MEKAYANA

Mekayana

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Mekayana

Thank You Page

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Mekayana

Disclaimer: Throughout this book, I have striven to be as accurate and respectful to the cultures and religions of India as possible, although errors of omission were impossible to avoid given the ancient and complex subject matter. However, I took certain liberties in the SRSes in order to make a better game. No disrespect or insult is intended.

Opening Fiction: Duet

"Zero Zero One, no enemy in sight," Ashok reported in. Vijay scanned the Kashmiri hillsides with his dark eyes, then glanced down again to his mekayana's sensors. They were telling him the same thing his eyes and his wingmate Ashok were: no enemy in sight.

His unit of Special India Defense Taskforce mekayana had been sent out into this region, this eternal battlezone, to seek out a terrorist cell that had gone to ground here after a series of high-profile terrorists attacks on the city of Mumbai. Vijay's unit had driven them out of Mumbai and back to their base here, somewhere in the epic mountainscapes of Kashmir. Some friendly eyes on the ground had reported seeing an unmarked Mail-0 mekayana in the vicinity; the same kind used by the terrorists.

So Vijay and his squad had been mobilized to track them down to their base, and the most recent intel they had placed them in these foothills. Command trusted Ashok implicitly to complete the task to the best of his ability - he was the best officer they had, the product of years of selfless service to the country of India.

But Command did not know Vijay's secret. With the foothills growing dark in the long shadows as the sun set behind the picturesque mountains, he signalled his squad to move out to start sweeping another area of the foothills. As they moved, their twenty-foot tall mekayana camo coloring blending in to the rich hues of reds, oranges and browns of the mountains, Vijay's mind went back into the past...

The gown was beautiful blue, like the seashells they had once collected together on the beaches of Chandipur when they were both much younger, and Naureen wore the dress beautifully. She smiled at Vijay from across the street, and he waved to her. They were both only seventeen years old, finishing up Thakur high school. But their families hadn't been speaking to each other since that incident at the marriage of his older sister Reena, where uncle Marijke had told a very offensive joke. Later, he had claimed he hadn't known that some of the guests were Muslims. He shouldn't have told the joke in any case, Vijay thought bitterly, watching his beautiful neighbor walking to school across the street from him. They always did this. People would tell their parents if they talked, but they could share this moment together as the sidewalks of their Mumbai suburb woke up.

Yes, Reena was Muslim, and Vijay was Hindu, and they were very much in love. They stole glances at

each other across the street, hardly noticing the people crowding in around them.

"We got a blip on the LADAR, commander," Ashok announced.

Vijay broke out of his reverie and looked at his own scanners. "Ok, men," he said, his strong voice not betraying a hint of his inner turmoil. "Ashok, you hold back and provide fire support; Gupta, you're with me." The three mekayana moved out, low shadows against the darkening Kashmiri hills.

Naureen had moved away with her family after that, and even though Vijay didn't see her again until years later, he never forget her. In the hollow of his heart was a space only her presence could fill. But then they met again, at the Special India Defense Taskforce training grounds. She was in a different training squad, and they reunited during training exercises. There had been something about they way her IND-1 Indra mekayana moved that made him hesitate. Then the other mech had moved, and he saw the vivid splash of seashell blue painted on its forehead, shoulders and forearms. Somehow then, he knew - and the revelation had stunned him just long enough for the other mekayana to score a killing shot against him.

Later, he had learned the other pilot was Naureen, as he had realized, and they began their romance again, not the hesitant romance of two young people unsure of themselves, but the passionate romance of two people in the blossoming of their adulthood. They met under the stars, and they sang to each other with their eyes. But Vijay could tell Naureen was keeping something from him, and no matter how he tried, Naureen always shied away when he tried to approach that part of her.

Without warning a volley of fire erupted from Vijay's left, tracing rounds that sparked off his Indra's armor. Alarms blared at him like the brass line of a music band. He pulled hard on the control stick, and his mekayana broke into a run, diving for cover. Not waiting for his sensors to lock-on, he pulled the trigger button, and his mekayana brought its assault rifle up, sending out a burst that tore up the countryside, and the enemy fell prone.

Gupta's Taj Mahal was already under cover, their makayanas' sensors chattering away to each other, computing a firing trajectory for a volley of missiles to take out the enemy. Ashok's Ganesha pounded away at the enemy's position with its shoulder-mounted recoil-less rifles from his position overlooking the firefight, but Vijay's Indra was still exposed. Four enemy mekayana - camo-painted, unmarked Mail-0's - burst from concealment, spraying fire wildly as they charged his squad's positions. With the enemy Colossus getting ready to fire another volley, that made the fight five to three, but Vijay wasn't worried - he knew his mekayana were technologically superior to the Mail-0s, and his men better trained. Vijay levered his mekayana to charge one of the Mail-0s, his power knuckles charging up to deliver a lightning punch, but then a sixth enemy target suddenly pinged on his LADAR, revealing itself from its position above him, controlling its fall with its jump jets and laying down a rain of assault rifle fire that scored three more holes in his Indra's armor. Vijay adjusted his own jump jets, not letting himself feel the fear in his heart, and boosted toward the enemy mekayana.

Indra looked up as the two mekayana passed each other, so close that he could look into the cockpit of the other mekayana. His eyes widened, but he wasn't surprised. It was as he had feared.

The other mekayana, another IND-1 Indra like his own, had seashell blue markings.

Vijay's heart had been crushed that day when Naureen disappeared. He barely even registered the

report that she had gotten away with an entire squadron of stolen mekayana, slaved to her Indra's control. Why hadn't he seen it? He knew she loved him, but she loved her own family's traditions more. Internal Security grilled him for hours about their relationship, but Vijay could think of nothing to say. The song had gone out of his heart, and his mind rang instead with a melancholy dirge.

The two IND-1 Indras came to ground away from their comrades, and then they just stood their, their metal armor pinging rhythmically in the cooling night. Neither moved for a moment. What could Vijay say now that would be adequate to express his grief and betrayal, that he still loved her. He nudged his mekayana one step closer to the other. "Naureen..." he started to say, but his voice choked. He cleared his mind. No, mere words were not enough.

"NAUREEN..." his alto voice rang into the night. Strings crescendoed loudly, the pinging of their mekayana merging into a rhythmic bass beat. His mekayana's legs moved, spread out, and he spread his arms wide. "You who are my lost love, why must we meet here..." he crooned, his arms swaying rhythmically. His mecha waltzed to the side, and then Naureen's arms also raised, and she echoed his dance movements. Her voice came over the communication system in song.

"VIJAY.... You know why we must meet, although I cannot bear..."

And the two mecha danced under the stars while their pilots sang a melancholy song of lost love to each other.

Welcome To Bollywood

Fiery passion; colorful fashion; beautiful leading ladies; handsome leading men; memorable song and dance routines; these are the elements of Indian cinema. Bollywood movies speak to the ancient traditions of India, but also to the basic goodness in people in a way that Hollywood no longer does. And of course, Bollywood offers song and dance, a feature which Hollywood can not match. These are the features that have made it more popular than Hollywood all over Asia and the world.

What we call Bollywood movies are, in their simplest form, simply movies made in India, usually in the city of Mumbai (formerly known as Bombay). Thus, they are more formally known as Indian Cinema, or even Hindi Cinema, after the language spoken in most of them (although that label then disregards the large number of movies made in the other languages of the Indian subcontinent, such as Tamil). But they are so much more than that. These movies have their own styles and characteristics that set them apart from Hollywood movies, such that a Bollywood movie is immediately recognizable as something different. While Bollywood movies run the usual gamut of movie genres, from romantic comedies to science fiction to historical set pieces and even to Westerns, they have a special style that

gives them their own character. They have pageantry, glamour, explosions of vivid colors, melodrama, and of course, world-famous song and dance routines.

Indeed, in India, many movies are preceded by their soundtracks, which are the largest selling native musical genre. Many fans follow their favorite composers, musicians or singers from movie to movie, rather like some people follow their favorite actors or directors from movie to movie.

Indian cinema has its own idioms and visual language. Restrictions on content make these films more acceptable to large regions of the world than Hollywood films; Bollywood films are very popular in China, for instance, whereas that country's communist government continues to censor many American films. At the same time, Indian Cinema offers films that deal with the complex social and political issues of the Indian people and state.

In this sourcebook for the Mecha roleplaying game, we will look at India through the eyes of Bollywood. India is a setting overflowing with history that offers unique opportunities for any roleplaying game. We hope you will spend some time with us in this ancient culture.

The History of India

"Study it for years with the best of teachers, and when you raise your head, nothing they have told you quite fits."

- E. M. Forster

Just as Hollywood movies are permeated with the culture, religion and history of the United States and Western Europe, so too are Bollywood movies informed by Indian history, religion and culture. It is certainly possible to enjoy these movies without an in-depth knowledge of these subjects, but we would be robbing ourselves of the cultural richness of one third of the Earth's peoples. Knowing a little about Indian history will help you make your games feel like genuine Bollywood movies.

Where do we start with the history of India, which stretches back deep into a time before writing, a time made rich with legends, myth, and archaeological mysteries?

Very roughly speaking, seven eras divide India's history: the Indus Valley Civilization, the vedic era, the Maurya empire, the rajput states, the Islamic era, the British colonial era, and the modern era.

It was not so long ago that forgotten ruins were discovered in northeast India of a lost civilization that rivaled ancient Egypt or the civilization of the Mesopotamia. This civilization thrived in the Indus river valley for almost two-thousand years, comprising some 40 cities with populations reaching 30,000 to 40,000 inhabitants each. While the dead hold fast to their secrets, archaeological finds give evidence to a peaceful, meditative people who raised cattle, had indoor plumbing and worshipped a goddess figure, but were also sharply divided by class.

In the turmoil of war, the enemy holes up in one of the ancient cities of the Indus Valley Civilization, or perhaps the PCs are sent on an expedition to recover some irreplaceable archaeological artifact - a key to the operation of the magical devayana? Are they willing to fight within the ruins, knowing that each stray rifle shot or rocket is destroying priceless cultural artifacts? Is the Indus Valley Civilization the origin of the mysterious mecha called the devayana? Will the players experience their past lives living in this society as they become closer and closer to their mecha?

Far away from the Indus river valley, on the grassy plateau to the north and west of the Black Sea located in Eastern Europe to the south of the Ukraine, a people arose who rode domesticated horses, drove cattle and possessed the wheel, a people known only by the language they spoke, a language that just happens to be the ancestor of English, French, Russian, Persian, and even modern day Hindi. Linguists call this language Indo-European.

Thirty-five hundred years ago, as the Indus river valley civilization was in decline, a tribe speaking the Indo-European language called Sanskrit arrived in the area of modern Pakistan and northern India. These martial peoples, already divided into a three-

caste social system, may have conquered the declining Indus river valley civilization, or perhaps they simply absorbed them, relegating them to a new, fourth caste. While neither more numerous nor more technologically advanced than the Indus River Civilization, they were well-organized and very powerful thanks to their use of horses and chariots to wage war. Whatever the case, Indus River Valley Civilization vanished into the mists of time, and with it, standards of urban life that would not be replicated by the agricultural invaders for a thousand years.

