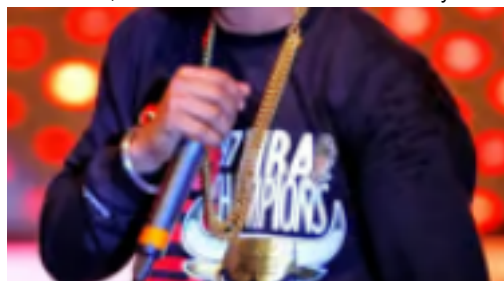
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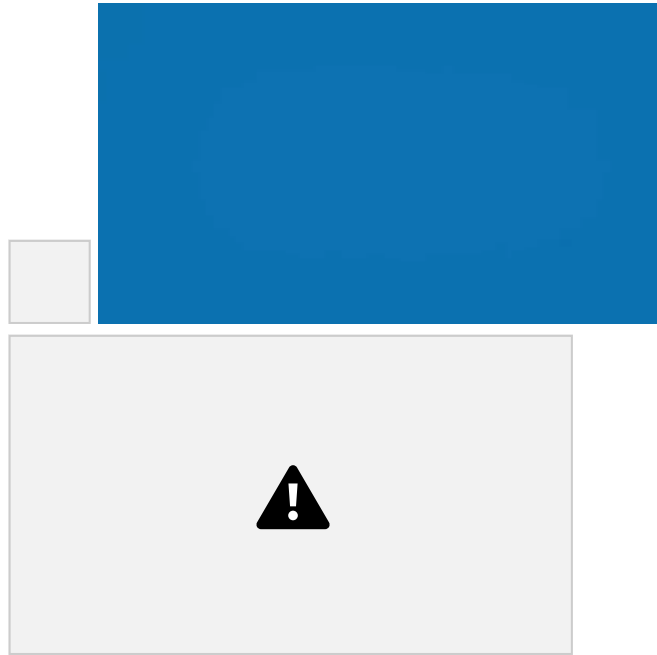
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