Thus began the Vedic period, so-called after the greatest manuscript left by these people, the *vedas*, the most holy books of Hinduism. After conquering much of Northern India, the vedic culture began its decline during what is known as the *Axial Age* - a span of several hundred years from 800 to 200 BCE during which new philosophies flourished all around the civilized world - Socrates and Aristotle in Greece, the Hebrew prophets in the Middle East, Confucius and Taoist philosophers in ancient China.

In India, the Axial age saw the transformation of the vedic religion into classical Hinduism, as the religion transformed itself from one focused on worldly concerns to one focused on mystical concerns. The belief in the transmigration of the soul and karma originated during this time, as the second great work of Hinduism was written - the Upanishads, which were all but a smack in the face to the ritualism of the vedic priests; "Wordly concerns," it is written, referring to the goal of vedic

rituals for prosperity and fertility, "are the concerns of vanity." The Indians in this age spoke a language not Sanskrit, but its descendant, Prakrit. It was in this language during the Axial age that the Buddha taught the way to enlightenment, and the Mahaviri founded of Jainism. However, Sanskrit remained the language of Hinduism, as it is to this day.

During the vedic era, India was not a unified whole, but rather divided into sixteen kingdoms, or *Mahajanapadas*. These states weathered incursions by the Persians and the Greeks, and proved the downfall of Alexander the Great.

Imagine a mythic India where the states fight wars with mortal armies led by great devayana, vehicles of the Gods. What if Alexander the Great brought the ultimate products of Greek artifice - the steampowered colossi - to wage battle against the devayana defending India?

The first empire to unite the Indian subcontinent as a whole was the short lived Maurya dynasty. Chandragupta Maurya united all the *mahajanapadas*, and further extended Indian rule all the way down to the tip of the Indian subcontinent. To this day, Maurya remains a common Indian surname.

How did Maurya unite an entire continent under one rule, where the Greeks and the Persians failed? Was he granted valley-striding giants by the devas, or did his Kshatriya soldiers don Brahmin-summoned armor that granted them battlefield-dominating powers?

After the Maurya dynasty came the Golden Age of India, the rajput states. Although no longer united under a single emperor, India prospered, experiencing a cultural and economic Renaissance. It is estimated that during this period India possessed up to 30% of all the wealth in the world.

But the wealth of India attracted the covetous attention of conquerors, the first of whom were the the Umayyad caliphate, who annexed North-west India and introduced Islam to what is now Pakistan. This region remained under Islamic rule from the 8th until the 16th century, when the Mughal dynasty again reunited most of India under Hindu rule for a brief period. However, not all Islamic contact with India was hostile, and the two cultures maintained an active and profitable trade relationship.

Did the raja maintain their wealth with gold-plated mobile fortresses?

It was then British East India company, backed by the authority and power of the British crown, arrived and plundered the wealth of the subcontinent, plunging a rich and proud people into poverty. The Indian people did not take this lying down, and there were several rebellions, culminating in Gandhi's non-violent revolution of 1947, when the British empire found it could no longer afford its colonial holdings after the deprivations of World War 2, and their empire came crumbling down.

The British empire spanned the world. Did they steal the secrets of the mekayana from India, or perhaps they brought them to India to try to tighten their control? Did bandits hiding in the mountainous regions use mekayana to mount lightning raids against the colonial powers? Did the British steal the secrets of science and technology from the very vedas themselves, said to hold all knowledge?

Today, India is the world's largest democracy, with a secular constitution, home to almost a third of humanity. And although it has its problems with rural poverty, class struggle (of both the classical *varna* kind and the modern capitalist kind) and government corruption, it is poised on the verge of becoming a new economic superpower in the new century.

India's military is large and modernizing quickly. Is there a lab in some government facility working on mobile battlesuits to give India the edge against its temporal enemies? If terrorists got their hands on these prototypes, would the India Defense Taskforce manage to stop them before they deploy them against the civilian populace?

Modern India has a tense relationship with Pakistan, a country which was partitioned off from India over religious differences shortly after the 1947 independence. One of the most contentious flash points is the mountainous and beautiful region of Kashmir; India and Pakistan have fought two wars over Kashmir, and that conflict remains a rich source of material for Bollywood movies, such as Mission Kashmir and Fiza.

India Defense Taskforce mekayana battle separatists in the wilds of Kashmir as tensions rise between the nuclear powers of India and Pakistan.

Bangladesh, a country almost wholly contained by India proper, gained its own independence from Pakistan in 1971 with the help of the Indian army. This rebellion would also make good fodder for a Mecha game.

An important Indian businessman is trapped in Bangledesh after violence breaks out. Your elite squad of mekayana pilots must extract him without bringing down the whole might of the Pakistani army on your heads.

So where do Bollywood movies fit into modern India? Bollywood unifies the people of India, their many backgrounds, castes and ethnicities. The twenty-four million people involved in the Indian Diaspora, wherever they may be, are connected to their motherland by Indian Cinema. These films act as a unifying stratum to the various classes living in India today, binding the diverse society together in a shared experience.

Religion in India

This is the spirit that is in my heart; smaller than a grain of rice, or a grain of barley, or a grain of mustard seed, or a grain of canary seed, or the kernel of a grain of canary seed.

This is the spirit that is in my heart; greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven itself, greater than all these worlds.

- The Chhandogya Upanashad

The largest religion in India is Hinduism, an ancient belief system with its roots reaching back to the Indus River Valley Civilization and the Vedic age. About 80% of the two billion people in India are Hindu. The second largest religion is Islam, with a population of 13%, introduced into India by Islamic invaders in the eighth century. Pakistan, India's northern neighbor, was partitioned from India on the basis of this religious difference; whereas India is secular nation with a large Hindu population, Pakistan is an Islamic state. However, many Muslims remain in India, and religious tension, sometimes violent tension, persists between Hindus and Muslims to this day. Islam gained ground in India by appealing to the poor and low-caste of Indian society, gaining many converts with its promise of equality in the eyes of god, and an immediate heaven rather than the endless cycle of death and rebirth. All other religions, including Buddhism (surprising because Buddhism was born in India) and Jainism, constitute a very small percentage of the population. Sikhism is a syncretic religion, an attempt to bridge Hinduism and Islam, and is popular in the Punjab, the region where India and Pakistan meet.

Hindu themes permeate Bollywood films, and just as a knowledge of Indian history can enrich our Bollywood games, so too can an overview of this religion, perhaps the most ancient in the world. That's a lot to ask. Hinduism is a huge topic. Hinduism isn't even really one religion, it is more like a family of related religions; India has been called the test kitchen of religions. And sometimes Hinduism appears to be polytheistic, but there are branches of Hindu thought that are monotheistic, dualistic, or even atheistic.

The first question most Westeners ask about Hinduism is "How many gods are there?" The traditional answers are 33, 3306, 330 million, and 1. Hinduism does not see any contradiction in these numbers. Hindu mysticism states that ultimate reality, *Brahman*, or *Ishvara*, is one, but that *maya*,

the veil of illusion that covers the world, makes us perceive multitude where there is only one. It states that *atman*, the soul, is ultimately indivisible from Brahman.

Nevertheless, this refined mysticism is removed from the daily experience of most Hindus. Images of the Hindu *devas* decorate buses, and statues of them are found in every home, street, and public building. Most Hindus take on the worship of one particular god, their personal god, which is sometimes their family or village deity.

Could the devas of legend be the dim memories of the mekayana from the mythic age of India? Could the stories of their incarnations be inspired by the actions of your heroes?

One strong aspect of Hinduism is the transmigration of the soul, or reincarnation. "As a person puts on new clothes and discards old and torn clothes," says the Bhagavad Gita, a Hindu holy work almost three thousand years old, "similarly an embodied soul enters new material bodies, leaving the old bodies." However, the transmigration of the soul is not seen as a desirable thing; instead, the cycle is called *samsara*, the endless cycle of birth and death, and we are locked into it because we still perceive the illusion of the world; it is our ignorance that perpetuates the cycle.

The cycle of samsara is fed by *karma*. Our deeds, acting in accordance to our dharmas, generate positive or negative karma. If we garner enough positive karma in this life, we may hope to be reborn as a higher caste, ultimately as a Brahmin,

whose dharma of prayer, ritual sacrifice and spirituality brings us the closest to the possibility of escaping samsara.

This brings us to the India's caste system. It has had one for a very long time; scholars think that the current dual system comes from a fusion of the castes of the Indus River Valley Civilization and Vedic culture. The caste system is written into the Indian Constitution and its holy books; it is inseparable from the religion, government and culture of India.

Unlike in the West, where the caste system is determined by wealth, the Indian caste system is determined by birth. Wealth and political power do not neccessarily follow from one's caste, however. High-caste *Brahmin* may be poor, and low-caste *shudras* might be quite wealthy. Also unlike the West, there is no mobility between classes in life. If one wishes to attain a higher caste, one needs to follow their dharma and acrue good karma in this life.

There are two parallel caste systems in India, a large system of four tiers called *varna* and a more granulated system comprised of hundreds of tiers called *jati*. The *varna* system of castes is based on the dharma of the Vedic traditions; the *Brahmin* are the highest caste, the priests; the similarity to the name of the god Brahma is not accidental. The *Kshatriya* caste is second, and is charged with defending the people and the caste system itself; they are soldiers, kings, and diplomats. Below the *Kshatriya*, the *Vaisha* are merchants and craftsmen,

and at the bottom are the *Shudras*, farmers. A fifth caste, below even the bottom of the pile, exists and is sometimes called the *untouchables.* They are those whose labour - butchering meat, tanning leather, cleaning out sewers - accumulates so much negative karma that the normal methods of ritual purification cannot cleanse them. It is sometimes said that if a Brahmin even sees an untouchable, he has become unclean. The Indian Constitution of 1947 theoretically did away with the untouchables, rolling them into the Shudra caste; however, thousands of years worth of tradition dies hard in this ancient land, and the untouchables persist to this day.

Bollywood movies, particularly the more socially conscious ones, gain much drama from having plots based around the caste system and the conflicts it can create. The plot of the very famous early movie *Devda* is about a Brahmin who falls in love with a *Vaisha* girl. Your Mecha campaigns can speak to this tradition; does the hero love someone of a different caste? Is the best mecha pilot in the squadron an untouchable, and is thus scorned by her peers and passed over for promotion despite her abilities?

Hindu Festivals

Hindus love festivals, and have a very large number of them; practically every day there is a festival being held somewhere in India. The two largest and most widely celebrated of these festivals are *holi* and *diwali*.

Holi is, essentially, opposite day. Untouchables can berate brahmin, women control the household, people shout insults at the king. India is a very rigid society, and holi is the day that people get to let their hair down. It's more than that, of course. There is feasting and celebration. The special drink *thandai* (which sometimes contains cannibis) is drunk. Bonfires are lit and people throw colored water at each other. Holi is a spring festival, held in February or March based on the lunar calendar, initiating the season of rebirth.

Diwali, the festival of lights, is at the opposite end of the calendar from holi. This five-day celebration is important to many Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains, and is cause for a reunion of family, feasting and celebration. For each faith tradition, it commemorates the victory of good over evil. People festoon their homes and gardens with colored lanterns.

Hindi for Gamers

Watching Bollywood movies can be a fun way to learn Hindi; likewise, we can make our Bollywood-inspired games a little more authentic by putting on an Indian accent and sprinkling our speech with Hindi-isms. Don't worry about using gratuitous Hindi; Bollywood movies are filled with gratuitous English!

Hindi is a very difficult language for English-speakers to learn; never-the-less, since both English and Hindi share an ancient ancestor in Indo-European, the two languages share words that have the same prehistoric root; these cognates are noted below, and can provide an "ah-ha" moment when listening to the Hindi spoken in a Bollywood movie.

➢ **asura** - a demon, the elder brothers and sisters of the devas who caused evil to come into the world

➢ **atman** - the soul, from the Sanskrit word for "breath" (compare German: *atmen*, "to breathe")

➢ **bharat** - India

➢ **dharma** - The law of the universe, one's fate, destiny, and duty all rolled into one.

➢ **deva** - god (cognate: divine, compare Latin *deus*).

➢ **ha** - yes, more formally *ji ha*

➢ **jay ho** - victory to, e.g.: *bharat jay ho*, "Victory to India!"

➢ **-ji** - Sir, ma'am; honorific used with either gender (suffix)

➢ **kumari** - Miss; honorific used with unmarried women and girls

➢ **maha** - great

➢ **mahal** - palace

➢ **nahi** - no, more formally *ji nahi*

➢ **namaskar** - hello, more formal than *namaste*.

➢ **namaste** - hello (literally: I bow to you), said with hands pressed together and a small bow

➢ **pandit** - a teacher, particularly one schooled in Hindu law and religion

➢ **raja** - king

➢ **rishi** - wise person, sage

➢ **shri** - Mr.; honorific used with men, married or unmarried

➢ **shrimati** - Mrs.; honorific used with married women

- ➤ *veda* - the most ancient Hindu scripture; (it derives from the verb "to see", cognate with Latin *videre*, hence English *video.*)
- ➤ *yana* - vehicle

From this list, you can know understand certain Indian compound words that you may have been exposed to by pop culture, for example, the Beatles studied under the *maharishi*, the great sage.

Índián Names

If you are having trouble coming up with an authentic-sounding Indian name or just need to generate a name for an NPC quickly, you can roll on or choose from the following chart. To generate a random name, roll d66 - that is, roll one six-sided die and count its value in tens (10, 20, 30, etc.) and then a second six-sided die and count its value as 1s, giving you a range of 11 to 66.

d66	Male	Female	Surname
11	Acharya	Anjali	Achaya
12	Chandra	Archana	Battacharya
13	Dushyant	Devika	Chaudhary
14	Gangadhar	Dyumna	Gupta
15	Harish	Jaya	Hiremath
16	Indivar	Komala	Iyer
21	Lais	Malina	Jain
22	Nikhil	Naima	Johari
23	Prem	Parvati	Kaur
24	Pulin	Rani	Kishore
25	Ram	Reena	Maurya
26	Rishi	Sakari	Patil
31	Rohan	Sati	Rao

32	Talan	Shreya	Shah
33	Uday	Uma	Singh
34	Vijay	Yuvika	Verma
35	Bogar	Vasanti	Devar
36	Ekaling	Buddhana	Talwar
41	Aadi	Aadrika	Achari
42	Bhima	Balamani	Banerjee
43	Chatur	Chapala	Chaturvedi
44	Devdan	Dharani	Dhawan
45	Ekaling	Esha	Guneta
46	Girish	Hiranya	Iyengar
52	Himadri	Indira	Johar
52	Inder	Jaya	Kocchar
53	Jitender	Kamala	Menon
54	Kiran	Lavanya	Mukhopadhyay
55	Naveen	Mina	Nehru
56	Prasad	Nikita	Patel
61	Rudra	Opalina	Reddy
62	Siddhran	Padma	Sharma
63	Tej	Rita	Trivedi

64	Vidur	Suma	Ahuja
65	Yogesh	Tara	Chattopadhyay
66	Laal	Vasundhara	Gowda

Böllÿwööḍ ṢRṢeṣ

Each of the following SRSes can be used in one of the following two ways. First, each SRS can be used as a normal Mecha SRS for either a regular Mecha campaign or a one-shot. However, each can also be approached as if it were a Bollywood movie. That is, the players and GM conceptualize their characters not just as characters within the setting of the SRS, but also as Bollywood actors who perform in many movies over the course of their career. The campaign may then span many different movies (SRSes), while keeping the player characters - the actors - the same between movies. In this way, the troupe can experience a broad range of Bollywood-themed SRSes without having to make new characters for each setting.

Campaign Option: Bollywood movies often have strong villains. Whereas the heroes of Indian Cinema have been largely based on the character of legendary folk heroes and traditional Hindu morality, it is the villain's role that changes to reflect the times, and an interesting villain can provide a film with its dynamic character.

Therefore, the troupe may wish to experiment with having one player in the role of the main villain of the piece. The villainous player would get a roleplaying scene as normal, and would fight against the heroes during combat scenes. The most appropriate archetype for villains is the Character Actor, since the actors who played famous villains were often typecast into that role for the rest of their careers; however, Leading Man wouldn't be a bad choice either to represent a charismatic villain.

Another Bollywood tradition is the character of the "vamp", a sensuous woman, sometimes of loose morals, who plays the foil to the hero. A player could play the role of this vamp, and act as a foil to a romance of one of the other characters.

All of the Bollywood SRSes described below use the following character archetypes and mecha designs.

Archetypes

When creating a Bollywood character, consider yourself to be creating not the character within the movie, but rather the actor portraying that role. These archetypes reflect the style of your actor, and the roles that Indian audiences have come to expect from them.

Leading Man/Lady

You are suave, graceful, handsome or beautiful, with a voice that could melt butter. If a Leading Man, men want to be like you and women want to be with you; for a Leading Lady, men want to be with you and women want to be like you. You get to wear the most gorgeous costumes and get to sing in the stirring love duets.

Despite the name of this role, the game may have as many Leading Men/Ladies as players who want the role. Many famous Bollywood movies feature the adventures of groups of best friends.

Bollywood Examples: The "angry young man" of Bollywood, Amitabh Bachchan played the leading man in almost a hundred films in the seventies and early eighties. Priyanka Chopra was Miss World 2000 who has become a Bollywood sensation.

Strength: 2   **Agility: 2**   **Intelligence: 2**   **Will: 2**

Bonus Points: 3

Skills: **Mecha Combat: 2, Personal Combat: 1, Social: 4, Field Ops: 1, Repair: 1, Medic: 1**

Bonus Points: 3

Traits: Suave, Brave

Sidekick

You play the role of the faithful companion to the stars, helping him or her out tight spots and always providing a shoulder to cry on, especially when the romance subplot starts going astray. Despite not always being in the spotlight, you have your fans who appreciate your underdog roles.

Bollywood Examples: Arshad Warsi as Circuit in the influential Lage Raho Munna Bhai.

Strength: 2   **Agility: 2**   **Intelligence: 2**   **Will: 2**

Bonus Points: 3

Skills: **Mecha Combat: 2, Personal Combat: 2, Social: 2, Field Ops: 2, Repair: 1, Medic: 1**

Bonus Points: 3

Traits: **Loyal, Dependable**

Character Actor

You have become famous for playing a certain kind of character. Maybe you are a famous comedian, who brings his routine to the spotlight with him, or an actress renowned for her portrayal stereotypical Indian mothers.

Bollywood Examples: Actors who play villains are character actors, such as Amjad Khan, who played the famous villain Gabbar Singh in *Sholay.*

Strength: 2   **Agility: 2**   **Intelligence: 2**   **Will: 2**

Bonus Points: 3

Skills: **Mecha Combat: 2, Personal Combat: 2, Social: 1, Field Ops: 1, Repair: 2, Medic: 2**

Bonus Points: 3

Traits: Funny, Melodramatic

Ingenue

You are an unknown in your first major role. You are almost as star-struck by the famous actors you are working with as any other member of the general public would be. But you try your best to hide those feelings and put on your best performance; you know this is your time to make a name for yourself.

Bollywood Examples: Any actor in their first few roles, waiting until they get a role in a blockbuster movie.

Strength: 2   **Agility: 2**   **Intelligence: 2**   **Will: 2**

Bonus Points: 3

Skills: Mecha Combat: 3, Personal Combat: 2, Social: 2, Field Ops: 1, Repair: 1, Medic: 1
Bonus Points: 3
Traits: Naive, Enthusiastic

Child Actor

You're a kid. Maybe you were raised by a famous family of actors, or maybe you were scouted by some director or casting agent who attended a performance of primary school's theater group. Some of the other cast members don't take you seriously because of your age, but even though you lack experience, you take the job just as seriously as anybody else. Well, at least when you haven't eaten too much sugar before the shoot.

Example: Slumdog Millionaire made its child actors, children literally from the slums of Mumbai, into household names. Hrithik Roshan played the powerful role of Irfan in Mission Kashmir.

Strength: 1   Agility: 3   Intelligence: 2   Will: 2
Bonus Points: 3
Skills: Mecha Combat: 2, Personal Combat: 2, Social: 1, Field Ops: 3, Repair: 1, Medic: 1
Bonus Points: 3
Traits: Scrappy, Adorable

Stunt Man

You're used to getting thrown about. You may not get much in the way of pithy dialogue and you might be relegated to the backup dancers in the musical routines, but you know how to take a fall, and are always the man the director calls on to jump through the pyrotechnics and come out unscathed when he doesn't want to risk the smooth complexion of the Leading Man and Lady. You wouldn't have it any other way.

Bollywood Examples: Naushad Abbas is an actor-stunt man who has played in many films, such as Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikander and Baazigar.

Strength: 3   Agility: 3   Intelligence: 1   Will: 1
Bonus Points: 3
Skills: Mecha Combat: 2, Personal Combat: 3, Social: 1, Field Ops: 2, Repair: 1, Medic: 1
Bonus Points: 3
Traits: Daring, Foolish

New Configurations

Bodyguard: Spend 1 Overdrive (instead of 1 movement) to *Take the Bullet* for another mecha; you may do this at the moment of the attack.

Backup Drones: Spend 1 Overdrive to aid any character (including yourself) in the same sector engaged in a song battle or musical number with a number of dice equal to your Engineering.

Mecha Models

All the following SRSes use these same mecha designs. The settings may interpret the power sources and realism of the designs differently, however. Borders of Blood assumes that these mecha designs are *mekayana*, that is, conventional machines powered through technological means. Both Mythic India and Mumbai 2130 assume that they are *vedayana* powered through mystical means. However, it's possible that the GM might want to mix things up; perhaps the *mekayana* appear to be technological in origin, but are really powered by vedic magic. After all, a persistent legend says that all of Western science and technology is based on understandings gleaned from the *Vedas*, which are said to contain all knowledge.

Model TJM-7 Taj Mahal

This mecha is the largest and most regally designed mecha. Characters that come from wealthy backgrounds or the kshatriya caste are likely to pilot this mecha. The Taj Mahal is designed for area control and command and control.

Weapons: 2   **Armor: 2**   **Technology:** 3   **Speed: 1**

Bonus Points: 3

Traits: Analytical, Obvious

Weapon Systems:

Ban-Havai Multi-Rocket System (3/Missile)

Jangi Gattling Gun (1/Impact)

Configurations: Analyzer, Boomer

Model IND-1 Indra

The Indra is a sleek design preferred by classical action heroes. Not for the timid or sneaky, this mecha is very in-your-face, designed to get the pilot into the thick of the action quickly and safely, where she can show off her courage up close and personal against the enemy.

Weapons: 1   **Armor: 3**   **Technology:** 1   **Speed: 3**

Bonus Points: 3

Traits: Fast, Brave

Weapon Systems:

Vajra Power Knuckles 0/Impact

Configurations: Bulwark, Flanker

Model GAN-12 Ganesha

Genesha mekayana provide mobile fire support platforms. Possessing a wide range of weaponry and the speed to get these weapons into their optimal firing solutions quickly, it is preferred by those who put strategy before personal heroism.

Weapons: 3   Armor: 2   Technology: 1   Speed: 2

Bonus Points: 3

Traits: Brutal, Stout

Weapon Systems:

Vighnesha "Tactical Obstacle Remover" Strategic Cannon (4/Impact)

Hatyara Sniper Rifle (3/Impact)

Duragatacarya Assault Rifle (2/Impact)

Configurations: Assassin, Heavy Metal

Model CTR-7 Chatora "Stealthy Tiger"

The chatora is a scouting mecha, designed for light reconnaissance. Equipped with advanced cloaking systems, it is not heavily armed, but pilots who prefer precision munition placement gravitate to this mecha.

Weapons: 2   Armor: 1   Technology: 3   Speed: 2

Bonus Points: 3

Traits: Sneaky, Quiet

Weapon System:

Katar Armor Piercing Dagger (0/Impact)

Tamancha Light Machine Pistol (2/Impact)

Configurations: Prowler, Sniper

Model COL-9 Colossus

The colossus is the biggest and heaviest *devayana* available. Neither fast nor stealthy nor heavily armed, it is the immovable object of the battlefield. Colossus lend their heavy protective elements to their teammates to get the job done.

Weapons: 2   Armor: 4   Technology: 1   Speed: 1

Bonus Points: 3

Traits: Stoic, Protective

Weapon Systems

Dual Behada Sanghata Recoilless Rifles (3/Impact)

Configurations: Bodyguard, Defender

Model MNG-5 Mongoose

The Mongoose is a quick striking mecha, designed for hit-and-run tactics against larger, heavier mechs. Resilient and deadly, the Mongoose's graceful lines can be seen on many battlefields, dodging effortless among explosions and shrapnel to unleash its own deadly attacks in return.

Weapons: 2   Armor: 2   Technology: 2   Speed: 2

Bonus Points: 3

Traits: Brash, Weak

Weapon Systems

Belka Submachinegun (1/Impact)

Noonian RPG Launcher (3/Missile)

Configurations: Hot Shot, Ripper

Model Mail-0

Mail, the Hindi word for 'dirt', are unimpressive mecha cheaply produced and given to barely trained pilots. The India Defense Taskforce use *mail-0* to train its recruits, but certain terrorist and paramilitary organizations have been forced to use *mail-0* in field operations.

Note: This model is not intended for PC use. It is intended for poorly equipped allies and enemy mooks.

Weapons: 2   Armor: 1   Technology: 1   Speed: 1

Bonus Points: 1

Traits: Weak, Suicidal

Weapon Systems

Ak Saitalis Light Combat Rifle (2/Impact)

Configuration: Brawler [Mail-0 only have one configuration due to their cheap construction.]

Börders öf Blööd

This is a battle for power,
A war between politicians.
The blood of innocents is the color used to
Draw borders between our hearts.
 - lyrics from Dhuan Dhuan, from the film Mission Kashmir

Background

In the near future world of 2030, a rising India is becoming an important economic power in the world, having recently eclipsed the United States in economic output. However, as India's star rises, old grudges come back to haunt this democratic nation. A new Terrorist group known as *Liberation Kashmir* has arisen in the province of Kashmir, always a flashpoint of trouble between India and Pakistan. This group commits violent acts of terrorism in India proper. The player characters are a squadron of Special India Defense Taskforce mecha pilots who must defeat the terrorists in mainland India, and then track them back to their secret base in Kashmir and eliminate them once and for all.

But everything is not as easy as it appears. The political rhetoric between Pakistan and India is heating up again, and the war of words threatens to turn into an actual war. Will the players find evidence that that *Liberation Kashmir* is being secretly founded by elements within the Pakistani government? If so, is this evidence real, or has it been planted by war hawks in the Indian parliament so they can falsely justify initiating hostilities against Pakistan. And even if they players do find this evidence and it is legitimate, will they reveal it, understanding the political repercussions?

Theme: Borders of Blood is a fairly straight-forward black-ops game. They PCs are tasked with discovering and thwarting the plans of *Liberation Kashmir*, locating their home base, and striking back against them. The PCs should run their unit as an military squad, which is given a great deal of leeway to complete its mission, but they are still ultimately answerable to the India Defense Taskforce.

The GM should try to lend the game an element of tension, of time not being on the player's side. The players have limited time to find their opponents and strike against them, otherwise *Liberation Kashmir* will execute their own plans against the Indian civilian population. As always in Mecha, the game will alternate between roleplaying and mecha combat scenes, but in this SRS, the stakes are high: if the players are successful during their roleplaying scenes, they can take the fight to the terrorists and minimize collateral damage, but if they fail in their roleplaying scenes, they are reactive, and the terrorists bring the fight to them, often in very public or sensitive areas.

But Borders of Blood is not just about the military and anti-terrorist operations. In true Bollywood movie style, it is not just their bodies that the PCs they are putting at risk, but their hearts as well. Will they be able to continue their mission when they find out that their true love is secretly a *Liberation Kashmir* extremist? Where is the line between family and duty when a PC's parents come out in

favor of Kashmiri liberation? When the leader of *Liberation Kashmir* turns out to be the PC's respected mentor, will they have a change of heart?

This movie is about action, yes, no doubt about that; lots of things are going to explode. However, more important than the explosions are the questions the characters must face, that they must answer within the secret recesses of their own hearts.

That is what makes them *sing.*

Story Stages

Borders of Blood Stage 1 - Attack on Mumbai

This story stage starts off with a bang, literally. The PCs are in downtown Mumbai when terrorists attack. Their first order of business is to help protect the people; maybe a family is trapped in a burning building, or a child becomes separated from their parent in the madness the attack causes. This is a chance for the PCs to show their virtue; feel free to grant bonus dice to PCs who put themselves in harms way to save innocents - that's what heroes in Bollywood movies do.

After that, a mobile command center arrives with the PCs *mekayana*, and they get suited up for combat. The PCs should be wary of collateral damage, and seek to drive the attackers off while protecting the civilian population and preventing property damage. The PCs should feel the pinch of time against them here; the longer they take driving the enemy off, the more civilians will be killed.

Borders of Blood Stage 2 - Counter Terrorism

The PCs investigate the crime scene, trying to determine who the attackers were. Can they track them back to their staging area and hit them there, or will the terrorists have the opportunity to target more civilian targets before the PCs can arrive? These investigation scenes should be interspersed with how the attacks are personally affecting the PCs. They should be worried about their families, and go back to visit them. Meanwhile, other PCs can be forming close friendships and starting romances with NPCs.

Repeat this scene until the PCs have pinpointed the terrorists' location and have taken the battle to them. Hopefully, the PCs will drive the enemy away from Mumbai; if they fail, the terrorists will simply relocate to another staging area and continue their terror attacks. However, the enemy isn't going to leave quietly; they've set up bombs around the city to distract the PCs while they evacuate. These bombs can be dealt with either during roleplaying scenes, as the PCs track down the bombs and disposed of them, or they can be made part of a combat scene, with bombs going off causing civilian casualties unless a PC mecha moves to quadrant containing the bomb and spends an action to diffuse it - or take the hit themselves, covering the exploding bomb with their mecha in order to save civilian lives.

Borders of Blood Stage 3 - Hitting Them Where They Live

The PCs track the terrorists to their base in Kashmir. The hilly terrain of kashmir provides the terrorists with excellent cover, and approaching the base overland will be problematic without getting fired on or giving the enemy a chance to flee. Maybe a better option would be to try to have one character penetrate the terrorist cell to clear the way for the mecha assault.

Varna Anti-Mecha Rockets: The terrorists have been supplied with powerful man-portable anti-vehicular weapons. While these weapons pose no real threat to a full mekayana, they are a nuisance that can drain a mecha's stability and leave it in a weakened condition for ambushes. The terrorists will try to make hit and run attacks with these weapons, firing from a camouflaged position and then rapidly moving the launcher via their tunnel system to another site. When the terrorist mecha finally do come out for a fight, they will be supported by one to three groups of Varna rockets.

Represent a Varna rocket group on the map with a token. The token can either move or fire each turn. Other than that restriction, Varna rocket groups operate as if they were mecha with the following stats: Attack 2, Defense 5, Engineering 1, and Speed 5; Weapon Systems: Varna rockets 2/missile, Configurations: None. One hit will completely destroy a Varna rocket group.

Varna rocket groups are a nightmare for civilian shipping in Kashmir; the PCs may be assigned to

Ambhitap Donovan (Enemy Ace) -

> **Strength 2**
> **Agility 3**
> **Intelligence 4**
> **Wits 5**
>
> **Mecha Combat 4**
> **Personal Combat 5**

Personal Mecha: Taj Maha

> | | | | |
> |---|---|---|---|
> | **Weapons** | **3** | **Armor** | **4** |
> | **Tech** | **3** | **Speed** | **2** |

> **Attack: 5 (Linked to Strength)**
> **Defense: 8 (Linked to Intelligence)**
> **Engineering: 6 (Linked to Agility)**
> **Speed: 7 (Linked to Wits)**
>
> **Weapons:**
> **Ban-Havai Multi-Rocket System (3/Missile)**

protect critical convoys from attack. Run this scenario like a normal combat; treat the civilian trucks as Mecha with the following stats: Combat 2, Defense 2 Speed 2 Engineering 1, Weapon Systems: None, Configurations: None. Each truck can sustain two hits from Varna missiles before being destroyed.

Rebel Leader: Ambhitap Donovan is a charismatic leader who strongly believes in the Kashmiri Independence movement. He is a truely psychopathic terrorist, willing to stop at nothing for his goals. Trained by the mujahadeen, he left that group because he thought they were not militant enough, and he founded *Liberation Kashmir* to advance his violent agenda. Ambhitap sees himself as the liberator of kashmir and has something of a god complex - he sees himself not just as Kashmir's liberator, but as its saviour appointed by God. Perhaps his men could be made to turn against him if he was tricked into revealing his mental instability in front of them?

Jangi Gattling Gun (1/Impact)
Ak Saitalo Light Combat Rifile (2/Impact)

Configurations: Analyzer, Boomer

Mumbai 2130

Background

A hundred years into the future, India is a flourishing superpower. America was devastated by a civil war in 2050 from which it never re-emerged, the central government having disintegrated, leaving warring states behind. With its shadow removed from the world scene, Russia, Brazil, Europe, India and China have all filled in the gaps, vying for the title of new world superpower. With the discovery of vedic technology at the turn of the century, India laid claim to that title, with China coming in a close second. While peace prevails between the two economic superpowers, tensions boil just below the surface.

This SRS takes place completely within the city of Mumbai in the year 2130. In this bright future, Mumbai is a shining beacon among the world's cities, a sprawling cosmopolitan metropolis with a population in excess of 36 million people. It's super-skyscrapers, suspended on anti-gravitic fields, can be seen from space. It's space-port is the largest in the world, with hundreds of low orbit shuttles arriving from practically everywhere in the world on a daily basis. The city of Mumbai is rich and crowded, and the Mumbai Police Force often have their hands so full with domestic and petty crime that they do not have the manpower to tackle the more dangerous threats such as rogue robots and demonic criminals with *mekayana.* For this reason, they have created a special task force dedicated to countering these threats.

The secret to India's promotion to superpower is the cultivation of the secret knowledge encoded in the *vedas*, a code unlocked by the Hindu scientist and *maharishi* Rishi Singh almost thirty years ago. The secrets of the universe opened themselves up before India's alarmed scientists like a flower opening at dawn. In rapid succession, they discovered ways of harnessing cheap energy derived from the holy *soma* plant, antigravation technology powered by transcendental meditation, and the secret of creating human-like giant robots.

Devayana are the mecha of this setting, powered not by fusion reactors but by their pilots' transcendental meditative prowess. These machines are partly alive, and the animating spirit of the machines reaches deep into the heavens. The pilot acts to bind the mecha to this plane, and through the mecha channels awesome transcendental powers.

When not being piloted, devayana are stored in giant lotus flowers floating in glowing beds of pure *soma*. If the mecha has been damaged or the pilot wishes to soup it up, they spend time in meditation next to the flower. This is also how pilots form their initial bonds with their machines, sitting in silent prayerful contemplation next to the closed lotus flowers until they open, and the devayana allows the human to touch it.

Because of the intensely close bond between man and machine, many mecha pilots have trouble maintaining their relationships with other people. Some pilots have even been known to go into meditation trances so deep that they never come out; these pilots eventually whither away entirely.

To prevent this from happening to their highly skilled and trained specialist pilots, the Commission For the Study of Devayana has put into place a rule that every pilot must have a "controller", a companion for the pilot who isn't a mecha pilot and whose sole job it is to keep them human and focused on this world, instead of the next. The controllers gently encourage the pilots to engage in social activities outside their mecha, frequently arranging parties, song and dance recitals, and family visits for the pilots. It is not unknown for the relationship between pilot and controller to become very deep, even to the point of romance.

The city of Mumbai is beset with troubles beneath its neon glistening that requires the specialized attention of the devayana pilots. Corporations experiment with the new vedic technologies they barely understand, often to devastating results - summoning uncontrollable demons, transforming employees into monsters, or creating rifts in space and time out of their control. The criminal underworld employs its own devayana and soma-enhanced criminals to wage their secret wars, often endangering civilians and merchants. Spies from China, Pakistan and other countries constantly seek to penetrate the innermost secrets of India's government, business and military, seeking the secrets of vedic technology for themselves; their mundane technologically created powered armor and giant walkers are almost as dangerous as a devayana.

NPC - Rishi Singh

Rishi was just a normal scientist, very intelligent and dedicated to his work. He was a man of the modern era; he didn't believe in any of that superstitious nonsense about devas, samsara, or karma. The few visitors he accepted into his spartan apartment, high above the always crowded streets of Mumbai, were surprised when they didn't find a Hindu god placed in an alcove above the doorway to greet them. His rejection of tradition made Rishi an unwelcome visitor among his own family. And Rishi liked it that way. Rishi worked in top-secret projects for the Indian government, and he devoted all of his energies to work, he had no time for idle distractions like family and friends.

But then the new millennium rolled around. Rishi was brow-beaten into attending the New Year's Celebration by his superior at work. There, he met a charismatic and fascinating young woman, an assistant from a nearby office he had never met, or maybe just never noticed. The woman was intelligent, smarter than anyone else - man or woman - Rishi had ever met, and he found her intelligence, her wit and her charm intoxicating. What Rishi did not know was that he was being literally intoxicated by a mixture of drugs the woman, an agent for a foreign power, had slipped into his drink, a mixture that just happened to contain an extract from the soma plant. The woman led the drug-addled Rishi back to her apartment, where she intended to interrogate him for his state secrets.

But before the woman was able to get anything from Rishi, state police arrested her, and they left Rishi in what they thought was just a normally intoxicated state. But Rishi had fallen into a deep mystical trance. Rishi could feel his *atman* leaving his body, wandering deep into the cosmic heart of things. There, he met the great Brahma, the creator god, who laid out before him all the knowledge in the world, and showed him how it was all secretly encoded in the vedas. He could see the secret codes encrypted into the texts, and when he awoke, he began furiously scribbling down what he had seen into his notebook. Thus began an period lasting several months where Rishi alternated between working at a feverish pace and day long sessions of deep transcendental meditation. At the end of this period, Rishi had cracked the code, and discovered the secrets of vedic technology.

Dr. Singh is an absent minded professor or mentor figure to the player characters. He discovered the

process of creating and controlling *vedayana* through his vedic wisdom. They should look up to him as a wise grandfatherly figure. However, he is also absent-minded and a frequent target for enemy agents, so they need to protect him as well.

Vedayana vs. mekayana: In the setting of Mumbai 2130, India controls the secrets of vedayana. Meanwhile, China, Pakistan, Brazil and other countries are rapidly trying to play catch-up; however, without the deep insight into the vedas granted to Dr. Singh, they can only design *mekayana* - mecha powered by traditional technologies. When *vedayana* confront *mekayana* on the battlefield, the *vedayana's* superiority shines through. To reflect this mechanically, when a vedayana is attacking or defending against a mekayana, they may spend a point of Star Power to add 1 success to a roll after the dice have been rolled.

Story Stages

Mumbai 2130 Stage 1: Robot Revolution

When the game begins, the GM and the players should work together to come up with the role of the PC's squad. Perhaps they are all recent graduates, just assigned their own *vedayana*, or maybe they've been a squad together for some time, perhaps with one or two of the characters as the newbies in the squad. Spend the first roleplaying scene introducing the characters the players work with, such as Rishi Singh, their commanding officer, and their controllers.

After they have become comfortable with each other, the mission bell rings and they are summoned to mission control. Here, they are told that a group of industrial robots have somehow lost control and are on a rampage, terrorizing the glittering shopping districts downtown. They PCs suit up and head to the disturbance.

This should be a nice easy mission for the PCs to get their feet wet. The out of control robots are mostly composed of industrial loaders. They attack random targets, not specifically targeting people but doing a lot of property damage. The regular Mumbai police force, even the crack squad of elite special forces who have been called in, are unable to do more than contain the robots and evacuate civilians. It is up to the PCs to eliminate the threat.

The rogue robots are equipped with various industrial implements, mostly sledgehammers and industrial nail-guns. One rogue robot is equipped with a flamethrower, and is a lot tougher than the other robots. If the PCs suspect something is up, then can spend an action to scan this robot, and will discovered that it is being remotely controlled from somewhere nearby; the other rogue robots are taking their cues from the leader bot.

Rogue Industrial Robot: Attack 3, Defense 4, Engineering 3, Movement 3; Weapon Systems: sledgehammer (0/impact) or industrial nail-gun (1/impact.) Configurations: None.

Remote-Controlled Leader Bot: Attack 5, Defense 6, Engineering 4, Movement 4; Weapon Systems: Flamethrower (1/energy), Steel girder (0/impact). Configurations: Supercharged, Boomer.

After the initial rogue robot attacks, the characters must track the robots back to their source. An anarchist criminal organization known as the Black Family is using them to test their robotic remote control equipment; once they have perfected this equipment, they will use it to assume

control of all the robots in Mumbai at the same time, starting a robot revolution and smashing what they see as a symbol of capitalist decadence, killing hundreds or thousands and making tens of thousands homeless refugees in the process. Can the player characters stop them before this happens?

Mumbai 2130 Stage 2:
The Kidnap Plot

While defeating the rogue robots and tracing them back to their point of origin, the players should have plenty of time to socialize with Rishi Singh and their controllers, their families and the other officers on the police force. After a few weeks of peace after the rogue robot incident, police headquarters downtown is rocked by a explosion; *mekayana* of unknown make start climbing up the walls and infiltrating the building. They seem to be trying to make their way to the Room of Lotuses; are they trying to steal the *devayana*?

If the players are sharp witted, they will realize that this is just a diversionary attack. Oh, the enemy mecha pilots all think that securing one or more *devayana* for their faction is their ultimate goal, and indeed, their superiors would be more than pleased if this were to happen. However, the real principal purpose of main attack group is diversion. The actual target of the attack is Dr. Rishi Singh. His assistant, a long-term sleeper agent, is activated at the same time as the attack, proceeds to drug him and kidnap him under the guise of getting him out of harm's way. Enemy black ops will rendezvous with them and eliminate any police guards that may be escorting the doctor and his assistant.

Once the doctor has been kidnapped, the players know that it is only a matter of time before he is either made to divulge his vedic secrets to the enemy, or is killed for keeping his silence. The Indian government will not allow either possibility to happen; the highest channels of the government,

all the way up to prime minister Gabira Saigal herself, will contact the players to enforce upon them the seriousness of the situation.

The PCs must now track down the criminals and rescue the doctor. Will they make it in time, or have the enemy already learned enough to start modifying their *mekayana* with new technologies derived from the vedas? The battle to free the doctor is sure to be hard-fought.

(Even if the players succeed in preventing the kidnapping of Doctor RIshi during the initial attack, they enemy will succeed in stealing his research data, which poses almost as great a threat.)

The enemy is desperate for results. With the unwilling help of the doctor or his liberated notes, they have already started modifying their mekayana. The GM should give each enemy mekayana a third configuration. However, these modifications to the mekayana are not without consequences for their pilots, who become more and more mentally unstable. The PCs can manipulate this to their advantage.

Mumbai 2130 Stage 3 –
Rest and Relaxation

This campaign can run as long as needed. Each stage will pit the players against a different criminal organization with different goals on the city of Mumbai. After the spectacular fights in stage 2, perhaps the best thing is to put in a short breather stage. Concentrate on the PCs themselves, their families, and their growing relationships with their controllers. Combat scenes take place in the simulator, which allow for a variety of combat scenarios.

Story Seed - Another pilot from a different unit has gone AWOL along with his controller. It turns out that the strain of piloting a vedayana was too much for this young man, and he has snapped, stealing his vedayana, kidnapping his controller and taking them somewhere safe. Can the players find

him and bring him down from the edge before he loses it completely?

Mythic India

Action imprisons the world, unless it is done as sacrifice.
- Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita

Indian Cinema has always been strongly influenced by the Hindu classics, in fact some of the earliest silent films were based on the lives of great Hindu heroes - Rama, Krishna, Harishchandra, Hanuman - and retold stories from the Ramayana, Vedas, Mahabharata, and other sources.

Background

This is a time before history, an India steeped in myth and legend, where the gods roam the earth, and titanic wars are waged between civilizations unknown to modern man. Demons plague mankind; evil sorcerers serving wicked monkey kings oppress the people, and bring the entire universe out of kilter by ignoring their dharma, serving an inhuman karma opposed by the gods.

The player characters are born into this world as *rakshasa*. Something went wrong with their reincarnation that left their souls stuck in the celestial world with only a thin tether tying the bodily shell to the soul. Thus, rakshasa are powerful humans born of two worlds - half celestial, half mortal, with one foot in the world of the mystic at all times. However, in times of great need, a rakshasa can summon their full soul into this world, transforming themselves into a vedic superman, a *devayana*.

Many Rakshasa also learn powerful mantras that can affect the physical world as well as that of the spirit. These mantras can transform their physical bodies into physically perfect specimens of humanity; they can give the rakshasa the ability to see across the *triloka* into the world of spirits, gods and demons; they can give the rakshasa the ability to alter the minds and will of people.

Rakshasa learn their mantras in secret, passed down from master to student in an unending tradition. However, rakshasa do not have limitless power: being half-deva or half-asura, they can be harmed by a *brahmin* reading from the vedas, and even their own spirit nature attracts demons and other unwholesome things to them.

Rakshasa are born possessing one type of deva spirit; this is their essence, their *devayana* and they cannot ever change it because it is who they are. However, the elder masters who pass down their mantras to their students choose whom they wish to teach. Thus it is possible to find a rakshasa who has any given combination of *devayana* and *mantra*.

Whatever the case, rakshasa will always find themselves, by benefit of their flawed incarnation, embroiled in the troubles of mortals and gods alike. None can resist their dharma, although some may try for a time. Whatever varna caste the rakshasa was originally born into, their dharma is dominated by the fact of who they are. Despite the blessings of power that come from a soul that abides in the

heavens, the rakshasa are not fully human, and thus they are ultimately on a lower rung of reincarnation than even the lowest untouchable, because at least the untouchable is fully human. The dharma of a rakshasa is to protect the world from supernatural forces, keep order in the world, and do good deeds; if a rakshasa does these things, then in the next life they may hope that their soul fully rejoins their body, and they can be reborn as a human.

The Mythic Age of India is a lot like a certain TV show about Hercules and his journeys which are legendary; the exact time period is uncertain, and myth and history commingle with each other in exuberant abandon. Even history itself is fluid; in one adventure, you might encounter a rajput raja, and in the very next one, the vanguard of the British East Trading Company. The devas walk the earth, but are still worshipped in their traditional forms. In one adventure, you might journey to the great fest of the asura Bali Maharaja and assist Lord Vishnu in his incarnation as the dwarf Vamanadeva (perhaps he has lost his powers and needs to get them back!), and in the next, you might encounter travelling scholars who know the story from the Rig Veda.

Because of this structure, particularly in Story Stage 1, this game facilitates one-shots and a disconnected campaign where players may drop in and out. You can take a break from this SRS, turn to the more grim Borders of Blood, and then come back for a break from the grit of that series to bathe in the wahoo of this one.

The Mantras

In addition to regular character creation, each character chooses one mantra during character creation. Once chosen, it cannot change, nor can they learn another - the *marga* of one mantra takes all the meditative energies and soul searching that any one being, even one as powerful as a rakshasa, can muster. Still, rumors spread through the scattered rakshasa community speak of elder and very powerful rakshasa who have mastered one mantra and learned a second.

Mechanically, these mantras are written on the character sheet as a new skill. Each character receives a rating of '1' in the selected mantra at character creation, and may then raise it with bonus points normally. During play, a player may roll their mantra skill during a roleplaying scene whenever it would be applicable. (During a combat scene, their entire being has been transformed into a *devayana*, and it is all their will can do to keep the divine energy of their soul bound to this world; thus, they cannot use mantras while transformed.) The mantra skill is usually combined with Will, but *dehamantra* may sometimes use Strength or Agility, and the Mantra of All Knowledge might use Intelligence at the GM's discretion.

The Mantra of the Body (*dehamantra)*; the mantra of the body focuses the rakshasa's mind on his or her own body; through repetition of this mantra and performing secret yoga techniques, the body is strengthened, eventually reaching the peak of human perfection and slightly beyond. Those who master this mantra never get sick, and only need to rest for one hour a day; it is said they may live for a thousand years, although no one knows, since almost all rakshasa meet the end imposed by their dharma well before then.

The Mantra of the Spirit World (*svargamantra*); *svarga* is the world of the gods, also known as the *devaloka*. Those who study this mantra can see into the spirit world, and attune their wills to the entities found their. By focusing their will on the other world, and repeating this mantra, the rakshasa opens their *ajna chakra* - their third eye, an eye composed of pure divine light. With their third eye open, the practitioner can speak with the spirit world, gaining great insight into other places. Masters of this mantra can even bind asura and

preta, banishing them or leashing them to servitude for a short time.

The Mantra of the Heart (*jimantra)* - The Upanishads teach that the heart is greater than all things, even the universe. The student of *jimantra* studies his own heart; it becomes as well controlled as his breathing and as well known to him as his own skin. Masters of this mantra control their own emotion perfectly, and can even influence the emotions and minds of those around them. They know no fear, and those who love them love them perfectly, and those who fear them know the deepest heart's fear.

The Mantra of all Knowledge (*gyanmantra)* - It is said the vedas contain all knowledge, even the position of every star in heaven. By repeating this mantra while studying the vedas, a rakshasa can tap their innermost secrets. All knowledge lies exposed to them; they can invent machines that fly in the air, or mirrors that collect sunlight in jars. They are never lost, and know the name of every animal, down to the last beetle. They are never hungry or thirsty, for their insight provides them the knowledge of how to eat and drink things inedible to other humans.

The Mantra of Earthly Powers (*prithvimantra)* - Lightning that thunders down from the sky; fire that rages like wrath itself; winds that howl through canyons; whirlpools that make widows of a hundred sailors' wives; the master of *prthvimantra* commands them all. He walks through fire unharmed. He calls down lightning from the bluest of skies. The ships he sails always have favorable winds.

The Mantra of Nature (*prakritimantra)* - All the animals that walk upon this earth and all the plants that grow upon its surface, everything that wriggles beneath the earth or flies in the sky, that is the purview of this mantra. The master of this mantra rides tigers and controls armies of mice. He blights crops or causes a boom harvest without a drop of rain. His servants, the worms, tell him of everything that walks on the land, and the birds tell him everything they see from the sky.

Story Stages

Mythic India Stage 1 – Wandering the Earth

As the movie begins, we find the heroic rakshasa wandering mythic India, walking from village to village and solving problems as they go. Each player should have a reason to wander the earth - perhaps one is seeking a loved one who spurned them on discovering their half-deva nature; or they are fleeing from a powerful secret in their past; or they are wandering the earth to experience the beauty and suffering of the world at the behest of their rishi.

Story Seed - In a certain village, a Brahmin priest has fallen from the graces of the local raj, and he is therefore unable to perform his dharma, unable to find work as a priest. He lives now with some poor farmers on the outskirts of the village. When the players come upon the village, they are just in time to save it from an attack by asuras.

Asura Attackers: Attack 7, Defense 4, Engineering 4, Movement; Weapons: Demon Claws (1/impact), Fire Breath (3/energy); Configurations: Boomer, Disruptor

The PCs will discover that the reason the asuras are attacking the village is because it has accumulated too much negative karma. This is because the raj is not performing his dharma by

protecting the caste system (he expelled the Brahmin for political reasons), and because therefore the priest is unable to fulfil his own dharma. The player characters must convince the raj to fulfil his dharma and reinstate the Brahmin priest.

Story Seed - Zeenat is a dancer and a prostitute, a *vaishya* who has fallen on hard times. She loves a man named Murali, son of a wealthy merchant. Murali loves Zeenat, but his parents have engaged him to another woman, a proper woman whom he does not love. But Zeenat is lusted after by a vile man, an untouchable, who is trying to blackmail her into marrying him. If this marriage goes through, Zeenat will commit suicide on their wedding bed, and much negative karma will be accumulated by all involved. The player characters must find a way to resolve this situation, and hopefully unite Murali and Zeenat while having their families save face.

If the players manage to arrange Zeenat's and Murali's wedding, they must fight off the spurned suitor and his companions, who in their rage have attracted *preta* - evil spirits attracted by strong negative emotions. However, if the players fail to resolve the situation, they will find themselves fighting asuras attracted to the negative karma generated by the suicide, perhaps even including Zeenat-turned-demon herself, who is seeking vengeance against the untouchable and Murali both.

Story Seed - A peasant finds the player characters while they are between villages, and begs them to come help his village immediately. They are under attack by a giant ogre. The players arrive and defeat the ogre and his servants, and the village throws a feast in their honor. But just after they have left, they are summoned back again; this time, asuras are attacking the village. They defeat the asura menace. Later on, preta attack the village. Investigating players will find no bad karma or build-ups of negative emotions; the village is running just

fine according to its dharma, so why is it under such constant attacks by evil?

The answer is that the village headman, Vidya Amarna, is a rakshasa who has tried to establish a normal life here. Rejecting his dharma, never practising his mantra, and never summoning his devayana atman, he has married a local woman, raised two strong boys and one beautiful daughter and built a life for himself here. He is in denial of his supernatural past, he sees it as a bad phase in his life, as if it were an addiction he has gotten over.

But the supernatural part of a rakshasa always shows through. Vidya's presence in the village has weakened the wall with the spirit world around it, attracting all kinds of supernatural entities. The players must convince Vidya to leave the village, no matter how resistant he is. If he loves the village, his wife and children, he will no longer endanger it with his presence. If they are not diplomatic in this conversation, Vidya may turn violent and attempt to drive off the player characters. His *vedayana* is still very powerful, and the local Brahmin priests will summon lesser devas to fight by his side.

Mythic India Stage 2 – The Mortal War

After the players have wandered India for a while, they may come to hear about a powerful rakshasa warlord who is gathering his forces in the mountains. The Warlord says he wants nothing but to unify India and make a peace that will last until the end of the current age of the world, but others see him only as an opportunistic conqueror. The players will start becoming embroiled in the politics behind the situation, being asked to lend their strength to small towns and cities that are under threat by The Warlord. However, the PCs are also approached by heralds of The Warlord, who they say has heard of them and wishes to give them a place of honor in his army. If they join him, his armies begin a march of conquest across India, and the PCs serve as his arm, eliminating choice targets

for their new lord. If they oppose him, The Warlord becomes angry and declares them his enemies. They will be constantly harassed by his men. They may wish to try to rally the various Indian states into one army to resist The Warlord.

When the war reaches its climax, their adversaries will reveal a new weapon, summoned by vedic magic: a powerful mecha called the *jagannatha*, a huge *vedayana* which they deploy in a last ditch effort to win the war with one mighty blow. Naturally, it is up to the PCs to defeat this awesome weapon.

Mythic India Stage 3 – The Eternal War

The PCs' defeat of the jagannatha brings them to the attention of the gods themselves, as well as to their asura enemies. After a brief time to enjoy their victory, round up any remaining enemy, and rest and heal their wounds, they are ambushed by a troop of asura demons. Afterwards, the herald of heaven will come to them, explaining that they have earned the right to fight by the side of the gods. This is a war fought with prayer, dharma, and mysticism as much as it is with raw firepower. Whereas in the previous stage, they PCs fought in a mortal war, in this stage they fight in an eternal war, one fought with noble thoughts and actions, that cannot be won outright, but whose repercussions will echo through eternity.

The players are tasked with performing a series of tasks which tax their very abilities, and at every step, they find themselves harried by the asura. Even the deva themselves are not always trustworthy, and may challenge them in order to test their worth for the trials to come.

The tasks they are given, which they receive during sessions of meditation or dreams, should be strange, difficult, and drenched in symbolism. They must light three lanterns on three mountaintops at the three corners of India, all in a single day. They must gather and sacrifice one thousand goats. They must defend a holy man during his meditations, taking especial care not to disturb him, while he is under assault from vermin, demons of temptation, and strange huge birds. They must journey deep into unexplored India, find the palace of illusions, and escape with one of the intelligent bulls quartered there.

During these tasks, the players should have lots of time to meditate on the nature of the universe. Devas and rishis will question them about *maya*, the veil of illusion that shrouds the truth of the universe, and all kinds of other arcane knowledge.

This is also the opportunity for the PCs to take part in the legendary stories of the Vedas, the Mahabharata, the Puranas, and other sources; and also to take the battle to the asuras proactively. Will the players venture into the territory of the asuras atop a lightning-storm wracked mountaintop in order to stop them from completing a terrifying new form of vedayana?

NPCS and Enemies

Greater Asura Demon Core

Greater Asura demons only appear when brought into this world by the actions an evil Brahmin summoner, or in places where the veil between worlds has been worn down to its thinnest at sites of great negative karma.

Attack: 9   Defense: 10

Engineering: 4   Movement: 4

Skills: (Greater Asura Demon is considered an enemy ace.)

Mecha Combat 5

Weapons:

2xChaos Beam 3/Energy   Razer Sharp Beak 1/Impact

Corrosive Stench 0/Energy

Configurations:

Special: Summon Preta. (Greater Asura demon can spend 1 point of overdrive to summon a mook squad of preta to its location; this squad has 1d6 members and has a Base of 3. It can use this Configuration at most once per turn.)

Defender

Greater Asura Demon Tentacles

A Greater Asura Demon is a huge monster that occupies not just its own space, but spreads its squamous peusopods and tenctacles throughout the battlemap. When encountered, along with the Greater Asura Demon, place several tentacle counters on the battlemap as well (one per PC is appropriate.)

Attack: 6   Defense: 4

Engineering: 5   Movement: 6

Skills: Mecha Combat 3

Weapons:

Corrosive Slap 1/Energy   Entangle 0/Impact

Configurations: Disrupter   Flanker

Special: If the Greater Asura Demon Core is destroyed, all tentacles will likewise vanish.

Special: If all Tentacles are destroyed, the Core's Defense is reduced to 6.

Öptiönál Rűleş

Star Power

Bollywood movies face a tough crowd. More than 800 movies are released each year, and simply having a big budget does not guarantee success at the box office. For the movie your troupe of actors is making, you will need something else to succeed. Something special. You will need *star power.*

Star Power is a new mechanic that rates how well their movies are received. Actors gain acclaim from starring in good movies; this translates as a small bonus to AP. However, Star Power is also a measure of how much faith the movie's director has in its stars, and how much he is willing to let them get away with. So Star Power can also be used to bend the rules of the game. This can be powerful, but watch out! If you don't earn enough Star Power, or spend too much, your movie may be a flop.

Star Power is kept by the group itself, not an individual character. A character who earns Star Power adds it to the group's total; a player who uses Star Power subtracts it from the group's total.

Gauging a Movie's Success

At the end of a session, Star Power earned translates into how successful the movie was with Bollywood audiences; a successful movie might earn the players extra overdrive or AP.

First, determine the movie's overall Star Power by taking the average Star Power of all the characters. (Round fractions off normally.)

0 Stars: Execrable movie. The movie is not screened for critics and opens to critical lambasting and financial disaster.

1 Star: Bad movie. The movie screens for a few weeks, barely makes back its investment, and is then promptly forgotten in the deluge of other movies.

2 Stars: Ok movie. The movie makes some good money, although it doesn't earn the highest marks with the critics.

3 Stars. Hit movie. The movie makes it into the top ten highest grossing films of the year. Talk of a sequel is in progress.

4 Stars: Timeless movie. This movie left audiences speechless and critics grasping for new superlatives to describe it.

Additionally, if the movie earned at least 3 Stars, each actor gets 1 bonus AP, Also, any actor who earns 4 Star Power by themselves gets a 1 AP bonus.

Example: Jake, Sharon and Chris are done with a session of Mekayana. During the session, Jake earned 1 Star Power, Sharon earned 3 Star Power and Chris earned 4 Star Power. The movie's final rating is 3 Stars, so they each get 1 bonus AP. Furthermore, since Chris earned 4 Star Power by himself, he earns 1 additional AP, for a total of 2 extra AP.

Earning Star Power

You earn Star Power by engaging in Musical Routines, either during character scenes or during Mecha combat.

Note: the maximum number of Star Power a single character can accumulate in one game is 4.

Character Musical Routines: At the end of the scene, the player rolls against Social; if he is successful, he earns 1 Star Power.

Solos and Song Battles: For sheer drama, nothing beats fifty ton, twenty-foot tall giant robots dancing in unison and singing songs. Musical routines happen during combat. A player gives up their attack actions for the turn to perform a musical routine, in either a solo or a duet. The character can solo only if they are alone in an area. The solo has no combat effect, but it is not opposed. The character rolls Social vs. Mecha; if they succeed, they Earn 1 Star Power.

However, if an enemy is in the same area as the character, they must *song battle* one opponent. (Enemy mooks cannot be song-battled.) Both characters rolls Social vs. Mecha Combat. If the acting character wins, he earns 1 Star Power and the enemy takes 1 damage. However, if the enemy Mecha wins, the acting character takes 1 damage and he earns no Star Power.

Earning Bonus Dice: You can earn bonus dice on the Star Power roll in the following ways:

- Playing an appropriate song during your scene, +1d.
- Karaoke during the scene, +2d.
- Presence of mooks: allied mooks act as backup dancers, adding +1d.

Spending Star Power

Accumulated Star Power is kept until the end of the session; however, each Star can also be spent, once, to use one of these special powers.

1. A player can spend one Star Power to turn a roll with seven successes into a Cutscene. The roll remains seven success; it does not become eight success, but the player gets the cutscene anyway. Bollywood audiences love flash.

2. In the Mumbai 2130 setting, a player can spend one Star Power to raise the results of a roll by one success if they are attacking or defending against a mekayana in their devayana.

3. A player may spend 1 Star Power after resolving any scene in order to take make an extra roll as for a recovery or repair scene. Bollywood audiences bore of endless hospital or repair scenes, they want to get back into the action!

4. A player may spend 1 Star Power to activate one Configuration their mecha doesn't have for this turn. They must also pay the normal overdrive cost to activate the Configuration. Bollywood is frequently silly, and the audiences are more willing to accept things that don't make total sense so long as it's exciting.

Optional Rule: Relationship Lines

The super-sentai giant robot genre of anime and the gltizy star-studded world of Bollywood movies may not seem to have anything in common at first glance, but there is one thread that unifies them; their stories tell the tales of people driven by their relationships with the other characters. Whether its Renton fighting to save Eureka in Eureka Seven or Thakur nearly sacrificing himself to gain vengeance against Gabbar in *Sholay*, the theme is the same. The giant robots, the song and dance are the visual appeal of the story, but the heart of the story is in the relationships between the characters.

You can use this optional rule in a Mekayana game or in any other Mecha SRS. It plugs right into the system. The basic idea is that each character has two or more relationships that are important to them; these relationships see them through the toughest times, and inspire them to action when everything seems against them. Their lovers and friends keep them tied to the world of the everyday

so that they do no lose themselves in the wires and gears of their machines or the burning vengeance in their hearts.

If you use this optional rule, the PCs will be slightly more powerful than if you do not use it. Mechanically a Relationship Line is roughly equivalent to two points of Overdrive. However, whereas a PC may gain Overdrive during combat, Relationship Lines can only be "recharged" out of combat.

Furthermore, only PCs ever have Relationship Lines drawn from them, thus NPCs can never gain the benefit of stressing a relationship.

Creating the Relationship Map

Start off during character creation by drawing a relationship map. (If you plug Relationship Lines into an ongoing game, just set aside a few minutes at the start of a session - the existing relationships formed during the campaign should populate the map very quickly.) The map is simply a piece of paper showing the PCs and their Relationship Lines to the important NPCs in their lives. I like using a large sheet of heavy duty poster board and drawing the lines with thick, bold markers so that they are easily visible to everyone at the table. You could also use a whiteboard to draw the relationship map, but you can just get away with using a regular sheet of paper if that's all you have.

First, each player puts their own character on the map - write down the character's name and draw a box around it. Now, each player independently creates a new NPC on the map in the same way - you just need to come up with a name (use the table for Indian names on page TODO if you can't think of one) and place a box around it. Now, each player draws their first Relationship Line from their PC's box to the box of the NPC they just created.

Next, the players write a short descriptive label on the relationship line they just drew. This label indicates the kind of relationship the line

represents; for example, Unrequited Love, Childhood Friend, or Rival. If you are having trouble coming up with a label for the relationship, roll or choose one from the table of relationships provided below.

The last thing to do to finish the relationship line is to add some boxes near the line to track the mechanical aspects. Each relationship line needs four boxes. Place one box on one side of the line; this is the Stressed box. While the box is unmarked, the relationship is Unstressed. Conversely, when this box is checked the relationship is Stressed. On the opposite side of the line from the Stressed box, put a row of three Advancement boxes. These boxes are used to keep track of, well, how far the relationship is advancing. I recommend using permanent marker to make these boxes, as you will need to draw and erase inside them during the game.

For example, when playing the Mekayana SRS Mumbai 2130, each pilot has controller whose job it is to keep the pilot tied to the mundane world, rather than vanishing into the heavens. In this setting, the first Relationship Line each character draws could be with their controller.

Now that they have completed their first Relationship Line, each player draws a second Relationship Line to any other PC or NPC already on the map. You cannot add new NPCs to the map at this point. Go ahead and label the line; rolling randomly at this point for the label works really well in creating interesting dynamics. If you draw a relationship line to another PC, make sure you place an arrow indicating which PC the relationship is from; the "target" PC of the relationship cannot stress that relationship line, but he or she could draw their own line back to you, possibly with a different label. For example, PC A could have a Relationship Line labeled "Unrequited Love" to PC B, while PC B draws a line back to PC A and labels it "Professional Jealousy."

Now your map should contain all the PCs, one NPC per PC, and two relationship lines leaving each PC.

Note that the GM can seed the relationship map with important NPCs if they want, possibly an antagonist and an important ally such as the squad's commanding officer. PCs are then free to draw either or both of their Relationship Lines to these NPCs.

With that done, the initial Relationship Map is complete. Keep the map around - you will be using it during play.

Stressing Relationships

When a character's life is in danger, the memories of the ones they love drive them forward through the pain and the stress. Their mentor's words echo inspiration in their ears; images of their rival's faces pass before them, egging them on with remembered mockery; their lover's scent erases the pain.

A character can **stress** a relationship for a mechanical benefit. They simply put a check or X into the Stressed box of the relationship, making the relationship stressed. Then they add 3 dice to their dice pool. They may elect to do this before or after the roll. If a relationship is already stressed, it cannot be stressed again.

However, the decision to stress a relationship is not without consequences. Whenever a character puts stress on a relationship, their is an equal and opposite reaction in the NPC. At the same time the character in the midst of battle is thinking of their girlfriend, she is standing on the sidelines, worrying herself to death over him. When he remembers his mentor's words under a lightning-streaked sky, that very person at that very moment is looking up into the sky, wondering if they've taught you the right lessons. When you decide to press on because dying here would break your mother's heart, her heart cracks a little bit as she flips through your baby album.

These are the things that create stress and tension in a relationship. The player character needs to deal with these stress fractures in their relationships; our bounds to other people give us strength, but they also complicate our lives.

To undo this stress, the character needs to take action. But once a relationship is put under stress, it cannot come back in the same form - it can only either deepen or break. The player may use their roleplaying scene to try to Advance a Stressed relationship. The player has their roleplaying scene with the NPC and tries to fix the damage.

Their girlfriend might confront them when they get back from the battle, saying "Every time you go into battle, you [i]use[/i] me. I can't take it anymore!"

Or they go visit their old mentor, asking him for a new lesson, but they are rebuffed, "I don't think you are ready for my ultimate technique... and maybe you never will be."

Or they face their rival in the debriefing room. The rival smirks and boasts, "I shot down five. By my count, you ah, only got four. Maybe next time, slugger."

You must react, you must do something, to advance the relationship. Get down on your knee and propose to her. Prove your worth to your mentor. Show your rival the battle record of you taking down two more enemy mechs while he was busy.

At the end of the scene the player makes a roll using their Social as the governing skill. The difficulty of the role is equal to the relationship's level - that is, how many Stress boxes the relationship has. If the roll is successful, remove all Stressed marks from the relationship. If it fails, there's a consequence - the Relationship **breaks**. Place a line through the Stress box to indicate this.

A broken relationship is one that has lost its emotional heart. Love is replaced by hate; a mentor's wisdom turns to his scorn; a rival's boasting claims stop as he realizes you just aren't in

his league any longer. A broken relationship cannot be used for the remainder of the current session. During the next session, the player may make another attempt to heal the relationship. This takes a roleplaying scene as normal, but repairing a broken relationship is automatic, with no roll required. Remove the broken line and all Stressed marks. Do not advance the relationship, however.

Taking a Relationship to the Next Level

If the player makes the roll to unstress a relationship, the relationship Advances. The player removes the checks from all Stressed boxes and places a new checkmark in one of the Advancement boxes. If this is the third time the relationship has Advanced, the relationship deepens to the next level. Mechanically, this is represented by erasing all Advancement marks and adding a new Stress box to the relationship.

A relationship with multiple Stress boxes works like normal, except that it can be stressed multiple times (equal to the number of Stressed boxes) before it can no longer be stressed and requires a roleplaying scene to unstress.

Dramatically, the deepened relationship moves to the next level. The player must narrate a scene of the relationship growing deeper. When deepening a romantic relationship from level 1 to 2, for example, maybe the player narrates a quiet conversation the two have under the moonlight sky, and the first kiss they share under that moon. If the same relationship moves from level 2 to 3, a more intimate bond forms - both emotionally and physically. (Feel free to "fade to back" before anyone gets uncomfortable here.)

The relationship label changes when the relationship deepens. "Love interest" becomes "girlfriend." Maybe "girlfriend" becomes "fiancee". Maybe after narrating a scene where the PC and her rival race motorcycles through the crowded streets of the city, she changes the label "rival"to "partner in crime."

The dramatic scene and the new label are mandatory for the relationship to deepen to the next level. However, if the player does not want the relationship to become deeper, they can refuse to make it deeper. When a relationship is poised to deepen and the character refuses, it Crashes instead. A crashed relationship cannot be recovered; it is one where all possibilities of the relationship continuing have been lost. The jilted lover commits suicide in grief. The mentor goes into retirement, calling you his greatest failure. The rival gets promoted over you and relocated. Erase the relationship line.

Adding New Relationships

As the game progresses, characters will meet new NPCs, some of whom they will become attached to. They can form new relationships with these NPCs by expending 4 AP and drawing the new relationship line as described above. A new relationship begins at level 1 - even if game events have narrated a relationship that has already reached a deeper stage, that depth is new and fragile, and only work can make the relationship really and truly deep.

Random Relationship Table

Random Relationship Table. If you roll a relationship that doesn't apply or that you don't like, roll again. To determine a random relationship, roll d66 - that is, roll one six-sided die and count its value in tens (10, 20, 30, etc.) and then a second six-sided die and count its value as 1s, giving you a range of 11 to 66. Read the tens value down the rows and the ones value across to locate the correct column. Finally, this table is descriptive, not proscriptive; if you want a relationship with a completely different label than any of these, please go right ahead!

d66	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	Twin	Childhood Friend	Academy Roommate	Business Partner	Leisure Friend	Betrothed
20	Professional Rival - Young hotshot	Professional Rival - peer	Professional Rival - old guard	Romantic Rival	Romantic Rival	Romantic Rival
30	Love Interest	Former Lover	Girlfriend / Boyfriend	Unrequited Love	Spouse	Ex-spouse
40	Father / Mother	Brother / Sister	Niece / Nephew	Uncle / Aunt	Son / Daughter	Mysterious Stranger
50	Landlord	Senpai	Religious Leader	Wise Man	Medical Professional	Mentor
60	Egghead	Government Leader	Sidekick	Awkward Friend	Comrade	Blood Brother

Appendix A - Further Media

Learning More: Entire books have been written about the subjects of Indian History, Hinduism, and Bollywood, and new works appear on these topics every month. Spend a little time investigating it, and you will discover a whole new world.

Great Religions of the World: Hinduism, by Mark W. Muesse. This is a marvelous DVD and CD audio series produced by the Teaching Company. It now comes available in a pack with the other Great Religion Series - Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. I can't recommend it highly enough.

Pimsleur Hindi: Available as an audiobook, you can learn some basic Hindi on the commute to work. The Hindi speakers speak slowly and the repitition makes it easy to pick up on patterns. However, if you are after a deeper grammatical knowledge of Hindi, or want to learn Devanagari, the beautiful script Hindi is written in, you will need to look elsewhere.

Teach Yourself Hindi comes with three books, one to teach Hindi, a small dictionary, and "Beginner's Hindi Script", which teaches the script Hindi is written in, Devanagari. The main book also comes with a CD of some audio from the lessons. These books are very useful to the self-motivated student.

www.shabdkosh.com - online Hindi to English dictionary. Be sure to click the Show Transliteration link unless you've mastered Devanagari!

he Upanishads, translation by Patrick Olivelle; a good readable translation of some of the most influential religious texts in the world.

Behind the Scenes of Hindi Cinema, by Johan Manschot and Marijke de Vos, is a lavishly illustrated full-color book complemented by insightful commentary. If you are looking for one book as a reference for Bollywood visual tropes, buy this book.

Bollywood: The Indian Cinema Story, by Nasreen Munni Kabir, on the other hand only has a few color plates, but is written by a Bollywood insider. With an easy-to-read narrative, this book is a great comprehensive lay introduction to Indian Cinema. Frequent quotes from Nasreen's interviews with Bollywood's movers and shakers lend this book an air of authority few other sources can match.

Recommended Bollywood Movies

Enthiran **-** A Tamil Cinema movie, this is the most expensive Indian movies ever made, about a robot who falls in love with its creator's daughter.

Krrsh **-** The adventures of an Indian superhero.

Sholay **-** An absolute classic. Set in a wild-west version of India, this is one of the best movies ever made, let alone Bollywood movies, about a police man obsessed with revenge who hires two outlaws to help him bring down his man.

Mission Kashmir **-** A powerful movie about the cycle of revenge of Kashmir.

Mother India - Made shortly after Indian independence, this film shows the classic virtues of a strong Hindu woman as takes on greedy money lenders and her own criminal son.

Slumdog Millionaire - This is not technically a Bollywood movie, but stars famous Bollywood actors and has a common Bollywood theme of love triumphing in the face of impossible adversity. Well worth watching.

What's Your Rashi - While a flop at the box-office, this movie is notable for starring Priyanka Chopra in twelve different roles.